

Blair and SIU: So sorry, no snitching

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Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair's public apology last week, for blaming the victim in a violent clash involving police, was a welcome admission of error. Blair's allegation that Adam Nobody may have been armed and violent during G20 demonstrations last June clearly crossed a line; so did his criticism of the province's Special Investigations Unit (which concluded police probably used excessive force).

Now a new video of Nobody's arrest offers additional evidence that the SIU was right, and serves as proof that Blair must do more than just say he's sorry for some ill-judged words. For the sake of public confidence in the integrity of Toronto's police force, he needs to catch any rogue officer involved in abuses suffered by Nobody.

Allegations go even beyond videos showing a swarm of police officers chasing Nobody and piling on when he's brought to ground. Equally troubling is the subsequent treatment he describes when brought behind a police wagon and repeatedly kicked in the head by an officer enraged that he gave his legal name as "Nobody." Other police allegedly stood by and laughed.

Several officers obviously have useful information on what happened here. The fact that the arresting officer used a false badge number on his report points to serious wrongdoing. Yet silence reigns — akin to the "code of silence" so often criticized by police when investigating gangland crime.

Blair's apology will do nothing to track down those behind Nobody's mistreatment. It isn't enough to say that the force's own Professional Standards Unit is on the case. He should be exhorting his officers to come clean and using the full weight of his office to find those responsible.