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# Let police do their job

Rumors are flying around town, about who will be the next prominent Cornwall person to be charged in the sex abuse scandal the OPP has dubbed Project Truth.

Coffee clutches and the workplace are unfortunately fuelling the rumor mill.

The *Standard-Freeholder* has had numerous disturbing telephone calls this week, claiming that two prominent citizens have committed suicide in connection with the investigation. In both cases, we were able to locate the individuals and talk with them. Happily, they were alive.

Sadly, we don't know whether these individuals, and many others whose names are freely being connected to this scandal, are even involved in the affair. How can we put a stop to this rumor-mongering?

Perhaps the OPP should take a look at how it has been informing the public of its progress.

Last September, the OPP announced the five-person unit Project Truth had been set up to investigate allegations that prominent people in and around Cornwall had sexually abused youths over the past few decades.

It went quietly about its work and laid its first charges in late January against a Roman Catholic priest. Then it was six months later before it charged a 47-year-old area man. The *Standard-Freeholder* is a court-ordered publication ban on identifying this man or the two complainants in the case, further fuelling the rumor mill.

Because this is a high-profile investigation, it has resulted in a lot of finger-pointing and whispered names.

This is not a very pleasant task for the police, as they interview persons who they know as upstanding individuals in our community. Some of them have had positive relationships with the police, doing their part to make this community a better place.

We plead with the people of Cornwall and district to stop spreading rumors. If you don't read it in the newspaper or hear it on the radio, then consider it not to be true. If ever there was a time to practice the Golden Rule, it is now! Before you pass on the names of individuals you have heard are connected with this scandal, think how you would feel if it were your name being spread around the community - especially if you were not guilty!

The media is often accused of being sensational. When we have a story like this that is sensational, we must be responsible in the way we handle the news.

We can tell you that several persons who are going to be implicated in this scandal have contacted us to ask us not to use their names.

We will not keep names out of the newspaper unless we are ordered to by the courts.

The reason we have not been printing these names in the newspaper is because we believe there is a proper time and place for names to be officially made public. That will be in a police press release, at a press conference or in a courtroom.

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When that happens, we'll be there. Until then, let the police do their job, finish their investigation and lay charges in the appropriate manner. It is not appropriate, very unfair and potentially damaging to innocent people to second-guess the police. The *Standard-Freeholder* is not going to do it, and we implore our readers not to do it.

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