



## College of Massage Therapists of Ontario

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### Discipline Hearing Summary

#### Matthew Michael Lessard (Orleans, ON)

March 22, 2021

#### Decision

On March 22, 2021, the Discipline Committee found that Mr. Matthew Michael Lessard committed acts of professional misconduct in that he:

1. was found guilty of offences that are relevant to his suitability to practise, namely sexual assault;
2. engaged in sexual abuse of clients, more particularly, touching of a sexual nature;
3. contravened a Standard of Practice of the profession or a published standard of the College or failed to maintain the Standard of Practice of the profession, specifically the *Standard for Maintaining Professional Boundaries and Preventing Sexual Abuse*;
4. physically abused clients; and
5. engaged in conduct or performed an act relevant to the practice of the profession that, having regard to all the circumstances, would reasonably be regarded by registrants as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional.

These findings arose out of Mr. Lessard's conduct toward five female clients, which led to his criminal conviction on five counts of sexual assault and a sentence of nine months of incarceration and additional orders.

#### Penalty Order and Cost Award

The Discipline Committee's order included the following:

1. Mr. Lessard is required to appear before a panel of the Discipline Committee immediately following the hearing of this matter to be reprimanded, with the fact of the reprimand and the text of the reprimand to appear on the public register of the College.
2. The Registrar is directed to revoke Mr. Lessard's Certificate of Registration effective immediately.

3. Mr. Lessard is required to reimburse the College for funding provided [for] the client [for therapy or counselling] under the program required under section 85.7 of the Health Professions Procedural Code, being Schedule 2 to the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*.
4. Mr. Lessard is required, within thirty (30) days of the date of the Discipline Committee's order, to post security acceptable to the College in the amount of \$15,000.00 to guarantee payment of any amounts he may be required to reimburse the College under the order in paragraph 3. Any security that has not been used by the College to provide funding to the client shall be returned to Mr. Lessard on January 8, 2024.
5. Mr. Lessard is required to pay to the College costs in the amount of \$3,000.00, within twelve (12) months of the date of this order, in twelve (12) monthly payments of \$250.00 each.

The complete Decision and Reasons will be available online on the Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLII) [website](#).

### **Reprimand Delivered to Mr. Lessard**

The following reprimand was delivered by a panel of the Discipline Committee:

Mr. Lessard, the panel would like to acknowledge your cooperation in arriving at an agreed statement of facts and a joint submission on penalty which assisted in the process and lessened the burden of time and resources upon the College and the profession. We also appreciate your presence here today.

Having said that, the panel finds that your conduct was egregious and totally unacceptable for a Registered Massage Therapist and a regulated health professional.

You deliberately and knowingly engaged in behaviour that caused significant emotional, psychological, and physical distress to your clients. You put your clients' safety at risk by exploiting your position of trust towards your clients, who were in a vulnerable position. They no longer feel safe accessing health care from male practitioners.

This panel would like to remind you that being a Registered Massage Therapist is a privilege and not a right. Actions such as yours, undermine the public's confidence in this profession and will not be tolerated by the College of Massage Therapists of Ontario.