Doctor gives up licence

A Saskatchewan doctor who served time for two sex assaults has agreed to voluntarily surrender his medical licence.

Dr. Daniel Couture moved to Gravelbourg from Quebec in 1999 and practised family medicine in the town for years. He had more recently been working as a locum, temporarily filling in for doctors across the province, when police charged him with the sexual assault of two young girls from incidents in the 1980s.

The girls were his neighbours, and not his patients, although he was a doctor at the time of the crimes.

Couture, who is in his early 70s, had been fighting to hang on to his medical licence.

On Friday, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan's governing council agreed to call off a penalty hearing for Dr. Couture after he said he was willing to cancel his own licence.

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Former Coronach doctor serves time for sexual assault

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Kelly Elder

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Former Coronach doctor, Daniel Couture, who is currently practicing in Gravelbourg requires supervision after recently serving jail time for sexual assaults that happened 30 years ago.

Bryan E. Salte, Associate Registrar of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan said, “Subsequent to a criminal conviction for indecent assault on minors, a Hearing under Section 55 was adjourned at the request of Dr. D. Couture’s legal counsel.

Council determined it would reconvene the Hearing at the earliest opportunity after receipt of a risk assessment pertaining to the likelihood of Dr. Couture reoffending. Dr. Couture was required to enter into an undertaking that he have an adult person present for every patient who is less than 18 years of age.”

According to a Star Phoenix article, Couture served two months in a Quebec jail late last year after pleading guilty to sexually assaulting two young girls who were his neighbour’s children three decades ago.

Couture, who has faced no other criminal charges or professional sanctions in all those years, is fighting to hold onto his medical license.

A Hearing was held before the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan’s council on January 18. His lawyer, Christine Glazer, argued to keep Couture’s license to practice, saying he has already served a severe penalty for his actions.

“The events were extremely shameful for him,” Glazer said in the news report. “They continue to be extremely shameful. The implications are significant: Incarceration and his youngest son has alienated him from his life because he doesn’t understand how this could have occurred.”

The college’s lawyer, Bryan Salte, told council one of the victims came forward to the police two years ago after suffering psychological trauma from the incidents. Police in Quebec laid charges, Couture pleaded guilty and served two months of a three-month sentence last year. As part of his release, he agreed not to practise medicine until the college of physicians and surgeons had a chance to consider the matter.

Salte said, “The hearing under section 55 of The Medical Profession Act, 1981 was adjourned until Dr. Couture’s assessment is obtained.”

Council also voted Couture be allowed to see patients in the interim, as long as he agrees to have a chaperone in the room whenever he treats children.

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Rural doctor required to have chaperone

Janet French
The StarPhoenix

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A Saskatchewan doctor who recently served jail time for sexual assaults that happened 30 years ago has his ability to practise medicine hanging in the balance.

Dr. Daniel Couture of Gravelbourg served two months in a Quebec jail late last year after pleading guilty to sexually assaulting two young girls who were his neighbour’s children three decades ago.

Couture, who has faced no other criminal charges or professional sanctions in all those years, is fighting to hold onto his medical licence.

His lawyer, Christine Glazer, argued before the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan’s council Friday that Couture has already served a severe penalty for his actions.

"The events were extremely shameful for him," Glazer said. "They continue to be extremely shameful.

The implications are significant: Incarceration and his youngest son has alienated him from his life because he doesn't understand how this could have occurred.”

Couture moved to Gravelbourg from Quebec in 1999, Glazer said, where he practised family medicine until a few years ago. In recent years, he has been a locum physician, travelling around to fill in for doctors who are temporarily away.

"Dr. Couture is a good doctor, committed to patient care," she said.

Couture, 71, had been working for about 10 years in the early 1980s when a demanding call schedule and workaholic ways led to him taking some time off to deal with depression and extreme amount of stress, Glazer said.

The victims were Couture's neighbour's children, who were about six years old at the time, she said.

The two were not his patients. Social services authorities investigated the incident at the time, but no criminal charges were laid. After several months of therapy, Couture returned to practising medicine.

The college's lawyer, Bryan Salte, told council one of the victims came forward to the police two years ago after suffering psychological trauma from the incidents.

Police in Quebec laid charges, Couture pleaded guilty and served two months of a three-month sentence last year.

As part of his release, he agreed not to practise medicine until the college of physicians and surgeons had a chance to consider the matter.

After a lengthy private deliberation, the college's council voted Friday to have a sub-specialized psychiatrist in Toronto assess Couture's likelihood of posing a risk to patients before making a decision about his licence in the long term.

Council also voted Couture be allowed to see patients in the interim, as long as he agrees to have a chaperone in the room whenever he treats children.

"Dr. Couture is ready to move on from this event," Glazer told the council.

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