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NEWS

Khan shoulders some of the blame

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By: Craig MacBride

February 4, 2008 07:05 PM - Mississauga-Streetsville MP Wajid Khan, who pleaded guilty on Friday to exceeding his 2004 election campaign spending limit by more than \$30,000, says his only mistake was not supervising closely enough his campaign team.

"At the end of the day, I'm the candidate," Khan told The News this evening, "and these people were experienced people running my campaign, and I'm a businessman. I delegate responsibility, but there it was and I should've been more careful."

Khan has been ordered to pay a \$500 fine, and his riding president from 2004 was fined \$400.

In 2004, and again in 2006, Khan was elected as a Liberal in the riding.



Mississauga-Streetsville MP Wajid Khan pleaded guilty last week to exceeding his 2004 election campaign spending limit.

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He crossed the floor in January 2007 to join the Conservatives, but has been sitting as an independent since last November, when Elections Canada revealed he had overspent by \$31,118 on his campaign and had broken election rules by using money from the car dealership he owns for his personal campaign.

However, Khan is now back in the Conservative fold in the wake of his guilty plea.

Asked if he thought spending 40 per cent more than his competitors were allowed to spend helped him win in 2004, Khan said, "Not at all. I'm not going to get into those details, what was spent, who spent. How do you know where it was spent and who spent it? I don't know and I don't want to get into that."

The \$500 fine "reflects the minor nature of the matter," he said, repeating several times that the court decided the overspending was not intentional.

Khan added he doesn't believe the guilty plea will hinder his chances in the next election.

"Constituents of Mississauga-Streetsville have to decide who is the best member of Parliament who is going to deliver for Mississauga, and I have a track record for delivering," he said.

In a government press release issued Saturday, Conservative Whip Jay Hill said the matter was concluded and, "I am happy to re-admit him as a member of our caucus in full standing."

The court ruled that Khan did not deliberately attempt to break the rules. Ryan Sparrow, a spokesperson for the government, said, "The court found that there was no intent to overspend by Mr. Khan."

Sparrow also said that, at the time, Khan was a first-time candidate and that it isn't unusual for rookie candidates to make such mistakes.

Khan, his Dufferin-Mazda car dealership and his former riding president were all originally charged with unauthorized election campaign spending. First elected as a Liberal, Khan was later chosen to be Prime Minister Stephen Harper's special advisor on South Asia and the Middle East. Liberal leader Stephane Dion gave the Streetsville MP an ultimatum to either turn down the job or leave the party.

Bonnie Crombie has been nominated by the Liberals to run in the coming election against Khan in the riding he won for that party in 2004.

Crombie said voters will make the final judgement.

"His actions to date show he has put himself first and not his constituents," said Crombie.

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