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## Ontario man dies in police shooting after mask dispute in grocery store

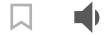
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Police markers near the home of a 73-year-old man who was fatally shot by officers, in the area of Eagle Lake, by the village of Haliburton, Ont., are photographed on July 16, 2020.

TIJANA MARTIN/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

A 73-year-old man was the eighth person to be shot and killed by police in Ontario this year, after a fatal exchange of gunfire outside his rural home in cottage country Wednesday morning.

The man's encounter with police began at a Valu-Mart grocery store in Minden, Ont., a town two and a half hours north of Toronto, after officers received reports of an "altercation" between the man and a store employee, followed by "assaults" by the man on individuals at the store, after he was asked to put on a mask.

Lynda Easton, owner of Easton's Valu-Mart, said Thursday that the man had come into the store, and was offered a mask by an employee. He said he didn't want one, she recalled, and when the employee turned to put the mask away, the man struck him on the back.

"He was not forced to wear a mask, he was asked if he would like one," said Ms. Easton, who added that the man was then escorted out of the store by another employee. "He then got in his car, hit another vehicle and tried to hit some of my staff who were outside, hit the building and left."

When police responded, they spotted the man's vehicle and followed him for a short time, according to the province's Special Investigations Unit, which is called in to probe any case involving police that ends in serious injury, death or allegations of sexual assault. The officers then headed to the address associated with the vehicle's plates, on Indian Point Road in the Eagle Lake area, a half-hour drive from the grocery store.

Outside the home, the SIU said, there was a confrontation between the man and two police officers. At one point, the OPP said in a press release Wednesday, the man fired gunshots, and police requested backup.

Two police officers then fired at the man. He was taken to a hospital where he died around 11:45 a.m.

The SIU said Thursday that a semi-automatic rifle and pistol were found at the scene. The two officers' service weapons were also seized.

Garfield Munshaw, a neighbour, said he heard two "high-powered" gunshots Wednesday morning, and then drove his car to the end of his driveway to see if everything was okay. There, he said, "police were everywhere." He said an officer told him there was an active shooter, and to go back inside his house.

"So I came back up to the house and then we heard multiple shots," he said.

He described his neighbour, whom he believes lived alone, as a recluse.

"He's been here probably 10 years now across the road from me, and I bet he hasn't said six words in 10 years," Mr. Munshaw said. "He was very to himself. He would not mix with people, wouldn't talk to any of our neighbours ... he just was a very reclusive man."

He said there was an incident roughly three or four years ago in which his neighbour had been firing gunshots on his property. He said the police were called and spoke with the neighbour, but he doesn't know what came of it. All he knows is the shooting stopped.

On Thursday afternoon, OPP officers remained outside the entrance to the victim's Indian Point Road property, where a "No Trespassing" sign hung on the driveway gate, surrounded by trees on both sides. A small area of the road was blocked off by orange pylons and police tape, approximately 100 metres down the road from the property entrance.

The SIU said Thursday that investigators were still trying to reach the man's next-of-kin. A postmortem examination is expected to take place Friday.

This is the eighth fatal police shooting in Ontario being investigated by the SIU in 2020, according to its website – the same number of fatal police shootings that occurred in the province in all of last year. There were seven fatal police shootings in Ontario in 2018, and six in 2017.

Three of the 2020 shootings were by Peel Regional Police officers. Two were by Toronto police officers. Two were by OPP officers (one by the Temiskaming detachment and one, this most recent case, by the Bracebridge detachment). One was by Hamilton police.

The SIU is also investigating an additional six cases of “firearm injuries” this year.

The police watchdog announced Thursday that a former Peel Regional Police officer, Valerie Briffa, has been criminally charged in connection with a Mother’s Day shooting of Chantelle Krupka, outside her Mississauga home. Ms. Briffa (who has since resigned from Peel police) is charged with criminal negligence causing bodily harm, assault with a weapon and careless use of a firearm.

*With files from Rick Cash*

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351 King Street East, Suite 1600, Toronto, ON Canada, M5A 0N1

Phillip Crawley, Publisher