

# Alberta man brings protest to Georgetown

Toting signs emblazoned with "Stop Killing Children" and "Watch Tower Protects Pedophiles", approximately 20 people protested at the Jehovah's Witnesses Canadian headquarters in Georgetown Saturday afternoon.

Calgary resident Lawrence Hughes, a former Jehovah's Witness, organized the two-hour protest "to educate the public and protect children," he said.

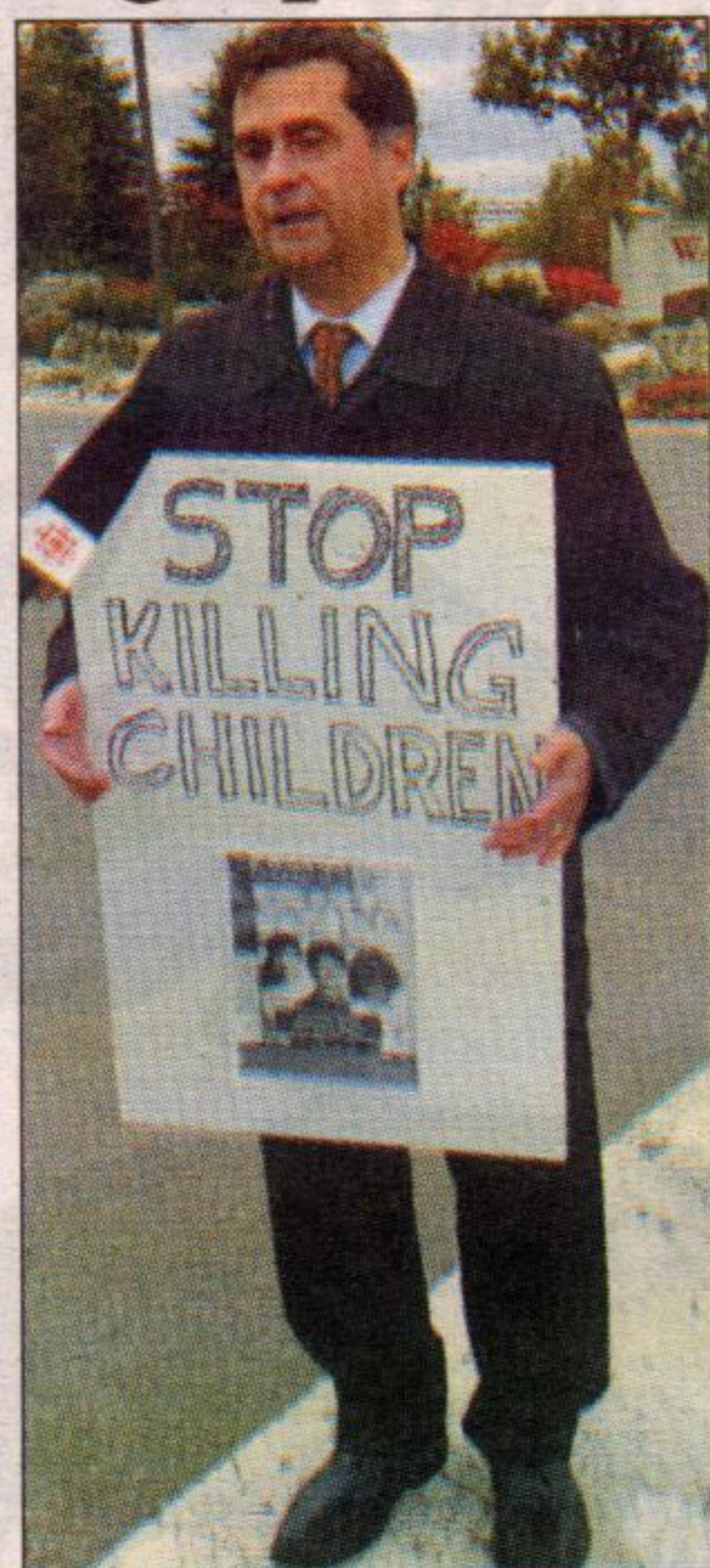
Hughes fought hard and convinced the Alberta government in 2002 to force his 16-year-old daughter Bethany, who had acute myeloid leukemia, to undergo blood transfusions against her will and the will of her mother.

In August, Hughes launched a \$1 million lawsuit against the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Canada that claims Jehovah's Witness members used the fear of damnation to convince Bethany not to have blood transfusions. It also claims that influence exerted by Jehovah's Witnesses on Bethany and her mother led to the girl's death in 2002.

Mark Ruge, director of public information at the Canadian headquarters for Jehovah's Witnesses on Hwy. 7, said yesterday the organization has not yet been served with Hughes' suit.

Hughes said he organized the protest for three reasons. The first one being the Watch Tower Society (WTS) refuses to report known pedophiles to police, he said.

"If a victim of sexual abuse reports the crime to the authorities, the WTS disfellowships the victim, has the victim shunned by the congregation members and has their legal department defend



Lawrence Hughes protests in front of the Watch Tower Society outside Georgetown.

the known pedophile in court," said Hughes in a media release. Ruge said Hughes "can say whatever he wants," but there was no truth to his claims. "We're not those kind of people," said Ruge.

Hughes said they were also protesting because "the WTS forces members of the church to slave full time all their life in their factories and are not paid anything."

He added when the workers get old they are "thrown out onto the street without any money or belongings and are not even eligible to collect Canada Pension...a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

Ruge called that claim, "outrageous."

"If this is slavery, boy, it's pretty nice," said Ruge.


He said they provide good working conditions at the Watch Tower Society and many Jehovah's Witnesses continue to work there when they are older.

He added they have a section in one of their residence buildings where the older people receive care and are well looked after.

Another reason for the protest according to Hughes is because "the WTS is responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of men, women and children," and has been giving out "bad medical advice to its members concerning vaccinations, organ transplants, blood transfusions and alternative medicine" for hundreds of years.

Ruge called those claims, "absurd" and "ridiculous."

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer




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