



## COMMUNIQUÉ

### **The Archdiocese of Montreal embraces a “victim-centred” approach with the establishment of an Ombudsman and a revamped complaints process.**

#### **Highlights:**

- Implementation of a complaints procedure tailored to victims' needs
- Appointment of Me Marie Christine Kirouack, *Ad.E.* as Ombudsman
- All forms of abuse included
- Age of victim not a determining factor
- Advisory Committee to comprise five laypersons, including a survivor
- Delegation of investigative process to external experts

**Montreal, May 5, 2021** – The Archdiocese of Montreal announced today that the majority of recommendations set out in the [Capriolo Report](#) have now been implemented, including the appointment, effective May 3, 2021, of Me Marie Christine Kirouack, *Ad.E.*, to the position of independent Ombudsman. All complaints of abuse or other inappropriate behaviour will be referred to Me Kirouack, who will oversee the follow-up in each case.

All forms of abuse are included, be it sexual, physical, psychological, spiritual or financial, committed by any priest, deacon, staff member or volunteer working within the Archdiocese of Montreal. Furthermore, complaints will be heard irrespective of the victim's age at the time of the reported act.

"Thanks to the diligent efforts and commitment of the members of the Committee to Implement the Recommendations of the Capriolo Report, created in January, as well as to the collaboration of the Honourable Pepita G. Capriolo, we are now poised to move forward and announce that the numerous changes outlined should help all persons feel confident and secure within the Catholic Church of Montreal. The appointment of the first Ombudsman and the implementation of these new procedures will better enable us to protect the faithful and the wider community," said Montreal's Archbishop Christian Lépine.

All clergy, staff and volunteers within the Catholic Church of Montreal will now be required to convey to the Ombudsman without delay any and all information that they receive regarding a potential complaint. They will also be required to inform the Ombudsman of any instances of inappropriate behaviour that they themselves might observe.

The Ombudsman will maintain a record of all complaints received and of the process followed. She will receive complaints at any time, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. After listening attentively to the complainant, the Ombudsman will respond to his/her questions and explain how the complaint process will proceed. If the complaint involves a minor and the abuse is physical or sexual in nature, the Ombudsman will immediately inform the Direction de la Protection de la Jeunesse (DPJ, Department of Youth Protection). She will oversee the treatment of each complaint and keep the complainant informed of the decisions made at each stage of the procedure.

Abuse complaints will be referred to a new Advisory Committee composed of five lay members, one of whom is a survivor and the other four are professionals who contribute relevant expertise and reflect Montreal's cultural diversity. Appointed by the Archbishop, the Committee Chair will participate in the process, albeit without the right to vote.

After studying the case, the Advisory Committee will submit its recommendations to the Archbishop, which may include that support be provided to the victim, that the faculties of a member of the pastoral personnel be temporarily or permanently removed, that an employee be suspended, reprimanded or dismissed, or that any other action be carried out that is deemed appropriate. If the Advisory Committee recommends an investigation,



it will be undertaken by an independent, external investigator, who will then report the findings to the Advisory Committee.

The *Status of Capriolo Report Recommendations* that are being implemented, the *Constitutive By-Law of Ombudsman and Advisory Committee*, the *Complaint Handling Process*, the *Disclosure Protocol*, the *Complainant Support Policy* and the *Protocol Concerning the Subject of a Complaint (Pastoral Staff)* – which will be entrusted to an appointed Liaison – are matters of public record and are available on the website of the Catholic Church of Montreal.

The establishment of an Ombudsman and the guidelines governing the registration and treatment of complaints will be widely publicized within the Catholic Church of Montreal and to all members of parish communities.

An awareness/training program, the first phase of which has just begun, will be offered in the coming months to all members of the clergy, staff and volunteers in the Catholic Church of Montreal. This program aims to sensitize those at every Church level to the impact of abuse on victims and to the importance of remaining vigilant, so that any unacceptable or worrisome behaviour or situations are reported without delay to the Ombudsman.

It is expected that the process of implementing the remaining recommendations will be completed by the end of the year.

#### **Career Highlights of Me Marie Christine Kirouack, Ad.E., Ombudsman**

A lawyer for almost 30 years, Me Marie Christine Kirouack has extensive expertise in crisis intervention. In addition, she has served as president of L'Entre-Deux (a mental health resource for women suffering from depression), has provided teacher training on child abuse for the Commission scolaire des Patriotes, and teaches at McGill University.

In February 2011, Me Kirouack was named Director of the *Programme d'aide aux membres du Barreau du Québec* (PAMBA), where she had been working as a front-line intervener.

She is the recipient of the LPAC Award of Excellence from the Canadian Bar Association and is twice the recipient of the *Mérite de l'Association des avocats et avocates en droit familial du Québec* (AAADFQ). Me Kirouack was also named *Advocata Emerita (Ad.E.)*, a distinction conferred by the *Barreau du Québec*, and in 2019 of the *Mérite du Barreau du Québec*.

The Ombudsman can be contacted at any time by phone or email to obtain information or to file a complaint: 514-PLAINTE ((514) 752-4683) or:

You can also register your complaint:

By email: [plainte@ombudsman-ecm.com](mailto:plainte@ombudsman-ecm.com)  
By mail: Me Marie Christine Kirouack, Ad.E., Ombudsman  
4141 Sherbrooke Street West, Suite 255,  
Westmount, QC H3Z 1B8  
Web site: [www.ombudsman-ecm.com](http://www.ombudsman-ecm.com)

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