

Briefing Note – For Information

Date: March 30, 2023

Issue: Mass Casualty Commission Final Report and Recommendations

BACKGROUND

From Saturday evening, April 18, to Sunday morning, April 19, 2020, a perpetrator shot and killed 22 residents of Nova Scotia, one of whom was expecting a child. He also wounded three more people before being killed by RCMP officers in the ensuing manhunt. His 13-hour rampage extended through several communities in the central part of Nova Scotia.

The Mass Casualty Commission is an independent public inquiry created to examine the April 18-19, 2020 mass casualty in Nova Scotia and to provide meaningful recommendations to help keep communities safer. On October 21, 2020, the Government of Canada and Province of Nova Scotia each issued an Order in Council (OIC) officially establishing the Commission and announcing the appointment of the three Commissioners and the beginning of this important work.

Their final report and recommendations entitled [Turning the Tide Together](#) was released publicly on March 30, 2023, in Truro.

OVERVIEW

The Report is divided into seven volumes plus an Executive Summary and 3 Annexes.

The Report includes main findings, lessons learned and recommendations. The recommendations cover a wide range of areas, including:

- how to strengthen community safety and well-being, including through focusing more on gender-based, intimate partner, and family violence
- best practices for critical incident responses
- how to improve public communication during an emergency
- how to better support individuals, families, emergency responders, service providers, and communities after a mass casualty

- how the RCMP can rebuild public trust and deliver effective, rights-regarding policing services in Canadian communities
- how policing in Nova Scotia may be improved in the near term, and how the Nova Scotian community should be engaged in imagining the future structure of police services in the province
- how to improve everyday policing practices in Canada
- how to more safely manage access to firearms and police paraphernalia.

The following is the high-level synopsis each Volume highlighting main findings and recommendations:

Volume 1 Context and Purpose

- Sets the stage of the Inquiry and includes a Commemoration, The Ripple Effect of the Mass Casualty, Individuals and Families Most Affected, Communities Most Affected, Impact of the Mass Casualty, Purpose and Approach, Purpose and Process, Approach, NS Public Safety System

Volume 2 What happened

- Responding officers acted appropriately and with great courage.
- There is a need to focus on preventative measures most notably related to gender-based violence
- There were failures in assigning scene commanders, information sharing, procedure, supervision and public notification as to the threat to the community
- Information sharing between emergency responders needs to improve with highlights on RCMP to Truro Police interoperability.

Volume 3 Violence (17 Recommendations)

- A call for researchers and data collectors to use the following common definition for mass casualty and collect and share data across many dimensions.
 - An intentional act of violence during which one or more perpetrator(s) physically injure(s) and/or kill(s) four or more victims, whether or not known to the perpetrator, during a discrete period of time.
- The recognition of intergenerational violence and the connection to that violence manifesting itself in intimate partner violence, gender-based violence and mass casualty was highlighted.
- Identification and tracking of these violent behaviours is not tracked but could have served as “red flags” and highlighted the failure to share information between HRP, Truro and the RCMP
- Identified the need for data collection, research, and policy strategy to track these behaviours and take a public health approach including intervening to support and redirect those at risk and addressing the root causes of violence.
- Call for RCMP Behavioural Sciences Branch to adopt best practices

- Gender-based, intimate partner and family violence is an epidemic in Nova Scotia that requires a meaningful whole of society response. It was recognized that it is even worse for women and girls from marginalized communities, indigenous, black, racialized, immigrant refugee, 2SLGBTQ1+, disabled, northern, rural and remote.
- Call for police and Crown Prosecutors to examine coercive control in relation to intimate partner violence cases and involve subject matter experts to reduce victim blaming hyper-responsibilization (holding of an individual to higher standards than what would typically be expected of the average person) of women survivors of gender-based violence.
- Creation and funding for a woman centric safety-first models with safe reporting community based reporting options
- Replacement of mandatory arrest and charging policies and protocols for intimate partner violence offences.
- Government supports the gender-based violence advocacy and support sector to work with police services to expand upon the National Framework for Collaborative Police Action on Intimate Partner Violence with an external accountability mechanism.
- F/P/T governments establish an expert advisory group, drawing on the gender-based violence advocacy and support sector, to examine whether and how criminal law could better address the context of persistent patterns of controlling behaviour at the core of gender-based, intimate partner, and family violence.
- F/P/T provide funding to deal with the epidemic level of gender based violence that is commensurate with the problem
- A call for a broad all of society approach to gender-based, intimate, and family violence.
- All organizations create women centric programs that are holistic, comprehensive, coordinated, collaborative and integrated with advocacy and support services.
- The prioritization of putting women's safety first in prevention strategies, lifting women and girls out of poverty and oppression and employ restorative practices to support survivors.
- Creation of a gender-based violence commissioner to monitor and report to Parliament annually.

Volume 4 Community (32 Recommendations)

- Highlighted rural community well-being is impacted by an urban bias and that there needs to be a voice for rural communities in their safety.
- Called for a national emergency management system for public alerting.
- Creation of national hub of expertise for mass casualty events including support to victims
- By May 1, 2023, the Governments of Canada and Nova Scotia should jointly fund a program to address the public health emergency that exists in Colchester, Cumberland, and Hants counties as a result of an unmet need for mental health, grief, and bereavement supports.
- Police to be using trauma informed practices and victim centered principles.
- Called for the moving from community policing to community safety and well being approaches that include statutory frameworks, focused on the social determinants of health, with community engagement and information sharing across service providers including police, education, health, social services and corrections while respecting privacy provisions
- Municipalities should be funding and building multi-sectoral community safety plans and creating community safety and well-being councils.

- Promoting bystander intervention awareness and training
- There were a series of recommendation related to firearm legislation and taking a public health approach to gun safety.
- Call for a review of police equipment disposal including vehicles, badges and uniforms and the reporting of police impersonation events.
- The promotion of healthy masculinity programs

Volume 5 Policing (75 Recommendations)

- Adoption of the 5 Principles of Effective Critical Incident Response
 - Prepare before
 - Each is unique
 - Ensure planning, policies and training include other agencies.
 - Community members are the true “first responders”.
 - Evaluate each response as to what went well or what be better.
- Series of recommendations related to critical incident planning, supervision, role clarity, training equipment, 911 call taking and radio usage.
- Highlighted the need for interoperability protocols with regular exercises.
- Requirement to complete after action reports of lessons learned.
- Creation of an interagency conflict resolution process
- Clarification of the role of the Serious Incident Response Team relating to critical incidents and crime scenes, information sharing and expert witness usage
- Adoption of the In Search of Civic Policing: Recasting the ‘Peelian’ Principles” (2016):
 1. The basic mission of the police is to improve public safety and wellbeing by promoting measures to prevent crime, harm, and disorder.
 2. The police must undertake their basic mission with the approval of, and in collaboration with, the public and other agencies.
 3. The police must seek to carry out their tasks in ways that contribute to social cohesion and solidarity.
 4. The police must treat all those with whom they come into contact with fairness and respect.
 5. The police must be answerable to law and democratically responsive to the people they serve.
 6. The police must be organized to achieve the optimal balance between effectiveness, cost-efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness.
 7. All police work should be informed by the best available evidence.
 8. Policing is undertaken by multiple providers, but it should remain a public good
- Series of recommendation related to the RCMP and their relationship with the Minister, RCMP Professional Responsibility Unit and Civilian Review and Complaints Commission
- Municipalities and Provinces should be involved with the selection of detachment commanders under the Provincial Police Service Agreement (PPSA)
- RCMP should be reporting vacancies to contracting provinces and territories and filling temporary vacancies.
- Call for a comprehensive review of the RCMP including past inquiries and reviews in which recommendations were not implemented with a view to providing direction on the restructuring of the RCMP.

- Rewrite and publish new RCMP policies in a concise format and ensure they are evidence-based including the consultation with contracting partners before the policy is changed.
- Ensuring adequate rural and policing including the potential for FPT to fund municipalities and indigenous policing.
- Creation of new member orientation by community including local standard operating procedures, structures, cultural history and geography
- Phase out the RCMP Depot Training facility by 2032 and consult First Nations of future use of land and buildings and introduce a 3-year degree program for all police officers in Canada
- Replace the RCMP Use of Force model with the Finnish Police Act model
- The inclusion of conflict resolution as a prerequisite to promotion
- Report back on the changes made to change the RCMP Management Culture to disrupt the unhealthy culture.
- In Nova Scotia Policing, the creation of a comprehensive and adequately funded mental health care model that addresses both urban and rural citizens and that the Federal government fund this a proportion equal to the RCMP subsidy.
- Embed mental health specialists in all 911 Public Safety Answering Positions (PSAP) on a 24/7 basis.
- In relation to Police Governance, NS Department of Justice to create a mandatory standard training program for Boards, ensure they are funded adequately and that vacancies are filled, and they are performing.
- Call for the creation of a public website and community contact information for the Board.
- Recommend meeting are held in accessible and open public locations and that the Board establishes a relationship with the community.
- Board members should be fairly compensated for their work as compensation is a barrier to participation.
- Police policies should be made public and those that are deemed confidential should have an explanation as to the rationale.
- Federal Minister to direct the RCMP to follow provincial standards.
- Province of Nova Scotia to ensure specialized police services are adequate, effective, and efficient and there are clear guidelines for access to and that cost allocation should not be a barrier.
- All integrated teams should have a memorandum of understanding and policies in place.
- Nova Scotia 911 should review recruitment, training and compensation of 911 operators.
- Nova Scotia should have a facilitated process to deal with conflict amongst police agencies and hold police leaders accountable for following thought on resolutions.
- In person conflict resolution training should be made mandatory for all Chiefs, Deputy Chiefs and candidates.
- Within 6 months of the report, Province of Nova Scotia is to have a multisectoral council to review research and offer recommendation relating to the 2032 PPSA expiry on the future of policing in Nova Scotia
- Province of Nova Scotia to create a common information sharing policy including collection, sharing and retention.
- Province of Nova Scotia to create a process to identify and report on situations when inadequate follow-up to information is suspected.
- When conducting community engagement police should be using community subject matter experts and they should be adequately compensated
- Police must counter system bias by identifying and countering misogyny, racism and homophobia.

Volume 6 Implementation (1 Recommendation)

- Canada and Nova Scotia must create a Mutual Accountability Body by May 31, 2023, to exchange knowledge, monitor implementation, consult community, monitor the framework and offer updates. The founding chair should be named by July 31, 2023 and membership list created by September 1, 2023.

Volume 7 Process

- General and specific information related to the inquiry design and document management.

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