



Oblates of Mary Immaculate Appoint the Honourable André Denis to Lead Safeguarding Commission

Ottawa, June 12, 2023

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate, OMI Lacombe Canada and the Oblates of the Province of France (the “Oblates”) have appointed Justice André Denis to lead the Oblate Safeguarding Commission, an independent review of historical allegations of sexual abuse against Johannes Rivoire in present-day Nunavut.

This commission meets a previous commitment to independently review the congregation’s response to these allegations, including the circumstances under which he left Canada. It aims to better understand how past allegations of abuse were addressed within the congregation and identify any improvements to Oblate policies and governance in order to better safeguard minors and ensure a high level of accountability.

“The Oblates recognize the tragic legacy of clergy abuse and are sincerely committed to support the Inuit Peoples who advocate for truth, justice, healing, and reconciliation,” said Fr. Ken Thorson, Provincial for OMI Lacombe Canada. “It is my hope that Justice André Denis’ work will contribute to the process of healing for the survivors and intergenerational survivors of clergy abuse.”

“I appreciate the opportunity to lead this commission and expect that my findings will contribute to greater understanding of this history, while positioning the Oblates to set a higher standard of accountability and safety,” said Justice André Denis. “I believe that my experience on the Quebec Superior Court and completing two public review processes for the Archdiocese of Montreal positions me well to take on this important project.”

All relevant personnel records and other archival material from the Oblate provinces of OMI Lacombe Canada and France will be made available to Justice André Denis, and a final written report will be made public in English, French and Inuktitut no later than April 1, 2024.

About the Honourable André Denis

Justice André Denis is a retired judge of the Superior Court of Quebec who has had a distinguished career in the judiciary, including as the first judge in Canada to preside over a trial involving the Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act. In December 2020, he was hired by the Archdiocese of Montreal to work on two mandates regarding allegations of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable people.

Denis reviewed almost 10,000 files dating from 1940 to 2021 and compiled a report covering the nine dioceses of the Ecclesiastical Province of Montreal and the Ecclesiastical Province of Gatineau. The report that he oversaw uncovered 87 employees who were the subjects of confirmed or well-founded sex abuse allegations involving minors or vulnerable adults, providing the Archdiocese with information that helped it understand the scope of the problem before taking concrete steps in pursuit of truth, transparency, and transformation.

For further information: [OMI Lacombe Canada - Oblate Safeguarding Commission](#)

To contribute to the Oblate Safeguarding Commission and to contact Justice André Denis: j.andredenis@icloud.com.