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## Mount Cashel victims soon to receive settlements

By [Quinton Amundson, The Catholic Register](#)

- March 31, 2023

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Dozens of survivors of abuse at the Mount Cashel Orphanage in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s will receive compensation from the Archdiocese of St. John's beginning in the fall.

Lawyers Geoff Budden, who represents most of the victims, and Geoffrey Spencer, the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of St. John's (RCESJ) lawyer, shook hands on the settlement deal after their negotiated claims process was approved by the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador on March 27.

“Time is of the essence,” Justice Garrett Handrigan reportedly said during the proceedings. “Let’s get on with it.”

This sentiment was received well by Budden, who has represented some Mount Cashel clients dating back to 1999. Thirty-nine men who were abused at the orphanage stepped forward against the Christian Brothers of Ireland, which operated Mount Cashel, and the archdiocese.

“It is satisfying for the clients of course to hear that from an authority figure that now really is the time to push forward, and that a resolution is so close,” said Budden. “It was also very satisfying for me having worked on this case closely for so many years. I was pleased when I heard (the judge) say that.”

The Catholic Register also sought an interview with Spencer, but the archdiocesan lawyer did not return phone or email requests. He did characterize the claims procedure to the CBC as “a fair and efficient and cost-effective claims process which reduces the evidentiary burden that would be put on claimants, while ensuring that the claims are proven.”

An independent, court-appointed claims officer is set to be approved in the coming days. He or she will review each claim to determine liability and the amount of compensation to award.

Afterwards, an awareness campaign will be executed via advertisements, social media and interviews with news outlets to encourage any other member of the public who was abused at this orphanage to file their claim against the RCESJ by Sept. 30. Any person who experienced abuse by a member of the St. John’s Catholic clergy are also asked to step forward.

Budden said in a previous interview that his client pool for this case already stretches from Vancouver Island to Germany and across the United States. A wide net will likely have to be cast to effectively spread the word.

In 2020, the Court of Appeal of Newfoundland and Labrador ruled — later affirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada in January 2021 — that the RCESJ was “vicariously liable” for the brutalities carried out by the Christian Brothers, which filed for bankruptcy in 2011 after being found liable for the abuse claims. Ultimately, the RCESJ applied for bankruptcy in December 2021 and sold off over 43 church properties in the St. John’s area throughout 2022.

According to recent court documentation, the RCESJ has raised \$31 million through the sale of assets. Budden has stated that over 100 people could possibly step forward to make a statement of claim, and it would take a total of over \$50 million to adequately compensate all these individuals for the abuse inflicted upon them. In 2020, the Court of Appeal awarded four Mount Cashel plaintiffs an average of \$600,000.

More than 70 rural properties in the southern Avalon Peninsula and the Burin Peninsula are poised to enter an auctioning process this year to help RCESJ raise more funds for victims.

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