

## **Veteran Ontario cop cleared of sex charges**

Jan 16 2014

TIMMINS - Child-sex charges against a veteran police sergeant in Moosonee have been withdrawn.

Detective Sgt. Randy Cota was charged a year ago with sexual assault, sexual interference and invitation to sexual touching. The offences were alleged to have occurred in the Toronto area over a period from 2000 to 2006.

However, the prosecutor withdrew the charges on Monday at the conclusion of a preliminary hearing which was held at Old City Hall in Toronto.

David Bayliss, Cota's defence attorney, said, the "Crown withdrew the charges because there was no reasonable prospect of conviction. There never had been and it took them a year to do the right thing."

Cota, who has been with the OPP since 1987, was working in Moosonee when he was arrested and charged by the Metropolitan Toronto Police in the early part of last year.

Since then, he had been suspended from active duty with pay.

"Randy's case is a very sad example of how a person's life and career can be destroyed by an incompetent investigation and prosecution," said Bayliss. "I was convinced from the very first moment that I met Randy that he was completely innocent of this crime.

"I just hope he will be able to recover from what's been done to him." Brendan Crawley, spokesman for the attorney general, stated in an email to The Daily Press, "As in all cases, the Crown has a duty to assess the strength of a case throughout a prosecution, and is duty bound to withdraw charges if there is no reasonable prospect of conviction, or if it is not in the public interest to proceed.

"The Crown carefully examined all aspects of the evidence in this case, including witnesses' testimony, and the applicable law.

After completing that review and giving the matter very careful consideration, the Crown was of the view that there was no reasonable prospect of conviction and accordingly, the charges were withdrawn."

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