

Thunder Bay Police and Police Board remain under scrutiny

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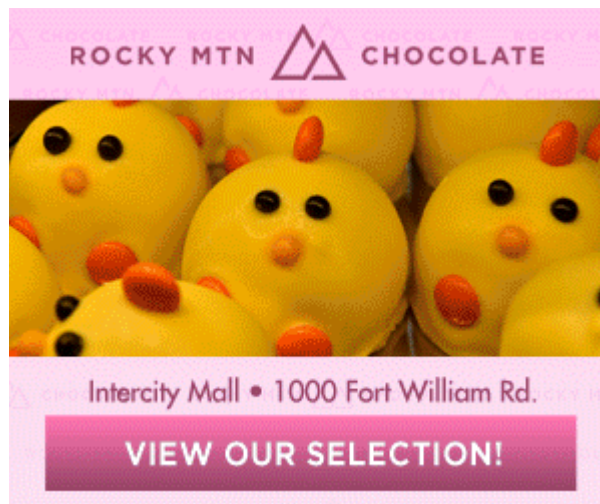


Thunder Bay Police headquarter on Balmoral St.

THUNDER BAY -- As the community awaits the fallout from a scathing report on the Thunder Bay Police investigation into the death of Stacy DeBungee, the police service and the board that oversees it are bracing for two more critical analyses of their work set for release in the coming months.

The Office of the Independent Police Review Director (OIPRD), the same organization that found the DeBungee case was handled in a slipshod manner, continues its broader, systemic examination into the way that police investigate the deaths of Indigenous people.

That probe was started in late 2016.



Director Gerry McNeilly said in a September, 2017 interview that he had already heard "a lot of concerns from members of the community about issues and how they believe police are interacting with the Indigenous community."

A spokesperson for McNeilly said Tuesday that his report is most likely to be completed by the end of May or June.

In a separate undertaking, Senator Murray Sinclair continues to look into the operations of the Thunder Bay Police Services Board.

The former chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was appointed in 2017 by the Ontario Civilian Police Commission (OCPC), after Indigenous leaders questioned the board's ability to oversee adequate and effective policing.

In an interim report issued in November, Sinclair said "It is trite to say that there are significant concerns in Thunder Bay about the manner in which police conduct death and missing person investigations of Indigenous persons."

His final report was originally scheduled to be delivered by March 31, but Sinclair received an extension to August 31, 2018.

In announcing that decision in December, 2017, the OCPC said it would allow Sinclair time to consider the findings of the OIPRD investigation, and to take into account legislation and/or regulatory changes around police oversight resulting from the introduction of the *Safer Ontario Act* last fall.

The legislation includes provisions for stronger civilian oversight of police.

Among other measures, a new office of Inspector General would oversee police services and would have authority to investigate and audit police. The office would also receive and review complaints—including complaints about chiefs of police and police boards.