

**Annual Report
of the
Integrity Commissioner
for
The Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie**

(Covering the period from February 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021)

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Background

On May 1, 2018, the Council of the Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie, appointed Antoinette Blunt, President, Ironside Consulting Services Inc. as the City's first Integrity Commissioner. The period of appointment was from May 1, 2018 until December 31, 2020. This appointment was extended by mutual agreement of the parties, on December 14, 2020 until March 31, 2023. This report represents the services provided from February 1, 2020 until June 30, 2021.

Preliminary Review of Complaint Alleging Violation of Code of Conduct by Mayor Provenzano

A request for an investigation into the conduct of Mayor Provenzano, was received on October 8, 2020. The allegations included, improper use of City resources; use of City property for personal use; improper influence on staff and improper use of influence. The Integrity Commissioner concluded that none of these allegations were substantiated. The Integrity Commissioner finds there are no grounds for an inquiry. And found that Mayor Provenzano did not violate the Code of Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards, By-law 2017-242, dated 11 December 2017, as amended.

Participation in AMO's Survey: Strengthening Accountability for Municipal Council Members

The Integrity Commissioner responded to the above noted AMO survey prior to the closing date of July 15, 2021. One statement noted that Municipalities are required to develop codes of conduct for members. Currently, Codes of Conduct for Members of Council rules about:

- Gifts, benefits and hospitality
- Respectful conduct
- Confidential information
- Use of municipal property and equipment
- Any other subjects the municipality wishes to include

Respondents were asked if there are other things that municipalities should be required to address in their codes of conduct. The Integrity Commissioner responded stating, not specifically, but what would be beneficial is developing a "Guide to Code of Conduct", for reference to enhance understanding; to promote a higher standard of conduct and ensure consistency. Also, consider expanding the definition in the Act or requirement for compliance and what it means; consider a legislated Code of Conduct that is applicable to all municipalities that clearly delineates between governance versus operations and roles of staff versus roles of elected or appointed members.

Another statement noted that currently, if a Council member violates the Code of Conduct, Council may reprimand the member or suspend the member's rate of pay for up to 90 days. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), has made recommendations to improve accountability for members of council, including suggestions for increased penalties for code of conduct violations. Respondents were

asked which of AMO's recommendations they thought would help improve accountability for Council members and to select all that applied from the following list:

- Increased financial penalties to encourage compliance
- Suspension for certain violations
- Removal from office in certain circumstances
- Better training and standards for Integrity Commissioners

The Integrity Commissioner responded by selecting all stated above.

Another question asked was under what circumstances did you believe that additional or stronger penalties for violating a code of conduct would be appropriate. The Integrity Commissioner responded by stating that it should be defined in legislation what constitutes minor or major violations and increase penalties and sanctions for major breaches. Also, it was noted that there should be a course developed for Integrity Commissioners, that they should be required to take in order to become certified. In addition, practice guidelines should be developed to increase competency and standard application of actions of Integrity Commissioners. The Integrity Commissioner also recommended the development of a template for investigations. Also, for individuals being considered for positions of Integrity Commissioners, a recommendation for education and experience requirements. There should be training courses for Integrity Commissioners and another for Councillors and members appointed to Boards, that can be taken virtually.

The Integrity Commissioner also responded by stating that standards and practice guidelines will ensure a best practice approach to investigations done by Integrity Commissioners and creating a legislated Code of Conduct for all municipalities will support consistency and fairness. Developing training courses for Integrity Commissioners and certification requirements and training course for Councillors and members appointed to Boards, ensures a consistent and a fair approach. All of these measures are proactive and will minimize the need for an enforcement approach.

Expenditures During Period and Total Since Appointment

The cost for services rendered for the period from from February 1, 2020 until June 17, 2021. was \$2,432.33. This included the expenses related to the October 8, 2020 preliminary review of allegations regarding Mayor Provenzano and the development of the 2020 Annual for Council and the preparation and presentation to City Council on the role of the Integrity Commissioner.

The total cost for services rendered since date of initial appointment is \$5,531.36.