



Documents shed light on charges facing Thunder Bay police chief

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The Globe and Mail

Published Wednesday, May 24, 2017 9:11PM EDT

Last updated Thursday, May 25, 2017 7:11AM EDT

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Documents filed in a Thunder Bay court offer a glimpse into why Ontario Provincial Police took the rare step of laying criminal charges against a sitting police chief this week and barring him from any contact with his employer.

On Tuesday, the provincial police agency announced charges of breach of trust and obstructing justice against J.P. Levesque, chief of the beleaguered Thunder Bay Police Service – the latest blow against a department facing allegations of systemic racism and investigative negligence in its handling of cases involving Indigenous victims.

A police charge sheet filed by the OPP on Tuesday states that between Dec. 14 and 22 of last year, Chief Levesque disclosed “confidential information” regarding Thunder Bay Mayor Keith Hobbs. The document gives no further detail about the nature of the confidential disclosure.

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As a condition of his release, Mr. Levesque agreed to avoid contact with Mr. Hobbs and his wife, Marisa, as well as city manager Norm Gale, deputy chief Sylvie Hauth and members of the Thunder Bay Police Services Board, the chief’s employer.

The chief also swore to stay away from the mayor's home.

A statement from Mr. Levesque's lawyer, Brian Gover, says the chief "looks forward to fully responding to the allegations against him, and to his ultimate vindication."

In a news release, the OPP said it launched the investigation five months ago at the request of the RCMP's Ontario division. All further details are being withheld by the provincial force to protect the continuing investigation and court process.

The mayor's office referred an interview request to Councillor Brian McKinnon, who sits on the police board. He did not respond to calls from The Globe and Mail.

The court documents also hint at the gravity of the investigation. One of the listed investigators on the case is Detective Inspector Martin Graham, a renowned interview expert with the OPP's Criminal Investigations Branch. Also named is Detective Superintendent Dave Truax, director of Criminal Investigation, who has overseen high-profile investigations into Ontario Liberal operatives accused of bribery and Elizabeth Wettlaufer, the nurse accused of murdering eight nursing-home residents.

Mr. Levesque has already quit one post related to his position. Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police spokesman Joe Couto told The Globe that Mr. Levesque spoke with the group's chair, Ottawa Police Chief Charles Bordeleau, on Wednesday to say he was "stepping aside" from his role on the board of directors.

Thunder Bay police have been under investigation for months by the Office of the Independent Police Review Director, which is looking at how the force investigates the deaths and disappearances of Indigenous people in the city.

The OIPRD began on the heels of a bruising coroner's inquest into the deaths of seven youths in Thunder Bay. Accusations of systemic racism ran throughout the months-long inquest, which exposed flaws in the way police investigate missing-persons cases.

Those concerns resurfaced last week, when the body of 14-year-old Josiah Begg was pulled from the McIntyre River after going missing 12 days earlier.

A week prior, Tammy Keeash, 17, was discovered dead in the city's waters.

They mark the sixth and seventh Indigenous teens to have drowned in the city since 2000, renewing complaints that the municipal police force doesn't take reports of missing Indigenous people seriously.

The force issued a lengthy news release last Thursday to defend the Begg and Keeash investigations.

"These investigations have been extensive," it reads. "The members of our service are emotionally and

professionally invested in finding answers for the families. ... This is not the time for pointing fingers. It is the time to join hands and work toward our common goals of finding answers. Together, we can make that happen.”

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