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## Former minister Kenneth Gibbs to learn fate Nov. 9

NINE DAYS OF TESTIMONY AND LEGAL ARGUMENTS CONCLUDES

Posted By LINDA RICHARDSON, SUN MEDIA

Posted 11 months ago

Kenneth Gibbs will learn in November whether a judge thinks the former Anglican minister is guilty of dated sex offences involving young girls.

Following nine days of testimony and legal arguments at the 76-year-old Belleville man's trial, Superior Court Justice Edward Koke reserved his decision until Nov. 9.

Gibbs, who is charged with nine counts of indecent assault, has pleaded not guilty to six of the counts and guilty to the remainder.

The offences, which involve six complainants, are alleged to have occurred in two Northern Ontario communities in the 1960s and 1970s.

The current Belleville resident served as minister of St. John's Anglican Church in Chapleau from 1966 to 1971. He now lives on Hickory Grove in the city's east end.

He was at St. Peter the Apostle Church in Elliot Lake from 1971 to 1980.

A publication ban prohibits reporting evidence that might identify the complainants.

During the trial, the court heard from 12 witnesses, including the complainants, now in their 40s and 50s, and the accused.

The women described incidents in which they say Gibbs fondled their breasts or vagina when they were children.

One complainant told the court Gibbs digitally penetrated her while he had her masturbate him.

The various incidents are alleged to have occurred at church, the rectory and at one of the complainant's home.

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When he testified, Gibbs denied the allegations, but admitted to touching one complainant on three occasions.

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In his closing argument, prosecutor Mike Kelly called the accused's evidence -- evasive and non-responsive -- especially during cross-examination.

The assistant Crown attorney pointed to times when Gibbs "minimized his conduct" in regards to the girl he admitted touching.

On the witness stand, Gibbs described two incidents where he said he touched the girl's inner thigh.

Yet, in a video interview with police, played in court, he indicated he had touched her vagina, the Crown said.

Citing numerous inconsistencies throughout the man's testimony, Kelly urged the court not to accept his evidence.

"You can't rely on what he says because of his tendency to interpret and mislead the court," Kelly told the judge.

In reviewing the evidence of two complainants, who testified about incidents in Chapleau, defence counsel Andre Berthelot agreed they were "believable witnesses."

"But they are mistaken witnesses, are unreliable," he said, referring to testimony that revolved around the type of chairs at the church. "The events they relate couldn't have happened."

He pointed to inconsistencies and lack of reliability in the evidence given by the various women.

Berthelot suggested the most unreliable indicator was the six complainants' testimony about frequency of the acts. The estimates ranged from five or six times to 20, 45, 75 and 80 over varying time periods.

"It's a guessing game, an estimate. The most they possibly can guess is that there were repeated occurrences," he said, urging the court to bear that in mind when making its determination about his client.

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