



MINISTRY OF ATTORNEY GENERAL

Smith Commission Told to Wrap Up Gaming Inquiry

VICTORIA - A commission of inquiry that has been looking into gaming in B.C. for five years is being terminated effective immediately, Attorney General Geoff Plant said today.

"This has been a long process, and it's time to bring the Smith Commission of Inquiry to an end," said Plant. "I don't think we'll learn anything more about gaming in B.C. by giving the commission more time and more money."

The previous government set up the commission in 1996 to examine the Nanaimo Commonwealth Holding Society and other gaming matters in B.C. The commission's mandate was to look at the rules governing the use of proceeds from licensed charitable gaming, how those proceeds are administered, and make recommendations.

Since then, a public record of the commission's ongoing work and evidence has been available through the Internet, and government has made substantial changes to the face of gaming in the province. The gaming branch and gaming commission have been reorganized, and there are new policies and procedures for licensed charitable gaming.

As well, police, ministry staff, and special prosecutors investigated the dealings of the Nanaimo Commonwealth Holding Society, which resulted in charges, convictions and fines.

The final report of the commission was to have been due Aug. 31. However, the commission recently requested an extension of four months to Dec. 31 – the seventh extension since it was established. In addition, court proceedings have been launched challenging the commission's jurisdiction to make adverse findings concerning the conduct of certain officials.

"The cost of the commission to date is about \$6 million, and another \$2 million could well be spent by year's end, including publicly funded legal fees for some of the people who received notices of adverse findings from the commission," Plant said. "I do not believe the taxpayers would be well served by this additional expenditure and delay."

"It's simply not in the interest of the public, or the public purse, to continue with this inquiry. It's time to close the book on the long nightmare of Nanaimo Commonwealth Holding Society and move forward."

The full text of the commission's proceedings can be found at <http://www.smithinquiry.com/> on the Internet.

News release available at http://www.ag.gov.bc.ca/media_releases/2001/jun2001/0171.htm

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[\[Back \]](#)