

# EDMONTON JOURNAL

## Windsor police face \$72 million in lawsuits

By Sarah Sacheli, Windsor Star; Postmedia News December 24, 2011

Police in this southwestern Ontario city are being sued for a total of \$72 million by people who claim officers beat them up or levied bogus charges to hide police misconduct.

There are currently 30 outstanding lawsuits against Windsor police officers in cases of alleged police brutality and malicious prosecution. Under the city's insurance policy, the deductible on any single claim is \$250,000, meaning any settlement or judgment for sums below that comes directly from taxpayers.

"Their behaviour costs us a lot of money," Mayor Eddie Francis said Friday. Since 2006, such lawsuits have cost city taxpayers \$820,000, mostly in settlements reached out of court, said Dana Paladino, the city's supervisor of risk management. The city's insurer - a co-operative of member municipalities - has paid out an additional \$717,000.

The largest lawsuit currently facing police is the \$14.2-million claim filed by Dr. Tyceer Abouhassan. Abouhassan claims he was beat up by Windsor police Det. David Van Buskirk in an apparent case of mistaken identity, then wrongfully charged with assault in an alleged attempt by police to protect one of their own. His suit names eight police officers, including former chief Gary Smith, who stepped down this week amid public controversy stirred by the case. Abouhassan's claim has not been tested in court.

The oldest lawsuit still outstanding was filed in 2005 by the family of a developmentally challenged man who claim he was repeatedly harassed by Windsor police officers and was once assaulted by them.

The latest claim served on the city was by a man beaten by police Const. Brad Snyder in 2009. Snyder, a former Olympic shotputter, has already been convicted in the criminal courts of assaulting Rod Wuschenny in an incident captured by security cameras. Snyder was also convicted under the Police Services Act in proceedings that ended with him being fined, but allowed to keep his badge.

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