

# Rising political star had lottery addiction

Seduced by lure of a quick win, Rogala chased tickets like a junkie chases a fix



Albin Rogala: no jackpot

By PAUL LEGALL  
The Spectator

FROM ALL outward appearances, Albin Rogala was a man of influence and substance.

The 42-year-old real estate lawyer seemed to know all the right people and have all the right connections.

A long-standing member of the Progressive Conservative party, he had acted as legal counsel for the Stoney Creek hydro commission since 1981 and became president of the local chamber of commerce in November of last year.

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He wrote a column in the Stoney Creek News, hosted a legal affairs program on community television and was a frequent visitor at municipal council meetings where he challenged the local fathers on nu-

merous issues, including the location of a new \$9.2-million city hall.

When some political big-wig popped into town, he was usually able to jockey his short, portly frame to the front of the crowd and sidle up to the visiting dignitary.

In 1985, he worked on former Conservative boss Larry Grossman's leadership campaign. And, closer to home, he supported former Hamilton-Wentworth regional chairman Bill Sears and Lincoln MP Shirley Martin.

There was nothing flashy or ostentatious about Stoney Creek's rising political mover.

Whether debating politics or dispensing legal advice, he was known for his straight-talking, no-nonsense style.

But despite his public profile, nobody seemed to know much about Albin Rogala's personal life.

As far as his co-workers knew, he was a bachelor and lived alone

with his elderly mother in a modest home on Sunrise Drive in Hamilton.

He didn't appear extravagant or frivolous in any way.

He leased rather than owned a car, he seldom found time to take holidays and he wore suits as conservative as his political stripes.

But for several years, Albin Rogala was able to conceal a strange obsession that would eventually drive him into financial ruin and public shame.

He was addicted to lottery tickets.

He bought them with the blind compulsion of a junkie chasing his next fix.

On a typical Saturday for the last two or three years, he made the rounds of ticket outlets in Stoney Creek and Hamilton where he invested hundreds of dollars in everything from the 6/49 draw to Celebration 89.

He also made the occasional Wednesday night foray into the fickle realm of chance.

At the Eastdale Variety and the Lottery Hop, two of his regular stops, he usually handed the clerk an envelope with \$400 for 6/49 Quick Pik and Lottario tickets and told her to re-invest any previous winnings.

At the Lottery Hop, located at Jackson Square, the clerks assumed he was buying tickets for a group.

"He was always business-like. I got to know him so well he'd just say 'the usual.' He'd hand me the envelope and leave to wander around the mall while I got the tickets," a female clerk recalled.

"He once told me that he won \$5,000 (as well as smaller amounts) as part of a group," she added.

Police estimate he bought about \$600,000 worth of tickets from

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