

Nfld. & Labrador

Archdiocese selling properties to pay Mount Cashel victim was 'inevitable,' says lawyer

Property other than churches, such as parish halls and other land, could be up for sale

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St. John's lawyer Geoff Budden, who represents several Mount Cashel abuse victims, says a move by the Archdiocese of St. John's to sell some church properties to help pay victim settlements is a step in the right direction. (CBC)

A decision by the Archdiocese of St. John's to downsize and sell some church properties to help compensate victims of abuse at Mount Cashel Orphanage is a step in the right direction, says a lawyer who represents several victims.

Geoff Budden said Monday the move has been coming for some time.

"Really, it was inevitable from the moment they lost their leave to appeal application to the Supreme Court," said Budden. "We're pleased that the archdiocese is working with its parishioners to prepare for what they must do to satisfy the claims against them."

The archdiocese made the announcement Sunday, saying a "major restructuring plan" including consolidation and downsizing is being worked on to help provide a resolution to the victims' claims. Archbishop Peter Hundt also wrote that some church properties could be listed on the real estate market in the coming weeks.

The Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador ruled the Archdiocese of St. John's was not liable for abuse at the orphanage in 2018, but a subsequent appeal by the victims was successful in overturning that decision in the Court of Appeals of Newfoundland and Labrador last July.

- [Archdiocese of St. John's to sell church properties to pay Mount Cashel victims](#)

The Supreme Court rejected an application for appeal from the archdiocese in January, ending a process that had been moving through the courts for 21 years.

Following the announcement, Budden said he and his clients are pleased with the approach, but noted there are still challenges to come.

"This was resisted through three levels of court. They have been found liable for the four test cases plus dozens of others would fall into the same category," he said. "I'm glad they are responsibly responding to what they inevitably must do, but they're going to do it anyway whether they want to or not."

Buildings across Avalon, Burin likely up for sale

When asked about what kind of properties will likely be downsized or sold, Budden said the archdiocese's fiscal corporation owns properties across the Avalon and Burin peninsulas.

Property other than churches, such as parish halls and other land, could also be up for sale as the corporation has acquired a "considerable amount of property" since its inception in 1897, he said.

"That of course takes in a lot more than just the City of St. John's," said Budden. "It's all the Southern Shore, St. Mary's Bay, the Burin Peninsula, [Conception Bay South], Bell Island and other communities.... There are many buildings that are publicly known in the communities as being properties of the churches."

Buildings in central and western Newfoundland along with Labrador will not be sold, as the archdioceses in those regions are separate from the Archdiocese of St. John's.



Mount Cashel is seen here in 1996. (CBC)

Budden said both parties are in communication as they work to meet the result issued by the Supreme Court.

"There is a recognition on their part that they are liable, and an apparent willingness to satisfy the claims. So now we have to test that.... They have to contribute enough to properly satisfy the claims to the limit of their ability to do so. They would have a certain idea for each of those things. We might have different ideas."

- [**Supreme Court of Canada rejects Catholic archdiocese appeal over Mount Cashel**](#)

Budden said it's too soon to know what full compensation could look like for the dozens of victims who have come forward, as every case is unique. As part of the court's decision made in January, four test cases were awarded \$2.6 million, an average of \$650,000 per case.

"It's not a straight-line extrapolation exercise, but it gives you some idea that if for four of them the court saw fit to award \$2.6 million, for 60, 70, 80 or 90 [people], it's going to be a large multiple of what the court ordered."

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