

Retired Catholic bishop faces lawsuits over alleged abuses

BY KELLY PATRICK

WINDSOR, ONT. • A retired Catholic bishop who is accused of playing an “instrumental” role in a long-rumoured pedophile ring in Cornwall, Ont., is facing at least five lawsuits from men who say he abused them decades ago.

The first of those suits against Eugene LaRocque, 78, of Windsor, was filed on Monday in a Superior Court in London, Ont., on behalf of Adrien St. Louis, a 48-year-old bus driver living outside Cornwall.

The \$3.1-million action, which also names the Vatican, College

of Cardinals, Aloysius Cardinal Ambrozic of Toronto, two Roman Catholic dioceses and the estate of deceased Cornwall priest Donald Scott, accuses Bishop LaRocque of sexually abusing Mr. St. Louis 30 years ago when he was an 18-year-old altar boy.

Mr. St. Louis’s London-based lawyer, Paul Ledroit, said yesterday he expects to launch at least four more suits against Bishop LaRocque in the future.

He is already accused of negligence — not direct abuse — in another civil action suit alleging the priest violated two boys on his watch.

Bishop LaRocque served as parish priest at St. Anne’s in

Tecumseh, Ont., until he was elevated to bishop in 1974 and assigned to the diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall. He returned to the Windsor area after retiring in April, 2002.

He denied the allegations when reached yesterday.

“I don’t know how much more I can add,” he said. “I think I’ve said what I have to say, which is basically that I’m innocent. I haven’t done anything.”

The lawsuit links him to tales of a powerful pedophile ring in Cornwall. Local police and Ontario Provincial Police have probed complaints of long-standing and widespread sexual abuse in Cornwall.

In 1997, an OPP task force laid 115 charges against 15 high-profile individuals, yet only one person unrelated to the ring was convicted. Bishop LaRocque was never charged.

CanWest News Service