

SIU Probes

EDITORIAL

Ontario Attorney General Caroline Mulroney, daughter of a Canadian prime minister likely to be judged better by history than he's being judged right now, recently put some needed binders on the province's Special Investigative Unit.

The SIU, created to do investigations regarding police contact with civilians where injury or worse has transpired, or where sexual assault allegations against police have been levelled, needed to have its mandate updated.

So, good on the Progressive Conservative government of Premier Doug Ford for moving quickly on this issue.

Because it's important, that's why.

The SIU's reach was too broad. Not only that, the SIU tended to take its own sweet time coming up with conclusions and too often had police officers handcuffed under a cloud of suspicion that was never warranted or justified.

Police were investigated wrongly, for example, for failing to successfully resuscitate a shooting victim at the scene, despite desperately trying to do so.

They've been investigated, again wrongly, for failing to talk someone out of committing suicide.

Or for failing to save someone from a drug overdose.

None of these demanded the SIU stepping in, because it was never intended it step in under such circumstances.

So, Mulroney told them to back off, and to do the job they were created to do. And that's to determine if there was any police wrongdoing when a civilian is hurt or killed during his or her contact with police.

Mulroney also gave the SIU 120 days to come up with its decision, or provide a good explanation why not.

It would be hard to forget the shooting rampage in Toronto's Greektown along Danforth Avenue in July of last year when a gunman killed two and shot 13 others.

We knew within hours that the shooter, Faisal Hussian, exchanged gunfire when cornered by police and finally brought silence to the area by turning the weapon on himself.

But it took the SIU a ridiculous 178 days to file a report that justified the police officers returning fire.

For all those 178 days, those police officers were living under suspicion and on restricted duties, waiting for the SIU to decide on their fate.

It was not fair to them or fair to the public.

Investigate police use-of-force, yes, but do right and do it quickly.

That's the SIU's job, nothing else.