

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

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II Appearances / Comparutions

Mr. Jamie VanWart	Commission Counsel / Conseiller de la commission
Ms. Jessica Zita	Counsel / Conseillère
Ms. Erin Breen	Counsel / Conseillère
Ms. Linda MacDonald	Counsel / Conseillère
Mr. Brian Carter	Counsel / Conseiller
Mr. Charles Thompson	Counsel / Conseiller
Mr. Blair Hagen	Counsel / Conseiller
Mr. Rod Giltaca	Counsel / Conseiller
Ms. Joanna Birenbaum	Counsel / Conseillère

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Truro, Nova Scotia

--- Upon commencing on Thursday, September 22nd, 2022, at 9:02 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. Bonjour et bienvenue. Hello and welcome. Please join us from Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.

Please join us in remembering those whose lives were taken, those who were harmed, their families, including those here in Nova Scotia, across Canada, and in the United States, and all others affected by the April 2020 mass casualty in Nova Scotia.

Thank you for joining us earlier than usual for proceedings today. For everyone here in Nova Scotia, we are keeping a close eye on Hurricane Fiona, which is forecast to make landfall in Atlantic Canada late tomorrow and into Saturday.

We will keep you posted if there are any changes, but for now, we are intending to proceed as planned.

Today we will hear more final oral submissions from participants. Jessica Zita will begin, followed by Erin Breen, Jessica Rose, Jeanne Sarson and Linda MacDonald, Brian Carter, and Charles Thompson. Blair Hagan, Rod Giltaca, and Joanna Birenbaum will join us virtually.

As we shared yesterday, we will be making a number of documents as exhibits this week. Many of these are related to the Commission's mandate on the causes, context, and circumstances of the mass casualty.

Our next set of exhibits will be tendered tomorrow.

Ms. Zita, if you would please begin?

--- SUBMISSIONS BY MS. JESSICA ZITA:

1 **MS. JESSICA ZITA:** Good morning. I'm Jessica Zita, and I'm
2 counsel for Lisa Banfield.

3 Ms. Banfield has asked that I begin today by expressing gratitude
4 on her behalf, firstly to her family and friends, especially her sisters, Maureen and
5 Janice, without whom she would not have survived.

6 She has also been overwhelmed by the support of complete
7 strangers who have sent messages of kindness throughout the last two years. Their
8 compassion and encouragement have helped to strengthen her resolve.

9 Ms. Banfield very much appreciates as well how the Commission
10 has dealt with her. This has been a humanizing process for her, and Commission
11 counsel has always been very respectful, helpful, and kind. She has especially valued
12 the interview team's trauma informed approach. It has helped her to process this
13 situation.

14 This situation has been an intense and isolating experience for Ms.
15 Banfield. I need not repeat the horror with which she has dealt over the last two
16 decades, culminating the night of the homicides.

17 And so many of us are fortunate enough to only fathom such an
18 experience, but as she said in her evidence before you, she does not want to dwell on
19 what happened to her, because she does not believe that what happened to her is in
20 any way comparable to what happened to those killed and injured that night.

21 As she said to you in July, in comparison to what others have lost,
22 she does not want to complain about what she doesn't have, and I will take her lead on
23 that.

24 My oral submissions are going to primarily address how the
25 Commission can make recommendations for how the authorities should approach and
26 deal with domestic violence cases in the future to avoid something even remotely
27 similar from happening ever again, and while my oral submissions will touch on this,
28 these issues will be explored more thoroughly in our written submissions.

1 The police failed to protect the people of Nova Scotia from the
2 perpetrator by failing to follow up on opportunities to identify him as a risk on a number
3 of occasions dating back several years.

4 The police should have been better focused on the perpetrator's
5 alarming history and accumulated risk factors.

6 One of the ways that can be improved on is to have protocols in
7 place so that officers have the training to recognize high-risk circumstances, which
8 should include a review of the individual's history, as well as reaching out to collateral
9 sources of information.

10 It may also be timely for police to review and update this high-risk
11 protocol in cases where there is no criminal offence, but there is concerning intimate
12 partner behaviour, nonetheless.

13 Most importantly, there must be a mandate towards training officers
14 to respect and empower victims of domestic violence, including those that are reluctant
15 and ambivalent. Fear is often the currency of these victims; they just don't know it.

16 Police forces should also be educated on coercive control and how
17 it manifests, how it involves an abuser regulating the everyday behaviour of their victim.
18 Knowing the signs of coercive control will better equip officers to spot the most
19 dangerous form of domestic abuse, the kind where the violence is unseen.

20 Turning my focus to Ms. Banfield specifically, the one area I want to
21 address is how she was charged criminally with transferring ammunition to the
22 perpetrator. Bear in mind that the police neither alleged nor thought that she had any
23 idea what he was going to do, nor was it alleged that she provided or obtained the
24 ammunition through her relatives to assist him in what he was to do. And we know that
25 because the police announced it in their press release at the same time they announced
26 the charges, so the charges cannot -- can be seen as not only unnecessary, but
27 completely harmful, as they re-victimized Ms. Banfield eight months after the mass
28 casualty event, eight months during which she cooperated with the police, giving them

1 multiple statements without hesitation, and with the support of her counsel, Mr. Lockyer.

2 Never did it dawn on her or her counsel that in the meantime, the
3 investigating officers were plotting and were taking direction from senior police officers,
4 the command team, all of whom were directed by the chief superintendent. Their
5 primary focus was completely different than what had been communicated to Ms.
6 Banfield.

7 In my submission, what they did, what they authorized, needs to
8 be taken on by you, the Commissioners, because it led to a dreadful deception of Ms.
9 Banfield and her counsel, a deception which breached her Charter rights when she was
10 unsuspectingly fully cooperating with the police.

11 The police conduct in this case was reminiscent of a pre-Charter
12 era. It was outdated, ill-informed and out of touch. And worst of all, this can do nothing
13 but discourage victims of domestic violence from coming forward to the police. Why
14 would they? How could they if it means being investigated themselves? The police
15 have to know that this inappropriate action on their part and inappropriate conduct to
16 betray the trust of a victim of domestic violence.

17 What cries from the investigative material in this case is how the
18 police were operating in extremes. This was an investigation that can be described as
19 both careless and calculated. Just look at Ms. Banfield's first interview with S/Sgt.
20 Vardy. He was kind, sympathetic, attentive in a moment where she needed it most.
21 She was hospitalized, newly admitted after the night of the mass casualty, and it was
22 here that Ms. Banfield learned of the perpetrator's death and of his destruction. If you had been
23 in Ms. Banfield's shoes, you would have felt comfortable, supported, and understood.

24 She felt so comfortable that she took him and other officers to the
25 woods to locate where she hid for the night, which was of course extremely traumatic
26 and painful. And that was, after all, the first time she returned to Portapique. Ms.
27 Banfield volunteered this re-enactment, and the police made it happen, but no qualified
28 personnel attended nor were her sisters able to walk with her. They were asked to stay

1 behind. Ms. Banfield thought that this could bring her some closure and that the officers
2 were only there to help, but the RCMP clearly had different intentions.

3 Vardy had an agenda. And whether he developed it immediately
4 or later, only he knows. But unbeknownst to Ms. Banfield, he had an agenda. His plan
5 was never shared with her or her counsel despite her counsel's request in April of 2020.
6 His request was that Vardy alert him if he were to ever criminally investigate Ms.
7 Banfield. He did not. This is such a bad precedent for future victims of domestic
8 violence and such a bad precedent for a police officer, a male police officer at that. To
9 come face to face with such vulnerability and feign sensitivity to further an ulterior
10 motive is manipulative and, dare I say, it's abusive. It is shocking that the decision to
11 proceed with criminal charges against Ms. Banfield was authorized by three senior
12 RCMP officers and two Crown attorneys.

13 Putting aside the damage to Ms. Banfield herself, the charges
14 prevented this Commission from speaking to her. Did none of them realize that the
15 work of this Commission was paramount, especially when contrasted with the laying of
16 minor charges? It is important to note that within one hour of the Crown publicly
17 announcing that they would withdraw the criminal charges, Ms. Banfield went to speak
18 to Commission counsel in their offices. She gave four interviews, and these were
19 grueling, during which she had to relive again her experiences with the perpetrator. But
20 Ms. Banfield understood the importance of this exercise and she participated willingly.

21 Mr. Lockyer observed from afar and not once did he intervene in
22 questioning. I would ask you, Commissioners, to accept the testimony Ms. Banfield
23 gave before you without hesitation or exception. She did her very best for you and she
24 has always wanted to do her best to help this Commission.

25 Though Ms. Banfield bears no responsibility for the actions of the
26 perpetrator, she's haunted nonetheless and carries with her the enormity of the
27 devastation caused. She shouldn't but she always will.

28 The Commission has before Dr. Jaffe's report. And besides

1 addressing Ms. Banfield's situation, his report tells us and awful about domestic
2 violence. I actually spoke to Dr. Jaffe as recently as yesterday because he has a
3 vested and deep interest in this Commission's work. He feels passionately about
4 educating the public and the state about the insidious nature of domestic violence. Dr.
5 Jaffe is viewed as one of the leading authorities on domestic violence in Canada. This
6 report, his report, can be very helpful to you in explaining domestic violence and the
7 impact and signs of coercive control on a victim.

8 The dynamics of gender violence lie at the core of this mass
9 casualty event. Had the police better understood those delicate nuances and coercive
10 control, could this have played out differently? I ask the Commission to consider that in
11 your final report. Every right-thinking person in this province will see your report as
12 furthering the cause of justice and protecting the people of Nova Scotia from future
13 violence like this.

14 Investigating domestic violence should always be akin to
15 investigating a potential homicide. And I can say without hesitation, had that approach
16 been taken, we would be having a very different discussion today. Thank you.

17 **MR. TOM MacDONALD:** Thank you, Ms. Zita.

18 Ms. Breen.

19 **--- SUBMISSIONS BY MS. ERIN BREEN:**

20 **MS. ERIN BREEN:** Good morning, Commissioners and fellow
21 participants. I'm Erin Breen and I represent the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, Leaf,
22 and Wellness Within.

23 In July, we addressed the police response to the perpetrator prior to
24 April 18th, 2020, and how it compromised public safety. We maintain this position
25 despite the written submissions of the Federal Government in response.

26 Since July, we have received further evidence. Our coalition
27 representative, Kristina Fifield, directly contributed to roundtables. And last week,
28 Kristina presented a report to the Commission to amplify the voices of African Nova

1 Scotian women directly impacted by the perpetrator. We will be filing a detailed written
2 submission to the Commission outlining our specific suggestions for practical
3 recommendations to make communities safer.

4 Today, we wish to provide the Commission with our views on the
5 key issues that have arisen in the record and how those issues should lead to
6 recommendations going forward. We believe the recommendations must create a
7 pathway for new, non-carceral responses to gender-based violence. Further, we are
8 urging recommendations to level the playing field both between individuals and the state
9 and amongst individuals with enhanced transparency, screening, and accountability
10 processes for we submit, it is the power imbalances and the abuse of power that is at
11 the root of gender-based violence.

12 Though it may appear to have spontaneously occurred on April
13 18th, 2020, the mass casualty event formed over the lifetime of the perpetrator. And
14 though we do not speak his name, it is necessary to discuss him, his life and his
15 continuum of violence, particularly with respect to gender-based violence which is set
16 out in the foundational documents that are before the Commission.

17 The perpetrator was at one time a child. This child was subjected
18 to violence and cruelty and witnessed the abuse of his mother. Violence in the
19 perpetrator's family went back generations and was normalized. It is of note that as
20 adults both the perpetrator and his uncle seriously assaulted their own fathers. As a
21 teenager the perpetrator asked his uncle to witness a sex act between him and a
22 female. His uncle laughed as he recounted how the perpetrator refused the woman a
23 ride home after the sex act.

24 As an adult, the perpetrator went to university. There he met his
25 long-term closest friend Tom Evans who was convicted of sexual assault. Ms. Banfield
26 stated that Tom Evans was one of the friends that later sat by and watched the
27 perpetrator assault her.

28 The perpetrator married once and was violent with his wife. He

1 also had a firearm at that time. After working for a period of time as a mortician in a
2 funeral home, the perpetrator became a denturist. He met Lisa Banfield. He convinced
3 her to give up her job and work for him. He controlled her finances and he assaulted
4 her repeatedly over 19 years. He threatened her and her family.

5 Simultaneously over decades, the perpetrator sexually exploited
6 vulnerable women using his professional status and he abused his position of trust. He
7 sexually assaulted women. The perpetrator smuggled illegal firearms across the
8 border. The perpetrator was a white, university-educated, wealthy male of professional
9 status, a multi-real property and vehicle owner. These intersecting privileges gave him
10 a significant advantage in his interactions. His relationship with Constable Wiley is a
11 concrete example of this.

12 Constable Wiley was impressed with the perpetrator's manners,
13 way of speaking and he admired his impressive cottage and building skills. The
14 perpetrator was not viewed as dangerous despite the specific intelligence on him to the
15 contrary. Rather, he was viewed as pro-police.

16 In the time leading up to the mass casualty, it is clear that the
17 perpetrator's mental health deteriorated. His denturist practice closed. He became
18 obsessed with the pandemic. Ms. Banfield stated that his prior extreme interests in
19 pornography and alcohol bottomed out and he spoke in vail terms of suicide.

20 Ms. Banfield and the perpetrator had a heated argument before the
21 mass casualty event began. The argument escalated to the perpetrator violently
22 assaulting Ms. Banfield, burning down his treasured properties and then Ms. Banfield
23 escaping.

24 Ms. Banfield wonders to this day whether the perpetrator's killings
25 in Portapique were as a result of him going house to house searching for her. We will
26 never know what specifically motivated the murders, and I shutter to think how terrible
27 and difficult that is for the families of those killed.

28 However, what is certain in the record before you, is that the

1 perpetrator engaged in a continuum of violence, including extensive, serious and varied
2 forms of gender-based violence for his entire adult life.

3 The experts have provided this Commission with data regarding the
4 high co-relation of perpetrators of mass casualty events also perpetrating gender-based
5 violence prior to the events.

6 We urge the Commission to accept this as a finding. It is therefore
7 at our own peril that we as a society, cling to uninformed biases and stereotypes to
8 dismiss gender-based violence as a private matter that does not effect us personally.

9 How did this continuum of violence go both unrecognized and
10 uninterrupted for so many years? In July we gave submissions about the perpetrator's
11 interactions with police prior to April 2020 and the missed opportunities for police
12 intervention. They are obvious. But we can also look to his other documented
13 interactions with government authorities and documented contacts in the community for
14 examples of where systems and screening failures occurred. We highlight these
15 matters as lessons learned so that recommendations can be crafted to protect the
16 public in the future.

17 One issue that has recently come to light through further questions
18 of the A.G. Canada relates to the perpetrator's smuggling of illegal firearms across the
19 border. This is one area where we can see that the perpetrator was granted a tangible
20 privilege by the Government of Canada in the form of a Nexus membership.

21 Nexus is a voluntary program designed to speed up border
22 crossings for low-risk, preapproved travellers into Canada and the United States. And,
23 Commissioners, there has been an Affidavit of -- I believe it's Eric Levesque of the
24 Canadian Border Services Agency, which I understand is to be exhibited. The COMM
25 No. is 64444.

26 Members of Nexus enjoy a quick and simplified entry process that
27 allows Canadian and U.S. border officers to focus their efforts on unknown and
28 potentially higher risk travellers and their goods.

1 Commissioners, you will recall that on June 2nd, 2010 Halifax
2 Regional Police added the perpetrator as firearms interest to police, or FIP is the
3 acronym I've come to learn is used. In a document entitled "CPIC Attachment", you will
4 recall that this red flag had an expiration date of 2015-06-02 at 03:51, the reference for
5 this is in paragraph 91 of the foundational document "Violence in the Perpetrator's
6 Family".

7 We have not heard a lot about CPIC or an explanation about CPIC;
8 we've heard the acronym throughout the Commission. The CPIC system, which is
9 operated by the RCMP's National Police Services Program, is the only national
10 information sharing system that links law enforcement and other public safety partners
11 across Canada.

12 Through the CPIC system we are told, criminal justice information
13 is shared 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

14 In new information from the A.G. Canada in the form of a letter from
15 Ms. Ward to Commission counsel dated September 7th, 2022 -- again I understand it will
16 be exhibited. The COMM No. is 64757. We are told that FIP or fire arms interest to
17 police, is a separate query under the CPIC system.

18 You will recall, Commissioners, from Exhibit P-1229, that the
19 perpetrator filed his application for Nexus on March 19th, 2015. You will recall from
20 Exhibit P-2304 that Canada Border Services Agencies conducted its assessment of that
21 application, that CPIC was checked and he received a pass on March 24th, 2015.

22 So both the Nexus application is submitted and it is assessed by
23 CBSA and his membership is granted prior to the June 2nd, 2015 expiration date of the
24 FIP entry, which is within the CPIC system.

25 We know from the Affidavit of Mr. Levesque that the perpetrator
26 entered Canada via the Woodstock, New Brunswick point of entry 20 times between
27 2016 and 2020.

28 In Ms. Ward's letter to Commission counsel dated September 7th,

1 2022 to be exhibited, we are informed that the CBSA did not and currently does not
2 have access to FIP for the purpose of processing Nexus applications. Apparently, this
3 is now under review. Additionally, when the perpetrator was now under review.
4 Additionally, when the perpetrator was crossing the border between June 2nd, 2010 and
5 June 2nd, 2015, border agents did not have access to FIP. I understand that that part
6 has now been remedied, according to Ms. Ward's letter.

7 So in the perpetrator's Nexus application process the CBSA did not
8 have access to FIP, the part of the CPIC system that contained the lone tangible red
9 flag that the perpetrator was not low risk. I think any member of the public would be
10 highly concerned about this. We believe it is incumbent upon the Commission to
11 recommend that the CBSA have access to all relevant CPIC systems including FIP
12 when assessing who should be granted the privilege of being treated as a known and
13 low-risk traveller.

14 I'll move on now to other documented encounters.

15 We know that the perpetrator was criminally charged in 2001 for
16 assault on a teenaged boy. The charge was resolved by way of a conditional discharge
17 which allowed the perpetrator to not report the incident to the Denturist Licensing Board
18 of Nova Scotia. This was due to the wording of the question on their annual licencing
19 renewal application. The application did not ask, "Have you ever been found guilty or
20 have you ever been charged with a criminal offence?" But rather, "Have you ever been
21 convicted of a criminal offence?" To which the perpetrator could honestly answer, "No."

22 As a result, he continued on unscathed in his professional capacity
23 in the community and meanwhile we have since learned that he was perpetrating further
24 violence in his Halifax denturist office against racialized and other vulnerable women,
25 some of whom were on income and disability support.

26 The Government of Nova Scotia paid the perpetrator for these
27 denturist expenses, this despite a series of professional complaints against him by
28 denturist patients that did result in a six month suspension of his license in 2007.

1 We are urging the Commission to recommend enhanced screening
2 of government-funded professionals who are providing services to vulnerable people,
3 and that is expanded upon in the Avalon report.

4 Yet another documented encounter with a professional occurred in
5 2010, the day after the incident where the perpetrator shot off a firearm in his house and
6 threatened to kill his parents. He did go to see his family doctor and according to the
7 doctor's notes, he did discuss his extreme rage directed at his parents. The doctor's
8 notes indicated that he prescribed the perpetrator blood pressure pills.

9 The perpetrator had previously discussed emotional disturbances
10 with the physician, a break-up with Ms. Banfield, and stopping the use of alcohol. But
11 there is no evidence in the records of the physician that the perpetrator was referred for
12 psychological, psychiatric, or any other program of support or treatment at that time.

13 We are urging the Commission to recommend gender-based
14 violence education for all justice and healthcare professionals including education on
15 existing services for me.

16 In addition to these documented encounters, there is ample
17 evidence before the Commission that many people, family, friends and neighbours,
18 were well aware of the perpetrator's violence, his alcohol use disorder, and his criminal
19 activity in relation to firearms. We are strongly urging the Commission to recommend
20 mandatory curriculum in relation to gender-based violence and bystander intervention
21 beginning in Kindergarten.

22 Finally, we have the evidence gathered from Avalon report that the
23 perpetrator was a household name in the African Nova Scotian communities for many
24 years and well known to sexually exploit vulnerable women. Just as we examined the
25 intersecting privileges and how they advantaged the perpetrator, we have to recognize
26 the multiple and intersecting forms of oppression and how they affect the prevalence of
27 gender-based violence. Those forms of oppression may include race, gender identity,
28 sexual orientation, disability, economic marginalization, criminalization, and rural

1 location.

2 For members of marginalized communities including African Nova
3 Scotian and Indigenous communities, there are many reasons why it may be unsafe to
4 come forward and engage with formal institutions and services. These reasons are fully
5 explored in the Avalon paper and have also been addressed by numerous experts at
6 this Inquiry.

7 It is clear that the most at risk have disengaged from formal
8 institutions and systems for valid reasons. Morally, we cannot continue to support a
9 default police response to gender-based violence with a pro-arrest pro-charge pro-
10 prosecution policy.

11 Emerging from Avalon's work with survivors are 21 specific
12 recommendations that we are asking the Commission to support. Those
13 recommendations cover a wide range of issues from core funding for perpetrator
14 programming, prohibition on non-disclosure agreements for sexual assault and
15 harassment, and mandated transparency for codes of conduct and complaints
16 procedures for professionals. We wish to highlight just one of those specific
17 recommendations at this time.

18 In the Avalon paper you will see the recommendation that we are
19 asking the province to provide core funding to community-based organizations for
20 designated African Nova Scotian and Indigenous gender-based violence navigator and
21 legal advocate positions to work out of community-based centres and services. We are
22 asking that core funding be provided to the province's women's shelters and sexual
23 assault centres for these permanent community navigator positions. The navigator
24 would be available to assist survivors in making informed decisions for themselves
25 regarding whether to engage in formal systems, navigating those systems if chosen,
26 safety planning, and connecting with other required resources and services.

27 The Avalon project itself is a concrete example of how we are to
28 reimagine our response. Survivors that would likely have never connected with a formal

1 system like the Commission were able to have their voices heard. That was only
2 possible due to the work of a highly trusted community navigator who created safe
3 space in community where the survivor's safety and autonomy were prioritized.

4 Avalon's invaluable community navigator is Cheyenne Gordon and
5 we note her position is funded federally in a pilot project which will end next year.

6 In addition to the recommendations set out in specific detail in the
7 Avalon report, our coalition is asking for the end of the pro-arrest pro-charge pro-
8 prosecution policy, and then end of the prohibition on restorative justice for gender-
9 based violence offences. Carceral systems that prioritize obtaining a criminal conviction
10 over a survivor's safety and autonomy can no longer be our default response. The
11 carceral system we so heavily rely upon was completely ineffective in addressing the
12 perpetrator's violence at any point of his continuum.

13 We need to look no further than the tragic murder of Susie Butlin of
14 Bayhead and her heartbreaking ordeal of attempting to navigate our carceral system
15 alone, to demonstrate that our current approach does not keep women safe. Safety
16 must be the top priority, not convictions.

17 In closing, we wish to acknowledge the difficulty of this process for
18 many. We extend sincere wishes of healing to all of the families and to all of those
19 directly impacted by the violence of the perpetrator.

20 We thank the Commission, in particular Emily, Gillian, and Jenna
21 Lee and all of the staff who have been very patient with our ongoing quests for
22 information.

23 Finally, we thank you, Commissioners, for giving our coalition the
24 opportunity to create a new pathway for the voices of lived experience to be heard and
25 amplified. Thank you very much.

26 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you, Ms. Breen.

27 Next we have Ms. Rose?

28 Mr. VanWart, do you know if Ms. Rose is here? We'll go with -- Ms.

1 Sarson and Ms. MacDonald, I see you're here. We may as well proceed. Thank you.

2 **--- SUBMISSIONS BY MS. LINDA MacDONALD:**

3 **MS. LINDA MacDONALD:** Good morning, Commissioners. My
4 name is Linda MacDonald and I'm with the Feminists Fighting Femicide and Persons
5 Against Non-State Torture, and I appreciate this opportunity to share my voice one last
6 time during this Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission.

7 Earlier, Jeanne Sarson and I have submitted our written report,
8 including 10 recommendations, and today we'll speak of some of our recommendations.

9 I stepped into this journey almost two and a half years ago after
10 hearing quotes that the perpetrator was described as a nice guy, that this heinous crime
11 was senseless, without any answers, and that rural Nova Scotia is a beautiful, peaceful
12 place where such violence was never expected to happen.

13 I didn't believe any of these statements, and reached out to Jeanne
14 and other feminists in Nova Scotia to start developing a feminist lens on this mass
15 casualty.

16 Feminists across Canada, and indeed, globally, contacted us with
17 the same concerns.

18 As feminists, we are gravely saddened by the brutal reality of the
19 perpetrator that has unfolded, but we are not surprised.

20 The feminist research is very clear that the majority of mass
21 shooters are extremely violent men, often with a history of violence in their past, and
22 that an act of male violence against women -- a woman -- gender-based violence,
23 intimate partner violence, or femicide can spill over into the street, becoming a mass
24 shooting or a mass casualty.

25 There is enough research now to show that we indeed have made
26 some sense and found some answers for these crimes, and that femicide or the murder
27 of women and girls because they are female persons can be prevented.

28 There's no safe place for women and girls, and despite the beauty

1 of the Nova Scotia landscape, male violence against women or gender-based violence
2 exists here, just like every other place in the world.

3 Jeanne and I value that you have included feminist lens
4 conversation about gender-based violence in this inquiry, showing a transformational
5 model for future discussions about mass casualties. We ask that you have the courage
6 to include conversation in your final written report about patriarchy as a global system
7 where male domination over women is maintained and about misogyny, the hatred of
8 women and girls, or your report will fail to be holistic.

9 We maintain that male violence against women is a core issue in
10 this mass casualty crime, not a side issue. Such violence against women starts with
11 misogyny, moves to abuse, sexual assault, strangulation, torture, and finally, femicide.

12 Jeanne and my expertise is based on the torture, non-state torture,
13 to be exact, of women and girls, and we're not the only ones in Canada now voicing
14 such a historically silenced reality. Documentation about the torture of women in
15 Canada has been included in two recent Canadian reports, the 2022 Department of
16 Justice review on prostitution, and the 2021 report "Roadmap, the National Action Plan
17 on Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence".

18 Without discussion of the root cause of patriarchy, misogyny, and
19 all forms of gender-based violence, including strangulation, torture, and femicide, there
20 will be gaps in the framework for recommendations.

21 We ask that you listen to the women, listen to Brenda Forbes, who
22 contacted Jeanne and I, telling about calling the Bible Hill RCMP in 2013, describing
23 that the perpetrator had strangled his partner, Lisa Banfield, in front of other men.
24 Strangulation is now known to increase the risk of femicide by 750 percent.

25 Listen to Lisa Banfield, who confirmed that the perpetrator did
26 indeed strangle her and put a gun to her head.

27 Listen to Suzanne Davis, who contacted Jeanne and I when she
28 learned that the very same RCMP who investigated the sexual assault of her dear, dead

1 friend, Susie Butlin, was the same police division who investigated the mass casualty.

2 Jeanne and I pushed to have the femicide of Susie Butlin discussed
3 during this inquiry. Susie could still be alive today if she had been believed when
4 describing being sexually assaulted by her neighbour versus seen as consenting
5 because she didn't physically fight him off. She described that her grandchildren were
6 in the next room, and she didn't want to wake them, causing them trauma.

7 In fighting valiantly for her life, Susie was reported to have been
8 called a public nuisance by the RCMP because she kept coming back and back to the
9 RCMP, begging for their help. Disgraceful.

10 Listen to Cathy Mansley, a retired Nova Scotia RCMP, who talks
11 about the sexualized violence she endured at the hands of the RCMP she worked with
12 and the many forms of misogyny she observed when working with the RCMP in this
13 province.

14 And listen to the countless brave women who came forward to give
15 evidence in the Bastarache Report, "Broken Dreams, Broken Lives"; and the FAFIA
16 Report, "The Toxic Culture of Misogyny, Racism, and Violence in the RCMP".

17 Showing that you are indeed listening to these women, we ask,
18 Commissioners, that you recommend changes in the Criminal Code of Canada by
19 including femicide as a separate and distinct crime.

20 Jeanne and I are not alone in this recommendation. The Canadian
21 Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability; the Renfrew County Inquiry; and
22 the London, Ontario Police Services Boards are making the same recommendation.

23 Recommend that strangulation also be included in our Criminal
24 Code so such a grave form of violence against women will receive the investigation it
25 deserves to contribute to preventing femicide in Canada.

26 And recommend that the RCMP be held accountable to transform
27 their misogynistic culture to one that affirms that women and girls receive an equality-
28 based investigation for the many forms of violence they bring forward to the RCMP.

1 Almost 150 years ago, the RCMP started as a paramilitary group
2 with the main goal of controlling the Indigenous people in this country. There have been
3 numerous reports and many, many women's stories brought forward detailing the
4 rampant misogyny towards women RCMP, the spouses of the RCMP, and women who
5 came searching for justice for the crimes they have endured. Yet, this misogynist
6 RCMP culture remains, with no real signs of transformation.

7 Obviously, education and training are not enough. Saying, "We'll
8 do better," is not enough.

9 Feminism is about naming power and abuse of power. The RCMP
10 are given power by the state to investigate crime. The state can take away that power,
11 and if they're not doing their job, it should be.

12 John Sewell, in his 2021 book, "Crisis in Canada's Policing"
13 describes how police culture just chews up training and then in order to change policing,
14 the culture itself must be the target.

15 Accountability is the answer with such actions as changing
16 disciplinary procedures to include legally-binding mechanisms related to sexism and
17 racism, loss of pay and promotions, suspensions without pay, and appointing
18 knowledgeable people from the community to police boards, to name a few.

19 Jeanne and I ask that to ensure your recommendations just don't
20 end up sitting on a bookshelf somewhere that you build in accountability measures for
21 all of the recommendations in your written report next March.

22 In closing, as a grassroots feminist, I want to speak about the
23 importance of truth for our children, girls and boys, in this province, and in this country
24 of Canada.

25 I am thinking of my three little grandgirls growing up in this province
26 of Nova Scotia, and all children living here and across this nation. Research has
27 shown, and in order for children to grow up with resilience, they need truth and they
28 deserve the truth. The truth about violence against women and girls can be painful,

1 very painful to hear, but not near as painful as silence. Silence and misogyny kills.

2 I ask that you have respect for children by ensuring you promote
3 deep, honest talking about male violence against women and girls so this mass casualty
4 will take part in bringing more caring, justice, and equality to children's lives as they
5 develop into adulthood. Thank you.

6 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you, Ms. MacDonald.

7 We'll take a -- sorry, Mr. VanWart?

8 Sorry, Ms. MacDonald, were you sharing your -- Ms. Sarson, were -
9 - oh, I'm sorry. I apologize. I misunderstood. We'll hear from you now, then, Ms.
10 Sarson.

11 **MR. JAMIE VanWART:** I'll just maybe interrupt just to advise
12 Commissioners that Elizabeth Fry Society will not be making oral submissions but be
13 making written submissions. Mr. Carter is prepared to proceed when we're finished with
14 these, Commissioner.

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

16 Ms. Sarson. My apologies. Sorry, whenever you're ready.\

17 **MS. JEANNE SARSON:** That's all right.

18 **--- SUBMISSIONS BY MS. JEANNE SARSON:**

19 **MS. JEANNE SARSON:** Commissioners, I'm restating our
20 recommendation the Criminal Code be amended to implement, identify, and torture
21 perpetrated by non-state actors as a torture crime because women have endured a
22 long, patriarchal, cultural, and legal legacy that silenced intimate-partner, family, and
23 gender-based violence. For example, the first explicit Canadian case of sexualized
24 intimate-partner violence manifesting as non-state torture occurred in Nova Scotia in
25 1916 when a Lunenburg County farmer covered his wife's mouth, silencing her screams
26 when the severity of his vaginal and anal rapes caused bleeding, inflammation, and
27 displacement of he uterus and bladder.

28 Snell's 1988 research also revealed Judge Ritchie declared

1 adultery, the reason for this marital breakup, a patriarchal legal practice of dismissing
2 male violence against women. Decades later, wife battering, culturally and legally,
3 misnamed “intimate partner violence” that manifested as non-state torture inflicted
4 against Nova Scotian Jane Hurshman by her male perpetrator spouse. RCMP S/Sgt.
5 Williamson excluded years of torture, humiliation, and dehumanization from Jane’s
6 statement because he felt these had nothing to do with Jane’s trial for the shooting
7 death or her perpetrator spouse.

8 Excluded were having a gun held to her head, being shot at and
9 threatened she would be killed, being severely beaten, kicked, knocked down, punched,
10 beaten black and blue with a vacuum-cleaner hose, being degraded when urinated on,
11 when forced to drink his urine, when he gagged with soiled panties, when he urinated in
12 bed and forced Jane to clean up his mess, when forcefully stripped naked, repeatedly
13 raped, and he bit her breasts, inflicting bestiality. He tied her to a chair and yanked out
14 her pubic hair. He forced her to keep a four-inch pipe in her rectum.

15 And being horrified by the perpetrator spouse’s brutality, killing a
16 cow by ramming a shovel handle into its rectum; horrified when he dehumanized their
17 infant son, calling him a bastard and Jane a whore; horrified when he beat her son
18 head to toe with a broken mop handle; horrified witnessing her son forced to eat his
19 vomitus, are examples.

20 Similar to the Portapique mass casualty perpetrator, this
21 perpetrator inflicted violent acts against his female partner and against others. He had
22 a gun. His violent acts were well known by many, including the RCMP. He, too, spoke
23 of wanting to kill a cop. He said he had killed a man. Applying red-flag warnings to this
24 man’s violence, he may have eventually become a mass casualty perpetrator. The
25 severity of a man’s violence against his female partner can result in a woman’s suicidal
26 ideation and suicide. Non-state torture is absolutely severe creating the risk a woman
27 may die by suicide as Jane Hurshman died.

28 Such deaths are consequential femicides, a woman’s effort to end

1 the severity of the dehumanizing torture, pain, and suffering. As Jane Hurshman said,
2 “He took everything from me until there was nothing left but a shell.”

3 Lynn, a Nova Scotian homecare client Linda and I supported --
4 COMM reference 0061201 and P-003717 -- describe being held captive, tortured,
5 trafficked, and prostituted by her male spouse and his three partners. They pleased
6 dehumanizing her, calling her “a piece of meat”. Intimate partner exploitation is
7 recognized in a 2014 global report on human trafficking by the United Nations Office of
8 drugs and crime. Nova Scotians inherited this patriarchal legacy given that in 1910, 100
9 Canadian young girls and women trafficked into the United States; one-third were Nova
10 Scotians.

11 Weeks into our support of Lynn, we arrived at her home to find her
12 on the floor curled into a ball of terror. She’s received a late-night call from a man telling
13 her to shut up, a call that came over 20 years after she’d escaped. Although Lynn
14 doubted she’d receive police protection, she called the Bible Hill RCMP explaining her
15 experience, a call, to our knowledge, never returned.

16 The trafficking exploitation of Lynn by her perpetrator spouse and
17 partners developed an informal network of buyers when holding her captive in Ontario.
18 A 2021 Global Crime Index indicates that such networks exist because of state actors’
19 involvement, passive and active. This was a patriarchal reality in 1910 in Nova Scotia
20 and existed when Lynn described 10 Ontario policeman from 10 different police -- from
21 different police forced became state buyers versus rescuers, dehumanizing her and
22 inflicting sexualized torture while protecting the spouse and his informal criminal
23 network.

24 Criminal Code Section 269.1 on torture is state-centric and these
25 policemen were on duty when torturing Lynn. Our experience suggests they would not
26 have been criminally charged with torture because of Canada’s patriarchal
27 discriminatory and legal legacy of dismissing violence against women, including torture,
28 as private matters.

1 Implementing a Criminal Code amendment so non-state torture is a
2 torture crime will be transformative by promoting education aimed at eliminating cultural
3 patriarchal misogyny dating back in Nova Scotia to 1910 and 1916 and creating new
4 knowledge to eliminate systemic, legal, and policing discriminatory practices that
5 presently deny intimate-partner, family, and gender-based violence can manifest as
6 non-state torture crimes.

7 Advancing knowledge on crimes of human depravity, of human evil
8 -- COMM reference 0061203 and P-003715 -- is another recommendation. The
9 atrocities committed by the Portapique mass casualty perpetrator have been described
10 as actions of human evil. Research explains atrocities as mass casualty violent, which
11 commonly involves intimate, family, and gender-based violence, can be prevented.
12 Prevention occurs when such relational violence is a culturally public matter so citizens
13 develop skills to respond to red-flag warnings to end all forms of relational violence.

14 Likewise, torturing another human being, an infant, a child, or an
15 adult is human depravity and preventable by implementing a law to challenge non-state
16 torture's impunity by visibilizing their modus operandi. To eliminate systemic
17 discrimination and marginalization women and girls confront were not believed, and to
18 uphold the imperative of their human and legal right not to be subjected to torture
19 perpetrated by non-state actors, COMM Reference 0061202 and P-003716.

20 Our recommendation to implement amending the *Criminal Code* on
21 whistleblowing respects Brenda Forbes who testified warning community members the
22 mass casualty perpetrator was a dangerous man and reported his assaults on Lisa
23 Banfield to the Bible Hill RCMP who, she says, failed to respond to her complaint. Mass
24 Casualty Commission reference, the 12th of July 2022.

25 When a woman is victimized or others who support a woman
26 victimized, decides to report relational violence, as Brenda Forbes did, they risk
27 perpetrators inflicting malicious complaints or slaps against them. Whistleblowing
28 protection is necessary to transform Nova Scotian and Canadian culture by adopting

1 social practices aimed at ending all forms of gender-based violence, family and intimate
2 partner violence that contribute to mass casualty violence.

3 Whistleblowing protection is being advanced in December by the
4 United Nations Office of Drugs & Crime as an intervention for advancing criminal justice.

5 Commissioners, these are recommendations discussed in Linda
6 and my final feminist analysis written submission which also recommends the
7 implementation of educational practices to explain no one, no one escapes inherited
8 patriarchy which culturally positions male domination over female subordination, of male
9 power and control over female oppression, normalizing violence, including the
10 exploitative commodification of women and girls as practiced by the mass casualty
11 perpetrator.

12 All forms of gender-based family and intimate partner violence are
13 never private. They spill over on to children, on to other family members, become inter-
14 generational, violate innocent people and are culturally disturbing and painful realities
15 as the Portapique mass casualty tragic has been. Thank you.

16 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you, Ms. Sarson. Mr.
17 Carter?

18 **--- SUBMISSIONS BY MR. BRIAN CARTER:**

19 **MR. BRIAN CARTER:** Good morning, my name is Brian Carter;
20 I'm representing the RCMP Veterans Associations, the Nova Scotia Division. Our
21 deepest sympathies go to the families listed here today and to the families of the 28
22 people in the Saskatchewan mass casualty event.

23 Saskatchewan has demonstrated that these mass casualty events
24 will continue and heightens the importance of this Commission to get it right. The
25 RCMP Vets have all been deeply affected mentally by this event and the subsequent
26 media coverage and constant attack on policing.

27 As veterans we served and did our best. We risked our lives daily
28 for all people in Canada. We are grateful to be involved in this Commission and are

1 seeking the required changes in policing, which involves making changes to the RCMP
2 as well as finding the very best model of policing for the Province of Nova Scotia that
3 Nova Scotians can afford.

4 Keeping the Red Serge. The Queen's funeral on Monday with the
5 RCMP leading the parade, should show everyone the pride and honour we have in our
6 service under a Royal title. Those who have never served under a Royal title do not
7 understand what that means. So please try to.

8 Do not remove the Red Serge from us in retirement. Taking this
9 uniform from us is cruel and completely unnecessary and damaging to our mental
10 health and to our way of life.

11 One insane man should not be able to have the power to destroy
12 the pride and service of so many. That is not how our system of government or legal
13 system we inherited from the Royals, is supposed to work.

14 Now policing in Nova Scotia is broken and it's very evident from this
15 information collected here in this Commission. In 1992 the province turned over the
16 responsibility of policing to municipalities. Nova Scotia is the only province in Canada
17 that it's done this.

18 Dr. Judith Anderson and I both spoke to the Commission about the
19 lack of measuring and analyzing training and practice, and in this case measuring the
20 outcome of the changes made by the province in policing. Dr. Scott Wortley also said
21 that not setting outcomes desired and then not measuring the data to prove that you've
22 met your outcomes, is a consistent problem in policing and he's correct.

23 The province also has done the same thing by not doing any of
24 those things after moving policing to municipalities. The province failed miserably and
25 created a dysfunctional broken system that we have today.

26 Time for change. The evidence is in and policing needs to go back
27 to the responsibility of the province, but not go back to the old model, but rather to a
28 new model that meets the expertise requirements of today and capacity needs of today

1 which this Commission has already identified.

2 Commissioner Fitch and the RCMP Vet, Steve Graham, have said
3 there is a need to change police culture and the model, and that's absolutely correct.

4 We must find new and better policing models now that will enable
5 Nova Scotia to take on new technology and fight new rising tech crime today. The cost
6 of this expertise is huge and out of reach of small police agencies and small regional
7 agencies.

8 Scotland, Finland, Netherlands and Quebec as examples, all made
9 national police forces to combat these issues and allow them to better fight major --
10 investigate major crime cases, organized crime, major events such as this one, and
11 create capacity and seamless working together.

12 The national approach also provides the needed special sections to
13 assist small agencies by providing things like dog section, identification section, ERT
14 teams, dive teams et cetera.

15 Quebec has a six-tier system that breaks down what a police force
16 can and cannot do all based on population. You can find the details of this under the
17 *Quebec Police Act* under the Regulations.

18 One example though is, level four in their *Act* is 500 -- a half a
19 million to one million people, they can have an ERT team; anything lower than that
20 cannot have an ERT team.

21 In Nova Scotia, Cape Breton Regional, Halifax Regional and RCMP
22 all have ERT teams. Truro, Amherst and Charlottetown are currently trying to develop a
23 joint ERT team. ERT is a good example that identifies the problems that small agencies
24 have with special sections, specialized sections. The cost is insane.

25 Superintendent Wallace Gossen of York Regional who spoke to
26 this Commission in the past, told me that his department spends \$300,000 just for basic
27 training and equipment for one ERT officer. Armoured vehicles would be the next
28 request. The TAPV, which we're familiar with here, is \$800,000 to purchase. The

1 exhaust system that they had to replace on it was \$27,000 (technical audio problem) will
2 have the issues of agencies asking or IDENT section dogs, dive teams, et cetera, all
3 very costly.

4 This moves us more toward a U.S. model of policing. Dr. Hunter
5 Martindale of Texas said that his country is dealing with 18,000 different agencies, all
6 trained different, all have different budgets, all have different equipment, et cetera.

7 That system did not work for them in a recent case in Uvalde and
8 the system that we have did not work for us in our current mass casualty event. It's
9 time to walk away from our old models.

10 I'll give you another example. A murder in Bridgewater a number of
11 years ago, the RCMP Major Crimes Section assisted Bridgewater police in the
12 investigation.

13 To solve the case they had to do an undercover operation. At that
14 point the RCMP took over the case. The case was solved and a person was convicted
15 as a result of the undercover operation. That operation cost \$1 million. Bridgewater
16 may have gone bankrupt if they had to pay for that. There are many cases like this in
17 small municipal agencies in this province but how quickly we forget.

18 Nova Scotia cannot afford a provincial police force. We only have
19 one million people cannot afford a provincial police force. We only have one million
20 people; half of those are seniors like myself on fixed incomes. Quebec has 8.5 million,
21 Ontario 14.8 million. That's how they pay for a provincial police force. The only way
22 that we can continue to have the expertise of 200 specialized sections and the
23 equipment that goes with that for Nova Scotia is to keep the RCMP contract.

24 We heard people say that they weren't happy with the fact that four
25 RCMP officers were the first responders to this original call. The responsibility of
26 policing is under the municipalities in this province, and Colchester municipality did not
27 do their job and they let capacity drop. If they had built RCMP capacity to the national
28 standards they would have had eight officers there that night. The province must take

1 control of policing back into their hands. The province must be willing to step away -- to
2 step up and pay for proper capacity and policing under the contract.

3 RCMP vets have submitted several documents on the issue of real
4 costs of policing in municipalities and counties. And much on the need for capacity in
5 policing which is not being addressed at all under our current policing model. I refer you
6 to COMM 63221 and COMM 61199.

7 We've also heard a great deal about community policing which has
8 for the most part been presented to this Commission by municipal police forces. Dr.
9 Rose Ricciardelli -- I hope I pronounced her name correctly -- and I have both pointed
10 out that community policing is very different in rural communities where police are
11 immersed and live directly in small communities. Please refer to COMM 51958 and
12 COMM 59793.

13 Dr. Ricciardelli explains it very clearly in her roundtable
14 submissions and in her papers and research that she was embedded in an RCMP
15 family in a small community. She pointed out that rural policing is very difficult on
16 officers and their families psychologically and that transfers are a must or the mental
17 health and advancing of their education and promotional opportunities. Rural police
18 officers are embedded and live in the community that they are sent to and they are
19 under constant scrutiny by the public as they are watched constantly every day on and
20 off duty.

21 Urban policing, on the other hand, Vancouver and Calgary, are
22 trained to never wear the uniform to and from work, and never tell anybody what they do
23 for a living off-duty. This is very different. The idea that Halifax, Truro, Bridgewater and
24 other departments in this province have all of their officers living in their community is
25 not in fact true because very few live in the community they police.

26 There were several speakers on the 7th and 8th of this month that
27 spoke of the need to have officers from the community to police the community. Ms.
28 Marshall said that in her communities, Indigenous communities, police must speak

1 Mi'kmaq. This is true. Police should speak Mi'kmaq in Indigenous communities and
2 how do you do that? Well, you recruit from those communities and recruit people who
3 do speak Mi'kmaq and you also offer language training to those who don't.

4 We also heard that these rural officers need to remain in the
5 communities, not being transferred. Mental health professionals that we've heard argue
6 against that idea. In small communities, if the officer is from there, we've seen
7 favoritism and it is an issue that erodes the trust in the police. Building trust is very
8 important. Chief Superintendent Darren Campbell stated that there needed to be -- the
9 police need to be transparent. The RCMP is what he is referring to -- need to be
10 transparent, part of the public, inform the public, and be open with them. And this must
11 be fixed.

12 Dr. Chris Murphy, who has listed several recommendations for the
13 RCMP to adopt to make the needed changes also said this. The RCMP knows they
14 must change and they must change fast. The current policing model is municipality
15 driven and it flies in the face of the identified issues of lack of ability to work together
16 and pushing the American policing model.

17 Dr. Scott Wortley spoke about this, stating:

18 "It is not in the best interest of the public to create
19 multiple agencies all duplicating everything and all at
20 a huge cost to taxpayers. It does not build the
21 required expertise needed in policing today." (As
22 read)

23 We also heard much about working relationship between police
24 agencies in Nova Scotia. The working together talked about by the Nova Scotia Chiefs
25 Association appears only to apply to municipal agencies and they are not referring to
26 working with the RCMP. They've gone so far as this summer to remove the RCMP as a
27 voting member of the Association. That is a move that is completely against their own
28 mandate, and I'll quote from their mandate; it's their aims and objectives and it is

1 number 1:

2 “To encourage and develop cooperation between
3 police forces in Nova Scotia in the pursuit and
4 attainment of common objectives and in the
5 development of efficient and effective law
6 enforcement.”

7 What does this objective mean? What is effective enforcement and
8 how is it measured?

9 Policing standards, Inspector Sean Auld pointed out that the current
10 standards in Nova Scotia are not standards at all, which is true, They were written to
11 meet the abilities of the very smallest departments. Chief Kinsella said he sees the
12 need for the standards to be the same across the country, national standards of which
13 would be great and make sense. This is what Quebec currently does and we need.

14 Our current direction, based on the current policing model in Nova
15 Scotia, is that of the U.S. which is also a failed and broken model. We have heard from
16 the Nova Scotia Police Association talk about more regional police agencies to solve
17 the problem. At the same time we’ve heard from Dr. Kimmo Himberg on the national
18 police model in Finland and how it has improved all of their issues and delivers
19 seamless policing service there.

20 The U.S. model is not going to solve our problems, nor will more
21 regional police agencies. We must put the system that we now have on a shelf, start
22 looking at real change, change that will be measurable, analyzed, changed accordingly
23 as we progress. This must be an academic approach and it must be now and continue.

24 Changing our thinking about policing models -- Dr. Himberg’s
25 research and information is before us as well as many other experts who spoke to the
26 Commission. We also have documents submitted by the RCMP vets on the Quebec
27 model of policing. The Quebec model should be seriously looked at in Nova Scotia for
28 so many reasons. Here’s a few,

1 National policing standards come from it. Advanced training, a
2 three year program. Six-tiered policing delivery model based on population size of the
3 community. This system provides access to all police agencies in Quebec to
4 specialized sections and equipment through the Sûreté du Québec which is their
5 national police so that everyone has the same. Choosing a system like this will prevent
6 re-inventing the wheel and replacing a broken system with a proven system capable of
7 meeting the policing needs of today as well as into the future. Is it perfect? Not at all.
8 But it is measurable and it moves us forward with the needed changes that we have to
9 go forward with.

10 Road blocks -- yeah, there's road blocks in this. There's lots of
11 road blocks. Municipal government are a road block. Provincial government is a road
12 block. Municipal police agencies are a road block, and the RCMP are a road block
13 requiring to make a lot of changes.

14 The public is not informed or educated on policing. I was at a
15 meeting on the 15th of this month in Springhill on a policing issue. And all they wanted
16 to see was a police car and visibility. Policing is much more complex than that today
17 and it is not like the old days where villages and small towns had their own police
18 departments. The number of calls is higher today. Investigations are much more
19 complex and take longer because the courts demand better evidence. An impaired
20 driver used to take a half hour to process. Now it takes four hours.

21 More science in investigations, DNA, computers, blood splatter, all
22 kinds of things. Need for more experts in policing and specialized equipment. The
23 public has no idea about the need for many specialized sections and equipment that
24 small towns cannot afford and can never justify having. Lack of public knowledge on
25 policing is a serious roadblock.

26 The RCMP need to make a lot of changes. There's many lists, and
27 we have supplied you with a list of some that we saw. But here's a few examples.

28 Ottawa needs to give more power to division commanding officer

1 and less requirement seeking permission from Ottawa.

2 Need a stronger oversight system that's not only dealing with a
3 national oversight, but gives the provinces oversight over the RCMP under contract.

4 The need for a three-year or similar education program to what
5 Quebec has.

6 A need to change promotional system to ensure that those
7 promoted are properly prepared and suited for the role that they're supposed to take.

8 A need for the force -- need to force the RCMP to be more engaged
9 with all forms of media and to be more transparent.

10 No one is able to make a case for the policing structure that Nova
11 Scotia currently has. No one can make a case for the fragmented police model the U.S.
12 has because they are both broken systems.

13 A case can be made for national policing models, as proven
14 worldwide and in Quebec.

15 The RCMP has changed over its 150 years, many, many times,
16 and constantly. Recent examples would be the implementation of all but one of the
17 recommendations from the MacNeil Report in the Moncton issue; the Frank Carriere
18 inquiry, Frank was a friend of mine, and the Frank Carriere inquiry changed how the
19 dive team operates, made it safer.

20 The talk of removing the RCMP is completely a political issue which
21 must stay out of this process. The LAPD Rodney King case, 163 people died in the
22 riots that ensued from that. The Ottawa Freedom Convoy took three weeks to remove a
23 handful of vehicles. The St. John PD in the Oland case, the Toronto PD in the Sherman
24 case were grossly mismanaged.

25 No one said, "Get rid of those police forces," because the goal is
26 not to get rid of the police, it's to change and improve those police forces, not remove
27 them.

28 The same should be true here today with the RCMP, yet there's a

1 huge push publicly to remove the RCMP from this province. Why? Politics with no
2 justification is the driving force to remove the RCMP.

3 As police veterans, we seek to better -- we seek a better policing
4 structure for the future that includes an understanding of the costs, provide the
5 expertise, the equipment, the people; in other words, the capacity to move to the future.

6 Our fear, from being part of this Commission and being on the
7 inside is that capacity in the broad definition, and the lack of understanding of the need
8 for those 200 sections exists.

9 We have to understand the differences as well between special
10 sections, and I'll use ERT as an example again. From department to department, they
11 are very different. They are not the same. You're not comparing apples and apples, it's
12 apples and oranges, and we have to understand that in many sections.

13 Understanding those issues and others is critical to making an
14 educated move to the future. Small is not better, nor is more agencies when it comes to
15 solving the identified problems tied directly to this mass casualty event and the
16 response to this event.

17 As veterans, we choose to retire in this province because we
18 believe in it. We are worried right now that Nova Scotians will get less from policing
19 after this Commission, due to the high volume of conflicting information that the
20 Commission has to sift through.

21 We remain hopeful though that this is not the case. We hope that
22 our input has been helpful. We will continue to serve our communities where we can by
23 volunteering. We will bring up statistical facts as well as research information on other
24 options for policing in Nova Scotia to keep Nova Scotians safe in the future.

25 Thank you for including us in this process, and thank you,
26 Commissioners, for your commitment and your hard work in this process.

27 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Carter.

28 We are a little bit ahead of time, but Mr. Thompson, we thought it

1 would be a good use of our time to hear from you now, and then -- rather than take what
2 would be a mid-morning break, we can then break until 1:00 p.m. when we have some
3 virtual presentations scheduled.

4 Mr. Thompson?

5 **--- SUBMISSIONS BY MR. CHARLES THOMPSON:**

6 **MR. CHARLES THOMPSON:** Thank you, Commissioners. My
7 name's Charles Thompson. I'm here representing the Truro Police Service.

8 In the time that I have this morning, I want to review some of the
9 points and issues that our written submissions will address more completely, and I'll just
10 go through them in sequence.

11 First, the ability of the Truro Police Service to assist in the mass
12 casualty event and its aftermath. One question that has been asked in these
13 proceedings is why the RCMP did not request the assistance of the Truro Police on
14 April 18th and 19th, or afterward.

15 Since the mass casualty, there have been a number of reasons
16 suggested for this in media reports, and by some during these proceedings. Those
17 reasons include Truro Police Service did not have adequate equipment, it had
18 inadequate training, radio communications with the RCMP were not possible or not
19 secure, it had insufficient personnel to assist, and it had inadequate or no standards.

20 These suggestions have had an impact on the Truro Police Service
21 and on the residents of Truro. They've caused some residents to question the
22 competence and the ability of the Truro Police to keep them safe.

23 The evidence that this Commission has received has shown that
24 none of these things are true, and that Truro Police Service wants it to be clear to this
25 Commission and to the public that it is capable and competent, well resourced, well
26 trained. That was the case in April of 2020, as well as today.

27 In April 2020, the Truro Police had the equipment necessary to
28 assist in dealing with active shooters, including carbines, hard-body armour, and

1 ballistic vests. Its officers had regular training in firearms and in dealing with active
2 shooter events through in-house training and through external training and courses.
3 Truro police officers had the ability to communicate with the RCMP on its radios. Truro
4 Police also had six portable encrypted radios it could have deployed if necessary.

5 While Truro Police did not have a lot of officers on duty during the
6 night of April 18th and 19th, it could easily have called in several more who could have
7 been on the scene quickly. Evidence before this Commission is 12 to 25 officers would
8 have been able to be called in on short notice.

9 Truro Police Service has followed the existing Nova Scotia
10 Department of Justice policing standards and also has its own policies in place that
11 governs its operations.

12 If the Truro Police had been called upon, it was capable and ready
13 to assist during the mass casualty event and afterwards, and in the view of the Truro
14 Police, not involving the Truro Police Service during the mass casualty was a missed
15 opportunity to make use of all available police resources to stop the perpetrator as
16 quickly as possible.

17 Next, I want to address policing standards. It's been stated by a
18 number of people before this Commission that there are no existing provincial policing
19 standards in Nova Scotia. This is not true. There are provincial standards. It is safe to
20 say that policing agencies in the province and the Provincial Department of Justice have
21 recognized that these standards are dated and need to be updated.

22 All parties, including Truro Police Service, are working together to
23 update the provincial standards, and that process is ongoing.

24 With respect to the Truro Police Service, specifically, as stated
25 earlier, Truro Police has developed its own policies that it uses for its operations. Like
26 the RCMP has its standards, Truro Police Service has policies that it follows.

27 While standards are important, to some extent, provincial policing
28 standards are a distraction from the more serious issues facing this Commission in its

1 work. Provincial standards were not the problem during the mass casualty. The RCMP
2 has stated on several occasions that although it found the provincial standards
3 inadequate, the RCMP itself has its own regular standards that it follows.

4 So provincial standards, whether inadequate or not, did not play a
5 part in the way that the RCMP handled events on April 18th and 19th.

6 Provincial standards are also not the reason the RCMP did not call
7 in the Truro Police Service to assist. While there has some suggestion after the fact
8 that inadequate provincial standards affect the ability of Truro police officers and other
9 municipal officers, and RCMP officers to work together, there's no evidence that this
10 was a consideration during or immediately after the mass casualty.

11 On the other hand, there is evidence that there were many
12 incidents in the years before the mass casualty where Truro Police did assist the
13 RCMP, including in other critical incidents in Colchester County.

14 So while policing standards are important -- and I don't mean to
15 suggest otherwise -- Truro Police has a concern that standards may have become too
16 big a focus in the Commission proceedings and urges the Commission not to place too
17 much or emphasis on police standards in its final report.

18 Next, training. Like standards, training has also become a
19 significant issue in these proceedings. Training is obviously important and crucial but it is
20 simplistic to say more training is always necessarily a good thing or that it will in itself
21 solve the problems exposed during these Commission proceedings.

22 As stated, specifically with respect to Truro Police, its officers are
23 highly trained, would have been able to assist in response to the mass casualty.
24 Various Truro Police officers have described training programs used by the Truro Police
25 in the Commission interviews and their training records have been supplied to the
26 Commission.

27 While training, as I said, is good and critical, training also comes
28 with a cost, and this has to be kept in mind. First is the financial cost. Training is

1 expensive, the expense of the programs themselves, travel and other direct costs, as
2 well as the salaries paid to officers while they're on training. And it also takes time of
3 officers away from their regular duties of frontline policing. And the Commission has
4 heard about all of the other demands on police officers that take away from the time
5 they're able to spend on actual police work.

6 So any recommendations from this Commission on training, in my
7 submission, must be realistic and well-thought out and must recognize the costs,
8 financial and otherwise, of increased training. And that -- while there may well be good
9 recommendations from this Commission dealing with training, I urge you to keep that in
10 mind, that the capacity of any police service for additional training is limited. There are
11 priorities and choices have to be made.

12 Another theme in the Commission proceedings is a need for
13 common training involving RCMP and municipal police agencies. And Truro Police
14 agrees that this is useful and helpful. I do point out that common training does happen
15 now and has happened for many years. Truro Police and other municipal forces do
16 share training with each and with the RCMP. As an example, it's common for one
17 agency to arrange a training program and open up seats for that training to officers from
18 other agencies. And this happens on a regular basis.

19 Truro Police and other municipal agencies also regularly send
20 officers for specialized training to the Canadian Police College where they receive the
21 same training as RCMP members and as officers from other police services.

22 And finally, Truro police recruits from the Atlantic Police Academy
23 in Prince Edward Island, sends officers there as well for ongoing training. And again,
24 this is the same education and training as almost all other municipal forces in Atlantic
25 Canada receive.

26 That said, although there is common training now, Truro Police
27 certainly agrees that it would be beneficial to have more joint training with the RCMP
28 and other municipal forces.

1 Next, I want to address the relationship with the RCMP. The
2 Commission has heard from Chief MacNeil during his evidence that the relationship
3 between the RCMP and Truro Police Service was good for many years and is still good
4 on the ground in the sense that Truro Police officers can and do assist the RCMP, and
5 vice versa, and the two forces cooperate with and support each other in many ways.
6 However, it is clear that the relationship has deteriorated. There are number of reasons
7 for this and I just want to discuss a few of them quickly.

8 Individual personalities have played a big role. Not long before
9 the mass casualty, there was an influx of new senior management at the RCMP into the
10 province. A number of senior managers came in almost at the same time. The
11 relationship between municipal leaders, municipal chiefs, and the RCMP during that
12 period of time deteriorated and have not been good.

13 The RCMP has made the decision, and some individual officers
14 made the decision, that those -- that senior leadership team will no longer be in Nova
15 Scotia. There is, of course, a new leadership team in place. So that in itself, the Truro
16 Police Service believes, will be of assistance in improving the relationship.

17 Other reasons for the deteriorated relationship, the mass casualty
18 was a factor and did create some rifts. The fact that the RCMP did not ask for
19 assistance, it's communication during and after the mass casualty from the RCMP to
20 the Truro Police was lacking in Truro Police's view. Other RCMP actions after the mass
21 casualty increased friction. As an example, the way that the RCMP handled the 2011
22 CIS NS bulletin. And I won't get into the details of that but you did hear about the
23 concerns of the Truro Police Service and other municipal agencies about some of the
24 discussions that the RCMP had with them regarding that bulletin.

25 There are also differences between the RCMP and Truro Police
26 and other municipal forces on the use of Alert Ready and messaging two levels of
27 government and public regarding its use and whether it should be used.

28 You've also heard about the special services such as forensics

1 and other special services that the RCMP provides to municipal forces. The RCMP's
2 rollout of a form in early-2021 to municipal forces to request RCMP assistance without
3 adequately explaining or the background for that form was a cause of concern as well
4 as the suggestion, at least, that municipal forces may have to pay for special services
5 and/or may not receive them. Obviously, this is a significant concern to Truro Police
6 and other municipal agencies.

7 There's also an issue that the Commission has heard quite a bit
8 about and that is the decision by the Nova Scotia Chiefs Association to move the RCMP
9 to associate member status. I just want to speak to a couple of points on that. First of
10 all, that decision was not a sudden or reactive decision. There were legitimate
11 difference between the RCMP and municipal chiefs on a number of policy areas that led
12 to the decision. There were discussions between the association executive and the
13 RCMP prior to that decision; it was not out of the blue.

14 The RCMP were not expelled as members of Nova Scotia Chiefs.
15 They can still, and are encouraged, to attend all professional development meetings,
16 conferences, and participate in all committees. Essentially, from the perspective of the
17 Truro Police, in some areas, the interest and positions of the RCMP diverge from
18 municipal chiefs, and municipal chiefs felt that they need to be able to speak with one
19 voice.

20 In terms of recommendations on improving the relationship
21 between municipal forces, including Truro Police and the RCMP, first, as I stated, the
22 new and incoming RCMP relationship in the province needs to make a conscious and
23 concerted effort to improve communication and relationships with municipal forces.

24 The new RCMP leadership provides an opportunity for a reset to
25 the relationship and Truro Police is optimistic in that regard and certainly prepared to
26 work with the new leadership to move things forward.

27 Also, all parties have to work to resolve some of the irritants that
28 are detrimental to the relationship and there I'm thinking specifically of the issue of

1 whether and how the RCMP should be paid for the special services that it provides to
2 municipal agencies. This is not a simple issue. It involves a number of parties including
3 the RCMP, municipal forces, municipalities themselves, and the province. The
4 historical aspect of it is that for many years the RCMP provided these special services
5 at no cost. Recently, the province and the RCMP have begun to take the position that
6 the RCMP is not under any obligation to provide these services.

7 While the RCMP provides special services to municipal agencies,
8 municipal agencies including Truro Police also provide services and assistance to the
9 RCMP routinely at no charge. And this is something that needs to be taken into
10 account.

11 Truro Police Service asks that this Commission recommend that all
12 parties involved get together to clarify and resolve this issue in a way that does not
13 negatively penalize or impact Truro Police and other municipal forces, ensures that
14 special services are available to municipalities and to all residents across the province.

15 Truro Police are aware that there are currently discussions
16 underway between the provincial government and municipalities involving this issue
17 which will hopefully result in some clarity and move things forward in resolving this issue
18 which again is clearly an irritant to improving the relationship.

19 Final point I want to speak to is the structure of policing in Nova
20 Scotia in the bigger picture. And again, this is an extremely complex issue. The
21 Commission has heard a lot of evidence. You've received a lot of reports on structure
22 of policing, different models, different approaches and the strengths and weaknesses of
23 each. It is clear that the current structure of policing in Nova Scotia has significant
24 problems. This is illustrated by the Mass Casualty and by the issues that have arisen
25 and become clear during these proceedings. Truro Police Service submits that the
26 critical issue here is that the RCMP does not have the capacity to adequately engage in
27 contracting policing at this stage. The RCMP is stretched too thin; they're trying to do
28 too many things as a federal police force and all that entails, and also take on contract

1 and front-line policing and everything that that involves.

2 RCMP is very large; it's a bureaucratic organization. It's extremely
3 difficult to make changes and to adapt to local needs and conditions. The size and
4 structure of the RCMP is part of the cause of its inability to make changes that have
5 been recommended in previous inquiries and reviews. The RCMP's district policing
6 model has centralized police operations to a large extent. As an example, the
7 detachments in Stewiacke and Tatamagouche have effectively closed, leaving the only
8 police presence in Colchester County in Bible Hill.

9 RCMP special services are all centralized in Halifax which is far
10 from many of the places in the province where they are routinely needed. The RCMP is
11 having trouble attracting and retaining officers, leading to a shortage of frontline officers.
12 It also leads to an inability to backfill positions where an officer is temporarily out due to
13 illness or injury, parental leave or other reasons, or where an officer gets transferred to
14 another position or location.

15 And finally, accountability. The RCMP is accountable to Ottawa
16 and not to the communities that it serves.

17 So to deal with these problems, Truro Police Service asks this
18 Commission to recommend that the Nova Scotia government, municipalities, and
19 RCMP examine other possible structures and specifically a regional policing model
20 which could involve the following.

21 The RCMP would move out of contract policing in Nova Scotia. A
22 number of regional police forces would be established in the province with adequate
23 size, resources and critical mass to have a lot of their own specialized services, like
24 forensics, and have the ability to pool resources to develop other specialized services
25 such as ERT teams.

26 The province would take the funds currently paid to the RCMP and
27 use those funds to help pay for the regional police forces. This regional policing model
28 would have many benefits. Police services would be local, based in the communities

1 they serve. The police services would be more flexible to respond to local needs. They
2 would be accountable to the community, that is, police boards that consist of
3 representatives of local communities. And it would allow the RCMP to focus on federal
4 policing rather than try to do too many things and be everything to all people.

5 This is just a very quick summary of the Truro Police Services
6 submissions on this issue, and other issues, and of course will be fleshed out more fully
7 in our written submissions.

8 Unless there are any questions, those are my comments today.

9 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you so much, Mr.
10 Thompson.

11 And we will break then til, as I mentioned earlier, til 1:00 p.m. when
12 we'll have virtual presentations.

13 Thank you.

14 **THE REGISTRAR:** Thank you. The proceedings are now on
15 break and will resume at 1:00 p.m.

16 --- Upon recessing at 10:47 a.m.

17 --- Upon resuming at 1:10 p.m.

18 **THE REGISTRAR:** Welcome back. The proceedings are again in
19 session.

20 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Yes, welcome back everyone;
21 thank you.

22 We'll now have a virtual presentation with Mr. Blair Hagen and Mr.
23 Rod Giltaca.

24 **--- SUBMISSIONS BY MR. BLAIR HAGEN:**

25 **MR. BLAIR HAGEN:** Good afternoon. Thank you for giving me
26 the opportunity to address this Commission on behalf of Canada's National Firearms
27 Association. My name is Blair Hagen and I am Executive Vice-President of Canada's
28 National Firearms Association, Canada's oldest firearms' rights and freedoms advocacy

1 organization.

2 Canada's National Firearms Association has participated in this
3 process with the very serious intent of assisting this Commission in identifying the real
4 facts and exposing the real circumstances of this very serious national tragedy. We
5 hope this Commission accepts this assistance with our sincere spirit and intention of
6 finding real solutions and pathways in preventing mass tragedies and acts of violence
7 such as the Nova Scotia mass casualty event from occurring in the future.

8 We have provided a history of the politics and failures of Canadian
9 Firearms' laws and regulations over the period of the last four years. The reasons for
10 those failures and the civil disarmament agenda that gave birth to them.

11 But, frankly, we are confused by the Commission's focus and
12 emphasis on the firearms issue, especially in light of the present Federal Government's
13 legislative agenda on firearms.

14 The perpetrator of the Nova Scotia mass casualty event was not
15 authorized by law to be in possession of any firearm. He was completely outside of the
16 scope of the Canada Firearms Program and all of the regulations imposed by the
17 *Firearms Act*.

18 He had been investigated and charged in the past and could not
19 have purchased or possessed firearms legally. He was known to police. He had many
20 run-ins with the law. He had been previously investigated for a variety of serious
21 events. He was a recidivist who generated through his antisocial behaviour and actions
22 a very long history with the police. None of that mattered.

23 The perpetrator planned this incredible act of violence for a very
24 long period of time, carefully accumulating the tools and accessories he needed,
25 unlawfully if need be, in complete contempt and total disregard for any law or regulation.

26 The laws and regulations had no effect. They could not have had
27 any effect as the perpetrator had no concern and had not submitted himself to them.

28 End of story.

1 Someone denied the legal means and opportunities to acquire the
2 tools necessary to commit an offence will simply acquire them illegally. Someone who
3 already has contempt for human life, and especially someone who has conspired and
4 planned to take human lives in such an extensive and comprehensive manner, will not
5 be bound or deterred by an law or regulation, only by an equal or greater force.

6 The police cannot be every where. The RCMP cannot be every
7 where. Where use of force in one's own defence, the defence of others, and in the
8 defence of the laws of Canada, is reserved by government, law and regulation,
9 exclusively to the state and its representatives in law enforcement. Ultimately no one
10 can ever be safe.

11 It is logically, statistically and realistically impossible. The fact that
12 the perpetrator of this tragedy targeted and murdered among his 22 victims a police
13 officer, apparently with no compunction, makes the question of what kind of firearms'
14 laws or regulations might have prevented this event from ever occurring entirely absurd
15 and irrelevant, ridiculous even. This was a deranged individual who met -- who initially
16 met little or no resistance to his assaults. And the very real question to this is, why was
17 this the case? It might as well be discussed what charges to the *Provincial Motor*
18 *Vehicle Act* or the *Canada Agricultural Act* might have prevented this mass casualty
19 event in Nova Scotia, and that would have had the same effect as discussing or
20 debating firearms. The answer to that is none. It applies to firearms laws and
21 regulations as well.

22 Not only do the facts contributing to this tragedy condemn the
23 efficacy of today's firearms' laws, they condemn the merit and usefulness of firearms'
24 laws and legislation which have been imposed with great controversy, dispute and
25 expense in Canada over the last 40 years.

26 The rights and freedoms of Canadians have been sacrificed with
27 contempt and derision by governments, not for any practical purposes for public safety,
28 but rather to achieve a means to an end through stimulating an legislative process

1 targeting not criminals or mad men, but the rights, freedoms, property and culture of
2 Canadians.

3 Now apparently there are allegations that the Liberal government
4 may have engaged in political interference of this process and with the RCMP. If this
5 Commission focuses exclusively on the firearms' issue, it will not have done its job. It
6 will have provided no solutions for public safety and Canadians will be no closer to the
7 truth of the circumstances and facts that are pertinent to just what precipitated to this
8 national tragedy, and that will be a tragedy, a tragedy of process and a tragedy of
9 political malfeasance in connection with driving a narrative towards arriving at a
10 preconceived result by a government hell bent on furthering its civil disarmament
11 agenda.

12 This will have been a politically poisoned process. The more
13 appropriate conclusion to this process would be to find recommendations on how
14 Canadians can be empowered to provide for their own self-defence and in defence of
15 their fellow Canadians and the laws of Canada. The lack of discussion on this in this
16 process is glaring in its absence, and it is not unnoticed.

17 This concludes my submission to the Commission. I thank the
18 Commission and will end by saying Canada's National Firearms Association will never
19 cease fighting for fundamental firearms law reforms that target individuals such as the
20 perpetrator of the Nova Scotia mass casualty event. The criminals and sociopaths now
21 indiscriminately and without fear of the law commit acts of violence on the streets of our
22 cities and communities and we'll continue to fight for reforms that truly respect the rights
23 and freedoms of property and culture of Canadians. I thank you.

24 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you so much, Mr. Hagen.
25 Mr. Giltaca?

26 **--- SUBMISSIONS BY MR. ROD GILTACA:**

27 **MR. ROD GILTACA:** Thank you. Good speech from Blair, I
28 appreciate that. Good morning or good afternoon, depending on where you are.

1 Normally I don't just read a statement but in these circumstances I'm going to read a fair
2 bit because I have limited time and I want to make sure that I don't miss anything.

3 So I guess to begin, when the Commission was first established we
4 had an opportunity to participate and I immediately submitted a request and we were
5 granted standing. And then part of that process I ended up being contacted by some
6 surviving family members of the victims and I had the opportunity to chat with them
7 about their feelings around this whole experience.

8 And that experience in itself reinforced my belief that the reason for
9 all of this is to bring justice to the victims. And my understanding of that justice in this
10 case is, number one, bringing to the public's view what actually happened on April 18th
11 and 19th, 2020; and secondly, what we can do to avoid this from happening again, if that
12 is at all possible.

13 I can only imagine what a painful experience it is for friends and
14 family of the victims to go through all of this for a period of around two years; it's
15 unimaginable to me.

16 Now one thing I do want to mention is, that it's been quite clear that
17 there have been groups and individuals that have viewed this tragedy as an opportunity
18 to get their message out or to use this suffering as a platform for their agenda. And in
19 my opinion, this behaviour is abhorrent but happens every single time there's a tragedy
20 like this, every time, and I think we can do better.

21 And the reason why I bring that up, is this is why -- while I'm
22 representing the Canadian Coalition for Firearm Rights or the CCFR, I have strictly
23 limited my comments to my expertise and to the facts of this specific case without
24 deviation. This was the reason our group was given standing and I take that very
25 seriously.

26 All that to say, my comments today will again apply to the mass
27 casualty event that is in front of us and answer to the mandate of this Commission as I -
28 - at least, I understand it.

1 Earlier this year, we submitted our preliminary report as part of our
2 work for the Commission. At this point, I've had the benefit of five months of additional
3 information provided by the Commission. After considering the foregoing, very little has
4 changed about our opinion. In review, a simplistic summary of the facts of this case are
5 as follows, and this is going to be very similar to what Mr. Hagan said.

6 Fact, a violent and erratically-behaved resident of Nova Scotia
7 committed the largest spree shooting in Canadian history. This individual was well
8 known by police on a few different levels. It's complicated, but I'm not going to get into
9 that.

10 This individual had a history of violent behaviour, including the
11 issuance of death threats, going back beyond a decade.

12 Another fact, this individual and his concerning behaviour was well
13 known in the community, going well back beyond a decade.

14 It was well known that this individual had engaged in other unlawful
15 behaviour, including being in unauthorized possession of firearms, a very serious
16 criminal offence in Canada. It was an open secret in the community.

17 Fact, it was established that all the firearms used to commit the
18 murders were illegally smuggled into Canada from the United States.

19 Now, just in case anyone's unsure, firearm prohibitions in Canada
20 are not enforceable in other countries, just to make sure everybody understands that.

21 Now, he was in possession of one domestically-sourced firearm
22 obtained through fraud, though there's no conclusive evidence that he used that firearm
23 against anyone during the mass casualty event, nor was it necessary for him to do so.
24 He had other options.

25 And last, it has been established that the perpetrator did not
26 possess a firearms licence in Canada at any time, nor did he have any demonstrable
27 links to the firearms community in Canada.

28 These are the non-controversial facts of the mass casualty event,

1 and it's my understanding that these facts are not disputed by anyone in this inquiry.

2 From the perspective of the regulation of firearms in Canada, laws
3 or regulations that may have had some effect in preventing or mitigating the mass
4 casualty, are fairly easy to identify. The reason is because there were almost none of
5 them. The only regulation that could have had any influence on this tragedy is found in
6 section 117 of the Criminal Code, and that regulation, as it is today, was more than
7 sufficient to serve its intended purpose.

8 So in plain language, section 117 allows a peace officer to apply to
9 a court for a search warrant, or in some cases, search without a warrant with the intent
10 to seize firearms or weapons or other prohibited devices in the interest of public safety.

11 It seems that the opportunity to use section 117 presented itself on
12 a few occasions, particularly in light of death threats made by the perpetrator, the
13 frequent discharge of illegally possessed firearms, members of the community being
14 aware of this possession, and a handful of concerning interactions with police, again,
15 some complicated ones, but those are beyond my purview.

16 So I'll add that there's a high degree of frontline police discretion
17 involved in deploying section 117, the powers of search and seizure there. And I'd be
18 interested in further analysis on this from experts who are more qualified than I am on
19 this topic itself.

20 So what I'm saying is, this is an important aspect of this inquiry, and
21 I sincerely hope -- I am almost desperately hope that the Commission pursues an
22 explanation of why these regulatory measures weren't exercised. They are well
23 understood by frontline police officers, so again, this is a very serious problem.

24 Now, I do want to hypothesize for just a moment about what I just
25 suggested. So maybe, if we're just throwing it around, maybe local law enforcement
26 could have acted on one of these complaints that they received over the preceding
27 decade.

28 Maybe they dug around a little bit and they're able to obtain a

1 search warrant, a search. Maybe the perpetrator was too smart and no firearms were
2 found.

3 Alternatively, maybe firearms were found and maybe through some
4 lengthy legal process, the perpetrator was no longer able to legally cross the border into
5 the United States, which were the numerous trips that he made, smuggling these
6 firearms back from a different jurisdiction.

7 Would that have affected his ability to source the firearms he used?
8 These are interesting questions, but I might suggest that with this individual, his level of
9 intellectual competence, his financial resources, he would have likely found a way to
10 achieve his goals, regardless. We've seen that in other crimes in Canada, time and
11 time again.

12 But again, the section 117 powers were the only applicable laws
13 that may have possibly made a difference. It seems they weren't used.

14 Now, on the contrary, every other firearm regulation in Canada had
15 absolutely no effect in mitigating or preventing this tragedy, not a single one, not
16 magazine size restrictions, not possession offences, storage, transportation regulations,
17 certainly not any Australian-style gun buybacks, or the innumerable prohibitions that we
18 have seen before or after the mass casualty event. Not a single law could have had
19 any influence on what happened.

20 If all firearms were banned in Canada for the last 100 years -- I've
21 said this before -- this tragedy would have happened exactly the same way. There's no
22 way around it. It's a physical reality. It's physically true.

23 So -- and I know it's an uncomfortable truth for, you know, people
24 involved in this inquiry, but it's just -- it's the way it is, and that in itself is difficult.

25 A little more undeniably true information. Adam and Carol Fisher
26 were in their home -- and I mentioned this before in our first oral presentation -- were in
27 their home when the perpetrator drove up their driveway. The perpetrator was
28 acquainted with the Fishers and knew Adam Fisher was a legal gun owner. It also so

1 happens that Adam Fisher had a legally-owned loaded shotgun at the ready, it's my
2 understanding, while Carol Fisher was on the line with 9-1-1.

3 I'm not privy to exactly what happened, but I'd be interested in
4 knowing more. But I'll say this. Adam and Carol Fisher survived this interaction with the
5 perpetrator. And I'll also add, not a shot was fired. It seems like the perpetrator was
6 deterred, but we don't know that for sure.

7 I can say this though. If there was a gun ban in Canada for the last
8 100 years, like I mentioned, is there anyone who thinks that this interaction would have
9 ended the way that it did? These are the only people to survive an interaction with the
10 perpetrator at their home. They're the only ones.

11 If the intent of all this is to save innocent lives, this part of the story
12 needs to be honestly and seriously considered. It's part of the fact pattern. I realize it's
13 inconvenient for a few people involved in this inquiry and on the periphery, but if we're
14 here for the right reasons, this needs to be highlighted and considered in the
15 Commission's final report.

16 In any case, I intend to pursue a little bit more information on a few
17 of the things that I mentioned today, and I'd like to invite everyone to read our final
18 report to be submitted to the Commission in early October and reply submissions in late
19 October.

20 So I'll end it there, and I thank you all for your time.

21 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you so much, Mr. Giltaca.

22 We will now ask Ms. Joanna Birenbaum.

23 **--- SUBMISSIONS BY MS. JOANNA BIRENBAUM:**

24 **MS. JOANNA BIRENBAUM:** Good afternoon, Commissioners. I
25 am Joanna Birenbaum and I'm co-counsel with Mercedes Perez for the Canadian
26 Coalition for Gun Control.

27 The Coalition, of course, wants to start by expressing its sincere
28 condolences to the families, friends, and community of the victims of the mass casualty

1 that occurred on April 18 and 19, 2020.

2 As some members of the Coalition unfortunately know only too
3 well, the impact on your lives is unimaginable, and the Coalition will continue to seek
4 ways to prevent such tragedies.

5 The Coalition is comprised of over 200 organizations, and its
6 members include the victims of many other mass shootings. The Coalition was founded
7 in response to the mass casualty at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal in 1989 that
8 killed 14 women and injured many others.

9 Since 1989, the Coalition has been a recognized domestically and
10 internationally as a leading voice and expert on firearms and firearms policy, including in
11 the context of more than 15 firearms-related mass casualty events that have occurred in
12 the past two decades in Canada.

13 Commissioners, the facts in this case underscore the recognized
14 links between the proliferation of firearms and firearms-related violence. The presence
15 of a firearm increases the risk of serious injury and death, whether from homicide,
16 domestic violence, suicide, or unintentional injury. And while these are all distinct forms
17 of violence, the Commission was provided with evidence of the links between mass
18 shootings and domestic violence, the link between mass shootings and extreme
19 expressions of hate, mass shootings and suicide.

20 The presence of a firearm also increases the potential for multiple
21 victims and for mass casualty events. And it's important to highlight that this mass
22 casualty occurred at a time when there has been a very significant proliferation of
23 firearms globally and in Canada, including a dramatic increase in handguns as well as
24 an increase in gun violence.

25 While rifles and shotguns are used for hunting and pest control,
26 most Canadians support a complete ban on military style semi-automatic assault
27 weapons like the Ruger Mini 14, and a ban on handguns. Research from industrialized
28 countries such as the U.K. and Australia as well as the U.S. suggests that the

1 availability of firearms generally and specific types of firearms, handguns and semi--
2 automatic assault weapons is linked to firearm death and injury including femicide.

3 Additionally, while mass shootings are relatively rare events and we
4 hope they remain so, and the coalition is committed to that end, it is important to
5 remember that they are most often committed by legal gun owners with legal guns or
6 with guns that were at one time legally owned.

7 Finally, the evidence is that mass shootings occur less frequently in
8 countries with stricter gun controls.

9 Commissioners, my submissions today will start by briefly
10 identifying relevant facts from this Mass Casualty that inform the Coalition's
11 recommendations. I'll then address other contextual evidence before this Commission,
12 in particular the importance of a public health approach to reduce the harms of firearms,
13 through education and through the implementation, enforcement, and oversight of
14 regulatory rules and measures. And finally, I'll then turn to 10 of the recommendations
15 that the Coalition asks this Commission to adopt which recommendations the Coalition
16 will obviously set out in more detail in our written brief.

17 In terms of the fact relating to April 2020, in this Inquiry as in so
18 many other inquests and mass casualty events, there were many warning signs. And
19 you've heard about that repeatedly over the past few days. Family, friends, and
20 community members were aware that the perpetrator had a pattern of violent behaviour,
21 and had illegal guns. Some, including or perhaps most particularly the police,
22 normalized the perpetrator's behaviour or didn't understand the risks. Some community
23 members for very good reason were too afraid to report or faced multiple systemic
24 barriers and oppressions in doing so.

25 Some didn't know where or how to report. Some had concerns
26 about lack of anonymity which is a particular issue in smaller communities. Others
27 believed that reporting would be ineffective, particularly given the known friendly
28 relationships between the perpetrator and the police. And these are barriers that are no

1 unique to Portapique and they are not unique to Nova Scotia.

2 Second, in spite of the warning signs, there were gaps and lost
3 opportunities in policing and in the enforcement of existing laws, contrary to the
4 submissions of the organizations that you heard immediately before me. And this too is
5 reflective of a pervasive pattern and problem across Canada. And the Coalition will
6 make recommendations for closing the gaps and for much more rigorous enforcement
7 of existing laws.

8 Third, the perpetrator was not a licenced firearm owner yet he
9 easily managed to acquire firearms in Canada and the U.S.. As the Commission is
10 aware, of the five firearms recovered by the RCMP from the perpetrator's vehicle at the
11 Enfield Big Stop, four had been smuggled from the U.S. but the perpetrator's fifth gun,
12 the Ruger mini 14 semi-automatic rifle was acquired from the estate of a deceased
13 friend in Canada, no questions asked. Further, some of his ammunition was acquired
14 in Canada with the assistance of licenced gun owners.

15 So situating these facts more broadly, it's important that the
16 Commission focus on the fact that more than half of crime guns in Canada that are
17 traced originate from Canadian sources. All illegal guns start as a legal gun. Diversion
18 of firearms and ammunition in Canada from legal to illegal markets was present in this
19 case. The problem was not only a cross-border smuggling problem.

20 I'm turning now to the contextual evidence before the Commission.

21 Dr. Negin who testified at the Inquiry on September 6th of 2022 was
22 one expert voice among others who emphasized the need for a public health approach
23 to gun-related injury and violence. The Coalition strongly supports this approach.
24 Commissioners, firearms-related deaths are the second leading cause of death from
25 injury among youth in Canada after motor vehicle accidents including drunk driving
26 accidents. Yet there is minimal to no public education around firearms risks as
27 compared to drinking and driving. And while urban violence receives considerable
28 attention, rates of firearm violence are in fact higher in rural communities, particularly

1 murders of women, suicides, and murders of police officers.

2 And as I mentioned already, it can't be ignored that the rate of
3 firearm homicides has been increasing year over year over year in Canada since 2013
4 which increase has happened to coincide with the loosening of gun laws in Canada, and
5 the proliferation of access to firearms.

6 Prior to 2013 firearm death and injury in Canada including firearm
7 homicide of women were declining in a similar pattern to what was observed in
8 Australia. The Coalition's submission is simple. The evidence shows that more guns
9 do not make us safer. In fact, guns in the home are associated with an increased risk of
10 homicide and suicide. Research shows that defensive gun use is extremely rare.
11 Studies from the U.S. and elsewhere shows that permissive gun laws, including carrying
12 concealed weapons laws, do not deter crime and in fact are associated with higher risk
13 of murder, rape, and other forms of violence. There is no evidence that armed security
14 guards or armed citizens stop mass shootings.

15 As noted by a 2014 study of mass shootings in the U.S., and I'm
16 quoting:

17 "Between the beginning and the end of a typical killing
18 rampage the only interruption that makes the shooter
19 pause is the need to reload or to search for new
20 targets." (As read)

21 Arming for self-protection is not supported by Canadian law and is
22 not a solution to combatting violent crime.

23 Now, the Coalition acknowledges that there are legitimate reasons
24 for certain citizens to own certain kinds of guns -- for hunting, for subsistence, for
25 collections, and sport activities. The Coalition also acknowledges that rural and urban
26 perspectives on firearms and firearm controls differ. But so do the perspectives of men
27 and women. A gendered analysis of the support for access to firearms is critical. A
28 2003 Environics study showed that while a majority of gun owners oppose the

1 registration of firearms, the majority of people living with those gun owners, their wives,
2 their families, supported it.

3 In 2009 an extensive University of New Brunswick study on rural
4 family violence found that 66 percent of women with firearms in their home said that
5 knowing that firearms were present made them more fearful for their safety, and 70
6 percent said the presence of firearms affected their decision whether to tell others about
7 abuse or escape abuse.

8 So with those submissions in mind, the Coalition will address 10 of
9 the recommendations that will be laid out in the Coalition's written submissions. And I'll
10 start with Recommendation 1.

11 The Coalition calls on the Commission to identify the proliferation of
12 firearms in Canada and the rates of firearm injuries and deaths as an urgent public
13 health concern that requires an immediate and coordinated response from all levels of
14 government utilizing a public health approach. Amongst other benefits, a public health
15 approach guides community standards and expectations.

16 And so using my earlier example of drinking and driving, as a
17 country we no longer tolerate drinking and driving and have set strict boundaries around
18 permissible behaviour. As a result of really effective public health campaigns we have
19 the knowledge and feel empowered to intervene when someone is about to drink and
20 drive, including with friends and family members in social and other settings.

21 A similar cultural shift in respect of the risks of firearms would assist
22 in ensuring that community members are better able to speak out, are better able to
23 identify the risks. And then enforcement agencies respond appropriately when firearms-
24 related concerns have been identified.

25 Recommendation number 2. Flowing from adopting a public health
26 approach, the Coalition calls on the Commission to recommend the establishment of a
27 national firearms hotline. The purpose of the hotline would be multifold. It would allow
28 citizens to report concerns about firearms directly to staff accountable to the

1 Commissioner of the RCMP and not to their local police force which proved problematic,
2 for example, for Brenda Forbes in this case.

3 It would avoid the problem identified in Dr. Cukier's evidence on
4 September 6th when she mentioned the experience of a coalition member who tried
5 really, really hard to report a significant firearm concern to a provincial firearms office
6 and was put on hold literally for 24 hours before giving up. The hotline would provide a
7 safer place than local police for community members to at least initially obtain
8 information on gun laws and options for reporting. It would enhance accountability and
9 transparency frameworks and provide an additional resource for firearms-related data
10 collection.

11 The Commission should also recommend that the launch of the
12 hotline be accompanied by a comprehensive, public education campaign to increase
13 awareness about the risks associated with firearms in the home and to publicize the
14 hotline as a resource for Canadians to direct questions and concerns.

15 Recommendation No. 3 -- or areas of recommendations No. 3.

16 The Coalition calls on the Commission to recommend that
17 loopholes in the existing laws be addressed and that the regulatory priority be on public
18 safety and the right to be safe.

19 Holding a firearms licence is a privilege, not a right. The firearms
20 regulation is intended to allow individuals to use firearms for legitimate purposes,
21 principally hunting as assistance, cultural activities and pest control, while rigorously
22 reducing the risk that firearms will be misused. So prohibiting military style semi-
23 automatic assault weapons and handguns appropriately restricts access when the risks
24 are too high and the legitimate purpose is not justified.

25 The Coalition recommends the implementation of the ban on
26 military style assault weapons, and further, that the *Criminal Code* should be amended
27 to more precisely define military style assault weapons, to ensure that manufacturers
28 have fewer opportunities to circumvent the intent of the law, with new models and new

1 modifications to existing models.

2 Legislative restrictions and amendments should also be extended
3 to prohibit possession of handguns. And ideally loopholes in the law would be
4 addressed by making it a criminal offence to import, trade or possess a firearm that is
5 not on a prescribed list of lawful firearms so that there aren't any gaps that can be
6 exploited.

7 Recommendation No. 4. Sean Parkins who gave evidence on
8 September 6th as the Firearms Manager for Nova Scotia, called for clarification on when
9 a prohibition order imposes a duty on the Chief Firearms Officer to suspend or revoke a
10 licence.

11 The risk factors between domestic violence and firearms violence,
12 including mass casualties, are well established. So if a person is convicted of a
13 domestic violence or analogous or related offence, their licence should be automatically
14 revoked and immediate follow-up to identify and retrieve weapons undertaken. If
15 they're charged, the licence should be automatically suspended. And the Coalition
16 further recommends that to avoid the lack of clarity that Mr. Parkins discussed when, for
17 example, charges are diverted, the licence should remain suspended and the onus
18 should shift to the licence holder to demonstrate their continued eligibility for a licence.
19 And while the Coalition has concerns about aspects in the Bill C-21, and particularly the
20 downloading onto individual citizens the burden of applying to the courts to have
21 licences revoked or firearms removed, which should be an obligation of the State,
22 amendments to the criminal law that automatically revoke or suspend firearms, licences
23 in the context of domestic violence and related charges, are important and should be
24 enacted immediately.

25 More generally, where there are concerns about hate crimes, about
26 suicide, about domestic violence or where the licence holder is a threat to himself or
27 others, authorities should rigorously screen and err on the side of caution. The burden
28 of proof should be on gun owners to demonstrate that they are not a threat or a risk.

1 Recommendation No. 5. In this case the ruger mini-14 was still
2 classified as an unrestricted firearm prior to May 2020. As a result, the records of
3 ownerships of six million unrestricted firearms were destroyed in 2012 with the abolition
4 of the Firearms Registry. And the 2012 legislation when it came into effect, did not
5 restore the 1977 legislative record-keeping requirements for sales or transfers.

6 So what did that mean? That meant that it was impossible to trace
7 the ruger mini-14 that belonged to Tom Evans. The Coalition calls on the Commission
8 to make a finding that the ability to track sales and hold gun owners accountable for
9 their firearms, is absolutely necessary to effectively enforce the firearms regulatory
10 regime. Tracking sales and tracing firearms ownership is critical to stemming the
11 diversion of firearms, in this case from a deceased licence holder, and also for informing
12 policy.

13 Recommendation No. 6. The illegal transfer of the ruger mini-14 is
14 but one example of loopholes in the existing firearms legislation that could have had an
15 impact in this case.

16 When firearms licences expire or a licence holder dies, there is
17 currently little to no follow-up. The onus is on executors or family members to alert
18 police to the need for deactivation or destruction. The Coalition calls on the
19 Commission to recommend immediate administrative and legal changes to prevent the
20 unlawful transfer of firearms from the States and to track the firearms belonging to
21 owners with expired licences.

22 These changes can include, for example, the creation of
23 mechanisms to transfer information from government databases such vital statistics to
24 firearms' offices, along with the protocol that police are required to follow-up and identify
25 and retrieve guns in a timely way upon immediate notice of death or the expiry of a
26 licence.

27 Recommendation No. 7. Back to a public health approach. A
28 public health approach to the risks that firearm access and possession is part of

1 rigorous enforcement, and that of course is captured by all of the recommendations that
2 the Coalition is presenting to the Commission today.

3 For the purposes of effective screening, review, renewal,
4 suspension or revocation of licences, the Coalition recommends that all provinces and
5 territories impose a mandatory duty to report on health care professionals where
6 individuals are assessed as a risk to themselves and others and may have access to
7 firearms. And along with that, would be education of these professionals of the risks of
8 firearms which, for example, appear to have been very tragically lacking in the
9 Desmond case.

10 Recommendation No. 8. The Coalition notes that generalized
11 statements have been made in this Inquiry about the border with the U.S. being the
12 major gun problem in Canada. But there is little information being consistently and
13 accurately collected on the source of crime guns in Canada, whether the firearm was
14 legally owned, whether it was stolen, whether it was illegally purchased or whether it
15 was smuggled into Canada.

16 No province, no province requires the police send all crime guns for
17 tracing and there is no national firearms tracing database.

18 The Coalition therefore recommends, that all federal, provincial,
19 territorial and municipal police agencies, as well as the CBSA, be required to submit for
20 tracing all confiscated firearms. The Commission should also recommend that a
21 national firearms tracing database be established to track and record the results of
22 tracing efforts.

23 Recommendation No. 9. To address firearms smuggling across the
24 U.S./Canada border, which was also of course a component to the facts before you in
25 relation to April of 2020, the Coalition recommends that the federal government make it
26 a priority to confirm a bilateral agreement with the U.S., designed to prevent smuggling
27 and trafficking of firearms. This agreement should include, among a number of
28 elements, number one, securing a commitment by the U.S. to fully investigate,

1 prosecute and where necessary extradite American residents, citizens, and companies
2 who sell or otherwise transfer firearms to Canadians when the U.S. citizen knew or
3 ought to have known, the firearm would be transferred to a Canadian who is not
4 licenced to own the firearm, or was otherwise illegal.

5 And so for example in this case, it does not appear that any steps
6 were taken to hold the perpetrator's friend Sean Conlogue, criminally accountable.

7 Secondly, that agreement should secure a commitment from the
8 U.S. to fully investigate how guns are being transported from the U.S. into Canada for
9 illegal possession and use, including straw purchases and sales to gun traffickers. It
10 should also include a commitment by the U.S. to increase enforcement, inspection and
11 investigation of gun dealers near the Canadian border who are trafficking and
12 smuggling into Canada, as well as a requirement that gun dealers near the border and
13 in source states, screen for indicators of straw purchasers and trafficking.

14 And, finally, Recommendation 10, which is by no means tenth in
15 the order of priority. Throughout this inquiry the Commission has heard time and again
16 about data gaps. Transparency, accountability, and evidence-based policy-making are
17 impossible without -- well, not impossible, but are less ideal without good data.

18 In terms of accountability in the enforcement firearms regulations,
19 the Commissioner of the RCMP who, as we know, is also the Commissioner of
20 Firearms, produces an annual report but the data contained in that report is minimal.
21 For example, there's no annual data, either publicly released or at all, on the number of
22 firearms licences refused, suspended, expired, or revoked, or the reasons those actions
23 were undertaken.

24 Aggregate information on possession and acquisition licences for
25 restricted weapons can only be obtained through an ATIP or FOI request. Gender
26 disaggregated data are hard to access. There's no data on the outcomes when licences are
27 suspended, or revoked, or prohibition orders are made in terms of retrieval of firearms or
28 the time it took for steps to be undertaken. There's no public data on the number of

1 times a year that the Chief Firearms Office receives information that could affect the
2 ongoing eligibility of a firearms licence holder and what step were taken to investigate.

3 The coalition therefore calls for a review and revision of the types
4 of data required to be collected by the Chief Firearms Officer to strengthen
5 accountability and transparency in the administration of the law.

6 There are also significant data gaps on gun-related violence,
7 particularly gender data gaps. The coalition calls for further review and augmentation of
8 the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey to collect, in every case, comprehensive,
9 consistent, and specific data on the type of firearm used, the offender-victim
10 relationship, who owned the firearm at issue, how the firearm was stored, and whether
11 the person who used the gun was licensed, among other data.

12 Canada needs a comprehensive national database on gun-
13 related assaults and femicide and that data should be compiled not only from police
14 services but also from coroner, hospitals, courts, and social service agencies.

15 And I'll conclude now. I began these submissions by
16 emphasizing the importance of this Commission recommending a comprehensive public
17 health approach to gun violence. Paired with strong gun controls and more rigorous
18 and transparent enforcement of gun laws, a public health approach will help to set
19 community standards and expectations. A statement of principle by this Commission
20 that firearms are a serious public health problem and a recommendation that Canada
21 implement a broad public health approach supported by comprehensive and rigorous
22 regulatory enforcement and public safety change will address some of the things that
23 went wrong in Portapique and other mass casualties and will be a meaningful and
24 lasting step toward prevention.

25 And the coalition thanks the Commissions for receiving these
26 submissions this afternoon.

27 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you so much, Ms.
28 Birenbaum.

1 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** I just wanted to check with Mr.
2 VanWart if there's anyone that was planning to go this afternoon. Okay. No. Thank
3 you.

4 Just thanks to all the participants and their counsel for your
5 submissions which, of course, we'll continue to consider carefully. And if any of you that
6 are watching the proceedings today have an idea for change that can strengthen
7 community safety, please do share it with us. The process is outlined on the website
8 and we're accepting your submissions until the end of September,

9 Tomorrow is our final day of public proceedings. We'll continue to
10 hear more final submissions from participants before delivering final remarks to
11 conclude proceedings and to reiterate our next steps as we continue to make progress
12 towards sharing the final report and recommendations.

13 And of course, like you, we're closely monitoring the weather here
14 in Nova Scotia. We'll continue to do so this evening. Our team will contact participant
15 counsel and media if there are any changes to tomorrow's proceedings.

16 So thank you, everyone, and we'll see you tomorrow.

17 **THE REGISTRAR:** Thank you. The proceedings are adjourned
18 until September 23rd, 2022, at 9:30 a.m.

19 --- Adjourned at 1:55 p.m.

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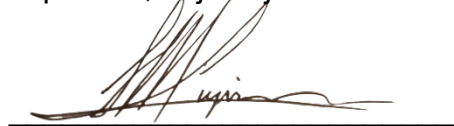
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CERTIFICATION1
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I, Sandrine Marineau-Lupien, a certified court reporter, hereby certify the foregoing pages to be an accurate transcription of my notes/records to the best of my skill and ability, and I so swear.

Je, Sandrine Marineau-Lupien, une sténographe officiel, certifie que les pages ci-hauts sont une transcription conforme de mes notes/enregistrements au meilleur de mes capacités, et je le jure.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Marineau-Lupien', is written over a horizontal line.

Sandrine Marineau-Lupien