

Cumulative report of the Ombudsman of the Montreal Archdiocese

June 12th, 2023

Ombudsman's Sixth Report

Me Marie Christine Kirouack, *Ad.E.*

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## Summary:

The cumulative report of the Ombudsman of the Archdiocese of Montreal was filed on June 12, 2023.

It details the current progress of the complaint's process.

With regards to complaints, it analyzes the new complaints received since October 1, 2022, namely:

- Fifteen (15) complaints of abuse which were sent to the Advisory Committee;
- Nine (9) Ombudsman complaints, two of which were sent to the Advisory Committee and 7 to Mgr Lépine directly;
- Thirty (30) complaints referred to the Vicars General;
- Twenty-two (22) to the Director of the OPP.

Then, cumulatively, it analyzes the content of all the complaints received since the Ombudsman took office on May 5, 2021, namely a total of 212 complaints, which break down as follows:

- 76 complaints of abuse that were submitted to the Advisory Committee for recommendations to Archbishop Christian Lépine, 45 of which concern sexual abuse;
- Eighty-three (83) complaints to the Vicars General which do not target members of the clergy, but are rather in connection with the holding of cemeteries, funerals, the requirement of a vaccination passport, genealogical research, requests for apostasy or relations of work, and;
- Fifty-three (53) complaints to the Director of the OPP mainly concerning problems between employees and members of the clergy or between the Church Council and a member of the clergy were sent to the Office of Pastoral Personnel (OPP).

In addition, following the filing in the spring of the external audit of the Honourable André Denis, a retired judge, the Ombudsman was given the mandate to deal with any previous complaint or abuse file that had not been satisfactorily dealt with in the past. As part of the implementation of this mandate, the Advisory Committee received 16 complaints, known as "*Ombudsman complaints*", all of which concern sexual abuse, and Archbishop Lépine, for his part, received 17.

## Introduction:

This report is the sixth since I took office on May 5, 2021. As was the case with the previous ones, this report is public and will be made available to everyone through the Archdiocese's website.

It covers concurrently:

- The period comprised between October 1, 2022, and June 10, 2023;
- cumulatively, the period from May 5, 2021, to June 10, 2023,

which is reflected in the various statistical portraits found there.

## 1. The Ombudsman's work

To understand my work and the comments that follow, I deal with three types of complaints:

- Complaints of abuse of all nature :
  - o sexual, physical, psychological, financial and spiritual abuse;
- Complaints that fall under the jurisdiction of the Vicars General;
  - o requests for apostasy, difficulties related to cemeteries, problems with volunteers or related to the functioning of the Fabriques, etc.;
- Complaints under the jurisdiction of the director of the OPP (Office of Pastoral Personnel):
  - o These complaints mainly concern difficulties between staff and members of the clergy or disagreements between members of the Fabrique Councils and a member of the clergy.

In terms of abuse, I deal, on the one hand, with contemporary complaints, i.e., those arising from people who contact me and wish to file a complaint. These are sent to the

Advisory Committee which, after study, makes recommendations to Archbishop Lépine: suspension, external investigation, letter of monition (reprimand), etc<sup>1</sup>.

On the other hand, in accordance with the mandate given to me by Archbishop Lépine following the filing of the Denis Report last Spring, I am reviewing old files (files that date prior to May 2021). In cases where I find that complaints had no follow-up or that the complaints have not been dealt with adequately, I have the authority to initiate complaints in these files. These are the so-called "*Ombudsman*" complaints. There are two types, either those referred to the Advisory Committee for analysis and recommendations, or the one that I send directly to the Archbishop for answers to my questions, in terms of sanctions or follow-ups.

As part of this work, by cross-referencing, other complaints were found. In other instances, some complaints were found by accident. Those are also sent, as the case may be, to the Advisory Committee or to Archbishop Lépine directly.

## 2. Abuse complaint's process - internal process

### 2.1 The complaint's process

In my previous report, I noted significant difficulties in dealing with complaints:

- Delays in contemporary cases, which render our complainants fragile and calls into question their full confidence in the complaints system.
- Delay in the implementation of the Archbishop's decisions in Ombudsman cases.

It has to be said that things are improving a little since my last report. However, the absence of some key players, including the Chancellor, who had to be absent for family reasons and the departure of the Moderator of the Curia, appointed Archbishop of Toronto, a position that remained vacant until his replacement was found, created their own set of delays. Added to this is the backlog which I mentioned in my last report and which now rests largely on the shoulders of the Director of the OPP as the main actor in the implementation of the Archbishop's decisions following the recommendations of the Advisory Committee. He has doubled down to ensure this extensive work is achieved. All these elements had repercussions in the complaints process and the implementation of

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<sup>1</sup> These will be dealt with under their own subsection further in this document.

Archbishop Lépine's decisions following the recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

However, there seems to be a certain unity to ensure that the shift is made and that we can finally move forward; at least I hope so.

Following two complaints, one of which in an Ombudsman's complaint, two reports were made detailing the significant flaws in the internal process before I took office that should allow the main stakeholders to draw the necessary lessons in favour of the shift made since the creation of the Ombudsman by the Honourable Pepita Capriolo.

## [2.2 Decrees of suspension, of investigation and weekly update of files](#)

The suspensions that have been recommended in recent months have been carried out in reasonably short delays.

The table of complaint files which shows the steps that remain to be taken in each of them is regularly updated by the executive arm of the Archbishop. He and I have weekly meetings to review the progress of each of the files and where we jointly decide which files should be prioritized. He is a key element of the work that is currently being done.

All of this gives me hope that we will succeed.

## [2.3 The crisis of November 2022](#)

Knowing that many journalists will want to know what happened to the status of my archivist and of the complaint lodged against me at the Barreau du Québec by an employee of the archdiocese, I thought it appropriate to address these issues.

Following my report, my archivist's situation was resolved and he is still in office. As for the complaint filed against me, it was dismissed in May by the Syndic of the Bar.

I therefore continue my research work in the old files with the help and unwavering support of my archivist, without whom I would not be able to carry out this work so effectively and I thank him for it.

## 3. Acknowledgement of one's institutional past, apologies and disclosing of the names of abusers

### 3.1 The Jesuits:

On March 13, 2023, to rebuild trust and commit to transparency and accountability, the Jesuits of Canada released the names of 27 members who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors.

As Ombudsman, I congratulate them.

### 3.2 The Archdiocese of Montreal

Archbishop Lépine did not wait for a judicial debate to negotiate in good faith a settlement for the benefit of the victims. Thus, a settlement was already reached between the parties on March 8 preceding May 2, 2023, the date on which the Superior Court rendered a judgment formally authorizing and with the consent of all the parties involved<sup>2</sup>, the class action against the Archdiocese of Montreal, a preliminary step necessary for the Court to be able to ratify the settlement reached between the parties two months earlier. Another step towards reconciliation with the victims and recognition of the abuses they have suffered.

In addition, at the request of Archbishop Lépine, I am in the process of contacting the borough of Ville LaSalle to remove the name of a street named in "honour" of a priest who sexually abused children. This was an important wish from one of our complainants.

### 3.3 Sisters of Providence and Duplessis Orphans:

As everyone who follows my reports knows, I have had to speak to many Orphans of Duplessis in the course of my work as Ombudsman. For those who do not know, these "orphans"<sup>3</sup> were placed in psychiatric institutions between 1940 and 1964. If there is one

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<sup>2</sup> *A.B. c. Corporation archiépiscopale catholique romaine de Montréal* 2023 QCCS 1444.

<sup>3</sup> These men and women were not always "orphans" in the strict sense of the term.

constant, it is that they have suffered multiple sexual, physical and psychological abuse. Added to this is the fact that they were not schooled, so that they began their adult life practically, if not totally illiterate, and haunted by dubious psychiatric diagnoses.

Religious institutions were much better paid if they tagged these children with psychiatric labels. Indeed, as it appears from the extract from the Canadian Encyclopedia:

*“In 1999, researcher Martin Poirier and Professor Léo-Paul Lauzon maintained that the institutionalization of some children beginning in the 1950s may have been done for financial reasons. They showed that, in 1956, the federal government allocated a subsidy of \$0.70 per day for every child living in an orphanage, while allocating \$2.25 for every patient diagnosed with a mental illness and confined in a psychiatric institution. These investigators demonstrated that falsely diagnosing some orphans with mental disorders enabled some Quebec institutions to receive these larger subsidies from the federal government.”<sup>4</sup>*

This means that a child labelled “psychiatric” generated 321% of the base rate.

Consequence of these larger subsidies? A large portion of them received false diagnoses of mental disabilities, so that the institutions that housed them receives grants reserved for psychiatric establishments.

In August 1954, Maurice Duplessis granted the sum of \$3,000,000 (the equivalent of more than \$32,000,000 in current dollars) to the Sisters of Providence to transform their institution, Mont Providence, and I quote, « *en hôpital pour le traitement des idiots et des séniles*<sup>5</sup> »<sup>6</sup>. Many children were sent there with the deleterious consequences that we know today.

On March 4, 1999, Prime Minister Lucien Bouchard issued a public apology for the abuse suffered by the *Orphans*<sup>7</sup>. In June 2001, his government, through the National Reconciliation Program with the orphans and orphans of Duplessis, granted compensation consisting of \$10,000 per person, plus \$1,000 per year of internment in a

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<sup>4</sup> Source : The Canadian Encyclopedia.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/duplessis-orphans>

<sup>5</sup> Translation: "in hospital for the treatment of idiots and senile"

<sup>6</sup> Arrêté en conseil no.816, août 1954.

<sup>7</sup> Voir <https://www.archivespolitiquesduquebec.com/discours/p-m-du-quebec/lucien-bouchard/autres-discours-officiels-1998-2001/>.

psychiatric establishment, an average \$25,000 per orphan from the files I have seen. The problem is that in exchange for such a minute amount, the orphans had to give up all recourses<sup>8</sup>, including against the religious communities responsible for their abuse, whereas the latter did pay any compensation whatsoever<sup>9</sup>. One of the whereas of the decree creating the Program explicitly provided that:

*« ATTENDU QUE le versement de cette aide financière est conditionnel à la renonciation à tout recours envers quiconque, devant tout tribunal, pour quelque dommage ou préjudice que ce soit se rapportant à ces événements de même qu'à l'abandon, selon la procédure prévue par la loi, des recours collectifs intentés par des orphelins et orphelines de Duplessis contre des communautés religieuses et le Procureur général du Québec »<sup>10</sup>*

To this day, many are wondering why the Bouchard Government decided to release religious communities from their civil responsibilities, myself included.

Since I took office, four complaints received by the Advisory Committee concerning Orphans of Duplessis have been sent to the Sisters of Providence. The first three received only terse follow-up letters underlining that the plaintiffs had benefited from the government settlement:

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<sup>8</sup> The acquittance signed by the orphans who obtained government compensation prevents them from suing the religious communities. See *Boudreau c. Procureure générale du Québec*, 2020 QCCS 1590 (confirmed in appeal : *Boudreau c. Procureure générale du Québec*, 2022 QCCA 655, par.53, permission to appeal to the Supreme Court denied 23-03-30)

<sup>9</sup> See *Comité des orphelins de Duplessis victimes d'abus c. Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale*, 2018 QCCA 208 where the Committee of Orphans of Duplessis Victims of Abuse (CODVA) approached the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Solidarity (the organization) in order to obtain « *l'entente conclue entre le gouvernement du Québec, les institutions religieuses, le corps médical et les orphelines et orphelins de Duplessis, visant les différentes phases du programme national de réconciliation avec les orphelins et orphelines de Duplessis ayant fréquenté certaines institutions* ». No document supporting any form of framework agreement with religious communities was found.

<sup>10</sup> Décret 1153-2001, G.O.Q., 24 octobre 2001, no 43, p. 7359. Translation : WHEREAS the payment of this financial assistance is conditional on the renunciation of all recourse against anyone, before any court, for any damage or prejudice whatsoever relating to these events, as well as the abandonment, according to the procedure provided for by the law, class actions brought by orphans of Duplessis against religious communities and the Attorney General of Quebec

*Selon nous, Messieurs (...) et (...), comme plaignants, ont bénéficié du règlement offert par le gouvernement provincial québécois, tel que je vous ai déjà écrit dans ma lettre du 9 février dernier.*

*Le dossier a été réglé au début des années 2000, par M. Lucien Bouchard, ex--premier ministre du Québec. Le décret 1153-2001, en octobre 2001, G.O.Q. page 7359, en vigueur du 26 septembre 2001 au 30 mai 2003, transmet ces informations. Les congrégations religieuses n'ont pas reçu copie des montants versés aux Orphelins de Duplessis ni des quittances signées.*

*Nous vous assurons de notre prière et de nos meilleurs sentiments dans ces dossiers si difficiles et éprouvants.*

Admittedly, the plaintiffs only had their testimonies to support the abuses they had suffered. Admittedly, it is easy to believe or to say that we were unaware of anything or worse not to believe the victims. Admittedly, it is easy to hide behind the poor financial settlement these people have received from the government.

However, in the case of the fourth plaintiff, the situation was very different. This man had in his possession the entirety of his file, having obtained a full copy of it while he was trying to find his parents, well before Orphans' movements denounced the abuses they had suffered and claimed compensation. What I discovered in his file was simultaneously dumbfounding, overwhelming and above all filled me with anger. In April 1956, while at Mount Providence and aged only 8 years old, he was given a VDRL test. For those who don't know, a VDRL test is intended to screen for syphilis.

This implies that at the time, at least one other boy and possibly several other boys had contracted syphilis from the perpetrator. It also means that:

- some nuns knew;
- the doctor who requested the test knew;
- the nurse who performed the venipuncture knew;
- the lab staff knew.

And that all without exception choose to do nothing. In short, the abuse was institutional and everyone was complicit in the ill-treatment that experienced the Orphans.

On September 12, 2022, Archbishop Lépine wrote to the Superior of the Sisters of Providence and relayed to her what the complainant most ardently desires, simply an apology.

Not only would such an apology have no legal or financial consequences for this Community, since they benefit from the general acquittance granted to them by the Bouchard Government's Compensation Program, but one must also add that since June 12, 2020<sup>11</sup>, art. 2853.1 C.C.Q. has been inserted into the Civil Code, which provides that an apology cannot result in the civil liability of its author nor any fear of harmful legal repercussions, or even be admitted as evidence in the context of a civil suit:

*Art.2853.1. An apology may not constitute an admission.*

*Furthermore, it may not be admitted into evidence, affect the determination of fault or liability, interrupt prescription or cancel or reduce the insurance coverage to which the insured or a third person is entitled.*

*Any express or implied expression of sympathy or regret constitutes an apology.*

We and especially the complainant are still awaiting for an letter of apology from the Sisters of Providence.

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<sup>11</sup> Date of adoption of Bill no.50, *An Act to amend the Civil Code, in particular to make civil actions for sexual aggression, violence suffered during childhood and spousal violence imprescriptible*, SQ 2020, c 13. When it was adopted, Quebec was one of the last provinces that had not enacted a law regarding apologies.

## 4. Complaints of abuse

## Section 1: « Ombudsman » complaints

### Part.1: Ombudsman complaints forwarded to the Archbishop

All the foregoing considerations having been made, let us now look at the content of the complaints I have dealt with.

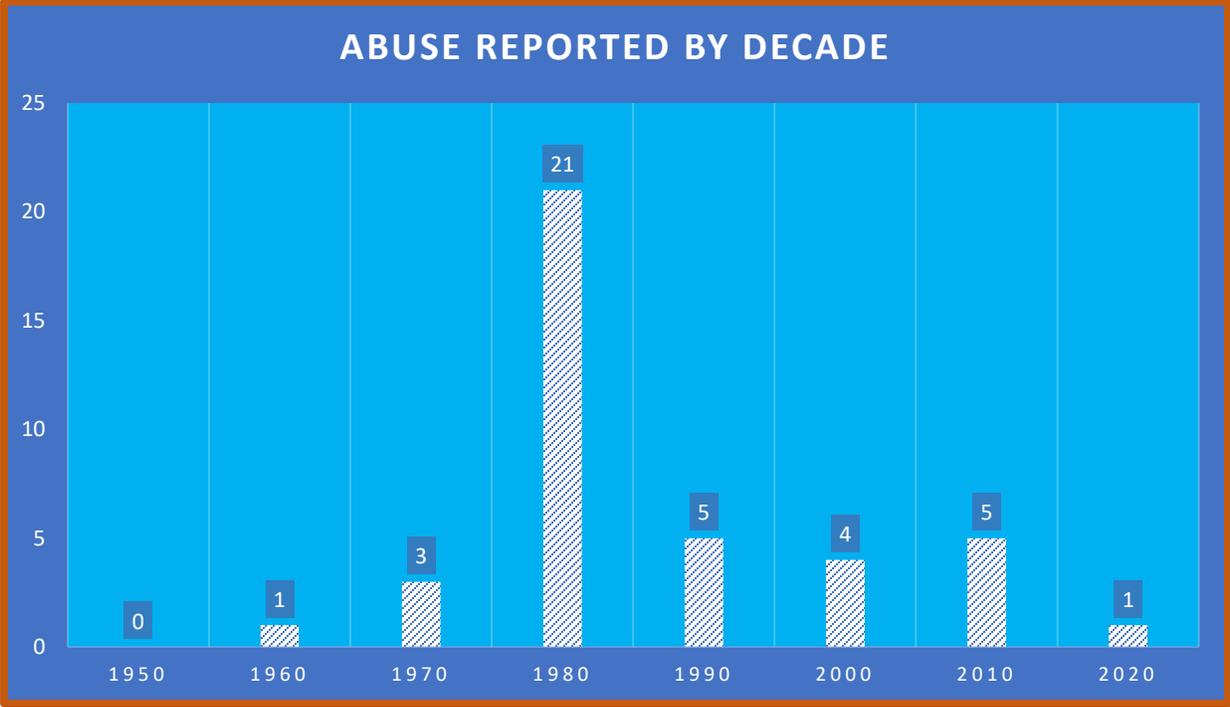
To date, twenty (20) « Ombudsman » complaints were forwarded to Mgr. Lépine, The complaints concern either:

- files of priests convicted criminally for sexual abuse of minors or files of priests who admitted during the canonical preliminary investigation to having performed acts of a sexual nature on minors. These files must normally be immediately sent to the CDF (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome) for file opening and possible subsequent secularization (5 files). In one of these cases, the former Archbishop lied to the CDF, assuring them that "the civil and judicial authorities have not brought charges following the allegations" while the priest had been arrested a few months earlier and accused of sexual abuse of a minor for which he was found guilty subsequently;
- files of sexual assault or sexual abuse of adults by priests (4 files);
- files where I want confirmation that the priests have been secularized, the documents being missing (2 files);
- files necessitating canonical clarification or additional information (3 files);
- files of psychological abuse by a person already covered in a previous category (2 files);
- breaches of the complaints process put in place in May 2021 (2 files);
- a breach of the duty of confidentiality and loyalty in the handling of complaints by the Advisory Committee, this case is presently under investigation by an external firm (1 file).
- File of abuse where I want to obtain confirmation of the death of the priest (1 file).

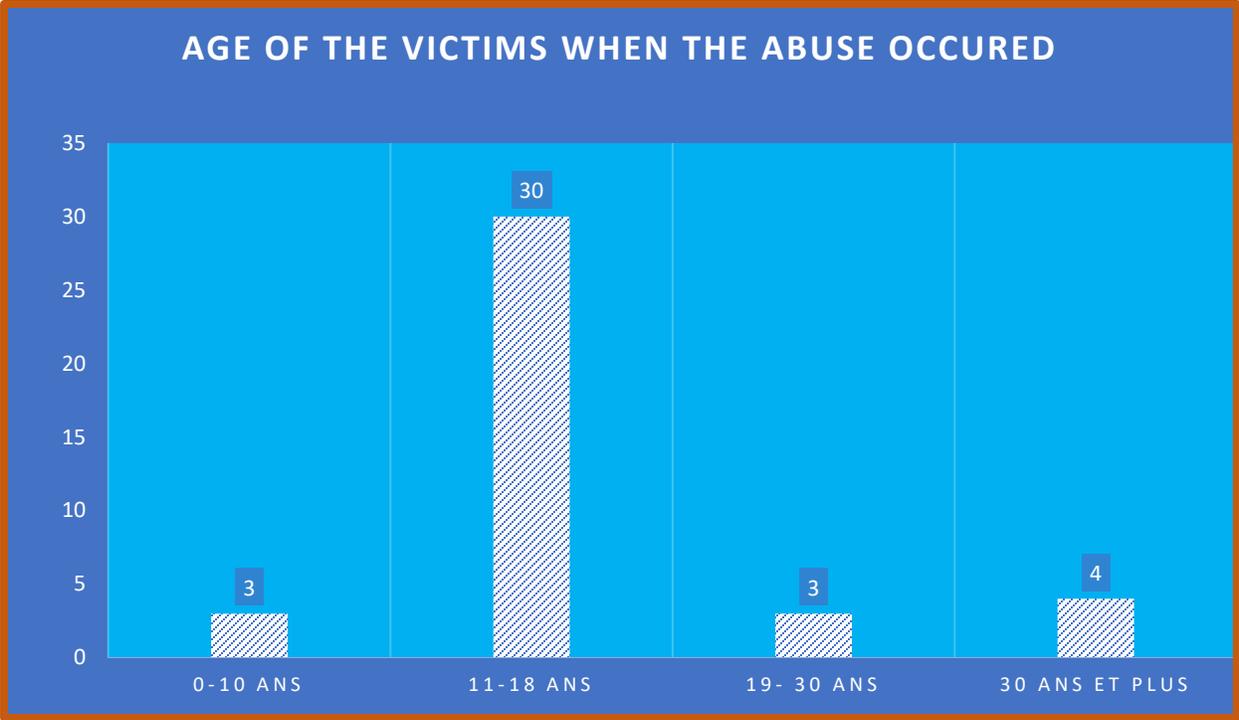
For a total of eighteen (18) persons under complaints.

One of these files was recently transferred to the Advisory Committee, because the victim contacted me directly to file personally a complaint.

Most of the files concerning sexual abuse (15 files) took place since the 1980s (one of the persons targeted having possibly made 20 victims). These complaints involve thirty-nine (39) victims according to what I found in the files.

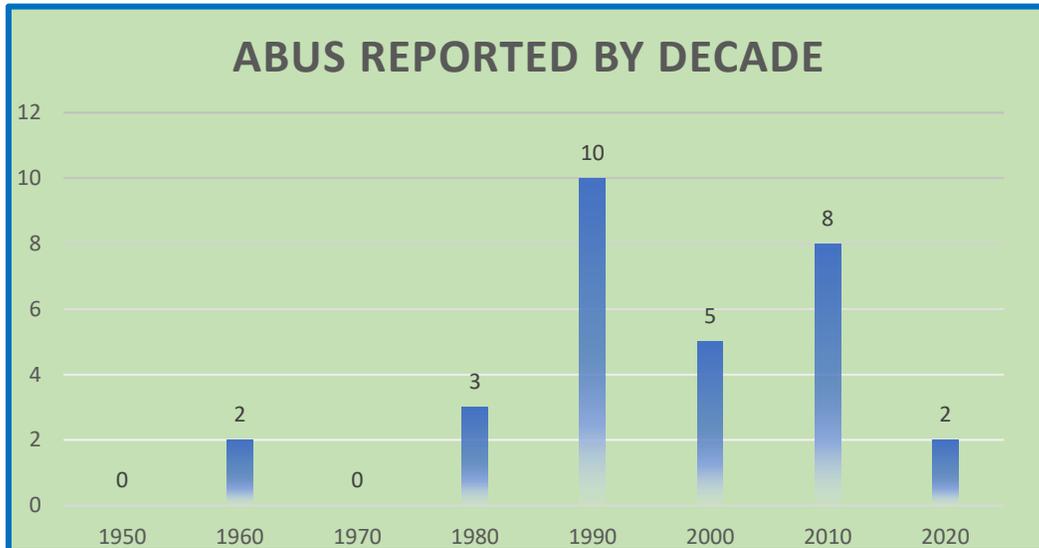


Thirty-three of the victims were minors whereas 6 were adults as shown by the following table:



## Part 2: « Ombudsman » complaints to the Advisory Committee

For the purposes of this report, to date, I have sent 16 complaints to the Advisory Committee arising from my review of past files. These "Ombudsman" complaints target 16 members of the clergy who, according to what I have found on file, have caused at least 30 victims from the seventies to date, 5 of whom were minors.



### Age of the victims:

The victims are mostly adults (25 out of 30):



## The type of abuse:

All of these cases involve acts of a sexual nature: from harassment to sexual abuse and sexual assault.

I take this opportunity to once more thank the members of the Advisory Committee for the colossal work they have done given the large number of "Ombudsman" complaints that I have sent to them and which have been added to their work, although this was not provided for, in their initial mandate.

### C. « Ombudsman » complaints: conclusions on the old files

In summary, since the spring, I have filed 32 complaints<sup>12</sup> resulting both from my study of the old files highlighted in the Denis Report and of the files that I found as part of my own study, all of which concern sexual abuse. At the risk of repeating myself, this work would have been difficult, if not impossible, without the help and support of my archivist, an employee of the Archdiocese.

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<sup>12</sup> Three of the complaints sent to the Archbishop concern breaches of the complaints protocol. They are therefore not included in this total.

## Section II. Contemporary complaints of abuse

This section analyzes contemporary complaints, that is, complaints that are filed at the request of someone who contacts me and that are sent to the Advisory Committee for analysis and recommendations.

It comprised of two parts:

- Part 1: namely the section analyzing the content of complaints received between October 1, 2022, and June 10, 2023, a total of 15 complaints and:
- Part 2: the section cumulatively analyzing all complaints received since I took office (between May 5, 2021, and June 10, 2023), namely 76 complaints.

These files comprise complaints for:

- psychological abuse, including abuse of power and misogyny;
- financial abuse;
- physical abuse;
- sexual abuse;
- spiritual abuse.

In the case of sexual abuse, we find complaints concerning exhibitionism, pornography, unwanted sexual advances or proposals, sexual harassment, group masturbation, forced fellatio, masturbation, male tribadism, vaginal penetration and sodomy.

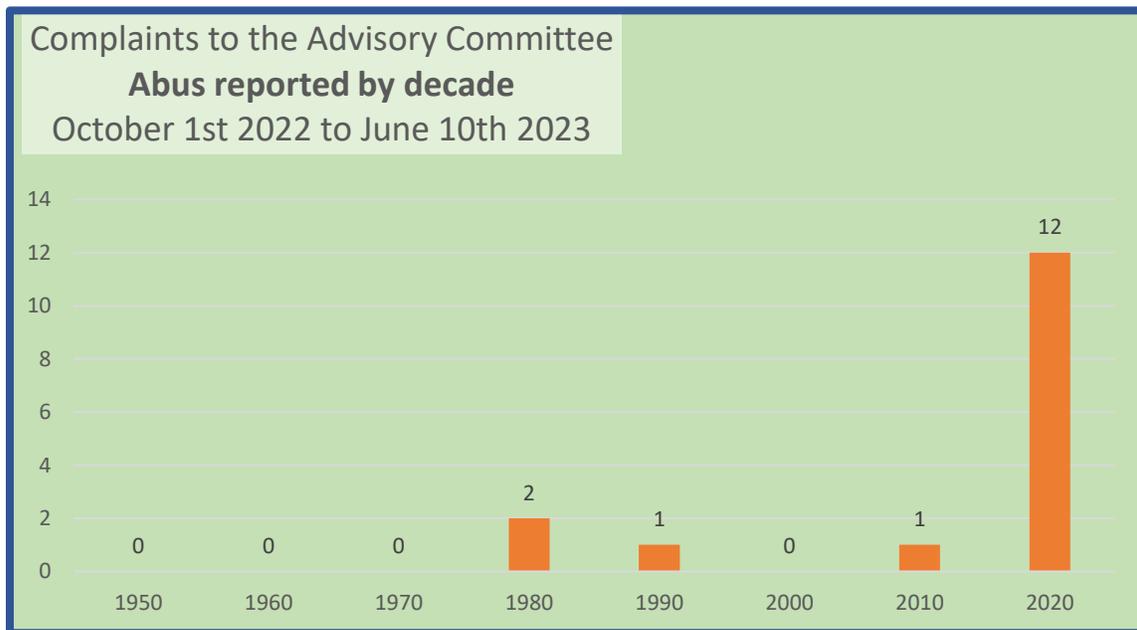
Part 1. Analysis of complaints received between October 1, 2022 and June 10, 2023:

The number of complaints:

Between October 1, 2022, and June 10, 2023, I received 15 reports of abuse, all of which resulted in formal complaints sent to the Advisory Committee.

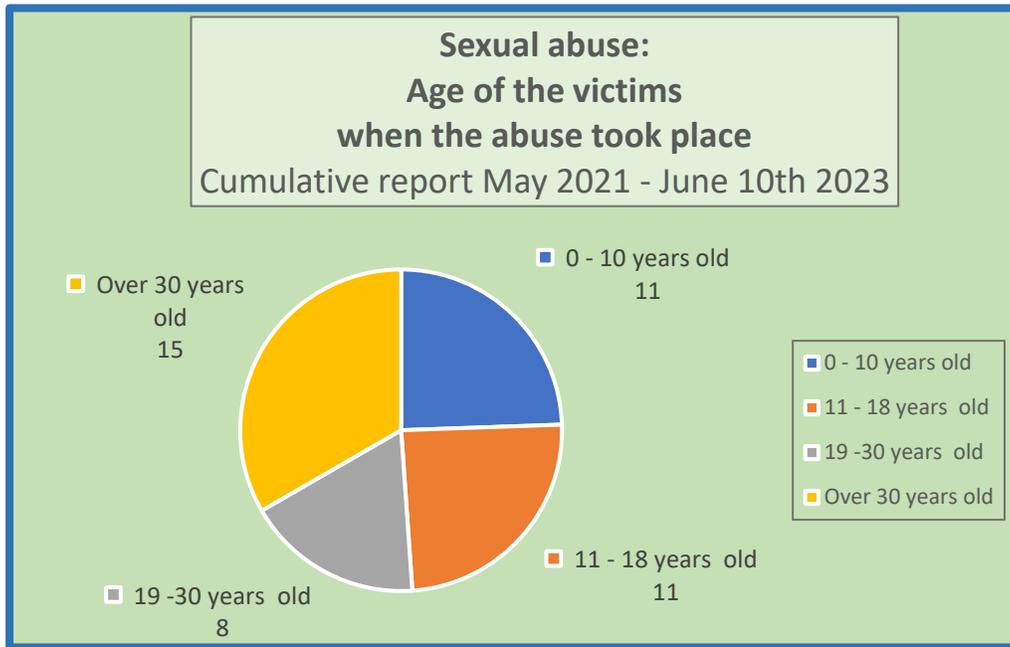
The decades concerned:

The abuses denounced took place in the following decades:



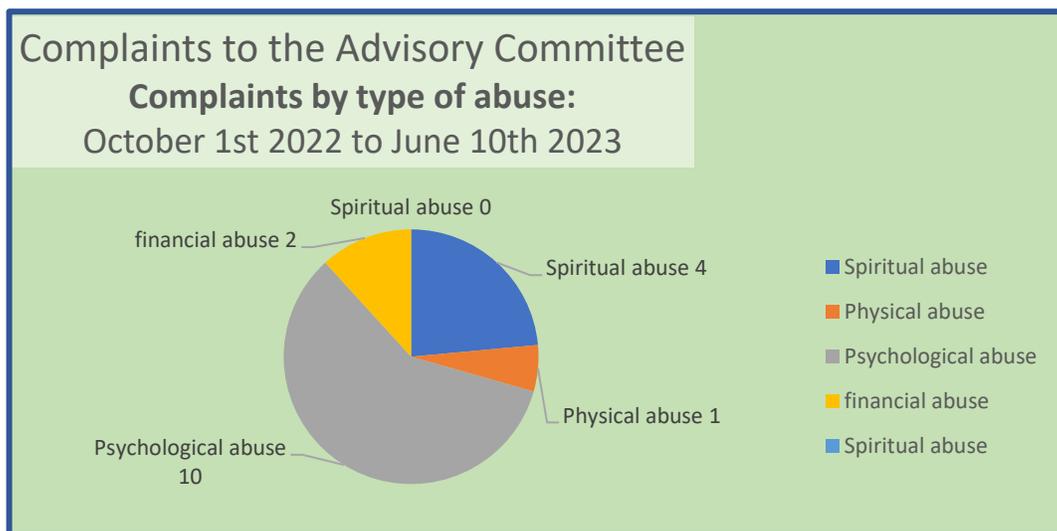
## Age of the victims:

Save and except for one, all other victims were adults.



## Type of abuse:

As with regards to the type of abuse, here are the details



## Part 2. Cumulative report of the complaints received between May 5, 2021, and June 10, 2023 :

### Cumulative number of abuse complaints:

To date, the Advisory Committee has received 76 formal complaints of abuse. As of June 10, 2023, of those that have been processed, 5 complaints have been dismissed and 5 closed for lack of information<sup>13</sup>, the others have been retained. One complaint was also withdrawn by the complainant prior to its consideration by the Committee. In addition to the 76 formal complaints submitted to the Advisory Committee, there were added 16 "Ombudsman complaints", i.e. the 16 cases mentioned above that I sent to them in my capacity as Ombudsman, bringing the number of complaints dealt with or to be dealt with by the Committee to 92.

The cumulative statistical data in this section does **not** include the "Ombudsman complaints" and therefore only refers to complaints received from individuals as part of the Ombudsman's complaint process.

### External investigations:

In sixteen (16) of the complaints that were retained, investigations were recommended by the Advisory Committee.

Of these investigations, eight final reports have been filed to date. Of this number:

- Three (3) reports concern abuse of a sexual nature. The reports conclude that the alleged acts were committed. These acts were committed against four people.
- One (10) report concerns psychological and financial abuse. The report concludes that the priest targeted by the complaint committed psychological abuse towards five (5) people and financial abuse towards one of them.
- One (1) report concerns psychological abuse and concludes that the priest targeted by the complaint committed such abuse against two people.
- One (1) report concludes that inappropriate acts of a sexual nature were committed against two people.

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<sup>13</sup> Those complaints could be reopened if other information surfaced.

- Finally, one (1) report concerns an allegation of sexual harassment. The report concludes that without reaching the level of abuse, it is an inappropriate gesture on the part of the person concerned.

A file concerns both an external investigation and a canonical investigation. Further to the conclusions of the preliminary canonical inquest, the file has been sent to Rome and we are awaiting their decision.

In addition, the Advisory Committee recommended in September and October that investigations be held on the internal process that took place in two files, in order to obtain explanations from some persons as to their past interventions or lack of appropriate interventions in these files. These files concern an “Ombudsman” complaint and a contemporary complaint. These two investigations were conducted by a person outside the archdiocese and confirm what was already amply described in the Capriolo Report: the lack of accountability and the absence of background checks on priests before their appointment, which led to the abuse in those complaints.

### The persons concerned by the complaints:

Of the 67 people targeted by complaints of abuse submitted to the Advisory Committee<sup>14</sup>, 62 were religious, namely 36 members of religious communities and 26 members of the clergy and 6 lay employees of religious communities<sup>15</sup>.

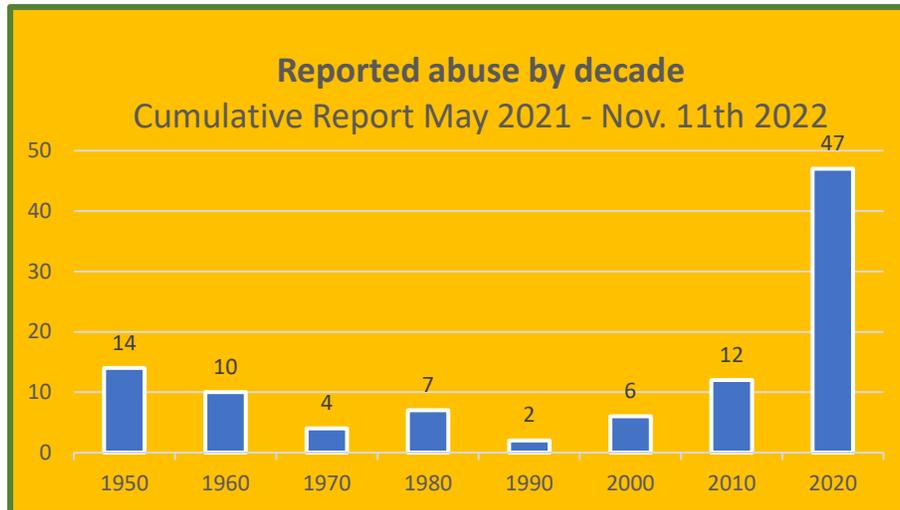
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<sup>14</sup> Some people are the subject of more than one complaint and conversely, some complaints target more than one person.

<sup>15</sup> In our previous report, we failed to take duplicates into account, that is, multiple complaints against the same people.

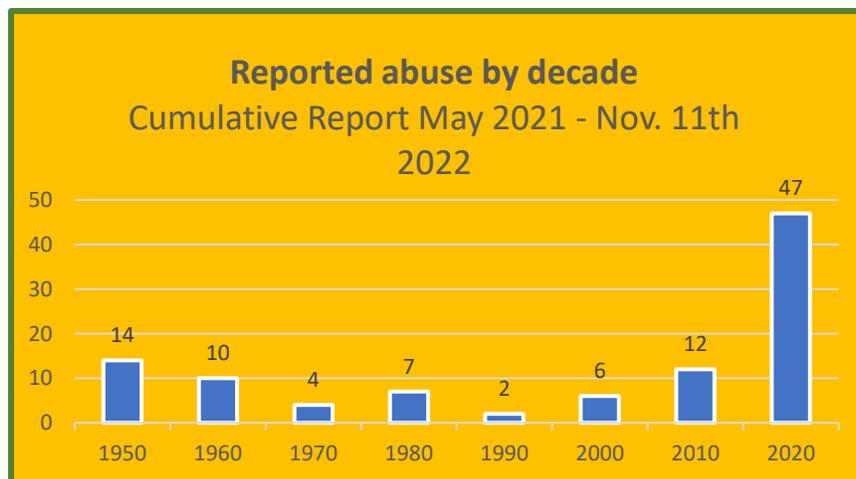
## The decades concerned:

The complaints relate to events that took place from the 1950s to the present day and some complaints relate to abuses that span more than a decade, particularly in the case of the Duplessis Orphans.



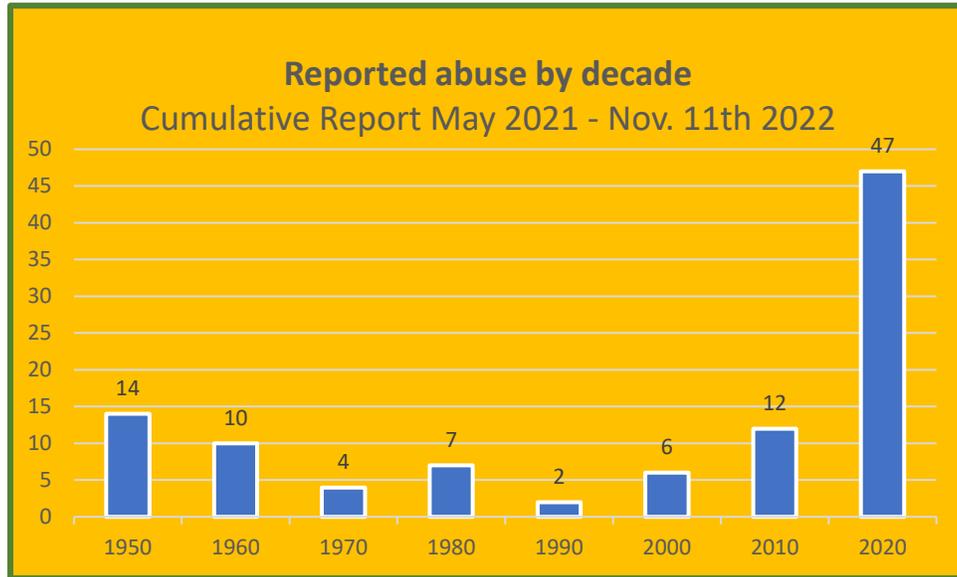
## Age of the victims:

The age of the victims at the time of the abuse ranged from elementary school-aged children to adults over 80 years old. It should be noted that in cases of repeated abuse, victims may fall into more than one age category.



## The type of abuse:

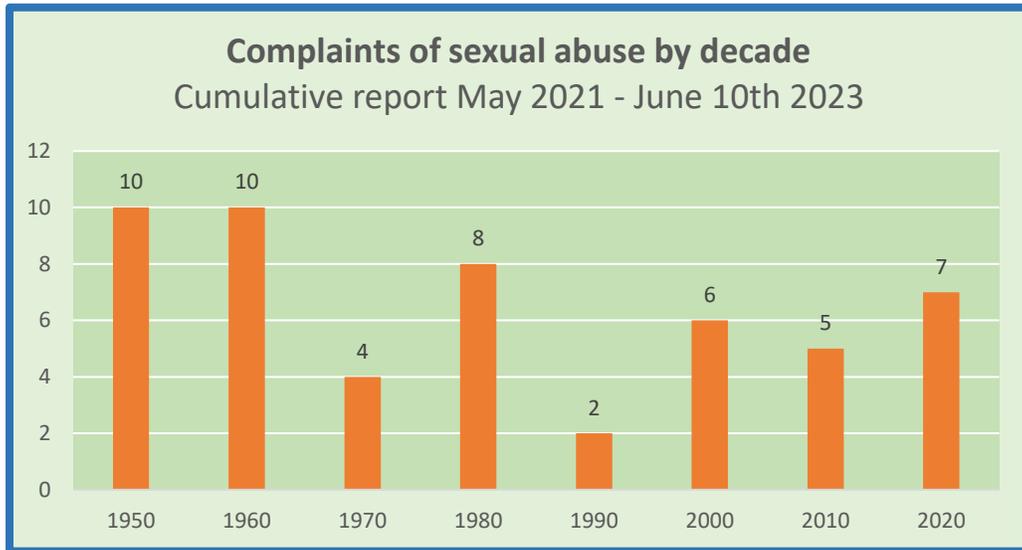
The type of abuse covered by the complaints (note that a complaint may include more than one type of abuse).



In the case of sexual abuse (45 cases out of 108 cases of abuse or 41.66% of all complaints received), **48.9%** of victims were victims of abuse repeatedly. In the case of physical abuse (11 cases or 10,18% of the complaints received), **72,7%** of complainants have suffered repeated acts of violence.

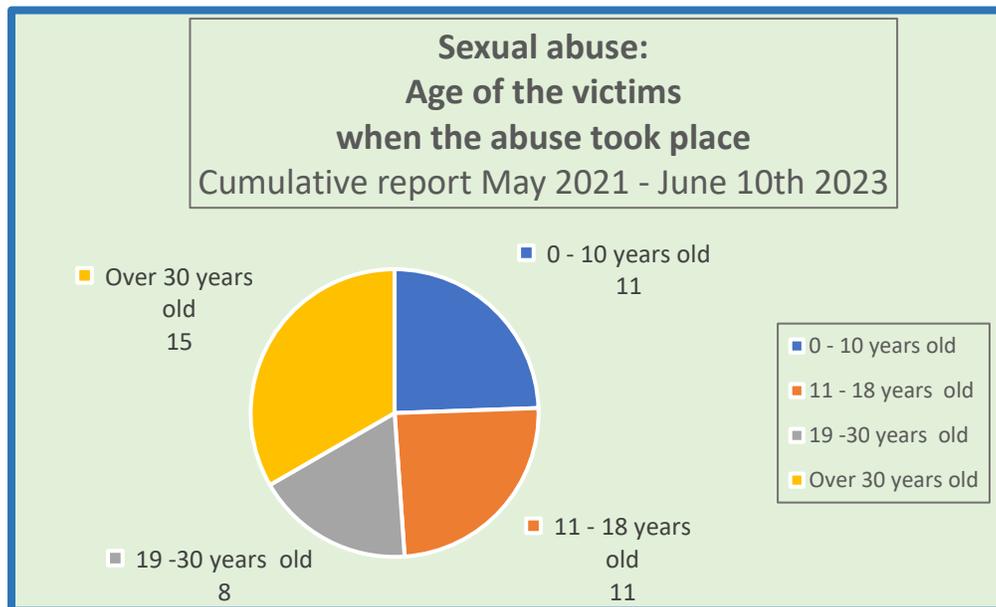
The specificity of sexual abuse:

The decades concerned:



Age of the victims of sexual abuse:

As to the victims, their age ranges as follows:



It should be noted that the average median age of victims at the time the sexual abuse took place is increasing. This trend, noted in my previous report, continues to be apparent. It is necessary to make a link here with the decades concerned, which are also more contemporaneous.

Date of reports :	Minors	Majors
December 2021	66,7%	33,3%
March 2022	67,8%	32,3%
July2022	55,9%	44,1%
November 2022	54%	46%
June 2023	49,8%	51,2%

In cumulative percentages, the age groups of victims of sexual abuse in complaints referred to the Advisory Committee to date are as follows:

- ten years and under in 24,4% of cases;
- from 11 to 18 years in 24,4% of cases;
- 19 to 30 years in 17,8% of cases;
- over 30 years: 33,3%.

One constant, however, remains. The abuse, whether sexual, physical or psychological, perpetrated during the fifties and sixties was mainly perpetrated by members of religious communities.

## 5. Complaints that fall under the responsibility of the Office of Pastoral Personnel (OPP) or the Vicars General:

### Section 1. Complaints that fall under the responsibility of the Office of Pastoral Personnel (OPP)

Since my last report, the OPP has received twenty-two (22) new complaints, bringing the total to 53 complaints forwarded to this jurisdiction. They mainly concern difficulties between the personnel and members of the clergy or disagreements between the members of the Church Councils and a member of the clergy.

The processing of some of these complaints is currently experiencing delays, given the heavy workload experienced by the Director of the OPP due to his responsibility for following up on the complaints of the Advisory Committee, which has been added to his duties, and one cannot reproach him in this respect. Adjustment measures have recently been taken to free him from a portion of OPP complaints via one of the Vicars General.

### Section 2. Complaints that fall under the responsibility of the General Vicars:

Since October 1, 2022, the Vicars General have received 30 new complaints, bringing the total of complaints they have received since I took office to 83 complaints of various nature:

- demandes d'apostasie non traitées sous l'ancien Chancelier, dont 8 plaintes depuis le début de 2023.
- problems related to funerals which do not involve members of the clergy;
- problems related to cemeteries including the consequences that stem from the labor conflict at Côte-des-Neiges;
- genealogical research;
- work relations;
- opposition to the vaccine passport (when it was in effect);
- apostasy requests untreated under the former Chancellor including 8 since the beginning of 2023;

- *etc.*

While some complaints from 2023 are still being processed, the others, with two exceptions, have been resolved.

## Conclusion :

Are there still problems with the complaints process? Yes. Has everyone adopted the new habits of sending all documents for archiving? Alas, not yet. Are the delays still too long for both the victims and the persons under complaint? Yes.

Do I still think this can work? Definitely. Is there still work to be done? Definitely. It is not easy to integrate big changes in an institution that has had its own way of dealings internally with problems for many decades. But I see glimmers of hope here and there.

Furthermore, when the system works, it gives remarkable results both in preventing such situations from recurring, and in helping to heal those who have been victims of abuse from members of the clergy.

In addition, an Ombudsman system that would work very well would allow many Catholics to regain confidence in their institution and for those who have abandoned their Church, to return to it.

Once again, I assure in advance all those who wish to contact me of my empathy and understanding of what they have experienced or are still experiencing and of my unwavering support through the complaint process.

Me Marie Christine Kirouack, *Ad.E.*

Ombudsman for the Archdiocese of Montréal