



SASKATCHEWAN  
**HUMAN RIGHTS**  
COMMISSION

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **For Immediate Release**

July 10, 2014

### **\$44,900 Queen's Bench Judgment Against Hotel Owner-Manager For Violation of Human Rights and Sexual Harassment**

The Court of Queen's Bench found that Northwoods Inn & Suites owner-manager John Pontes sexually harassed a female hotel clerk contrary to sections 16 and 19 of *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*.

For gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment Pontes must pay the complainant the maximum possible award under the *Code* of \$10,000 for injury to feelings, dignity, and self-respect. He must also pay \$31,900 for lost earnings. Costs of \$3,000 for vexatious, frivolous and abusive conduct in the court proceedings were also ordered.

"The SHRC sees this case as a significant legal precedent. The Court recognized the significant harm to the woman's human rights that occurred in this situation," said David Arnot, Chief Commissioner of the SHRC. "The judgment is financially notable as the damages provided by the *Code* far exceed usual damages for wrongful dismissal. This is a clear message that egregious human rights violations will not be tolerated in the workplace."

Since 2012, the Court of Queen's Bench decided two cases that were brought to the Court by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. Human rights complaints in Saskatchewan are frequently resolved through mediation or through settlement agreement.

"Litigation is certainly not the only tool available to the SHRC and, for the most part, business owners and other respondents want to achieve constructive and restorative outcomes," said Arnot. "However, every situation is unique and requires appropriate case resolution. This means that the Commission will pursue legal remedies through the courts when necessary."