

Thunder Bay Mayor Keith Hobbs, wife and 1 other charged with extortion

Charges laid Friday and earlier ones against police chief are part of same investigation, OPP says

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Thunder Bay Mayor Keith Hobbs and two other people have been charged with extortion, say Ontario Provincial Police. (Jeff Walters/CBC)

- [Police chief in Thunder Bay, Ont., charged with breach of trust](#)
- [Police chief J.P. Levesque placed on administrative suspension while facing criminal charges](#)
- [New acting Thunder Bay police chief says service working through 'challenging times'](#)
- [Thunder Bay police chief charged after disclosing information concerning city's mayor](#)

Ontario Provincial Police have charged Thunder Bay Mayor Keith Hobbs and two other people with extortion.

Keith Hobbs, 65, and his wife, Marisa Hobbs, 53, have each been charged with extortion and obstructing justice, an OPP release said Friday. Another Thunder Bay resident, Mary Voss, 46, has also been charged with extortion.

The OPP statement said the charges relate to "an investigation of allegations of criminal wrongdoing that include a municipal official and a local resident."

The accused are scheduled to appear in court on Sept. 26.

Court documents obtained from the Thunder Bay courthouse on Friday showed that the extortion charges are related to a Thunder Bay lawyer currently facing a number of his own charges, including assault and sexual assault.

The specifics of those charges are subject to a publication ban.

Alexander "Sandy" Zaitzeff was originally charged Nov. 25, 2016. His licence to practice law has since been suspended by the Law Society of Upper Canada.

- **Sandy Zaitzeff, charged with sexual assault, in court Friday**
- **Thunder Bay lawyer faces new sexual assault charges**

Keith and Marisa Hobbs, as well as Mary Voss, attempted to obtain a house for Voss, between Oct. 19, 2016 and Nov. 20, 2016, attempted to "induce ... Zaitzeff to purchase a house, by threats, accusations or menaces of disclosing criminal allegations to the police," according to the court information on the extortion charges against the Hobbs.

The obstruction charges against Keith and Marisa Hobbs cover the period between Dec. 21, 2016 and May 7, 2017, and allege that they interfered in an investigation being conducted by the RCMP.

Keith HOBBS (09 Jul 52), Marisa HOBBS (30 Jul 63)
and Mary VOSS (06 Nov 70)

(date of birth / date de naissance)

(1) between the / entre le 19th day of October 2016 and the 20th day of / jour de November, 2016
at the City of Thunder Bay in the said region
à (au) de dans ladite région District of Thunder Bay,
Province of Ontario,

without reasonable justification or excuse and with intent to obtain a dwelling house for Mary Voss, attempt to induce Alexander "Sandy" ZAITZEFF to purchase a house, by threats, accusations or menaces of disclosing criminal allegations to the police, thereby committing extortion contrary to section 346 (1.1)(b) of the Criminal Code of Canada;

AND FURTHER THAT

(2) Keith HOBBS between the 21st day of December 2016 and the 7th day of May 2017 at the City of Thunder Bay in the said region did wilfully attempt to obstruct the course of justice in a judicial proceeding by interfering in a criminal investigation into an allegation of extortion reported to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, contrary to s. 139 (2) of the Criminal Code of Canada;

AND FURTHER THAT

(3) Marisa HOBBS between the 21st day of December 2016 and the 7th day of May 2017 at the City of Thunder Bay in the said region did wilfully attempt to obstruct the course of justice in a judicial proceeding by interfering in a criminal investigation into an allegation of extortion reported to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, contrary to s. 139 (2) of the Criminal Code of Canada.

Court documents obtained by CBC News on Friday laid out the nature of the charges against the accused. (Jody Porter / CBC)

A statement issued by Keith and Marisa Hobbs's lawyers, Brian Greenspan and Naomi Lutes, denied the allegations, calling them "unjustified," and said they will be "vigorously defended."

"Mayor Hobbs and his wife are hopeful that the community will not prejudge these unproven charges and are grateful for the continued support of their many colleagues, family and friends," the statement concluded.

Keith Hobbs told CBC Friday he can't speak publicly about the matter because it's before the courts.

Hobbs to take leave

City officials in Thunder Bay called a news conference on Friday morning to say that Hobbs has requested a leave, which will begin on Monday. He will be paid during that period.

Coun. Trevor Giertuga, who is serving as the city's acting mayor for the rest of the month, said Hobbs' charges are not related to any municipal business.

Hobbs will be absent from his duties for an undetermined period of time, city officials said, adding that city council received "legal advice" about the matter at a closed-session meeting Thursday evening.

The mayor was also appointed in 2015 to the board of the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation for a three-year term. The corporation's website said Hobbs went on leave on July 19.

Same investigation, OPP says

Hobbs is the second high-ranking city official in Thunder Bay to be charged this year. In May, provincial police charged Thunder Bay police Chief J.P. Levesque with breach of trust and obstructing justice.

Court documents filed when Levesque was charged showed those charges stemmed from allegations that Levesque disclosed confidential information concerning Hobbs.

The extortion and obstruction of justice charges laid on Friday and the charges against Levesque are part of the same investigation, according to Staff Sgt. Carolle Dionne, a spokesperson with OPP headquarters in Orillia, Ont.

- [Thunder Bay police chief charged with breach of trust](#)
- [Case involving Thunder Bay Police chief put over to Aug. 17](#)

A complainant contacted the RCMP in January, 2017 and alleged "criminal wrongdoing," involving a municipal politician, Dionne told CBC News in an interview Friday morning, adding that the chief of Thunder Bay police at the time — Levesque — requested that the OPP investigate those allegations.

There is "some type of relationship" between Hobbs, Voss and Levesque, Dionne said, citing "the charges being part of the same investigation," but added that she doesn't know any specific details.

Levesque was subsequently charged in May and placed on a leave with pay.

Dionne wouldn't divulge who the original complainant was.