

Gyles' expenses will be audited

By DECLAN FINUCANE

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Councillor Cliff Gyles' election expenses will be put under the microscope of a forensic auditor, city councillors decided Wednesday.

The audit, to be carried out by the accounting firm of Deloitte & Touche, will determine the validity of the Ward 5 councillor's election finances during last year's campaign.

The figures were called into question by a lawyer representing Lorne Park resident Roy Willis, who officially requested the audit last week, citing concerns about duplicate contributions and unexplained expenses.

The matter was brought to the attention of councillors late last week after City Clerk Arthur Grannum received notice from Willis' lawyer.

Specifically, Willis, who has campaigned unsuccessfully for the Ward 5 council seat a half-dozen times, is concerned about "excessive and inordinate" expenses, including an \$18,633 figure not supported by documentation. He is also concerned

about several duplicate \$750 contributions from the same companies and/or individuals.

After a lengthy discussion, councillors voted in favour of the audit. But, the landmark decision — the first time council has ever had to deal with such a delicate legal matter concerning one of its own members — left some councillors feel-

ing uneasy about the process.

"We've never had anything like this before," said Mayor Hazel McCallion, adding that the Municipal Election Act puts council in an awkward position.

"For your sake, councillor Gyles, this should go to an independent body to say if it's a frivolous appeal or if it isn't. We have to find out one

way or the other," said McCallion.

McCallion said a more effective route would have been through a magistrate.

Gyles suggested the municipality is duty-bound to investigate the source of an official request for an audit when taxpayers' money is on the line.

"This issue is not about election

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expenses, but one of vindictiveness," said Gyles.

Municipal legislation allows eligible voters to call into question election expenses incurred by councillors, Grannum said.

Under terms of the Municipal Election Act, councillors who exceed their limits can lose their seats in office, he added.

Gyles spent \$61,464.18 on his campaign, \$26,000 more than the councillor with the next highest expenses.

Charges against Gyles of municipal corruption, breach of trust and fraud that stem from allegations he accepted funds from a developer in return for his support of a project in his ward have yet to be dealt with in court.

Gyles, Cliff

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