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NEWS

Judge settles Peace Forum severance fight

By Mike Howell-Staff writer

There is no peace, it seems, at the World Peace Forum Society.

A B.C. Supreme Court ruling issued May 23 has awarded Lynn Hainsworth, a former executive director of the society, a portion of her salary-\$54,000-and other costs in a wrongful dismissal suit.

The society was created in August 2004 to provide an umbrella organization for groups involved in the World Peace Forum, which begins in Vancouver this month. The society will dissolve at the end of July.

Hainsworth, a 55-year-old single parent, began her job April 24, 2005 as one of two executive directors. The longtime peace activist moved from Saskatchewan for the job and entered into a one-year lease on an apartment.

As executive director of operations, Hainsworth worked with Jef Keighley, the executive director of outreach and programs. In her suit, Hainsworth said that tensions grew in the summer of 2005 between her and Keighley and members of the board of directors.

In court documents, Hainsworth said tensions over appropriate work roles, structures and decision making "heightened considerably" in September 2005 when she believed one of the members of the board was "besmirching her reputation, but she was determined to push pass the insult."

Hainsworth met with board members Jane Turner and Karen Dean. They told Hainsworth her title would be changed to coordinator of operations and she would be reporting to Keighley. She told Turner and Dean she would take the weekend to think about it.

When she returned to the office Nov. 1, 2005, Hainsworth met with Keighley. He wanted to know if she would accept the new job title, but she refused.

"_It was a substantial demotion and from the treatment I had already received by board members and Mr. Keighley, I knew I was not

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wanted anymore, and things were not likely to get any better; they were going to get considerably worse," she said in her affidavit.

She said Keighley then asked for her keys to the office.

In four affidavits he filed in court, Keighley noted the relationship with members of the board and joint steering committee became "increasingly strained primarily over performance issues, in particular the slowness of ensuring venues were identified and catalogued and the failure to implement an effective fundraising strategy."

He stated that he didn't intend to fire Hainsworth, noting only the board had authority to do so. Keighley also claimed Hainsworth told him to "make me an offer to go away." He said Hainsworth declined the new job title and voluntarily quit the society.

Hainsworth claimed lost income for the remaining 39 weeks of her employment at \$53,999.79 and vacation pay of \$2,880 and \$793 in moving costs, bus fare and lost damage deposit from her apartment.

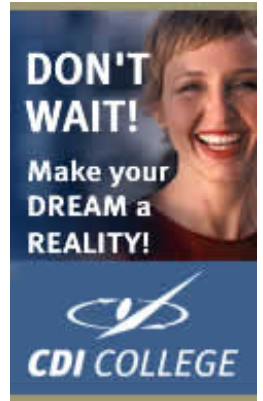
In his written remarks, Justice T. P. Warren stated: "_Although there was no clear evidence that Mr. Keighley fired the plaintiff and the uncontradicted evidence is that he did not have the authority to fire the plaintiff, nevertheless it was open to the plaintiff to assume he did fire her and that he had the authority to do so."

Warren noted Hainsworth's Record of Employment indicates Hainsworth was dismissed. Keighley said the notation was an "unauthorized act of a former bookkeeper" who joined the society after Hainsworth left.

Warren awarded her damages equivalent to her salary for the remaining terms of her employment and special damages out of breaking her apartment lease. Costs for her move were not awarded.

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