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**STATEMENT BY BRAD BLAIR**  
**September 13, 2019**

On March 4, 2019, Deputy Minister Di Tommaso, abruptly and in my opinion, unlawfully, ended my 33-year career with the OPP.

I have served the OPP faithfully and honourably since 1986, and due to my efforts in safeguarding the independence and credibility of province's largest service from improper political interference I was fired.

My OPP career began on March 24, 1986 with a posting to Red Lake. It was my dream to become an OPP officer and I felt a debt of gratitude to the OPP and the people of Ontario for the opportunity to serve them. During my time in Red Lake I was fortunate to work with some of the most dedicated officers I would interact with in my career. My coach officer was from Red Lake and he taught me about the importance of public trust and how hard it is to earn and how easy it is to lose. He also taught me about responsibility and the role that police officers play in communities other than being law enforcers. Those are lessons that I carried with me throughout my career. It has always been important to me that the OPP be an institution that the people of Ontario trust to carry out its duties in a fair and impartial manner.

On November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018 I assumed command of the Ontario Provincial Police as the interim Commissioner. I assumed command of the OPP as a result of an OIC proposed by the Premier and supported by Cabinet. On that same day I submitted my resume indicating my intention to compete for the Commissioner position on a fulltime basis. As a result of having near 33 years service with the OPP, the last 5 years as Deputy Commissioner, all I expected was to be given consideration to compete in a fair and transparent selection process.



In assuming responsibility for Canada's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest police service even on an interim basis, I understood and accepted that I was solely responsible for maintaining the OPP's operational integrity, maintaining the public's trust and ensuring mistakes of the past were not repeated.

During the month of November, I participated in the Commissioner's selection process and as a result of that experience and my responsibility as Commissioner I challenged the Premier's public statements that the selection of Ron Taverner as OPP Commissioner was an independent process. I believed that I was duty bound as Commissioner to come forward. I believed at the time of coming forward that the OPP Commissioner's process was the entire iceberg in terms of the cronyism. But as the months passed and the numerous examples of further cronyism were identified it became evident that the Commissioner's process was the tip of the iceberg.

I was fired on March the 4<sup>th</sup>, 20 days shy of 33 years of service, for reasons that are still not clear to me. A firing that was unlawful and done without any due process. A firing that if left unchallenged puts every OPP officer at risk of suffering the same fate. A firing that was done to silence me and to dissuade me from seeking a response to allegations that I had made. Allegations that were made to the Ombudsman in writing and under oath to the Integrity Commissioner. To date there are allegations that have yet to be investigated by either the Integrity Commissioner or the Ombudsman. Instead those two legislative watchdogs have tossed the allegations back and forth, with neither taking responsibility for conducting a full investigation. It is a result of the systemic failure of these institutions to fulfill their mandates that a Public Inquiry into these matters is the only path forward to adequately address the serious issue of cronyism that hangs over this government and to restore public trust.

The Integrity Commissioner's report on the Commissioner Selection process in March specifically identified the involvement of the Premier's office. In particular, it identified the actions of the Chief of Staff Dean French and the complicit actions of public servants. Yet nothing happened and the cronyism continued. Eventually the numerous examples of cronyism led to the resignation of the Chief of Staff and the only response has been that the Premier's office will conduct a review. An entity accused of wrong doing investigating itself is not a hallmark of accountability or transparency and it erodes the public's trust.



I competed for the position of Commissioner of the OPP as a result of my sincere desire to continue to contribute to the safety of the people of Ontario and to continue to remain part of an organization that I love. For 33 years the OPP was our family and on March 4<sup>th</sup> that was taken from us cruelly and without consideration of the impact it would have on me or my family. My wife Danielle is here with me and has been with me for 37 years including the last 33 as my wife. At 19 she married me and followed me to Red Lake and has stuck with me through the good and the bad. The spouses and partners and families of emergency services personnel are special people who pay a significant price in supporting their loved ones. My firing without any due process or opportunity to defend myself came as a shock to us. The impact of the firing has quite frankly traumatized me, my wife and our family. We have been cut off from our OPP family and isolated from the organization we were dedicated to. We have suffered from social anxiety and have lost trust in the very institutions we have always respected. The past six months have been a time of grieving for us dominated by overwhelming sadness that has permeated our daily lives. Taken from us was the natural transition to retirement that in the best of circumstances is difficult for police officers. The retirement process provides closure and would have given me the opportunity to take stock of my contributions and reconcile the experiences that have shaped me. It is in my belief that the retirement process is vitally important to future mental health outcomes for police officers.

Since my firing we have received tremendous support from family and friends. Old friends and numerous OPP employees, retirees as well as fellow police officers from the province, the nation and the United States have reached out to us in solidarity. I was approached recently by a retired police officer from London England who introduced himself and shook my hand thanking me for my sacrifice to protect the profession of policing. And while support from fellow officers can be expected considering the bond we share, the most surprising support has come from complete strangers who have sought me out to offer their support and to thank me for my courage.

I do not expect that Premier Ford will do the right thing and hold a public inquiry into these matters, and that is why I call on the good people of this province to join me in demanding that an inquiry be held. That the people of Ontario let their elected representatives know that this is not the way we expect our government to be run- using the government as a vehicle to appoint friends to positions of power and great financial gain.

