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Windsor police officers face police act charges in connection with Van Buskirk case

Veteran cops face discreditable conduct charges

By Trevor Wilhelm, The Windsor Star October 25, 2011



Police cruisers are seen outside the downtown police station in this file photo. Photograph by: Scott Webster, The Windsor Star

WINDSOR, Ont. -- Two veteran Windsor cops are charged with discreditable conduct for allegedly trying to strike a deal to make complaints against one of their own - charged in the beating of a doctor - disappear.

The Police Act hearing against Staff Sgt. Paul Bridgeman and Staff Sgt. Pat Keane began Monday with a marathon session that lasted 11 hours. They are accused of offering to withdraw an assault police charge against Dr. Tyceer Abouhassan in exchange for him withdrawing complaints against Det. David Van Buskirk.

During an often tense exchange, defence lawyers attacked the suggested impartiality of investigators who pursued charges against the officers.

Lawyer Glen Donald accused one investigator of stressing to the doctor how "serious" it would be for police to offer such a "quid pro quo" deal.

Bernie Mueller, with the Office of the Independent Police Review Director, bristled at the suggestion.

"It was important for the doctor to understand the gravity of it," said Mueller, the only witness to take the stand Monday.

"I was simply saying what it could be. Not what it was."

The saga began in April 2010 with a run-in between Van Buskirk and Abouhassan. The Windsor-born endocrinologist was jogging from the train station to his family's home in South Windsor when Van Buskirk arrested him outside the Jackson Park Health Centre about 5 p.m.

Abouhassan, who is visually impaired, suffered head injuries, a broken nose, detached retina and required emergency surgery after the confrontation.

Police have since remained tight lipped about why Van Buskirk confronted the doctor.

The province's Special Investigations Unit, an independent police watchdog, later charged Van Buskirk with assault causing bodily harm and public mischief.

That case is still before the criminal courts.

Windsor police charged Abouhassan with assaulting Van Buskirk following the incident, but that charge has been stayed.

In May 2010, Abouhassan and his lawyer Anthony Barile filed complaints with the SIU and the Windsor police professional standards branch. There were three specific complaints. The first was in regard to the large number of officers who showed up at the hospital on the day he was injured. The second complaint was for Windsor police not calling in the SIU after he was injured.

The third complaint was for the alleged conversations Bridgeman and Keane had with Barile. Mueller said Monday that the officers had nothing to do with circumstances of the first two complaints.

But Bridgeman and Keane are accused of suggesting during a conversation with Barile that they would withdraw the assault police charge against Abouhassan if he gave up his complaints against Van Buskirk.

Mueller said he questioned Bridgeman about whether he did such a thing and the answer was "absolutely not." Mueller said he accepted Barile's side of the story because of the "direct, forthright and competent nature" that the lawyer gave evidence. Barile was "adamant" the conversation took place, he said.

The hearing resumes today with testimony from Barile and Abouhassan.

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