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Harassed pastor reaches settlement after more than a decade

Minister settles with church after winning human rights panel decision seven months earlier

A Prince Edward Island pastor has reached a settlement in her sexual discrimination fight that has dragged on for more than 12 years.

Rev. Gael Matheson suffered harassment from members of her Presbyterian congregation in Murray Harbour, P.E.I., in the mid-1990s. She received anonymous letters accusing her of lesbianism and molesting a choir member and a church elder stalked her for five years. In 1996, she was fired after refusing to follow the orders of church officials who told her to get counselling.

In June 2007, a human rights panel found the Presbytery of Prince Edward Island discriminated against her because she was female and ordered the church pay her \$600,000 in damages, write her a letter of apology and offer her a new post. The church appealed and Matheson filed a civil suit for \$2.5 million.

However, rather than proceed with further litigation, Matheson reached an agreement on Jan. 11 with the Murray Harbour congregation, the Presbytery of Prince Edward Island and the Presbyterian Church of Canada. No details of the settlement were released.

"She is glad to get it over with," Matheson's lawyer, Peter Ghiz, told *The Charlottetown Guardian*. "She can get on with her life."