

Man gets his Mounties

Muslim to become an RCMP recruit again after 9-year battle — and collect \$650Gs

TOM GODFREY
Sun Media

Mississauga reitor Ali Tahmourpour's dream to saddle up as a Mountie came true yesterday, following a nine-year court battle.

"It has always been my dream to become a Mountie," said a jubilant Tahmourpour, 35. "I feel there is a lot I can contribute to the force even with the experience I have had."

A Canadian Human Rights Tribunal yesterday ruled in his favour, ordering that he have the option to complete Mountie training and receive a package worth more than \$650,000.

This battle began in 1999

when he filed a complaint of individual and systemic racism against the RCMP and Canadian Human Rights Commission.

Tahmourpour, a Muslim originally from Iran, was a senior cadet in training in 1999, but was booted out 14 weeks into the 22-week course for wearing a religious pendant and failing to properly clean his rifle.

All cadets were to remove their jewelry for training, but Tahmourpour refused and notified his drill sergeant

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of the pendant and his religious beliefs about keeping it on. He asked the sergeant to keep the matter private, but the entire class was told of the incident and that led to Tahmourpour being the brunt of jokes.

His complaint was initially turned down by the Canadian Human Rights Commission, but the Federal Court of Appeal determined the case warranted a more thorough investigation.

In its 65-page ruling yesterday, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal determined the RCMP has to offer a spot to Tahmourpour in the next cadet training program. The tribunal awarded him more than \$650,000 in various

forms of compensation.

"This is a feeling of vindication for me," said Tahmourpour. "I have always said I can become a Mountie if I was given a fair chance."

The former Canada Customs inspector and armed forces member said he's ready to complete his training in Regina.

'Mounted officer'

"My great grandfather was a mounted officer," he said. "I have always wanted to follow him and become a mounted officer too."

Tahmourpour's lawyer, Barry Weintraub said the compensation package includes salary his client would have earned as an RCMP officer in

the last eight years.

"It is unfortunate that it took nine years for this to happen," Weintraub said. "Hopefully the RCMP will take this decision to heart and take steps to improve its treatment of visible minorities."

Tribunal head Karen Jensen said Tahmourpour at first outlaid his concerns about his treatment to the RCMP, who never investigated or responded to his complaint.

She said the Mounties never responded until they were forced to do so by the human rights commission.

RCMP Sgt. Nathalie Deschênes said the force is reserving comment until it reviews the decision.



ALI TAHMOURPOUR
Brunt of jokes

'It felt like we were in toy cars'

TAMARA CHERRY
Sun Media

