



Bishop Pierre-Olivier Tremblay OMI

Bishop of Hearst-Moosonee

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I want to address the report by *Enquête* of Thursday, March 2, on the allegations of sexual abuse committed within our diocese. Like you all, I am disturbed by what I have seen and heard. As your bishop, your pastor, your brother, I want to begin by saying that my heart goes out first and foremost to the alleged victims and their families.

Any act of sexual abuse is a tragedy. I recognize that seeking justice and accountability is a difficult and deeply personal process. I want to express my sympathy to those who may have been harmed by members of the clergy. The Diocese of Hearst-Moosonee supports the choice of these individuals to tell their stories and efforts to seek truth and justice. I encourage all those who may have been a victim or witness to abuse to come forward to the police or the diocese (705-362-4903 ext. 6 or cceshm@outlook.com) to ensure those responsible may be subject to an investigation and held to account.

Since I arrived at Hearst, I have made the protection of our community members and the promotion of a safe environment one of my top priorities, building on the commitment of the diocese and the Church.

I have appointed Ms. Mona Comeau, who is independent of the diocese and has worked in child protection all her life as the bishop's delegate. Ms. Comeau will play a central role on the Advisory Committee, which receives complaints and accompanies individuals, makes recommendations and provides training on abuse prevention. I required a systematic criminal background check of all priests, volunteers, and employees of the diocese. I met with professionals from various disciplines (psychology, social work, law, canon law) and the Church to ensure we follow best practices in these difficult situations.

Enquête identified 12 priests who have worked in our communities, five of whom are still alive and two volunteers. In these cases, I have followed the Church's internal protocols regarding the allegations of abuse. A preliminary investigation has been opened into each of the priests and will allow us to uncover the truth. In addition, all clergy who were not already retired have been removed from public ministry and all volunteers have been removed from their positions. No accused person, whether clergy or volunteer, continues to be presently actively involved in the diocese.

I am confident these important measures will help make our communities safer. The work, however, is not over. In the coming weeks I will be meeting with you starting in Kapuskasing. I will be there to listen to you so that together we can discuss and share what we are experiencing. If you have any questions, suggestions, or comments, please feel free to share them with me. I consider them with all the importance that the situation requires.

Brothers and sisters, I pray for the victims and their families, the communities, and the entire diocese. I also entrust myself to your prayers. Let us pray for one another. It may seem simple, banal, and even a bit cliché to ask, but I am deeply convinced it is fundamental, as we cannot move forward without God's help. He is the One who is greater than we are and at the same time the One who has identified himself with the least of us.

+Pierre-Olivier Tremblay omi
Bishop of Hearst-Moosonee

March 2, 2023