

SIU not solely responsible for Wiche's suffering, court told

Whatever pain and loss of reputation Detective Robert Wiche suffered after shooting a Markham youth in 1996 can't all be laid at the feet of the Special Investigations Unit for charging him with manslaughter, a court was told this week.

Rainbow said that Wiche's wife, Shirley, had agreed in testimony that the fact the youth who was shot was a teenager and a member of a visible minority had created an intense media attention that had drained them from the outset.

Rainbow was making closing arguments in defence of the provincial government and the SIU — which probes police incidents leading to serious injury or death — its former executive James Harding and ex-director Andre Marin in a malicious prosecution lawsuit.

Wiche, 42, alleges the SIU conducted a careless investigation and withheld key documents that would have helped clear him at his preliminary hearing in 1997.

Although a judge ruled there was insufficient evidence to commit the York Region officer to trial in his shooting of 16-year-old Faraz Suleman, he alleges his reputation was damaged and he has experienced pain and suffering.

Government lawyer Dennis Brown, citing case law, said Wiche's defence lawyer in the criminal case, David Humphrey, had a duty to be diligent in obtaining any documents he thought were missing.

"Counsel must not remain passive. Rather they must diligently pursue disclosure," Brown told Mr. Justice John Ground of Ontario Superior Court.

Brown said there is no evidence, as Wiche alleges, to support the allegation that the SIU prosecuted him for political purposes, or because of media or public pressure.

"There is no evidence of any improper purpose or disregard or carelessness that would warrant a finding that Mr. Marin acted in a malicious fashion or that anyone under his direction did so," Brown said.

"Any shortcomings were merely minor deficiencies in the conduct of the investigation and did not bear on the outcome," Brown said.

— Torstar Network



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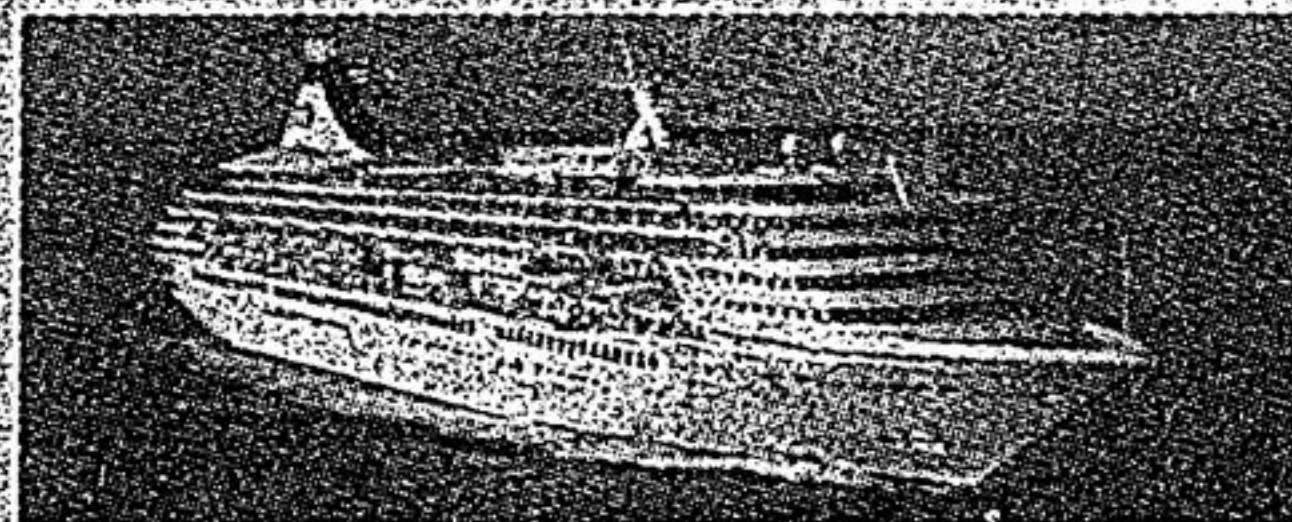
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Heart Health leader forges partnerships

BY PATRICK MANGION
Staff Writer

Health officials have long advocated prevention as a means of achieving prolonged good health.

Nicky Rauzon-Wright, the one-woman team behind the Ministry of Health's Heart Health program in York Region, is certainly doing her part.

With 26,000 Ontarians dying from heart disease every year, she said it's essential to increase awareness of the region's Heart Health program.

The provincially-funded program, now in its second year, aims to reduce risk factors associated with heart disease such as smoking and poor diet.

"We want people to adopt small steps and turn that into lifestyle changes," Rauzon-Wright said.

"I don't know one person who smokes that doesn't wish they never started."

After leading the local Heart and Stroke Foundation branch for 12 years, she continues to share resources with the agency, along with a host of others in the region.

Rauzon-Wright said she would like to establish more relationships with York Region-based companies concerned with the health of their employees.

She has sent 1,000 letters to local companies hoping for donations of \$3 for every dollar contributed by the provincial government.

In exchange, Rauzon-Wright said the business community can lean on her to help them meet some of their goals.

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