

Chatham-Kent Police Services Board

Headquarters - Chatham

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Chief of Police Gary Conn announces his retirement; Deputy Chief Kirk Earley to assume command.

The Chatham-Kent Police Services Board (CKPSB) has received and accepted Chief Gary Conn's intentions to retire on June 14, 2024.

Gary Conn was appointed as Chief Designate of Police in April 2015 and officially took over as Chief of Police for Chatham-Kent in May 2015.

"It has been both an honour and a privilege to serve the residents of Chatham-Kent as a police officer and your Chief of Police. I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the municipality, community, the police services board of Chatham-Kent, our senior officers, entire membership, and Associations. Your trust, support, and collaboration have been the bedrock of our success. It is the strength of our community that has enabled us to create a safer and more inclusive environment for all.

Together, we have navigated through complex challenges, implemented innovative solutions, and fostered an organizational culture of excellence. Our collective efforts to foster trust and mutual respect have been truly inspiring and I am deeply thankful for each and all of you. The members of the Chatham-Kent Police Service and our community will always have a special place in my heart."

Chief Gary Conn was born and raised in London, Ontario where he graduated from the University of Western Ontario with an Honours Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology. He subsequently enrolled in the Canadian Armed Forces and was a Commissioned Officer. In 1995, the London Police Service hired Gary and in 1998; he joined the newly amalgamated Chatham-Kent Police Service (CKPS).

Over the course of his nearly 30-year career Gary has had the privilege to work in many areas of policing either in a direct or supervisory role. In 2002, he was seconded to the Ontario Police College for two years where he facilitated in the Basic Constable Training (BCT) program. He facilitated several of the practical courses, including Firearms, Defensive Tactics, Police Vehicle Operations and Physical Training.

During his 9 years plus tenure as Chief of Police, he was known as a progressive and people focused leader who was instrumental as a champion of change for many initiatives. He facilitated the creation of a state-of-the-art training facility and firearms range, while bringing CCTVs to the core downtown areas

of Chatham-Kent. Over the years he has worked in collaboration with the Board and Associations to increase and enhance wrap around supports and services for police personnel dealing with work related operational stress injuries. Finally, he championed the Deloitte Staffing and Operations Resource Analysis which increased the authorized strength of the CKPS by an additional 43 full time members.

An advocate for life-long learning, Gary continued his education at Western University, where he completed his Master's degree in Public Administration and his Doctor of Education. His Doctoral thesis examined the increasing and supporting of gender and BIPOC equity, diversity, and inclusion within the CKPS through, leadership, recruitment, and culture. Interventions to increase the cultural competence of CKPS were many including the creation of an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Coordinator. Gary is a graduate of the Rotman School of Business – University of Toronto where he completed the Police Leadership Program. He is also a distinguished graduate from the FBI National Academy, Session 258 where he further obtained a Graduate Diploma from the University of Virginia in Criminal Justice Education. He has completed numerous courses in police operations, management, and leadership through the Ontario Police College.

Gary is a Board Director for the Chatham-Kent Women's Centre. He sits on the CACP (Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police) Use of Force Advisory Committee, is a Co-Chair for the Chatham-Kent Community Safety and Well-Being Steering Committee, is a Co-Chair for the Ontario Police Health and Safety Committee, is a past President of the OACP (Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police) and is currently on the Board of Directors (representing Ontario) of the CACP. He is a Knight of the Hospitaller Order of St. John, Company Sergeant Major for Delta Company of the Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment and is an Officer of the Order of Merit of Police Forces.

Board Chair Patrick Weaver states, "Chief Conn has been an integral part of the organization and has demonstrated exceptional leadership internally and externally. Chief Conn has always focused on community safety and his contributions at all levels of government has and will continue to positively impact Chatham-Kent for the foreseeable future."

The Chatham-Kent Police Services Board immediately initiated a replacement process and is proud to announce that Deputy Chief Kirk Earley will assume command as the Chief Designate effective June 15, 2024, until his official swearing in on June 19, 2024, as the next Chief of the Chatham-Kent Police Service. The CKPSB understands the importance of their responsibility in having a successful succession plan in place. As such, and with a strong history and commitment to succession planning, the ability to maintain a qualified candidate and promote from within was a key factor in the board's decision.

Weaver states, "Deputy Chief Earley has displayed a strong commitment to the service and community for over 27 years. Deputy Chief Earley is deeply rooted in the Chatham-Kent Community, being born, and raised here. He understands the organization, the people, and the needs of the community. The Board has full confidence in Kirk's ability, with an extensive career in all aspects of the organization, this will serve him well as he leads the service into the future. The Board is excited to work with the new Chief as he assumes his new role."

Chief Designate Earley is a 27yr veteran and began his career with the Chatham Police Service as a special constable in 1997. In 1998 Kirk was sworn in as a constable with the newly formed Chatham-Kent Police Service. Kirk has spent time over his career, in Community Patrol, Training, Community Priority Action Team, Major Crime, and the Intelligence Section. Kirk has also held various supervisory roles in each Branch of the Services, gaining extensive experience in a multitude of levels.

“It’s an honour and a privilege to be given this opportunity and I thank the Board for their support. There are so many amazing individuals I have had the pleasure of working with over the years, and each relationship developed has had an impact on this achievement. A key priority for our success will be ensuring the health and well-being of our members. Member Wellness is not just a buzz word, it is a fundamental principle that underpins our ability to perform at our best. When we take care of our members, we are far better equipped to care for and serve those around us.

With the significant shift in crime complexity, we must work diligently to ensure our goals and objectives are in-line with the needs of our community, through meaningful dialogue. We will continue to take a collaborative approach, to ensure the appropriate resources are in place for our members and for the community, with the common goal to enhance the health and well-being of our community. We will engage the community to understand the unique challenges we face, while building positive relationships built on mutual respect and trust. With the goal to become a healthier Society and a healthier Organization.”

In addition to professional development, Earley has an Honours Degree in Criminology from Athabasca University, a Master of Arts Degree in Leadership from the University of Guelph. Further, he is a graduate of the Police Leadership Program from the University of Toronto’s Rotman School of Management, and he is also a certified Municipal Manager Level III. Kirk is a member of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and is actively involved in various committees through the OACP. Kirk is an active member of the community as a volunteer with a variety of organizations, boards, and sports teams.

Change of Command Ceremony

The Change of Command and Swearing in Ceremony will occur on June 19, 2024, at 11am at the Municipality of Chatham-Kent Civic Centre in Council Chambers. Reception to follow.

All current and past members of the Chatham-Kent Police Service are invited to attend. Members from policing services are also invited to attend, in order to have an estimate on the number of attendees, we ask that you please rsvp-Larissa Jackson at larissaj@chatham-kent.ca



Mr. Patrick Weaver
Chair, Chatham-Kent Police Services Board