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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CPA supports call for victim-centred parole reform

OTTAWA – The Canadian Police Association (CPA) is supporting the Toronto Police Association's call for the federal government to place meaningful parole reform on Parliament's agenda this fall, following serious concerns about the treatment of victims and their families in advance of the upcoming parole hearing for Clinton Gayle.

Gayle is serving two life sentences for the first-degree murder of Toronto Police Constable Todd Baylis and the attempted murder of his partner, then-Constable Mike Leone, in 1994. His scheduled July 30 hearing will be his fourth appearance before the Parole Board of Canada since becoming eligible for parole.

"We stand with Todd Baylis's family, Mike Leone, and our colleagues at the Toronto Police Association in asking that this experience lead to serious reform," said CPA President Tom Stamatakis. "This is a man who murdered a police officer and attempted to murder another, and the prospect of his release is not an abstract policy question for Todd's family, for Mike, or for police officers across Canada. The Parole Board must remain independent in reaching its decision, but that independence cannot become a shield against legitimate scrutiny or necessary reform. Parliament has a responsibility to fix a process that repeatedly forces victims to relive the worst moment of their lives while treating their meaningful participation as secondary."

The Baylis family and the Toronto Police Association had communicated their desire to attend an in-person hearing months in advance. They were advised on July 10 that the hearing would take place in British Columbia on July 30, with updated victim statements due only six days after receiving that notice. A request for a brief postponement to allow the family to prepare and make arrangements to attend was denied.

"Twenty days may appear to be notice when measured on an administrative calendar, but it means something very different to a family being asked to travel across the country, prepare a statement, and relive the murder of a loved one," said Mr. Stamatakis. "The psychological impact does not begin on the day of the hearing and end when the hearing concludes. A process that does not adequately account for that reality cannot reasonably be described as victim-centred or trauma-informed."

The CPA recognizes that parole hearings must proceed within legal and administrative requirements, and that the rights of offenders must be respected. Those obligations should not prevent reasonable accommodation for victims who have clearly expressed a desire to participate, particularly when their intentions have been communicated well in advance.

The Toronto Police Association has put forward detailed reform proposals that deserve serious consideration. The CPA believes a federal review should examine:

- clearer notice and scheduling requirements that meaningfully consider the availability of victims who wish to attend or present a statement;
- longer intervals between reviews following the denial or revocation of parole in defined cases involving the most serious offences, while preserving a mechanism for an earlier hearing where there has been a material change in circumstances;
- greater transparency and access to parole decisions, hearing records and information required for meaningful victim participation; and
- an explicit requirement that the Corrections and Conditional Release Act be interpreted and administered consistently with the rights and principles recognized in the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights.

“The federal government has recently demonstrated, through its work on bail and sentencing reform, that it is prepared to listen to police associations, victims and other partners and make carefully considered changes to the justice system,” said Mr. Stamatakis. “We are asking the Minister of Public Safety, working with the Minister of Justice, to bring that same approach to parole reform and begin the work now so that concrete proposals can be part of Parliament’s agenda this fall.”

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The Canadian Police Association is the national voice for over 60,000 sworn and civilian police personnel across Canada, and the largest law enforcement advocacy organization in the country. Through our member associations, the CPA advocates on behalf of front-line police personnel and their families on issues that affect the safety and well-being of our members and the communities they serve.

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