

March 28, 2014

**Re: 'The Case Against Police Funerals', March 21**

Letter to the Editor – Toronto Star

Darryl Davies Criminologist at Carleton University raises a number of objections to police officers conducting “a ceremonial march down the streets of Canadian cities every time an officer is killed”.

There are not only valid reasons but very real societal needs for these meaningful, dignified memorials, when one who has risked his or her life and has paid the ultimate price.

Mostly, funerals are for the living. There are incredibly strong bonds in law enforcement. Funerals for police officers are a powerful expression of the solidarity and sorrow of the community of first-responders. The pageantry and prolific turnout from police services across North America are traditional at police funerals for an incredibly potent reason: fellowship. When officers lose their lives, it has an immense emotional impact on others. It's like losing a member of the family. There is a healing effect when officers see their fallen fellow officer treated with respect.

But these memorials are as much for the public. There's a reason that we see street after street lined with respectful civilian mourners. At times of crisis, the public make symbolic gestures which make them feel like they are at least doing something. This is a caring way for society to let police officers and fellow members of the public know that they care -- not only about the loss of a life cut short, but also for policing as a profession. The death of a police officer in the line of duty underscores every citizen's vulnerability. Lining the streets at memorials of fallen front-line officers shows respect for their role in protecting and safeguarding the lives and property of citizens.

Public memorials are also a bonding moment for the public and law enforcement officers. Too often people only see so many police officers in one place during high-profile, high-security events. But at a police memorial, the support shown for and shared with front-line police officers is amazing and powerful – and sadly, grief does bring communities and individuals closer together. Police officers are always very touched by and grateful for the spontaneous show of sorrow by the public at these memorials.

And finally, it is a fact that these memorial services certainly do have their roots in military memorials. The proud traditions are rich in symbolism, and based on our nation's culture of saying farewell to our most revered heroes. Century-old traditions show our deep gratitude and respect for the honourable contribution individuals made to society.

Sadly, we have not seen the last of memorials for fallen police officers. Fortunately, we will continue carrying them out in ways that honour, respect and bring us all together. To do any less, shows nothing but disrespect and dishonour to us all, as a nation.

Respectfully,

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