

Justice Officials Portray Griswold Man As Drug Kingpin

November 11, 2017

Glen Kirby

<https://southwestpost.ca/2017/11/11/justice-officials-portray-griswold-man-as-drug-kingpin/>

A Griswold man has been described as a "one-stop shop" for illegal drugs and "high-level trafficker" supplying a number of dealers across Manitoba, during his sentencing hearing in Brandon court Friday.

Leslie Gerald Bisson was arrested in last fall's task force investigation into the drug trade in southwest Manitoba. Individuals from Brandon, Dauphin and Toronto were also charged but justice officials maintain that Bisson was running the sophisticated drug-dealing network with links to the Hell's Angels.

"I believe he is a high-level trafficker, one of the more significant players in the Brandon trade," RCMP Cpl. Jon Morrisseau told court as Bisson watched via closed circuit TV from Headingley Correctional Centre where he remains in custody.

The 37 year old was initially charged in October 2016 with 23 offenses including trafficking of cocaine, marijuana, psilocybin and crystal meth and illegally possessing several guns including what police call a "tactical" semi-automatic rifle. In July, he pled guilty to one count of trafficking cocaine and a weapons violation and the Crown stayed the remaining charges. *Read previous stories [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).*

During Friday's sentencing hearing, Crown prosecutor Erin Magas introduced several thick binders filled with wiretap transcripts, photos and descriptions of evidence collected during the seven month long police probe code-named Project Derringer.

Several telephone calls were also replayed for the court, with a man identified as Bisson talking with a number of people about what police say was the buying, selling, delivery and quality of drugs. Often, the conversations were peppered with code words.

Morrisseau cited examples where callers talked about pizza toppings or a paint job but really meant drugs. Marijuana was called 'green' and a kilogram of cocaine was a 'brick'.

"People that are involved in drug dealing, they know that they are subject to wiretaps. So, they attempt to disguise the true meaning of what they are saying," Morrisseau testified.

The Crown maintains that Bisson was obtaining marijuana from one supplier in British Columbia and cocaine from another supplier in Toronto, and using several locations as "stash houses" where large quantities of the drugs were stored and repackaged for distribution to his network.

"Because he has several underlings who clearly have people working for them, it just shows where he sits in the hierarchy," said Morrisseau. "He supplies people who supply people who supply users. That puts him very high on the supply chain."

Police documented Bisson storing drugs at an apartment on 10th Street in Brandon, an abandoned church that he had bought less than a block away from the Brandon courthouse and buildings on properties that he owned near Fairfax and Griswold.

During last year's investigation, police had wiretaps on Bisson's phones and secret listening devices installed in his vehicles, homes and drug stash locations.

With close-cropped hair and a beard down to his chest, Bisson seemed emotional and appeared to cry when Magas replayed a phone call in which he talked to both his wife and young daughter in the months prior to his arrest.

Another recording captured the takedown of Bisson and a co-accused at his farm south of Griswold. A quiet conversation in Bisson's truck gives way to police sirens and shouting as 30 officers with drawn weapons take the pair into custody.

Cocaine, marijuana and cash with a combined value of over \$340,000 were recovered from Bisson's property during the raid in 2016.

A car with a customized secret compartment was also seized that police allege was transporting cocaine from Toronto to southwest Manitoba.

Bisson was also using sophisticated devices to encrypt his telephone calls, texting and messaging with associates, according to evidence presented by police. Morriveau said this is the first known use of the so-called 'zappers' or PGP phones by criminals outside of major urban centres.

"He is clearly running his organization," Morriveau told court. "There is nothing I've seen where he has to answer to anyone."

The hearing will continue in December when defense lawyer Eric Wach will challenge the Crown's contention that Bisson was a high-level dealer, in an effort to reduce the pending sentence for the two guilty pleas.

A trio of other men charged in connection with Project Derringer also remain before the courts.