News



Canadian Cardinal Gérald Lacroix of Québec speaks during an Oct. 11, 2023, briefing about the assembly of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

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Cardinal Gérald Lacroix of Québec has announced he will temporarily step aside from his duties, after he was named in court documents Jan. 25 in connection with a class-action sex abuse lawsuit filed against the Archdiocese of Québec in 2022.

A Jan. 26 statement from the archdiocese, issued in French, said that the cardinal would be "temporarily withdrawing from his activities until the situation is clarified."

According to court documents, two incidents allegedly involving him reportedly occurred in 1987 and 1988 in Quebec City, when he was a religious brother. He is accused of inappropriately touching a 17-year-old girl on two occasions. The woman has not been identified.

The archdiocesan statement said Lacroix "categorically denies the allegations against him" and considers them "unfounded."

"In the coming days," the statement said, "he will send a personal communication" to the archdiocese "which will be relayed to the media."

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From 1982 to 1987, then-Br. Lacroix served as the secretary-general of the Pius X Secular Institute in Quebec City. From 1985 to 1987, he also was the director of the Maison du Renouveau du Québec, or House of Renewal, described on its website as a gathering place for prayer open to people of all walks of life. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1988.

The allegations come a year-and-a-half after Lacroix's predecessor, Cardinal Marc Ouellet, was named in the lawsuit for allegedly assaulting a woman between 2008 and 2010.

Ouellet has denied the accusations leveled by Paméla Groleau and has launched a lawsuit of his own against Groleau, accusing her of defaming him.

Neither cardinal has been criminally charged.

In total, 147 alleged victims have joined the civil suit against the Archdiocese of Quebec which covers claims of abuse dating back to 1940. Fifteen other people associated with the archdiocese have been named in the court documents. The

lawsuit also names the Seminary of Quebec.

The law firm representing alleged victims said they have testified against more than 100 priests or employees.

Lacroix has been the archbishop of Quebec since 2011 and holds an honorary role as primate of the Catholic Church in Canada. Created a cardinal by Pope Francis in 2014, he is an adviser to the pope as a member of the Council of Cardinals. Established by Francis in September 2013, the Council of Cardinals was created to assist him in the governance of the universal church. One of its projects is to revise the Roman Curia.

Lacroix has been the North American representative on the council since 2023. He also is a member of the Vatican Council for the Economy.