**What we know about the RCMP Management Advisory Board**

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The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Management Advisory Board (referred to as the “Board” hereafter) was established in 2019. The Board was created to provide advice on the administration and management of the RCMP. The federal government [claimed that the mandate of the Board](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2019/06/rcmp-interim-management-advisory-board-members-announced-by-minister-goodale.html) will focus on key priorities of RCMP transformation, including supporting the development of a “People First Strategy,” RCMP business modernization, and employee health and well-being. It was clearly determined that the Board would not be involved in any matters relating to active law enforcement investigations or any day-to-day operational decisions. However, it was reported that the Board will enhance accountability and will help ensure a diverse, healthy, and effective RCMP workforce. Despite this, **any recommendations the Board gives to the RCMP are non-binding which raises questions about the strength and legitimacy of this “oversight” and “governing” body.**

Since the Board was established, there has been very little information provided to the public about the operation of this body and its work in transforming the RCMP. In fact, there have been only a handful of announcements from the federal government regarding updates pursuant to work of the Board and its members. The last update was given by then-Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Minister Bill Blair on November 28, 2020. [In that statement](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2020/11/minister-blair-announces-the-reappointment-of-rcmp-management-advisory-board-members.html), the Minister announced the reappointment of the RCMP Management Advisory Board members for an additional 12-months “so they can continue their important work.” At the end of December 2021, the reappointment of Board members was set to expire; however, there has been no update on the status or work of the Board in 2022.

There was already [public criticism](https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/its-a-farce-no-indigenous-women-named-to-civilian-advisory-panel-overseeing-the-rcmp/) of the Board before it even had its first meeting. Specifically, of the 13 members named to the Board, there were no Indigenous women included. Though, the Board did include one Indigenous man—John Domm who is the former chief of police of the Nishnawbe Aski and Rama police services. However, the lack of representation of Indigenous women is concerning since these voices are instrumental in making necessary cultural and employee well-being changes to the police service—something that both the federal government and RCMP have been vocal in promoting. Additionally, two Board members—Wally Oppal and Leanne Fitch—have both resigned their positions for different reasons. This creates an opportunity to include more Indigenous representation on this body. Yet, there have been no new members appointed to the Board to replace the two resignations.

It was initially stated that the Board would have a budget of approximately $1.5 million per year. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, costs were reduced, and the Board spent roughly $377,000 in its first year. There was no public update on the projected budget of the Board for 2021 and the actual costs incurred over that year. Most of the costs for the first year were travel related or for meetings. For example, the chair of the Board—Richard Dicerni—travelled to Regina to visit Depot where RCMP officers are trained. The purpose of this trip was for Dicerni to understand the pedagogical approach to the training and to see what changes have been made or are being considered. There is no public information available on the outcome of that visit nor is there any information related to other travel-related expenses of Board members. This is concerning from both a transparency and civilian governance perspective.

Perhaps the most information the public has on the activity of the Board is from a December 2020 [*Toronto Star* article](https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/12/02/its-meant-to-help-fix-the-rcmps-toxic-culture-but-youre-not-allowed-to-know-what-advice-this-external-group-is-giving.html) that investigated the role and actions of the Management Advisory Board. At that time, Board chair Dicerni was the only member that provided comment—many other Board members who were contacted said that all media requests needed to go through Dicerni. Some of Dicerni’s comments were questionable in terms of accountability and governing legitimacy. First, Dicerni declined to give his opinion on whether he believed the Board’s recommendations should be made public. Second, when asked if the Board would look into systemic racism, Dicerni commented that “I’m not sure there’s that much more to say than what the commissioner has said.” He also added that he is “not sure what value added commentary a lowly chair of a management advisory board could add to that discussion.” It is troubling that the Board chair would clearly minimize his role on this “civilian governing” body. In fact, less than a week before the *Toronto Star* story was published, [RCMP commissioner Lucki commented](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-safety-canada/news/2020/11/minister-blair-announces-the-reappointment-of-rcmp-management-advisory-board-members.html) that “the Management Advisory Board plays a critical role in the future of our organization.” This illustrates some disconnect between RCMP brass and civilian advising members where the commissioner views the Board as critically important while the chair of the Board perceives his role or position as menial.

The most disturbing information disclosed in the *Toronto Star* article is the fact that Dicerni claimed that the Board primarily gives verbal advice to the RCMP. This is bizarre because it suggests that there is a lack of any paper trail on the workings of the board. Additionally, without documentation outlining the recommendations and advice given by the Board, there is no feasible way that any of the suggestions can be measured and realized. Most importantly, if any member of the public submitted an Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) request to obtain Board meeting minutes (e.g., similar to municipal police services boards meeting minutes) or information related to RCMP recommendations, they would be denied the information because it does not exist. This is a clear failure in transparency and accountability, especially given the purpose of this advisory body as a civilian-led entity working with a “People First Strategy.”

If the federal government had any meaningful intention of RCMP oversight and/or reform, the Management Advisory Board would be more robust in its operation, functionality, membership, and authority. It would have the independent autonomy to make binding decisions on RCMP reform and be accountable and transparent to the Canadian public (e.g., releasing annual reports and other information on its activities and operation). In September 2021, the [RCMP provided a response](https://www.securitepublique.gc.ca/cnt/trnsprnc/brfng-mtrls/prlmntry-bndrs/20210930/12-en.aspx?wbdisable=true) to its efforts under Vision 150 which is the agency’s plan for modernization and culture change. The RCMP claimed that there have been significant improvements made to RCMP governance and decision-making through the establishment of the external Management Advisory Board. Additionally, in the [Prime Minister’s December 2021 letter](https://pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters/2021/12/16/minister-public-safety-mandate-letter) to Public Safety Minister Mendicino, he asked that the Minister achieve action to reform the RCMP by enhancing the Management Advisory Board to create an oversight role over the RCMP. Unfortunately, this is the same kind of lip service we have witnessed before regarding RCMP institutional change and reform. In the case of the RCMP Management Advisory Board, there is no tangible evidence that this body has achieved any real or measurable improvements in employee health and well-being specifically, or culture change within the RCMP generally.

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