

## **Report silent on pedophile ring**

### **OPP investigators slammed in Cornwall sexual abuse inquiry**

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**By ALLISON JONES, THE CANADIAN PRESS**

CORNWALL, Ont. -- Rumours that swirled for years that children were abused at the hands of a pedophile ring in eastern Ontario were neither put to rest nor given credence yesterday by a \$53-million public inquiry report four years in the making.

The Cornwall inquiry's official mandate was to examine institutional responses to historical claims of sexual abuse, and the sensational allegation that fuelled it went unresolved in the more than 1,600-page report.

"Throughout this inquiry, I have heard evidence that suggested that there were cases of joint abuse, passing of alleged victims, and possibly passive knowledge of abuse," Commissioner G. Normand Glaude wrote.

"I want to be very clear that I am not going to make a pronouncement on whether a ring existed or not."

The Ontario Provincial Police spent four years investigating allegations of sexual abuse, an investigation Glaude criticized in the report. Police laid 115 charges against 15 people under Project Truth, though only one was convicted.

The police declared there was no evidence of a ring, but that failed to quell the suspicion and fear in the community.

"There is good reason why certain members of the public were less than satisfied with the OPP's unequivocal position about the non-existence of a ring," Glaude wrote.

"I find that the OPP did not conduct a full-scale investigation into the linkages between victims and perpetrators."

Glaude made the point, however, of noting "much of what I have heard about linkages remain allegations that have not been proven beyond a reasonable doubt."

The report found institutional response to reports of sexual abuse was, in large part, inadequate and failed to protect the vulnerable. Among the commissioner's recommendations was to expand training and mandatory education for professionals such as public servants, those in the justice system, teachers and others having contact with children or adults who may have been sexually abused.

At closing submissions in February, groups including the local diocese and police service urged the commissioner to debunk the pedophile clan theory once and for all.

While the commissioner did not answer that call, he did find that allegations that officials at the Ministry of the Attorney General conspired to cover-up allegations of sexual abuse were unfounded.

And perhaps the most sensational of all the stories -- that a clan of powerful men sexually abused boys at a cottage during strange rituals while clad in robes -- was given little weight.

The source of the tale was Ron Leroux, who both police and Glaude found not to be credible and who later recanted his allegations.