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Bike store owner Igor Kenk granted bail

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Efforts are to continue Saturday for the release of alleged bicycle thief Igor Kenk from jail, his lawyer said today.

A judge granted Kenk bail to the tune of \$275,000 Friday and ordered him under house arrest with one of his three sureties. But after spending more than two weeks in jail on theft and narcotics charges, the Mr. Fix-it of the bike trade was escorted back to the Don Jail instead while the logistics of his release were being worked out.

Kenk, 49, owner of the Bicycle Clinic on Queen St. W., has been charged with 58 offences, mostly related to bike theft and narcotics following his arrest on July 16.

Although he will be giving up his jail cell for house arrest, Kenk told reporters he had reservations about his future and felt "a little betrayed" by his situation.

"I'm a dead man," the handcuffed and dishevelled Kenk said enigmatically as he was led out of the Old City Hall courtroom and into the courthouse elevator in his prison jumpsuit, while the doors closed behind him.

The man many see as a pack rat and alleged thief, is also viewed as charismatic and romantic by his admirers. When asked if he missed his wife concert pianist Jeanie Chung, Kenk responded: "How do you think? It's 37 degrees Celsius under your skin. What can I do?"

Kenk's bail was set at \$250,000 for provincial charges related to bike theft, \$10,000 for federal charges including 21 drug offences, and \$15,000 surety bail was to be put up by three supporters.

"It's a more detailed bail with more parties involved than in a typical bail release," Kenk's lawyer Lon Rose explained Friday night. "It really is logistics."

Rose described Kenk's sureties as "extremely responsible, capable, mature individuals who satisfied the court."

He said he hopes Kenk will be released this weekend.

Kenk will be placed under house arrest and won't be able to step outside unless he is accompanied by one of his three sureties, Justice Bruce Young ruled Friday at the Old City Hall courtroom.

Although Kenk must stay away from his Queen St. W. bike clinic and not possess any bike, there was no prohibition against visiting his Yorkville home to see his wife of seven years.

A self-described former Slovenian police officer, Kenk was also required to surrender his passport and other travel documents to the court Friday, and barred from leaving Ontario.

The judge also ordered Kenk to have a psychological assessment, be assessed for substance abuse, and to undergo treatment if required.

He must also contact the detective in charge of his case 24 hours in advance of changing his address. Evidence heard in court at Friday morning's bail hearing is covered by a publication ban.

Outside the court, Kenk's lawyer praised the judge's decision to grant his client bail. "It was the right thing to do ... very well thought out," said Rose.

Police have recovered some 2,700 bikes since Kenk's arrest, most of them from garages he rented in the city's downtown west core, and have put many of them on public display in an attempt to reunite them with their rightful owners.

Police also seized an estimated \$70,000 worth of drugs - including about seven kilos of marijuana and less than three ounces of cocaine - found on property he either owns or rents.

Rose told reporters outside court that the community outrage against Kenk for the alleged bike thefts seems like "a knee-jerk reaction from the public ... "an overblown response by the public."

"In the media it seems to some extent he's (Kenk) being blamed for every bicycle that's disappeared in the last many, many years in Toronto."

Although police have told reporters that there could be possibly more charges laid against Kenk, Rose told the media "if police are going to lay any more charges they don't necessarily have to bring him (Kenk) into custody."

Rose also told reporters that he thought the judge was "very thorough and addressed a number of issues to make sure that Mr. Kenk is supervised and that the public's concerns are addressed as well."

"There's a presumption of innocence and part of the presumption of innocence is a right to interim judicial release."

So, Rose explained, "it's not necessary to keep him physically in a jail."

Kenk was described by his lawyer as "very much an individual, that's for sure ... a very intelligent man and he's got a lot of original ideas."

As for the bike theft charges, Rose implied the allegations would be difficult to prove in court. "We're looking forward to hearing all the evidence and getting the evidence tested in court."

Rose also told reporters that Kenk "has had a very rough ride" in the Don Jail.

He said Kenk's health would be "much better when he's released."

"This has been an extremely trying experience for (Kenk) and he hasn't had a very easy time of it at the Don Jail."

Kenk will next appear in court on Aug. 6.