

Bob Rae will advise Ottawa about Air-India inquiry

Ex-premier to meet families soon Appointed by deputy prime minister

WINNIPEG—Former Ontario premier Bob Rae says he hopes to start meeting with families of the 1985 Air-India disaster right away to try to determine whether the federal government should call a public inquiry.

Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan has appointed Rae to

provide her with independent advice on an inquiry that victims' relatives have sought for almost two decades.

"I want to listen to them, I want to hear them, I want to spend time with them and I want to work this through with them," Rae told reporters yes-

terday following a policy speech in Winnipeg.

"This is not something I'm going to be doing off in some office tower somewhere."

The World Sikh Organization questioned the need for an "in-between stage," but took no issue with Rae's credentials for the task.

"We've all had 20 years of looking back on what occurred, but if this is what it takes, we'll

now put all our hopes with Mr. Rae," said executive director Anne Lowthian.

She encouraged Rae to "set an example" for the federal government by being broad and inclusive in his research and making sure everyone is heard.

Rae said McLellan has not imposed a deadline, but he expects to have his report ready within a few months.

He will review all materials

and previous inquiry findings related to the bombing that killed 329 people when an explosive blew apart an Air-India plane off the coast of Ireland.

More than 200 Canadians were among the victims. Two baggage handlers in Tokyo were killed in a related bombing.

Calls for a public inquiry have grown louder since Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri were found not guilty of mur-

der and conspiracy charges on March 16 following a lengthy trial in Vancouver.

McLellan said in a statement she hopes Rae's review will help the government resolve any remaining public interest questions about the attack, both for the families and for all Canadians. Rae will also review transportation and security measures since 1985.

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