

Cornwall Public Inquiry

Cornwall awaits report on sex-abuse inquiry

[CBC News](#)

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Heartbreaking stories about the sexual abuse of children and teens filled the courtroom in Cornwall, Ont., for weeks. Their abusers were priests, probation officers, lawyers — men in positions of authority and trust.

A provincial commission heard they were men backed by institutions that paid bribes to keep the victims silent, discouraged police investigation, offered the opportunity for the accused to leave quietly, or even welcomed them back to positions where they would have access to children.

On Dec. 15, 2009, the Cornwall Public Inquiry will release its final report about the way those organizations and others, including police, dealt with the abuse allegations.

The inquiry, which opened on Feb. 13, 2006, is expected to make recommendations about how institutions can improve their response to such allegations. But its other mandate is help the eastern Ontario community heal from the scandal that has simmered quietly for decades and badly tarnished the town's public image after it became public.

Dallas Lee, a lawyer for a group at the inquiry representing about 50 victims of sexual abuse, said there is a lot of anticipation about the release of the report.

'A long time coming'

"This has been a long time coming," he said.

He said his clients are hoping the report will silence once and for all critics' nagging denials that the abuse in Cornwall set it apart from any other Ontario community.

"My clients are looking for a really legitimate, hard-hitting, definitive answer to the fact that Cornwall was not the norm and that something unusual happened there and this inquiry needed to be called and that it was worth it."

Peter Engelmann, lead counsel for the inquiry, expressed little doubt that the \$40-million inquiry was indeed worth it. About 400 people have 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.

"We met so many victims or alleged victims who were very damaged," Engelmann said. "You have to value those costs — costs to society for people who are victimized and then cannot lead productive lives. They are at higher risk to offend or abuse others ... so it's a huge problem. It's really difficult to put a public cost on it."

Lee said the victims are also hoping that the report will lead to institutions responding properly and compassionately to allegations of abuse, that police will improve the way they interview victims of historic abuse and that prosecutors will improve the way they handle abuse cases.

"Cause that really fell apart in Cornwall."

There, few of the alleged abusers ever faced justice in a way that brought closure to the victims. Some had charges stayed due to delays. Others committed suicide before they could be tried. Despite more than 100 charges laid in a number of investigations by several Ontario police forces, only a few men were convicted and sent to jail.

'Learning curve'

Engelmann confirmed the report will look into how the cases could be investigated and prosecuted better. However, he said historical abuse cases are very difficult to prosecute due to lack of forensic evidence. He also acknowledged that the abuse discussed at the inquiry took place in a different time and the attitude toward sexual abuse has evolved since then.

"It has been a learning curve," he said. One of the things the report will deal with is how institutions' response to abuse has changed over the years and whether they are adhering to their new policies.

Engelmann also acknowledged some people may be disappointed by the limits of the commission's mandate.

"You have so many people who want to make findings about criminal liability and/or civil liability and like any other public inquiry, we're forbidden from doing that."

Story comments (16)

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[OneDaySoonIhope](#) wrote: Posted 2009/12/14 at 4:49 PM ET

I am a sibling of one of the abused victims. I watched a brother struggle with his demons my entire life, wishing and praying that he would get his life back, only to see him hit rock bottom again and again. He has had a hard life and aged so much through the years. Even with his family for support, he hid what he didn't want us or was ashamed for us to know.

He was punished and served time for his crimes,. He didnt deserve to be a victim of abuse. No one deserves that.

He will find peace now, for the first time in his life.

With love, understanding, support and patience, you can come back from rock bottom. I know, I am watching my brother take his life back.

[Kilbarry1](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/14 at 4:35 PM ET

Two of the main witnesses admitted that they had lied; the policeman who orchestrated the hysteria refused to give evidence and was sentenced from 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. 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?

[MrSeventy8](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/14 at 3:42 PM ET

"As for the police officer who testified, he was subjected to extreme harassment and had to move out west to get away from the "powers that be" He was also charge with contempt of court for refusing to re-appear at the inquiry. This gut had guts and did what he felt was right even though his information was against the grain of the system"

There are underlining truths to this story that will forever go untold, but most notably, the fact that this certain "officer" was no hero and he had a hand in the cover-up. those closest to the story know what i'm talking about and unfortunately there are many other reasons why this person fled, was held in contempt, sent to prison and hasn't spoke since.

Remember, playing the media in your favor is all too easy a task.

speaking as an ex-resident, born and raised, cornwall-ite.....i'm happy to hear that the inquisition is going to ATTEMPT to come to a conclusion, but the fact of the matter is that pedophilia will never come to a conclusion. the only true conclusion is what's been suggested before, a stiffer and much less lenient punishment for the truly sick, twisted and insane individuals involved in such horrific crimes.

[DisplacedMaritimer](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/14 at 2:19 PM ETColeWilson7 wrote:

"As has been posted already, but is worth repeating, why don't we make the punishment for such crimes so horrible that the offenders will really be afraid to do it? But no, we ship them off to a "prison" for a couple years and then they're back out on the streets."

If only it was that easy. I was watching one of those crime shows on tv one evening and they were going over the case of a 14 year old who disappeared. It turned out that she had been abducted and sexually assaulted. Unfortunately, the perpetrator ended up murdering her because of how harsh a penalty he would be facing if caught. He wanted to leave no witnesses...

retired07 wrote:Posted 2009/12/14 at 2:11 PM ET

I am also an X resident of Cornwall and can remember things that were unimportant at the time and never considered their impact until all this came to light. Things like teachers (religious brothers and priests) "favorites" while in the Catholic school or altar boys receiving favoritisms at school for their good conduct while or after serving a mass..

We never considered these occurrences other than just teacher's pets but when this scandal broke is made me wonder.

The fact that some of the accused committed suicide or died under "mysterious" circumstances should have raise a flag. I believe the clergy and the legal system were all connected and that alone should have raise a red flag.

I wonder how many of my boyhood schoolmates were subjected to these ordeals. I will never know, but I hope blame and corrective action will be taken.

As for the police officer who testified, he was subjected to extreme harassment and had to move out west to get away from the "powers that be" He was also charge with contempt of court for refusing to re-appear at the inquiry. This gut had guts and did what he felt was right even though his information was against the grain of the system

WaynePittman wrote:Posted 2009/12/14 at 12:33 PM ETIt will be interesting to see how the Glaude Commission dealt with the evidence at its disposal, including but not limited to the formerly confidential Papal Instruction called "Crimen Sollicitationis" that was first issued by Pope Pius XI in 1922 and later revised and re-issued by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

Certain relevant excerpts from the 73-paragraph 1922 version, and a copy of the 74-paragraph 1962 version, were tendered in evidence at the inquiry. And copies of the relevant Latin excerpts from the 1922 and 1962, and an unofficial English translation of the 1962 version, can now also be found at the link below.

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As can be seen, Crimen Sollicitationis provided all the bishops and other higher prelates in the world with a detailed set of instructions on how to deal (in secret) with any and all cases of sex abuse by Catholic clergy and members of Catholic religious orders, including the sexual abuse of children, which, at Title V, ("De Crimine Pessimo") was classified as one of "The Worst Crimes".

And with the insertion of the extra (74th) paragraph in the 1962 version, Pope John XXIII made it permissible for even the regular superior (head) of any Catholic religious orders, such as the Christian Brothers, to deal with their own 'problem' members, according to both Canon Law and the dictates of Crimen Sollicitationis, but with the proviso that they, too, must communicate the decisions taken in such matters to the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office.

All such cases were to be subjected to Secret of the Holy Office, on pain of instant automatic excommunication from the Church, which was revocable only by the Pope himself.

And it will be interesting to see just how the Glaude Commission handled that particular document in their report.

[kserasera](#) wrote: Posted 2009/12/14 at 12:21 PM ET

Sure has been long awaited! Just want to lend my support to the victims for staying the course and seeing this through-- incredibly brave and resilient.

Officer Dunlop sounds like he was traumatized too, damaged trust as well, no doubt fearful, took the brunt of a lot of intimidation as well.

I mean that's wild, total systemic abuse-- not only clergy, but probation officers and lawyers; superiors trying to shut it up-- I mean what a hellish experience for all the victims, and just no-one to trust, and the suffering that has gone on for so many years with this secret.

I'm hoping for justice too, and that we all learn from this experience-- it certainly blows away several myths, e.g. a pedophile can be anyone, and they can hold such high status positions in society.

Dispicable of the Church to offer bribes to silence the truth; or the intimidation going on everywhere to silence this truth-- there is lots to learn from here.

And the victims, who were children, just so horrible this happened, and no doubt it affected them through their adult lives, keeping this terrible secret and not being believed, and a conspiracy going on to silence the truth-- how damaging. I'm glad they are finally receiving access to some counselling to help deal with these horrible wounds.

I want to say, my prayers are with you all, but unfortunately that this has also been religious abuse on a deep level as well, it may not be the comfort I was wishing to express. May I say, safe journeys, people do care and are so sad for the suffering you've all experienced. And we're angry that this happened and we hope for justice, and that we can get stronger and more alert to stop this from every happening again.

[ColeWilson7](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/14 at 11:57 AM ET

As a former resident of Cornwall, it continues to infuriate me that nothing of substance was ever really done. And this report will do little, if anything, different. When you have an organization like the Catholic Church paying people to shut their mouths, you have a serious problem.

As has been posted already, but is worth repeating, why don't we make the punishment for such crimes so horrible that the offenders will really be afraid to do it? But no, we ship them off to a "prison" for a couple years and then they're back out on the streets. Makes me sick.

[The Artist formerly known as Ronnie Wristshot](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/14 at 11:21 AM ET

It's time to start talking about sex. It's time to do it openly, honestly and without the customary stigma attached. We must be able to do this with everyone in our families including and especially our children. The "dirty, wrong, and bad" connotations associated with sex must be replaced a clear, healthy view and understanding of just what becoming sexually active entails, pro and con. Everyone to their core must know what constitutes consensual touching. We must put an end to the guilt associated with sexuality. Guilt is what creeps who seek positions of power use to subvert their prey. No child should have any hesitation whatsoever telling uncle Charlie "I don't feel like giving you a Christmas hug" and Charlie should be able to accept that gracefully without feeling slighted. Until children understand that sex is not bad but powerful and that it should only be beautiful and consensual, we will never see an end to the flood of creeps and perverts who seek to gain positions of trust and power only to abuse them.

[AverageCanadian Mom](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/14 at 11:17 AM ET

Countless thousands of children, who were ripped from their innocent parents (such as the Baynes in Vancouver, BC), have been abused in every way because the government sent them to foster "care." It has been proven, time and again, that the government either knew or should have known that the parents were innocent, or concealed evidence or fabricated evidence (as the CBC has reported, even the lawyer for the Ministry of Children and Family Development stated that the Bayne's children should be returned - they still have not been returned).

After these children are tossed from foster "home" to foster "home - they end up suicidal, addicted to drugs, homeless, incarcerated, and too often, dead, either because they have been murdered or because they have taken their lives. This is the most brutal crime against children and families, yet after decades of reporting and inquiries, nothing has really changed. The government or the Children's Aid Society, still has God-like power to remove a child, and condemn that child and his or her family to a life of hell.

When will these victims even been acknowledged, let alone be compensated?

In Alberta, where there is an attempt to get justice for former foster children, the Law Society and the government lawyers of that province have done everything they can to shut down the lawsuit, including attempting to disbar the lawyer who has bravely fought against a system that destroys children and families.

Now would be a good time to remember the anguish and pain of all those families - like the Baynes in Vancouver, BC - who will not be spending Christmas together because the Child Protection industry has ripped their family apart. Without due process and without real evidence.

Okanagan Bob wrote:Posted 2009/12/14

at 10:51 AM ETThis story has always been just below the surface, threatening to break out and become the full-fledged scandal that it should be. This CBC site is great and has links to former stories on this subject.

Like this from 2001: "Cornwall pedophile investigation ends".
And this from 2006: "Cornwall sexual abuse inquiry begins".

What the hell is going on here? The public is not being served when the legal system grinds on at such a slow pace.

chllysillywilly wrote:Posted 2009/12/14 at 10:23 AM ET

trial convict and for repeat offenders exacute them

motherhubbard wrote:Posted 2009/12/14 at 10:16 AM ET

This type of crime will go on unless the punishment is so severe that the accused will be afraid to do it. It is as evil as murder because the child is never the same - his soul has been shattered.

"huh!" wrote:Posted 2009/12/14
at 10:02 AM ET

Long time coming is an understatement.

sunview wrote:Posted 2009/12/14 at 1:06 AM ET

I remember the police officer who lost his carrerr and has lost so much. He tried so hard to bring this whole situation to light. Has anyone thought to apologize or better yet, thank him for all he tried to do?

Highway Dawg wrote:Posted 2009/12/12 at 9:34 PM ET

And what will be different tomorrow?

