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Turnover trains eye on transit

Head officer packs in job

By [SHAWN LOGAN](#), SUN MEDIA

In the midst of a major safety blitz, Calgary's Transit's top cop has resigned, prompting a city alderman to raise questions about the work environment for understaffed protective service officers.

Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart said with the resignation yesterday of Joel Porter, Calgary Transit's co-ordinator of protective services, serious questions need to be asked about the work environment faced by transit cops and how it's affecting LRT safety.

"I've spoken to employees past and present and they're treated terribly and they can't stand working in that environment," she said. "In order for Calgary Transit to move forward we need new blood and a new way of thinking."

Colley-Urquhart said she's heard too many stories of staff turnover in the thin ranks of transit cops and a "poisoned" work environment that's making patrolling the rails an afterthought.

She said she plans to meet Monday with city manager Owen Tobert to discuss her concerns and may call for an external consultant to interview past and present officers to get to the bottom of the problem.

Calgary Transit spokesman Ron Collins wouldn't comment on Porter's resignation, noting it was a personnel matter, but said there are more officers on the way to bolster the ranks and the system is safe.

He said there are currently 40 uniformed transit cops patrolling C-Train cars and stations with six more in training and another class in the process of being interviewed.

Council has called for 69 officers to be walking the beat by the end of the year, Collins added.

But one former officer, who asked for anonymity because he still works for the city and fears repercussions, said morale amongst current transit cops is low and unlikely to improve under the current regime.

"Really poor management and bad business decisions have cost the department," he said.

The former uniformed officer said at night there are seldom more than four officers patrolling the entire C-Train system, making it an unsafe environment.

