RNC investigating ‘historic’ allegations of sexual assault by RCMP doctor

Rosie Mullaley (rosie.mullaley@thetelegram.com)  Published: Mar 23 at 3:10 p.m.

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The RNC child abuse and sexual assault section is investigating complaints from people in this province of sexual assault by a physician employed by the RCMP dating back to 1981.

The male physician — who media reports say is Dr. Donald MacLeod Campbell of Nova Scotia — is already the subject of an investigation being carried out by Halifax Regional Police in relation to allegations of sexual assault by a physician conducting medical examinations on prospective RCMP candidates between 1981 and 2003.

Since that time, individuals from this province have come forward to the RNC with similar complaints.

Const. Geoff Higdon told The Telegram Friday that the individuals came forward in February, and the RNC established a major investigative team, “because we believe there are victims who haven’t come forward.”

He wouldn’t say how many people from this province are involved and wouldn’t discuss the nature of the sexual assaults.

“We want to make sure this investigation is done thoroughly,” Higdon said. “With potentially more victims, the team that’s been established can investigate them collectively.”

No charges have been laid and police say there is no reason to believe there is any risk to the public.

The Halifax investigation made national news earlier this year and already, the number of complaints filed with Halifax police has risen to more than 100. Campbell has been accused of inappropriate and unnecessary breast, gynecological and rectal examinations on RCMP members and recruits. Campbell, who was employed by the RCMP until 2003, has denied the allegations.

“When there’s a substantial amount of detail already in the media, it certainly presents challenges to investigators because a lot of specific details — which are normally known to police and victims — are already known to the public,” Higdon said.

“It certainly adds an extra layer of complication.”

The RNC is encouraging anyone who believes they were sexually assaulted by this doctor, or anybody who is a victim of any sexual assault, to report it to the RNC by calling 729-8000.

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Want more local news? Subscribe to all e-editions in Newfoundland and Labrador for $8.62+tx a month.
The managing editor of a local news site in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia has reportedly included thousands of people in a class action settlement against the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), due to allegations of sexual misconduct by its physicians.

The deadline for the uncapped class action settlement is Feb. 8, and involves allegations of sexual harassment that led the federal court to approve a landmark settlement last May. The allegations mirror widespread complaints about sexual harassment in the force that led to some of the examinations, including allegations of women having their breasts fondled for lengthy periods of time, being given unneeded rectal exams, and having their fingers inserted into their vaginas without good reason and spending unusually long periods rubbing their breasts with his hands.

Another lawyer handling the class-action claimants, Megan McPhee, said several clients had complained to her because hundreds of women applied for the police force over the 23-year period in question and received medical exams from the doctor.

A former RCMP employee who was sent, in the late '80s, for a required physical exam as part of her application, said the complainants don't believe there was any medical necessity to some of the examinations, including allegations of women having their fingers inserted into their vaginas without good reason and spending unusually long periods rubbing their breasts with his hands.

The woman, who was accepted into the force but is now retired, is one of more than 60 men and women to file complaints with Halifax Regional Police about the doctor allegedly sexually assaulted them at the RCMP health services office.

The Halifax police public information officer, Dave McNeil, said the number of complaints had risen over the past year. He said he had been named by police and had not been charged with any offences.

Lawyer David Klein, whose firm is one of two representing female RCMP employees in a sexual harassment class action, said several clients had informed him the Halifax police physician was nicknamed “Dr. Fingers.” He said several clients told him the doctor gave them unneeded rectal exams, inserted his fingers into their vaginas without good reason and spent unusually long periods rubbing their breasts with his hands.

“I wasn’t going to complain because it was the last thing I had to do before getting into the force and I didn’t want to rock the boat,” she said in an interview with The Canadian Press.

The RCMP has said the alleged victims were either applicants looking to join the force or serving members who were receiving treatment by the physician.

The police investigation into the matter.

If you are unable to file a complaint, you can contact the police investigation into the matter.

“Rectal examination as well as breast and gynaecological/Pap test examinations are not routinely performed as part of the RCMP regular member applicant health assessment,” he said in the email.

The RCMP spokesman Sgt. Harold Pfleiderer said in an email that such exams — including checks on vital signs, head, ears, nose and throat, along with the respiratory, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal and central nervous systems, among other things — are performed only if necessary.

He said the exams are not part of the police force’s regular physical examination process.

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Former RCMP doctor declines interview as sexual assault allegations reach 40

RCMP say number of complainants is expected to grow and both men and women have filed complaints.

The case involves alleged abuse of RCMP officers and recruits over two decades by a retired Nova Scotia doctor. (Nic Amaya/CBC)

A Halifax doctor accused of sexually assaulting RCMP members declined to speak publicly Thursday, even as police said the number of complaints against him had grown to about 40.

"Especially in a case like this I don't want to say too much," said the doctor, who worked at the RCMP health services office in the Halifax suburb of Bedford.

Halifax police Const. Carol McIsaac said Thursday the number of complaints is "very fluid" and is continuing to climb, nearly doubling over a 24-hour period.

"It's a complicated, complex investigation to begin with because it's quite large," she said, noting the complainants are both men and women. "Anything that's a historical investigation into anything can be difficult because if there are witnesses they can forget or move on, or they can be difficult to locate."

The investigation into the Nova Scotia doctor comes as Toronto police say they are also probing sexual assault allegations against an RCMP doctor who used to practise in the Mounties' Ontario division.

"Dr. Fingers"

Lawyer David Klein, whose firm is one of two that represented female RCMP employees in a sexual harassment class action, said several of his clients had informed him the Halifax physician was nicknamed "Dr. Fingers."

Klein said in an interview this week that several clients told him the doctor gave them unneeded rectal exams, inserted his fingers into their vaginas without good reason and spent unusually long periods rubbing their breasts with his hands.

The lawyer said more women were contacting his office to tell their stories, but they were not necessarily bringing their reports forward to police.

Time for civilian governance at RCMP, watchdog says in harassment report

RCMP could pay up to $100M to female employees who were sexually harassed, abused

RCMP Assistant Commissioner Brian Brennan, the commanding officer of the force in Nova Scotia, talks to reporters in Halifax on Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2018. (Canadian Press)
N.S. doctor accused of sexual abuse of RCMP officers says he did nothing wrong

By Rebecca Joseph and Ross Lord Global News

The Nova Scotia doctor accused of molesting women and men while conducting medical exams for the RCMP is speaking out. But as Ross Lord reports, the RCMP say dozens of people have come forward with allegations.

The doctor accused of sexually assaulting multiple RCMP officers is adamant he did nothing wrong.

Global News identified the doctor as Donald MacLeod Campbell, who worked for the RCMP until 2003. The retired doctor also had a family practice at Albro Lake Medical Clinic.

Halifax police say there are more than 20 victims who have come forward, both male and female, and the incidents took place over a 23-year period.

The head of the RCMP in Nova Scotia, assistant-commissioner Brian Brennan, estimated on Tuesday that the figure could be in the “dozens.”

A B.C. lawyer, who is working with some of the complainants, told Global News the alleged abuse included unwarranted cavity searches and groping. David Klien said his clients claimed the doctor was nicknamed “Dr. Fingers” by recruits.

READ MORE: Alleged sexual abuse by doctor against RCMP members includes ‘cavity examinations, groping’

But, in a phone conversation with Global News, Dr. Campbell said he was doing the normal medical exam. He refused to explain further.

“I’d rather not, because you’re starting to ask too many questions,” Campbell said.

Asked about what the proper procedure required him to do, Campbell replied: “Examine people, fill out the form. OK, I’m not gonna say any more.”

He also said he was upset at comments by the RCMP on Tuesday which he said paint him as guilty of sexual abuse, even though he has not been charged.

Const. Carol McIsaac of the Halifax Regional Police said the number of complaints for the case is rising.

“We are getting complaints pretty much on a daily basis,” she told Global News.

“We want everybody to know that if they want to, they can call us and we’ll investigate on their behalf.”

The Nova Scotia College of Physicians and Surgeons told Global News there were no public disciplinary findings against Campbell, but clarified that any complaint is confidential unless they result in a disciplinary finding.

The number of sexual harassment allegations being leveled against the RCMP is also soaring.

In November, 1,100 people had filed claims against the Mounties, but it’s now around 2,400.

The number of settlements in that two-month period rose from 72 to 124 cases.

WATCH: RCMP sexual harassment by the numbers

After news of the Nova Scotia doctor came to light, Ontario police announced they are also investigating a doctor who used to practise in the province’s RCMP division.

The doctor hasn’t been identified nor have charges been laid, but police say another 20 women and men have come forward to say they’d been sexually assaulted by the RCMP doctor between 1981 and 2003.

READ MORE: Toronto police investigating sex assault allegations against former Ontario RCMP doctor

Meaghan Gray of the Toronto Police Service said she doesn’t know if the two cases are connected.

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The head of the RCMP in Nova Scotia and the force’s chief of human resources say the department has made changes, including increased scrutiny of new recruits and regular members for more than two decades has been accused of committing “numerous” sexual assaults during medical appointments.

The allegations come after nearly 1,000 women filed claims in a class-action settlement that was announced last year. The class-action suit is seeking compensation for thousands of women who were victims of assault at the health clinic to seek help.

Meanwhile, in Halifax, Assistant Commissioner Brennan is urging those who were victims of assault at the Bedford clinic to seek help. “This is an extremely daunting time for those who have shared their trauma and are reliving this, and I am beyond unsettled to think that an individual who this organization entrusted abused their power.”

In a separate memo to all RCMP staff, Assistant Commissioner Stephen White, the RCMP’s acting chief of human resources, describes the allegations as “disturbing.”

He urges other victims or anyone else who has information about the alleged crimes to contact officers of the Halifax Regional Police who have taken the case.

Story continues below advertisement

David Klein of Klein Lawyers in Vancouver, whose firm was one of two that negotiated the class-action settlement, says eight of the hundreds of women who have come to his office asking for help in filing their claims say they were assaulted by a physician at the Bedford clinic who was nicknamed “Dr. Fingers” by recruits.

Mr. Klein said those women say the doctor gave them unnecessary rectal examinations, inserted his fingers into their vaginas for no apparent reason and spent unusually lengthy periods of time rubbing his hands on their breasts.

Those who say they were assaulted at the Bedford clinic during the process of applying for jobs in the RCMP say they did not lodge immediate complaints because they did not want to be perceived as troublemakers. Mr. Klein said. And many members of the forces were reluctant to speak out because they did not want to be perceived as troublemakers, Mr. Klein said.

But the force did not respond to more than a week of requests from The Globe and Mail for information regarding what has been done about those required changes, or put forward anyone to speak to the issue of making the workplace a safer and more welcoming environment for women.

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Dozens of RCMP officers and recruits allege sexual abuse by doctor at Mounties’ health office | National Post

will receive about $89 million. At the time, the lawyers involved estimated that more than 1,000 claimants were sexually abused, and set up a claims process for the women. It also announced settlements of up to $220,000 for women who were over the past 40 years.

The RCMP formally apologized in 2016 to hundreds of former and serving female officers who were sexually harassed while working for the police force.

Klein said the case helps illustrate how important it is the police force act more quickly to bring in a series of 20 changes to its policies, committee structure and corporate culture aimed at reducing sexual assault, harassment and discrimination.

"I find it surprising that with that many women involved it didn't find its way into their training. I think that's the surprising part," he said.

Klein said he's pleased the police force has publicly released information about the case, and that it is offering support to the female employees who have a remarkable consistency and they happened years apart. "These stories are consistent. The reports we have from these eight women are reporting the assault.

Klein said while it is plausible senior managers in the RCMP didn't hear of the allegations against the doctor, he thinks it's likely that other members of the force who were aware of the mistreatment of the applicants. "It's possible the doctor had some senior-level supporters who were aware of what was going on and that the doctor is now retired.

"New people coming in, unfamiliar and with a desire to get into the RCMP, may not have realized at the time what was taking place. Over the years, they may not have realized at the time what was taking place."

He also said the potential scope of the investigation is very large because the scope of the investigation was opened after the allegations were brought to their attention late last week.

The lawyer said more women were contacting his office to tell their stories on Tuesday, but they were not necessarily bringing them forward to senior management.

Assistant Commissioner Michael Tutton, who leads the force's investigation into the allegations, said in an email to members that the allegations involved a doctor who conducted recruitment medical examinations and periodic health assessments on members.

"The investigation is in the very early stages and is fluid at this time," he said. "We're not at a point yet where we can provide a specific number, we can confirm that we have received a number of calls so far.""The investigation is in the very early stages and is fluid at this time," he said. "We're not at a point yet where we can provide a specific number, we can confirm that we have received a number of calls so far."