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Nunavut Edition Headline News

November 30, 1998

## Goo Arlooktoo: Public inquiry cost too much money

The NWT's justice minister and acting premier is giving lukewarm reviews to Anne Crawford's public inquiry report.

DWANE WILKIN  
Nunatsiaq News

IQUALUIT — How much money is the truth worth?

Is there a limit to how much a public government can afford to spend investigating the conduct of its own members?

As MLAs considered the meticulously detailed findings of Conflict of Interest Commissioner Anne Crawford's public inquiry report, the final cost for probing the conflict of interest complaint launched against Don Morin 10 months ago was expected to surpass \$1 million.

Most MLAs say they want time to read the report thoroughly before pronouncing on its findings, but at least one senior cabinet member questioned the way in which the inquiry was handled from the start.

"What we have here is legislation and a process that's flawed," says acting Premier Goo Arlooktoo, who was one of 42 witnesses who gave evidence during a four-week long public inquiry that culminated last week in a scathing assessment of Morin's conduct.

"Not to belittle the principle of conflict of interest legislation, but it's got to be more efficient."

Morin, who resigned last Thursday, a day after the report was released, accused Conflict of Interest Commissioner Anne Crawford of bias, and vowed to challenge her findings in court.

On the government side, the major costs associated with the inquiry were lawyers' fees and support staff for commission counsel, plus legal counsel for Morin.

They could be higher still, if MLAs choose to act on Crawford's recommendations regarding legal costs.

In her report, the conflict of interest commissioner reiterated her opinion that the GNWT's management services board should assume legal costs for Hay River MLA Jane Groenewegen, the complainant who triggered the inquiry, and two other principal witnesses, Mike Mrdjenovich and Roland Bailey.

That's one of the recommendations MLAs were expected to debate when they meet this week to review the report.

But Arlooktoo said he remains opposed to the principle of paying Groenewegen's legal costs, which are reported to have exceeded \$70,000.

"If you look at other situations where complaints are filed — you call the RCMP to report a possible criminal act, or you report smoke coming out of the building — it's the process that takes over. That's the end of your involvement.