

RCMP launches internal investigation

BY DAWN MITCHELL

HALIFAX (CUP) — The RCMP has launched an internal investigation following a public statement by a woman who was charged with mischief after reporting a sexual assault.

The University College of Cape Breton student's statement condemns the officer who heard her complaint that three men had sexually assaulted her.

"I am greatly concerned about the conduct of the RCMP and in particular the conduct of one officer," she said in the statement.

The 18-year-old was questioned extensively on two occasions, following a report she had been raped in a campus residence in September.

Police charged her with mischief after she changed her statement during the second interview. The charges were later dropped for lack of evidence.

The woman said the officer who

conducted the second interview repeatedly told her she had not been sexually assaulted.

"He used words like 'baloney' and 'bull' when I tried to explain what happened," she said.

She said the officer also fingerprinted her, photographed her, and implied she was carrying drugs in her purse.

Sexism is alive and well

"He threatened to humiliate me further if I did not cooperate by changing my story," she said.

RCMP superintendent George Timko said an internal investigation will follow a review of the criminal charges.

"We want to determine that every aspect (of the case) has been addressed and that nothing was

overlooked during the initial investigation."

The woman's lawyer said it is possible the men will be charged if the new investigation determines the evidence supports the woman's story.

The student wants the men expelled.

"I believe their continued presence on the campus, while I have been absent from the university, sends very negative messages to other students and to the community at large," her statement said.

She has returned home to her family in Newfoundland.

UCCB president Peter Hill said he was advised the university could not take action against the men.

But a second legal opinion said the men could be brought before a judicial committee if criminal charges are not laid against them.

The committee — composed of students, faculty and administrators — hears cases of a non-academic nature.

The committee can recommend penalties ranging from fines to expulsion, but the president makes the final decision.

Hill said he is waiting for the outcome of the new investigation before deciding on a course of action.

A few weeks ago, Hill told the media the woman asked the men for sex.

"It was in my opinion, unfair of President Hill to release a version



of the incident which casts doubt on my character and integrity and plays down the seriousness of the incident as an assault," said the student.

"I note that Dr. Hill had spoken to the three perpetrators, but has never spoken directly to me."

UCCB student Laurie Barratt said the case will prevent women from coming forward to report rape and sexual assault.

"This would confirm my fears that sexism is alive and well and when a woman is violated, it's her fault and that upsets me to no end," she said.

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