

Man who started audit on Morrison gets three years

By Bill Rea

Jeffrey Granger sounded contrite, but a Newmarket judge Tuesday went along with the request of the Crown and sentenced him to three years in prison.

Granger had previously pleaded guilty to breach of trust by a public official, accepting a secret commission and fraud. Part of the charges involved an attempt to discredit Mayor Marolyn Morrison which led to a police investigation. The investigation into the mayor's activities was concluded in the fall of 2008.

At the conclusion of the investigation, it was determined that the allegations were unfounded and there was no evidence of any misconduct, an OPP news release stated at the time.

I fully understand the severity of these charges, Granger, 39, told the court, acknowledging that Morrison suffered because of his actions. Her reputation was called into question in her community.

Granger, who was an audit team leader for the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), before being fired, had asked for a sentence of two years, with a rehabilitation component added in.

I am truly sorry for my actions, he added, as he asked forgiveness from Morrison, her family, friends and community.

While Justice Joseph Kenkel acknowledged that Granger spoke very well, he went along with the Crown's call for three years.

There is a strong need for general deterrence, he said.

These offences are not committed regularly, it's fair to say, Crown attorney David Moull observed, commenting the fraud included some \$569,000 in federal taxes owing from non-reported income. It's a large-scale fraud.

Moull agreed there were some mitigating factors, including the fact Granger pleaded guilty, which he called a sign of remorse, as well as noting it avoided a trial before a jury, which he said could have lasted eight weeks.

There was a considerable saving of court time by the plea, he said.

Moull also pointed out Granger had no criminal record prior to these events (he's since been arrested for impaired driving). He's also faced a severe decline in his fortunes, losing his wife and family, and had even been reduced to panhandling.

On the other hand, he said, Mr. Granger is entirely the author of his own misfortune.

The aggravating factors included the fact Granger held a position of trust with CRA, giving him access to sensitive taxpayer information, adding citizens need to have confidence in the way the system is run. It's a serious breach of the public trust.

In the case involving Morrison, he said Granger accessed information he had no business going into, which led to an unnecessary audit and police investigations.

This is not a one-off, Moull added, pointing out Granger's actions took place over time and on multiple occasions. He even charged overtime while working on the improper audit.

He also said Granger received about \$1.1 million in secret commissions over time, calling that figure somewhat staggering.

Speaking on his own behalf, Granger referred to his health situation. He stayed seated while addressing the court, saying he had back trouble. He also said he has a painful bowel condition (diverticulosis), which has required hospitalization. As well, he said he's experienced substantial weight gain, from 210 to 280 pounds, and has been suffering from depression and anxiety.

Granger said he's been trying to address issues that have been with him for years, including alcoholism and an addiction to gambling, attending meetings of both Alcoholics and Gamblers Anonymous.

He also said accountability is important in both programs, and he has tried to comply, although he's had trouble finding employment, and has had to sleep in a truck, shelters and hotel stairwells.

Granger said he's been getting support and guidance through his church, having joined a men's fellowship group and acted as an usher, something he said he enjoys.

I have disgraced my employer. I was in a position of trust and abused that position, he told the court, adding he's tried to use his release time wisely. I am a better man today.

I have tried to take actions over the last few years to try and change my behaviour, he added. I fully accept responsibility for my actions. I have done everything in my power to be as cooperative as I can.

He argued a two year sentence, with a rehabilitation component, was reasonable, considering what he's gone through, his remorse and the impacts it has had on his life.

It's been the most difficult thing I've ever had to go through, he said.