

AGREED STATEMENT OF FACTS

Joseph LeClair resigned as the Parish Priest of the Blessed Sacrament Parish in Ottawa in May of 2011. While Father LeClair was the Parish Priest at the Blessed Sacrament Parish he received an annual salary with some benefits, such as a food allowance. His salary was approximately \$22,000 per year, or just over \$110,000.00 from 2006 to 2010. As the Parish Priest, Father LeClair was the representative of the Archbishop and was responsible for the administration of the Parish and its finances in accordance with the guidelines of the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Ottawa, also known as the Archdiocese of Ottawa. Apart from his salary and stipends, Father LeClair was entitled to receive and keep gifts from parishioners and well-wishers.

In early 2011, the media reported allegations of gambling and potential misuse of funds by Father LeClair at the Blessed Sacrament Parish. Subsequent to these media reports, the Archdiocese of Ottawa commissioned an audit of the parish finances by the accounting firm DELOITTE and TOUCHE for the period from January 2006 to December 2010.

The investigation by DeLOITTE and TOUCHE revealed that from January 2006 to December 2010, over \$1.16 million was deposited in Father LeClair's personal financial accounts. The investigation also established that Father LeClair conducted a considerable amount of Church business through his personal credit account. An analysis of deposits

to Father LeClair's accounts showed that approximately \$769,000.00 were revenues such as his salary, legitimate nominal stipends, gifts from parishioners and casino or lottery winnings, which could be accounted for. This left a net difference of approximately \$400,000 in unexplained deposits into Father LeClair's personal accounts.

The Ottawa Police Service commenced an investigation into the misuse of Parish funds in October of 2011. The investigation showed that the accused secured significant cash advances on his credit card between 01 January 2006 and May 31 2011, the time set out in the information. The majority of those cash advances were made at casinos, primarily the Casino du Lac-Leamy. Frequently, several significant cash advances occurred on the same day at the casino.

An analysis of the deposits to Father LeClair's personal accounts, including his credit card accounts between 01 January 2006 and 31 May 2011, showed the following:

1. Stipends or other payments taken by Father LeClair:

There were numerous deposits in the form of cheques written by Father LeClair to himself from the Church's Mass Account, which were identified by Father LeClair as stipends. Father LeClair called these payments "Christmas", "Easter Stipend," "Summer Mass Stipend", "Stipend for Mass over X-mas" and so on. Under the rules of the Church and the Parish, Father LeClair was not entitled to receive these funds that he claimed as stipends. Father LeClair frequently used these funds to pay down his personal credit card

balance. These payments were frequently made on his credit card following a number of cash advances or withdrawals at Casino De Lac Leamy. These payments totalled approximately \$61,800.00

2. Marriage Preparation Courses

Any revenues generated by parish activities such as weddings, funerals, christenings or in this case marriage preparation courses are revenues for the Parish. The fee for the marriage preparation course was \$100.00, to be paid in cash as directed by LeClair. These funds were to be deposited into the main Parish account; however, the fees for the marriage preparation courses were not deposited into the main account or any church account and were used by LeClair at his discretion. There are no existing paper records explaining how these funds were dispersed. The fees for the marriage preparation courses generated approximately \$157,000 of revenue for the parish over the time set out in the information. Only \$13,170 of this revenue however was deposited in the parish account, as this amount was paid by way of cheque. This resulted in a shortfall of over \$144,000 in unrecorded revenues. During a cautioned six and a half hour videotaped interview with Sgt Richard Dugal of the Ottawa Police Service on 03 July 2012, LeClair acknowledged that some of the marriage course revenue collected during the time set out in the information was used to repay LeClair's personal gambling debts. Between 01 January 2006 and 31 May 2011 funds in the range of \$35,000 were misdirected by LeClair from the marriage preparation course to pay down gambling debts.

3. Parishioner Donations/Collections

Over the course of the 5 year time period set out in the information between 2006 and 2011, the weekly parishioner collections were gathered and kept in Father LeClair's office closet or his bedroom instead of the walk-in safe. The investigation revealed numerous cash deposits into LeClair's personal accounts in denominations consistent with the funds having come from the regular collection taken at the Blessed Sacrament Parish masses. In the course of the police interview on 03 July 2012 with Sgt Dugal, Father LeClair admitted that some of the cash deposits into his account, in large number denominations of five dollar bills, ten dollar bills and coins, came from the weekly collections and were used to repay his gambling debts. This amount totalled \$16,760.00 over the 5 year time set out in the information between 2006 and 2011.

4. Overcharged Re-Imbursements

A review of Father LeClair's personal credit card statements revealed that his personal credit card was regularly used for church expenses. The record keeping procedures at the Parish were very relaxed, if not non-existent. There are numerous expenses which are valid church expenses, but for which there is no record of reimbursement. On some occasions, Father LeClair reimbursed himself from Parish funds for expenses he claimed he incurred on behalf of the Parish. These expenses were routinely rounded up to the nearest \$1,000.00, resulting in an over charge for expenses claimed. For example, he purchased a fridge for the Parish valued at \$2240.00 and wrote himself a cheque for \$3,000.00 as a reimbursement. During the videotaped interview with Sgt Richard Dugal

of the Ottawa Police Service on 03 July 2012, Father LeClair acknowledged that some of the amounts he “over-expensed” were used to repay gambling debts. These inaccurate expense claims totalled approximately \$15,000.00, a significant portion of which was used to pay down some of LeClair’s gambling debts.

5. Personal Travel

Father LeClair wrote a cheque on 03 January 2011 to Lutgart SEVIGNY to repay the SEVIGNYS for a holiday that he took with them. The police investigation revealed that Father LeClair had written this cheque from the Parish Account. The parish priest is responsible for paying for his own holiday expenses. The memo on the \$5,700 cheque states "Fr. Joe X-mas."

The Deloitte and Touche audit raised several serious concerns over the lack of financial controls at the Parish, and over suspicious and/or unsubstantiated use of parish funds by Father LeClair. The audit also raised significant concerns about the ability to quantify the improper use of parish funds by LeClair. The Crown is prepared to accept, for the purpose of these pleas of guilty, that Father LeClair defrauded the Blessed Sacrament Parish of funds in the range of \$130,00.00.