

WORK BACKGROUND

⇒ I worked for the City of Saskatoon for almost 31 years. Started in Tax Department, then City Commissioners (now City Manager's) and at the age of 22 was promoted to Executive Assistant to the Chief of Police. I worked for 6 police chiefs over the course of 26 years.

EVENTS LEADING UP TO 2 DISMISSALS

⇒ February 28, 2003 – I filed 4 complaints of harassment against then Chief Sabo.

⇒ They were investigated by an outside agency and Chief Sabo was found guilty of four harassment incidents against me and one incident against a female police officer.

⇒ Chief Sabo was reinstated and I was expected to go back and work with him.

⇒ My emotional state was such by this point that my doctor put me on sick leave for 11 months. I wished to return to my job so I agreed to mediation with Chief Sabo in the spring of 2004, and returned to work on April 1, 2004.

⇒ I returned to work, but found my duties had been diminished and I was now to share the workload with my co-worker whom had taken over my regular duties while I was on sick leave. Other new conditions and substantial changes to my work duties were imposed on me. The OH&S investigator found the timing and nature of the changes to be of a discriminatory nature.

⇒ The Board of Police Commissioners sent me to a conference in Toronto in the fall of 2004 called “Partnering with your Boss”.

Upon my return to work from the conference, I was read a prepared statement and placed on indefinite paid administrative leave for an alleged complaint against me by a co-worker. I was asked to leave the workplace and not return except to meet with the investigator.

- ⇒ I made several requests for a copy of the complaint over the next month. When I finally received it, I found the complainant was the co-worker who had been moved into my position when I was on stress leave. This written complaint was received almost a month after I was put on paid administrative leave.
- ⇒ The OH&S investigator determined that the City of Saskatoon failed to follow their own policy which states, “The supervisor in consultation with all the parties involved will determine a course of action to resolve the conflict, utilizing the tools and resources available”. The City did not consult with me - they merely sent me home without informing me of or allowing me to address the allegations.
- ⇒ The City Solicitor, on behalf of the Board of Police Commissioners, indicated to my lawyer that regardless of whether I accepted a severance package or not, I would not be returning to my job. I found this an interesting statement considering I had done nothing wrong.
- ⇒ In July of 2005, now 9 months after I was put on paid administrative leave, I heard that the investigation against me had in fact been completed on December 4, 2004. My lawyer and I were never advised it was completed –I was simply left to sit at home being paid full salary and benefits the entire time. I then requested a copy of the investigation and findings. After repeated calls to the Board of Police Commissioner’s new lawyer, I finally received a copy.

⇒ In September, 2005, I received a letter from the Board's lawyer saying I was terminated.

⇒ I filed a complaint with the OH&S investigator and was reinstated three months later. The OH&S investigator questioned the Board's lawyer regarding the reason for my firing and he confirmed that it was based on the investigator's review. The OH&S investigator stated it appeared the City chose to disregard the investigator's findings which did not recommend discipline or termination. The investigator found that the employer had taken discriminatory action against me since October 12, 2004.

⇒ I returned to work in January, 2006. Although the Board appealed the decision and requested I be kept away from the workplace until the appeal was heard, this was denied and I remained at work and received full back pay and benefits owing. The Board lost this appeal.

⇒ Due to further harassment when I returned to work, I went on stress leave. During this time, an offer to settle was made and I reluctantly decided that it was best to negotiate a settlement package because of my emotional and financial state. When I believed an agreement would be before the Board in August of 2006, I began to seek other employment as I understood from the Board's lawyer that I would be able to remain on the City payroll and work elsewhere. As a result, I was fired a 2nd time on October 31, 2006. This firing came four weeks prior to me being eligible for retirement after having given exemplary service to the City of Saskatoon for almost 31 years.

⇒ OH&S once again investigated and found the employer's "good and sufficient other reasons" for the latest termination did not

convince her that my occupational health and safety activities were not involved in the employer's decision to terminate me. I was again reinstated and the Board was to comply with the order by September 24, 2007. I quit my new job to return to my position at the Saskatoon Police Service. When I returned to work on September 19th, the day of the order, I was escorted out of the Police Station. When I returned on September 24, 2007, the date the Board was to comply, I was once again escorted out of the Police Station.

- ⇒ The OH&S investigator also recommended that my file be forwarded to Saskatchewan Justice for review as she believes the employer knowingly contravened Section 27 of The Occupational Health and Safety Act.
- ⇒ The Board appealed the decision and has refused to comply with the order even though they have requested, but have not received permission from the adjudicator to keep me off the payroll and away from the office.
- ⇒ A three-week trial will now take place most likely in November of this year. At that time, it will be almost six years since I laid my initial four complaints.
- ⇒ I can't even explain the emotional and financial turmoil this has caused. The process has been more damaging than the actual harassment.
- ⇒ I know of other women who have had to sell their vehicles and homes to continue their battle to return to their jobs after their harassment complaints were founded. Some have simply given up and taken settlement packages only to have to go out and work elsewhere often at a lower level of pay and benefits.

⇒ This cannot continue. We seem to have a process in place, however, it takes too long and employers are not punished for not complying with orders when they have not received permission in the appeal process. I have met with government officials in the previous government and this government to no avail. I collected signatures on a petition for zero tolerance for sexual harassment in the workplace. (On April 23rd I was advised this was tabled at the last legislation, but have not heard anything since.)

⇒ I don't know the answers. But I feel the only way this is going to end is that if the perpetrator is found guilty, he or she needs to be removed from the workplace so the victim can return safely to his or her position without any further repercussions.

⇒ My partner's aunt told me she was sexually harassed when she worked for the City of Vancouver in the early 1960s. At that time there were absolutely no processes in place and she had to endure it if she wanted to keep her job. When she shared her story with me she was in her early 80s and she sang a line from a song she learned as a little girl:

**THIS GREAT BIG WORLD IS A GREAT BIG STAGE WHERE
WE ALL HAVE TO PLAY OUR PART.**

My hope is that we can all take part in putting an end to the suffering of many victims of harassment, sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace. These things should not be happening in this province or country in the 21st century. We can no longer turn a blind eye hoping it will simply go away.