



## Jehovah's Witnesses sued in Canada over history of sex abuse cover-up



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Current and former Jehovah's Witnesses in Canada have filed a \$66 million class-action lawsuit against the religion's leadership claiming that its policies protect members who sexually abuse children.

The suit was filed in Ontario on behalf of alleged victims of sexual abuse across Canada, where more than 100,000 Jehovah's Witnesses reside.

“It appears the organization has not established policies to prevent sexual abuse from happening and has faulty policies when sexual abuse is reported to it, at the hands of elders or otherwise,” said Bryan McPhadden, the lead attorney on the case.

McPhadden said that since filing the suit he’s fielded calls from dozens of alleged victims interested in joining.

Another class-action suit against Jehovah’s Witnesses was filed last month on behalf of victims in Quebec.

An ongoing [investigation \(https://www.revealnews.org/article/jehovahs-witnesses-use-1st-amendment-to-hide-child-sex-abuse-claims/\)](https://www.revealnews.org/article/jehovahs-witnesses-use-1st-amendment-to-hide-child-sex-abuse-claims/) by Reveal from The Center for Investigative Reporting has found that the religion’s parent corporation, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, instructs local leaders to hide child abuse from law enforcement as a matter of policy.

For more than 20 years, the Watchtower has [collected the names \(https://www.revealnews.org/episodes/secrets-of-the-watchtower/\)](https://www.revealnews.org/episodes/secrets-of-the-watchtower/) of alleged child abusers in its congregations across the U.S. The organization has provided some of its child abuse files to courts in civil lawsuits, but they are under a protective order and [can’t be viewed by law enforcement or the public \(https://www.revealnews.org/article/how-jehovahs-witnesses-leaders-hide-child-abuse-secrets-at-all-costs/\)](https://www.revealnews.org/article/how-jehovahs-witnesses-leaders-hide-child-abuse-secrets-at-all-costs/).

McPhadden said he plans to seek similar files pertaining to Jehovah’s Witnesses congregations in Canada.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses have faced an increasing barrage of child abuse lawsuits in recent years across North America, Europe and Australia.

At least 20 child abuse lawsuits are pending against the Watchtower in the U.S.

The commission that regulates charities in the U.K. is currently [investigating \(https://www.revealnews.org/blog/in-england-more-accusations-that-jehovahs-witnesses-hid-sex-abuse/\)](https://www.revealnews.org/blog/in-england-more-accusations-that-jehovahs-witnesses-hid-sex-abuse/) the Watchtower’s child abuse policies there. Investigators have spent three years reviewing Watchtower records and interviewing alleged victims to determine whether the Jehovah’s Witnesses should be stripped of their charitable status for failing to protect children from abuse.

In 2015, an Australian government commission investigated Watchtower headquarters in that country and found evidence of [1,006 alleged child abusers \(https://www.revealnews.org/blog/24232/\)](https://www.revealnews.org/blog/24232/) in Jehovah’s Witnesses congregations since 1950. None had been reported to police. The commission has since referred hundreds of those cases to law enforcement.

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