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Sprague inquest to resume Tuesday

Even before the Coroner's inquest into the police cell death of Orangeville resident Adam Sprague, 25, from an overdose of Oxycodone began last week, two officers of the Orangeville Police Service had been disciplined for their actions prior to the 8:20 a.m. death on Nov. 11, 2010.

Now it will be up to jury at the inquest to make recommendations on how such deaths can be avoided in future, after it has heard all the available evidence. Although historically inquest juries could offer opinions as to the cause of a death and who should be held responsible for it, the cause of Mr. Sprague's death has long been determined by experts, and under the current Coroners Act juries can no longer lay blame on anyone for a death.

The inquest, which began on Wednesday, Oct. 23, is presided over by Dr. Jack Stanborough of the Central West Regional Coroner's office.

It heard evidence for two days from civilian and police witnesses, and then stood down last Friday and is to resume Tuesday.

On Monday, Police Chief Joe Tomei declined to comment as, he said, "it is a very sensitive matter, as it is still going on." He did, however, note that the coroner could call whichever witnesses he chooses.

Coroner Dr. Stanborough could not be reached for comment. His counsel, Hamilton Crown Karen Shea, had left a voice message on her phone indicating she would be absent from her Hamilton office until Friday, Oct. 29. She did not respond to a message.

Wikipedia describes the side effects of Oxycodone thus: "Common side effects include constipation, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, dry mouth, anxiety, itching, and sweating. Less common side effects (experienced by less than 5% of patients) include loss of appetite, nervousness, abdominal pain, diarrhea, urine retention, dyspnea, and hiccups. "In high doses, overdoses, or in patients not tolerant to opiates, oxycodone can cause shallow breathing, bradycardia, cold-clammy skin, apnea, hypotension, miosis, circulatory collapse, respiratory arrest, and death."

Earlier reports in The Citizen stated that Sgt. Chris Dryden, the officer in charge on the fateful night, had pleaded guilty to two counts of disreputable conduct under the Police Services Act "for

not properly questioning the arrest of Mr. Sprague and not properly monitoring Mr. Sprague while he was detained in the station cells.

He was penalized with a demotion for four months. Constable Jon Kennedy was the arresting officer who had taken Mr. Sprague into custody on a charge of being intoxicated in a public place, although Mr. Sprague was admittedly within a private residence at the time.

The arrest was later ruled unlawful. Const. Kennedy received a 24-hour suspension for disreputable conduct in making the arrest.