Quebec Dad Sued by Daughter After Grounding Loses his Appeal

Father's Lawyer Says They May Take Case to Canada's Supreme Court

A Quebec father who was taken to court by his 12-year-old daughter after he grounded her in June 2008 has lost his appeal.

Quebec Superior Court rejected the Gatineau father's appeal of a lower court ruling that said his punishment was too severe for the wrongs he said his daughter committed.

The father is "flabbergasted," his lawyer Kim Beaudoin told CBC News.

In its ruling, issued Monday, the province's court of appeal declared the girl was caught up in a "very rare" set of circumstances, and her father didn't have sufficient grounds to contest the court's earlier decision.

The family's legal wrangling started with a dispute over the girl's Internet use.

'Either way, he doesn't have authority over this child anymore. She sued him because she doesn't respect his rules. It's very hard to raise a child who is the boss.

Kim Beaudoin, the father's lawyer - She had been living with her father after her parents split up when he grounded her in 2008 for defying his order to stay off the Internet. The father caught her chatting on websites he had blocked, and alleged his daughter was posting "inappropriate pictures" of herself online.

Her punishment: she was banned from her Grade 6 graduation trip to Quebec City in June 2008, for which her mother had already granted permission.

The father — who had custody — withheld his written permission for the trip, prompting the school to refuse to let the girl go with her classmates.

That's when the girl asked for help from the lawyer who represented her in her parents' separation, and petitioned the court to intervene in her case.

"Going to court was a last resort," said Lucie Fortin, a legal aid attorney who represented the girl. "The question was that there was a problem between the father and the mother, and the child asked the court to intervene because it was important to her.

"The trip was very important to her."

A lower court ruled in the girl's favour in 2008. She went on the trip, but her father appealed the decision on the principle of the matter.

He doesn't have regrets, his lawyer said.

"Either way, he doesn't have authority over this child anymore. She sued him because she doesn't respect his rules," Beaudoin said. "It's very hard to raise a child who is the boss."

The girl — who now lives with her mother — doesn't have much of a relationship with her dad now, Beaudoin said.

"We went from a child who wanted to live with her father, and after all this has been done, they're not speaking anymore."

"We have a lot of work to re-establish a link between those two."

Beaudoin believes the ruling reflects a loss of moral authority in Quebec's court system.

"Is this what we want in our society? Laws are supposed to reflect our values. And if the courts aren't reflecting that, maybe the government will, to prevent children from going this way," she said Tuesday, adding her client may take the case to Canada's Supreme Court.

In its Monday ruling, the appeal court warned the case should not be seen as an open invitation for children to take legal action every time they're grounded.