

Canadian Reporting System for Sexual Abuse or Cover-up by a Catholic Bishop - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

About the Canadian Reporting System for Sexual Abuse or Cover-up by a Catholic Bishop

1. Question - What types of reports can be made through this service and against whom?

The [Canadian Reporting System for Sexual Abuse or Cover-up by a Catholic Bishop](#) can be used to inform Church authorities about a Catholic Bishop in Canada who has committed sexual abuse, or other sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual harassment or possession of child pornography), or whose actions or omissions intended to interfere with or avoid civil or canonical investigations regarding sexual abuse.

A report can be made regarding any of the following categories of Bishops:

- a) all living Roman Catholic (Latin) Bishops in Canada, both active and retired, as well as those who served in Canada but are now living outside the country, and
- b) the Eparchial Bishops of the following three Eastern Churches which are present in Canada are also listed in the reporting system: the Eparchial Bishop of the Catholic Armenians in Canada and the United States; the Apostolic Exarch for Syro-Catholics in Canada; and the Eparchial Bishop of Maronite Catholics in Canada.

2. Question – What reports cannot be made through this system?

Misconduct on the part of the following individuals cannot be made through this system and should instead be reported to the [diocese/eparchy](#) where the incident has taken place:

- a) a priest, deacon, consecrated person (i.e., Brother or Sister), or officially mandated lay pastoral worker (Note: if you are reporting a consecrated person, you should also contact the Superior of the religious community), *or*
- b) a deceased Roman Catholic (Latin) or Eparchial Bishop *or*
- c) an Eparchial Bishop (active or retired) other than the ones listed in the system.

Any other complaint about a Bishop that does not relate to the commission or cover-up of sexual abuse cannot be reported through this system (such as, dissatisfaction with how the Bishop exercises his pastoral governance of the diocese, or regarding his appointment of priests, deacons, and pastoral workers, or to oppose the closure of a church, etc.).

3. Question – If I cannot remember the name of the Bishop, can I still submit a report?

One of the steps in submitting a report through this reporting system requires the person making the report to identify by name the Bishop they are reporting. Without a name, the report cannot be processed. To assist the person making the report, the system includes a list of Bishops against whom a complaint can be made using this system.

If the Bishop in question is not on this list, he may be either deceased or belong to an Eparchy not participating in this system. Should you encounter such a problem, contact the [diocese/eparchy](#) where the incident has taken place for further assistance.

4. Question – What information should be included in a report?

Individuals will be invited to provide as many details about the reported incident as they can recall, such as indications of time and place of the facts, of the persons involved or informed, as well as any other circumstance that may be useful in order to ensure an accurate assessment of the facts.

5. Question – Why was the [Canadian Reporting System for Sexual Abuse or Cover-up by a Catholic Bishop](#) established?

The establishment of this reporting system is a response to Article 2 of Pope Francis' 2019 Apostolic Letter [Vos estis lux mundi](#) (You are the light of the World). It also complements the ongoing pastoral priority of the Bishops of Canada to prevent sexual abuse, as outlined in the 2018 CCCB publication [Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation, and Transformation](#). The reporting system represents another important step toward healing and justice for victims-survivors as part of the Catholic Church's deepening commitment to responsibility, accountability and transparency.

6. Question – How does this new system fit within the existing diocesan or eparchial protocols for the reporting of sexual abuse by clergy (e.g. priests, deacons) and religious?

As part of an existing responsible ministry or safe environment program, the Bishops of Canada have previously established protocols in their respective dioceses and eparchies to respond to reports of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct by clergy (e.g. priests, deacons), religious, as well as mandated lay pastoral agents.

These diocesan/eparchial protocols concerning a report of abuse by a member of the clergy, religious or a mandated lay pastoral agent will remain in place in addition to the introduction of this new national reporting system that follows a defined protocol for reports about a Catholic Bishop in Canada who has committed sexual abuse or sexual misconduct or whose actions or omissions intended to interfere with or avoid civil investigations or canonical investigations regarding sexual abuse.

What Happens to Your Report?

7. Question - Will my privacy be respected?

ClearView (an independent professional ethics firm)* has created a platform (ClearView Connects™)* through which individuals can submit reports to Church authorities. Clearview has taken all necessary precautions to ensure that your privacy is protected. When submitting a report online, ClearView protects your privacy in the following ways: the online session is fully encrypted using 256-bit encryption technology; neither ClearView nor its client are able to identify the IP address of a computer that has submitted any specific report; all data resides on ClearView's secure servers in Canada. When submitting a report using the hotline, ClearView never asks for the caller's name or records the call; does not subscribe to "Caller ID"; ensures its call centres operate in a paperless environment (reports are entered verbatim into the ClearView online system by an agent).

8. Question – Who will receive and assess my report?

A report submitted through the reporting system will be received and assessed by a limited number Church authorities, the “authorized reviewers”, specifically identified according to the prescriptions of the Apostolic Letter *Vos estis lux mundi* as follows:

- a) the Metropolitan Archbishop and his Assistant Reviewer will receive all reports concerning any Bishop (active or retired) living within the territory of his ecclesiastical province, except for Eparchial Bishops.
- b) the Senior Suffragan Bishop of the ecclesiastical province and his Assistant Reviewer will receive all reports concerning the Metropolitan Archbishop.
- c) The Papal Representative will receive all reports concerning the Metropolitan Archbishop of Saint Boniface; the Archbishop of Winnipeg; any Bishop who, after serving in Canada, has moved to a foreign country; and the Eparchial Bishops of the following three Eastern Churches present in Canada: the Eparchy for the Catholic Armenians in Canada and the United States; the Apostolic Exarchate for Syro-Catholics in Canada; and the Eparchy for Maronite Catholics in Canada.

Note: the Assistant Reviewers are trusted persons appointed by each Metropolitan Archbishop and each Senior Suffragan Bishop. He/She is notified of all reports submitted through the system and has access to the reports so as to assist the Bishop-Reviewer.

9. Question - What happens to my report once I've submitted it through ClearView and what can I expect?

Once the report is submitted through ClearView Connects™*

- a report ID and password will be generated and provided, and you will be invited to set up email notifications, allowing you to track the status of your report;
- a computer-generated notice will automatically be sent to the proper Church authorities to alert them of your report, which they can then access through the password protected system;
- Church authorities will acknowledge receipt of your report and indicate any necessary follow-up. If you choose to provide your contact information, Church authorities will contact you through the system portal to go over your report and review next steps.

10. Question – What happens to my report once Church authorities receive it?

- i. A Bishop Reviewer and/or the Assistant Reviewer will acknowledge receipt of your report through the ClearView system.
- ii. The Bishop Reviewer will assess your report and, unless it is manifestly unfounded, he will forward his initial assessment to the proper authority of the Holy See (Vatican) and request the authorization to begin an investigation.
- iii. Within 30 days, the Holy See will provide the appropriate instructions on how to proceed. If an investigation is called, the Holy see will authorize a Bishop to oversee it. The investigation is not to exceed 90 days of receiving the instructions from the Holy See (*Vos estis lux mundi* Art. 14). During the investigation, the Holy See may require the adoption of provisions or appropriate precautionary measures with regard the Bishop being investigated (*Vos estis lux mundi* Art. 15), such as requiring him to be placed on administrative leave. You will be kept apprised of each of these steps.
- iv. The findings of the investigation are then transmitted to the Holy See (*Vos estis lux mundi* Art. 17), which will then order the appropriate process to be undertaken in accordance with Church law, such as a trial, leading to a final judgment .
- v. If the accused Bishop is found guilty, the Holy See will impose disciplinary measures upon him according to the nature of the offence. Such measures may vary, depending on the crime and can include restricting the Bishop from ministry or even dismissing him from the clerical state.

The above is a summary and is not fully representative of the rigorous and detailed manner in which Church authorities are required to handle such reports. For more information, consult the [Apostolic Letter *Vos estis lux mundi*](#) as well as the [Vademecum on certain points of procedure in treating cases of sexual abuse of minors committed by clergy](#).

11. Question – Who contacts the civil authorities if a minor is being sexually abused?

Church authorities are legally required to notify the police and/or child protection service when they know or have been informed that a minor is in danger. This requirement of informing civil authorities applies across Canada to anyone who is aware of a minor whose safety is at risk. See [Provincial and territorial child protection legislation and policy \(2018\) by the Public Health Agency of Canada, Table 6 “Duty to Report”](#).

If your report concerns someone who was abused as a minor but is now an adult, you are encouraged to contact the police to report the crime of sexual assault.

12. *Question – What is ClearView?

The Bishops of Canada have engaged [Clearview Strategic Partners](#), an independent professional ethics and whistleblowing firm, to provide a highly-secure confidential platform, known as ClearView Connects™, through which reports can be submitted via an online web or mobile platform, or a toll-free hotline. ClearView Connects™ ensures that any reports submitted through the reporting system are routed to the proper Church authorities. ClearView is a very reputable firm with a 20+ year history, and also provides a similar service to other faith communities, health and education institutions, charitable organizations and other NGOs.