

Cop to be fired: lawyer

Senger expects to lose his job; Sabo to announce decision next week

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The lawyer for one of two Saskatoon constables implicated in the death of Neil Stonechild says he expects his client to be fired next week.

"Next Wednesday, I'm sure, the chief will dismiss him," lawyer Jay Watson said Wednesday of his client, Const. Brad Senger.

On Tuesday, Justice David Wright, commissioner of the Neil Stonechild inquiry, found that Senger and Const. Larry Hartwig had the Saulteaux teenager in their car the night he was last seen alive.

Wright found that Stonechild's frozen body was discovered in the north industrial area five days later with injuries and marks on his body that were probably made by handcuffs.

Wright found that the pair had enough time between dispatched calls to drive Stonechild to the area nine kilometres away.

Senger and Hartwig were suspended with pay on Tuesday.

Police Chief Russell Sabo said Tuesday he will make a decision about their futures no later than Nov. 4, after he has read Wright's report in detail and has heard from the officers.

Watson said a hearing will eventually be held to determine if there are grounds under the Police Act for the police department to fire the officers.

"At that point, hopefully, there'll be a fair hearing and (Senger) will have his chance to say his piece," Watson said.

Hartwig's lawyer, Aaron Fox, did not say what outcome he expects.

"At this very moment, (we're) waiting to see what the chief's going to do . . . things are a little bit up in the air," Fox said.

"His career has been pretty significantly affected by this before the decision (Wright's report) ever came down. Now this makes it much worse."

Fox said Hartwig is "shocked by the decision, astounded by the decision would be a good way of describing his reaction to it."

He is "now trying to come to grips with, 'Where do you go from here?'"

Hartwig maintains he had no contact with Stonechild that night, Fox said.

"Now he's looking at, 'What do I do? Here's the report, there's no right of appeal.'

"Of course it isn't a report that's binding on anything, but of course, it's out there. 'What do I do

with the frustration that comes from that?' " Fox said, referring to Hartwig's response.

Hartwig still wonders how Stonechild got to the field where he died, Fox said.

"He's hoping the book isn't closed on that. . . . It would help him an awful lot if that question was answered."

Sabo said Wednesday that while the Saskatoon Police Service accepts Wright's findings, rank and file members are "stunned" by them.

"They've seen these guys as good officers. They've looked at the findings and I think some of them feel as though these two officers are being scapegoats.

"This has been a huge blow to our members, their interpretation of the evidence was different than Justice Wright. The justice, who is a very learned person, respected person in the judiciary, made an assessment on the balance of probabilities and our members are just really taken aback."

Sabo said it will take time for the police service to come to terms with conflicting responses within it but he is confident there is a will to do that.

"They're the kind of people, our members step up to the plate when they need to. I have every confidence that they are going to continue to do the job, a very difficult job that not a lot of people want to do.

"They are supportive of the community and the initiatives in the service. This is just something we're going to have to work on," Sabo said.

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