



Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VANDALISM OFTEN AN INDICATOR OF IMPENDING ARSON

DATELINE TORONTO - Jacinta Whyte, General Manager and Chief Agent for Ecclesiastical Insurance Office plc Canada, expressed shock and concern regarding the December 14th fire that gutted the historic All Saints Anglican Church in Whitby, Ontario.

“As insurers of places of worship, we understand and sympathize with the extent of the emotional, spiritual, social and historical loss to the community, especially painful during the Christmas season” she stated.

All Saints Anglican Church experienced several incidents of vandalism in the months preceding the fire. Stuart Rowley, Ecclesiastical’s Underwriting and Operations Manager for Canada, added that, “There is a pattern of activity leading to arson – particularly, repeated acts of vandalism such as breaking windows, tearing down signs, leaving broken bottles or trash on the property, graffiti, etc. The majority of church fires are caused by arson, and usually involve intrusion through windows and doors.”

Ecclesiastical has extensive expertise in the area of arson prevention risk management. The importance of intrusion alarms, even in rural areas cannot be overstated. There is always a time lag between a fire being started and fire or smoke detectors being activated, and that time delay can be crucial. While fire and smoke detectors are essential for detection, an audible intrusion alarm is even more important as a deterrent and an early warning system. Other preventative steps that may deter would-be arsonists include:

- 1) Restricting entry: Keep doors and windows locked and keys secure. Use heavy-duty locks that can withstand an attempted entry. Know where keys are at all times and who has access to them.
- 2) Lock up outbuildings or sheds. At the end of the day, lock away ladders, tools, flammable liquids and all items not belonging outside.
- 3) Do not leave a place of worship unattended whilst open. Have a professional, or volunteer caretaker on site and visible.
- 4) Installing security lighting: Consider perimeter floodlighting and motion activated lights at doors and windows. Use timers on interior lights and ensure that interior lighting is visible from the outside.
- 5) Remove combustibles: Candles, matches, newspapers, paints and cleaning fluids should be locked in a metal security container, and stored in a locked shed.

- 6) Keep the property clean and tidy: Trim trees and shrubs, sweep up leaves, and remove graffiti. Use garbage bins that can be locked, and keep them away from the building.
- 7) Report suspicious behaviour or activity to the police: Suspicious activity includes groups of young people loitering on the property, vandalism, and graffiti. Be vigilant, and assign volunteers to walk past the place of worship as part of a neighbourhood watch program.
- 8) Install fire and intrusion alarms: This can be the best protection for places of worship. Alarms that are central station monitored are most effective in deterring arsonists.

Ecclesiastical Insurance has identified arson as one of the most serious threats to places of worship and has developed an in-depth arson-prevention white paper entitled, **Protect Your Place of Worship**. To request a copy, email swebster@eccles-ins.com.

About Ecclesiastical Insurance

Ecclesiastical Insurance is the insurer of choice for Canada's places of worship. Established in the United Kingdom in 1887, Ecclesiastical has been present in Canada since 1972. Owned by a charitable trust, the company is committed to serving the needs of its customers and the larger community. Apart from funds required for business operations, group profits are redistributed for the benefit of faith and charitable initiatives. Ecclesiastical is rated "A" by A.M. Best, and "A -" by Standard and Poor's.

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