



Council Meeting Questions:

Councillor Caputo:

Original e-mail from Caputo – May 12, 2025

1. In all of the meeting minutes throughout 2024, when budget came up it normally reads “Chief went over report” and then gives a comment about The Chief stating that you were on target to meet budget. A) Can those reports be sent to us? B) Was The Chief misreading the reports or misleading the board?

Attached we have included all the budget reports that were provided to the Board, the media and Council. Our understanding is the former Chief was relating to the year-to-date figures when speaking to budget figures.

On November 18th the SSMPs Finance Manager provided the Chief with a projection for the November Board meeting. The projection estimated a \$500K deficit for 2024 based on Q3 results, without having full access to all reports.

2. It is clear that staffing cost is an issue. How many officers were being paid, but not working in 2024?

As per collective agreement, members off on WSIB are paid 100% of their wages and non-occupational leaves are paid 70% of their wages. Currently, when officers are off work on WSIB they accumulate vacation time.

The end of 2024, 11.59% of officers were off on occupational and/or non-occupational leaves. The percentage varies, for example case load increased by 50% in June of 2024. Also, members that return to work may not be able to return to frontline duties and may need to be accommodated. Currently, 4.2% of officers are unable to answer emergency calls for service. This number includes members off on WSIB and accommodated members.

In addition, three members were away from work while suspended with pay.

With regard to this, who deals with officers that are off work?

Human Resources, works along with a third-party vendor, Frontline Resilience to ensure members who are away from work to stay connected with the workplace



and are provided supports along with a safe return to work plan. As part of this, Human Resources and Training Services introduced the Graduated Workplace Exposure Program in 2022.

Third party or department and what is the protocol to getting these folks back to work?

In 2021, the decision was made not to renew the services of a third-party vendor Disability Management Company (Trac Group Inc.) to save \$25,000.00/year and manage these services internally.

Since 2021 – Human Resources staff completed certification in disability management program and worked directly with WSIB, Frontline Resilience, Healthcare Providers and the member to facilitate back to work processes.

This change did not increase Human Resources staffing.

3. Officers often accumulate overtime on paid duty for hockey games, etc. Is this something that should be eliminated in order to claw back on the budget?

Officers working a special paid duty are paid by the event organizers through the police service. This is net zero on the budget.

4. What has been approved for division 2 and can you feasibly open this division this year? What is the operational budget for division 2?

The downtown location had it's Grand Opening on May 12th, 2025. A soft opening did take place in 2024, but unexpected construction delays lead to the 2025 launch.

The cost of the downtown location's lease is \$6,695.42 a month.

The costs of the renovations and engineering of the downtown location for 2024 was \$209,469 plus an additional \$34,247 for lease payments.

The bill for engineering and construction, (the job is now complete) total for 2025 is \$1,063,777.

Rent for 2025 up to May of this year is \$33,477.



It should be noted the SSMPs does reclaim the HST, which would be 13% rebate of the above figures.

One sergeant and four constables have been assigned to Division 2 effective April 28, 2025, at a cost of approximately \$648,523 for the remainder of the year.

The budget for Division 2 is \$536,000 for 2025. These are operational costs. The cost of renovations is coming from reserves transferred from the 2024 budget.

These officers are not additional staff and would be paid their wage regardless of their assignment.

5. Have there been any pay increases or staff increases in civilian jobs such as HR, communications, or accounting since 2023? What is the total of that?

As per negotiations for the collective agreements 2023 - 2026, all civilian members received pay increases in 2023 to 2026.

Due to the 5-year review with the Job Evaluation and Pay Equity Committee and other changes by the Chief, the salary of 9 positions were affected.

The eight positions that received increases were the Finance Manager, Human Resources Manager Intelligence/Crime Analyst, Special Constables, Human Resources Assistant, Investigation Services/Professional Stands Clerk, Manager Corporate Communications and DEMS Clerks.

Finance issued retroactive payments in the amount of \$245,600 and the approximate impact on salary for the remainder of 2024 was \$132,000.

6. Who is ultimately responsible for this and how will these oversights be remedied moving forward?

Operational decisions are made by the Chief of Police. Several steps have been taken and outlined in previous communications to mitigate budget deficit.

Additional questions from Councillor Caputo received via email May 15, 2025

1. In the minutes of both the October and December 2024 PSB meetings, it is noted that the Board is on track to meet budget, that staff shortage overtime costs had



a “significant decrease”, that overtime was “better than last year”, and that you were on track and spending appropriately. Did Chief Hugh Stevenson mislead the board with these statements? Was there supporting documentation? If so, who wrote that documentation and where did they receive their information? Someone misled the board and community into believing spending was on target and it was not. Do you have plans to hold the individual who is found to be responsible for providing misinformation to the Board?

Documentation referenced is a report generated from the Finance Department of the City, with data provided from Finance Services from Sault Police. As stated above, the Chief was likely comparing figures year-to-date for 2024 compared to 2023.

On November 18, 2024, the SSMPFS Finance Manager provided the Chief with a projection for the November Board meeting. The projection estimated a \$500K deficit for 2024 based on Q3 results.

2. If it is found that former Chief Stevenson did indeed mislead the board, what action can be taken given that he no longer works for the service?

The former Chief is no longer a member of the Police Service, therefore at this time no action can be taken.

3. Chair Bruno indicated at Monday’s Council meeting that “no one has done anything nefarious” (at 1:26:40 on city’s YouTube). Can you please provide the reports that prove that to be true? Has an investigation been done? What information is Mr. Bruno basing that statement on?

A review was conducted with Sault Police Finance Services, and the Finance Department of the City to identify the 2024 deficit figures. This review was provided to council and addresses the deficit.

4. In our meeting Monday, I asked, “Did somebody misread the reports, or was the board being misled with the information being given” and I was told that finance was not present nor was “the other person who could answer” which would be former Chief Hugh Stevenson. Can I expect an answer for this (I know this is a similar question to #1, but it is the question everyone wants answered)



Please see above and attached reports.

5. I noticed that this year when the Sunshine List was published, Police Communications person was on the list around the \$150k mark. Last year this position was not on the list. How and why did such a massive increase happen for this position? Further in this department- I have seen an additional person named as a communications person to Police Services. How and why was it determined that an additional hire should happen in this department?

As previously mentioned as part of our job evaluation process, several positions received increases in pay due to enhanced responsibility, skill set, know how etc. As part of those reviews, positions receiving increases were eligible to retroactive payments to reflect new pay grid of the position. This position was appealed by the Chief of Police and went to a third-party vendor to review.

The Chief determined due to an increase in responsibility, changes to the position, and added workload, a second person was added to the corporate communications team. This position is a part-time position.

The retro payments are more fully explained in a further question.

Questions received Via Email from CAO Vair 16 May 2025- take from Council meeting

Councillor Caputo:

- What happened in the last three months of the year to change the financial status when previous reports indicated overtime was on track (27 per cent left in budget)?

The 27% was indicated in a report provided by the City, at the October 2024 Police Services Board meeting, showing figures from the end of September 2024. The reference to overtime being on track is a comparative number to 2023, not in relation to the 2024 budget.

- Did somebody misread these reports (financial reports), or was somebody misled? Because the information being given is that you had more than a quarter left of your budget.



Documentation referenced is a report generated from the Finance Department of the City, with data provided from Finance Services from Sault Police. As stated above, the Chief is likely comparing figures year-to-date for 2024 compared to 2023.

On November 18, 2024, the SSMPs Finance Manager provided the Chief with a projection for the November Board meeting. The projection estimated a \$500K deficit for 2024 based on Q3 results.

- You mentioned there will be a review? Is that in-house review or will there be a third-party engaged to review the overage?

A review was conducted with Sault Police Finance Services, and the Finance Department of the City to identify the 2024 deficit figures. This review was provided to council and addresses the deficit.

- Ultimately, my main question to you is, what happened? From what I can see, from your board reports, you were misled by the Chief, unless he was misreading something. So, what happened there? Misread or misled?

The Board is not able to comment on the mindset of the previous member of the police service.

- And who is responsible for this?

Please see above.

Councillor Dufour:

- What are the steps that are going to be undertaken to get an answer to this very fundamental question – Board Chair Bruno became aware in February of the discrepancy between the budget numbers presented, but now it's been two months. So, I have some pretty serious concerns that in those two months, the answers have not yet been forthcoming as to where this money went and why?

The Board Chair and Interim Chief of Police appeared before council and provided answers to where the deficit came from. Financial documentation was



also provided that outlines where the deficit occurred and how financial reports indicated the budget was on track.

- Will your board be willing to engage with an outside third party in order to get to the bottom of this, or will you just be engaging through City finance to get these answers?

A review has already taken place and conducted by Finance Services with Sault Police and the City's Finance Department.

- The percentage increase in budget (both budgeted and with the overage) is an astonishing number for any governance board to be seeing without being aware and the community is going to want to see how and why this happened.

The Board and the SSMPs have provided documentation and appeared before council to answer questions and address concerns related to the budget deficit.

Councillor Kinach:

How much did we, as City Council, reduce your original ask (in regard to the 2025 budget request)?

The initial increase that went to the Police Services Board was a 10.63% increase (\$41,076,035). The Finance Committee asked that we reduce the increase to below 10% so it was reduced to 8.19% (\$40,170,897). Upon presentation to Council, we were asked to reduce the increase to below 7% so we made cuts that resulted in a final increase of 6.79% (\$39,650,897). *(The Finance Committee moved the purchase of new carbines as required to be covered by reserves – and money was gained through additional funding streams)*

- 2024 deficit – how much was spent on software, cloud backups, body cameras?

In reference to the technology advancements through Axon, we have budgeted to roll this out over a 10-year lease ending in 2034. The cost of this lease in 2024 was \$600,565 and was budgeted. We remained within that budgeted amount for



2024. In addition, changes to the CSPA increased the budget by approx. \$1,031,637.

- What is projected deficit?

The projected deficit as of January 2025 was \$2.5 million, the current estimated deficit as of May 12, 2025, is \$1.9 million. Mitigation efforts are ongoing to attempt to reduce the estimated deficit.

Councillor Hollingsworth:

- Finance programs between Police and City not in sync? Did new division add to overage (corrected by Mayor not enumerated in list of contributing factors)

SSMPS Finance Services did have access to city software, however, did not have the ability to run certain reports to support financial forecasting. Previously, city staff would be provided with data from Sault Police and then run reports for the police service. This has since been amended and Sault Police Finance Services can now run more accurate predictive reporting from Sault Police data. An MOU between the Sault Ste. Marie Police Services Board and the City of Sault Ste. Marie is in development to formalize this relationship. SSMPS Finance still does not have full access to the City's budgeting preparation software.

- Did new division add to overage

The downtown location had its Grand Opening on May 12th, 2025. A soft opening did take place in 2024, but unexpected construction delays lead to the 2025 launch.

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Councillor Spina:

- The most current report from former Chief stated on budget (October 2024) Overage found in February 2025. By whom?

A projected overage was communicated to the Chief in November – this was estimated by SSMPs Finance staff based on Q3 results. This deficit amount was updated in January 2025 once more accurate information was available to SSMPs Finance Services staff. City Finance Department staff communicated a preliminary estimated overage of \$1.8 million to the SSMPs in January 2025 and the final deficit to the Police Services Board after a completed year-end financial review in February 2025.

- From October 2024 to February 2025 – any information as to overage? What could be done to mitigate (No.)

At that time little could have been done to mitigate the deficit. See above.

- Why is violent crime down but budgets up?

The 2024 yearend report from stats Canada shows that Assaults were up 15.8%, Sexual Assaults were up 23.5%, IPV was up 9.9% and offensive weapons calls were up 14.9% for 2024 as compared to 2023. Although Homicides were down 85.7% and attempt homicides were down 50.0% Violent crime overall for 2024 was up 13.9% compared to 2023.

The overall crime rate for Sault Ste Marie in 2024 was down 0.7% from 2023.



- Important to know impact, reasons why it happened.

Answers and documentation related to the deficit have been provided to city staff and city council. The Chief of Police and the Sault Ste. Marie Police Services Board mandate, under the CSPA, is to provide adequate and effective policing.

Please see provided reports.

Councillor Bruni:

- How to budget for overtime (answered difficult to predict).

Each year the overtime costs for policing are around \$1 million. However, during the budget process, in an attempt to keep the % increase of the budget at a manageable figure, the overtime budget is reduced significantly. This is not reflective of year-to-year figures for overtime expenses. In the past few years when we have increased complement, we have been asked by Council to reduce the overtime budget as an offset, however staffing shortages only reflect a small percentage (approx. 20%) of total overtime.

The majority of the overtime is a result of criminal investigations support – ident, tactical team, crime suppression.

- Operational budget – where can savings come from in 2025 to reduce projected deficit?

The operational budget in 2024 was nearly \$700,000 under budget. As stated above, following a comprehensive review, numerous cost-saving methods, reducing travel, reducing non-mandatory training, participating in professional committees, hiring freeze, etc. have been implemented in an attempt to reduce the total deficit for 2025. We continue to apply for Grants and explore opportunities to offset salary dollars.

Councillor Zagordo:

- 2025 projected deficit – how confident no deficit?

The Board and the SSMPS are making every effort to reduce the deficit.



Councillor Gardi:

- 16 eligible to retire, now 13 – 9 new hires.
- \$670k savings – travel? Training? How much was budgeted for travel/training in 2024-2025 and what was spent?

The operational savings does include training and travel as well as other areas of operation. Training costs fluctuate based on the number of spaces provided to the service for individual training opportunities.

The 2024 operating budget was \$9,632,691. The total spent on operating costs in 2024 was \$8,958,867. The 2024 training and travel budget was \$1,039,900. Only \$606,493 was spent on travel and training in 2024.

The 2025 operating budget is \$9,891,060. Through April 30, 2025, \$3,628,748 of the operating budget has been spent. The 2025 training and travel budget is \$1,206,800. Through April 30, 2025, \$187,712 has been spent on travel and training.

- Any officers eligible to retire on WSIB? (Unclear as to whether this could be asked)

This is not a question the service can answer due to privacy concerns.

- Attendance management program for officers, civilians?

The Sault Police do have an attendance management program for members.

- Why was inaccurate information provided?

Attached we have included all the budget reports that were provided to the Board, the media and council. Our understanding is the Chief was relating to the year-to-date figures when speaking to budget figures.



Mayor Shoemaker:

- Bulk of increase over complement hires. Adequate and effective discussion. Duty of PSB to ensure effectiveness.
- What has been done to change reporting of deficits to PSB?

The Board will now be provided quarterly projections by Finance Services of Sault Police. Through an enhanced relationship with City staff, SSMPs Finance Services will be able to run more accurate predictive financial reporting.