

RCMP officer sorry for shoplifting

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A 20-year veteran of the RCMP apologized Thursday and provided some emotional testimony at her disciplinary hearing — which was sparked by her off-duty arrest for shoplifting during the Vancouver Olympic Games.

“I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere apology for my behaviour and misconduct,” Staff Sgt. Suzanne Denise Marie Martel said. “I take full responsibility for my action.”

Martel was charged with one count of theft under \$5,000 in February 2010, was subsequently relieved of her duties at the Games and sent back to her Ottawa-area detachment. The criminal charge has since been stayed, but she still faces a disgraceful conduct charge under the RCMP Act.

Martel, who broke down on several occasions during her testimony, said Thursday she never intended to embarrass the Mounties

and painted a picture of her frail state of mind and health in the days and weeks leading to the incident, which happened at a Winners store.

Her Olympic assignment began in late January 2010, and Martel said she first became stressed when she learned she was not sure where she was going to sleep.

After finally being assigned to a hotel for the first few days, Martel was told she would have to move to a cruise ship in Vancouver Harbour, an experience made difficult by her fear of water and constricted spaces, she said.

As well, in the days leading up to the Feb. 11, 2010 incident, Martel said she had no sleep and was taking medication to fight a cold.

When her colleagues, some of whom testified Thursday, heard the news about the arrest they wrongly thought it must have been another woman with the same name.

Her co-workers described her as a kind-hearted officer with a good work ethic.