

BASI-VIRK TRIAL

# Premier's chief of staff denies 'fix was in' to sell BC Rail

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VANCOUVER SUN

Premier Gordon Campbell's chief of staff denied defence allegations Thursday that government-appointed BC Rail board members adopted a "failure strategy" to justify the sale of the railway to CN Rail.

"What I'm suggesting is the fix was in and Gordon Campbell wanted to sell BC Rail," defence lawyer Kevin McCullough said to Martyn Brown during cross-examination.

"I would emphatically, to my knowledge, deny that," Brown replied at the political corruption trial of Dave Basi, Bob Virk and Aneal Basi.

"I'm going to suggest to you that you had these conversations with Mr. Virk," said McCullough, who represents Virk, "that CN was getting the rail line and that it was the decision of Gordon Campbell."

"Wrong. Incorrect," Brown replied. The deal was controversial because Campbell had made

an election promise not to sell BC Rail.

Brown also rejected McCullough's contention that BC Rail had made an operating profit in each of the 21 years before the government decided to privatize it.

"That's not my understanding," Brown testified. "It was losing money and wasn't

profitable."

He added: "It was saddled with debt."

Virk's lawyer previously alleged the "fix was in" to award CN the contract to take over BC Rail operations because

CN's chair, David McLean, had been Campbell's chief fundraiser during the 1996 election campaign.

The Crown has alleged Dave Basi and Bob Virk leaked confidential information about the BC Rail bidding process to a lobbyist representing one of the bidders in exchange for cash and other benefits, and Aneal Basi assisted in laundering money by accepting cheques.

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