

Judge gets a slap on wrist

By KEVIN CONNOR, SUN MEDIA

An Ontario Court judge was given a warning yesterday for a "slip from grace" in tampering with court transcripts.

Family court Justice Marvin Zucker admitted to the Ontario Judicial Council that he committed judicial misconduct by making deletions and additions to court transcripts in a case where paralegal Harry Kopyto was trying to represent a woman battling a supervision application by Jewish Family and Children's Services.

In July 2005, Zucker refused to allow Kopyto to represent the women because of his history and for being "adversarial" in court -- remarks Zucker later removed from transcripts.

Zucker apologized to the OJC, admitting it was wrong, but he stuck to his guns about not letting Kopyto represent the woman.

"She faced the possibility of losing her children," Zucker said. "I had grave concerns proceeding with Mr. Kopyto and I felt it was imperative for her to have legal counsel." Kopyto was disbarred in 1989 for bilking Ontario Legal Aid of more than \$150,000, said Zucker's lawyer, Phil Epstein, who sat on the disciplinary panel that disbarred Kopyto.

Zucker made a "slip from grace," said OJC chairman Justice Robert Blair, who issued Zucker a warning and ordered him to write a letter of apology to Kopyto and his client.

Calling the outcome "outrageous," Kopyto said it proves judges are above the law.