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## Former OPP officer says racial discrimination led to firing

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Peter Edwards

A former Ontario Provincial Police constable who says he lost his job after being labelled “Crazy Ivan” by fellow officers has turned down negotiated settlement to his complaint of workplace discrimination.

“My life will still be ruined,” Michael Jack, 39, told Keith Brennenstuhl, vice-chair of the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal, on Tuesday.

Three days have been set aside for his complaint this week, but Brennenstuhl said it can be expected to last far longer than that.

Jack balked when Brennenstuhl advised both sides that they might be far happier with mediation or arbitration.

“You control the outcome in that process,” Brennenstuhl said.

Jack, a Canadian of Russian-Jewish heritage, said he was unfairly ridiculed and smeared by fellow officers, including lies that he was connected to Albanian organized crime or that he was gun-obsessed and had been a killer in the Israeli navy.

Fellow officers at the Peterborough detachment falsified documents and fabricated complaints against him, said Jack, who was hired by the OPP as a probationary constable in 2009.

He moved back to Israel in 2010 after his employment was terminated.

The inquiry heard that Jack earned Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in computer science from Trent University in Peterborough, where he met former York Regional Police chief Armand La Barge in the weightlifting room.

He said La Barge told him that he would be a good candidate to become a police officer, since modern police forces are looking for candidates with language and computer skills.

"I did not know much about policing at the time, but the chief presented himself to me as an erudite and wise man and literally inspired me and gave me the encouragement to re-evaluate the direction of my life," Jack told the hearing. "I decided then and there that I would pursue a career in policing."

Jack said that he was fast-tracked for hiring by the OPP, graduated with a 91.6 per cent average at the Ontario Police College and was top in his class of 108 candidates in handgun use.

Jack told Brennenstuhl that he's not a complainer and never once felt discriminated against or harassed during his eight years as a student and instructor at Trent University.

"I was ... subjected to the acts of harassment and racial discrimination because I was well educated, was not a local, was not a Roman Catholic, was a Russian Jew and, to top it off, spoke with a strong accent," Jack said.

He said he now wishes he'd followed up on interest shown by the police services in York and Halton regions.

"Unfortunately, the OPP hired me first and totally ruined me as, after the termination of my employment with the OPP, no organization, let alone police services, wanted to have me on board," Jack said.

"The OPP turned me into an 'undesirable' as it appeared that the resumes I was sending out in search for a job disappeared into an abyss. Even Brinks would not get back to me."

The hearing continues.

<http://www.thestar.com/news/crime/article/1182263--former-opp-officer-says-racial-discrimination-led-to-firing>