

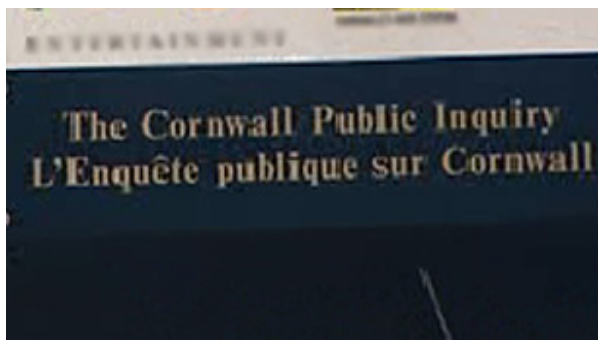
IN DEPTH

Cornwall Public Inquiry

Cornwall sex-abuse scandal spawns hearings, healing

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[CBC News](#)



The inquiry heard its final witness on Jan. 29, 2009, and was scheduled to release its final report on Tuesday, Dec. 15. (Simon Gardner/CBC) In 1992, a man claimed that he had been sexually abused by a priest and a probation officer while he was an altar boy in Cornwall, Ont. The local Roman Catholic Diocese offered the man \$32,000 in return for dropping the complaint he had filed with police.

A local police officer blew the whistle on that coverup, unleashing a flood of other child sexual abuse complaints and a chain of events that would eventually lead the Ontario government to call a public inquiry.

The \$50-million Cornwall Public Inquiry's final report is scheduled to be released Tuesday, Dec. 15, after several delays.

Since that first complaint, dozens of people in the eastern Ontario community have come forward with allegations that they were abused as children and teenagers by priests, probation officers, lawyers and other men in positions of power and trust. The allegations go back to the late 1950s, and there were even claims that children were passed from one abuser to another by a ring of pedophiles.

A number of police investigations were launched by various Ontario police forces, including the high profile Ontario Provincial Police probe Project Truth. Dozens of charges were laid in that investigation. In the end, police found no evidence of a pedophile ring. Many of the accused had their charges stayed due to court delays, some

committed suicide, some died of natural causes and a few were punished with significant jail time.

Meanwhile, there were nagging questions about the roles of the institutions that backed the men and took part in the investigation. Some were accused of dealing poorly with the situation, acting inappropriately or helping the alleged abusers avoid serious consequences.

Premier's promise

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty promised to launch a public inquiry after the last Project Truth court case wrapped up, and went on to establish the Cornwall Public Inquiry, with two main goals:

- To hold public hearings into events surrounding allegations of abuse of young people in Cornwall, to examine the response of the justice system and other public institutions to the allegations, and to make recommendations.
- To work with residents of Cornwall to facilitate healing and reconciliation within the community.



Justice G. Normand Glaude, regional senior judge for the Northeast Region of Ontario, was asked to chair the public inquiry, which began on Feb. 13, 2006. (Sudbury Star/Canadian Press) Justice G. Normand Glaude, regional senior judge for the Northeast Region of Ontario, was asked to chair the inquiry, which began Feb. 13, 2006.

After more than 300 hearing days spread over three years, the inquiry heard from more than 170 witnesses, accepted 3,400 exhibits of evidence and generated 60,000 pages of transcripts.

About 400 people received provincially funded counselling as a result of the inquiry. Two-thirds of them were victims or alleged victims, both male and female, and the others were people who dealt with victims. Heather McIntosh, the psychologist who oversaw that counselling, said some "amazing transformations" resulted.

When Glaude launched the inquiry, he said it would be a "lengthy and sometimes difficult process."

Lengthy and difficult

It proved to be lengthier and more difficult than many anticipated.

From the beginning, the inquiry was bogged down with court challenges and motions that put witness testimony on hold time and again, delaying and dragging out the proceedings as lawyers for some of the institutions and the accused fought to withhold evidence and the identities of some of the accused.

Those challenges, along with other publication bans, led members of the media to accuse the inquiry of not being "truly public."

By November 2006, more than a dozen motions had tied up the proceedings — far more than the one or two brought forward in previous provincial inquiries.

Another major setback came in September 2007, when a key witness refused to testify.

Former Cornwall police officer Perry Dunlop blew the whistle on an apparent coverup of abuse allegations in 1993, when he overheard some police sergeants discussing a former altar boy who had been paid \$32,000 by the Catholic Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall to drop a sexual abuse complaint against two priests. Dunlop took a sexual abuse complaint to the Children's Aid Society against orders from superiors, leading to an OPP investigation and eventually the latest inquiry.

Dunlop, who says he and his family were subjected to harassment and death threats, twice refused to testify at the public inquiry, saying he believed it was not about finding the truth and he had lost faith in a justice system that treated him as a bad guy.

Stonewalling witness jailed

Glaude ruled that Dunlop had no good legal reason to refuse testimony and he was eventually convicted of both criminal and civil contempt of court, serving seven months in jail.

The commission was also criticized by those who said they had been sexually abused. They complained about the way they were questioned by lawyers while on the witness stand. After one witness stormed off during cross-examination, Engelmann reminded lawyers that an inquiry is not a trial.

The inquiry heard its final witness on Jan. 29, 2009 — Murray Segal, Ontario's deputy attorney general.

Dallas Lee, a lawyer for about 50 alleged victims, said while the question of whether there really ever was a pedophile ring was not answered during the hearings, even though some witnesses did touch on the topic. For example, Claude Marlow, said he was abused by eight men between the ages of 11 and 17 and was "unequivocal" that he was passed from one man to another in at least one case, although he did not go as far as to say they knew each other.

In the end, Lee said he found the lack of specific apologies at the inquiry by representatives of the institutions involved "very, very disappointing."

He said he hoped the commission's final report will:

- Acknowledge that something unusual and wrong happened in Cornwall with respect to the sexual abuse of children.
- Lead to institutions responding properly and compassionately to allegations of abuse and help the justice system do a better job of prosecuting those accused of abuse.

Story comments (9)

[Lamorial](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/16 at 3:05 AM ET

So ... after 4 years and \$52 Million, we still don't have an answer to the key question - was there or was there not a pedophile ring opering in Cornwall? And out of all the enquiries and investigations to date, only one person was convicted of an offense! Wow!!! This makes for an extremely expensive and ineffectual justice system - to say the least! Once again, the victims have been victimized by a government inquiry that doesn't answer the most pressing question. And, sadly, Cornwall retains its crown as the dirty little city that refuses to clean up its mess.

[StrongBasis](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/15 at 7:10 PM ET

The most disturbing aspect of this case is how child services knew about abuse but were endeavouring with the church to cover it up - these are people paid with our taxes, protecting sex-offenders from prosecution. The whistle blowing actually came from withing child services, I know because I personally know the person involved, who ended up talking about it to CSIS by accident (a relation which was a CSIS agent although they didn't know it at the time). Good on them for raising a sting and exposing a ring of corruption.

[Mudhooks](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/15 at 5:36 PM ET

The fact is that had the police bothered to actually investigate at the time allegations were made rather than simply say "It never happened". all this might have been avoided.

The church, as it has always done and probably will continue to do, did its utmost to

silence victims and to move perpetrators to places where they would be free to abuse yet more children.

The police refused to effectively investigate their own and there was no mechanism for outside investigation.

One will never know the entire truth but it is very clear that for decades abuse WAS happening.

[Kilbarry1](#) wrote: Posted 2009/12/15 at 5:00 PM ET

JACKO

The report is enormous but I have been following the case on and off for a few years and the following is a partial summary of events. You may find this convincing but I have grave doubts myself.

1992: A 35-year-old former altar boy Davis Silmsler alleges he was sexually abused by probation officer Ken Seguin and Rev. Charles MacDonald when he was younger.

1993: Ron Leroux claims he has seen for himself bizarre sex rituals involving robe-clad community leaders and young boys.

1996: [Rev] Charles MacDonald charged with sexually abusing young people. Charges are stayed in 2002 after judge rules his right to a trial within a reasonable amount of time was violated.

Sept. 25, 1997: The OPP announce they are devoting a team of full-time investigators to re-examine the case, codenamed Project Truth. They say the ring was operating for nearly 40 years and they have turned up 18 suspects, including local officials and Roman Catholic priests.

June 7, 2001: Jean-Luc Leblanc [a bus driver] pleads guilty to 12 charges relating to attacks on 10 young males, the FIRST (AND ULTIMITELY ONLY) conviction from the police investigation.

Aug. 22, 2001: The OPP announces that Project Truth has turned up no evidence to back claims that a pedophile ring operated in Cornwall.

1 Feb 2007: David Silmsler storms off the stand in the midst of questioning by the lawyer representing Rev. Charles MacDonald.

June 28, 2007: Mr. Leroux recants his story, telling the inquiry he fabricated a tale of pedophiles who wore robes, burned candles and sexually abused young boys during weekend meetings in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Nov. 2007: Mr. Dunlop is convicted of civil contempt of court for refusing to give evidence. etc

[enfelice](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/15 at 2:28 PM ET

There were two extensions granted on this inquiry and this is what we got. That was a waste of 50 million dollars, Judge Glaude can recommend anything he wants to the government and as we all know governments seldom follow-up on anything.

[cainlawrence](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/15 at 2:21 PM ET

Who needs to be scared of terrorists on the other side of the world when you have so many homegrown sickos like this? I hope it puts some people's priorities in order.

[Jacko](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/15 at 12:53 PM ET

Killbarry1: Read the report before you run off at the mouth. It will actually require a little effort though.

[Okanagan Bob](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/15 at 12:35 PM ET

We believe because the church and people in positions of power have tried to silence this proceeding.

[Kilbarry1](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/15 at 11:34 AM ET

Two of the main witnesses admitted that they had lied; the policeman who orchestrated the hysteria refused to give evidence and was sentenced for civil and then criminal contempt of court; the original accuser from 1992 gave evidence then fled the court during cross examination and produced a doctor's certificate that cross examination would be bad for his health. (Thus he cleverly evaded contempt of court proceedings) There were allegations of a paedophile ring and meetings involving men with strange clothes carrying out strange rituals, the Bishop of the diocese was accused in relation to a period BEFORE he arrived in the diocese.

Why do people still believe this tripe?