

Decision Regarding Findings Report INV-25-95 Concerning the Conduct of Sault Ste. Marie Police Service Board Member Matthew Shoemaker

Decision By:

Ryan Teschner, Inspector General of Policing

I. INTRODUCTION

- [1] This decision addresses allegations that Mayor Matthew Shoemaker, a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Police Service Board (the “Board”), committed misconduct by acting in an unprofessional manner, speaking without authorization on behalf of the Board, and improperly acting to exclude the complainant from the chief selection competition. These allegations were investigated by an inspector with Ontario’s Inspectorate of Policing (“IoP”) who prepared a Findings Report,¹ which is attached to this decision as Appendix A.
- [2] Following a review of the Findings Report and for the reasons that follow, I conclude that Mayor Shoemaker has not committed misconduct in contravention of the *Code of Conduct for Police Service Board Members* Regulation, O Reg 408/23 (“Code of Conduct”), enacted under the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019*, SO 2019, c 1, Sch 1 (the “Act”).

II. BACKGROUND

- [3] The complainant resigned his position as Chief of the Sault Ste. Marie Police Service (“SSMPS”) in March 2025 to run as a candidate in the federal election.² At the time, the SSMPS had run a \$2.9 million deficit under the complainant’s command, which received widespread media coverage during the election campaign and led to tensions between himself, city officials and members of the Board.
- [4] Unsuccessful in his election bid, the complainant re-applied for his position as chief of police. He believed that there was an understanding between he and the Board that he could return to his position if he was not elected as a Member of Parliament. Instead, the Board chose to hold a competition for his position.

¹ Section 123 of the Act requires an IoP inspector who completes an investigation of a complaint to report their findings to the Inspector General. This report is redacted to comply with the *Publication of Findings Reports and Directions under Sections 123 and 125 of the Act* Regulation, O Reg 317/24.

² Section 5 of the Act’s *Political Activity* regulation, O Reg 402/23, prohibits serving police officers from engaging in a variety of political activities that might place the officer in a position of conflict, without a leave of absence granted by the police service board. However, chiefs of police (and deputy chiefs) are expressly excluded from eligibility for the leave provisions.

[5] The complainant asked the Board to remove Mayor Shoemaker from the chief selection process, on the basis that the mayor's numerous public comments made about the SSMPS deficit created a reasonable apprehension of bias. The complainant felt these comments were unfair and damaged his professional prospects, including his applications for chief's positions in other jurisdictions.

[6] The mayor and the Board declined his request. Ultimately, the complainant was denied an interview in the selection process by the Board.

III. ISSUES

[7] The two primary issues flowing from the complainant's allegations include:

- a. Did Mayor Shoemaker's public comments breach the Code of Conduct; and
- b. Did Mayor Shoemaker or the Board act improperly in choosing not to interview the complainant in the chief selection process?

IV. ANALYSIS

The Board Member's Public Comments

[8] Although critical, Mayor Shoemaker's public comments were based on publicly available information and provided the mayor's assessment, in his capacity as head of council, as to the cause of the budget overage. While this assessment was not flattering, and while there could have been other causes for the overage, Mayor Shoemaker's comments were within the bounds of his expressive rights.

[9] Furthermore, Mayor Shoemaker's comments, in his capacity as mayor, did not create a conflict in relation to his role as a board member. While we must remain alert to the "two hats" phenomenon and how it can lead to a confusion of roles – wherein the role of board member is sometimes subordinated to the role of municipally elected official – a "two hats" issue does not arise here.

[10] Mayor Shoemaker initially received the information about the police budget overage in his capacity as a member of the Board. Thereafter, in his capacity as a board member, Mayor Shoemaker owed a fiduciary duty to the Board to manage its financial interests and obligations. A budget overage of this significance was a serious matter, and while such an overage might have been justified, the record is clear that it flowed from the operations of the SSMPS. Regardless of the reason, there was a budget issue that the Board had to examine and address in some fashion.

[11] Importantly, Mayor Shoemaker never publicly placed blame for the budget overage at the feet of the complainant. In fact, the published articles and podcasts that were reviewed as part of this investigation confirm that when Mayor Shoemaker referenced the overage, he linked it to a “failure of governance” and a “broader oversight issue within the Board”, rather than the failures of an individual.³ Likewise, Mayor Shoemaker was quoted in an article in the *Sault Star* as attributing the budget overage to a “failure of the board and the board is responsible to ensure it is corrected moving forward.”⁴ These public comments were consistent with those made by Mayor Shoemaker during the meeting of the Sault Ste. Marie City Council on May 12, 2025.⁵

[12] In respect of the May 12th City Council meeting, there was conflicting evidence as to whether Mayor Shoemaker was authorized to take the position, on behalf of the Board, that there existed a need for improved communication between it and the Council. On the one hand, Witness 1 suggested this comment was improper. On the other, Nuala Kenny, serving as the Board chair at the time, suggested that the mayor had the Board’s authorization to make this point. Given the challenges in reconciling the City and the Board’s budget information,⁶ I find, on a balance of probabilities, that discussions of the need for improved financial information-sharing took place, and that this represented the Board’s position on the issue, and that Mayor Shoemaker was within his rights to express this position at City Council.

³ Appendix A, Findings Report, at p 13, referring to the *SooToday.com* podcast that aired on May 2, 2025.

⁴ Appendix A, Findings Report, at p 14.

⁵ Appendix A, Findings Report, at p 14.

⁶ This is a matter upon which both Witness 1 and Nuala Kenny agreed — see Witness 1’s Summary of Statement in the FR at pp 6-7, and Nuala Kenny’s Summary of Statement in the FR at p 9.

[13] Parenthetically, Mayor Shoemaker's comments on this matter deserve mention, although they do not change where I have ultimately landed on the issue. The mayor stated that only the Chair of the Board is authorized to speak on behalf of the Board. That may be true – and, in fact, is the case for a number of police service boards that have chosen to enshrine this practice in their own by-laws. However, if this authority is delegated to the chair of a board, it still first requires that the board, as a whole, take a position on an issue.

[14] The chair of a board does not enjoy free license to assert his or her own opinions on behalf of a board, solely on the basis of the chair's authority to speak on behalf of said board. That authority comes with a condition precedent: the police service board must first have adopted a position on an issue. Thereafter, the chair becomes the one board member authorized to publicly communicate that position, if that is the practice the board has put in place. I mention this only because Mayor Shoemaker's statement suggested some "super authority" for a board chair to not only communicate board positions, but to unilaterally determine them. That is absolutely not the case, and I would strongly advise boards and board chairs across the province to be mindful of the condition precedent I have identified here.

[15] Overall, I do not find that Mayor Shoemaker's public comments, including his comment that there is "rot in the governance of the board", to be unprofessional or disrespectful when taken in the proper context. That context must include the fact that the Board, at the time, was not functioning well. The evidence before me makes clear that the budget overage had led to a mini-crisis that resulted in members of the Board no longer working as a cohesive unit. That is unfortunate, and in my view, should not have been the result of a financial challenge. However, it did, and in that context, it was fair and not misconduct for Mayor Shoemaker to speak to his concerns about how the body governing policing in Sault Ste. Marie was functioning at the time.

[16] While different people may have picked different descriptors, the role of the Inspector General is not to use a thesaurus to armchair quarterback. In the circumstances, I find that the comments did not rise to a level that constitutes misconduct.

The Hiring Committee Decision to Decline to Interview the Complainant

[17] I must now consider whether the Board's ultimate decision not to grant the complainant an interview in the selection process was compliant with the Act. There are two issues that flow from this question. The first is whether the Board had the legal authority to make the decision it did, in the way that it did. The second is whether the basis for the Board's decision not to grant an interview was within the bounds of a fair process. I will consider these two issues in turn.

[18] Section 42 of the Act permits a police service board, by by-law, to delegate any of its powers under the Act to a committee.⁷ Amongst its many duties and responsibilities, a board must:

(d) recruit and appoint the chief of police and any deputy chief of police and determine their remuneration and working conditions, taking their submissions into account ...⁸

Accordingly, a board may delegate the recruitment of a chief of police to a committee with members chosen by the board. This is the process employed by the Board here in its search for a permanent chief following the complainant's resignation and the federal election.

[19] When the complainant formally raised his concerns about a potential conflict in Mayor Shoemaker, as board member, participating in the chief selection process, the Board sought legal advice. The advice sought was on the specific question of whether Mayor Shoemaker's public comments created a conflict of interest, such that he should no longer participate in the chief selection process. The legal advice indicated that there was no conflict. This is advice that I agree with, in the circumstances. Regardless, the Board exercised its due diligence and probed the conflict issue squarely before proceeding with its selection process.

⁷ Section 42 of the Act. The requisite by-law may govern the name, powers, duties, and quorums of the committee, as well as its composition and the appointment of individuals to the committee.

⁸ Section 37(1)(d) of the Act.

[20] So long as a chief of police selection process is fair, there is no inherent “right” to be considered for candidacy. The complainant may not have agreed with Mayor Shoemaker’s reason for suggesting to the Board hiring committee that his candidacy not be considered, but there was nothing unfair about what occurred. Mayor Shoemaker expressed his view that the complainant should not be granted an interview in the selection process and provided his reasons for his view, including that the “precise causes of the overage were never fully established”.⁹ The Board selection committee ultimately agreed with his view. Different individuals may have come to different decisions, but that is not the barometer for determining non-compliance. There is nothing on this record that places the Board’s actions within the arena of non-compliance.

[21] Moreover, even if the Board, as a whole, was satisfied with the explanation for the overage, this perspective did not constrain Mayor Shoemaker in advancing his views as to who should or should not be the next chief of police, in his role as a member of the hiring committee. Mayor Shoemaker was entitled to have his opinion that the overage was a legitimate reason not to consider the complainant’s candidacy. Ultimately, this seems to be an opinion that carried the majority of the Board’s selection committee. This was the mechanism the Board put in place to make this decision.

[22] It also deserves mentioning that the complainant terminated his position as chief of police with only days’ worth of notice. Putting aside whether this was technically a breach of contract (the record suggests that six months’ notice is required), I can understand why this might result in some members of the Board not being as open to the prospect of including the complainant as a candidate to return as chief of police.

A Comment Concerning Board Chief Selection Processes

[23] I want to take this brief opportunity to comment more generally on the overall structure of the decision-making for the hiring of a chief of police. This is important for municipal police service board across the province.

⁹ Appendix A, Findings Report, at p 8.

[24] A police service board will, in the course of its work, be asked to make a number of decisions that will have a more consequential impact on the police service it governs. One of those decisions is the selection of the service's senior executive, the chief of police.

[25] For reasons of efficiency, many matters may be suitable for delegation to a sub-committee of the police service board. I do not believe the decision about selecting a chief of police is one of them. A sub-committee/hiring committee of a board can, and perhaps should, be used to develop a short list of candidates from a much longer initial list. But, given the magnitude of the decision, it is my view that the entire police service board should be involved from that point forward. Ultimately, the whole board should make the final decision as to who becomes the next chief of police. While this is not enshrined in the Act as a procedural requirement, I mention this to send a strong signal to all boards that it is my view of good governance practice.

V. CONCLUSION

[26] For these reasons, I find that Mayor Shoemaker has not committed misconduct, contrary to the Code of Conduct.

[27] I am also satisfied that the Board did not misconduct itself nor act unfairly when it chose not to interview the complainant in the chief selection process.

Date: September 24, 2026

Original Signed By

Ryan Teschner
Inspector General of Policing

FINDINGS REPORT

Sault Ste. Marie Police Service Board
Member: Matthew Shoemaker

**Section 106(1) Board Member
Conduct Investigation**
(INV-25-95)

Submitted to:
Ryan Teschner
Inspector General of Policing of
Ontario

August 31, 2026

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ABOUT THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICING AND THE INSPECTORATE OF POLICING

The Inspector General of Policing drives improved performance and accountability in policing and police governance by overseeing the delivery of adequate and effective policing across Ontario. The Inspector General ensures compliance with the province's policing legislation and standards, and has the authority to issue progressive, risk-based and binding directions and measures to protect public safety. Ontario's Community Safety and Policing Act embeds protections to ensure the Inspector General's statutory duty is delivered independently from government.

The Inspector General of Policing leads the Inspectorate of Policing (IoP). The IoP provides operational support to inspect, investigate, monitor, and advise Ontario's police services, boards and special constable employers. By leveraging independent research and data intelligence, the IoP promotes leading practices and identifies areas for improvement, ensuring that high-quality policing and police governance is delivered to make everyone in Ontario safer.

In March 2023, Ryan Teschner was appointed as Ontario's first Inspector General of Policing with duties and authorities under the Community Safety and Policing Act. Mr. Teschner is a recognized expert in public administration, policing and police governance.

For more information about the Inspector General of Policing or the IoP, please visit www.iopontario.ca.

INTRODUCTION

This is a report to the Inspector General of Policing by an inspector appointed by the Inspector General who has completed an investigation under Part VII of the [Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019](#) (CSPA).

OVERVIEW OF INVESTIGATION

The Complaint

The Inspector General received a complaint in relation to an allegation that Vice Chair Matthew Shoemaker of the Sault Ste. Marie Police Service Board (SSMPSB) displayed a bias toward the complainant during the Chief of Police selection process. The complainant also alleged that Matthew Shoemaker did not conduct himself in a professional and respectful manner and that he spoke on behalf of the board without authorization.

The Subject Police Service Board Member

Name of Police Service Board: Sault Ste. Marie Police Service Board

Subject Police Service Board Member Name: Matthew Shoemaker

Length of service (Term): Appointed January 13, 2025 – December 31, 2026

Specific Role Held on Police Service Board: Member / Vice Chair (July 2025)

Previous Substantiated Misconduct: None

Appointing Authority: Municipality

Applicable Legislative and Regulatory Provisions

Section 35(6) of the CSPA provides that every member of a police service board shall comply with the prescribed code of conduct.

[Ontario Regulation 408/23: Code of Conduct for Police Service Board Members](#) was reviewed having regard to the allegations made in the complaint and the following sections were deemed to be relevant:

- a) Section 3: A member of a police service board shall not conduct themselves in a manner that undermines or is likely to undermine the public's trust in the police service board or the police service maintained by the board; and
- b) Section 10: A member of a police service board shall conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner in the course of their duties including, without limitation, not using abusive or insulting language in the course of their duties.
- c) Section 12: A member of police service board shall not purport to speak on behalf of the police service board unless authorized to do so.

- d) Section 13: A member of a police service board shall clearly indicate when they are expressing a personal opinion when commenting on an action or omission of the police service board, the police service maintained by the board or a member of the police service.

SUMMARY OF THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED

As part of the investigation interviews were conducted with the complainant, two former members of the SSMPSB, the current Chair of the SSMPSB and the subject, Matthew Shoemaker. Additionally, a “SooToday” podcast, a “Sault Star” article, and the May 12, 2025 Sault Ste. Marie city council meeting (full video on YouTube) were reviewed. Open-source media, SSMPSB meeting minutes, along with information provided by the complainant, witnesses, and the subject also contributed to this investigation.

Complainant Interview

On July 24, 2025 an interview was conducted with the complainant who previously served as the Sault Ste. Marie Police Service (SSMPS) Chief of Police.

The complainant joined Peel Regional Police in 1987 and the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) in 1994, where he served for 32 years, retiring as a Chief Superintendent in 2018. That same year, he was appointed Chief of Police for the SSMPS. He resigned in March 2025 to run in the federal election, as required under the CSPA, and subsequently re-applied for the Chief of Police position after the election. He believed there was an understanding that he could return if not elected.

The complainant described a previously positive working relationship with the SSMPSB and the mayor. He acknowledged that in early 2025, staff with the city of Sault Ste. Marie identified to financial staff with SSMPS that the Service was over budget by what was eventually confirmed to be \$2.9 million, which led to tensions between himself, city officials, and members of the SSMPSB regarding fiscal responsibility. He provided a detailed explanation of why his expenditures as Chief of Police were, in his view, necessary and justified.

Following his resignation and the onset of the election campaign, local media coverage focused heavily on the budget overage. The complainant said that Mayor Matthew Shoemaker made several public comments suggesting that, as Chief of Police, he and the Service's leadership were responsible for the deficit. The complainant viewed these remarks as unfair and damaging, particularly because they coincided with his re-application for the Chief of Police position. He expressed concern that the mayor's public criticism created a reasonable apprehension of bias that should have disqualified him from participating in the Chief of Police selection process.

The complainant wrote to the Board requesting that Matthew Shoemaker recuse himself from the hiring committee to preserve the fairness of the competition. He said the SSMPSB referred his request to legal counsel. The complainant was later informed by the SSMPSB that no conflict existed and that the process would proceed.

The complainant said that the subsequent media coverage and public commentary by Matthew Shoemaker had harmed his reputation and professional prospects, including his applications for Chief of Police positions in other jurisdictions.

The complainant asserted that Matthew Shoemaker should be removed from the SSMPSB Chief of Police selection committee and emphasized that his letter to the SSMPSB was not intended as a formal complaint but rather as a request for fairness in the selection process.

Witness Interviews

Witness 1

An interview was conducted with Witness 1, a provincial appointee who served on the SSMPSB [redacted – s 1(1)2 – O Reg 317/24].

Witness 1 described having a positive working relationship with the complainant and sat on his hiring panel when the complainant was selected to be the Chief of Police for the SSMPS in 2018. He said the complainant maintained strong community relations and had been an effective leader.

In early 2025, Witness 1 became aware of a reported budget deficit of approximately \$2-3 million. He and another board member returned from a police service board member conference to address the issue. He recalled that the SSMPSB had previously been advised there was sufficient funding for the fiscal year, and that the overage arose from staffing pressures, overtime, and workplace injuries. The complainant had emphasized his obligation to maintain adequate and effective policing and had hired recruits to fill vacancies. Witness 1 said the Service's accountant lacked access to the same financial software as the City, which contributed to differing analyses of the budget data.

Witness 1 said that following the complainant's resignation to run in the federal election, he did not give any assurance that the complainant would be reinstated if unsuccessful but expected he would be treated fairly if he re-applied.

When the SSMPSB discussed how to proceed with hiring a new Chief of Police, Witness 1 and another member recommended all five members participate in the hiring committee. Matthew Shoemaker and Nuala Kenny opposed this, favouring a smaller three-member committee. The SSMPSB voted 3-2 in favour of a committee consisting of Witness 1, Matthew Shoemaker, and Nuala Kenny.

At the May 12, 2025 City Council meeting on the budget, Matthew Shoemaker was sitting as mayor and publicly expressed support for a council resolution directing that quarterly SSMPSB reports be shared with Council. Witness 1 viewed this as improper, as Matthew Shoemaker was not authorized to speak on behalf of the SSMPSB.

At a later subcommittee meeting, Matthew Shoemaker began by saying the complainant should not be granted an interview for the Chief of Police position, and Nuala Kenny agreed, citing the complainant's "political stripes". Matthew Shoemaker also asserted that the complainant no longer had the confidence of the SSMPSB or community. Witness 1 challenged these comments, pointing out that the complainant had strong performance evaluations and met all application criteria.

Tensions escalated after Witness 1 sent council-related correspondence to the SSMPSB's legal counsel for review without prior approval. Matthew Shoemaker later emailed him, calling the decision an example of "rot in the governance of the board." Witness 1 viewed the message as bullying and evidence of ongoing hostility.

Combined with the negative public comments by Matthew Shoemaker and Nuala Kenny about the SSMPSB, this created a divided and dysfunctional governance environment. This led to Witness 1 and Witness 2 resigning from the SSMPSB.

Witness 1 did not participate in the hiring committee for the Chief of Police position. He said the events surrounding the budget dispute and subsequent SSMPSB conflict were distressing and had affected him and his family.

Witness 2

An interview was conducted with Witness 2. Witness 2 has served multiple terms on the SSMPSB [redacted – s 1(1)2 – O Reg 317/24]. A long-time community member with over forty years in the local media industry, he had [redacted – s 1(1)2 – O Reg 317/24] shortly before resigning from the Board.

Witness 2 described having a positive working relationship with the complainant, whom he regarded as a capable, community-minded Chief of Police.

In early 2025 a significant budget overage was identified by staff with the city of Sault Ste. Marie. Witness 2 and Witness 1 returned from a police service board conference held in Toronto to address the issue. He recalled that the budget had appeared stable in late 2024 and attributed the overage to several factors, including overtime, pay-equity adjustments, facility costs, and officers on WSIB leave. He added that the SSMPS accountant lacked the same analytical software used by the city, which complicated budget reconciliation. Despite ongoing discussions, the precise causes of the overage were never fully established.

Witness 2 said the SSMPSB was disappointed when the complainant resigned to pursue federal office, noting that his recent performance review had been excellent. No assurance was given that he could return as Chief of Police if not elected. When the SSMPSB later discussed the selection process, Witness 2 recommended that all five members participate. The three municipal appointees disagreed, and a vote established a three-person hiring committee composed of Witness 1 (provincial appointee), Matthew Shoemaker, and Nuala Kenny.

During the selection process, the complainant submitted a letter requesting that Matthew Shoemaker recuse himself from the hiring committee due to perceived bias. The SSMPSB sought a legal opinion from counsel not recommended by Witness 2 and the lawyer concluded there was no conflict. Witness 2 said Nuala Kenny and another municipal member warned there would be “consequences” for the complainant’s letter. He opposed that view, asserting that the complainant should not be penalized for raising a legitimate concern.

He described ongoing tension between Matthew Shoemaker and other board members. Matthew Shoemaker and Nuala Kenny, he said, pressured Witness 1 and the Interim Chief of Police to appear before City Council on the budget issue, where the discussion became adversarial. The complainant was not an active member of the SSMPs and was not invited to attend.

Shortly after the city council meeting, Witness 1 sent written responses in relation to additional questions posed by city council for legal review. Matthew Shoemaker criticized the action by email, calling it “another example of rot on the board.”

Witness 2 believed Matthew Shoemaker’s actions reflected bias and an inability to separate the roles of mayor and SSMPsB member. He recounted that Matthew Shoemaker had privately apologized to the complainant, saying he was under political pressure from several councillors. Witness 2 also alleged that Matthew Shoemaker discarded the complainant’s application for the Chief of Police position, which he viewed as the final incident, prompting both his and Witness 1’s resignations.

Witness 2 did not participate in the candidate interviews or the selection of the new Chief of Police and has had no contact with Matthew Shoemaker since resigning.

Witness 3: Chair Nuala Kenny

An interview was conducted with Nuala Kenny, who joined the SSMPsB in January 2025 and was elected Chair on July 12, 2025. Before her appointment, she practiced as a solicitor and held several positions within the municipal government.

Nuala Kenny knew the other board members through prior professional and community connections and had previously worked at the same law firm as Matthew Shoemaker. She said she and Matthew Shoemaker maintain a positive working relationship and that she regularly engages him and other community leaders in her legal clinic’s outreach efforts. She did not know the complainant personally but understood him to be well regarded locally.

Regarding the 2024-25 budget overage, Nuala Kenny said she was not involved in that year’s budget process and initially paid little attention to the issue. After returning from a police service board member conference, SSMPsB members reported the deficit, and an emergency meeting was convened with city and SSMPs financial staff. She recalled a discrepancy between the City and SSMPs accounting systems and noted that lower-than-expected retirements and staffing decisions made by the Chief of Police contributed to the overage.

Nuala Kenny said she first learned of the complainant's resignation on short notice in March 2025, when the SSMPSPB received only 48 hours notice of his intention to step down to run in the federal election. She emphasized that the Chief of Police contract required six months notice and expressed concern about the precedent of such a breach. The complainant told the SSMPSPB that he was running as a Conservative candidate and felt the law's requirement to resign was unfair. No SSMPSPB member, she said, assured him that he could return to the role if not elected.

Following his resignation, the SSMPSPB decided to begin the selection process for a new Chief of Police. Nuala Kenny supported conducting the competition internally due to financial constraints. The SSMPSPB voted to form a three-person hiring committee and update the job description. She said the hiring committee aimed to move quickly to restore community confidence following the budget controversy.

Nuala Kenny said she did not believe Matthew Shoemaker held a personal bias or conflict of interest regarding the complainant. She acknowledged the budget overage was a serious concern but said she never heard Matthew Shoemaker make improper or accusatory remarks about the complainant. Initially, she viewed the complainant as a qualified candidate and included his name among the applicants.

However, she said the complainant's subsequent letter alleging a conflict of interest affected her perspective. She reviewed the referenced article and podcast and concluded that Matthew Shoemaker's comments about a "failure in governance" were directed at the SSMPSPB, not the complainant. She added that she was troubled by the complainant's overt political affiliation, noting her view that a Chief of Police should remain publicly neutral. In her opinion, public knowledge of the complainant's political stance undermined perceptions of impartiality in a community already facing social challenges.

Nuala Kenny said the SSMPSPB obtained a legal opinion as recommended by the Police Service Advisor. The SSMPSPB selected independent counsel to provide the legal opinion, which concluded there was no conflict. She described the selection process as fair and emphasized that transparency was essential given heightened public scrutiny.

Nuala Kenny did not attend the May 12, 2025, City Council meeting where Matthew Shoemaker discussed improving communication between the city and the SSMPSPB but believed he was authorized to speak on the SSMPSPB's behalf.

She acknowledged that subsequent friction arose when Witness 1 sent council-related correspondence to legal counsel without prior approval. Nuala Kenny viewed the action as unauthorized and an unnecessary expense, given the simplicity of the questions.

Matthew Shoemaker's follow-up email referring to "rot on the board" reflected, in her view, frustration with governance issues rather than personal animosity. She agreed with his assessment that the SSMPSPB was under strain due to public criticism, the Chief of Police resignation, and the budget deficit.

After Witness 1 and Witness 2 resigned, Nuala Kenny described the environment as tense but said she looked forward to working with new members. She characterized Matthew Shoemaker as professional and respectful in all interactions, stating that while she does not always agree with his decisions as mayor, she has never seen him act inappropriately during SSMPSPB meetings. She shared his concern about the overage and agreed that communication and governance within the SSMPSPB required improvement.

Subject Police Service Board Member

An interview was conducted with Matthew Shoemaker, Mayor of Sault Ste. Marie and Vice Chair of the SSMPSPB. Matthew Shoemaker was first elected as a city councillor in 2014, re-elected in 2018, and elected mayor in 2022. He previously served on the SSMPSPB in 2020-2021 and rejoined in January 2025.

Matthew Shoemaker described longstanding governance challenges within the SSMPSPB predating his current term, including divisions among members. He noted that Witness 1 had donated to his mayoral campaign and that Witness 2 had endorsed him publicly.

Matthew Shoemaker said his relationship with the complainant, the former Chief of Police, was positive until the discovery by city of Sault Ste. Marie staff of a budget overage in early 2025. Prior to that, he and the complainant had collaborated closely on community issues and outreach. The budget shortfall came to light several months after the fiscal year ended, and Matthew Shoemaker understood it to have resulted primarily from hiring decisions made in anticipation of retirements that did not occur. He said city officials were frustrated and sought accountability, and that he pressed the SSMPSPB to determine what went wrong and how to prevent recurrence.

Matthew Shoemaker learned of the decision made by the Chief of Police to resign only days before it was made public. He recalled telling Witness 1 that there could be no guarantee of reinstatement should the Chief be unsuccessful in the election. He viewed the Chief's limited notice period as a breach of contract and agreed with other members that the SSMPSPB should not appear to endorse his political campaign. The Deputy Chief was appointed Interim Chief of Police shortly afterward.

When the SSMPBSB turned to recruiting a new Chief of Police, Matthew Shoemaker and Nuala Kenny supported a three-person hiring committee rather than full SSMPBSB participation, which is consistent with city's hiring practice. The SSMPBSB voted 3-2 in favour of this approach.

Matthew Shoemaker said he created a spreadsheet comparing candidate qualifications and was initially open to interviewing the complainant, though he questioned whether the complainant could re-establish a functional relationship with the SSMPBSB and City Council.

After receiving the complainant's letter alleging bias and conflict, Matthew Shoemaker said his position changed. He viewed the letter as a personal attack rather than a procedural concern and believed it confirmed that a professional relationship could not be repaired.

The SSMPBSB sought an external legal opinion on the matter, and Matthew Shoemaker recused himself from the discussion. Legal counsel concluded there was no conflict of interest. Matthew Shoemaker stated that he would have withdrawn from the process had legal counsel found otherwise.

Matthew Shoemaker denied having any personal bias against the complainant or being influenced by political affiliation. He said his past involvement with both major political parties reflected personal rather than partisan motivations. He added that his comments about a "failure of governance" were directed at the SSMPBSB's oversight shortcomings during the 2024 budget cycle, not at the complainant. He emphasized that he made no disparaging remarks about the complainant in any podcast or media interview.

Following legal counsel opinion, the hiring committee voted 2-1 not to interview the complainant and to proceed with four other candidates. Within two weeks, Witnesses 1 and 2 resigned from the Board, which Matthew Shoemaker said left the hiring committee short-staffed.

Matthew Shoemaker confirmed making a statement at a May 12, 2025, City Council meeting supporting greater transparency between Council and the SSMPBSB. He clarified that he was speaking as an individual member, not on behalf of the SSMPBSB, and later reiterated that only the Chair is authorized to speak for the SSMPBSB.

Matthew Shoemaker addressed his email to Witness 1 referring to “rot in the governance of this board,” explaining that the phrase referred to procedural failures, specifically, Witness 1’s decision to send council correspondence for legal review without SSMPSB approval. He believed his comments were not abusive or disrespectful.

Matthew Shoemaker acknowledged that tensions rose within the SSMPSB following the budget controversy and City Council scrutiny, particularly between municipal and provincial appointees. He said he believed Witness 1’s unilateral decision-making and poor governance practices contributed to dysfunction. Since the resignations, he felt the SSMPSB had become more cohesive.

Matthew Shoemaker said his public statements were made honestly and transparently, reflected personal opinion rather than SSMPSB positions, and were not intended to undermine confidence in the SSMPSB.

Open-Source Information: Collection and Review

SooToday.com podcast (Aired May 9, 2025)

On May 9, 2025 Mayor and SSMPSB member Matthew Shoemaker participated in a live podcast interview with *SooToday* Editor-in-Chief Michael Friscolanti.

When asked about the complainant’s resignation, Matthew Shoemaker described it as “unfortunate” and said there had been no loss of confidence in the Chief. He noted that the decision came as a surprise, leaving the SSMPSB to appoint the Deputy Chief on an interim basis.

In response to questions about the reported budget overage, Matthew Shoemaker attributed the shortfall to a “failure of governance” rather than individual misconduct. He identified contributing factors such as hiring replacements before retirements were confirmed and described the matter as a broader oversight issue within the SSMPSB.

Matthew Shoemaker emphasized the need to review past decisions, strengthen accountability, and ensure proper oversight. He added that the overage would impact the city budget and that a further deficit was projected for 2025.

Sault Star article (Posted May 16, 2025)

On May 16, 2025 *The Sault Star* published an opinion column by Elaine Della-Matia titled “*Sault Police Services Board failed as a governing body to check financial ledger.*” The piece was critical of the SSMPSB, the former Chief of Police (the complainant), and the Interim Chief of Police.

The author argued that both the SSMPSPB and the Service's senior administration lacked adequate financial oversight, noting that neither the Chair nor the Interim Chief could satisfactorily explain a reported budget overage for 2024. She cited earlier assurances that the budget was on track and suggested that the deficit reflected weak governance and insufficient financial experience among Board members.

The article quoted Mayor and SSMPSPB member Matthew Shoemaker as saying: *"There has been no regard to the numbers approved by council. It's the failure of the board and the board is responsible to ensure it is corrected moving forward."*

The commentary was directed at the SSMPSPB's overall governance responsibilities and did not attribute any criticism by Matthew Shoemaker toward the complainant personally.

YouTube - Sault Ste. Marie City Council Meeting

On May 12, 2025 Sault Ste. Marie City Council held its regular meeting, which was broadcast live on YouTube and remains publicly available on the platform.

Link: [City Council Meeting \(May 12, 2025\)](#)

The former SSMPSPB Chair (Witness 1) and the Interim Chief of the Sault Ste. Marie Police Service attended to address a \$2.9 million overage in the 2024 police budget and an anticipated \$1.9 million overage for 2025. Both were questioned extensively by members of City Council regarding the Service's financial management.

During the meeting, Mayor and SSMPSPB member Matthew Shoemaker made several comments referring to a "failure of governance" and a "failure of the board." He also commented on how he intended to vote as a board member concerning a motion to enhance financial reporting between the Board and City Council. The potential for seeking an O.P.P. costing was also raised as part of the discussion.

INVESTIGATION FINDINGS

I make the following findings, relying on the material and information collected during the investigation and now contained in this report:

1. In February 2025, it was discovered that the Sault Ste. Marie Police Service was facing a \$2.9 million overage from the 2024 budget.

- a. The Sault Ste Marie Police Service Board was notified in October 2024 that there was approximately 28% remaining in the 2024 budget.

- b. The former Chair and Vice Chair (witness 1 and witness 2) became aware of the overage while attending a conference and returned home to deal with the matter.
- c. An emergency meeting of SSMPSB was held, along with staff from city hall. At this meeting, tensions grew as the overage came as a surprise to the board.
- d. Discussion at the meeting suggested that the finance officer at SSMPs did not have the same software and technology as the city.

2. The complainant resigned from the SSMPs to run in the federal election, providing two days' notice to the SSMPSB.

- a. The complainant's contract stipulated that he was to provide six months' notice to the SSMPSB if he wished to resign.
- b. The SSMPSB appointed the Deputy Chief as interim Chief of Police and initiated the steps to begin the process for hiring a new Chief.

3. On May 9, 2025 Matthew Shoemaker spoke with the Editor in Chief of SooToday on a live podcast aired on the SooToday website.

- a. When questioned about the complainant's resignation, Matthew Shoemaker indicated that it was unfortunate as there was "no lack of faith" in the Chief of Police.
- b. When questioned about the overage, Matthew Shoemaker indicated that this was a "failure of governance" and needs to be looked at in the same lens as at other agencies where there is a failure of governance and problems with oversight that need to be corrected.
- c. Matthew Shoemaker indicated that the comments relating to a failure of governance were in reference to the fact that board was not asking the right questions and that they should have been aware of the overage.
- d. When asked by the podcast interviewer if there was someone specifically to blame, Matthew Shoemaker indicated that there were several issues such as hiring replacement officers prior to confirming that officers were going to retire. He indicated that it was a governance issue of the SSMPSB.

4. On May 12, 2025 a Sault Ste. Marie City Council meeting was held, at which Matthew Shoemaker made comments relating to the SSMPSB.

- a. Witness 1 and the Interim Chief of the SSMPS attended to answer questions relating to the overage.
- b. During the meeting, after a resolution was passed, Matthew Shoemaker stated “If I understand Councillor Caputo correctly, essentially what comes to the Police Service Board quarterly, you’d like to come to council, and you’re requesting that of the Police Service Board. I can advise that as a member of the Police Service Board, I support that and will support that at the Board.”
- c. Matthew Shoemaker stated that he was speaking only for himself and not on behalf of the board.
- d. At the end of the meeting, it was agreed that the SSMPSB would respond to additional written questions submitted by city councillors.

5. On May 16, 2025 the Sault Star published an opinion piece by Elaine Della-Matia

- a. The author quoted Matthew Shoemaker as saying “There has been no regard to the numbers approved by council. It’s the failure of the board and the board is responsible to ensure it is corrected moving forward.”
- b. There is no reference to Matthew Shoemaker being critical of the leadership of the complainant.

6. The SSMPSB formed a three-person hiring committee to conduct the hiring process for the position of Chief.

- a. The board voted 3-2 in favour of a three-person board consisting of witness 1, Matthew Shoemaker and Nuala Kenny.

7. On May 19, 2025 the complainant sent a letter to the SSMPSB after he reapplied for the Chief of Police position. The letter stated in part that “one of the members of the Board Selection Committee is in a conflict and has further publically (sic) shown that he has a bias against myself. Mr. Shoemaker will have to declare a “conflict of Interest” as a Board member as it appears that he cannot, as a member of that committee, act in an objective and unbiased manner.” The complainant asked to be advised whether Matthew Shoemaker would withdraw from the hiring committee.

- a. The complainant cited the SooToday podcast and the Sault Star article, indicating that Matthew Shoemaker’s comments demonstrated a public display of conflict and bias.
- b. The SSMPSB referred the complaint to outside legal counsel to determine if Matthew Shoemaker had a personal bias and/or conflict of interest toward the complainant and whether he should be removed from the selection committee.
- c. The SSMPSB received the legal opinion that Matthew Shoemaker was not precluded by conflict of interest or bias from participating in the selection of Chief of Police.
- d. The complainant was notified of the results and the hiring process continued with Matthew Shoemaker remaining on the hiring committee.

8. The complainant was not granted an interview in the hiring process.

- a. After the complainant submitted his complaint to the board, Matthew Shoemaker felt that he would no longer have the confidence of the board or the public.
- b. Nuala Kenny indicated that she was concerned with the fact that the complainant breached his contract and that he showed his political stripes. Nuala Kenny stated that she feels that a Chief should be viewed as politically neutral by the public.
- c. Witness 1 opposed not granting the complainant an interview as he felt that the complainant met all of the criteria and felt that he was the most qualified candidate.
- d. Matthew Shoemaker stated that prior to the board receiving the complainant’s conflict of interest complaint, he was in favour of granting him an interview.

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