

Cornwall moves on after child sex abuse scandal

'I'm hoping that this report helps people turn the page': victims' lawyer

Last Updated: Wednesday, December 16, 2009 | 9:53 AM ET

[CBC News](#)



'We need to move on, we need to come together as a community,' said Steve Parisien, who describes himself as a sex abuse survivor. (Simon Gardner/CBC)

The final report into a child sex abuse scandal that marred Cornwall, Ont., for decades has brought relief and some closure to many people in the community.

Dallas Lee, a lawyer representing about 50 people who said they were sexually abused in the eastern Ontario city, said that the reaction he has heard to the findings and recommendations of the Cornwall Public Inquiry has been "rather positive."

The Cornwall Public Inquiry's final report is [available online](#).

The institutions it examined include the:

- Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.
- Cornwall Community Police Service.
- Ontario Provincial Police.
- Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall.
- Children's Aid Society.
- Upper Canada District School Board and the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario.
- Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General.

The victims had been hoping for recognition that their complaints were real and institutions such as the police and the Children's Aid Society really had failed them, Lee said Wednesday.

"We've certainly been validated on those points," he added.

Normand Glaude, the commissioner for the inquiry, released his final report on the four-year, \$50-million inquiry Tuesday. It had been examining how public institutions like police forces and the Catholic church responded to widespread allegations of child sexual abuse against priests, parole officers, lawyers and other members of the community.

The report had criticisms and recommendations for all seven institutions it looked at, saying they did not meet their responsibility to help the community's children and protect them from predators.

Lee said he hopes the report will help Cornwall residents recognize that the problems examined in the inquiry existed everywhere and weren't their fault.

"I'm hoping that people will recognize five years down the road that Cornwall was a real agent for change," he said. "So I'm hoping that this report helps people turn the page."

When asked about criticism that the inquiry took too long and cost too much, Lee responded: "It cost what it cost, but I think it had to be done."

Premier Dalton McGuinty told The Canadian Press it's a good question to ask whether the inquiry into allegations of child sex abuse really had to cost so much. He said there's accountability to taxpayers, not just to the people of Cornwall.

He added that his government has made legislative changes to give it greater authority to limit the scope of inquiries and make sure they're run more efficiently.

Ontario Attorney General Chris Bentley said through the report, the community and its victims of child abuse have been able to speak out about issues that have, in some case, been hidden for many years.

"He found the conclusions that were there to be found," Bentley said, although he acknowledged in some cases "there were not the conclusions that people were looking for."

In the end, the report did not provide an answer about whether there had, in fact, been a pedophile ring in the community — a rumour that had plagued the city for decades.

Victims' reactions mixed

Steve Parisien, who calls himself a sexual abuse survivor, was one of the dozens of people who packed a meeting room at a Cornwall hotel to hear Glaude speak about his report Tuesday, and he seemed satisfied.

"I have come to a full circle in my life in the healing process," he said. "We need to move on, we need to come together as a community."

Not everyone in the audience shared that positive outlook.

"They said come forward and we did come forward and they did nothing to the victims but minimize, minimize and minimize our agony," said Marc Carrière, who also heard Glaude speak and didn't try to hide his anger.

At a nearby department store, local resident Theresa Ryan said she's "definitely glad" the inquiry is over.

"It's too much money and a waste of time," she said while doing some grocery shopping Tuesday.

Another Cornwall resident, Herta Schweitzer, said she believes some good has come out of the report, as it brought a lot of happenings to light and she thinks that will prevent similar incidents in the future.

With a file from the Canadian Press

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[Pixelfix](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/16 at 2:59 PM ET

I'm starting to think that people who didn't suffer abuse of some sort while growing up are actually in the minority. Seems like everyone and their brother was abused (or at least thinks they were - false memories anyone?). Most people just suck it up and go about their lives as best they can, others dwell on it and make it the centerpiece of their existence.

And before people jump on me, yes I was abused sexually when I was around 6-7, but honestly its not worth wasting energy on 40 years later.

[Fung Chang](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/16 at 1:20 PM ET

I'm really conflicted about the outcome of this investigation.

There have been no concrete evidence proving nor dis-proving the allegations of a pedophile ring. But one thing is certain, there were many victims of abuse(50). From what I can gather, there have been no convictions in these allegations. The only person who served time was the cop who began this investigation twenty years ago. But he was charged and sentenced for obstruction. I don't like that either.

I lived in Cornwall in the 70's, it was a stinky paper mill town that reeked of the effluent spewed into the St. Lawrence river by DOMTAR. Very depressing when you have to live

with that fog all the time. A small town with a friendly mix of anglo and francophone community. \$53 million of taxpayer money spent and no convictions.

- [5](#)
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[5Agree](#) [1Disagree](#)[Policy](#) [Report](#) [abuse](#)

[beautifulpoision](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/16

at 1:08 PM ETTo the victims who suffered abuse and feel the system has failed - I am truly sorry.

- [8](#)
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[8Agree](#) [0Disagree](#)[Policy](#) [Report](#) [abuse](#)

[bendyjenn](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/16

at 12:55 PM ETtruepatriotBS - are you posting on the wrong forum? If not, then what on earth do Islamic terrorists have to do with sex abuse of kids in Cornwall ON.

UrbanerMezei - I think Sendthemtojail made some good points...This 'can of worms' must be repeatedly opened and examined until the Catholic Holy See actually DOES SOMETHING to aid the cessation of the indoctrinated pattern of child rape among its members. It's not a vendetta against Joseph & Mary Q. Catholic, who are likely really good people - but maybe if enough Catholics become offended enough by the actions of the priests they trust, they might actually demand some real action.

Not that the Catholic Church is in ANY way a democratic organization, but one can assume that if we launch enough 'Catholic' guilt at the Vatican, they might be shamed enough into doing something useful about child sex abuse - appealing to the sense of right and wrong in the organization just isn't working.

[Isthatright](#) wrote:Posted 2009/12/16 at 12:24 PM ET

ovely windfall for judges lawyers at the expense of victims...once again...ah yes the great society