

SPORTS

ROBIN BIG SNAKE HAS THE HEART OF A WARRIOR

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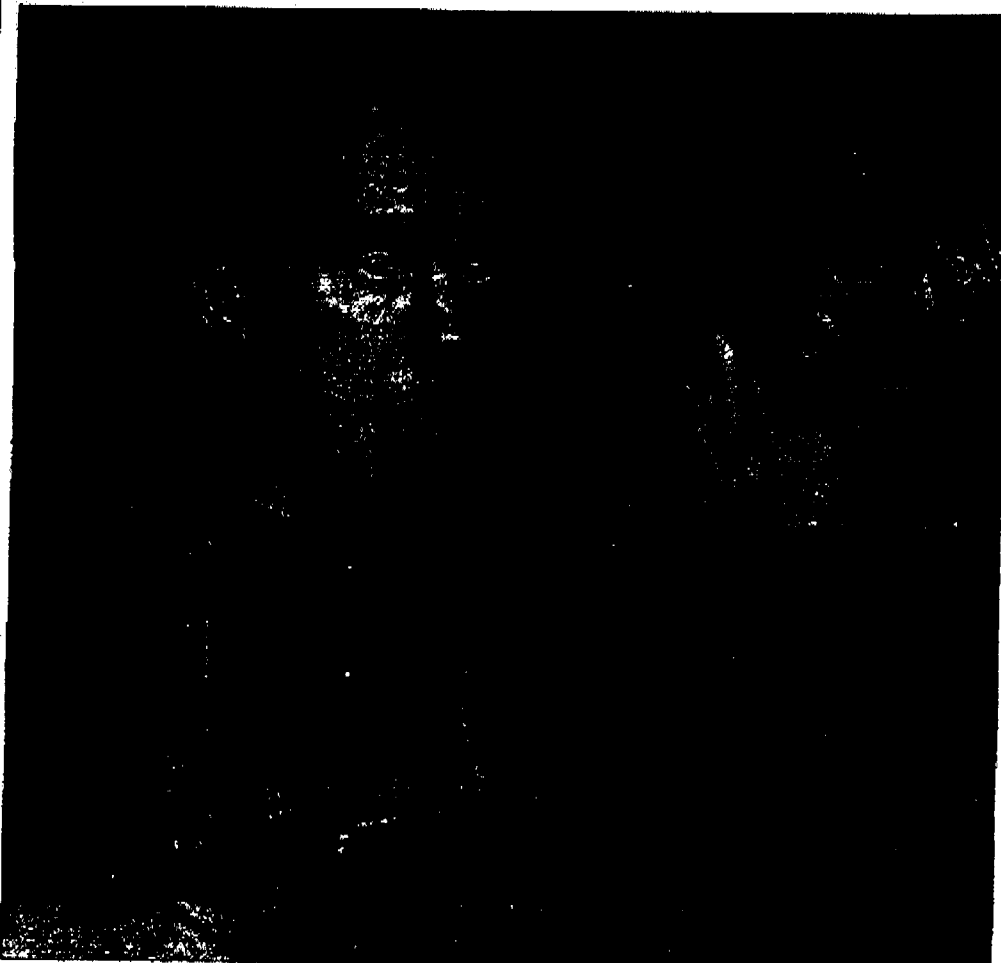
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Lawyer in fraud probe now a pet food baker

Claims totalling \$52 million listed in bankruptcy documents



GLENN HALLIDAY/VANCOUVER SUN

Former lawyer Martin Wirick, approached Wednesday at the pet food store where he works by Sun reporter David Baines.

By NEAL RAYL and DAVID BAINES

A former Vancouver lawyer being investigated for his involvement in a massive real estate fraud is now working as a baker at a gourmet pet food store in North Vancouver, according to documents filed in B.C. Superior Court.

In bankruptcy documents filed in July, Martin Wirick stated he is making \$1,500 a month as a baker at Koko's

Gourmet Pet Foods, and is receiving another \$1,500 a month as support income from family and friends.

More critically, he reported that he has "unsecured creditors totalling approximately \$52 million" and assets of only \$467,250.

Asked to list the reasons for his financial difficulty, he stated: "Failing to pay out mortgages pursuant to my undertakings, but instead paying monies to my client on his

promise to pay out the mortgages but who failed to do so."

Approached at Koko's, where he was working in the shipping area, and later at his North Vancouver home, Wirick refused to discuss the matter. On both occasions, he claimed he was constrained by solicitor-client confidentiality. Asked which client he was referring to, he said "Thomas Gill," the Vancouver developer who also implicated in the fraud.

Pressed on the matter,

Wirick said he could not talk to reporters without the permission of his lawyer, Thomas Hara, also of North Vancouver.

"There are other issues that need to be dealt with, so I need to talk with my lawyer," he said.

The Law Society of B.C. has alleged that Wirick — acting for Gill — received money from lenders and purchasers of Gill's properties on his undertaking to register their interests on title, but failed to live up to

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NEWS



STEVE BROWN/VANCOUVER SUN

...and without CP Rail cutting the price it charges TransLink to run West Coast Express on its tracks.

t line being considered

whether its SkyTrain technology or some other type of technology," he said. "We need to move that way because the ridership is there already."

The new partnership could not have been reached if CP Rail had not agreed to reduce the price it charges TransLink to run the West Coast Express on its tracks.

CP Rail was accused of gouging taxpayers after details of the 20-year contract signed in 1995 with the B.C. government were made public earlier this year.

Federal Liberal cabinet ministers, backbench MPs and senators, along with several Lower Mainland mayors, flooded Transport Minister David Collette's office with letters pushing for cabinet intervention to assist West Coast.

They argued the "excessive" charges should be reduced so commuter services could be

expanded, a move that would reduce traffic gridlock and pollution.

The new deal cuts the cost by \$26 million over the 13 years remaining in the contract — \$2 million each year beginning Jan. 1. It will not affect a \$1.6 million-a-year charge for crews.

TransLink and CP Rail have also begun to study whether CPR's Sapperton right-of-way in New Westminster can accommodate a rapid transit connection from Coquitlam to the new Millennium SkyTrain line, without affecting the corridor's freight capacity.

A rapid transit link along this corridor could be in place sooner and for lower cost than the proposed SkyTrain line through Port Moody, which is expected to carry a \$750 million price tag.

"It could be considerably cheaper. The right-of-way is already

there," McCallum said.

Another option being pursued is improving the shipping of goods, including better access to ports.

McCallum said the worst bottleneck in the region for freight trains is the Pattullo rail bridge across the Fraser River — a one-way track that is often delayed because it is also a draw bridge.

"We are going to have to look at studying that to move goods more efficiently," he said.

TransLink estimates there will be 17 per cent more bulk cargo and 249 per cent more container traffic moving across the Lower Mainland over the next 10 years.

Funding for the expansions would have to be shared by CP Rail, TransLink and other partners, McCallum said.

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Fee to pay for fraud sparks outrage

From A1

those undertakings.

Wirick resigned from the Law Society of B.C. on May 23 and was subsequently cited for failing to live up to his undertakings and misappropriating money. He has also been named in numerous lawsuits and is being investigated by Vancouver police.

Gill is still in the Vancouver area and is also keeping a low profile.

The society says it has already received \$18 million in claims on its Special Compensation Fund, which is designed to compensate victims of lawyer fraud, and the final figure could reach \$46 million. To pay for the fraud, the society is proposing to impose a fee, tentatively proposed to be \$30, on every real estate transaction.

The fee has sparked outrage among B.C. housebuilders and realtors, who question why the public should have to pay for a fraud committed by a lawyer.

Wirick's bankruptcy documents list 43 creditors, with the largest single creditor listed as VanCity Savings Credit Union, which has a contingent claim of about \$14 million.

Other contingent amounts listed in documents include \$5 million owed to CIBC Mortgages, \$8 million to HSBC Bank Canada, \$5 million to Canadian Western Trust and \$1.5 million to the Toronto Dominion Bank.

Wirick also reported contingent obligations of more than \$1 million to each of several individual creditors, including \$3 million owed to

Surrinder, Balwinder and Sukhwinder Numbra of Richmond, \$1.5 million to Daljit Singh Dhillon and Pritam Dhillon of Vancouver, and \$1.05 million to Belmont Properties of Vancouver.

A "contingent" claim purports that another party is primarily liable for the debt.

Wirick also said he owed \$5,280 to his wife, \$6,400 to CIBC Visa and \$90,000 in unpaid income tax.

Wirick's most significant asset is his house, which has an estimated value of \$412,000. It is jointly owned by his wife, Karen Wirick, who works as a legal assistant.

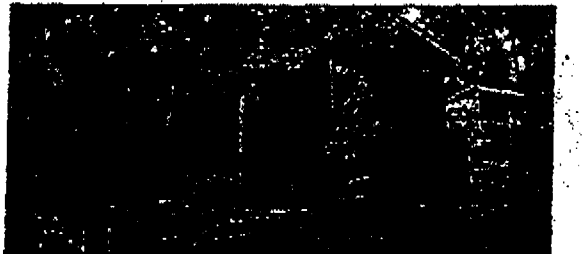
The home has about \$365,000 worth of mortgages, including a first mortgage for \$330,000 held by Scotia Mortgage and a \$35,000 second mortgage held by Bernice and Viggo Nygaard of North Vancouver.

His other listed assets included \$12,359 cash on hand, \$2,500 worth of household furniture and personal effects, \$1,500 worth of office equipment and furniture, \$500 worth of clothing, a 1979 Mazda RX7 worth \$1,000 and \$38,000 worth of RRSPs.

In his bankruptcy documents, Wirick said he had cashed in some of his RRSPs last May and used \$10,780 for living expenses. Then in July, he cashed in an insurance policy, receiving net proceeds of \$24,848.

"I gave \$9,000 to Harn & Co. — for legal fees and disbursements. The balance of \$12,350 was given to my [bankruptcy] trustee," he stated.

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GLENN BAGLO/VANCOUVER SUN

...Pemberton Heights home of former lawyer Martin Wirick.

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