

Inquiry worthwhile, too lengthy: expert

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Posted By KEVIN LAJOIE

A prominent university professor and legal author believes the Cornwall Public Inquiry was a worthwhile exercise, but it could have been done much more quickly.

"I don't think this inquiry was particularly well-managed," said University of Ottawa professor Ed Ratushny, the author of a new book entitled *The Conduct of Public Inquiries*.

"The commissioner acted in good faith and very conscientiously, but more experienced staff would have provided better guidance and got to the heart of the matter more quickly."

Specifically, Ratushny believes a lot of the contextual testimony from expert witnesses could have been presented in written summaries, thereby saving some time. Also, the author believes the inquiry may have stretched itself too far through the second phase of reconciliation and healing by providing various services such as professional training and counselling support programs. No one can argue the importance of healing, he said, but an argument could be made about the inquiry providing the services itself.

"That was a significant cost to be putting all those things in place," Ratushny added.

The length and cost -- upwards of \$50 million -- of the inquiry has actually garnered virtually as much attention as the final report itself, but despite the challenges along the way, Ratushny remains confident that some good will come from it.

"The report will speak for itself. If it brings closure to this problem that has been a concern for so long, then it will have served a valuable purpose," he added.

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The Report would not have been necessary had officials done their jobs to start with.

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