

Justice for Irene

A long road to go down, which now leads to the Pope.

Background

Judge grants bid to re-open settlement against Catholic church

from CBC News Dec. 6, 2018.

In a rare legal decision, a judge has set aside an 18-year-old settlement in a civil lawsuit that child sexual abuse survivor Irene Deschenes signed with the Diocese of London, saying the church failed to disclose key information about previous sexual assault allegations that would have drastically changed the terms of the settlement.

"I think justice has been served," said Deschenes, 57, at a news conference announcing the decision Thursday. "This might be the first step in a longer road to go down. But it feels good to be successful in my bid to re-open my civil suit."

Deschenes was abused by Father Charles Sylvestre between 1970 and 1973 while she was a young girl and a student at St. Ursula Catholic

School and parishioner of the parish in Chatham, Ont.

Sylvestre pleaded guilty in August 2006 to sexual assaults of 47 victims, all girls under the age of 18. The abuse happened between 1952 and 1986. Sylvestre died in prison in 2007.

Deschenes started a legal action against the diocese in 1996. At the time, the church argued it had no direct knowledge that Sylvestre was a sexual predator of children, saying the church only became aware of his actions in 1989.

Based on this information, Deschenes settled with the diocese in 2000.

Then in December 2006, it came to light that in 1962 police in Sarnia, Ont., had taken reports from three 11-year-old girls in the company of their parents. The girls alleged Sylvestre sexually assaulted them. Police took no action but gave copies of the witness statements to the local church, which is part of the London diocese.

* * *

In his six-page decision, Justice Aston said the church's failure to disclose those police reports "was a material misrepresentation and it was relied upon by the plaintiff in her decision to settle as she did."

"The plaintiff would not have settled as she did in the fall of 2000 if they had known about the 1962 police reports," the judge's statement says.

Justice Aston also wrote that setting aside a settlement isn't a decision the court takes lightly and only happens when "there is a compelling reason."

At a news conference on Thursday, Deschenes said that by mis-handling the police reports, the Catholic church failed to protect her and other children from Sylvestre.

"If the church had done what they were legally bound to do, Sylvestre would have been stopped from creating more victims," she said.



IN THIS ISSUE

Background newspaper articles	1
Why fund an enabling church?	3
Supreme Court sides with Irene	4
"Justice for Irene Network"	5
Letter to Pope Francis	6
Update on OPEN	8
CRIFE's battle with the UN & Can. govt.	9
RC education about to be destroyed	10

London Catholic Diocese loses appeal

From: CBC News · May 21, 2020

An Ontario appeals court has dismissed a bid by the Diocese of London to fight a lower court's decision to throw out a settlement involving a victim of child sexual abuse.

Justice David Aston ruled in 2018 that London-area resident Irene Deschenes would not have settled with the church for the abuse she suffered at the hands of a priest had the church disclosed key information about previous sexual assault allegations.

Deschenes started a legal action against the diocese in 1996. At the time, the church argued it had no direct knowledge that Sylvestre was a sexual predator of children, saying the church only became aware of his actions in 1989.

* * *

It turns out the diocese was told about allegations of the priest's sexual misconduct back in 1962 when three 11-year old girls gave statements to Sarnia police. ★

Ontario abuse victim urges Catholic diocese to drop appeal

Canadian Press August 20, 2020

An Ontario woman who was sexually abused by a priest as a child says the Roman Catholic church is turning to Canada's top court in an effort to further delay a decades-long legal battle.

Irene Deschenes says the Diocese of London has filed for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada after Ontario's highest court granted her the right to sue the church a second time over the abuse.

While the diocese has the right to legally defend itself, that doesn't mean an appeal is the right thing to do, Deschenes said in a news conference Thursday.

"It's painful enough to try to recover from the effects of sexual abuse by a Roman Catholic priest; it's even more painful to recover from the effects of legal bullying that the church and their lawyers put victims through again and again," she said.

"Two decades is two decades too long. If we go to mediation, this pain-

ful process will be expedited and I can finally get on with my life." ★

Sexual abuse survivor uses vigil to pressure Catholic Diocese to end legal battle

CBC News · Posted: Sep 15, 2020

Irene Deschenes, who survived childhood sexual abuse by a local priest, is calling on the Catholic Diocese of London to drop its appeal in what has been a decades-long legal battle.

"We're challenging the diocese to do more, to treat us with more care and compassion when we come forward and not to call their lawyers when victims do come forward," said Deschenes.

Deschenes and her supporters gathered outside of St. Peter's Basilica in downtown London for a vigil Tuesday.

The vigil comes almost a month after Deschenes learned the diocese was appealing an Ontario Court of Appeal decision in her favour to the Supreme Court of Canada. The lower court decision allows her to reopen a civil settlement she reached with the church for the abuses she faced as a child.

Deschenes says she feels re-victimized by the process which has dragged on for decades.

"I want to stand strong for other survivors to let them know that there is justice and we can find it together," she said.

"It's not easy to go public. Most survivors do not go public." ★

Supreme Court of Canada rejects Catholic archdiocese appeal over Mount Cashel

CBC News · Posted: Jan 14, 2021

The Archdiocese of St. John's is liable for the abuse at Mount Cashel Orphanage in the 1950s, after Canada's highest court declined to hear one last appeal from the Catholic Church.

The Supreme Court of Canada released its decision Thursday, simply saying it rejected the application from the Archdiocese of St. John's.

The decision brings to an end a painstaking process for victims who were abused at the orphanage when they were children. The case has been snaking its way through the courts for 21 years.

The case featured four victims who served as test cases for about 60 men in total. For them, Thursday's ruling brings long-awaited relief, said one of their lawyers.

"Some of these folks were in that orphanage experiencing this abuse in the 1950s, and they've lived with that all these years. And today, in 2021, they finally have the final answer that they've gotten justice for

what they've suffered," said Allison Conway, a lawyer at the St. John's-based firm Budden & Associates.

The church is now liable to pay the outstanding bills left behind by the Christian Brothers of Ireland when the organization went bankrupt from settling child abuse lawsuits in 2012.

The church had always denied it was responsible for Mount Cashel, where an untold number of children were abused between the 1950s and 1970s, with the horrors covered up by government and law enforcement. It all came to light in 1989 with a series of media reports and the subsequent Hughes Inquiry, which blew the lid off the scandal and the widespread trauma caused by the Christian Brothers.

With the Catholic church now being held accountable, the case could also be used as a precedent-setting decision in other cases — whether related to the church or not — where an institution is accused of being liable for the actions of people working for them.

"I think it brings a lot of hope for survivors of sexual abuse, that you can pursue justice and justice will be there for you. I just think it's a tremendous precedent, here in our province, but also across Canada," said Conway.

With Mount Cashel, the church based its case on two key facts: it was not involved in the day-to-day operations at the orphanage and the Christian Brothers was a lay organization, meaning its members were not ordained priests.

The Archdiocese of St. John's declined comment on Thursday, saying it needs time to speak to its legal team, but released a short statement by Archbishop Peter Hundt.

"The Archdiocese of St. John's has immense sympathy for those who suffered abuse at Mount Cashel Orphanage and we ask that all join with us in praying for healing for those who suffer as a result of abuse," reads the statement.

The Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador agreed with the church in 2018, when Justice Alphonsus Faour ruled the Archdiocese of St. John's was not liable. A subsequent appeal by the victims was successful in overturning that decision in the Court of Appeals of Newfoundland and Labrador in July 2020.

The Archdiocese of St. John's exercised its final legal option in the weeks following that decision, and asked the Supreme Court of Canada to hear the case and deliver one final ruling. In rejecting that application, the case now comes to a close.

The victims received some compensation from the Christian Brothers during bankruptcy proceedings. The full amount they are owed is still being finalized, but Faour set damages at \$2.61 million for the four victims in the test case.

The decision could have broader ramifications for the church, as more victims could now come forward and seek compensation.

Conway said her firm represents approximately 60 other men who could do so, and estimates there are many more victims out there.



Bishops 'hid' sex abuse complaints

Ottawa Citizen 2018 / 08 / 15 & 16

HARRISBURG, PA.

More than 1,000 children, and possibly many more, were molested by hundreds of Roman Catholic priests in six Pennsylvania dioceses, while senior church officials took steps to cover it up, according to a landmark grand jury report released Tuesday that accused senior church officials, including the man who is now archbishop of Washington, D.C., of systematically covering up complaints.

The "real number" of victimized children and abusive priests might be higher since some secret church records were lost and some victims never came forward, the grand jury said in the report that is the largest of its kind in the United States.

U.S. bishops adopted widespread reforms in 2002 when clergy abuse became a national crisis for the church, including stricter requirements for reporting accusations to law enforcement and a streamlined process for removing clerics. But the grand jury said more changes are needed.

"Despite some institutional reform, individual leaders of the church have largely escaped public accountability," the grand jury wrote in the roughly 900-page report. "Priests were raping little boys and girls, and the men of God who were responsible for them not only did nothing; they hid it all."

Top church officials have mostly been protected, and many, including some named in the report have been promoted, the grand jury said, concluding that "it is too early to close the book on the Catholic Church sex scandal."

Pennsylvania Attorney General

Josh Shapiro said the two-year probe found a systemic coverup by senior church officials in Pennsylvania and the Vatican.

"The coverup was so sophisticated. And all the while, shockingly, church leadership kept records of the cause and the coverup. These documents, from the dioceses' own 'secret archives,' formed the backbone of this investigation," he said at a news conference in Harrisburg.

"We are sick over all the crimes that will go unpunished and uncompensated," the grand jury said.

Most of the victims were boys, but girls were abused, too, the report said. The abuse ranged from groping and masturbation to anal, oral and vaginal rape.



Why fund a school board that supports an enabling church?

Ottawa Citizen (letter to editor)

For years, there has been a torrent of evidence from around the world that the Roman Catholic Church has enabled child abuse. The stories are heart-rending, with recent examples from Chile and Pennsylvania. This church has become an international criminal organization.

Sadly, Canadian taxpayers assist the Vatican by providing tax deductions and, even worse, by giving tax money for a Roman Catholic school system in Ontario.

We cannot undo the damage to children around the world. But we can abolish the separate school boards in Ontario and save a lot of money in the process. If Premier Doug Ford really wants to cut government spending, this is a place to start.

Patrick Esmonde-White, Ottawa



Supreme Court sides with London, Ont. Woman suing Catholic church

Kate Dubinski—CBC News Posted Feb 11, 2021

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/supreme-court-sides-with-london-ont-woman-suing-catholic-church-1.5910153>

The Supreme Court of Canada has sided with Irene Deschenes, the London, Ont., woman trying to reopen her civil suit against the Diocese of London, which has tried to legally stop her for more than a decade.

Thursday's dismissal of the diocese's appeal application marks the end of the legal road for the church, at least for now, and it means Deschenes and the church can begin re-negotiating her claim.

"It's in the hands of the church so we will see what will happen next. If they have any compassion for the victims they created, they'd be on the phone to us by the end of the day," said Deschenes at a virtual media conference after the ruling.

Diocese spokesperson Matthew Clarke said Bishop Ronald Fabbro will not be granting interviews about the matter, but in a statement said the organization is disappointed by the high court's decision. "We hope the resolution of these legal proceedings helps with the healing process for Ms. Deschenes. Having said that, we felt strongly that the facts of the case deserved to be presented in court," the statement issued by Clarke said.

In 2000, Deschenes settled a lawsuit with the dioceses for damages she suffered at the hands of pedophile priest Charles Sylvestre. The church claimed it didn't know Sylvestre was a predator when he was transferred to Deschenes' parish in the early 1970s.

But Deschenes found documents that proved church officials did know about Sylvestre's predatory behaviour as far back as the 1960s, and she has sought to reopen the lawsuit because the settlement was reached based on misrepresentation by the church. The Catholic diocese has fought the woman's claim through every level of the court system.

'Legal bullying'

Deschenes and her supporters characterize the diocese's unrelenting litigation against her as "legal bullying" that shows Fabbro and others have little regard to the feelings of victims of clergy abuse.

"They knew in 1962, 10 years before he got to Irene, that Charles Sylvestre was a threat to young girls. They failed to protect Irene from him, they failed all the other girls. That is not okay, it is not okay that she has to keep fighting so hard and so long for justice," said Michelle Schryer, executive director of the Chatham-Kent Sexual Assault Crisis Centre. Deschenes, her lawyer, and supporters, are urging the Catholic Diocese of London to begin negotiations about the settlement. Deschenes is asking for \$4.83 million in damages.

The diocese can still fight the lawsuit and ultimately take Deschenes to court.

In today's brief, the diocese said "the settlement that was offered to Ms. Deschenes was fair and in line with the limited case law that existed at the time."

Deschenes reported being sexually abused by Father Charles Sylvestre in the early 1970s. He later pleaded guilty to abusing 47 girls when he worked as a priest in Southwestern Ontario. He died in jail.

Deschenes reached a settlement with lawyers representing the diocese long before Sylvestre went to trial. But she now believes the agreement she signed was reached under false pretences, because the diocese claimed they had no knowledge of Sylvestre's sexual abuse.

Court sides with survivor three times

Documents have surfaced since Deschenes' settlement that indicate the diocese did know about Sylvestre's sexual abuse years earlier.

Thursday's decision is the third time the courts have sided with Deschenes.

In 2018, the Ontario Court of Justice allowed her to reopen the civil case, but that was appealed by the diocese to the Ontario Court of Appeal. The diocese lost but appealed to the Supreme Court in August 2020, leading to Thursday's decision.

Today the diocese said it regrets that Sylvester was not removed from active duty following the 1962 police report that prompted this case.

"This was a failing on our part even though the way it was handled was consistent with the way this type of behaviour and its impact was historically misunderstood," it said in a statement.



"Justice for Irene Network"

Considering recent developments regarding the Mount Cashel Supreme Court case, the Justice for Irene Network (JIN) is requesting that the Pope intervene in Irene Deschene's decades long sexual abuse case and have the Diocese of London, Ontario, Canada mediate a just settlement cancelling their leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada.

JIN is a group of concerned citizens from across Canada who sent an open letter to Pope Francis on Jan. 16, 2021 asking him to intervene in the case of Irene Deschenes who is the survivor at the heart of a decades-long legal battle with the Diocese of London. JIN is requesting that the Pope have Bishop Ronald Fabbro, Diocese of London, Ontario enter into mediation for a just and expedited settlement with Irene Deschenes instead of filing leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada.

JIN has just learned that the Supreme Court of Canada, in a precedent-setting decision on January 14, 2021 has rejected the appeal from the Archdiocese of St. John's, Newfoundland, regarding the horrific sexual abuse perpetrated by Christian brothers at Mount Cashel orphanage in the 1950s. It is unconscionable that the Diocese of London continues to pursue an appeal to the Supreme Court in Irene's case despite these developments.

In 2000, Irene Deschenes settled her civil suit with the Roman Catholic Diocese of London regarding her sexual assaults as a little girl at the hands of a Roman Catholic priest - "Fr." Charles Sylvestre. The Diocese of London said at this time that they had no knowledge of Sylvestre's pedophile proclivities prior to Irene's abuse. We now know that Sylvestre sexually molested at least 47 children while employed in the London Ontario Diocese.

In 2006, Sarnia police reports from 1962 were found to be 'misfiled' in a diocesan office.

Irene sought to re-open her civil suit based on this new information and in 2018 an Ontario Court of Justice agreed.

The diocese appealed this decision to the Ontario Court of Appeal and they lost.

The Ontario Court of Appeal ruled unanimously that Deschenes could re-open her civil suit based on "misrepresentation."

In August 2020, the Roman Catholic Diocese of London filed leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada.

JIN is supporting Irene Deschenes so that she (and other child survivors of clerical abuse) may finally find nominal justice from a religious institution that states they are "committed to vigilantly protecting those who are vulnerable, to supporting survivors" (Bishop Fabbro, Dec. 5, 2019) while at the same time using every resource to fight victims in court.

XXX

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For more information: <https://justiceforirene.wordpress.com/>



Letter to Pope Francis

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January 16, 2021

His Holiness Pope Francis
Apostolic Palace
00120 Vatican City

Dear Pope Francis,

As members of the “Justice for Irene Network”, a group of concerned citizens from across Canada, we respectfully request that you intervene to ask the Bishop of London, Ontario, Ronald Peter Fabbro to enter into mediation for a just and expedited settlement with Irene Deschenes.

Irene Deschenes, the survivor at the heart of a decades-long legal battle with the Diocese of London, was 10 years old and a pupil and parishioner at St. Ursula Catholic School and Parish in Chatham, Ontario when she was sexually abused by Fr. Charles Sylvestre in the early 1970s.

Irene filed a lawsuit with the Diocese in 1996 and settled out of court in 2000. At that time, the Diocese of London claimed it did not learn of Fr. Sylvestre’s sexual abuse of minors until the late 1980s.

In 2006, Fr. Sylvestre pleaded guilty to sexually assaulting 47 girls under the age of 18, including Irene Deschenes. At that time it came to light that the Diocese had received police statements that Fr. Sylvestre had sexually assaulted three girls in 1962, almost a decade before Ms. Deschenes was sexually assaulted. If the Diocese had acted on this information at the time, the sexual assault of Irene Deschenes and 46 additional girls would have been prevented.

With this revelation, Ms. Deschenes sought to have her original lawsuit thrown out. A superior court judge ruled in Irene Deschenes favour but the Diocese of London appealed to the Ontario Court of Appeal. The Appeal Court also sided with Irene Deschenes in May 2020, saying that there had been significant “misrepresentation” by the Church that impacted the original settlement. The Court also said evidence that the Dioceses tried to cover up the allegations of sexual abuse is “relevant to the consideration of fairness and justice.”

The Diocese of London has now filed a leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada rather than mediate a new settlement with Ms. Deschenes. As Irene Deschenes says: “It’s painful enough to try to recover from the effects of sexual abuse by a Roman Catholic priest, it’s even more painful to recover from the effects of legal bullying that the Church and their lawyers put victims through again and again. If we go to mediation, this painful process will be expedited, and I can finally get on with my life.” (The Canadian Press, August 20, 2020)

We hope that as the Catholic Church’s spiritual leader, you will call upon Bishop Ronald Fabbro to cancel the Diocese of London’s appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada and enter into mediation with Irene Deschenes. We have just learned that the Supreme Court of Canada, in a precedent-setting decision on January 14, 2021 has rejected the appeal from the Archdiocese of St. John’s, Newfoundland, regarding the sexual abuse perpetrated by Christian Brothers at Mount Cashel orphanage in the 1950s. We ask you, in your capacity as Pope, to intervene on behalf of Irene Deschenes, that she might be able to receive justice from the Church and live in peace after all these years.

Since some of our members have written to you in the past and your staff have not acknowledged receipt of our letters, we are sending this letter by registered mail. We ask that you or your staff kindly acknowledge receipt of this letter by mail at justiceforirene101@gmail.com by February 19, 2021.

Thank you

Sincerely

(signature)

Patricia Grell, BSc, MDiv, Secretary, Justice for Irene Network on behalf of:
Advocates for Clergy Trauma Survivors (ACTS), Canada

Catholic Network for Women's Equality (CNWE), Canada

Corey Allison, Executive Director, Women's Rural Resource Centre (WRRC), Strathroy and Area, Ontario

Marie Bouclin, MA, Roman Catholic Women Priests, Sudbury, Ontario

Kenn Bur, Chief Imagination Officer, Citizen Strategies, Edmonton, Alberta

Irene Deschenes, BA, SSW, Strathroy, Ontario

Leona Huggins, B.Mus, M. Ed, Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests (SNAP), Western Canada,
Vancouver, BC.

Kathleen Kevany, EdD, Associate Professor, Department of Business & Social Sciences, Dalhousie
University, CCC (Certified Canadian Counsellor with CCPA), Truro Nova Scotia

Margaret MacPherson, MA Research Associate, Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against
Women and Children, Western University, London Ontario

Nancy N Mayer, MSW, RSW, Toronto, Ontario

Jessie Rodger, MSW, RSW, Executive Director, Anova: A Future Without Violence

Michelle Schryer, Chatham-Kent Sexual Assault Crisis Centre, Chatham, Ontario

Robert Talach LLB, MMM, Becket Personal Injury Lawyers, London, Ontario

Megan Walker, Executive Director, London Abused Women's Centre, London, Ontario

Shelley Teo, Anti-Violence activist, London, Ontario

Cc: Thomas Christopher Collins, Cardinal & Archbishop of Toronto

Richard Gagnon, President, CCCB & Archbishop of Winnipeg

Ronald Fabbro, Bishop, Diocese of London



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Update on OPEN

New counsel obtained

OPEN (One Public Education Now) has retained new counsel, Adair Goldblatt Bieber LLP, for our proposed legal challenge to the public funding of separate Catholic schools. Adair Goldblatt Bieber is a boutique civil litigation firm that has experience in a broad range of litigation including product liability, class actions, and Charter litigation.

Unfortunately, doing the research on finding new counsel took time, and our new counsel will have to take additional time to review all our documentation, though they were sent the most important documentation and summaries before they were retained, so they do have some familiarity with the issues. But in order to go forward with the case we do require an experienced, competent counsel in a firm which recognizes and accepts the challenges. We had to take whatever time was necessary in order to find and retain them.

Our expert historical witness, Dr. Patricia Kmiec, knows about our new counsel. Her report is key to all the issues our counsel could advise bringing. We have also received, through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, information from all 37 separate school boards on topics such as their policies in regard to the admission of non-Catholic students, their hiring of non-Catholic teachers, how they define who is "Catholic", and the number of non-Catholics in their elementary and secondary school systems.

The reason this could be significant is a Saskatchewan lower court ruled (*Good Spirit School Division No. 204 v Christ the Teacher Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 212, 2017 SKQB 109 (CanLII)*) that the admission of non-Catholics to separate schools was not protected

from challenge under the *Charter of Rights*. This decision was appealed to the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal who ruled that it was protected (*Saskatchewan v Good Spirit School Division No. 204, 2020 SKCA 34 (CanLII)*). The public school Board then asked the Supreme Court of Canada for leave to appeal.

Whatever the Supreme Court decides, the legislation applying to Ontario is somewhat different and we could still go forward with this issue. Of course, we also want to raise broader issues but it could be useful to raise this issue which has never been discussed in Ontario courts. Through our FOI requests, we found that several separate school boards had at least 25% non-Catholics; one board had over 52% non-Catholic in their elementary school division. So the funding of non-Catholics is not trivial.

As we all know, in the time of Covid-19, there are more demands on schools for ventilation and other hygiene controls. More than ever, it is a waste of public money to fund the administration, including busing, for a duplicate separate school system.

Occasionally journalists and academics write articles on why Ontario should not be funding separate schools and how Ontario could abolish funding for separate schools just as Quebec did in 1997. We agree. But OPEN does not think Ontario will make this change until the Ontario government is dragged into court and forced to defend its discriminatory policies. It is not enough to write articles; we must take action. That is why OPEN is continuing this battle and continuing to crowdfund for our legal challenge.

Continued from page 10

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Catholic education is protected by denominational rights in Canada's Constitution, but too many Catholic leaders like Browne no longer defend that right. Why? They believe that Canada has evolved (the Obama verbal sleight of hand) and the OHRC presently overrules Church teaching. This helps to explain why every Catholic school board in the province, all 29 of them, have recognized gender identity, gender expression, and have an aggressive equity plan to supposedly better serve the expanding list of lgbtq2 students.

Catholic education has slowly eroded over the decades and the *Catechism*, when not overlooked, is undermined or no longer found to be relevant. Parents should not be surprised that Catholic educators and trustees no longer feel responsible to believe and instruct what the text teaches. People of a generation or two ago would not recognize Catholic schools today with its strong focus on comprehensive sex-"education," critical race theory and social justice issues. At best, the schools have become faith lite. There's a serious moral crisis in Catholic schools.

* * *

Progressive thinkers want us to believe that Canada's Constitution and the Charter no longer fully apply to Catholic education. This is morally misguided and legally not true. Let those who believe this mount a political challenge to alter the Constitution and the Charter. We argue that the OHRC doesn't supersede denominational rights found in Canada's founding document and maintained in our updated Charter. Separate schools are still protected in law in Ontario. However, this has not stopped governments, activists, teachers and even those running Catholic boards from undermining Catholic education. The woke "Catholics" inside the system and others from outside are working hard to dismantle it. The changes include everything from hiring, teaching, curricula, student enrolment, trustee qualifications and board directors. There is no longer a commitment to being Catholic and following Catholic teaching in order to govern Catholic schools. The new "Bible" and the "Catechism" for the progressives is the OHRC.



CRIPE's Battle with the UN and the Canadian government over blockage of complaints against religious discrimination

Background

With regard to the short note at the bottom of page 3 of CRIPE newsletter for Summer 2020, Issue #126, it has now been nine months since CRIPE, with 21 supporters, submitted a complaint to the United Nations Human Rights Council, through proper channels, to the Special Rapporteur on Religion or Belief with regard to the discriminatory provision of public funds to the Roman Catholic separate school systems in Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

The Special Rapporteurs are independent human rights experts whose mandates are to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective. They are non-paid and elected for 3-year mandates that can be re-conducted for another three years. Presently, there are 44 thematic and 11 country mandates.

Our submission, made on June 3rd, 2020, was accepted as being of proper form and content, but regardless of a plea for a report on its process through the required steps, there has been no response from the UN.

Due to COVID-19 and possible disruptions to duties performed by the UN personnel, I waited for four months before contacting the UN again. I received a prompt reply from the Human Rights Officer, Mr. Damianos Serefidis, on Oct. 14 which read: *"The information has been shared with the Special Rapporteur for his information and consideration."*

You may wish to contact the Human Rights Council for further consideration via its complaints

procedure. As per the supporting documentation, the Human Rights Committee has already tackled this issue in the past."

First of all, we have no intention of going to the effort of flooding the Council with multiple submissions about the same issue. The four already sent just need proper attention.

The last line is the most telling: that our issue concerning the discriminatory public funding of the Roman Catholic separate school systems is an old one, and has been dealt with, period.

Yes, three other communications have been made, dating back to 1999, which have either been dismissed, or ignored. So I made an appeal to the UN's "urgent-action" and their answer was just to make more submissions. There was no way that the Special Rapporteur could be contacted directly. So this "advice" was ignored.

A revealing moment

In a November newspaper column by reporter Terry Glavin, he wrote that certain entities have introduced themselves through stealthy means "... into veto positions in several leading United Nations agencies, including the UN Human Rights Council."

Although some of us in CRIPE have suspected some behind-the-scene dirty work was monkeying with our previous submissions, we now had some indication that we were correct.

In the meantime it was noted that Bob Rae, a senior Ontario politician who was once premier

of Ontario for the NDP, now had a job as "permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations in New York". The "Permanent Representative of Canada to the UN in Geneva, Switzerland" is Leslie E. Norton.

So one letter, addressed to both, was written to ask them to contact the appropriate authorities to ensure that our submission was "acted upon without any further delay." Both letters were registered and I was advised that they had been received.

The answer

The answer, signed by both Rae and Norton, arrived in mid January with three paragraphs, in which they introduced the points that the Special Rapporteur is an independent expert of the UN, and that "... COVID-19 may result in unforeseeable delays."

The actual answer, however is more like: the Government of Canada is not in a position to ensure that the CRIPE submission to the Rapporteur is expedited without further delay, because then, the jig would be up. Rae's support of separate-school funding goes way back as premier of the Ont. NDP from 1991 to 1995.

The fact that they didn't even make an inquiry of the front man, D. Serefidis, tells us that we just got the brush-off.

All is not over

It appears that there is no use going any further with either the UN or Canadian government politicians. We have now embarked on a different, confidential, proposal. Hang in there.

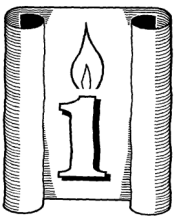


WHO WE ARE

Civil Rights In Public Education, Inc. is the latest name for this organization which began in 1986. It is composed of citizens living in more than 155 communities across Ontario who are committed to one strong public education system which offers neither privilege nor prejudice to anyone.

OUR AIMS ARE

- To serve as advocates for civil rights in public education so that the public is informed about the issue of publicly-funded separate schools.
- To hasten the day when ON, AB and SK institute the principled decisions by Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador to remove public funding for religious schools.

**OUR LOGOS**

Our logo is composed of a background scroll representing the charters of rights which guarantee fundamental freedoms to all individuals; the numeral "1" signifies equality and social unity in one public education system for each official language; the flame above is the universal symbol for freedom.

OPINION**Catholic education is about to be destroyed for good in Ontario**

<https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/catholic-education-is-about-to-be-destroyed-for-good-in-ontario>

February 5, 2021 (Everyday For Life Canada) — In Canada, Catholic education historically has often been a contentious issue. Catholic parents in the past strongly defended the choice to send their children to Catholic schools. In fact, the 1867 Constitution of Canada recognizes the existence of separate schools. Catholics have a denominational right to Catholic education. However, in modern times there has been an aggressive continued push to have one public school system. Presently, the situation at the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) has reached a crisis.

Less than half of the provinces and territories currently fund Catholic schools. In 1997, a referendum ended the denominational school system in Newfoundland and Labrador. In Ontario, the secular changes have come from legislation, policies and regulations, as well as Ontario's Human Rights Code (OHRC). So, the question that remains is this: can Catholic education in the province be saved?

Continued on page 8, column 3.

A Thought to Consider

Finally, government is to see to it that equality of citizens before the law, which is itself an element of the common good, is never violated, whether openly or covertly, for religious reasons.

Nor is there to be discrimination among citizens.

Pope Paul VI Declaration on religious freedom. 7 December 1965

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ABOVE ALL WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT NO CITIZEN OF ONTARIO, NOW, OR EVER IN THE FUTURE, IS PRIVILEGED OR DISADVANTAGED PUBLICLY BECAUSE OF HIS/HER RELIGIOUS FAITH, OR ABSENCE OF RELIGIOUS FAITH.