

Guilty! But corrupt politician won't resign

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By LOUIE ROSELLA

More than two years after his arrest shocked the City of Mississauga, Ward 5 Councillor Cliff Gyles was found guilty Wednesday of demanding and accepting bribes from local businessmen.

Madame Justice Bonnie Wein told a packed Brampton courtroom she was left with "no reasonable doubt" of the politician's guilt on any of the charges.

"He must be found guilty," Wein said.

She convicted Gyles on two counts of municipal corruption and two counts of breach of trust.

Wein's 35-page judgment detailed how Gyles demanded and accepted \$35,000 in bribes from two Malton businessmen in 2000 and 2001 in return for approval on two unrelated rezoning applications.

"That such similar offences occurred on two completely separate occasions only strengthens the evidence, and sadly affirms the adage that power corrupts," Wein told the court.

The judge ordered Gyles to relinquish his passport to Peel Regional Council.

As a condition of bail, she also stripped him of his duties as City councillor and Peel Regional councillor until the sentencing hearing

Aug. 28.

The disgraced councillor said outside the court he will not resign from either position.

"My lawyer will be considering the judgment and we'll deal with it later," Gyles said as he left the courthouse.

The councillor was first arrested in February 2001 after accepting \$25,000 from Rick Benisasia, the court heard.

The businessman purchased property and wanted to have it rezoned to allow for a funeral home.

Wein rejected Gyles' testimony he accepted the money with the intention of turning it over to police, as a "one-person counter sting operation."

The evidence presented by Crown prosecutor Brian McGuire included wire taps that recorded Gyles accepting the two installments of the bribe and police surveillance of his movements.

McGuire said he credits police with not sweeping this case "under

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Cliff Gyles strides away from the court house Wednesday after being found guilty on four charges of municipal corruption and breach of trust.

Gyles guilty of municipal corruption, breach of trust

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the carpet" because Gyles was a political figure.

Gyles was also convicted of accepting \$10,000 in early 2000 from Malton businessman Malkit Dhaliwal.

Wein said although Dhaliwal was "something less than a model citizen," his testimony was believable and was backed up by his own tape recordings of the exchange.

Gyles, wearing a taupe suit with a striped black and yellow tie, sat stone-faced next to the prisoner's docket as the judge read her verdict.

Prior to Wednesday's court proceeding, Gyles' wife Inez repeatedly declared "victory" before entering the courtroom.

There were not enough seats for the more than 40 people — including Gyles' entourage, a number of Peel Regional Police officers and concerned residents — who packed the courtroom.

"It's been a sad two years. Hopefully, he'll be put away into incarceration," said Harry Grimme, a member of Malton Neighbourhood Services.

"He should resign as councillor. He should have resigned a long time ago. It's a black eye on the whole City of Mississauga."

Other residents who attended court Wednesday also called on Gyles to step down.

"It's a sad day in the City of Mississauga that this had to happen, for all the people," said Roy Willis, a longtime political rival of Gyles.

Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion said she believes Gyles can still collect a paycheck while he is suspended from his duties.

She explained the City can not request or demand Gyles' resignation.

"We have no right to do that," she told The News. "We are strictly guided by the judge and the courts."

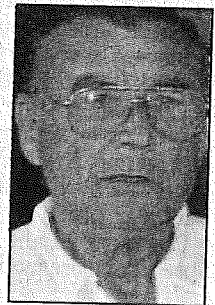
Peel Regional Police acting Superintendent Tom Allen said Gyles' conduct was, "an affront to members of municipal and other levels of government who serve the public and take seriously their oaths of office."

Gyles' lawyer, Alan Gold, said he and his client will consider an appeal.

"My client and I are quite disappointed, but we'll study the judgment carefully and consider where it is we can go from here," he said outside the court.

"We're considering the possibility of an appeal, but I can't comment on that until I've had a chance to go through the judgment carefully."

McGuire said he will examine whether or not to pursue the remaining fraud charges, which were held in "abeyance" until after the trial against Gyles.



GRIMME



GOLD