

community

Richmond educator fights for daughter

International child custody case has broader implications

by **Martin van den Hemel**
Staff Reporter

A Richmond educational assistant and his 11-year-old daughter are at the heart of an international child-custody battle that's seen the state of Nebraska recently pass legislation enabling it to ignore rulings made in Canadian courts.

Steven Lorenz, who works with special needs kids in Richmond, hasn't seen his daughter

Steffany for more than two years after she was abducted by Lorenz's former common-law wife, Susan Lien.

Steffany is currently living with her mother in Nebraska, despite the fact the B.C. Supreme Court has awarded Lorenz sole custody of Steffany.

Lorenz and his ex-wife had shared custody of Steffany for many years, with Lorenz flying to Nebraska to pick her up during holiday

vacations about five weeks every year.

This continued until 2004, when Lien suddenly accused him of having abused Steffany.

Lorenz volunteered to undergo polygraph testing, which he passed, and no criminal charges were laid against him after Delta police investigated.

Steffany's mother has since fought to get the B.C. Supreme Court to relinquish jurisdiction

over the case, and tried to get the Nebraska Supreme Court to rule it had jurisdiction, but failed on both accounts.

But then Lien and her supporters lobbied for politicians in Nebraska to help her custody fight, resulting in Nebraska passing legislation indicating it doesn't have to honour the custody rulings of courts outside the U.S.

That law happened to be written by Lien's lawyers, said Lorenz, who believes the legislation was aimed specifically at his battle.

Now Lorenz has enlisted the help of Delta-Richmond East MP



Mark Patrick photo

Steven Lorenz is fighting to get his daughter back in a child custody case that has pitted him against the state of Nebraska.

John Cummins, who said this case deserves the immediate attention of Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon.

"If a state such as Nebraska can pass a law directed at a custody case in British Columbia based solely on a mother's unproven allegations, the implications are more far reaching and of much greater concern than any individual

case," Cummins wrote in a letter.

And unless the case is dealt with in a timely fashion, Cummins fears that "it will no longer be safe for a Canadian parent to support the visitation rights of a separated spouse living in the United States."