

The South Bayview Bulldog

Chief Saunders answers feeble on eve of TPS board meeting

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Ordinary citizens trying to understand why the Special Investigations Unit was not called in by police in the Dafonte Miller case will rightly find the responses of Chief Saunders worrying. The TPS Board will hold a closed meeting Thursday to attempt to rationalize the failure of any police initiative to report the beating of Miller by off-duty PC Michael Theriault on a Whitby Street in the middle of the night. The Chief's explanation offered to CP24 during the program The Chief seems incomplete, and without further explanation, rather feeble. There is a recording of a 9-1-1 call made by Miller at some point in his encounter with Theriault in which the off-duty officer says "You're under arrest." This is taken by Miller, his lawyer and apparently by the SIU itself, as evidence that Theriault identified himself and, in doing so, put in place an obligation under the law to report any injury to Miller to the SIU.

CHIEF'S RESPONSE SEEMS FEEBLE

The CP24 account of Saunder's responses is given as follows: "The police chief said that Theriault may have identified himself as an officer in a 9-1-1 call but he (Saunders) said that in order for the SIU to get involved, he (Theriault) would have had to either identify himself as an officer to Miller or use or display equipment that was issued to him as an officer. 'I'm not disputing the phone call but the phone call is not what the investigation is about,' Saunders said." Sadly, in this account, Chief Saunders seems to be grasping at straws to justify the lack of action. The matter also throws the accountability of the Durham Regional Police into question. Why did it not contact the SIU or investigate the assault on Miller for what it certainly appears to be. Of course, there are many questions unanswered, especially about timing. Who knew what when, did nothing and why?