

PHOTO ELLESTRATION BORGE WATANAGE AND IAM BANTH/AUXCOLVER SUN The big red W stop the old Woodened's building has been a Venocurer landspark for decades.

## Developer eyes Woodward's

## as squatters' dispute escalates

By DOUG WARD

There is a buzz among pover-ty activists. City Hall officials and developers over a proposal by Vancouver developer Geoff Hughes to buy the old Wood-ward's building.

Hughes, who has recently purchased other rooming houses in the Downtown Eastride. has so far declined to comment on his negotiations with the province and the city.

"I can't talk right now I just can't talk right now," Hughes said when contacted earlier this

However, he has spoken over the past month about his plan to buy the building with city officials and Downtown Eastside activists. Hughes visited the site last weekend and talked with the squatters who have occupied the building for the past weck.

Vancouver councillor Fred Bass said Thursday that he had discussions with Hughes in August about his plan to purchase the building, Bass said Hughes indicated to him that any redevelopment would include some affordable

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three years to s the 70 million A The Wednesday ingham defend began with me Eames, primate ( ing the audienc conservative A that "there is no ai all."

## Higher laid in of Mo

By LORI ( and NEA

The driver of was allegedly spe the Honda Civic killed Richmond ble Jimmy Ng ha charged with crir causing death. Ying Hua Davi

originally charge ous driving in the

ing accident that Now Guan and Chun Stuart Ch driver of the Ho the come charget gence causing de the scene of an a Richmond RC

gating whether suspects were n sive speeds" car ing, just before a a red light and f

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forensic accounting firm has been hired and further assistance may be sought from the

estate developer Tarsem Gill has

evolved into the biggest com-mercial crime investigation in the

force's history, a senior officer

It is by far the largest investi-

gation that the financial crime unit has ever undertaken, not only in terms of the amount of

money involved, but also its com-

plexity and scope," said Inspec-tor Keith Hutchinson, who heads

He said the total dollar amount could exceed \$75 million.

tives and a senior sergeant have

been assigned full time to the

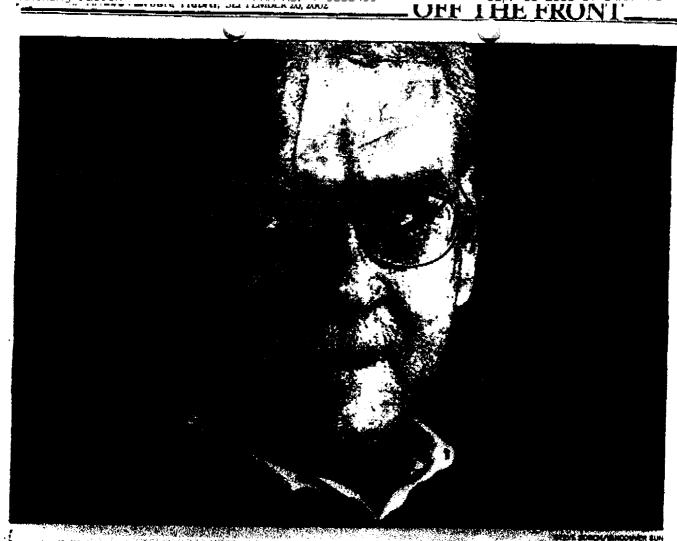
case. He also said a private

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Hutchinson said two detec-

said Thursday.

the unit.



Inspector Kalth Hutchinson, hand of Musicial colors for Vancouver Police Department, says investigation is biggest in force's history.

## VanCity, HSBC biggest creditors

From Al

RCMP commercial crime section in Vancouver.

He said investigators will not only review the activities of Wirick and Gill, but others involved with them.

"Most assuredly we will be looking at other people who we believe had roles in the deals," he الواضح

Several months ago the Law Society of B.C. received com-plaints that Wirick had accepted mother from people who were putationing or financing Gill's properties and had failed to live up to his undertaking to pay out prior mortgages and register their

new interests on title.
The society launched an investigation and in May, Wirick vol-untarily resigned from the socicty and agreed to the appointment of a custodian to take over

his practice.

The society subsequently cited him for falling to live up to his undertaidings and for misappropristing money. A hearing has been set for Dec. 3

Earlier this week, society executive-director Jim Matkin said victims had already filed \$18 million in claims to the society's speenestion fund, which was established to compensate victims of lawyer fraud. He said that figure could rise to \$46 million.

But Butchinson said the amount could be much higher, although he conceded there could be some "double counting" in his \$75-million estimate.

For example, a purchaser could have paid \$100,000 for one of Gill's properties on Wirick's undertaking to discharge prior mortgages and register the pur-

chaser as the new owner. Of this amount, \$75,000 could have been provided by a bank on Wirick's undertaking to provide the bank with a first charge on the property. If neither interest was registered, the alleged frauds could have totalled \$173,000 even though only \$100,000 in cash would have been misappropriat-

The law society has decided to pay all valid claims through its cial compensation fund, To fund the claims, the society has decided to impose a fee, tenta-tively proposed at \$30, on all real-estate transactions starting Jan. 1.

The fee, which the society concedes will probably be passed on to clients, has outraged housebuilders and realtors, who say the public should not be required to compensate the society for

lawyer fraud,

Wirick, who graduated from the University of B.C. law school in 1978, is now working as a baker at a pet-food manufacturing plant in North Vancouver.

In July, he filed for bankruptcy, listing \$52 million in "contingent" liabilities against only \$467,850 of assets. Asked to state the reason for his financial difficulty, he said: "Failing to pay out mortgages pursuent to my undertakings, but instead paying monies to my client on his promise to pay out of the mortgages but who failed to do so."

Most of the liabilities are indirect obligations arising from his fullure to meet his undertakings. The largest creditors are VanCi-ty Savings Credit Union, which is owed \$14 million, and HSBC Stark which is owed \$8 million Bank, which is owed \$8 million.

dhainss@pacpress.southam.ca