

Security, surveillance discussed at Thunder Bay city hall

Council receives update on Eye on the Street program

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Anna Betty Achneepineskum, Deputy Grand Chief of Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and Randall Crowe, a NAN youth council member address Thunder Bay city council. (Jeff Walters/CBC)

Security and surveillance concerns became the focus at Thunder Bay city council on Monday night, as council heard from Nishawbe Aski Nation, as well as administration on the Eye on the Street program.

NAN made a presentation to council early on in the evening, asking for the city to increase its surveillance of waterways, including the McIntyre River.

That waterway is where the bodies of both Josiah Begg and Tammy Keeash were found in May.

Mayor Keith Hobbs told NAN representatives the city will commit to keeping youth safe in the city.

"I don't think there's a councillor here that doesn't stay awake at nights thinking about this issue," he said.

The city expects to have a report on recommendations from an inquest looking into the deaths of First Nations students in Thunder Bay ready by next week.

That report may shed some light on how to ensure students in Thunder Bay from remote communities are kept safe.

Coun. Joe Virdiramo said the city has also undertaken an audit of its waterways. That report is expected to have some information as well on safety and security around rivers.

"We are still waiting for the water safety audit report, the river audit report, that will provide council information on how to proceed," he said.

Eye on the Street

In a separate report also presented to council on Monday, council heard how more safety and security incidents were reported in 2016 with the Eye on the Street program.

399 incidents were reported last year, up from 326 in 2015, and 267 in 2014. The top location for 'suspicious activity' as defined by the program was at the corner of Victoria Avenue and Brodie Street, as well as at the Water Street bus terminal.

Some councillors wanted to know if the activity in the south core was taking place in front of a specific establishment, or on a particular block.

"Details in terms of which specific corner an activity happened on would not be something that we would be capturing in the statistics at our level," said Charles Campbell, the Manager of the Central Support Division.

"It would be something perhaps we would discuss with the police and follow up on."

The cameras were used for video evidence 54 times last year by city police, with 46 incidents receiving a response from EMS and/or Thunder Bay Fire Rescue.