

It's Delta dad vs. Nebraska

CUSTODY CASE: U.S. state may overrule B.C. court order

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A Delta dad is at the heart of an international child-custody case that has U.S. lawmakers in Nebraska poised to enact new state legislation aimed at superceding Canadian courts.

The case involves community-care worker Steven Lorenz and his estranged wife, Susan Lien of Lincoln, Neb. Lien claims he physically and sexually assaulted their eight-year-old daughter, Steffany, during visitations.

Lien is trying to deny future visits to Lorenz, who vehemently denies the claims of abuse and has taken two polygraph tests and subjected himself to psychological testing to

prove his innocence.

"I have taken and passed two polygraphs," wrote Lorenz, who provided 60 pages of documents to *The Province* in support of his claims. "Ms. Lien [is trying] to eliminate me from my daughter's life."

No criminal charges have been laid and B.C. courts, which currently have jurisdiction in the matter, continue to order visitations.

But Lien's lawyer, Sheri Wortman, is urging state senators to fast-track Bill 341, which would change the law and allow Nebraska courts to override custody orders from foreign courts in the case of abuse or neglect.

Lorenz's lawyer in Lincoln, Christopher Furches, called the

proposed bill, which has passed a first-round vote, "outrageous," arguing Lien is attempting to fight a custody order that she considers unfavourable.

"This is outrageous. This new act essentially makes foreign nations' courts irrelevant," Furches told *The Province*.

Furches pointed out that international treaties such as the Hague Convention state that authority over child-custody issues should remain with the court where the child was living when the case was filed.

Lien filed her custody application at a court in B.C., where she was working when Steffany was born. In 2000, she moved back to Nebraska after being granted custody.

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