

Crown wants 'substantial' prison term for Currie

By KAREN SMITH
The Champion

A judge called Charles Currie a "chronic liar" before finding him guilty of fraud in Milton general division court yesterday.

Judge Patrick LeSage said Mr. Currie, 37, of Campbellville repeatedly lied to his business partner Edward Marion and in the process swindled \$23,000 from him. Outside the courtroom, Mr. Marion breathed a sigh of relief. He said he

believed that justice was done even while knowing he will never get his money back.

"I'm just relieved that it's all over. It's been the most disruptive year of my life," he said.

Mr. Marion, of Mississauga, said Mr. Currie made claims in his testimony Wednesday that he couldn't back up. "His testimony was typical of his dealings with everybody."

Court has heard Mr. Currie and Mr. Marion became friends while performing as part-time comics and decided to open their own club as equal partners in Hamilton.

An antique dealer, Mr. Currie negotiated a lease agreement for 1705 Main St. W. with Vector Main West Ltd. from July to October, 1993.

During that time, Mr. Marion gave Mr. Currie four cheques totalling \$25,500 for what Mr. Currie said were legitimate business expenses such as a lease deposit, legal fees, liquor licence costs and renovations.

Mr. Marion later spent an additional \$20,000 to pay tradespeople for work because Mr. Currie didn't come

up with the money.

Judge LeSage said evidence heard over the three-day trial indicated that Mr. Currie lied to Mr. Marion about how he used \$23,000 of the original \$25,500, and that Mr. Currie didn't financially fulfil his end of the deal.

"The accused never made contributions he said he would or said he had."

Mr. Currie earlier testified in cross-examination that he spent Mr. Marion's money on furniture, renovations and a sound system for the club. He said he put well over \$100,000 into the venture.

Asked in cross-examination to produce receipts, Mr. Currie said he didn't have any. He denied telling Mr. Marion that he needed the money to secure a lease for the building and to purchase a liquor licence.

"There's no question in my mind that what I did was proper," Mr. Currie told the court.

Court heard Mr. Currie has an extensive criminal record including many fraud-related convictions.

He pleaded not guilty to fraud over \$1,000 in connection with the comedy club venture September 13. However, he pleaded guilty to breach of recognition for writing a cheque contrary to a condition set when he was released on bail in another criminal matter March 9.

Mr. Currie, who has been in custody since his arrest March 26, is scheduled to return to court Oct. 12 for sentencing. Crown Attorney Laurie Jago said she plans to seek a "substantial penitentiary term."



Charles Currie

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HRCA dispute heats up

• from COUNCILLORS on page 1
Earlier this summer, HRCA chair and Milton town Councillor Brian Penman said, "It's our right to levy and that challenge, I think, will be dealt with in the courts."

The HRCA's budget comes from Ministry of Natural Resource grants, municipal levies, and fee revenue. A similar 1991 dispute was settled just short of the courtroom when the Region paid up.

HRCA general manager Murray Stephen said the HRCA doesn't intend to go through this exercise

annually. If Halton doesn't pay its share, it opens the door to other contributing municipalities potentially challenging their payment.

The HRCA's 1994 levy showed no increase over 1993.

With the Region's shortfall, it was a 3.5 per cent reduction — or the equivalent of the province's Social Contract and Expenditure Control Plan.

The HRCA contends the Region must appropriately fund the Conservation Authority, a legally-constituted body.

Mayor Krantz said he sympathizes with the Region as a strong advocate of not increasing property taxes.

Legislation prohibits municipalities from withdrawing from conservation authorities. The HRCA manages water, forests, wildlife, provides outdoor education and recreation.

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