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## **Class action members join B.C. suit**

**Ten from this province part of contact lens solution action**

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The Telegram

Ten people from this province who claim to have suffered eye damage from using defective contact lens solution are opting into a British Columbia-based class action. They're joining the litigation because the B.C. Supreme Court has certified a suit against Advanced Medical Optics as a national action. "I think it's great. I think it's fantastic," says Travis Harris, one of the 10 that had been involved in a class action against the company in Newfoundland and Labrador. In 2007, Advanced Medical Optics announced a global recall of the solution. The substance was found to significantly increase the risk of users developing acanthamoeba keratitis (AK), a rare and painful infection that can result in blindness. Harris, 25, didn't lose his vision, but he came close. He claims using the faulty liquid has dramatically impacted his life since his eyes began bothering him on the May 24 weekend five years ago. He saw specialists in St. John's, Halifax and Ottawa, but they were unable to diagnose the problem. It turned out to be AK and Harris ended up with scars on his cornea. As a result, he underwent a cornea transplant and three laser surgeries. "If I didn't have the laser surgeries, I'd be pretty blind," says Harris, who had to abandon his studies and, at one point, spent a full month in the dark because light hurt his eyes. St. John's lawyer Ches Crosbie filed a class action on behalf of Harris and the nine others in this province who claim their eyes were damaged by the solution. The barrister suggested becoming part of the B.C. suit to cut back on their costs. Harris, acting as the group's representative plaintiff, filed an affidavit indicating a desire to be involved in the action on the opposite side of the country. A group in Nova Scotia also wanted in. On May 26, a B.C. judge certified the suit as a national class action. Crosbie says the development means the matter is closer to being resolved. He says his role now is to help his clients get compensation if the B.C. class counsel is able to reach a settlement. Crosbie notes it's novel his clients opted to be part of a class action in a province so far away. "It just shows how these class actions can have a considerable reach and you've got to be flexible in how you approach them, because it is not necessarily the best thing that people have a class action in their own home province," he says. "Sometimes, depending on numbers and other things, you're better off joining somebody else's action and that's what happened here." The Telegram was unable to reach officials with the company. [sbartlett@thetelegram.com](mailto:sbartlett@thetelegram.com)

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