

Windsor Police Chief retires amid controversy

Retirement comes amid several high-profile problems facing the Windsor Police

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Windsor Police Chief Gary Smith abruptly retired Thursday afternoon. (CBC News)

Windsor Police Chief Gary Smith abruptly retired Thursday afternoon, leaving under a cloud of controversy over several high-profile problems at the department.

CBC News will have more details Thursday at 6 p.m. on Windsor at Six on channel 9 (cable 10). Tune into CBC Radio One at 97.5 FM on Friday morning when *Early Shift* host will speak with Mayor Eddie Francis.

Deputy police chief Al Frederick was named the acting chief, effectively immediately.

Smith said at a media conference he had been thinking of wrapping up his 37-year career since August. His plan had been was to retire in February 2012 and then take outstanding vacation owed for the remainder of the year.

The process sped up in light of several ongoing troubles within the force, he said.

"It was more appropriate to retire now," Smith said. "If you're thinking about it, you may as well drop the hammer and move on."

Smith told reporters gathered at the hastily announced news conference, that neither the board nor the mayor approached him to retire early. He said it was his choice and that all the media attention and requests have made it difficult to do his job to the best of his ability.

"Things get missed," Smith said.

"He felt it was best for him to retire and step aside," said Mayor Eddie Francis, who also heads the police services board.

Allegations of police brutality

Dr. Tyceer Abouhassan alleges he was beaten by a police officer outside the Jackson Park Medical Centre in April 2010 and that police tried to cover up the incident.

The doctor has launched a \$14-million lawsuit against the police.

'We are never afraid of holding our people accountable.' —*Acting chief Al Frederick*

None of the allegations has been proven in court.

The province's special investigations unit (SIU) confirms that the chief never informed them about the savage beating Abouhassan allegedly suffered, or the injuries he incurred during the arrest.

It had also been reported that Smith refused to respond to four letters sent from the SIU to the chief.

'Retired not resigned'

Francis said he did not want anyone to leave the media conference thinking the SIU report was the reason behind Smith's departure. Francis stressed to reporters Smith had "retired, not resigned." Francis held a report up for all to see and sternly read out loud the number of similar letters sent to other police departments in the province.

The Abouhassan case is not the first allegation of police brutality the Windsor force has faced.

In an unrelated case, Windsor police Const. Brad Snyder pleaded guilty to assaulting Rod Wuschenny on Sept. 26, 2009.

Wuschenny recently launched his own \$1.25-million lawsuit against the police.

Francis said there will be a organizational review of the Windsor Police Service. He said the review will look "deep into the organization."

"It will be from the top down and bottom up," Frederick said.

"There's going to be significant change we're looking for. It's not going to be easy," Francis said. "Everybody out there is talking about the Windsor Police Service."

"We are absolutely not in a crisis," Frederick said.

Frederick said headlines about allegations of police assaults erode public trust in the Windsor police force.

Francis admitted Thursday the city is now receiving three public complaints about the police service each day. Most have been in regard to the Abouhassan case.

"The actions of a few should not be a reflection of the majority of men and women who report to work every day," Francis said.

"We are never afraid of holding our people accountable," Frederick said.

Smith was sworn in as chief on March 3, 2008.