83-year-old Canadian fashion mogul, Nygard, jailed for sexual assaults

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Peter Nygard, the founder of one of Canada’s largest clothing brands, was sentenced Monday to 11 years in prison for four counts of sexual assault of women and a girl in Toronto.  
  
He could be released in about six and a half years with credit for time spent in pre-trial custody, or sooner if he is granted parole.  
  
Nygard, 83, is “a Canadian success story gone very wrong,” Ontario Superior Court Justice Robert Goldstein said in handing down the sentence.  
  
He called him “a sexual predator,” adding that “Mr Nygard used his wealth, power and profile to prey on his victims.”  
  
Wearing a dark hoodie and a makeshift visor to shield his eyes in court, Nygard did not appear to react to the decision.  
  
His lawyer, Gerri Wiebe, said he planned to appeal the sentence while continuing to “maintain his innocence” in several other criminal cases pending against him.  
  
Outside the Toronto courthouse, a spokesperson for one of Nygard’s victims, whose identities are protected by court order, read a statement describing a sense of closure after “four years of hell.”  
  
“We did this to ensure every victim of sexual assault will remember this trial and feel the strength and confidence to come forward and not be threatened by social status or money,” read the statement.  
  
– Trapped victims in bedroom –  
  
Nygard was convicted in November 2023 of using his status as the head of one of Canada’s largest womenswear makers to sexually assault three women and a 16-year-old girl between 1988 and 2005.  
  
His trial heard he had invited them to his opulent Canadian offices on the pretense of lucrative modelling or other opportunities, only to find themselves trapped in a top-floor bedroom suite with a hot tub where he preyed on them.  
  
The case marked a spectacular fall for a man who once oversaw 170 of his eponymous stores in Canada and the United States, and threw lavish parties at his homes in the Bahamas—a Mayan-inspired playground with fake volcanoes—and Los Angeles.  
  
Prosecutors had sought to have Nygard incarcerated for at least 15 years while the defense, citing his advanced age and failing health, urged releasing him within two years.  
  
The judge noted in his sentencing decision a high level of “violence, degradation and (the) duration of these sexual assaults, (as well as) the manipulations used to get the victims into (his) private apartment” in Toronto.  
  
Nygard also did not moderate his behaviour over the years, the judge noted.  
  
– Empire crumbles –  
  
At the height of his success, Nygard dined with Queen Elizabeth II and rubbed shoulders with political leaders and Hollywood stars.  
  
He had long boasted about his rise from humble beginnings, as a young Finnish immigrant who built a fashion empire and amassed a personal fortune worth Can$850 million (US$620 million).  
  
But it all came crashing down in 2020, when police raided his Manhattan corporate headquarters, and his company filed for bankruptcy protection shortly afterwards.  
  
His arrest in Canada the same year came after a whistleblower released footage that included a 17-year-old dancing on a stripper pole on Nygard’s private Boeing 727 plane.  
  
One of his Canadian accusers called Nygard “a monster.”  
  
In the United States, prosecutors allege Nygard used company funds to host “pamper parties” where minor girls were drugged and women assaulted if they did not comply with his sexual demands.  
  
They have sought his extradition to the United States.  
  
Nygard also still faces trials on separate charges in the Canadian provinces of Manitoba and Quebec.  
  
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