

---

## Public inquiry madness

Toronto Globe and Mail

16 December 2009

Almost five years in the making and \$53 million spent. Some 180 witnesses called. A four-volume report containing more than 2,000 pages (including a 404-page "executive summary"). For what?

The Cornwall public inquiry was prompted by dubious allegations of a pedophile ring in the eastern Ontario city. But Normand Glaude, the judge who headed the inquiry, states in his massive report, released yesterday: "I want to be very clear that I am not going to make a pronouncement on whether a ring existed or not."

Glaude's report does provide some useful analysis of the sexual abuse of children, how the victims cope, and how society should respond. But that presumably could have been done for a lot less money if some experts had been hired to canvass the issue. And a legislative committee could have pursued the political aspects of the inquiry – how the Cornwall police, the OPP, and provincial government ministries dropped the ball. The money saved could have been ploughed into programs to assist victims of sexual abuse.

With this concluding report, the Cornwall inquiry is likely destined to become Exhibit A for what is wrong with public inquiries. In a word, they tend to run amok.

That's something for both the media and opposition politicians to keep in mind before calling for a public inquiry at every hint of wrongdoing in high places.