

Public Hearing

Audience publique

Commissioners / Commissaires

The Honourable / L'honorable J. Michael MacDonald,
Chair / Président

Leanne J. Fitch (Ret. Police Chief, M.O.M)

Dr. Kim Stanton

VOLUME 39

Held at :

Best Western Truro Glengarry
150 Willow Street
Truro, Nova Scotia

Tuesday, June 21, 2022

Tenue à :

Best Western Truro Glengarry
150, rue Willow
Truro, Nouvelle-Écosse

Mardi, le 21 juin 2022

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II Appearances / Comparutions

Ms. Gillian Hnatiw	Commission Counsel / Conseillère de la commission
Ms. Emily Hill	Commission Counsel / Conseillère de la commission
Mr. Jamie VanWart	Commission Counsel / Conseiller de la commission
Mr. Joshua Bryson	Counsel / Conseiller
Mr. Thomas Macdonald	Counsel / Conseiller
Mr. Michael Scott	Counsel / Conseiller
Ms. Linda Hupman	Counsel / Conseillère

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Truro, Nova Scotia

--- Upon commencing on Tuesday, June 21, 2022 at 9:33 a.m.

REGISTRAR DARLENE SUTHERLAND: Good morning. The proceedings of the Mass Casualty Commission are now in session with Commissioner Michael MacDonald, Commissioner Leanne Fitch and Commissioner Kim Stanton presiding.

COMMISSIONER FITCH: Good morning, and thank you. It's hard to start the morning without my opening notes.

Thank you, Commissioner MacDonald.

Bonjour at bienvenue. Hello, and welcome.

On this National Indigenous Peoples Day, we join you once again from Mi'gma'gi, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.

Please take a moment with us to remember those whose lives were taken and those who were harmed, their families and all those affected by the April 2020 mass casualty in Nova Scotia.

Yesterday, we learned about how the families of victims sought information about their loved ones during and after the mass casualty and how next of kin notifications worked. Today, we continue to learn about post-event communications and supports.

Commission Counsel will present two more Foundational Documents, one looking at supports offered to the families and communities, and another looking at public statements made by the RCMP and governments in the days, weeks and months after April 18th and 19th, 2020.

We will also hear from Constable Wayne Bent about his role as family liaison for the RCMP, the delivery of next of kin notifications and other information to affected families as well as his involvement in the search of Cobequid Court on April 19th, 2020.

As we continue to hear potentially difficult information, please

1 remember that the Commission's mental health team is at proceedings to help you and
2 that you can reach out for support providers who are listed on our website at any time.

3 I will now ask Commission Counsel Gillian Hnatiw to begin.

4 Ms. Hnatiw.

5 **--- INTRODUCTION OF FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS: SUPPORT SERVICES FOR**
6 **SURVIVORS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES; PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS FROM**
7 **THE RCMP AND GOVERNMENT AFTER THE MASS CASUALTY**

8 **--- PRESENTATION BY MS. GILLIAN HNATIW:**

9 **MS. GILLIAN HNATIW:** Good morning, Commissioners,
10 Participants, counsel, media, members of the public. My name is Gillian Hnatiw, and
11 I'm a member of the Commission's counsel team.

12 And I will start today by asking Madam Registrar to please mark as
13 an exhibit the Foundational Document titled "Support Services for Survivors, Families
14 and Communities".

15 **REGISTRAR DARLENE SUTHERLAND:** That's Exhibit 2346.

16 **--- EXHIBIT No. 2346:**

17 (COMM0059120) Foundational Document titled "Support
18 Services for Survivors, Families and Communities" and
19 source material

20 **MS. GILLIAN HNATIW:** And I'd also ask you to mark all of the
21 source material cited in that document.

22 **REGISTRAR DARLENE SUTHERLAND:** So exhibited.

23 **MS. GILLIAN HNATIW:** Thank you.

24 I note for the record and for the benefit of everybody here today
25 that there is -- there are, in fact, two errors in the citations to that document that were
26 just discovered, and so I want to note that the seventh bullet under paragraph 20 should
27 read "COMM53501" in place of "COMM53502".

28 And similarly, under paragraph 49, it should read "COMM56205" in

1 lieu of "COMM56206".

2 So with that piece of housekeeping out of the way, commence to
3 start the presentation of today's document.

4 This document was prepared in connection with the part of the
5 Commission's mandate that directs it to examine issues relating to the information and
6 support provided to families of victims, affected citizens, police personnel and
7 community. It provides an overview of the services and supports offered by
8 government, health systems, community groups to families, survivors, first responders,
9 frontline service providers and communities affected by the mass casualty.

10 The information in this document is bigger picture and it is only part
11 of the story. The Commission has also obtained a great deal of information about
12 supports that were available, the supports that were needed, and perhaps the supports
13 that were missing from its small group sessions, from public response to its "share your
14 experience" process and from its ongoing interviews and investigations.

15 This part of our work is very much ongoing, as this part of the story
16 is very much ongoing.

17 So I'll begin by looking at the framework of government services
18 that were available to affected communities and the individuals in the aftermath of the
19 mass casualty.

20 Three separate provincial entities were engaged, the Nova Scotia
21 Health Authority, Nova Scotia Victim Services, which is under the umbrella of the
22 Department of Justice, and the Nova Scotia Medical Examiner Service, beginning with a
23 look at the Nova Scotia Health Authority, which is the provincial Health Authority that
24 operates hospitals, health centres, community-based health and wellness programs
25 across Nova Scotia.

26 Immediately on April 19th as the mass casualty was unfolding, the
27 Nova Scotia Health Authority recognized that it was going to need to respond and
28 developed a three phase plan to address the health and psychological needs

1 associated with the mass casualty. First, there was an immediate phase plan to
2 respond and offer high priority interventions on the ground.

3 So on April 19th, 2020, the Nova Scotia Health Authority deployed
4 its Crisis Response Team to the Colchester East Hants Health Centre in Truro, and had
5 five volunteers and a psychiatrist available on the ground. It also immediately began to
6 promote the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Line.

7 On the 20th, the Health Authority, in cooperation with the local
8 school boards arranged for those boards to use their Swift Reach Communication
9 Centres to send automated messages to parents directing them to call their children's
10 school and providing them with some information as to how to find -- go about finding
11 supports if they were needed. They also partnered with IWK to offer virtual crisis
12 supports, and implemented some first aid First Responder Assist programs.

13 All of this -- all of these different programs and the details of them
14 are detailed in the Foundational Document itself.

15 As part of their intermediate and long-term plan, the Nova Scotia
16 Health Authority also worked to develop webinars for the general public focussed on
17 coping and resiliency, and supported the development of guides and other resources to
18 be distributed by DOJ Victims Services.

19 Victims Services, again, which operates under the Department of
20 Justice, was the second main provincial entity that was engaged and deployed in the
21 wake of the mass casualty. The Victims Services branch of the Department of Justice
22 is typically focussed on providing support to individuals going through court processes,
23 specifically criminal court processes, but were quickly redeployed to offer supports in
24 the immediate aftermath in two main ways that work together very much.

25 First, they set up what were known as Support Navigation Centres
26 in four of the affected communities. So that's Portapique, Debert, Shubenacadie, and
27 Wentworth. Staff was available at those centres to help connect families and
28 community members affected by the mass casualty with available mental health

1 services and supports.

2 I think it's helpful to remind ourselves that all of this was unfolding in
3 the context of the early days of COVID when there was a Shelter In Place Order for the
4 province -- in effect for the province, and it was very challenging for anybody to
5 congregate together at all. So the Support Navigation Centres were set up to default
6 through appointments, but they certainly welcomed walk-ins as well. And the intent was
7 to provide a central place for families and affected community members to get
8 information and resources. Victims Services worked to develop relationships with the
9 individuals most affected, and help meet their needs. Again, this was a service that was
10 set up quickly and adapted from existing resources in the context of what was unfolding,
11 both in respect of the mass casualty and in respect of the ongoing COVID-19 health
12 crisis.

13 To let local residents know about the existence of these navigation
14 centres, cards were sent out to all households in affected communities informing them
15 of the available supports. Again, appointments were encouraged but not required, and
16 they also made arrangements to make the services available remotely, both by
17 telephone and by email. Victims Services staff worked to build relationships with many
18 of those most affected, and those relationships continue today.

19 The centres themselves were closed. The last one was closed on
20 January 8th, 2021, due to the fact that they were no longer being physically accessed.
21 The relationships that they had worked to build sort of were able to continue in other
22 fashions.

23 The second major initiative spearheaded by Victims Services was
24 access to the Criminal Injuries Counselling Program. Again, this is an existing service
25 that is typically made available to victims and families of criminal injuries. It is designed
26 to provide short-term funding for counselling in the form of sort of an approved stipend
27 to go into the community and retain a private counsellor that meets your needs in your
28 local area. It is intended to make counselling accessible to victims in a more timely

1 manner to address the psychological effects stemming directly from the crime.

2 Through Victims Services, packages and applications to the
3 Criminal Injuries Counselling Program were distributed to families and other affected
4 individuals. Once approved for funding, they're also provided with a list of counsellors
5 that purport to offer their services in the area.

6 Typically, the awards were for \$4,000 for immediate family
7 members and \$2,000 for others, with additional funding awarded on a case-by-case
8 basis. There is a maximum counselling fee of \$85 per hour.

9 We have heard some feedback from families and from others that
10 for some, this program was very helpful and enabled them to access counselling very
11 quickly. For others, they struggled to find a counsellor in their area that was accepting
12 patients or that would accept new patients at the rate provided, which put them in a
13 position of potentially having to pay the difference out-of-pocket. So there has been
14 feedback on the overall efficacy of the service, but it was deployed very quickly and it
15 seems to have gone some ways to fill that need.

16 To date, Victims Services has opened 189 files in relation to the
17 mass casualty and awarded approximately half-a-million dollars in funding, only about a
18 quarter of which has been used.

19 The third government entity that was engaged in responding in the
20 aftermath of the mass casualty was of course the Medical Examiners Service, which in
21 more normal circumstances liaises directly with families to provide information
22 contained in final autopsy reports.

23 Here, as is often the case when there is an ongoing criminal
24 investigation, the medical services was initially asked by the RCMP not to release the
25 information contained in the final autopsy reports to the families. However, once
26 permission by the Major Crimes Unit was given, families were given the opportunity,
27 sorry, the cause of the death was released to the nearest relatives and families were
28 given details as to how to receive a final copy, sorry, a copy of the final autopsy report.

1 Again, many families reported that the Medical Examiners Office
2 were helpful and kind during their interactions. We also heard from families who had
3 difficulty accessing the information that they wanted when they wanted it. And I know
4 that interaction with the Medical Examiners Service continues today as families continue
5 to seek out answers to some of their more intimate questions about their loved ones.

6 In addition to the services that were available to the public more
7 generally and to the families and those most affected, there were also services for
8 frontline workers and first responders, who, as we have heard over the past weeks and
9 months, were also among those most affected by the mass casualty. Some of those
10 groups of first responders had access to specific programs, services and supports
11 through their employers. Some of them also had supports through governments and
12 other outside agencies.

13 We discovered through our work that the supports and services that
14 were available to the different individual groups of first responders differed significantly
15 between depending on whether they were -- depending on the circumstances of their
16 employment, whether they were employed full-time, whether they were unionized or
17 non-unionized, whether they were volunteer, as well as the supports services and
18 benefits offered by those particular employers. As we already heard, certainly from the
19 paramedics last week, there's sort of a range of experiences.

20 There were some common denominators in the supports made
21 available to all first responders, one of which is that the Nova Scotia Health Authority
22 implemented First Responder Assist, which offered 24/7 access to short-term tele
23 counselling and support services to first responders, which included emergency health
24 services, municipal police, fire services, and their families. Call takers for the program
25 would determine if the caller had been impacted by the mass casualty, and then a
26 healthcare provider would offer assistance in connection the caller with the appropriate
27 counselling and support services as well as follow-up treatment as needed. So this
28 phone line really acted as sort of a navigation and referral service.

1 There were supports available to RCMP members. There were
2 271 RCMP employees directly involved in the mass casualty. And in the immediate
3 aftermath, peer support services were made available to those involved and a number
4 of critical incident stress debriefings, or called CISMs, were held in keeping with RCMP
5 protocols.

6 In addition, a number of members, I think approximately 70,
7 accessed some form of sick leave of some duration in the weeks -- days, weeks and
8 months immediately following the mass casualty. As a result, additional members were
9 deployed from Ottawa and Quebec to Nova Scotia for a period that varied for two
10 weeks. The force from Ontario and Quebec sent I think 60 officers for the first 2 weeks
11 following the mass casualty, which was later tapered out to 12 additional officers 4
12 months out.

13 Several virtual wellness sessions were held for RCMP members,
14 both by private companies like LifeSpeak as well as by Veteran Affairs Canada and the
15 Workers Compensation Board. Wounded Warriors Canada conducted the Warrior Kids
16 virtual program free of charge for children of employees engaged in H-Strong.

17 Finally, the capacity of the Operational Stress Injury Clinic in
18 Dartmouth was increased to provide accelerated mental health support to RCMP
19 members and their families, and the Operational Stress Injury Clinic in Fredericton was
20 also available to provide additional supports.

21 Other first responder groups also -- sorry, the Commission and its
22 work has also learned of supports available to other first responder groups. This is
23 really about helping the helpers. So when I spoke before about Victim Services
24 deploying its staff into the communities to set up those navigation centres and to begin
25 assisting families, that those workers themselves sometimes need support. So as
26 examples of that support, restorative circles were held for those DOJ Victim Services
27 employees, the Pictou team and their managers, and they all had access to employee
28 family assistance program. Their direct supervisors were -- also held internal wellness

1 check-ins with staff on an ongoing basis.

2 I think that in the rush to help those most affected in the aftermath
3 of something like the mass casualty, we look at the ripples as to the impact on them and
4 the impact on those supporting them.

5 So similar situation with Colchester East Hants Health Centre.
6 Nova Scotia had already been developing something called the Compass Service in the
7 context of COVID to support health -- frontline healthcare workers in their response to
8 COVID, and that was deployed early to provide immediate support to NSHA staff
9 involved in the response to the mass casualty. Also, on April 23rd -- 22nd, 23rd and 24th,
10 a clinician specializing in trauma was onsite at Colchester East Hants Hospital, and
11 available to see staff there for individual or small group supports.

12 Finally, supports were offered to VON employees. Of course, we
13 know that both Heather O'Brien and Kristen Beaton were VON employees and that
14 Kristen Beaton was on the way to see a client at the time of her death. So VON made
15 employee assistant counsellors available to all employees via teleconference to provide
16 additional supports.

17 As I've mentioned throughout, but now as also reflected in the
18 slides, despite well intentions, many of these services were put together in response to
19 a truly horrific tragedy, or they were adopted from something that went before, and they
20 have been imperfect, as is a surprise to no one. So some of the challenges that we
21 heard with Support Services so far include, you know, families telling us that they had
22 difficulties accessing the counselling services, notwithstanding the fact that they may
23 have had funding for counselling services. We heard that sometimes the list provided
24 by Victim Services was outdated and that it could be challenging for them to find a
25 counsellor in their area. We also heard that the rate of \$85 per session didn't -- was not
26 in keeping with the market, and it was sometimes challenging for them to access those
27 services as a result.

28 From the communities more broadly, we have heard from a number

1 of different witnesses that there remains gaps in the supports available, or that they
2 were simply unaware of the supports that were available to them, despite, for example,
3 the cards that were mailed out to all the households. Some people reported that they
4 didn't receive the card or that they didn't understand that the navigation centres were for
5 them.

6 With the RCMP, we certainly have heard some members express,
7 including in their testimony before the Commission, that there were other supports and
8 services that could have been available to them, particularly in coping with the stress in
9 the immediate aftermath of being involved and responding to the mass casualty. We
10 heard from Fire Chief Muise and Deputy Fire Chief Currie that they in fact, as volunteer
11 firefighters, were not offered any kind of support until a year after the mass casualty
12 took place.

13 And finally, from first responders, the Commission has conducted
14 interviews with some EHS staff, as well as some members of the Colchester East Hants
15 Health Centre who continue to need supports and continue to experience harms that
16 remain unaddressed a year and a half later.

17 The Foundational Document does speak in some detail to the
18 supports that were sought out by individual families, the supports that were provided,
19 and the supports that were still needed.

20 I don't intend to cover those details in my presentation this morning.

21 I wanted to pause though and recognize that in addition to the
22 detail set out in the Foundational Documents, some families have chosen to share their
23 experience and some families have not. And some families have chosen to keep some
24 of the details of what they experienced to themselves. So we want to recognize the
25 many other family members who continued to grieve the loss of their loved ones and
26 acknowledge that the information in the document is incomplete and it's also ongoing as
27 this story is ongoing and the need for support is ongoing.

28 And so the Commission will continue to work to try and hear those

1 voices in different ways.

2 Although I won't be going into detail, I did want to quickly
3 summarize the kind of tasks that were provided and completed for families, primarily
4 they were completed by the RCMP liaison officer, all of the families, except for the
5 families of Heidi Stevenson and Cst Chad Morrison -- sorry, Cst Heidi Stevenson and
6 Cst Chad Morrison, worked with Cst Wayne "Skipper" Bent from the RCMP, who we're
7 going to hear from later this morning.

8 Cst Bent, in cooperation with individuals from Victim Services
9 worked on the front lines to provide information and supports to families from April 19th
10 onwards.

11 Some of the tasks that this included for everyone in the early days,
12 including reaching out to ask the families if they wanted to receive condolence calls
13 from politicians and public figures who were asking to reach out. They have provided
14 them with ongoing updates on the H Strong investigation, they worked to try to provide
15 them with advanced notice about the release of ITOs and other information about the
16 investigations before that they showed up in the media or the public.

17 The goal was always for the families to learn about any updates
18 before they saw it on the evening news.

19 The family liaisons worked to help them access the Red Cross fund
20 that we'll hear about in a moment, to distribute gifts and cards from the general public,
21 and to do things like restoring the woods around Portapique, which were awash with red
22 flags from the ground search conducted by the RCMP and served as a constant
23 reminder to the individuals who still lived in the community of what had happened there.
24 So I think you'll hear more about that this afternoon.

25 In addition to the services that were provided on a bigger picture
26 level, the family liaison officers in Victim Services have often worked with individual
27 families to do things like clean and return personal effects, help them hire cleaning and
28 restoration companies once the crime scenes were released to the families, helped

1 liaise with insurance companies and the Medical Examiner's Office, and tried to provide
2 them with individual information and support in connection with the H Strong
3 investigation and related court proceedings.

4 Again, these supports and services were provided hand in hand
5 with individuals from Victim Services and often involved liaising with the Medical
6 Examiner's service as well.

7 This isn't on the slides, but I should also note the fact that the
8 communities have often provided -- we heard about how communities often provided
9 grass roots supports to the individual families in their midst through car rallies, through
10 drive by memorials, through the ongoing donation to a furnace oil account for the
11 Webber family. And so communities have shown up in unique and personal ways to
12 support the families in their midst.

13 Communities have also organized themselves in more specific
14 ways to support the families and each other in the aftermath. And so this is just an
15 example of some of the initiatives that the Commission has learned about in its work
16 and continues to learn about and reflect on as we look towards making
17 recommendations.

18 The first example is the Nova Scotia Legacy -- Nova Scotia
19 Remembers Legacy Society, which began through the ad hoc organization of an online
20 vigil. Again, the mass casualty occurred during covid, at a time where people could not
21 physically gather and be with each other. And through Facebook, a community member
22 named Tiffany Ward organized an online vigil that was eventually held on April the 24th,
23 2020 that enabled communities to connect and mourn while remaining covid compliant.
24 The vigil featured musical tributes and video messages and was a source of some
25 coming together in the days immediately afterwards.

26 Following the vigil, the Society of Volunteers formed and began to
27 accept public donations for the affected communities. Their work was organized around
28 four pillars. The first was commemorization [*sic*] and memorialization. The second was

1 education. The third, community development. And the fourth was grief and trauma
2 support.

3 On the one-year anniversary of the mass casualty, the Society
4 organized a commemoration ceremony, a walk in Victoria Park in Truro, and a
5 marathon event that raised approximately \$35,000.

6 In January of 2022, the Society began to shift the funds it had
7 raised to a municipal government trust and concluded its work.

8 The second example of some community efforts that was really
9 more nationwide was the Red Cross Stronger Together Fund. It was established on
10 April 22nd, 2020 to accept public donations, financial support for families and
11 communities affected by the mass casualty.

12 Funds were donated by individuals and corporations across the
13 country and internationally. Here in Truro, the Sobeys accepted in-store donations and
14 Tim Horton's sold Nova Scotia Strong doughnuts until May the 5th.

15 The Red Cross eventually hired a team of experts to engage in
16 determining how to best administer the funds, and they were distributed in cooperation
17 with the provincial government.

18 On April 12, 2021, the Red Cross published final update
19 announcing that Canadians had donated a total of 6.2 million to the fund and that 99
20 percent of those funds had been distributed.

21 Other examples of community efforts include the Portapique
22 Community Buildup, which was another grassroots effort undertaken in cooperation with
23 the Rotary Club that has raised funds and focused it on renewing and regenerating the
24 community hall in Portapique. It has a new structure to host community events, a new
25 playground and a new multi-purpose area for hosting sports and other events.

26 The concept behind this project is that this -- the community of
27 Portapique needs an opportunity to gather and to heal and to know their neighbours
28 again.

1 In partnership with the MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning in
2 Dartmouth, the centre has also brought art and music programs to the area to be
3 accessed by the children in the area.

4 Other community efforts include GoFundMe campaigns that were
5 set up by friends, family and other members of the public who wanted to support in the
6 immediate aftermath. Those were soon I should say replaced or at least encouraged to
7 be replaced by the Red Cross' campaign.

8 And one last example -- or two last examples is -- I think I skipped
9 over this on a slide -- that the Canadian Blood Services held a Nova Scotia Strong
10 blood drive in collaboration with the RCMP to encourage people across Canada to
11 donate blood in honour of the victims of the mass casualty.

12 And two university students organized a walk that spanned 150
13 kilometres to fundraise for the victims' children and for the Portapique Community
14 Buildup project. Again, this walk itself took place in the midst of COVID, but they
15 walked through affected communities and were joined by individuals along the way.
16 And in the end, they raised \$10,000 for the children's education fund and the
17 Community Buildup project.

18 So these are examples of some of the community initiatives that the
19 Commission has learned about and continues to learn about in its work to date.

20 Again, as I said at the beginning, this part of the story remains
21 ongoing and the need for support continues, and we continue to hear about those
22 experiences and those needs as the Commission's work continues, so thank you.

23 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you so much, Ms. Hnatiw.

24 We will now reorganize the platform here so that we can hear from
25 our first -- our witness today, Constable Wayne Bent, so we'll just take a -- the
26 Commissioners will remain here and we'll just take a few minutes to rearrange the
27 platform.

28 Thank you.

1 --- Pause

2 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you so much.

3 Ms. Hill?

4 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Good morning. Commissioners, we've arranged
5 to hear from Constable Wayne (Skipper) Bent, who you have heard was and continues
6 to be the Family Liaison Officer for most of the families directly affected by the mass
7 casualty, so I would ask him to come forward.

8 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you.

9 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Good morning, Constable Bent.

10 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Good morning.

11 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Madam Registrar, can you please affirm Mr.
12 Bent -- Constable Bent?

13 **--- CST. WAYNE BENT, Affirmed**

14 **--- EXAMINATION IN-CHIEF BY MS. EMILY HILL**

15 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Constable Bent, I just want to begin by asking a
16 few questions about your employment background.

17 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I'm sorry.

18 **MS. EMILY HILL:** So what's your current position?

19 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I'm currently with the Northeast Nova Major
20 Crime Unit stationed in Bible Hill. I've been there since December of 2019.

21 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And I understand you've served as a member of
22 the RCMP here in Nova Scotia since 2008.

23 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

24 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And I understand you joined the RCMP in 2000.

25 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

26 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And you were first posted in Tuktoyaktuk and
27 then Fort Good Hope and then Yellowknife?

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** All in the Northwest Territories. Yes, that's

1 correct.

2 **MS. EMILY HILL:** So you spent your first eight years in the
3 Northwest Territories with the RCMP and then came to Nova Scotia.

4 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

5 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. Today, we will be talking primarily about
6 your role as a family liaison and also your activities on April 19th.

7 And I just want to remind you that as a public inquiry, we're a bit
8 different than trials that you may have testified at in the past. In our process, the
9 interview that you've provided to the Mass Casualty Commission is already an exhibit
10 and I may take you at certain points to the Foundational Document that was prepared
11 and entered yesterday as an exhibit.

12 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Okay.

13 **MS. EMILY HILL:** I'm just going to ask you a few general
14 questions about your assignment as family liaison.

15 Who assigned you to that role?

16 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That liaison task came from Corporal
17 MacKay, Angela McKay, and Corporal Gerry Rose-Berthiaume.

18 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And when were you assigned to that role?

19 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** It came on the 19th.

20 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about how you
21 came to know that you were assigned to that job?

22 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I was called at home, advised of an incident
23 that had happened, was asked if I could come in, and went to work. And upon arrival,
24 was -- I had initially been told over the phone by Corporal McKay that I was going to be
25 the file coordinator. And by the time I had shown up at work there, they had -- they had
26 changed that. I don't know what the discussion was, but just that my role was now
27 going to be family liaison.

28 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And do I understand that that call very early in

1 the morning on the 19th of April?

2 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct. It was just before -- just
3 before 2:00 a.m. in the morning.

4 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And at the time when you were assigned that
5 role, you didn't know how many families you would be working with. Is that right?

6 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** No. At that time, things were still -- well, at
7 that time, everything was thought to have been stopped, that everything had not
8 continued on as it did after the calls came in from Wentworth.

9 **MS. EMILY HILL:** So before asking you some specific questions
10 about your asks on April 19th, I just want to ask a few questions about the role of family
11 liaison generally.

12 Was that a role that you had played ever before?

13 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I think every police officer who works
14 frontline policing is a -- has liaison experience. You're always dealing with people,
15 sometimes at their worst. You learn to talk to folks, so you're always providing them
16 with updates on what's going on with their -- with their file, with the investigation. If it's
17 going through a court process, you're talking with folks.

18 Being specifically assigned as a family liaison on a major crime file,
19 no, I was not.

20 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Do I understand you correctly that that's --
21 communicating with families is a role that many police officers would be involved in on
22 many files but that in this case, having that as your sort of primary responsibility was
23 something new for you?

24 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

25 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And is -- do I understand that in Nova Scotia in
26 the RCMP, that's not usually a role that someone in Major Crime would be assigned?

27 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** For as long as I've worked in Major Crime,
28 it's not been a role that's ever been assigned to someone in our unit.

1 Typically, what we end up doing is, for example, our responsibilities
2 are for the northern part of Nova Scotia. So in one of our last files that happened in a
3 Cape Breton community, we had a member from detachment who was designated as a
4 liaison person who could work to provide the information that came from the Command
5 Triangle of our team. The person who works in that community lives usually in or near
6 that community, they know the people in that community, they know the resources in
7 that community.

8 For example, why did I reach out to Pictou County Victims
9 Services? Because I had never worked in Colchester County on detachment, I didn't
10 have a clue of who to call, so I reached out to my old contacts. If I was to go to some
11 spot any where's else in, you know, Cape Breton, Antigonish, wherever, I wouldn't know
12 who those resources were, I wouldn't know who the people were that they could lean on
13 for support.

14 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And to your knowledge, the responsibilities of a
15 Family Liaison Officer aren't laid out in RCMP policies; is that right?

16 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** There is nothing that I see specifically in
17 there. I -- I do know that a family liaison acts as a conduit between the Command
18 Triangle, and more specifically, the lead investigator, the primary, and the family, so that
19 I can provide information to them or provide questions back to the lead investigator.

20 **MS. EMILY HILL:** You understand that being that conduit is a -- is
21 an important part of that job?

22 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Absolutely.

23 **MS. EMILY HILL:** But that's not laid out in policy?

24 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** There is nothing that I have seen in policy
25 that -- that it lines what that is.

26 **MS. EMILY HILL:** So there's not a job description or a task list that
27 you know of?

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** No, nothing that I know of.

1 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. And you hadn't, in April 2020, received
2 any specific training for that role?

3 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Other than having worked probably, oh the
4 better part of my career, responding to complaints and going and talking to folks. So...

5 **MS. EMILY HILL:** You're relying on the job experience?

6 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Exactly.

7 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Are you aware of any specific training that is
8 available for that role?

9 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I don't know of any that has been around.
10 I've heard that there may be something in B.C., but I don't know if that's -- if that's
11 accurate or not, so I can't really say that there is or isn't.

12 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Do you know why you were chosen for this job?

13 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I -- I've known Corporal McKay and
14 Corporal Rose-Berthiaume for sometime, I've worked with them previously in different
15 roles. Again, they know I'm a peaceable person, they know what I bring to a team. You
16 know, I think that's the reason that they chose me, they knew that I would be able to
17 treat people with dignity and compassion, could -- could fulfill the responsibilities of the
18 role.

19 **MS. EMILY HILL:** I'm going to ask you about some specific tasks
20 that you were responsible for and took -- took responsibility for on April 19th. I
21 understand that you started your day, as you've just said, at very early hours of the
22 morning at the Bible Hill detachment.

23 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct. That's where our office is.

24 **MS. EMILY HILL:** What was your first task that you did that day?

25 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I began to work on a profile of the
26 perpetrator. At that -- when our unit is called in, we're usually -- we start to slow things
27 down, is what we do, and we start to develop tasks and task lists of what to do. One of
28 those things is that we know that if there is going to be a custodial interview of a

1 perpetrator we want to have background information, so I was beginning to put together
2 that profile.

3 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. Do I understand that that task was really
4 in your role as sort of a member of the Major Crimes Unit rather than as the Family
5 Liaison ---

6 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's completely as that. Up until such time
7 as, you know, we find out that the perpetrator is now deceased is we're still in an active
8 boots on the ground role is what we're doing.

9 **MS. EMILY HILL:** So that dual role that you were having, do I
10 understand that the transition from primarily being concerned with the activities as a
11 Major Crime Unit member to being the Family Liaison, that that was after the perpetrator
12 was deceased was when that focus changed?

13 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** After he was deceased and when I returned
14 to the office. Because I was at the Debert scene on Plains Road until almost 2:00 p.m.
15 that afternoon before I returned to the office.

16 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. So just to make sure we don't skip over
17 that part. You were working at Bible Hill on this profile that you were developing. At
18 some point, you left and went to -- to -- you were heading to Wentworth but you ended
19 on Plains Road. Do I have that ---

20 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

21 **MS. EMILY HILL:** --- right?

22 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

23 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. And you were there for a number of
24 hours?

25 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I'm going to say for approximately three
26 hours. I don't -- I honestly don't remember looking at my watch as we went running out
27 the door, I just know when roughly that I had left.

28 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. And -- and so then you returned to Bible

1 Hill and began focussing on some tasks related to your role as Family Liaison.

2 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

3 **MS. EMILY HILL:** It may be helpful, Madam Registrar, if you could
4 bring up paragraphs 13 to 15 of the next of -- of the Foundational Document that was
5 entered yesterday, which is Information Seeking from Family and Next of Kin
6 Notifications. Thank you.

7 I'm just going to take your attention to paragraphs 13 to 15. I'll just
8 read them just to sort set out what the, as I understand, the scene was at that time, and
9 then I'll just ask you to comment.

10 So at paragraph 13:

11 "In his interview with the Mass Casualty Commission
12 in April 2022, Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume provided
13 information about the Major Case Command
14 Triangle's strategy to process scenes and complete
15 NOK notifications beginning on [April 19th].
16 Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume said the transition from Critical
17 Incident Command to the MCU began after the
18 perpetrator was shot, and '[t]he amount of information
19 that was flowing in at that time was astronomical.' The
20 MCU was processing 17 scenes and 22 deceased.
21 Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume explained the immediate
22 strategy for processing the scenes and identifying the
23 victims as follows:

24 This is a block quote:

25 "As to what scenes got processed first, it's the
26 investigative team, myself and the TL [Team Leader],
27 Angela McKay, we took our direction from them as to
28 what ones were processed first. And a lot of that,

1 from our conversations with them, had to do with
2 where those scenes were and what they involved.
3 For example, scenes outside, like, Debert, like the
4 Cloverleaf and what not, they were obviously more
5 important to, you know, go and assess and process
6 right away, as opposed to a scene such as, for
7 example, the Bond's or the Tuck's, that were inside,
8 enclosed, and, you know, you kind of, for lack of a
9 better word, covered or tucked away . . . There's only
10 so many FIS [Forensic Identification Services]
11 investigators."

12 And then, just the next paragraph:

13 "At the same time, Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume and
14 Cpl. McKay's team was processing a large number of
15 requests for information about possible victims.

16 Cpl. McKay's notes state:

17 'Between April 19th to 2000 [sic] [20] hrs on April 20th
18 – well over one hundred family/Portapique resident
19 related emails came in and needed to be addressed.

20 ... Many messages were not from immediate family
21 members and therefore all had to be reviewed to
22 ensure any information provided was correct and not
23 released without ascertaining the caller's relationship
24 to the victims."

25 "At 2:00 p.m., Cst. Wayne ('Skipper') Bent began
26 reviewing the 'enormous number of emails' received
27 by the RCMP (described further below) to determine
28 who were NOK for various victims. Cpl. Rose-

1 Berthiaume and Cpl. McKay advised Cst. Bent that he
2 was assigned the task of family liaison for all families
3 except Cst. Stevenson's. One of Cst. Bent's
4 responsibilities was to complete outstanding NOK
5 death notifications or, in the cases where a positive
6 identification had yet to be made, to explain to family
7 members that the investigative team believed their
8 family member was deceased. Cst. Bent also began
9 developing a list that identified one family member as
10 a contact who would disseminate information from the
11 police to additional family members.

12 So I just wonder, Constable Bent, if you can comment on that
13 portion of the Foundational Document and just explain if there's anything else that would
14 help us understand what your role was at that -- at that time?

15 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Well, the role of a Family liaison is not the
16 next of kin, generally, that was assigned by the Command Triangle to various other
17 officers to take care of that. There were occasions where I was going -- when I was
18 going through those emails and going through that list that we would come across
19 someone who had not been spoken with yet, and at that time, that's when I would tell
20 somebody that, "Yes, we believe your loved one is deceased."

21 We work in conjunction with the Medical Examiners Office. We
22 want to make sure that we have a positive identification on people. We don't want -- I
23 can't imagine anything worse than being told that perhaps your loved is deceased and
24 they're not, or vice versa. So that would pretty much be, if I was to give you my
25 summary, of what I'm reading there.

26 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. I may ask you in a little bit some more
27 questions about that Next of Kin process.

28 Just in terms of those early stages on that afternoon on the 19th,

1 what were you doing, or your team doing, to ensure that information provided was
2 correct and not released without ascertaining the caller's relationship to the victim?

3 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Anyone I spoke to, I can't speak to what
4 anybody else did or didn't do, you know, in regards to what conversations they may
5 have had with family members.

6 I know for me, in my assertion with people, was discussing who
7 they were, what their relationship was with the people, trying to ascertain any kind of
8 information that I could. Nothing personal was released other than, you know, if I felt
9 that this was somebody and they provided enough information that made me feel
10 comfortable that this person was, then that is somewhere where I would again say, "We
11 believe..." I don't recall having told anybody that, "Your loved one is dead," because
12 again, we want to make sure there's positive identification.

13 **MS. EMILY HILL:** What steps were you taking to deal with all of
14 the messages that were coming in? What was the system that was in place?

15 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** There was -- if I recall correctly, there was a
16 proxy email set up that any of the calls that were going into the 9-1-1 centre, because it
17 was Sunday, if anyone called the detachment on the non-emergency number, it would
18 also go through to the OCC centre. Emails were being sent by any of the dispatchers
19 who were receiving calls to that email, and the email was -- this proxy was being
20 checked by the Command Triangle, other than -- I don't know -- I don't believe Cst
21 Stanton had time to check for most of them. He may have checked some. But for me, I
22 was starting at the very first. There was no priority other than just to start at the first one
23 and work my way down the list.

24 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Do I understand correctly what you're saying, is
25 that the messages were coming in to 9-1-1 and to the OCC that had perhaps gone to
26 other RCMP detachments, that information was being sent by email to the Command
27 Triangle and to you?

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** To me and to the other members of the

1 Command Triangle, yes.

2 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And then you were dealing with -- just as -- in
3 the order that they were in?

4 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** In the order they were coming in. Correct.

5 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. And how did you know, as the person
6 who was making calls, how did you know what information you could release or you
7 could share?

8 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Cpl Rose-Berthiaume sits right beside me.
9 the direction was, "Obtain as much information as you can from these people. Again,
10 there was only a couple of next of kins that I provided because most had already been
11 taken care of or were assigned to other officers to deal with. It was not in my role to
12 take care of doing all of the Next of Kins.

13 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. I'll just ask you, with regard to Next of Kin
14 notifications, we heard yesterday that is an area that is covered by RCMP policy.

15 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

16 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And just tell me a little bit about sort of what it is
17 to do Next of Kin or what you understand in your general role when you're involved in
18 providing a Next of Kin notification? What's important in that?

19 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** You know, you want to try to do it as quickly
20 as possible, but at the same time, I think when you're talking about a mass incident like
21 this compared to what could perhaps be a car accident where somebody passes away,
22 it's completely different, in that with the motor vehicle accident there's a lot of knowns.
23 You have license plate numbers. You have, perhaps, personal identification in the
24 vehicle. There might be some other things that you can use for doing that.

25 The mass one would be a little bit different in that, you know, again,
26 both equally important. You want to make sure that you're giving accurate information
27 to folks, but the motor vehicle accident may or may not involve any criminal activity,
28 where the other one does, and you want to make sure that you can provide some

1 details, but you don't want to provide anything that's going to compromise the
2 investigation.

3 Again, it's all about talking to people. I mean, it's -- telling someone
4 their loved one is dead is the worst thing to do.

5 Compassion, honesty, resources. Trying to find resources for
6 people to -- the Medical Examiner's Office to Victim Services, to be there for the, to
7 make sure they have support when you've told them as well, because if you go to
8 somebody's house and they're by themselves, you don't leave that person by
9 themselves afterwards. I mean, that's just not right. That's -- I know it's policy, but it's
10 just common-sense decency.

11 Making sure that, you know, they know who to contact in your
12 organization as to who they have questions for.

13 **MS. EMILY HILL:** I'll ask you in a few minutes about some of the
14 other tasks that you had in that role which you're alluding to, but I just want to make
15 sure I fully understood what you've said about working with the Medical Examiner's
16 Office as it relates to Next of Kin.

17 Again, if you can talk about, in the normal course, in the normal
18 course of how you do your work as a member of the Major Crimes Unit, how would you
19 work with the ME's Office with regard to death notifications?

20 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Well we have a duty to notify the Medical
21 Examiner any time there's a death which is suspicious in nature or criminal in nature,
22 and then we would try to work hand in hand with them, you know, with providing them
23 information about who the next of kin people are, who the family contacts are that they
24 can make contact with.

25 Sometimes that identification doesn't come for quite some time
26 because there might need to be DNA analysis to make a confirmation of who somebody
27 is. We work with them by providing them all the information that we can, that we've
28 gathered to assist them to work with the families for that identification.

1 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And then so thinking back to the afternoon of
2 the 19th, were you in touch with the Medical Examiner's Office during that time when
3 you were at the Bible Hill Detachment doing -- beginning to sort those messages that
4 were coming in?

5 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** So what I was trying to do at that was we
6 have a shared drive for Major Crime, and there are for other offices. Cpl McKay had
7 started a scene list with names of deceased and we were trying to fill in a contact for
8 each one of these next of kin if that person was possibly the family contact, somebody
9 else, it was someone else so that we could provide that information to the ME's Office.
10 So we were constantly updating that form and making sure that we could get that
11 information to the Medical Examiner so they would know that as victims were coming in,
12 who they were associated to.

13 **MS. EMILY HILL:** So it sounds like you were trying to connect
14 addresses or scenes with individuals who were family members, making those
15 connections that you would then provide on to the Medical Examiner's Office?

16 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

17 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. And so in that case, we're using the term
18 Next of Kin not so much to mean the Next of Kin notification around confirmation, for
19 example, of death or remains, but more just who is that nearest relative?

20 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Family contact.

21 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay.

22 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** The family contact.

23 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And you -- in developing that list that you've just
24 been speaking about, you were trying to identify one family member as a contact? Is
25 that right?

26 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Because of the number of emails that were
27 coming in, there were times where I spoke to somebody from, you know, another family.
28 And so early on, I thought it would be reasonable that rather than talk to six people from

1 this family, for example, and not have a chance to talk to these people, it will be easier if
2 I took one person and I asked people if they could be the family contact, that I would
3 have them funnel their questions through that person to me, which I can funnel through
4 to the Command Triangle, but also that I could funnel information from the Command
5 Triangle through that one person who would disseminate it to everybody else.

6 Especially early on, initially I felt that with the number of people, it
7 was important just to have one line of contact so that each family was equally able to be
8 spoken to so that one family wasn't maybe monopolizing all the time that it was going to
9 take and some other family wouldn't have a chance to be spoken with.

10 As time went on, some families, unfortunately, split, and the
11 information wasn't being shared. Other family members came to me and said, you
12 know, the information wasn't being shared. The family hadn't split, but just the
13 information wasn't getting shared as much. And so I would add extra people to my list
14 of who either I was sending out emails or text messages to, or making phone calls to to
15 just make contact with them to keep them updated.

16 **MS. EMILY HILL:** That identification of sort of a primary family
17 contact, that was a technique you were using to manage the flow of information?

18 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

19 **MS. EMILY HILL:** That's not set out anywhere in policy that that's
20 something you should do? That's just something you are ---

21 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's just something I found was going to
22 be easier for me to manage.

23 **MS. EMILY HILL:** How long were you at the Bible Hill Detachment
24 sort of doing this task of looking for family contacts, triaging the emails, and
25 communicating with command triangle about what information was coming in and going
26 out?

27 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** It was probably about two to two-and-a-half
28 hours before I left to go to Portapique to pick up medication for Mr. Griffin Senior, an

1 individual who had left the scene when he was told to leave and needed medication.

2 **MS. EMILY HILL:** So you travelled back to Portapique ---

3 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

4 **MS. EMILY HILL:** --- in the late afternoon. Okay.

5 I wonder, Madam Registrar, if you could bring up paragraph 21 of
6 that same document?

7 So that paragraph, I think, just talks about this point in time,

8 Constable Bent. The paragraph says,

9 "Sometime after 5:30 p.m., Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume
10 texted Cst. Bent and directed him to go to all the
11 [houses] in Portapique and check for more victims or
12 persons requiring help. During this check, Cst. Bent
13 located a third deceased person at [redacted] Cobequid
14 Court, who was later identified as Emily Tuck. Cst.
15 Bent, Cst. Nathan Forrest, Cpl. Brad Wood, and Cpl.
16 MacDonald checked homes on Cobequid Court."

17 So I take it that this task of checking homes was again back with
18 your Major Crimes Unit hat on; have I got that right?

19 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Major Crimes hat on, yes. I -- when I was
20 getting read to leave from Portapique, I was advised by another member that they had
21 found more victims in Cobequid Court, so I made sure to pass on that information to
22 Corporal Rose-Berthiaume because every piece of information needs to go to him to
23 make decisions and directions. For him to make directions, he needs the information.
24 Upon my providing him that information, that's when he asked me, or, sorry, directed me
25 to start checking homes.

26 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And for what reason were you checking homes?

27 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I was checking homes to see if there was
28 any other victims, if there were any live or deceased victims, if there was anyone else

1 that we could provide assistance to.

2 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And at that time when you were checking
3 homes in Portapique, including on Cobequid Court, were you aware that there were still
4 emails coming in from the OCC from people asking for information about their loved
5 ones?

6 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I was -- there -- my phone may have been
7 getting emails on them, but I wasn't checking them. I was checking houses to see if
8 there was anybody else there. I was more concerned about potential victims who we
9 could render assistance to than emails at that time. I knew other people were going to
10 be looking at those emails as well.

11 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Who did you understand to be looking at those
12 emails at that time?

13 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I knew that, as time permitted, that Corporal
14 Berthiaume was looking -- or Rose-Berthiaume was looking at that, as well as Corporal
15 McKay.

16 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And do I understand that you finished up at
17 Portapique, returned to Bible Hill and ended your shift at 10 o'clock that night?

18 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Somewhere handy of 10 o'clock, yes. I'd
19 been up for about 38 hours at that time.

20 **MS. EMILY HILL:** You've asked -- answered already a number of
21 my questions with regard to the delivery of next-of-kin notifications. In terms of the
22 conversations that you were then having over the next couple of days from family
23 members, is it fair to say that although you may not have been delivering an official
24 next-of-kin notification, you were often communicating information that their loved one
25 was -- so the property that their loved one lived in was associated with a mass casualty,
26 or that human remains had been found, even if they had not been yet identified, that
27 you were sharing that type of information even if you couldn't officially confirm death?

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

1 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. And that official confirmation was
2 pending medical examiner's direction and information?

3 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

4 **MS. EMILY HILL:** In terms of that information coming in, I just
5 want to confirm that there was no central line for family members to call or for
6 community members to call who were seeking information?

7 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** There was not -- you know, once family
8 members had my number, they could call me, but -- and there were a couple of folks
9 from the community who did get my number and called as well or were directed to call
10 me and did.

11 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And on the 19th particularly, and perhaps even
12 into the 20th, is it fair to say that messages and requests for information were coming in
13 more quickly than they could be responded to?

14 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Absolutely.

15 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Thinking back, would it have been helpful if
16 those requests were sent somewhere other than to the command triangle, given the
17 other responsibilities the command triangle had during those hours?

18 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** There were limited -- again, you only have
19 so many resources that, you know, you have scenes to guard, you have people who
20 were processing. You know, we were answering those as quickly as we could, to deal
21 with people as quickly as we could, so I think, you know, within 24 hours from when 2
22 o'clock came on the -- after the 19th, when I was gone from Plains Road to the next day,
23 I believe that within that timeframe, everybody had received their notification and had
24 spoken with me.

25 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And if there are family members who would say
26 that they perhaps hadn't had contact with anyone from the RCMP within that first 24
27 hours that it took, it may have even taken another 24 hours after that, is that something
28 that you would also -- I guess would you -- is that possible?

1 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Possible I could say. You know, I don't -- I
2 know for sure that I was doing my best to keep up with everything that was going on. It
3 was chaotic, but there was an organization to that chaos as it -- to be dealt with by the
4 command triangle.

5 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And it -- would it have been helpful to have had
6 more people assigned to that role in those early first hours and days?

7 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Looking at it from now, perhaps, but again,
8 you know, it was a large event, and where do you -- you know, where do you deploy
9 resources to when you need them at 17 different scenes?

10 **MS. EMILY HILL:** I'm going to now turn to asking you some
11 questions about the tasks that you took on in that -- in your role as family liaison, sort of
12 after that first day, so starting after the 20th and onward. How did you explain your role
13 to the families that you were working with? How did you -- what words did you use?

14 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I was just there to offer them any assistance
15 I could. You know, I was able to answer questions on the investigation if I could. I --
16 they were told there were going to be questions I couldn't answer because it was an
17 ongoing investigation, that somewhere down the line we can provide those questions --
18 or those answers to those questions, but we have to maintain the integrity of our
19 investigation until we know what we know, because there's a lot that we don't know.
20 And until we know it all, it's unknown, and we -- you know, we don't want to give away
21 those answers. The victims are the ones we're working for. We want to make sure that
22 they have a voice.

23 **MS. EMILY HILL:** In terms of that role that you just described, that
24 sharing information and answering family's questions, that was -- if families had
25 questions, they were invited to come to you with those questions?

26 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

27 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. But and you've just said that -- or
28 sometimes that you may not have been able to answer those questions. Is it fair to say

1 that is it sometimes you didn't actually know the answers to the ---

2 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Absolutely. And nobody knew the answers
3 to some of those questions because we still hadn't, you know -- within the first few days,
4 there were still crime scenes that hadn't been processed, houses were still hot, ones
5 that had been burned down. They -- you know, it takes time to get answers, and there
6 was some answers that we didn't find out until months and months later.

7 **MS. EMILY HILL:** How were you kept up to date about the
8 investigation as it was unfolding?

9 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** We had regular briefings going on in our
10 office where all the investigators would come in and would of summarize to the
11 command triangle what they had learned from the tasks that they had been assigned. I
12 was present during maybe half of the briefing most of the time, because I was
13 answering text messages from family members. I was taking phone calls from family
14 members. So I wasn't keeping myself completely up to date with everything that was
15 going on. What I would do is basically lean over to the next cubicle, I would talk to
16 Corporal Rose-Berthiaume, say here's a question, can we answer it? We can. We
17 can't. And then I would communicate that back to a family member.

18 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And if you couldn't answer a question that
19 perhaps there was an answer to because of the ongoing investigation, is that what you
20 would tell the family?

21 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's exactly it, yes, if there was ongoing
22 investigation that we can't release that information. Even if it was something that we did
23 know, then no, I would let the families know that we couldn't release it, but you know,
24 "some day we will be able to release it to you."

25 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Just on this theme of information-sharing, one of
26 your tasks later on, as the investigation unfolded, was to arrange meetings with families
27 and Chief Superintendent Leather, many of which happened at the Bible Hill
28 detachment. Have I got that right?

1 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** No. Chief Superintendent Leather was not
2 there, it was Superintendent -- it was Superintendent Darren Campbell.

3 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Thank you. And so those meetings, if -- tell me
4 if I've got this right, were held at the end of June and the beginning of July?

5 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

6 **MS. EMILY HILL:** What was the purpose of those meetings?

7 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** There were an opportunity for the families to
8 meet individually because we were still -- you know, all this happened during COVID.
9 And so -- whereas perhaps if COVID hadn't been prevalent it may have been something
10 where a venue such as this could have been used. I don't think it would have been
11 appropriate because you would have had families there that maybe didn't need to know
12 all the information Family A about Family B and vice versa. It gave an opportunity for
13 the families to meet with the lead investigator, to also meet with senior RCMP
14 management to -- to try and answer some of the questions that folks had.

15 And during these meetings, Corporal Rose-Berthiaume would
16 outline where we were with the investigation, where we were going, made sure that
17 families knew that there was some -- some part of the investigation that was still
18 proceeding, that we couldn't share that information at this time, but we would later on
19 down the road.

20 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Another aspect of being Family Liaison Officer
21 was making referrals to Victims Services.

22 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

23 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And I think you mentioned initially not quite
24 knowing how to do that, but you relied on some contacts that you had previously relied
25 on; is that right?

26 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Yeah. Absolutely, yes. I called an old
27 contact from Pictou County and she was able to help to expedite everything for me. It
28 was absolutely great.

1 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Just in terms of making a referral to Victims
2 Services, who did you understand would qualify for Victims Services in terms of the
3 counselling services that they could arrange?

4 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Not for me to determine who does and
5 doesn't qualify, any person that was a family relative, any person who was thought
6 could benefit from this. During those briefings early on, I had brought up to the -- to the
7 investigators who were going out and conducting interviews with witnesses and letting
8 them know that, "Hey, you're the ones who were talking to folks out there who are
9 witnesses. If you're seeing somebody who is struggling who could benefit from Victims
10 Services", I asked them to please provide me with the names of the people and contact
11 information and we would forward that on, as well as the ones for -- for all the families of
12 the victims, or as well, for the survivors.

13 **MS. EMILY HILL:** So your referral -- the referrals that you made to
14 Victims Services were broader than just the families that were impacted?

15 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

16 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And in terms of your role as Family Liaison, I
17 just want to be clear about exactly who you were providing services to, I understand that
18 you were assigned the surviving families of all of the victims except
19 Constable Stevenson?

20 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

21 **MS. EMILY HILL:** As well -- and that included families that were
22 not just here in Nova Scotia, but some families across Canada and a family in the
23 United States?

24 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

25 **MS. EMILY HILL:** So you were responding to enquiries from all of
26 those individuals?

27 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

28 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And you also came to be assigned to assist

1 some of the survivors, The Fishers, Andrew and Kate MacDonald, and Lisa Banfield?

2 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

3 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Another organisation that you've indicated you
4 were communicating with on behalf of family was the Medical Examiner's Office. Did
5 that continue in that communication role after the 19th?

6 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct, yes.

7 **MS. EMILY HILL:** What sort of communication would you do to
8 and from the Medical Examiner's Office and to and from families?

9 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** It was -- you know, families want -- want
10 answers to everything, and trying to help them with, you know, the contact with the
11 medical examiners, if there was information that was being shared, a lot of it at the time
12 was being held by the investigative team. It was requested that it not be released
13 because, again, it's information that could be what we call "holdback evidence" in that
14 only maybe a perpetrator or someone who assisted the perpetrator would know of. And
15 so if that information went out to the -- to even just one person, that information could be
16 shared and it could compromise the integrity of the investigation.

17 **MS. EMILY HILL:** So you were communicating with the Medical
18 Examiner's Office to -- what information were you giving to the Medical Examiner's
19 Office or what information were you getting from the Medical Examiner's Office?

20 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Again, I was just providing names, you
21 know, and the phone numbers. I know -- you know, I've had a relationship with some of
22 the -- the investigators at the Medical Examiner's Office, so was able to call and just
23 have a conversation sometimes about someone's looking for this or someone's looking
24 for that, and whether or not it could be shared or not.

25 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Another role that I understood you -- I
26 understand you played was sharing information with families about ITOs. And ---

27 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

28 **MS. EMILY HILL:** --- information that -- that stands for information

1 to obtain, and you tell me if I've got this wrong, but I believe that -- these are documents
2 that had been filed with the court to obtain warrants in the course of the investigation,
3 and in the months following the mass casualty, media made application to have portions
4 of those ITOs made public.

5 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct. It was -- it was after our first
6 family meeting that it was brought, you know, brought to our attention. It was something
7 I had never thought of before, was that the courts were releasing the ITO and we were
8 then sharing it with the families. And the first family we spoke to said, "Well, why can't
9 we know first if something's going out first before it gets to the media?" And again, it
10 was -- you know, with this one being as large a -- an incident as it was, there were --
11 there was always some -- some learning going on, things were fluid. It made perfect
12 sense.

13 So from that point forward, we worked with the DOJ to ensure that
14 we could try and get all that information out to the families as soon as it was released by
15 the court because we couldn't release it before that, but once the courts, they had it
16 released, we had a process in place to ensure it was getting out to families. So they --
17 they may not have had a chance to review it because some of those documents were
18 well over a hundred pages, but they had it in their possession before it was going out
19 any where's else.

20 **MS. EMILY HILL:** So that practice of trying to get families the ITOs
21 before they became public, that was a suggestion that came from a family member.

22 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That came from a family member, and then
23 we started using it for anything that we were putting out. If there was going to be a
24 press release, we made sure family members knew about it first.

25 **MS. EMILY HILL:** You also played a role, I understand, in
26 assisting families who may have wanted to have access to residences that were being
27 processed as crime scenes.

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's ---

1 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Can you talk a little bit about that?

2 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** There were families that wanted some
3 personal belongings to be used for -- for funerals. So the -- the second day we had
4 Sergeant Bill Raaymakers at Portapique, and he kind of acted as a gatekeeper for us
5 for any of the requests that were going down through there. There were people that
6 had animals inside houses that wanted animals fed, they wanted animals caught with
7 the assistance of the SPCA. There was personal documentation that may have been
8 needed for when the loved ones has passed away that needed to be obtained as well.
9 So I was able to work with Sergeant Raaymakers to make this stuff happen for the
10 families.

11 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And some of the homes remained crime scenes
12 that were being processed for -- for quite sometime, a number of days and weeks,
13 actually, where families couldn't return or couldn't access those homes without going
14 through you. Have I got that right?

15 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

16 **MS. EMILY HILL:** You were involved in arranging some cleaning
17 for some of the homes?

18 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** No. Tara Long arranged for the cleaning
19 initially. I kind of just jumped on her bandwagon for it. She had contacted me and
20 mentioned that she had made contact with a local company about -- about doing this.
21 And so I contacted to the company, spoke to them about this, and they confirmed that
22 yes it was true, it was -- it was something that she had spoken to, and that they were
23 going to do it for free of charge. The company -- I talked with -- with Guy from the
24 company, and he had mentioned, you know, "just let me know when we can get in
25 there." And so on the day when we were able to do the cleaning, I escorted them to the
26 scene because, again, it's still somebody's house, and there's still personal belongings
27 and stuff, and potentially valuables inside a house. So I went with him to the first house,
28 and he was amazing guy. Because told him I got a couple more houses down there,

1 and he said, "Before you even ask," he said, "I'd like to clean those houses for you too."
2 Again, something I'd never thought of before because any time I've been involved with a
3 crime scene, whether it be a vehicle or a house, we've -- we haven't done the cleaning.
4 Like, you know, that goes through your insurance companies usually. There are
5 cleaning companies out there that do do that stuff. I felt really bad because the Goulet's
6 had not -- I hadn't -- they'd already cleaned the house when I contacted them. They
7 had already done it on their own. And, again, just something I wouldn't have thought
8 about before.

9 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Just on that point of something you wouldn't
10 have thought of before, that's based on your previous experience working with families
11 as a member of the RCMP, things like cleaning houses, or cleaning property that's
12 being returned, that's not something that falls within the job description?

13 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Never seen it before. Never seen it or done
14 it before.

15 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And in your -- in the role that you were in and
16 following the mass casualty, there wasn't a checklist or anything that you could go and
17 make sure that for each family you were completing certain tasks?

18 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I knew what they had gone through. I
19 couldn't tell them how -- I -- and I've told them all, "I don't know how you feel. I'll never
20 know how you feel." Nobody in this room except for them are going to know how they
21 feel. Knowing how they felt and what they were going through, whatever extra I could
22 do for them.

23 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. I understand that included assisting with
24 their questions, requests made for returning property that had been seized ---

25 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

26 **MS. EMILY HILL:** --- seized from scenes or when bodies that had
27 been recovered, getting property back to people?

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

1 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. And I understand, you know, things like
2 jewellery, things like that?

3 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** There was, yeah. And that -- again, that
4 wasn't me that started that. That was Constable Lori Thorne who was an exhibit
5 custodian, and she began the process of when people wanted jewellery, she made sure
6 it was cleaned. And I actually ended up helping her out with a couple of pieces because
7 -- and she was in there with a toothpick and a dental pick and everything she could to
8 make sure that when we returned something it was clean.

9 **MS. EMILY HILL:** You mentioned insurance companies. I think
10 that primarily had to do with vehicles that were involved in crime scene; is ---

11 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

12 **MS. EMILY HILL:** --- that right?

13 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

14 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Could you just talk a little bit about dealing with
15 insurance companies and what your role was as a family liaison?

16 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** With the vehicles that were involved, I had
17 tried to tell folks that, you know, they don't want to see these vehicles. You know, this is
18 where their loved ones have died, or the vehicles were just in any way that, you know, it
19 was going to be traumatizing possibly for them. I -- my suggestions were go through
20 insurance companies, and to let me know if you need any assistance with your
21 insurance companies.

22 I know the Beaton vehicle, for example, the insurance company
23 was going to buy it but they were talking about selling -- reselling it in Nova Scotia. And
24 I called the insurance company and I said, "Like, what -- let's be reasonable here. I
25 mean, there are people who will buy that and will not fix it for the simple fact that they'll
26 think that they want to have this." It -- I didn't want Nick to have to potentially see that
27 vehicle somewhere in Nova Scotia driving around. I didn't want anybody in his family or
28 anyone else to have to see that. You know, to me, that conversation was really over the

1 sake of \$20,000, or your company's willing to have your name associated with
2 something that would do that. There were other insurance companies that needed
3 written confirmation that the loved one had died or that a family member was not
4 somebody who was a subject of the investigation, who may have caused the deceased
5 person's death. So I filled out some forms and forwarded them to different insurance
6 companies for those purposes.

7 **MS. EMILY HILL:** You were -- I think the O'Brien family had their
8 vehicle returned to them; is that correct?

9 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** They wanted their vehicle. They wanted to
10 see the vehicle and they wanted to take possession of the vehicle, yes. And I had
11 suggested against it.

12 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And again, do I understand correctly that, as
13 you've said, that vehicle wasn't cleaned or dealt with before it was returned, it was taken
14 from where it had been processed for forensic evidence and provided back to the
15 O'Brien family?

16 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

17 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. Did you have any concerns about that?

18 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** You know what? That's not -- if it happened
19 to my mom, that's not how I want to remember her.

20 **MS. EMILY HILL:** But it was a request of the O'Brien family and
21 you facilitated ---

22 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

23 **MS. EMILY HILL:** --- that request?

24 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I was not going to argue with them about
25 that. It was their property.

26 **MS. EMILY HILL:** I understand one of the roles that you also had
27 was delivering gifts that arrived from across Nova Scotia and across Canada to the
28 families?

1 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Non-stop. Non-stop. The people across
2 Canada just kept sending stuff. Even now, there's still stuff that's showing up in the
3 office to be delivered to people.

4 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. And just do I understand correctly, things
5 like quilts, things like that, that fit -- people who are learning about what the families who
6 are the victims of the mass casualty had gone through from media were responding by
7 sending things that they wanted distributed?

8 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Quilts, flowers, cards, CDs, dried flowers
9 that actually came from the Portapique memorial. Buoys that somebody had painted
10 and made up in Ontario. There was wooden angels that were carved in Cape Breton. I
11 mean, just everything just kept coming and coming.

12 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Okay. And so again, it's probably not anyone's
13 job to be receiving or distributing those, but that was something that you took on?

14 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That was just something I took on because I
15 wanted -- you know, wanted the families to know that they had people behind them.

16 **MS. EMILY HILL:** This was your full-time role until September
17 2020?

18 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Until September 29th of 2020, correct.

19 **MS. EMILY HILL:** You still continue in this role as part of your
20 duties still today; is that right?

21 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I was taking calls on Saturday night and
22 helping somebody on Saturday night with the -- and into Sunday morning with a
23 request.

24 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Fair to say that different families have different
25 needs?

26 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Absolutely.

27 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Can you just talk a little bit about that?

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** You know, some families -- and I shouldn't --

1 in my statement I said needy, and I shouldn't have said needy. Needy wasn't the right
2 word. It was just some people needed to communicate more often and would call with
3 questions or concerns. And a lot of times it was not in regards to what had happened.
4 It was other things that were happening. People were posting stuff on Facebook. You
5 know, there was an incident of someone trying to sell a police vehicle, a used police
6 vehicle online shortly thereafter. It was -- you know, some people were happy with
7 minimal communication, and, you know, a lot of times it was left in their court to contact
8 me. I would make sure that I was doing regular contact with folks, but some folks would
9 call three and four times a day, and I wasn't going to not take a phone call because I'd
10 already talked to you today and I haven't talked to another family over here. So I would
11 still take a phone call or a text message.

12 **MS. EMILY HILL:** I want to ask you a little bit about your role as
13 family liaison for so many families.

14 I wonder, Madam Registrar, if you could bring up paragraph 17 of
15 that Foundational Document?

16 This paragraph from the Foundational Document Information
17 Seeking from Families and Next of Kin Notification refers to an interview that you
18 conducted with the Mass Casualty Commission. It says,

19 "In his interview with the Mass Casualty Commission
20 in January 2022, Cst. Bent noted that Cpl. McKay had
21 discussed with him a few times the possibility of
22 adding another family liaison to help with his
23 responsibilities. Cst. Bent said he was "a little bit
24 selfish, I think, in that you know I had these
25 relationships with people and I had worked hard at
26 building these relationships with people and I also felt
27 – and I mentioned this to Angela [Cpl. McKay] – that I
28 wanted the same message going out to each of the

1 families [and] that we were sending out." Cst. Bent
2 briefly had support from another RCMP member, Cpl.
3 Rodney MacDonald, before Cpl. MacDonald was
4 transferred to another division. Cst. Bent continued to
5 be the sole family liaison to the families affected by
6 the mass casualty (with the [...] exception of the
7 Stevenson family)."

8 And I'm wondering if you can just talk a little bit about that
9 suggestion that perhaps it would have been helpful to have had more than one family
10 liaison through this process and what you think of that.

11 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I built very good relationships with these
12 people, with all these families, I had people tell me they were suicidal, abusing alcohol,
13 telling me about major illness they were going through, sharing information that if you
14 didn't have that relationship, you probably wouldn't know of. You probably wouldn't
15 hear about that stuff.

16 To me it was very important that the same message went out to
17 everybody. If we'd had five, for example, different liaison officers that were providing
18 information to four families, five families, if the information was turned just a -- was just
19 off a little bit, if I said Tuesday at 2 o'clock and another officer said it's Wednesday at 2
20 o'clock because he thought the 21st was a Tuesday when it actually was -- was, you
21 know, the day before, families are going to be upset about that, you know.

22 I recall a situation where a family wanted me to take them to
23 Portapique and I said no, I wasn't going to take you to Portapique because the folks
24 down there are still living it. You know, they're there every day and it was on the news
25 just prior to that that Tom Taggart was on there talking about -- basically equating
26 Portapique, that people were thinking of it as a tourist attraction.

27 And you know, I didn't want to take people down there when I knew
28 there were other options. And my other option was to share an overhead map because

1 they wanted to know where everything happened.

2 I went to this family and I took them an overhead map and showed
3 them where houses were and where things had happened. And their question to me
4 was, you know, "What do you think happened?"

5 And I told them several times that I said, "We're never going to
6 know because we don't have video cameras down there. We don't have witnesses
7 saying that they were at these houses at this time", you know.

8 And I told them it was in my opinion, and my opinion only, that it
9 made sense to do the loop prior to being seen on video because we know when the first
10 call came in, we know when they're seen on video.

11 To me, I said, that seems reasonable just given the time, but again,
12 I made sure that it was not from the RCMP, that the RCMP -- yes, I work for the RCMP,
13 but I was asked for my opinion and I told them, you know, this, to me, seemed
14 reasonable.

15 The next day I received a phone call from someone who said,
16 "What do you mean the RCMP's telling people my parents were the first ones killed?".
17 And if that call -- if we had had five different liaison officers -- I was able to quickly
18 answer that question. If we'd had five different liaison officers and it went to this officer
19 who didn't know that I'd had this conversation, then now you've got people really
20 distressed.

21 And at that time, there was -- well, even still, there were lots of
22 questions about everything that was going on.

23 And so to me, having one source of information -- if I passed out
24 the wrong information to everybody about a 2 o'clock meeting when it should have been
25 3 o'clock, everybody had the wrong message, but it was the same wrong message,
26 whereas if everybody had the right information, it was all to the right information.

27 **MS. EMILY HILL:** And so that -- to make sure I've understood the
28 example that you gave about that conversation with the family as you were looking at

1 the overhead map, that was -- in the course of that conversation, you were expressing
2 sort of your theory or your observations about what made sense, and that was heard
3 later by another family as if it had been an official communication from the RCMP. And
4 that misinformation or miscommunication is -- you're pointing to that as the reason why
5 it's so important that there just be one liaison officer.

6 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** To me, yes. That's -- and again, I'm no
7 expert in this. I learned as I went along.

8 I based it on a bunch of my past experience of dealing with folks.
9 To me, it just seemed reasonable to have it done that way.

10 **MS. EMILY HILL:** So you said you learned as you went along.

11 And so now, looking back, are there other things that would have
12 helped you to be more effective in your role as family liaison that we should be thinking
13 about in your role of the Commission eventually making meaningful recommendations
14 to respond to mass casualties or to similar situations in the future?

15 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I think there needs to be training or, you
16 know, a policy, a guideline, check sheets of some sort. I mean, most police officers
17 have that opportunity to deal with people lots and, like I say, they develop some skills.
18 Some people develop them more than others. But there should be something of some
19 sort.

20 And again, a family liaison is only to be a conduit for the
21 information. To me, the family liaison is not to call insurance companies, is not to do all
22 this other stuff, but given that this was my sole role, I was able to do that. You know,
23 knowing what the families had gone through, it was important to the command triangle
24 to make sure that we could do whatever we could do for these folks to help them out.

25 And again, nothing was going to bring anybody back, but if it was
26 something that we could help to lessen a little bit, then we were going to look at doing
27 that.

28 **MS. EMILY HILL:** Commissioners, those were all the questions

1 that I had for Constable Bent.

2 I see the time is 11:15. I'm in your hands whether it would be
3 appropriate to take a break and have a caucus or whether you'd like to combine that
4 with moving into lunch.

5 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Yeah. Thank you so much, Ms.
6 Hill. And thank you, Constable Bent.

7 We'll break for 20 minutes. And I'll explain to you, Constable Bent,
8 that the process we will follow is that Commission Counsel will meet with counsel for the
9 various Participants and discuss what further questions you'll be asked, and so we'll
10 take 20 minutes for that.

11 If you need more time, then we can certainly reconsider, but we
12 think it appropriate at this stage that we'll take 20 minutes and allow the parties --
13 everyone a break, and of course, allow the counsel for the various parties to discuss the
14 process for further questions for further questions for Constable Bent.

15 Thank you.

16 Twenty (20) minutes.

17 **REGISTRAR DARLENE SUTHERLAND:** Thank you.

18 The proceedings are now on break and will resume in 20 minutes.

19 --- Upon breaking at 11:17 a.m.

20 --- Upon resuming at 11:52 a.m.

21 **REGISTRAR DARLENE SUTHERLAND:** Welcome back.

22 The proceedings are again in session.

23 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you.

24 Thank you, Ms. Sutherland.

25 I understand that following a meeting with -- among counsel that it's
26 agreed that four counsel representing various Participants will be asking questions of
27 Constable Bent, so we'll ask Constable Bent to come back.

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT, Resumed**

1 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you again, Constable
2 Bent. Four counsel representing various -- you can have a seat, sir.

3 Four counsel representing various Participants will be asking you
4 questions.

5 We'll see how we get along, counsel, in terms of how many we do
6 before lunch, but we'll break roughly around 12:30 and see where we are that time.

7 So I understand, Mr. Bryson, you are the first counsel to ask
8 questions. And as always, we would be obliged if all the counsel let Officer Bent know
9 who they represent.

10 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Yes. Thank you, Commissioners.

11 **--- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MR. JOSHUA BRYSON**

12 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Good morning, Constable Bent.

13 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Good morning.

14 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** My name is Josh Bryson. I represent the
15 family of Peter and Joy Bond. They resided at Cobequid Court within Portapique
16 and their sons, who you've dealt with, Harry and Cory Bond, who ---

17 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Extensively, yes.

18 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Yes. Yeah.

19 So I have a few questions about your involvement with Cobequid
20 Court on April 19th. So I've looked at your notes, and the first entry I see in regards to
21 Cobequid Court is roughly -- is 5:50 p.m. Is that your first attendance at Cobequid Court
22 ---

23 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** It would be ---

24 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** --- give or take?

25 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** --- somewhere -- somewhere around that
26 time, correct.

27 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Okay. And we can actually bring that up,
28 please. It's been exhibited previously.

1 So at 17 -- these are your notes?

2 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** At 1730, yes, correct.

3 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Oh, is that 30? Okay. I thought that was
4 a five.

5 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's a three.

6 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** So 5:30 p.m. And at the bottom you note
7 finding the victims at [] and [] Cobequid Court at roughly this time, 5:30?

8 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

9 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Okay. Now, when I read these notes, it
10 doesn't appear as if you were perhaps aware that the Bond and Tuck, Oliver families
11 were obviously discovered previous to 5:30. Did you know that at the time?

12 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I was told that there were bodies there, and
13 that's when I had contacted -- because I did not know if Corporal Rose-Berthiaume, who
14 was the primary investigator, had that information or not. So when I had shared it with
15 him that I had just learned that information, that's when I was directed to go.

16 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** So when you -- sorry, you -- when you
17 attended [] Cobequid Court, did you know anyone else was there prior to you attending
18 there?

19 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I did because that's why I had gone there,
20 was because I had been told. I believe it was Cpl Macdonald, Jarret MacDonald, who
21 told me that. I can't say for sure. I know I'd spoken to an officer who told me that there
22 were additional victims at those residences.

23 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Okay. And so besides Cst MacDonald's
24 involvement, ---

25 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Corporal.

26 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Cpl MacDonald, sorry. Cpl MacDonald's
27 involvement when he came across the deceased persons in these two residences at
28 roughly 4:46 and 4:50, are you aware of any other members that had canvassed or

1 been on Cobequid Court that day?

2 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Sorry, 4:46?

3 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Four forty-six (4:46) p.m. is what we see
4 from the Coms, the Colchester Coms when ---

5 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Okay.

6 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** --- Cpl MacDonald announces ---

7 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Sorry, I apologize, I just didn't -- I didn't have
8 that time in my notes. I did not know of what time anybody had gone by there. I just
9 know what time I was told, give or take.

10 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Now, I just want to talk about your
11 observations of [] Cobequid Court when you attended at roughly 5:30. Do you recall
12 seeing the door ajar?

13 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

14 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Okay. And when I look at Cst
15 MacDonald's, Jarret MacDonald's statement, he had phrased it as when he was
16 perpendicular to [] Cobequid Court, the driveway, he could ---

17 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Oh.

18 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** --- see down into [] -- he could see []
19 and you could actually see the door was ajar from that location.

20 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Okay.


21 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Would you agree with that explanation?

22 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I don't know what he may or may not have
23 seen. I do know that you can stand in one spot and see, you know, roughly a 45 degree
24 -- or sorry, a 90-degree angle, say there's one here and you can see one there.

25 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** But it was quite apparent to you that the
26 door was ajar; right?

27 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

28 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** And was there a screen door, do you

1 recall, on 

2 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I do recall there being one there the next
3 day. Or sorry, not the next day, but when I did attend with the Bond brothers, that there
4 was a door there that may have been damaged. But, again, not knowing when -- if it
5 was there at the time. I was more interested in getting into the house to see if there
6 were any victims in the house that I could assist with.

7 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** If I suggested to you that the screen door
8 was hanging off its hinges at roughly 5:30 on the 19th, is that something you could agree
9 with or do you have any independent recollection of?

10 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I have no recollection of that. My main
11 priority was to get inside to see if there was anybody else in there who needed
12 assistance.

13 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Okay. And Mr. Bond was in the
14 doorway, correct, when you ---

15 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Fairly closely to the doorway, yes.

16 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** And that would prevent the door from
17 being closed? Is that fair?

18 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Again, I didn't try to close the door at any
19 point in time or anything like that, so -- but if that was his position, then the door possibly
20 probably could not have been closed.

21 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** So when I look at photos, would you
22 have moved Mr. or Mrs. Bond prior to photos being taken?

23 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I never took any photos. I can't imagine that
24 anybody else would take photos -- or sorry, would have moved anybody.

25 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Yeah. And I'm referring to the crime
26 scene photos. But my question, to your knowledge, ---

27 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I've ---

28 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** --- did you or anyone else ---

1 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I've never seen those photos and I can't
2 speak as to whether anybody would or would not. But for my work previously with the
3 Forensic Identification Specialists, everything is photographed as it is found.

4 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Okay. And do you recall if the T.V. was
5 on at the residence?

6 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I do not.

7 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Do you recall if the lights were on?

8 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Not off the top of my head I do not.

9 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** At the time that you attended Cobequid
10 Court, were you aware of Cory Bond's email at 10:41 that morning requesting someone
11 check in with his parents, he hasn't heard from them, he was concerned?

12 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** No, not of the top of my head I don't.

13 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Okay. So no one had brought that to
14 your attention when you were attending Cobequid Court?

15 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** No. When I went to Cobequid Court, I didn't
16 have that from anyone.

17 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** So at 5:30 after you discovered and
18 confirmed what had previously been discovered, that the Bonds were in fact there, did
19 you make any contact with the Bond family that evening after 5:30?

20 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Not that evening I did not. I provided the
21 information off to Cpl Berthiaume -- to Rose-Berthiaume, and I proceeded to go to every
22 house in Portapique looking to see if there was anybody else who needed assistance.

23 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** And if we could bring up 45 --
24 COMM4517? It's a multi-page document. So this is actually page 5. Five at the
25 bottom. This one here, yeah.

26 This is a message you appear to be copied on April 20th at 9:06
27 a.m.:

28 "I spoke to Harry BOND... he states [...] his parents Joy

1 and Peter BOND reside at [REDACTED] Cobequid Court] and he
2 has been unable to contact them.”

3 Do you recall receiving that message on the morning of April 20th?

4 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** The message would have come in at some
5 time. I don't know exactly when I would have opened it or specifically looked at it. My --
6 based on my looking at my notes at 12:45, then that would be when I had made a
7 phone contact with Mr. Bond.

8 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** And that's after Mr. Bond and his brother
9 and wife drove to Portapique; correct?

10 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I don't know if they drove to Portapique or
11 not. I'm just going to review that there, but -- and now that I see that he's planning to
12 drive, I don't know -- I have no recollection if he had actually made his way down there
13 or not.

14 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Do you recall having any dealings with
15 the Bond family in Portapique on April 20th in the afternoon?

16 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I don't recall being in Portapique on the 20th.

17 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Okay. Yeah. Is there any RCMP policy
18 or guidelines, just in terms of how to timely process a notification of next of kin, to your
19 knowledge?

20 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** The policy says as soon as reasonable.

21 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Okay. And what would reasonable --
22 who defines what is reasonable, in terms of the timeliness, to your knowledge?

23 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Reasonable could be based on all kinds of
24 things. I think if it ultimately came down to it, maybe a Court of Law. You know, what's
25 reasonable when you have 17 crime scenes and 22 victims? You know, if you take a
26 look at what just happened in Verde, Texas, one crime scene, 19 victims took two days.

27 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Would additional resources help?

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Pardon me?

1 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Would additional resources help you?

2 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** With?

3 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Performing that role.

4 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Performing as the liaison officer?

5 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** To ensure timely notifications to next of
6 kin?

7 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** My job was not the next of kin. My job was
8 the family liaison. The next of kin was run by the Command Triangle.

9 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Are they your notes on that email?

10 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Those are my hand written notes, yes.

11 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Okay. And at 12:45, you indicated that's
12 your understanding of when you communicated to Mr. Bond that his parents ---

13 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

14 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** So you did notify Mr. Bond that his
15 parents had been murdered in this?

16 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** No, I would have told him that I -- we
17 believed his parents were deceased. We didn't have a positive identification on
18 anybody at this time. His parents could have been gone and it could have been
19 relatives that were staying at the house.

20 **MR. JOSHUA BRYSON:** Thank you. Those are all my questions.

21 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Thank you.

22 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Bryson.

23 Mr. MacDonald?

24 **--- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MR. TOM MACDONALD:**

25 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Thank you, Commissioner.

26 Good morning, Cst Bent. I am Tom MacDonald. I am counsel to
27 Tara Long, whose biological half-sibling, Aaron Tuck, was killed in Portapique on the
28 18th and also to Scott McLeod, whose brother, Sean McLeod was lost in Wentworth on

1 the 19th.

2 I want to ask you a few questions generally to start, and then I'm
3 going to move to specifics about Ms. Long and Mr. McLeod.

4 I wasn't quite clear from your evidence this morning about one of
5 your answers to Mr. Bryson's questions clarified for me.

6 You didn't do next of kin notification? You classify yourself as a
7 family liaison officer with respect to the mass casualty; right?

8 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Well I don't classify myself as the liaison
9 officer. I was the liaison officer.

10 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Right.

11 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** The family liaison officer. I was, at times, if I
12 was the first point of contact for someone who had not been spoken to, then I would
13 provide that information that we believed that their loved one was passed.

14 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** So in other words, when you said to
15 Mr. Bryson next of kin notification was handled by the Command Triangle, you handled
16 some of it yourself, didn't you?

17 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I was -- if it so happened, then yes, I would
18 be assigned that duty to do it, but generally, the Command Triangle made those
19 decisions and deployed resources to make those next of kin notifications.

20 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** So let me understand this. There is a --
21 an RCMP next of kin notification policy?

22 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

23 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Right. But there is no RCMP Family
24 Liaison Officer policy, is there?

25 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** There is none that I have ever seen.

26 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Okay. Do you know whether one exists
27 even if you haven't seen it?

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Each division in the RCMP, which is usually

1 designated by provinces, is a division, individual divisions can also have additional
2 policy in addition to a national policy. So ---

3 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Do you know whether ---

4 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** So ---

5 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** --- H-Division has a policy?

6 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** H-Division does not, that I know of, have any
7 policy for Family Liaison.

8 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** If H-Division had a policy, who in
9 H-Division would be aware of it? The Assistant Commissioner?

10 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I can't -- I can't speculate as to what
11 someone may or may not know.

12 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** I'm -- I'm asking you to -- not to
13 speculate. You're -- you're a member of H-Division, aren't you? You're a Family
14 Liaison Officer. I'm just asking if the Commissioners wanted to know if there was a
15 policy at H-Division, you have said you don't know, as I understand your answer, who
16 would be a good starting point at H-Division to get that information?

17 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I would say, potentially, the CrOps officer,
18 who I believe is in charge of developing policy.

19 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** And do you know who that person is?
20 What that name and rank is?

21 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** At this point in time, I'm not sure. I believe it
22 may be Chief Superintendent Chris Leather. I know he had been acting -- acting as the
23 Assistant Commissioner for sometime, I'm not sure if he's back to his role or not.

24 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** All right. And if I suggest to you he may
25 be retired, is that news to you?

26 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I -- I -- I don't follow people who do and don't
27 retire, except for the people who I work with.

28 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Should there be a Family Liaison RCMP

1 policy, if there isn't one?

2 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I've already said that I believe there should
3 be, yes. There should be some either policy or guidelines or check sheet, training,
4 there should be something of some sort to assist people with this -- with this task.

5 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** And because, as I understand your
6 evidence, you think there was not one when you were involved in the mass casualty ---

7 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

8 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** --- did you then have to make up some
9 policies yourself in terms of how you approached the families?

10 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** No, I never made up policies. For me, I was
11 creating what I thought were best practices.

12 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Okay, and what were those practices?

13 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Such as having one point of contact for each
14 family, who could be a person to funnel the information through to the family and back.
15 Cleaning jewellery, helping with insurance companies. All those extra things that a
16 Family Liaison -- it -- to me, the Family Liaison takes information from the families,
17 passes it on the Investigative Triangle, from the Triangle back to the families. All the
18 extra stuff I did, the cleaning jewellery, the insurance companies, returning personal
19 effects, all that was extra stuff that I felt was part of best practices.

20 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** So you mentioned having one point of
21 contact for each family, but you also mentioned in your evidence this morning that it
22 became evident that some families "split", I think was the word you used, maybe for
23 various reasons, so that information wasn't always necessarily flowing from the one
24 contact person. Is that fair?

25 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's very fair to say, yes. That's -- and
26 when that was brought to my attention ---

27 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Right.

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** --- I made sure that it was shared with -- it

1 was two sides of a family, three sides. Sometimes it wasn't that the family was split, on
2 one occasion, I was told that the family contact person was overwhelmed, and so I was
3 asked to start sharing it with others, so I did.

4 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** And because this Commission is
5 forward-thinking in its mandate, in terms of trying to help for the future, would agree that
6 it would be helpful if there was a specific policy that dealt with, quotations, "split
7 families" so that the next Family Liaison Officer would have something to follow in terms
8 of how to deal with ---

9 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I think -- I think any help that can be
10 developed or anything that can be put forward from this Commission or within an
11 organisation, reaching out to SMEs, subject matter experts, about any of this, that can
12 help with that task, it's a -- it's an important task. It's very important to, you know, keep
13 the families updated and let them know what's going on of what you can share.

14 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** So of course, I heard your evidence this
15 morning, I listened to it. I'm not quite clear on what the role is of a Family Liaison
16 Officer, if there is a role, in terms of assisting families to contact the Medical Examiner's
17 Office for information. Can you help me out with that?

18 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I was providing them with who the contact
19 people is at the Medical Examiner's Office, providing phone numbers, providing that
20 stuff because the medical examiner is going to want to determine who's the next of kin
21 to deal with because my name point of contact may not have always been the next of --
22 the true next of kin. Because there would be questions that only the Medical Examiner's
23 Office can answer, but I know that they want to know about how to deal with potentially
24 effects, how to deal with what funeral home that's going to want to go to, so they're
25 going to need to determine that stuff. There's other legal documents that only the
26 Medical Examiner's Office can answer those questions, I can't.

27 For me, I was trying to put them in contact so that they would have
28 a point of contact of who to speak with and to establish that so that when the time came

1 that information could be released about their loved ones and the manner in which they
2 died, that they would be able to share that information with them, and they would
3 already have those lines of communication open.

4 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** So was your role strictly limited to
5 providing them with contact information? Did you ever make calls to the medical
6 examiner ---

7 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** It was ---

8 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** --- for people?

9 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** It was mainly for that. Yeah, there was time
10 later on where family members had called and we were able to release that information,
11 and so I would be a point of contact for the family. I spoke to the family to say, "This is
12 what I've learned. You can contact the Medical Examiner's Office who can provide you
13 because I am not a medical expert in any way, and so they could provide more than I
14 could other than the barebone facts."

15 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** My question was did you ever contact
16 the Medical Examiner's Office yourself for certain family members in relation to this
17 mass casualty?

18 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I'm sure that I did call the Medical
19 Examiner's Office saying, so-and-so or so-and-so did this, or that I was looking for this
20 or that.

21 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** And what would trigger your -- your
22 intervention to move up from just providing a contact to making a call, a direct request
23 from a family member?

24 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I'm not sure what you mean by intervention.

25 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Well, you can choose whatever word
26 you like, but you understand my question, don't you? Why would you move from just
27 giving contact information to actually making a call to assist a family member at the
28 Medical Examiner's Office? What would be the trigger for you to make the call as

1 opposed to just provide a number?

2 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Well, because the family member had called
3 me looking for assistance.

4 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Okay. Just had a couple of questions in
5 terms of specifics with my client, Tara Long. There was a statement attributed to you
6 that you had asked, when you were in contact with Ms. Long, for her to send a
7 photograph of Aaron Tuck, and that you didn't receive that photograph?

8 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

9 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Right. If I suggest to you this morning
10 that Ms. Long in fact emailed you a photograph, but because she was distraught she
11 entered the incorrect email address, you would have no basis to disagree with that
12 suggestion this morning, would you?

13 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** None.

14 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Okay. You said earlier this morning that
15 Ms. Long arranged for cleaning services?

16 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

17 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Her recollection is that she did not do
18 that and maybe another individual did that. Do you have any basis to disagree that that
19 is not her recollection?

20 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I know in my notes that I wrote that
21 Ms. Long, or I believe, I -- I have read my notes last night, and there are 400-plus
22 pages, again, I believe it was Ms. Long who called about that house in particular and
23 making the arrangements for doing the cleaning. Not knowing who Ms. Long was, and
24 wanted to find out whether or not this was actually something that had actually been
25 arranged, not going to let just anybody into a house, and so my recollection is yes, it
26 was Ms. Long because it was not the Oliver/Tuck from another part of the country who
27 had called to make that arrangement for that specific house.

28 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Do you remember which came first,

1 though, the offer to set up cleaning services or sending the photo of Aaron Tuck. The
2 sending of the photo of Aaron Tuck was, like, very, very early on.

3 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Okay.

4 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** The cleaning came later on

5 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** So I wasn't quite understanding when
6 you said a moment ago about the cleaning, not knowing who Ms. Long was. You did
7 know who she was.

8 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Oh, no, I knew who she was.

9 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Yeah.

10 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** But you're just -- you know, my
11 understanding is that she had made that arrangement for cleaning.

12 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Okay. As I understand it, Dale McLeod,
13 you know who Dave McLeod is?

14 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I do very well.

15 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** So Sean McLeod's father, Scott
16 McLeod's father ---

17 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Yeah.

18 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** --- he was notified about Sean on --
19 formally, I guess, on April 21st, 2 days after. Any explanation you could offer why it
20 would take two days for that notification?

21 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Was that a notification done by me?

22 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** I don't know that it was by you, but it's a
23 notification by the RCMP, so I'm just wondering if you could offer ---

24 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I can't ---

25 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** --- assistance.

26 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** --- speak to next of kins and when they were
27 done or when they weren't done.

28 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Okay. So you don't remember him as

1 being one of the ones you contacted directly?

2 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I do know I've spoken to Mr. McLeod on a
3 very regular basis. I don't know when was the very first time off the top of my head
4 without reviewing my notes to tell you when that was.

5 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** When you say you remember speaking
6 to Mr. McLeod on a very regular basis ---

7 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** To Dale McLeod.

8 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** To Dale McLeod. And you also spoke
9 to Scott McLeod on a regular basis?

10 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I've spoken with Scott. I've spoken with
11 Christopher, and prior to her passing, I'd spoke with Audrey.

12 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Can you think of any -- because again,
13 forward looking mandate, changes that can be made in terms of family liaisons with
14 officers of the RCMP and families that could assist these kinds of events if one was to
15 occur in the future?

16 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Again, if -- development of policy,
17 development of guidelines, check sheets, training, any of those such things would be
18 very valuable, I think, to have.

19 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Those are my questions, Constable.
20 Thank you.

21 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Thank you.

22 **MR. TOM MACDONALD:** Thank you, Commissioners.

23 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. MacDonald.

24 Mr. Scott, do you want to go now or would you rather -- all right.

25 Thank you. We'll break then until an hour? Yeah, we'll break for an hour then, 1:15 or
26 thereabouts. Thank you.

27 **REGISTRAR DARLENE SUTHERLAND:** Thank you. The
28 proceedings are now on break and will resume at 1:15.

1 --- Upon breaking at 12:17 p.m.

2 --- Upon resuming at 1:18 p.m.

3 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you. We'll ask Officer
4 Bent to come in.

5 **CST. WAYNE BENT, Resumed:**

6 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Mr. Scott?

7 **--- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:**

8 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Good afternoon, Constable Bent. My
9 name is Michael Scott and I'm here on behalf of a number of those who are most
10 affected by the mass casualty event. I have a few questions, if you wouldn't mind.

11 I think this morning your evidence was that you had never acted as
12 a family liaison in the past?

13 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Not to this kind of a capacity.

14 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Had you ever been appointed as a family
15 liaison?

16 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Just as I had earlier said about I think all
17 police officers who do frontline policing work who are dealing with the public, responding
18 to complaints are -- it may not be an official family liaison, but you are because you're
19 dealing with people and their families.

20 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** So do I understand you correctly what
21 you're saying is that any RCMP officer would have experience in liaising with families?

22 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I would say any police officer, whether it be
23 municipal or RCMP, depending on what kind of work they did. For example, someone
24 on the ERT team who only ever did that may not actually have done, you know, face-to-
25 face policing with people taking complaints.

26 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Okay. And would I -- am I correct that you
27 said this morning that you had received no training or weren't aware of any standard
28 operating procedures with regard to being appointed as a family liaison?

1 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

2 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And in this instance, you were appointed
3 as the family liaison broadly on the 19th?

4 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

5 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Okay. And did I understand correctly that
6 at that time it wasn't clear to you how many families you would be responsible for?

7 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I knew that I was dealing with the families,
8 but not with Constable Stevenson's family.

9 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Okay. Do I understand correctly that
10 Constable Stevenson, her family had a dedicated family liaison?

11 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Yes, that's correct.

12 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And Constable Chad Morrison had a
13 separate family liaison officer?

14 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

15 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Right. And then you would be responsible
16 for everyone else?

17 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

18 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Are you aware, and maybe you're not, but
19 are you aware of why Constables Stevenson and Morrison would have their own
20 liaisons and then the families would have a different liaison?

21 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Not for Constable Morrison, but
22 unfortunately, I've had a friend of mine who was an RCMP officer who was murdered in
23 the line of duty, and I know that the RCMP had assigned a family liaison specifically to
24 that officer.

25 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Okay. And as the days went on past April
26 19th and 20th and 21st, how was the list compiled of those family members that you
27 would be liaising with? How was that list generated?

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** The list was a work product in -- that began

1 with Corporal McKay who was putting that together. It was on the share drive where we
2 all had access to it. We could look at it if there was something that we had learned, we
3 were able to add something, a person who may be for a family or not, phone numbers,
4 addresses, anything such as that, then we could update that list as we went. When I
5 spoke to somebody from each family, I asked people if they would be willing to be the
6 contact person for the family. And so for those people who were willing to take on that
7 role, in some instances, there were folks who said, "Why don't you use me as a contact
8 instead, because so-and-so is not able to deal with this right now." In two occasions off
9 the top of my head, it was a spouse of someone who'd lost somebody, or a -- actually,
10 in both those occasions right off the top of my head, yes, it was a spouse.

11 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** You didn't have any dealings with Deputy
12 Chief Darrell Currie; did you?

13 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I don't even know who he is.

14 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Was there any discussion when you were
15 appointed as the family liaison officer as to what the scope of your role would be? I
16 know you told us this morning that you would be responsible for passing on information
17 to the families and being their point of contact, and I think you also said that you, sort of
18 your own accord, took on some other duties as well, but taking us back to when you
19 were appointed, were you communicating with the people that you were reporting to as
20 regards what exactly you would be doing and what you would be responsible for?

21 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I knew from what we have asked other
22 officers who've been our family liaisons on files that we've gone elsewhere and we've
23 worked on, of what we've asked of them, which is to be that conduit between the family
24 and the investigators, to relay information back and forth. I knew it was very important
25 in having discussions with Corporal McKay and with Corporal Rose-Berthiaume that it
26 was very important for them that we provide support to the families. We have never had
27 an officer who's been assigned as a liaison officer for any of our other files that that was
28 their sole responsibility. For example, that officer I was talking about in Cape Breton

1 earlier, that officer was still responding to calls, was still taking calls as they were
2 coming in and -- but would still meet with that family when there was information to pass
3 on, or if there was -- he would provide -- or she, sorry, would provide that phone number
4 to that person, so that they could call him to ask for more information.

5 For Corporal McKay and Corporal Rose-Berthiaume, they realized
6 the scope of this, and they wanted to have a dedicated officer to that that -- so there
7 were a couple of other little tasks I ran. A lady from Pictou County called me because
8 she had information and I was asked to go take a statement from her because I had
9 dealt with her on a previous file, and had a rapport with her, and it was just something
10 that took me away from the other duties for maybe 30 minutes. So, yes.

11 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** If you were the conduit, as it were, for
12 information being provided to the families, am I correct that the information that would
13 be allowed to be given to the families was being vetted through you? You weren't being
14 -- you weren't making the decisions about what information was being passed on to the
15 families; is that correct?

16 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct. I wasn't vetting any information.
17 Any information that was provided to me by Corporal Rose-Berthiaume was what I was
18 sharing.

19 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Right. So to the best of your
20 understanding, Corporal Rose-Berthiaume was the one deciding what the families
21 would be told. You're the liaison passing that message on.

22 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** He -- that's correct, he would pass that on.

23 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And was it your understanding that you
24 didn't have any particular discretion in that regard? Whatever you were authorised by
25 the Corporal to pass on is what you would pass on?

26 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I could pass on other -- I mean, stuff that
27 wasn't related to that. I mean, I could pass on stuff such as, you know, "You can
28 contact this person or this person." "If you're looking for assistance, maybe this." I

1 mean, that's not stuff that I -- that I called Corporal Rose-Berthiaume about on every --
2 on every occasion.

3 If it was something that they were looking for, more assistance than
4 perhaps the... For example, in just reviewing my notes earlier, I noticed that someone
5 had called and said, "My funding for Victims Services has run out." You know, I took
6 that upon myself to contact Victims Services and say, "Hey, can you work with these
7 folks and see if there's something else you can do?" So that's not something... But that
8 wasn't information related to the investigation, that was more outside of that scope.
9 When it came to the information of the investigation specifically, and as to what was
10 going on there, then yes, everything came through Corporal Rose-Berthiaume, and
11 what was from him was passed on.

12 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** You spoke this morning about things that
13 might be deemed "holdback evidence" ---

14 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

15 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** --- that being evidence that we wouldn't
16 want to share publicly for fear of compromising the ongoing investigation; correct?

17 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

18 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Would you have been part of the
19 conversation with either Corporal Rose-Berthiaume or Corporal McKay or anyone else
20 about what would be considered holdback evidence, and therefore, necessarily
21 withheld, or were you simply advised what information you were allowed to pass on?
22 And again, I'm specifically talking about information with regard to -- that would touch on
23 the investigation.

24 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** If -- when you look at the Command
25 Triangle, I'm not part of the Command Triangle. So I would have some information. I
26 wouldn't know what that holdback was unless I was brought in and given that. Typically,
27 when we run our investigations, very few members of the team will have knowledge of
28 what that actual holdback information could be. So I wouldn't know what was or wasn't

1 able to be passed on, only what I was told that I could pass along.

2 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And how were you being briefed on
3 developments -- developments in the -- in the investigation? Were you being briefed
4 separately or with everyone else?

5 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Corporal Rose-Berthiaume sat beside me. If
6 there was ever a question that came from someone, he and I would have an open
7 conversation about that.

8 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And in that regard, to the extent that
9 you're passing on -- on information, do you agree with me that it wouldn't have been
10 appropriate for you to do things like offer your own personal opinions?

11 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I was asked on one occasion of what I
12 thought of something, and I made it very clear that it was not the opinion of the RCMP,
13 that there was no way we would ever know this, that there was no way we would ever
14 prove it. That they asked for my opinion as to what I believed, and I provided them with
15 my opinion of what seemed reasonable.

16 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And you're referring to, you were talking
17 about this this morning in talking about a family, which suggested to them that the
18 perpetrator had killed their loved ones first in sequence?

19 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's -- that's correct.

20 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And you -- I think what you said was, and
21 correct me if I'm wrong, that you weren't saying that in your capacity as a RCMP Liaison
22 Officer, you were saying it sort of in your...

23 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I was just saying it as myself, as to what, to
24 me would seem reasonable, what any person who would know that this is the starting
25 time we have and this is an ending time, that it seemed reasonable.

26 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** But you were communicating with that
27 family in your role, quite literally, as a -- an RCMP Liaison Officer.

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Absolutely.

1 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Right?

2 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Absolutely.

3 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And presumably, it was your
4 understanding that that family was asking you those questions because you were an
5 RCMP officer?

6 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Yes.

7 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Assigned to communicate to them
8 information on behalf of the RCMP?

9 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I was doing that, but on this occasion they
10 had asked for my opinion, which I had told them repeatedly was not that of the RCMP,
11 that this had never been proven, would not be proven, that we didn't have any
12 reasonable way of ever knowing this stuff.

13 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** In retrospect, do you think that that was ill-
14 advised?

15 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Only probably because it wasn't recorded.

16 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** What difference would that make?

17 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** It probably would have made it easier at that
18 point in time to say this is what was out there, this is what was said.

19 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Are you of the understanding that there is
20 any dispute about what was said?

21 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Not of this information, no, not that I know
22 of. I haven't heard of anyone saying that there is anything in dispute, so...

23 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Right. So I'm sorry, why -- why would it
24 be beneficial if it had been recorded in -- about the incident that we're talking about?

25 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Not talking about. I'm just saying that it
26 would be clear that I had spoken in that instance and I had said on numerous occasions
27 that -- that it was my opinion, it was not that of the RCMP's.

28 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** So you were saying it as if you had

1 offered your personal opinion on a different occasion, and there was some confusion as
2 to what role, then it would have -- it would have been helpful if you had recorded it?

3 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

4 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Right. So were there other instances
5 where you were offering your personal opinion to family members?

6 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** None that I can recall off the top of my head.
7 I mean, there were times when people would ask me, "The media is calling me, what do
8 you think I should do?" Again, I've never been trained for this. I don't know what to --
9 you know, what is the correct answer, what's not the correct answer. I was asked a
10 question and I told them "It's up to you. It's up to you to decide whether or not you wish
11 to talk to somebody in the media." Is that coming from the RCMP? Is that coming from
12 me? Is it kind of a... You know, I'm having this conversation with someone who has
13 asked me for help, for some advice. So are they asking me only because? Would they
14 had not talked to you, for example, and ask you the same question, you know, someone
15 who they just happened to know and may have some kind of expertise or have
16 happenings in that regard? To me, that was, if you want to call it personal advice, then
17 fine, it was personal advice, but I'm looking at it as I'm asked that question, and if it's
18 something I could do to help this family member who is dealing with something that
19 they're having an issue with, then that's what I'm here to do.

20 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Is that how you would describe it in
21 certain circumstances you were providing personal advice to -- to the families?

22 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** It was my role to help these folks out, to do
23 whatever I could to help them. I don't -- I don't see how, you know, a question such as
24 that, for example, really violates anything one way or the other, it's just someone's
25 asking for some help and I'm trying to offer some help. At the end of the day, here's
26 what I'm saying, "you can make an informed decision here as to what you want to do
27 now."

28 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Using that instance as an example, talking

1 about the order of -- of when things happened in Portapique, was your personal opinion
2 on that based on any special evidence or information that you had, or was it simply
3 speculating?

4 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Just taking everything into perspective for
5 these folks. I know some folks had told me that, you know, "I'm tired of being
6 contacted", you know, "by the media", and/or whatever else it was. But -- and again, it's
7 just trying to offer some comfort, offer a little bit of reassurance that, you know, they're
8 capable of making these decisions on their own, and if it's me just providing a little bit of
9 -- a little bit of guidance to them to help them make those decisions, they're the ones
10 ultimately making the decision at the end of the day.

11 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Would you not distinguish between say if
12 somebody asked you to -- to reach out to their insurance company or for advice on how
13 to handle the media, that might not be something that you would normally deal with;
14 correct?

15 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** No, I don't normally deal with insurance
16 companies.

17 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** But if somebody was asking you for that
18 assistance, and there was some way that you could it, you would do that?

19 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I did on a few occasions, yes, help with
20 insurance companies just to help with the process of if somebody needed to have a
21 claim, that they were having issues with an insurance company, such as the insurance
22 company needed a file number or to know that their loved -- or the person making the
23 claim wasn't involved in some way, wasn't a perpetrator of the reason why their -- their
24 loved one was deceased now.

25 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Would you not distinguish those sorts of
26 attempts to help informally with offering your personal opinion on the events that
27 occurred in the mass casualty and things that would bear directly on the investigation?

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I don't believe I ever offered any kind of

1 personal opinions as to why the mass casualty happened.

2 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** No, but you did offer it on how it
3 happened.

4 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** On how it happened?

5 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Right.

6 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I'm not quite sure what you mean, sir.

7 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Well, by offering your opinion on the
8 timeline of events or when which family was killed.

9 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** A timeline of events, yes, but not how it
10 happened. I never offered how it happened. I offered what my opinion was, and mine
11 alone, of what seemed reasonable at the time.

12 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Do I understand correctly that in either
13 late April or early May of 2020 you had a phone call with the family of John Zahl
14 regarding identification of remains of the scene?

15 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I may have. I don't recall right off the top of
16 my head.

17 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Do you recall contacting Mr. Zahl's family
18 and making inquiries as to -- or suggesting to the family that there may have been other
19 people in the house?

20 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I believe, if I recall correctly, that the Zahl
21 residence had a very large cat in the house. There was something that -- if that is the
22 correct -- and I don't recall off the top of my head if that's correct, but there was an
23 animal in one of the houses that was burnt and we were trying to determine if there may
24 have been somebody visiting at this residence.

25 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** So do I understand correctly that those --
26 those remains were found and before they were identified as being human or animal,
27 you contacted the family to offer the suggestion of whether -- maybe there had been
28 somebody else visiting at the time?

1 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I wasn't offering a suggestion at all. I was
2 asking and trying to determine if there may have been.

3 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Right. And who directed you to make that
4 phone call?

5 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That would have come from the command
6 triangle from Corporal Rose-Berthiaume.

7 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** So you were specifically tasked with
8 making those inquiries?

9 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

10 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Was there any reason to believe that Mr.
11 Zahl's daughter would have information of that sort? You were aware at the time that
12 she lived in the U.S.

13 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

14 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Right. Did anyone have any reason to
15 believe that she would have specific information about who was in the house that night?

16 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** She's related and we have no reason to
17 believe that she wouldn't know who it was.

18 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Did you suggest to her that the RCMP
19 was concerned that perhaps some of the grandchildren had been in the house that
20 night?

21 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I believe by that point it was known that they
22 were not there. By late -- by late April, early May I believe it was well known that one
23 was in Nova Scotia and had been calling and was alive and well, and the other one was
24 in the U.S.

25 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Right. So am I correct that you did not ---

26 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** No, there -- no, there was -- it was, again,
27 determination trying to figure out if there had been -- may have been someone visiting.

28 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Presumably no forensic examination of

1 those remains had been completed at that point; correct?

2 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I can't speak to that. I don't know when
3 forensic examination was or wasn't done. My -- to me, it's reasonable to believe that I
4 was tasked because it hadn't been done.

5 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And my understanding is that
6 subsequently those remains were identified as being animal remains.

7 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Again, I don't recall which house off the top
8 of my head those were found at, but yes. There was an identification of remains that
9 were found to be animal.

10 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And I appreciate that it sounds like you
11 were tasked by the command triangle to contact Ms. Zuhl-Bruin about potential other
12 victims, but were you advised at all as to why that phone call was made before the
13 remains were examined by those that could determine whether they were human or
14 animal?

15 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I was not.

16 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** You spoke earlier today about your role in
17 bringing items back to family members, and I think you said that one of the things you
18 would do is, you know, take it upon yourself to do things like clean jewelry before you
19 handed them back to members of the family?

20 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

21 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Yeah. And I wanted to ask you about two
22 vehicles, the first one being the vehicle of Kristen Beaton.

23 And you were present when -- when her husband, Nick Beaton,
24 attended to retrieve her belongings?

25 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

26 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And do I understand correctly that he
27 retrieved those belongings out of a tote that was actually in Ms. Beaton's car?

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Sorry. Out of the tote that was in the car?

1 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Or bag of some sort, but that the items
2 were actually in the car.

3 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** There were many, many items in that car. It
4 was full of items. And previous to his arrival, myself and Constable Josh Bircham had
5 gone through that vehicle to take out as much as we could to assist so that Mr. Beaton
6 wouldn't have to go through that vehicle to take all the stuff out.

7 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** But Mr. Beaton did go through the vehicle,
8 did he not?

9 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** He looked through the vehicle afterwards,
10 yes.

11 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Right. And while it was still at the -- I
12 believe it was the Bible Hill RCMP ---

13 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

14 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Is there any reason why the items weren't
15 taken out of the car, why they -- why Mr. Beaton was sent to retrieve them from the
16 vehicle?

17 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** We were returning the vehicle to him. He
18 has to sign for the vehicle. He had wanted to see the vehicle.

19 **(INTERRUPTION)**

20 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Sorry. No interruptions, please.

21 **(INTERRUPTION)**

22 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Yes, he is.

23 No more interruptions, please.

24 **UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:** Or what?

25 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Mr. Scott?

26 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** The vehicle at the point that Mr. Beaton
27 was there had not been -- it had been, I think the word is processed; correct?

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

1 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And can you tell us what it means to
2 process a vehicle like that in those circumstances?

3 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That just means that the Forensic
4 Identification Section has done what they do with the vehicles. I can't speak as to what
5 they do with vehicles other than they examine them.

6 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** So your understanding that the purpose of
7 FIS when they're going through a vehicle like that is to do things like document it, take
8 pictures, see what evidence is in the vehicle?

9 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

10 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Right. But the vehicle isn't cleaned or
11 prepared in any way for the family to receive it back.

12 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

13 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And do I understand that at the time there
14 was no policy governing best practices for how to give back a vehicle like that to
15 someone like Nick Beaton?

16 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** There's -- not that I know of.

17 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** No.

18 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I don't -- and I know you had said there
19 wasn't, but I don't know if there has been a new one made or not. I have not seen that
20 or been aware of.

21 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** You're not aware of -- if there has been
22 one subsequently produced, you're not aware of it.

23 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** No, I'm not aware of.

24 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** You had the foresight, however, when it
25 came to things like personal items to clean, presumably, things like blood off of jewelry?

26 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** With the stuff that we had received from the
27 Medical Examiner's Office, yes.

28 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Was there any -- did you turn your mind to

1 or was there any discussion with those you were reporting to as to how to handle things
2 like somebody like Mr. Beaton showing up and being confronted with the vehicle that his
3 wife was murdered?

4 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** There was not that I recall. None that I was
5 a part of.

6 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** You were also directly involved in
7 returning Ms. O'Brien's vehicle to her family; correct?

8 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

9 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And that was given over to the custody of
10 Andrew O'Brien, Junior; correct?

11 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I believe so. I believe to he and his wife.

12 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And similarly, that vehicle had been
13 processed by FIS?

14 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That was what I had been told, yes.

15 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Photographs had been taken, evidence
16 had been collected?

17 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Again, that's what I was told, it had been
18 processed, so I don't know what they did for the processing, but generally, that's what
19 would be done.

20 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** But it would still show all the signs of
21 trauma just as it would have been on the side of the road.

22 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Yes.

23 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Right. And you later became aware that
24 certain items were found in that vehicle by the O'Brien family?

25 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

26 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And one of those things included a spent
27 shell casing.

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Yes, that's correct.

1 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And is it usual that something like that
2 would be left in a vehicle or should that have been picked up by a forensic examination
3 of that car?

4 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I can't say what they should or shouldn't
5 have picked up. I did not do an examination on that vehicle. That's well beyond my
6 expertise.

7 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** You had a number of communications
8 with Mr. Beaton about the return of Kristen Beaton's phone; correct?

9 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

10 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And a number of the phones of the victims
11 had been collected by the RCMP?

12 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

13 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And a number of them had been sent for
14 forensic examination by H Division; correct?

15 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

16 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And not all of the phones that were
17 collected, but several of them.

18 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Again, I don't know. I wasn't -- it wasn't my
19 decision to send what phones did or didn't go.

20 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And am I correct that of the phones that
21 were collected, Ms. Beaton's for some reason took longer than the others to get return
22 to her family? Is that your recollection?

23 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** My recollection is that it did take a while,
24 yes.

25 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Do you have any understanding of why it
26 would have taken longer?

27 You received the password to get into that phone from Ms.
28 Beaton's husband; correct?

1 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Again, I don't know. I can't speak to that.
2 That would be something to come from our digital forensic section who does that stuff. I
3 know they are responsible for the province, so as to what may have been a higher
4 priority or not, I don't know. It would have to be from them.

5 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** But my question was, Mr. Beaton had
6 provided to you a code to access his wife's phone; correct?

7 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** From my understanding, yes.

8 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And Mr. Beaton asked you several times
9 when he could have his wife's phone back; correct?

10 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

11 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And he indicated to you that he wanted it
12 because it would have pictures and her voice was recorded on it.

13 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

14 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And do you recall providing your opinion
15 to Mr. Beaton on why investigators may want to examine that phone?

16 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** It wasn't an opinion. This is why we collect
17 stuff. This is the evidence that we collect. We don't know what we don't know, and we
18 need to -- to know what's on that phone. We -- we look -- we look at everything with
19 wide, and work towards where the evidence is.

20 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** I believe what you told him was "you can't
21 rule anything out"? Do you remember that? Telling him that?

22 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I may have told him that, that we were
23 looking at everything.

24 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** Do you remember suggesting to him that
25 it may be possible that -- that his wife had a relationship with the perpetrator and they
26 needed to rule that out?

27 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I don't know if those were my exact words,
28 but we needed to follow up on anything that may have been on that phone, we needed

1 to look at all possibilities.

2 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** I appreciate that you don't remember your
3 -- your exact words, but you do recall that -- that you implied to Mr. Beaton that there
4 was at least some, not conclusions, but that there was some reason to believe that
5 perhaps she had meant to meet the perpetrator at the spot where she had been killed?

6 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** No, I didn't -- I didn't make any implication to
7 that at all. I said we were looking at all possible avenues and looking at everything.

8 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** But to the extent that anybody would
9 suggest that you told Mr. Beaton that -- that you needed to rule out whether or not
10 Kristen Beaton had a relationship with the perpetrator, your -- your evidence here today
11 is that you never said anything of that sort?

12 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** My evidence today would be that we needed
13 to rule out everything. If there was something, maybe there was or there wasn't, we
14 needed to rule out everything.

15 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** And I appreciate that, but you understand
16 that wasn't my question.

17 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Okay. Well, please repeat your question
18 then.

19 **MR. MICHAEL SCOTT:** My question is to the extent that
20 Mr. Beaton or anybody else suggests that you told him that we needed to rule out
21 specifically some sort of relationship between his wife and the perpetrator or some
22 connection between them, your evidence here today is that you never said anything of
23 the sort?

24 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** My evidence is that I would have told him
25 that we are looking at everything. At that point in time, what is the relationship as to
26 why he was and wasn't looking at certain people? Why some people were chosen and
27 some people weren't chosen? We have to look at everything out there that's a
28 possibility.

1 (INTERRUPTION)

2 COMMISSIONER MacDONALD: Mr. Scott?

3 (INTERRUPTION)

4 COMMISSIONER MacDONALD: We'll take a break. Thank you.

5 REGISTRAR DARLENE SUTHERLAND: Thank you. The

6 proceedings are now on break and will resume in 15-minutes.

7 --- Upon recessing at 1:48 p.m.

8 --- Upon resuming at 2:24 p.m.

9 REGISTRAR DARLENE SUTHERLAND: Welcome back. The
10 proceedings are again in session.

11 COMMISSIONER MacDONALD: Thank you.

12 Mr. Scott, I understand your -- you have completed your
13 questioning?

14 MR. MICHAEL SCOTT: I have.

15 COMMISSIONER MacDONALD: Thank you.

16 Ms. Hupman, we'll bring the witness in.

17 ---- CST. WAYNE BENT, Resumed:

18 COMMISSIONER MacDONALD: Thank you, Officer Bent.

19 Mr. Scott has completed his questioning and Ms. Hupman will have some questions for
20 you.

21 --- CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MS. LINDA HUPMAN:

22 MS. LINDA HUPMAN: Good afternoon, Constable Bent. My name
23 is Linda Hupman. With my colleagues, Steve Topshee and James Russell, we appear
24 on behalf of the Oliver/Tuck families and the family of Lillian Campbell.

25 CST. WAYNE BENT: Excuse me. Prior to our beginning, could I
26 clarify a point that I made with Mr. Scott ---

27 MS. LINDA HUPMAN: I'll leave that to the Commissioners.

28 CST. WAYNE BENT: --- for the benefit of the Commissioners?

1 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Sure.

2 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** The investigative team was trying to
3 establish victimology of the victims. We were trying to determine whether or not there
4 were any relationships between victims and the perpetrator. Relationships doesn't
5 mean intimate, relationships means personal, business, professional, or potentially
6 intimate. That was ---

7 **(INTERRUPTION)**

8 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That was not my indication, not my -- not
9 what I was saying. I was letting people know that this is what we're looking at. We're
10 keeping all options open until we know what we know.

11 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you.

12 Ms. Hupman.

13 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Yes, thank you, Commissioners.

14 Constable Bent, just one matter of clarification, and -- and to just
15 clarify for -- for some of us, perhaps. We've heard you speak during your testimony
16 today about the Command Triangle that you worked within. Can you tell us exactly who
17 that was? Because we have heard that term earlier in the proceedings from other
18 witnesses in the context of the CIC operation, so can you just enlighten us, I guess, as
19 to, in your context, what you're talking about when you're referring to the Command
20 Triangle?

21 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** So first up, I didn't work within the Command
22 Triangle, I -- I guess I'm a loosely kind of a branch off of the Command Triangle. The
23 Command Triangle is used for major case -- is major case management is what it's
24 used in.

25 There are three positions. The first one is a Team Commander,
26 and that would have been Corporal McKay initially. The Team Commander is
27 responsible for obtaining the resources that are needed to complete the tasks that are
28 dictated. There's a File Coordinator who is responsible for reviewing all of the

1 information that comes in, and then he takes that, sorry, and then he, I say he, only
2 because it was a he on this occasion, takes that information and he ensures that it's
3 indexed, it's organised and it's searchable. So all the information has been reviewed by
4 him, he's a second set of eyes for every piece of document that comes in. The third
5 part of that triangle is the Primary Investigator, and this -- and sorry, the File Coordinator
6 was Constable Shawn Stanton. Corporal Rose-Berthiaume was the Primary
7 Investigator. His job is to determine the speed, the flow, and the direction of the
8 investigation, meaning that he receives -- all information comes in through him, he
9 makes the decisions of where we're going.

10 For example, being the Team Commander, should he say, "I want a
11 search warrant for 123 Main Street, I need someone to write a warrant." He talks to the
12 Team Commander and says, "I need a warrant writer." Once the warrant is completed,
13 and it's been done, then he would say, "I need people to go search that residence."
14 And so the Team Commander would say, "Okay. We need four people to go search
15 that residence", and that Team Commander would go get those resources. Anything
16 that was done as a result of that one task would then be reviewed by the Primary and
17 determined where to move on from there.

18 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Okay. Thank you. That puts things in
19 perspective for us.

20 So I want to cover a couple of areas, and I guess I want to start
21 with having you kind of pick up when you got back to the detachment. We heard you
22 testify this morning about being at the detachment, then leaving after the call came in
23 from Wentworth, and then you were on scene in Plains Road for a number of hours, and
24 then you move back to the detachment early afternoon, as I understand it?

25 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

26 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** And at that time, you were aware or were
27 becoming aware of the -- a large number of messaging and inquiries coming in from
28 people concerned about relatives or acquaintances and friends and so on?

1 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Correct.

2 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** And you had -- you started -- you testified, I
3 think, that you started going through those methodically to deal with those, and I just
4 wanted to ask you if you recall seeing inquiries as part of the ones you were looking at
5 coming in from family members in Alberta of the -- of Jolene Oliver, Aaron Tuck and
6 Emily Tuck, if they were part of that message?

7 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** There may have been -- I can't recall of.
8 There was just so many messages coming in. I just started at the top of the list and was
9 working my way down through them. I don't remember -- I mean, I'm sure if there was a
10 phone call made and I've made some notes on it in email, then, yes, I would have seen
11 it. I just don't recall just because there was such a number of emails coming in.

12 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** And when you were dealing with those
13 messaging -- messages as you were starting to go through them, were you contacting
14 people, and if so, were you contacting them by phone, or texting, or were you trying to
15 contact any of the people they were inquiring about?

16 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** All the conversations that I had were with
17 people on the phone, trying to gather any information that I could and to share anything
18 that I could as well.

19 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Okay. So if I were to suggest to you that
20 you perhaps had been -- would you have tested *[sic]* any of the inquired people, like, for
21 example, Aaron Tuck, would you have reached out to try and contact any of those
22 people that were being inquired about?

23 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I know at some point in time I made contact
24 with the Tuck/Oliver family, but I don't recall when it was.

25 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Okay. So if I were to show you a
26 screenshot of a text message, which I'm going to have entered as an exhibit -- oh, okay.
27 I was going to say Ms. Hill I think is going to pass them out, but she slipped by me.

28 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you.

1 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Approximately 5:30 p.m. I believe is when I
2 contacted and advised Corporal Rose-Berthiaume.

3 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Right.

4 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** So it would have been shortly just before
5 then when I was advised first off that there were bodies there.

6 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Right. And so when you attended at
7 Cobequid Court, which was the Oliver/Tuck residence, were you aware at that time or
8 did you recall at that time having heard any text -- any of those messages from earlier in
9 the day referring to that particular family and that household?

10 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I don't know if I would have linked one and
11 one together or not. I don't know if I would have been able to make that linkage.

12 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Okay. And it didn't -- you didn't have any
13 recollection at that time either about your earlier text message?

14 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** There was so much going on that -- I was
15 swamped with other stuff. I just -- I don't remember.

16 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Sure. Okay.

17 And at the time when -- and when you were attending at Cobequid
18 Court that evening and it was together with -- am I correct there would have been
19 Corporal Jarrett MacDonald, Corporal Ward -- or Wood, Brad Wood. Was there anyone
20 else with you?

21 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I believe just from reviewing the documents
22 that Constable Forrest was there as well, but ---

23 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Okay.

24 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** --- I'll be honest, I only remember Jarrett
25 MacDonald, who I've known for quite some years before even coming to Nova Scotia,
26 so just he stuck out in my mind.

27 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Sure. And were you all going together at
28 one time to all of the houses, or did you split up in teams?

1 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Yeah, I know myself and Corporal
2 MacDonald went down to these residences and were going down through them.

3 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Okay.

4 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Yeah.

5 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** And you don't recall when you did the other
6 residences in the area, whether you were all together or whether you were separate?

7 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Just in -- I know that Constable -- or
8 Corporal MacDonald and I would drive to an area, we'd get out, we'd walk to all the
9 houses, we would go through the houses if the houses were open, and if they were
10 locked, we looked through all the windows, we tried doors, just we did area by area and
11 just worked our way around.

12 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Right. And you indicated as well, and I
13 think it was mentioned before, that once locating the deceased persons at the two
14 residences on Cobequid Court, you relay that message back to Corporal Rose-
15 Berthiaume.

16 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** That's correct.

17 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** But -- and you're not aware whether
18 anyone at the detachment took any steps immediately to be in touch with anyone in
19 regards to those victims?

20 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I don't know. I don't know if anybody did or
21 not, no.

22 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Okay. Thank you.

23 This one's been covered.

24 Were you aware while you were conducting your canvassing, for
25 want of a better word, of and contacting all of the residents in Portapique, whether there
26 were -- were you aware of the continued contacts or messaging that was coming in from
27 relatives about people in the community?

28 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Again, there may have been emails coming

1 through to my phone, but I wasn't checking my phone. I was checking residences to
2 see if there was anybody that was there that I could assist, and if there was somebody
3 that was hurt and not able to get help.

4 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Right. Okay. So you weren't checking in
5 on the phone or anything at that point?

6 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** No, I was more concerned about if there
7 was someone that I could help.

8 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Okay. All right. That takes care of the next
9 question as well then.

10 Do you recall how -- what time you wrapped up with your search of
11 the community?

12 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I don't recall for sure. I don't know if it's in
13 my notes or not what time I would have left or not.

14 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Okay.

15 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I would say maybe an hour and a half that it
16 would take for us to go through all the houses, because we were very, very thorough.
17 At least I know I'm -- I was very, very thorough in going through each house, on the odd
18 chance that maybe somebody was hiding from the house and thinking that I may have
19 been there as the perpetrator.

20 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** What was the process in terms of the other
21 residences that you attended at in terms of searching them or checking them?

22 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Searched -- looked around top to bottom,
23 went through every room, called out to folks, if there was anybody there, letting know
24 who I was there to help. Just top to bottom from wherever, like, room to room.

25 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Right. And obviously, if they were open. I
26 guess if they were locked, what was the procedure then?

27 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** If they were open, I felt that I could go in with
28 the lawful authority to under exigent circumstances to go into the house to see if there

1 was somebody who needed assistance. If houses were locked and I could look in
2 through the windows, I could see that there was nothing that would indicate that there'd
3 been any foul play inside that house, then, to me, it seemed reasonable that the people
4 who owned that house had either left when they were asked to leave the house, or were
5 not at their cottages during that time. And I didn't feel that I had the lawful authority to
6 make entrance into that house.

7 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Right. In your dealings with -- I'm just
8 changing tact just a slight bit here -- in your work as the family liaison officer and your --
9 and a fairly long period of time in dealing with many of these families who had lost loved
10 ones, we heard this morning from the Support Services Foundational Document about
11 some of the various services through victim --- Nova Scotia Victims Services that were
12 offered and accessed by people. And I'm just wondering, in -- and I think it was raised
13 this morning that there were concerns from some family members, and particularly, I
14 know that the Oliver/Tuck family members in residence in Alberta, when they were
15 trying to access services the -- the rate for, for example, the hourly rate, as was
16 mentioned this morning, for counselling services and so on was considered low.

17 Is that something that family members raised with you during your
18 dealings with them? Was that raised with you as a concern that they were having
19 difficulty?

20 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** There were a couple of occasions where
21 someone would call me and say, you know, "My -- my funding has run out. Are you
22 able to assist?" There was -- there were a few people who had issues trying to access
23 somebody as well, trying to find a counsellor that was willing to take on new clients.

24 It worked out very well because I got to meet some people through
25 Victims Services, I was able to meet with Ms. Dana Bowden, who is the director here for
26 the Province. It was nice that I was able to, actually just through a committee that I was
27 working on with her and several other folks, to be able to pick the phone up to make that
28 phone call to have that relationship that I could her and explain the issues that were

1 going on between -- with her and with Ms. Kim Burton out of Pictou County as well with
2 Victims Services. And so again, I can't arrange more funding, but you know, I could put
3 it forward to Victims Services to say some folks were having some issues.

4 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Right. And did -- and did you encounter
5 that with some of the out of province relatives, and were you able to do any -- assist
6 them in any way?

7 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** The only one I can recall off the top of my
8 head was the Alberta, and again -- families. It was -- it was letting -- letting our Victims
9 Services know here in Nova Scotia, based on what I was told from the family in Alberta,
10 that they had been able to receive more funding, I sent an email out to all the families to
11 let them know that, "Hey, you know what, if your funding is running out I have been told
12 that additional funding can be found and on a per -- a per case basis." And if people
13 were having an issue they could contact me and I would put them in contact with the --
14 with the right people or -- or have the right people contact them.

15 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** And do you know whether there was any
16 linkage between the provincial Victims Services here and any like organisations in the
17 other provinces that people may have been residing in?

18 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I know in Manitoba, there was someone in
19 Manitoba who was having some -- some issues, and I was able to reach out through the
20 RCMP Victims Services in Halifax, who put me in touch with a Victims Services person
21 with the RCMP in Manitoba, who was able to assist this person. I was also able to find
22 a local RCMP detachment that didn't police that town but did do the highway patrolling,
23 and one of the RCMP officers out there agreed to go and meet with the family member
24 in Manitoba and -- to try to offer some -- they were having some financial difficulty as
25 well, to try to offer them... And again, nice to have someone who lives there and knows
26 what the resources is and was able to help that person with -- get some additional
27 resources and some help.

28 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Okay, thank you. Just a couple of quick

1 things now. And one thing that we just wanted to -- to mention, and you may be aware,
2 and of course, this morning you were asked, I think, or you, in -- in -- as part of your
3 direct testimony you talked about some of the community initiatives that had been taken
4 on, remembrance things that -- that had occurred and that you were aware of, and I just
5 wanted to ask, just because it touches on our -- on the families we represent. Were you
6 aware of the -- of the initiative at the Cobequid Educational Centre with the gazebo that
7 was -- funds were raised and a gazebo was built there in memory of Emily Tuck? I
8 didn't know if you were aware of that or not?

9 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I -- I knew that -- we had been asked by
10 Mr. Beaton about having RCMP participation when her class graduated that she should
11 have graduated with, but no, I didn't -- I didn't know about that.

12 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Okay. And I have one final question that
13 one of my colleagues wanted me to ask, and it really doesn't touch on your -- on your
14 area, but you are an RCMP constable and have worked in the Major Crime Unit,
15 obviously probably a general duty member before that, and it's a question that has been
16 missed in asking some of the other more operational people involved in this file. So I'm
17 going to put it to you, and just ask if you are aware whether the general duty patrol cars
18 or any of the unmarked vehicles that you would be aware of have dashcams in them?

19 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I know -- I haven't been that -- that long
20 removed from the role that I was working general duty, I know there are dashcams in
21 some of the vehicles. Any of the unmarked non-traffic vehicles that I've ever been
22 associated to do not have dash cameras. Our unmarked vehicles are sometimes used
23 for surveillance work, so the less we can draw attention to them the less we do, but I do
24 know -- I have seen unmarked traffic vehicles which do have cameras in them as well.

25 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Right. Okay. But there's not a consistent --
26 they're not consistent in all vehicles, then, from what I'm understanding?

27 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Not from what I've seen, no.

28 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** And no policy on the use of them routinely?

1 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** I would -- I am -- I don't know how to operate
2 my own VCR, so I wouldn't even know. I usually took a car that didn't have a camera in
3 it because I had no clue how to use it. If there's a policy on it I don't know.

4 **MS. LINDA HUPMAN:** Okay. Thank you. Those are my
5 questions, Constable Bent.

6 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you, Ms. Hupman.
7 Ms. Hill?

8 **MS. EMILY HILL:** (Inaudible response.)

9 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thanks so much.
10 Mr. VanWart, did you have an exhibit?

11 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** I'm sorry, did we exhibit the text
12 message? We did? Okay, thank you.

13 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Oh. I'm sorry, Mr. VanWart, I'll
14 check with my colleagues first.

15 No questions from the Commissioners for you, Officer Bent. Thank
16 you very much for your coming here today and sharing your -- your evidence with us.
17 It's -- it's a very difficult subject matter, it's a difficult day for you, and we really
18 appreciate it, and we thank you for your help.

19 **CST. WAYNE BENT:** Thank you.

20 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you. You're free to go.

21 **MR. JAMIE VanWART:** Thank you, Commissioners. Before we
22 take a moment to reorientate the stage for the presentation of the next Foundational
23 Document, I just wanted to take a moment to move to enter four additional exhibits. I'll
24 provide a bit of an explanation as to what these exhibits are:

25 Commission Counsel is moving to file RCMP Policy binders. There
26 are four volumes. These are not new to the Participants, but were created as a
27 package to use as exhibits for convenience. They are the national divisional
28 detachment level policies that the RCMP have identified to the Commission after

1 extensive dialogue as those requisite to the Commission's mandates, and enforce as of
2 April 2020, or as updated since where indicated.

3 These binders exist in the RCMP's, or sorry, these policies exist in
4 the RCMP's possession in a intranet, which is not produced for disclosure in one piece,
5 but taken apart and examined for relevance and privilege, and then provided as
6 individual documents over about a year. Therefore, the Commission was not able to
7 recreate the hyperlinks between policies that exist when viewed internally by the RCMP.

8 There are still appendices and possibly other policies still to be
9 identified as requisite to the Commission's work. Any new material will be put into the
10 new binder and not insert -- inserted into the four -- one of these four binders. In
11 essence, they'll become a new exhibit themselves. Each policy contained in these
12 binders already has an individual COMM number, which it retains within these binders
13 that have -- that will be given a COMM -- or exhibit number today. These policies have
14 already been disclosed and are in the RCMP Policy folder in relativity. They are also
15 being sent to Participants' Counsel via a Titan file so that the bookmarks will be usable
16 as the hyperlinks are not usable in relativity.

17 So with that background, I would ask that Madam Registrar enters
18 the four volumes.

19 Volume 1 is COMM No. 0058879.

20 **REGISTRAR DARLENE SUTHERLAND:** That's Exhibit 2460.

21 **--- EXHIBIT No. 2460:**

22 (COMM0058879) RCMP policy binder Volume 1

23 **MR. JAMIE VanWART:** And Volume 2 is COMM No. 0058880.

24 **REGISTRAR DARLENE SUTHERLAND:** 2461.

25 **--- EXHIBIT No. 2461:**

26 (COMM0058880) RCMP policy binder Volume 2

27 **MR. JAMIE VanWART:** And Volume 3 is COMM No. 0058881.

28 **REGISTRAR DARLENE SUTHERLAND:** 2462.

1 **--- EXHIBIT No. 2462:**

2 (COMM0058881) RCMP policy binder Volume 3

3 **MR. JAMIE VanWART:** And Volume 4 is COMM No. 0058882.

4 **REGISTRAR DARLENE SUTHERLAND:** And 2463.

5 **--- EXHIBIT No. 2463:**

6 (COMM0058881) RCMP policy binder Volume 3

7 **MR. JAMIE VanWART:** Thank you, Commissioners.

8 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you.

9 I understand now we will rearrange. We can stay on the platform,
10 but we can rearrange the podium, et cetera, for the second presentation of the
11 Foundational Document -- second Foundational Document for today.

12 (SHORT PAUSE)

13 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Ms. Hnatiw is ready? Thank
14 you.

15 **--- INTRODUCTION OF FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS: PUBLIC**

16 **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE RCMP AND GOVERNMENT AFTER THE MASS**

17 **CASUALTY**

18 **--- PRESENTATION BY MS. GILLIAN HNATIW:**

19 **MS. GILLIAN HNATIW:** Good afternoon again everyone. Shifting
20 gears, I am here to present the Foundational titled -- Foundational Document titled
21 "Public Communications from the RCMP and Governments after the Mass Casualty".

22 And Madam Registrar, I'd like to start by marking it an exhibit.

23 **REGISTRAR DARLENE SUTHERLAND:** That's 2464.

24 **--- EXHIBIT No. 2464:**

25 Foundational Document titled "Public Communications from
26 the RCMP and Governments after the Mass Casualty" with
27 source material

28 **MS. GILLIAN HNATIW:** Could you also mark as exhibits the

1 source material contained in that document?

2 **REGISTRAR DARLENE SUTHERLAND:** So exhibited.

3 **MS. GILLIAN HNATIW:** So this document captures the public
4 communications from both the RCMP and other government officials from the moment
5 the perpetrator was taken down at the Enfield Big Stop into the days, weeks and
6 months that followed the mass casualty. In many ways, it is a follow-along from the
7 public communications -- sorry, from the Foundational Document titled "Public
8 Communications April 18th and 19th, 2020".

9 This document also strives to compare the public statements made
10 by these officials with the information known to the RCMP and others internally at the
11 time the statements were made.

12 So just starting with a bit of background, here are the key RCMP
13 members and teams that are involved in the subject matter of this document. First in
14 Nova Scotia, Director Lia Scanlan led the communications strategy for the Nova Scotia
15 RCMP in relation to all media communications following the mass casualty.

16 Director Scanlan, in turn, took direction about the content of those
17 communications from the command triangle leading the H-Strong investigation as well
18 as from Superintendent Darren Campbell.

19 As we will see in the clips we're about to see in a moment, both
20 Commanding Officer -- sorry, Assistant Commissioner Lee Bergerman, who's the
21 Commanding Officer for Nova Scotia, and Chief Superintendent Chris Leather, who's
22 the Criminal Operations Officer, were actively involved in communications to the public.

23 In case anyone's forgotten who was leading the province and the
24 country at the time, Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen McNeil, Nova
25 Scotia Premier, Bill Blair, who was the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency
26 Preparedness for Canada, as well as Mark Furey, who was then the Nova Scotia
27 Justice Minister and Attorney General, all figure in this document from time to time.

28 Before we get to the specifics and an examination of what the

1 communications involved, the communications work that was done by Director Scanlan
2 and the communications team at headquarters -- which prompts me to realize I skipped
3 right over the headquarters, so I will go back.

4 I think I reviewed who was in charge of -- in Nova Scotia at the
5 time. They would have been working in concert with and reporting up to the National
6 Communications Services in Ottawa, which was led by Sharon Tessier, the Director
7 General, and involved comms professionals Daniel Brien, Jolene Bradley and Catherine
8 Fortin.

9 And of course, the RCMP Commanding Officer is Commissioner
10 Brenda Lucki.

11 So the work done by the comms team in Nova Scotia and the
12 comms team in Ottawa would have been guided by both standing instructions to the
13 RCMP that were in place at the time as well as some RCMP policies.

14 So first, standing instructions that were adopted in 2019 set out
15 instructions for the type of information that could not be shared with the media or public
16 in keeping with obligations under the provincial *Privacy Act*. So these standing
17 instructions would have constrained the ability to share information about marital status.
18 For example, the document directs that the individual speaking cannot say "domestic
19 assault", but could say that a woman assaulted was in a -- can say a woman was
20 assaulted in a residence by a man.

21 Similarly, the relationships between individuals, including
22 child/parent relationships, spouses, siblings, et cetera were not to be shared. Instead,
23 RCMP officers were directed to say that individuals were known to each other.

24 They were also directed not to share an individual's employment
25 status or criminal history and to refrain from disclosing details of medical conditions or
26 medical status, but instead to use more general terms like non-life-threatening injuries.

27 The RCMP's Operational Manual on Media Relations also instructs
28 members to ensure information released to the media does not interfere with the

1 investigation or result in injury, injustice or embarrassment to the victims or the accused.
2 It directs speakers not to speculate or offer their personal opinion, but to report only the
3 facts.

4 They are directed to always protect the integrity of the criminal
5 investigation or an impending trial. They're not to name young persons or the names --
6 or share the names of any injured parties. And finally, they're directed not to release
7 the cause of death before an autopsy is conducted and the cause of death is
8 determined by the medical examiner.

9 So with that background, we rewind to April 19th, 2020. The RCMP
10 sent out a Tweet announcing that the perpetrator had been taken into custody at 11:40
11 a.m. Less than 2.5 hours later, the public heard its first live statement from a public
12 official when Stephen McNeil offered the following remarks during the standard -- sorry,
13 standing daily covid briefing in the province.

14 **[AUDIO PLAYBACK]**

15 As we heard Premier McNeil say, at the time that he was
16 addressing the public, the Nova Scotia RCMP, under the direction of Director Scanlan,
17 was preparing for its first press briefing. Director Scanlan had put together the
18 components of a communication strategy that involved senior RCMP personnel
19 delivering coordinated updates at press briefings, and that was in lieu of providing one
20 on one interviews to the media.

21 In her second interview with the Mass Casualty Commission,
22 Director Scanlan spoke about her thinking and her rationale at some length and
23 essentially said that given the breadth and the volume of interest and the overwhelming
24 number of inquiries that she had elected this approach at this time so that information
25 could be shared in a measured, equal way.

26 Given that -- she also planned that given the dynamic environment,
27 that they would sort of deliberately hold and control the messaging through these press
28 conferences, as opposed to giving ad hoc updates in different ways.

1 The investigation was obviously active and unfolding and it was a
2 very dynamic factual environment.

3 So at 6:00 p.m. on April 19th, Nova Scotia RCMP held its first press
4 briefing. Commissioner -- Assistant Commissioner Bergerman opened by announcing
5 the death of Cst Heidi Stevenson and the injury of a second RCMP member.

6 Chief Superintendent Leather then took over and provided an
7 update on the status of the criminal investigation.

8 **[AUDIO PLAYBACK]**

9 During the question period that followed, Chief Superintendent
10 Leather did address a number of specific questions from the press in which he noted
11 that there were in excess of 10 people killed, although the investigation was ongoing.

12 The number 10, as Director Scanlan spoke to in her interviews with
13 the Commission, and I believe also in her testimony a few weeks ago, was just a
14 number chosen on that day based on the information they had at the time they settled
15 on it. In fact, about an hour before this press conference started, Chief Superintendent
16 Leather had been appraised that the victim count was at least 17 at that point in time,
17 but the decision had been made to call the information final.

18 Other information that was shared, obviously, in the course of this
19 press briefing was that the perpetrator was deceased and not in custody, as had been
20 communicated to the public earlier that day.

21 He confirmed that the perpetrator's death would form part of a SiRT
22 investigation, but declined to confirm whether the perpetrator had been shot by a
23 member of the RCMP.

24 You heard him mention that there were multiple communities
25 across Nova Scotia affected. He later acknowledged that there were several locations
26 in the province, in addition to Portapique, that were involved, but declined to share.

27 At that point in time, the RCMP were aware of at least 15 specific
28 scenes that had been involved in the mass casualty.

1 They were also aware that a second referral had been made to
2 SIRT in relation to the perpetrator's exchange of gunfire with Constable Stevenson at
3 the cloverleaf. That was not shared at this time.

4 The plan at the end of this briefing was to hold another briefing the
5 next day to update the public at the same time, and this was a plan that was shared and
6 discussed with National Communications at headquarters in Ottawa. Despite this plan,
7 RCMP Commissioner Lucki continued to participate in one-on-one interviews with
8 various news organizations into the evening, and she shared the rising death toll that
9 was being reported internally, and thus shared information that was at odds with what
10 was reported by Chief Superintendent Leather at the news conference. This resulted in
11 different outlets receiving and reporting different information over the course of the
12 evening. In turn, this created confusion in the public. The Commission has also heard
13 in the course of its work that this created distress for some of the families who were still
14 trying desperately to find out information about their missing loved ones and who were
15 watching the numbers climb on the evening news.

16 Outlets who had not been in direct contact with RCMP
17 Commissioner Lucki began to reach out to Nova Scotia RCMP Comms asking for
18 updates or confirmation of the information that Commissioner Lucki had shared. And so
19 there was uneven reporting on the number of dead during the evening of April 19th and
20 into the morning of April 20th.

21 And I pause to say that the Commission has not yet spoken with
22 Commissioner Lucki, but we'll be hearing from her later this summer, and I'm sure we'll
23 hear her perspective on these events as well.

24 So into the evening of April 19th, there were official statements
25 released by Prime Minister Trudeau on behalf of the Nova Scotia RCMP, on behalf of
26 Minister Blair's office, and finally, on behalf of Nova Scotia's Serious Incident Response
27 Team, or SIRT, confirming that they would be investigating the -- what was effectively
28 the shooting of the perpetrator at Enfield.

1 The following day, April 20th, another full day of public statements
2 and press conferences, including notably press briefings from both the Nova Scotia
3 RCMP and RCMP headquarters in Ottawa.

4 At the Nova Scotia briefing that took place around two p.m. that
5 afternoon, Assistant Commissioner Bergerman and Chief Superintendent Leather again
6 addressed the press and the public. At that time, they confirmed that there were in
7 excess of 19 victims, including the perpetrator, and said that it involved both men and
8 women, and that they were all adults, some of whom were known to the perpetrator and
9 others who were not. Constable Chad Morrison was also identified publicly as the
10 injured RCMP member, but the -- they declined to release the names of other victims at
11 that point in time, pending examination and confirmation by the medical examiner's
12 office.

13 Although the number was put at that point as in excess of 19,
14 internally, it was known that there was potentially as many as 23 deceased, including
15 both Constable Stevenson and the perpetrator. It was also known internally that Emily
16 Tuck, who was just 17, was among the dead.

17 In addition, they numbered the crime scenes in Portapique -- or,
18 sorry, they numbered the crime scenes at 16 in both Portapique and other communities
19 in central and rural Nova Scotia, although there had been as many as 18 identified
20 internally at that point in time.

21 In terms of SIRT referrals, they shared that two additional referrals
22 had been made, but declined to provide any other details, other than to say that two
23 separate referrals means two separate incidents. We now know that those referrals
24 related to Constable Stevenson's death at Shubenacadie and the blue-on-blue incident
25 that occurred at the Onslow Belmont Fire Hall. I note that by the end of April 20th, SIRT
26 itself announced that it would not be investigating what we now refer to as the
27 Constable Stevenson matter at the cloverleaf, that that matter was best investigated by
28 the RCMP itself.

1 On the subject of firearms on April 20th, Chief Superintendent
2 Leather declined to discuss firearms, citing the ongoing SIRT investigation. Internally,
3 the RCMP had known since the day prior that the perpetrator was not licensed to own
4 firearms and that if he had any in his possession, they were not registered in his name.
5 There was also some internal information that Constable Stevenson's sidearm and
6 magazine were missing, but the forensic report confirming that it had in fact been in the
7 perpetrator's possession at the time of his death and located in the car he was driving
8 was not complete until the following day.

9 On the subject of police paraphernalia, it was reported that they
10 had first received reports of the fact that the perpetrator was driving a replica RCM [sic]
11 cruiser early in the morning of April 19th. What we now know is that within the first 30
12 minutes of the RCMP starting to receive 9-1-1 calls on April 19th, shortly after 10 p.m.,
13 they were variously told that the perpetrator was driving a decaled and labelled RCMP
14 car, a vehicle that looked just like a police car with lights and stuff and a cop symbol on
15 it, as well as a copy car that was white with stripes, but possibly no lights. We've also
16 heard already in the course of this Commission's work that certainly there were the calls
17 and statements from Andrew and Katie MacDonald as well as the interview with Andrew
18 MacDonald shortly after 5 a.m. on the morning of April 19th.

19 Finally, on the question of the public alert, Chief Superintendent
20 Leather said that he believed an amber alert had been issued, but was corrected on site
21 by Corporal Croteau, who clarified that the RCMP had just used Twitter and Facebook.

22 Almost immediately after the RCMP's press briefing concluded, a
23 similar briefing was held in Ottawa by RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki and the
24 Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Bill Blair. During that press
25 briefing, Minister Blair referenced 18 innocent lives that were lost, and said that the
26 RCMP was actively investigating 16 crime scenes. So there was inconsistencies with
27 the information being shared.

28 Although the victims had not yet been identified to the public or in

1 some respects by the medical examiner's office, Mr. Blair did know that they included a
2 nurse, a teacher, correctional officer, serving police officers, parents, neighbours and
3 friends.

4 Moving on and speaking about the investigation, Commissioner
5 Lucki warned that in the face of this unprecedented crime, it's going to be a very long
6 and very complicated. She said there was at least -- there's 15, at least 15 crime
7 scenes.

8 About an hour and a half after that, Premier McNeil was sitting with
9 Dr. Strang, preparing to, again, deliver their COVID address to the province, and during
10 question period, received some questions about why a public alert was not set out
11 during the mass casualty. So we can see that as early as April 20th, questions about
12 use of the public alerting system were starting to bubble up.

13 And so Premier McNeil had this exchange with the press during
14 that COVID briefing.

15 **[AUDIO PLAYBACK]**

16 That was the end of press briefings and statements for the 20th.

17 Moving on to April 21st, we can see that Premier McNeil continued
18 to field questions about the public alert and why a public alert wasn't issued. The
19 RCMP did not hold a live press briefing that day but did issue a statement, in which it
20 identified the fact that there was 23 victims. This statement was originally published on
21 Facebook. Later that evening, the statement was amended, or rather edited, the post
22 was edited, and the number of victims was amended to 22. In a comment below the
23 post, the RCMP did clarify that the post had been edited to reflect the fact that there
24 were 22 victims plus the suspect, who also died in the incident.

25 So from this point onward, there does start to be clarity as to the
26 number of dead. Other questions start to bubble up.

27 As -- I should also say that in their April 21st statement, the RCMP
28 also clarified that one of the victims was 17 while the rest were adults. Again, none of

1 the names were provided as they continued to work with the medical examiner's office
2 and to carry out next of kin notifications.

3 The statement also restated that the perpetrator did not have a
4 "criminal record," and this is technically correct. However, as early as April 19th, there
5 was -- the RCMP had internal knowledge of the fact that the perpetrator had had a
6 number of prior interactions with the police. Most significantly, in 2011, he pled guilty to
7 an assault and received a conditional discharge. There's sort of distinction that's often
8 understood by lawyers but perhaps not as much by the general public that you can be
9 found responsible for a crime without being technically convicted.

10 They also had knowledge of the fact that there was a complaint of
11 threatening to kill his parents in 2010. In 2011, there was a BOLO that said he wanted
12 to kill a cop, so an officer safety bulletin. And then finally, there was a documented
13 interaction with the Halifax Regional Police from February 2020, in which the perpetrator
14 had had a confrontation over the fact that they had parked a vehicle in the parking lot
15 aside -- beside his Dartmouth clinic and that he appeared to be using his size and
16 aggression to attempt to intimidate the officers.

17 What was not addressed in this RCMP statement was the question
18 of why the public alert was not used, although the Premier continued to redirect
19 questions to the RCMP when he was sort of faced with them on a daily basis at this
20 point in time. However, there's internal correspondence from the RCMP that's reflected
21 in the Foundational Document that shows that they were sort of in active discussions
22 about how to best respond to that question.

23 Jumping forward to April the 22nd, again, Premier McNeil continued
24 to field and address questions about public alerting during his daily COVID-19 briefings.
25 Around 4:30, the Nova Scotia RCMP held another press briefing, in which Chief
26 Superintendent Leather delivered a statement about the ongoing investigation and
27 addressed the emergency alert ready system, as well as the course of events and the
28 RCMP's response. He confirmed to the public that the perpetrator had acted alone, but

1 added that the RCMP continued to investigate whether he may have been assisted
2 during or leading up to the mass casualty.

3 During this briefing, Chief Superintendent Leather was also asked
4 about the firearms used by the perpetrator, but declined to go into specifics, citing the
5 SIRT investigation. Finally, in response to a journalist's question however, he did
6 confirm that the RCMP believed the perpetrator did not have what's called the firearms
7 acquisition certificate. That was the language he used at the moment, although I
8 understand that those certificates are -- had been sort of out of -- there was a different
9 term for those certificates at the time and it caused some confusion. Internally,
10 however, the RCMP had recovered and identified a number of the firearms that were
11 recovered from the vehicle at Enfield.

12 When asked again about the replica police cruiser and police
13 paraphernalia, they again stated that it was not until the morning of April 19th that
14 information about both the police uniforms and the car came to the CIC commander. As
15 I covered a few minutes ago, this Commission has heard of a number of reports
16 provided to the RCMP on April 18th about the vehicle being driven by the perpetrator.

17 On the question of the alert, Chief Superintendent Leather said a lot
18 of delay in preparing alert was based on communications between the EMO and the
19 various officers, and then a discussion about what the message would be.

20 On -- in response to a question, or I should say that a question was
21 posed about whether the term firearms complaint perhaps undersold the initial events in
22 Portapique, and Chief Superintendent Leather replied that he was very satisfied with the
23 messaging, and that the communications that were being provided were the best and
24 clearest information that could be provided at the time.

25 I am a slide behind, and I apologize.

26 So you see -- you can see in this summary and the one that
27 follows, as well as in the detailed contents of the Foundational Document, that there
28 were discrepancies between the information that the RCMP was sharing with the public

1 and what they knew internally. It remains to be discussed and ultimately decided by the
2 Commissioners as to, you know, the rationale for those differences. As I reviewed at
3 the beginning, there were some policies and guidelines in place that did establish some
4 guidelines about what could be shared and what could not be shared, pending things
5 like confirmation from the medical examiner's office and the ongoing investigation.

6 I would say that communications up until April 24th were
7 characterized by a certain amount of fluidity and dynamism. I mean, it was an ongoing
8 investigation. When the first RCMP press briefing took place on April 19th, there were
9 still things on fire, and investigation was very much in its early stages, and information
10 was dynamic. There's a change in that during the press briefing on April 24th. They sort
11 of had come to ground on the initial facts and information available to them and were
12 sort of organizing to do the deeper work of the H-Strong investigation.

13 And so with that, on April 24th at 11:00 a.m., they held another
14 press briefing, this one conducted by Superintendent Campbell, who delivered a
15 statement in which he shared a timeline, quite a detailed timeline of the mass casualty
16 and the first responders' actions in Portapique, again, noting that the initial complaint
17 was of a shooting.

18 He described the mass casualty as occurring in three parts: The
19 first cluster was in the Portapique area on Saturday night; the second, there was a
20 second cluster of incidents in the areas of Wentworth, Glenholme, and Debert; and then
21 a third and final cluster of incidents that were in the Shubenacadie area, Milford, and in
22 Enfield.

23 **[AUDIO PLAYBACK]**

24 So there were a number of new facts and details that emerged from
25 this press briefing, and I think that as you watch it in real time you can see that the
26 RCMP at this point in time has reconstructed, at least to some extent, the course of
27 events and -- and have some of the core facts settled. Among the facts that were
28 shared at this press briefing for the first time was that the incident had started with an

1 assault on a person known to him. And we saw at the beginning how that was inline
2 with the standing instructions for how to communicate and not refer to the individual's
3 spouse, but that person was of course Lisa Banfield, although she was obviously not
4 named. The names of the other victims also still had not been shared by the RCMP.

5 When asked about firearms used in the course of the mass
6 casualty later in questions during this, the RCMP confirmed that the perpetrator was in
7 possession of a pistol and long-barrelled weapons. It said that they had traced one of
8 the weapons to Canada, but believed the rest had come in from the United States.

9 On the questions again about the replica car and police
10 paraphernalia and the perpetrator's possession, Superintendent Campbell said that it
11 was early in the RCMP's response that they learned that the perpetrator owned several
12 vehicles that looked like police vehicles, and it was only on the morning of April 19th
13 that the -- they learned he was in possession of a fully-marked and equipped replica
14 RCMP vehicle and was wearing a police uniform.

15 As their investigation sort of enters a new phase, the next press
16 briefing came four days later, on April 28th. The additional new information shared at
17 this point in time was that the perpetrator's assault on his common-law spouse was the
18 first significant assault of the mass casualty. The RCMP confirmed that it had
19 interviewed Lisa Banfield several times, although she was still not named.

20 When asked again about the second SiRT investigation,
21 Superintendent Campbell said that he could not go into details, but it involved two of our
22 other officers and a marked vehicle. And again, as I said before, this second SiRT
23 investigation was the blue-on-blue shooting incident that occurred at the Onslow-
24 Belmont Firehall.

25 On the question of firearms, it was confirmed that Canadian Border
26 -- Canadian Border Services Agency was assisting with the investigation, and that the
27 RCMP had spoken with an individual in the United States, who had helped fill in some
28 blanks for them, and that they believed, not just believed, that they knew the perpetrator

1 to be in possession of some -- of several semi-automatic handguns and two semi-
2 automatic rifles at that time.

3 I'm behind again, I apologise.

4 The language used about the firearms during the press briefing
5 early on April 28th is interesting in light of a meeting that took place later that day, which
6 is documented in notes provided to the Commission by -- by the RCMP and taken by
7 Superintendent Campbell. At the meeting was Assistant Commissioner Bergerman,
8 Chief Superintendent Leather, Superintendent Campbell, and Director Scanlon, who
9 met with Commissioner Lucki by phone, along with other members of the Comms team
10 at National Headquarters.

11 And it was during this meeting that Commissioner Lucki expressed
12 her disappointment in the press briefings carried out by the Nova Scotia RCMP. She
13 conveyed that they had disobeyed her instructions, at least according to Supt
14 Campbell's notes, she conveyed that she had -- that they had disobeyed her
15 instructions to include specific information on the firearms used by the perpetrator and
16 that she had promised Minister Blair and the Prime Minister's office that they would
17 release information that was tied to pending gun control legislation that was designed to
18 make officers and the public safer.

19 Again, the Commission has not yet had an opportunity to speak
20 with Commissioner Lucki and we anticipate we will hear from her later this summer.

21 The next update came on May 11th, almost two weeks later, and it
22 was at that time the RCMP announced that their investigation had been renamed H
23 Strong, Operation H Strong, and that to date, they had interviewed 500 witnesses and
24 were continuing to conduct interviews. All 17 scenes and search areas had now been
25 released, and that there had been three referrals to SiRT, although one of them had
26 been declined.

27 After that, the next press briefing takes place on June 4th, in which
28 Supt -- Chief Supt Leather confirmed that the RCMP was also subject to a number of

1 independent reviews and investigations external to the organization. There was the two
2 being conducted by SiRT, there was an Employment and Social Development Canada
3 investigation, a Hazardous Occurrence investigation, TEAM investigation, and that the
4 RCMP itself was in discussions to determine the best approach regarding a formal
5 comprehensive review.

6 So again, on these two slides, we can see that the RCMP is,
7 probably not surprisingly, in possession of some information that's not shared, although
8 that's part of what we're looking at in this process.

9 This June 4th press briefing was in fact the last press briefing held
10 by the RCMP specifically to address the mass casualty.

11 In July, as we all know, Ministers Blair and Furey announced, on
12 July the 23rd, that there would be a joint federal/provincial review into the events of April
13 18th and 19th, 2020.

14 The news release -- the RCMP issued a news release on behalf of
15 Assistant Commissioner Bergerman regarding the announcement of the joint review,
16 which as we know, a week later, in response to public pressure, the governments
17 announced an intent to convert into a joint federal/provincial inquiry.

18 On June 30th, pursuant to a court order, the ITOs, information to
19 obtain, that had been filed with the Court were released to the media and to the public.
20 And in an effort to provide some context to the information that was shared through the
21 ITOs, the RCMP issued further statements in an attempt to provide some additional
22 context to the bits and pieces of information that was contained in those ITOs.

23 Those additional contexts included the fact that there was, you
24 know, no credible or actionable information that the perpetrator was involved in any
25 other murders prior to the murders of April 18th and 19th, that the perpetrator was
26 involved in procuring firearms illegally, but they had not uncovered information that was
27 involved -- to suggest the perpetrator was involved in organized crime.

28 They shared information about the bank accounts and personal

1 investments available to and accessed by the perpetrator prior to April 18th, 2020.

2 They discussed connections between the perpetrator and
3 individuals in Maine.

4 And also the fact that the perpetrator had hidden rooms and
5 compartments in his residences.

6 Again, this information was shared in an effort to provide context for
7 some of the details that came out through the ITO.

8 The next official announcement came on December 4th, 2020,
9 when the RCMP published a statement from Supt Campbell announcing new criminal
10 charges against three individuals accused of providing ammunition to the perpetrator.

11 The statement continued that:

12 "To ensure a fair trial for those who have been charged
13 and with the public inquiry now ongoing, [...] [t]he RCMP
14 will respectfully refrain from further commenting on these
15 matters outside of the inquiry."

16 And again, in Lia Scanlan's interview with the Commission, she
17 does discuss in further details the fact that it was decided that no further information
18 could be shared beyond that point. She felt that there was a limit on what could be said
19 and what could not be said, and they needed to be mindful of not influencing anything.

20 So beyond that, and statements released on the one- and two-year
21 marks of the mass casualty, there have been no further press briefings or statements
22 from the Nova Scotia RCMP.

23 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** thank you so much.

24 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** Thank you, Ms. Hnatiw and all
25 Commission Counsel for the work and the presentations of the Foundational
26 Documents today.

27 And of course to Cst Bent for appearing.

28 It's apparent to all of us that everyone whose lives have been

1 touched here are also touched by terrible pain. And we certainly acknowledge the
2 support people who come each day to provide support to the people -- the -- assisting
3 the attendees and also the witnesses who come. We're very grateful to those of you
4 who come each day and have a hard task in supporting people who are obviously
5 addressed -- taking part in these proceedings.

6 We do encourage counsel to ensure that there's access to the
7 available wellness supports for their clients and to make efforts to assist us in ensuring
8 a respectful process going forward.

9 While the work of the Commission and Participants continues, there
10 will be no public proceedings tomorrow. However, we'll resume on Thursday.

11 We'll hear from a number of people in a roundtable discussion
12 focused on emergency communications and interoperability among agencies.

13 On Thursday we'll also hear from Dr. Jaclyn Schildkraut, who has
14 written a commissioned report for the Commission on supporting survivors and
15 communities after mass shootings.

16 Thank you so much and we'll see you on Thursday.

17 **REGISTRAR DARLENE SUTHERLAND:** thank you. The
18 proceedings are adjourned until June the 23rd, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.
19 --- Upon adjourning at 3:47 p.m.

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CERTIFICATION

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I, Sandrine Marineau-Lupien, a certified court reporter, hereby certify the foregoing pages to be an accurate transcription of my notes/records to the best of my skill and ability, and I so swear.

Je, Sandrine Marineau-Lupien, une sténographe officiel, certifie que les pages ci-hautes sont une transcription conforme de mes notes/enregistrements au meilleur de mes capacités, et je le jure.



Sandrine Marineau-Lupien