

Nfld. & Labrador

Catholic Church selling assets to pay Mount Cashel survivors, but lawyer says it won't be enough

'It's going to take quite a large pool of money,' says Geoff Budden

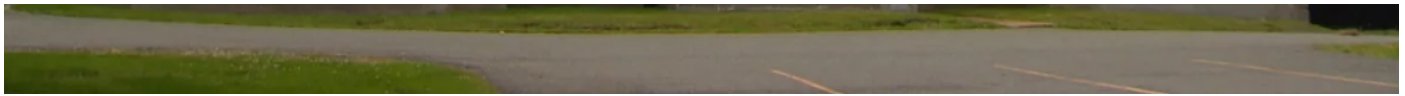
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The Catholic Church is moving ahead with selling some off its assets to pay survivors of sexual abuse from the former Mount Cashel Orphanage. It includes the Mount St. Francis property on Merrymeeting Road in St. John's. (Mark Quinn/CBC)

The Archdiocese of St. John's is preparing to sell off its properties to compensate men who were sexually abused at the former Mount Cashel Orphanage in the 1940s, '50s and '60s, but a lawyer representing the survivors says that revenue won't be sufficient to cover damages.

Lawyer Geoff Budden says he's pleased to know the Catholic Church is moving ahead on its obligation by selling some well-known properties, including the Archbishop's residence in Outer Cove, the Mount St. Francis property on Merrymeeting Road and two parcels of vacant land.

The archdiocese announced its intention to sell those assets over the weekend.

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are in fact well over 60 men. Our firm has 60 survivors or more, and other firms have some also," Budden said Monday.

"So it's going to take quite a large pool of money — tens of millions of dollars to satisfy all those claims."

Budden said he has issues with how slowly the church moved up until the point of the Supreme Court of Canada's final say. He said, in fairness, since the final ruling the Catholic Church has been public about selling its assets.



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The Archdiocese of St. John's was found liable after the Supreme Court of Canada declined to hear one last appeal in January. The decision brought to an end a painful case for survivors that had been slowly working its way through the court system over the last 21 years.

Some of the survivors are now in their 80s. Most are in their 70s, Budden said.

"They were abused over 60 years ago in some cases, or more. Some were abused before Confederation. So yes, it's been a long time, yes they are impatient to receive the compensation that the law says they're entitled to. However, they also realize that it is a process that has to be done right," he said.

"It's also important to remember that things have to be done professionally. You can't just market properties without some sort of strategy, professional advice, all those things. So it can only move so fast."

Church-owned schools

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province, with some still in use by school districts.

After the denominational school system ended in N.L. in 1997, school districts were given buildings owned by the Catholic Church to use rent-free until they were no longer needed.



Lawyer Geoff Budden, whose firm represents over 60 survivors of abuse from the former Mount Cashel Orphanage, says the first four properties listed for sale by the Catholic Church for payment won't raise enough money. (Mark Quinn/CBC)

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"The goal is to see the government ultimately take responsibility, take over the schools in every sense, pay off the true value of the schools to the archdiocese, continue to use them as schools if they are needed but allow compensation to be paid out of the proceeds of that compensation."

- [Supreme Court of Canada rejects Catholic archdiocese appeal over Mount Cashel](#)
- [Catholic Church appeals to Supreme Court of Canada on bombshell Mount Cashel ruling](#)

For the Catholic Church itself, Archbishop Peter Hundt isn't taking interviews yet, but in his latest written update to parishioners on the church's ongoing reorganization, he wrote there will be more properties for sale as the archdiocese undergoes a "major restructuring" that will impact its services and staff.

"These properties are the first of many that will be listed for sale in the upcoming weeks and months. As much as is possible, we will try to keep you informed about this property appraisal and sale process," Hundt wrote.

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