

Progress reported in residential school commission talks

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[CBC News](#)

Lawyers are reporting progress following another day of negotiations over how to get the commission into native residential school abuse back on schedule.

Lawyers for First Nations groups, the churches that ran the government-funded schools and survivors met with government solicitors on Friday to discuss a proposal to replace the former chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Harry LaForme.

"We visited all the issues," said Pierre Baribeau, a lawyer representing the Catholic entities.

"We're in a good way to find solutions together."

Baribeau said there was "real progress" toward naming a replacement for LaForme because of what he called "the co-operative atmosphere."

Citing a confidentiality agreement, Baribeau refused to discuss who the replacement might be or other details of the proposal, which was put before government lawyers during a similar meeting last week.

"Everyone is happy compared to what we could have expected," he said following the meeting in Toronto.

Another meeting is set to be held within a few weeks, although no date has been confirmed.

Former Supreme Court of Canada justice Frank Iacobucci facilitated Friday's negotiations, meeting privately with representatives from the Assembly of First Nations and other groups. He also mediated a session where all the parties were involved.

Baribeau described Iacobucci's involvement as a "very good thing."

The former justice, who helped craft the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, has the credibility to speak to all the parties including the federal government, the lawyer said.

Neither Iacobucci nor a lawyer for the Assembly of First Nations returned calls seeking comment.

Established as part of the historic settlement agreement, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was thrown into turmoil after LaForme resigned from his post on Oct. 20, less than six months into the job.

The commission, which was established in June with the aim of completing its work in five years, is not charged with determining innocence or guilt but with creating a historical account of the residential schools, helping people to heal and encouraging reconciliation.

In his resignation, the former justice said the commission was on the verge of paralysis and doomed to failure. He cited an "incurable problem" with the other two commissioners, whom he said refused to accept his authority as chair and were disrespectful.

The commissioners, Claudette Dumont-Smith and Jane Brewin Morley, have denied the accusations.

With files from the Canadian Press

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