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Riordon promises verdict Wednesday in child's death

By Cathy Carnahan
Correspondent

MIRAMICHI (Special) — Court of Queen's Bench Judge Thomas Riordon reserved decision here Thursday in the death of John Ryan Turner, but he promised to give a verdict on Wednesday at 2 p.m.

Corporal Steven Turner and Lorelei Turner are charged with manslaughter in failing to provide the necessities of life to their son who died at home at Canadian Forces Base Chatham on May 26, 1994.

John Ryan was three years and nine months old when he died. Evidence during seven days of trial suggests the boy died of starvation in his bed at 379 Hamilton Cres. Pediatricians said the little boy also died of a broken heart and lack of love.

It's a story which has touched the heart of the nation. Citizens from across the country are calling and writing the local newspaper in outrage. A court official confirmed that Riordon

has also received letters of concern.

Crown prosecutors in the case are Fred Ferguson and William Morrissy, and Ferguson spent more than three hours Thursday giving an overview of the case.

He said the Turners committed manslaughter by failing to provide their young son with necessary medical treatment.

Dr. John Anderson, an expert in physical, sexual and emotional abuse at the Izaak Walton Killam Children's Hospital in Halifax for 26 years, testified he believed John Ryan Turner might still be alive today if his parents had taken him to a doctor even a few days before his death.

Ferguson told the court, according to law, John Ryan's parents also had an obligation to prevent him from abuse.

Dr. John McKay, chief pathologist for the province, testified the boy had 21 physical injuries, including four fractures which had been left to mend on their own.

There was also testimony suggesting John

Ryan was tied in his bed and gagged, but defence lawyers say most of the Crown's case is based on speculation rather than facts.

Steven Turner's lawyer, Barry Whynot, spent two hours Thursday defending his client, with Lorelei's defence counsel, Brian Doucet, wrapping up the day's arguments.

There was a lot of wrangling over the wording of the indictment, as well as arguments on various case laws.

The Crown called a total of 60 witnesses while the defence called none.

In the end, there was a lot of discussion about whether John Ryan Turner was a victim of something called psycho-social dwarfism, also known as Kasper Hauser Syndrome or the failure to thrive.

Dr. Anderson and Dr. David Meek, a pediatrician at Saint John Regional Hospital with specialties in child development and neurology, told the court they thought the boy was subject to the disorder.

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Carnahan photo

Anglican priest Rev. Wilfred Langmaid, right, talks with defendants Lorelei and Steven Turner outside Miramichi court, Thursday