

Sabo complainant back on the job

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The StarPhoenix

The woman whose harassment complaints against police Chief Russell Sabo led to the chief's public apology and lengthy leaves of absence for both, is back on the job.

Gwen Klotz, formerly known as Gwen Findlater, resumed her job as executive assistant in the chief's office April 1 with altered duties. She had been away for almost 11 months on paid leave.

"I was looking forward to going back, I was ready to go back," she told The StarPhoenix, sounding upbeat. "And I received a very warm welcome from the other members and staff. That made it very easy."

As for her resumed working relationship with the chief: "He and I had worked things out through mediation, so it was fine."

Klotz made four of 42 complaints against Sabo that an independent investigator studied last year at the request of Saskatoon's police commission. All four of her complaints were deemed founded:

- The investigator ruled it was harassment when the chief suggested a T-shirt he gave Klotz as a keepsake from a sporting event could be worn as a nightshirt in bed;
- Sabo also crossed a line by removing a fuzz from her hair without her permission;
- The investigator found Sabo too forward when he commented on Klotz's perfume, telling her, "You smell nice." When she told him it was hand lotion, Sabo leaned in closer and told her to "come here" so he could smell again;
- The final confirmation of harassment dealt with an invasion of personal space. Sabo would walk around Klotz's desk, standing next to her, when they talked.

The investigator also ruled as harassment a complaint from a female constable that Sabo had used the term, "split-tail" to describe female officers.

Other complaints not deemed to be harassment came from staff at City Hall and the police station.

In interviews with the investigator, Klotz noted that by the end of 2002 she was so stressed, her doctor told her to take time off work, which she declined to do.

"All of us here, including Ms. Klotz, are doing our best to ensure that her transition back into the workplace is smooth and one that is good for everyone," Sabo said Thursday. He had been on administrative leave himself for eight months last year while harassment complaints were under investigation.

"Everything is fine here, from my perspective.



Gwen Klotz in May 2003

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"We're trying to assist her to get back into the workplace, which we would do with any employee."

Sabo confirmed Klotz's duties involve less direct contact between the two of them.

"I'm doing my best, as is Ms. Klotz, to make this transition as easy for her as possible," he said, when asked how comfortable he is with their working relationship.

Klotz has been executive assistant to the police chief for 24 years, serving under six leaders.

The city police association raised concerns last year that the harassment investigation was too secretive and followed a different process than investigations of rank-and-file officers.

"Those were our concerns then and we've dealt with them," said association president Const. Stan Goertzen.

How long Klotz will continue working for the police service is unclear. The question of a severance package is in the hands of Klotz's lawyer, she said.

During her time away, Klotz said she gave emotional support to other harassed women, including six women who allege they were sexually assaulted by former senior government official Murdoch Carriere, based in Prince Albert.

"I don't feel it was all in vain, going public," she said. "It has helped women say, 'Hey, we have to speak up about this.' "

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