

## **Small Group Session**

## **Séance en petit groupe**

### **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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#### **Held at :**

Mass Casualty Commission Office  
1791 Barrington Street  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3K9

Wednesday, September 7, 2022

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**II**  
**Appearances / Comparutions**

Ms. Francene Cosman	Aunt of Lisa McCully
Mr. Leo Artalejo	Facilitator
Mr. Michael MacDonald	Commissioner
Ms. Leanne Fitch	Commissioner
Ms. Kim Stanton	Commissioner

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Halifax, Nova Scotia

1  
2 --- Upon commencing on Wednesday, September 7, 2022 at 5:30 p.m.

3 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** So thank you for being here today.

4 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah.

5 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** We know that you have valuable  
6 experience and perspective as a family member, and so we're having these small group  
7 sessions so that we can hear more about your family's experiences seeking information  
8 and gathering support during and after the mass casualty. So we know that that's an  
9 important part of helping to formulate recommendations that will make a difference for  
10 Canadians moving forward. So that's the purpose of these sessions, as you know.

11 My role as a facilitator is to support the flow of conversation. I  
12 might help with the -- keeping track of time, keeping track of topics. But when you  
13 speak, you will be listened to without interruption and we're happy to hear whatever --  
14 as little or as much as you'd like to share today.

15 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Okay. Yeah.

16 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Some of the topics that we're hoping to  
17 hear about today was your experience and your family's experience, during the mass  
18 casualty event. How you were accessing information during the mass casualty? What  
19 supports and services were most helpful to your family? And what was missing that  
20 may have made a difference for your family? And all of this is about learning so that we  
21 can make sure that the supports and services that would make a difference for families  
22 in the future are part of what we're recommending in the final report.

23 Before we leave you [indiscernible], I'll just check in with you, make  
24 sure that you're ready to continue, and if you need a break, feel free. And as I  
25 described, we're happy to give you the room and let you review your notes, because we  
26 know you've also made some notes as well.

27 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah, I did actually. And don't be put  
28 off by the thickness of this, I double spaced everything in a 14 font. So ---

1                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Yeah.

2                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Because my eyesight's a little  
3 challenged at times. So I am going to refer ---

4                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Great.

5                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** --- to notes as I speak with you, and  
6 take it forward from there. So ---

7                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Yeah, whenever you're ready.

8                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Okay. Well, I think I'm going to start  
9 by just saying that Lisa was just a beautiful, and wonderful, spiritual person. And she  
10 was dedicated to her family and her children, and her work ethic was amazing.  
11 Everybody who worked and taught with her all had the same kind of reaction to her  
12 death. Everybody feels this loss, even to this day and people come up to me and talk  
13 about Lisa because she really was a great human being. And having said that, I'm sure  
14 every family member could sit here and say the same thing about their own members  
15 that they lost.

16                   So I just -- I wanted to read that into the record and talk about her.  
17 Because I knew her from the time she was born and Lisa, and Jenny, and my two  
18 daughters were all practically the same age, very, very close together. So the cousins  
19 just had a grand time growing up and I believe I knew Lisa very well. So I wanted just to  
20 put that framework around her.

21                   The aftermath of the mass casualty, I found it really hard to know  
22 what I was doing around becoming an accredited Participant. And I use the word  
23 accredited, I don't know if that's the proper word. But there was all the discussion first  
24 that there wasn't going to be an inquiry, and that had everybody upset wondering why  
25 there wouldn't be. And at the time I thought something is being hidden between the  
26 Minister of Justice, who was a former RCMP, and the federal folks. So I was really  
27 happy when the inquiry was announced and I saw the information in the newspaper and  
28 I started making inquiries about how to be a Participant, and I think that's when you and

1 I first talked on the phone, Maureen, and spoke together.

2                   So one issue that I've had to deal with through the hearings was  
3 that Lisa had an Executor to her Will, and Patterson Law would only deal directly with  
4 the Executor of the Will. So I found that a struggle to accept and I don't know where in  
5 law it actually says that, but I felt like sometimes I was a ghost car in the hearings  
6 because I was not being dealt directly with. And as much as it was made very clear to  
7 me by email that that was how it was going to be, and Sandra McCulloch did try quite  
8 hard at times to keep me informed with documents in the initial stages. But there were  
9 times when documents weren't being given to me in a timely manner, and I would come  
10 into the hearings and suddenly hear things that were really hard to hear about my  
11 family.

12                   And I just felt that put me in quite an awkward spot, being not  
13 spoken directly with and not being able to speak to the lawyers and say, "Look, would  
14 you ask this, or would you ask that?" And I would sometimes ask other family members  
15 and say, "Look, please raise this with Patterson Law", because they were representing  
16 a lot of the families, as you know. So that was quite awkward for me.

17                   So yeah, I think at some point Lisa's mum and her sister Jenny  
18 asked me to represent them at the hearings because they could not tolerate coming for  
19 their own mental health reasons. And I had called Lisa's sister and said, "What can I do  
20 to support you?" And basically, thinking I was going to be there with her, but she could  
21 not come to the hearings either. So I came in her place and in her mum's place, and  
22 again, it was awkward. As you know, I came to a lot of the hearings when they were  
23 here, not in Truro, and I just found it awkward not being able to directly relate to  
24 Patterson Law.

25                   So I took to sending emails. I sent quite a few emails, probably  
26 drove them a little around the bend, but it was my way of raising the issues that I felt I  
27 wanted clarity on. So I did send emails, and I would get an acknowledgement of the  
28 emails being received, but I wouldn't get a detailed response to what I was raising in

1 those emails. So needless to say, I didn't like that very much.

2 But anyway, when the original list of Participants came out -- I'm  
3 sort of backtracking here -- I didn't see my name on the list in the paper. I saw the  
4 McCully name, and so that's when I was advised I would come in under the McCully  
5 name and under Patterson Law. So yeah, that was that. I'm just going to take a look  
6 here and make sure I'm not forgetting to say something that I think is strategic.

7 Yeah, I don't want to really sound altogether negative about  
8 Patterson Law, because that wouldn't do them justice either. But I have struggled with  
9 this now through all the hearings, that I sort of just felt like I was sitting in a chair, and I  
10 know I would have had a lot to say because that's who I am. Yeah, I've already  
11 mentioned what's on that page.

12 So I will have a list of recommendations when I finish talking with  
13 you. When I say I sent emails and raised questions, one of the questions was about  
14 Lisa Banfield when she came out of the woods after her night in freezing temperatures.  
15 And I raised a number of questions about, had her temperature been taken by the crew  
16 on the ambulance? And had she been triaged at the hospital again to see, did she have  
17 hypothermia? The first folks who took her out to the fire hall, by looking at her said she  
18 had hypothermia, but that is not a determinant, it's your core body temperature that is  
19 the determinant. I have never been able to understand how somebody could be in the  
20 woods overnight in zero and minus temperatures, lightly dressed, and live to tell the  
21 tale, and I really wanted to know about the temperature taking because I didn't believe  
22 the details. And I'm not going to say anything more than that about not believing the  
23 details.

24 And I do have a question as you record a transcript, can I be sued  
25 for anything I say in this environment, because I wouldn't want to be, in saying that I  
26 don't believe a particular narration? So are there risks in saying that?

27 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** I don't think so. I mean, it's a public  
28 document.

1 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah.

2 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** So we will record -- we will transcribe what  
3 you say.

4 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah.

5 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** But I think you're being fairly clear that  
6 these are questions that you have.

7 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah, okay.

8 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Yeah. Ms. Cosman, maybe just as a point  
9 of clarification, if you have these concerns or these issues that you wanted to raise,  
10 could you work through Patterson Law to -- so that -- could you work with Patterson Law  
11 such that they could raise these concerns on your behalf, or on the family's behalf?

12 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** The only concern that I heard raised in  
13 the public testimony was when Rob Pineo asked a question about taking her  
14 temperature and it hadn't been taken. And that was the one element of that one email  
15 that I had raised. I also asked them about when she was taken to the emergency room,  
16 she had been pulled by the hair. I asked, was there evidence on her scalp, bruising,  
17 loss of hair from such a violent act? And I found it difficult to imagine that Lisa Banfield  
18 could run into the woods with a fresh lumbar spine injury. So I asked, could a second  
19 opinion look at those x-rays or CAT scans, I don't know what tests they did. But the  
20 only thing that got picked up out of that was the question around her body temperature.

21 So -- but I'm a former nurse and I was sort of looking at these  
22 details under that lens. So yeah, and that -- I don't know if that answers your question.  
23 but I was sending emails and getting an acknowledgment, but not necessarily feeling  
24 that the information was followed up that I was raising. So ---

25 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** So just to be clear, the emails that you  
26 were sending were to counsel, or to the Commission?

27 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** No, to Patterson Law.

28 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** To Patterson Law.



1                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah, to Sandra McCulloch.

2                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Okay.

3                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah.

4                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Great, thank you.

5                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah. I wanted to talk about mental  
6 health impacts. Just after Lisa's death, I underwent spinal surgery in Halifax and as I  
7 came out of anaesthetic I was crying for Lisa, and the nurses in the recovery room said  
8 "Well, who's Lisa? Why are you crying for Lisa?" So I explained to them that she was  
9 my niece and that she had been murdered. Excuse me, and they said that is a form of  
10 PTSD. I thought only soldiers had PTSD, but anyway they recommended that I get  
11 some counseling for that deep grief that was coming up out of my unconsciousness  
12 from anaesthetic. So -- and I was quite surprised at that. But then I realized, yes, at  
13 least for a year and a half, I was still in a state of shock from her death because I would  
14 cry every time her name was mentioned.

15                   So the mental health impacts don't go away easily and there were  
16 psychologists who were offering five free sessions of counseling, so I did take part in  
17 that. And I guess if I have an observation to make here, it would be that families --  
18 some will never get any counseling, some will need a lot of counseling, some may be  
19 fine after 5 or 10 sessions. And I think the current setup right now is that you can  
20 access counseling up to two years from the time of the end of the Commission's work.  
21 Excuse me. So I don't know if that is enough, if there should be a finite point at which  
22 it's closed off. Counseling is very expensive, and I think there are folks in the room who  
23 may need longer term counseling and not out of their own pocket. So, yeah.

24                   **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** Maybe speak with Mary Pyche  
25 about that. Because I think that there has been some negotiation to extend that ---

26                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Okay.

27                   **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** --- for some folks, if I'm  
28 remembering correctly.

1 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah.

2 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** So have a chat with Mary after this  
3 about that, because I think ---

4 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Okay.

5 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** --- it's possible to have it extended.

6 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah, I think some of the people that  
7 I've talked with, I really believe they'll need longer term mental health care. So thank  
8 you for that.

9 This room has dust in it, I hate to tell you.

10 **(Laughter)**

11 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** That's why I'm doing this coughing. I  
12 do it in my own house, too, but anyway ---

13 **COMMISSIONER FITCH:** I have a cough drop in my office if you  
14 would like.

15 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** It's okay. I'll keep on and I'll get a little  
16 drink anyway.

17 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** And don't forget your water over there.

18 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah, yeah.

19 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** We're not in a hurry.

20 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Okay. You folks don't have your  
21 water.

22 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** I do.

23 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Okay. Thank you.

24 Okay, that's about the mental health impact. No, people were  
25 wonderful after the event. People I didn't know in my neighborhood were coming to the  
26 house with -- well, they made a little memorial on the front garden, you know, and they  
27 had plants and they had painted rocks, and they had little angels. And to know that  
28 there's such good people out there is a real counterfoil to knowing there are people who

1 do evil acts, you know? So I found that helpful.

2 Yes, the impact of the funeral. COVID was closing everything

3 down and the week before Lisa's death my son-in-law's nephew [REDACTED] C1

4 [REDACTED] C1 And they had to return from Los Angeles,  
5 and they were driving a humongous camper van with two dogs, two kids, and them, and  
6 the Canadian border shut down. So they were driving a vehicle with California plates  
7 and we didn't think they were going to get into the country, so that was a huge stress at  
8 the same time. And we did get help from Geoff Regan, our MP at the time, and he got a  
9 letter from External Affairs, and they had to use that letter at the border to get across  
10 and to get back home and to isolate.

11 So it's amazing how things impacted on you trying to get our family  
12 home and trying to be together through this. And then of course, when they arrived,  
13 they had to isolate. They live in Mahone Bay in the summertime, and they had to  
14 isolate for two weeks there.

15 So Lisa's funeral we watched a live broadcast and they had a  
16 problem with the broadcast so it froze in the middle of it and we were sitting -- part of my  
17 family sitting in my living room thinking we're going to miss the funeral, you know. But  
18 eventually that got sorted out. So we did see the funeral, we wore our masks, it was at  
19 the height of not knowing how spreadable COVID would be. So we didn't hug, we didn't  
20 kiss, we didn't unmask. We went through that experience again, you know, just not  
21 good.

22 So I want to talk about the trauma informed process, because  
23 you've taken quite a few hits about this, and I did write you letter about it. It didn't get to  
24 you, it got to Counsel, I understand, so that letter went by email and then I got a return  
25 email saying that you wouldn't see my letter, but the Counsel would look at it and deal  
26 with it. And it was -- I was protesting that you chose to give the protection and privacy  
27 to the two RCMP and to Lisa Banfield. And all the family members around that time  
28 who talked about this, they felt they were traumatized by that choice. So I know you've

1 been in a difficult spot, you probably have some punch holes in your back from all this,  
2 you know, the kind of energy that's been coming out that was negative around it. So we  
3 felt our families had an overlayer of more trauma by that -- is it Section 43 that you  
4 utilized? Yeah, so I just wanted to comment on that. Yeah, we all struggled with that  
5 part of the process, so ---

6 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** Our Counsel did make us aware  
7 that you had written.

8 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Oh, okay.

9 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** Yeah.

10 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Okay.

11 **COMMISSIONER KIM STANTION:** Yeah.

12 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** I don't know if you saw what I wrote,  
13 but ---

14 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** She passed it along, what you told  
15 us.

16 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Okay.

17 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** So we read it.

18 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** I was really ticked off to find that it  
19 wouldn't go directly to you, because I thought I'm writing you a letter, it should have had  
20 a stamp on it and gone to you. I'm glad it got passed on.

21 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Yeah. Let me take a minute just  
22 to try to explain that, and of course before I was a judge, I used to be a lawyer and it  
23 becomes challenging sometimes, the way the -- it has to operate. But the Estate has a  
24 lawyer, and we receive submissions through the various lawyers, so it becomes  
25 impossible for us to hear submissions other than through the Counsel. That's just how -  
26 --

27 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** How it was.

28 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** --- how it operates.

1 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah.

2 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** So I just want you to know that is  
3 not that we don't care or anything of that nature, and we certainly understand -- and  
4 thank you for your honesty in sharing that message. And you're right, it is a very difficult  
5 -- was a very difficult decision. But I just want you to know that that's the reason behind  
6 it, not that we ---

7 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah.

8 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** --- not that we don't care.

9 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** You see, amateurs like myself, and  
10 others who don't have legal training, we wouldn't actually grasp that. But I just wanted  
11 to put it in here.

12 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Of course. Thank you.

13 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah.

14 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you for that today, and as  
15 well for your caring enough to share.

16 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** I want to talk about the initial response  
17 in Portapique. And I don't want to criticize the poor three RCMP who were first on the  
18 scene, because they entered my version of hell, as -- probably all of our versions of hell  
19 that night. And I think if I assign a failure, a cascade of failures, it is to the senior  
20 management in the middle management and how it all unfolded. So to send officers  
21 down without night vision goggles, without tracking devices on their uniforms, when they  
22 go out of the car and they wouldn't know where the other person was. I just think there  
23 was a colossal unfolding of mistakes that night, and mistakes around not being able to  
24 communicate, having systems get overloaded because the systems aren't designed for  
25 this kind of massive response from people hearing about what was going on.

26 Yeah, the question of leaving the children alone has absolutely  
27 haunted me since I first heard it. The Blair children saw their parents murdered in front  
28 of their eyes, and when they smelled the smoke, as you know, they ran over to Lisa's

1 house, and Lisa had already gone outside to check on the fire, and thank God the  
2 children didn't see her body.

3 But I think when the RCMP said to hide in the basement, nobody  
4 went down to check was there egress from the basement, and that house could have  
5 been set on fire and the children would have been in the basement. So I kept mulling  
6 this in my mind again, how could you leave four children in that house, unattended and  
7 not checking, could they escape from the basement if a fire was started? So I just think  
8 that the RCMP who were directing the events and not the three on site, I understood it  
9 at some point in testimony they did not know that the children had seen their parents  
10 murdered. They knew kids were alone in the house, but I believe at some point in  
11 testimony it was said that they didn't know those children had actually seen their parents  
12 murdered. And the 911 operator that stayed on the line with the kids for two hours, I  
13 wish I knew who that was, they deserve a medal because they did a wonderful job with  
14 them. And yeah, they deserve a special kind of thanks.

15 Please excuse me for having to glance at this, I'm not an  
16 extemporaneous speaker at times, and this is one of those occasions.

17 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** It's absolutely fine. Take your time.

18 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Yeah.

19 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Hmm?

20 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** It's absolutely fine.

21 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Okay. Thank you.

22 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Yeah, take your time.

23 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** You know, so many people describe  
24 that the neighbor was driving a police car just like yours, and in the first 15 minutes they  
25 heard that three times. So when Superintendent Darren Campbell recently was on the  
26 stand and he said, if Mrs. Blair had used the word "exactly like a police car", I just could  
27 have died on the spot myself. I just was shocked because here's a woman calling to  
28 say her husband's just been murdered and she's about a minute and a half away from

1 being murdered herself, and her last thoughts have to be “Oh my God, my children are  
2 hiding, are they going to be killed?” And he was looking for the word “exactly”, and I  
3 couldn't help but think was this just gross stupidity that he would say that? I don't know.  
4 But it just really, really, hurt to hear him use those words, because there was no  
5 “exactly”. They heard from several sources that he was driving a marked police car. So  
6 ---

7 I mentioned the police failing to protect the children, and I had  
8 written some things in here. But in some of the testimony, the RCMP believed that  
9 Gabriel Wortman had shot himself in the woods. I can't understand why they would  
10 think that, because they didn't find a car that he was driving, and he wasn't there. And if  
11 they thought he shot himself, why did they hide in Lisa's house when they were  
12 instructed to hide in the house for the rest of the night? So that doesn't make much  
13 sense to me. But I just wanted to make that point.

14 It's really hard to review all the errors that the RCMP made, and  
15 you've heard them all. There's not much point of me even probably talking about them  
16 anymore, but the feeling all through this is that the RCMP from Ottawa have been  
17 working very hard to protect any exposure of those officers from looking like they made  
18 mistakes. And mistakes were made, and I think we all know that. So there's an  
19 impression that there's been an attempt to hide information from the Commission, and I  
20 think that was borne out very recently when you just got new documents released from  
21 federal folks, from the Commission, from their lawyers not your lawyers. The  
22 impression I continue to have is an RCMP force that is built out of silos, and the left  
23 hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. And this effort to keep documents  
24 back, that's very, very perturbing to me, and I'm sure it is to you, to get information late  
25 in the game, you have to start looking at that and going through it, of course. So yeah,  
26 is there something to hide? I think there is. But I'm just an amateur sleuth. So anyway.

27 I think that I've mentioned what I've already written on this page. I  
28 think the conflicting information that we heard on a few occasions. I'm briefly going to

1 mention Heather O'Brien's death and the testimony that was given that conflicted. The  
2 two officers had very, very conflicting information. And I think that should be the subject  
3 of an independent review to try and get answers why it was so conflicting. For the first  
4 set of responders to say they smashed the window on the driver's side and reached in  
5 and felt her pulse, and then for the next responder to come and say there was no  
6 access into the vehicle, the windows were rolled up, they had to smash the windows.  
7 And it's just a huge conflict of testimony and therefore, I think it should be independently  
8 investigated to see why.

9                   Because going forward, we don't want to think that we can't trust  
10 the word of the responding officers in a tragedy. And God forbid that we should ever  
11 have another event like this. But if we do, we need to know that we can trust what's  
12 being told to us and that it's not being covered up, or that there's two opposed  
13 viewpoints. So that is one of my recommendations, that it have an independent review.

14                   I want to talk about early intervention in schools. And most recently  
15 we heard the roundtable discussions about topics that I had already written about in  
16 this, and part of my background knowledge is that I used to be the President of the  
17 Advisory Council on the Status of Women. I worked on research papers around  
18 pornography and prostitution and family violence, and I was the Minister of the Status of  
19 Women when I was in Government along with Community Services and the Civil  
20 Service.

21                   So what I'm hearing about early intervention in the schools, and I'm  
22 wondering about, had anybody ever identified that the perpetrator was being brutalized  
23 at home and laying the groundwork for his future mental health issues and violence?  
24 So I think what I'm learning in talking with, what I call guidance counselors, they are now  
25 called resource counselors, they are vastly overworked and they are assigned too many  
26 students to be a resource to. I think the accepted figure now is that a resource  
27 counselor would work with 500 students, it used to be 300. And 75 percent in the high  
28 schools that work is actually administrative and not working directly with the students.



1                   So there's a serious issue here about resource counselors in the  
2 schools. And I was at a renewal of vows wedding last night and by a funny fluke I sat  
3 down with a resource counselor in the high school. So I sort of milked her all evening to  
4 give me some more information about this, and so much of their work is spent with  
5 administration. And in high schools where there are at least 29 nationalities  
6 represented, they are working to guide the students through issues of course selection.  
7 Do you want to go to university down the road, this is what you need to do. It's not  
8 counseling around a student's mental health issues and whether or not they have  
9 violence in their home or an alcoholic father, or whatever.

10                   So I really would like us to look at guidance counseling and look at  
11 some recommendations around what's a workable number. It isn't 500. It used to be  
12 300, I think it needs to go back to that. And the administrative role that resource people  
13 in the schools are doing takes away from their role as guidance or resource counselors.  
14 So I've shaped up a little bit of a recommendation around that. And I do think it's  
15 important, because there's so much going on in student's life affecting their future  
16 behavior, and that role of resource is very, very important, and I wondered if Gabriel  
17 Wortman ever had any help in high school or earlier, you know?

18                   Do you get the chance to go over this after, or do you just have my  
19 vocal part of it?

20                   **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** It's being recorded.

21                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yes, but do you actually have to look  
22 at it after?

23                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Yes, oh yes. We look at it.

24                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Okay. I'll leave you my notes too.

25                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** You're welcome to leave us -- to give us a  
26 submission in writing as well.

27                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah.

28                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** This is really helpful, just so you know.

1 We're hearing you speak to the issues that will help formulate the recommendations.

2 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah.

3 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** And so we -- when we go back to the  
4 transcript, we will contextualize them by topic. So a lot of what I'm hearing is around  
5 child rescue protocols, chain of command, red flag detection and response. So we'll try  
6 to kind of organize them a little bit by topic.

7 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah.

8 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** But I want you know this is really  
9 helpful, because you're helping -- you're touching on the issues that the  
10 recommendations need to respond to.

11 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Okay. I do have a little sheet of my  
12 recommendations summarized at the end of this so that might be helpful.

13 Now, I mentioned they're working in schools with 29 nationalities,  
14 and they're working in schools with issues around language, race, and religion. And so,  
15 to have a set number that says you put one counselor in a school with X number of  
16 student population, you might have a small school out in Spryfield that has huge issues  
17 around poverty and family violence and all the elements coming together that maybe a  
18 school in Bedford doesn't have. And it's hard to say that a defined number is going to  
19 work just because of those variables. So I would like somebody in Education or  
20 whatever to take a look at that, you know, there's no rubber stamp for this, and that's  
21 what I was hearing loud and clear last night when I was talking with folks at my table,  
22 and I'm so glad they were there.

23 Yeah, I think I've pretty well covered that. Oh, I did have an idea  
24 though. I know we have helplines and I wondered whether or not -- it's difficult for a  
25 young person to walk through a door marked resource and have other kids tease them  
26 and say, "Well, what did you have to go to the resource person for?" And I wondered  
27 about a dedicated hotline for students in each school that would be available in the  
28 evening that if they wanted to get help with some issue that they could use a hotline

1 approach and make the phone call in the evening. Now, that's off the top of my head. I  
2 have no research to say it's done elsewhere, but I sort of like the idea, so I put it in here.

3 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** We did hear from someone from  
4 Kids Helpline.

5 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah.

6 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** Do you know about Kids Helpline?

7 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah.

8 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** Yeah, so you're talking about  
9 something different than that.

10 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Slightly different, yeah.

11 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** Okay.

12 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Dedicated more to the ---

13 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** --- to the school.

14 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** --- access in each school, and Kids  
15 Helpline only works if that youngster can get to a phone and not have their parents  
16 know they're making a call. But that issue could be the same with a hotline as well, but  
17 it's just maybe an expansion on the idea of, how do you access the resources. So  
18 yeah.

19 In our schools today, I think there's only three mandatory courses  
20 that are required to graduate, and you can get credits in yoga, credits in all sorts of  
21 things that my generation wouldn't have considered education. So I know the  
22 roundtables recently discussed the need for having a mandatory course with topics  
23 around family violence, sex education, and so forth. I watched that online, I didn't  
24 attend the session. I support every word I heard, and I thought they were really well-  
25 done presentations.

26 So part of that kind of a mandatory course has to discuss healthy  
27 sexual relations. And I knew about this before I listened to the roundtable discussion,  
28 because students now are allowed to take cell phones to school there's very little

1 teaching going on, and I know a lot of teachers, including my daughter, who have left  
2 the profession, and it's quite chaotic in the classroom with cell phones. And what's  
3 happening with young kids on the school buses, they are accessing pornography sites,  
4 and today's pornography is not the Playboy magazine of 30 years ago, and I know  
5 because I did a lot of research on this issue.

6 I've networked the entire province the film *Not a Love Story* from  
7 the National Film Board of the day, and the distorted images that kids are watching,  
8 body parts, sexual violence, no 10- or 11-year-old should be seeing this. But they are,  
9 and then seeing it on the school bus, and they're seeing it on the school grounds. And I  
10 have neighbors with kids this age and I'm hearing about this firsthand. So when I heard  
11 it in the roundtable discussion I thought, Oh my God, yes. this needs to come out. I  
12 might be a responsible parent who puts blocks on my child's iPhone, but the next parent  
13 might not be. And so the kid who can't access it sits with the other kid on the bus and  
14 sees these violent images.

15 This has to spill over, kids get desensitized, their sexuality is being  
16 shaped by these images, and it has to have an impact as they grow up. There's a lot of  
17 sexual dysfunction in the adult population because they've spent 10 years watching  
18 violent games, and 10 years accessing pornography on a website. So I'm putting that in  
19 there, but it plays back to what you already heard in the round table discussions.

20 Are you folks all okay so far with what I'm saying?

21 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Yes, I'm going to turn the light on  
22 though.

23 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** Absolutely, I was just going turn the  
24 light on. Thank you for that.

25 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** I thought I had another -- I do --  
26 another pair of glasses to help me see better. Okay. Yeah. So it comes back to the  
27 mandatory courses and healthy family relations, and we're up against digital platforms  
28 of today that are absolutely corrupting what kids are learning, and what they're taking

1 forward into their adulthood, and it's a very, very, scary thought.

2 Oh, I did -- I was quite interested in the discussions about the  
3 intimate partner violence and why women stay in those situations, and how do we  
4 shape the recommendations for change going forward. I did get quite a bit of research  
5 through the Legislative Library, and I sent it to Patterson Law, and they looked at -- well,  
6 the research looked at the *Nova Scotia Domestic Violence Intervention Act*, and that  
7 had Statutes put in place in 1995 when I was in Government. Well, I say Statutes, there  
8 were directives, but a directive is not the law, as you know, and they weren't followed up  
9 with a bill being passed in the Legislature. A bill requires First, Second, Third Reading,  
10 and it requires Royal Assent.

11 So those directives essentially are not worth the paper they're  
12 written on because they aren't legally required to be followed. So I looked at a 1995  
13 report by the Nova Scotia Law Commission, "*From Rhetoric to Reality*", and that was  
14 about a directive as well and it required that police investigate all spousal assault calls,  
15 make arrests where the situation warranted, and lay the appropriate charges, and it  
16 hasn't been done. So it's stated in the directive and the police have more problems --  
17 you probably know this -- making calls around family violence than a lot of other calls.  
18 So that is an area where we really need to hammer home some changes and get some  
19 bills in place, and get Royal Assent to those bills.

20 And we've already heard the conflicting testimony between Brenda  
21 Forbes and the officer who disputes that her call was about family violence, and Lisa  
22 Banfield disputes that it was something else like a speeding car. So my point being,  
23 and you've heard it, directives aren't backed up by legislation, and they need to be. I  
24 think we have to make it mandatory for police follow up, and then the case where a  
25 person doesn't want to press charges for a variety of fear-based reasons that I  
26 understand, the law should state that the police have to return on a number of  
27 occasions to check in and determine further if charges should be laid, which is the  
28 current directive being ignored.

1                   And I think we need an automatic legal requirement that the person  
 2 who is the subject of the complaint must have counseling for anger management. Now,  
 3 remote areas, how do you get the counseling? We heard about that too and you heard  
 4 about it. But we have to design a response on that, so that counseling is available and  
 5 it's -- I've always heard it, it's very tough to get men to seek counseling because they  
 6 don't want to admit they need it. But I think we need to have a change that can be  
 7 made here obviously, and it's up to you folks to try and design what that change will look  
 8 like. So, yeah, I support everything I heard that day.

9                   Alcoholics Anonymous used to affect change by having men come  
 10 to group meetings and use the 10-step program. C1

11 C1

12 C1

13 C1 But  
 14 there has to be a model out there that can work in remote areas as well as less remote  
 15 areas. So you have a big job to do.

16                   That alert system failure, you've heard a great deal about that. So  
 17 I've been getting alerts on my phone when -- of course the Amber Alerts come over the  
 18 phone, when there's a forest fire it comes over the phone, there's all sorts of times in the  
 19 last couple of years I've had alerts come through my iPhone. So the fact that they didn't  
 20 use an alert is mind boggling, it's another huge mistake. And it seemed through  
 21 testimony that the RCMP were really disconnected from today's alert systems, and how  
 22 they are used, and the fact that they went back and forth trying to craft a message on  
 23 Saturday [sic] morning, sending up the line, getting it back the line. It's a terrible failure  
 24 that cost more people their life.

25                   So I think what I'd like to see is that a matrix be developed for an  
 26 early alert broadcast that would be readily spelled out in a document at each police  
 27 location, if you've got this issue happening this is the alert that you can put out right  
 28 away. It's crafted, it's in the matrix, it's in your binder, instead of trying to handcraft the

1 response under duress. I'd like some thought given to developing a matrix of responses  
2 for different situations. So that's in here too.

3           The decommissioned police vehicles and their sale. I'm going to be  
4 succinct here, don't allow the resale of a police vehicle, have them crushed. Help the  
5 environment with more metal. Don't allow the sale of decals, and decals that mimic  
6 those of the police cars. Don't allow the sale of police uniforms and police costumes.  
7 I've seen people at costume parties, they look just like they walked in from a force in a  
8 car wearing the uniform. It's a costume you can buy. I think that absolutely ought to be  
9 a criminal offence and stop the practice.

10           Purged records. Again, purging records after two years, I find that  
11 hard to believe. I think that records should not be purged at all, records shouldn't go  
12 home, the notebook shouldn't go home. I did question whether notebooks could be  
13 overwritten, could they be erased, or the pages numbered. I did get a response from  
14 Rob Pineo on that and it sounds like there is some good practice around the notebooks.  
15 But I don't think that's it's wise to be able to take them home. Are they secured if you  
16 take them home? Do your kids have access to them? Could they be tossed in the  
17 fireplace, you know? So I think the handwritten notebook has huge importance  
18 regardless of computers and computer records. So I'd just like some more thought  
19 given to that question around the purging of records.

20           Consolidation and amalgamation of police services in Nova Scotia  
21 is my big recommendation. It's going to get a lot of resistance, but I think we just need  
22 one Nova Scotia Police Force. In my very distant past I was the first Mayor of Bedford.  
23 I hired and set up our Police Department, and if the police in Halifax were chasing a  
24 suspect from a bank robbery down the highway and they came to Bedford's boundaries,  
25 the communication didn't work, they had to give up the chase. We fixed that very, very  
26 quickly with equipment that was interoperable. So I have a little history there actually.

27           But I would like to see us develop one police service in Nova  
28 Scotia, and it would mean consolidation and amalgamation of the Forces that exist.

1 And I'd like to see common training across our Forces, municipal and RCMP. Common  
2 training on guns, common training on communication. This kind of recommendation  
3 won't fly. It will be really kicked back, but if you aim really high you might land in the  
4 middle and get some really important changes that are needed. So that's why I'm  
5 saying I think we need one police service and the historic respect for the RCMP is  
6 shattered after Portapique, it's just shattered. Everybody I speak with says the same  
7 thing. So I would love to see us aim for one service, merge the two.

8                   And I did look at the Public Safety Canada Amalgamation of Police  
9 Services Report. I didn't read the whole thing, but I did look at it. And given the rural  
10 nature of Nova Scotia and, you know, the move into the cities is so obvious, and the tax  
11 bases in the cities. But the rural communities are still going to exist. They don't have a  
12 tax base to support a police service on their own, and I think that's part of why I believe  
13 we need to look at more education, longer training, a cohesive force across the board  
14 that could be one police service.

15                   Now, the Minister of Justice is going to hammer a nail in this, I  
16 know, if you were so bold as to make that recommendation. But it's not about  
17 defunding, and I think defunding conversations have to do with mental health calls, and  
18 why are two police cars parked in front of a home where a teenager is threatening  
19 suicide. I think some of the discussion around defending [sic] -- defunding comes into  
20 that use of the police. I've seen that in my own neighborhood. I've seen two police cars  
21 parked upwards of five hours when a young person is threatening suicide, and  
22 fortunately they didn't do it, but it tied up police resources very much for a long time.

23                   That's -- what I have in these pages somewhat repeats that you've  
24 already heard, and I don't need to do that. I think the lion's share of change though  
25 around policing it has to rest with the Provincial and Federal Government, so at least  
26 the Provincial Government. Because these little municipal units with 900 people in  
27 them, like Mahone Bay, they have such a limited tax base so it's very hard to afford to  
28 make these changes and provide safety in those rural communities.



1 Well, I think you've got a task that can't be envied. Like, it's really  
2 difficult and as you craft your Report I think it's going to be 1,000 pages long and I think  
3 it's going to be this thick. And I have a suggestion, respectfully made, that when you do  
4 your Report put it into a binder format with removable sections, because you're going to  
5 have things for the police, you're going to have things for the Justice Department, for  
6 Community Services, for Health, for Education. If they're sitting with a book this big on  
7 their desk it's going to be difficult to use. So I would really like you to take a look at what  
8 kind of format you put your Report into. And as a former Minister, with a lot of reports  
9 coming across my desk, wow, it was easy for some of them to gather dust. And if I  
10 could extract from the major report the section that was applicable to my department it  
11 would have made it easier. So that's one of my suggestions.

12 I would like to see that you recommend a legal requirement for a  
13 plan of action and a public review of the progress after your Report comes out, and you  
14 probably already thought of this. I think we need timelines, and you know, this Report  
15 will go in a number of directions, and I think you need a special session with Cabinet,  
16 not just part of their regular agenda which is a couple of hours long. But you're probably  
17 going to need a full day of a workshop with Cabinet and then farmed out as well to the  
18 Deputy Ministers, because they'll be the ones that munch into it, as you know.

19 So, yeah. I'd like to see some community roundtable discussions  
20 as well on the report, because at the ground level looking at your recommendations will  
21 bring that up through the system as well, not being top heavy coming down, but driven  
22 at the ground level coming up. So that's just a comment as a community activist that I  
23 am. So ---

24 I've really struggled with the act of forgiveness. I've tried to forgive  
25 the perpetrator, but not his actions. So I hope someday I can achieve my own sense of  
26 peace as I look back to my niece's death. And out of all of this horror there was a big  
27 miracle and it's that the four children lived. To me that was a miracle. It might have  
28 been another way. So that's difficult to say.

1                   So I have a little précis of my recommendations: counseling  
2 services, independent review into the conflicting testimony, with recommendations  
3 around the resource counseling, mandatory course around family relations, the laws  
4 around intimate partner violence, matrix of early messages, criminal offence to resale  
5 decommissioned cars, no more purging of records, and consolidate the police services  
6 in Nova Scotia. That's it.

7                   I didn't think I could do this.

8                   **COMMISSIONER FITCH:** You did really well.

9                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** A lot of thought and effort. Thank you for  
10 your time and energy.

11                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** You're welcome.

12                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** A lot of prep.

13                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** I've been sort of working away at this  
14 and then every time I reread it, I'd think, no that's not good enough. anyway, I'll leave  
15 this with you, it's on my computer at home.

16                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Okay. I just wanted to check in with the  
17 Commissioners to see if there's any follow up questions, there's a lot there, but --

18                   **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** I just wanted to thank you so  
19 very much for -- clearly you put so much thought into it, and to reduce it to specific  
20 recommendations in the last few pages is very helpful for us, and being thoughtful in  
21 also helping us with something we're preoccupied with in getting the recommendations  
22 implemented.

23                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah.

24                   **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** So thank you so much for that.  
25 And thank you for being there so often, and you're supporting Lisa and you're  
26 supporting her family, but you're supporting us too by being there, and I understand  
27 from reliable sources that you're very much a positive presence in the room and that is  
28 no surprise to me having ---

1 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Thank you.

2 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** --- met you tonight. And so  
3 really appreciate your honesty, really appreciate the time and care you put into that, and  
4 your earlier public service, thank you for that. That's just amazing. So ---

5 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** It was a lot of work and a lot of fun.

6 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Yeah. at the same time. But just  
7 really, you know, these are -- we have a difficult task. But for me personally, you've  
8 given me more hope and I found it uplifting to hear from you actually.

9 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Thank you.

10 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** And to just ---

11 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Thank you very much.

12 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** --- learn how much you care,  
13 and your honesty about your feeling that we didn't do everything perfectly, and I  
14 appreciate that. But I really, really, appreciate the fact that you have such care and  
15 interest in what we're doing and I do sense some optimism, and we need that right now.  
16 So thank you so much.

17 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Thank you.

18 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Appreciate it.

19 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Thank you. A big job ahead, yeah.

20 **COMMISSIONER FITCH:** I couldn't say anything any better than  
21 what you've said, Michael, and I just -- I do want to reiterate though, looking out and  
22 seeing you there, time and time again, it really has been important for us. It helps -- it  
23 helps us ---

24 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah.

25 **COMMISSIONER FITCH:** --- get through the days to know that ---

26 **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Well, the rooms were so big, and they  
27 were quite empty.

28 **COMMISSIONER FITCH:** Yeah.

1                   **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Yeah, they were.

2                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** So that was -- wow.

3                   **COMMISSIONER FITCH:** Yeah, I really can't put words any better  
4 than you already have. And I just want to thank you so much.

5                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** You're more than welcome.

6                   **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** Yeah, I think we're all struck by your  
7 extraordinary strength, that you've come on behalf of your family in that way, and  
8 witness, and then you know, the courage to -- and the tenacity, and the very  
9 thoughtfulness in putting together, distilling so much of what you've heard into really  
10 helpful recommendations for us.

11                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Good. I'm so glad you're telling me  
12 this. I didn't want it to be a vain effort.

13                   **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** Not at all. It's not a vain effort at all.  
14 it's not of an effort at all. I found quite a bit of what you said very helpful actually, and  
15 I'm just -- I'm just so struck by how constructive you're able to be in the face of the  
16 enormous weight that you're carrying and the pain that you've suffered, and to be able  
17 to nonetheless come and speak to us in such a constructive way ---

18                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Thank you.

19                   **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** --- is really extremely impressive.

20                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** You know, I really hope it helps. I  
21 really hope, you know, you've heard so many suggestions, I just hope it helps. I look  
22 forward to reading your report, I hope it's in sections so that I don't have to hold a large  
23 report in my hands.

24                   **COMMISSIONER FITCH:** We're putting a lot of thought into it for  
25 sure.

26                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah.

27                   **COMMISSIONER FITCH:** And any bit of advice and input is  
28 welcome.

1                   **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** If you would be kind enough to  
2 relay to Lisa's family, repeating again of course, we met with them a year ago March,  
3 but just express as we do every morning, but you know, Lisa's life taken, and all the  
4 other lives taken motivate us to try to do what's best. And if you could just relay our  
5 ongoing sincere care and sympathy, and deep regret that some of the difficult decisions  
6 we made have, as you have reported, have had a feeling of re-traumatization. We  
7 deeply regret that and we're doing the very best we can to balance some very difficult  
8 decisions. But if you could relay that?

9                   **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** I will, yes, thank you.

10                  **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** We would really appreciate it.

11                  **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Yeah. Thank you. Onward and  
12 upward.

13                  **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Thank you.

14                  **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** Thank you for your time.

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

16                  **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** Can I leave that with you?

17                  **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Yes, absolutely.

18                  **MS. FRANCENE COSMAN:** It might help in the transcription.

19                  **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Yes, absolutely.

20 --- Session concludes

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**CERTIFICATION**

I, NANCY EWING, hereby certify the foregoing pages to be an accurate transcription of the audio recording provided to the best of my skill and ability, and I so swear.



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NANCY EWING