



To: Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission  
From: Canadian Red Cross Society  
Date: October 7, 2022

**Subject: Recommendations**

Dear Commissioners,

As a humanitarian organization committed to supporting Canadians, the Canadian Red Cross Society (CRCS) appreciates the opportunity to provide recommendations to the Mass Casualty Commission (the Commission). The CRCS is an independent, not-for-profit, humanitarian organization guided by its own principles and objectives including neutrality. **The objectives of the Commission and its scope of inquiry are broader than the role of the CRCS. As such these recommendations are limited to the CRCS' experience, perspective and areas of engagement.**

**BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

The CRCS was amongst multiple emergency management partners working closely with the Government of Nova Scotia and law enforcement from the earliest hours of this tragedy. In response to an outpouring of support and sympathy from across Canada and a desire by individuals, groups, businesses and other organizations to help in some way, the CRCS established the *Stronger Together Nova Scotia Fund*.

In total, Canadians generously donated \$6.2 million to this fund. **All funds are or will be used for those impacted and none of the funds have or will be used for administrative purposes. All administration costs incurred by the Canadian Red Cross for administration of the fund were supported by the Government of Nova Scotia**, meaning that 100% of funds raised will be distributed.

**As of August 31, 2022, 99% of donations had been distributed or committed.** At the time of this letter, the CRCS is continuing to work with a small number of impacted individuals and families. One per cent has been retained for contingencies as we worked through final and complex cases but once all cases are closed, those remaining funds will also be distributed pro rata. Specific details of who received payments, amounts and for what purposes will remain confidential in keeping with our commitment of confidentiality to those impacted.

**CRCS LESSONS LEARNED**

- 1. This event was unprecedented and with that came unique challenges. The CRCS had in place a funding mechanism to advance funds required to meet immediate needs, however challenges meant that it took longer than intended for more complete fund distribution.**

Families and relationships can be complex and likewise fund distribution was also complex. For example, for some, family representation and rightful beneficiaries was unclear and/or contested. Further, in keeping with CRCS principles we can only move at the pace of those impacted and often at the pace of

the slowest. In terms of pace, there are many legal complexities around estate administration and guardianship that had to be addressed by those impacted. These factors contributed to delays in implementing the fund and in future fund administration the CRCS would aim to administer the full funds (not just the preliminary distributions for immediate needs) more quickly.

With that said, the CRCS has mapped out that many urgent needs and costs were addressed (psychosocial support and funeral costs) through other sources and throughout our discussions with families, the CRCS inquired as to whether there were any immediate needs that the family had. Where there were, funds were provided quickly to help with those needs. This was particularly important where the deceased person was a large contributor to the family's overall income. It is advised that fund administrators ensure that immediate and unmet needs be supported as quickly as possible while additional conversations with families continue.

Further speed to fund distribution could be supported by rapid activation of a fund administration. Ensuring government authorities at all levels have a greater understanding of these services prior to events occurring would support rapid activation and the ability for, if appropriate, the CRCS to start program implementation as quickly as possible.

Finally, mindful that the CRCS works at the pace of those impacted and mindful that some of the delays are not avoidable, if another event were to arise the CRCS would also seek to be clearer with those impacted both in terms of the length of time it will take as well as the fact that we are not able to set specific targets and deadlines as it is so dependent on others in the group.

**2. Benchmarking of best practices was required to ensure appropriate administration of the fund. With that said administration must be based on the unique event, context and the needs and wants of the majority of those directly impacted.**

Leveraging its experience and expertise in case management for disruptive events<sup>1</sup>, the CRCS assembled a team to work closely with representatives of impacted families and those injured. To determine fund administration the CRCS consulted law enforcement, the Nova Scotia government, community groups, those with expertise in fields such as crime victim support and reviewed other mass-casualty events and how subsequent financial supports were managed, all with a goal of ensuring the most effective and compassionate use of these funds.

With that said, the CRCS sought guidance from those impacted to understand their views and perspectives on how the funds should be administered. When an approach was determined the CRCS then sought consensus from the majority of those impacted to ensure alignment on the distribution approach prior to distribution.

The CRCS believes that balancing best practices, context and ensuring the perspective of those impacted is reflected is critical to effective management of the funds.

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<sup>1</sup> Case Management provides support to and families who have been impacted by disruptive events or disasters to navigate their own recovery from impact. Support includes navigation, referrals to community organizations or professional services, assessment of needs, psychosocial and emotional support and financial assistance.

- 3. The capacity to leverage case management capacities and offer additional supports to those impacted aided in the CRC's administration of the fund. Further, beyond the provision of funds, and in addition to other services available, there is a need for navigational support for those impacted.**

Throughout this process, the priority of the CRCS has been to support those impacted who continue to grieve the loss of loved ones and cope with the emotional and financial trauma caused by this ordeal. Our objective was to respect their privacy and confidentiality while acknowledging that no two cases are identical, and that each family is working through their recovery and closure at a different pace.

It has been our experience in providing support following emergencies in Canada, as well as following this event, that the provision of case management support is an additional tool that can be leveraged to support those affected. Though not necessary or utilized by all those impacted, the CRCS was able to provide critical navigational support, referrals, and supportive conversation in addition to the distribution of monies.

The CRCS' case management methodology, the programming leveraged for this response is premised on providing both financial assistance and wrap-around support such as referrals and supportive conversations to help support recovery from impact.

- 4. The Nova Scotia Government funding of the costs required for administration was well received and ensured the maximum amount of funding went directly to those impacted.**

The Government of Nova Scotia has covered all the administrative costs for the fund ensuring that 100% of the funds are for the benefit of those impacted. These costs include those incurred by the families such as independent legal fees related to the funds being disbursed by the CRCS to ensure that those impacted understood the fund, the administration approach, their rights, and our commitments to confidentiality. This commitment has been extremely well received and has allowed for maximum funding for those impacted. Such an approach is advised for other governments supporting fund administration.

We thank the Commission for the opportunity to provide recommendations.

Sincerely,

The Canadian Red Cross Society