

Rossmo is out \$325,000 in sick time, lawyer tells court

By Gregory Middleton
Staff Reporter

Former Vancouver police Det.-Insp. Kim Rossmo is out of pocket more than \$325,000, his lawyer said yesterday.

Rossmo, who's suing the Vancouver Police Board and Deputy Chief John Unger for wrongful dismissal, lost only \$16,000 in wages before getting a better job in Washington, D.C.

But Rossmo's lawyer, Murray Tevlin, told B.C. Supreme Court Justice Marion Allen his client lost out on more than 3,000 hours of banked sick time worth \$180,000.

"He has banked only two days of sick time at his new job and at a time in his life when people can expect to get sick," Tevlin said as the trial, which has had senior police officers accusing each other of lying, went into its final phase.

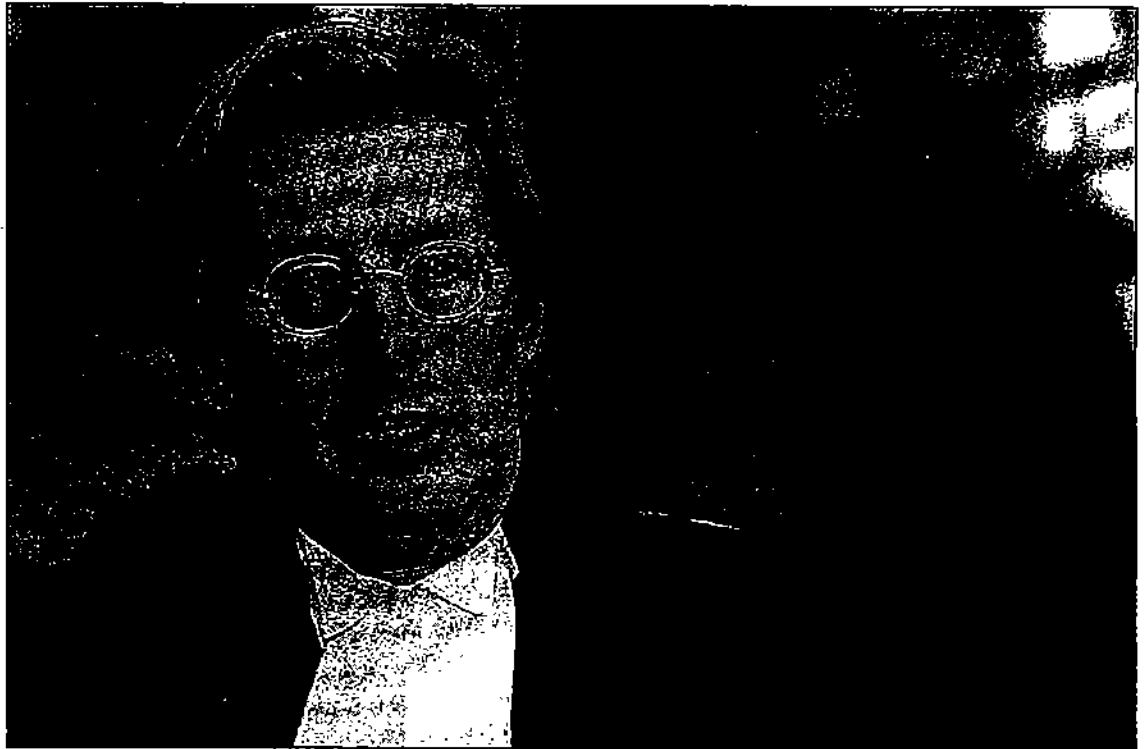
Rossmo, 46, was given the newly created title of detective-inspector in 1995 to counter a job offer from the RCMP. The Mounties were willing to make Rossmo an inspector to get his expertise in geographic profiling, a computer-aided system for tracking serial offenders Rossmo created while acquiring a PhD in criminology at Simon Fraser University.

The Vancouver force cancelled Rossmo's contract last year, offering him a return to constable rank — with a pay cut of 50 per cent.

In his final arguments yesterday, Tevlin invited Allen to consider punitive damages against the police board because it failed to control the department's senior management. Punitive damages, common in U.S. courts, are rare in Canadian civil suits.

Tevlin said Rossmo was a victim of a "clash of cultures" within the police department. Tevlin portrayed Rossmo as a dedicated officer who worked nights as a constable while studying at SFU.

Meanwhile, Unger, with only a



David Clark — The Province

Murray Tevlin, Kim Rossmo's lawyer, told court yesterday Rossmo was a victim of a 'clash of cultures.'

high school education, worked his way up to deputy chief. It "ate away at him" that Rossmo had vaulted into the senior ranks so quickly, Tevlin said.

"Unger believes in rank and in a lock-step kind of seniority and it offended him that someone with low seniority but a high level of skill or academic achievement would be promoted," he said.

Tevlin said Unger went to several chiefs to complain about Rossmo and, in a discussion with ex-chief Bruce Chambers, raised Rossmo's status as "a burning issue" facing the department.

"Not child prostitution, drugs or the thousands of break-and-enters in the city," Tevlin added.

Tevlin cited testimony that Unger said Rossmo's promotion "diminished the rank of inspector" and the only way to solve a morale problem among officers was to demote Rossmo to constable.

He suggested that when Unger was made deputy chief he took it upon himself to get rid of Rossmo — a charge Unger has denied.

While Unger was acting chief he sent Rossmo a letter terminating his contract, even though the police board had asked for a report on the status of contract talks.

Unger earlier told the court he didn't know about the board's request, testimony Tevlin

described as unbelievable.

Tevlin also suggested that, once Unger had fired Rossmo, the department's "old boys' network" closed ranks to protect the deputy chief. He said the department's argument that Rossmo's contract was not renewed because of budget constraints lacked credibility, because the day after that decision was made the department announced the promotion of 11 members to the rank of inspector, at a cost Tevlin estimated at \$1 million a year.

Vancouver police board lawyer Ken McEwan began his final arguments by saying that it was a contract and the contract expired. He and Dick Hamilton, Unger's lawyer, make their final reply to Rossmo's allegations of dirty dealing today.



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