

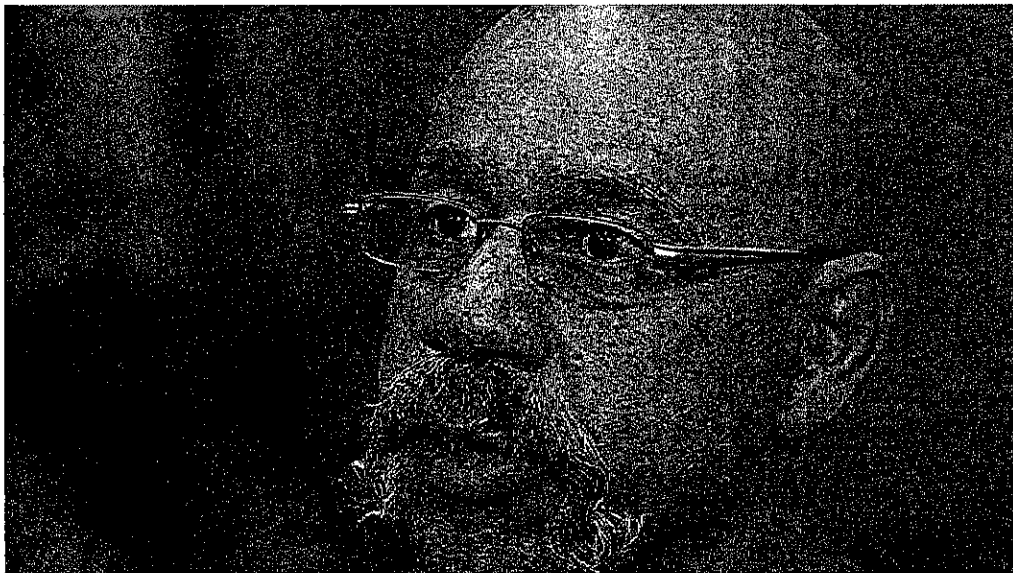
Decision deferred in Paris case

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Former cabinet minister accused of defamation



A judge has reserved decision on whether former cabinet minister Percy Paris must testify in a defamation lawsuit brought by the former CEO of the South West Shore Development Authority. (THE CANADIAN PRESS)

A judge has reserved decision on whether former provincial cabinet minister Percy Paris must testify in a defamation lawsuit.

Frank Anderson is the former CEO of the South West Shore Development Authority and the Yarmouth Area Industrial Commission. He was fired from both agencies almost four years ago after a report into the authority was prepared by the provincial ombudsman and an audit was conducted by Ernst and Young.

In his statement of claim, Anderson said he was fired after Paris, the economic development minister in the former NDP government, told the authority and commission that they would not receive provincial funding unless Anderson was let go.

Anderson alleges Paris defamed him in comments made to The Chronicle Herald and allnovascotia.com, a business news website when he was talking about Anderson being forced off the board of Trade Centre Ltd.

The comments suggested Anderson "had engaged in misconduct, had mismanaged the authority and commission, and caused losses to the community at large," says the suit, which alleges Paris made the comments with the intention of harming Anderson's reputation.

None of the allegations made in Anderson's suit have been tested in court.

Barry Mason, Anderson's lawyer, said the government was using his client as a scapegoat for its own failings with the development authority.

"Their focus became almost like a laser," Mason said Thursday in Nova Scotia Supreme Court in Halifax. "They became engaged attacks on Mr. Anderson's character. This was a public smear at its best."

Mason told Justice Heather Robertson that while some cabinet documents have been provided to him, he wants to know what was said around the table, arguing that there is no difference between cabinet documents and discussions.

He said he wants to know what the discussions were when it came to Anderson, the two reports and the decision to remove him from the Trade Centre board.

But government lawyer Alexander Cameron said that because the suit alleges defamation and not wrongful dismissal, what was <http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/1180158-decision-deferred-in-paris-case>

Cameron said that while the decision came from cabinet to take Anderson off the board, "the only question to be answered is whether what Mr. Paris said (to reporters) is defamatory" because the suit alleges defamation.

The judge said she wanted to prepare a written decision. No date was set for her to deliver that decision.