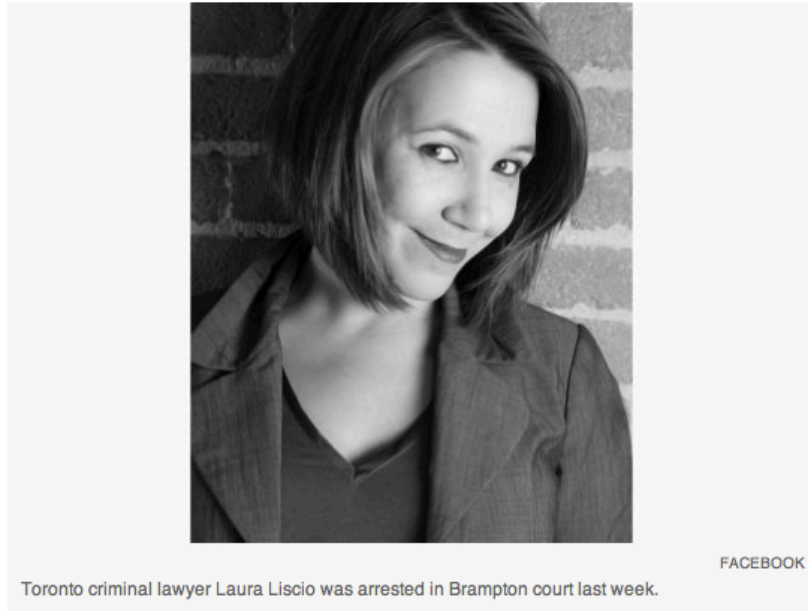
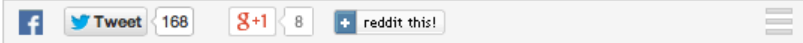


News / GTA

Peel police change their story about arrest of lawyer

After denying Laura Liscio was arrested in court garb, Peel officers now concede it's true.



By: [Katrina Clarke](#) Staff Reporter, Published on Wed Feb 18 2015

Peel police admit they were wrong about the circumstances surrounding the [arrest of Toronto lawyer in Brampton court](#) last week but refuse to reveal details about the false claims.

In a Wednesday press release, Peel Regional Police said it regretted publishing “misinformation” in a news release Friday. The Friday release took aim at reports on the details of a Toronto lawyer’s arrest in a Brampton courthouse, denying that police handcuffed criminal lawyer Laura Liscio in her court attire and saying she was escorted to an unmarked police vehicle by plainclothes officers.

Police now say that information was wrong.

“Upon arrest Ms. Liscio was indeed handcuffed in her court attire and escorted to a discreet location within the Court Bureau,” the Wednesday release read. “Following her arrest, Ms. Liscio was escorted by both uniformed and plainclothes officers to a marked cruiser.”

The admission comes days after Toronto’s legal defence community decried police’s handling of Liscio’s arrest, calling it humiliating and uncalled for.

Liscio, 32, was arrested on charges of drug possession, trafficking, obstructing justice and breach of trust last Thursday after police alleged she “smuggled” drugs into the courthouse. A source familiar with the case said Liscio handed her client’s clothing to a court security officer and marijuana was found in the garments.

“Obviously this is a step in the right direction — righting wrongs that were put before the media and before the world,” said Liscio’s lawyer, Stephen Bernstein, Wednesday evening. “This does not erase the devastation and embarrassment of how she — an officer of the court, an ethical person and above all a human being — was treated.”

Bernstein [spoke out last week following first news release](#), telling the Star his client was indeed handcuffed in her court attire — though police eventually seized her robe — and uniformed officers put Liscio into a marked police cruiser. “As you can see, I was accurate,” he said.

Bernstein confirmed police contacted him Wednesday but he did not want discuss details of their conversation.

He said he looks forward to a proper investigation that will “completely clear her name,” and said he is working to expedite the case.

Peel police Const. Thomas Ruttan said the errors were due to a “miscommunication” revealed through an internal investigation: “We determined throughout the last couple of days that we had information that was not correct.”

Ruttan said he was unaware of anyone being reprimanded as a result of the miscommunication and said he was unable to say whether the error came from investigators or the arresting officers. He said he was unable to say how police realized a mistake was made.

“All I can tell you is that we regret publishing this misinformation and the impact that it has on . . . the members of the media, Ms. Liscio and obviously the members of our own organization,” said Ruttan.

Daniel Brown, a Toronto director for the Criminal Lawyers’ Association, called the error-laden news release “troubling” and said it raises questions about police credibility. “If we can’t trust them to issue an accurate press release, how can we trust them when they come to court and give sworn evidence under oath?” he said.

Brown said he believes police may have retracted the initial claims because Liscio’s lawyers were pursuing video surveillance of the incident.

Bernstein confirmed he has requested the surveillance footage and expects to receive it soon.

Brown said he wants an inquiry into how police handled Liscio’s arrest, including “parading” her through court in her robes. “It’s the Criminal Lawyers’ (Association’s) belief that this was an attempt for the Peel police to embarrass (Liscio) and to demean her profession,” he said. “It was meant to send a message.”

Brown also called on Peel Police Chief Jennifer Evans to comment on the errors.

“Perhaps the chief of police can answer why such an inaccurate press release was issued and on what information was that based on,” he said.

As for whether Evans will comment, Ruttan said, “That would be completely up to her.”

Liscio’s first court appearance is scheduled for March 12.

With files from Wendy Gillis and Betsy Powell