

Chief Tomie Graham's internal email today

Firefighter statement March 21, 2007-03-21

I am writing you to address an issue that appears to have generated a great deal of interest and concern within the department over the last few days.

As you know, I can't discuss the facts of the case but I want to recognize your thoughts and feelings on this matter. I appreciate all your emails and messages of support for our members. I want to echo your concerns. Early judgements could easily prejudice the case but a preliminary examination suggests our officers were doing their jobs in a very difficult situation.

We have a close and positive working relationship with the Vancouver Fire and Rescue Service and them with us. Public safety will always be our number one concern. I would ask everyone to keep this in mind as we examine more closely the circumstances of this event.

I am referring to an incident on Saturday night where a car was driven through a plate glass wall in the 500 block of Robson Street. The Vancouver Fire and Rescue Service were the first to arrive and secured the site with yellow tape. They called police and asked us to come to the scene.

There were many witnesses.

When interviews were attempted with two of the men from the car, three of our officers ended up in a major struggle that took them all to the ground. They called for cover and as you know two of our units rushing to the scene collided injuring four of our members. This second collision happened near a fire station and the responding fire-fighters provided outstanding support and medical attention. I am grateful to them and also grateful that our members were all treated and released without sustaining serious injuries. But it is also distressing to report that as a result of this case we have seven members on leave with work related injuries.

I welcome the upcoming court case and any procedure that the OPCC might recommend. We will participate fully to ensure there is a thorough examination of the evidence. That is where this should be examined, not in the media.

I am taking the extraordinary step of writing to you about this because a video on the internet has made this very public and the two men involved have decided to continue fighting through the media. Most importantly, this event cannot

adversely reflect our relationships with the members of the Vancouver Fire and Rescue Service. The public depends on both our agencies in times of crisis and peril. We both share the same responsibility for maintaining the public safety. It is a trust that we must never violate.