

Mass Casualty Commission

PUBLIC PROCEEDING

||| MASS CASUALTY
COMMISSION
COMMISSION
DES PERTES MASSIVES

JUNE 21, 2022

NOW SPEAKING

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Exhibits

FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENT

- **Support Services for Survivors, Families, and Communities**
- **All supporting documentation**

 **MASS CASUALTY
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**Support Services for
Survivors, Families, and
Communities**

Foundational Document

Prepared by: Counsel for the Mass Casualty Commission

Subject Matter

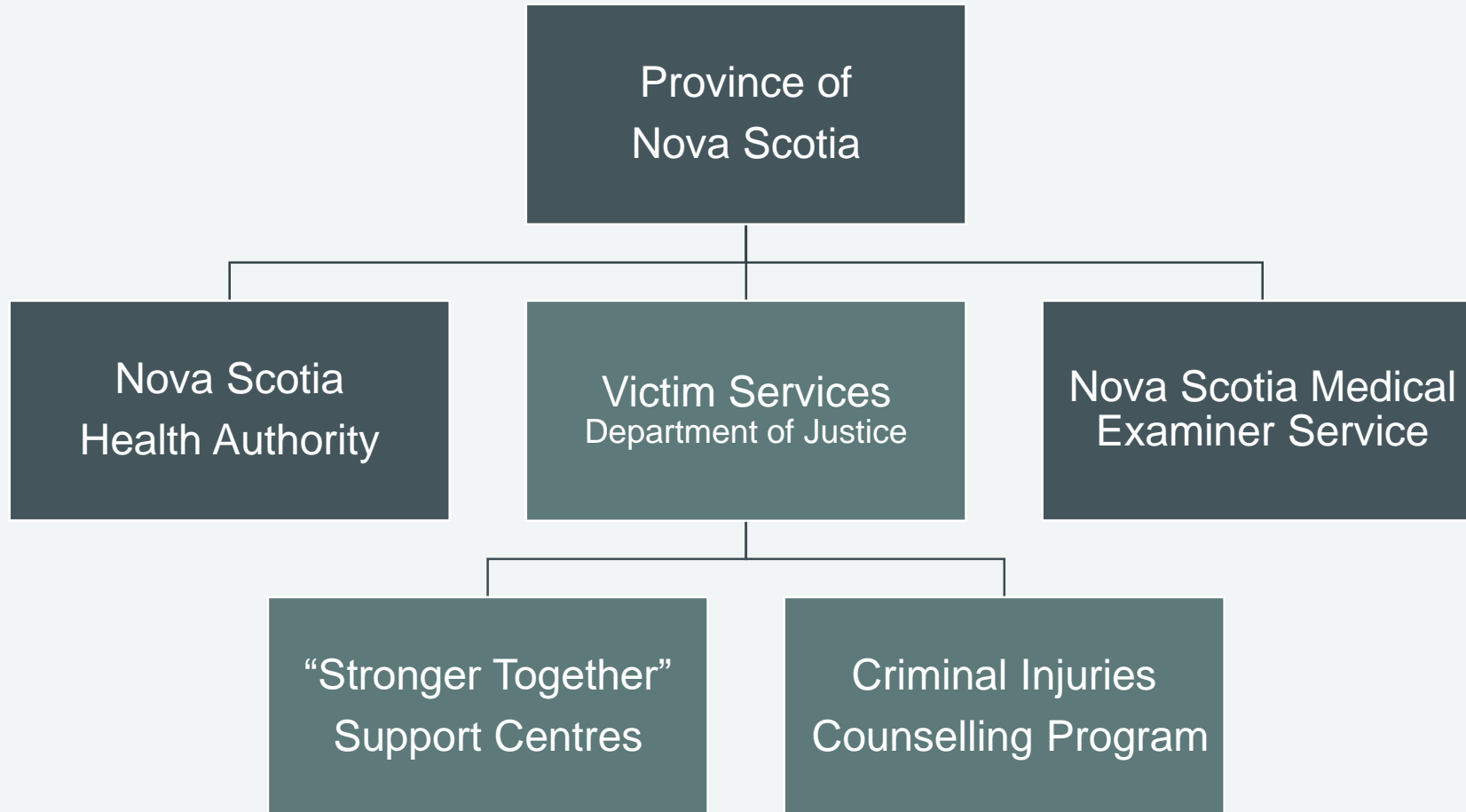
AREAS OF FOCUS

Overview of the services and supports offered by government, health systems and community groups to inform, support, and engage those affected by the mass casualty.



Support Services for Survivors, Families and Communities

Framework of Government Services for the Public



Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA)

OVERVIEW

The Provincial Health Authority operates hospitals, health centres and community-based health and wellness programs across Nova Scotia.

FOLLOWING THE MASS CASUALTY

- Developed a three-phase plan to address mental health and psychological needs associated with the mass casualty.
 - Immediate phase – high priority interventions
 - Medium-term phase – expand supports for first responders, families, communities
 - Long-term phase - interventions that would meet ongoing mental health/psychosocial needs

Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA)

ACTIONS TAKEN IN IMMEDIATE PHASE FOLLOWING THE MASS CASUALTY

Promoted Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Line

Partnered with IWK Health Centre to offer virtual crisis support

Assisted school boards in sending messages to families offering supports

Implemented “First Responders Assist”

Partnered with Psychology Association of Nova Scotia to offer support sessions with a psychologist

Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) cont.

ACTIONS TAKEN IN MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM PHASE
FOLLOWING THE MASS CASUALTY

Developed webinars for the
general public focused on coping
and resiliency

Supported the development of
guides about resources to be
distributed by DOJ Victim
Services

Victim Services

OVERVIEW

Provided by the Nova Scotia Department of Justice (DOJ). Offers a range of services to victims of crime including information, counselling, referrals to other services and assistance navigating the legal system.

“STRONGER TOGETHER” SUPPORT NAVIGATION PROGRAM

- Set up four community support navigation centres in Portapique, Debert, Shubenacadie and Wentworth.
- Staff at the centres were available to connect community members affected by the mass casualty with available mental health services and supports.
- The service could also be accessed remotely by calling a toll-free number or contacting DOJ Victim Services via e-mail.
- Closed on January 8, 2021.

Victim Services

(Criminal Injuries Counselling Program)

CRIMINAL INJURIES COUNSELLING PROGRAM

- Provides short-term funding for counselling to victims and witnesses of crime.
- Intended to make counselling accessible to victims in a timely manner to address the psychological effects stemming directly from the crime.
- DOJ Victim Services maintains a list of counsellors that offer their services.
 - A counsellor can be added to the list at any time provided they meet the program criteria.
- Typical awards of \$4000 per immediate family member and \$2000 for others, with additional funding awarded on a case-by-case basis. Maximum counselling fee of \$85/hour.
- DOJ Victim Services has opened 189 files in relation to the mass casualty and awarded approximately \$500,000 in funding.

Nova Scotia Medical Examiner Service

OVERVIEW

The Nova Scotia Medical Examiner Service investigates deaths that are violent, unexpected or unexplained, and is responsible for determining the cause and manner of the person's death.

FOLLOWING THE MASS CASUALTY

- The Medical Examiner Service was initially asked by the RCMP not to release the information contained in the final autopsy reports due to the ongoing police investigation.
- Once permission was given by the Major Crimes Unit, the cause of death is released to the nearest relative as well as details on how to receive a copy of the final autopsy report.
- Many family members reported that the medical examiners were very helpful and kind during their interactions with the service.

Services for First Responders & Front-Line Workers

Groups of first responders and front-line service providers had access to specific programs and services through government, their employers and outside agencies.

These groups include:

- Healthcare providers
- VON employees
- Colchester East Hants Community Centre
- RCMP members
- All first responders

Framework of Services for First Responders & Front-Line Service Providers

ALL FIRST RESPONDERS

- NSHA MHAP implemented “First Responders Assist”, which offered 24/7 access to short-term telephone-based counselling and support services to first responders including Emergency Health Services, municipal police, fire services and their families.
- Call-takers for the program asked First Responders (or family members) using the service to indicate if they were impacted by the mass casualty. A mental healthcare provider would then provide assistance and connect the caller with counselling and supportive services, including follow-up treatment if needed.

RCMP Members

- 271 RCMP employees directly involved in the mass casualty. In immediate aftermath, peer-support services made available and Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISM) held.
- Additional Members were deployed from Ontario and Quebec to Nova Scotia for period that varied from two weeks to four months.
- Several virtual wellness information sessions were held (LifeSpeak, Veterans Affairs Canada).
- Wounded Warriors Canada conducted the Warrior Kids Virtual Program free of charge for children of employees engaged in “H-Strong.”
- Capacity of the Operational Stress Injury (“OSI”) Clinic was increased to provide accelerated mental health support to RCMP members and their families.

Victim Services Employees	Colchester East Hants Health Centre (CEHHC)	VON Employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restorative circle held for DOJ Victim Services Pictou team and Managers • Employee Family Assistance Program (“EFAP”) and the Office of Workplace Mental Health with the Public Service Commission have provided internal and external mental health resources. • Direct supervisors hold internal check-ins with staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NS COMPASS Service implemented following the mass casualty to provide immediate support to NSHA staff involved in the response. • On April 22, 23 and 24, 2020. From 2:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. each day, a clinician specializing in trauma was available to CEHHC staff for individual or small group supports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Assistance Program (“EAP”) counsellors were made available via teleconference for VON employees starting on April 20, 2020.

Some Challenges With Support Services

Family Members

- Several family members reported that the list of counsellors provided by Victim Services was outdated and that it was challenging to find a counsellor who was accepting new clients. They also reported that \$85/per session was not enough to cover the cost.

Community Members

- Some community members reported they were unaware of supports available to them.

RCMP Members

- Some members reported concerns that the RCMP failed to support members' requests for accommodations to support mental health needs and coping strategies. Instead, it felt like RCMP management told them to go home and cope with it on their own.

Onslow Belmont Fire Hall

- Fire Chief Greg Muise and Deputy Chief Darrell Currie were not offered any kind of support until a year after the mass casualty took place.

First Responders

- Some EHS staff members stated they didn't see advertisements for the "First Responders Assist" program.

Some families have chosen to share their experiences with the Commission. We recognize the many other family members who continue to grieve the loss of their loved ones.

Examples of Tasks Completed For All Families

RCMP FAMILY LIAISON OFFICERS

- Canvassed families for their consent for politicians to call to express condolences.
- Provided updates on the H-Strong investigation.
- Provided advance notice about the release of ITOs pertaining to the mass casualty to the media.
- Notice and reminders about the Red Cross fund were sent to families.
- Delivered quilts made by the Maritime Modern Quilt Guild in Dartmouth and other gifts from the public.
- Removed flagging tape placed around Portapique.
- Notified out-of-province families about the live streaming of memorial events.

Examples of Services Provided to Individuals Families

RCMP FAMILY LIAISON OFFICERS

- Coordination, cleaning and return of personal effects.
- Providing advance notice about media articles and broadcasts pertaining to the mass casualty.
- Support and coordination with cleaning and restoration companies, insurance companies, the medical examiner's office.
- Delivery and distribution of cards and gifts from the public (quilts, stuffed animals, etc.).
- Providing information and support in connection with the H-Strong investigation and related court proceedings.
- Liaising with the Medical Examiner Service and Victim Services on behalf of the families.

Examples of Services Provided to Families cont.

VICTIM SERVICES

- Support and coordination of information and services
- Coordinating funding for individual counselling
- Liaising with the RCMP to provide information and support in connection with the H-Strong investigation

MEDICAL EXAMINER SERVICE

- Liaised with the families when able to do so, and provided information pertaining to causes of death

Community Efforts

Nova Scotia Remembers
Legacy Society

Red Cross Stronger
Together Fund

GoFundMe Campaigns

Wagon Walk

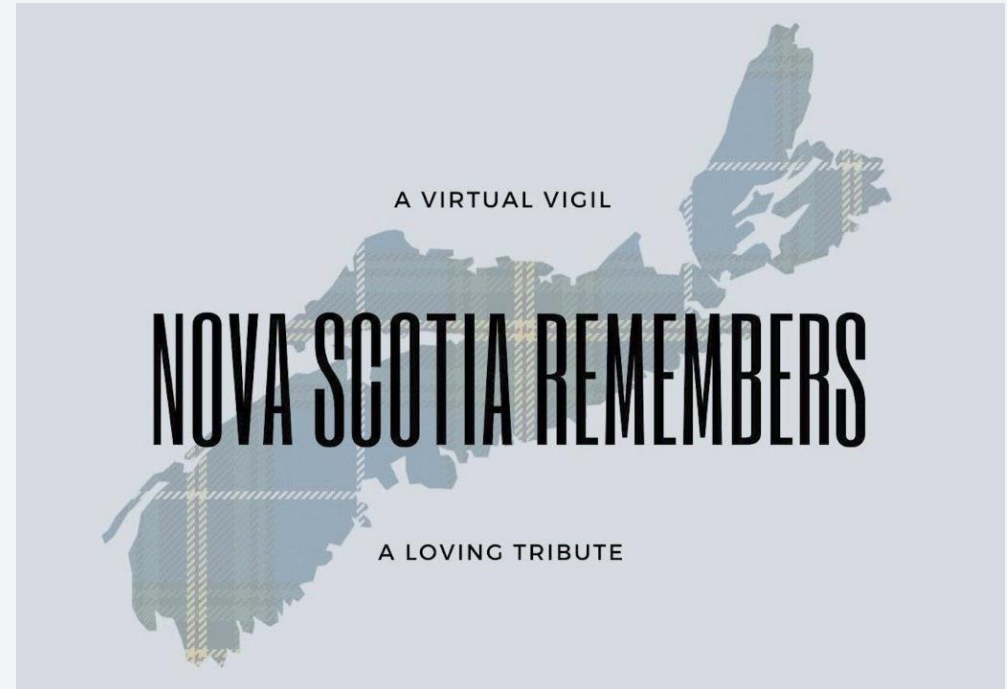
Portapique Community
Build Up

#NovaScotiaStrong Blood
Drive

Community Efforts

NOVA SCOTIA REMEMBERS LEGACY SOCIETY

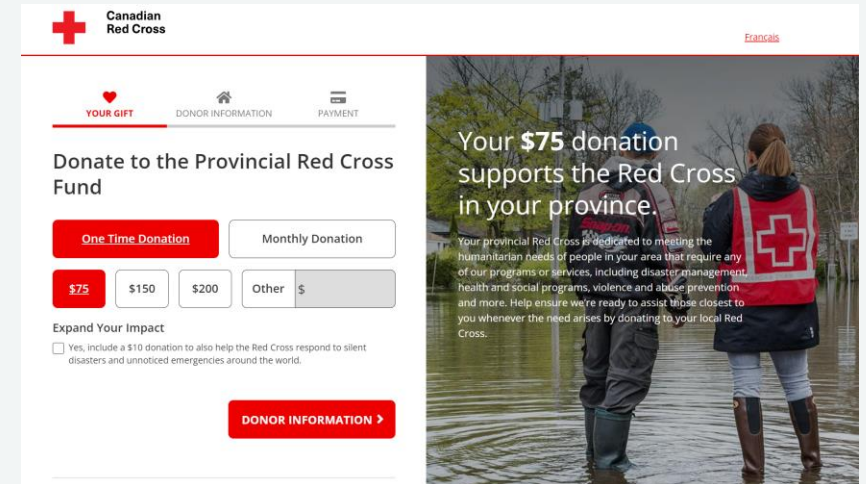
- Began with the organization of an on-line vigil held April 24, 2020, which enabled communities to connect and mourn while COVID kept people apart.
- Following the vigil, became a society of volunteers formed to accept public donations for the affected communities.
- Formed with four pillars in mind: 1) commemoration and memorialization, 2) education, 3) community development, and 4) grief and trauma support.
- On the one-year anniversary of the mass casualty, the society organized a commemoration ceremony, a walk in Victoria Park in Truro and a marathon event that raised \$35,000.



Community Efforts

RED CROSS STRONGER TOGETHER FUND

- Established April 22, 2020, the Red Cross established the Stronger Together Nova Scotia fund to support families and communities affected by the mass casualty.
- Red Cross committed to distributing the funds, in cooperation with the provincial government. A team of experts was later engaged to determine how best to administer the funds
- Donations could be made online or via a toll-free phone number.
- On April 12, 2021 the Red Cross published a final update announcing that Canadians had donated \$6.2 million to the fund and that 99% of donations had been distributed.



The screenshot shows the Canadian Red Cross donation interface. At the top, the Canadian Red Cross logo is on the left, and the word "Français" is on the right. Below the logo, there are three tabs: "YOUR GIFT" (selected), "DONOR INFORMATION", and "PAYMENT". The main heading is "Donate to the Provincial Red Cross Fund". There are two buttons for "One Time Donation" and "Monthly Donation". Under "One Time Donation", there are four buttons: "\$75" (highlighted in red), "\$150", "\$200", and "Other \$". Below this, there is a section titled "Expand Your Impact" with a checkbox and the text: "Yes, include a \$10 donation to also help the Red Cross respond to silent disasters and unnoticed emergencies around the world." At the bottom right, there is a red button labeled "DONOR INFORMATION >". To the right of the form is a photograph of two Red Cross volunteers in red vests with white crosses, standing in floodwaters. Text overlaid on the photo reads: "Your \$75 donation supports the Red Cross in your province." Below this, smaller text states: "Your provincial Red Cross is dedicated to meeting the humanitarian needs of people in your area that require any of our programs or services, including disaster management, health and social programs, violence and abuse prevention and more. Help ensure we're ready to assist those closest to you whenever the need arises by donating to your local Red Cross."

Community Efforts

PORTAPIQUE COMMUNITY BUILD UP

- The Rotary Club of Truro created the “Rotary Cares Committee” to see how they could assist the community. As a result, they announced their project titled “Community Build Up”.
- Plan includes upgrades to the existing Community Hall in Portapique, a new structure to host community events, a new playground and a multipurpose area for hosting sports and other events.
- A partnership with the MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning in Dartmouth has brought art and music programs to the area.

#NOVASCOTIASTRONG BLOOD DRIVE

- Canadian Blood Services in collaboration with the RCMP launched a national initiative titled #NovaScotiaStrong to encourage people across Canada to donate blood in honour of the victims of the mass casualty.

Community Efforts

GOFUNDME CAMPAIGNS

- Various GoFundMe campaigns were started following the mass casualty. However, the public was encouraged to stop donating to private campaigns and to direct their funds to the Red Cross Stronger Together Fund instead.

WAGON WALK

- Two university students organized a walk spanning 150km to fundraise for victims' children and the Community Build Up project.
- They were joined on parts of their walk by community members and members of the families. In total, they raised \$10,000 for the children's education fund and the Community Build Up project.



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