

Ont. can now better rein in inquiry costs: AG

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TORONTO — The costs of future public inquiries in Ontario can now be reined in earlier in the process, the attorney general said Tuesday ahead of the release of a \$50-million inquiry's report.

The Cornwall public inquiry was called in 2005 to examine institutional responses to sex abuse allegations in eastern Ontario. After three years of testimony and \$50 million spent, its final report is set to be delivered Dec. 15.

Legislation was recently passed that will ensure the government can better focus any future inquiries, Attorney General Chris Bentley said in response to questions about the cost of the Cornwall inquiry.

"(That way) we get what we need in the way we need it as quickly as we need it at a cost that we're aware of early on in the process," he said.

When asked about the \$50-million price tag, Bentley appeared to speak about inquiries in general, instead of referring directly to the Cornwall inquiry.

"Sure, I'm concerned about cost," he said.

"I'm very concerned about taxpayers' money and want to make sure ultimately that we get the answer to issues as quickly as we need it and we are as careful with funds as we can be."

When the inquiry was still plugging away in October 2008, the provincial government stepped in to set an end date.

Part of the inquiry's funding has been going toward counselling for victims of sexual abuse, and Bentley said he wants to people continue to get support.

Counselling support is currently scheduled to end on Jan. 15, and Bentley says he will wait to see what the commissioner recommends on that front.

However, he did say officials will be following up with each person to get them the help they need.

"We're aware of the many challenges that people who have been victimized or affected by issues such as this have," he said.

"We want to make sure they get the support they require."

The inquiry heard three years of testimony and wrapped up in February with closing statements.

Commissioner G. Normand Glaude was originally given until July 31 to complete the report, but asked twice for extensions to allow for editing, translating and typesetting.

Many of the closing submissions focused on urging Glaude to finally debunk the pedophile clan theory years after rumours spread through the community.

Many suggest the blame for the sensational story, of which provincial police found no evidence, could be placed on former Cornwall police officer Perry Dunlop.

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