

CBSA dog handler says she was 'terrorized' after fighting maternity leave rule ^[1]

Union says there's no fair way for officers to complain about management harassment

Author: Tunney, C.

Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 31 Jul 2023

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpts

For years, Danielle Getzie had her dream job. One of those all-consuming, nothing-else-matters-because-I've-made-it jobs.

She was part of the Canada Border Services Agency's selective dog handler program, tracking down contraband at the Vancouver airport with her drug-sniffing canine partner Nova.

"I would have considered, and I did consider, not having a family for my job, because it was that important to me," she said from her Vancouver home.

"It was very well known that to be a female dog handler you could not have a family or think about having a family, or else you would be removed based on the policy."

That policy caps the length of time trainers in the CBSA's Detector Dog Service can be away from their animals at 90 days — making maternity leave and life as a new mom almost impossible.

Getzie said her superiors even told her she had better not get pregnant.

"And then as time went on, I started questioning that ... and then I realized how wrong it was."

That realization set off a years-long fight with the border agency — one that has landed on the desk of the CBSA President Erin O'Gorman.

...

In 2018, Getzie said she decided to grieve the detector dog policy, arguing it discriminated against those taking maternity and paternity leave. She filed the grievance after watching a colleague come back within 89 days of having a baby.

...

Getzie said the fight became personal when she realized during the grievance process that she was pregnant.

During the initial grievance period, the regional director general agreed with her and, according to a copy of the decision obtained by CBC News, deemed her complaint was valid. The adjudicator also wrote that the dog handler manual should be amended.

"I'll never forget at the end of it," Getzie said, tearing up. "She stood up and she gave me a big hug and she said, 'You just go and take care of your family because this should never have happened.'"

But the win was short-lived, she said.

Getzie alleges colleagues ran a smear campaign

The 90-day policy remains on the books. And Getzie alleges her grievance set off years of bullying and harassment in retaliation.

...

"It's sickening to think that any workplace could be like this, let alone a federal government workplace," she said.

...

The CBSA defends the 90-day absence policy, arguing it's necessary to maintain the detector dog's skills.

...

Similar allegations were lodged against the RCMP for years. Following a \$125-million class-action lawsuit, the Mounties set up an independent centre to investigate allegations of harassment and violence outside the chain of command.

...

A scathing 2020 auditor general report found CBSA knew about ongoing problems with harassment, discrimination and violence in its workplaces — but didn't do enough to address them.

Related link: [The gaps in parental leave in Canada](#) [3]

Region: [Canada](#) [4]

Tags: [federal government](#) [5]

[gender equity](#) [6]

[mother's labour force participation](#) [7]

[parental leave](#) [8]

Source URL (modified on 8 Aug 2023): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/23/08/cbsa-dog-handler-says-she-was-terrorized-after-fighting-maternity>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/23/08/cbsa-dog-handler-says-she-was-terrorized-after-fighting-maternity> [2]

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/cbsa-dog-handler-maternity-harassment-1.6919830#:~:text=That%20policy%20caps%20the%20length,a%20new%20mom%20almost%20impossible>. [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/23/08/gaps-parental-leave-canada> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [5]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9140> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/gender-equity> [7]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/8142> [8] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/parental-leave>