



Integrity Commissioner's Preliminary Report Regarding Request for Investigation

To Mayor and Council – The City of Sault Ste. Marie

Date of Report: Thursday February 13, 2025

Complaint #: 2025-1

Request for Investigation – Appendix” B,” to the Code of Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards

Date Request for Investigation Received:

Wednesday February 5, 2025, at 3:36 pm by email.

Name of Requester: Councillor Stephen Kinach

Request for Investigation Details and Process:

The Integrity Commissioner confirmed receipt of the Request for Investigation with Councillor Kinach on Wednesday February 5, 2025, at 5:28 pm by email. The Integrity Commissioner called Councillor Lisa Vezeau-Allen by phone on Thursday February 6, 2025, to advise her of the Request for Investigation and then emailed her the documents submitted by Councillor Kinach on Thursday February 6, 2025, at 12:14 pm. The Integrity Commissioner met with Councillor Kinach in a Teams Meeting on Thursday February 13, 2025, at 0900 hours and reviewed his Request for Investigation, and questioned him regarding the matter.

The Integrity Commissioner reviewed the Request for Investigation and concluded that according to Appendix 1 of the Code of Conduct, under “Formal Complaints”, point 1. was adhered to. In point 2. It states, “All complaints or requests for inquiries must clearly state,” The member to whom the complaint relates.” Councillor Kinach has identified “Councillor Lisa Vezeau-Allen.”

Councillor Kinach alleged Councillor Vezeau-Allen has contravened sections “Key principles of the Code of Conduct B&C.” It is noted that under the “Purpose” section of the Code of Conduct its states as follows in “b”, ‘Members should be committed to performing their functions with integrity and to avoiding the improper use of influence of their office, and conflicts of interest, both real and apparent’, and in c.” Members are expected to perform their duties in office in a manner that promotes public confidence and will bear close public scrutiny.”

Councillor Kinach stated the particulars of his complaint were that Councillor Vezeau-Allen had requested a leave of absence on January 31, 2025, to be effective from that date until February 28, 2025, as she was running in the provincial election. Councillor Kinach provided a copy of that request. Councillor Kinach stated that at the Council Meeting of February 3, 2025, Councillor Vezeau-Allen was in attendance and that she was in the gallery and before the Council Meeting started, Councillor Vezeau-Allen entered the staff and council portion of the chamber. Councillor Kinach stated the meeting was delayed and that Councillor Vezeau-Allen was conversing with staff members and councillors. Councillor Kinach took two photos on his camera and provided these as evidence. Councillor Kinach stated in his Request for Investigation that he believes this act by Councillor Vezeau-Allen was a “conflict of interest, this erodes public confidence in our municipal government & this is undue influence on staff & her colleagues when she is on her leave of absence of her own request.” Councillor Kinach also stated in his Request for Investigation that “There is a clearly defined line between the gallery where she had every right to be and crossing that line onto the council chamber floor unprovoked & of her own free will to inappropriately engage staff & colleagues during her leave of absence at the time normally the Council Meeting would be ongoing.” Councillor Kinach named the witnesses as being all Councillors and Staff members present at the February 3, 2025, Council meeting.

Code of Conduct

In the Code of Conduct, specifically the Formal Complaints, section 6, it states “If the Integrity Commissioner is of the opinion that the referral of the matter to him or her is frivolous, vexatious or not made in good faith or that there are no grounds or insufficient grounds for an inquiry, the Integrity Commissioner shall not conduct an inquiry and shall state the reasons for not doing so in the preliminary report”.

Conclusions:

The Integrity Commissioner based the conclusions on the following:

- a. That the mayor had announced the start of the Council meeting was delayed as Councillor Kinach confirmed.
- b. That Councillor Vezeau-Allen was in the “staff and council portion of the chamber” prior to the commencement of the Council meeting and not after the commencement of the Council meeting as Councillor Kinach confirmed.
- c. That the individuals Councillor Kinach specifically observed Councillor Vezeau-Allen speaking to were Councillors Spina and Caputo and that he also confirmed that he could not hear any of the conversation between Councillor Vezeau-Allen and Councillors Spina and Caputo and that he has no knowledge of what they discussed.

- d. That Councillor Kinach stated that the photos he provided were taken by him on his cell phone at 5:03 pm and 5:05 pm and were of Councillor Vezeau-Allen conversing with staff members and councillors prior to the commencement of the Council meeting.
- e. That Councillor Kinach stated that it was his opinion and his view that given Councillor Vezeau-Allen had requested and was on a leave of absence she should not have been in the “staff and council portion of the chamber” prior to the commencement of the Council meeting.

Findings:

The Integrity Commissioner finds there are no grounds for an inquiry.

Regards,



Antoinette Blunt MPA, CHRL, CHRE, FHRPA
Integrity Commissioner
City of Sault Ste. Marie