

Local comic's lawyer leaves human rights tribunal as it begins

By **LISA TALLYN**
Staff Writer

The lawyer for Georgetown comic Guy Earle withdrew Monday from a human rights tribunal hearing in Vancouver.

Earle, at the centre of the hearing, is accused of subjecting Lorna Pardy and her same-sex partner to homophobic and sexist comments during an amateur comedy night at a B.C. restaurant back in 2007 while he was working as a volunteer master of ceremonies.

Earle, who remained in Georgetown and did not attend the hearing, said his lawyer James Millar walked out of the hearing on his instructions.

"We don't consider the proceedings legal in the face of the Supreme Court quash," said Earle referring to the B.C. Supreme Court's decision last September to quash the tribunal's decision to have a

full hearing.

"I won't defend myself and my lawyer won't validate an illegal process. The Supreme Court asked them to define their jurisdiction before they proceed, and they didn't," said Earle.

"No matter what I said, as far as I'm concerned I'm protected," said Earle, who believes his remarks come with the comedy show territory and his right to free speech as an artist performing on stage.

"Stand-up comics are the canaries in a coalmine of freedom of speech. When they start restricting what we say, you're next," said Earle.

Pardy reportedly is claiming she suffered post-traumatic stress from the incident and is seeking \$20,000 in damages from Earle the restaurant owner.

The hearing is expected to end today (Thursday).

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—Comedian Guy Earle



Newspaper office closed for Good Friday

The *Independent & Free Press* office will be closed tomorrow (Friday) so staff can enjoy the Good Friday holiday.

The office will reopen Monday,

April 5 at 8:30 a.m.

We wish all our readers and advertisers an enjoyable holiday and remind everyone to not drink and drive.

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