

Michelle Hanson to stand trial in drowning of her son Kaden

Written By **PAULA BROWN**

Michelle Hanson, mother of Kaden Young, will stand trial on charges of impaired driving causing death and criminal negligence causing death, a judge ruled on Tuesday (July 30).

“The accused, Michelle Hanson, will be committed to stand trial by a judge and jury on counts one (impaired driving causing death) and three (criminal negligence causing death),” said Ontario Court Justice Richard Humphrey.

The decision comes after an eight-day preliminary hearing to determine whether there was enough evidence for Ms. Hanson to be tried on the two criminal charges.

Faced with the evidence and the numerous witness accounts over the eight days, Justice Humphrey told the courtroom that, “At this stage the court must accept the Crown’s evidence taken at its highest, even in circumstance where evidence could suggest an alternate explanation favourable to the accused.”

“This evidence constitutes some wanton or reckless disregard for the life of the child, Kaden Young,” said Justice Humphrey.

Outside of the courtroom Toronto lawyer Marco Giuseppe Forte, who will represent Ms. Hanson, spoke with the Citizen.

“I’m not going to say we were completely taken by surprise in terms of the committal,” he said, later adding that they were satisfied with how the evidence came out in the preliminary inquiry.

When asked by the Citizen whether there were any doubts about a committal, Assistant Crown Attorney Danielle Garbaty said, “One never knows what the judge will do, so you never know what’s going to happen until it happens.”

Mr. Forte and Ms. Garbaty previously agreed that the count of impaired driving causing death would be tried, with the focus of the preliminary hearing centring on whether there was sufficient evidence to warrant the count of criminal negligence causing death.

A publication ban is still in effect preventing media from publishing or broadcasting any information relating to evidence brought up in the preliminary inquiry.

Now that the decision for Ms. Hanson to face trial on the two counts, with a previous charge of dangerous driving causing death having been withdrawn by the Crown in May, Mr. Forte said he is planning to take a look at whether a change in venue should be sought.

“I plan to take a much closer look at the impact, the potential impact of some of those social media sites and mainstream media coverage and we’ll make a determination about change of venue then,” said Mr. Forte.

Ms. Hanson, on the early morning hours of Feb. 21, 2018, failed to stop at a road-closed sign on the 10th Line of Amaranth near Waldemar, proceeding onto the flooded roadway. Her minivan was subsequently pulled into the flooding Grand River. Both Ms. Hanson and Kaden Young, who was in the vehicle with his mother, managed to escape the vehicle but Kaden was pulled from his mother’s arms. On April 21, two months to the day that Kaden went missing, two fishermen found his body under a bridge in Belwood Lake.

Ms. Hanson will appear again in an Orangeville courtroom on Sept. 30 for court assignment, which Ms. Garbaty says is a first appearance and will act as if the process is starting over in a higher court.

Ms. Hanson is expected to enter a plea of not guilty.