

December 8, 2011

Open letter to Mr. Richard Rosenthal

Head of the Independent Investigation Office for B.C.

Dear Sir:

My name is Al Wright. I am the father of Alvin Wright who was shot in his bedroom by the Langley RCMP. Alvin had no criminal record and no mental health history or history of violence. The RCMP had no search warrant and we have yet to hear what reason they may have had to be in his bedroom that night. You announced yesterday that you do not want to investigate his case.

We still don't know what happened. We don't know the officers involved. We don't know how many times he was shot. We don't know what his last words were.

Alvin's death at the hands of RCMP officers was investigated by another police department, the Vancouver Police Department. The VPD were criticized in a public inquiry into the death of Frank Paul for their poor investigations of other police officers. A police video showed a soaking wet Frank Paul being dragged out of the Vancouver jail by officers before he was dumped in a back lane where died of hypothermia.

VPD investigators didn't recommend any charges against the officers involved in Frank Paul's death. The Vancouver police did not recommend any charges against the RCMP officers involved in my son's death either.

Our family had to go to the media and hold a protest outside the RCMP detachment before the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner would even review the investigation file.

I understand that you are the new head of the Independent Investigation Office. I saw you on the news being introduced by the Premier. I saw you flanked by senior representatives of the police, including the RCMP and the Vancouver Police and the West Vancouver Police as well as the police union, who called you by your first name and said that they could not wait to work with you.

You should know, in our family's eyes, and in the eyes of many individuals directly and indirectly affected by police violence, those people you were standing with have tolerated and covered up misconduct by their fellow officers in British Columbia for decades. The RCMP, for example, is in the middle of yet another scandal, this time related to allegations of sexual assaults and harassment. You were standing on a stage surrounded by the very people you must investigate in order to win the respect of the public and cause them to believe the police will be accountable to the public again.

I don't doubt or discredit your experience. But I've heard you are not going to look at any past cases, including the death of my son Alvin. This is unacceptable. In other words, you are saying that we will have to wait for another person to be killed or sexually assaulted by the police before you will begin work.

We live in a province where an RCMP officer had killed a man while a police officer in Newfoundland which resulted in a public inquiry there. He was then convicted of assault after breaking the bones in a man's face during an arrest. He was the subject of a civil settlement in relation to injuring a motorist's shoulder. He was found by a judge in yet another case to have destroyed video evidence of his repeated use of a Taser on a handcuffed and injured man. All of this conduct took place before he hog tied Clayton Alvin Willey in Prince George and broke that man's ribs. Mr. Willey, too, died. This man is still a police officer. He worked the day after being convicted of assault, as an RCMP police officer.

In other words, historic cases here are not historic. The issues they represent are ongoing. Officers convicted of criminal conduct are still working as police officers. Your job is to protect the public from problem police officers, because the police have failed to protect us from problem officers.

There are a number of cases going to Coroner's inquest soon, my son's included, where it will be much more difficult to prosecute involved officers after the Inquest takes place. Your file reviews must take place before these cases go to Inquest. This is the only way, in my belief, your office can even have a chance to restore faith in the police agencies in this province. The people want justice now, not for the deaths that we know will come, but for what has happened already and to try to prevent what we fear will come.

I am very disappointed that Shirley Bond would sign another contract with the RCMP for 20 years, an agency that could be criminally responsible for my son's death and many others, as well as countless sexual assaults and relentless sexual harassment of female staff. Many people in this province, tax payers, teachers, airline employees, city workers, forestry workers, longshoreman, the very backbone of this province, have often gone years past contract deadlines. Until these matters involving the RCMP are resolved, it is insulting to us, the taxpayers and family members, that the Province would agree to anything with this police agency.

There is absolutely no trust that the police in this province will protect us from their problem officers. The politicians have let this go on for too long and are still signing deals with these police departments. You have yet to prove any different than what I've seen in this province so far, and if the police union is calling you by your first name, and you're posing for photo opportunities with the police agencies you're supposed to be aggressively holding accountable, and you're going to wait until the police kill again before starting work, I'm not sure you are different.

Yours truly,



Al Wright