



# Witness at Minty inquest says OPP officer backed away



By [Tracy McLaughlin](#), Special to QMI AGENCY  
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MIDHURST – A door-to-door salesman who watched a police officer shoot and kill a mentally challenged Elmvale man testified that the officer retreated backwards as the man rushed at him with his arm extended while holding a knife, a coroner's inquest heard on Wednesday.

The inquest is exploring the death of 59-year-old Douglas Minty, a developmentally handicapped man who was shot five times after he advanced toward OPP Const. Graham Seguin while holding a small knife in his hand on June 22, 2009.

The incident began when Minty got into a physical altercation with door-to-door water heater salesman David Parker, who came to his mother's Lawson Avenue home, where Minty lived.

The salesman called police after Minty punched him in the face.

On the witness stand, Parker's co-worker, Kumal Arora, who was also selling water heaters in the neighbourhood, said Parker called him on his cellphone.

"You won't believe what just happened," he told him. "Some guy just punched me in the face."

He said he quickly walked to meet Parker near the home and he saw Minty come out of the house and down the driveway toward the police officer.

"At first he came at him (the officer) slowly, but he kept going faster and faster until he was almost jogging," said the witness.

He said Minty was a much larger man than the officer and he walked with an odd, limping gait – "almost as if he were drunk."

But no one suspected that Minty was developmentally challenged.

"The officer retreated backwards as fast as he could toward his cruiser, but Mr. Minty kept coming."

The officer kept yelling "put the weapon down," but Minty kept moving toward him until he was out on the street, advancing toward the officer and his cruiser, he said.

"He was approaching the officer with some sort of intent," said Arora.

When the first shot was fired, Minty continued to advance.

"I was shocked," said Arora. "He didn't go down ... he kept moving toward the officer."

He said more shots were fired and Minty lay dead in the street.

"Mr. Minty's mother came out of the house then," he said. "She was screaming, 'You shot my son ... you killed my son!'"

He said Parker, who watched the scene with him, began to panic. "He was hyperventilating," Arora said.

After an ambulance arrived, the officer came over to comfort Parker.

"He kept repeating, 'It's not your fault, it's not your fault,'" said Arora.

Earlier in the inquest, Minty's mother, Evelyn Minty, testified that the salesman came to her home and told her a pipe was broken in her basement and she needed it repaired.

She said she didn't like the salesman and shoved him from behind to get him out of her house.

But for some reason the salesman returned and Minty punched him.

"Are door-to-door salesmen trained to fix a broken pipe?" asked Julian Roy, the lawyer for the Minty family.

"We are trained to advise the person to get it fixed – or get one of the new pipes we offer and then we would fix it," answered Arora.

"But what if the homeowner gives you the brush-off?" Roy asked.

However, the lawyer acting for Seguin objected to the question and he was not allowed to answer.

Arora said it's not unusual to run into verbal hostility when knocking on doors, but he said he has never run into physical hostility.

"If I had a dollar for every time someone shouted at me, I'd be a very rich man," he said.

The inquest also heard from Ottawa police Staff Sgt. Jamie Dunlop who told the jury about their program of registering people with autism so that police can be more informed. He said the program has been so successful with zero cost and is being extended to include all persons with mental disabilities.

The inquest is held to examine the circumstances surrounding Minty's death and will consider police response to individuals who are developmentally delayed.

The jury may make recommendations aimed at preventing similar deaths.

[barrie.news@sunmedia.ca](mailto:barrie.news@sunmedia.ca)