

# Transcript: CBC Fifth Estate Program

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BOB MCKEOWN: Good evening. I'm Bob McKeown. Welcome to "the fifth estate." Tonight... The crimes were horrifying, and worse, they were committed by people the victims trusted the most. But when they went looking for help, from their church, what they found there was worse than no help at all.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have a squeaky clean image. Preaching door to door. Recruiting converts to share in paradise to come. Most live up to that image. But as other churches have found, no faith is free from child molesters.

BILL BOWEN (Former Elder): It's the Watchtower pedophile database. They've told me there were 23,720 people on that database.

MCKEOWN: Sounds a bit like the problems facing other religious organizations. Until, that is, a victim does as Jehovah's Witness doctrine requires and reports their allegations to church elders.

MIKE MOSS (Victim): The one called me and told me that I had to go in for a judgment on me because I was part of a homosexual act.

MCKEOWN: Victims say what comes next is an intimidating process, seemingly designed to keep them quiet and their attackers, church members, in good standing.

UNIDENTIFIED: They view everything as a sin, and if it's a sin, they can fix it.

UNIDENTIFIED (Voice on tape): Leave it for Jehovah, he'll bring it out.

**\*\*START-IO-STORY\*\***

BOB MCKEOWN: Because their clean cut, pious ways stand out, because they proselytise by knocking on doors, the Jehovah's Witnesses may seem more numerous than they are. Only about six million worldwide; 110,000 or so in Canada .

But they've got a big problem. In the U.S. , Britain , Canada , and elsewhere around the world, young Jehovah's Witnesses are complaining. Going to court with charges they've been sexually molested by older members of the church. Fathers, stepfathers, elders, Bible teachers.

Deepening their misery, they say, is the way the church handles those cases. It avoids going to the police, and instead puts matters into the hands of elders -- spiritual shepherds. In effect, creating its own internal justice system.

And victims will tell you it's a system designed to protect not the children, but the church itself. And as a result, it may shield, even encourage, dangerous pedophiles.

ON SCREEN: A Warning: Some of the descriptions in this program may be upsetting to some viewers, especially young people. Discretion is advised.

There was a time growing up in rural New Hampshire when Holly Brewer would put on her Sunday best. No nose ring. No tattoos. Just a little girl in a crisp, clean dress who learned how to read her Bible and keep quiet.

Because for years, Holly's stepfather systematically physically and sexually abused her.

HOLLY BREWER (Victim): (Singing)... Remember when we were in the woods, remember what we were like when we were through growing up Jehovah's Witnesses. We are taught to be loyal, do what dad says. All the elders...

He took away my entire childhood. He absolutely took it away. And I was a very little person. And I learned how to be a big person immediately.

MCKEOWN: Holly says by the time she was five, she knew how to please her stepfather sexually. He insisted she had to keep their secret. Otherwise, she'd be a bad girl which meant she wouldn't survive Armageddon, the end of the world, that's the very heart of the Jehovah's Witness faith.

BREWER: If you're a Jehovah's Witness and you hear that word, your stomach sinks. It's every day. You go to bed at like 5:00 , and if the sun sets really red, you're, like, is this the day?

MCKEOWN: Jehovah's Witnesses believe that when doomsday does come, only they will be saved. And as this church video shows, they're required to spend hours going door to door armed with the scriptures trying to save the rest of us, too.

VIDEO CLIP: The righteous themselves will possess the earth.

MCKEOWN: That's how Sarah Brewer, Holly's mother, first became a Jehovah's Witness.

SARAH (Holly's Mother): Two nice women knocked on my door one day and started a Bible study with me, and that was my introduction to the church.

MCKEOWN: In 1979, Sarah was a single mother of two, seeking a father for her young son and daughter. She thought she'd found a good match in Paul Berry. He became a Jehovah's Witness as well, and her new husband.

But she knew she'd made a terrible mistake the very night they got married.

SARAH: That was the first time he hit me.

HOLLY BREWER: Growing up in our home was just -- it was like a fire. He'd just totally throw you into the wall and bash your face in and say he didn't do it, literally two seconds later.

SARAH: There's nothing quite as devastating as watching somebody injure your children and not being able to do anything about it.

MCKEOWN: What Sarah did was what any good Jehovah's Witness is supposed to do. She went to the church elders at the Kingdom Hall for help. Spiritual shepherds, they're called.

SARAH: They made me feel like I was making a big deal out of nothing. Somehow it was my fault. If I could improve myself, this would stop.

MCKEOWN: Devoted wife. Devout Witness. But that wasn't going to stop a child molester.

Sarah says she had no idea her husband was sexually abusing Holly. But she became convinced he was abusing the daughter they had together. Holly's new little sister, Heather.

SARAH: Heather experienced an extreme personality change literally overnight. She was a very docile, very shy little girl. And she became incredibly violent, incredibly self-harming.

HEATHER BERRY (Victim): When I was about three, I started to throw things at my father. I would hide in closets. I would sleep in the bath tub. I started to self-mutilate. She found me stabbing myself with a screwdriver in the arm.

MCKEOWN: Sarah took her suspicions about her child back to Kingdom Hall. Surely this time, she thought, they'd believe her and make her husband stop.

SARAH: Their response was that I needed to pray more and be a better wife. That was their response.

MCKEOWN: Pray more. Over and over Sarah was sent back to her Bible. Her husband. And the home that was now a living hell. And because Paul Berry denied it, as far as the church was concerned, that was that.

Sarah says it never occurred to her she could go beyond the church for help because Jehovah's Witnesses see the outside world as the domain of Satan.

SARAH: If you were a mother, would you go to Saddam Hussein for help? You need to understand that anybody outside the auspices of Kingdom Hall is evil.

This is my community. This is my world, and these are the folks that have all the answers.

BILL BOWEN (Former Elder): They're the only friends and family that you know, are fellow members of the congregation and the community. So they were my life.

MCKEOWN: Bill Bowen was once one of those men with all the answers.

BOWEN: Elders oversee all wrongdoing in the congregation. If you murdered your wife, next call is to the elders, to report that and ask them what you should do next.

MCKEOWN: A Witness from the day he was born, Bowen became a respected church elder in Kentucky who followed his faith with a passion, that is, until the day two years ago, going through some church files, he made a shocking discovery. A fellow elder had molested a child, but the church had told no one.

BOWEN: Any matter related to child molestation is kept absolutely confidential. Not even the man's own wife knew that he was a child molester.

MCKEOWN: But they certainly knew it here. At Jehovah's Witness world headquarters, the Watchtower Society in New York .

In the world of the Jehovah's Witnesses, how important is the Watchtower Society in Brooklyn , New York ?

BOWEN: God.

MCKEOWN: What they say is interpreted as the word of God?

BOWEN: It's the direct word of God. The governing body which is a group of 11 men. Everything they say is considered the direct word of God and cannot be challenged.

MCKEOWN: But Bill Bowen wasn't sure what to do about the case he had discovered. So he made the first call an elder is always told to make...

UNIDENTIFIED: Good evening, Jehovah's Witnesses.

MCKEOWN: Not to child welfare or the police, but to Jehovah's Witness headquarters. He then recorded the guidance he was given by the church's legal department.

UNIDENTIFIED: You just ask him again, now is there anything to this? If he says no, then I would walk away from it.

BOWEN: Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED: Leave it for Jehovah. He'll bring it out.

BOWEN: Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED: But don't get yourself in a jam.

MCKEOWN: Leave it for Jehovah. According to Bill Bowen, that's the Jehovah's Witness philosophy in a nutshell. One Bowen says treats child abuse as a sin, but not necessarily a crime.

BOWEN: Policy is simple. Elders are required by the church to investigate and question this child about the abuse.

MCKEOWN: Are these people who have any training in the investigation of sex abuse cases, in psychology sex abuse?

BOWEN: Nothing. They have nothing. All they have is a set of Bible scriptures that they read.

MCKEOWN: In fact, church elders do have something else to guide them called Pay Attention to Yourselves and the Flock. A kind of handbook for elders which provides a blueprint for, among other things, how to handle allegations of wrongdoing, including sexual abuse.

Though the handbook does briefly entertain the possibility that some crimes should be reported to the authorities, it squarely places the onus to investigate on church elders, telling them to question both the accuser and the accused.

Some cases then go on to what's called a judicial committee to determine if the accused person is repentant. And how serious the penalty might be. But from beginning to end, this handbook makes one thing perfectly clear... The church elders can take into action whatsoever unless the person who is accused confesses or there's an independent eyewitness. No confession and no witness, case closed.

That doesn't sit well with law enforcement officers like New Hampshire's detective Sergeant Jack Zeller.

SERGEANT JACK ZELLER (Detective, New Hampshire): I've dealt with a lot of child abusers, and usually they don't line up two witnesses to watch them rape three, four, and five-year-olds. It usually takes the fun out of it when there are witnesses.

MCKEOWN: And if there's no eyewitnesses, if the accused person simply denies it all, according to the elders' handbook, it's the word of one brother against another.

So elders are told to leave the matter in Jehovah's hands. In other words, do nothing.

Which is just what happened in New Hampshire to Paul Berry when he denied any abuse. In fact, he ended up rising through the Jehovah's Witnesses ranks.

HOLLY BREWER: (Singing)... He takes me down down now where nobody will find me.

MCKEOWN: And there was no safer place for Holly. While her mother was at work, her stepfather would take her into the barn or to their secret spot beneath the house.

HOLLY BREWER: I put down some sheets and made it look nice and made it suitable for rape.

He always called me a bitch, a little bitch. He was a very kinky person. You memorize these motions of he's going to hold me there. Then I'm going to did this to him, and then I'll be on top.

He'd say things like you're better than your mother.

But it always ends up with pain when you're little because you're too little. Your spaces are too little for their spaces.

MCKEOWN: Holly's only escape was in the forest behind her house. But she could never get away for long.

For six years, Paul Berry raped and tormented her. The abuse only stopped when Holly and the rest of her family finally fled from her stepfather. Not because the church intervened, but after local school officials noticed bruises on her older brother and told authorities.

SARAH: I was paid a visit by a social worker who told me that either he needed to go or they would take my kids away from me.

We were homeless for a while. We lived out of the car. And I had no social supports whatsoever.

MCKEOWN: No support, even from her church. In fact, while Paul Berry was still a Jehovah's Witness in good standing, Sarah and her children were shunned. As far as the church was concerned, leaving her husband, even such an abusive one, meant they were doomed.

at Armageddon.

But there was hope on the horizon for Holly. When she was a troubled 13-year-old, she met a most unlikely friend.

Detective Jack Zeller, then a beat cop in Keene, New Hampshire, knew something was terribly wrong.

ZELLER: She would tell me that one of these days, Jack, I'm going to tell you about this thing, but it isn't now. I can't yet.

MCKEOWN: But in the next three years, Holly began to change and built up enough trust to finally walk into the police station and share her secret.

ZELLER: To watch a child relive a rape, relive a torture, relive the horrors she must have had to sleep with. She shivered and she cried when she talked to me. And you just knew she was feeling it all over again.

UNIDENTIFIED: This was -- what did you call this room?

HOLLY BREWER: The secret room.

UNIDENTIFIED: The secret room.

MCKEOWN: State troopers took over the case and took Holly and a video camera back to the house in New Hampshire to document where it all happened. Paul Berry was arrested for what he had done here.

HOLLY BREWER: Just that... I was really little.

UNIDENTIFIED: You were really little, I know.

MCKEOWN: In the State of New Hampshire versus Paul Berry, Holly's stepfather was found guilty on 21 counts of sexual assault.

The Jehovah's Witnesses paid for his defence.

On the day of the sentencing, this courtroom was filled with members of the congregation. Not to support Holly and her family, but the defendant.

More than two dozen took the stand on his behalf. Holly's sister Heather says she couldn't believe it.

HEATHER BERRY: They were saying that he was an excellent worker, and if he was released tomorrow, they'd have him babysit their children. They'd have him come over and play. He's an excellent person. He's so nice.

MCKEOWN: And just ask Detective Jack Zeller what was going through his mind.

ZELLER: As a church, as an institution, shame on you! You should be utterly shamed.

MCKEOWN: In the end, the judge sent Paul Berry to prison for a minimum of 56 years, which means Holly's stepfather will die behind bars.

HOLLY BREWER: (Singing)... So they took you down now where nobody can find you. They open up your legs, they take your life, they take your name, and they give you a number penitentiary... life.

MCKEOWN: When we come back, with Canada's tough laws for reporting child abuse, surely nothing like that could happen here, or could it?

MIKE MOSS (Victim): They'll swear up and down that it's not true. But you ask anyone that has been victimized by them people, it is the truth. (BREAK)

ANNOUNCER: And now we return to "the fifth estate."

PROTESTERS: One, two, three, four... Silent lambs no more! One, two, three, four. No more pedophiles at my door.

MCKEOWN: They call themselves "silent lambs". Many are victims of sexual abuse themselves and they're led by former elder Bill Bowen.

These are people who used to go door to door preaching Jehovah's Witnesses could reach a spiritual paradise. These days, they're delivering a different message, a shocking one, to Jehovah's Witness headquarters in Brooklyn, New York.

BOWEN: It's a pedophile paradise. A pedophile paradise is a place where pedophiles are protected and they can get access to children. It's got to be stopped. And these people have to wake up and see what's going on.

MCKEOWN: Since founding the silent lambs, two years ago, Bill Bowen says thousands of horror stories about sexual abuse in the church have flooded his organization's web site.

BOWEN: It was over 15 pages of just one e-mail after another from individuals who said that they'd been abused and it was covered up.

MCKEOWN: And Bowen made an even more surprising discovery. He says that two separate sources inside the church have told him about the existence of a kind of internal Jehovah's Witness sex offender list. Files containing details of abuse allegations reported by church elders.

BOWEN: It's the Watchtower pedophile database. They've told me there were 23,720 people on that database.

MCKEOWN: More than 23,000 people.

BOWEN: Yes, and that was shocking.

MCKEOWN: Jehovah's Witness headquarters in New York declined our request for an interview, but we were given this video about the church's child abuse policies.

VIDEO CLIP: We've heard the suggestion that our policies may not be adequate to cover the problem of child molestation. But that's not the case at all.

MCKEOWN: While the church won't discuss charges of sex abuse database or specific numbers, it does claim to be well aware of the importance of the issue.

VIDEO CLIP: We have a very aggressive policy to handle child molestation in the congregations. And it is primarily designed to protect our children.

MCKEOWN: Not according to this man, a lifelong Jehovah's Witness.

UNIDENTIFIED: I'm sacrificing a lot by being here. It's very likely I'm going to be disfellowshipped and shunned.

MCKEOWN: He asked us not to show his face because of the possible impact on Jehovah's Witnesses in his family. But he spoke with us because of what he saw when he worked here, the church's Canadian headquarters.

They call it Bethel , the House of God; a sprawling 65 acre complex in Georgetown , Ontario , outside Toronto .

For three years, in the early 90s, he worked in its legal department. Typing, filing, answering the phone. Sometimes taking calls from elders reporting child abuse allegations.

So these are elders of the church who have learned of a possible case of sex abuse and their first phone call is to...

UNIDENTIFIED: To the legal department at Bethel .

MCKEOWN: Headquarters.

UNIDENTIFIED: That's correct.

MCKEOWN: They wouldn't call the local child welfare authorities, they wouldn't call the police?

UNIDENTIFIED: No. They are told in letters to the bodies of elders that before doing anything, contact the legal department at Bethel .

MCKEOWN: Though child protection laws do vary somewhat from province to province, everywhere in Canada , the law is clear. If there are reasonable grounds to suspect child abuse, everyone, including clergy, must report it to child welfare authorities.

But this man says it doesn't always work that way.

Are you aware of a case or cases where someone phoned in with an allegation of sex abuse and that person was told do not report it?

UNIDENTIFIED: Yes. There were several which I became aware of while I was in legal that people were told... elders were told do not report because you do not have a basis for it.

MCKEOWN: You were getting these calls. You were asking the questions. Did it ever occur to you to pick up the phone and call the child welfare authorities or the police?

UNIDENTIFIED: It really wouldn't enter the mind of anyone serving at Bethel to do that. Because that would be going completely against God's organization. It would be an act of rebellion, it would be an act of independent thought, all things which are discouraged by the Jehovah's Witnesses.

MCKEOWN: But back at church headquarters in Georgetown , Ontario , the Jehovah's Witnesses insist they always follow the letter of the law. In fact, as far as back in 1988, elders were instructed in writing to comply with reporting requirements.

MIKE MOSS (Victim): That's not the way it worked in my case. I've got proof. There's proof there.

MCKEOWN: Mike Moss should know. As a young Jehovah's Witness, he was molested, but when the church elders found out, they never reported it.

MIKE MOSS: You go to the elders, and they take care of it. You do not go outside of the organization. They'll tell you, and they'll swear up and down to you that that's not true. But you ask anybody that has been victimized by them people. It's the truth.

MCKEOWN: These days for 27-year-old Mike, there can never be enough ice time. Growing up a Witness in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, in line with the church doctrine, he wasn't allowed to play competitive hockey. Nonetheless, he says he was a pretty happy kid.

MIKE MOSS: We had a close-knit family. I had a good childhood up till I was about 12 or 13 years old.

MCKEOWN: But then Mike experienced some typical teenage rebellion. Conflict with his dad. His father thought that Bible study with a respected role model from the congregation, a man who was a married father of two, would put Mike on the straight and narrow.

MIKE MOSS: My parents felt fully comfortable with him. He was an outstanding member in the church. He was a ministerial servant, you know, had a nice family, everything.

MCKEOWN: And at first, it was fun. At home, Mike was one of six kids. But Peter Gavin seemed to have all the time in the world for him. To talk about hockey, and girls.

Gavin gave him spending money. Started buying him presents. Eventually he even snuck booze into their study sessions. And it soon became obvious that Mike's teacher had more than the Bible in mind.

MIKE MOSS: I remember driving in the car one time and there was a song that came on. It was a love song, and he said to me that it reminded... it reminded him of me, and that's when I said to him, I think you better save that for your wife.

MCKEOWN: The turning point came when Mike was 14. He and other boys in the church went on a hall build. Helping to construct a new Kingdom Hall in Sudbury. Staying overnight at a hotel with Peter Gavin.

MIKE MOSS: I remember sleeping, and I remember waking up and there was, you know... I felt bad because he was doing something. And I went into the bathroom and then he came in and said is anything wrong. And I remember shutting the door, and I'm like, no, don't worry about it. And I didn't say nothing.

MIKE MOSS: And it was, like, the next morning was, like, as if nothing happened, and there was four other guys in the room.

MCKEOWN: When you said he was doing something, you mean he was sexually assaulting you?

MIKE MOSS: Yeah, yeah.

MCKEOWN: When you woke up?

MIKE MOSS: Yeah. Other the next two years, Mike was sexually assaulted by Peter Gavin at least half a dozen times.

But given his age and his upbringing, he says he felt ashamed and powerless to stop it.

We're talking about -- something -- it all happened more than a decade ago.

MIKE MOSS: Yeah.

MCKEOWN: But it's obviously still right there right now.

MIKE MOSS: And I wake up with it every day.

MCKEOWN: When he was 16-years-old, Mike Moss summoned up the courage to do exactly as his religion had taught him to do. He came here to the Kingdom Hall to seek help. And though he couldn't bring himself to discuss the details much the sexual abuse he suffered, he did tell the church elders he was being stalked by his Bible teacher.

In many cases when there's an allegation of wrongdoing, the Jehovah's Witness procedure is to bring the accuser and the accused face to face with the church elders, and that's what happened with Mike.

MIKE MOSS: I went through the list of stuff, he'd given me love letters, he's following me. I want that stopped. And their answer to me was I was being rebellious, that I had a problem with authority, and that was their answer to me.

MCKEOWN: And Peter Gavin denied everything to the elders. He remained a Witness in good standing.

As for Mike, he was desperate to get away. The day after high school graduation, he moved hundreds of kilometres from Sault Ste. Marie to Cambridge, Ontario. But he still couldn't put it all behind him.

One night, 17-year-old Mike phoned his dad and told him what Peter Gavin had done.

MIKE MOSS: I was drinking one night, and it finally come out and he's, like, oh, my God, Mike, you know, he goes, let me deal with this. Like, I got to deal with this. So that's when he called the one elder and said, look, Peter Gavin did something to my son and I want it dealt with.

MCKEOWN: The elders dealt with it all right. Not with a phone call to authorities, but to Mike. A conversation he says he remembers word for word.

MIKE MOSS: The one called me and told me that I had to go in for a judgment on me because I was part of a homosexual act.

MCKEOWN: So they've just learned that you were assaulted, and they're asking you to come in so they can judge you?

MIKE MOSS: Yeah. He's asking me if there was any of ejaculation, if there was... like, what kind of act, right, into great detail.

I was kind of stunned by it, and I'm, like, why do you need to know that? And he goes, well, I'm just going by what the police would do. That's what they would ask.

MCKEOWN: But again despite what Mike and his father told them, the elders never went to the police or child welfare.

As for Peter Gavin, he confessed to a single incident. And elders took away some of his church privileges for a time. They let the congregation know he'd done something wrong. But they didn't say what. Not even to Gavin's own wife.

And Mike's parents still saw him at the Kingdom Hall every week.

JULIE: (Mike's Sister): My parents go through it every day, like, it happened yesterday.

MCKEOWN: Mike's older sister, Julie.

JULIE: I don't trust anyone now. It's taken all that away. I don't feel I can trust anybody that goes to a church or a Kingdom Hall, whichever you want to call it, because they betrayed my family. Not once, but twice.

MCKEOWN: Betrayed not once, but twice. Because incredibly five years before her brother, Julie had also gone to church elders and also been ignored. About her own experience with another Jehovah's Witness, another family man.

She was a 14-year-old baby-sitter when one weekend it went too far.

JULIE: He was going to molest me. He was undressing me. If his wife's friend hadn't have pulled in the driveway, it would have happened.

MCKEOWN: He would have raped you?

JULIE: Yes.

MCKEOWN: She told her parents, who told the elders, who told her she had to confront the man face to face.

JULIE: To me, I was 14. I didn't want to be in a room with him. I didn't want to tell him what he did. He knew what he did. So they called him, they met with him, and he denied everything.

MCKEOWN: It seems too cruel to think, that a child terrified of an abuser would have to face him. But insiders say for the Jehovah's Witnesses, that's often the case.

You know that happens?

UNIDENTIFIED: Yes.

MCKEOWN: That a child who's been assaulted or even raped would be put in the same room with the person accused of doing it?

UNIDENTIFIED: Yeah, and with three other men from the congregation who are the judicial committee elders.

MCKEOWN: And what questions would be asked in that setting?

UNIDENTIFIED: I've read reports of committees where they have asked an 8-year-old where did your daddy touch you? Did he put his fingers inside you? How deep have the fingers gone inside of you? Did he... did he make you touch his penis? Did his penis go inside of you?

MCKEOWN: It just seems obvious that the possible emotional and psychological trauma of a situation like that is...unimaginable.

UNIDENTIFIED: But when you take it from the mental outlook of these men who feel they are God's representatives, they are responsible, so they view everything as a sin, and if it's a sin, they can fix it.

MCKEOWN: When we come back, who the Jehovah's Witnesses may be sending to your doorstep to preach on their behalf.

MIKE MOSS: The public don't know, the people's doors that he's going to, they don't know what he has done or what could be done again. (BREAK)

ANNOUNCER: And now we return to "the fifth estate."

MCKEOWN: For two years in his early teens, Mike Moss was sexually molested by his Bible teacher in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. And for years afterwards, he tried to escape the anguish of the abuse, and the failure of the Jehovah's Witness church to respond.

He became a contractor, found a therapist, got married, but nothing, he says, could erase the past.

MIKE MOSS: Things were going wrong with my wife. I was sleeping on the floor. I couldn't sleep in the same bed. I had flashbacks. It was just a bad situation all around.

MCKEOWN: At what point did your marriage break up?

MIKE MOSS: When I went to the police. That was it.

MCKEOWN: That was the trigger?

MIKE MOSS: That was the trigger. I remember standing in front of... (Crying)

I haven't talked about this in a long time.

MCKEOWN: Five years after church elders were told about the sexual abuse, someone finally told the authorities. Mike Moss himself.

MONIQUE ROLLIN (Sault Ste. Marie Detective): The damage that had occurred has been phenomenal. I think he has lost a lot of what was the foundation in his life.

MCKEOWN: Sault Ste. Marie detective Monique Rollin investigated Mike's case. She says there's no question in her mind that once church elders learned what Peter Gavin had done, even though at the point Mike had turned 17, they should have reported it.

ROLLIN: The law is specific. If you are a member of the clergy and you have knowledge that a child has been abused, is being abused, or is about to be abused, you have a clear duty to report.

MCKEOWN: Did they?

ROLLIN: They did not. No report was ever made to police or child... in this case the Children's Aid Society.

MCKEOWN: When Sergeant Rollin wanted to question the elders as part of her investigation, she didn't get many answers from them either.

ROLLIN: As far as being interviewed as potential witnesses, they refused. They said we'd want you to speak to our lawyer.

MCKEOWN: And when you spoke to the Jehovah's Witness lawyer, did he pledge their full cooperation?

ROLLIN: No. I think his words were I act for these gentlemen and I'm advising them not to cooperate with you.

MCKEOWN: But someone from the church had been talking to Peter Gavin. The Jehovah's Witness lawyer informed Sergeant Rollin he anticipated Gavin would plead guilty.

And at the Sault courthouse, that's exactly what happened. The judge sentenced Gavin to 18 months in jail, saying that Mike Moss was leading a real life nightmare.

Even now, a decade after he first turned to them for help, Mike still feels church elders turned their backs on him.

MIKE MOSS: I see people here, and it's just too hard to come around here, the memories. It's even hard being here now from this...

MCKEOWN: Mr. Horner? Hi, my name is Bob McKeown. I'm with "the fifth estate." We'd very much like to talk to you about Mike Moss.

Grant Horner was one of the elders to whom Mike went for help.

Why when confronted by Mike in the first place, when his father went to you and told you what was going on with Peter Gavin, no one thought the law would apply, and you'd have to report that to child welfare authorities or the police.

GRANT HORNER (Elder): When I was asked to provide an on-camera interview, I did provide a written statement.

MCKEOWN: Mr. Horner declined to answer our questions on camera. But in writing, he did tell us that the elders didn't report to authorities because by the time Mike came to them, he was no longer a child in need of protection.

MCKEOWN: This is something Mike would very much like answered. Do you believe that he's due an apology, which he says he's never received.

HORNER: Well, if the CBC has changed their mind and they'd like to let me know what the interview's about...

MCKEOWN: Well ,we'd very much... sir, we'd very much...

HORNER: Linda has my number. She can give me a call.

MCKEOWN: We'd very much like answers to those two questions. Why you didn't go to the authorities and do you have anything to say to Mike?

HORNER: You'll have to excuse me now.

MCKEOWN: In writing, Horner also told us that when the facts became clear, Peter Gavin was expelled from the congregation. But, in fact, Peter Gavin was only expelled once police got involved. Five years after he first confessed to the church elders.

And soon after he got out of jail, Gavin was welcomed back into the congregation.

None of that surprises former elder Bill Bowen, now a victims advocate in the U.S., with strong opinions.



BOWEN: The primary goal of the Watchtower Society, when it comes to child abuse, is to protect themselves legally, to prevent themselves from being sued.

The secondary goal is to protect the image of the organization.

The third goal is to protect child molesters.

And the fourth goal is the child.

MCKEOWN: And because of those outspoken views, Bill Bowen himself was recently expelled from the church he once cherished.

BOWEN: I lost my life. I lost everything. People that have known you all your life will not acknowledge that you exist, you could stand three feet away from them, and they will look the other way.

MCKEOWN: In Fredericton, New Brunswick, this 32-year-old mother of three little girls knows how it feels to be seen as an enemy of the church.

Vicki Boer says she was molested by her father for three years starting when she was 11. But it wasn't until she was 19, plagued by depression, that she decided it was time to tell church elders.

VICKI BOER (Victim): The second they told me how they were going to deal with it and that I had to confront my father and there had to be these judicial committees, I wanted to die.

MCKEOWN: But at her childhood church in Shelburne, Ontario, she went through the process anyway. The details. The meetings with elders. And though the church denies forcing her to do it, to face to face judicial committee with her father.

He confessed to at least one incident, and remained in the congregation. Though he did have some of privileges taken away. He was never criminally charged.

As for Vicki, the victim, she became a pariah in her own hometown.

BOER: People in the congregation did not believe me. People stopped talking to me, and at one point, when it got so bad I had to leave.

They need to keep their congregation clean. They don't care that you're gone. In fact, you're just a blemish. You know, you're that little piece of mould in the bread that will spread to everyone else. So if you gone, everyone else will stay clean.

MCKEOWN: So Vicki Boer sued. Not her dad, but three elders, as well as the Watchtower Society of Canada for \$700,000 alleging the church's actions in her case did more harm than good.

The trial lasted for two weeks in September. The judge is expected to rule on the case any day now. Church spokesman Clive Thomas spoke to reporters at that time.

CLIVE THOMAS (Church Spokesman): We very much feel for her. But we feel she should... if she's suing anybody, should really sue the abuser and not the church and the people in the church who tried to help her.

MCKEOWN: The church says your problems may be far more attributable to your father than to the Jehovah's Witnesses. Why are you suing us?

BOER: Sure, my father abused me. He did a lot of things, but the church was supposed to be a safe haven for me. It was supposed to be a place for me to go because I had nowhere else to go. You're not allowed to go anywhere else. It's supposed to be safe. It's not supposed to tear you apart.

MCKEOWN: Jehovah's Witness headquarters in Canada would not speak to us on camera. But in a statement to "the fifth estate," the church acknowledged that it has experienced what it called a learning curve in the handling of child abuse.

And in other materials send to us, church officials admitted that the elders aren't perfect and that there were cases that should have been reported.

But to this former church insider, that explanation doesn't go far enough.

If the church says to us, you know, this is being blown out of proportion, a few isolated case are being made to look like a tidal wave.

UNIDENTIFIED: Two instances is a tidal wave in my opinion. How many does it take before it becomes a problem?

The fact is that there are pedophiles walking through the halls of the Kingdom Halls. There are pedophiles going door to door in communities across Canada. Even if someone has been convicted, served time as a child rapist, they are told they have to go on the door to door ministry and knock on people's doors on Saturday morning or Sunday morning.

MCKEOWN: Even Peter Gavin.

PETER GAVIN (Convicted child molester): I don't have any comment, thank you.

MCKEOWN: You have nothing you'd like to say to him about all of this. After all this time.

GAVIN: No, I don't want to be misunderstood about...

MCKEOWN: Well, this is your chance to make yourself understood.

GAVIN: No, thank you anyway.

MCKEOWN: "The fifth estate" has established that the former Bible teacher who molested Mike Moss is still going door to door in Sault Ste. Marie. The church acknowledges that happens if a convicted child abuser is sufficiently rehabilitated. But insists, he would be accompanied at all times.

MIKE MOSS: The public don't know. The people's doors that he's going to, they don't know what he has done or what could be done again, and that's why I'm here. I don't feel that it's right.

UNIDENTIFIED: You're shaming Jehovah's name!

BOWEN: Are you an elder?

UNIDENTIFIED: You're are shaming Jehovah's name!

MCKEOWN: And more abuse survivors are speaking up at Jehovah's Witness headquarters in New York.

BOWEN: We wish to deliver a lamb as a gift. Can you accept it, sir, please.

MCKEOWN: Delivering symbolic stuffed lambs to the doorstep hoping that bad publicity will force the church to get rid of bad policy.

In New Hampshire, Heather Berry and her sister Holly, sexually assaulted for years, are part of an American lawsuit against their abuser, and against the Jehovah's Witness organization, hoping to change the church, even if they can never change the past.

HEATHER BERRY: It's just etched in your soul somewhere. Because I... To me it feels like a part of me has been taken and I won't get that back, and you can always feel that void.

MIKE MOSS: I lost everything. I lost my wife. I lost my beliefs, my family. Everything I believed in was shattered.

HOLLY BREWER: Man, I spent so many years crying, I don't have many tears left.

MCKEOWN: We will, of course, keep an eye on this story and report any developments to you.

BOB MCKEOWN: You can learn more about tonight's program and about "the fifth estate" on the Internet at [cbc.ca/fifth](http://cbc.ca/fifth). And right now, stay with us. We'll be back in a moment with more.