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## Delays let career criminal walk

Guard dispute mars bail hearing

By [TOM GODFREY](#), SUN MEDIA

TORONTO -- A career criminal who has racked up a nine-page rap sheet "bawled like a baby" after a provincial court judge set him free because it took too long for him to get a bail hearing.

Bryan Thomas Ward, 30, of Georgetown, had six charges against him stayed by Justice Stephen Brown on Tuesday because he missed two previous Milton court dates due to walkouts by guards at Maplehurst Correctional Complex.

Ward, a landscaper, was facing two counts of break and enter and one count each of threatening death, obstructing police, failing to appear and theft under \$5,000. He was among several men charged last year in connection with the theft of a safe containing \$27,000.

"I was stunned and in shock when I found out I was free to go," Ward said yesterday at the Bloor St. W. office of his lawyer, David Costa. "This is a blessing because I was looking at 18 months in jail."

He plans to return to work and mend fences with his common-law wife, Jennifer, and their two young daughters.

"This was a sign for me to pay more attention to my family," Ward said. "We were on the verge of splitting up because my wife is under a lot of stress."

He doesn't recall how many criminal convictions he's racked up but said they are in "the dozens" and mostly for thefts, failing to appear or breaching probation. The longest stretch he's spent in jail is eight months.

"There's no way I ever plan to live through this again," he said. "Because of the strike I couldn't shower or talk to my lawyer for days at a time."

If Ward gets in trouble again the charges can be reinstated, Costa said.

Ward missed bail hearings at Milton court on May 4 and 5 because he arrived late due to the work dispute, which slowed the transfer of inmates to area courts and jails, Costa said.

Ward was granted release on May 7, but his Scarborough surety couldn't take time off work to travel to Milton court to re-post a \$5,000 bail.

"I then filed a charter motion seeking that the charges be stayed," Costa said. "Few people are dogged enough to go after a Crown attorney."

Ward is entitled to a "timely" bail hearing within 24 hours of his arrest, the lawyer said.

"Mr. Ward was held hostage by a labour dispute," Costa said. "This is a travesty and I was outraged and so was the judge."

Ward wasn't allowed to shower or contact his lawyer for days at a time due to lockdowns at Maplehurst stemming from the work dispute, he said.

"There are many cases like this out there," Costa said. "Many people won't like the fact that he's free even though he has a huge record with a lot of charges."

At the May 7 hearing, Justice Roselyn Zisman said Ward has a right to have a bail hearing as "soon as practicable.

"It's not a matter of inconvenience," she said.

"It's a fundamental right to have an accused before the court and let him have his day in court."



**Bryan Ward, right, with lawyer David Costa says his lengthy life of crime is over after a judge threw out his latest charges. (Craig Robertson/SUN MEDIA)**