

Rotolo inquest continues

April 27, 2010

A former security guard testified he watched from a distance as six Niagara Regional Police officers used batons to pummel a man in a parking lot near Casino Niagara, an inquest heard Tuesday.

"They were circled around him and they kept hitting him. I could hear the hits from the baton," Dale Farquharson told the jury in a St. Catharines courtroom at the inquest into the death of Orlando Rotolo.

Rotolo died July 25, 2007 following an altercation with police at Bender Hill.

Farquharson testified he was working in a booth at the parking garage at the casino around 5 a.m. when he observed Rotolo pacing back and forth.

He caught sight of the man, whom he thought was intoxicated, a short while later and watched as a police cruiser pulled up to him.

He watched Rotolo walk towards a hotel, followed by an officer.

When the man emerged a few minutes later, a number of other police officers had converged on the scene.

"When one police officer tried to grab him, he was resisting. He was flailing his arms and shaking his body away," Farquharson recalled.

He said the police then took out their batons and began to strike the man.

He told the jury he estimated the incident took at least five minutes and involved in excess of 20 blows.

While he couldn't hear anything the police were saying, Farquharson said at one point it sounded like they were laughing.

The inquest continues Wednesday.