

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **1. Why has it taken the Catholic Church so long to address the issue of sexual abuse by priests?**

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon and the Catholic dioceses throughout Canada have worked steadily over the last 30 years to develop and implement policies to protect the young and the vulnerable. Even one case of abuse is too many! In Saskatoon, we recognize we have made mistakes in the past, and we are resolved to intensify our efforts to protect more forcefully, to respond more effectively, and to promote healing. The work of the Safeguarding Committee, and more recently the Historic Case Review Committee and the Policy and Operations Committee - have been important and significant developments in our diocese over the last three years.

### **2. Why are the numbers so low in Saskatoon compared to Vancouver, and large American dioceses such as New York, Philadelphia, and other jurisdictions in the U.S.?**

Every local diocese has its own history of leadership and some distinct local laws and values. Saskatoon is a much smaller diocese and with a shorter history. The diocese of Saskatoon has approximately 95,000 Catholics, while Vancouver has approximately 443,000; New York approximately 2.6 million Catholics; Philadelphia about 1.4 million Catholics. It is also possible that some victims/ survivors may have been afraid to report. We want all victims/survivors to know there are policies in place to protect them and if they wish to come forward, all incidents will be heard, investigated and treated with respect.

### **3. Did the Case Review Committee look at everything?**

Yes, they reviewed every file concerning serious misconduct, including sexual abuse.

### **4. Are there priests who have been found guilty of sexual abuse/ assault still working in ministry in Saskatoon?**

No.

### **5. What happens to the priests who are removed from ministry?**

Church law has changed in the past decade to allow them to be much more readily “removed from the clerical state” or “defrocked.” In cases where that change is not possible, a priest removed from ministry can be given strict restrictions (for example: no contact with children, no access to social media, no right to wear clerical garb, no right to say Mass).

**6. Are there any priests — who have not been charged or convicted but who are strongly suspected of having abused others, whether children or adults — who are currently ministering in other dioceses?**

No.

**7. Once a priest and/or lay employee has been accused, what happens?**

A priest who has been accused is placed on leave, and if the complaints involve children, police are notified immediately. As well, complainants are offered counselling by a qualified third-party counsellor at the expense of the diocese. Before 2019, the protocol for the review of accusations involved priests delegated by the bishop for the purpose of investigating complaints. In 2019, and confirmed in the safeguarding action plan' released in March 2020, a new policy mandated lay persons to this task. If a priest or lay employee is found to have committed a criminal offence, responsibility for pursuing charges lies with the public justice system. If the individual is charged and ultimately found guilty, he/she will be removed from ministry. In the case of a priest, he will also be given strict restrictions. If the offence is not criminal in nature but has been damaging and hurtful, the independent investigator will recommend to the bishop whether the conduct merits removal from or restriction in ministry or work in the diocese.

**8. Why cannot the diocese readily release names and files of all clergy or church employee abusers?**

Canada has ten provinces and three territories, all of which have their own legislation regarding privacy and defamation issues. Unlike British Columbia, Alberta, and Quebec, Saskatchewan has no specific privacy legislation for organizations operating in the private sector. Instead, the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)* applies to the private sector. Defamation laws throughout Canada and the U.S. are also applied differently. Publicized reports from U.S. dioceses over the last few years operate within the context of the related legislation in their state.

Many observers note that websites such as the “Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests” (SNAP) publish names of the ‘probably guilty’ and wonder why the diocese cannot. This is because these third-party organizations are not an employer of these priests/employees, and thus privacy legislation does not apply to them.

In addition, the diocese commits to careful consultation with victims or representatives of victims prior to the public identification of names. (*Safer Church, Stronger Communities* #12)

**9. Were religious orders who historically worked in the diocese part of the historical review?**

If there were cases of serious misconduct that related to religious clergy assigned to working in the diocese, and these were in the diocese's files, then yes, these were reviewed. However, the scope of the historical case review did not involve reviewing historical records held only by religious orders.

**10. Do victims have to sign confidentiality agreements or are they prevented in any way from speaking openly if they wish to?**

The last time a confidentiality agreement was signed was in the early 1990s. Such agreements have not been used in almost 30 years and the diocese has waived any agreements that were previously signed. The diocese will respect and take into consideration the wishes of victims.

**11. Will the new victim support process be run by professionals trained in the area?**

Yes, the victim/survivor support service will be staffed by on-call professional(s) with certification as psychologists, registered clinical counsellors, or registered social workers.

**12. What has the diocese learned about being "victim / survivor focused"?**

The diocese has learned a great deal about the meaning of being 'victim/survivor focused', and we know there is still much more to learn. One of our commitments is to move from working "...for victims" to working "...with victims". We are also learning that victims/survivors have a great variety of circumstances and desires in terms of how they are supported, whether abusers are publicly named, the weighing of transparency versus the need for confidentiality, and ways in which re-traumatization of victims occurs. This commitment to being "victim / survivor focused" is probably the most important and challenging commitment that our diocese is undertaking.

**13. How can victims be assured that these promised changes will take effect?**

The current response includes deadlines as a sign of the very serious commitment of the bishop and all his co-workers. Ongoing auditing (Commitment #14b) of the diocese's policies and protocols related to safeguarding will be done by an external auditor at four-year intervals.

#### **14. I am a victim who has never reported. What can I do?**

We are so sorry for what has happened to you. Please know that the diocese of Saskatoon is committed to listening to you and responding to you. We invite you to come forward if you wish to share your report with the diocese. If a crime was committed you are encouraged to also contact police.

Contact information for reporting abuse to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon:

1. Anne E. Williams, BSW, RSW, SEP, at (306) 220-0448 or [awilliams.home@gmail.com](mailto:awilliams.home@gmail.com)
2. Father Marvin Lishchynsky, Judicial Vicar, at (306) 659-5825 or toll free at 1-877-661-5005 Extension \*825 or [mlishchynsky@rcdos.ca](mailto:mlishchynsky@rcdos.ca).

As of Spring 2020, a new service was established in the diocese of Saskatoon, which features designated 'intake officers' who receive any complaints.

During and following the investigation process either by the diocese or by the police, a "Victim Support Coordinator" provides initial and ongoing support and information to the complainant.

In the case of a complaint/ allegation received by the Intake Officer of the diocese – and if the complaint is determined 'not criminal' – the complaint is forwarded to an "investigator" who conducts his/her investigation independent of the bishop's office. The findings of the investigator are then communicated to the bishop, who then brings the investigator's result to:

- 1) the Safeguarding Committee Chair or representative;
- 2) the Director of Safeguarding;
- 3) The College of Consultors.

The bishop then makes a decision about acceptance of the investigator's findings. (This process is outlined at: [Serious-Misconduct-Apr30-2020.pdf \(rcdos.ca\)](#))

#### **15. Why was the abuse reported in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission not addressed by this committee?**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission did years of thorough collaborative work. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon did not run residential schools, nor were any residential schools located in the diocese, and therefore these are not a part of our history and records. A summary of the related report from the TRC may be found here: [http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Honouring\\_the\\_Truth\\_Reconciling\\_for\\_the\\_Future\\_July\\_23\\_2015.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Honouring_the_Truth_Reconciling_for_the_Future_July_23_2015.pdf)