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Do we still need Project Truth?

Project Truth, the Ontario Provincial Police investigation into claims of massive sexual abuse in Cornwall and area, plods along.

It has been plodding along for almost 15 months, making it one of the longest criminal investigations carried out in this neck of the woods.

In its lifetime, Project Truth has charged a handful of men, most of them elderly, with various sexual offences. None yet has gone to trial.

The cost has been enormous. It would not be farfetched to suggest the investigation has cost taxpayers at least \$1.5 million.

A bigger price has been the rumours and innuendo which has tarnished the reputations of several citizens, men who weren't even connected to the investigation.

This has roots in allegations of a pedophile ring.

Project Truth investigators, in months of probing, have no evidence of a pedophile ring.

There were also allegations of a coverup by Cornwall Police Services. Again, not a shred of evidence.

One of the wildest stories concerned Const. Perry Dunlop, who exposed an investigation involving a former Cornwall priest which was going nowhere fast.

Dunlop was suspended, with pay, then reinstated after, with the help of his police association, he challenged the department.

According to the story, which came

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out of an interview Dunlop had with the CBC, he got more than a cold shoulder from his colleagues, the same colleagues who went to bat for him when he returned to work. There was a strong suggestion in the interview that he was being "set up" by the department.

At times, so the claim went, Const. Dunlop was not getting back-up from his fellow officers when dispatched to potentially dangerous calls.

Shades of Frank Serpico and a corrupt New York City Police Department. Except in this case, it was bullfeathers.

Such a plot would have to include NCOs, patrol officers and dispatchers.

Yet, talk to any member of the 118-member force, and to a person they shake their heads in disbelief at the "set-up" story.

As for the claims of a coverup, consider this: Cornwall Police Service has laid far more sexual assault charges than Project Truth in the last 18 months. One of those charged was the son of a former police chief.

Once Project Truth found no evidence of a pedophile ring, there was really no need for its existence. It is only duplicating what the Cornwall Police Service can and is paid to do.

Project Truth could go into any small Ontario community, or any small community in North America for that matter, and flush out alleged victims. It doesn't mean the local police are mistrusted or not doing their job.

Perhaps the money being spent on Project Truth would be better spent on an advertising campaign encouraging sexual assault victims to come forward...to the Cornwall Police Service.

One thing is certain: Project Truth is running out of steam and has exhausted its mandate.