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Statement of Chief Constable Jim Chu

Good afternoon

Today has been a long time coming for all of us.

While I know that you have been anticipating the release of this document for years, today my thoughts as always are with the families who lost loved ones to this monster.

I am pleased that we will be able to release this document to the families so they can understand and be aware of every step and misstep the police took in this investigation.

On behalf of all the men and women of the VPD I would say once again how sorry we are that we did not catch this killer more quickly.

We had intended to release this document in September after the provincial cabinet met and discussed it. The premature leak of this document has now made that timing impossible.

After discussion with our police board members and the Province it has been decided in the interest of openness and transparency that we will release the report prior to our September 9th date.

We will be investigating how this leak occurred. The lives of confidential informants and the privacy of many people are threatened because an unredacted version of the report has been obtained. I am asking that anyone else that might have obtained an unredacted version not publish any names.

We are releasing a redacted version of the document today in order to protect the privacy of confidential informants and others.

Please keep in mind that this is strictly a VPD assessment of what happened. We still strongly support an open and full inquiry and we will cooperate fully.

I am pleased to tell you however that much has happened in policing in the Province of BC and at the VPD over the past 11 years to ensure that this will never happen again.

I can say with all certainty this would not happen today.

We have always been proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with the members of the RCMP as we do today and will continue to do in the future. We work on planned investigations - like our recent successes in suppressing gang violence, and emergent investigations, like kidnappings and shootings.

The Province has also delivered many tools such as the PRIME information system which is leading edge and available no where else in the world.

I'm now going to ask Deputy Doug LePard, the author of the report to come forward.
Statement of DCC Doug LePard Concerning the Release of his Missing Women Investigation Review

This Can Never Happen Again

Thank you for coming today.

Before I begin I would like to reemphasize what I said on the day that the Supreme Court of Canada made its final decision about the fate of Robert Pickton.

While slamming the door forever on this vile killer might seem like the end of the road for some, I'm sure that for the families of his victims the nightmare will never end.

Some of the families may feel that they received justice with his convictions and I'm aware that others feel robbed of their day in court. What they all share, however, is a terrible loss and a right to know not just what happened to their loved ones but how he got away with it for so long.

I have said it before and I know I will think about it every day for the rest of my career, as I have every day since I started my review: I wish we could have caught this monster quicker and saved more lives.

If there is one message that I would like to make emphatically clear today it is this.....THIS CAN NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN!

The families and the public have a right to know why police didn't stop him sooner, what went wrong and what we have done since to ensure this type of tragedy will never happen again.

The Vancouver Police Department is very dedicated and committed to answering those questions. For several years, I investigated and assembled the information necessary. I pored over about 20,000 pages of documents, interviewed every key VPD member from clerks to Chief Constables along with examining other documents, literature and media reports. I also had the benefit of interviewing a key RCMP officer, who had been the lead investigator in the Coquitlam RCMP into the Pickton information.

The report I am giving you today contains hundreds of pages of facts, portions of statements, analysis and a chronology that outlines every step and misstep along the way from the time there was a significant increase in women going missing from the Downtown Eastside in 1997, until Pickton was arrested in 2002.

While it includes the involvement of the RCMP during those years, it does not deal with the joint investigation called Project Evenhanded that took over the Pickton investigation after an unrelated search warrant on Pickton's farm led to his arrest and ultimately his convictions.

The Team Commander of Project Evenhanded, Inspector Don Adam, was one of very few people anywhere in Canada who could have led that incredibly complex and large investigation to its successful conclusion. Not only did he have the very onerous responsibility as leader, he

stepped in to the interrogation chair to obtain key admissions from Pickton. That team's work was extraordinary.

Instead, my report focuses primarily on the problems in the VPD Missing Women investigation overall, but also looks at the parallel investigation that was conducted by the Coquitlam RCMP into information the VPD received about Pickton in 1998 and 1999.

I'm not going to sugar coat this; I owe it to the families and the public to be open and forthright. They will likely find the contents of this report to be shocking and sad. But I hope they will find some consolation in the fact that the lessons we have learned leave us much better equipped to safeguard the vulnerable and those who have been marginalized.

I also want to be clear: there was only one villain in this story and that is Robert Pickton. No police officer wanted a killer to escape, so we should not point fingers at individuals. I had the benefit of hindsight and it is much more complicated than individual errors. Instead, we need to focus on the systemic issues that were the primary barriers to success.

This report sheds a harsh cold light into every corner of the process, outlining every failure regardless of where it occurred. I will spare you the details at this time since you can find those facts in the report.

But there are individuals that the public should know about, who worked tirelessly on this investigation. The report recognizes the outstanding efforts of several investigators including Detective Constable Lori Shenher, who pegged Pickton early on and then suffered the heartbreak and frustration of watching the investigation flounder despite her incredible perseverance.

There were others in the VPD, like Sgt. Geramy Field, and Detectives Ron Lepine and Mark Chernoff, who poured their hearts and souls into the investigation, but did not receive the support they needed.

There was also Constable Dave Dickson, the first VPD member to raise the alarm, and Detective-Inspector Kim Rossmo, whose report solidifying the serial killer theory was uncannily accurate. Many of these investigators remain deeply affected by this investigation after all of these years.

And I would be remiss to not recognize the investigative contributions of key Coquitlam RCMP members who also faced strikingly similar problems, but who continued to investigate the file to the best of their ability, doing some extraordinary work.

I have made a number of recommendations in my report to the VPD to improve our systems and protocols. All of those recommendations have long since been implemented.

But I think the bigger lesson learned here is that we need better communication among police, including within the RCMP and its many detachments. We must always be looking for ways to improve policing in BC. It is important that you know that the VPD and RCMP haven't been waiting to make changes; many have already been implemented since 2002.

But there is always more that can be done, and we need to continue to strive for mechanisms that overcome the barriers to effectiveness and accountability that exist in our current structure. We also urge the provincial government to call an Inquiry of some kind, so that an impartial person can examine the facts.

We owe at least that to the public. We also owe it to the dedicated men and women of the VPD and the RCMP who poured their hearts into solving the most horrific case of their careers. But

most of all, we owe it to the families of this monster's victims in the hope that the positive changes that may come out of this inquiry would mean that the deaths of the Missing Women were not in vain.

I expect that you will have many more questions than I will have time to answer today but I will try to take as many as I can. Over the next few days I will try to make myself as available to you as possible and our Public Affairs section will facilitate your requests.