



Inspector General's Office City of Chicago

180 N. Michigan Ave, Suite 2000

Chicago, Illinois 60601

(773) 478-7799

(773) 478-3949 (fax)

<http://www.ChicagoInspectorGeneral.org>

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CONTACT: (773) 478-7799

Dan Sprehe, Special Assistant

Former City Employee Repays \$20,000, Avoids Prison Time for Felony Theft

CHICAGO – A former project administrator for the City of Chicago's Department Of Cultural Affairs pled guilty today in Cook County Criminal Court to one count of felony theft. Ming Liu (now Ming Liu Bengtsson) was indicted last August for felony theft, forgery, and official misconduct, following an investigation by the Chicago Inspector General's Office ("IGO").

During the course of an unrelated investigation in July 2008, the IGO discovered a copy of a \$20,000 check, made out to the defendant. An inconsistency in the check's signature led to further scrutiny by the IGO. Investigators found that Liu had written the check to herself, forging the signature of the Chicago Tourism Fund's executive director. She then altered the payee of the check in the fund's electronic accounting system to avoid detection.

The evidence, which was forwarded to the Cook County State's Attorneys Office, resulted in Liu being charged in a four-count indictment. The charges in the indictment carried a maximum penalty of seven years in state prison.

In court today, Liu Bengtsson was sentenced to two years of probation, as part of a plea agreement with prosecutors. In addition, she paid \$20,000 in restitution the City of Chicago.

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