

Fantino calls allegations 'hysterical nonsense'

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ORILLIA, ONT.—Called to testify at a disciplinary hearing, OPP Commissioner Julian Fantino flatly rejected the allegation he was being malicious or political when he chose to charge two officers with misconduct. "With respect, this is hysterical nonsense. None of this is true," Fantino said. "It's absolutely mind-boggling."

Sitting in the witness chair, a visibly irritated Fantino sparred with defence lawyer Julian Falconer for more than three hours yesterday.

The testimony and questions hopscotched across the case's numerous plot lines and characters.

At the centre of the fray are Insp. Alison Jevons and Supt. Ken MacDonald. In 2005, both were involved in an internal probe against Det. Staff Sgt. Mark Zulinski.

Zulinski faced allegations he hadn't properly investigated a domestic dispute involving an OPP sergeant, in which the officer smashed his ex-wife's car with a baseball bat. Jevons and MacDonald were charged with neglect of duty in their treatment of that investigation.

The pair's misconduct hearings began on Jan. 7. The next day, Fantino announced one of the hearing's witnesses, Chief Supt. Bill Grodzinski, would be relocating to a northern detachment. Grodzinski had taken notes of an inappropriate comment made by Fantino the previous March regarding MacDonald. The commissioner suspected MacDonald was leaking information to Caledon city officials about plans to reorganize jurisdiction in the region, according to previous testimony. This was in fall 2006, around the time Fantino took over the provincial force.

"Are you going to execute the disloyal one or do you want me to?" Fantino asked Grodzinski – a comment Fantino confirmed yesterday. Fantino moved MacDonald out of his job at the Professional Standards Bureau, but unbeknownst to the commissioner, Grodzinski had taken notes of the conversation – or as Fantino described them yesterday "cheat notes."

When Fantino found out about the notes nine months later, just days before the misconduct hearing began, he made the decision to transfer Grodzinski to North Bay.

Falconer inferred the move amounted to interfering with witnesses.

"You moved (Grodzinski) as a reprisal because he embarrassed you. You moved him as punishment because he had taken notes of the execution comment," Falconer charged. "You

moved him as a signal to other officers who might have considered coming forward to testify for these officers. This was a reprisal; this was an effort to fix the problem."

"You are wrong. You are so wrong," Fantino replied.

Coincidence was the reason, Fantino said. The North Bay detachment was in need of a new chief. Fantino learned that Grodzinski's wife was from North Bay.

"I thought I was sending him home," Fantino testified.

"It's an extraordinary coincidence in timing," Falconer said.

The hearing resumes Nov. 5.