

Councillor sentenced

Jail time for Gyles

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A Superior court judge sentenced disgraced Mississauga City Councillor Cliff Gyles to two-and-a-half years in federal prison Wednesday for demanding and accepting bribes.

"This corruption amounts to a clandestine and insidious assault on democracy," said Madam Justice Bonnie Wein as she handed down the punishment to the stone-faced politician. "It is clear from the evidence that...this was well-planned by Mr. Gyles...a sophisticated and deliberate plot to obtain money without being detected."

Gyles, 59, left the courtroom in police custody, but by that evening, was already out on bail.

Gyles' lawyer Alan Gold appealed the conviction and is in the process of appealing the sentence.

Gold added it could be as long as nine months before the appeal is heard in court.

The City of Mississauga, nonetheless, passed a resolution Wednesday declaring the councillor's seat vacant, exactly two months from the municipal election.

"Under legislation...imprisonment disqualifies a member of council from holding office," the City-issued statement read. "As Mr. Gyles has been sentenced to jail and has commenced serving his sentence, he becomes disqualified from holding his Ward 5 office."

But Gold said there is nothing stopping his client from running in the Nov. 10 municipal election.

Gyles was convicted on June 25 on counts of municipal corruption and breach of trust. He demanded \$70,000 and accepted \$35,000 in bribes from two Malton businessmen in 2000 and 2001 in return for approval on two unrelated rezoning applications.

Crown prosecutor Brian McGuire said yesterday he is "satisfied that it's a fair and just sentence."

Wein noted the politician's apology in court last month failed to convince her he has an understanding of the "seriousness of these crimes and...the harm he's done to the community.

"His apology is devoid of any real remorse," she said in her 30-minute judgment. "Left unpunished, the harm affects all of us."

Wein maintained Gyles' crimes "taint the political arena."

She said his "willingness to abuse his position," could influence residents not to vote in the next election for fear their government is corrupt, or make developers question whether or not their rezoning applications will be fairly assessed.

Wein noted Gyles' contributions in the community, and a petition signed by more than 500 people supporting the politician.

Gold had asked that his client receive a conditional sentence of 12 months.

But the judge said Gyles' sentence must serve "as a warning to others...who might be tempted to abuse" their political authority.

Gyles was also ordered to repay \$10,000 he took from Malkit Dhaliwal. The money was given in return for a promise to help rezone agricultural land for a trucking school. Dhaliwal paid it under the threat that Gyles would hold up his application indefinitely.

Gyles must also repay Peel Regional Police \$6,600 of \$25,000 in marked bills given to him by businessman Rick Benisasia, who was wired and under surveillance after going to police.

**What happens
to Ward 5 now?**

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