

Man acquitted in alleged US\$650-million scam

By Jennifer Pritchett, Associate Editor



A Toronto man has been acquitted of all charges after he was accused of being one of several individuals behind an alleged US\$650-million fraud against a major Canadian bank, says his counsel, Toronto criminal lawyer [Jacob Stilman](#).

“The whole case turned on the fact that the witnesses were found not to be credible,” he tells AdvocateDaily.com.

Stilman, partner with [Lo Greco Stilman LLP](#), took on the case mid-stream in 2016 and made the final submissions to the court. Another lawyer handled the evidentiary part of the trial back in 2015, he says.

He explains his client was charged with one count each of fraud over \$5,000, conspiracy to commit fraud, and committing fraud to benefit a criminal organization. The man was accused of working with others to obtain falsified bank drafts to send to a financial institution in Spain, which were to be used to secure credit for a real estate deal overseas back in 2013, he says.

Stilman says the Crown maintained that the forged Canadian bank drafts, totaling US\$650 million, were to be held as collateral by the overseas lending institution that would extend millions in credit to the parties.

“When the drafts arrived by courier at the bank branch in Spain, an employee there called the bank in Canada to speak with the manager,” he says. “At that point, things started to unravel.”

Stilman says police were called and investigators eventually arrested a group of individuals — including his client. Of those individuals, one man pleaded guilty to a series of offences related to the alleged fraud and several others have cases still before the courts.

Two of the men who were arrested later testified that his client was a party to the fraud but there were credibility issues with their evidence, Stilman explains.

“The bottom line is that these guys were so disreputable in terms of how they testified that neither were believed at all,” he says. “Their evidence was replete with inconsistencies and claims of lack of recollection. Other than their testimony, there was no evidence directly linking my client to the deals. There were wild inconsistencies with their evidence.”

As a result, his client was acquitted, Stilman says.