



## Remaining Woodlands abuse survivors should be compensated: NDP

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**The leader of B.C.'s NDP says if he is elected premier, all of the victims of a notorious mental institution would be compensated for abuse they suffered at the hands of staff there.**

Adrian Dix says he would compensate the remaining 300 survivors of the Woodlands Institution who have been left out of the current deal with the provincial government that doesn't apply to anyone who was at the school before 1974.

"Their position is legally correct but morally and politically wrong," Dix said at a press conference on the Woodlands property Monday.

"If there is a change in government we will be instituting this policy not on day three of this government but on day one," he said.

Some 1,500 children were physically, sexually, and psychologically abused at the New Westminster institution. The facility was shut down in 1996, and the provincial government acknowledged what happened in an ombudsman's report in 2001.

A settlement was reached in July of this year, but a legal technicality means it doesn't apply to people who were abused before August 1, 1974.

That was the day the Crown Proceedings Act took effect, which made it possible to sue the provincial government for what happened in care.

B.C.'s Attorney-General Barry Penner told CTV News that the entire case is tragic, but he doesn't want to set a bad precedent by rushing to give compensation without deferring to the courts.

"We have to be cautious of what this means for other claims against the provincial government, and that means taxpayers," he said.

Former residents currently have until September 19 to apply for restitution. Depending on the case, the awards could be from \$3,000 to \$150,000.

That's no help to Bill McArthur, who missed the August 1, 1974 deadline by ten days.

"I was thrown into isolation for a month. I've seen kids beaten, I've seen kids dragged by the hair down the staircase. I myself was sexually abused by staff members," he said.

Gary Hill is also not eligible. He says he was forced to work as an 11-year-old cleaning the cells of the mentally handicapped in other parts of the facility, which meant cleaning fecal matter and urine.

He tried to escape, and bit staff members, who sent him to get all of his teeth removed.

"I tried to bite because I wanted to escape. I was with pedophiles, you name it, I was put with some real bad people," he said. "They chopped my teeth out so I wouldn't bite."

He finally escaped to Ontario, but says he still wakes up in the middle of the night with memories of what happened.

He says he is aging, as are other survivors – and he wants compensation to come before more people pass away, and it's too late.

*With file from The Canadian Press*