

**THE ELLIOT LAKE COMMISSION OF
INQUIRY**

The Honourable Paul R. Bélanger
Commissioner



**LA COMMISSION D'ENQUÊTE ELLIOT
LAKE**

L'honorable Paul R. Bélanger Commissaire

January 2013

To the Residents of Elliot Lake

Happy New Year!

I am writing to give you an update on the work of the Elliot Lake Commission of Inquiry.

Much progress has been made since I was appointed in July to inquire into the collapse of the Algo Centre Mall.

The team of lawyers, investigators and professional staff that I have assembled share my commitment to discover the causes of this tragedy and make recommendations to prevent similar tragedies in the future.

We have been working at full speed to gather the information and documents we need before we can proceed with public hearings.

We have served summonses on more than 100 individuals, companies and organizations to obtain documents relevant to our investigation.

We have so far received approximately 280,000 documents and my team is diligently reviewing, categorizing and classifying them. A substantial number is still outstanding, however, and that gives me cause for concern if we are to complete our work within the time period stipulated in our mandate..

My investigators have already interviewed approximately 250 people.

I must emphasize, however, that our investigation is separate from any of the other investigations currently underway into this tragedy.

In October, I held a hearing in the community to hear applications for standing and funding. I granted standing to 14 individuals and organizations and recommended that the Ontario government provide funding to three groups. .

In December, I held a hearing in Ottawa on two requests to keep certain documents confidential and issued my ruling this week.

Our hearing room at the former White Mountain Academy of the Arts is finally nearing completion. To that end, I am pleased to announce that the Commission's public hearings are expected to begin in the week of March 4, 2013, assuming the hearing room is ready and we have received all the documents we have summonsed and are necessary for the hearings. Our present plan is to sit four days a week..

I was hoping to start our hearings a few weeks earlier but the scope of the preparatory work, including construction of our hearing room and offices, was greater than originally anticipated. However, experience at other inquiries has shown that detailed preparations have usually paid off in more compact, well-organized and efficient public hearings.

There will be seats in the hearing room for members of the public who wish to observe the proceedings and an overflow room equipped with a large television screen.

All of our proceedings will be broadcast live on the Internet. The local cable company is looking at the possibility of broadcasting the proceedings as well and we are setting up a media room so that local, regional and national media can cover the hearings.

I look forward to meeting some of you during the course of the hearings.

I know that 2012 was a very difficult year for many in the community, but one cannot help but be impressed by the strong sense of community, courage, dynamism and hope as the citizens of Elliot Lake work together to rebuild a vibrant and safe town center. I am confident that 2013 will be a great year for Elliot Lake!

Paul R. Bélanger
Commissioner