

# 'We have a huge problem,' councillor says after 3rd transportation engineer quits

## Stephen Chapman latest city official to quit public works department

By Bartley Kives, [CBC News](#) Posted: Nov 22, 2017 9:05 PM CT Last Updated: Nov 22, 2017 9:05 PM CT

Another transportation engineer has quit Winnipeg's public works department, further adding to the brain drain at the upper echelons of the city's public service.

Transportation management engineer Stephen Chapman told the city he intends to resign at the end of the year, Winnipeg communications director Felicia Wiltshire confirmed Wednesday.

"We have recently been made aware of Mr. Chapman's intention to step away from his current position with public works at the end of the year," Wiltshire said in a statement. "We were definitely disappointed to learn of his departure as he is a valued city employee, and we wish him all the best in the next phase of his career."

## Second resignation this month

Chapman's departure was confirmed three weeks after another transportation engineer, Scott Suderman, informed the city he intends to resign at the end of November.

Suderman, who was working on plans to extend the William Clement Parkway to the south and extend Sterling Lyon Parkway to the west, quit days after public works chair Marty Morantz (Charleswood-Tuxedo-Whyte Ridge) criticized his performance on the file.

At a public works committee meeting on Halloween, Morantz told Winnipeg chief administrative officer Doug McNeil he expected Suderman to be stripped of his responsibilities.

"I know you and I have had discussions where you said you were planning to take the engineer in the city on this project off. I was hoping you would be willing to say that today," Morantz told McNeil. "But I'm just telling you so everyone can hear that you have said that to me and I expect that to happen."

The Winnipeg Association of Public Service Officers, the union representing the city's skilled professionals, filed a respectful workplace complaint against Morantz and McNeil and demanded an apology.

The resignations of Suderman and Chapman in November followed the September resignation of transportation engineer Luis Escobar.

All of this came after the dismissal of public works director Lester Deane in April. McNeil suggested Deane, who contradicted Mayor Brian Bowman on the Portage and Main reopening file, lacked the political acumen necessary for his job.

The loss of Winnipeg's public works director and three transportation engineers has led former council public works chair Janice Lukes to question why so many officials are leaving the same department.

"We have a huge problem. These are people with great integrity. Something is going on there," Lukes said Wednesday. "Why would they all step away? We've gutted our transportation. Where's the CAO in all this?"

McNeil declined to comment on Wednesday.

On the CAO's behalf, communications director Wiltshire issued the same statement she issued earlier this month, when Suderman resigned.

"There are no concerns regarding the present leadership of the public works department," she said in the statement. "There is no question that working in a senior role within the public service is challenging and takes a unique skill set as the roles are demanding and are under constant public scrutiny."

## **'Doesn't anyone see this as a problem?'**

Asked by CBC News in early November whether he believes the CAO is doing a sufficient job protecting the integrity of the public service from the whims of elected officials, Mayor Bowman said there's more work for McNeil to do.

"He's got a tough job. There's no secret that things were pretty messed up when we arrived on the scene," said Bowman, who's now spent more than three years in office.

On Wednesday, CBC News asked the mayor to comment on the departure of three transportation engineers.

"We're doing our best in terms of providing a framework for our CAO and our senior administration to manage their workforce," the mayor said.

Lukes suggested the situation will become dire next year, given Winnipeg's intention to ramp up spending on road renewals to \$116 million.

"We have more road construction going ahead than we've ever had before and our public works department is imploding," she said. "Doesn't anyone see this is a problem?"