

Edmonton MP charged for refusing breathalyzer test

Peter Goldring withdraws from Tory caucus

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Three blocks from his own fundraising event and hours after publicly speaking against tougher drunk driving laws, Edmonton East MP Peter Goldring was charged for refusing to take a breathalyzer test when a police officer pulled him over.

Goldring, who didn't appear Monday in the House of Commons, voluntarily withdrew from the federal Conservative caucus.

"Our government takes drinking and driving very seriously," said Sara MacIntyre, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's press secretary. She wouldn't comment further while the case is before court, except to say Goldring, 66, has

withdrawn from caucus until the charge is resolved.

Goldring did not return calls to The Journal to explain what happened early Sunday following a fundraiser at the Ukrainian Youth Unity Complex near 97th Street and 153rd Avenue.

Edmonton police spokesman Chad Orydzuk said Goldring was charged with refusing to provide a breath sample using the roadside screening test. Police pulled over the car near 95th Street and 153rd Avenue about 12:30 a.m. Sunday, three blocks from his annual constituency fundraising dinner.

More than 100 people attended the Saturday night event, which featured a roast beef and perogy dinner along with a silent auction and a cash bar.

Edmonton-Castle Downs MLA Thomas Lukaszuk sat at the same table as Goldring and said the two had a public disagreement at the podium after Lukaszuk offered the keynote speech at the event and addressed tougher drinking

and driving laws in Alberta.

"Mr. Goldring felt that the legislation is intrusive and will some day be challenged by someone in a court of law," Lukaszuk said, "to which I responded, as I would to anyone, that it ensures impaired drivers will be taken from Alberta streets. This is a matter of much higher importance than some potential hypothetical challenge."

The new legislation, proposed under Premier Alison Redford, will suspend the licences of motorists charged with having more than .08 blood-alcohol content. Drivers who blow between .05 to .08 blood-alcohol content will also face tougher sanctions.

Someone drove Goldring home, Orydzuk said, since the charge brings an immediate 24-hour licence suspension, followed by a 21-day grace period and then a three-month licence suspension.

If convicted, Goldring faces a minimum \$1,000 fine, up to five years in prison and potential restrictions on driving.