

Chief 'totally rejects' hint of police impropriety

Halton Regional Police Chief James Harding has rejected outright the allegations of police impropriety contained in an anonymous letter circulated to regional councillors last week.

The document is "slandrous and scandalous. I totally reject its contents," Chief Harding said in an interview Tuesday.

Chief Harding said he will be "calling for an investigation" into the matter and consulting with lawyers regarding the text.

Anonymous letters are "usually put in the garbage can where they belong" but "we've got to respond to this," Chief Harding said.

The letter, signed "a caring and loyal cop", was distributed to Halton regional councillors last Wednesday (June 3) by Halton Hills councillor Pam Johnston. Copies turned up at police headquarters and in the media the next day, although Ms Johnston said she never intended for the information to be made public.

The letter alleges that senior Halton Regional Police officers covered up an alleged wife-beating incident involving a Halton officer in the early 1980s, and that records relating to the preliminary investigation disappeared.

Chief Harding and Ms Johnston have been at odds publicly twice prior to the letter incident in the recent past.

In late April she accused him of being pushy in his dealings with politicians and in May she escalated her war of words by suggesting he should resign because he wasn't handling some matters, such as wife assault, well. The police department angrily rebutted those charges at the time.

Tuesday chief Harding said he has no personal animosity toward Ms Johnston, but believes she may be responsible for in essence distributing libelous material.

"She circulated the letter" to councillors, he noted.

Police cover-up alleged

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However, it would appear many more copies were circulating. "I don't think the letter is really a secret," a police source, requesting anonymity, said. On the force, it seems "every Tom, Dick and Harry has one."

"It's unfortunate such a matter was made public," Mr. Oliver said. The letter is "unsigned, there is nothing to back it up."

Ms Johnston has been highly critical of Halton Regional Police Chief James Harding since late April. She accused him of bullying tactics in his negotiations over police funding with area politicians, and later said he should resign.

Ms Johnston was particularly displeased with the chief over what she saw as his inability to deal with violence against women. Police media relations officer Carey Smith issued an angry rebuttal at the time, denying that was the case and citing numerous force initiatives to curb the crime.

Ms Johnston has confirmed that she passed out copies of the letter to regional councillors but said she never intended for them to become public.

The letter apparently was in the hands of various police officers by Thursday, according to a police

source, and chief Harding decided to phone Waterloo regional police chief Harold Basse to set up an independent inquiry into the allegations. But the police-services board later countermanded that, the source said, to avoid any possible appearance that chief Harding was orchestrating the investigation.

Ms Thompson confirmed that "initially there was consideration" of asking Waterloo to deal with the matter, but the idea is on hold.

John Van der Lelie, chief Harding's staff officer, said there was an "incident" in the early 1980s involving a force member. "It was resolved."

Although chief Basse and chief Harding are acquainted, it would be "ludicrous" to suggest Waterloo force members would conduct anything but an impartial investigation, inspector Van der Lelie said.

Inspector Van der Lelie called the allegations "an irresponsible piece of writing." He said there are numerous channels to air such complaints, and "all this frustration that apparently appears in this letter."

While it is a violation of police rules for officers to make such public statements, "that's not nearly as important as having these allegations investigated," inspector Van der Lelie said.



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Looking into the past

Mike Ellis the owner of this historical home on Martin Street shows visitors to the home, Myrna Leaman (centre) and Cathy Morin (left) a copy of a 1942 Toronto Star. The ladies were on a Historical Society house tour Saturday.

Tele-towel phone blitz is back

The blitz is back tonight and Milton residents can expect a telephone call from volunteers attempting to raise money for the new leisure centre.

The success of a one-night phone blitz last month has prompted a second night on the phone lines for volunteers. Callers will be asking residents to purchase a towel package which includes a plush purple towel and \$60 worth of swim vouchers that are good any time for any age. The cost of the package is \$100 and buyers receive an \$80 tax receipt.

Volunteers will even deliver the towels and vouchers to those who buy during the blitz. The last blitz effort sold 275 of the towel packages.

Hadfield selected

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every two years for a six-month period. Canada has also been invited to send two astronauts to mission specialist training sessions at NASA's Johnson Space Centre in Houston, Texas.

It is predicted that the two Canadian mission specialists will make their first space shuttle flight five years from now, in 1997.

In January, the CSA launched a Canada-wide recruitment campaign and received 5,330 applications. Various screening processes reduced the number to 113, then to 50, and then 20.

The 20 finalists announced two weeks ago underwent further interviews and intensive psychological and medical testing at the National Defence Medical Centre in Ottawa before the final four were selected.

Currently stationed in Maryland with the U.S. Naval Air Test Center, the husband, and father of three children earned his Masters of Aviation Systems from the University of Tennessee in May this year.

A graduate of the United States Air Force Pilot School, he also holds a bachelor of mechanical engineering from the Royal Military College. Captain Hadfield is the author of numerous publications and the recipient of various aviation awards.

Most recently, he was honoured as the U.S. Navy Test Pilot of the Year. His interests include volleyball, racquetball, water skiing, and scuba diving.

Captain Hadfield grew up in Milton and was a student of Percy W. Merry School. He attended high school in Oakville, but transferred to Milton District High School for Grade 13.

His parents, Eleanor and Roger Hadfield are still residents of Milton. At press time, the couple was out of town and could not be reached for comment.

Between 1988-2000, the Canadian government is committed to investing \$1.2 billion in the Space Station Freedom. The country will supply the robotic system used for assembly, operating and maintaining the space station.

The involvement permits Canada to obtain a three-per cent share in station equipment for conducting scientific experiments and research.

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