

DECISION

File No. PC-23-0169

NOVA SCOTIA POLICE REVIEW BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:

The *Police Act*, Chapter 31 of the *Acts* of 2004 and
the Regulations made pursuant thereto

-and-

IN THE MATTER OF:

An appeal filed by **Helen Ong**, Complainant against
Cst. Chris McLeod of **Halifax Regional Police**.
Requesting a review of a decision made by
Inspector Ron Legere dated January 11th, 2024.

BEFORE:

Jean McKenna, Chair
Mary Potter, Board Member
Siobhan Doyle, Board Member

COUNSEL:

Helen Ong, Self-Represented
Brian Bailey, Counsel for Cst. Chris McLeod
Andrew Gough, Counsel for Halifax Regional
Police

HEARING DATE:

June 16th, 2025

DECISION DATE:

September 18th, 2025

[1] On August 17th, 2023, at 20:19, Cst. Chris McLeod was dispatched to a call from John Sorensen who reported that his former spouse had failed to return his two children (Stanley, 6, and Kiara, 3), to him in accordance with a Family Court Order. Sorensen reported that there was a Peace Bond in place, which restricted him from contacting her directly. At the same time, Ms. Ong made her own call to Halifax Regional Police (HRP), reporting that Mr. Sorensen had called her three times in the previous 15 minutes and so, was in violation of the Peace Bond.

[2] Ms. Ong filed a public complaint against Cst. McLeod in relation to his dealing with the response to Mr. Sorensen's issue. Ms. Ong's complaint filed on October 17th, 2023, references Cst. McLeod's response:

“Cst. McLeod “...asked me to come down to his car despite he knew that I was with my 2 children at 21:30. I refused, and he sounded annoyed. I was triggered and my anxiety went higher. Cst. emailed me 12:25 a.m. to come to HRP for cautioned statement at 1500. I was intimidated and nervous as he sounded annoyed on the phone. I came and told him the truth. Gave my phones, he read the emails from crown attorney and sent him a copy. On 9/30/2023 he told me not moving forward with my complaint. I ordered for police report and found he claimed I have not provided him with the full email explanation of the crown attorney which is false.”

[3] To summarize her complaint, it seems to focus on three items:

1. An allegation of rudeness by Cst. McLeod
2. Intimidation by requesting a cautioned statement

3. A false statement concerning an email from the Crown Attorney

[4] The breach of the conduct as framed in the Form 8; Notice of Allegation is:

24(3)(a) Neglecting to, or without adequate reason, failing to promptly, properly, or diligently perform a duty as a member;

24(4)(a) Willfully or negligently making or sign a false, misleading, or inaccurate written statement or entry, including by electronic means, in an official document or record;

[5] The issue for this Board is whether there was any misconduct by Cst. McLeod in his conduct on this file. The ‘criminality’ of Mr. Sorensen's activity, as alleged by Ms. Ong, is a breach of the peace bond regarding John Sorensen's contact with Ms. Ong, and Cst. McLeod's response to that. She maintained throughout the process, and in her testimony at the Review Board Hearing, that the Family Court Order had been altered from the original draft order.

[6] Allegations of alteration of the Family Court Order are matters for the Family Court. Whether altered or not, that Order became incorporated in the Peace Bond, and both the ‘draft’ order, which we have not seen, and the court certified order, contained the same provisions as to when Ms. Ong could have access to the children. It did not spell out any particular contact restrictions on inter-parent communication, it provided that she was to pick them up, and drop them off. Those restrictions are only seen in the Peace Bond, which allows contact if it is made for the purpose of exercising access, as set out in the Family Court Order. Otherwise, he was to have no direct or indirect contact with her.

[7] The history of events leading up to that dispatch is lengthy, and confusing.

[8] The Complainant, Helen Ong, was born in China, where she met John Sorensen, her (former) partner. They moved to Canada in 2017. They have 2 children, Stanley and Kiara. For some period of time, they lived with John's parents. At the time of the events complained of, Stanley was 6 and Kiara, 3.

[9] It is an understatement to say that the relationship between Ong and Sorensen was acrimonious. She testified that she was physically and sexually abused by John Sorensen, and she felt isolated, away from her home country and family. She made allegations of financial fraud against him and his family members. All allegations were investigated by Halifax Regional Police.

[10] John Sorensen and Helen Ong separated in 2021, and protracted Family Court matters followed, apparently with some involvement with Family and Children's Service. An interim consent order was made on December 12th, 2022. It is headed "Interim Consent Order" and is recited as "Before the Honorable Justice Cindy G Cormier." The recital states "The matter was before this Honorable Court for a pre-trial conference on December 12th, 2022." That Order provided that the children were to reside with John Sorensen, and provided for specific "parenting time" for Helen Ong:

- "a) Every Tuesday, she shall pick up the children at 3:00 pm from school, daycare, or Mr. Sorensen's home if there is no school or daycare, and Ms. Ong shall return them to Mr. Sorensen by 8:00 pm on Thursday.

- b) Every Sunday from 10:00 am until 1:00 pm, and Ms. Ong shall both pick up and return the children.”

[11] For reasons unknown to the Board, that Order was not issued by the Court until April 12th, 2023. The original, typed, issue date was “The _____ day of December 2022”, but on the stamped Court Order, December 2022, has been deleted, and April 2023 is entered in pen and ink, and initialed by an unknown party. The Order is endorsed by counsel Peter Katsiitis, for John Sorensen Petitioner, and Nicholas Darbyshire for the respondent Helen Ong.

[12] The allegations of abuse had resulted in HRP laying a charge against John Sorensen in 2022; however, the Crown Attorney proposed a common law Peace Bond as an alternative resolution. The Peace Bond was dated June 13th, 2023, (subsequent to the issued Family Court Order) and provided the following conditions:

HAVE NO DIRECT OR INDIRECT CONTACT OR COMMUNICATION WITH
HELEN ONG EXCEPT

-THROUGH A LAWYER

-IN ACCORDANCE WITH AN ORDER OF THE FAMILY COURT

-IN ACCORDANCE WITH A WRITTEN AGREEMENT BETWEEN HIM AND
HELEN ONG

DO NOT BE ON OR WITHIN 25 METERS OF ANY HOME, WORKPLACE OF
HELEN ONG EXCEPT

-FOR THE PURPOSE OF FACILITATING ACCESS TO A CHILD OR
CHILDREN; OR

-WITH HER EXPRESSED CONSENT, WHICH MAY BE REVOKED AT ANY
TIME, AND ONLY FOR SO LONG AS SUCH CONSENT IS GIVEN

[13] Ms. Ong maintained, in her dealings with Halifax Regional Police, and even in her testimony before the Board, that the Interim Order (Exhibit Book pages 359, 360) that was endorsed by counsel for both Mr. Sorensen and Ms. Ong, and later issued by Family Court was not the same as the draft Order, and that the draft that she claimed to have, had been altered. She alleged that her then lawyer had never seen the final version (although his signature appears on it.) Correspondence from her lawyer's assistant says that he, (the lawyer) believes that the original Order may have been altered. We don't know what alteration he is referring to. We understand that since then, her lawyer either withdrew from representing her, or she dismissed him.

[14] The only alteration we see on the issued Order is the date change. No "draft" order was presented in evidence, although in Cst. McLeod's Initial Officer's Report mentioned that John Sorensen emailed him a copy of the issued Order, and that there were no visible changes on the document other than the date. The "draft" Order that Ms. Ong insisted governed the custody arrangement is also mentioned in a later written statement sent as an e-mail from Russell Taggart to Chris McLeod on September 30th, 2023: "He ...(Neil Sorensen)...asked that I forward him the court order which we have, to which I suggested he have John speak with his lawyer for the version which is on file with the court". Russell Taggart did not forward any "draft" Order.

[15] On June 14th, 2023, (the day after the Peace Bond was issued) Helen Ong emailed Laura Roberts, a "Victim Service Navigator", who had apparently been assisting her through the assault charge process, to advise her that the police had responded to a complaint from her that John Sorensen had already violated the Peace Bond and the police had "made an incident number",

but had told her that they did not think there was a Peace Bond violation as he came to her to hand over her daughter. Ms. Roberts explained to her that John can contact her “if it has to do with the kids”, and that he “is doing the right thing by using his brother to contact you”, and further, “He is also allowed to come to your home if it is to pick up or drop off the kids as well.”

[16] On August 4th, 2023, Helen Ong sent an email to Laura Roberts, and Nicholas Foran, Crown Attorney. She reiterates her numerous and continuing allegations against John Sorensen, and says that she called the police multiple times, and that they spent “all their night shifts trying to resolve the circus my family created. Police did their due diligence and listened to both sides only to come back again in few weeks for same reason”. She alleged that John Sorensen had “altered” the Family Court Order by “changing the pick up and drop off schedule last minute to provoke her to a nasty argument in front of the kids”.

[17] On August 16th, 2023, Crown Foran emailed her. He explained the Peace Bond conditions, and exceptions, and explained that police will not always lay a charge, and that even if they suspect a breach, that is not enough. They must have reasonable grounds, which “rises above suspicion”.

[18] It seems that neither Mr. Sorensen nor Ms. Ong had been strictly following the terms contained in the Family Court Order, as far as who was to pick up, and drop off. The contacts / exchanges had been acrimonious.

[19] As noted, it was the next day, August 17th, 2023, the day after Crown Foran's message, that Cst. Chris McLeod was dispatched to respond to the call from John Sorensen, advising that Helen Ong had failed to drop off the children that day. August 17th, 2023, was a Thursday, and according to the Family Court Order, she was to drop off the kids by 8:00 pm. John Sorensen reported that he had been using his brother Neil to facilitate the child exchange process, but as of August 17th, 2023, he did not want to do that, "as his lawyer's advice was to stick to the Family Court order." He told Cst. McLeod that when Ms. Ong failed to drop off the children as per the Order, his only option was to call police, as he did not want to contact her directly, as he feared he could be charged with breaching his Peace Bond.

[20] As will be seen below, it seems that same night, around the same time, Neil Sorensen had called Ms. Ong's number three times, apparently inquiring about the drop off.

[21] According to Cst. McLeod's Initial Officers Report (IOR), while he was speaking to John Sorensen, Ms. Ong contacted HRP to advise that John Sorensen had been calling her, three times in 15 minutes, between 9:56 and 10:04 PM. The record shows that the calls were actually from Neil Sorensen, John's brother. His discussions had been with Russell Taggert, a friend / support of Ms. Ong. It seems that as a result of those telephone discussions, Mr. Sorensen was satisfied that the children were safe.

[22] In response to the call from dispatch, after briefly reviewing related files involving the two individuals Cst. McLeod went to Ms. Ong's address and called her number. The call was answered by a male, "Russell", who we now understand to be Russell Taggert, who Ms. Ong

describes as her “support”. Mr. Taggert eventually put Helen Ong on the call, In his IOR, Cst. McLeod describes Helen Ong as “...emotional, hard to keep on track, and avoided direct questions at times.” She did not want to come down from the building and meet with Cst. McLeod. She testified that the reason for refusing to do so was that she could not leave her children alone. In cross examination, she acknowledged that Russell Taggert would be with the children, and her response was to the effect that the relationship was not such that she would be comfortable doing that. (The following day, Russell Taggert facilitated the drop off of the children, as Ms. Ong was not present).

[23] On his response to the call, Cst. McLeod became satisfied from his discussions with John Sorensen, Russell Taggert, and Helen Ong, that the children were safe, and so he arranged for Helen Ong to come to police headquarters on August 20th, 2023, to provide a cautioned statement. He obtained a 90-minute statement from her.

[24] A Supplemental Report completed on August 18th, 2023, by Cst. Sym Dewar, shows that the following morning, Helen Ong was again complaining of a supposed breach by John Sorensen. The pick up itself was apparently done by John's other brother Steve. She said she wasn't there at the time, and the children were handed over by her “support”, Russell Taggert.

[25] On August 20th, 2023, Cst. McLeod obtained the 90-minute statement from her, In the course of that statement, she appears to show him an email copy of the stamped Family Court Order, and claims that it was given to her by John's brother when he came to facilitate the exchange of the children on August 18th, 2023, and she says “...I have the court order for the first

time” and later, “...I emailed you the original on December...” She says, “my lawyer doesn’t even recognize that” Cst. McLeod says “I have the exact same thing here for the record”. She then refers to a discussion with her lawyer, who supposedly told her that “they” were applying to the Court to produce the original Court Order.

[26] The discussion is confusing as to what was seen and read in during the statement process, but it appears to include an email from her counsel on December 22nd, 2022: “Please find a draft interim consent order I prepared for your review”. While it is difficult to determine what he is referencing, Cst. McLeod seems to indicate that the documents are the same, but one is not stamped, and Ms. Ong says the times of pick up and drop off have been changed.

[27] There is no dispute, however, that Cst. McLeod did have a copy of the April 22nd, 2023, court certified Order.

[28] Stepping back chronologically to events occurring after the December 2022 Family Court interim hearing and Order, in the course of dealing with what appears to be another assault complaint or charge against John Sorenesen, in January 2023, Cst. Anil Rana is dealing with Ms. Ong. An email from Cst. Rana to Ms. Ong references as follows: “This is what John shared with us: 'Every Sunday, from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. and Ms. Ong shall both pick up and return the children'.” That reflects exactly the wording in the later certified Family Court Order, originally dated December 12th, 2022, and runs counter to the allegation by Ms. Ong that the “draft” order had been altered.

[29] In the course of her statement, Ms. Ong did show Cst. McLeod a copy of the August 16th, 2023, letter from Crown Foran setting out to her the exceptions to the Peace Bond, and it was read into the statement. The exceptions had also been explained to her by Victim's Services on June 14th, 2023.

[30] One of the emails surrounding the June 13th, 2023, exchange with Victim's Services indicates that the very day "about 30 minutes ago he was standing in the driveway about 8 meters from her as he sent her daughter to come running to her". She saw this as a breach of the Peace Bond, presumably of the 25-meter restriction and therefore a violation of the Peace Bond conditions.

[31] As noted, no "draft" Order was produced at the hearing. However, even if dates were different, it seems that the pick up and drop off requirements were the same. It also appears from Ms. Ong's evidence that she and Mr. Sorensen varied those requirements periodically; she made some reference for example to meeting at a local mall, and also to an event where she claimed she had a flat tire and couldn't attend. Also, she became dissatisfied with Neil Sorensen being used to facilitate, and on the August 18th, 2023, exchange of the children, Stephen Sorensen "facilitated" the pick up.

[32] There is no dispute that the court certified Order was in place on August 17th, 2023. Ms. Ong may or may not have seen it, but given the communication with her from Victim's Services, and the Crown, she surely must have been aware of the content. Ms. Ong's issue was not with the "no contact" provision in the Peace Bond, which is reflected with exceptions in the Family Court

Order. Rather her issue was with who should pick up and drop off the children. The “no contact” provisions were in the Peace Bond, not the Family Court Order, in both the December and April Orders, Ms. Ong's concern was with her interpretation of “no contact in the Peace Bond.” She was unhappy that the pick up and drop off provisions were unfair to her.

ANALYSIS

The investigation / failure to charge:

[33] The issues surrounding the “draft” Order serve simply as background to the complaint. There certainly is some question as to whether a “draft” ever existed at all, and whether any alteration was done other than the date. However, although that can impact Ms. Ong's credibility to a point, those issues are not particularly germane to Cst. McLeod's dealing with Ms. Ong.

[34] In responding to dispatch, it became incumbent for Cst. McLeod to determine firstly, whether the children were safe, and secondly, given the concurrent call from Ms. Ong, to consider a violation of the Peace Bond by John Sorenesen, in contacting her “three times in 15 minutes”. In considering whether charges could be laid against John Sorensen for breach of the Peace Bond, Cst. McLeod was responding to the language in the court issued Peace Bond, and the court issued Family Court Order. Those documents must be read together, and governed the question of any possible violation of the Peace Bond conditions.

[35] It is undisputed that as of August 17th, 2023, Ms. Ong did not return the children to Mr. Sorensen as was required by the Family Court Order. It is equally clear that, although there had

been different arrangements for child pick up and drop off, as of August 17th, 2023, John Sorensen was expecting that the children would be dropped off.

[36] On that date, John Sorensen's brother Neil was the one who had called Ms. Ong. Victim's Services Ms. Roberts had advised Ms. Ong in June that using the brother to facilitate the exchange was "doing the right thing".

[37] All of this information became known to Cst. McLeod as he continued his investigation into a possible violation of the Peace Bond.

[38] In the course of his dealings with Ms. Ong on August 17th, 2023, he became aware that the children were sleeping, and that John Sorensen was no longer concerned about their location or safety and that the exchange would take place the next morning.

[39] In her complaint, Ms. Ong says that he requested that night that she come to HRP headquarters "8/28 at 15:00", to provide a cautioned statement. Ms. Ong said that she was intimidated and nervous. In his Initial Officer's report, Cst. McLeod noted;

"With the complicated nature of the occurrences, and the difficulty communicating with Helen Ong over the phone, Cst. McLeod wished to get an audio video warned recorded statement from Helen Ong. This would allow Helen Ong's story to be clarified, and documents to be reviewed. There was no immediate danger to Helen Ong and she had made plans for John Sorensen to be in close proximity to her in the morning. Helen Ong was agreeable to a non-custodial warned audio video statement and arrangements were made for Sunday August 20 at 1500 hours at HQ."

[40] The statement consumed some 90 minutes. Even with the transcribed statement, the story “meanders”.

[41] Cst. McLeod's next step was to obtain a statement from Russell Taggert, but due to his own work volume, it was not until September 7th, 2023, that he was able to speak with him, and arrange for a recorded statement on September 14th, 2023. That date did not work, and then on September 30th, 2023, Mr. Taggert sent him a written statement. Mr. Taggert's statement confirmed that on August 17th, 2023, Neil Sorensen had been the caller, and spoke to Mr. Taggert. He also said the Order provided that “they” (Sorensen's) should pick the children up and Mr. Sorensen said that the stamped court Order said that the children would be dropped off. Mr. Taggert said that “Helen's lawyer said he was not aware of the terms of this court order and that he did not sign it”. As noted, her lawyer's signature is on the document; despite the comment from her lawyer's assistant, it does not seem credible that he said to Helen, or Mr. Taggert, that he did not sign the Order, or that it must have been changed. But that was a matter to be dealt with in the Family Court. There is no doubt that this was the underlying reason that Helen Ong and her lawyer parted company.

[42] After review of that statement, Cst. McLeod concluded that charges should not be laid against John Sorensen. The file was cleared, on the basis of “insufficient evidence to proceed”, and Ms. Ong was notified.

[43] The Board accepts that this was the appropriate disposition; it was clear that this was in reality, a custody dispute, to be dealt with by the Family Court.

Rudeness and intimidation / request for a cautioned statement

[44] Ms. Ong claimed, in her formal complaint, and in her testimony, that Cst. McLeod's tone was “angry” in the course of the phone call of August 17th, 2023. She said she was intimidated by the request for a cautioned statement. That reaction would not be unusual; it implies the possibility of a criminal charge. The statement forms part of the exhibits.

[45] At the outset, Cst. McLeod says to her, “If it is proven that you lied to me or other police officers to try to mislead an investigation or anything you can be charged with public mischief, right? And I'm not accusing you of that. We just...(Ong: “I Know”)...like to have it...(Ong: yeah)...clear, right? And also, you are not a suspect in anything, you're here on your own free will”.

[46] The statement is not “cautioned” in the usual sense of the word; there is no “right to counsel” language as would be seen in a cautioned statement. In his testimony, at the hearing, and in the course of the statement, it was clear that the reason for such a statement was an effort to obtain a clearer picture of events. As he noted in his IOR, Ms. Ong was described as, “emotional, hard to keep on track, and avoided direct questions at times.” Several times in the course of taking the statement, he had to ask her, politely, to please stop interrupting him.

[47] This was an accurate portrayal of much of Ms. Ong's communications throughout the documents, and even during her testimony at the hearing.

[48] While describing the statement to Ms. Ong as “cautioned” may have been somewhat intimidating, and perhaps not the best choice of language, this certainly is not a matter for discipline. It was an effort to obtain a clear picture of events, certainly absent over the course of HRP dealings with both her and Mr. Sorensen.

[49] Ms. Ong saw Cst. Mcleod's tone as “annoyed”. He denies this and says he was not annoyed. He says that he is experienced in dealing with domestic disputes. His language used in taking the statement does show a sensitivity to her situation. It reflects a courteous, and sensitive demeanor.

[50] The Board finds that there was nothing improper in his manner and tone in dealing with Ms. Ong on August 17th, 2023.

False statement re: communication to Ms. Ong from the Crown:

[51] In his Supplemental Report #4, Cst. McLeod states that “Helen Ong did not provide Cst. McLeod with the full-length e-mail from the Crown Prosecutor she had shown Cst. McLeod during the statement. That email really dug into explanations of the peace bond and reiterated that just because Helen Ong believes a breach had happened, does not make it true.”

[52] There is no dispute that whether Cst. McLeod did or didn't see a copy of the email, the email is read into the statement, from Ms. Ong's cell phone. The email is included in the Exhibit Book filed at the hearing. It contains exactly what is read in the statement. In his testimony, Cst. McLeod agreed that he had seen it, and that she had sent the email, but he had later missed the

email. But his supplemental report, although he denies having seen the Crown email, correctly says that it “dug into” the explanation of the Peace Bond, and he was fully aware of the content.

[53] Ms. Ong in her brief argued that by saying in his Supplemental Report that she did not send the email, Cst. McLeod abused his authority and “failed to respect how is handling of my personal information would effect me when creating a record that would become public- all without consulting me”. She says that the fact that it was then a month before she received “updates or investigative results” shows that her matter was not taken seriously and that her rights were not respected.

[54] It was on September 23rd, 2023, that the matter was closed, and Helen Ong was notified.

Conclusion

[55] We acknowledge that Ms. Ong was in a vulnerable situation. She was dealing with the acrimonious dissolution of her marriage, with ongoing custody and access issues, and an allegation of assault in the not too distant past. She was trying to negotiate the Nova Scotia Family Law system, and the Criminal Justice system, which were new to her. She did not have familial support in Canada. She was emotional, anxious, and — according to her evidence and statement — sometimes fearful. But that does not color the undisputed facts.

[56] **24(4)(a) Willfully or negligently making or sign a false, misleading, or inaccurate written statement or entry, including by electronic means, in an official document or record**

The mis-statement by Cst. McLeod in his reporting regarding the Crown email was an error, but can't fall within the category of "Willfully or negligently making or sign a false, misleading, or inaccurate written statement or entry". He did not deny that he had seen it, and considered it. His failure to recall that he had received the full email was an error, but not negligent in the sense that he either knew or should have known that some harm could result. Whether he recalled the email or not, the content was fully read into the statement, and it was supportive of his final determination that he did not have reasonable grounds to charge John Sorensen.

This allegation is dismissed.

[57] **24(3)(a) Neglecting to, or without adequate reason, failing to promptly , properly, or diligently perform a duty as a member**

The basis for this allegation default would seem to be that his conduct was rude and intimidating, and that he sounded "annoyed" in the course of the phone call, thereby failing to "properly" perform his duty. It is subjective on the part of Ms. Ong, and his own view of the interaction is of course equally subjective. But Ms. Ong was certainly in a very emotional state at the time, and it seems, throughout all of her interactions with police and others in relation to the acrimonious relationship between herself and John Sorensen.

[58] On his part, Cst. McLeod is an experienced, trained officer, and frequently has cause to deal with domestic disputes. The recorded statement demonstrates his willingness to listen, and his sensitivity towards her. As noted, her allegation that the conversation was also intimidating,

in part, because he wanted a “cautioned” statement. Cst. McLeod had good reason to want a formal statement.

[59] We find that even if he sounded “annoyed” to Ms. Ong on the phone call, it is hardly conduct that could rise to the level of disciplinary default.

This allegation is dismissed.

Dated in Halifax, Nova Scotia, this 18th day of September 2025.

ORIGINAL SIGNED

Jean McKenna, Chair

ORIGINAL SIGNED

Mary Potter, Board Member

ORIGINAL SIGNED

Siobhan Doyle, Board Member