

Edmonton pastor named interim president of St. Michael's College

Edmonton pastor Rev. Andrew Leung has been named interim president of St. Michael's College as the all-boys Catholic school deals with the fallout from allegations of assault and sexual assault.

Father Leung, a member of the Congregation of St. Basil, is currently the pastor of St. Alphonsus and St. Clare parishes in north-central Edmonton. He is a former science and physics teacher at St. Michael's College School in Toronto.

Leung's appointment, effective immediately, was announced Nov. 22 after the principal of St. Michael's College School and its board president both resigned.

Leung is travelling outside of Canada and could not be reached for comment. Rev. Glenn McDonald, also a Basilian priest, has been named interim pastor of the Edmonton parishes. McDonald will also continue as a district chaplain for Edmonton Catholic Schools.

In a statement, [St. Michael's College School](#) announced that principal Greg Reeves and president Father Jefferson Thompson have resigned "citing their shared desire to move the school forward without distractions and allow it to focus on healing and change after the horrific events of student misbehaviour that came to light last week."

Police are investigating [six cases involving students](#), some of which involve hazing. Six students have been charged by Toronto police with assault, gang sexual assault and sexual assault with a weapon. Eight students have been expelled and another suspended in the wake of these incidents.

Just one day before the resignations, the board had stated it was "united in our support" of school leaders.

Reeves in particular had come under criticism from media and alumni of the prestigious Catholic school for the handling of the crisis that has torn at the school's reputation.

"Greg Reeves and Father Thompson have always put the welfare, education and formation of our students first – and they do so once again today," said Michael Forsayeth, the chair of the board of directors.

"Having fulfilled their moral and ethical obligations to manage the immediate crisis and engage our school community, this courageous decision allows us to move forward with our goals: understanding how these events could have

occurred, regaining the trust of our community and bringing cultural change to our school.”

Reeves faced criticism for not contacting police as soon as he was made aware of a video of one of the incidents that was circulating on social media that appeared to show teens pinning a student while two others allegedly assaulted him with the handle of a broomstick.

Reeves became aware of the incident on Nov. 12 but didn't contact police until Nov. 14. He said he did that to protect the victim, who had not yet notified his parents of the assault.

“At that point I came to understand that he (the alleged victim) had not told his parents,” Reeves said in a statement explaining his delay in informing police. “So it was important for me, for total protection of the victim here, that I set up expulsion meetings again for the next morning and that I expel the kids out of the school in protection of the victim.”

Reeves added that the parents of the victim were “very pleased” with the school's handling of the situation.

“My only concern was the safety of that young man and in my judgment I acted appropriately and the parents were pleased with the timelines that I kept,” Reeves said.

The alleged attackers and the youth who allegedly filmed the incident were charged by police on Nov. 19. Police believe more charges will be laid as more information becomes available.

They have identified 50 witnesses and are in possession of a number of videos that have been posted to social media. The school has also set up a phone hotline for students to report any incidents. It is also hiring a full-time social worker to give students support on bullying issues.

The school announced Nov. 18 that it will conduct an independent examination of its “student culture” which is expected to be in place by the first week of December. A final report is expected by summer. The school has also implemented an anonymous hotline for students to report “any inappropriate behaviours and incidents they have experienced, seen or heard about at the school.”

St. Michael's, which teaches Grades 7-12, was founded by the Basilian Fathers in 1852 and is renowned across Canada for its academic and athletic programs, particularly its rich hockey history. Dozens of its graduates have gone on to play in the NHL and 11 of them have been enshrined in the Hockey Hall of Fame.