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Top cop refuses to discuss allegations involving West Van child-porn probe

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The West Vancouver Police Department has released an e-mail that appears to support a complaint lodged earlier this year against then-police chief Kash Heed, now the solicitor general of British Columbia.

Photograph by: Ward Perrin, Vancouver Sun

VANCOUVER — B.C.'s top cop, Kash Heed, refused to answer questions Wednesday about a newly released e-mail that suggests he discussed a child-porn investigation with a police board member who worked at the same company as the suspect.

The West Vancouver Police Department released the e-mail to the North Shore News. It reveals that when Heed was West Vancouver's police chief, he discussed the investigation with Nancy Farran.

Farran, a police board member, worked at RBC Dominion Securities, where the alleged child pornographer worked.

The Feb. 11 e-mail reveals that Farran and Heed met for coffee while the investigation was active. In fact, they met the same morning as a police raid on the home of Jack Crone, who was later charged with possession and distribution of child pornography.

The e-mail was sent from Farran to West Vancouver police spokesman Jeff Palm. In it, Farran said she had met with the police chief for coffee and discovered a colleague was "in a bit of trouble."

The e-mail makes it appear that Farran, armed with knowledge of the Crone case, attempted to influence the way it would be portrayed to the public. The body of the e-mail follows:

"I also understand from the Chief (we had a quick coffee this morning) that a fellow who works downtown with my company (RBC Dominion Securities) but lives in West Van is in a bit of trouble. I am hoping you can play up the fact that he does NOT work in West Van! We stockbrokers are having a tough enough time with our reputations these days!

“Seriously, I don’t want to interfere. . . . You are doing a great job. Many thanks for everything.”

Heed later faced a complaint to the provincial Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner that he had improperly disclosed information about an active police investigation to a police board member. The complaint was filed by an unidentified police officer.

In a telephone interview with The Sun Wednesday, Heed said: “I’ve been very clear that this complaint is completely without substance. Over my 30 years I’ve conducted myself with the utmost integrity, and I think my record speaks for itself.”

Shortly before terminating questions by abruptly ending the interview, he said: “You might as well print this answer for all of them. This complaint has no substance whatsoever.”

Asked if Premier Gordon Campbell was aware of the complaint before selecting him as solicitor-general, Heed said the case had been reported, and repeated that it has no merit.

He gave a similar response when asked what exactly he discussed with Farran regarding the Crone investigation. But he reiterated he did not interfere in the investigation.

Asked whether disclosing the information interfered with the Crone investigation, he responded, “No. It’s not unusual for police chiefs to have conversations with board members and that is why board members have to take an oath of confidentiality.”

Heed said he didn’t know Crone’s name at the time.

He refused to say whether he knew that Crone worked at RBC Dominion, a key question because of Farran’s employment there.

Heed said he met with Farran about matters unrelated to the Crone case, but refused to say how the case arose in their discussion.

It was unclear whether their meeting occurred before or after the raid, but the Crone case hadn’t yet been made public.

According to court documents, the warrant authorizing the raid was executed at 7:45 a.m. that day. It lasted several hours, according to the RCMP’s Integrated Child Exploitation team, which headed the investigation.

The Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner let the complaint drop after Heed tendered his resignation from the police force. He then ran for office, winning a seat in the May provincial election, and was subsequently named solicitor-general.

Legislation had been proposed, but was never passed, to amend the Police Act to allow investigations against officers to continue after they retire. Heed said he supports a revised Police Act.

“Our government is committed to reintroducing the Police Act and it will be up to the complaints commissioner to decide what he investigates,” he said.

Asked for comment, Farran said the context of the message would help add some clarity, but referred further questions to police board chairwoman and West Vancouver Mayor Pam Goldsmith-Jones, in accordance with board policy.

In a phone interview with the North Shore News, Goldsmith-Jones described the e-mail as “a mistake.”

“It’s inappropriate,” she said. “We do have a board code of conduct that governs that kind of thing, so it’s very, very unfortunate.”

As a result, Farran will not be returning to the board when her term expires at the end of July, Goldsmith-Jones said.

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With files from James Weldon, North Shore News

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