

SUPREME COURT OF NOVA SCOTIA

Citation: *R. v. Cripps*, 2026 NSSC 65

Date: 20260220

Docket: CRH 527886

Registry: Halifax

Between:

His Majesty the King

v.

John Alexander Cripps

Restriction on Publication of any information that could identify the victim or witnesses: Sections 486.4 & 486.5 *Criminal Code*

SENTENCE DECISION

Judge: The Honourable Justice James L. Chipman

Heard: December 5, 2025 and February 20, 2026, in Halifax, Nova Scotia

Written Decision: February 23, 2026

Counsel: Maura Landry, for the Crown
Brian Bailey, for Mr. Cripps

Order restricting publication — sexual offences

486.4 (1) Subject to subsection (2), the presiding judge or justice may make an order directing that any information that could identify the victim or a witness shall not be published in any document or broadcast or transmitted in any way, in proceedings in respect of

(a) any of the following offences:

(i) an offence under section 151, 152, 153, 153.1, 155, 160, 162, 163.1, 170, 171, 171.1, 172, 172.1, 172.2, 173, 213, 271, 272, 273, 279.01, 279.011, 279.02, 279.03, 280, 281, 286.1, 286.2, 286.3, 346 or 347, or

(ii) any offence under this Act, as it read from time to time before the day on which this subparagraph comes into force, if the conduct alleged would be an offence referred to in subparagraph (i) if it occurred on or after that day; or

(b) two or more offences being dealt with in the same proceeding, at least one of which is an offence referred to in paragraph (a).

Order restricting publication — victims and witnesses

486.5 (1) Unless an order is made under section 486.4, on application of the prosecutor in respect of a victim or a witness, or on application of a victim or a witness, a judge or justice may make an order directing that any information that could identify the victim or witness shall not be published in any document or broadcast or transmitted in any way if the judge or justice is of the opinion that the order is in the interest of the proper administration of justice.

By the Court:

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

[1] By Indictment filed September 28, 2023, John Alexander Cripps was charged with ten counts with respect to crimes alleged to have occurred between June 19, 2021 and September 11, 2021 and September 1, 2021 and April 1, 2022. At a November 23, 2023 Crownside appearance a notice of re-election from a judge and jury to judge alone trial was filed and not guilty pleas were entered on all counts. The trial was set for five days in December, 2024. At a Crownside appearance about a year later (November 21, 2024) Mr. Cripps sought and received an adjournment of the trial dates.

[2] On February 20, 2025 there was a further Crownside appearance and new trial dates were confirmed for late February and March of 2026. At a May 1, 2025 Crownside appearance Mr. Cripps confirmed that he had found a lawyer, Mark Bailey, who would represent him. Mark Bailey confirmed his retainer at a May 22, 2025 Crownside appearance. Following two more Crownside appearances in June, 2025, the parties appeared before me on December 5, 2025, with Brian Bailey now representing Mr. Cripps.

[3] On December 5, 2025, following a s. 606 inquiry and an Agreed Statement of Facts (ASF) read into the record, Mr. Cripps plead guilty to Indictment counts two and four, which read:

2. AND FURTHER that he between June 19, 2021 and September 11, 2021 at or near Cole Harbour, in the Province of Nova Scotia, did for a sexual purpose touch [redacted], a person under the age of sixteen years directly with a part of his body, to wit., his penis and hands, contrary to Section 151 of the *Criminal Code*.

4. AND FURTHER that he between September 1, 2021 and April 1, 2022 at, or near Ohio, Antigonish County, in the Province of Nova Scotia, did, using a telecommunication device to communicate with [redacted], a person believed to be under the age of sixteen years for the purpose of facilitating the commission of an offence under Section 173(2), with respect to that person, contrary to Section 172.1(1)(b) of the *Criminal Code*.

[4] The ASF reads as follows:

1. Pursuant to section 655 of the *Criminal Code of Canada*, the Crown alleges and the accused John Alexander Cripps (“Mr. Cripps”) admits, for the purposes of dispensing with proof thereof, the following facts:

2. Mr. Cripps and his then-partner hired a family friend's daughter, [redacted], to babysit their children at their family home in [redacted], during the summer of 2021. [redacted] was 13 years old at the time. [redacted] resided with her family outside [redacted], at that time. In order to babysit, [redacted] moved into Mr. Cripps' family home for the summer break from school.
3. During the time [redacted] was residing in Mr. Cripps' home, Mr. Cripps committed the following incidents of sexual assault against [redacted]:
 - a. **First Incident:** Mr. Cripps had finished showering and asked [redacted] to bring a towel for him to his bedroom. [redacted] got the towel for Mr. Cripps and when she entered Mr. Cripps' bedroom to give it to him, he was naked. Mr. Cripps then inserted his fingers and his penis in [redacted]'s vagina while she was in the bedroom with him. Mr. Cripps "squeezed her chest" very hard and she began to cry. Mr. Cripps put his hand over her mouth and told her, "it was going to get worse and would be over soon." Mr. Cripps then ejaculated on her stomach, which ended the sexual assault.
 - b. **Second Incident:** [redacted] was asked by Mr. Cripps' then-partner to take supper to Mr. Cripps in the basement of their residence. [redacted] took Mr. Cripps' supper to him in the basement and when she was walking away, he grabbed her hair and pushed her on a bed in the basement. Mr. Cripps then took off [redacted]'s pants and underwear and forced his penis in her vagina. Mr. Cripps ejaculated inside of [redacted] in the course of this incident.
 - c. **Third Incident:** Later on the same evening as the second incident, [redacted] was asleep in her bed in the guest room and awoke to Mr. Cripps having inserted his penis inside of her vagina. Mr. Cripps told [redacted] that he wasn't going to do it again. After this, [redacted] started to bleed from her vagina and Mr. Cripps told her it was "gross" and "disgusting."
 - d. **Fourth Incident:** On a later date, [redacted] was in her bed in the guest room sleeping and woke up to Mr. Cripps putting his penis on her lips. [redacted] said "no" and Mr. Cripps left the guest room.
 - e. **Fifth Incident:** [redacted] was putting clothes away in Mr. Cripps room. Mr. Cripps was in the bedroom and motioned for [redacted] to get on the bed. [redacted] knew what he wanted so got undressed and got on the bed. She saw a dildo near the bed. Then Mr. Cripps put something black over [redacted]'s eyes like a blind fold and forced the dildo into her vagina. [redacted] could see and feel Mr. Cripps forcing the dildo in her vagina under the mask/blindfold.
 - f. **Sixth Incident:** [redacted] and Mr. Cripps were in the basement together. Mr. Cripps moved [redacted]'s shorts to the side, and he inserted one of his children's toys (possibly a unicorn) in her vagina. [redacted] started to bleed from her vagina as a result and Mr. Cripps told her it was "gross" and to go upstairs.

4. At the end of the summer of 2021, Mr. Cripps paid [redacted] for babysitting both with money and by giving her an old iPhone that had once belonged to someone in his family.
5. After [redacted] had returned to her family's home near [redacted], Mr. Cripps remained in contact with her throughout the fall of 2021 and into the winter and spring of 2022 by texting her on the iPhone he gave her, using Facebook Messenger's "Vanish" mode.
6. During this period, Mr. Cripps repeatedly asked [redacted] to send him nude photos of herself, and during video chats he would ask [redacted] to masturbate in front of the camera. He would also send nude photos of himself to [redacted] during these chats.
7. In June of 2022, [redacted], now 14 years old, told her mother what had been happening with Mr. Cripps during and after the summer of 2021. She gave a formal statement to police that month.

John Alexander Cripps

[5] At the time of entering the guilty pleas, Mr. Cripps had no prior criminal record, a pro-social history and was a working member of the Canadian Armed Forces. The parties agree and the Court accepts that a Pre-Sentence Report is not required.

[6] Today, through his lawyer's comments, Mr. Cripps states that he is extremely remorseful and regrets what he did. He is very sorry for his actions.

Victim Impact Statements (VISs)

[7] VISs were prepared by the victim, [redacted], her mother [redacted], and her grandmother, [redacted].

[8] Now eighteen years old [redacted] provides a powerful, heartfelt account of the devastation the crimes have brought. For example, mid way through her VIS she stated:

Life stopped feeling like life. Everything around me went numb, like nothing mattered anymore. I felt like I had no purpose, like I was nothing. My family watched me disappear in front of them. They lost their daughter in all the ways that mattered. I made multiple suicide attempts. I spent nights in the hospital. I went through nonstop therapy – drowning in sessions where I didn't even know how to speak the truth.

[9] As for [redacted] mother, [redacted], included in her VIS which she powerfully delivered in open court, these moving passages:

My daughter was only 13 years old. She had never used drugs or alcohol. She was still very much a child. The abuse and exploitation she endured have had life-altering consequences. She now struggles with PTSD, depression, anxiety, hyper-vigilance, and episodes of paranoia. She has experienced suicidal ideation and has engaged in self-harm. She has required ongoing counseling and medical care, including treatment related to the abuse.

The harm did not end when the abuse stopped. She had to relocate to a private location due to fear for her safety. She continues to live with ongoing anxiety and fear as a result of threats made against her. Even years later, she does not feel fully safe. That fear has altered how she lives her life every day.

[10] As for [redacted] grandmother, [redacted], her VIS includes these words:

Four years ago, my granddaughter was thirteen years old. She was standing at the doorway between childhood and her teenage years. She was still playing with dolls while beginning to imagine babysitting jobs, school dances, and sleepovers with friends. She believed in the safety of her world. She trusted easily. She dreamed freely. What she experienced altered the course of that childhood.

...

As her grandmother, I have felt helpless in ways I never imagined. My role has always been to provide warmth, comfort, and security. Instead, I have sat awake at night worrying about her mental wellbeing. I have carried anxiety and a constant ache knowing I could not shield her from harm.

[11] Mr. Cripps' crimes have had a major impact on [redacted], who was just 13 years old when the crimes were initiated. The incidents have had both a profound impact on her and her family and this will continue for the foreseeable future.

CRIMINAL CODE – SENTENCING PROVISIONS

[12] The *Criminal Code* provides clear guidance as the appropriate principles to consider on sentence. Sections 718 and 718.01 state:

718 The fundamental purpose of sentencing is to protect society and to contribute, along with crime prevention initiatives, to respect for the law and the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by imposing just sanctions that have one or more of the following objectives:

- (a) to denounce unlawful conduct and the harm done to victims or to the community that is caused by unlawful conduct;

- (b) to deter the offender and other persons from committing offences;
- (c) to separate offenders from society, where necessary;
- (d) to assist in rehabilitating offenders;
- (e) to provide reparations for harm done to victims or to the community; and
- (f) to promote a sense of responsibility in offenders, and acknowledgment of the harm done to victims or to the community.

718.01 When a court imposes a sentence for an offence that involved the abuse of a person under the age of eighteen years, it shall give primary consideration to the objectives of denunciation and deterrence of such conduct.

R. v. Friesen

[13] The parties and the Court reference *R. v. Friesen*, 2020 SCC 9, where Justice Rowe discussed the incredibly devastating repercussions for children who are sexually abused, and the need for increased custodial sentences for sex offenders who prey on children. Justice Rowe said variously (some citations omitted):

[1] Children are the future of our country and our communities. They are also some of the most vulnerable members of our society. They deserve to enjoy a childhood free of sexual violence. Offenders who commit sexual violence against children deny thousands of Canadian children such a childhood every year. This case is about how to impose sentences that fully reflect and give effect to the profound wrongfulness and harmfulness of sexual offences against children.

...

[5] Third, we send a strong message that sexual offences against children are violent crimes that wrongfully exploit children's vulnerability and cause profound harm to children, families, and communities. Sentences for these crimes must increase. Courts must impose sentences that are proportional to the gravity of sexual offences against children and the degree of responsibility of the offender, as informed by Parliament's sentencing initiatives and by society's deepened understanding of the wrongfulness and harmfulness of sexual violence against children. Sentences must accurately reflect the wrongfulness of sexual violence against children and the far-reaching and ongoing harm that it causes to children, families, and society at large.

[14] The Supreme Court of Canada continued with helpful passages in *Friesen*, and I note especially their words at paras. 45, 59 – 65, 78 – 81 and 88 – 90.

[15] *Friesen* has provided clear guidance to the court regarding the appropriate considerations when imposing a sentence for a sex crime committed against a child by an adult, as is the case here.

Joint Recommendation

[16] The parties have placed the following joint sentencing recommendation before the court:

- 5 years custody, concurrent on both charges
- 10-year weapons prohibition order pursuant to s. 109 *CC*
- DNA Order pursuant to section 487.051 *CC*
- *SOIRA* order for 20 years pursuant to section 490.013(1)(a) *CC*
- A no-contact order with [redacted] during the jail sentence pursuant to s. 743.21 *CC*
- A s.161 *CC order* for a period of 10 years with conditions a, a.1, b, c and d

[17] The Crown and defence agree that this is a true negotiated plea agreement that involved give and take regarding legal and factual issues on both sides. They indicate specifically that there were frailties with the Crown's case due to the age of the complainant and the lack of corroborating witnesses. This is Mr. Cripps' first conviction. He was in a breach of trust position with [redacted] as he employed her as a babysitter.

[18] In *R. v. Anthony-Cook*, [2016] 2 S.C.R. 204, Justice Moldaver discussed the need for courts to follow joint recommendations and the test to be applied by a trial judge when considering a joint recommendation:

[34] In my view, these powerful statements capture the essence of the public interest test developed by the Martin Committee. They emphasize that a joint submission should not be rejected lightly, a conclusion with which I agree. Rejection denotes a submission so unhinged from the circumstances of the offence and the offender that its acceptance would lead reasonable and informed persons, aware of all the relevant circumstances, including the importance of promoting certainty in resolution discussions, to believe that the proper functioning of the

justice system had broken down. This is an undeniably high threshold -- and for good reason, as I shall explain.

[35] Guilty pleas in exchange for joint submissions on sentence are a "proper and necessary part of the administration of criminal justice" (Martin Committee Report, at p. 290). When plea resolutions are "properly conducted [they] benefit not only the accused, but also victims, witnesses, counsel, and the administration of justice generally" (*ibid.*, at p. 281 (emphasis deleted)).

...

[44] Finally, I note that a high threshold for departing from joint submissions is not only necessary to obtain all the benefits of joint submissions, it is appropriate. Crown and defence counsel are well placed to arrive at a joint submission that reflects the interests of both the public and the accused... As a rule, they will be highly knowledgeable about the circumstances of the offender and the offence and the strengths and weaknesses of their respective positions. The Crown is charged with representing the community's interest in seeing that justice is done... Defence counsel is required to act in the accused's best interests, which includes ensuring that the accused's plea is voluntary and informed... And both counsel are bound professionally and ethically not to mislead the court... In short, they are entirely capable of arriving at resolutions that are fair and consistent with the public interest...

[19] The sentence being jointly recommended by counsel after protracted plea negotiations is well within the range of sentence for this crime. In addition to *Friesen*, I am guided by recent analogous decisions within our province including Justice Arnold's decision, *R. v. C.S.Y.*, 2022 NSSC 122 and Judge Buckle's decision, *R. v. C.B.*, 2023 NSPC 29. The recommended sentence, which I accept, is certainly not a sentence that is contrary to the public interest and there is no reason to deviate from the joint recommendation.

CONCLUSION

[20] Denunciation and deterrence are of paramount import in sentencing Mr. Cripps for this crime. His moral blameworthiness is high. He chose his own sexual gratification over any concern for the physical and psychological well-being of a child whom he employed. Nevertheless, he has plead guilty to the two counts thus sparing a young woman from travelling from out of province to come to court and testify over what was anticipated to be a lengthy time to relive a traumatic situation. As well the testimony would undoubtedly have had an impact on the victim's already precarious mental health. The joint recommendation proposed by Crown and defence is appropriate. Mr. Cripps will be sentenced to the following:

- 5 years custody, concurrent on both charges
- 10-year weapons prohibition order pursuant to s. 109 *CC*
- DNA Order pursuant to section 487.051 *CC*
- *SOIRA* order for 20 years pursuant to section 490.013(1)(a) *CC*
- A no-contact order with [redacted] during the jail sentence pursuant to s. 743.21 *CC*
- A s.161 *CC* order for a period of 10 years with conditions a, a.1, b, c and d

[21] Mr. Cripps, you will have a long time of carceral detention to think about the impact of your inappropriate, selfish actions. Hopefully, you will receive the treatment and counselling you require to help you deal with your demons. You initially preyed on a 13-year-old girl who was playing with Barbies. You chose your own sexual gratification over this young girl's well being. You now surely appreciate that your actions deprived [redacted] of a normal adolescence. She and her family have gone through immeasurable suffering. The court sincerely hopes that today assists with the long road to recovery for [redacted].

Chipman, J.