

High hopes for Cornwall Inquiry report

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Canoe network

By DAVID NESSETH, QMI Agency

CORNWALL — When the Cornwall Public Inquiry's final report is released on Tuesday, Ken Parker has faith it will all have been worth the three years to get there.

Sitting next to his wife Peggy, the senior couple was a fixture in the Weave Shed's gallery from the very beginning, attending virtually all 347 hearing dates.

Parker is a Roman Catholic and a retired teacher who says his interest in the inquiry was grounded in three areas: Justice for the victims of sexual abuse, as well as justice for the falsely accused. He was also concerned that Cornwall's image would be unfairly painted with the same brush that marked a spectrum of abuse.

When inquiry Commissioner Normand Glaude releases the inquiry report, Parker believes other communities in Ontario could end up viewing Cornwall as a "trailblazer."

"It's very hard to put a price on the value of institutional reform and making life safer for everybody and especially for children," Parker said of the inquiry's \$50-million price tag. "People need to look at what this will do for Cornwall and every institution in Ontario that has had problems in the past."

Glaude's report, which took more than nine months to complete, will make recommendations to improve the response of institutions such as the Children's Aid Society, probation offices under Correctional Services, and the Roman Catholic Diocese in similar circumstances.

Parker is particularly interested in diocesan reform. He hopes never again to see the diocese merely transfer priests accused of sexual abuse. He also wants the diocese to ensure parishioner safety over the image of the church.

Parker said he's been pleased with the work of current Bishop Paul-Andre Durocher, who unknowingly inherited a challenging position with the Alexandria-Cornwall Diocese eight years ago.

Durocher says he will be there for the release of Glaude's report, and he's open to any recommendations that will help the diocese respond to allegations of sexual abuse.

“I don’t look at it in terms of closure,” Durocher said of the report, “I look at it in terms of what can we learn from the past in order to improve the things we do now and to ensure a better future.”

Durocher believes new generations of priests are better informed in terms of properly addressing allegations of sexual abuse.

“The automatic trust that was given to the church and members of the clergy has waned,” Durocher said. “That change is a healthy one. People approach relationships with authority in a new way. Trust needs to be earned.”

CCR submitted a 500-page report of recommendations to the inquiry.

One of the hardest parts of the inquiry for Parker was hearing the testimony of 38 victims, beginning with Larry Seguin in October 2006. Many said that their allegations of sexual abuse were never taken very seriously.

“It brought tears to your eyes and a lump to your throat,” Parker said.

Copies of the report will be available to the public on-site and online at www.cornwallinquiry.ca

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