



## **Archdiocese of Saint Boniface Statement on the CBC's *Fifth Estate* Documentary**

November 18, 2019

The Archdiocese of Saint Boniface was contacted by the CBC's *The Fifth Estate* team on October 31, 2019, requesting it answer several survey questions in preparation for the documentary *The List: Unravelling Church Secrets*, which aired on Sunday, November 17 on the CBC network.

The Archdiocese does not generally respond to survey questions of this nature. Rather, to provide context and clarity, in a spirit of seeking transparency, this statement is being made available to all.

The Archdiocese of Saint Boniface takes all allegations of abuse very seriously. As soon as an allegation of sexual abuse is brought to our attention, our protocol for the protection of children, youth and vulnerable adults, in place since the early 1990s, is followed closely. When abuse is alleged, the Archdiocese suspends the accused, and contacts the police for advice. Any abuse of minors, or cases of historical abuse of minors who are now adults, are immediately reported to Child and Family Services Manitoba and police services. In the case of an adult reporting abuse suffered as a minor, his or her identity is protected unless he or she has given us permission to make it known to Child and Family Services and the police.

The diocesan protocol, *Working Together for a Safe and Respectful Church Environment*, can be found on the archdiocesan website at: [www.archsaintboniface.ca](http://www.archsaintboniface.ca). Our Diocesan Advisory Committee, established in the early 1990s, is composed of lay professionals and clergy that examine all allegations to ensure that our protocol is followed to the letter.

Our Church also proactively reports allegations to the faithful through notices to our parishes. The broader community is kept informed via press releases. Our ultimate goal in following these protocols with all possible transparency is to assist any victim that comes forward, as part of the healing and reconciliation he or she may need. We also seek to forestall any possible further harm. In 2018, the Canadian Conference of Catholic bishops published *Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse*, a document that put the victim of sexual abuse at the centre. (1) Like the CCCB, our archdiocese has striven and continues to work towards a compassionate response to victims. We stand in solidarity with all victims and endeavour to be an instrument of reconciliation and healing for them.

*The Fifth Estate's* survey questionnaire referred to the question of publishing the names of persons "credibly accused". This is a highly fluid term lacking clarity. Beyond the

presumption of innocence of an alleged abuser, who could be falsely accused, questions arise as to whether publishing a name might also help identify a victim, and potentially re-traumatize that person. A victim's confidentiality and well-being are our prime concern.

Regarding abusers who have been accused and convicted, or those who have been disciplined by the Church or after a civil process has been completed, their cases clearly belong to the public forum. Ultimately, our archdiocese affirms that victims must come first and be treated with compassion.

(1) For an update, dated November 15, 2019, on the CCCB's implementation of the guidelines on protecting minors, [click here](#).