

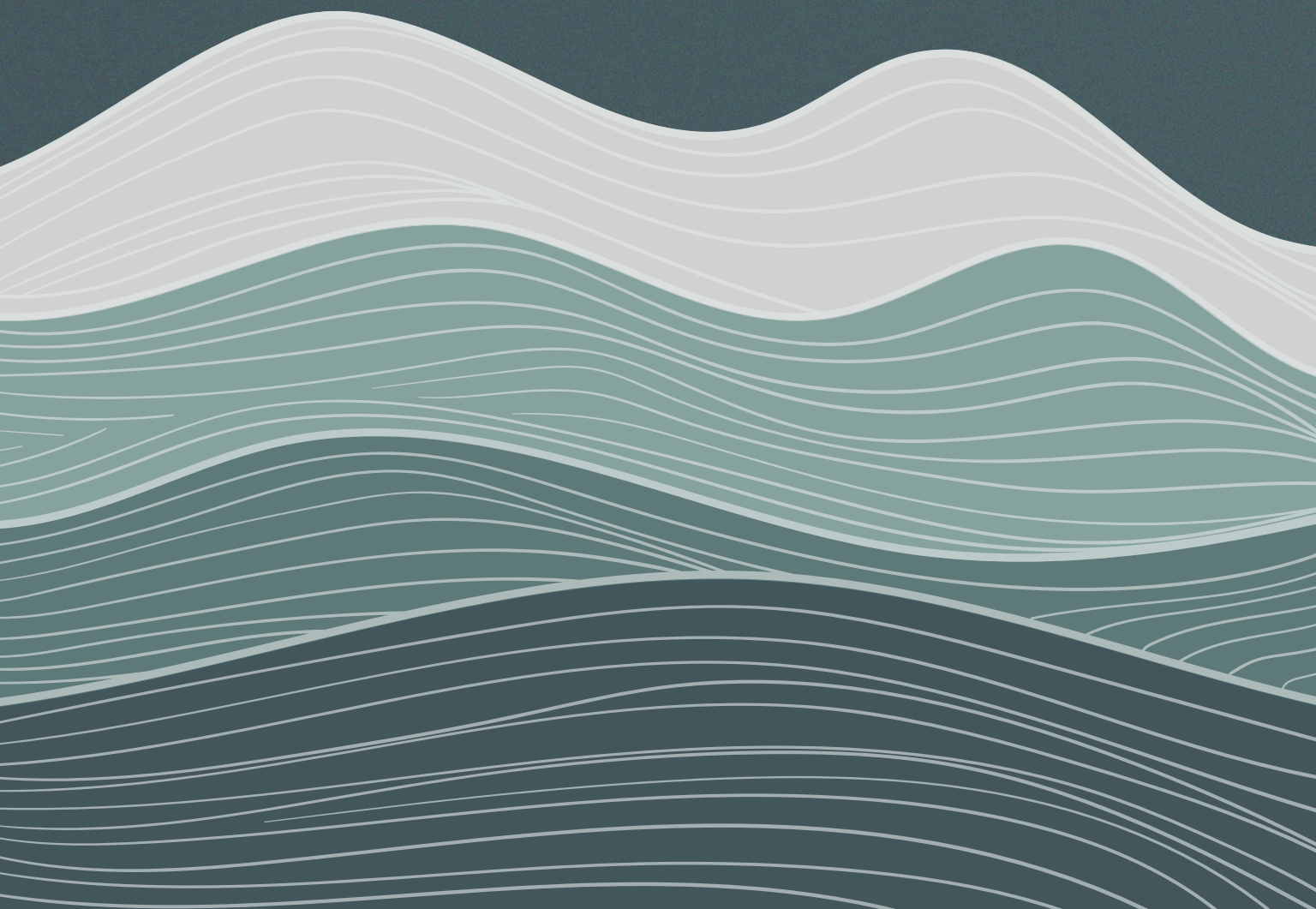
The Joint Federal/Provincial
Commission into the April 2020
Nova Scotia Mass Casualty

**MASS
CASUALTY
COMMISSION**

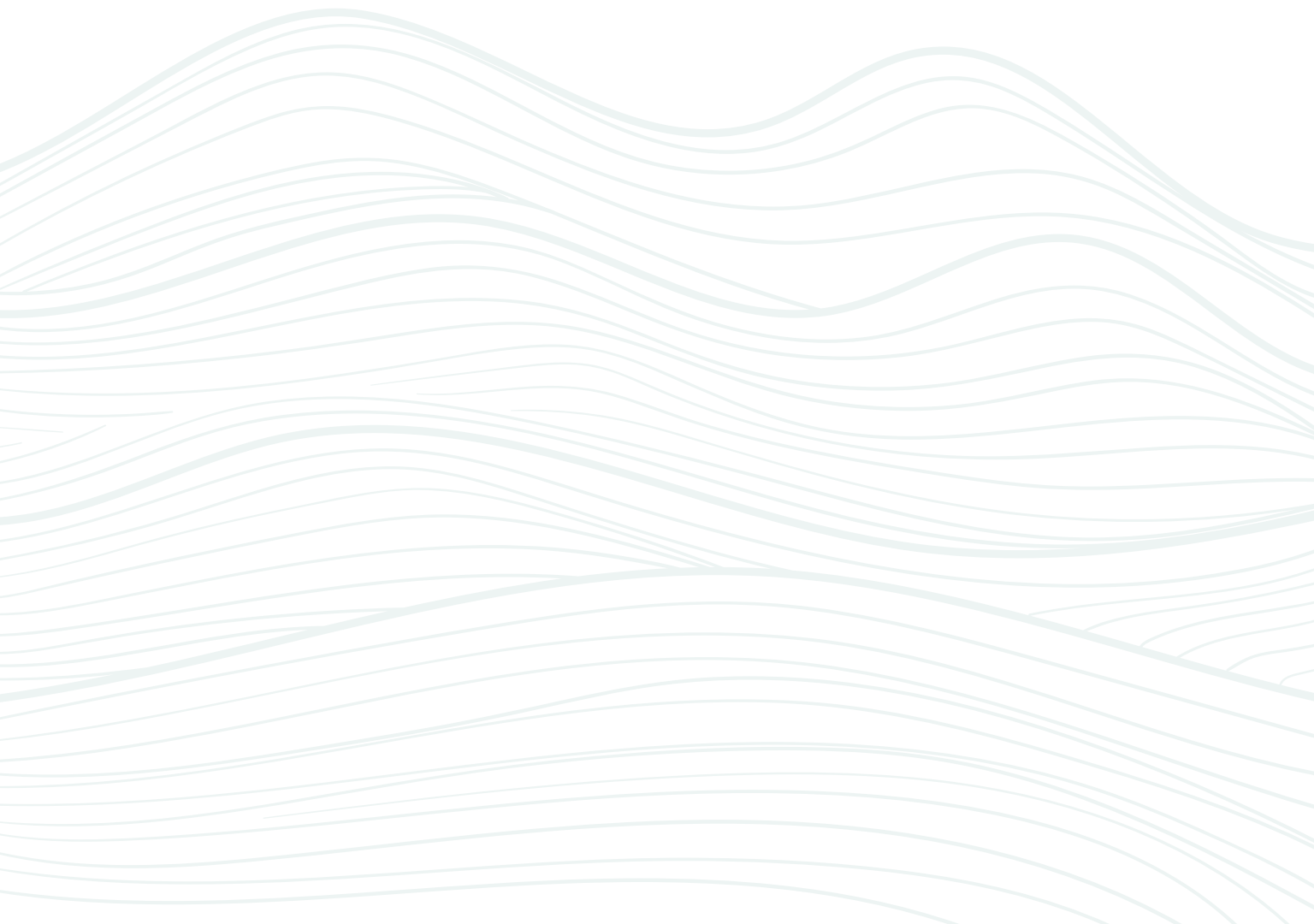
Turning the Tide Together

**FINAL REPORT OF THE
MASS CASUALTY COMMISSION**

Volume 2
What Happened



Turning the Tide Together



The Joint Federal/Provincial
Commission into the April 2020
Nova Scotia Mass Casualty

**MASS
CASUALTY
COMMISSION**

Turning the Tide Together

FINAL REPORT OF THE MASS CASUALTY COMMISSION

March 2023

Volume 2 What Happened

**THE JOINT FEDERAL / PROVINCIAL COMMISSION
INTO THE APRIL 2020 NOVA SCOTIA MASS CASUALTY**

Honourable J. Michael MacDonald
Commissioner, Chair

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

Dr. Kim Stanton
Commissioner

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The Joint Federal / Provincial Commission
into the April 2020 Nova Scotia Mass Casualty

Turning the Tide Together:
Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission
Volume 2: What Happened

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This is one of seven volumes of
Turning the Tide Together: Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission.

The full report is available in [English](https://MassCasualtyCommission.ca) (<https://MassCasualtyCommission.ca>) and
[French](https://commissiondespertemassives.ca) (<https://commissiondespertemassives.ca>) along with transcripts, exhibits,
webcasts, and reports prepared by or for the Commission.

Contents

Navigating This Report / xvi

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS / xvi

REPORT STRUCTURE / xvii

We remember / xix

Introduction to Volume 2 / 1

Purpose and Approach / 2

Overview of Volume 2 / 3

Geographic Orientation / 7

CHAPTER 1 Events Before April 18, 2020 / 8

Overview / 9

Perpetrator's History of Violent Behaviour / 9

PERPETRATOR'S BACKGROUND / 9

PERPETRATOR'S VIOLENT AND INTIMIDATING BEHAVIOUR / 10

PERPETRATOR'S VIOLENCE AND COERCIVE CONTROL
IN RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS SPOUSE / 10

**Perpetrator's Access to Weapons
and Police Paraphernalia / 12**

PERPETRATOR'S ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF FIREARMS / 12

PERPETRATOR'S POSSESSION OF POLICE PARAPHERNALIA / 13

Summary: Many Red Flags Before April 18, 2020 / 14

**Perpetrator's Behaviour in the Weeks Before
the Mass Casualty / 15**

CHAPTER 2 Events on April 18, 2020 – Portapique / 18

Overview / 19

The Community / 21

Assault of Lisa Banfield: Before 10:00 pm / 23

Portapique Fatalities / 29

PERPETRATOR'S ACTIONS BETWEEN 10:00 PM AND 11:00 PM / 29

10:00–10:05 pm: Greg and Jamie Blair / 30

Approximately 10:08 pm: Lisa McCully / 32

10:08 pm to Approximately 10:20 pm:
Joy and Peter Bond; Jolene Oliver, Aaron Tuck, and Emily Tuck / 34

Approximately 10:20–10:28 pm: Dawn and Frank Gulenchyn / 35

10:28–10:39 pm: Joanne Thomas and John Zahl / 37

10:39–10:40 pm: Corrie Ellison / 38

Alternative Hypotheses About the Sequence of Killings / 39

Perpetrator's Departure from Portapique:
Approximately 10:40–10:45 pm / 40

ACTIONS TAKEN BY OTHER PORTAPIQUE RESIDENTS / 42

ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE FIRST RESPONDERS / 47

RCMP Initial Command Response / 55

RCMP OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE / 57

OCC Set-Up / 58

Communication of Critical Information:

911 Call-Takers and Dispatchers / 61

Risk Managers / 62

General Role of Risk Managers / 62

Role of Risk Managers in Critical Incident Responses / 63

Risk Manager's Initial Decisions and Actions / 64

ESTABLISHMENT OF RCMP CRITICAL INCIDENT COMMAND / 64

RCMP Critical Incident Command Structure and Roles Within It / 65

Critical Incident Command Triangle / 65

Critical Incident Commander / 66

Other Members of the Critical Incident Command Group / 66

Critical Incident Package / 68

Resourcing the Critical Incident Response / 68

District Command Group Begins to Assemble / 69

Selection of Location for Command Post and Evacuation Centre / 72

INITIAL STRATEGIC DECISIONS AND ACTIONS / 73

Investigation / 73

The Perpetrator / 73

The Perpetrator's Cars and Replica RCMP Cruiser / 73

Other Investigative Efforts / 75

Perimeter and Containment / 76

Priorities of Life / 79

Efforts to Protect Portapique Residents / 80

Supporting First Responders / 82

Decision Regarding Second IARD Response / 84

Additional Resources / 85

Air Support / 85

RCMP J Division (New Brunswick) / 86

RCMP Executive Leadership / 87

Other Responding Agencies and Interagency Communications / 90

EMERGENCY HEALTH SERVICES / 90

VOLUNTEER FIRE SERVICES / 91

HALIFAX REGIONAL POLICE / 91

TRURO POLICE SERVICE / 92

Public Communications / 92

HISTORY OF THE RCMP'S DECISION-MAKING ABOUT ALERT READY / 92

RCMP PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY AND RESPONSIBILITIES / 93

ISSUE OF EMERGENCY BROADCAST / 94

Status at Midnight, April 18, 2020 / 95

CHAPTER 3 Events Overnight / 98

Overview / 99

Perpetrator's Actions Overnight / 100

GEOGRAPHIC ORIENTATION / 100

Reconstruction of the Perpetrator's Actions / 101

RCMP Response / 104

CRITICAL INCIDENT COMMAND IS ESTABLISHED / 104

ROLE AND TRAINING OF CRITICAL INCIDENT COMMANDER / 104

CRITICAL INCIDENT COMMANDER / 105

CRITICAL INCIDENT COMMAND STRUCTURE / 105

COMMAND POST ESTABLISHED / 105

TRANSITION IN COMMAND / 108

LIMITED ANALYSIS AND FLAWED DECISION-MAKING / 109

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES / 111

Operational Communications Centre / 112

ONGOING GATHERING AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION
ABOUT THE CRITICAL INCIDENT / 112

Strategic Decisions and Actions / 114

INVESTIGATIONS / 114

Perpetrator / 114

Perpetrator's Replica RCMP Cruiser and Other Vehicles / 115

Other Investigative Efforts / 118

PERIMETER AND CONTAINMENT / 119

TRANSITION FROM IARD TO ERT / 121

EVACUATION OF BLAIR AND MCCULLY CHILDREN / 121

ERT BECOMES OPERATIONAL / 122

EXTRACTION OF CLINTON ELLISON AND GENERAL DUTY MEMBERS / 123

CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH ERT RESOURCING / 125

INTERVIEW OF CLINTON ELLISON / 125

DEBRIEFING OF IARD RESPONDERS / 126

EVACUATION OF PORTAPIQUE RESIDENTS / 127

Communication and Coordination Issues Continue / 129

ROLE OF EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP / 130

OTHER AGENCIES AND INTERAGENCY COMMUNICATIONS / 130

VOLUNTEER FIRE SERVICES / 131

TRURO POLICE SERVICE AND AMHERST POLICE SERVICE / 131

HALIFAX REGIONAL POLICE AND HALIFAX DISTRICT RCMP / 132

Public Communications / 133

Status at 6:00 am on April 19 / 135

CHAPTER 4 Events on April 19, 2020 – 6:00 am to 10:15 am / 137

Ms. Banfield Leaves Her Hiding Place / 140

Perpetrator Emerges and Kills Again / 143

HUNTER ROAD, WENTWORTH / 143

Perpetrator's Actions / 143

Community Member Observations and Actions / 145

Emergency Response / 149

Operational Communications Centre / 149

First Responders / 152

HIGHWAY 4, WENTWORTH / 154

Perpetrator's Actions / 154

Community Observations and Actions / 155

First Responder Actions / 156

GLENHOLME / 157

Perpetrator Is Sighted by Police / 157

Perpetrator Stops at the Fisher Residence / 159

The Chase Continues / 162

PLAINS ROAD / 163

Perpetrator's Actions / 163

Community Observations and Actions / 165

**RCMP Command and the
Operational Communications Centre / 169**

STAFFING WITHIN THE COMMAND POST AND THE OCC / 169

SHIFT CHANGES AND BRIEFINGS FOR FRONT-LINE MEMBERS / 173

VICTIM LIAISON AND INFORMATION OVERLOAD / 175

COORDINATING THE WORK OF RESPONDING MEMBERS / 176

RCMP CONDUCT REGARDING THE DEATH OF HEATHER O'BRIEN / 177

RCMP EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP / 179

Other Agencies and Interagency Communications / 180

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY HEALTH SERVICES / 180

TRURO POLICE SERVICE / 182

HALIFAX REGIONAL POLICE / 182

Public Communications / 183

EMERGENCY BROADCAST / 183

OTHER PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS / 183

Status on April 19 at 10:15 am / 186

CHAPTER 5 **Onslow Fire Hall Shooting / 188**

Terminology / 190

The Comfort Centre at Onslow / 192

The Shooting / 195

Impact of the Onslow Fire Hall Shooting / 199

RCMP Accountability / 202

CHAPTER 6 **Events on April 19, 2020 – 10:15 am to Noon / 206**

**Shubenacadie Cloverleaf: Cst. Chad Morrison,
Acting Cpl. Heidi Stevenson, and Joey Webber / 209**

PERPETRATOR'S ROUTE / 209

GEOGRAPHIC ORIENTATION / 211

ENFIELD AND INDIAN BROOK MEMBERS TAKE POSITIONS / 213

PERPETRATOR SHOOTS AND INJURES CST. MORRISON / 215

ACTING CPL. STEVENSON AND THE PERPETRATOR
EXCHANGE GUNFIRE / 217

JOEY WEBBER STOPS TO RENDER ASSISTANCE, AND IS KILLED / 219

WITNESS OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIONS / 220

RCMP FIRST RESPONDER ACTIONS / 222

EMERGENCY HEALTH SERVICES AND FIRE
FIRST RESPONDER ACTIONS / 225

Emergency Health Services Treat Cst. Morrison / 225

EHS Attends to Acting Cpl. Stevenson / 227

Shubenacadie and District Volunteer Fire
and Emergency Services / 228

Highway 224: Gina Goulet / 228

PERPETRATOR'S ACTIONS / 229

COMMUNITY OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIONS / 230

EMERGENCY RESPONSE / 232

Pursuit of Perpetrator and His Death at Enfield Big Stop / 233

INITIAL POST-SHUBENACADIE PURSUIT
AND CLOSE ENCOUNTER AT ELMSDALE / 233

“SHOTS FIRED”: THE PERPETRATOR IS KILLED / 236

FORENSIC EVIDENCE ABOUT THE PERPETRATOR'S
CAUSE OF DEATH / 241

**Critical Incident Command and
Operational Communications Centre / 243**

TRANSITION TO NEW CRITICAL INCIDENT COMMANDER / 243

POSITIONING DIRECTIVES / 245

AIR SUPPORT / 247

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES / 248

INCIDENT COMMANDER ANNOUNCES MISSION / 250

911 CALLS ABOUT THE PERPETRATOR / 250

SCENE CONTROL / 252

CRITICAL INCIDENT COMMAND WINDS DOWN OPERATIONS / 254

RCMP Executive Leadership / 254

Other Agencies and Interagency Communications / 256

TRURO POLICE SERVICE / 256

HALIFAX REGIONAL POLICE / 260

MESSAGE TO ALL NOVA SCOTIA POLICE FORCES / 262

Public Communications / 263

SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES AND MEDIA RELEASE / 263

EMERGENCY ALERT / 265

Status on April 19 at Noon / 267

**CHAPTER 7 Events from Noon on April 19, 2020,
Onward / 269**

Overview / 270

Crime Scene Management / 271

DISCOVERY OF ADDITIONAL FATALITIES / 271

Cobequid Court in Portapique / 271

Family Members Contact the RCMP / 274

Lack of Coordination at the Scene / 275

OTHER CRIME SCENE MANAGEMENT ISSUES / 279

Forensic Evidence / 281

ITEMS FOUND IN THE STOLEN VEHICLE
IN WHICH THE PERPETRATOR WAS KILLED / 281

FIREARMS USED BY THE PERPETRATOR / 282

Information and Support Needs of Those Most Affected / 283

OVERARCHING FAILURE TO DEVELOP A PLAN TO MEET NEEDS / 284

NEXT OF KIN NOTIFICATIONS / 286

Definition of Next of Kin / 286

Next of Kin Notification Policy / 286

Responsibility for Next of Kin Notifications / 288

Uneven and Inadequate Notifications / 290

INFORMATION NEEDS / 295

Overview of Information Needs / 295

Information and Support for RCMP Members and Their Families / 296

Role of RCMP H Division Family Liaison / 296

RCMP Information-Sharing Practices / 298

SUPPORT AVAILABLE THROUGH NS VICTIM SERVICES / 300

Difficulties in Navigating Support Systems / 301

Disparate Experiences with NS Victim Services / 303

**RCMP Public Communications
Following the Mass Casualty / 305**

INTRODUCTION / 305

**LEGAL AND POLICY CONSTRAINTS
ON RCMP PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS / 306**

INITIAL PHASE: APRIL 19–28, 2020 / 307

First Press Conference: 6:00 pm on April 19, 2020 / 307

Analysis / 308

Second Press Conference: 2:00 pm on April 20, 2020 / 310

Analysis / 311

Third Press Conference: 4:30 pm on April 22, 2020 / 311

Analysis / 313

Fourth Press Conference: 11:00 am on April 24, 2020 / 313

Analysis / 315

Fifth Press Conference: 4:00 pm on April 28, 2020 / 316

Analysis / 317

April 28 Meeting with RCMP National Headquarters / 317

PERIODIC BRIEFINGS BEGIN / 319

ANNOUNCEMENTS CONCERNING REVIEWS OF THE RCMP RESPONSE / 321

FINDINGS ABOUT THE RCMP'S PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS / 322

Reviews of the Critical Incident Response / 323

INTRODUCTION / 323

INTERNAL RCMP H DIVISION AFTER-ACTION REPORTS / 324

RCMP Emergency Medical Response Team / 324

H Division ERT / 325

H Division RCMP Summary Report: Wellness Assessment / 325

RCMP AFTER-ACTION REVIEWS / 327

Post-action Operational Debrief / **327**

Use of Force Reporting / **328**

Operational Communications Centre Review / **329**

Hazardous Occurrence Investigation Team Review / **330**

The Idea of a Critical Incident Response Review / **330**

EXTERNAL REVIEWS OF RCMP ACTIONS / 331

Employment and Social Development Canada Review / **331**

Serious Incident Response Team / **331**

REVIEWS UNDERTAKEN BY OTHER AGENCIES / 332

Emergency Health Services Medical Communications Centre / **332**

Halifax Regional Police Critical Incident Command:
After-Action Report / **333**

Nova Scotia Health Authority:
Colchester East Hants Health Centre Lockdown / **333**

Victorian Order of Nurses:
Response Report / **334**

Notes / 336

Navigating This Report

Mental Health and Wellness

Sometimes reading about distressing or emotionally overwhelming information can be challenging. As you read this Report, please make sure to keep mental health and wellness in mind. If you or someone you know is in need of support, consider the resources listed below or check with your local health authority or the Canadian Mental Health Association at cmha.ca to find resources in your area. A list of services is also available on the Commission website MassCasualtyCommission.ca.

- If you are experiencing distress or overwhelming emotions at any time, you can call the **Nova Scotia Provincial Crisis Line 24/7 at 1-888-429-8167**. You do not have to be in a crisis to call, and nothing is too big or too small a reason to reach out. The Nova Scotia Provincial Crisis Service can also provide the contacts for other crisis services that are available if you live outside Nova Scotia.
- If you or someone you know is struggling in any way, you can call **211** or visit 211.ca. 211 offers help 24 hours a day in more than one hundred languages and will be able to connect you directly to the right services for your needs.
- The **Kids Help Phone** is a national helpline that provides confidential support at 1-800-668-6868 or Text CONNECT to 686868.
- Additional supports for across Canada are available at www.wellnesstogether.ca.

Report Structure

Turning the Tide Together, the Final Report of the Mass Casualty Commission, brings together everything we have learned about the April 2020 mass casualty in Nova Scotia as well as our recommendations to help make communities safer.

The Report is divided into seven volumes. Volumes that are longer are divided into parts and chapters focusing on specific topics, while others just contain chapters. Recommendations, main findings, and lessons learned are woven throughout the Report and are also listed in the Executive Summary. Appendices and annexes are also available. All materials relating to the Final Report are available on the Commission website [MassCasualtyCommission.ca](https://www.masscasualtycommission.ca) and through Library and Archives Canada.

Each Volume of the Final Report focuses on an area of our mandate:

Volume 1 Context and Purpose

Volume 2 What Happened

Volume 3 Violence

Volume 4 Community

Volume 5 Policing

Volume 6 Implementation: A Shared Responsibility to Act

Volume 7 Process, and Volume 7 Appendices

Annex A: Sample Documents

Annex B: Reports

Annex C: Exhibit List

We hope this Report not only encourages conversations about community safety but also helps people and organizations to move from conversation to collective action. Together we can help to make our communities safer.

We remember

Tom Bagley

Kristen Beaton, who was expecting a child

Greg and Jamie Blair

Joy and Peter Bond

Lillian Campbell

Corrie Ellison

Gina Goulet

Dawn and Frank Gulenchyn

Alanna Jenkins and Sean McLeod

Lisa McCully

Heather O'Brien

Jolene Oliver, Aaron Tuck, and Emily Tuck

Constable Heidi Stevenson

E. Joanne Thomas and John Zahl

Joey Webber

Introduction to Volume 2

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 2

Purpose and Approach

Volume 2 sets out the Commission’s main findings in the narrative of what happened leading up to, during, and in the aftermath of the mass casualty of April 18 and 19, 2020. As distressing as it is to recall the violent attack that ended the lives of 22 people (one of whom was expecting a child) and injured others, our mandate requires us to provide a detailed account of these events. We have striven to include enough detail to give readers a clear, hour-by-hour account of the perpetrator’s actions as well as the response of community members and those who had a formal duty to respond. Formal responsibility rests with first and secondary police responders, emergency services personnel (including firefighters and paramedics), and other service providers (for example, tow truck operators and medical examiners). Whenever possible, we include first-voice perspectives from those who experienced the mass casualty as witnesses, community members, service providers, and as responders and overseers of the response. Witnesses and people around the perpetrator have only so much information, however, and analysis of evidence can only take us so far. Some of the perpetrator’s actions – in particular, the motivation for his violent rampage – are unknown at this time and likely will remain so forever.

This account contains the Commission’s main findings in two key areas: in narrating how the mass casualty unfolded and in identifying any institutional and systemic failures discernable in the response, including any missed opportunities to prevent the mass casualty as a whole or in some specific aspects. Identifying what went wrong and what additional steps could have been taken is critical to establishing the lessons that may be learned from the mass casualty. As we describe in Volume 1, Context and Purpose, the Commission’s work is necessarily both backward-looking and forward-looking.

The Commission's major findings are clearly set out throughout this volume. These findings are a foundation for further and more refined findings, as well as lessons learned and recommendations, in subsequent volumes based on what the Commission has learned about why and how the mass casualty happened. We build on our main findings in relation to three major themes: violence (Volume 3), community (Volume 4), and policing (Volume 5). In these subsequent volumes, we elaborate on the lessons to be learned by providing more information about the causes, context, and circumstance of the mass casualty. We draw a direct connection from the findings set out in this volume's narrative account to the lessons to be learned and to our recommendations. It is our hope that this approach will help to ensure that lessons are in fact learned and integrated into our systems for community safety and well-being, including for those engaged in critical incident response.

Overview of Volume 2

Volume 2 is organized in seven sequential chapters, each one corresponding to one time period relevant to our understanding of the mass casualty.

Chapter 1 deals with events before April 18, 2020. It focuses on information about the perpetrator that contextualizes the mass casualty. The first sections present an overview of the perpetrator's history of violent behaviour, his illegal acquisition of firearms, and his possession of police paraphernalia. They include key facts about the violence and coercive control he exerted in his relationship with Lisa Banfield, his common law spouse. (More extensive factual background on these issues is contained in Volume 3, *Violence*.) The chapter then sets out what the Commission learned about the perpetrator's behaviour in the weeks leading up to the mass casualty and, in particular, his response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter 2 provides a narrative account of the events on the evening of April 18. After a brief introduction to the community of Portapique, the first section contains our findings about the perpetrator's assault on Ms. Banfield. The second section explains what happened in Portapique after this assault. The events are described from three points of view: the perpetrator's actions, resulting in 13 fatalities in

Portapique and in injuries to Andrew MacDonald; the observations and actions of other community members, who in many ways were the first responders; and the actions and observations of emergency services personnel who came on scene. The Portapique fatalities were Greg and Jamie Blair; Joy and Peter Bond; Corrie Ellison; Dawn and Frank Gulenchyn; Lisa McCully; Jolene Oliver, Aaron Tuck, and Emily Tuck; and E. Joanne Thomas and John Zahl. The third section steps away from the immediate scene in Portapique to the RCMP Operational Communications Centre and the non-commissioned officers who worked on the response from further afield. It sets out and examines the RCMP's approach to the critical incident response in the first few hours of the mass casualty. The fourth section reviews the decisions and actions of the RCMP executive leadership, and the fifth section looks at other agencies involved in the mass casualty and at communications among agencies. The sixth section examines the issue of public communications, including decisions about what information to share with the public, and by what means, during these first two hours. The final section summarizes the Commission's main findings and conclusions about this period.

Chapter 3 provides a narrative account of events after midnight and into the early morning of April 19. It covers the perpetrator's actions; RCMP decisions and actions; communications between the RCMP and other agencies, and the actions taken by other agencies; and communications with the public during this period. A final section summarizes the Commission's main findings and conclusions about the events overnight.

Chapter 4 sets out events on the morning of April 19 from 6:30 am to 10:15 am. It begins with Lisa Banfield leaving her hiding place in the woods of Portapique to seek help, at about 6:30 am. She had stayed hidden overnight after escaping from the perpetrator's assault. The second section recounts the perpetrator's re-emergence in Wentworth, thereby reactivating an active shooter situation over a larger geographical area than the previous night. This narrative is ordered by the locations where the perpetrator stopped, encountered other individuals, and killed an additional six people: Alanna Jenkins, Sean McLeod, and Tom Bagley on Hunter Road in Wentworth; Lillian Campbell on Highway 4 in Wentworth; and Kristen Beaton and Heather O'Brien on Plains Road in Debert. He also terrorized Adam and Carole Fisher in Glenholme. Again the narrative is told from three points of view: the perpetrator's actions, community members' observations and actions, and actions taken by first-responding police and emergency personnel. Sections that follow continue the examination begun in Chapter 2: the work of the Operational

Communications Centre and RCMP command decisions and actions; the role of the RCMP executive leadership; actions taken by other agencies and interagency communication; and the issue of public communications. The final section summarizes our main findings and conclusions.

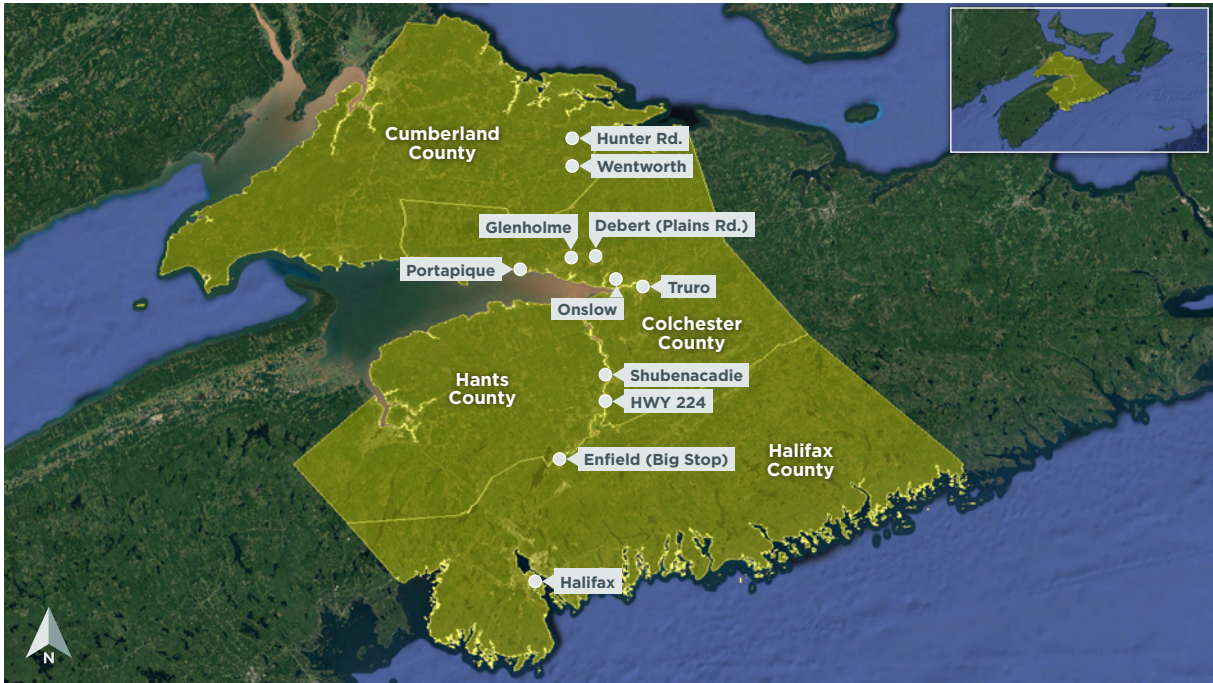
Chapter 5 examines the shooting at the Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade hall. It begins with a discussion of terminology, in particular explaining why we do not use the term “blue-on-blue shooting” to describe this incident. The next section explains how this fire hall came to be designated as a comfort centre for residents who had been displaced from Portapique. The chapter then turns to the facts of the shooting itself: at 10:17 am, two RCMP members, Cst. Terence (Terry) Brown and Cst. David (Dave) Melanson, shot at the emergency officer responsible for the comfort centre, David (Dave) Westlake, and a fellow RCMP officer, Cst. Dave Gagnon. We discuss the impact of the Onslow fire hall shooting on those who were most affected by this incident – namely, Mr. Westlake, Cst. Gagnon, and the three individuals inside the fire hall during the shooting: Richard Ellison, father of Corrie Ellison, one of the Portapique fatalities; Greg Muise, fire chief of the Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade; and his deputy fire chief, Darrell Currie – as well as the impact of the fire hall shooting on the Onslow community. Finally, we discuss the steps taken by the RCMP after April 19 to address the Onslow fire hall shooting.

Chapter 6 returns to the account of the perpetrator’s actions on the morning of April 19 from 10:15 am until his death at 11:25 am. The first three sections, like those in Chapter 4, are organized around the perpetrator’s encounters with individuals at different locations, resulting in three more lives taken and a serious injury to another person: at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf, Highway 224, and before the perpetrator was killed the Big Stop gas station in Enfield. During the final 70 minutes of his life, the perpetrator shot and injured Cst. Chad Morrison and killed Cst. Heidi Stevenson, Joseph (Joey) Webber, and Gina Goulet, before being shot and killed by two RCMP members. Each of these location-based sections begins with an overview of the perpetrator’s actions, sets out community observations and actions, and ends with the actions of emergency personnel. The remaining sections continue our examination of RCMP command decisions and actions and the role of the Operational Communications Centre, the decisions and action of the RCMP executive leadership, those taken by other agencies and interagency communication, and the issue of public communications during this period. The final section summarizes our main findings and conclusions.

Chapter 7 provides an overview of events following the perpetrator's death on April 19, including both the immediate aftermath of this critical incident and the follow-up by the RCMP and other agencies involved in the response to the mass casualty. The first part examines issues around crime scene management, with a focus on the belated discovery of the fatalities at Cobequid Court in Portapique. The second section provides information about forensic investigations and, more specifically, evidence about items in the perpetrator's vehicle at the time of his death and a forensic analysis of the firearms he used during the incident. The third section provides an account of how the RCMP and other agencies addressed the needs of survivors and the families of the deceased for both information and support during this initial period. We also touch on the impact of the RCMP's decision to charge Ms. Banfield with aiding to supply of ammunition to the perpetrator. The fourth section examines the RCMP's public communications following the mass casualty. The final section outlines steps taken and the results of internal and external reviews of the response by various agencies to the events on April 18 and 19, 2020. This section includes reviews undertaken by and of the RCMP and by other agencies engaged in the response to the mass casualty. It also provides an overview of investigations carried out by the Nova Scotia Serious Incident Response Team (SiRT) into the Onslow Fire Hall shooting and the death of the perpetrator.

A detailed timeline of the unfolding of the mass casualty is also set out in an online interactive timeline. The Commission developed this tool to help make the significant amount of information it gathered accessible and easier to digest. The interactive timeline is a complementary tool to the Final Report, providing additional insight into and understanding about what happened and allowing users to select information of interest to them. It can be found on our website (<https://MassCasualtyCommission.ca>).

Key Counties and Locations



Map Data | Google, ©2023 CNES / Airbus, Maxar Technologies, SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO, Image Landsat / Copernicus, Data LDEO-Columbia, NSF, NOAA

Geographic Orientation

In Volume 1, Context and Purpose, we provided an introduction to Colchester, Cumberland, and Hants counties, including a geographic description. The regional map here should assist readers not familiar with the area to follow the events described in this volume. We include more detailed maps throughout the Volume to add a visual aid to our narrative account.

CHAPTER 1

Events Before April 18, 2020

CHAPTER 1 Events Before April 18, 2020

Overview

The mass casualty took place on April 18 and 19, 2020, but the causes, circumstances, and context of the events have a longer trajectory. This chapter contains a brief overview of what the Commission learned about the perpetrator’s antecedents, his access to the means to carry out the mass casualty, and changes in his behaviour in the few weeks before the mass casualty. The purpose of this chapter is to provide background facts that are required for an understanding of what precipitated the mass casualty and how the perpetrator committed these acts. Our mandate extends to setting out lessons learned that could help prevent similar incidents in the future. In this chapter, we lay the groundwork for our more extensive factual findings and examination of opportunities for prevention in Volume 3.

Perpetrator’s History of Violent Behaviour

Perpetrator’s Background

The perpetrator was a white, wealthy male in his early 50s. He was a denturist, with clinics in Dartmouth and Halifax. He lived part of the time in Dartmouth and part of the time in Portapique, where he owned properties on which he had a cottage and a “warehouse.” The perpetrator was raised in a violent home. As a child, he witnessed violence among family members and was abused himself.

As an adult, the perpetrator had an alcohol use disorder. He drank regularly, virtually every day at times and frequently to excess. He was known to become aggressive when he drank. His uncle Glynn Wortman described the perpetrator as having “horrible points” and said, “[W]hen he drank he went off his stick. He was uncontrollable.”¹ There were periods, however, when the perpetrator abstained for weeks at a time. He had sought medical assistance with mental health issues at least once during his life, and, between 1996 and 2000, he saw a psychiatrist four times.

Perpetrator’s Violent and Intimidating Behaviour

Beginning as a youth and continuing as an adult, the perpetrator engaged in violent and intimidating behaviour – a pattern that extended to intimate partners; to friends, neighbours, and business associates; and to patients and community members, particularly those who were marginalized. Many people experienced violence and intimidation in their interactions with the perpetrator, and many others were aware of it. As we document further in Volume 3, Violence, those directly and indirectly affected by his violence were hesitant to report it to authorities because they feared him and, particularly given his social status, wealth, and privilege, they feared retaliation from him. On several occasions, individuals reported him to the police and other authorities, but only one report resulted in a criminal charge, for assault. In 2002, he pled guilty to this charge and was granted a conditional discharge. He had also uttered threats to commit violence using firearms against his parents in 2010 and the police in 2011. Both these threats were reported to the police.

Perpetrator’s Violence and Coercive Control in Relationship with His Spouse

Lisa Banfield was the perpetrator’s long-term common law spouse, and she worked for him in his denturist clinic. Over 19 years, their relationship was marked by his violence, coercion, and controlling behaviour toward her. The perpetrator was physically violent with her and threatened her with a firearm on more than one occasion. He also inflicted other forms of abuse, including verbal and emotional abuse and financial control, and was controlling and possessive in his behaviour toward her. As we document in Volume 3, Violence, other people witnessed this violent and controlling behaviour toward Ms. Banfield. Over the years, some people attempted to intervene and others stood by.

Ms. Banfield was interviewed by the RCMP on four occasions during and after the mass casualty. She also participated in a walk-through of the locations in Portapique where the perpetrator assaulted her on April 18, 2020, and her escape, explaining what had happened. The RCMP describe this walk-through as a video re-enactment. In her interviews with the RCMP, Ms. Banfield tended to minimize or discount the perpetrator's violence. The Commission interviewed her on five additional occasions, and in these interviews she provided a more comprehensive account of the patterns of violence and coercion in her relationship with the perpetrator as well as the methods she used to cope. Ms. Banfield also gave sworn evidence during the Commission's public proceedings.

Ms. Banfield described her relationship with the perpetrator as having “no even keel ever”:

[H]e's always been like a doctor Jekyll mister Hyde kinda, like, he could be so sweet on one uh, when it was bad, it was really bad and when it was good, it was great ... It's how our relationship with him always was. It's just the way he was.²

One of Ms. Banfield's coping mechanisms in response to the perpetrator's violence, abuse, and controlling behaviour was to minimize the frequency and seriousness of the abuse and to hide it from others, even those who were close to her. When we questioned about what she had told the RCMP regarding the number of times the perpetrator had been physically violent with her, she said:

I didn't know I told them 10 times. Because that's the thing, like, I've journaled my whole life. So, as you know, like ... and I don't know if I told you, but if I journaled something, I didn't go back and read it. So, in my mind I'm thinking, “Oh, it hasn't happened in years,” even though it's been happening all along. But I would just have to block it out because in order to stay, I needed to deal with whatever is going on in that moment, so I couldn't think about what's gone on, I had to focus on what's in front of me. So, that's how I dealt with what's happening in this moment, not what's happening here, what's happening over here, what's happening right here.³

Another coping mechanism Ms. Banfield used was to pacify the perpetrator in order to de-escalate the situation. She explained that there was no discernable pattern to his physical abuse: “[F]or a long time I was on egg shells and I didn't know, like ... it'd be no rhyme nor reason for it, he'd just, he would just lose it and I would just try to calm him down.”⁴

Several individuals, including two of Ms. Banfield's sisters, her niece (who she describes as being like another sister), and a neighbour, attempted to intervene in this pattern of violent, abusive, and coercive behaviours. Many more stood by and watched the perpetrator assault her. Ms. Banfield ended her relationship with the perpetrator several times as a result of his violence and infidelity, including moving out of their shared residence on at least one occasion. However, she returned to the relationship. On several occasions, she told the perpetrator she would leave him if he assaulted her again.

The perpetrator frequently threatened to harm Ms. Banfield or her family if she left him. She explained that there were times in the relationship where she contemplated leaving him but was worried he would carry out his threat: "If we were fighting or whatever, he would be like, 'I know where your family lives,' and he would look at me a certain way like, that I know exactly what he's saying. And it was like, intimidating me."⁵ She is very close to her family and described them as "my life link."⁶

The perpetrator effectively controlled every part of Lisa Banfield's life. Her sister Maureen Banfield described Ms. Banfield as having been "quite dependent" on the perpetrator because she worked for him, lived with him, and did not have any assets of her own.⁷ The level of her dependency on the perpetrator was extreme: if she left him, she would have no job, no home, and no savings.

Perpetrator's Access to Weapons and Police Paraphernalia

Perpetrator's Illegal Possession of Firearms

Canadian law restricts and regulates the possession, use, and transfer of firearms and ammunition. The *Criminal Code*, RSC 1985, c C-46, s 84(1), describes three types of firearms:

- prohibited – including certain handguns, fully automatic firearms, some semi-automatic rifles, and sawed-off shotguns and rifles;

- restricted – including handguns, certain rifles, and semi-automatic firearms;
and
- non-restricted – including ordinary hunting rifles and shotguns (or long guns)
not classified as restricted or prohibited weapons.

Restricted and prohibited firearms must be registered. Under the *Firearms Act*, SC 1995, c 39, the owner is required to participate in additional safety training, and may only use these firearms for specified activities such as target practice or being part of a collection. It is a crime in Canada to possess any firearm without a possession and acquisition licence, and to possess a restricted or prohibited firearm without a registration certificate for that particular firearm.

The perpetrator did not have a possession and acquisition licence, and any firearms in his possession were therefore illegal. On April 18, 2020, he owned at least five firearms: a Glock 23 semi-automatic pistol with a CTC laser-point grip attached, a Ruger P89 semi-automatic pistol with a CTC laser-point grip attached, a Colt Carbine semi-automatic rifle, a Ruger Mini-14 semi-automatic rifle, and a Remington Arms Wingmaster 12-gauge shotgun. He smuggled three of these firearms into Canada from the United States. He also possessed significant amounts of ammunition for these firearms and a hand grenade.

The perpetrator stored these firearms in readily accessible hiding spots in the cottage and the warehouse in Portapique and in his home in Dartmouth. He moved them around in each location and between properties. He had shown some of these firearms to several individuals, including his family, his neighbours, and members of Ms. Banfield’s family. On three occasions, someone reported his possession of firearms to the police. These reports were made in 2010, 2011, and 2013.

Our detailed findings with respect to the perpetrator’s acquisition and cross-border smuggling of firearms, as well as community and police knowledge about them, are set out in Volume 3, Violence.

Perpetrator’s Possession of Police Paraphernalia

The perpetrator had four decommissioned police vehicles at the time of the mass casualty. A decommissioned car is one that is no longer in service by the police and from which all markings and special equipment should have been removed prior to sale. The perpetrator purchased these cars through GCSurplus, the Government of

Canada moveable asset online auction site. GCSurplus is “an online, closed bidding system” that sells moveable assets (including vehicles) for more than one hundred departments and agencies within the Government of Canada.⁸

In 2019, the perpetrator also purchased various items outside GCSurplus which he used to transform one of the decommissioned vehicles into a replica of an RCMP cruiser. Those items included reflective vinyl, decals, a light bar, and a metal and Plexiglas barrier used in police cars to separate the back seat from the front (sometimes referred to as the “silent patrolman”). He ordered some of these items online through sites such as Amazon and eBay and purchased a few through friends. He bought the raw materials for making decals and decorating the vehicle in the form of reflective vinyl. He arranged for some materials to be shipped to addresses in the United States, where he later picked them up and transported them back across the border into Canada. He told many people about the replica RCMP cruiser and several had seen it in real life, or in a photograph.

The perpetrator possessed several items of RCMP uniforms, including a full RCMP traditional dress uniform including a red serge jacket, high brown boots, and a Sam Browne belt; general duty uniform shirt, dark blue pants with a yellow stripe, and a Stetson hat. He also had various items of police kit, including handcuffs. Our detailed findings and conclusions about the perpetrator’s acquisition of police paraphernalia and the regulations pertaining to such acquisition are set out in Volume 3, Violence.

Summary: Many Red Flags Before April 18, 2020

In this introductory overview, we show that the perpetrator had established a pattern of violent, intimidating, and coercive behaviour over many years. This pattern gave rise to numerous red flags and missed opportunities for intervention. He had also illegally acquired and stored firearms, including semi-automatic weapons, giving rise to yet more warning signs and cause for investigation. He owned multiple items of police uniforms and kit and four decommissioned police cars. Although it was not unlawful for him to purchase and own these items, he transformed one of the decommissioned cars into a replica RCMP cruiser.

Over several decades, the perpetrator had established a pattern of being violent and using intimidation and coercion to achieve some of his goals. Many years before 2020, he unlawfully acquired firearms, and he began to build a police vehicle many months before the mass casualty. He had made preparations, but we cannot conclude that he had made a plan. The important conclusion we draw is that the perpetrator’s behaviour gave rise to numerous red flags well before April 18, 2020. Individually and collectively, these red flags were missed opportunities for prevention and intervention. We set out our detailed findings about these patterns of behaviour, warning signs, and the way they were ignored in Volume 3, Violence, alongside discussion and recommendations about these patterns in the context of our examination of the connections between mass casualties and gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, and family violence.

MAIN FINDING

Over many years, the perpetrator’s pattern of violent and intimidating behaviours and illegal acquisition of firearms gave rise to numerous red flags and missed opportunities for prevention and intervention.

Our additional detailed findings, discussion, and recommendations about the perpetrator’s antecedents and the connections between mass casualties and gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, and family violence are set out in Volume 3, Violence.

Perpetrator’s Behaviour in the Weeks Before the Mass Casualty

The recognition of the perpetrator’s pattern of violent, intimidating, and coercive behaviour provides important context for understanding changes in his behaviour in the six weeks leading up to the mass casualty. On March 10, 2020, the perpetrator and Ms. Banfield moved from their main residence in Dartmouth to the cottage in Portapique as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. His denture clinics had been

required to close as part of the province's public health measures in response to COVID-19. The perpetrator was deeply affected by the pandemic.

In the period after the clinics shut down, Ms. Banfield reported that the perpetrator became "agitated and paranoid" and was not sleeping or eating much.⁹ She said he was normally someone who "was always active" and had previously had "the initiative to work on this or work on that."¹⁰ He "got so consumed with this Covid," however, that he spent most of the time lying in bed watching or listening to COVID-19 related news.¹¹ He watched this news for "hours after hours."¹² He refused to let her see her family, and his "obsession" with COVID-19 was "so draining and negative."¹³ He said "crazy things like the world's going to end, and people are going to get desperate, and we have to protect ourselves."¹⁴

During this period, the perpetrator told Ms. Banfield that "he wasn't afraid of dying" and that "he knew when he was going to die."¹⁵ She was scared by the things he said and would change the topic:

[The perpetrator] thought the world was going to end. As extreme as his behaviour was in the past, he was doing and saying things that were not even normal for him. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to calm him down, appease him or talk about the good life we had. His moods were more unpredictable; I didn't know what to say to make him happy.¹⁶

In Ms. Banfield's view, the perpetrator "became more and more convinced that Covid was a big government scheme ... he really believed that the world was shutting down. He didn't trust the police, the government, or anyone."¹⁷ She said the perpetrator "was preparing [as] if it's, it's the end of the world kinda thing." He wanted her to "load up" on food in case the grocery stores closed. In the past, he had been a "compulsive buyer," stockpiling food and beer.¹⁸

During the first two weeks of April, the perpetrator bought gas worth approximately \$500-\$600 and stored it at both the cottage and the warehouse in Portapique. He also stocked up on ammunition. He asked Ms. Banfield's brother and brother-in-law to purchase ammunition for him and arranged for Ms. Banfield to drive it from Dartmouth to Portapique on her next trip to the cottage.

The perpetrator was worried about banks collapsing as a result of the pandemic. In March 2020, he withdrew \$475,000 from the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC). Given the large amount, the perpetrator had to collect the money from Brinks, a company that employs armed guards and transports money and

other valuable goods by armoured vehicle. He already had other large sums of cash he had withdrawn and hidden in various locations around his properties in Dartmouth and Portapique. He combined his withdrawal from the CIBC with this other money and buried it all “in a duffel bag ... underneath the concrete steps that he had built” at the cottage.¹⁹ He told Ms. Banfield, “We’ll bury it so nobody will know where it is except for you and I. And, we’ll have it. And, we’ll have it in case anything ever happened that we can’t get into the banks.”²⁰

Ms. Banfield described the perpetrator’s behaviour in the days before the mass casualty as “really strange”:

[A]nd prior, prior to all of this a couple days prior to he, like he was so paranoid and he was so caught up in the Covid 19 thing, that it was negative, negative, negative all the time. But at one point he said, we were talking about death, or die - , you know when you die or whatever, I said ... [the perpetrator’s name] nobody knows when they’re going to die, and he goes I know when I’m going to die. And I said like why would you say that, nobody knows where they’re going to die. So, I just thought that was odd, and the fact that those couple days too, that he had his handgun, that I went into his bedroom and he had, it was the guide showing his handgun how to dismantle it, and clean it or do whatever, and I look in and he has this handgun on his bed. And he’s like does this look fa - , and I’m like what are you doing, he’s like oh, I’m just admiring my gun.²¹

In the six weeks before the mass casualty, the perpetrator further isolated his common law spouse from her family as his behaviour became erratic and increasingly concerning to her.

MAIN FINDING

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CHAPTER 2

Events on April 18, 2020 – Portapique

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Overview

The perpetrator murdered 13 people in the Portapique community in less than one hour during the evening of April 18, 2020, many in their homes or near their properties. Others survived violent encounters with him. He set fires in five homes and structures in Portapique, including his own cottage and warehouse.

This chapter tells the story of the first two hours of the mass casualty. It begins with a brief description of the layout of the Portapique community, identifying the residences, roads, and landmarks that are featured in the narration that follows.

The first section explains that the mass casualty began with the perpetrator's violent assault of Lisa Banfield, his common law spouse. The perpetrator inflicted serious injuries on Ms. Banfield, but she was able to escape from him before he set the warehouse on fire and committed his first murder.

The second section explains what happened in Portapique and the escalation of the perpetrator's violence following this assault. The events are described from three points of view: the perpetrator's actions, resulting in 13 fatalities and in injuries to Andrew MacDonald; the observations and actions of other community members, who in many ways were the first responders; and the actions and observations of emergency services personnel who came on scene. The Portapique fatalities were Greg and Jamie Blair; Joy and Peter Bond; Corrie Ellison; Dawn and Frank Gulenchyn; Lisa McCully; Jolene Oliver, Aaron Tuck, and Emily Tuck; and Joanne Thomas and John Zahl.

In this section, we describe the efforts made by community members to keep themselves and one another safe and to assist the police with information about the perpetrator, his replica RCMP cruiser, and the Portapique area. We also discuss the work of the first police responders to arrive in Portapique, including those

members who formed an Immediate Action Rapid Deployment (IARD) response to search for the perpetrator on foot, and those who provided containment in an effort to prevent the perpetrator from escaping.

The third section steps away from the immediate scene in Portapique to the RCMP Operational Communications Centre and the non-commissioned officers who worked on the response from further afield. It sets out and examines the RCMP's approach to the critical incident response in the first few hours of the mass casualty.

We identify problems in the RCMP response, including the lack of a scene commander, or on-scene supervisor to coordinate the on-the-ground response; the time taken for an experienced critical incident commander to assume command of the response; the failure to broadcast an effective public warning about the active shooter situation; and the lack of air support for the critical incident response.

“Critical incident” is the term used by emergency services to describe a life-threatening situation in which demand for emergency services outstrips resources, immediate and coordinated responses are necessary even though information about the nature of the incident may be incomplete, and the stakes are very high. Examples of critical incidents include, among other crisis situations, hostage takings, armed barricaded persons, and active shooter situations. These events have a significant impact on public safety and require special organizational skills and abilities on the part of emergency response personnel.

In the fourth section, we discuss the role and responsibilities of the RCMP's senior executive leadership at the outset of the mass casualty.

The fifth section looks at other agencies involved in the mass casualty and at communications among agencies. We identify the contributions made by other agencies, including Emergency Health Services paramedics and volunteer fire brigades, to the overall response.

The sixth section examines the issue of public communications, including decisions made by the RCMP about what information to share with the public, and by what means, during these first two hours.

The final section summarizes the Commission's main findings and conclusions about this period.

The Community



Map Data | Google, ©2023 CNES / Airbus, Maxar Technologies

The Community

Portapique is a small community in western Colchester County, Nova Scotia, situated on the east bank of the Portapique River and the north shoreline of Cobequid Bay. It lies east of the community of Five Houses, from which it is separated by the Portapique River. Portapique is approximately 10 kilometres west of the community of Great Village.

On April 18, 2020, there were approximately 30 residences in the Portapique community, some permanent and others seasonal. The primary access to the community is Portapique Beach Road, a 1.5 kilometre gravel road that runs north / south from Highway 2. It is owned, signed, and maintained by the provincial government. Several unpaved roads that extend off Portapique Beach Road into the community are privately owned, signed, and maintained. On April 18, they were all accessible to the public.

Portapique



Map Data | Google, ©2023 CNES / Airbus

Several of these private streets feature prominently in the narrative of what happened on April 18 and 19. They include Farris Lane, Orchard Beach Drive, Portapique Crescent, Cobeguid Court, Brown Loop, and what local residents call the blueberry field road. There were also informal trails and pathways throughout the community.

The perpetrator's cottage was located at 200 Portapique Beach Road, and he owned a warehouse nearby. The warehouse had a civic address of 136 Orchard Beach Drive. A path through the woods on property owned by the perpetrator connected these two structures – a short walk of approximately 250 metres. It was also possible to access the warehouse by vehicle from Orchard Beach Drive or Portapique Beach Road. The warehouse was essentially an elaborate recreation space where the perpetrator stored many of his prized possessions, including motorcycles and his replica RCMP cruiser. It also contained a bar, fireplace, bathroom, and in a loft area, a guest suite. Many witnesses told us that the perpetrator used the warehouse for social gatherings.

Assault of Lisa Banfield: Before 10:00 pm

The mass casualty began with the perpetrator’s violent assault of Lisa Banfield, his common law spouse. The perpetrator inflicted serious injuries on Ms. Banfield, but she was able to escape from him before he set the warehouse on fire and committed his first murder. Ms. Banfield co-operated during the RCMP investigation of the mass casualty by providing statements and photographs and by participating in a videoed walk through Portapique recounting the events of April 18 and 19. As we mention in Chapter 1, the RCMP charged Ms. Banfield in December 2020 with the offence of transporting ammunition. As soon as these charges were referred to restorative justice, Ms. Banfield presented herself at the Commission’s Halifax office to be interviewed, even though she was still technically in legal jeopardy at that time. The Commission interviewed Ms. Banfield over five lengthy sessions, and she testified during our public proceedings. The following account is derived from her evidence and includes specific facts confirmed through police and Commission investigations.

On April 18, 2020, Ms. Banfield and the perpetrator celebrated their 19th anniversary. They spent the day together, including a long drive through northern Nova Scotia in the afternoon, mainly on back roads. After they returned to the perpetrator’s warehouse, he cleaned the Jeep, which was muddy from their drive. They then had some drinks, listened to music, and Ms. Banfield took a photo of them to commemorate their anniversary. About 6:30 pm they spoke with a few friends on FaceTime. During one of the calls, they mentioned they were planning a commitment ceremony for their 20th anniversary the following year. While the perpetrator was in the bathroom with the phone, Ms. Banfield heard their friend tell him, “Don’t do it,” in relation to the commitment ceremony. This comment “pissed [her] off.”¹ By that time, the perpetrator had consumed “at least six, maybe more” beers.²

Upset, Ms. Banfield left the warehouse and began walking through the woods back to their cottage. Halfway there, within minutes of her departure, she realized she was mostly upset with their friend rather than the perpetrator and began to feel bad for leaving so abruptly. She returned to the warehouse to apologize, but the perpetrator was already “irate.”³ He was screaming, yelling, and pacing. Ms. Banfield apologized, but

he just went off, and just was just being rude and nasty and, and he was getting loud, and when he's getting like that I could tell like he's on the edge kind of thing. So, I know, you know, I got to get away kind of thing, so I said I'm just going to go back, I'm done, I just want to go home.⁴

Ms. Banfield spent "under five minutes" with the perpetrator back at the warehouse:

When I came in, he had an ugly look on and he was like yelling and screaming at me and going back and pacing back and forth and saying, "You have to ruin everything." And again, it was so much yelling that I don't even know what he was saying to me, but I just ... in my head, I was shutting down thinking, "I can't even turn this around to make it an okay night, so, I might as well just leave and he can just drink it off and I'll just go home and go to bed." So, I just turned around and I went back to the cottage.⁵

After leaving the warehouse, Ms. Banfield walked through the woods to the cottage, undressed, and got into bed. What seemed like minutes later, the perpetrator arrived. To avoid a confrontation with him, she pretended to be asleep, and he did not come directly into her bedroom. As she lay there listening, she heard a "whishing"⁶ sound that she had never heard before and wondered what he was doing. She later realized she had been hearing the sound of him pouring gas around the cottage.

After some time, the whishing sound stopped and the perpetrator burst into Ms. Banfield's bedroom, "screaming" at her and "irate":

He pulled the blankets down halfway to like my waist a little below my waist, so I said, "[perpetrator] go to bed" and I just pulled the covers. And that's when he grabbed my phone and he took it. And I'm just watching him like thinking, what are you doing? And then he smashes my phone down and jumps on it and then he ripped the blankets down to the end of my bed and he said, "Get up." And he grabbed me out of the bed and then he had me on the floor by the side of my bed on top of me strangling me and yelling at me, and I don't know what he was saying because I wasn't ... I don't even know, I wasn't concentrating or whatever, but I didn't know what he was saying to me. I just remember him screaming at me. And then he's telling me to get up. But before that, he was like, "I'm

done, I'm done." And I'm like, you're talking about you're done. Like it's OK, 'cause in the past, the last couple times that he was abusive to me, I told him that if you did it again, that I wouldn't stay, because my body I can't take ... I'm getting older and I can't take these beatings kind of thing. And so when he said, I'm done, I'm like, "It's OK," and he's like, "No, you'll never look at me the same way."⁷

The perpetrator pulled Ms. Banfield down beside the bed, got on top of her, and began choking and yelling at her. Ms. Banfield tried to calm the perpetrator down and de-escalate the situation, but he replied, "I've had enough of this, I don't need this anymore."⁸ He continued to assault her:

[A]nd then he, he kicked me and then I went flying and I ended up on the post to the bed, like, my back (Inaudible) like crunched down on the back and I, I could barely get off the floor. And he's like, get up, and it's just like, I'm trying and then he grabbed me by the hair to pull me up. So, then I'm trying to hold my hair, like, first I wouldn't get up, I stayed on the floor and he's pulling my hair, get up, and I wouldn't. And he's like, oh, that's when he started saying, oh, you got (Inaudible) in ya or whatever. And, and I was just stand my ground on the ground, I don't know why. But anyway, so then he finally, like, it hurt, so I finally stood up or whatever and then he started hitting me and he said, opened my closet door and he said get dressed. And I just grabbed a pair of tights and a long sleeve shirt and I said, well, let me grab my purse and he goes you don't need your purse.⁹

Medical records indicate that Ms. Banfield sustained fractures to her ribs and vertebrae as a result of this assault.

After directing Ms. Banfield to get dressed, the perpetrator tied "some kind of material" around one of her wrists and used it as a rope to force her "to follow him as he was throwing gas all inside."¹⁰ Once she was dressed, the perpetrator said in a "matter of fact" way, "[W]e can't forget about the gun," and he dragged her into his bedroom and grabbed his "handgun with the laser."¹¹ Ms. Banfield was thinking, "Oh, I should run, but my back [was] so sore. And I thought, I don't know if I can run fast enough. So I just stood there watching him as he got the gun."¹² As they walked through the cottage to leave, they slipped and slid along the floor because "it was obviously doused with the gas or whatever."¹³ When they got to the door, Ms. Banfield grabbed her coat and put her sneakers onto her bare feet.

The perpetrator set the cottage on fire and poured gasoline on the white Ford Taurus that was parked in the driveway. At this point, Ms. Banfield thought, “[T]his is it, like he would never have done this like if he’s not ready to continue on. And that’s when I was just begging him, like you know pleading with him that it you know, it’s going to be okay.”¹⁴ She continued trying to de-escalate the perpetrator by telling him that “it doesn’t have to go any further” and that she would take the blame for burning the cottage.¹⁵ However, she observed “there was no change of whatever he had in his head.”¹⁶ He told her, “At the end of this night, I’ll be dead and if you don’t run away from me you won’t be.”¹⁷

The perpetrator led Ms. Banfield toward the path back to the warehouse. When they reached the middle of Portapique Beach Road, Ms. Banfield got on the ground and began screaming and trying to kick him away from her. She was unsuccessful: “[H]e’s bigger than me and he got on me, and then he took my sneakers and threw them and I didn’t have socks on, cause I didn’t have time to put socks on.”¹⁸ The perpetrator said to her, “[N]ow you can’t run you little bitch.”¹⁹ The sneakers were located by the RCMP during their search of the area following the mass casualty.

Ms. Banfield described digging her bare heels into the ground because she did not want to go over to the warehouse:

[H]e said we’re going to go over to the warehouse. And then we’re going to burn the warehouse, and then he said we’re going to go to Dartmouth and burn Dartmouth, and then we’re going to Maureen’s and then all I could think of he’s going to go for my whole family.²⁰

The perpetrator dragged her by the arm along the path through the woods to the warehouse and held her by the back of her coat. At some point, Ms. Banfield slipped out of her coat, which was unzipped, and “just started running.”²¹ She could not see anything “‘cause it’s dark and then I tripped over wood and I ended up down on the ground. I’m trying to hide but he had a flashlight so he could find me.”²² Ms. Banfield recalled that the perpetrator said, “I can flashlight you stupid bitch,”²³ grabbed her, and pulled her up. When Ms. Banfield told the perpetrator he was hurting her, “he goes, if you run away from me again I’ll kill you but I won’t if you don’t.”²⁴ She continued to plead: “I’m like [name of perpetrator] it doesn’t have to be like this,” but “he said you’ll never look at me the same way, he said I’m done.”²⁵

When Ms. Banfield and the perpetrator arrived at the warehouse, all the doors were locked and deadbolted. As she said:

Everything was locked up. That’s what I didn’t understand because to me, I felt like something must’ve snapped, because why would you put all these dead-bolts on it to lock it up for the night like he did every other time that we left if you’re going to come back and burn it? It just ... it just made more work, but it just didn’t make sense to me. So that’s why I thought something snapped between when he left the warehouse and when he got to the cottage.²⁶

The perpetrator began dousing the vehicles parked outside the warehouse with gas. They included a white Ford Taurus – a decommissioned police car without decals or other police identifiers – and the Jeep they had driven that day on their anniversary drive. Ms. Banfield continued to plead with the perpetrator, with no success. Once he was done with the vehicles, he directed her inside the warehouse. They were inside standing by the bar area when he pulled out a pair of handcuffs and handcuffed her left hand. The perpetrator demanded her other hand, but she refused to give it to him.

At this point, Ms. Banfield was thinking, “If you’re going to kill me just do it, ’cause I can’t take it anymore.”²⁷ She dropped to the floor, closed her eyes, and covered her face with her hands, because she didn’t want to see him kill her. The perpetrator demanded that she get up. She stayed on the floor and continued pleading. When she refused to get up, he fired his gun into the ground on either side of her. The RCMP later found shell casings in the debris of the warehouse. After she heard the two shots, she managed to stand up, and the perpetrator dragged her over to his replica RCMP cruiser.

Pulling Ms. Banfield by her hair, he forced her into the back seat of his replica RCMP cruiser and shut the door. The back and front seats of the car were separated by a steel and Plexi-glas barrier with a sliding window. As is typical of police vehicles, the rear doors could not be opened from the inside. Ms. Banfield was trapped inside the back of the car.

As Ms. Banfield looked on, the perpetrator loaded several firearms into the front seat of the replica RCMP cruiser. He kept his guns in different locations, but the last place she



The back seat of the perpetrator’s replica RCMP cruiser.

remembers seeing them before April 18 was behind the bar in the warehouse. She recalled that he “went to the bar,”²⁸ came back, and threw guns into the front seat of the car. He did not say anything to her. He then went outside the warehouse briefly before returning and heading upstairs to the apartment inside.

Trapped in the back seat, Ms. Banfield, who is approximately 5 foot 5, tried to kick open the doors and windows, without success. Eventually, she was able to slide the single handcuff off her wrist:

Oh, while I was in the back seat. That’s the thing. While I was in the back seat, the whole time I was ripping it off me ‘cause I thought, I don’t want to be confined. And I felt like I was confined. I mean, I still have the scar, but I just kept pulling and pulling and ripping it off me. And I didn’t care how much it hurt, I wasn’t even thinking that I just wanted it off me, because I felt confined.²⁹

Bruises and abrasions to Ms. Banfield’s left wrist were documented in her medical records.

Ms. Banfield reported dropping the handcuffs on the floor of the replica RCMP cruiser before she escaped. A pair of handcuffs was later found by a civilian near the Shubenacadie cloverleaf crime scene, where the perpetrator abandoned the replica RCMP cruiser and set it on fire. The handcuffs were cleaned before being given to the RCMP, so forensic testing cannot establish whether they were the pair the perpetrator used on Lisa Banfield that night. However, given the circumstances, we conclude they are the same pair.

After removing the handcuffs, Ms. Banfield managed to slide open the window in the “silent patrolman” that divided the front and back seats. She didn’t recall precisely how she exited through this window into the front driver’s seat: “I didn’t care how I was going. I just remember almost feeling like I’m diving through it ... I don’t know how I did not hit the horn or anything. I just remember being in the front seat.”³⁰

From there, Ms. Banfield opened the driver’s door, fled the vehicle, and then the warehouse. She ran across Orchard Beach Drive and into the woods, from where she saw a parked truck “in a grass area.”³¹ She climbed into the truck to get warm and look for a coat or sweater. After a few minutes, though, concerned that the perpetrator would burn the truck or find her hiding there, she carefully exited the truck and ran further into the woods to hide, without being detected by him.

From her hiding place in the woods, Ms. Banfield continued to hear noises and activity around her. She heard gunshots and saw a house go up in flames. She thought, “I can just wait until daylight so I can try to find my way out of here ‘cause I didn’t uh, know where I was at this point.”³²

Around this time, the perpetrator set fire to his warehouse. Both the cottage and the warehouse became fully engulfed in large fires that were visible in the surrounding areas.

MAIN FINDING

The mass casualty began with the perpetrator’s violent assault of his common law spouse, Lisa Banfield.

Our additional findings, discussion, and recommendations about the role of gender-based and intimate partner violence in mass casualties are set out in Volume 3, Violence.

Portapique Fatalities

Perpetrator’s Actions Between 10:00 pm and 11:00 pm

Commission investigators and counsel worked hard to piece together a detailed timeline of the perpetrator’s actions in Portapique during the period before he escaped via the blueberry field road. Despite their efforts and those of RCMP investigators, gaps remain in our reconstruction of the precise sequence of events on the evening of April 18, 2020, following the assault of Ms. Banfield. What we do know is that in a rampage lasting fewer than 60 minutes in this small community, he took the lives of 13 people, physically injured another person, set fires to properties and vehicles, and inflicted enormous psychological harm on survivors, community members, and the families of those whose lives were taken.

We can determine some portions of the perpetrator's locations and actions from 911 calls, eyewitness accounts, digital information, and the timing of text messages sent by some of the victims. Gaps remain where there is little or no information to ascertain the perpetrator's exact movements. The Commission's Foundational Documents presented two hypotheses concerning the likely sequences of events after 10:00 pm on April 18, and here we set out the most likely sequence of the perpetrator's actions. This sequence is firmly established, except for the period between 10:05 pm and 10:25 pm. In this time frame, we include alternative sequences. The map that follows presents an overview of the perpetrator's movements in Portapique on that evening.

We develop this overview further below in the narrative account of the perpetrator's movements in Portapique and the actions community members and first responders took during this period of the mass casualty.

10:00–10:05 pm: Greg and Jamie Blair

Within minutes of having assaulted Lisa Banfield and setting their cottage and warehouse on fire, at approximately 10:00 pm the perpetrator arrived at the home of Greg and Jamie Blair on Orchard Beach Drive, 81 metres from the warehouse. This couple ran a business providing sales, service, and installation of natural gas and propane units in the Truro area. They loved fishing, cooking, the outdoors, and time with their family. They were familiar with the perpetrator as a neighbour in Portapique.

The perpetrator shot Mr. Blair on the deck, inflicting numerous gunshot wounds to his chest, torso, and arms. He died quickly, if not immediately.

At 10:01 pm, Ms. Blair placed a 911 call advising that her neighbour had shot her husband on the deck of their home. In the course of the call, she stated: "[T]here's a police car in the fucking driveway." She continued: "[T]here is a police car ... but he drives, he's a dentist and he drives like a ... there is an RCMP ... it's decked and labelled RCMP ... [Inaudible] ... but it's not a police officer."³³

Ms. Blair quickly took her two young children, AD (11 years old) and AE (10 years old), into a bedroom and remained on the phone with 911. She told the call-taker, RCMP employee Ms. Donna Lee Williston, that she recognized the perpetrator and advised her of his first name. Ms. Blair also instructed the children to hide on the floor between the wall and their parents' bed.

Perpetrator's Movements in Portapique, April 18, 2020



1	Before 10:00 pm	Perpetrator assaults Lisa Banfield at the cottage
2	Before 10:00 pm	Perpetrator sets fire to warehouse
3	10:00 pm	Homicides of Greg and Jamie Blair
4	10:08 pm	Homicide of Lisa McCully
5 or 6	Between 10:08 and 10:20 pm	Homicides of Joy and Peter Bond
5 or 6	Between 10:08 and 10:20 pm	Homicides of Jolene Oliver, Aaron Tuck, and Emily Tuck
7	Between 10:20 and 10:25 pm	Homicides of Dawn and Frank Gulenchyn
8	10:26 pm	Perpetrator encounters Andrew and Kate MacDonald
9	Approximately 10:27 pm	Perpetrator at intersection of Portapique Beach Rd. and Orchard Beach Dr.
10	10:28–10:38 pm	Homicides of Joanne Thomas and John Zahl
11	10:38–10:39 pm	Perpetrator travels through trail on lot 287
12	10:40 pm	Homicide of Corrie Ellison
13	Approximately 10:41 pm	Perpetrator proceeds to blueberry field road via Cobequid Crt.
14	Approximately 10:41–10:45 pm	Perpetrator exits onto Brown Loop

Map Data | Google, ©2023 CNES / Airbus

The perpetrator entered the Blair residence and shot the family dog and cat. He continued to the bedroom and shot Ms. Blair multiple times through the door while she remained on the line with 911. Gunshots can be heard on the call. He then opened the door and fatally shot Ms. Blair. There is no indication that he noticed the hiding children. Ms. Blair died quickly, if not immediately.

RCMP general duty members were dispatched to Portapique from the Bible Hill area at 10:04 pm. Ms. Blair had conveyed crucial information about the perpetrator in her 911 call, including information sufficient to ascertain the perpetrator's identity and the fact that he was not a real police officer but was driving a fully marked RCMP vehicle. We explain in the sections below that this information was not adequately captured within RCMP documentation of the call, nor was it properly accounted for in the RCMP's critical incident response.

The perpetrator pulled logs from the Blairs' woodstove and scattered them across the living room in an apparent attempt to cause the house to catch fire. He also turned on the propane stove and piled items on top of it. He then left the residence.

This sequence of events is established by the 911 calls. It is confirmed by the Blair children's subsequent statements to the RCMP, by the RCMP Emergency Response Team members' search of the home in the early morning of April 19, 2020, and by subsequent findings at the scene. These findings include a thin layer of soot throughout the residence, contents of the woodstove spread out on the floor, multiple shell casings, and damage to walls and doors consistent with projectile damage from bullets. Emergency Response Team members reported having to turn off the propane tanks at the Blair home before entering the residence.

Between 10:05 pm and 10:20 pm on April 18, the perpetrator took the lives of six more people. His precise movements in that 15-minute period are somewhat uncertain. We are unable to conclusively determine the order of these fatalities, but we set out the most likely account here.

Approximately 10:08 pm: Lisa McCully

The Blair children continued to hide until smoke forced them to flee their home. They ran to the house next door, where Lisa McCully lived with her children, AB (12 years old) and AC (10 years old). The Blair children arrived at the McCully residence and knocked on the door.

Ms. McCully was a mother and a teacher at the elementary school in Debert. She enjoyed the quiet of Portapique and spending time outdoors, biking, snowshoeing, and fishing. She was a neighbour of the perpetrator.

Before the Blair children arrived at her home, Ms. McCully and AC had noticed the fire across the road at the perpetrator’s warehouse and the sounds of explosions. AB had gone to bed before 10:00 pm. Ms. McCully grabbed a sweater and her cell-phone while indicating to AC she was going out to investigate. She told AC to stay inside the residence. As Ms. McCully opened the front door, she muttered: “Fuck [name of perpetrator], what’s going on?”³⁴ She had not returned by the time the Blair children arrived, and they had not observed her as they walked toward her house.

The Commission received from the RCMP a Cellebrite report with extracted data from Ms. McCully’s phone, including location-based cellphone data. This data appeared to show that Ms. McCully crossed her lawn to the edge of her property at approximately 10:13 pm. However, this location-based information did not accord with other evidence about the perpetrator’s movements between 10:00 pm and 10:25 pm on April 18, 2020. Participants noted other apparent gaps and inconsistencies within the location data in the Cellebrite report and asked the Commission to investigate this matter more closely.

The Commission retained a technical expert, Joseph Sadoun, to analyze the data extracted from Ms. McCully’s phone. As the director of wireless engineering services at Yves R. Hamel et Associés Inc., he is an expert in cellular network design and optimization and has the technical expertise necessary to explain whether Ms. McCully’s cellphone data regarding location is accurate. In his report, he explained that “using cell site signals for localization allows for a general location and is far from guaranteeing precision or accuracy.”³⁵ Based on his analysis of the location data collected from the cellphone, Mr. Sadoun concluded it is “likely that Lisa McCully was outside her residence at around 10:08:15 p.m. on April 18th, 2020.”³⁶ He explained that the weakness of cellphone signals in Portapique and the corresponding unreliability of the location-based cellphone data collected at this time was the likely reason why the extracted location data appeared to place Ms. McCully’s phone some distance away from her home after 10:25 pm. We accept Mr. Sadoun’s conclusion that Ms. McCully left her home at approximately 10:08 pm. The perpetrator shot and killed her very soon after this time, most likely while driving south along Orchard Beach Drive toward Cobequid Court.

The Blair children arrived at the McCully residence at approximately 10:16 pm, and the McCully children brought them inside the house. AD called 911 at 10:16 pm and remained on the phone with the call-taker until the four children were evacuated from Portapique more than two hours later. Details of this 911 call are set out below in the section on 911 calls.

10:08 pm to Approximately 10:20 pm: Joy and Peter Bond; Jolene Oliver, Aaron Tuck, and Emily Tuck

After the perpetrator killed Ms. McCully, he travelled south in his replica RCMP cruiser to Cobequid Court to the residence of Joy and Peter Bond and the residence of Jolene Oliver, Aaron Tuck, and Emily Tuck.

After raising their two sons near Chester, NS, Joy and Peter Bond moved in 2007 to their retirement home in Portapique. As the parents of 17-year-old Emily, Mr. Tuck and Ms. Oliver moved their family from Alberta to Nova Scotia in 2014. Mr. Tuck was good with his hands and liked restoring cars, while Ms. Oliver loved nature and was known for her infectious laugh. Emily was creative and played the fiddle. They enjoyed spending time together as a family at their house in Portapique. The Bonds and the Oliver / Tucks knew the perpetrator as a neighbour.

The distance between the Bond and the Oliver / Tuck homes is approximately 60 metres. The perpetrator shot the five residents, all of whom were later found by police inside their respective homes, near the entrance. He did not set fire to either residence. No information is available to determine the order in which he went to the residences on Cobequid Court.

We know that Emily Tuck was alive at 10:03 pm, the time she sent her last text message to a friend. The medical examiner's autopsy findings suggest that each of these victims died almost immediately after being shot. As we explain in Chapter 7, the RCMP did not ascertain that there were any deaths on Cobequid Court until 4:50 pm on Sunday, April 19. Despite a large police presence in the community and phone calls from concerned family members, the RCMP did not conduct a systematic search of Portapique for additional fatalities until sometime after 5:30 pm that day.

Approximately 10:20–10:28 pm: Dawn and Frank Gulenchyn

After killing the Bonds and the Oliver / Tucks, the perpetrator retraced his route, driving north on Orchard Beach Drive past his warehouse and the McCully and Blair homes. He arrived at 71 Orchard Beach Drive, the residence of Dawn and Frank Gulenchyn, sometime before 10:25 pm. Before retiring to Nova Scotia from Ontario, Dawn and Frank Gulenchyn had carefully renovated their home in Portapique.

The perpetrator parked his vehicle facing south in the Gulenchyns' U-shaped driveway, with his driver-side door closest to their front door. He shot Frank and Dawn Gulenchyn and then set the home on fire.

Andrew and Kate MacDonald lived on Portapique Beach Road. Shortly after 10:00 pm, they were preparing to go to bed. While brushing her teeth, Ms. MacDonald looked out their bathroom window and observed a fire burning from a neighbour's property. She heard "popping" sounds that she thought might be associated with the fire.³⁷ She called her spouse, Andrew, to come and look out. The fire appeared to be massive, and they were both concerned. Unsure whether anyone had reported the fire, they decided to get in their vehicle to investigate.

Shortly before 10:25 pm, they left their house and drove toward the perpetrator's warehouse, where they had seen the fire. On their way, they passed the Gulenchyn residence and observed what they believed to be an RCMP cruiser in the driveway. Two days later, when interviewed by police, Ms. MacDonald described the vehicle she saw:

There was absolutely nothing out of the ordinary about it. I mean, it had the writing on the side. I think it was the RCMP ... with the red and the yellow and the blue uh, um, the decals on the side ... it had that um, that thing on the back, the, the reflector, the strip down by the, the back bumper ... I don't think it had lights ... Just looked like any regular cop car to me.³⁸

When he confirmed that the fire was at the perpetrator's warehouse, Mr. MacDonald checked his phone contacts to see if he had information for the perpetrator. He did not, so he immediately called 911. This call was placed at 10:25:25 pm on April 18.

While on the phone with 911, Mr. MacDonald turned the car around and drove back up Orchard Beach Drive, travelling north. The MacDonalds approached the Gulenchyn residence (this time on the right-hand side of their vehicle) and stopped

their car. They noticed that the kitchen of the home was on fire. One minute into their 911 call, at 10:26:25 pm, Ms. MacDonald can be heard stating “Oh my god!”³⁹ Mr. MacDonald immediately advised the 911 call-taker that a second home was on fire. The couple was able to observe the fire through the large picture window of the Gulenchyn residence. They noted that walls inside were burning and that the fire was spreading quickly.

The perpetrator’s replica RCMP cruiser was still in the Gulenchyns’ driveway. Mr. MacDonald told the 911 call-taker: “Yeah, like, the police officer is parked at this driveway but I don’t know what, like, he’s coming around. I don’t know if he’s going to talk to me or what.”⁴⁰ The replica RCMP cruiser pulled out of the driveway and drew up alongside the MacDonalds’ vehicle, facing in the same direction, with the passenger-side window of the Taurus closest to the driver-side window of the MacDonalds’ car. The vehicles were approximately two feet apart.

The perpetrator pointed a handgun that was emitting laser-point sighting. Mr. MacDonald recognized the perpetrator and knew he was not an actual police officer. On seeing the beam of the laser, the MacDonalds realized the perpetrator was about to shoot them and quickly ducked down. The perpetrator fired two shots through the replica RCMP cruiser’s passenger window, toward the driver-side window of the MacDonalds’ vehicle. These shots can be heard at 10:27:11 pm on the audio recording of the 911 call. Mr. MacDonald was shot in his shoulder, and another bullet grazed his head. He exclaimed to the 911 call-taker: “It’s our neighbour, [short form of perpetrator’s first name], he just shot me in the arm!”⁴¹

Ms. MacDonald immediately told Mr. MacDonald to drive. He “floored it” and sped north on Orchard Beach Drive.⁴² He noted the perpetrator pursuing them and also observed that another vehicle – a white Hyundai Accent, later identified as the Faulkner family car – was behind them both, making its way north.

Mr. MacDonald continued north at high speed, toward Portapique Beach Road, and the perpetrator followed. After approximately 350 metres, they reached the intersection of Orchard Beach Drive and Portapique Beach Road. Mr. MacDonald turned right and headed north on Portapique Beach Road toward Highway 2, where the MacDonalds encountered the first RCMP members, who were arriving at Portapique. When the perpetrator reached the intersection of Orchard Beach Drive and Portapique Beach Road, he did not follow the MacDonalds.

The Commission interviewed David Faulkner, a local area resident who had seen the fires in Portapique from Highway 2 and turned into the subdivision to check that a friend’s home was not affected. After confirming that the friend’s home was

not on fire, he turned north on Orchard Beach Drive and followed the MacDonalds and a police car, which we find to be the perpetrator’s replica RCMP cruiser, onto Portapique Beach Road. Mr. Faulkner explained that he saw the perpetrator drive across Portapique Beach Road. When he last saw the replica RCMP cruiser, it had stopped “straight across Portapique Beach Road,” with “no taillights, no like, flashing lights, nothing.”⁴³ Mr. Faulkner turned right to follow the MacDonalds north up Portapique Beach Road toward RCMP members who were just arriving at Portapique.

10:28–10:39 pm: Joanne Thomas and John Zahl

After pausing at the intersection of Orchard Beach Drive and Portapique Beach Road, the perpetrator turned south on Portapique Beach Road. He then travelled past his cottage, which was firmly ablaze, to the residence of Joanne Thomas and John Zahl, at 293 Portapique Beach Road. Retirees who had come to Portapique from New Mexico in 2017, the couple quickly became involved in local community and charity work. They lived in a home immediately next to property owned by the perpetrator.

It is impossible to determine with certainty whether the perpetrator set the home on fire before shooting Ms. Thomas and Mr. Zahl or vice versa. However, we conclude he shot them first to prevent them from escaping or calling for help. In any event, forensic findings include the presence of two casings subsequently located within the debris of the burned residence at 293 Portapique Beach Road.

Other evidence supports our conclusion that Ms. Thomas and Mr. Zahl were killed between 10:28 pm and 10:39 pm. For example, Ms. Thomas sent a text message at 10:26 pm, establishing that she was alive while the perpetrator was at the Gulenchyn residence. Alan Griffon, who resided near 293 Portapique Beach Road, reported hearing rapid “popping” sounds before 10:39 pm – the time of his call to 911. Mr. Griffon did not observe that the Thomas / Zahl residence was on fire, but he did report that 200 Portapique Beach Road (the perpetrator’s residence) was on fire.⁴⁴ The eyewitness accounts of Ron and Patrick Zimmerman and Bjorn Merzbach further corroborate this sequence of events.

After leaving the Thomas / Zahl residence, the perpetrator drove his replica RCMP cruiser on a trail through the woods on his property from the southern portion of Portapique Beach Road to his warehouse at 136 Orchard Beach Drive. This

route appears to be the only possible one because, if he had retraced his path on Portapique Beach Road, he would have encountered the RCMP first responders, who were walking south on Portapique Beach Road between approximately 10:30 pm and 10:39 pm. Alan and Peter Griffon remained outside their residence between 10:39 pm and 11:15 pm, observing the fire at the perpetrator's cottage. Within that time frame, neither of them observed the perpetrator driving on Portapique Beach Road.

The perpetrator emerged from the driveway of his warehouse at 136 Orchard Beach Drive at approximately 10:39 pm and turned right (south) onto Orchard Beach Drive, where he encountered Mr. Corrie Ellison.

10:39–10:40 pm: Corrie Ellison

On the evening of April 18, Corrie Ellison was in Portapique with his brother, Clinton, visiting their father, Richard Ellison, who lived on Orchard Beach Drive approximately 450 metres south of the perpetrator's warehouse. Corrie Ellison grew up in Truro and had many friends in the area. Around 10:00 pm, Richard Ellison went upstairs for bed. The two brothers then heard what they believed to be a gunshot.

Richard Ellison, who was having trouble sleeping, returned downstairs. Clinton Ellison asked him whether he had heard a gunshot. The brothers stepped outside on the deck and immediately noticed flames rising above the treeline. They discussed phoning the fire department, but presumed that, given the scale of the fire, other people had already done so.

Shortly after, Corrie Ellison said he would go to investigate the source of the fire. Richard Ellison advised his sons to avoid the area because he knew there was “a bad cat” living in the vicinity of the fire.⁴⁵ At approximately 10:30 pm, the brothers left their father's home, and Clinton walked with Corrie to the end of the Ellison driveway before turning back. Corrie continued down the road and, at 10:36 pm, phoned his father to say there was a fire at 136 Orchard Beach Drive.

At approximately 10:40 pm, the perpetrator encountered Corrie Ellison just south of the driveway to 136 Orchard Beach Drive and fatally shot him. Mr. Ellison had been taking photographs of the fire shortly before he was shot. He took his final photograph of the fire at 10:39:33 pm. Thirty-nine seconds later, at 10:40:12 pm, a

final photograph was captured on his phone. This photograph is dark, with no discernable image.

The forensic evidence unequivocally establishes that Mr. Ellison was shot by the perpetrator. Forensic findings suggest that the perpetrator initially shot him from his vehicle, but then exited his vehicle and shot him again. This evidence includes the trajectory of bullet wounds sustained by Mr. Ellison and the presence of his DNA on the perpetrator’s boots.

Our conclusion regarding the timing of Mr. Ellison’s death is also supported by other evidence. For example, throughout this period, the Blair and McCully children remained on the line with 911 and were positioned in the main living area of the McCully home on Orchard Beach Drive, directly across the road from the perpetrator’s warehouse at 136 Orchard Beach Drive. At 10:39:27 pm, the children reported to the call-taker that they saw a car coming out of the perpetrator’s warehouse driveway. They reported hearing gunshots at 10:39:44 pm and 10:40:03 pm.

The RCMP Immediate Action Rapid Deployment responders were on foot in Portapique and also heard these gunshots. First responder Cst. Aaron Patton broadcast: “OK, lots of gunshots in here – three gunshots!” (10:39:50 pm) and “Two more gunshots!” (10:40:09 pm).⁴⁶ He later told the Commission that these gunshots sounded as though they were to the east of his position on Portapique Beach Road, in the direction of the warehouse. This evidence is consistent with the location where Mr. Ellison’s body was later discovered.

Alternative Hypotheses About the Sequence of Killings

Over the course of our proceedings, a number of alternative theories about the sequence of killings were discussed, and the evidence for and against these theories was investigated by Commission staff and canvassed by Participants. In this Report, we have set out the sequence of the perpetrator’s movements that is consistent with the evidence we heard and collected, particularly with determinant time posts such as the timing of 911 calls, text messages, and digital photographs. The sequence set out here does not conflict with any reliable information we obtained. We have concluded that alternative hypotheses, such as a theory that the perpetrator killed the Bonds and Oliver / Tucks as he left Portapique, are less consistent with the known evidence than the sequence we have set out here. Notwithstanding our best efforts and those of the Participants, gaps remain in our

knowledge of the perpetrator's movements around Portapique and of the exact sequence of killings in Portapique.

**Perpetrator's Departure from Portapique:
Approximately 10:40-10:45 pm**

The perpetrator made his way to Highway 2 and left Portapique at approximately 10:40-10:45 pm on April 18. There is some controversy surrounding how he was able to avoid detection by police as he left Portapique during this time frame.

The perpetrator could not have left Portapique by going out Portapique Beach Road without being seen. RCMP Cst. Vicki Colford was continually present at a perimeter point on Portapique Beach Road near Highway 2 between approximately 10:30 pm and 11:00 pm. By 11:00 pm, at least two other responding members had joined her there. The MacDonalds also remained at this point, awaiting medical attention. No witness saw the perpetrator or his replica RCMP cruiser at that location. There is therefore no basis to conclude that the perpetrator departed from Portapique via Portapique Beach Road.

There was, however, no containment point on Highway 2 east of Portapique Beach Road at this time.

We conclude that after encountering Corrie Ellison on Orchard Beach Drive at approximately 10:40 pm, the perpetrator travelled south, to the intersection of Cobequid Court, and turned left to proceed east along Cobequid Court to a dirt track that was known in the community as the blueberry field road - an unmarked, unofficial road that runs alongside a blueberry field and connects Cobequid Court to Brown Loop and ultimately to Highway 2. Using this route, before 10:45 pm, the perpetrator accessed Highway 2 and drove east toward Great Village. We conclude from witness observations and video evidence detailed further in this chapter that he was travelling at significant speed.

Witness accounts provided different and in some aspects conflicting information about the perpetrator's exit from Portapique. The Zimmerman family home backed onto the blueberry field and the blueberry field road. Members of this family unanimously recalled seeing a vehicle travelling at high speed north along the blueberry field road sometime after they had called 911. That call was placed at 10:33 pm. They differed, however, in their recollection of the precise time at which

they saw this vehicle. Dean Dillman, another local resident, was alerted to the fires in Portapique by his mother. He travelled east along Highway 2 from his home to Brown Loop and parked very close to the place where the blueberry field road comes out onto Brown Loop. His cellphone records establish that he placed calls to a Portapique resident at 10:38 pm and at 10:45 pm. He could not recall the precise order in which he made these phone calls and stopped at Brown Loop, but he estimated that he remained at Brown Loop between 10:45 and 10:55 pm. Mr. Dillman did not encounter the perpetrator or his replica RCMP cruiser en route or while he was parked on Brown Loop.

We have carefully reviewed the evidence provided by the Zimmerman family and Mr. Dillman, the time of Mr. Ellison’s last photograph, the evidence that Portapique Beach Road was unavailable to the perpetrator as an exit route, and the video evidence described below. We conclude on the basis of all the evidence that the perpetrator left Portapique immediately after killing Corrie Ellison. He drove the replica RCMP cruiser along Cobequid Court, turned left to travel north up the blueberry field road before driving along one of the arms of Brown Loop Road – likely the easternmost branch – to Highway 2. We find, based on the determinate evidence of Mr. Ellison’s photograph and Mr. Dillman’s phone records, that he exited blueberry field road between 10:41 pm and 10:45 pm on April 18.

We consider that this route and time provide the only plausible scenario for the perpetrator’s departure from Portapique. We continue our analysis of the blueberry field road issue in our findings below about some aspects of the RCMP command response of establishing a containment perimeter around Portapique.

Video surveillance captured at the Wilsons Gas Stops service station in Great Village, located on Highway 2 approximately 10 kilometres east of Portapique, shows a marked RCMP cruiser travelling east on Highway 2 at 10:51 pm on April 18. While the quality of this surveillance footage is poor, the Commission found no evidence of a legitimate Ford Taurus RCMP cruiser driving eastbound on Highway 2 through Great Village on that night between 10:45 pm and 11:00 pm. Our investigations in this regard included analysis of the GPS records for RCMP police vehicles being driven by RCMP members. Unlike other emergency vehicles captured on this camera, the vehicle suspected to be the perpetrator’s replica RCMP cruiser does not appear to have its light bar, headlights, or tail lights activated. This evidence is consistent with a witness description of the perpetrator’s replica cruiser as having no headlights, tail lights, or sirens activated.

The distance between the western prong of Brown Loop at Highway 2 and the Wilsons Gas Stops in Great Village is approximately 9.2 kilometres. The route is a single-lane highway, with posted speeds of 80 kilometres per hour until 1 kilometre west of the Wilsons Gas Stops service station, where the speed limit reduces to 50 kilometres per hour. The route could be traversed in approximately five-and-a-half minutes if the vehicle were to proceed at a speed of approximately 100 kilometres per hour. For reference, first responders, who reported travelling as quickly as possible in response to the 911 call, travelled this section of the highway in 4 minutes and 48 seconds (average speed of approximately 127 kilometres per hour) and in 5 minutes and 8 seconds (average speed 112 kilometres per hour).

Actions Taken by Other Portapique Residents

This chronology of the perpetrator's actions is the central thread of what happened in Portapique on the night of April 18, 2020, but it is only part of a complete account of what happened. We have also heard and read abundant evidence of the deep caring that many residents of the Portapique community and surrounding areas demonstrated through their actions during that same evening. Seeing fires and hearing what could be gunshots, many people took steps to be of service, to check on the safety of neighbours and friends, and to advise them of the potential danger.

We have described how Jamie Blair spent her final moments courageously protecting her children and how Lisa McCully left her home to ascertain what was going on and perhaps to intervene with the perpetrator. Andrew and Kate MacDonald also left their home and had been trying to assist others – including seeing if they could notify the perpetrator that his property was on fire – unknowingly putting themselves in jeopardy and resulting in Mr. MacDonald's physical injuries from shots fired by the perpetrator. The Blair and McCully children showed remarkable courage and fortitude. We discuss in greater detail below in the sections on first responders and 911 calls the information that the MacDonalds and the Blair and McCully children provided to the police. In this section, we set out other ways in which community members provided a vital role in the initial response.

This same spirit was shown in the actions of the Ellisons. Having not heard anything from Corrie Ellison after his call at 10:36 pm on April 18, Richard and Clinton Ellison grew worried. Both men left the residence: Richard Ellison walked to the end of the

driveway before returning inside, and Clinton Ellison continued north on Orchard Beach Drive. He illuminated his path with a flashlight.

Clinton Ellison approached the perpetrator's warehouse on Orchard Beach Drive at approximately 10:55 pm. As he did so, he noticed something lying on the ground on the left side of the road. He shone his flashlight to the area and realized it was the body of his brother, Corrie. Mr. Ellison also observed blood on the road. When he saw another flashlight shining in his direction, he shut off his flashlight and hid in the woods, believing the person holding the flashlight to be the one who had killed his brother. He later learned it was the first-responding RCMP members who shone the flashlight. Sometime between 10:55 pm and 10:59 pm, Mr. Ellison was able to contact his father by phone and tell him that Corrie had been shot. He showed courage in an extraordinarily difficult situation.

Right after ending the call with his surviving son, Richard Ellison phoned 911. He reported that fire and explosions were occurring on Orchard Beach Drive and that his older son (Clinton) had just contacted him to advise that his younger son, Corrie, had been shot. He explained that the building on fire was a big “storage facility” or “garage.”⁴⁷ He identified the perpetrator as the owner of the property, a man who owned another property on “the main road, the Portapique Beach Road.”⁴⁸ The 911 call-taker requested Clinton Ellison's phone number so that emergency responders could contact him. Mr. Ellison said he would find the phone number and call back. We pick up on what Clinton and Richard Ellison experienced after this point later in this volume.

Many other community members and some outside the community also took constructive steps. Numerous people called 911 to provide information about the fires and gunshots. Some of these individuals also tried to check on others by phone, text, and in a few cases in person by going out to knock on a friend's or neighbour's door or taking other actions to determine where the fires were burning.

Before the MacDonalds' interaction with the perpetrator at 10:25 pm, David Faulkner was travelling west on Highway 2 with his family. He turned onto Portapique Beach Road to investigate the flames he could see from the highway. He travelled south on Orchard Beach Drive and passed the Gulenchyn residence, where he observed a police car (later determined to be the replica RCMP cruiser) in the driveway. He also noticed that the Gulenchyn residence was on fire. He continued south and turned left onto Portapique Crescent. He pulled into Portapique resident Leon Joudrey's driveway and attempted to contact him via phone.

Receiving no answer, Mr. Faulkner drove back onto Orchard Beach Drive, where he came on the perpetrator and the MacDonalds. He later recalled that “just as we made the corner, we heard at the time we figured it might have been explosions, or ... we now know was gunshots for sure.”⁴⁹ This was the moment when the perpetrator shot Mr. MacDonald. As the MacDonalds sped away, Mr. Faulkner and his family drove behind their car to the top of Portapique Beach Road. There, RCMP members told him to drive around their police vehicles, which by that time were blocking Portapique Beach Road, to reach Highway 2. No member requested his name and contact information.

Mr. Faulkner noticed that the flames from the perpetrator’s warehouse were still visible from the road, and he drove to the Bass River fire hall, where he saw four or five volunteer firefighters. Mr. Faulkner spoke with the fire chief, Alfred Grue, for approximately five minutes. He showed Chief Grue the locations of the fires – 136 and 71 Orchard Beach Drive – on a map. He then drove home.

On April 18, 2020, Allison Francis and Bjorn Merzbach lived on Orchard Beach Drive. At approximately 10:21 pm, Ms. Francis heard what she believed to be fireworks. She opened her bedroom window to listen and sent a text message to her husband, Mr. Merzbach, who was working in the shop outside. She asked if he could hear the loud bangs.

When Mr. Merzbach received the text, he went outside his shop to listen. He heard between five and seven gunshots. Approximately 20 seconds later, he heard four additional shots, and noted that these rounds sounded as though they had come from a different firearm. At 10:23 pm, he sent a text message to his near neighbour Greg Blair inquiring whether he had heard gunshots. He received no answer. Mr. Merzbach went inside to retrieve his firearm, exited, and took cover behind his truck, observing the spreading fires and other developments.

Ms. Francis also heard two distinct louder bangs from across the street in the direction of the Gulenchyn residence. She heard a smoke alarm sounding there and messaged Ms. Gulenchyn to inquire whether she was okay. There was no response. Shortly after, Ms. Francis noted flames rising over the treeline as well as flames at the Gulenchyn residence. She reported her concerns to 911 over a series of calls, noting that the fire was approaching her residence. Ms. Francis also called her neighbour, Ms. McCully. The call was not answered.

On hearing of the fires from his mother, Autumn Doucette, who lived in the neighbouring community of Five Houses, Dean Dillman, who has a background and training in forest firefighting, packed up his firefighting gear and headed toward

Portapique. He was worried it was a structure fire and, possibly, at the house of his friend and co-worker, Leon Joudrey. Mr. Dillman tried calling Mr. Joudrey, but he got no answer. Mr. Dillman then called a mutual friend and co-worker in an attempt to locate Mr. Joudrey. Later, Ms. Doucette called her son again to tell him she was afraid because she had seen someone with a flashlight in the woods near Bay Shore Road, where she was watching the fires in Portapique. To make sure she was safe, Mr. Dillman left Brown Loop and drove to Five Houses via Highway 2 to meet her at the end of Bay Shore Road.

At approximately 11:15 pm on April 18, Floria and Jerry Murphy observed flames near their residence on Portapique Beach Road. The couple decided to go to their neighbours' houses and warn them about the fires. En route to the Griffon residence on Faris Lane, the Murphys observed the perpetrator's cottage and the Thomas / Zahl residence engulfed in flames. Ms. Murphy banged on the door of the Griffon home and, when she got no response, she phoned 911 at 11:36 pm from outside the Griffon home. Earlier, a 911 operator had contacted the Griffon family and advised them to shelter in place, so they did not answer the door when Ms. Murphy knocked. Instead, the Griffon family called 911 to advise that someone was at their door, they could hear banging outside, and they could see fire outside their windows.

Around 10:30 pm on April 18, Al (age 15) took his dogs out for a walk from his home on East Montrose Road, north of Highway 2 and Portapique Beach Road. As he left his house, he noticed flames rising from the other side of the highway. He returned inside and told his mother, Megan Netzke, what he had seen. Ms. Netzke placed a call to 911. She and Al then got in their car and travelled to the head of Portapique Beach Road. Once there, they observed the injured Mr. MacDonald, who had been shot by the perpetrator, and an RCMP member, who directed them to return home. While driving home, Ms. Netzke attempted to reach Ms. McCully by phone, but she got no response. Al tried to call and text message his friend Emily Tuck over this period, but he did not receive a response. Her last message to him was at 10:03 pm.

Whether they directly encountered the perpetrator or not, each of these civilians put themselves in harm's way in their attempts to ensure the safety of their neighbours. Community members were an essential part of the first response to the mass casualty. The RCMP underestimated this vital role. Witnesses provided valuable information, but additional steps should have been taken to ensure that they were identified and questioned and that the information shared by community members was fully taken into account in the RCMP's decision-making. As we explain further in Volume 5, Policing, the RCMP failed to identify some witnesses

who had relevant information – for example, Mr. Faulkner – or to make use of the important information that community members had provided.

In a consultation conducted by the Commission, Portapique residents identified the RCMP's lack of door-to-door canvassing during and immediately after the critical incident response as a major failing:

MS. MALLORY COLPITTS: ... just to ask the questions on the few remaining survivors that made it through the night could have told you everything, could have told you about the blueberry field road, you know? ...

I could have told you the Tucks were primary residents.

So that just goes with the canvassing and investigative skills that[,] respectfully, just did not happen.

COMMISSION COUNSEL: So you're saying that the door-to-door is not just about the –

MS. MALLORY COLPITTS: It's fact gathering.

COMMISSION COUNSEL: – person giving information, saying, "I don't want to give you information about this until –

MS. MALLORY COLPITTS: It's – there's duality of fact gathering, because I could have provided a lot of valuable information, as well as [being alerted to the danger].

COMMISSION COUNSEL: Right, and the information exchange could happen going door to door.

MS. MALLORY COLPITTS: Yes. Like, so there's not just – not one purpose to it.⁵⁰

Other community members, including Ms. Michelle Murphy and Mr. Leon Joudrey, similarly identified the failure to canvass Portapique residents to alert them and to gather information from them as major criticisms of the RCMP's critical incident response. In addition, they noted the failure to act on information provided by community members such as the MacDonalds and the Blair and McCully children.

MAIN FINDING

Community members were an essential part of the initial response to the mass casualty. Their central role was not adequately acknowledged, and the indispensable information they could provide was not factored into the RCMP's response.

We explore the vital role played by community members during a critical incident response in Volume 4, Community, and Volume 5, Policing.

We assess the RCMP's management of information supplied by community members in Volume 5.

Actions Taken by the First Responders

Within minutes of Jamie Blair's 911 call at 10:01 pm on April 18, police resources and an ambulance were dispatched to Portapique. The information provided to these first responders by the Operational Communications Centre was incomplete: key details such as the fact that the perpetrator was driving a "fully decked and labelled RCMP"⁵¹ car but was not a police officer were not conveyed. We examine how the failure to convey this information affected the critical incident response in Volume 5, Policing.

Four uniformed general duty members of the RCMP Bible Hill detachment – Acting Cpl. Stuart Beselt and Cst. Vicki Colford, Cst. Adam Merchant, and Cst. Aaron Patton – proceeded to Portapique in separate vehicles from various locations around Bible Hill. They travelled at high speed using police lights and sirens. While driving to Portapique, Acting Cpl. Beselt contacted the Bible Hill detachment operations non-commissioned officer, Sgt. Andrew (Andy) O'Brien, to advise him of the call. Sgt. O'Brien was off duty on the evening of April 18, so Acting Cpl. Beselt contacted him by phone to ensure he was aware that a significant incident was unfolding. At 10:16 pm, while the RCMP members were en route, the Blair and McCully children called 911.

These first-responding members sought additional information from the 911 dispatcher while travelling to Portapique. Given the serious nature of the call and the limited information available, Acting Cpl. Beselt directed members to approach

the scene cautiously, don their hard body armour, and ready their carbines (a high-powered semi-automatic compact short-barrelled rifle). Acting Cpl. Beselt was the first to arrive in Portapique, at 10:25 pm, with the other three responding members arriving over the next seven minutes.

As Acting Cpl. Beselt drove south into Portapique, he encountered two cars driving north on Portapique Beach Road. He parked his SUV diagonally, stopped the approaching vehicles, and exited his vehicle with his carbine. He recognized Andrew MacDonald in the first vehicle – he knew him from the hockey community. The MacDonalds were distraught, and Mr. MacDonald informed Acting Cpl. Beselt he had just been shot. In testimony, Acting Cpl. Beselt recalled that, in a very brief conversation, Mr. MacDonald advised that he had just been shot by “a guy in a white car.”⁵² However, in a statement given to the RCMP at 5:00 am on April 19, Mr. MacDonald recalled providing additional information:

I turned right on Portapique Beach Road towards the highway, and that’s when I saw your first officer coming on the scene with the lights going. And the door opened and when I pulled up beside him I explained that I had been shot, and that, there’s a police car down there that looks like a police car that obviously, I didn’t know, maybe it was a police officer or maybe he wasn’t I had no idea. So, either way, told him that he was shooting at us and that it looked like he was lighting places on fire on route or we caught him and I don’t know, I don’t know what happened.⁵³

Based on this information, Acting Cpl. Beselt concluded that an Immediate Action Rapid Deployment (IARD) situation had arisen because the perpetrator was an active shooter. The *RCMP Operational Manual* defines IARD as follows:

The swift and immediate deployment of law enforcement resources to an on-going, life threatening situation, where delayed deployment could otherwise result in grievous bodily harm and/or death to innocent persons.⁵⁴

At 10:28:24 pm and 10:29:32 pm, Acting Cpl. Beselt broadcast that he had encountered victims at the scene and that other people may have been shot as well. Cst. Patton also spoke with the victims and broadcast information that he learned from the MacDonalds – that the person who had shot at them was named “[short form of perpetrator’s first name], he has a car that looks like a police car, he’s

50–60 years old.”⁵⁵ Cst. Patton added that the shooter had a denture company in Dartmouth.

Acting Cpl. Beselt and Cst. Merchant entered the community on foot, adopting an IARD response to the active shooter threat. They began walking south down Portapique Beach Road, which was unlit, lined with trees and vegetation, and had a few residences on the east side of the road. Neither member was familiar with the Portapique community or its geography. It was dark, with few sources of artificial light, and there was smoke in the air. They could hear explosions and sounds like gunshots. They were soon joined by Cst. Patton, who was also on foot. He, too, had limited knowledge of the community. We refer to these three RCMP members as the IARD responders. Cst. Colford moved her location slightly north, to the community mailboxes near the intersection with Highway 2, and remained there to coordinate medical assistance for the MacDonalds and maintain containment of Portapique Beach Road.

The IARD responders used their encrypted police radios to provide regular updates as they moved into Portapique – in accordance with RCMP policy and training. The principle underlying these updates is that information shared by responding members who have entered an area where a shooter may be active will be captured by dispatchers located in the Operational Communications Centre and heard by scene commanders and others in overall command of the critical incident response. The area where a shooter or perpetrator of mass murder may be active is termed “the hot zone.”⁵⁶

Between 10:39:50 pm and 10:40:13 pm on April 18, the IARD responders reported hearing numerous sounds of gunfire, which they believed were coming from east of their location:

10:39:50 PM – Cst. PATTON (H-05B04/H-BH P07): OK, lots of gunshots in here – three gunshots!

10:40:09 PM – Cst. PATTON (H-05B04/H-BH P07): Two more gunshots!

10:40:13 PM – Cst. BESELT (H-05B06/H-BH P08): We’re hearing numerous gunshots.

10:40:35 PM – Acting Cpl. BESELT (H-05B06/H-BH P08): PATTON, be very careful bringing your car down here to avoid ambush.

10:40:40 PM – Cst. PATTON (H-05B04/H-BH P07): 10-4, I’m on foot – just coming past the first burning house now.⁵⁷

10-4 is a police code for affirmative, or okay. We have concluded that the shots reported by the IARD responders at this time correspond with the time frame when Corrie Ellison was shot.

At 10:41:12 pm, Acting Cpl. Beselt broadcast: “[F]irst burning house, there is a white Taurus in the driveway there, but we heard shots coming from further down the road so we’re continuing on.”⁵⁸ The “first burning house” was the perpetrator’s cottage, at 200 Portapique Beach Road. Cst. Patton also noted that the white Taurus was not visibly on fire when he passed the location.

After walking south down Portapique Beach Road, the IARD responders travelled through the woods from Portapique Beach Road to 136 Orchard Beach Drive – the perpetrator’s warehouse. The structure was completely ablaze, emitting intense heat and periodic explosions. Acting Cpl. Beselt used the navigation features of his personal cellphone to orient himself and the other IARD responders. RCMP-issued cellphones had no data, and therefore no navigation capacity of this kind.

The IARD responders exited the warehouse property onto Orchard Beach Drive. At 10:49:18 pm they broadcast the discovery of a deceased male, subsequently identified as Corrie Ellison. They then made their way across the street to the McCully residence, where they located the four McCully and Blair children sheltered in a home by themselves and on the phone with 911. The Blair children told the IARD responders that their parents had been killed by the perpetrator; the McCully children said that their mother had left the home and not returned.

The Blair children also said that the perpetrator had set their house on fire. The IARD responders subsequently misunderstood which home belonged to the Blairs – a misunderstanding that explains why the IARD responders did not go to the Blair house, the address of the original call in Portapique. They could see that the Gulenchyn house, which was on Orchard Beach Drive, was fully engulfed by fire. They believed it to be the Blair house, which was located on Orchard Beach Drive between the McCully and Gulenchyn homes.

The IARD responders advised the children to shelter together in the basement, and then they left the home. They remained outside the McCully home for a short time to protect the children but decided to move on toward the sounds of ongoing gunshots and explosions. In testimony before us, Acting Cpl. Beselt reflected on the difficult decision they faced about whether to leave the children alone:

Well, it’s a super-hard decision. Like, it would have been easy to stay there and protect the kids. Right? But if you think people are dying down the

street and you could have prevented that, then – you know, and that’s the basic principle of IARD is, you know, stop the threat, right? Like, it doesn’t matter if he kills the whole subdivision and you’ve kept the kids safe; like, he’s gone on doing what he was going to do.⁵⁹

Cst. Patton agreed: “[I]t was the single hardest decision that we made that night.”⁶⁰

At 10:49 pm, the children on the 911 call raised concerns that they could hear someone outside their door. The IARD responders returned to check on them. However, they could hear more gunshots and/or explosions within the community, so returned to their primary task of searching for the perpetrator. Cst. Merchant inquired with dispatch whether there was “any kind of description on this guy, in case we come into – run into him.”⁶¹ The IARD responders decided to have the children continue to shelter in the home while they continued toward the sounds. They told the children to lock the doors to the residence, hide in the basement, and answer only if the person at the door used the code word “pineapple.” We discuss decisions about when and how to remove the children in more detail below.

Acting Cpl. Beselt updated dispatch about their plans. The IARD responders exited the residence and, less than a minute later, they observed light from a flashlight south of them on Orchard Beach Drive. They suspected this person – later determined to be Clinton Ellison – to be the perpetrator. The members took up defensive positions on the lawn of the McCully residence. Mr. Ellison turned off his flashlight and fled into the woods. The IARD responders began to follow, but, having lost sight of him and concerned about the possibility of ambush in the woods, terminated the pursuit.

Immediately after, at 10:59:33 pm, the IARD responders broadcast that they had located the body of a female victim – later identified as Lisa McCully – by the front fence of her residence. They remained near the McCully home for some time to protect the children inside and, because they had no further indication of the perpetrator’s likely location, they stopped actively searching for him.

Between 11:05 pm and 11:25 pm, the IARD responders checked on the children two more times while also attempting to respond to a 911 call farther north on Orchard Beach Drive. During this period, Acting Cpl. Beselt queried whether an emergency broadcast might be made to warn civilians: “Is there some kind of emergency broadcast that we can make that – make people go into their basement and not go outside?”⁶² As we explain below in the section “Public Communications,” soon after Acting Cpl. Beselt raised this question, S/Sgt. Brian Rehill and Sgt. O’Brien

contacted RCMP public information officer Cpl. Lisa Croteau, and a tweet was sent about the incident.

At 11:33 pm, the IARD responders observed a house on fire at 71 Orchard Beach Drive – the home of Frank and Dawn Gulenchyn. They cut across to Portapique Beach Road to respond to a 911 call on Faris Lane (at the southern end of Portapique Beach Road), where residents reported an unknown person knocking on their door. (This person was later determined to be Portapique resident Floria Murphy, who was checking to ensure that the Griffon family were safe.) En route, the IARD responders observed a fire at 293 Portapique Beach Road – the residence of Joanne Thomas and John Zahl. The IARD responders believed that this residence had not been ablaze at 10:41 pm, when they first travelled down Portapique Beach Road.

Meanwhile, at the top of Portapique Beach Road, the MacDonalds waited with Cst. Colford for an ambulance to arrive. While they were waiting, Ms. MacDonald advised Cst. Colford about another potential exit out of Portapique (later understood to be the blueberry field road). At 10:48:21 pm on April 18, Cst. Colford broadcast this information over the Colchester radio channel. She directed this information to responding members from the Millbrook RCMP detachment who were en route to the call in Portapique (Cpl. Natasha Jamieson and Cst. Chris Grund):

Millbrook, if you guys want to have a look at the map, we're being told there's a road, kind of a road that someone could come out, before here. Ah, if they know the roads well.⁶³

However, neither the Millbrook members nor dispatch confirmed receipt of this important information. Cpl. Jamieson and Cst. Grund continued on to Cst. Colford's location on Portapique Beach Road and Highway 2. We analyze how the blueberry field road came to be overlooked as a potential escape route in Volume 5, Policing.

Shortly after 11:00 pm, Emergency Health Services (EHS) ambulance unit M-086, staffed by Emily MacLeod and Jesse Brine, had witness Andrew MacDonald on board to tend to his injuries and began transporting him to Colchester East Hants Health Centre. The ambulance was not escorted by police. EHS paramedics in unit M-090 Jeff Aucoin and Melanie Lowe assessed his spouse, witness Kate MacDonald, and determined that she was in shock but without physical injuries. Ms. MacDonald was picked up from the intersection of Portapique Beach Road

and Highway 2 by family members who drove on to the Colchester East Hants Health Centre to find out about Mr. MacDonald's condition. Ms. MacDonald was not offered professional victim services support at that time, despite being described as distraught. The MacDonalds' 911 call was not logged in the RCMP's CAD log (the Computerized Integrated Information and Dispatch System incident log), their names were not broadcast by radio to dispatch, and no immediate arrangements were made to interview them or provide victim support services to them.

The actions taken by Acting Cpl. Beselt and by Cst. Merchant, Cst. Patton, and Cst. Colford exemplify their strong commitment to their oath of office and service to the community. They were responding to an unknown danger and had received very little information about the perpetrator. Acting Cpl. Beselt described his situation as he drove toward Portapique:

Well you've got to imagine you're in a vehicle, you're driving 160 or faster. I think that's as fast as my car would go. You're looking at the MWS [Mobile Work Station]. You're trying to pay attention. There's a lot of deer in the area. You know, there's a lot of factors that you're trying ... and meanwhile, you're trying to get updates and, you know, you're juggling a lot of different things there.⁶⁴

As the senior member on site, Acting Cpl. Beselt led the on-the-ground IARD response. When he first arrived at Portapique, he made some of the decisions required of a scene commander. His decision to establish an IARD response and enter Portapique was necessary, given the active shooter situation. However, the RCMP IARD policy requires that a scene commander be designated, and that designation did not take place. Acting Cpl. Beselt, along with Cst. Merchant and Cst. Patton, moved toward an obvious threat in circumstances that required their complete attention. He could not possibly have assumed the additional responsibilities of scene commander.

We emphasize that the IARD responders were operating in a very challenging environment. Cst. Patton described the scene:

The structures are collapsing all around us. I mean, it's a war zone. There's the – the smoke from all of these fires is very low in the sky.

...

So you've got the glow of the fires reflecting off the smoke. Some fires had been burning for some time and, like, anything that's inside of those houses, gas, barbeques, vehicles -

- and then the gun shots on tops of it, and then us trying to decipher between explosions and gun shots and -

...

It was mayhem, yeah.⁶⁵

Acting Cpl. Beselt agreed: “[I]t’s like a war zone in there. Like you’ve never seen anything like it, so.”⁶⁶ Emergency Medical Response Team member Cst. Benjamin (Ben) MacLeod, whose role requires him to attend difficult scenes in order to provide medical attention, also emphasized that the scene in Portapique was unlike anything he had experienced in his policing career:

Yeah, so like I said, I was out from the very early morning hours ... it was different than any scene I’d ever been to before. I’ve been to lots of sudden deaths, murder scenes. This didn’t compare to anything like I’ve been to before.⁶⁷

The RCMP responders had limited knowledge of the community, even though some had been in the Bible Hill detachment for some time.

MAIN FINDING

First-responding members acted appropriately when they established an Immediate Action Rapid Deployment (IARD) response and entered Portapique and when they established an initial containment point at the intersection of Portapique Beach Road and Highway 2. These members acted with great courage in an extremely dangerous environment.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP’s failure to assign a scene commander created gaps in the initial critical incident response. These gaps meant that aspects of the response were not well coordinated and that important tasks, such as identifying eyewitnesses

and flagging the need to conduct interviews, were not prioritized and therefore not conducted in a timely manner, and in some cases not at all.

As additional members from other RCMP detachments in Colchester and Cumberland counties arrived on scene, they were assigned tasks or awaited such assignments. Shortly before midnight on April 18, two additional responding RCMP members – Cst. Bill Neil and Cst. Chris Grund, entered Portapique on foot to protect the four children in the McCully home. At 12:25 am they decided to use Ms. McCully’s car to transport the children to the Great Village fire hall, where a staging area had been established for ambulances and other non-police emergency responders. Cst. Grund drove the children while Cst. Neil stayed at the McCully home with the IARD responders. By this time, members of the Emergency Response Team were en route to Portapique, and the active response within the hot zone was to be transferred to this team.

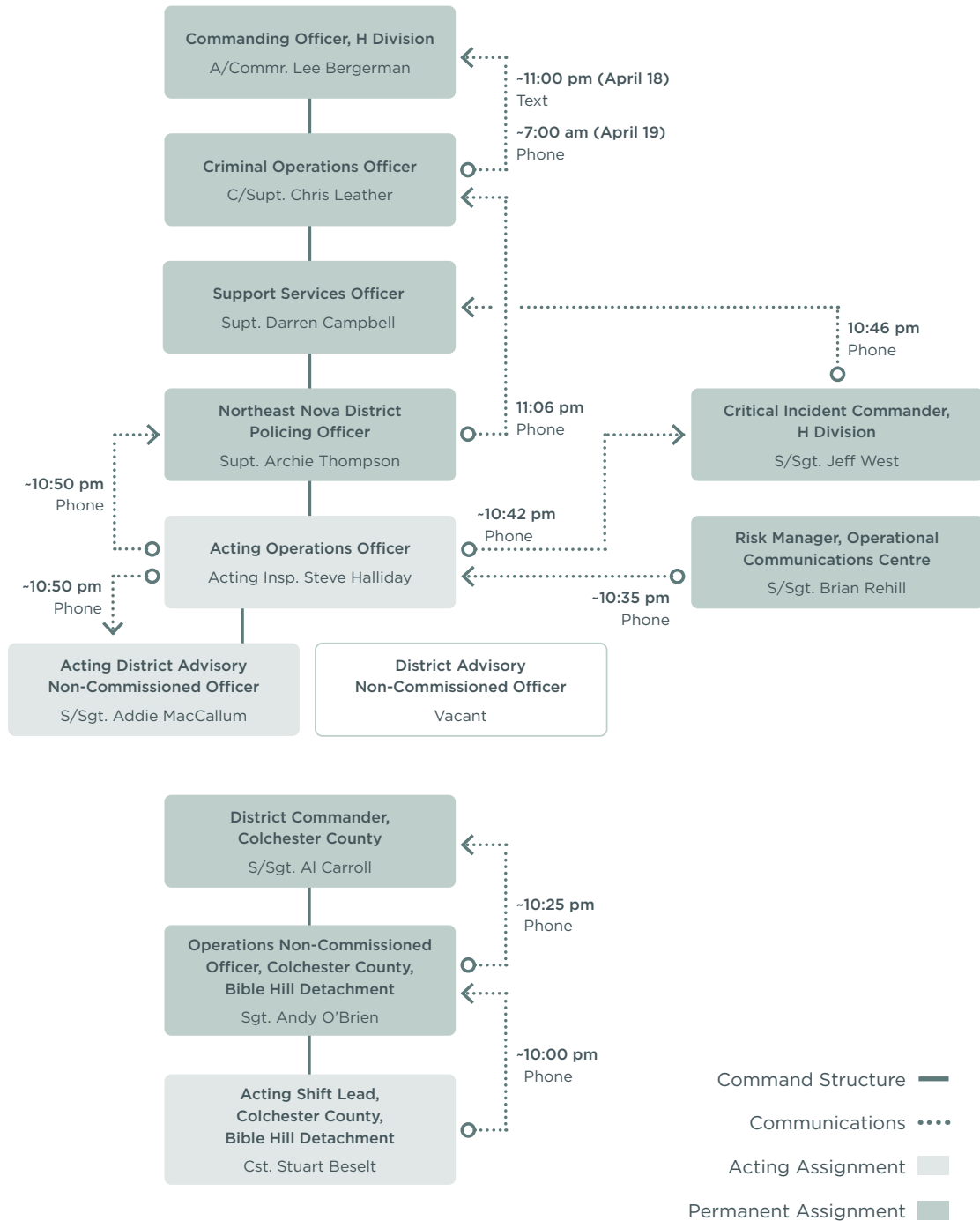
RCMP Initial Command Response

In this section, we step away from the scene in Portapique and provide our account of the RCMP’s initial command response and the role of the RCMP Operational Communications Centre (OCC) on April 18, 2020. We have already described the events from the perspective of the first responders on the ground: the witnesses and community members as well as the trained emergency responders. Here we set out the decisions made and the actions taken by the OCC and the RCMP command group.

We set out the framework of the structure of policing and emergency response in Nova Scotia in the final section in Volume 1, Context and Purpose. Here we provide a recap of a few of the features salient to the RCMP response.

RCMP H Division headquarters for Nova Scotia is located in Dartmouth, within the Halifax Regional Municipality. It is the hub of RCMP operations in the province. The H Division Emergency Response Team (ERT) is based in headquarters, but part-time ERT members may be based in RCMP detachments outside the Halifax / Dartmouth area.

RCMP Initial Command Response



There are three RCMP districts in Nova Scotia – Halifax District, Northeast Nova District, and Southwest Nova District. The mass casualty took place in the RCMP's Northeast Nova District – in Colchester County, Cumberland County, and the eastern half of Hants County. The RCMP's Bible Hill detachment served as a hub for its Colchester County operations in April 2020. At the time of the mass casualty, the RCMP Operational Communications Centre was located on Prince Street, in the town of Truro, adjacent to Bible Hill. The municipality of Truro is served by the Truro Police Service, a standalone municipal police department that is not part of the RCMP.

In response to the mass casualty, some RCMP members travelled for several hours – from as far as Yarmouth, Kings, and Lunenburg counties in the Southwest Nova District, and from Antigonish, Victoria, and Inverness counties in the Northeast Nova District, as well as from the province of New Brunswick. Some members based in Nova Scotia travelled more than 400 kilometres to Portapique.

Many of the decisions made before midnight on April 18, 2020, shaped the RCMP response to the mass casualty as a whole.

RCMP Operational Communications Centre

The RCMP Operational Communications Centre (OCC) in Nova Scotia is the RCMP's primary 911 call-taking centre in Nova Scotia and provides police dispatching support to RCMP detachments in the province, except for those located in the Halifax Regional Municipality. At the time of the mass casualty, the OCC was located in Truro. It has since moved to the RCMP's Dartmouth headquarters.

The OCC plays a vital role as a communications channel among community members, RCMP members, and RCMP supervisors. In most instances, including the mass casualty, a police response begins with a 911 call being received by a call-taker in the OCC. The call-taker is trained to document information in the RCMP's incident activity log in the RCMP Computerized Integrated Information and Dispatch System (CIIDS) program (the CAD log in RCMP parlance) and assign a priority to the call. New incidents are electronically forwarded to a dispatcher, who decides whether a member or members should be assigned to respond immediately. When appropriate, the dispatcher will report an incident to the risk manager or another supervisor of the OCC. Risk managers and supervisors can monitor

calls – most often by reviewing the CAD log, and only rarely by replaying a 911 call. All 911 calls and calls made from official phone lines in the OCC are automatically recorded.

OCC Set-Up

Call-takers and dispatchers are civilian employees of the RCMP. Normally there are two supervisors at the OCC: a dispatch supervisor and a call-taker supervisor, both of whom are also civilian employees. Two supervisors were working at the OCC during the April 18/19, 2020, night shift: Ms. Donna Lee Williston on the call-taker side, and Ms. Jennifer (Jen) MacCallum – the senior supervisor – on the dispatcher side. Supervisors actively participate in answering or dispatching calls. In Nova Scotia, the RCMP also posts a risk manager, a sworn police member with significant operational experience, within the OCC. We explain the role of the risk manager below.

Call-takers are responsible for receiving incoming calls to the OCC, including 911 calls, and for typing notes into the incident log on the CIIDS program. Once a 911 call has been posted on the CIIDS system, dispatchers can see the file and assign patrol units to incidents. Dispatchers communicate with RCMP members in numerous ways, including via the encrypted police radio system, mobile work station (MWS) messaging (which pushes text-based information directly to a computer within an RCMP vehicle), RCMP-issued cellphones, and personal cellphones. Dispatchers also update CAD logs and other RCMP databases, assist with information-gathering, and help coordinate the provision of resources to responding members.

At 10:00 pm on April 18, six call-takers and five dispatchers were working at the OCC. Shift change occurred at 7:00 am on April 19. From that time on, seven call-takers and seven dispatchers were working as well as the risk manager. According to Ms. MacCallum, the OCC was “fully staffed” because leaves had been cancelled owing to the COVID-19 restrictions.⁶⁸

On April 18 and 19, the OCC was laid out in such a way that a physical wall separated the dispatchers from the call-takers. The risk manager was stationed within the dispatch section at a desk next to that of the OCC dispatch supervisor.

RCMP Operational Communications Centre (OCC) Set-Up: April 18, 2020



Six call-takers and five dispatchers were working the night of April 18, 2020. The call-taker and dispatcher workspaces were separated by a hallway. The doorway break in the hallway is its estimated location. OCC Dispatch Supervisor Jen MacCallum references this break in her statement and indicates that if she were to lean from her desk she could see into the room across the hall and communicate with employees in the other room.

*This box was illustrated in the original drawing provided by Jen MacCallum (COMM0018364), but was not referenced.

RCMP Operational Communications Centre (OCC) Set-Up: April 19, 2020



*This box was illustrated in the original drawing provided by Jen MacCallum (COMM0018364), but was not referenced.

**CT10 Amanda Burns is referenced in the personnel sheet (COMM00146640), but not in the original drawing provided by Jen MacCallum (COMM0018364) therefore desk location should not be considered accurate.

Communication of Critical Information:

911 Call-Takers and Dispatchers

Within 30 minutes of the first fatality in Portapique on April 18, 2020, the RCMP had received three 911 calls about the active shooter situation. Jamie Blair, the Blair children, and Andrew and Kate MacDonald all identified the perpetrator by first name and provided other identifying characteristics such as that he was a neighbour and a dentist. These callers each said the perpetrator had a police car, but was not a real police officer, or that he had a car that looked exactly like an RCMP car. They provided identifying information, including that the car was white and had RCMP decals on it.

Mr. MacDonald provided similar information when he spoke in person to Cst. Patton, who at 10:30 pm relayed to OCC dispatch the short form of the perpetrator's first name, his estimated age between 50 and 60, and the fact that he owned a denture company in Dartmouth and had "a car that looks like a police car."⁶⁹ Ms. MacDonald also gave a clear description of the perpetrator's car directly to S/Sgt. Rehill at 10:28 pm, during the MacDonalds' 911 call. She advised that the vehicle looked like a marked cruiser, but was unsure whether it had a light bar.

Other information was also available to 911 call-takers. Gunshots can clearly be heard toward the end of Ms. Blair's 911 call and during the MacDonalds' 911 call. In neither instance was this information recorded by call-takers. (Ms. Williston later explained that she had not heard the gunshots when she first listened to Ms. Blair's call.) Accordingly, this information was not shared with responding members.

In short, important information from these 911 calls was not passed on to responding members or captured within the text-based incident logs produced by call-takers and dispatchers. The information provided by community members who recognized the perpetrator and witnessed his rampage did not result in a clear and consistent investigation strategy. Early gaps in capture, transfer, and appreciation of important details shared by community members clearly shaped the critical incident response. We trace the impact of these gaps in our continuing account of the mass casualty in this volume.

The 911 calls that evening were often broken up, and the transmissions were difficult to understand because of poor cellphone connectivity. This disruption between the call-taker and the person in need of help made an already tense situation only more harrowing. The gaps in the information captured and shared by call-takers and dispatchers were also the result of ineffective OCC policies and practices, which we discuss in greater detail in Volume 5, Policing.

MAIN FINDING

Key information conveyed by 911 callers from Portapique was not accurately or fully captured within the RCMP incident activity logs, nor was it fully conveyed to first responders and the RCMP command group.

Risk Managers

Risk managers are police supervisors who work in the OCC. They are non-commissioned officers – generally at the staff sergeant level – who supervise and provide operational advice to general duty members, particularly in high-risk situations such as vehicle pursuits. (In some RCMP divisions, there is no risk manager, and active road supervisors fill this role.) RM Rehill was the RCMP risk manager at the OCC on April 18 and overnight until the end of his scheduled shift, at 7:00 am on April 19. Although RCMP policy was not entirely clear about who is responsible for supervising a critical incident response before a critical incident commander takes command of the response, we explain in Volume 5, Policing, that RM Rehill occupied this interim role. He was therefore in command of the RCMP's critical incident response from the outset of the mass casualty until he turned over control to the critical incident commander at 1:20 am. We refer to him as RM Rehill while he was in the role of risk manager.

General Role of Risk Managers

OCC risk managers are responsible for providing supervision, guidance, and direction to general duty members, especially when there is no regular supervisor on duty. The risk manager on duty monitors responding members by working closely with the OCC supervisors, listening to the police radio, and reviewing incident activity logs. Risk managers work rotating shifts to provide full-time coverage.

Risk managers may also be responsible for providing operational guidance to members on scene. They have access to RCMP mapping and GPS capabilities. Through their CIIDS work station, they can monitor the locations of vehicles that are equipped with GPS units when the members have logged in to their mobile work stations. At the time of the mass casualty, the RCMP had not adopted

technology that permits GPS tracking of members when they leave their vehicles. Moreover, not all RCMP vehicles are equipped with mobile work stations. Those that are not equipped with these computers cannot be centrally tracked, and members cannot receive text-based information via CIIDS without a mobile work station.

Role of Risk Managers in Critical Incident Responses

After April 2020, RCMP H Division policy was rewritten to state that in the initial stages of a critical incident, the risk manager has command. It now states that when faced with a critical incident, the risk manager “will immediately take command and control over the situation, deploy resources and direct the response. [The risk manager] will also call in and/or re-deploy resources to allow for an increased response, while ensuring continued service delivery for the rest of the Division.”⁷⁰ In addition, the risk manager coordinates support units, provides oversight and direction, conducts continuous risk assessments, and maintains control of the critical incident until it ends or the critical incident commander takes over. The risk manager is also responsible for requesting the deployment of RCMP resources, including the critical incident package (the RCMP’s term for the specialist equipment and human resources involved in a critical incident response). However, in April 2020, no person was clearly assigned this responsibility within RCMP policy.

In addition to these operational responsibilities, the risk manager is charged with liaising with the provincial Emergency Management Office (EMO), coordinating the sharing and dissemination of intelligence between RCMP detachments and other police and intelligence agencies, assuming the responsibilities of the officer in charge when that individual is absent, and managing any supporting services required to manage a scene. The risk manager’s role is unique, standing outside the command structure of detachments and districts. While detachment and district supervisors ultimately report to the district policing officer – in Northeast Nova, this was Supt. Archie Thompson at the time – the risk manager reports to the officer in charge of the operation support and communications centre. In April 2020, that position was occupied by Insp. Dustine Rodier (who has since been promoted to the rank of Superintendent).

Risk Manager's Initial Decisions and Actions

Following Jamie Blair's 911 call at 10:01 pm on April 18, 2020, RM Rehill, who was in command of the OCC, began to monitor the incident. He repeatedly called Ms. Blair's phone number, but reached only her voice mail. He recalls initially wondering whether it was a mental health call or one related to organized crime. For a brief time, there was a supposition that Ms. Blair had been a witness in a trial of a gang member (the "Mersereau" trial) because her cellphone was registered under her maiden name, which was the same as a witness in that trial. This coincidence was the source of RM Rehill's reference to a potential connection to organized crime.

RM Rehill initially thought they were dealing with an isolated incident. This belief was dispelled around 10:25 pm when the first-responding members arrived in Portapique and when, almost simultaneously, Ms. MacDonald's 911 call was put through to him by call-taker Ms. Carol Howardson. At about 10:35 pm, RM Rehill phoned Acting Insp. Steve Halliday, the acting district operations officer, who in turn called the critical incident commander, S/Sgt. Jeff West. By 10:38 pm, Acting Insp. Halliday, S/Sgt. Allan (Addie) MacCallum, and S/Sgt. Allan (AI) Carroll had all been contacted. In April 2020, these three non-commissioned members constituted key members of the supervisory group in the Northeast Nova District, which comprises most of northern Nova Scotia. At 10:42 pm, Acting Insp. Halliday advised an on-call critical incident commander, S/Sgt. Jeff West, of the incident. S/Sgt. West readily agreed that the situation constituted a critical incident and initiated the process of calling out a full critical incident package. S/Sgt. West made some of these phone calls, and OCC employees made others.

Establishment of RCMP Critical Incident Command

RCMP policy is structured around the expectation that a scene commander will assume command of a critical incident response until a critical incident commander takes responsibility for directing the response. In Volume 5, Policing, we explain that policy and best practice are based on the expectation that a critical incident commander will take command relatively quickly. These commanders are trained personnel who acquire experience with the challenging decision-making

and coordination of resources that are integral to an effective critical incident response.

On April 18, 2020, the critical incident commander was contacted within 45 minutes of Ms. Blair's 911 call, but more than three hours passed from the time of the first 911 call until the command post was established. S/Sgt. West did not take command until 1:19 am on April 19. The section below provides an account of the steps taken toward this end during the first two hours of the mass casualty.

RCMP Critical Incident Command Structure and Roles Within It

In this section, we describe the RCMP approach to command over a critical incident response. We outline the roles and responsibilities of the various positions within the command structure and also the elements of the critical incident package. In addition, we introduce the individuals who assumed positions within the command structure during this initial period of the mass casualty.

Critical Incident Command Triangle

When critical incident commanders take responsibility for critical incident responses, they work at the apex of a command triangle. Acting Insp. Halliday (who served as the general duty commander on April 18/19, 2020) described the command triangle as follows:

In the command triangle, there is the Critical Incident Commander at the top, the Emergency Response Team leader will be at the bottom of one side of the triangle, and the negotiator team leader will be at the bottom side ... or, the other side of the triangle. Underneath that would be MCU [Major Crime Unit] investigative team and the general duty commander to support the critical incident operations.⁷¹

Critical Incident Commander

Critical incident commanders complete a two-week course at the Canadian Police College as well as a period of field training. At the time of the mass casualty, there were six critical incident commanders in Nova Scotia H Division who worked in rotation on “an on-call schedule.”⁷² Two critical incident commanders were on call at any given time. Each one worked with a trained scribe, who took “notes and maintain[ed] a record of decisions.”⁷³

Once critical incident commanders assume control of critical incidents, they have “absolute responsibility and control of all field operations.”⁷⁴ This responsibility includes, among other things, ensuring that information is shared with supporting units; ensuring that a command post is established; assessing containment and evacuation efforts; authorizing negotiations; approving the release of information to the media; and approving operational plans. The critical incident commander “directs all human and material resources during critical incidents, emergencies, and disasters. The critical incident commander also conducts a preliminary assessment of the incident and puts an action plan in place to resolve it.”⁷⁵

S/Sgt. West was one of two on-call critical incident commanders on the night of April 18, 2020, and Sgt. Rob Lewis served as his scribe. S/Sgt. Kevin Surette was the second on-call critical incident commander that night. S/Sgt. West called S/Sgt. Surette at 10:59 pm to place him on standby. At 12:46 am, he confirmed that he required S/Sgt. Surette’s assistance. S/Sgt. Surette drove from his assigned detachment in Yarmouth to the command post – approximately a five-hour drive – to provide that support. He arrived in Great Village at approximately 5:40 am on April 19.

Other Members of the Critical Incident Command Group

The critical incident command structure is not rank dependent and, to meet the needs of the situation, it is flexible in size and structure. The critical incident commander, or delegates, can assign tasks, including to those who would in other circumstances outrank them.

Portapique is in the RCMP Northeast Nova District. At the time of the mass casualty, Supt. Thompson was the district policing officer for Northeast Nova, having recently assumed that role in January, 2020. On April 19, 2020, he was not actively involved in the critical incident response. Three RCMP Northeast Nova

command personnel joined the critical incident response before midnight on April 18: Acting Insp. Halliday, who was serving as the acting operations officer for the district; S/Sgt. Carroll, the district commander for Colchester County; and S/Sgt. MacCallum, an acting district advisory non-commissioned officer. Northeast Nova District should have two district advisory non-commissioned officers, each of whom is responsible for a number of RCMP detachments within the district. On April 18, the second of these positions was vacant. S/Sgt. Carroll performed some tasks that would normally have fallen to the relevant district advisory non-commissioned officer. On April 18, then, much of the command structure for the Northeast Nova District was either new to the role or serving in an acting capacity. This is important, because new and acting personnel may not have received training for the role they are performing and/or may be unfamiliar with the personnel and resources available to them.

Acting Insp. Halliday, S/Sgt. Carroll, and S/Sgt. MacCallum each began monitoring RCMP radio communications soon after they were informed of the unfolding incident in Portapique. By 11:30 pm, they had assembled in the Bible Hill RCMP detachment.

Sgt. O'Brien was the operations officer for Bible Hill detachment. He was off duty on April 18. After Acting Cpl. Beselt called him to advise of the serious incident in Portapique, Sgt. O'Brien phoned his supervisor, S/Sgt. Carroll, and informed him he had consumed alcohol and should not attend the scene. His consumption of alcohol was in no way improper – he was off duty and not on call. However, Sgt. O'Brien's wife drove him to his detachment to collect a portable radio. From approximately 10:30 pm on, Sgt. O'Brien participated in the critical incident response in a supervisory capacity, without attending the scene. He later explained that he was supporting RM Rehill and S/Sgt. Carroll initially, and then CIC West, once he took command of the critical incident. He participated in the critical incident response in a range of ways: providing direction by radio, making phone calls to secure resources, and coordinating with other members of the Northeast Nova supervisory team. When he testified before us, Sgt. O'Brien explained:

I have a very strong sense of responsibility for the members that I'm responsible to. I lost a member in 2017 who worked for me. My nightmare that night was I was going to lose another member.⁷⁶

We acknowledge the sincerity of Sgt. O'Brien's concern for his members. Nonetheless, we agree with the assessment in the Attorney General of Canada's final submissions to the Commission:

It is clear he should not have [become engaged in the critical incident response] after consuming alcohol ... His actions in getting involved through his radio transmissions ... were motivated by his feeling of responsibility for the members that he supervised.⁷⁷

We also observe it was incumbent on Sgt. O'Brien's supervising officers to direct him to disengage once they became aware that he was providing direction to responding members and performing other supervisory tasks while under the influence of alcohol.

Critical Incident Package

The RCMP critical incident package consists of the Emergency Medical Response Team, Emergency Response Team, critical incident scribes, Crisis Negotiation Team, and Police Dog Service. It also encompasses equipment such as the tactical armoured vehicle that provides a secure means of transport within a hot zone. During a critical incident, the critical incident commander also commands other RCMP resources, such as general duty members, air services, the Explosives Disposal Unit, and the division's radio workshop.

Resourcing the Critical Incident Response

After speaking to Acting Insp. Halliday at 10:42 pm, on April 18, 2000, S/Sgt. West called the support services officer for the RCMP in Nova Scotia, Supt. Darren Campbell. Supt. Campbell authorized the deployment of the critical incident package at 10:45 pm. S/Sgt. West recalled that this decision was made quickly because, based on the information shared by Acting Insp. Halliday, the ongoing incident was clearly "well beyond the capability of the front line, the first responders, [and required] some sort of tactical response to address it."⁷⁸ Similarly, Acting Insp. Halliday recalled, "[I]t was evident that [approval of the critical incident package] was going to be a rubber stamp."⁷⁹ Accordingly, specialist resources such as the Emergency Response Team were put on notice before Supt. Campbell's authorization

was confirmed. The call-out process required many individual phone calls: from RM Rehill to Acting Insp. Halliday, who telephoned S/Sgt. West, who in turn called the Emergency Response Team leader, crisis negotiator, scribe, and Supt. Campbell.

After receiving approval to deploy the critical incident package, S/Sgt. West began to call out other RCMP services including Police Dog Service, the Emergency Medical Response Team, the Explosives Disposal Unit, and the Crisis Negotiation Team. As noted above, he also called S/Sgt. Surette in case he was needed to assist as an alternative critical incident commander.

MAIN FINDING

The critical incident package call-out process was cumbersome, requiring many individual phone calls to supervisors and specialist resources.

S/Sgt. West assumed critical incident command at 1:19 am on April 19. Until that time, RM Rehill held ad hoc command of the IARD responders, members who were providing containment, and Emergency Response Team members as they began to arrive at Portapique. Acting Insp. Halliday, S/Sgt. Carroll, and S/Sgt. MacCallum supported the critical incident response by assembling resources, assigning tasks, and preparing for S/Sgt. West to assume command.

District Command Group Begins to Assemble

Acting Insp. Halliday, S/Sgt. MacCallum, and S/Sgt. Carroll arrived at the RCMP Bible Hill detachment between 11:00 pm and 11:38 pm on April 18, 2020. They started to muster resources, such as assessing maps of the Portapique area, constructing a profile of the perpetrator, and aiding in the call-out for other resources. At that time, none of these three non-commissioned officers had completed the RCMP training in critical incident command for front-line supervisors. (The RCMP describes this training as mandatory for front-line supervisors.)

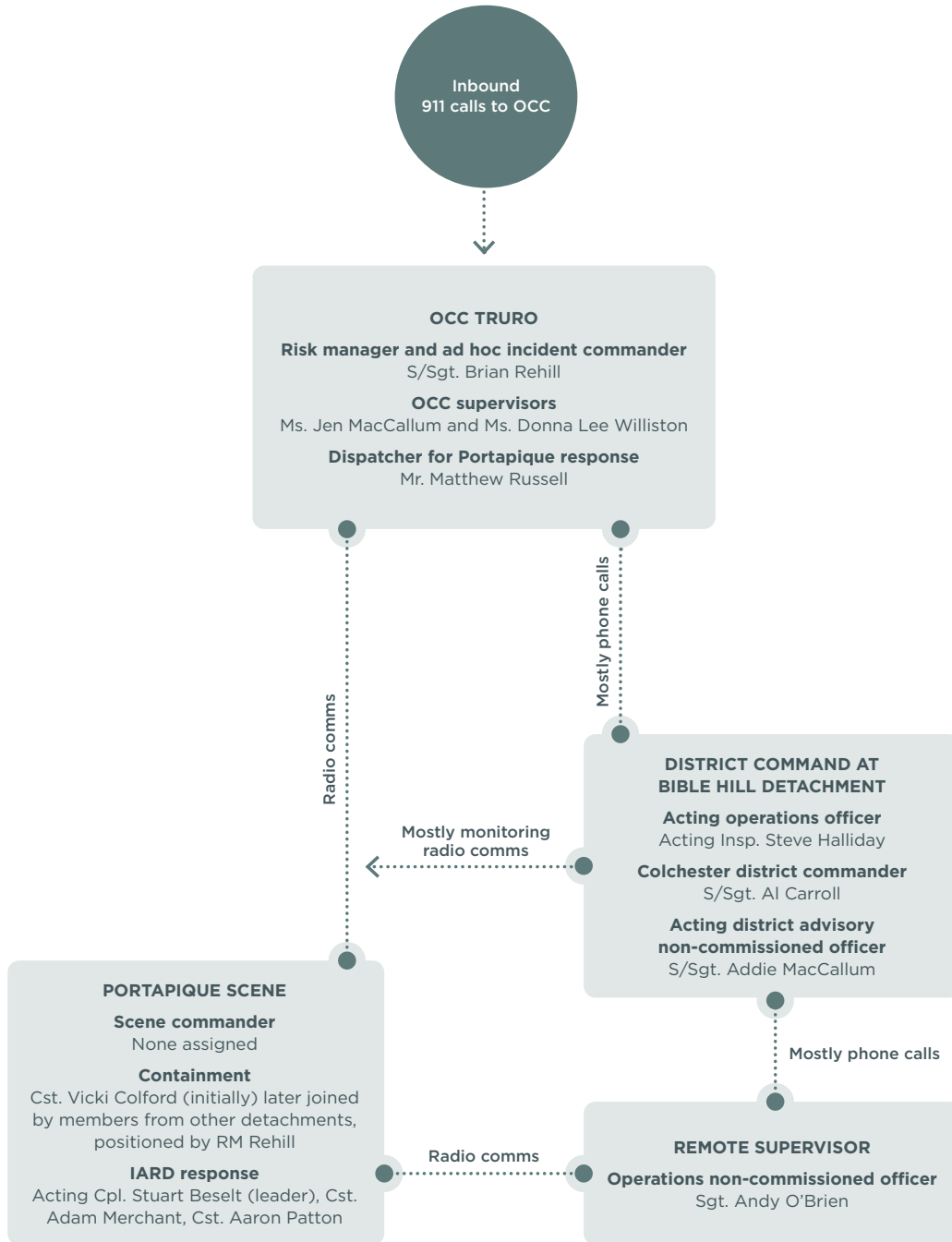
S/Sgt. Halliday testified that once he arrived at Bible Hill detachment, he was in charge of “the overall operation,” but decided to have RM Rehill continue to control resources on the ground as “ad hoc Incident Commander”:

So, when I got there, Al [Carroll] was in his office and he was on the radio ... he was working on his computer ... Addie [MacCallum] was at a workstation, gathering information and whatnot. I went into the boardroom in ... in Colchester [Bible Hill detachment]. At that time, I was advised that Brian Rehill, the Risk Manager, was still controlling the resources, and he was ... for all intents and purposes, the ad hoc Incident Commander ... there was still an awful lot of support work that needed to be done to make sure we were responding to this incident as efficiently and effectively as we could, [so] I decided to leave Brian in that role, allow him to control those resources so that I could focus on - on the big picture.⁸⁰

No one was deployed as scene commander in Portapique, and none of the senior officers went to the scene during the evening of April 18. Sgt. O'Brien was described as "coordinating the response and working to set up containment,"⁸¹ but was not tasked with the scene commander role. S/Sgt. Carroll had initially intended to attend the scene, but Acting Insp. Halliday asked him to remain at Bible Hill to help prepare for the critical incident commander's assumption of command.

The uncertainty about the assignment of responsibility among the district command group that assembled at Bible Hill detachment, Sgt. O'Brien and RM Rehill, created both gaps and unnecessary duplication of tasks within the critical incident response. We discuss the factors that contributed to this uncertainty in Volume 5, Policing.

RCMP Initial Response and Command Structure



MAIN FINDING

RCMP policy did not clearly assign supervisory roles and responsibilities for the period before a critical incident commander assumes command of the critical incident response. Uncertainty about these roles and responsibilities was evident from an early stage within the RCMP's response in Portapique.

MAIN FINDING

When it became apparent that Sgt. Andrew (Andy) O'Brien could not attend the scene to assume the role of scene commander, the district command group should have appointed an alternative scene commander.

The circumstances that created these gaps and uncertainty are explored in further detail in Volume 5, Policing.

Selection of Location for Command Post and Evacuation Centre

After arriving at the Bible Hill detachment, S/Sgt. MacCallum began to search for an appropriate location for a command post and evacuation centre. At 11:19 pm on April 18, he called Bass River fire chief Alfred Grue to ask if the Bass River fire hall could be used as a command post. Chief Grue agreed and advised that there was enough room. Sometime later, members realized that using the Bass River fire hall as a command post would require resources to skirt the hot zone in Portapique, thereby presenting a danger for non-police resources such as Emergency Health Services and civilian members of the RCMP in particular. For this reason, the decision was ultimately made to establish the command post at the Great Village fire hall.

Initial Strategic Decisions and Actions

While steps were being taken to prepare for S/Sgt. West’s arrival, RM Rehill and the other members of the command group began making initial strategic decisions and implementing them. The Commission has placed these decisions into four key areas: investigation, perimeter and containment, protection and preservation of life, and additional resources.

Investigation

The Perpetrator

Before the first-responding members arrived in Portapique, the OCC began taking steps to obtain further information about the perpetrator. OCC dispatch supervisor Jen MacCallum was able to use the information shared by initial 911 callers about the perpetrator’s name and the fact that he was a neighbour to obtain further information about him. Working together with call-taker supervisor Donna Lee Williston, she was able to ascertain the perpetrator’s full name, a possible date of birth, and a list of vehicles registered in his name. (As will become evident in Chapter 4, this list was incomplete because the perpetrator possessed a number of vehicles that were registered in the name of a company he controlled. He also owned at least one Ford Taurus he had not registered.)

OCC employees tried to locate a cellphone number for the perpetrator. OCC dispatcher Allie Trottier used her knowledge of the denturist profession and her contacts in the search for the perpetrator’s contact information. The perpetrator did not own a cellphone at the time of the mass casualty, but this information was not known to the RCMP during the early hours of the critical incident response.

The Perpetrator’s Cars and Replica RCMP Cruiser

At the outset of the critical incident response, the OCC heard that the perpetrator was driving a car that could be mistaken for a marked RCMP vehicle. We have already explained that this information was shared by several means: Ms. Blair’s 911 call, the 911 call from the Blair and McCully children, the 911 call from the MacDonalds, a phone conversation between Ms. MacDonald and RM Rehill, and a

radio transmission from IARD responder Cst. Patton, who conveyed information provided by the MacDonalds when he spoke with them at the top of Portapique Beach Road.

In response to this information, the RCMP initially reviewed the location of legitimate RCMP vehicles in the area. A Cumberland member said he believed that Sgt. Dave Lilly had a cottage in the Portapique area and suggested his vehicle might be the car that the caller reported. At 10:32 pm, after he had spoken to Ms. MacDonald, RM Rehill described his initial understanding of the scene to S/Sgt. Kevin Dunlevy – a trained critical incident commander who was not working at the time of the mass casualty. RM Rehill stated, “[T]hey’re, they’re saying someone in a police car is shooting people and we can’t nail it down. But we don’t think it’s a police car. I think somebody’s mixed up here.”⁸² Acting Insp. Halliday recalled that at 10:35 pm, when he spoke to RM Rehill, the risk manager said: “[B]ut it’s really strange, Steve, it’s – like a marked car is involved, like a police car is involved, and Dave Lilly’s name has come up.”⁸³

Between 10:35 pm and 10:47 pm, the RCMP sought to account for RCMP vehicles in Cumberland and Colchester counties to ensure that a real RCMP vehicle was not involved. These vehicles were all accounted for. Acting Insp. Halliday quickly reached Sgt. Lilly and was satisfied that he was not involved in any way. These investigations ended the concern that an RCMP member may have been responsible for the shootings in Portapique.

Members also considered other explanations for initial reports that the perpetrator was driving a police car. As first-responding members drove toward Portapique, dispatcher Matthew Russell updated them on the “police car.”⁸⁴ There was mention on the radio of the vehicle not being a “regular police car,”⁸⁵ and Cst. Travis Dow raised the possibility that the vehicle had been mistaken for a police car and might rather be a similar vehicle belonging to a local document server. These comments were added to the CAD log.

In his phone call with RM Martin Saulnier of RCMP J Division (New Brunswick) shortly before midnight, RM Rehill noted that the perpetrator might have been driving a white Taurus, possibly a rental, and that a white Taurus had been abandoned in a driveway in Portapique. He also observed: “He could be anywhere, stealing another vehicle for all we know.”⁸⁶

The RCMP supervisors who were involved in the initial critical incident response universally agreed that they had not contemplated that the perpetrator could have constructed a replica RCMP cruiser that was virtually indistinguishable from

authentic RCMP vehicles. In RM Rehill’s words, “[T]he photograph we saw the next day shocked us all.”⁸⁷ Instead, the critical incident response proceeded on the basis that community members had been mistaken in their description and that the car they described was most likely one of the decommissioned Ford Tauruses the perpetrator owned. The decals must have been imperfectly removed, they thought, so that a shadow of the former decals could be seen. In Volume 5, Policing, we analyze the combination of factors that led the RCMP to disbelieve the clear and consistent information that Portapique residents shared in the early minutes of the response.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP command group wrongly concluded that Portapique community members were mistaken when they reported seeing the perpetrator driving a fully marked RCMP cruiser. They were too quick to embrace an explanation that discounted the clear and consistent information that several eyewitnesses had provided independently of one another.

Other Investigative Efforts

The investigative efforts in this initial critical response period were very limited. In the absence of a scene commander, and lacking a clear assignment of responsibility for investigation, RCMP members were not reminded to collect names and contact information for those who passed through the containment point on Portapique Beach Road, including witnesses who were known to have encountered the perpetrator. For several hours, members of the command group were unaware that Mr. MacDonald was a surviving gunshot victim or that Ms. MacDonald was a surviving witness, both of whom knew the perpetrator and the Portapique community. Mr. Faulkner’s information was not obtained by the RCMP, and his identity was revealed only much later, after public controversy arose about the white vehicle that was recorded to have followed Mr. MacDonald out of Portapique. Initially, none of these witnesses were interviewed by RCMP investigators to see if they had more information that could assist the police response. Mr. MacDonald was eventually interviewed at 5:00 am on April 19, while the critical incident response remained ongoing, but Ms. MacDonald was not interviewed until the following day.

At 11:39 pm on April 18, S/Sgt. MacCallum contacted Jen MacCallum and requested that she ensure members conducting containment knew to check all vehicles leaving the area. At 11:41 pm, RCMP dispatcher Mr. Matthew Russell radioed the following direction:

11:41:35 PM – UM (RCMP OP3): 355 – for members attending there, Staff Sergeant advised to look in ah, every vehicle that's leaving ah, that area – they want to have a – a good thorough check every, ah – every vehicle leaving that area just in case there.⁸⁸

“355” is RCMP code for the Operational Communications Centre. Even in this transmission, members were not directed to collect contact information from drivers or passengers in these vehicles. As Mallory Colpitts pointed out in the quote we shared above, residents of Portapique were not canvassed to see if they could provide more information about the perpetrator and his vehicles.

MAIN FINDING

RCMP supervisors did not direct basic investigative steps during the initial critical incident response in Portapique, nor did they assign responding members to capture information that would facilitate investigation. Important community sources of information were ignored, with significant consequences for the critical incident response.

Perimeter and Containment

RM Rehill began giving directions to secure the perimeter at 10:44 pm on April 18, 2020. At this time, he was overtasked. As the sole supervisor on duty, without a scene commander on site in Portapique, he was monitoring the IARD responders, establishing containment, monitoring information coming into the OCC via 911 calls, and seeking to secure additional resources such as air support. He was aware that Cst. Colford was positioned at the intersection of Portapique Beach Road and Highway 2 and had been there since 10:32 pm. RM Rehill issued directions to general duty RCMP members to set up a containment perimeter beyond the

intersection of Portapique Beach Road and Highway 2. At 10:44 pm, he directed Cst. Chris Grund to establish a containment point on Highway 2 east of Portapique Beach Road, at Hillview Lane. As we explain in Volume 5, Policing, Cst. Grund appears not to have understood this instruction. Instead, he proceeded to Portapique Beach Road.

In an interview with Commission staff, RM Rehill described the rationale behind his initial containment efforts:

[W]here I set up containment, there was other little streets and stuff in there, I guess, or gravel – little gravel roads that, according to the mapping, he couldn't get out to the road from there. There was – it looked to me like there's just one way in and one way out. There's other roads that – amongst the community, but you have to come out that one road to get to the main road ... You have to come out Portapique Beach Road, which goes to the main road, and the others, you can't access the main road from the mapping that I had. So, that's where I had all the containment set up. But again, without local knowledge, and like, maybe there's a little dirt path that he could have driven on, I don't know, right. And that's the challenges we face in rural policing.⁸⁹

While Cst. Colford was providing support to the MacDonalds, Ms. MacDonald told her there was another road out of Portapique. As we explained above, Cst. Colford aired that information over her radio at 10:48 pm. She directed her broadcast to Millbrook members, who were then travelling west toward Portapique. Neither Millbrook member recalled hearing Cst. Colford's broadcast, nor did the dispatcher or a supervisor record this important information in the incident log. It was simply lost. When he testified, RM Rehill was asked about Cst. Colford's radio transmission. He said he may well have heard this broadcast, but that, in his mind, at 10:48 pm, "Grund is en route ... I already have him in my mind going to Hillview Lane" on Highway 2 east of Portapique. From this position, he would have secured the eastern perimeter well beyond the blueberry field road.⁹⁰

The command group did not realize that the eastern perimeter was not, in fact, secured, until approximately 5:00 am on April 19. We conclude in Volume 5, Policing, that, had an effective scene commander been in place, this gap in containment would have been identified far sooner.

The priority on containment was shared by other members of the command group. At 11:12 pm, S/Sgt. Carroll broadcast: "Make sure we get him locked down

in the area before CIC [critical incident commander] gets on scene.”⁹¹ One of S/Sgt. MacCallum’s priorities at this time was to oversee the development and maintenance of a perimeter around Portapique to contain the perpetrator. He intended to present his analysis to S/Sgt. West, to assist him when he assumed command. S/Sgt. MacCallum began this analysis at approximately 11:30 pm and developed his “initial profile / maps” over the next few hours.⁹² He concluded that the only escape route for a vehicle out of Portapique was via Portapique Beach Road.

These efforts were greatly hindered by S/Sgt. MacCallum’s inability to access or properly use mapping tools in the Bible Hill detachment. In his testimony S/Sgt. MacCallum described a frustrating course of events in which he tried and failed to obtain access to the CIIDS system and associated mapping tools on a number of computers before finally finding a computer that allowed him to log in; and even then, being unable to access the more useful mapping capabilities of the Pictometry software to which RCMP subscribes.

Pictometry is a visual intelligence system that uses aerial photography to create aerial “maps” of a given area in 3D. In a supplementary report produced by Commission investigators about maps of the Portapique area which were available via Pictometry in April 2020, the blueberry field road is plainly visible. While S/Sgt. MacCallum was familiar with Pictometry and would have valued having access to it, S/Sgt. Carroll had never used it. Acting Insp. Halliday, who was assigning tasks to S/Sgt. MacCallum and S/Sgt. Carroll, was largely unfamiliar with this tool. RM Rehill established containment largely on the basis of the Computer Integrated Information and Dispatching System (CIIDS) map, which also allowed him to see the location of some RCMP vehicles.

S/Sgt. MacCallum spent almost half an hour trying to find a computer that would allow him to access the CIIDS. He eventually pulled a map off the wall at the detachment and placed it on a table so that he and S/Sgt. Carroll could hand-draw their containment plan on it. Work on the Portapique containment points continued overnight.

We now know that the perpetrator used the track mentioned by Ms. MacDonald to leave Portapique just before Cst. Colford shared this information by police radio. As we explain in Volume 5, Policing, Cst. Grund likely passed the perpetrator on Highway 2 west of Great Village, but would not have had the opportunity to establish a containment point at Hillview Lane before the perpetrator passed that point. Given the timing, the information about blueberry field road may not have

prevented the perpetrator’s escape or allowed RCMP members to intercept him. Nonetheless, the belief that Portapique Beach Road was the only way out of Portapique, and that the eastern perimeter of Portapique was contained, influenced other decisions and actions over the course of the night of April 18/19. We detail the impacts of this error in Chapter 3.

MAIN FINDING

RCMP members did not have a good understanding of the geography of Portapique, and many had never been there before April 18, 2020. The RCMP did not seek out local knowledge about back roads, and information that was shared by a member who was on scene was overlooked.

MAIN FINDING

District command efforts to review containment were hampered by computer difficulties in the Bible Hill detachment. Not all RCMP supervisors were trained in the mapping technology to which the RCMP subscribes.

MAIN FINDING

During the initial critical incident response, and in the absence of a scene commander or an on-duty district supervisor, RM Rehill was overtasked.

Priorities of Life

When responding to a critical incident, the preservation of life is the single most important goal for every decision-maker. Supt. Wallace Gossen of the York Regional Police in Ontario is an experienced Canadian critical incident commander who also teaches critical incident command through the Canadian Police College. In a roundtable on critical incident response, he described how police define the priorities of life:

[T]he priorities of life for a [critical incident] commander is the exact same for the priorities of life of a front-line officer. It's the public, the officers, and the subject. So when they make those decisions ... everything is contextualized within that framework.⁹³

Supt. Gossen explained that critical incident commanders are taught to prioritize taking actions necessary to save lives – particularly civilian lives – within their decision-making. The IARD responders in Portapique acted in accordance with an RCMP policy that is designed to secure this value by requiring general duty members to move toward an active threat such as an active shooter in an effort to prevent them from causing further harm. However, the priorities of life also include saving lives – for example, evacuating those who can safely be evacuated or finding and tending to those who are injured.

During the initial response in Portapique – and for many hours following – the RCMP was focused on finding and stopping the perpetrator. This priority operated to the exclusion of rescue-oriented tasks such as finding and evacuating community members or searching for victims who may have been injured but survived their injury. By 11 pm, the RCMP was aware of four fatalities (Greg Blair, Jamie Blair, Lisa McCully, and Corrie Ellison). They had the information that Andrew MacDonald had been shot by the perpetrator and transported to hospital – although this information was not known to all members of the command group. They also knew that four children were sheltering together in Portapique and that one individual, Clinton Ellison, was missing and may have been hiding in the woods.

As we have seen, the actions of community members focused on warning others about the fires and sounds of gunshots, and many took active steps to check on the safety of neighbours and friends. We turn next to the efforts the RCMP made to protect Portapique residents.

Efforts to Protect Portapique Residents

At 10:47 pm on April 18, S/Sgt. Al Carroll contacted OCC dispatch supervisor Jen MacCallum to inquire whether community members in Portapique could be contacted through the 911 system and warned to shelter in place. The OCC's 911 system does not have a systematic way to contact residents of a community and does not routinely perform this function. When asked to do so, the OCC's employees engaged in a laborious process: “[W]e look at maps, we look at addresses, we

query our records management system, we find phone numbers ...”⁹⁴ Ms. Williston described this effort as “grasping at straws.”⁹⁵ The OCC was able to reach only three or four people by these means.

As midnight approached, the IARD responders discussed what should be done about the Blair and McCully children, who were at that point sheltering in the basement of the McCully home in Portapique. RM Rehill suggested either evacuating the children or having an RCMP member stay with them:

11:46:42 PM – UM (RCMP OP3): 355 here – is anyone with the children, the kids at the house?

11:46:47 PM – Cst. PATTON (H-05B04/H-BH P07): 10-10. [i.e., negative]

11:46:53 PM – Cst. MERCHANT (H-05B02/H-SW P10): That’s what we’re saying; we heard gunshots so we left after them. We think someone should go back and be with them.

11:47:02 PM – Cst. BESELT (H-05B06/H-BH P08): Or get them out of there – then we don’t have to worry about them at all.

11:47:07 PM – Cst. MERCHANT (H-05B02/H-SW P10): 10-4. [i.e., affirmative]

11:47:12 PM – S/Sgt. REHILL (RCMP OP7): If we can guys, get them out of there if it’s safe to do so, if not, somebody’s got to stay there and protect them. Are these three kids, would they have witnessed the shooting?

11:47:20 PM – Cst. PATTON (H-05B04/H-BH P07): Yeah, 10-4. Two kids are the neighbour kids, they’ve confirmed – parents deceased. And, other two kids in the house we’re assuming their parents are deceased – front lawn.

11:47:40 PM – Cst. BESELT (H-05B06/H-BH P08): The two neighbour kids I believe are the first call; the ah, father on the deck and the mother in the bedroom.

11:47:57 PM – Cst. BESELT (H-05B06/H-BH P08): I don’t want him to start that house on fire and ah, those kids be there. Let’s get somebody in there, two cars.⁹⁶

A few minutes after this conversation, Sgt. O’Brien directed two members who were stationed at the intersection of Portapique Beach Road and Highway 2 to

go to the McCully home to make sure the children were safe. One of the IARD responders, Cst. Patton, told these members that the “Code word to get those kids is ‘pineapple’ – they won’t come out without ‘pineapple.’⁹⁷ Cst. Grund and Cst. Neil immediately entered Portapique on foot and moved toward the McCully home.

The evacuation of the Blair and McCully children took place after midnight and is described in Chapter 3.

The RCMP made some efforts to alert Portapique residents to the dangerous situation in their community. The IARD responders advised community members they encountered to leave Portapique and knocked on some doors as they passed through the community. Some 911 call-takers advised Portapique residents who called them to lock their doors and stay away from windows. But the command group gave no consideration to systematically canvassing Portapique homes, either to warn residents to protect themselves or to look for victims who may have been injured but not killed. Their approach represented a significant failure to implement the priority of preserving life.

Supporting First Responders

The RCMP command group and the OCC were responsible for providing adequate information to responding members, including IARD responders and those involved in establishing and maintaining the containment perimeter. In our proceedings, Kerry Murray-Bates explained the important role played by the communications centre in ensuring that responding members are well informed. Ms. Murray-Bates is Manager of Communications at the Toronto Police Communications Centre (911 Public Service Answering Point for the City of Toronto). She explained that call-takers should be trained to record everything shared by a 911 caller and also to record their own observations – for example, sounds heard in the background. A dispatcher, in turn, should convey this information to responding members with as little reinterpretation as possible. Dispatchers are also responsible for capturing information shared by responding members:

50 percent of the dispatcher’s job is to give out information but also to receive information, and make sure that everyone else that needs to hear it hears it. So often, our dispatchers will repeat what the officers have said, and make sure that everyone – so it actually gets broadcast twice.⁹⁸

The communication channel should operate in two directions: dispatchers should also be listening for and integrating information shared by those on the scene. Scene commanders assist with the orderly management of information flowing between responding members and those who are off site.

By 11:15 pm, IARD responders on the ground in Portapique sought instructions from RM Rehill on how to proceed:

11:14:36 PM – Cst. BESELT (H-05B06/H-BH P08): Staff REHILL, do you want us just to sit tight here 'cause, if this is active shooter I don't want to ah, I just don't know where he is right now.

11:14:45 PM – S/Sgt. REHILL (RCMP OP7): 10-4. The best thing we can do is all shelter-in-place the best we can, ERT is on route. Um, Staff HALLIDAY's heading to Colchester. Ah, do as much as we can just to stay safe for now until ERT arrives on scene.⁹⁹

At 11:45:29 pm, Cst. Neil inquired about who had command of RCMP operations in Portapique. He sought guidance from the risk manager on what members at the head of Portapique Beach Road and Highway 2 should be doing:

11:45:29 PM – Cst. NEIL (H-30B05/H-PC P12): I don't know who's got the Command.

11:45:35 PM – S/Sgt. CARROLL (H-BH P03): Staff REHILL has Command, folks – Staff REHILL has Command.

11:45:41 PM – Cst. NEIL (H30B05/H-PC 12): Staff REHILL from NEIL we've got five members down at the end of Portapique um, Beach road, at number 2. Give us something to do.¹⁰⁰

According to Acting Insp. Halliday's notes, he called Sgt. O'Brien at 11:50 pm and instructed him to radio RCMP members regarding potential engagement with the perpetrator. Members were reminded of their authority to "challenge if able and use as much force as necessary to stop the threat."¹⁰¹ Sgt. O'Brien radioed the following message over the RCMP Colchester radio group at 11:59 pm:

11:59:01 PM – Sgt. O'BRIEN (H-BH P05): All members on scene, if you encounter the suspect, you are to challenge him, if he does not follow

your commands, if you feel that there's a threat, you're as - to use as much force as is reasonable to eliminate the threat. Everybody copy?¹⁰²

Dispatch and two responding members replied that they copied this information.

In Volume 5, Policing, we return to the topic of communications between responding members and those RCMP members and dispatchers who were situated away from the scene. There, we evaluate the quality of support offered by the Operational Communications Centre and command group to the first responders.

Decision Regarding Second IARD Response

At 11:20:08 pm, Cst. Grund radioed from the head of Portapique Beach Road asking if a second group of IARD responders should be sent into Portapique. RM Rehill did not immediately respond to this broadcast. At that time, RM Rehill had called Cpl. Lisa Croteau, the on-duty public information officer, updating her on the situation and warning her that the media would probably soon be seeking information.

Less than a minute later, Cst. Grund again broadcast a message to the risk manager, indicating that another group of RCMP members could be sent into Portapique. Sgt. O'Brien answered, instructing him to hold off because of concerns about potential blue-on-blue crossfire. The expression "blue-on-blue" refers to a situation in which a police officer uses force on another police officer in error.

Cst. Grund's request to form a second IARD response prompted a key decision point for RCMP command. A group of three members stood ready and willing to enter Portapique, either to join the search for the perpetrator or to rescue the children. However, the RCMP lacked technology that would permit supervisors to keep track of responding members while they were on foot. Compounding this issue, the risk manager who might otherwise have been capable of coordinating and monitoring the movements of more than one group was already stretched beyond capacity. Meaningful command support had not yet arrived. Given that responders were presented with a dark and chaotic hot zone in a location that was entirely unfamiliar to most of them, there may have been sufficient reasons not to approve a second IARD response at that time. However, this initial position should have been re-evaluated in accordance with the priorities of life.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP did not make effective systematic efforts to alert Portapique residents to the threat presented by the perpetrator or to look for potential injured victims. The initial Immediate Action Rapid Deployment (IARD) responders focused on finding the perpetrator, and this focus was appropriate for that group. However, the overall command decision-making did not adequately consider how best to protect and, if necessary, to rescue Portapique residents.

Additional Resources

RM Rehill and OCC supervisors continued to seek additional resources for the critical incident response. This included attempts to secure air support and engagement with New Brunswick RCMP’s J Division.

Air Support

At 11:10 pm on April 18, 2020, OCC dispatch supervisor Ms. MacCallum called the risk manager of J Division, S/Sgt. Martin Saulnier, to request support from the RCMP Atlantic Region Air Services. RM Saulnier indicated he would inquire about availability and call back. Less than 10 minutes later, RCMP Air Services advised that the helicopter in New Brunswick was “Off Duty Sick.” It had been disassembled for regularly scheduled maintenance and would not be available until May 12.

OCC call-taker supervisor Ms. Williston called the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC) in Halifax at 11:45 pm seeking aircraft support with forward-looking infrared capability (FLIR). The JRCC is a Halifax-based search and rescue service operated by the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Canadian Coast Guard. It is responsible for coordinating search and rescue operations in relation to air and marine incidents within the Halifax search and rescue region, which includes all four Atlantic provinces, the eastern half of Quebec, the southern half of Baffin Island in Nunavut, and the northwestern quadrant of the Atlantic Ocean. FLIR, a form of thermal imaging that shows a heat signature, helps, for example, to find humans and other mammals in the woods at night. Staff at the centre replied that “none of our air assistance have FLIR and they, our assets would not go for an active

shooter anyways.”¹⁰³ They suggested contacting Transport Canada or one of the provincial airlines.

Even if the RCMP Air Services helicopter had been operational and a pilot was able to deploy quickly, it would have had to fly from Moncton. The perpetrator left Portapique before the OCC made the inquiry about the helicopter’s availability, so it could not have assisted in locating him inside the containment area. It could, however, have helped to locate Lisa Banfield and Clinton Ellison and to provide air cover overnight to assist in a canvass of the neighborhood. Had it been available, it may also have assisted the RCMP members to determine that the perpetrator was no longer in Portapique. From early on, the lack of timely air support was detrimental to the critical incident response.

The RCMP command group was not aware of the scheduled maintenance of the RCMP air support, and the RCMP had no plans in place for an alternative. The OCC continued its search for another source of air support overnight and in the early morning of April 19, and we discuss these efforts and results in the next two chapters. These efforts and the time and resources spent scrambling to find air support detracted from the overall critical incident response. We provide more analysis of the lack of provision for air support and information about steps taken by the RCMP since April 2020 to address this gap in Volume 5, Policing.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP’s lack of preparation and contingency planning for air support to be provided during a critical incident when maintenance is being conducted created a distraction for Operational Communications Centre (OCC) employees and command. The search for an alternative helicopter diverted these personnel from other important tasks.

RCMP J Division (New Brunswick)

Shortly before midnight, RM Saulnier of J Division called the OCC and spoke with RM Rehill. In response to his offer of assistance, RM Rehill said that H Division currently had enough resources, but he might soon request aid and resources from J Division’s critical incident commander.

RCMP Executive Leadership

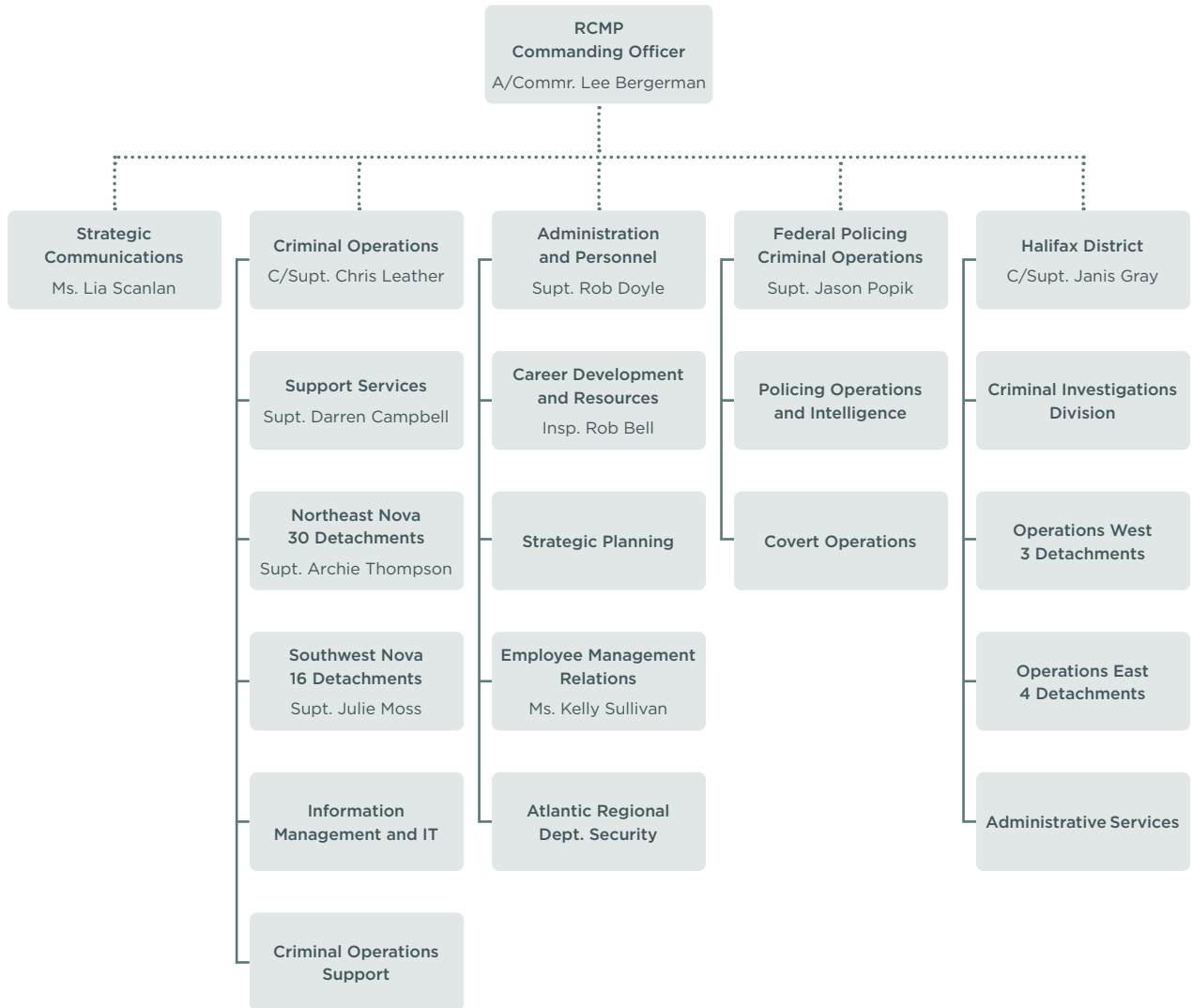
In this report, we use the term “executive leadership” to refer to RCMP officers who occupy the most senior positions within H Division, senior members within the Contract and Indigenous Policing group in national headquarters, equivalent senior civilian employees such as the chief human resources officer, and the RCMP’s commissioner and deputy commissioners. If these personnel are sworn RCMP members, they are commissioned officers in non-union positions. The executive leadership oversees the use and deployment of police resources, including budget, employees, facilities, and equipment, and is responsible for the preparation and management of those resources. Ultimately, it is responsible for the quality of police services delivered by the RCMP, including the quality of critical incident response.

In April 2020, A/Commr. Lee Bergerman was the commanding officer of H Division and sat at the top of the RCMP chain of command for Nova Scotia. C/Supt. Chris Leather was second in command as the criminal operations officer. Supt. Darren Campbell held the role of support services officer, with authority to approve the critical incident package. Insp. Don Moser was the assistant support services officer, and Insp. Dustine Rodier the officer in charge of operational support and communications centre. Supt. Archie Thompson was the district policing officer for the Northeast Nova District, which encompassed northern Nova Scotia.

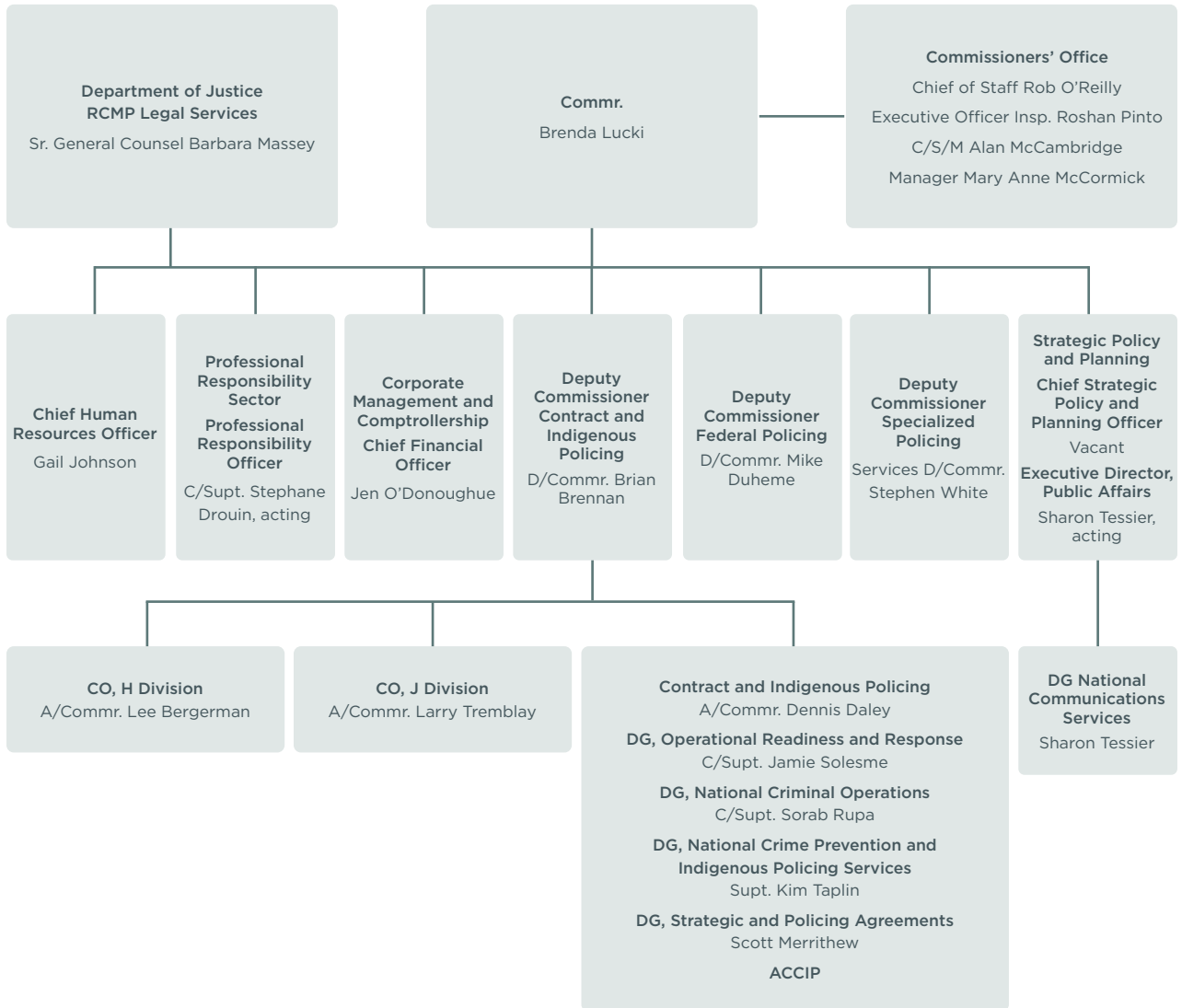
During a critical incident response, executive leadership may play a number of roles. Perhaps most immediately, in April 2020 these leaders were responsible for approving the deployment of resources necessary to support operations. They were also responsible for “briefing up” the chain of command – ensuring that officers senior to them were apprised of important information in a timely manner. During the initial stages of the critical incident response, many senior officers seemingly had little role to play after they had been notified of what was happening in Portapique and approved the deployment of necessary resources.

Supt. Campbell was informed of the homicides and the active shooter situation in Portapique by S/Sgt. West and approved the critical incident package “with minimal details” at 10:46 pm.¹⁰⁴ At 11:08 pm, C/Supt. Leather sent a text message to Supt. Campbell about the situation. A few minutes later, Supt. Campbell responded via text and advised that the resources of the Major Crime Unit were stretched thin, and he would have to get the Southwest Nova Major Crime Unit to assist. At that time, C/Supt. Leather was not provided with further information about the incident

RCMP H Division Command Structure as in April 2020



RCMP National Command Structure as in April 2020 (Relevant Extractions)



or the members who responded. H Division's Strategic Communications Unit standard operating procedures state that the criminal operations officer is responsible for advising that unit of a major incident such as a homicide. However, it was RM Rehill who advised Cpl. Croteau, the public information officer, on the evening of April 18. In turn, Cpl. Croteau advised Ms. Lia Scanlan, the director of the Strategic Communications Unit, on the morning of April 19.

A/Commr. Bergerman was informed by text message on April 18 that there had been a shooting incident, but did not receive any details until the morning of April 19.

Other Responding Agencies and Interagency Communications

A critical incident response inevitably engages a wide range of police and other emergency services. Some agencies were part of the response to the initial 911 call, and others were contacted by the RCMP as the incident developed overnight and into the day of April 19. These agencies included Emergency Health Services, Volunteer Fire Services, Truro Police Service, and the Halifax Regional Police.

Emergency Health Services

Two ambulances initially responded to Portapique and others were subsequently staged at the Great Village fire hall. Before midnight, EHS paramedics attended to Andrew and Kate MacDonald, and remained close in case other surviving victims were found. In Volume 5, Policing, we discuss the information that was and was not shared with paramedics and EHS dispatch over the course of the mass casualty, and the concerns that EHS personnel subsequently raised about the RCMP's lack of attention to sharing information with and ensuring the safety of paramedics.

Volunteer Fire Services

Volunteer fire services from the Bass River Fire Brigade staged (prepared to assist) during the mass casualty. In an interview with the Commission, the brigade’s Chief Alfred Grue explained that he first became aware of the incident in Portapique when the fire dispatch, Valley Communications, called to advise him of the incident. Recognizing the seriousness and potential danger associated with this call, Chief Grue gathered with a small group at the fire hall and travelled to Five Houses Road, about 1 kilometre from the intersection of Highway 2 and Portapique Beach Road, to assess the situation.

At 11:19 pm on April 18, during a call about the location of the command post with S/Sgt. MacCallum, Chief Grue also advised that the Bass River fire responders were currently staged “just up the road from your members here at Five Houses now.”¹⁰⁵ S/Sgt. MacCallum requested that, owing to safety concerns, the firefighters move back to the Bass River fire hall and stage there. Around midnight, Valley Communications also informed Chief Grue that the RCMP had advised that the scene was not safe and that the volunteers should return to their fire hall. They followed that instruction.

Bass River fire services were permitted entry into Portapique around noon on April 19 to put out fire “hot spots.”¹⁰⁶

Chief Larry Kinsman of the Great Village and District Volunteer Fire Brigade was contacted and confirmed that the Great Village fire hall could be used as a command post. During the time the IARD responders were in Portapique, Great Village fire services volunteers staged at the Great Village fire hall. The volunteers provided informal assistance to police, including food supplies. They were not permitted entry into Portapique until around noon on April 19, where, along with the Bass River volunteer services, they put out some spot fires.

Halifax Regional Police

At 11:52 pm on April 18, 2020, OCC dispatch supervisor Jen MacCallum called the Halifax Regional Police to alert them of the Portapique incident and the likelihood that 911 overflow calls might be rerouted to the Halifax Integrated Emergency Services. We discuss in Chapter 3 how the Halifax Regional Police joined the critical incident response during the overnight period of April 18/19.

Truro Police Service

The Truro Police Service was not engaged in the critical incident response until the early hours of April 19. The RCMP command group did not identify a role for Truro Police Service during the early stages of the critical incident response.

We discuss our conclusions about the role of other agencies and interagency communication in Chapter 6.

Public Communications

Public communications are a vital aspect of a critical incident response, and the media becomes an important partner to assist in communications during the incident. The Emergency Management Office can also play a central role, depending on the nature of the critical incident.

In this section, we provide an introduction to the history of RCMP decision-making about the Canadian emergency alerting system, which is known by the trade name Alert Ready. We also supply an overview of RCMP policy regarding public communications and the responsibilities under this policy, and we provide an account of the steps the RCMP took with respect to public communications on April 18, 2020.

History of the RCMP's Decision-Making About Alert Ready

In testimony before the Commission, many RCMP members and officers emphasized that on April 18 and 19, 2020, they were unaware that it was possible to send a direct public alert to cellphones in Nova Scotia to warn the public about an active threat. The Commission's investigation revealed that decisions H Division made in 2011-12 set a course that prevented the RCMP from adopting Alert Ready as a tool for public safety messaging. In 2011, Mark Furey was a staff sergeant and emergency program manager for the RCMP. (At the time of the mass casualty, he had retired from the RCMP and was serving as minister of justice for Nova Scotia.) In

early 2012, S/Sgt. Furey wrote a briefing note to the support services officer and the criminal operations officer recommending that H Division consider a proposal the Nova Scotia Emergency Management Office had made for the RCMP to use a public alerting system. He later elaborated on his analysis in a further briefing note. In an interview with Commission staff, Mr. Furey described numerous difficult discussions he had regarding his enthusiasm for the opportunities a public alerting system presented. His superiors were not supportive of the RCMP accessing this tool for public safety messaging. At the time, most people considered it for use only in natural and weather disasters. Mr. Furey told the Commission he was never given any reason for his superiors' opposition, but the experience contributed to his decision to retire early from the RCMP.

We explore the subsequent development of Alert Ready and efforts by the Nova Scotia Emergency Management Office to inform the RCMP about its potential uses in Volume 5, Policing. For now, it is sufficient to note that on April 18 and 19, 2020, the OCC and the command group were not aware that Alert Ready could be used to provide public information about an active threat. For this reason, they did not consider using it during the early hours of the mass casualty.

RCMP Public Communications Policy and Responsibilities

According to the RCMP's Instructions / Standard Operating Procedures for Risk Managers Re Media Relations: "The RCMP has a duty to inform the public on public safety issues."¹⁰⁷ The document further states:

Please note if there was a significant public safety or public interest issue (homicide etc.), the Strategic Communications Unit would be engaged by the Criminal Operations Officer to manage situations of that nature.¹⁰⁸

As we have noted, C/Supt. Leather did not engage the Strategic Communications Unit on the evening of April 18. The unit became involved in the morning of April 19 by another means.

The Strategic Communications Unit of H Division – often referred to as "Strat Comms" – is responsible for public communications from the RCMP. This unit drafts media releases and communications from the RCMP to the public, sends them for

translation and to news agencies, and publishes information on the RCMP’s website and via its Facebook and Twitter accounts. It is also responsible for liaising with media outlets and other stakeholders.

At the time of the mass casualty, the RCMP used Twitter and Facebook as its two primary methods of communicating with the media and directly with the public. When detachments or critical incident commanders decide to send out communications to the public, they provide the information that may be shared to the Strategic Communications Unit, which then issues the communication. The unit also uses an email distribution list to send out news releases to “all the news agencies.”¹⁰⁹

Issue of Emergency Broadcast

At 11:16 pm on April 18, 2020, Acting Cpl. Beselt radioed from Portapique to ask whether an emergency broadcast could be used to tell residents to shelter in their homes. RM Rehill responded that the 911 map was being used to warn residents in the area. S/Sgt. MacCallum and S/Sgt. Carroll believed that the OCC had greater technological capability to contact residents in a particular area than was in fact the case. They were not aware of how ineffective this system was or how few people were warned.



Twitter post made by RCMP NS, April 18, 2020, at 11:32 pm: COMM0013645

At 11:20:56 pm, RM Rehill contacted Cpl. Croteau, the on-call RCMP public information officer of the Strategic Communications Unit, at home to inform her about the developing situation in Portapique. Approximately 10 minutes later, Sgt. Andy O’Brien contacted Cpl. Croteau “to ask that [a] social media post be made to advise people to stay in their houses as there was an active shooter in the area.”¹¹⁰ Cpl. Croteau, in describing the request, stated, “He advised me that he wanted me to put out a Twitter message saying that the people needed to shelter in place in the Portapique area.”¹¹¹

At 11:32 pm on April 18, the RCMP posted its first tweet about the mass casualty. This text was prepared by the Strategic

Communications Unit using an existing bank of social media texts and was approved by Sgt. O’Brien. It stated that the RCMP was “responding to a firearms complaint in the #Portapique area. (Portapique Beach Rd, Bay Shore Rd and Five Houses Rd.)”¹¹² The public was “asked to avoid the area and stay in their homes with doors locked at this time.”¹¹³

The tweet was released one-and-a-half hours after Jamie Blair’s 911 call reported the homicide of her husband, Greg, and Ms. Blair was presumed dead. Two further homicides, of Lisa McCully and Corrie Ellison, had been confirmed by the IARD responders. The phrase “responding to a firearms complaint” in no way conveyed the public safety concerns arising from the perpetration of four homicides within such a short period of time and the fact that the perpetrator of these killings remained at large and potentially active.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP public communications during the evening of April 18, 2020, seriously understated the threat presented by the perpetrator and the associated risks to the public.

Our additional findings and recommendations can be found in Volume 4, Community, Chapter 1.

Status at Midnight, April 18, 2020

The mass casualty began with the perpetrator’s violent assault of his common law spouse, Lisa Banfield. Despite the serious injuries resulting from the assault and the perpetrator’s effort to confine her, Ms. Banfield was able to escape from him before he set the warehouse on fire and committed his first murder. These facts were unknown to the first responders, the Operational Communications Centre (OCC), and RCMP commanders.

Community members were an essential part of the initial response to the escalation of the perpetrator’s violence, which resulted in 13 fatalities and 1 further injury

in Portapique. The RCMP did not adequately recognize their central role, and the indispensable information community members could provide was not factored into the RCMP's response.

The trained emergency responders, the RCMP first-responding members, acted appropriately when they established an Immediate Action Rapid Deployment (IARD) response, to find and stop the active threat, and set an initial containment point near the intersection of Portapique Beach Road and Highway 2. These responders acted with great courage in an extremely dangerous environment. The RCMP's failure to assign a scene commander created gaps in the initial critical incident response. These gaps meant that aspects of the response were not well coordinated and that important tasks, such as identifying eyewitnesses and flagging the need to conduct interviews, were overlooked. In the last hour of April 18, additional members from RCMP detachments in Colchester and Cumberland counties arrived on scene, as did members of the RCMP Emergency Response Team.

The OCC and the RCMP commanders made decisions and took actions in the context of little information, as is typical in an initial critical incident response. These limitations were worsened by systemic failures to accurately and fully capture information provided by community members, to communicate the information that was obtained from community members through the chain of command, and to act on that information. The lack of a good understanding of the geography of Portapique hampered the response, and this inadequacy was compounded by the RCMP command group's inability to effectively access mapping tools and to seek out local knowledge.

The RCMP did not establish critical incident command until more than three hours after the first fatality. The impact of this troubling delay was worsened by the RCMP failure to clearly assign roles and responsibilities in the ad hoc command group during this crucial period. The critical incident package call-out process was cumbersome, requiring many individual phone calls to supervisors and specialist resources, and the lack of timely air support was also detrimental to police efforts.

During the initial response in Portapique – and for many hours following – the RCMP was focused on finding and stopping the perpetrator. This priority operated to the exclusion of rescue-oriented tasks such as systematically finding, warning, and evacuating community members or searching for victims who may have been injured but alive. Furthermore, the RCMP public communication, sent by Twitter during the evening of April 18, seriously understated the threat presented by the perpetrator and the associated risks to the public.

A wide range of police and other emergency services joined the critical incident response. Some agencies were part of the response to the initial 911 call, and others were contacted by the RCMP as the incident developed overnight and into the day of April 19. These agencies included Emergency Health Services, Volunteer Fire Services, Truro Police Service, and the Halifax Regional Police. During this initial period, the work of some emergency services was hampered by the direct and immediate threat posed by the perpetrator: an active shooter and intense, uncontrolled blazes.

As midnight marked the transition from April 18 to April 19, 13 members of the Portapique community were dead, and two more victims had been physically injured. The Blair and McCully children were hiding in the basement of the McCully home, where they had now been joined by RCMP members. The Blair children knew that their parents had been killed, while the McCully children feared that their mother was also dead. Lisa Banfield and Clinton Ellison were hiding in the Portapique woods. Five fires were burning. The eastern perimeter of Portapique was not contained, and in the absence of a scene commander, RCMP command did not realize that a gap existed in their perimeter. At least three surviving eyewitnesses had not been identified to the command group or interviewed. The RCMP had discounted the clear and consistent information it had received from community members about the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser and overlooked the information it received from Ms. MacDonald about the possibility of an alternative way out of Portapique.

Two hours after the first fatality, the perpetrator's whereabouts remained unknown.

CHAPTER 3

Events Overnight

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Overview

On April 18, 2020, the perpetrator drove from Portapique to Debert and stayed overnight in the Debert Business Park, arriving there at around 11:10 pm that night. He left early in the morning of April 19, shortly before 5:45 am. His overnight actions were unknown to the RCMP until a week after the mass casualty when, during the RCMP's Operation H-Strong investigation, a community member called investigators with new information. Our account of the perpetrator's actions is based on evidence obtained after the RCMP received this tip, augmented by the Commission's independent investigation.

Back at the Great Village command post, RCMP commanders believed that the perpetrator was contained in Portapique, and this belief shaped the critical incident response during the overnight period. In the late hours of April 18 to the morning of April 19, the RCMP response continued to operationalize the decisions and strategies described in Chapter 2. Though the fires and sounds of explosions continued into the early hours, as the night wore on the scene in Portapique appeared to quiet down.

In this chapter, we describe what happened between approximately midnight and 6:00 am on April 19. These six hours were an important time, in which RCMP members were gathering more information about the perpetrator and the situation in Portapique while seeking to make sense of what had unfolded. In the first section of this chapter, we explain the perpetrator's actions during this overnight period. We then turn to the RCMP response on the ground in Portapique and Five Houses, and explain the actions taken by police responders. The third section discusses the work done in the RCMP Operational Communications Centre overnight and the fourth section turns to the strategic decisions and actions taken by the RCMP, particularly by the command group, as S/Sgt. West assumed command of the overall

response and the command group came together at the Great Village Fire Hall. We then discuss the persistence of issues with communication and coordination of the critical incident response, before finally discussing the steps taken overnight by community members to share information and assist one another. We conclude this chapter by explaining the status of the critical incident response at 6:00 am on April 19.

Perpetrator's Actions Overnight

Geographic Orientation

On April 18, 2020, after leaving Portapique, the perpetrator travelled in his replica RCMP cruiser through Great Village to Debert. The community of Debert is located in Colchester County. It is situated approximately 24.4 kilometres northeast of Portapique, approximately 15.6 kilometres northeast of Great Village, and approximately 20 kilometres northwest of Truro.

The community of Debert surrounds a decommissioned airbase. After the airbase was decommissioned in the 1970s, the Province of Nova Scotia purchased the land. The property was subsequently transformed into the Debert Air Industrial Park. In 2008, the Province transferred ownership of the industrial park to the Municipality of the County of Colchester, where it forms part of the land holdings available for development as part of the Debert Business Park.

The Debert Business Park comprises several districts and includes Debert Airport. The perpetrator parked overnight in the Ventura District of the business park. The Ventura District contains a number of significant installations, such as the Debert Hospitality Centre and the Debert Diefenbunker, as well as a number of small businesses. The principal thoroughfare is Ventura Drive, which is the main access road to most of the businesses. There are some unmarked roads between the businesses.

Reconstruction of the Perpetrator's Actions

The perpetrator's actions overnight were reconstructed by the RCMP after the mass casualty using video surveillance; civilian witness observations; and, later, additional physical evidence uncovered during the RCMP investigations and based on a tip from a Debert business owner on April 26, 2020. The tip came from Brian MacDonald, owner of B. MacDonald's Portable Welding at the corner of Ventura Drive and Messina Drive, in the Ventura District of the Debert Business Park. Messina Drive connects to an unnamed road to form a square loop off Ventura Drive; at the southwest corner of Messina Drive, an unmarked road continues west to a small gravel parking lot. The parking lot is surrounded by brush and vegetation. It is obscured from view from Ventura Drive by trees and the welding shop building.

On April 26, 2020, Mr. MacDonald took a walk behind his welding and steel fabrication shop. He noticed some things he had not seen before. In particular, he spotted a "plastic case that holds bullets."¹ This observation prompted a closer inspection of the area, whereupon he saw two boots and a gun holster in the bushes. Mr. MacDonald called the RCMP with this information.

Based on the subsequent RCMP investigation, we are able to reconstruct the perpetrator's likely movements from when he left Portapique at about 10:45 pm on April 18 to 5:45 am on April 19, 2020.

The precise route taken between these two communities is unknown. As we explained in Chapter 2, surveillance footage shows the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser in Great Village at 10:51 pm. Witness observations suggest that the perpetrator proceeded north from Great Village on Station Road. Surveillance footage recorded in Debert at 11:08 pm shows the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser driving north on Masstown Road and turning right on Plains Road to travel east toward the Debert Business Park. The perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser was further captured on video entering the Debert Business Park, via Ventura Drive, at approximately 11:10 pm. These videos provide us with an account of where the perpetrator was coming from and where he was going.

On the night of April 18, 2020, Valerie Smith was in her residence on Station Road, just north of Highway 2 in Great Village. Although Ms. Smith could not be precise about timing, she recalled first seeing police cruisers travelling southwest heading toward Portapique on Highway 2. Then she observed a marked RCMP cruiser coming from the Portapique direction travelling rapidly using only its daytime running lights - no flashing lights, no siren, and indeed no headlights or tail lights.

Ms. Smith observed the RCMP cruiser turn off Highway 2 and pass her residence, bearing north on Station Road toward Londonderry. She found the lack of lights on the vehicle strange and shouted to her boyfriend:

“What the hell, why is there a marked cop car coming back?” I say, “All the other cop cars are going to Portapique. Why is this car coming back this way with no lights on, only running lights?”²

Ms. Smith explained that it was difficult to make out the car’s shape as a result of the lack of lights.

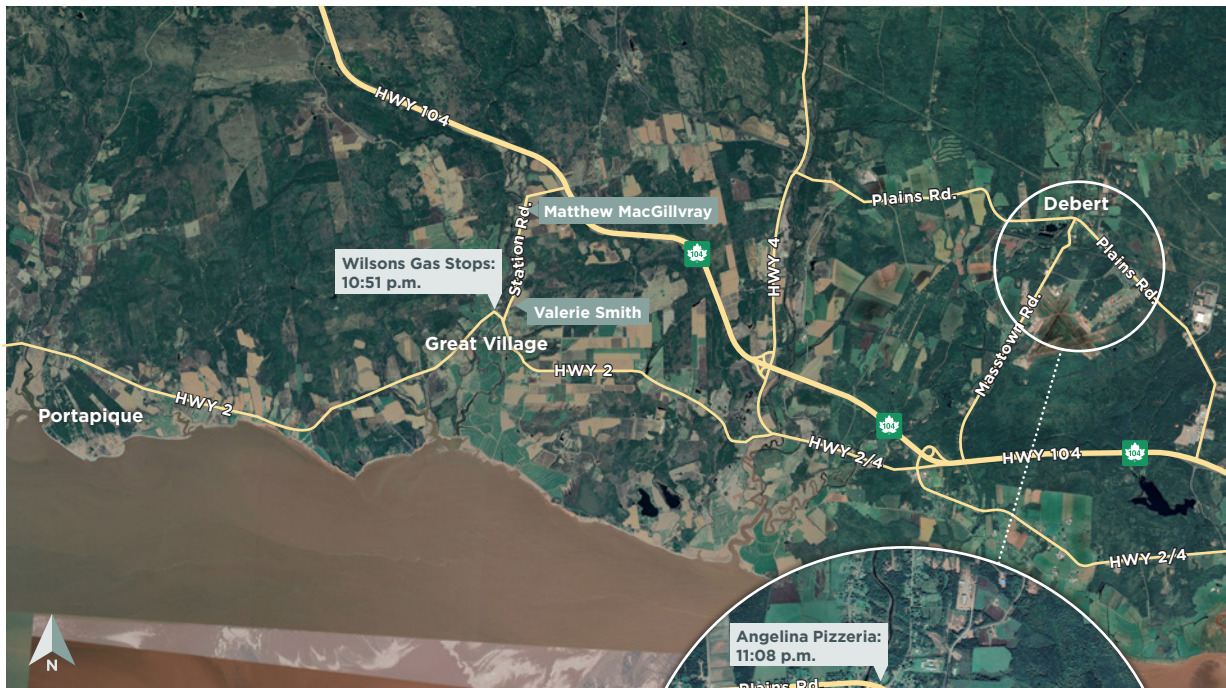
Matthew MacGillvray, who was at his residence on Station Road west of Highway 104 that night, also saw a “cruiser” that “looked like a cop car” travelling north-bound at a speed of approximately 70 kilometres per hour at around 11:05 pm; five minutes later, he heard a siren and saw red and blue flashing lights from another vehicle driving south at a high speed.

Video surveillance from several local businesses shows what appears to be an RCMP cruiser with a black push bar travelling through Debert and into the Debert Business Park from 11:08 pm to 11:11 pm on April 18, 2020. No additional surveillance video of the perpetrator’s actions overnight in Debert has been located. However, there are several eyewitness accounts of his actions between midnight and 1:00 am on April 19.

Three community members, including two youths, provided statements to the RCMP that, after midnight, they had seen a police patrol cruiser in the Debert Business Park. One youth described the car as having a “bash bar”: “Like the black thing that they put on the front of the car.”³ The two youths saw the perpetrator driving erratically in and around the parking areas of the Debert Business Park. One youth described him as driving very slowly, “just scoping out stuff”; he was “driving really, really slow, so it was really weird” and “he just wasn’t acting like a police officer.”⁴ The two youths were concerned that they could get into trouble for socializing during the lockdown measures the Province of Nova Scotia had put in place at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 22, 2020, the Government of Nova Scotia had declared a state of emergency, closed provincial parks, and advised Nova Scotians to leave their homes only for essential purposes.

At about 1:00 am, the third witness, Dave Brown, was on the deck of his home in this area and saw what he believed to be a marked police car parked about 30 feet

Perpetrator's Movements Through Great Village and Debert on April 18, 2020



Map Data | Google, ©2023 CNES / Airbus

away. He made no other observations of the vehicle or whether there was anyone around.

Footage from the same local businesses captured images of the perpetrator retracing his route out of the Debert Business Park – east on Ventura Drive, left onto Plains Road, heading westbound. This footage is captured beginning at around 5:41 am on April 19, with glimpses of headlights on one surveillance video camera followed by clear footage of the replica RCMP cruiser travelling northeast on Ventura Drive out of the Debert Business Park at 5:42 am. A third capture, taken at 5:45 am, shows the replica RCMP cruiser heading west on Plains Road from the Debert Business Park toward Highway 4.

RCMP Response

In this section, we continue our account of the central features of the RCMP critical incident response. For the overnight period, we merge our findings on the work of the RCMP Operational Communications Centre (OCC) and the first responders at the scene in Portapique with those concerning the RCMP's critical incident command's strategic decisions and actions.

Critical Incident Command Is Established

In Chapter 2, we explained that the critical incident commander, S/Sgt. Jeff West, was contacted at 10:42 pm on April 18, 2020, within 45 minutes of Jamie Blair's 911 call. He initiated the process of calling out a full "critical incident package," including the Emergency Response Team (ERT), crisis negotiators, dog handlers, and other specialist members. However, it was several hours before S/Sgt. West took command from Risk Manager (RM) Brian Rehill.

In this section, we provide an overview of the RCMP approach to critical incident command and the way it was put into effect during the mass casualty.

Role and Training of Critical Incident Commander

Critical incident commanders are RCMP members who have completed a two-week course at the Canadian Police College and a period of field training. At the time of the mass casualty, there were six RCMP critical incident commanders in Nova Scotia. They worked on a rotational basis on an "on-call schedule."⁵ At any given time, two critical incident commanders are on call. A critical incident commander (CIC) designates a trained scribe, who "takes notes and maintains a record of decisions."⁶

Once a CIC assumes control of a critical incident, they have "absolute responsibility and control of all field operations."⁷ CICs are responsible for the overall command and control of all operations responding to the incident. This responsibility includes, among other things, ensuring that information is shared with supporting units; ensuring that a command post is established; assessing containment and

evacuation efforts; authorizing negotiations; approving the release of information to the media; and approving operational plans. The CIC “directs all human and material resources during critical incidents, emergencies, and disasters. The CIC also conducts a preliminary assessment of the incident and puts an action plan in place to resolve it.”⁸

Critical Incident Commander

Acting Sgt. West was one of two on-call critical incident commanders on the night of April 18, 2020. Sgt. Rob Lewis served as his scribe.

S/Sgt. Kevin Surette was the second on-call critical incident commander that night. CIC West called S/Sgt. Surette at 10:59 pm on April 18 to place him on standby. At 12:46 am, CIC West confirmed that he required S/Sgt. Surette’s assistance. S/Sgt. Surette drove from his assigned detachment in Yarmouth to the command post to provide support and assistance, approximately a five-hour drive. S/Sgt. Surette left Yarmouth for Great Village around 1:15 am on April 19 and arrived there at approximately 5:40 am.

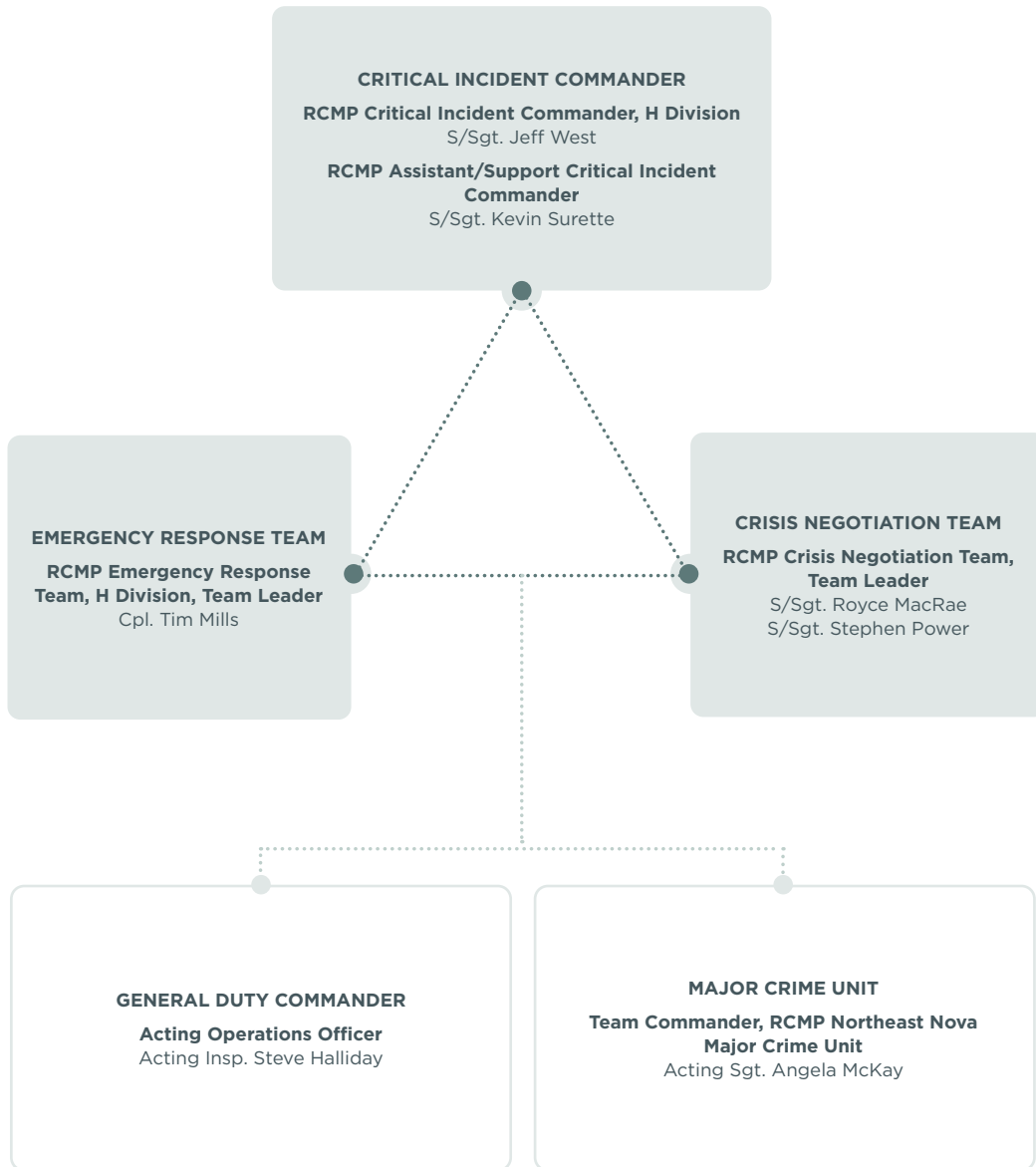
Critical Incident Command Structure

When critical incident commanders take responsibility for a critical incident response, they work at the apex of a command triangle. Acting Insp. Steve Halliday (who served as the general duty commander on April 18/19, 2020) described the command triangle as being formed by the critical incident commander (at the top) with the Emergency Response Team leader and the negotiator team leader, with the support of the Major Crime Unit investigative team and general duty commander.

Command Post Established

At 12:41 am on April 19, RM Rehill called S/Sgt. Allan (AI) Carroll. During this call they discussed whether the staging area, evacuation centre, and critical incident command post should be at the Bass River fire hall or the Great Village fire hall. Partway

Critical Incident Command Structure as at 1:19 am on April 19, 2020



through the conversation, Operational Communications Centre Commander Glen Byrne joined the call. The decision was made not to establish the post at the Bass River fire hall. The advantage of the one in Great Village was that members coming from the east would not have to travel through the perimeter of the hot zone to get to the staging area. (The hot zone is the area where a shooter or perpetrator of mass murder may be active.) RM Rehill explained the decision-making:

I remember them saying they were going to the Bass River Firehall, and I talked to Steve Halliday, I said, “Well, that doesn’t make any sense. You got to go through the scene to get to Bass River Firehall.” So, I said, “Great Village Firehall is just to the north of this, so you’re going to encounter that before you get to the scene. That’d be the better spot.” So, that’s where they did set up.⁹

S/Sgt. West departed RCMP headquarters in Dartmouth for Portapique–Great Village at 12:03 am on April 19. He travelled with his scribe, Sgt. Lewis, who was responsible for recording key information and decisions made by him. They arrived at the command post at the Great Village fire hall at approximately 1:00 am.

Once S/Sgt. West was on scene at the command post, he requested that S/Sgt. Carroll, Acting Insp. Halliday, and S/Sgt. Allan (Addie) MacCallum join him. They did so, arriving between 2:00 am and 2:20 am. This uniformed command group continued working on the tasks that CIC West had delegated to them late on April 18.

Radio and telecommunications and associated personnel also set up at the command post. OCC Commander Glen Byrne had taken the role of tactical communications operator at the command post and was monitoring the radio communications and responding to phone calls as well as logging key movements and information into a record. The Emergency Response Team technical officer, Cpl. Kevin MacDougall, was head of the Technical Support Unit.

Members of the Crisis Negotiation Team and the Major Crime Unit (MCU) also travelled to the command post. S/Sgt. Carroll contacted S/Sgt. Royce MacRae with the Crisis Negotiation Team, although we heard conflicting information about when he did so. By 2:00 am, S/Sgt. MacRae joined CIC West in position at the command post. At 12:13 am, Acting Insp. Halliday contacted Acting Sgt. Angela McKay of the RCMP’s MCU to advise her of the current situation in Portapique. Acting Insp. Halliday requested that MCU mobilize to assist with ongoing investigations. Half an hour later, Cpl. Gerard (Jerry) Rose-Berthiaume and Cst. Shawn Stanton,

both MCU members, arrived at the Bible Hill detachment. They met with Acting Insp. Halliday, who updated them on the current situation, and joined the investigation efforts. The role of these specialized units is explained in our account of the strategic decisions and actions taken by the RCMP critical incident command post, below.

Transition in Command

On arrival at the command post, S/Sgt. West took over command of the critical incident response from RM Rehill, assuming the role of critical incident commander at 1:19 am. (We will now refer to him by his role as critical incident commander, as CIC West.) However, because of challenges with radio communications from the command post, CIC West could not formally broadcast his assumption of command until 1:23:51 am.

An effective critical incident response requires that a fully trained critical incident commander take command as quickly as possible. It is also crucial that CICs are fully briefed so they can exercise their command in an informed and decisive manner. We were presented with no evidence that CIC West was thoroughly briefed during his travel to Great Village, or that he sought such a briefing. CIC West did speak with S/Sgt. Surette while they were independently travelling to Great Village. At 12:46 am, they agreed the current priorities were: “potential rescue of victims, possibility of evacuation, determine location of suspect.”¹⁰ With CIC West now in command of the incident, RM Rehill continued with risk manager duties. However, no formal transfer of knowledge and updates from RM Rehill to CIC West occurred.

RM Rehill continued to direct general duty members, although there was a lack of clarity about his role. As news about Portapique spread, many members began to offer up their services and, in some cases, self-deploy. At 1:19 am, Sgt. Andrew (Andy) O’Brien broadcast a general message: “All members standby, allow the Risk Manager to dispatch you please.”¹¹

The combination of unacceptable delay in putting a critical incident commander in place and inadequate steps taken to share information with the critical incident commander hindered the RCMP critical incident response during the overnight period.

MAIN FINDING

There was an unacceptable delay in the assumption of command by a fully trained and briefed critical incident commander.

Our additional findings, discussion, and recommendations on critical incident command are contained in Volume 5, Policing.

Limited Analysis and Flawed Decision-Making

In Chapter 2, we concluded that the RCMP initial command response was flawed because the command group discounted the clear information coming from Portapique community members that the perpetrator was driving a fully marked RCMP vehicle. Priority was placed on determining whether all RCMP vehicles in Nova Scotia were accounted for and to rule out that any of these vehicles were involved in the critical incident. This was a reasonable investigative step, but it led to a false conclusion that the eyewitness accounts were therefore mistaken.

These quieter five hours – when the CIC was in place at the command post – provided an opportunity for the RCMP command to take stock, review, and analyze the information they had received from all sources and to consider alternative scenarios. This opportunity was lost. As we elaborate in Volume 5, Policing, critical incident command decisions should involve the consideration of the widest and fullest range of explanations for the information available to the decision-maker, including worst-case scenarios. Contingency plans should be developed based on multiple potential developments, including the most severe or serious possible outcome.

Two factors contributed to the limited analysis and flawed decision-making that characterized the critical incident response overnight. The first is that the critical incident command structure lacked a dedicated information analyst. No one was assigned the task of reviewing the totality of information and performing an analysis of it. The second was a flawed decision-making process, particularly the failure to consider alternative scenarios based on the information about the replica RCMP cruiser and mounting reports about the perpetrator and his firearms. The negative impact of these factors was magnified by the apparent lack of routine situation report meetings and updates during these hours.

We conclude that the critical incident command did not seriously consider alternatives to the belief that the perpetrator was still in Portapique. The command group's focus was on whether the perpetrator was dead or alive, not where he was located. The one exception was directing policing resources to protect two groups of people who might be targeted by the perpetrator: his parents and Lisa Banfield's family members. In particular, the command group placed insufficient importance on the repeated witness information that the perpetrator was in a replica RCMP cruiser that could allow him to travel distances quickly and provide the cover of a police disguise. No one seemed to take into account the fact that the perpetrator was familiar with the Portapique area and therefore likely knowledgeable about local roads and trails.

The limited analysis carried out overnight is exemplified in the mission articulated by CIC West. At 4:04 am he identified that the mission remained "contain the crime scene area in Portapique and locate and arrest suspect ... This information had not changed from initial critical incident response."¹² A growing belief among members of the critical incident command post was that the perpetrator was suicidal and had perhaps already died by suicide. Between 4:15 am and 4:55 am on April 19, 2020, at a situation evaluation meeting held at the command post, Cpl. Timothy (Tim) Mills met with CIC West, S/Sgt. MacRae, and S/Sgt. Stephen Power of the Crisis Negotiation Team. Acting Insp. Halliday and S/Sgt. MacCallum joined part-way through the meeting. During this meeting, a "decision point" made at 4:20 am and registered by the scribe was that the perpetrator was still in Portapique.¹³

Also during this situation evaluation meeting, the members of the Crisis Negotiation Team concluded that the perpetrator appeared to be "closure motivated" or suicidal, a theory based largely on the facts that he had destroyed much of his own property, that the sounds of gunfire and explosions had petered out, and that no new fires had been set.¹⁴ Acting Insp. Halliday concurred with this assessment.

According to notes prepared by CIC West's scribe, Acting Insp. Halliday shared this summary of likely events:

[S]uspect shoots victim on the deck, shoots the dog, shoots the wife, saw him, knows him and he drove away in a ford Taurus. He has done all this on the way to a familiar area to do himself in. There are no more fires, he was there as the fires were going up.¹⁵

These conclusions were speculative, and there was no more evidence to support them than there was to support a range of alternative possibilities. They did, however, fit in with the initial assessment of the situation, and they underscore the

RCMP critical incident command's lack of deviation from a focus on one scenario of the perpetrator not having left Portapique.

We recognize that hindsight, with the knowledge of the perpetrator's actions after his rampage in Portapique, makes it easy to see the frailty of this analysis. Our intention, as elsewhere in our Report, is not to attribute blame but to set out lessons to be learned. Critical incidents unfold quickly and decisions must be made in the absence of full information. Constant analysis of available information and the testing of alternative scenarios are essential ingredients of best decision-making practices. These inadequacies were a salient feature of the RCMP's omission to prepare for potential scenarios involving the perpetrator's escape from the area and his violent re-emergence.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP critical incident command structure lacked a dedicated information analyst.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP critical incident command did not adequately consider a wide range of scenarios, including worst-case scenarios, and failed to develop contingency plans based on the most severe possible outcomes.

Our more detailed findings, discussion, and recommendations about critical incident decision-making are in Volume 5, Policing.

Additional Resources

In Chapter 2, we concluded that the RCMP's lack of preparation and contingency planning for air support when maintenance is being conducted created a distraction for OCC employees and command. The search for an alternative helicopter diverted these personnel from other important tasks. This distraction continued overnight.

Efforts to secure air support continued with OCC staff contacting the provincial Department of Lands and Forestry (now part of the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables, or DNR). Although the department had a helicopter available, it could fly only during daylight, and the pilot could not be called until 6:00 am on April 19, 2020. The OCC requested that the helicopter land at the nearest location to the Great Village fire hall.

It is unclear why the RCMP critical incident command did not engage support services officer Supt. Darren Campbell or another member of the executive leadership to lead these efforts. Given the difficulties encountered in arranging for air support throughout the evening of April 18 and continuing to the early morning hours, it would have been useful to push this task up the chain of command or for RCMP executive leadership to assume it.

Operational Communications Centre

The nature and frequency of 911 calls from the Portapique area changed after midnight. The Operational Communications Centre received several 911 calls from residents in the neighbouring community of Five Houses, immediately west of Portapique. The callers reported a suspicious vehicle and a suspicious person with a flashlight. Assistance was dispatched to attend to these calls, as we discuss below.

Ongoing Gathering and Dissemination of Information About the Critical Incident

Richard Ellison repeatedly called 911 to relay additional information about his sons and seek assistance in locating and safeguarding Clinton Ellison. He also told RM Rehill that the perpetrator had shown him a .40 calibre Smith & Wesson. At 1:43 am on April 19, OCC dispatcher Ms. Jennifer (Jen) MacCallum called Clinton Ellison's cellphone. She spoke to him at length in an attempt to pinpoint his location in Portapique. He described being followed by someone with a flashlight and explained that he was hiding in the woods, wearing all black clothes. Ms. MacCallum obtained a cellphone ping to pinpoint his location within a 98-metre radius. The ping placed

him close to the southern intersection of Portapique Crescent and Orchard Beach Drive. Ms. MacCallum contacted Richard Ellison at 2:35:33 am to inform him that the police had located his son Clinton.

Cst. Chris Grund learned more from the Blair and McCully children as he waited with them to be safely evacuated between midnight and 12:25 am. He called the OCC asking for RM Rehill, who could not come to the phone. Cst. Grund then gave the information to call-taker Mr. Patrick Brent instead. The children had described seeing the perpetrator with “possibly an assault rifle like an AK47 or something in that nature.”¹⁶ Further, the children “once again described [the replica RCMP cruiser] as a police vehicle.”¹⁷ Mr. Brent indicated he would pass the information along to RM Rehill.

At 3:34 am, OCC Commander Glen Byrne, who was aiding the critical incident command with radio communications and technical support at the command post, called the OCC. He spoke with call-taker supervisor Ms. Donna Lee Williston and inquired how the call-takers and dispatchers were doing. They discussed after-care for each telecommunications operator, and Mr. Byrne told Ms. Williston to call him if they needed anything. This remark is an indication that the mindset at the command post was beginning to shift to a post-active shooter situation.

At 5:46 am, Lisa Banfield’s sister Maureen Banfield called the OCC. About an hour earlier, Sgt. Kris Barr and Cst. Jim Smith of the Halifax Regional Police had spoken with her about the perpetrator and Lisa Banfield. They had told Maureen Banfield that S/Sgt. MacCallum was involved in the investigation. Maureen Banfield was calling to follow up. OCC dispatch supervisor Jen MacCallum advised S/Sgt. MacCallum that Maureen Banfield was on the line. S/Sgt. MacCallum initially told Ms. MacCallum to refer the call to “GIS [General Investigation Services] people.”¹⁸ After speaking some more with Maureen Banfield, Ms. MacCallum called S/Sgt. MacCallum back and strongly suggested that he speak to Maureen Banfield directly. It is unclear whether the two spoke directly, but Maureen Banfield provided information to the OCC about the perpetrator’s activities during the early evening of April 18. She also sent a photo, taken the previous night, of the perpetrator and Lisa Banfield as they celebrated their anniversary, and she described several features of the perpetrator’s warehouse and property. This photograph would later be used by the RCMP in a tweet that identified the perpetrator (at 8:54 am on April 19). No information was sought from Maureen Banfield about the perpetrator’s replica RCMP cruiser or other vehicles, a point that underscores our finding that the RCMP command group was not then actively investigating the clear evidence about the perpetrator’s replica RCMP cruiser.

Strategic Decisions and Actions

Investigations

Perpetrator

A clearer picture of the perpetrator began to emerge overnight. As we discussed above, some of this information came through the OCC. Details included information about the perpetrator's firearms. S/Sgt. MacCallum was tasked with creating a profile of the perpetrator.¹⁹

Information about the perpetrator's identity as well as a physical description were gathered and shared through internal communications. Cpl. Mills, a team leader of the Emergency Response Team, suggested to CIC West that the perpetrator's photograph be sent out on a Be on the Lookout (BOLO) message.

Be on the Lookout (BOLO) messages are broadcast messages generated by dispatchers at the Operational Communications Centre at the request of an RCMP member to inform other members or request assistance, usually to locate a person or a vehicle. RCMP BOLOs are sent internally by means including police radio, and email, and via the Computerized Integrated Information and Dispatch System. The member who issues a BOLO can decide how broadly it is distributed (e.g., to a single detachment, district, or division). RCMP BOLOs can be shared with other police agencies via the Canadian Police Information Centre.

RCMP records indicated that the perpetrator had threatened his parents in 2010. S/Sgt. MacCallum requested that RCMP members in Codiac, New Brunswick, attend the residence of the perpetrator's parents to ensure their safety, advise them of the current risk, and ask them to depart to a safe location. The perpetrator's parents were contacted but at first refused to leave their residence. Two RCMP members were stationed outside their home. The parents later left their home and travelled to a destination unknown to the police.

Sgt. Dave Lilly was assigned to interview the Blair and McCully children at the hospital following their evacuation from Portapique. He provided Acting Insp. Halliday with “a lot of information about the suspect” and about “what may have transpired on the scene.”²⁰ The Blair children had told Sgt. Lilly that the perpetrator’s girlfriend had broken up with him shortly before he came into their house.

It is during this overnight period that the critical incident command became concerned about Lisa Banfield’s situation. At 11:14 pm on April 18, 2020, RCMP supervisors learned that the perpetrator had a “girlfriend” named Lisa Banfield.²¹ Until 2:41 am on the 19th, there was some uncertainty whether Lisa McCully and Lisa Banfield were the same person. By 2:48 am, RCMP critical incident command had sorted out the identity issue and turned their minds to Ms. Banfield’s well-being.

Steps were taken to reach Lisa Banfield by phone and to ping her cellphone in an attempt to locate her. These efforts were unsuccessful. The Halifax Regional Police took some steps to locate her at the home she shared with the perpetrator in Dartmouth and at the homes of some of her family members in the Halifax area. They did so with the dual purpose of ensuring her safety and questioning her about the perpetrator’s whereabouts. These efforts were also unsuccessful. By this time, RM Rehill had come to believe that the perpetrator had killed Lisa Banfield:

I’m thinking she’s dead in the house that burnt down myself, I really am.
The girlfriend;²²

So the girlfriend I think she is unaccounted for and she may have split up with him so, I think she’s probably gone.²³

The Crisis Negotiation Team attempted to contact the perpetrator. At 3:51 am, CIC West was advised that all contact numbers for the perpetrator had been attempted and the team was not able to reach him. Continued efforts would be made to reach the perpetrator, but none were successful.

Perpetrator’s Replica RCMP Cruiser and Other Vehicles

At 12:12 am, Cst. Nicholas (Nick) Dorrington spoke with Sgt. O’Brien. They discussed a traffic stop that Cst. Dorrington had conducted on the perpetrator in February 2020. Cst. Dorrington, who had taken a picture of the perpetrator’s driver’s licence and saved it on his phone, suggested that this information be broadcast

over Colchester radio with an indication that members could text him to obtain a copy of the photograph:

12:12:22 AM – Cst. DORRINGTON (H-05B09/H-BH P09): So, just a heads-up to members. Um, our SOC [subject of concern / complaint], he's associated one of the vehicles he's associated to is a, ah, white Ford Taurus ah, with ah, RCMP deckling [*sic*] on the side, like the reflective striping, just so you are aware.²⁴

The Taurus in Cst. Dorrington's photo was not the replica RCMP cruiser, but the driver's licence photo was helpful to those members who were able to access it. Not all members could do so. This is one example of the issues, discussed below, that arose with communication, sharing of information, and coordination among RCMP members during the critical incident response.

The power of disbelief in the accuracy of information about the replica RCMP cruiser is illustrated in RM Rehill's briefing of Cpl. Mills as he was preparing to lead the ERT team into Portapique at 12:53 pm:

S/Sgt. Brian REHILL: ... we're just wondering cause like when the first two calls came in they said a policeman in a police car was shooting people.

[Cpl. Tim MILLS]: Oh.

S/Sgt. Brian REHILL: And we know that, that couldn't be right and we accounted for all cars. And apparently he had something that has markings like ours or something.

[Cpl. Tim MILLS]: Okay.

S/Sgt. Brian REHILL: So that could be in the driveway or the white Mercedes could be there. Um, I'm, I'm thinking he's making his way there cause there's a white Taurus that was torched at the scene or somewhere near the scene that's up in flames.

[Cpl. Tim MILLS]: Yeah.

S/Sgt. Brian REHILL: And I think we have at least six fires now according to [Acting Cpl. Stuart] BESELT. I think we have four victims deceased, I think so far. Um, it, it, it's really chaotic as you can see ...

[Cpl. Tim MILLS]: Oh yeah.

S/Sgt. Brian REHILL: I'm just saying if you guys do, if you guys do go to Portapique Road those are the kinda vehicles you'd be keeping an eye out for ...²⁵

The RCMP learned, through a recent parking ticket, that the perpetrator owned a white Mercedes that was linked to Lisa Banfield. Requests were made to the Halifax Regional Police (HRP) to conduct a drive-by of the perpetrator's Dartmouth address and to look for this Mercedes. HRP Sgt. Barr reported no sign of the Mercedes but did see an old Taurus police vehicle parked there, covered in snow, and with no indication the vehicle had been moved recently. Sgt. Barr maintained surveillance at the property and put a tactical response in place should the perpetrator return there.

Between 3:15 am and 3:38 am on April 19, Acting Insp. Halliday contacted Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume of the Major Crime Unit to follow up on obtaining photographs of the perpetrator and the known vehicles associated with him. At 3:37 am, Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume emailed Acting Insp. Halliday a photo of the perpetrator from a news segment on the perpetrator's denture clinic. Approximately nine minutes later, at 3:46 am, Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume forwarded another email to Acting Insp. Halliday containing a list of vehicles registered to the perpetrator: a white Ford F-150, a black Jeep Wrangler, and a white Mercedes C30.

The RCMP continued to investigate this list of the perpetrator's vehicles despite the clear information about his having been seen by several witnesses in his replica RCMP cruiser. The confusion created by the emphasis on the many vehicles registered to him was repeated in the BOLOs issued internally and to other policing agencies. (We discuss these BOLOs below.) It was reasonable for the RCMP to follow up on the scenario that the perpetrator had switched vehicles to facilitate an escape from the containment area in Portapique. However, it was unreasonable to do so at the expense of following up on the one scenario for which the RCMP had received information from multiple eyewitnesses.

The continued inability to recognize and act on the information about the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser is a pivotal aspect of this mass casualty. The critical incident command failed to reassess the information about the replica RCMP cruiser after its initial theory of the vehicle being a real RCMP police car was disproven. The CIC was unable to imagine that the perpetrator was in a police car when three groups of witnesses communicated this information. It seems that once the theory of the perpetrator somehow having a genuine RCMP police car was disproven, community members' description of the perpetrator driving a car with markings

that looked just like an RCMP car was incorrectly ruled out. When the CIC members heard “police car,” their instinct was to picture what was familiar to them – an RCMP vehicle or a decommissioned car without light bar and markings – not a reconstructed vehicle. This failure to consider all possibilities is a human failing, yet in the context of the mass casualty it was one that had dire repercussions. Education, training, and practice can assist police to consciously identify and evaluate alternative scenarios when there is no clear explanation for what seems to be happening during a critical incident. Along with other errors in the critical incident response on April 18 and 19, 2020, the failure to act on the repeated information about the perpetrator’s replica RCMP cruiser demonstrated a failure of decision-making training, policies, and practices. The systemic inadequacy of the RCMP’s decision-making policies and practices is discussed in Volume 5, Policing.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP’s failure to act on the clear and repeated information about the perpetrator’s replica RCMP cruiser continued overnight on April 19, 2020.

Other Investigative Efforts

At 4:30 am, S/Sgt. MacCallum and S/Sgt. Carroll briefed investigators Cst. Terry Brown and Cst. Dave Melanson and advised them to “continue investigational tasks including ensuring the safety of [the perpetrator’s] parents, TIR [thermal infrared] cameras & liaise with MCU [Major Crime Unit].”²⁶ These members were tasked with obtaining and reviewing thermal infrared camera footage from cameras placed along Nova Scotia highways.

Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson were also directed to reach out to the perpetrator’s family in Moncton, and Cst. Brown recalled they “fielded some phone calls from some people that lived down in Portapique.”²⁷ Pursuing information provided by the Blair and McCully children, the two constables also sought information about “a recent breakup between the perpetrator and his girlfriend.”²⁸ At 4:46 am, they spoke with RM Rehill to get more information. He advised them of what he had learned from Sgt. Lilly and also provided the information obtained from witnesses and members on the scene generally.

Perimeter and Containment

By 2:00 am, there were 18 marked RCMP vehicles providing outer perimeter containment, mostly along Highway 2. Acting Insp. Halliday led the deployment of uniformed resources, including monitoring and evaluating perimeter containment. He was supported in this role by S/Sgt. MacCallum and S/Sgt. Carroll. The three reviewed perimeter resources and member locations throughout the night of April 19. The Computerized Incident Information and Dispatching System showed “units stacked near all known escape points along Hwy 2 for a vehicle.”²⁹ The command group also continued to update the hand-drawn map they had made when first establishing the perimeter.³⁰ CIC West did not review containment measures when he assumed overall control of the critical incident.

Just before 5:00 am, the RCMP critical incident response realized there was a flaw in their containment strategy. At 4:57 am, S/Sgt. MacCallum advised CIC West that he had moved a police vehicle to the corner of Highway 2 and Brown Loop, after noting there was no member providing containment at that intersection.

The maps used in planning and reviewing the containment of Portapique showed what looked like a field [blueberry field] but did not depict a road that was navigable by car. It was not until much later that the command group considered the possibility that a small vehicle, such as an ATV, could exit the area via the blueberry field road. According to his notes, S/Sgt. MacCallum directed two police units “further West to Brown’s loop & Hwy 2 for better sight lights [sic] between checkpoints.”³¹ Cst. Trent Lafferty and Cst. Dorrington were directed to move from their prior position on Highway 2 to the eastern end of Brown Loop so they could see the next checkpoint. S/Sgt. MacCallum’s notes indicate this order was given before 2:30 am, but the Colchester radio transcript and GPS data indicate that these members repositioned themselves according to direction from their superior shortly before 5:00 am.

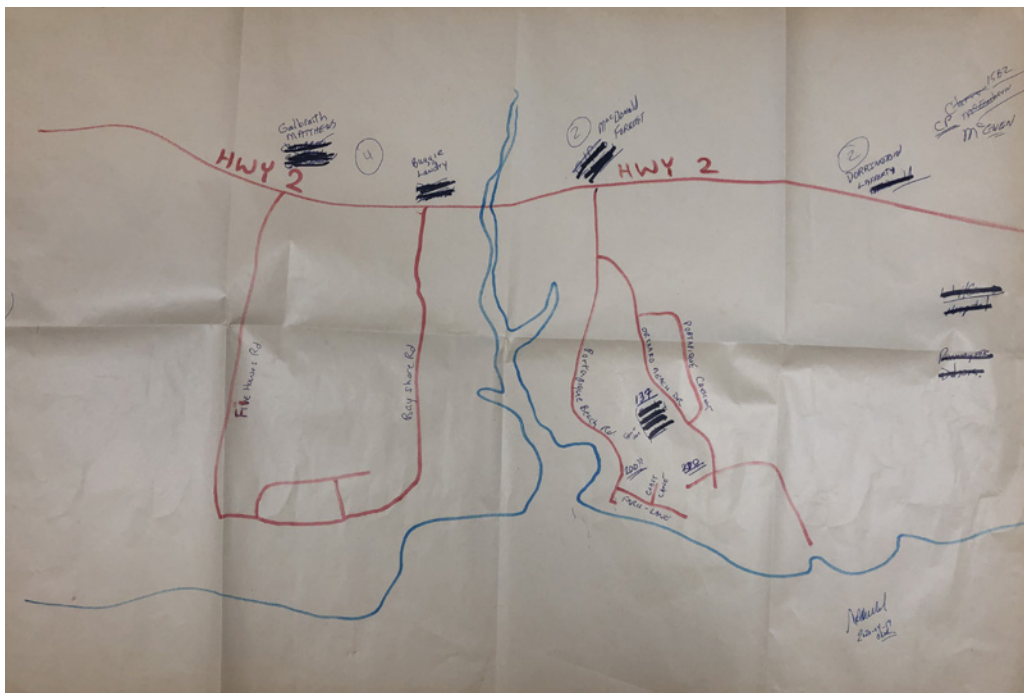
MAIN FINDING

The RCMP critical incident command failed to review containment when they had the opportunity to do so. This failure meant that gaps in the containment, which had arisen in the absence of a scene commander, were not addressed.

Containment Points



Map Data | Google, ©2023 CNES / Airbus



Hand-drawn map of Highway 2 containment points: COMM0011833

Transition from IARD to ERT

The RCMP H Division Emergency Response Team was called out with the critical incident package at 10:48 pm, and at 12:34 am Emergency Response Team members began arriving at the staging area at the intersection of Portapique Beach Road and Highway 2. In the meantime, members of the Immediate Action Rapid Deployment (IARD) response continued their work of checking on and protecting the Blair and McCully children and making efforts to clear houses and encourage residents to evacuate. They were joined by two additional general duty members, Cst. Grund and Cst. Neil. These members entered Portapique on foot to assist with the children. When H Division ERT arrived on scene, they replaced the IARD responders as immediate responders. The IARD responders were ordered to shelter in place at the McCully home until they could be evacuated by the ERT using the tactical armoured vehicle. After evacuation, the IARD responders were debriefed at the Great Village command post and sent home.

Evacuation of Blair and McCully Children

In Chapter 2, we explained that shortly before midnight Cst. Grund of the RCMP Millbrook detachment in Colchester County and Cst. Neil of the Stellarton detachment in Pictou County were directed to enter Portapique to go to the Blair and McCully children, who were still sheltering at the McCully residence. Cst. Grund had arrived at Portapique at around 10:59 pm, and Cst. Neil arrived around 11:35 pm. They staged at the top of Portapique Beach Road near the intersection with Highway 2. There was no scene commander on site, and they waited for clearance from RM Rehill to enter the hot zone.

Shortly before midnight, once given clearance to do so, Cst. Grund and Cst. Neil entered Portapique on foot. While en route to the children's location, the two members knocked on doors to advise residents to evacuate. When they arrived at the children's location, they said the code word, "pineapple." They decided that one member would evacuate the children while the other stayed in the community. At 12:25 am on April 19, Cst. Grund escorted the four children out of Portapique using a family vehicle that was at the residence. Cst. Neil remained on scene at the McCully residence on Orchard Beach Drive.

From the head of Portapique Beach Road and Highway 2, Cst. Grund drove with the children to the Great Village fire hall to meet with Emergency Health Services. Along with Sgt. Lilly of the Springhill RCMP detachment, he then accompanied the children to the Colchester East Hants Health Centre in Truro. An OCC dispatcher contacted the Department of Community Services – Child Welfare to request they attend to the children.

Cst. Grund and Sgt. Lilly spent the early morning hours of April 19, 2020, at the Colchester East Hants Health Centre. Both members obtained information from the children, which they then passed on to the OCC. At 1:41:39 am, Cst. Grund called the OCC and requested to speak with the risk manager, S/Sgt. Rehill. RM Rehill was unavailable, and Cst. Grund spoke with call-taker Patrick Brent instead. Sgt. Lilly called the OCC at 2:37 am, and he spoke to RM Rehill. The content of these conversations was described above.

Meanwhile, in Portapique, fires and explosive sounds continued as the IARD responders moved throughout the community. At 12:45 am, the IARD responders met up with Cst. Neil at the McCully residence. The four members were directed to shelter in place until they could be extracted by the RCMP Emergency Response Team.

ERT Becomes Operational

The first H Division Emergency Response Team (ERT) members arrived on scene at 12:34 am on April 19, approximately one hour and 45 minutes after having been called out. Cst. Trent Milton, Cst. Ben MacLeod, Cst. Andrew Ryan, and Cst. Jason Barnhill were the first to arrive in ERT vehicle D20. Cst. Travis Gallant and Cst. Edward (Ed) Clarke in ERT vehicle D26 arrived shortly thereafter, as did Cpl. Tim Mills, who led the team that night and travelled in ERT vehicle D21 with Cst. Andrew (Andy) MacLellan. Cpl. Calvin Byard was driving the slower-moving tactical armoured vehicle (TAV) and arrived after the other ERT members. There is no standard time frame for ERT arrival at a scene because it is dependent on so many factors – geography, travel time to command post or scene, and time of the call. According to the ERT's after-action report, the team's mission during the mass casualty was to “[l]ocate and arrest active shooter / murder gunman.”³² At approximately 1:20 am, when the TAV arrived at Portapique, the ERT members were directed to respond to 911 callers in Five Houses who reported seeing lights

and movement. Cpl. Mills told the Commission that this location was close to Portapique, and “knowing there’s a possible car involved, that he can drive anywhere ... You know, rescuing kids, evacuating, that’s all secondary. That number one priority, stop him.”³³

Extraction of Clinton Ellison and General Duty Members

At approximately 1:30 am, Clinton Ellison, who had remained hiding in the woods for about three hours, used his cellphone to call his father from his hiding place. Richard Ellison called the OCC to advise them that his son Clinton was alive, and provide Clinton’s cell number. At 1:43 am, the OCC contacted Clinton Ellison by phone.

At 1:43 am, IARD responder Cst. Patton provided an update that there had not been any new gunshots since the IARD responders and Cst. Neil had remained stationary outside the McCully residence. At 1:50 am, the members, still hunkering down, queried whether they could walk out of Portapique themselves. ERT lead Cpl. Mills responded that it “shouldn’t be too much longer.”

After clearing the call in Five Houses, H Division ERT members proceeded to Portapique in the tactical armoured vehicle. They entered the community in search of Clinton Ellison just after 2:00 am. The 911 dispatcher coordinated ERT’s evacuation of Mr. Ellison.

Shortly before being picked up, Mr. Ellison reported hearing a gunshot. Dispatch broadcast Mr. Ellison’s observation at 2:18 am. At 2:28 am, Cst. Patton broadcast that the IARD responders had heard the gunshot as well. If there was a gunshot at this time, it could not have been the perpetrator’s since the evidence clearly places him in Debert at this time. We consider it most likely that this sound was ammunition exploding in one of the fires set by the perpetrator.

In a small group session held with the Commission in September 2022, Clinton Ellison described his experience on the evening of April 18 and the early hours of April 19, 2020. He recalled that the OCC dispatcher Jen MacCallum had contacted him and stayed on the phone with him. She advised him that the ERT team was looking for him, and he heard them call his name over a loudspeaker. Mr. Ellison gave Ms. McCallum directions to his location, which she relayed to ERT. As ERT members approached, she warned Mr. Ellison to “have nothing in your hands.”³⁴ Mr. Ellison told us that he put down the two flashlights he had been holding and

stood waiting for them. ERT members handcuffed him and put him in the back of the TAV. He was dismayed that ERT members did not go up the driveway to locate his brother's body and that his last memory of his dead brother was seeing him while being driven away, handcuffed, in an armoured police vehicle.³⁵ The Colchester radio transcript records that as the TAV moved toward Mr. Ellison, Cpl. Mills asked, "[I]s this guy arrestable for anything?" Ms. MacCallum responded, "negative," and Acting Cpl. Beselt added, "I don't believe he's arrestable, I think he's a witness." Cpl. Mills acknowledged, "Copy."

Between 2:30 am and 2:50 am, Clinton Ellison, the IARD responders, and Cst. Neil were transported together from Portapique in the tactical armoured vehicle to the staging area at the intersection of Portapique Beach Road and Highway 2. Mr. Ellison and the general duty members were then taken to the command post in Great Village. Mr. Ellison, who was interviewed at that time, provided information about what had happened on the evening of April 18, including details of how he had found his brother's body and realized Corrie had been shot and had died. The interview with Mr. Ellison and debriefing of the IARD responders are set out below.

Following this evacuation, the TAV returned to the McCully residence, and H Division ERT members checked the vital signs of Corrie Ellison and Lisa McCully, confirming they were deceased.

At 3:20 am, with no recent sightings of the perpetrator in Portapique, members of both H Division ERT and Police Dog Service returned to Five Houses to respond to a further report of flashing lights in the area. They checked the location using a police service dog but found no sign of the perpetrator. ERT and Police Dog Service cleared the area by 4:00 am. H Division ERT members returned to Portapique and searched the perpetrator's properties, where they located several burnt or burning vehicles on his properties, including burnt Ford Tauruses at both the cottage and the warehouse. ERT members also cleared the Blair residence and the McCully residence on Orchard Beach Drive. In doing so, they checked the bodies of Greg and Jamie Blair and confirmed they were dead. They also encountered the Blairs' dog, which had been shot by the perpetrator but was still alive.

In the meantime, at approximately 3:30 am on April 19, 2020, Leon Joudrey awoke to the smell of smoke. He drove around Portapique, first passing the Gulenchyn home on Orchard Beach Drive, which had burned to the ground. He turned left onto Portapique Beach Road and observed the perpetrator's burning cottage at 200 Portapique Beach Road. He encountered ERT members, who

advised him to leave the community. Instead, he returned home and, as he later stated, went back to sleep.

Challenges Associated with ERT Resourcing

The Commission's investigation revealed that the ERT did not have a functioning android tactical assault kit (ATAK) application at the time of the mass casualty. This software enables the tracking of a cellphone's GPS location, providing situational awareness for those on the team.

This application had been working before April 18, 2020, as H Division ERT was participating in a pilot of the software. However, the division's devices were on the Developmental Server. Because the encryption key had expired, the devices needed to be transported to Ottawa for rekeying. On April 16, 2020, Cst. Milton wrote an email to two personnel at RCMP national headquarters, stating, "I can not stress enough the importance of getting these devices back online for us as soon as possible."³⁶

In testimony before us, CIC West and Cpl. Mills, the ERT team leader, both said that the ERT response was also impacted by a shortage of personnel. Because of this shortage, Cpl. Mills remained with the responding ERT members rather than situating himself in the command post at Great Village. As we explain further in Volume 5, Policing, critical incident command protocol and the command triangle are designed on the expectation that the ERT team leader will be positioned in the command post, to ensure tactical decisions are made with all relevant input, and that communications among the critical incident commander, the ERT team leader, and responding ERT members are strong.

Interview of Clinton Ellison

Sgt. Jason Pennoyer spoke to Clinton Ellison at 2:56 am while Mr. Ellison was in the back of an EHS ambulance at the Great Village fire hall. Sgt. Pennoyer's member report, which was prepared after the mass casualty, contains a summary of what Mr. Ellison told him about his actions, including his discovery of Corrie Ellison's body. Sgt. Pennoyer informed Mr. Ellison that a statement would be needed from him at a later date and arranged for Mr. Ellison to be transported to his girlfriend's

home. While Sgt. Pennoyer's member report indicates that he informed the "command centre" at 2:56 am, it does not indicate to whom he spoke. Acting Insp. Halliday's member report notes information from Sgt. Pennoyer at 2:49 am. The report, which does not indicate how Acting Insp. Halliday received this information – just that Sgt. Pennoyer reported that Mr. Ellison "is out" – stated that Clinton Ellison found his brother deceased, that he ran into a wooded area, and that he did not have any information about the suspect.³⁷

Debriefing of IARD Responders

After being extracted from Portapique, the three IARD responders Acting Cpl. Beselt, Cst. Merchant, and Cst. Patton, and Cst. Neil (who had entered Portapique to assist the Blair and McCully children) drove to the command post in Great Village. The four members debriefed with Acting Insp. Halliday, S/Sgt. Carroll, and S/Sgt. MacCallum. They explained what they had seen and done in Portapique. S/Sgt. MacCallum had the members trace their route through Portapique on maps, including which houses they had visited and where they had observed bodies and fires. He then provided a list of addresses they had checked to CIC West.

S/Sgt. MacCallum told the Commission that he started mapping out the houses that had been contacted to assist the ERT members who were replacing the IARD responders in the Portapique community. He was trying to figure out which houses were crime scenes, which ones contained deceased victims, which ones had been evacuated, which ones still had residents inside, and which ones had not yet been approached. He said he used the addresses that Ms. Williston had sent him, along with the information that the IARD responders had given him. This information was recorded on flip charts posted on the wall in the command post.

During the debrief of IARD responders, the bullet recovered from Andrew MacDonald on the night of April 18 was turned over by Cst. Patton to the critical incident command. It is at this time that those at the command post learned there was a surviving eyewitness. Even at this stage, it appears that Kate MacDonald was not similarly identified as a surviving eyewitness. In an interview with the Commission, S/Sgt. MacCallum described being in disbelief that, until 3:00 am on April 19, he did not learn there was a living witness to the events in Portapique. This key information about what had occurred at 10:25 pm on the 18th is an example of the critical failure of communication and coordination between members on scene,

the OCC, and RCMP command. Mr. MacDonald was not interviewed until 5:00 am, two hours after information about him had been provided directly to the command post. Ms. MacDonald was not interviewed until April 20, 2020.

After the IARD responders' debriefing, Cst. Merchant drove Clinton Ellison to a residence outside of Halifax. Acting Cpl. Beselt drove Cst. Patton home from the command post. Before logging off from their shifts, both Acting Cpl. Beselt and Cst. Merchant spoke with OCC staff by phone to thank the dispatchers for their work.

Evacuation of Portapique Residents

Overnight, the critical incident command had considered whether to continue to advise community members to shelter in place or to evacuate them from Portapique. At 12:27 am, S/Sgt. West, Acting Insp. Halliday, and S/Sgt. Surette decided to wait for the ERT's arrival in order to set up better containment and "figure out how to clear [the Portapique] area" safely.³⁸

The command post discussions continued about the best way to implement a general evacuation of Portapique. These efforts included making arrangements for a comfort centre at the Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade hall. The notes made about the overnight period by RCMP critical incident command members, including the scribe, contain little record of these decisions.

The sincere efforts of the Operational Communications Centre staff and the critical incident command group show that the RCMP was not prepared to plan and execute a large-scale evacuation of civilians from a hot zone while an active threat was in progress. In the previous chapter, we described the efforts made in the OCC to identify contact information for homes in Portapique and explained that these efforts were largely fruitless. On the ground, the IARD responders knocked on some doors as they made their way through the community. They informed residents they encountered about the RCMP checkpoint at the top of Portapique Beach Road, and suggested they leave the community.

At 3:19 am on April 19, 2020, Ms. Williston sent S/Sgt. MacCallum a list of 15 addresses. In her message, Ms. Williston indicated that the addresses were identified "via the dispatch log and the dispatchers on the floor at the time, we believe the following addresses received door knocks from members."³⁹ These addresses

included numerous houses on Orchard Beach Drive and Portapique Beach Road; one home on each of Portapique Crescent, Faris Lane, and Orchard Road; and one home on Bay Shore Road, which is west of and not part of the Portapique community. This list did not include any residences on Cobequid Court. The failure to systematically record the names of people passing through the RCMP checkpoint at Portapique Beach Road and Highway 2 means that the identities and total number of residents who left Portapique overnight cannot be known.

During the overnight period, the RCMP critical incident command failed to make a decision concerning whether to continue advising Portapique community residents to shelter in place or to evacuate. Discussions were more focused on securing air support before initiating an evacuation. Cpl. Mills told the Commission:

So, we come up with this evacuation plan and the big thing was, you know, we didn't want to evacuate until there was like, air support of some sort you know, eye in the sky. So, that's when we're going to call DNR, you know.⁴⁰

Scribe notes indicate that investigating the possibility of injured survivors seemed absent from the RCMP's planning until the early morning hours, when the command group discussed checking the condition of the residents at the Blair home. Residents received conflicting messages about how to ensure their personal safety and the safety of their families. The command group's constant and redundant deliberation about this issue resulted in decision inertia leading to a failure to take action to develop and operationalize a general evacuation plan. We explain the concepts of redundant deliberation and decision inertia in Volume 5, Policing.

Shortly before 6:00 am, CIC West spoke with Cpl. Mills and advised that the plan would now involve liaising with Acting Insp. Halliday to safely evacuate the remaining persons in the area. The Emergency Response Team was also asked to use its drone technology to search the area.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP critical incident command did not develop and operationalize a general evacuation plan, nor did it take into account possible survivors of the violence.

The transition from the command group to Major Crime Unit investigators – Acting Sgt. Angela McKay and Cpl. Gerard (Jerry) Rose-Berthiaume – was largely accomplished through Acting Insp. Steve Halliday. The investigators were called around 11 pm on April 18, 2020, and they made their way to the Bible Hill detachment, where they were briefed by Acting Insp. Halliday sometime between midnight and 12:30 am. Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume told the Commission that as the night progressed:

I became aware of a couple things through CIC through Staff Halliday, that Andrew MacDonald was at the hospital. He was a witness that had been shot. And then the children also. He said they were on the hospital or on their way to the hospital then when I got in. I don't recall. We felt as investigators that those are people we should follow up with and conduct further investigation – get further info from.⁴¹

A Major Crime Unit investigator interviewed Mr. MacDonald by telephone at approximately 5:00 am on April 19. The Major Crime Unit investigators continued receiving updates from Acting Insp. Halliday via phone. As daylight approached, thoughts turned to transitioning from a critical incident to a major investigation.

Communication and Coordination Issues Continue

The RCMP's ability to respond to the critical incident was hampered by its information management and internal communication practices and overall by coordination challenges. These challenges included gaps in the information captured from Portapique residents and relayed to responding members – particularly community members' descriptions of what they observed to be happening, the perpetrator, and the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser. They were compounded by the fact that the command group was unaware of Andrew and Kate MacDonald's status as surviving eyewitnesses until approximately 3:00 am and by a failure to actively seek out further information from community members. The command group's capacity to coordinate members' work on the ground in and around Portapique was hindered by the lack of a scene commander and by the RCMP's inability to track members' locations when they were not logged onto mobile work stations

or were outside their vehicles. In particular, the command group did not realize that there was a gap in containment east of Portapique until approximately 5:00 am on April 19. Ultimately, these problems meant that the command group's situational awareness was incomplete, detracting from the RCMP's ability to respond to the mass casualty in a coordinated and strategic fashion. In Volume 5, Policing, we analyze in greater detail how these challenges arose and what impact they had on the overall response.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP critical incident response was hindered by system-wide poor communication and failures of coordination.

Role of Executive Leadership

The RCMP command briefed Supt. Campbell, the support services officer, by phone on one occasion overnight. At 3:35 am, Supt. Campbell sent the following text message to C/Supt. Chris Leather:

Just got off the phone with CIC (Jeff West). Looks like 6 dead this point. Multiple scenes. SOC [subject of concern / complaint] remains at large. Looks like it may have been a 'domestic' with an ex girlfriend. Will need to start discussing with J Div. ERT relief resources. Air Services request didn't solidify last night. Will need a helicopter today.⁴²

Other senior officers were not briefed overnight.

Other Agencies and Interagency Communications

During the overnight period, the RCMP critical incident command effectively engaged the Halifax Regional Police. The same was not true, however, with respect to the Truro Police Service (TPS). RCMP command had some contact with the TPS via the Operational Communications Centre overnight, but there is no indication

the RCMP command or executive leadership in H Division turned their minds to considering whether the Truro Police Service could provide support to the critical incident response or otherwise play a fuller role. This lack of engagement was a continuation of the approach the RCMP took to liaising with the TPS on April 18, although as the critical incident continued more information was shared with TPS and other Nova Scotia police agencies through Be on the Lookout bulletins.

Volunteer Fire Services

Overnight, the fires started by the perpetrator in Portapique continued to burn hotly. The Bass River fire department did not attend the scene because the area remained a hot zone and thus was inaccessible to non-police emergency responders. RCMP critical incident command learned the fire department had FLIR equipment, but their personnel could not go into an active situation. No effort was made to examine the fire department's equipment for potential use on April 19 because ERT was on the way and had FLIR capabilities.

Truro Police Service and Amherst Police Service

Shortly after midnight, the Truro Police Service received a call from the emergency department of the Colchester East Hants Health Centre. The hospital, which is located in Truro within the municipal police force's jurisdiction, advised that it was on lockdown on account of "a shooting in Portapique" and that it was requesting a police presence.⁴³ Cst. Michael Young was dispatched to the hospital shortly thereafter and remained there until relieved at 7:15 am on April 19 by Sgt. Dan Taylor.

At 12:55 am on April 19, the OCC telephoned both the Truro Police Service and the Amherst Police Service dispatches to advise them of a BOLO related to the perpetrator. As we discussed above, the BOLO relayed the perpetrator's name and date of birth, and advised that there was a white Mercedes registered to him. A few minutes later, the OCC called again and said there was a second vehicle associated with the suspect, which was "described as a former police car, with even like, like a Canada decal [on it]."⁴⁴ OCC dispatch noted that this car might be burned at the scene. Shortly after 1:07 am, this BOLO was sent to all Nova Scotia police via the Canadian Police Information Centre. The heading was, "Colchester Active Shooter

Update.” This BOLO reiterated that the suspect was associated with a Mercedes and an “old white police car (may be burned at the scene).”⁴⁵ The Canadian Police Information Centre message also said the suspect was associated with Lisa Banfield, who was “not currently accounted for.”⁴⁶

Sometime between 2:15 am and 2:45 am, TPS Sgt. Richard Hickox encountered two RCMP members – Cst. Ian Fahie and Cst. Devonna Coleman – in an RCMP SUV on Victoria Street near the Truro Fire Hall. These two members had been deployed from Antigonish and were making their way to the command post. They told Sgt. Hickox that there were at least four casualties and that the perpetrator’s location was unknown.

The OCC continued to update TPS dispatch about other cars registered to the perpetrator but confirmed the RCMP had no idea what the perpetrator was driving or where he was. Information about these vehicles was added to the BOLO from the RCMP to all Nova Scotia police agencies.

Halifax Regional Police and Halifax District RCMP

At 12:08 am on April 19, the HRP Integrated Emergency Services 911 call intake and dispatch centre sent out an internal BOLO to HRP officers. It stated that the RCMP had an active shooter situation in Portapique and that there were possibly two shooters, multiple fires, and two or three fatalities in the community.

At 12:47 am, OCC dispatch supervisor Jen MacCallum asked HRP to check the perpetrator’s denture clinic / residence on Portland Street in Dartmouth for the perpetrator and his unaccounted-for vehicles.

From approximately 1:21 am onward, Halifax District RCMP members set up at various points along Highway 102 in Halifax Regional Municipality, between Dartmouth and Elmsdale and on Forest Hills Parkway in Dartmouth.

At approximately 1:30 am, HRP officers attended the perpetrator’s residence at 193 Portland Street. They located a snow-covered white Ford Taurus at that residence. They found no sign that anyone was there.

At 1:37 am, the Halifax Regional Police Integrated Emergency Services attempted to ping two phone numbers associated with the perpetrator. One number was for a cellphone, but emergency services were unable to obtain a location.

HRP officers began surveillance at the Russell Lake Drive residence of Lisa Banfield's sister, Maureen Banfield, at approximately 2:20 am. They first identified this location as a potential address for Lisa Banfield but subsequently learned it was occupied by her sister Maureen. At 4:36 am, they made contact with Maureen Banfield and obtained information from her, including about the previous evening's anniversary celebration of the perpetrator and Lisa Banfield. HRP officers also learned about the location of other members of the Banfield family and a second denture clinic, on Novalea Drive in Halifax, owned by the perpetrator. This information was shared with the RCMP critical incident command.

Public Communications

The RCMP did not provide additional information to the public overnight. In Chapter 2, we concluded that the RCMP public communication by Twitter during the evening of April 18 seriously understated the threat presented by the perpetrator and the associated risks to the public. This failure was perpetuated and compounded overnight. There is no evidence that the RCMP critical incident command or RCMP executive leadership turned their minds to providing more information to the public. This omission is glaring, given the RCMP was sending out BOLOs about the "active shooter situation in Portapique" to update RCMP members and, later, all police forces in Nova Scotia.

At approximately 3:00 am, the CBC contacted Cpl. Lisa Croteau, who was the on-call public information officer for H Division RCMP, seeking information about the situation in Portapique. Cpl. Croteau stated that she had no additional information to provide beyond the content of the tweet described in Chapter 2, and that the shelter in place direction was the most recent update.

At 4:55 am on April 19, Acting Insp. Halliday asked Cpl. Croteau to attend at the RCMP command post in Great Village to provide media communications support. At approximately 6:00 am, Cpl. Croteau spoke with Ms. Lia Scanlan, the director of the RCMP's Strategic Communications Unit, and updated her on the situation. Cpl. Croteau then travelled to the command post.

Despite the relative lack of information provided to the public by the RCMP, community members were taking active steps to share information and to assist one

another both on scene in Portapique (as described in Chapter 2) and through social media posts. We learned from community members that messages were being shared as early as 11:00 pm on April 18. These early messages focused on photos of the fires in Portapique. Messages also shared information about the large police presence in Portapique.

One example of the spread of information through community networks was provided by Portapique resident Nancy Hudson:

We were watching that concert, ended at 11, said to John, "I'm going in to get my pyjamas on." Went into my bedroom which faces, one window faces this way, one window faces the highway. Like I usually do, I'm going to put my blind down, I'm looking out and I'm going, "Holy crap, there's a lot of cops up at the corner". I said, "John," he goes, "What?" I goes, "There's a lot of cops up at the corner," I goes, "All their lights are on and everything," and then I went to the other window to shut the blind, to get dressed, and the whole sky is just lit and I mean orange and crimsons and I'm going, "Holy shit," I said, "John," I goes, "There's a fire, there's something going on down Portapique Beach road" ... so I got a hold of Angela on Facebook, I was messaging her going, "You're not going to believe this," I said, "There's a fire, I think it might be [the perpetrator's] place," I said, "I don't know what's going, there's a bunch of cops at the end of Portapique Beach Road."

...

[A]nd then I started getting stuff coming in from Facebook, people going, "Are you OK?" I goes, "Yeah, what do you mean am I OK?" "Well there's a lockdown in Truro hospital, there's this going on and there's a gunman and he's shooting, there's a bunch killed," and I'm going, "What?" "Yeah, you're suppose to lock your doors, shut your lights," and I'm going, like this is stuff people are saying on - to me on Messenger and I'm going, "Holy shit, OK ..."⁴⁷

Some community members reported that they learned about the active incident through phone calls, text messages, and Facebook and Twitter posts. Other people did not have access to social media or did not check these sources of information overnight. For example, Leon Joudrey said he did not have Twitter and, although he had Facebook, he didn't check it in the early morning. He googled "What's going on in Bass River? What's going on in Five Houses?" to see what was

going on, and he received messages from friends checking in on him.⁴⁸ We learned that frequently younger community residents became aware of the situation in Portapique and warned their parents and others, although this pattern was not invariable.

On April 18, 2020, Connor Reeves, son of Clinton Ellison, was at home in Millbrook. Mr. Reeves saw a post on social media (Twitter or Facebook) about fires burning in Portapique. At the time, he did not understand the extent of what was going on. Mr. Reeves believes that the social media post was created by a member of the local community rather than from an official source.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP did not provide further public communications about the mass casualty overnight and in the early morning of April 19, 2020. Community residents took active steps to share information about the mass casualty and to seek to ensure the safety of themselves and others.

Status at 6:00 am on April 19

By 6:00 am, reports from Portapique indicated no new fatalities, injuries, or encounters with the perpetrator. The critical incident response continued to be predicated on the belief that the perpetrator could not have left Portapique. Suspicions were mounting among personnel at the RCMP command post that the perpetrator may have died by suicide and had taken Lisa Banfield's life.

As the night wore on, Acting Insp. Halliday tasked S/Sgt. Carroll and S/Sgt. MacCallum with arranging for relief of existing members and providing provisions for members on scene. At approximately 5:40 am, S/Sgt. Surette arrived at the command post. He had a briefing with CIC West. S/Sgt. Surette suggested that contact be made with S/Sgt. Dan MacGillivray to relieve CIC West at shift change.

By this time, RCMP members had escorted the Blair and McCully children to safety and transported Clinton Ellison out of Portapique. They had also advised some

other Portapique residents to evacuate. The RCMP critical incident command had discussed a general evacuation of Portapique, but a firm plan had not yet been drawn up. Firefighters and medical personnel were still unable to access Portapique, since it continued being treated as a hot zone in which an active shooter could still be present. No new fires were lit in this period, and no additional killings were identified.

Be on the Lookout bulletins about the perpetrator had been circulated both within the RCMP and to all police agencies in Nova Scotia, but they did not contain information about the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser. No additional communications or alerts had been issued to the public, but community members were using a variety of communication channels to inform one another about what they knew of the incident in Portapique.

Eight hours after the first fatality, the perpetrator's whereabouts remained unknown.

CHAPTER 4

**Events on April 19, 2020 –
6:00 am to 10:15 am**

CHAPTER 4 Events on April 19, 2020 – 6:00 am to 10:15 am

The perpetrator had been inactive overnight, but his actions continued to have a profound impact in Portapique. Fires continued to burn and explosions could be heard. No additional fatalities were confirmed overnight. Police continued their ground search for the perpetrator, and they evacuated witnesses and other residents. More and more community members learned that their safety was compromised, and some began to leave their homes. The neighbouring community of Five Houses was also affected, and awareness grew in Truro as a result of those most affected being brought to hospital and through personal communications. Some people learned that it was an active shooter situation, but the spread of information was patchy, and community members did not fully understand how dangerous the situation was.

At the command post and the Operational Communications Centre, the critical incident command group continued to add resources to their efforts. The command group's focus was on investigating the perpetrator and his cars. Information was shared with responding RCMP members, but in a haphazard manner. Be on the Lookout (BOLO) bulletins were sent out to all policing agencies. Plans were also being made to meet the needs of Portapique residents once the shelter in place direction was lifted and a general evacuation plan put into place. As morning approached, the command group started to prepare for shift changes and consider next steps.

The perception that the situation had stabilized began to unravel at around 6:30 am, when the perpetrator's first victim, Lisa Banfield, emerged from her hiding place in the woods. She provided additional, vital information about the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser and firearms. At about the same time, police obtained a photograph of the replica RCMP cruiser and more details about the perpetrator from Ms. Banfield's family members. The command group began to consider the possibility that the perpetrator had left the Portapique area but, for some time after receiving this information, their operational efforts remained largely focused

on Portapique and Five Houses. The consequences of failing to make contingency plans for the possibility that the perpetrator had left Portapique crystallized three hours later, when it became apparent that the perpetrator had reactivated his rampage. By then, he was on the move over a wider area of Nova Scotia.

This chapter begins with Ms. Banfield leaving her hiding place in the woods at 6:28 am on April 19, 2020. We describe her efforts to seek help in Portapique and the aid she received from Leon Joudrey. This first section also details Ms. Banfield's interactions with the police and the steps taken by police to incorporate the information she and others provided into the critical incident response.

In the next four sections we shift to a location-based account of the continuing mass casualty. Between 6:00 am and 10:15 am, the perpetrator travelled in the replica RCMP cruiser to four locations in Colchester and Cumberland counties: Hunter Road and Highway 4 in Wentworth, Glenholme, and Plains Road in Debert. In this time period, he killed Sean McLeod, Alanna Jenkins, Tom Bagley, Lillian Campbell, Kristen Beaton (who was expecting a child at the time of her death), and Heather O'Brien. He also terrorized Carole and Adam Fisher in their home. These events are delineated using the same narrative structure found in Chapter 2: geographic orientation, description of the perpetrator's actions, the responses and perspectives of witnesses and other community members, and first responder actions and accounts.

The sixth section describes how the RCMP dealt with information that Lisa Banfield and her family provided to them at around 7:30 am on April 19, 2020, and how they changed their approach in response to the perpetrator's re-emergence as an active mobile threat. As his violence escalated over a broader geographical area, more emergency personnel from additional police agencies became engaged, as explained in the seventh section of this chapter. As the police response became larger and gathered speed, some of the early limitations of the critical incident response became glaringly apparent. One central weakness was the inadequate processing and sharing of information among RCMP members and between the RCMP and other police agencies (which was not rectified during shift changes). Another weakness was the inadequate public communications about the danger posed by the perpetrator, the subject of the eighth and final section of the chapter. One key way in which these inadequacies manifested was the continued insufficient appreciation of the importance of the information about the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser. This replica RCMP cruiser allowed the perpetrator to be highly mobile and hide in plain sight, to catastrophic effect.

Over this period, the RCMP began to more actively communicate via social media to warn the public of the danger posed by the perpetrator. But they moved slowly to convey key information and their efforts were often too little, too late.

Ms. Banfield Leaves Her Hiding Place

The sun rose in Portapique on April 19, 2020, at 6:20 am.

Lisa Banfield remained hidden in the woods of Portapique overnight as temperatures dipped close to zero. At the time of her escape from the warehouse, she was barefoot and wearing a pair of leggings and a long-sleeve top. She tried to stay warm in the woods by tying the ends of her pants to cover her feet and pulling her hands into her sleeves. She also buried her face in her shirt to prevent the perpetrator from seeing her breath. She recalled: “I didn’t know if my feet went, froze or burnt because I couldn’t even feel them, and I was trying to keep moving them and trying to massage them and stuff. So, I couldn’t really walk much ‘cause it hurt ...”¹

At approximately 6:28 am on April 19, Ms. Banfield left the woods and sought help from the first house she came to: Leon Joudrey’s residence on Portapique Crescent. As noted in Chapter 3, at about 3:30 am, Leon Joudrey awoke to the smell of smoke. He drove around Portapique, first passing the Gulenchyn home on Orchard Beach Drive, which had burned to the ground. He turned left onto Portapique Beach Road and observed the perpetrator’s cottage at 200 Portapique Beach Road, burning. He encountered ERT members, who advised him to leave the community. He instead returned home and later stated that he went back to sleep.

Mr. Joudrey let Ms. Banfield inside and, seeing that she was shaking and shivering, he gave her his coat and sneakers. He handed Ms. Banfield his phone, but she was so cold she dropped it and so he picked it up and called 911. On the 911 call, Mr. Joudrey told the call-taker that Ms. Banfield was at his house and “freaking out” and “scared to death.”² The call-taker asked if Ms. Banfield was calm enough to be able to answer questions, and he responded, “No, just send the cops down.”³ Mr. Joudrey later reported that he was also afraid of the perpetrator.

Five minutes later, several members of the Emergency Response Team arrived in the tactical armoured vehicle and transported Ms. Banfield to the head of Portapique Beach Road. One of the ERT members, Cst. Ben MacLeod, carried out a

cursory medical exam on Ms. Banfield and described her as having no visible serious injuries although she was in a “state of terror” and had a distraught, dishevelled appearance.⁴ She was having trouble walking because of lower back pain suffered as a result of the perpetrator’s assault on her. Cst. MacLeod said he had seen only one other person in his career who was petrified to the same extent: a woman who had been kidnapped and held captive for three days. In his view, Ms. Banfield was “fearful for her life, that he was coming to get her.”⁵ She did not yet know that anyone had been killed that night although she was aware of fires and explosions. Emergency Medical Response Team (EMRT) member Cpl. Duane Ivany assessed Ms. Banfield as moderately hypothermic. He explained that her body was not circulating heat and that this symptom “indicated to me that she was outside for an extended period.” In addition to being a trained EMRT responder, Cpl. Ivany had been a member of the Canadian Ski Patrol for approximately seven years. He has a great deal of experience with hypothermia from the work he did in that period.

Ms. Banfield was then transported by EMRT members to an Emergency Health Services ambulance staged at the Great Village fire hall. A staging area is a location outside of a “hot” or danger zone, where responding resources (e.g., tactical or medical) stand by for deployment once the situation has been made safe or to provide treatment to casualties transported to the staging area. Once the initial medical assessment was complete and before she was transported to hospital, Ms. Banfield was interviewed by Cst. Terry Brown and Cst. Dave Melanson.

Cst. Brown led the interview, which lasted for 45 minutes and took place in the back of an ambulance. He described Lisa Banfield as lying on a stretcher and in visible pain. In the first 15 minutes of this interview, the paramedics assessed Ms. Banfield and began treating her. After the paramedics completed their work, Ms. Banfield provided additional details about the perpetrator, including the fact that he had a fully marked replica RCMP cruiser. Ms. Banfield told the constables about the perpetrator’s firearms and the fact that she had seen him loading them into the car. At 7:22 am, she told them that the perpetrator was driving a vehicle that “looks identical to your guys’ police cars.”⁶ She described particular features of the car, including that it contained a “silent patrolman” and that it had stripe decals, RCMP logos, a light bar, and a siren. Cst. Brown responded, “[T]hat’s very concerning for sure.”⁷ During his testimony, Cst. Brown explained he did not realize the serious implications of what Ms. Banfield was saying until later that morning, when he saw a photograph of the replica RCMP cruiser.

Immediately after completing the interview, Cst. Brown left Ms. Banfield to attend the command post in Great Village. (Cst. Melanson had left earlier, to begin

briefing, and thus missed parts of the interview.) Ms. Banfield was a victim of a violent assault at the hands of her intimate partner, and was still potentially under threat since the perpetrator's whereabouts were then unknown to police. She provided the RCMP with vital information, and a further interview could have yielded additional information and details. The police did not take photographs of her injuries or arrange for Victim Services to support her.

Cst. Trevor Arsenault was directed by S/Sgt. MacCallum to follow the ambulance transporting Ms. Banfield to the hospital and remain there until the afternoon of April 19. Approximately an hour after Ms. Banfield arrived at the hospital, Cst. Arsenault asked her questions about the previous night. He later prepared a report of the information she had shared with him. This was the second occasion on which an RCMP member had asked Ms. Banfield to recount her recollections of the previous night. Asking a witness to recount traumatic memories repeatedly is one of the key practices that has been identified as exacerbating the trauma victims' experience within the legal process.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP did not treat Lisa Banfield as a surviving victim of the mass casualty; that is, as an important witness who required careful debriefing and who would need support services.

Shortly before 8:00 am, Ms. Banfield was transported to the Colchester East Hants Health Centre, where she was assessed in the emergency department and then admitted. On examination, she was noted to have tenderness in her lower right flank; superficial scratches and abrasions on her hands, feet, and legs; and bruising to her upper back and left wrist and hand. X-rays revealed fractures to her ribs and lumbar spine. Ms. Banfield was treated in hospital for five nights and discharged on April 24, 2020.

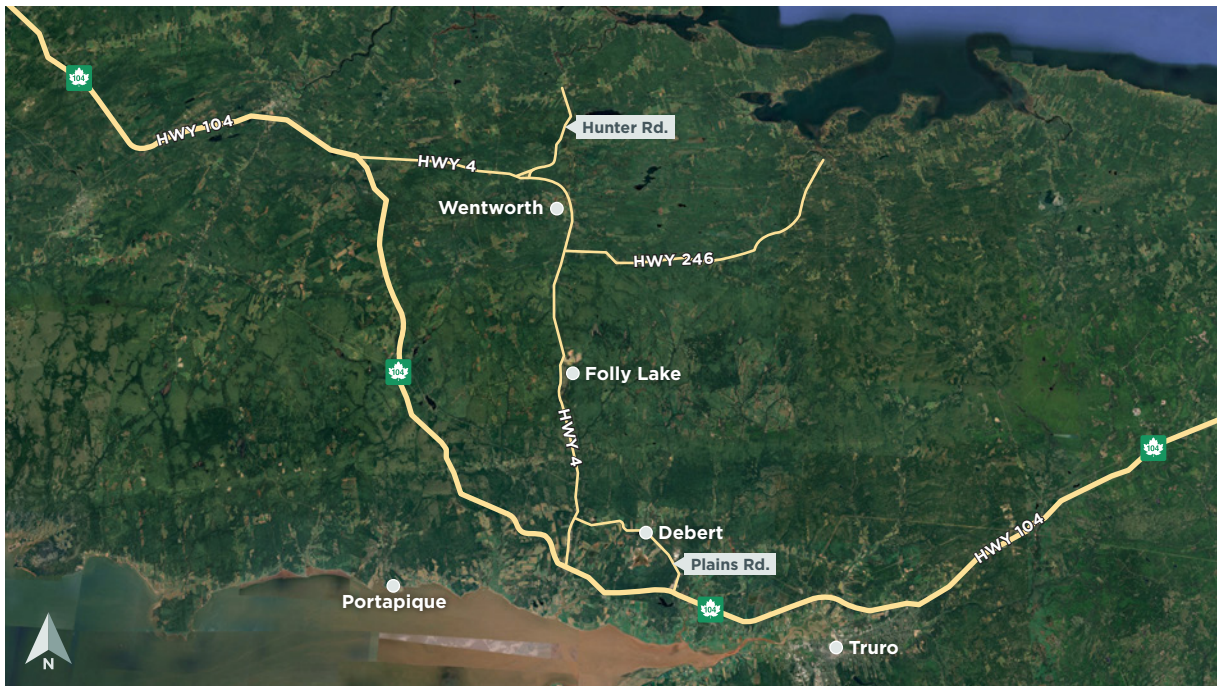
Perpetrator Emerges and Kills Again

Hunter Road, Wentworth

Perpetrator's Actions

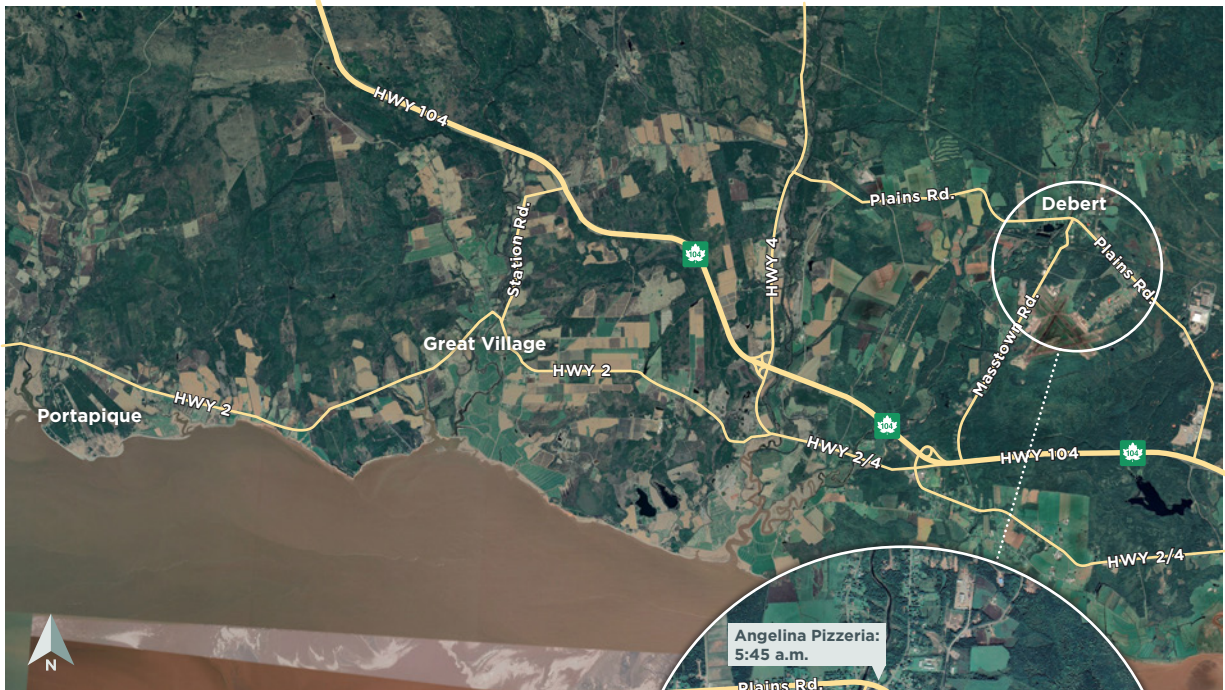
As summarized in Chapter 3, the perpetrator had spent the night in the Debert Business Park. Video surveillance had captured the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser on Plains Road, travelling west toward Highway 4 at 5:45 am. Less than half an hour later, the replica cruiser was captured on video surveillance travelling north on Highway 4 and passing a residence near Folly Lake; at 6:29 am, video surveillance shows the vehicle travelling north on Hunter Road, 3.7 kilometres south of 2328 Hunter Road.

Hunter Road and Plains Road, Wentworth



Map Data | Google, ©2023 CNES / Airbus

Perpetrator's Route Through Debert on April 19, 2020



Map Data | Google, ©2023 CNES / Airbus

Shortly after 6:35 am, the perpetrator arrived at 2328 Hunter Road, the home of Alanna Jenkins and Sean McLeod, both long-time employees of Corrections Canada. Ms. Jenkins worked at the Nova Institution for Women in Truro, and Mr. McLeod worked at the Springhill Institution. Mr. McLeod had met the perpetrator through a friend in Portapique, and the couple had socialized with him.

The perpetrator shot one of the family dogs at the residence and entered the home. The perpetrator spent almost three hours in the Jenkins / McLeod home. Evidence suggests that he shot the couple before setting the house on fire. He took Mr. McLeod's wallet from the scene. The house ultimately burned to the ground, destroying forensic evidence that may otherwise have assisted with reconstructing the perpetrator's actions, including the times of death of Alanna Jenkins and Sean

McLeod. As we describe in the witness accounts below, people nearby heard gunshots followed by dog yelps at 6:10 am and between 6:30 am and 6:40 am. Additional gunshots were reported after 8:00 am and between 8:30 am and 9:00 am.

At 8:50 am, Tom Bagley left his home on foot for his usual morning walk along Hunter Road. Known for his kindness, caring and skill as a storyteller, Mr. Bagley was a military veteran and retired firefighter. The distance between the Bagley and Jenkins / McLeod homes was about 400 metres. At approximately 9:00 am, another nearby resident, Carlyle Brown, observed smoke coming from the direction of the Jenkins / McLeod residence. During Mr. Bagley's walk, he passed the Jenkins / McLeod residence and would likely have observed smoke and fire. Prior to 9:20 am, Mr. Bagley went to the home, presumably seeking to assist or to ascertain whether assistance was needed. He was shot and killed by the perpetrator.

After taking the lives of Alanna Jenkins, Sean McLeod, and Tom Bagley, the perpetrator left 2328 Hunter Road. At 9:23 am, the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser was captured on video travelling south on Hunter Road toward Highway 4, approximately 3.7 kilometres south of 2328 Hunter Road. The perpetrator proceeded along Highway 4.

Community Member Observations and Actions

On April 19, community members were the first responders on Hunter Road, just as they had been the evening before in Portapique. The evidence we have shows Hunter Road neighbours caring for one another in the absence of public safety information. These community-minded people were at risk without knowing it. Neighbours and nearby residents reported hearing gunshots at various times that morning, and at least two saw the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser pass by their homes. Seeing the fire, neighbours checked to see if Ms. Jenkins and Mr. McLeod and others were safe. Some had heard about the events in Portapique, but others had not.

Carlyle and Cindy Brown's home was closest to the Jenkins / McLeod residence, about 175 metres to the south though separated by thick woodland. Around 6:10 am, Mr. Brown heard a gunshot followed by a yelp, then followed within the next hour by two gunshots that were very close together and "kind of muffled."⁸ He assumed Sean McLeod had shot a coyote and had had to pursue the animal down the bank, toward the river, accounting for the gunshots sounding farther away. He

also heard a single, louder gunshot 30 to 60 minutes later. Sometime after 8:30 or 8:45 am, Mr. Brown observed smoke coming from the Jenkins / McLeod residence. He initially believed it to be from a brush fire. Approximately 10 to 15 minutes later, the amount of smoke coming from his neighbour's property began to concern him. Mr. Brown got dressed and was leaving his front patio when he heard another gunshot coming from the direction of the fire.

Carlyle and Cindy Brown had been watching the news that morning and were aware of the situation in Portapique. At around 9:35 am, after receiving a phone call from their neighbours telling them to "get off the road," the Browns got in their truck to leave the area.⁹ They headed first toward the Jenkins / McLeod residence, at which point they observed the home engulfed in flames and heard a loud explosion. They then turned around and drove south on Hunter Road to leave the area.

As the Browns drove south on Hunter Road, they met their neighbour Darrol Thurier, who was heading toward 2328 Hunter Road on his ATV. They advised him of the situation and told him to get off the road. The Browns continued south on Hunter Road and warned people they encountered along the way to leave the area. Mr. Thurier returned home and told his wife, Lisa Owen, what he had heard. The couple locked their doors and Ms. Owen saw the two tweets that had been issued by the RCMP by 8:02 am about the situation in Portapique. These tweets had been sent at 11:32 pm on April 18 (describing the situation as a firearms complaint in Portapique) and 8:02 am on April 19 (describing the situation as an active shooting in Portapique).

About 15 minutes later, the Browns heard an explosion. They remained inside with the doors locked, but as time passed they became increasingly worried about their neighbours and the situation at the Jenkins / McLeod home. They left their home and travelled by car to offer assistance, arriving at 2328 Hunter Road around 10 am to find the home engulfed in flames. After stopping for about five minutes and talking with neighbour and volunteer firefighter Joe Rushton, who had just called 911, they continued on to check on other neighbours and to see if they could find Alanna Jenkins and Sean McLeod.

Further down on Hunter Road, April Dares also heard the gunshots and yelp around 6:30 am to 6:40 am. She was concerned that a dog had been injured. At about 7:30 am she left her house, driving in her truck to see if she could help. Shortly before reaching the Jenkins / McLeod residence, she had an intuition to turn back. Ms. Dares explained that as she was driving along Hunter Road, "a little voice just said, 'OK, go home.'"¹⁰ She stopped her vehicle two driveways south of

the Jenkins / McLeod residence, turned the truck around, and proceeded back to her home.

At approximately 9:15 am, Ms. Dares observed what she described as a police cruiser travel by her residence, heading south toward Highway 4. Ten minutes later, she posted a question on the Hunter Road community Facebook group's page about hearing gunfire. Shortly afterward, Shelly MacBurnie, a neighbour, called to say that her husband, Jody MacBurnie, had been unable to contact Sean McLeod or Alanna Jenkins that morning. The MacBurnies advised Ms. Dares that Mr. McLeod knew the perpetrator. Ms. Dares then called 911. The MacBurnies had already called Alanna Jenkins's parents, Dan and Susan Jenkins, who called 911 and made their way toward Hunter Road.

Jody MacBurnie first became aware that something was happening in Portapique at around 7:00 am on April 19, when he saw a Facebook message from friends in Masstown. Mr. MacBurnie worked with Greg and Jamie Blair, and Greg Blair was his first cousin. Mr. MacBurnie reached out to Tyler Blair, Greg's adult son, who confirmed that Greg and Jamie Blair had been killed but that their children were alive. After this conversation, Mr. MacBurnie recalled that Sean McLeod also knew the perpetrator. He texted Mr. McLeod and, when he didn't receive a reply, he texted Ms. Jenkins. Mr. MacBurnie later explained: "Sean and I text all the time so I knew, I knew when he didn't reply something was wrong."¹¹ He called the Oxford RCMP detachment at 9:19:54 am to report his concerns. (This call was automatically forwarded to 911 because the detachment phone line was not staffed at that time.) Mr. MacBurnie later recalled that, as he was hanging up, while standing in his yard,

I was standing right here where we are now, partially in my driveway it was 9:19 an RCMP cruiser drove by really slow, and I said that's fucking weird. And I said to my wife this is, something's fucking weird because I was on the phone with the RCMP and he said you know maybe we'd get somebody up there, whatever, so obviously I said they don't know an RCMP was on my road. So, we just got scared at that point[.]¹²

The MacBurnie family decided to leave Hunter Road. Four of them, plus their family dogs, drove around rural Nova Scotia for a while, regularly checking social media. When they reached Oxford, Mr. MacBurnie saw a message that the Jenkins / McLeod home was on fire. This confirmed for him that Hunter Road was unsafe, and the family stayed away from their home for some time.

Lacking any public safety warning or direction about how best to keep themselves safe, the MacBurnie family did their best to ensure their safety. Mr. MacBurnie's account of his close relationships with the Blairs and Ms. Jenkins and Mr. McLeod is a particularly vivid example of the tightly knit relationships that can exist within the communities most affected by the mass casualty. In evidence, in responses to our Share Your Experience survey, and at our open houses, many Nova Scotians shared similar accounts of having close ties to more than one victim or a family of victims. As we explain in Volume 4, Community, this connectedness is important to understand when planning how best to support individuals and communities during and after a mass casualty.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP did not provide advice to community members about what precautions they should take to ensure their safety. In the absence of this information, community members adopted a range of strategies to stay safe, some of which may have put them at greater risk.

On April 19, 2020, Patsy Bagley observed her husband, Tom Bagley, leave for his usual morning walk. Less than an hour later, Ms. Bagley went out on the deck of her residence and observed the fire at the Jenkins / McLeod residence. She started to worry about her husband. At around 10:15 am, neighbours Lisa Owen and Darrol Thurier drove to the Bagley residence to ask whether Alanna Jenkins and Sean McLeod might have gone there to escape the fire. Mr. Thurier asked Patsy Bagley, "Where's Tom?" and Ms. Bagley explained that her husband had gone for his walk.¹³ Ms. Bagley recalled her neighbours saying, "Tom's on the missing, Patsy."¹⁴ Shortly after 11:00 am, Patsy Bagley called her daughter, Charlene Bagley, and advised her that a friend had called to warn her to stay inside "because a crazy guy was pretending to be a cop and shooting people."¹⁵

When Dan and Susan Jenkins – Alanna Jenkins's parents – woke up on the morning of April 19, 2020, they heard on the news about the previous evening's events in Portapique. At approximately 7:30 am, Jody and Shelly MacBurnie phoned Dan and Susan Jenkins to say they had been unable to reach Alanna or Sean that morning. Dan Jenkins called 911 from his home in Pictou County to provide the information that he had about the situation and told the call-taker that he and his wife were getting ready to travel to the house on Hunter Road. The call-taker told

him that the police were requesting that everyone stay out of the area. Mr. Jenkins replied that he was not going to Portapique and would get as close to his daughter's house as he could. The call-taker took his name and phone number and said someone would contact him.

Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins then drove toward Hunter Road. About 400 metres from Wentworth Provincial Park, they were stopped at an RCMP roadblock. While they waited, they continued to be contacted by Jody MacBurnie. Mr. MacBurnie said there was a fire at the Jenkins / McLeod residence and told them he did not have a good feeling about what was going on. Mr. MacBurnie told Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins that he and his wife were leaving their house and getting away because they did not know what was going on.

At the checkpoint, Dan Jenkins exited his vehicle and approached Cst. Brenna Counter. Cst. Counter aimed her rifle at Mr. Jenkins, told him to stop, and asked who he was. Mr. Jenkins told her his daughter's name and address and that he had heard her house was on fire and he was unable to reach her. Cst. Counter told Mr. Jenkins that she could not tell him anything and asked him to get back in his car. She asked him for his phone number and told him that she would call him. Mr. Jenkins returned to his car, and Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins returned home. They did not hear from Cst. Counter or any other RCMP member that day.

Emergency Response

Operational Communications Centre

At 9:19 am, Jody MacBurnie called the Oxford RCMP detachment to express concern that he could not get hold of Sean McLeod or Alanna Jenkins. The detachment phone line was not staffed at that time, and Mr. MacBurnie's call was put through to 911. Mr. MacBurnie mentioned that Mr. McLeod knows or knew the perpetrator, said that he was aware of the events in Portapique, and explained his connection to Greg Blair. The call-taker advised that he would pass along the information provided and that Mr. MacBurnie may get a call back. This call was not logged on the RCMP's incident activity log, and the information shared by Mr. MacBurnie was not dispatched to the command post or responding members.

At 9:32:20 am, after her phone conversation with Shelly MacBurnie, April Dares called 911. She told the call-taker that she heard a vehicle drive by at around 6:40

am that morning, and, not long afterward, she heard gunshots followed by a dog yelping. Ms. Dares told the call-taker that she drove down the road to where she thought the sound came from and did not see anything. She also informed the call-taker that the perpetrator may have connections to Hunter Road:

[S]omeone called me and mentioned the Portapique shooting, and that this guy ... Actually, someone who lives on this road, he shot and killed his cousins ... And he knows the people which would be down the road and possibly where I heard the gunshots.¹⁶

In the same phone call, April Dares told the 911 call-taker that she had observed a police vehicle. (At this time, the public was still not aware that the perpetrator was driving a fully marked replica RCMP cruiser.) As she explained to the call-taker, “Actually the police had gone by a few minutes ago so I don’t know, I don’t know. Anyway, they’re not aware of me hearing gunshots.”¹⁷

Call-takers had access to the Be on the Lookout notice, sent at approximately 8:00 am, which stated that the perpetrator may be anywhere in the province and was likely driving a fully marked replica RCMP vehicle. However, the call-taker – who had also fielded Jody MacBurnie’s call – did not appreciate the significance of the information he received in short succession from Hunter Road. Ms. Dares’s call was logged in the RCMP’s incident activity log, but the information that the caller had seen a police vehicle was not recorded.

Moments later, April Dares noticed smoke rising from the north on Hunter Road. At 9:38:12 am, she placed a second call to 911 and told the call-taker “now there’s a fire [and there are] more gunshots [from] down the road.” Ms. Dares informed the 911 call-taker that there was “a bunch of smoke.”¹⁸

At 9:40 am, Carlyle Brown called 911 and reported that there was a fire at 2328 Hunter Road. He told the call-taker that he could hear gunshots and explosions.

At 9:35 am, the first 911 call about Lillian Campbell’s death was received. Responses to this call are described in the following section of this chapter. The overlap in time between 911 calls about the murders on Hunter Road and Highway 4 in Wentworth, and the perpetrator’s attendance at Highway 4 in Glenholme, illustrates how quickly the perpetrator was moving after leaving the Jenkins / McLeod home. As we explain in our section on the police response to these calls, the RCMP was largely unprepared for the more dynamic critical incident response that this development required.

At 9:47 am, the 911 call-taker transferred Carlyle Brown’s call to Bryan Green, the supervisor at OCC dispatch, and the call dropped. Mr. Green called Mr. Brown back right away, and Mr. Brown informed him that he had heard a gunshot earlier that morning, at 6:00 am. He said that he could still hear shots going off, but that it could have been propane tanks exploding. Most likely these sounds were made by ammunition exploding in the fire at the Jenkins / McLeod residence. Mr. Green asked Mr. Brown if there was any danger that the fire could spread to another home. Mr. Brown replied that he did not think it was likely the fire would spread. Mr. Green advised Mr. Brown that fire services would not be able to attend immediately on account of the active shooter situation, and he advised him to stay clear of the area.

Wentworth is located in Cumberland County, Nova Scotia, while Portapique is in Colchester County. The RCMP uses separate radio channels for each of these two counties. On April 19, 2020, information about the incidents in Wentworth and subsequent incidents was broadcast by dispatch on both these channels. When the RCMP later prepared a transcript of the Colchester County radio transmissions, it did so using Eastern Standard Time. The Commission produced a transcript of the Cumberland County radio channel transmissions using Atlantic Standard Time. We have used Atlantic Standard Time throughout this report, as it is the time zone local to Nova Scotia. Times shown on the RCMP’s transcript of Colchester County radio transmissions are one hour earlier than the correct time of the relevant transmission.

After Mr. Brown’s call, OCC dispatch began to broadcast information about the situation on Hunter Road on both the Cumberland and Colchester channels. At 9:48 am, the first dispatch on Cumberland radio was that a caller had reported heavy black smoke and the sound of explosions in the Hunter Road area. The dispatcher said, “I’m not sure if this is connected at all” and advised that Wentworth fire services had been notified.¹⁹ Almost immediately, RCMP dispatch advised Wentworth fire services, which were en route to 2328 Hunter Road, to stand down because of the active threat in the area. At 10:03 am, the fire was also mentioned on Colchester radio. At 10:33 am, RCMP dispatch broadcast on Cumberland radio about the call from Dan Jenkins: “[J]ust to advise the 2328 Hunter Road extension with the fire, I’ve had the dad call in. He’s quite concerned he cannot reach his daughter’s cell phone.”²⁰ On both the Cumberland and Colchester radio channels, dispatch

and RCMP members erroneously refer to the address of the fire as 2328 Hunter Road Extension. In fact, 2328 was on Hunter Road.

At approximately 1:43 pm on April 19, 2020, April Dares called 911 a third time. She and her husband had gone to check on their neighbour, Patsy Bagley. Ms. Dares told the 911 call-taker that Ms. Bagley's husband, Tom Bagley, had not been seen or heard from since 8:45 am that day, when he left for his morning walk, and that Ms. Bagley had asked her to put a report in. The 911 call-taker informed Ms. Dares that this information would be relayed to RCMP members and someone would be in touch to give assistance. Ms. Bagley was contacted by the RCMP later that afternoon (discussed in the section on next of kin notifications in Chapter 7).

First Responders

On the morning of April 19, 2020, many Cumberland County RCMP members were assisting with the incident in Portapique. Cst. Matthew Bray of the Amherst detachment had not been scheduled to work that day but, given the strain on resources caused by the Portapique incident, agreed to assist in covering Cumberland County. Most general duty members scheduled to work the day shift on April 19 began their shifts at around 7:00 am. Some shifts were short staffed because members had self-deployed the previous evening. (Self-deployment means that these members attended the critical incident response without being directed by a supervisor or dispatcher to do so.) In some instances, members attended work to respond to the critical incident, despite the fact that they were not scheduled to work at that time. As members started their shifts, the briefing they received from their supervisors, the Operational Communications Centre, and the command post varied and, overall, was unsystematic and insufficient. Most members picked up as much background information as they could glean from monitoring the radio traffic and speaking to colleagues. No general instructions were issued by the command post or risk manager about what information should be shared with oncoming members.

First responders from several RCMP detachments were travelling toward Wentworth to respond to the call about the homicide of Lillian Campbell when they received the broadcast about fire and explosions on Hunter Road. As Cst. Matthew Bray and Cst. Richard Harvey turned onto Hunter Road, they encountered a black pickup truck with male and female occupants. They pulled up to the vehicle and

advised the occupants that there was an “active situation” and they needed to leave for their safety. The RCMP members then continued down Hunter Road.

At 11:07 am, Lisa Owen reported the discovery of Tom Bagley’s body to a 911 caller who, while remaining on the line with Ms. Owen, connected her to Emergency Health Services (EHS) dispatch. EHS created an incident file. At the same time that Ms. Owens was speaking with EHS, Cst. Bray and Cst. Harvey arrived at the Jenkins / McLeod property. They arrived at 11:12 am, almost two hours after Jody MacBurnie’s first 911 call.

As Cst. Bray and Cst. Harvey pulled up, the members noticed people standing at the scene. The two constables approached and observed the “burned out foundation” of the home, which had collapsed into the basement with the remaining structure on fire.²¹ They also observed “multiple burnt vehicles” and propane tanks on fire. The constables spoke with Lisa Owen, Darrol Thurier, and Darrol’s son, Darren Thurier. Darrol Thurier advised the RCMP members that the body on the ground was Tom Bagley and that they knew the residents of the burnt home, but could not locate them. The constables assessed Mr. Bagley and confirmed he was deceased. They approached the remnants of the burning structure but could not locate any signs of the residents. Cst. Bray and Cst. Harvey broadcast their findings on the radio and continued to search nearby outbuildings on the property.

At 11:21 am, EHS dispatch called RCMP dispatch to see if the Hunter Road area was secure. At approximately 11:24 am, Cst. Harvey confirmed that the potential hospital patient was deceased and an ambulance was no longer required. At 11:25 am, RCMP dispatch called EHS dispatch and told them to cancel the ambulance request for 2328 Hunter Road. Two minutes later, the ambulance call-out was cancelled. EHS records indicate the reason for the cancellation was that the scene was now a “police matter.”

The fire at the Jenkins / McLeod residence had spread to the surrounding treeline and lawn. Cst. Harvey requested that fire services attend to ensure the fire did not get out of control, adding that they should stay away from the scene to preserve evidence. Cst. Bray and Cst. Harvey remained at the scene.

Unfortunately, evidence was destroyed because of the fire at the Jenkins / McLeod home and the fact that there was no emergency services response to this scene for so long after the RCMP first became aware of the house fire. There is much that will never be known about the perpetrator’s activities during the time he was on Hunter Road. This loss of evidence sadly means the Commission could not answer many questions as we would have liked, to provide more information to the

families of those whose lives were taken at Hunter Road. The same is true for those who died at other crime scenes where evidence was destroyed by fires that were set by the perpetrator but continued to burn long after he had departed.

Highway 4, Wentworth

Perpetrator's Actions

Around 9:00 am on April 19, 2020, Lillian Campbell left her home on Highway 246, in the Wentworth area, for her regular morning walk south on Highway 4 and along Valley Road. Ms. Campbell, who with her husband had retired to Nova Scotia from the Yukon in 2014, enjoyed gardening and day trips to nearby beaches. She was community-minded and loved walking the roads and parks around her home in the Wentworth Valley.

On the morning of April 19, 2020, Ms. Campbell was wearing an orange high-visibility vest, sunglasses, mittens, a hat, and a scarf. Neither Ms. Campbell nor her husband was aware of the events in Portapique the night before.

At approximately 9:23 am, the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser was captured on surveillance video driving southwest on Hunter Road, approximately 1.8 kilometres northeast of the intersection of Hunter Road and Highway 4. The perpetrator then travelled east on Highway 4. Just before 9:30 the same car passed the Wentworth Market, driving south on Highway 4. The front push bar is clearly captured in this video.

Travelling south on Highway 4, the perpetrator passed Lillian Campbell, then turned the vehicle around and fatally shot her from his replica RCMP cruiser. The perpetrator then turned the car around again and continued south on Highway 4 toward Glenholme.

At about 9:30 am, Lillian Campbell died from a single fatal gunshot fired by the perpetrator at close range from inside his vehicle. A long, undamaged walking stick was located next to her body. A metal detector was used to search the scene, and no casings or projectiles were located.

There is no evidence to suggest that Ms. Campbell was known to the perpetrator or had any prior contact with him.

Community Observations and Actions

Mary-Ann and Reginald Jay were Lillian Campbell's neighbours. They lived on Highway 4, about 350 metres from where it intersects with Highway 246. The intersection is close to where Ms. Campbell lived on April 19, 2020, and she walked by the Jays' residence on her daily walks. She encountered the perpetrator at the end of the Jays' driveway.

At 9:30 am, Ms. Jay was sewing upstairs in her home when she heard a gunshot. She stood up to look out the window and observed an RCMP car slowly turning around and heading south, toward Truro. Ms. Jay noted the car "was a typical RCMP vehicle ... it had the markings on it like any RCMP vehicle." The car turned around in a "casual" manner; it did not squeal its tires or speed away.

Mary-Ann Jay then observed a body lying on the side of the highway. She recognized the clothing on the body and realized the person on the ground was her neighbour, Lillian Campbell. She ran outside to the side of the road where Ms. Campbell was lying. She observed her friend and believed her to be deceased. Ms. Jay ran back to her residence and called 911 to report the incident. The 911 call was placed at 9:35 am.

While Mary-Ann Jay was on the phone, Reginald Jay pulled into the driveway. He exited his vehicle and called to Ms. Jay, asking whether she had called 911. When she responded in the affirmative, Mr. Jay ran to Lillian Campbell on the side of the highway. He immediately checked her vital signs and signalled to Ms. Jay that Ms. Campbell was deceased.

Mary-Ann Jay continued to update the 911 call-taker. She explained that an RCMP vehicle had just left the scene. The call-taker was confused by this statement and asked Ms. Jay if she was speaking to the RCMP member. Ms. Jay explained, "No! I – I was in my room and I saw him, I saw him, go down the road."²² The call-taker asked again, "Ok did you see, was the RCMP officer there with her?"; to which Ms. Jay responded, "I didn't see, all I heard was a big bang like a gunshot, and I looked out to see."²³

Mary-Ann Jay gave Reginald Jay a blanket to cover Lillian Campbell's body. As he was doing so, another person, former paramedic Scott Brumwell, arrived at the side of the road. The 911 call-taker advised Ms. Jay that both she and her husband should remain inside their residence. Ms. Jay was unaware of the active shooter situation and responded to the call-taker that it would be inappropriate to leave their neighbour alone on the side of the road.

Despite the potential danger, Reginald Jay and Scott Brumwell remained on the side of Highway 4 with Lillian Campbell's body until Cst. Brenna Counter arrived on scene at approximately 10:09 am.

Yet again, community members put themselves in harm's way to assist others.

First Responder Actions

At about 9:42 am, RCMP dispatch broadcast the information from Ms. Jay's 911 call over the Cumberland radio channel, followed quickly, at 9:42:30 am, by the Colchester radio channel. RCMP Emergency Response Team (ERT), Police Dog Service (PDS), and general duty members stationed in Portapique and the Cobequid Pass toll plaza were directed to respond to the Wentworth area. Additional RCMP members responded from their detachments and other locations.

While RCMP members were en route to Wentworth, the perpetrator was sighted farther south on Highway 4, in Glenholme. ERT and PDS members, as well as some general duty members, were diverted to Glenholme in pursuit of the perpetrator while other general duty members continued to Wentworth. Some members who responded to the scene in Wentworth then carried on to the call on Hunter Road, as discussed in the previous section.

The first-responding RCMP members arrived at Lillian Campbell's location at 10:09 am. They confirmed that she was deceased, and contained the scene.

Lillian Campbell's husband, Michael Hyslop, was at home on the morning of April 19. He knew his wife was out on her usual morning walk and had no reason for concern because she often walked for an hour and a half or two hours. At 10:45, his step-mother called to tell him that a woman had been shot in Wentworth. Mr. Hyslop immediately left his home and took his car to search for his wife. Shortly after leaving his home, he encountered a large police presence and saw someone under a blanket near the Jays' residence.

Mr. Hyslop exited his vehicle and told an RCMP member (Cst. Harvey) that he was looking for his wife, who had gone for a walk and not returned. The RCMP member told Mr. Hyslop to return to his vehicle. Mr. Hyslop again stated his reason for approaching the scene and told the member what his wife had been wearing. The RCMP member told him to return his vehicle and someone would speak with him shortly. Mr. Hyslop waited in his vehicle for approximately 15 to 20 minutes. RCMP

members S/Sgt. Craig Learning and Cst. Counter drove up to Mr. Hyslop's vehicle and informed him that his wife was deceased. The members then drove Mr. Hyslop to his stepmother's home nearby.

Later that afternoon, Mr. Hyslop returned to his home. He was visited by RCMP members Cst. Troy Allen and Cst. Dayle Burris, who offered their condolences and took a brief statement. They stated that someone would be in contact in the near future. Mr. Hyslop later received phone calls from Victim Services and the RCMP Major Crime Unit Victim Services, from whom he received information about the services available to him but not details about what had actually happened.

Glenholme

Perpetrator Is Sighted by Police

Leaving the crime scene in Wentworth, the perpetrator turned around and resumed travelling south on Highway 4. His next stop would be Glenholme, a little more than 21 kilometres from where he had killed Lillian Campbell, near the intersection of Highway 4 and Highway 246 and the entrance to Wentworth Park. The perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser was captured on surveillance video driving south on Highway 4 past a residence near Folly Lake between approximately 9:40 and 9:45 am on April 19, 2020.

While the perpetrator was travelling south, Cpl. Rodney Peterson, the Colchester County duty team leader, was travelling north on Highway 4 to respond to the Wentworth scene.

Cpl. Peterson had learned of the events in Portapique from a phone call with a colleague before reporting for duty at the Bible Hill detachment at 9:00 am. He had spoken with Sgt. Andrew (Andy) O'Brien outside the detachment sometime after 8:35 am. Sgt. O'Brien told Cpl. Peterson that they were looking for a police car and that he should put on his hard body armour. This short conversation was an inadequate briefing, particularly for the team leader on duty. Cpl. Peterson left with the impression the perpetrator could be driving a decommissioned police car. At the time of Cpl. Peterson and Sgt. O'Brien's conversation, the RCMP had possessed a photograph of the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser for at least an hour.

On his way to Portapique, Cpl. Peterson had spoken on the phone with Cst. Trent Lafferty and Cst. Adam MacDonald, who were both on his team. Cpl. Peterson learned there were multiple people shot in Portapique overnight and that they were looking for a police car with decals. Cpl. Peterson understood this information to mean that the car had once had decals and traces of them could be seen, but not that the car was still fully marked. Shortly after this call, Cpl. Peterson received a Be on the Lookout (BOLO) message on his mobile work station that he believed gave a description and a photo of the perpetrator's vehicle. However, he was unable to open it. Cpl. Peterson pulled over in Masstown to try to open the message again. Immediately after stopping, and before opening the BOLO, he heard the call concerning Lillian Campbell's homicide in Wentworth. The limitations in Cpl. Peterson's briefing and access to information are critical to understanding what happened next. Once again, a failure to share important information with responding members and technological difficulties hindered the police response.

With this context in mind, we return to Highway 4, where the perpetrator was driving south while Cpl. Peterson was driving north at approximately 130 km per hour. At about 9:47 am, Cpl. Peterson and the perpetrator passed each other just south of the intersection of Highway 4 and Plains Road, while travelling in opposite directions.

Immediately, Cpl. Peterson broadcast his sighting of the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser over the Colchester radio channel. He inquired whether they were looking for a "fully marked car" or an "ex-police car."²⁴ Information about the car's call sign was shared, but by then the perpetrator's car had passed by. Cpl. Peterson confirmed that the car was driving south on Highway 4 and described the perpetrator: "The guy ah, was driving slow, smiled as he went by. Ah, white Caucasian male, ah looked like brownish hair. He's got a reflective ah, vest or jacket on."²⁵ Cst. Terry Brown responded, "[T]hat has to be him"; Cst. Fahie added, "And heads-up, he has a front push bar - front push bar." Cpl. Peterson did not hear Cst. Fahie's transmission.

After broadcasting his sighting over the radio, Cpl. Peterson turned his RCMP vehicle around in order to proceed south on Highway 4 in pursuit. Cpl. Peterson described his thinking at the time:

I'm trying to decide, should I stop, slow down, talk to this person or keep going? So, and this is very quick. It's not like I had a lot of time, we're like bam, pass each other. So, I said, if I ... if I stop and this is the bad guy, I'm going to get shot here, I'm going to get killed. If I continue on, that will give me a chance to turn around and pursue him or to do something, right.²⁶

Cpl. Peterson travelled 1.2 kilometres further north before finding a safe spot to turn around. By then the perpetrator was no longer within view. Cpl. Peterson travelled at high speed south of the Highway 104 overpass but could not locate the replica RCMP cruiser. The perpetrator had driven into the Fishers' property on Highway 4 and eluded detection.

Perpetrator Stops at the Fisher Residence

Adam Fisher is the owner of an excavation company. Prior to April 19, 2020, he had had some limited interactions with the perpetrator, who had approached him to provide a quote on excavation work on one of his properties. The perpetrator had visited the Fishers' Glenholme residence on a single occasion sometime well before the mass casualty.

On the night of April 18, Carole Fisher received a phone call from her mother in the Five Islands area, west of Portapique on Highway 2. Ms. Fisher's mother told her that something serious was happening in Portapique and that she should lock her doors. At around 9:00 am, Carole Fisher saw a Facebook post by the RCMP identifying the perpetrator with a photo of his face. She recognized him and showed Adam Fisher the picture. On seeing the picture, Mr. Fisher exclaimed, "[H]oly fuck, he's got a cop car."²⁷ In June 2019, the perpetrator had told Adam Fisher that he had just purchased two decommissioned RCMP cruisers, and he was "going to put ... one back to a marked, fully marked car." Mr. Fisher asked him, "[W]hy the hell would you want that?" According to Mr. Fisher, the perpetrator shrugged his shoulders and said, "[B]ecause I can."²⁸

The RCMP had not yet released information to the public about the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser, despite the fact that they had first received information about it almost 12 hours earlier, at the outset of the critical incident. The information first shared by eyewitnesses in Portapique had been confirmed with a photograph and by Ms. Lisa Banfield by approximately 7:30 am on April 19, 2020.

Carole Fisher urged her husband to call the RCMP and tell them about the perpetrator's vehicles. At 9:37 am, Mr. Fisher called the Bible Hill detachment. His call was automatically forwarded to the OCC, and he spoke with call-taker Ms. Tracey Brooks, telling her that he had information to share about the Portapique suspect and "some of the vehicles he owns."²⁹ When asked about his relationship to the suspect, he replied that he was an acquaintance. Ms. Brooks took note of

Mr. Fisher's name and phone number and said that a member would "contact [him] if needed."³⁰

Approximately 12 minutes after Adam Fisher called the RCMP about the perpetrator's vehicles, the perpetrator turned into the Fishers' driveway in his replica RCMP cruiser. Surveillance video footage from the Fisher property shows the perpetrator pulling into the parking area by the Fisher residence, briefly driving on the lawn, and then parking his vehicle next to the Fishers' SUV and truck. The perpetrator's vehicle was positioned in such a way that the Fishers' vehicles were located between his vehicle and their residence.

The surveillance video then shows the perpetrator exiting the replica RCMP cruiser, reaching back into the vehicle via the driver's door, and walking toward the residence with what appears to be a rifle in his right hand and a small dark object in his left hand. The perpetrator was wearing a baseball hat and a high-visibility vest. He approached the residence with a rifle in his hand.

Carole Fisher saw the replica RCMP cruiser pull into the yard, and she initially thought it was the police responding to her husband's earlier call to the RCMP about the perpetrator. However, Ms. Fisher then saw the perpetrator exit his vehicle. She recognized him from the photo posted to the RCMP's Facebook page and told her husband that the perpetrator was at their residence. The couple retreated away from the window, hid, and called 911. At around this time, the perpetrator knocked at the Fishers' door and rang their doorbell.

Carole Fisher called 911 at 9:49 am on her way to hide. As soon as the 911 call-taker answered the phone, Ms. Fisher stated that the shooter from Portapique was at their home in a police car. In response to the call-taker's questions, Ms. Fisher said:

He's dressed in a police officer outfit with a - a um, ah, ah I can't even talk he's got like a bright, thing on him. We saw him, pull in and then just reach across the passenger seat I don't know what he did and we just ran and hid ... and he's got an RCMP car, he has his own RCMP car.³¹

At the same time, Adam Fisher hid in a separate room and also called 911. He provided the perpetrator's full name to the call-taker and explained that the perpetrator was driving a police car and was dressed like a police officer. Mr. Fisher told the 911 call-taker that he believed the perpetrator had a gun. While on the phone with 911, Mr. Fisher loaded his 12-gauge shotgun and said, "If he comes up to my house I'm gonna blow his fucking head off." Mr. Fisher also expressed concern for the

safety of his neighbour, Peter Atkinson. He provided Mr. Atkinson's phone number so that dispatch could contact him and warn him to remain inside. Carole Fisher texted Mr. Atkinson about the situation at their residence, and Mr. Atkinson then proceeded to call 911. Even in dire circumstances, the Fishers showed their care and concern for their neighbour.

The Fishers' surveillance video captured the perpetrator returning to his vehicle and driving away from the house at approximately 9:51 am. The Fishers were unaware that the perpetrator had left and believed that he could have been elsewhere on the property. They remained hidden in their home. Carole Fisher remained on the line with 911 until shortly after 10:00 am. Shortly before hanging up, the 911 call-taker told her that the police would tell her when it was safe.

Adam Fisher also remained on the line with 911 at the time of the perpetrator's departure and stayed on the line until 10:33 am. The call-taker informed Mr. Fisher that there had been another incident and that the RCMP attending to the Fishers' call were leaving to attend to this newer one. The call-taker told Mr. Fisher that the RCMP could not confirm that the perpetrator had left the property but advised that the Fishers should remain inside the home with the doors locked and call back if they heard or saw anything. Adam Fisher joined Carole Fisher where she was hiding. They remained hidden with the shotgun and spoke with friends and family members by phone to get updates on the perpetrator's whereabouts. They had no further contact with the RCMP on April 19, but spent hours terrified because they were unsure whether the perpetrator was nearby and whether he had planted explosives on their property.

Having not heard from the police, the Fishers contacted the RCMP on April 20, 2020, to report that they had video surveillance of the perpetrator at their residence and to ask that the police search their property for possible explosives. On April 21, Sgt. Dave Legge and Cst. Michael Townsend attended at the Fisher residence, took statements from the couple, and obtained a USB containing the surveillance footage from their property. Cpl. Dion Sutton, a member of Police Dog Service, also came to the residence. He conducted a search but did not find anything related to the time the perpetrator spent at the Fishers' residence.

The Chase Continues

At 9:50 am on April 19, 2020, following the Fishers' 911 calls, RCMP members en route to the Wentworth homicide call were redirected to Glenholme. Within six minutes, RCMP members, including general duty, Police Dog Service, and Emergency Response Team members, had paused south of the Fishers' residence to regroup and confirm their target destination. They were soon joined by the ERT tactical armoured vehicle. In his testimony, S/Sgt. MacCallum described this moment:

[W]e got what I thought was a break by the dispatch coming over, said that he was at the certain address on Highway 4. And I knew exactly where it was. I knew this driveway. I knew that civic only because I go up that road often. We camped nearby. And in my mind, it's like, "We finally know exactly where he is."

...

[S]o I thought we were going to keep going, and then I saw other cars, marked cars and unmarked cars, pulled off to the side of the road on the Wentworth Highway just off the exit. And we stopped and I thought we were stopping maybe for formation or - and at that point, ERT is the tip of the spear. They're the ones that are going to be doing this. And so we stop and then I just - more cars started coming up, because we had quite a response coming, and as we came out, there was - I don't want to say it momentarily confusion, but it was like, "Okay. Where's the driveway? Where is he?" And many people there weren't familiar with the neighbourhood. And it's like, "Guys, why are we stopping? It's up there."

And so that was it. Everybody was, "Let's go." Like, everybody wanted to be in the fight. Everybody wanted to get there. And I just - to this day, it's just a very hard thing that if I just didn't tell [the driver] just to keep going, that we would have saw him in the distance or - I just don't know that.

COMMISSION COUNSEL: Yeah Of course we don't know that, but you're concerned, I guess, over the issue of the delay that may have been experienced at that time?

S/SGT. ADDIE MacCALLUM: Yes.³²

The Department of Natural Resources helicopter had joined the RCMP response at 8:45 am. At 9:45 am, it was directed to Wentworth and then began a perimeter flight around the Fishers' residence. All responding resources, including the helicopter, came from the south, which allowed the perpetrator to escape north along Highway 4 toward Plains Road in Debert, without detection.

The RCMP was unaware that it was already too late: the perpetrator had left the area. The perpetrator did not enter the Fisher residence, nor did he hide on their property. Unbeknownst to the Fishers and the RCMP, he had left the property shortly after arriving.

MAIN FINDING

Poor navigation technology and a lack of local geographic knowledge by responding RCMP members slowed the RCMP response to information received about the perpetrator's location.

Plains Road

Perpetrator's Actions

At about 9:51 am on April 19, the perpetrator left the residence of Adam and Carole Fisher in Glenholme in his replica RCMP cruiser. He travelled east on Plains Road toward Debert. The cruiser was observed by several civilian witnesses on Plains Road and captured on multiple surveillance cameras, including just before 9:58 am as it passed Dave's Service Centre travelling southeast on Plains Road.

Kristen Beaton, a young wife and mother who was expecting a child at the time, was employed with the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) as a continuing care assistant. She was known for her kindness with her clients. Ms. Beaton was driving to Masstown and Debert to meet her homecare clients that morning. Along the way, she exchanged multiple text messages with her husband, Nick Beaton, about the events involving the active shooter as they unfolded. Neither of the Beatons knew the perpetrator.

Shortly before 10:00 am, Ms. Beaton parked her Honda CR-V in a gravel pull-out on the south side of Plains Road, just southeast of the Debert Business Park. This pull-out was frequently used by VON staff to do paperwork or make phone calls while doing their rounds.

The perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser was captured on surveillance video travelling east past Angelina Pizzeria and Dave's Service Centre, both on Plains Road, Debert, at approximately 9:57 am. The perpetrator continued travelling on Plains Road to the pull-out where Kristen Beaton was parked. He slowed his vehicle, drove into the pull-out, and positioned his replica RCMP cruiser next to Ms. Beaton's vehicle. He proceeded to fatally shoot Ms. Beaton through her driver-side window.

Heather O'Brien was driving a Volkswagen Jetta on the same stretch of road that Sunday morning. Ms. O'Brien had been employed with VON for nearly 17 years as a licensed practical nurse. She was also a wife and mother. Ms. O'Brien was not working that day, but she spoke with her friend and colleague Leona Allen multiple times over the course of the morning. The two exchanged text messages and phone calls about the active shooter situation. Ms. O'Brien had also been corresponding with her daughters that morning about the events in Portapique and had left her home to bring them coffee.

Heather O'Brien's Jetta was captured on the Community Metal surveillance camera, heading southeast toward the Plains Road pull-out, 30 seconds behind the perpetrator. Ms. O'Brien passed the perpetrator and Kristen Beaton before pulling her Jetta over to the south shoulder of Plains Road approximately 260 metres from where Ms. Beaton's vehicle was parked. Ms. O'Brien was speaking with her friend and colleague Leona Allen by phone. She told Ms. Allen that she saw what she believed to be a police cruiser and that she heard a gunshot.

The perpetrator drove from the Plains Road pull-out and stopped his replica RCMP cruiser next to Heather O'Brien's car. He then got out of his vehicle and proceeded to fatally shoot Ms. O'Brien through her driver-side window. Ms. O'Brien's vehicle rolled southeast along the shoulder of Plains Road for approximately 60 metres before coming to rest in a wooded ditch on the south side of the road.

At this point, the perpetrator had killed 19 people.

After the shootings on Plains Road, the perpetrator proceeded southeast down Plains Road toward exit 13 on Highway 104.

Community Observations and Actions

Ms. Beaton's cellphone records indicate that she was aware of the incident in Portapique and was actively following the situation, including through social media updates. She texted with her husband on the topic throughout the morning and had two brief calls with him. Sometime before 9:00 am, Kristen Beaton posted on a Facebook group called "Local 35 Home Support Workers." The post contained a link to the RCMP Twitter page and the message, "Anyone working in D5 and 7 please be safe and keep your eyes open."³³ At 9:38 am, Nick Beaton sent his wife a Facebook screenshot of the RCMP warning with a description of the perpetrator, and the two spoke a few minutes later. Shortly after 10:00 am, Kristen Beaton's phone received an SMS text from Nick Beaton stating, "2986 Wentworth buddy is hiding inside."³⁴ Thereafter, numerous attempts by Mr. Beaton to reach Ms. Beaton by telephone and text messaging were unsuccessful.

Shortly before 11 am, Mr. Beaton called VON saying that he was unable to reach Ms. Beaton. A staff member agreed to be a point of contact for Mr. Beaton and indicated that VON would try to locate Ms. Beaton's whereabouts via the CellTrak tracking system. After unsuccessfully attempting to get through by phone to the RCMP's Bible Hill detachment, Mr. Beaton called 911 about his wife. At 11:32 am, he spoke with call-taker Ms. Megan Blanchard and explained Kristen Beaton's situation and that she had not arrived at her intended destination. He provided her licence plate number and date of birth. Ms. Blanchard said she would send the information to the RCMP members on scene and ask them to call Mr. Beaton after they had checked into it.

Following multiple attempts to contact Ms. Beaton on her mobile phone, and with the consent of Mr. Beaton, at approximately 11:52 am the VON employee acting as Mr. Beaton's point of contact reported to the RCMP that Ms. Beaton was missing. The VON employee provided GPS co-ordinates to the RCMP for Ms. Beaton's last known location according to CellTrak. At the request of the RCMP, the information regarding Ms. Beaton's location was not provided to Ms. Beaton's family.

Leona Allen had left her house in Five Islands at around 6:00 am and drove east toward Great Village. She passed an RCMP vehicle in the community of Economy, "just cruising down through, toward Five Islands."³⁵ She was then stopped by an RCMP member at the intersection of Highway 2 and Five Houses Road and told that the road was closed. She said that she was a nurse working for VON in the community and going to Great Village. The member said that the road might be

closed for days and advised Ms. Allen to monitor social media. She told him she would take the back roads.

After this detour, when she was back on Highway 2, Ms. Allen encountered more RCMP members. They searched her trunk and then directed her to continue on to Great Village. In Great Village she noticed a significant police presence and was starting to think that something major was going on. She then travelled to Mass-town, Debert, and Belmont for her next client visits. At this point, she started advising her clients to lock their doors and not open them for anyone unless they knew them.

Leona Allen and Heather O'Brien remained in contact throughout the morning: seven phone conversations between the two women between 6:28 am and 10:00 am. Their last conversation occurred at 9:59:49 am and lasted 35 seconds.

Ms. Allen said that Ms. O'Brien went out for a drive to get a coffee and clear her head because she was overwhelmed with the situation, having learned that someone she was close to had died. She was also planning to bring coffee to her daughters, who lived nearby. Ms. O'Brien told Ms. Allen that she was near Home Hardware on Lancaster Crescent in Debert and thought she heard gunshots. She told Ms. Allen that she saw a cop car. Ms. Allen then heard Ms. O'Brien's scream followed by three thuds, which she later realized were gunshots. Ms. Allen was approximately five minutes from Ms. O'Brien's location at this time. It was only at this point that Ms. Allen realized she was in any danger driving around in the community.

Leona Allen described their conversation as follows:

I asked her where she was, and she said she was on the Plains Road by Lancaster Drive, or Crescent, whatever it's called. And she said, and I told her to stay calm. She said okay, I can see a police car and then she just started screaming[.]³⁶

Leona Allen hung up and tried calling Heather O'Brien back. She made calls to Ms. O'Brien's phone at 10:01:13 am, 10:02:08 am, 10:04:53 am, 10:09:49 am, 10:15:48 am, and 10:26:28 am – all unanswered.

At 10:02:31 am, call-taker Mr. Nathan Joyce at the Truro Operational Communications Centre received an incoming 911 call from Leona Allen. Ms. Allen explained to the call-taker:

I was just on the phone with my friend, who is out in Debert. She said she was near Lancaster Drive [*sic*] in her car she said, she heard gun shots, and there was a police vehicle and then all's I could hear was her scream, and I can't get through to her.³⁷

The call-taker did not advise Ms. Allen that there was an ongoing threat or that she should stay home or shelter in place.

Leona Allen then reached out to Heather O'Brien's daughter, Darcy Dobson, via Facebook. She explained to the Commission:

I'm trying to process it all as I'm going and get myself to a safe place. But I knew that I didn't know what was going on and I pulled over and I went on Facebook. I found Heather's daughter, Darcy, who she talked about all the time, so I knew that that was somebody I could get a hold of. And I sent her a message and said, "You need to call me." And she called me straight ... she ... I said, "I don't know what's wrong, but something happened to your mom. I can't get her to answer me, but I know she's on the Plains Road." And she said she ... she had heard something about an incident on the Plains Road. And yeah, so, that was a very quick conversation, she hung up and made her way wherever she went. I ... I ... I don't even know what I was thinking. I went to the end of the Onslow Mountain Road, pulled over at a place that we refer to as River Breeze. It's not River Breeze anymore, but I pulled over there to take calls from my husband and my sister ...³⁸

After speaking with Darcy Dobson, Leona Allen phoned VON and told them something was wrong. She asked VON to attempt to locate Heather O'Brien. Ms. Allen then drove to Highway 104, via Onslow, intending to travel to Debert. She encountered an RCMP member who told her she could not go to Debert, to keep driving, and not to stop for a police vehicle. Ms. Allen drove to Springhill and then back to her home in Five Islands.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP's failure to publicly share accurate and timely information, including information about the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser and disguise, deprived community members of the opportunity to evaluate risks to their safety and to take measures to better protect themselves.

MAIN FINDING

Essential workers, including Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) employees, were particularly at risk because of the nature of their work. The RCMP did not share accurate and timely information, including information about the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser and disguise, with these workers or their employers. By not sharing this information, they deprived these essential workers and their employers of the opportunity to evaluate risks to the safety of the workers. This opportunity would have allowed them to take measures to better protect themselves.

Four other people called 911 to report the Plains Road fatalities. Starr Moore was driving east on Plains Road, past the Debert airbase, "right around the 10 o'clock mark."³⁹ She observed the silver SUV, Ms. Beaton's vehicle, in the Plains Road pull-out with its window shot out. Ms. Moore looked at the vehicle and believed she saw a deceased female in the driver seat. Ms. Moore continued driving east, where she observed a second vehicle that had come to a stop in a wooded ditch on the south side of Plains Road. She described it as a "little older car" with the window shattered out.⁴⁰

Starr Moore then turned around, drove to the Community Metal shop, and called 911. Her call was received at the OCC at 10:06:34 am. Ms. Moore stated that there were two people shot on Plains Road in Debert. She said that one woman was shot in a car and there was another car with the window shot out, but she did not see anyone in it. She explained that she had a cottage in Portapique and so was aware of the situation there.

At 10:07, Jessica MacBurnie called 911. She reported seeing "two vehicles off the road" close to the decommissioned airbase, "and one of them looks like the driver is dead in the passenger seat of a van."⁴¹ Her call was answered by a call-taker at Valley Communications in Kentville. Valley Communications is the overflow call centre for 911 calls that would normally be answered by the RCMP Operational Communications Centre in Truro. The 911 call-taker assumed from the description that the incident was a motor vehicle accident and sent the call to Emergency Health Services dispatch first to obtain an ambulance. After connecting Ms. MacBurnie to RCMP dispatch, the call-taker then dispatched fire services to respond. Four minutes later, Trevor Higgins called 911 with a similar description of the scene.

A fourth call was also placed to the OCC about the incidents on Plains Road. At around 10:00 am, Bruce Higgins and Tiffany McMaster were driving west on Plains Road toward the intersection with Reid Road. Mr. Higgins described passing an RCMP car that was heading east and driving “slow.”⁴² He thought that it was the police “looking hard” into people’s yards.⁴³ Ms. McMaster remarked that it was “so strange that it was going so slow.”⁴⁴ At the time of their sighting, the couple was not aware that the perpetrator was driving the replica RCMP cruiser. They learned about it minutes later, when Bruce Higgins’s daughter called to alert them of the danger. Shortly after 10:20 am, they called 911 and stated that, 15 or 20 minutes earlier, they had seen the perpetrator’s vehicle drive by them near their driveway in Debert.

Many community members came forward later on April 19 and in the days following to provide information to the RCMP investigation.

RCMP Command and the Operational Communications Centre

Staffing Within the Command Post and the OCC

The morning of April 19 brought shift changes, and additional RCMP members became involved in command, supervision, communications, and the front-line response.

At 7:00 am on April 19, S/Sgt. West was still acting as critical incident commander with S/Sgt. Surette assisting him. Cpl. Mills was the H Division ERT commander, and S/Sgt. MacRae was the crisis negotiator. CIC West, S/Sgt. MacRae, and Cpl. Mills formed the command triangle. CIC West’s scribe, Sgt. Rob Lewis, was also present and was tasked with keeping a record of CIC West’s decision-making.

The command triangle was being assisted by Acting Insp. Halliday, S/Sgt. Allan (AI) Carroll, and S/Sgt. MacCallum, who were also stationed at the command post in Great Village. These officers were managing the general duty members, who were providing perimeter containment, liaising with other agencies including

Halifax Regional Police, liaising with the risk manager, and making plans for a transition to post-incident investigation by the Major Crime Unit, among other duties. Also present in the command post by about 8:00 am were Acting Sgt. Angela McKay and Cpl. Gerard (Jerry) Rose-Berthiaume. These two investigators with the RCMP's Major Crime Unit had been coordinating interviews of witnesses, liaising with the medical examiner's office, and preparing for the forensic investigation that would follow. OCC Commander Glen Byrne was also at the command post, monitoring radio communications and liaising at times with the OCC. Mr. Byrne was also monitoring the Computer Integrated Information and Dispatching System (CIIDS), which, for example, showed the incident activity log and the locations of marked RCMP vehicles whose drivers were logged into the mobile work station in their vehicle. Cpl. Kevin MacDougall was responsible for the technology that supported Emergency Response Team, including radio technology. Cpl. Lisa Croteau was outside the command post, working with media who were attending in person or calling for information.

Others came and went from the command post; for example, Sgt. O'Brien arrived at around 9:00 am and stayed for approximately half an hour before leaving to supervise scene containment at Portapique. Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson interviewed Lisa Banfield in Great Village at around 7:00 am and attended the command post to brief those stationed there about the information she had shared. Insp. Rob Bell arrived at the command just before 10:00 am to relieve Acting Insp. Halliday, although this handover did not occur because of the shift in response to the perpetrator's movements.

At 7:00 am on April 19, 2020, the risk manager and Operations Communications Centre were playing an important, but supporting, role in the critical incident response by capturing incoming information about the mass casualty and arranging resources, including extra responding members, for the command post. The OCC was also responsible for ensuring that other, unrelated calls were being responded to as necessary. S/Sgt. Bruce Briers took over the role of risk manager from S/Sgt. Brian Rehill at approximately 7:00 am. RM Briers started gathering information about the ongoing incident at around 6:00 am and requested that Halifax Regional Police share any records it held about the perpetrator. This action yielded new information about the perpetrator's prior interactions with police. Before taking over as risk manager, S/Sgt. Briers also monitored the Colchester radio channel, but he found the incident log being maintained on the RCMP's Computer Integrated Information and Dispatching System too clunky and slow to be of great value.

The OCC call-takers, dispatchers, and supervisors also had a shift change at approximately 7:00 am, and the OCC supervisor, Ms. Jennifer (Jen) MacCallum, remained at the centre until around 7:40 am to make sure the incoming shift was properly briefed.

At the time when Ms. Banfield was extracted from Portapique, the command post was still making its strategic decisions on the premise that the perpetrator likely remained in the Portapique area and was possibly dead. Plans were being made to transition toward scene investigation, and the question of whether to evacuate Portapique residents was under discussion. The command post received Ms. Banfield's information about the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser and the photograph of that vehicle at about the same time: 7:30 am. Although some evidence suggests that this information prompted members of the command group to more seriously consider the possibility that the perpetrator had escaped Portapique, they did not make plans for an active manhunt.

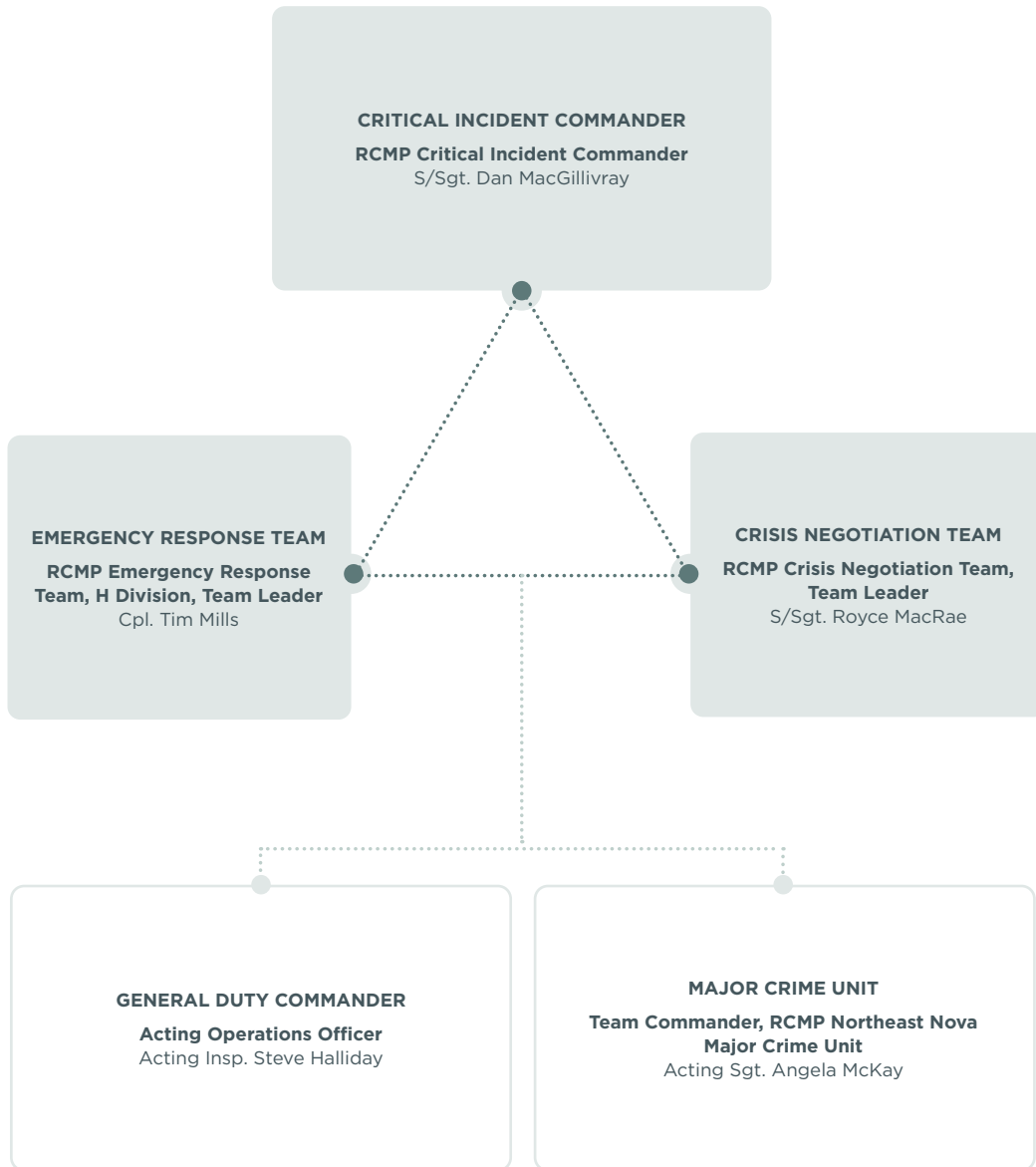
MAIN FINDING

The command post did not take sufficient steps to reassess the strategic and tactical response, even after it began to consider the possibility that the perpetrator had escaped Portapique.

A lack of coordination between the command post and the Operational Communications Centre also may have contributed to the OCC's failure to recognize the significance of information that was shared by residents of Hunter Road, Wentworth, in 911 calls, starting at 9:19 am. Once again, the RCMP's failure to ensure that information being provided by community members was fully captured and evaluated against other known facts caused a delay in acting on crucial information.

When it became apparent to the command post that the perpetrator was a mobile active threat, many members left the command post to search for him and/or to secure crime scenes. For example, S/Sgt. MacCallum left the command post in an unmarked Police Dog Service vehicle with Cst. Craig Hubley, Acting Sgt. McKay and Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume drove together in an unmarked vehicle, as did Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson. Sgt. O'Brien and S/Sgt. Carroll moved to Portapique, where Sgt. O'Brien remained while S/Sgt. Carroll returned to the command post at Great Village.

Critical Incident Command Structure as at 10:20 am on April 19, 2020



At approximately 10:15 am, S/Sgt. MacGillivray took over the role of critical incident commander from S/Sgt. West, who remained in the command post to assist. Sgt. Rob Lewis initially continued to act as scribe, until this role was taken over by civilian member Ms. Jennifer Reid, who had arrived at the command post sometime before 10:00 am.

Shift Changes and Briefings for Front-Line Members

Information about the events in Portapique began to spread informally, but there were no formal briefings of general duty members as they reported to their detachments to begin the day shift. We already noted Cpl. Peterson’s experience in this regard and its impact on his response when, en route to respond to the Wentworth call regarding the homicide of Lillian Campbell, he encountered the perpetrator. Many RCMP members explained that they were calling other members and listening to the radio, “trying to gather as much information ‘cause we weren’t getting a whole lot.”⁴⁵ Some members relied on information they saw on social media or information shared by family members.

Acting Cpl. Heidi Stevenson’s experience at the start of her shift and her methodical approach to overcoming these briefing deficiencies are illuminating. Acting Cpl. Stevenson logged on to her RCMP cruiser’s mobile work station at 6:35:38 am on April 19, while en route to the Enfield RCMP detachment. As the most senior member on duty, Acting Cpl. Stevenson was acting as a corporal for the Enfield shift and, as acting shift supervisor, took on the role of directing the team. She was acting corporal for this shift because Enfield Cpl. Calvin Byard was driving the Emergency Response Team tactical armoured vehicle, and a second corporal was not working that day. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, some RCMP members had taken RCMP cruisers home and were beginning their shifts from home.

At 6:34 am, Acting Cpl. Stevenson broadcast on the Hants East radio channel that, on her way to work, she had heard on the radio about the events in Portapique. She began to actively seek out additional information about the current situation. At 7:00 am, Acting Cpl. Stevenson asked, over the Hants East radio channel, whether there were any relevant BOLO notices. She had heard from a couple of Lower Sackville members who were positioned looking for a target vehicle from Colchester, and she said, “[I]t just seems funny that they’re all set up and I don’t have any

deets.”⁴⁶ Less than a minute later, the BOLO naming the perpetrator and stating that an active shooter incident was in progress was sent to all RCMP members.

Acting Cpl. Stevenson arrived at the Enfield RCMP detachment at 7:05 am. There was no formal briefing of the incoming Enfield members that morning.⁴⁷ Acting Cpl. Stevenson and her fellow Enfield members spent an hour looking through the records on the RCMP’s Police Reporting and Occurrence System (PROS) and the province’s Justice Enterprise Information Network (JEIN) databases and reading social media to learn more about the situation. They also made calls to colleagues at other detachments. Acting Cpl. Stevenson was monitoring both the Hants and Colchester radio channels, on separate radios.

At 8:04 am, the first BOLO was sent to members stating that the perpetrator was “potentially using fully marked ford taurus car number 28b11 and could be anywhere in the province.” At 8:16 am, RM Briers broadcast a reminder to all members that “because we’re looking for potentially a white, fully marked PC, 28-Bravo-11. Please wear your hard body armour the rest of the – your duration of your shift today. Just in the event you come across this vehicle.”⁴⁸

A few minutes later, Acting Cpl. Stevenson contacted the OCC by phone and asked for some specifics about the replica RCMP cruiser. She asked whether it was a decommissioned or an active vehicle, whether the vehicle had a light bar, and whether the perpetrator had access to a radio in his vehicle. She also discussed with the OCC about how members can access a photograph of the replica cruiser through their database system. It is noteworthy that Acting Cpl. Stevenson used her phone rather than her police radio to make this inquiry, presumably taking precautions in case the perpetrator had access to the RCMP’s radio communications.

Less than half an hour later, at 8:44 am, Acting Cpl. Stevenson inquired over the Hants East radio channel whether a media release to the public was being considered regarding the replica RCMP cruiser. The question was relayed to dispatch supervisor Bryan Green and Risk Manager Briers. There is no record of Acting Cpl. Stevenson receiving a response to her question. This was the second time an RCMP responder suggested that public notice be given about the incident. The first was Acting Cpl. Beselt’s suggestion in the late evening of April 18, 2020.

Other members who were drawn into the critical incident response on the morning of April 19 appear to have received information in a patchwork fashion, most often from other colleagues, from BOLOs, and by monitoring the RCMP radio channels. It appears that no detachment or district conducted a systematic briefing for incoming members.

MAIN FINDING

The briefing of RCMP members was inadequate throughout the critical incident response and particularly during the shift change on the morning of April 19, 2020.

Victim Liaison and Information Overload

Family members had a great deal of difficulty getting information about their loved ones as the mass casualty unfolded. Some family members who could not get information by calling the RCMP ended up going to crime scenes out of desperation. They variously encountered rudeness and threats of violence including, in some instances, having guns pointed at them. Other members of the affected communities were also unable to get the information they needed when they tried to call their local RCMP detachment or 911. Many of these community members also shared information that was potentially important to the critical incident response, such as when a person was last in communication or that a missing person knew the perpetrator. This information was rarely captured within the incident activity log or communicated by radio. The failure to provide family and community members with a clear way to report concerns and share information also resulted in additional calls coming in via 911, at times competing with more immediately pressing calls about the ongoing incident.

Some information requests came to the RCMP Commander post and contributed to the information “firehose”⁴⁹ that the critical incident command was dealing with. There was no clear system for receiving and triaging information requests and for providing information to those seeking it.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP did not have a clear alternative to calling 911 for the public to report concerns about family and loved ones, or to provide information that may have been significant but did not relate directly to the perpetrator’s whereabouts.

Coordinating the Work of Responding Members

As the mass casualty unfolded, the RCMP was able to call out a large number of members from across the province and New Brunswick. Particularly in the period after the critical incident response became more mobile, these resources were not deployed according to a well-thought-out strategy. For example, after the RCMP received word that the perpetrator was actively targeting community members in Wentworth and Glenholme, investigators with the Major Crime Unit joined the search for the perpetrator – even though there were eight known victims in Portapique and little had been done to secure the known crime scenes or look for others. By this time, Sgt. O’Brien was in charge of the Portapique area scene, but he testified that he did not think to start a canvass for other victims or witnesses.

J Division ERT arrived at Great Village at approximately 9:25 am on April 19, and CIC West directed them and H Division ERT to join the search for the perpetrator after it became apparent that he was in the Wentworth and Glenholme area.

Halifax Regional Police was tasked with blockading the route into Halifax. At 9:43 am, OCC dispatcher Ms. Brittany Oulton called Truro Police Service dispatch to advise them that the perpetrator was active near Wentworth and had last been seen heading toward Truro. We now know that the perpetrator passed through Bible Hill and Truro between approximately 10:11 and 10:20 am on April 19. However, until coordination of uniform resources was handed over to RM Briers at 10:15 am, no one in the command post appears to have been systematically analyzing other potential routes or coordinating the positioning of members along likely routes. With all these resources, the RCMP remained almost exclusively reactive and thus were unable to get ahead of the perpetrator.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP’s critical incident response did not deploy resources according to a coherent and coordinated strategy. Its approach was reactive.

RCMP Conduct Regarding the Death of Heather O'Brien

RCMP members, including those from the Emergency Medical Response Team, were also responding to some crime scenes, checking for vital signs, and assessing whether it was possible to resuscitate victims. In our proceedings, a question arose specifically about the quality of the RCMP's response to Heather O'Brien in this regard.

Conflicting information existed about whether Ms. O'Brien was possibly still alive at the time when RCMP members first attended to her. In particular, data taken from a FitBit device worn by Ms. O'Brien appeared to record a pulse for some hours after she was shot by the perpetrator. A responding RCMP member, who was not medically trained, initially provided a statement that suggested that Ms. O'Brien may have been alive when he first attended to her. In our proceedings, however, he explained that Ms. O'Brien had "no signs of life" at that time.⁵⁰ Ms. O'Brien was also attended to by an Emergency Medical Response Team member, Cpl. Duane Ivany. Cpl. Ivany testified that he had initially and erroneously evaluated Ms. O'Brien's pulse using his thumbs instead of his fingers. After being reminded by his partner to use the correct technique, Cpl. Ivany reached the conclusion that Ms. O'Brien had no pulse. The O'Brien family was understandably extremely concerned by the suggestion that Ms. O'Brien may have been alive for some time. Their concern was only heightened by the fact that during the window of time when the FitBit data suggested she had a pulse, family members were pleading with RCMP members to be allowed to go to her and had been treated callously, and even aggressively, in response.

At the request of the O'Brien family and of the National Police Federation, the Commission took steps to assess whether it was possible that Ms. O'Brien remained alive when she was first attended to and for some significant length of time after that. We have, whenever possible, avoided discussing the injuries that the perpetrator inflicted on those whose lives were taken. However, given the importance of this issue to the Participants, in this instance we provide a little more detail about the evidence we heard.

We called the chief medical examiner of Nova Scotia, Dr. Matthew Bowes, to testify about his assessment of Ms. O'Brien's wounds and of her prognosis at the time when she was shot. Dr. Bowes had attended the scene of Ms. O'Brien's death and conducted her autopsy. His testimony was unequivocal, given her injuries: "[T]he

fact of Ms. O'Brien's death was certain ... I would expect that her death, for all practical purposes, was instant or seconds[.]”⁵¹ Dr. Bowes emphasized that “the advice I’ve ever received and certainly the research and reading I’ve been able to do really reinforces the idea that that kind of brain injury is rapidly and certainly lethal.”⁵²

Dr. Bowes’s evidence unequivocally settles this matter. Ms. O'Brien’s injuries would have resulted in immediate or near immediate death, and, given the nature of her injuries, any residual signs of organ function after the first few seconds were not compatible with life.

Recognizing that there is a matter of public interest raised by the apparent discrepancy in the FitBit data, Commission investigators contacted FitBit and its lawyers numerous times to question them about why Ms. O'Brien’s FitBit would erroneously have recorded a pulse for hours after her death. The FitBit company and its lawyers did not provide any substantive response to our inquiries. We agree with Dr. Bowes, who testified that the FitBit data is unreliable.

We are persuaded on the totality of evidence that there is no possibility that Ms. O'Brien survived her injuries for any more than a few moments after she was shot by the perpetrator.

This is a fact that the O'Brien family should have been told as soon as Ms. O'Brien's autopsy had been completed.

The RCMP’s handling of the matter of Ms. O'Brien’s death, including the direction that was given by the RCMP to the Nova Scotia Medical Examiner Service not to release information to families of those whose lives were taken about the manner of death, unnecessarily prolonged the O'Brien family’s well-founded fears that their wife and mother may have been alive at a time when they were desperately trying to reach her. The RCMP’s decision not to share reliable information with the O'Brien family, and to prevent this information from being shared by other agencies, exacerbated the family’s grief and mistrust.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP directive to the Nova Scotia Medical Examiner Service not to release information about cause, manner, and circumstances of death to family members was unnecessary and harmful in the circumstances of this investigation, and it compounded the grief and mistrust of some family members.

RCMP Executive Leadership

On the morning of April 19, 2020, many members of the RCMP executive leadership gravitated to the H Division headquarters building. Supt. Darren Campbell, Supt. Archie Thompson, and C/Supt. Chris Leather had received briefings from the command post by around 6:30 am. Acting Insp. Halliday’s briefing of Supt. Thompson and C/Supt. Leather was interrupted when news came that Ms. Banfield had emerged from the woods in Portapique. In her interview with the Commission, A/Commr. Lee Bergerman recounted being “stunned” when she first saw the replica RCMP cruiser.⁵³ She first saw the photograph of this vehicle on the news before she left home on the morning of April 19, sometime after 9:30 am. She was not briefed on the morning of April 19, until approximately 11:10 am.

A/Commr. Bergerman’s main focus was on briefing the minister of justice in Nova Scotia and the RCMP national headquarters in Ottawa. At approximately 9:30 am, a situation report was sent on behalf of A/Commr. Bergerman to Commr. Brenda Lucki and others at national headquarters. This report described the initial call in Portapique as a report of “shots fired” and cited initial police response and investigation as revealing “multiple victims.”⁵⁴ The situation report identified that the critical incident commander was in command, and the perpetrator was reported by witnesses to have “left the area on foot” and “is assumed to still be at large.”⁵⁵ The initial victim count provided in this situation report was six deceased victims and two injured, with a note that “[t]here may be more victims.”⁵⁶ The situation report also stated “‘H’ Division Strategic Communications has issued proactive media releases to ensure public safety in the area.”⁵⁷ Yet at this time, only four tweets had been issued, only two of which referred to an active shooter incident. A considerable amount of the information contained in this situation report was inaccurate or at odds with information known to the RCMP at that time.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP’s H Division and national executive leadership had not predefined or practised their roles and responsibilities during a major critical incident response. As a result, their role was unclear. Opportunities for the executive leadership to support the critical incident response were overlooked.

MAIN FINDING

The command group did not share information about the unfolding mass casualty with senior executive leadership in H Division or national headquarters in a timely, coordinated, or accurate way.

Other Agencies and Interagency Communications

Volunteer Firefighters and Emergency Health Services

Volunteer firefighters and Emergency Health Services (EHS) were called out to assist throughout the morning of April 19, 2020. As was true in Portapique, these emergency responders were often unable to assist at the scenes of deaths because the RCMP treated these scenes as “hot zones” that were still at risk from an active shooter and thus too dangerous for these service providers. This approach persisted even when good information suggested the perpetrator was active many kilometres away. At the same time, however, EHS was allowed to stage without protection on Highway 2 near Portapique on the night of April 18.

RCMP Emergency Medical Response Team members are trained to carry out medical assistance in hot zones and were engaged during the morning of April 19. Given the number of fatalities, however, additional emergency medical personnel were needed. This shortfall speaks to the need to recognize and build capacity to provide emergency medical services in “warm zones” – areas where casualties are present and medical and fire services can provide essential services with police protection, on the basis that a perpetrator is known to be elsewhere. It also underscores the importance of cross-agency training and preparedness for critical incident response.

MAIN FINDING

The lack of shared RCMP, Emergency Health Services (EHS), and firefighter protocols to ensure that non-police emergency responders are safe and able to perform their work created an uneven response in which these responders were at times exposed to greater safety risks and at other times may have been prevented from doing work that would have aided the critical incident response or subsequent investigation.

At the same time, the lack of communication that was a signal feature of the RCMP critical incident response also had implications for other first responders. Many personnel dispatched to attend to the events of April 18 and 19, 2020, did not know the identity of the perpetrator or have a description of him. Nor did they appreciate the extent of the mass casualty.

At Plains Road, Cpl. Ivany advised the EHS crew – in person, not over the radio – of the perpetrator and replica RCMP cruiser:

I go to the paramedics and said, “You guys were updated that our two shooting victims are deceased, that there’s nothing?” They go, “No, we weren’t updated.” I said, “Okay, just to let you know, both are deceased, there’s nothing that we can do for them. It’s obvious ... obvious death.” I said, “Are you guys aware of the suspect we’re looking for?” They’re like, “No, we have no info on that.” I said, “Okay,” I said, “the suspect is possibly dressed like an RCMP officer, has a high visibility vest and is operating a fully marked police car.” I said, “Make sure your dispatch puts it over right now over the radio that you guys are not to respond or get flagged down by any individual police car that you cannot confirm through dispatch is one of ours.” So, he says, “Okay, I’m going to notify our dispatch.”⁵⁸

A better flow of information through public safety answering points would ensure that vital information is shared with all those engaged in an emergency response, particularly when dispatching fire and emergency health services. Ensuring that all emergency responders have access to encrypted TMR2 (Trunked Mobile Radio 2 system) radios would also facilitate information sharing among agencies.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP did not systematically share information with other emergency responders, including volunteer fire services and Emergency Health Services, that would have permitted these responders to evaluate risks to their safety and take measures to better protect themselves.

Truro Police Service

Between 8:00 am and 10:00 am on April 19, 2020, there was regular communication between the Operational Communications Centre and Cpl. Ed Cormier of the Truro Police Service. The RCMP provided a further update to all police agencies in Nova Scotia at 8:07 am via a Be on the Lookout notice. This notice included details about the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser, including the car number, and information about other cars associated with the perpetrator.

At 9:50 am, TPS Chief David MacNeil emailed RCMP C/Supt. Chris Leather, copying A/Commr. Lee Bergerman, to offer assistance. The email stated, "If needs any support from Truro Police Service today let me know."⁵⁹ About 10 minutes later, Chief MacNeil received an email from C/Supt. Leather, stating, "It sounds like we may [have] the suspect pinned down in Wentworth. Will be in touch."⁶⁰ This was a reference to the RCMP belief at that time that the perpetrator had been located and contained at the Fisher residence in Glenholme. Chief MacNeil replied, stating, "Thanks Chris. We can cover local calls if the detachment members are tied up. Just ask."⁶¹

Halifax Regional Police

The Halifax Regional Police (HRP) had been actively involved in investigations and assisting with information gathering overnight. On the morning of April 19, 2020, HRP performed a number of important functions that contributed to the overall response. When it became apparent that Lisa Banfield's family members were in danger from the perpetrator, HRP took them to a place of safety. These family members were interviewed and they, in turn, provided valuable information,

including photographs of both the perpetrator and the replica RCMP cruiser. The HRP Emergency Response Team (ERT) planned to execute a search of the perpetrator's Dartmouth home and business premises, but before this search began, it became apparent that the perpetrator was active in Wentworth. The search was called off and the ERT travelled toward the Halifax Regional Municipality border to be ready to intercept the perpetrator should he travel toward the city.

Public Communications

Emergency Broadcast

The use of Nova Scotia's Alert Ready public alerting system was first considered at approximately 8:19 am on April 19, 2020, by employees of Nova Scotia's Emergency Management Office (EMO). The EMO, which is the authorized government user of the Alert Ready system, can broadcast public alerts to cellphones, radio, and television at the request of a trusted source, which includes the RCMP.⁶² The EMO's executive director, Mr. Paul Mason, called employees into the office's Provincial Coordination Centre in the event that a request might be forthcoming from the RCMP.

At 9:33 am, the EMO advised its broadcast disseminator that the office was on standby in the event that the RCMP requested use of Alert Ready.

Other Public Communications

The RCMP had been told about the replica RCMP cruiser at the outset of the mass casualty, more than eight hours before the start of this time period, but they had discounted this information. Between 7:15 am and 7:27 am on April 19, 2020, RCMP members became aware from multiple sources that the perpetrator owned a fully marked replica RCMP cruiser. The director of H Division's Strategic Communications Unit, Ms. Lia Scanlan, spoke with Acting Insp. Halliday and S/Sgt. MacCallum shortly before 8:00 am and, shortly afterward, S/Sgt. MacCallum sent her a

photograph of the perpetrator and Lisa Banfield. This photograph had been provided to HRP by Lisa Banfield's sister Maureen Banfield. Around this time, S/Sgt. MacCallum also attempted to send a subsequent email to Ms. Scanlan, with photographs of the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser attached.

The second RCMP public communication about the critical incident was released at 8:02 am. Notwithstanding that the RCMP had now confirmed the perpetrator's identity and disguise, the tweet does not mention the replica RCMP cruiser:

Public Communication #2: April 19, 2020 8:02 a.m. Twitter #RCMPNS remains on scene in #Portapique. This is an active shooter situation. Residents in the area, stay inside your homes & lock your doors. Call 911 if there is anyone on your property. You may not see the police but we are there with you. #Portapique.⁶³

At 8:44 am, Acting Cpl. Heidi Stevenson of the Enfield RCMP detachment inquired to the Operational Communications Centre about whether a media release describing the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser was being released to the public. Ten minutes later, the third tweet was released. It included the photo of the perpetrator that the RCMP had obtained from Maureen Banfield, with Lisa Banfield cropped out:

Public Communication #3 April 19, 2020 8:54 a.m. Twitter 51-year-old [perpetrator's name] is the suspect in our active shooter investigation in #Portapique. There are several victims. He is considered armed & dangerous. If you see him, call 911. DO NOT approach. He's described as a white man, bald, 6'2-6'3 with green eyes. [photo attached]⁶⁴

Less than 10 minutes later, a similar social media message was made by the RCMP using Facebook:

Public Communication #4 April 19, 2020 9:12 a.m. Facebook RCMPNS is responding to a firearms complaint in the #Portapique area. (Portapique Beach Rd, BayShore Rd and Five Houses Rd.). We remain on scene. This is an active shooter situation. Residents in the area, stay inside your homes & lock your doors. Call 911 if there is anyone on your property. You may not see the police but we are there with you. 51-year-old [perpetrator's name] is the suspect in our active shooter investigation in #Portapique. There are several victims. He is considered armed & dangerous.

If you see him, call 911. DO NOT approach. He's described as a white man, bald, 6'2–6'3 with green eyes. [photo attached]⁶⁵

S/Sgt. Al Carroll and RM Bruce Briers spoke by phone at approximately 9:00 am about Acting Cpl. Stevenson's inquiry as to whether information about the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser would be shared with the public. At 9:08 am, S/Sgt. Carroll emailed RM Briers: "Thought was given to give release about vehicle, but decision was made not to."⁶⁶ In his Mass Casualty Commission interview, Acting Insp. Halliday stated that it was "absolutely inaccurate" to say that the request to release the vehicle's description had been denied. Acting Insp. Halliday stated that "[t]here was no ... no point ever at any point did I have any conversation with anyone who denied any release of any information."⁶⁷

Notwithstanding the 9:08 am email, it appears that preparations for such a release were underway that morning, shortly before 9:00 am. By 9:40 am, a draft tweet describing the replica RCMP cruiser and including a photograph of the vehicle had been prepared and forwarded to S/Sgt. MacCallum for approval. S/Sgt. MacCallum did not reply, likely because he was responding to the Wentworth homicide dispatch. The request for approval was forwarded to Acting Insp. Halliday at 9:45 am, and approval was granted at 9:49 am. It was not actioned until 10:17 am. We discuss the breakdown in internal process that caused this delay in fuller detail in Chapter 6.

At 9:47 am, RCMP Cpl. Rodney Peterson saw the perpetrator on Highway 4 in Glenholme. At 9:49 am, Adam and Carole Fisher called 911 to report that the perpetrator was at their home. At 10:04 am and 10:10 am, respectively, the RCMP posted on Twitter and Facebook about the perpetrator's presence in Glenholme:

Public Communication #5 April 19, 2020 10:04 am. Twitter #RCMPNS is advising people to avoid Hwy 4 near Hidden Hilltop Campground in #Glenholme. [perpetrator's name] is in the area. Please stay inside your homes and lock your doors. #Portapique.⁶⁸

Public Communication #6 April 19, 2020 10:10 a.m. Facebook #RCMPNS is advising people to avoid Hwy 4 near Hidden hilltop Campground in #Glenholme. [perpetrator's name] is in the area. Please stay inside your homes and lock your doors. #Portapique.⁶⁹

MAIN FINDING

Media has an important role to play in a critical incident response. The RCMP's approach of sharing information primarily via social media was insufficient to strategically engage local media outlets. The media was insufficiently utilized as a partner in public communications on April 18 and 19, 2020.

Status on April 19 at 10:15 am

The critical incident command's belief that the perpetrator was still in Portapique, and most likely dead, contributed to the lack of planning for alternative scenarios. The stubborn disbelief of the consistent reports from community members in Portapique that the perpetrator was driving a replica RCMP cruiser also contributed to poor preparedness for the challenges that the morning brought to the situation.

Once the perpetrator emerged and reactivated his rampage, the RCMP's response was restricted and reactive. Many RCMP members were on the lookout for the perpetrator but, for the most part, these resources were not strategically led or deployed. The RCMP response was hyper-focused on pursuing the perpetrator, particularly once it became apparent that he was mobile and once again actively killing community members. However, the RCMP's approach was largely uncoordinated and reactive rather than tactical. This approach was inadequate to the challenge of a heavily armed man driving a replica RCMP cruiser.

By contrast to the overall pattern of reactive response, Acting Cpl. Heidi Stevenson was leading her members strategically and calmly. From 9:45 am, the Enfield and Indian Brook members had taken lookout positions at the border of Colchester and East Hants counties and were monitoring the Colchester radio channel. These members had been assigned positions by Acting Cpl. Stevenson, and she continued to manage the members under her supervision strategically as the mass casualty continued to unfold.

Although the command post and the Operational Communications Centre were sharing more information both inside the RCMP and with other police agencies

through BOLOs, this communication channel is inherently limited. The shift change was not accompanied by an effective briefing, and members had to proactively search for information to better understand the situation so they could respond effectively. However, the one detail consistently communicated was the caution to wear hard body armour.

The number of fatalities was now 19, although the RCMP did not yet know about 6 of the deceased and was not systematically searching for other fatalities. The perpetrator was a highly mobile active shooter. No one knew where he would go next.

CHAPTER 5

Onslow Fire Hall Shooting

CHAPTER 5 Onslow Fire Hall Shooting

In the midst of this unprecedented manhunt, two RCMP members, Cst. Terence (Terry) Brown and Cst. David (Dave) Melanson, discharged five rounds from their carbines toward a civilian emergency management employee and an RCMP member. David Westlake, a Colchester Regional Emergency Management Organization (REMO) employee, was standing beside Cst. Dave Gagnon's marked RCMP cruiser in the parking lot of the Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade hall when this incident occurred. Cst. Gagnon, who was wearing his RCMP uniform, was seated in the driver's seat of the vehicle. The RCMP members who fired these shots mistook Mr. Westlake for the perpetrator and Cst. Gagnon's vehicle for the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser.

The shots fired by Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson fortunately missed Mr. Westlake and Cst. Gagnon. However, some of them penetrated the building, inside which Portapique resident Richard Ellison and two volunteer firefighters, Chief Greg Muise and Deputy Chief Darrell Currie, were present. All these individuals were at the Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade hall because that building had been designated on April 19, 2020, as a community comfort station at which displaced residents of Portapique could seek assistance and shelter.

The Onslow fire hall shooting caused physical damage to the fire hall, a fire truck, and a sign; it also caused considerable distress to those in the fire hall at the time and to neighbours who saw or heard the shooting.

There is no doubt that this incident has had a lasting impact on those at the fire hall and the community, the community's sense of safety, and how its people relate to law enforcement, particularly the RCMP.

This chapter adopts a different structure from those that come before and after it. This difference reflects the fact that we are here focusing specifically on events at Onslow fire hall. We begin with a discussion of terminology, and in particular explain why we do not use the term "blue-on-blue shooting" to describe the

shooting at the Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade hall. We explain how this fire hall came to be designated as a comfort centre for residents who had been displaced from Portapique, before turning to the facts of the shooting itself. We then discuss the impact of the Onslow fire hall shooting on those who were most affected by this incident. Finally, we discuss the steps taken by the RCMP after April 19 to address the Onslow fire hall shooting.

Terminology

Since words matter, we begin with a brief explanation about our use of the phrase “Onslow fire hall shooting.” Many people refer to the incident at the Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade hall as a “blue-on-blue” incident. A blue-on-blue incident is a situation in which a member of one police service accidentally shoots at a member of the same force or a member of another police service. However, in this instance it was clear that Mr. Westlake, a civilian REMO employee, was the primary target of the shots fired. In fact, Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson had not seen Cst. Gagnon sitting in the RCMP vehicle. For that reason, the Onslow fire hall shooting cannot be classified as a blue-on-blue incident.

We also considered using the term “RCMP use of force incident” to describe this incident. As is discussed within this volume, the RCMP used force on many occasions over the course of the critical incident response of April 18 and 19, 2020. For example, pointing a firearm without shooting, and handcuffing a person, are both use of force incidents within police terminology. This phrase is therefore too vague. The term “Onslow use of force incident,” while more specific as to location, does not convey the risk of lethality that arises when a police officer shoots at a person.

We chose to use the phrase “Onslow fire hall shooting” to refer to this incident. In doing so, we acknowledge that the word “shooting” is also vexed. Shooting frequently refers to an instance in which someone is killed or injured by a discharge of firearm. Fortunately, no one was killed or physically injured by the shooting at Onslow, and the word does not have that meaning in this instance. However, this outcome was purely a matter of luck.

Of the terms we considered, we have concluded that this phrase best captures the significance of discharging a firearm toward another human being and the

institutional responsibilities that are thereby engaged. Canadian police routinely carry firearms in populated public spaces. This is a power that is extended to few others in our society. Canadian law and cultural norms reflect that the decision to discharge a firearm toward another person must remain a decision of last resort.

We also feel that the phrase “Onslow fire hall shooting” best reflects what we heard about the continuing impact of this incident on those who were present at the fire hall when the shooting occurred and on those who witnessed the incident. There is no synonym to the word “shooting” that readily conveys the implications of a decision to discharge a firearm in the direction of another person.

In using the phrase “Onslow fire hall shooting,” we are not evaluating the appropriateness of the RCMP members’ decision to use potentially lethal force in this instance. In Nova Scotia, the Serious Incident Response Team (SiRT) is responsible for conducting a criminal investigation of a police officer’s decision to discharge their firearm in order to decide whether to lay charges. The RCMP is responsible for reviewing a decision to discharge a firearm on the basis of its code of conduct. Both of these processes were engaged after the Onslow fire hall shooting.

Rather, and given our mandate to assess the systemic implications of the police response to the mass casualty, the phrase “Onslow fire hall shooting” suggests the institutional responsibilities that arise from police possession and use of firearms. As we explain in Volume 5, Policing, these institutional responsibilities include providing rigorous police education in topics such as the ethical and legal implications of carrying and potentially using firearms and how to make effective use of force decisions in stressful and potentially dangerous situations – and not merely training the technical skills of weapons handling. Similarly, the term “Onslow fire hall shooting” signifies that a discharge of firearms initiates institutional and individual responsibilities with respect to reporting and external oversight, even when no one is killed or physically injured.

In this report, we refer to the discharge of bullets by RCMP members at the Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade hall as the “Onslow fire hall shooting.”

The Comfort Centre at Onslow

The Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade hall is a large building with a large parking area in front of it, located at 12355 Highway 2 in Onslow.

As described in Chapter 3, at around sunrise on the morning of April 19, 2020, the RCMP command post was developing a plan for the evacuation of residents from Portapique and to establish a comfort centre for the evacuees. A comfort centre is a temporary facility set up by an emergency management organization where residents affected by a localized emergency may visit to receive information as well as essential needs such as meals, hygiene facilities, and electronic device charging capabilities, but not overnight shelter.

At around 6:20 am, David Westlake, emergency management coordinator for the Colchester REMO, was contacted by the Nova Scotia Emergency Management Office and asked to set up a comfort centre for Portapique evacuees. Mr. Westlake was told that there had been a shooting in Portapique and that the residents still in the area were being evacuated. Permission to use the Onslow fire hall for this purpose was granted by Chief Muise at 7:50 am. Chief Muise explained in an interview with the Commission that he received relatively few details from Mr. Westlake at that time.¹

Greg Muise, Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade fire chief, and Darrell Currie, deputy fire chief, assisted Mr. Westlake at the fire hall. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Red Cross volunteers, who would usually have been deployed to the site, were organizing supports for evacuees remotely and were not on site.

Cst. Dave Gagnon was assigned by S/Sgt. Addie MacCallum to provide security at the comfort centre. He arrived at the fire hall at approximately 8:25 am. He had received a copy of the incident activity log concerning the events overnight in Portapique from RCMP dispatch. Cst. Gagnon stated that the information was “very brief and only about two lines indicating that there was a male shot laying down, the subject of complaint was [the perpetrator] and that there was an RCMP vehicle already there.”²

Cst. Gagnon parked his marked RCMP cruiser in front of the fire hall. He went inside to meet with Mr. Westlake, Chief Muise, and Deputy Chief Currie. He showed them a photo of the perpetrator and identified him by name. He then returned to his cruiser where he conducted surveillance, monitored radio transmissions, and waited for evacuees to arrive. Mr. Westlake described Cst. Gagnon’s dress as “the

Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade Hall



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typical RCMP garb with the yellow stripe down on the pants.”³ He was also wearing a black vest and no hat.

By 8:33 am on April 19, the Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade hall opened its doors to assist those evacuated from Portapique. At 9:05 am, the Emergency Response Team began carrying out its evacuation plan for Portapique residents and directing evacuees to the Onslow fire hall. Critical Incident Commander Jeff West confirmed the location of the comfort centre over the Colchester radio. The command group and dispatchers did not make any all-member radio broadcast to ensure that responding members were aware of the location of the comfort centre.

The first group of evacuees arrived at 9:40 am but left after a conversation with Mr. Westlake and Cst. Gagnon.

Cst. Gagnon learned of the shooting of Lillian Campbell in Wentworth over his police radio at 9:42 am, and heard that a marked police car was seen leaving the area. Eight minutes later, he heard the broadcast reporting that the perpetrator was at a residence in Glenholme. These broadcasts indicated that the perpetrator was active near the boundary of Colchester County and Cumberland County at this time. This meant that he was closer to Onslow than he had previously been.

Shortly after 10:00 am, Richard Ellison arrived at the comfort station in his car. Mr. Ellison sought safety and assistance at the Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade hall after spending a devastating night in Portapique. His son Corrie had been killed by the perpetrator, and his son Clinton had spent hours hiding in the woods fearing that he, too, would be killed.

As Mr. Ellison pulled into the Onslow fire hall parking lot, Mr. Westlake and Cst. Gagnon approached his vehicle and spoke with him. During this conversation, Mr. Westlake noticed what appeared to be a fully marked RCMP cruiser travelling eastbound in front of the fire hall. The cruiser caught his eye because it had an unusual feature: a black push bar. At the time, he was not aware the perpetrator was driving a replica RCMP cruiser, and he did not think much of the cruiser, given the large police presence in the area. The RCMP did not share information about the perpetrator's cruiser with members of the public until 10:17 am. Given what we know of the perpetrator's movements, it is likely it was he driving by the fire hall. Cst. Gagnon did not notice the vehicle go by because he was engaged with Mr. Ellison, after which he returned to the front of his police vehicle.

At 10:08 am, Cst. Gagnon heard radio transmissions reporting another shooting on Plains Road, in Debert. Mr. Ellison entered the fire hall at 10:15 am.

At 10:20 am, Cst. Gagnon was sitting in his marked RCMP cruiser. Mr. Westlake was standing beside Cst. Gagnon's cruiser. The nose of Cst. Gagnon's vehicle was facing Highway 2, and the rear of the vehicle was close to a stone monument at the fire hall entrance. Cst. Gagnon's vehicle did not have a push bar. The call number was 30B06.

MAIN FINDING

The command post and Operational Communications Centre did not take adequate measures to ensure that all members were aware of the location of the comfort centre and that a marked RCMP cruiser was stationed at this location.

This information should have been broadcast repeatedly by radio or otherwise shared with all responding members, and it should have been acknowledged as received.

The Shooting

At around the time when Cst. Gagnon was speaking with Mr. Ellison and Mr. Westlake, RCMP members Cst. Terry Brown and Cst. Dave Melanson were travelling east on Highway 2 in search of the perpetrator. Cst. Brown had interviewed Lisa Banfield at approximately 7:00 am on April 19, 2020. He learned from her that the perpetrator was driving a replica RCMP cruiser that was identical to current RCMP vehicles, and that he was last seen wearing an orange vest. Cst. Melanson broadcast this information over the police radio when Ms. Banfield first shared it. The RCMP members had also seen a photo of the perpetrator shared by Lisa Banfield's brother-in-law David McGrath. Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson had heard over the radio that the perpetrator had been sighted wearing a reflective vest or jacket. They also heard a 10:08 am dispatch about the shooting on Plains Road. Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson travelled to the Debert area in search of the perpetrator and then travelled east on Highway 2 toward Onslow.

Shortly after 10:17 am, Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson approached the Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade hall from the west in an unmarked police vehicle, a Nissan Altima. Cst. Melanson was driving. Both members observed Mr. Westlake wearing an orange reflective vest and standing next to an RCMP cruiser. Believing him to be the perpetrator, Cst. Melanson stopped the car in the middle of the road, approximately 88 metres from the monument at the entrance to the fire hall. Both members exited their vehicle with their RCMP-issued carbines raised.

Cst. Gagnon recognized they were RCMP officers and assumed they were there to set up a roadblock. He explained:

So, as soon as I saw them and I knew that they were two of our guys, I said, "Okay," I started thinking, "Okay, perfect. They're going to do a roadblock," because I'd been alone here for almost an hour and a half, hour

and 45 minutes at the time. And then I said, “Okay, good, we’re doing a roadblock.” I start thinking, “Okay, I’m probably going to join them.”⁴

He then saw the officers exit their car, raise their weapons, and point them in his direction.

At this moment, Cst. Gagnon turned to talk with Mr. Westlake and handed him a clipboard. When he turned back to the RCMP members, he said, he “immediately notice[d] that they have their two guns pointed at me ... me and Mr. Westlake.”⁵

Cst. Melanson tried to radio to advise members of what he was seeing, but could not get through. According to Cst. Brown, he yelled for Mr. Westlake to show his hands. Both Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson reported observing Mr. Westlake duck behind the RCMP vehicle. Cst. Brown fired four rounds from his carbine toward the parked RCMP vehicle. Cst. Melanson fired one round from his carbine toward the parked RCMP vehicle.

Mr. Westlake heard the words “get down” before shots were fired, and he started running. He ran into the fire hall and yelled, “Shots fired! Get down! Get down!”⁶ Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade Fire Chief Greg Muise and Deputy Fire Chief Darrell Currie were inside with the only evacuee in the building, Richard Ellison. The four men took cover at the back corner of the fire hall, behind overturned tables.

Chief Muise told us:

[W]e - me and Darrell, and I think Dave was involved in this too, [were] flipping tables and chairs over, trying to find a spot that we can hide from this - we had no idea what was going on outside. And it was just - I don’t know how to explain it. It just - it happened so fast, and everything was just chaos. It was just tables flying everywhere and trying to hide behind them and it’s something I hope nobody has to go through that because it’s a tough road.⁷

Cst. Gagnon stayed in his cruiser while the shots were fired. He used his police radio to identify himself and directed the members to look at the call number on his police cruiser. He called out: “You guys are pointing your guns at me.”⁸ And then he called out the code phrase used to signal when an officer is pointing his gun or shooting at another police officer. The code phrase was redacted in the evidence. Cst. Gagnon explained that it is “just code for other police officers in the room or in

the area. So, yeah, I yelled out, [the phrase].”⁹ The Colchester radio transcript also records that he broadcast, “Who are you shooting at? It’s Gagnon.”¹⁰

Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson stopped shooting but did not lower their weapons until they were assured of Cst. Gagnon’s identity. Cst. Melanson approached Cst. Gagnon. Cst. Brown walked directly to the western side of the fire hall and circled the building to clear the area.

While the four men inside remained hiding, someone banged on the door at the southeast corner of the building and then pulled on the door. No one yelled anything or said “police.” Deputy Chief Currie described the moment at which he heard banging on the door as “the worst moment of my life ever” and stated that he believed that it was the perpetrator at the door, and that he truly believed he was going to die.¹¹

In his testimony, Richard Ellison reflected on the RCMP use of force incident:

I followed the orders to get down, ... when we got into the other side there, away from where the shots are coming from, and like I say, we stayed there until we got the green light, you might say. And then after that, we come back out and we ended up going around to where the firetrucks are kept, and we walked by a brand new pumper truck and you could see where the bullets come through the – they come through that door just like it wasn’t even there.

And if they – if they had have hit one of us it would have been the end of us big time.¹²

At 10:24 am, after a brief conversation, Cst. Gagnon and Cst. Melanson entered the fire hall. They were told by Mr. Westlake that no injuries were sustained during the shooting. Cst. Melanson exited the fire hall 17 seconds later. Cst. Gagnon exited the fire hall 30 seconds later. A “supplementary report” prepared by Cst. Gagnon on April 19, 2020, says that he did not see anyone in the main area so he continued into the building “and found the firefighters in the next room. [He] asked if they were alright, they shouted that they were ok and everyone was accounted for.”¹³ Cst. Gagnon said that he considered this was sufficient because there were three volunteers in uniform, two of them firefighters. He would have shown more concern for “regular civilians,” but he knew the three men were trained to deal with emergency situations.¹⁴ Moreover, he believed he didn’t have time to do a more thorough check on them, given the unfolding critical incident.

Chief Muise and Deputy Chief Currie were not aware of who had entered the building. They said the individuals never identified themselves as police and did not speak with them directly or enter the main area of the hall to check on the occupants. Chief Muise and Deputy Chief Currie overheard one of the men tell Mr. Westlake “to stay in place or shelter in place or don’t leave the room or something to that effect.”¹⁵

Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson then returned to their vehicle and phoned their superior, S/Sgt. Allan (AI) Carroll, to report the incident. S/Sgt. Carroll asked a few questions, including whether they were okay, but because the perpetrator was active, he told them to keep going. Cst. Gagnon also knew that he should report the incident, but he knew that his superior, S/Sgt. MacCallum, was engaged in the critical incident response and felt that should take priority. In his words, “we were still in the fight.”¹⁶ Instead, at 10:50 am he reported the incident to Sgt. John Kenny, who was not directly involved in the critical incident response. Sgt. Kenny offered to have someone relieve Cst. Gagnon, but Cst. Gagnon declined. In his words, “knowing resources were very limited, I advised I would stay at my post.”¹⁷ Cst. Gagnon contacted S/Sgt. MacCallum at 11:30 am, after the perpetrator had been killed.

Having assured himself that no one had been hurt, Cst. Gagnon got back into his vehicle and continued to monitor the situation. Approximately 10 minutes after the shooting incident, at 10:34:04 am, dispatch sent out a radio broadcast alerting members of a shooting near the fire hall. Cst. Brown immediately clarified that it was an RCMP use of force incident: “that was ours.”¹⁸

Chief Muise and Deputy Chief Currie were not yet aware that the person shooting toward the fire hall was an RCMP member. Deputy Chief Currie continued to monitor the perpetrator’s known movements on the RCMP Twitter page. They remained hidden for 57 minutes, until they saw a Twitter post stating that the suspect was in Brookfield, which they considered a safe distance from the fire hall. At that time, Chief Muise and Deputy Chief Currie left their hiding spots under the tables and entered the truck bay to look out the windows. They did not see the RCMP cruiser that had been parked in front of the hall and believed that Cst. Gagnon had left them alone with no police protection. Cst. Gagnon had not left his post. He had only moved his car to a better location, backing it up closer to the fire hall. It was at this time that Chief Muise and Deputy Chief Currie realized there had been damage to one of the fire trucks in the bay from the shots that had been fired.

Cst. Gagnon had a delayed response to the RCMP use of force incident. He just kept on with his role until after the mass casualty ended. At that time, he spent an

hour and a half with Mr. Westlake and Chief Muise walking around looking at all the damage and talking about what had transpired. They wondered where the perpetrator had been when Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson had shot at him; they assumed that the perpetrator had been there, even though they had not seen him. But then there was the “lightbulb moment” when Mr. Westlake said, “... they were shooting at us?”¹⁹ Cst. Gagnon realized the shots were all two feet above his head; he knew his colleagues had mistaken him or Mr. Westlake as the perpetrator.

Impact of the Onslow Fire Hall Shooting

The carbine rounds from the RCMP officers’ weapons caused damage to the bay doors, a fire truck, the monument at the fire hall entrance, a wall of the building, and an electronic sign near the road.

One of the bullets penetrated the bay door, through to the right front fender of the fire truck inside the bay. The bullet entered the engine block of the firetruck. The second bullet went through the windshield of the firetruck, through the dash and out through the driver-side quarter window. The piece of projectile was located on the bay floor by the forensic identification officers. A third projectile was traced to have gone through the electronic sign at the western corner of the parking lot. The sign originally read “Everyone remember to wash your hands”; the bullet went through the “b” in the word “remember.”

The bullet also ricocheted off the granite monument in the entranceway of the fire hall. The monument has bullet damage. There is also shrapnel damage on the western side of the eastern part of the hall building.

In testimony before us, Mr. Ellison reflected on the importance of having a community place to attend after his unimaginably difficult night, and on the crucial role played by volunteer fire brigades in rural Nova Scotia:

[I]t affected me in a way that at least there’s still some humanity out there as the way I was welcomed there. And I want to thank these gentlemen [Chief Muise and Deputy Chief Currie] for the service that they

provide for their communities. They're the front lines when it comes to health, you know, answering of health, distress, heart attacks and things like that.²⁰

His thoughtful remarks convey the importance of volunteer fire brigades in community life in rural Nova Scotia. Mr. Ellison also emphasized that his religious faith had assisted him greatly after the events of April 18 and 19, 2020. To us, the circumstances that led to his presence at the fire hall compound the significance of the Onslow fire hall shooting.

Chief Muise and Deputy Chief Currie were forthright with the Commission about the immediate and ongoing impact of the incident at Onslow.

Deputy Chief Currie spoke about the thoughts entering his mind that day: "I remember thinking like 'How am I going to die?' Just 'Am I going to bleed out on the floor of this comfort centre?' ... [I]t was pretty horrific."²¹ He also remembers being very worried about Cst. Gagnon as they could not see him:

When we did finally come out of that side of the building, the eastern side of the building and out into the truck bay, we had noticed that the RCMP officer that was there to provide us security, he was gone, his car had moved, and he didn't - he never told us, we didn't know where his car went. So our assumption was that he was either dead and somebody stole his car; he took off after the perpetrator maybe, you know; or I suppose he was hiding. We never - we never thought for a second that he was hiding, we just assumed that he was gone.²²

The firefighters therefore assumed that they had been left at the fire hall without security. Chief Muise spoke candidly about the ongoing impact of the Onslow fire hall shooting:

I have been going for counselling twice or three times a month. I am on pills to calm me down. I had a reaction to a pill I was using earlier. I returned to my doctor who prescribed another pill. It took me a while to start the other pill because I was not sure what it was going to do to me again, but I am back on them again. I still have trouble sleeping at night. I get at best four hours of sleep. I think about it every day and all the time. No day goes by without something popping in my mind. I have had a hard time dealing with it.

The Fire Hall was my second home. Now it is not. It used to be my safe zone. That is probably going to be taken away from me.

I have trouble being around a group of people. I suffer all the time trying to catch a breath. It seems like I am smothering when I am around many people.

I still do my duties at the hall. I am still the Chief. I thought about resigning a few times. I talked to Deputy Chief Currie a few times about it and we decided that we would try staying on for a while and see how things turn out. It seems like this is never going to end for me. It seems like it took a part of my life from me and I do not think I will ever get it back. I fight this every day.²³

Deputy Chief Currie explained that his experience shifted over time and it was the interview with the RCMP Hazard Occurrence Investigation Team (HOIT), in April 2021, one year after the incident, that “was the straw that broke the camel’s back.”²⁴ When he provided his evidence to the Commission, which was a year after this interview, he had not yet been able to return to work. He told us: “I had not been going to counselling at the time. One’s mind goes into some dark holes when one needs help and cannot get it. I was in some dark holes.”²⁵ Deputy Chief Currie talked about the impact on his behaviour and day-to-day living situation:

I could hardly drive. I could not focus on the road. I was scared I was going to have an accident. I could not concentrate. I could not think. I had no memory. I could not finish a sentence. If you asked me to testify last April, I would not have been able to because I could not talk.

I did not lose my life that day but I lost the life that I had. It is not the same. I do not feel the same. My drugs stabilize me but they stabilize me at a place I do not want to be.²⁶

Deputy Chief Currie also shared the challenges he had experienced in accessing support. These challenges are addressed in the section on post-event support in Volume 4, Community, Part B.

Fire halls are key landmarks in Nova Scotian communities, and they often serve as important meeting points for community members. They are places to gather and be together. Volunteer firefighters are first responders who play an important and respected role. They are part of what makes rural communities strong.

Many Onslow community members were outraged by the shooting at their fire hall. For many, it was not about what happened in the moment so much as the way it was addressed, or more accurately not addressed, with the community by those responsible. The failure to acknowledge the harms of this incident has had a lasting impact on the relationship between community members and the RCMP.²⁷

MAIN FINDING

The Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade hall should have been a place of safety for community members, including those who were directly affected by the mass casualty. Fortunately, the Onslow fire hall shooting did not cause death or physical injuries, but this incident turned a place of safety into a site of further harm.

RCMP Accountability

In their testimony before the Commission, Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson stated that, while they now appreciate that the person on whom they fired was not the perpetrator, they would not do anything differently based on what they knew at the time that they opened fire. The SiRT concluded that these members had reasonable grounds to believe that Mr. Westlake was the perpetrator, and that the totality of circumstances established a lawful excuse for discharging their firearms.

In the circumstances of the RCMP's pursuit of a perpetrator who was disguised as an RCMP member, the stress levels and adrenalin of responding members would have been extreme. The risk of misidentifying another responder or a civilian as the perpetrator was very high. This danger was exacerbated by the RCMP's lack of effective technology for monitoring the position of all RCMP vehicles and by the failure to ensure that key static locations, such as the comfort centre, were regularly communicated by radio or other means. These circumstances called for all members to exercise caution and to communicate well with one another. In Volume 5, Policing, we discuss how planning, member education, and effective

standard operating procedures can address these risks, and make recommendations for how the RCMP can improve its approach to critical incident management.

S/Sgt. Carroll's single-minded focus on the hunt for the perpetrator meant that he did not obtain full details of the Onslow fire hall shooting, or evaluate whether it was appropriate to instruct Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson to continue their pursuit of the perpetrator. He was unaware that both members had fired shots, or that they had been fired at a civilian at the Onslow fire hall. He was also unaware that the Onslow fire hall had been designated a comfort centre. In his testimony, S/Sgt. Carroll reflected, "I didn't ask the questions I should have asked. That falls on me."²⁸

S/Sgt. Carroll did ask Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson whether they felt able to continue, and Cst. Brown expressed a desire to continue to pursue the perpetrator. The decision to allow Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson to carry on was made in a context in which a large number of RCMP members were similarly engaged in this pursuit – at this point in the critical incident response, these two members were one vehicle among many. No one within the command group was actively monitoring whether individual responding members were effectively managing the stress and adrenalin associated with the active pursuit. If someone had been monitoring the well-being and effectiveness of responding members, they might well have heard Cst. Brown misidentifying Cst. MacDonald's marked RCMP cruiser as the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser at 9:52 am, approximately 25 minutes before the Onslow fire hall shooting:

9:52:47 AM – Cst. BROWN (H-05D02): Break! Break! We got eyes on him.
Marked PC on the side of the Highway here up ahead of us.

9:52:54 AM – Cst. [MACDONALD] (H-05B08/H-BH P03): Guys, that's
MACDONALD. MACDONALD, we're just trying to log in to find out where
the fuck we're at.²⁹

After the Onslow fire hall shooting, Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson also identified a Halifax Regional Police (HRP) officer as potentially being the perpetrator, and threatened to "take him down" before another RCMP member identified that this officer was HRP.³⁰ In testimony before us, Cst. Brown suggested that the phrase "take him down" does not mean shoot: "[W]e're going to go and engage this guy and give commands to have him drop his weapon and proceed from there."³¹ Regardless, it is apparent that Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson seriously considered

use of force on three occasions in a short time span, and discharged their weapons on one of these occasions.

MAIN FINDING

The procedure that must be followed by police after a use of potentially lethal force should not be varied during a critical incident response unless there is an immediate threat from a physically present perpetrator. This exception did not apply in the circumstances of the Onslow fire hall shooting.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP command group did not recognize the gravity of the Onslow fire hall shooting. They failed to take the necessary steps to evaluate the circumstances of the shooting, secure the scene, or evaluate the involved members' capacity to continue with the critical incident response.

Eight weeks after the shooting at the Onslow fire hall, the RCMP began to engage with the community about what had happened. In hindsight, S/Sgt. Carroll realized that he should have visited the Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade hall on the morning of April 19, 2020. He acknowledged that there were ill feelings within the Onslow community and that he had not taken proactive steps to address community concerns. He reflected, “[T]hat’s a regret I have, that I didn’t go see them earlier.”³²

In a press conference held on June 4, 2020, C/Supt. Chris Leather referenced a visit that he paid to Onslow in mid-May 2020, along with other regional commanders, to meet with the chief and deputy chief of the Onslow Fire Brigade. C/Supt. Leather said:

There is something I will add about Onslow because what took place on April 19 as the incident was unfolding, was traumatic for those who were there.

I, along with local RCMP commanders from the area, met with the Chief and Deputy of the Onslow Fire Brigade, to hear firsthand what people experienced.

We had a very respectful and honest conversation, and as partners, we made a commitment to continue to work shoulder to shoulder in our shared responsibility of public safety.

We are moving forward together and are compensating for the damage to the property at the firehall.³³

In his testimony before the Commission, Deputy Chief Currie said this about that visit:

They showed up, just – you know, I like to say they just – they just showed up to see the handiwork of their constables is – that’s all they did. They didn’t – they didn’t offer RCMP Victim Services. They made the offers of “If there’s anything we can do to help”, you know, “here’s our card.” But you know, unbeknownst to us at the time, you know, we should have been offered services through RCMP Victims Services. When the HOIT, the HOIT people showed up to do their investigation, they were, if I can use the word “appalled,” I guess. They were appalled that we had never been offered any help through the RCMP. And that’s how I mentioned earlier that I – we did engage with the RCMP Victims Services a little bit at the end, but that’s – that was a year later. So it was too little, too late at that point.³⁴

MAIN FINDING

In the weeks and months after the incident, the RCMP continued to underestimate the gravity of the Onslow fire hall shooting. They did not take sufficient steps to hear community concerns, nor recognize that those who were placed at risk during the shooting required support. These failures caused lasting harm to the RCMP’s relationships with the Onslow community and the people at the fire hall that day.

CHAPTER 6

**Events on April 19, 2020 –
10:15 am to Noon**

CHAPTER 6 Events on April 19, 2020 – 10:15 am to Noon

In Chapter 4, we set out what happened during the early morning of Sunday, April 19, 2020. At 5:45 am, the perpetrator drove away from Debert Business Park. By approximately 10:00 am, he had taken the lives of an additional six people. Alerted by several 911 calls from community residents, first responders attended to those crime scenes and the RCMP began an active chase of the perpetrator. By 10:00 am, several Be on the Lookout (BOLO) notices had been sent to inform RCMP members and other police agencies that an active shooter incident was in progress. The notices provided the perpetrator's name and description, and advised that he was "potentially using fully marked ford taurus car number 28b11 and could be anywhere in the province."¹ RM Bruce Briers had reminded all members to "Please wear your hard body armour the rest of the – your duration of your shift today. Just in the event you come across this vehicle."²

The RCMP had also shared information about the perpetrator and an active shooter situation with the public via Twitter. Members of the public were cautioned about the situation but had not yet been informed that the perpetrator was disguised as a police officer and driving a replica RCMP cruiser.

This chapter begins with the perpetrator's departure from Plains Road in Debert and ends with his death at the Big Stop gas station in Enfield, 73 kilometres southwest. The critical incident response had entered a new phase as additional RCMP members were deployed and additional roadblocks and checkpoints were established. Despite these efforts, the perpetrator was able to evade police again, and in the last hour of his life he continued his rampage, taking the lives of an additional three people and wounding another.

Chapter 6 uses the same structure employed in Chapters 2 and 4. For each scene, we describe the perpetrator's actions, community and police responses, and the role of other emergency responders such as Emergency Health Services (EHS) and fire. We also explain what happened at the Enfield Big Stop gas station, where

the perpetrator was killed by two RCMP members. The balance of the chapter considers the role of the command group, Operational Communications Centre (OCC), and executive leadership; the contributions made by other police agencies; and the public communications sent (and not sent) during this time frame.

The first section of this chapter describes the perpetrator's route past the Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade hall, through Truro, and onto the Shubenacadie cloverleaf in Milford. While he was en route, members of the RCMP detachments in Enfield and Indian Brook were gathering information and taking positions around this area. As the perpetrator neared the cloverleaf, he shot at and injured Cst. Chad Morrison, who was seated in his marked RCMP SUV. Minutes later, the perpetrator deliberately collided with the marked RCMP cruiser driven by Acting Cpl. Heidi Stevenson. Acting Cpl. Stevenson exchanged gunfire with the perpetrator before he fatally shot her. The perpetrator received a head wound in this exchange. Before leaving the Shubenacadie cloverleaf, the perpetrator also killed Joey Webber, who had stopped to render assistance at the scene of the collision. The perpetrator set fire to his replica RCMP cruiser and Acting Cpl. Stevenson's RCMP cruiser. He then fled in Mr. Webber's SUV.

The second section follows the perpetrator away from the Shubenacadie cloverleaf to the home of Gina Goulet on Highway 224. Within a few minutes, the perpetrator killed Ms. Goulet and stole her car, leaving Mr. Webber's SUV behind.

The third section contains our findings about the perpetrator's death at the Enfield Big Stop.

The final sections of the chapter outline RCMP command decisions and actions, the role of the RCMP executive leadership, the engagement of other police agencies, and public communications during this time frame.

Shubenacadie Cloverleaf: Cst. Chad Morrison, Acting Cpl. Heidi Stevenson, and Joey Webber

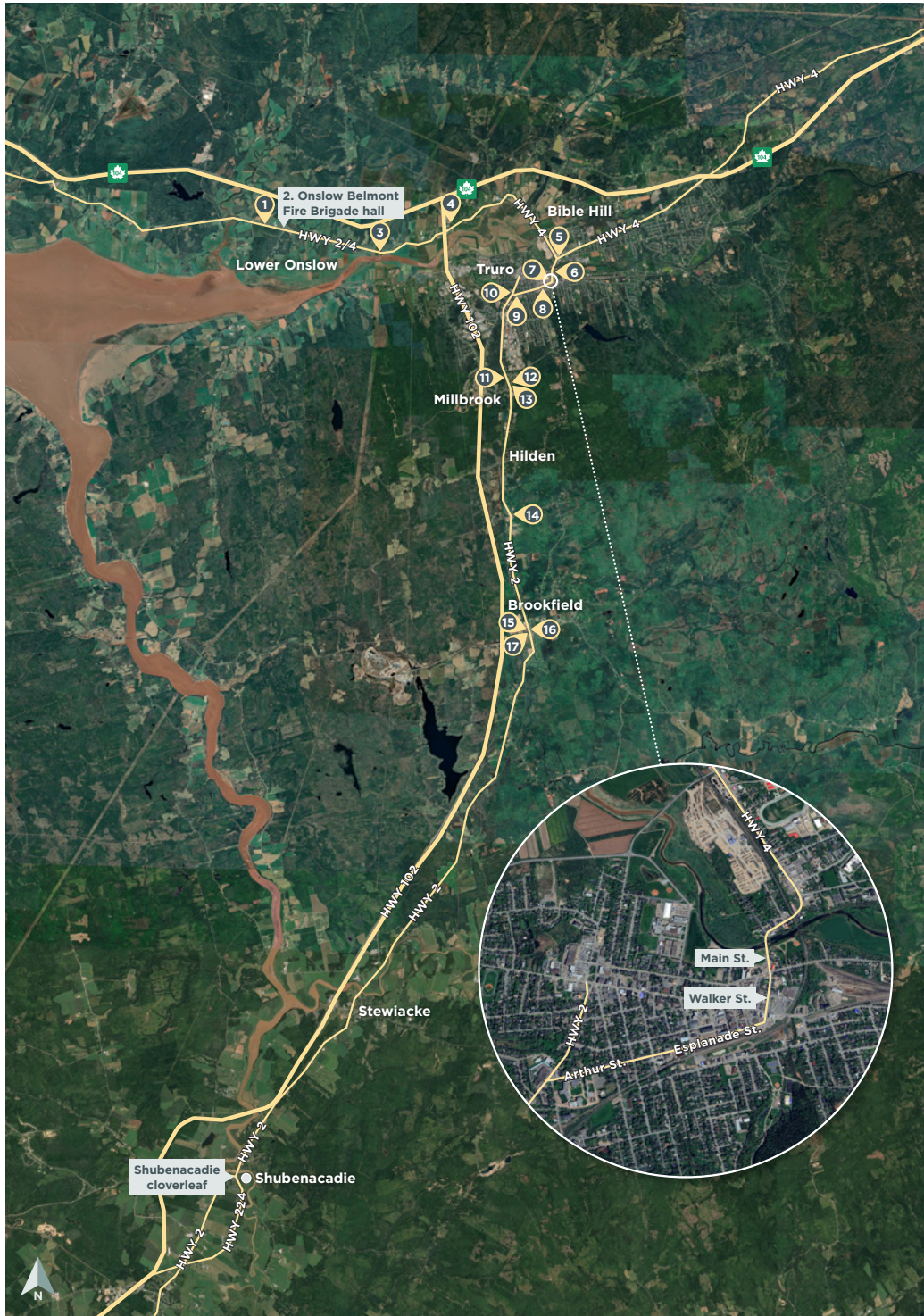
Perpetrator's Route

The RCMP collected and analyzed video surveillance footage after the mass casualty in order to reconstruct the perpetrator's route on the morning of April 19, 2020. The route was unknown at the time of the events.

Shortly before the Onslow fire hall shooting described in Chapter 5, the perpetrator passed the Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade hall travelling east. He passed through downtown Truro at 10:17 am. This Sunday morning was likely to have been quieter than usual with fewer people out and about. It was the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, and most businesses were closed due to health regulations. From Truro, the perpetrator proceeded south on Highway 2 and continued through the Millbrook, Hilden, and Brookfield areas toward Stewiacke and then Shubenacadie. At 10:23 am, his replica RCMP cruiser was caught by video surveillance as it passed the Millbrook RCMP detachment.

Video surveillance footage from Millbrook Mi'kmag'ki Trading Post shows the perpetrator in more detail as he travelled south. He pulled over, exited the replica RCMP cruiser, and removed a navy-blue jacket, which we believe to be a Correctional Services Canada jacket. The jacket was later found in Mr. Webber's SUV. The perpetrator appeared to be wearing a grey RCMP shirt and a baseball cap. He removed the high-visibility vest from over the jacket he had been wearing and put it on over the RCMP shirt. He then got back into the vehicle and continued to proceed south on Highway 2 toward the Shubenacadie cloverleaf.

Perpetrator's Route: April 19



Map Data | Google, ©2023 CNES / Airbus, Maxar Technologies

1	10:06:35	CarStar Collision
2	Approximately 10:07	Onslow Belmont Fire Brigade Hall
3	10:08:29	13077 Hwy 2/4
4	10:11:00	Patterson Sales and Service
5	10:15	Century Honda
6		Wilson's Gas Stops
7	Approximately 10:16	Dairy Queen
8	10:17:09	Jimolly's Bakery Cafe
9	Approximately 10:19	Nova Scotia Community College
10	10:19:50	Best Western
11	10:23	Millbrook RCMP Detachment
12	10:23	Millbrook Fisheries
13	10:23	Millbrook Mi'kmag'ki Trading Post
14	10:28	Glenn's Autobody
15	10:31	Brookfield Lumber
16	10:32:41	Roops Esso
17	10:34:17	Brookfield Bakery

Geographic Orientation

Shubenacadie is located in Hants County, Nova Scotia, approximately 70 kilometres from Portapique and approximately 35 kilometres southwest of Truro.

The Shubenacadie cloverleaf is a small highway interchange between Highway 2 and Highway 224. Highway 2 is known locally as Gays River Road. For our purposes, the key directions of travel through the cloverleaf are south (the direction from which Cst. Morrison and the perpetrator entered) and east (the direction from which Acting Cpl. Stevenson and Mr. Webber entered).

Shubenacadie Cloverleaf



Map Data | Google ©2023

Drivers travelling south on Highway 2 will pass an intersection with Gays River Road on their left before crossing a bridge over the Shubenacadie River. From there, they can continue straight to travel south on Highway 224, or they can exit to the right, using a ramp that allows them to head west on Highway 2 through the village of Shubenacadie.

Drivers travelling east on Highway 2 from Shubenacadie can head either north or south from the cloverleaf. To continue north on Highway 2, they travel under the highway overpass, enter the eastern ramp of the cloverleaf, merge back onto Highway 2, and then travel across the bridge over the Shubenacadie River. This is the route Acting Cpl. Stevenson would have taken if the perpetrator had not collided with her near the top of the cloverleaf ramp. It would also have been Mr. Webber's route, had he not stopped to assist at the scene of the collision.

Due to differences in the elevation of these two highways, drivers using the eastern ramp to merge into the northbound lane of Highway 2 cannot see the southbound traffic until they are close to the top of the cloverleaf ramp. Those travelling south along Highway 2 have a clear view of traffic on the eastern ramp of the cloverleaf.

Enfield and Indian Brook Members Take Positions

As we explained in Chapter 4, Acting Cpl. Stevenson – a 23-year veteran of the RCMP known for her work as a drug recognition expert, and in communications and community policing – was the acting non-commissioned officer for the Enfield shift, and shift supervisor on April 19. Acting Cpl. Stevenson is widely known within the community as Cst. Stevenson. (As explained in Chapter 1, in situations where an RCMP member was working in an acting capacity at a rank higher than their usual rank, we refer to them accordingly. For this reason, we use the Acting Cpl. title when discussing her work on the morning of April 19.) Acting Cpl. Stevenson had taken steps to find out about the previous night's events and the perpetrator, and had ensured that other members of the Enfield shift had as much information as possible. She directed her team – Cst. Chad Morrison, Cst. Austin Comeau, and Cst. Chris Gibson – to strategic positions along the highway system in Hants County in order to watch for the perpetrator.

After gathering information about the previous night's events, members from the Enfield and Indian Brook RCMP detachments took up lookout positions at various points on the border between Colchester and Hants counties. From 9:45 am onward, these members were monitoring the Colchester radio channel and travelling the local highways in search of the perpetrator.

Enfield members are typically tuned in to the Hants East talk group in their cruisers, while neighbouring Indian Brook members are typically tuned in to the Colchester talk group. The events in Portapique, Debert, and Glenholme occurred in Colchester County and were primarily broadcast over the Colchester radio channel. As a result, many Enfield members had one radio tuned to the Colchester radio channel and the other to their local channel. At 10:20:35 am, Acting Cpl. Stevenson confirmed with Cst. Morrison that he was also monitoring the Colchester radio talk group using his portable radio. The Colchester and Hants East radio channels were patched together at 11:08 am, after responding members including Sgt. Darren Bernard pointed out that coordination difficulties were arising. Patching two radio channels together means that members on either channel can listen and broadcast to each other.

By 10:27 am, Enfield and Indian Brook members were positioned in and around the Shubenacadie cloverleaf:

Positions of Enfield and Indian Brook Members



Map Data | Google, ©2023 CNES / Airbus, Maxar Technologies

- Cst. Morrison was parked in Shubenacadie, just north of the Shubenacadie River and south of the intersection of Gays River Road and Highway 2, facing north.
- Acting Cpl. Stevenson and Cst. Gibson were parked on the median of Highway 102 just north of exit 10, facing north and west, respectively.
- Cst. Comeau was parked on the south side of Highway 236 at its intersection with Phillips Road, facing east.
- Cst. Stephanie LeBlanc and Cst. Kari Pettinger were parked in Cst. LeBlanc's vehicle on Highway 102 south of exit 9 in Milford.

At this time, the perpetrator's last confirmed location was Plains Road in Debert. This confirmation occurred at approximately 10:00 am, when he killed Kristen Beaton and Heather O'Brien. At 10:39 am, RM Briers requested over Hants East radio that two carbine-trained Enfield members be sent toward Colchester. Acting Cpl. Stevenson was not certified to use a carbine. She directed Cst. Comeau and

Cst. Gibson to go to Colchester County. They were to meet in Brookfield, approximately 22 kilometres north of Shubenacadie. She also directed Cst. LeBlanc and Cst. Pettinger to travel to her location on Highway 102. She would travel to Maitland, near where Cst. Comeau had been stationed on Highway 136, and Cst. Morrison would stay at his location in Shubenacadie.

After taking his position, Cst. Morrison realized he had yet to put on his hard body armour. He did so.

Perpetrator Shoots and Injures Cst. Morrison

At around 10:40 am, radio broadcasts about sightings of the replica RCMP cruiser suggested that the perpetrator might be in Brookfield and travelling south on Highway 2. Acting Cpl. Stevenson realized this meant that the perpetrator could encounter Cst. Morrison at his position on Highway 2, and she immediately indicated that she was going to move to that position as well. She broadcast that she would travel toward Cst. Morrison's location: "Chad, if there's anything to that last one, I'm gonna make my way to your position."³ Acting Cpl. Stevenson left the exit 10 ramp and travelled south on Highway 215 toward Cst. Morrison. Highway 215 intersects with Highway 2 in Shubenacadie village, and from there her route took her east into the Shubenacadie cloverleaf.

Cst. Morrison was still positioned north of the Shubenacadie cloverleaf and the Shubenacadie River. He was parked on the east shoulder of Highway 2 facing north, just south of Highway 224 / Gays River Road. He had his hard body armour on, his carbine ready, and was listening to the radio for updates. He believed that the perpetrator was in Brookfield and knew that Acting Cpl. Stevenson was travelling to his location. Cst. Morrison noticed a Ford Taurus police vehicle "a couple hundred metres" north of his position, travelling south on Highway 2 toward him.⁴

Acting Cpl. Stevenson was on Highway 215 south of the Shubenacadie River, approaching Highway 2 when Cst. Morrison inquired over Hants East radio as to who was approaching in a police cruiser. She replied, "That's me."⁵ From this position, she merged onto Highway 2 in Shubenacadie village and soon thereafter entered the Shubenacadie cloverleaf.

Cst. Morrison had begun to put his vehicle in motion to prepare for a quick exit but was put at ease by Acting Cpl. Stevenson's response. Instead, he made "a gentle

little U-turn” and pulled his police SUV over on the north side of Highway 224 / Gays River Road.⁶ However, the vehicle that Cst. Morrison saw was in fact the perpetrator’s replica RCMP cruiser.

Cst. Morrison was looking to the right, where the replica RCMP cruiser was continuing south on Highway 2 toward him. He saw the vehicle turn left onto Gays River Road and approach his stationary vehicle. As the perpetrator was turning, Cst. Morrison noticed the push bar on the front of the vehicle and realized the driver was not Acting Cpl. Stevenson. He did not recognize the perpetrator from the photos that had been distributed until the vehicle pulled up next to him. By then, the perpetrator was pointing a handgun out the driver-side window and began to fire.

The perpetrator fired at least three shots. As soon as Cst. Morrison saw the perpetrator, he “hit the gas” and screamed as he drove off. In a statement to RCMP investigators, he said, “glass was breaking and I was hearing things go off and I felt, I felt um, something in my chest and I felt like, things happening in my arms and I know I had this gash on my face.”⁷ Cst. Morrison turned left from Gays River Road onto Highway 2 at high speed and hit the guardrail on both sides of the highway as he attempted to straighten out.

As he drove, he was “smashing on” the Emergency Request to Talk button of his radio but did not know if the emergency transmissions were going through, so instead, he grabbed the mic and talked.⁸ It was the first time he had ever had to use the Emergency Request to Talk button. Cst. Morrison successfully radioed that he had been shot and was heading to the Milford Emergency Health Services station for help. He broadcast that the perpetrator was driving the replica RCMP cruiser: “I’m shot, I’m shot. Southbound on number 2. Southbound on 2 taking the Shubie. I’m shot.” He was also able to communicate that it was the perpetrator who had shot him: “It’s the suspect vehicle. It’s him.”⁹

Cst. Morrison crossed the bridge over the Shubenacadie River and took the western ramp of the cloverleaf to drive toward Shubenacadie village. He then continued south on Highway 2 to the EHS paramedic base in Milford. Cst. Morrison’s experience in Milford is discussed at the end of this section.

Acting Cpl. Stevenson and the Perpetrator Exchange Gunfire

As Cst. Morrison sought to escape the perpetrator and seek medical assistance, Acting Cpl. Stevenson was accelerating up the eastern ramp of the cloverleaf.

Acting Cpl. Stevenson was just approaching the intersection of Highway 2 and Burgess Road, near the entrance to the cloverleaf, when Cst. Morrison radioed that he had been shot. Following his broadcast, Acting Cpl. Stevenson accelerated toward Cst. Morrison's last known position. As she was driving up the cloverleaf ramp, the perpetrator, who had continued driving south on Highway 2, crossed the bridge.

Collision at Cloverleaf



COMM0007516; labels added by Mass Casualty Commission

From this vantage point, he would have been able to see Acting Cpl. Stevenson's vehicle as she was driving up the eastern ramp. The perpetrator turned left onto the eastern ramp, across the oncoming lane. He was now travelling against the flow of traffic, toward Acting Cpl. Stevenson's oncoming vehicle. This resulted in a head-on collision with Acting Cpl. Stevenson's vehicle near the top of the Shubenacadie cloverleaf ramp at 10:49 am.

After the collision, the vehicles came to rest almost perpendicular to one another. The nose of Acting Cpl. Stevenson's vehicle faced approximately north, into the guardrail by the ramp's yield sign. The rear of the perpetrator's vehicle was positioned close to the passenger-side door of Acting Cpl. Stevenson's vehicle, while the nose of the perpetrator's vehicle faced approximately southeast, down the cloverleaf ramp. The driver-side door of the replica RCMP cruiser was beside the guardrail.

At some point after the collision, Acting Cpl. Stevenson exited her vehicle from the driver's door and came to be on the ground. There is conflicting witness evidence about whether this was done under her own power or due to the interference of the perpetrator. Several community members witnessed the cloverleaf scene, and their accounts of the incident are summarized in the following section of this chapter. Here, we summarize forensic evidence and other information that shed light on the course of events.

We find that Acting Cpl. Stevenson exchanged gunfire with the perpetrator before and after she exited her vehicle.

Acting Cpl. Stevenson's portable radio was activated on four occasions between 10:49:40 am and 10:52:57 am. During the middle two activations, there are gunshot sounds but no communication from Acting Cpl. Stevenson. On the first and last activation, no audio was transmitted. Forensic evidence later seized from the scene included 14 casings that were consistent with having been fired from Acting Cpl. Stevenson's RCMP-issue Smith & Wesson pistol. Several of the expended casings were recovered in and around the driver-side floor of Acting Cpl. Stevenson's vehicle. A bullet exit hole was located on the passenger-side door of Acting Cpl. Stevenson's vehicle; three bullet entry holes were located in a rear panel of the vehicle, on the driver's side. At least two casings from Acting Cpl. Stevenson's gun were found on the roadway and in nearby grass, suggesting that she continued to shoot after exiting her vehicle.

During the exchange of gunfire, the perpetrator fired several shots toward Acting Cpl. Stevenson's vehicle. He then approached Acting Cpl. Stevenson and shot

her at close range before taking her pistol and ammunition. He did not take her radio. These shots killed Acting Cpl. Stevenson. The perpetrator sustained a head wound from bullet fragments shot from Acting Cpl. Stevenson's firearm during this exchange. Our findings concerning the cause of the perpetrator's death are set out below, in the section detailing events at the Enfield Big Stop.

Despite being wounded by Acting Cpl. Stevenson, the perpetrator was able to escape the scene at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf. In the course of making his escape, he took another life.

Joey Webber Stops to Render Assistance, and Is Killed

Around 10:52 am, Joey Webber drove into the Shubenacadie cloverleaf and came upon the two crashed police vehicles. He pulled over and exited his car. Based on the witness testimony set out below, it is clear that Mr. Webber was seeking to render assistance. Joey Webber was a loving partner and father who loved being out in the woods.

Earlier that morning, Mr. Webber was with his partner, Shanda MacLeod, and their children at their home in Wyses Corner, approximately 25 kilometres south of Shubenacadie. Ms. MacLeod had been reading about the shootings in Portapique on Facebook and had mentioned them to Mr. Webber. They discussed the location of Portapique as being “out past Truro, Debert area” and agreed that what had happened was “crazy.”¹⁰ Mr. Webber had remarked, “that kind of stuff doesn't happen here.”¹¹ Thereafter, they went about their morning. Ms. MacLeod later said, “we didn't know that we were in danger or anything.”¹²

Mr. Webber left home shortly after 10:00 am to purchase furnace oil. He was driving a silver/grey 2008 Ford Escape SUV. At various times on April 19, Mr. Webber's Ford Escape was erroneously described as a Ford Explorer, a Jeep Liberty, and, most often, a Chevrolet Tracker. For simplicity, we refer to the vehicle as “Mr. Webber's SUV.”

After visiting the Esso gas station in Milford, Mr. Webber drove back toward home.¹³ He entered the Shubenacadie cloverleaf via the eastern ramp from Highway 2 and encountered the collision at the top of that ramp. He pulled over nearby, and witnesses described him as running to help.

Witnesses observed that Mr. Webber moved toward the two vehicles that had been involved in the collision. The perpetrator either directed or forced Mr. Webber into the back seat of the replica RCMP cruiser. The perpetrator then shot Mr. Webber while Mr. Webber remained seated in the vehicle. Witnesses observed the perpetrator unloading items from his replica cruiser and placing them in Mr. Webber's SUV. The perpetrator set the replica RCMP cruiser on fire. Both vehicles were eventually consumed by this fire.

Around 10:55 am, the perpetrator drove away in Mr. Webber's SUV, crossed the oncoming lane of traffic, and proceeded south on Highway 224.

Witness Observations and Actions

Several witnesses contacted 911 and provided contemporaneous observations about what they were seeing at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf.

Katie Rodler and Kenneth Hood were travelling through the area that morning with their infant in the back seat of their car. They were proceeding north on Highway 2 toward Stewiacke when they observed Cst. Morrison at the intersection of Highway 2 and Highway 224, putting on his hard body armour. As they continued, they passed another police cruiser proceeding south; this one had a "big black push bumper."¹⁴ After noticing the police presence, they decided to turn around and head back home. They were aware that there were incidents happening in Portapique. As they turned, they observed Cst. Morrison's RCMP vehicle travelling down the western ramp of the cloverleaf some distance ahead of them. They then saw two police vehicles collide on the cloverleaf's eastern ramp, to their left. They initially slowed down, and then when shots were fired, drove away, and Ms. Rodler immediately called 911.

Ms. Rodler told 911:

Yeah, it goes right up from the Highway 2 in Shubie. There was a police vehicle, but I don't know if this is the guy, that's the shooter, that you guys have been looking for. There is a police vehicle up there, there's two of them. They were shooting ... There was a police vehicle parked on the side of the road ... they rammed into each other basically. Both front of the cops cars were dented in ... there was somebody laying on the ground and there was somebody shooting at them ... I believe it was an actual police officer that was shooting because it was a female ... there was one

on the ground it looked like it was male. The one that was shooting was a female. So that was obviously a real police officer.¹⁵

In her statement to the RCMP on May 1, 2020, Ms. Rodler indicated that she observed Acting Cpl. Stevenson roll out of her vehicle, and she believed upon reflection that it was the male who was shooting.

Gerald Whitman resided in the area at the time and made some observations from his residence. At 10:52 am, he called 911 and said:

I'm watching out the window here right now. There's one guy ... wandering back and forth between cars and stuff. And there was a guy that stopped with an SUV, but I don't see him anymore ... Wow! One of the guys that was doing all the shooting ... He's taken off in a Ford Explorer, gray one ... Heading out the 224 towards Milford ... And the guy that owned the SUV, he put him in the back of the police car and I think he might have shot him. The car's on fire there now.¹⁶

At 10:50 am, Colleen Nesseth, who resided near the cloverleaf, called 911 to report her observation:

I see two police cars that have hit each other in the cloverleaf in Shubenacadie, and I believe there's been shots fired ... It appears that the officer's taken a driver out of the police car and laid him on the ground ... One person has gone back into the civilian vehicle but he's on highway 224 heading out of Shubie towards Milford.¹⁷

Other witnesses also saw Mr. Webber pull over at the scene of the collision between Acting Cpl. Stevenson's RCMP cruiser and the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser. Eric Fisher described that "the guy jumped out and ran right up to where the shooter ... was."¹⁸ Rosalie Fisher stated, "whoever this person was looked like he was running to help."¹⁹ Gerald Whitman said that the perpetrator "got [Mr. Webber] to go into the back seat of the" replica RCMP cruiser.²⁰ He explained, "After he got him in there he reached back in and you could hear the gun firing again."²¹ Bernard Myra stated that he saw a third car arrive at the scene and the driver was motioned between the two cars. He said he could not see whether the perpetrator "threw him in the back seat or just shot him standing up."²² Elizabeth Small described seeing a "good Samaritan" arrive who was taken to the back of the car and shot.²³

Like many community members during the mass casualty, Mr. Webber's first response was to act quickly to help others. As Commission counsel said when presenting evidence about the incident at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf before the Commission, his was "an act that is consistent with only the best and kindest attributes of humanity."²⁴ The perpetrator took Mr. Webber's life and stole his SUV, finding a means to flee the scene and continue to attack.

RCMP First Responder Actions

At around 10:57 am, Emergency Response Team (ERT) members arrived at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf in an ERT vehicle carrying Cpl. Matthew Ingraham, team lead Cpl. Tim Mills, Cst. Andy MacLellan, and Cst. Trent Milton. Upon arrival, they found the replica RCMP cruiser engulfed in flames. They encountered community members, including Diana Pelrine, who was approaching Acting Cpl. Stevenson to move her body away from the fire, and Craig Van der Kooi, a man approaching with his arms elevated. The ERT members yelled for civilians to move back, away from the burning vehicle. They approached with firearms raised, cleared the replica RCMP cruiser, and recognized that the perpetrator was not on scene. They did not see Joey Webber's body in the vehicle, which was fully engulfed in flame. Operational Communications Centre dispatchers on the Hants County or Colchester County police radio channels had not shared 911 caller reports that a man had been put into the back seat of a police vehicle and shot.

As the ERT members maintained a lookout for the perpetrator, Cst. MacLellan moved Acting Cpl. Stevenson's body to a position behind the cover of the ERT vehicle and confirmed that she was deceased. Mr. Van der Kooi advised the ERT members that the perpetrator had proceeded south on Highway 224 in a silver SUV, and the members broadcast this information over the radio. Cpl. Mills also advised over the radio that Acting Cpl. Stevenson's pistol and magazines had been taken by the perpetrator:

He's got her pistol and mags. He's in a silver, ah SUV, tracker type. (BACK-GROUND: (Inaudible) We're leaving her and we're continuing on, trying to find this guy.

...

If they see a silver SUV Tracker with a guy with a yellow jacket, you got to – you can't give him a second. You got to have a gun on him. Gun on him.²⁵

The ERT team left in pursuit of Mr. Webber's SUV, which they believed to be a Tracker.

Sgt. Darren Bernard, commander of the Millbrook detachment, was the first general duty member to arrive at the cloverleaf. He arrived approximately four minutes after the ERT members had left the scene. Like other responding members, Sgt. Bernard did not receive an adequate briefing on the morning of April 19. In his interview with the Commission, he described speaking first to Cpl. Natasha Jamieson and later to another general duty member before reaching out to Acting Insp. Steve Halliday to learn more about the incident and find out why he had not been briefed. Two of his members had been involved in the critical incident response overnight, and others were involved on the morning of April 19. At about 10:35 am, after contacting Acting Insp. Halliday, Sgt. Bernard was called in to the Bible Hill detachment. He understood that he was being called in as a crisis negotiator. As he was en route, Sgt. Bernard heard a radio transmission "about a police car accident and a fire, multiple police cars. And I don't recall anyone telling us what to do at that point. And I thought to myself, 'Jesus, we're on our own here, like, is there anybody in charge here?'"²⁶

Sgt. Bernard continued south on Highway 2 with the intention of finding Cst. Morrison and providing him with support and assistance. He arrived at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf from the north on Highway 2 at 11:04 am. Sgt. Bernard did not realize that the Emergency Response Team had been on scene and had left before he arrived. Cst. Austin Comeau, Cst. Jared Daley, and Cst. Chris Gibson were travelling right behind Sgt. Bernard, in separate cars. Within the next few minutes, Cst. Gibson, Cst. Comeau, and Cst. Daley arrived on scene and also observed the two police vehicles engulfed in flames. Cst. Comeau pulled up alongside Sgt. Bernard, and called out to him that Acting Cpl. Stevenson was on the ground. Sgt. Bernard confirmed that Acting Cpl. Stevenson was dead and stayed with her body while broadcasting details of the scene. Sgt. Bernard looked for Acting Cpl. Stevenson's firearms and radio, and aired his findings over Hants East radio. The delay in patching radio channels interfered with the receipt of this information by other responding members.

Sgt. Bernard assumed command of the scene and instructed Cst. Comeau, Cst. Daley, and Cst. Gibson to set up a perimeter and stop all vehicles. While RCMP

members were stationed out of their vehicles at various points on the scene, they used their vehicles to block traffic at points around the Shubenacadie cloverleaf.

Emergency Medical Response Team (EMRT) members Cpl. Duane Ivany and Cst. Jeff Mahar had left the Plains Road crime scene and were following the ERT TAV toward the interchange of Highway 102 and Highway 104 when they heard the broadcast that Cst. Morrison had been shot. Dispatch indicated that the member was “okay,” and the EMRT members interpreted that to mean that he had been shot at but not hit.²⁷ They continued toward Truro. Once they heard that an officer was down and two police cruisers had crashed, they travelled quickly toward Shubenacadie. They followed the smoke to the scene.

Cpl. Ivany and Cst. Mahar arrived at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf and checked Acting Cpl. Stevenson’s vital signs. They confirmed that she was deceased.

Just as the Emergency Medical Response Team members finished their assessment, they heard RCMP dispatch’s 11:12 am broadcast that the perpetrator had been seen at the Sobeys in Truro. Cpl. Ivany realized that their medical response might be especially necessary with an active shooter at a shopping centre. He and Cst. Mahar left immediately and travelled toward the Sobeys. While en route, they heard over the radio that the report was false. They changed direction and began travelling toward Halifax, eventually turning off with the intention to get gas at the Elmsdale Petro-Canada.

Sgt. Bernard, who is Mi’kmaw, stayed with Acting Cpl. Stevenson. He later explained to the Commission: “[W]e just kind of sat down in the dirt and stayed with Heidi. In my culture, you know, when there’s a deceased person, you have to stay with them. So, I kind of stayed with her and just sat in the dirt for I don’t know how long.”²⁸

S/Sgt. Addie MacCallum later arrived at the scene to provide containment, as did other members. When Sgt. Bernard left the cloverleaf, he drove S/Sgt. MacCallum back to the Great Village fire hall before returning to the Bible Hill detachment. He later reflected: “I went to Bible Hill very angry. Because in the context, I guess, of what I knew and how it should have went ... Heidi was a friend of mine, and like [a] good friend of mine, and she was a Constable ... [S]he’s a very capable individual.”²⁹

In Volume 4, Community, we consider the after-incident support that was offered to RCMP members following the mass casualty, including those who observed the deaths of those they knew.

In Volume 5, Policing, we evaluate the RCMP's critical incident response, identify lessons learned, and make recommendations for future preparedness.

Meanwhile, responding members had not been advised to look for a second victim in the replica RCMP cruiser at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf scene.

Emergency Health Services and Fire First Responder Actions

Emergency Health Services Treat Cst. Morrison

After being shot and radioing for help, Cst. Morrison continued south over the Shubenacadie River bridge, driving ahead of the perpetrator in the southbound lane of Highway 2. He turned right at the cloverleaf onto the western ramp. At the bottom of the ramp, he turned left and drove west and then south on Highway 2, through Shubenacadie and toward Milford.

On the morning of April 19, EHS paramedics Molly McFaul and Daniel Storgato were working at the Milford EHS base in ambulance M-122. They began their shift at around 7:30 am, and both had little information as to what had transpired the night before. They were advised by dispatch to remain inside the base and avoid any unnecessary travel.

At 10:51 am, an Operational Communications Centre dispatcher called EHS dispatch to advise them that Cst. Morrison had been shot and was at the Milford base. This message appears to have been misunderstood by EHS dispatch. At 10:55 am, EHS dispatch sent Ms. McFaul and Mr. Storgato a dispatch ticket advising them that an RCMP member required treatment. They were told to remain at the base as the member was en route. They waited in the ambulance bay for the member to arrive.

At 10:53:44 am, Cst. Morrison broadcast on the Hants East radio channel, "I'm at EHS here; I need help guys."³⁰ He got out of his vehicle and knocked and kicked at the EHS base door, but saw no one there. Cst. Morrison had lost a considerable amount of blood and was losing sensation in his arms and hands. He was very afraid that the perpetrator might have followed him. He grabbed his carbine and went to the back of the EHS building.

The microphone on Cst. Morrison's portable radio was damaged in the shooting; he could hear others through it but could not transmit. He later said that the Volume was low on his portable radio and he could not hear clearly, but he was able to hear clearly from his vehicle radio. Cst. Morrison heard transmissions regarding the cloverleaf scene, including that Acting Cpl. Stevenson was down. He continually returned to his police vehicle to update dispatch regarding his whereabouts. At 10:54:04 am, so that EHS paramedics would not confuse him with the perpetrator, Cst. Morrison radioed, "I have my carbine out. Ah, I don't have a yellow stripe on my pants; just know that."³¹ At 11:00:11 am, he radioed, "Any updates on EHS? I'm still here at the station. I can't use my portable."³²

Cst. Morrison was experiencing a loss of feeling in his hands and was losing grip strength. He realized he was no longer able to fire his weapon. He returned to the back of the EHS building, "wrestled" the magazine out of his carbine, and hid it in the grass.³³ He sat down. He was experiencing blood loss from a bullet wound in the inner crook of his left arm. Another bullet had entered one side of his right arm, fractured his ulna bone, and exited out the other side. Cst. Morrison huddled down in a grassy, marshy area beside the EHS base and waited for someone to find him.

At 11:00:17 am, OCC dispatch phoned EHS dispatch a second time and advised that Cst. Morrison was at the EHS base. By this point in the critical incident response, the uncertainty sowed by the perpetrator's disguise was evident:

Ambulance Dispatch: And uh, you, you confirmed that, that this person is the uh, an actual police officer, not the ...

Kirsten BAGLEE: I can confirm he's an ...

Ambulance Dispatch: Okay.

Kirsten BAGLEE: ... police officer, his car number's fifteen bravo six.³⁴

Shortly thereafter, EHS dispatch contacted the paramedics and advised them to look outside for a vehicle. Initially, they could not see Cst. Morrison's vehicle. Mr. Storgato left the base to look for a police vehicle in the parking lot. He noticed an RCMP vehicle and returned inside to confirm that the car number corresponded with the dispatch information. EHS dispatch advised that the RCMP member "should be able to come into the base to see you guys."³⁵ Mr. Storgato left the base and approached the vehicle. The vehicle was unoccupied. He noted that the car had bullet holes in the door and that the windows were smashed out. He also observed a trail of blood leading behind the base.

Mr. Storgato followed the trail of blood and located Cst. Morrison, who was returning from the woods. Cst. Morrison exclaimed, “I’m the good guy, I’m the good guy. Please help me!” and explained that he had dropped his carbine in the woods and had unloaded the magazine.³⁶ Mr. Storgato introduced himself and guided the member into the ambulance bay for treatment.

Ms. McFaul and Mr. Storgato disinfected and bandaged Cst. Morrison’s bullet wounds. They recorded in their notes: “[A]brasion and bruising to left of chest, from suspected third gunshot, protected by flak jacket on, no entry or exit wounds.”³⁷ While treating Cst. Morrison, the paramedics overheard that Acting Cpl. Stevenson was deceased. They turned off Cst. Morrison’s radio in an effort to keep him calm. At approximately 11:27 am, Ms. McFaul and Mr. Storgato left the base to transport Cst. Morrison to the Colchester East Hants Health Centre. Before leaving, they advised EHS dispatch that the RCMP vehicle would be left at the EHS base and that there was an empty carbine behind the building.

At 11:30:43 am, EHS dispatch phoned RCMP dispatch and advised them of the weapon behind the Milford EHS base. At approximately 2:15 pm, Cpl. Glenn Brown of the Police Dog Service Unit went to the base and retrieved the weapon.

EHS Attends to Acting Cpl. Stevenson

At 11:06:32 am, Sgt. Bernard radioed that Acting Cpl. Stevenson was down and requested EHS be sent to the Shubenacadie cloverleaf. Fourteen seconds later, OCC dispatch confirmed that EHS would be “advised to go in.” An OCC dispatcher called EHS dispatch to request an ambulance be dispatched to the intersection of Highway 2 and Highway 224. EHS dispatch called OCC dispatch to confirm that there was a second RCMP member in need of an ambulance, in addition to the member at their base (Cst. Morrison). RCMP dispatch confirmed that there was a second member at the cloverleaf, Acting Cpl. Stevenson, and that she was possibly deceased. Ambulance M-110 was assigned to the call at 11:17 am.

Ambulance M-110 (Gerald Galway and Kelly Richardson) arrived at the cloverleaf at 11:36 am. The incident was closed approximately 20 minutes later. The notations on the incident report indicate that the call was cancelled on scene. The reason for cancellation is given as “D.O.A.” – dead on arrival.³⁸

Shubenacadie and District Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services

At 11:49 am, RCMP dispatch called Valley Communications to request the dispatch of the Shubenacadie and District Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services to the cloverleaf to contain the fire caused by the ignited vehicles. The call was dispatched within a minute, and fire services arrived on scene approximately six minutes after the RCMP dispatch call, at approximately 11:55 am. Fire services remained on scene until approximately 1:30 pm. Fire services returned later that night to wash down the road once the vehicles had been removed.

Highway 224: Gina Goulet

Yet again, the perpetrator was able to evade the police by minutes.

Gina Goulet died in her home on Highway 224 at approximately 11:00 am on April 19, 2020. She was shot multiple times. As with Lillian Campbell's homicide earlier that morning, Ms. Goulet's murder involves a discrete set of facts that happened over a relatively short period of time.

Ms. Goulet was a professional denturist and a cancer survivor. She lived in, and loved, rural Nova Scotia. In 2020, Ms. Goulet had been a denturist for 27 years. She had met the perpetrator through the province's relatively small professional denturist community, including through continuing education activities.

Ms. Goulet lived with her two dogs at a residence on Highway 224. Highway 224 runs through a rural area of Nova Scotia: there are few houses or businesses, especially in comparison to Highway 2. The residence is located approximately 1.8 kilometres south of the Shubenacadie cloverleaf. It is situated on the east side of Highway 224 and is surrounded by agricultural fields. The closest neighbour is a business, approximately 600 metres away.

Highway 224



Map Data | Google ©2023

Perpetrator's Actions

The perpetrator left the Shubenacadie cloverleaf at approximately 10:55 am, driving south on Highway 224 in Joey Webber's SUV. He passed Ms. Goulet's home on Highway 224, made a U-turn shortly thereafter, and then proceeded back to her residence. He parked the SUV in Ms. Goulet's backyard. From this location, Mr. Webber's SUV was visible to traffic driving northbound on Highway 224, but not to those driving southbound.

That morning, Ms. Goulet was at home in the company of her dogs and had been texting with a friend and, separately, with her daughter. We describe these communications in the next section.

Forensic evidence shows that the perpetrator pulled up behind the residence, left Mr. Webber's SUV, and broke into the residence by breaking the glass in the side door. The position of Mr. Webber's SUV, which was parked at the east side (the

back) of the residence, suggests that the perpetrator may have purposefully tried to conceal it.

The perpetrator went into the living area, where he shot one of Ms. Goulet's two dogs. He then went into the master bedroom and fatally shot Ms. Goulet, who was hiding in the ensuite bathroom. The perpetrator then left the residence in a grey Mazda 3 hatchback owned by Ms. Goulet.

Subsequent investigation of the residence reveals that the perpetrator left "a grey colored long sleeve shirt with RCMP insignia on the shoulders, a neon colored sleeveless traffic vest and a dark blue/maroon colored sleeveless vest" near the side entrance.³⁹ We do not know if he left these items before he entered or when he left. He also left a partially filled plastic gas canister by the clothing.

Investigators also found a Correctional Service Canada jacket inside Mr. Webber's SUV. The perpetrator may have taken this jacket earlier that morning from the residence of Alanna Jenkins and Sean McLeod in Wentworth. Also inside the vehicle were blue trousers with a yellow stripe, a pair of gloves, various ammunition, and a butane torch with blood stains on it. DNA analysis determined this to be the perpetrator's blood. The perpetrator's blood was also found in the vehicle on the driver's seat, the passenger-side rain guard, the steering wheel, the steering column, and the interior driver-side door trim. These findings suggest that the perpetrator was bleeding when he was in the vehicle and are consistent with the finding that he had been shot by Acting Cpl. Stevenson at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf.

We estimate that the perpetrator was at Ms. Goulet's home for 5 to 10 minutes before proceeding south on Highway 224 toward exit 9 and then on Highway 102. This estimate is based on: an outgoing phone call from Ms. Goulet to her daughter, Amelia Butler, at 10:58 am; the time Ms. Goulet's Mazda 3 is picked up on surveillance on the Highway 102 off-ramp at Elmsdale at 11:15 am; and the distance between the two points being approximately 14.8 kilometres.

The perpetrator continued south toward the Elmsdale Petro-Canada and the Enfield Big Stop.

Community Observations and Actions

There are no witnesses to the homicide of Ms. Goulet. However, individual observations have helped us establish a timeline of the perpetrator's actions. Some

witnesses describe Mr. Webber’s SUV as being grey, while others saw or remembered the vehicle as being silver.

Earlier that morning, Ms. Goulet had been texting with a friend, Kendra Tonet, and confirmed that she had heard about the “active shooter in Portapique” on CBC News.⁴⁰ She also stated that she knew the perpetrator through professional activities. Although the two friends continued texting until 9:43 am, there is no mention in the text conversation about the perpetrator’s movements outside of Portapique on April 19.

Amelia Butler is Ms. Goulet’s daughter, and David Butler is Ms. Goulet’s son-in-law. They live north of Shubenacadie. That morning, Ms. Goulet had been communicating with her daughter by text message. They discussed what they had heard of the incident in Portapique, which by that time was being discussed on various news networks and social media. They also discussed that Ms. Goulet knew the perpetrator. Ms. Goulet told Ms. Butler that another dentist had reached out to tell her to keep her doors locked. Ms. Goulet told Ms. Butler that she was scared because the perpetrator knew where she lived. Ms. Butler reassured her mother that “there’s no way he could get that far without being caught.”⁴¹ She agreed to keep her phone close in case Ms. Goulet called.

At around 10:58 am, Ms. Goulet called Ms. Butler. Ms. Butler explained that her cellphone rang twice, and that just as she picked up the phone and went to swipe the accept button, the call on the other end hung up. Ms. Butler tried to call her mother back multiple times but received no answer. Shortly thereafter, she and her husband left their residence and drove toward Ms. Goulet’s home. Later, when Ms. Butler examined her mother’s cellphone, she saw that she had tried to call her mother 16 times between 10:58 am and 11:51 am on April 19, 2020.

Between 11:00 am and 11:08 am, Faith Corkum, who was less than 1 kilometre away from Ms. Goulet’s residence, was out taking photos of the smoke rising from the Shubenacadie cloverleaf. Shortly before taking these photos, she saw what she described as a grey SUV travel down Highway 224, perform a U-turn, and then travel north toward Ms. Goulet’s home. She took note of the SUV because she thought it was strange that “the police were still allowing traffic through” from that direction given the smoke and likely fire in the area.

By the time Amelia and David Butler entered Shubenacadie, a roadblock had been set up by the RCMP to contain the Shubenacadie cloverleaf scene. The detour added approximately 10 to 15 minutes to their drive. The Butlers arrived at the Goulet residence at 11:55 am. They noted that the chain cable that was normally drawn

across the driveway was on the ground. They also saw a grey SUV parked behind the residence.

Ms. Butler called 911 shortly after they arrived. Mr. Butler proceeded inside the house. As he turned toward the hallway, he saw a small silver shell casing and thought he saw blood and what he believed was a body.

While Ms. Butler was on the phone with 911, the Butlers left Ms. Goulet's residence in order to find help.⁴² They headed north on Highway 224 toward the police road-blocks at Shubenacadie. At around 12:00 pm, Mr. Butler flagged down Cst. Comeau, who was on his way back to the Enfield detachment after being relieved at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf scene. The constable had been instructed to leave because he was a colleague and friend of Acting Cpl. Stevenson. Mr. Butler exited his vehicle and told Cst. Comeau what he had seen at Ms. Goulet's residence.

Emergency Response

After speaking to the Butlers, Cst. Comeau communicated their observations to dispatch. The homicide at the Goulet residence on Highway 224 was broadcast over the Colchester radio channel at 12:10 pm. Cst. Comeau requested Emergency Health Services to attend to Ms. Butler, who was distraught, and she was taken to Colchester East Hants Health Centre.

The RCMP Emergency Response Team had departed the Shubenacadie cloverleaf at approximately 11:00 am in pursuit of the perpetrator on Highway 224. Either during the period in which the perpetrator was inside Ms. Goulet's home, or sometime shortly after he left, ERT members drove southbound past the residence. RCMP members did not see the silver SUV parked behind Ms. Goulet's home.

RCMP units also moved through the surrounding area, including Highway 2 and Highway 102, in search of Mr. Webber's SUV.

Pursuit of Perpetrator and His Death at Enfield Big Stop

Initial Post-Shubenacadie Pursuit and Close Encounter at Elmsdale

When members of the Emergency Response Team departed the Shubenacadie cloverleaf at around 11:00 am on April 19, 2020, the last known information about the perpetrator was that he had left the cloverleaf moments before and was driving a silver SUV or Tracker. ERT members also knew that he was wearing a high-visibility yellow vest. The information led to a concentration of RCMP Emergency Response Team members circling and travelling Highway 2 and Highway 102. The RCMP knew they were close to the perpetrator and, as a result, multiple ERT members and police dog handlers (in their vehicles) were searching the area.

Members of the ERT J Division (New Brunswick) stayed in the Truro area in case the perpetrator circled back that way.

We now know that the perpetrator had continued south to the residence of Gina Goulet. While there, he removed the vest and changed vehicles to Ms. Goulet's Mazda 3 hatchback. Based on an investigation of the car, the Mazda 3 had its gas light on, indicating that the fuel tank was near empty. This is likely what led the perpetrator to stop at the Elmsdale Petro-Canada.

At this same time, several community members called 911 erroneously reporting a possible sighting of the perpetrator at the Sobeys grocery store in Truro. This information was relayed to the RCMP command post and dispatched to members. Other information – including the timing, the information received from witnesses in the area, and the perpetrator's known direction of travel – contributed to the ERT members' belief that the perpetrator was still in the Elmsdale area rather than in Truro. The J Division ERT and Truro Police Service (TPS) officers responded to the call about the Sobeys in Truro while the H Division (Nova Scotia) ERT attended the Sobeys in Elmsdale, in case there was a mistake about the location of the Sobeys. Both teams reported that the areas were clear.

By this point in the critical incident response, the RCMP had shared information about the perpetrator's disguise and the replica RCMP cruiser with the public. As the

morning progressed, more Nova Scotia residents were aware of the mass casualty and of the fact that the perpetrator was no longer in Portapique. This produced an increase in 911 calls, including reported sightings of legitimate RCMP vehicles that members of the public believed might be the replica RCMP cruiser. The OCC dealt efficiently with these calls, for the most part resolving them by checking the caller's location against the mapping of marked RCMP vehicles provided by the Computer Integrated Information and Dispatching System (CIIDS). The false sighting in Truro was similarly handled expeditiously and without detracting from the overall manhunt.

At 11:16 am, about four minutes after the false sighting at Sobeys, the perpetrator pulled into the Elmsdale Petro-Canada and parked Gina Goulet's grey Mazda 3 at pump 7. He was captured on video surveillance at this location. He briefly reached toward the passenger seat of the Mazda 3 before exiting the vehicle. The perpetrator was dressed in dark pants and a white or light-coloured T-shirt. He was no longer wearing the high-visibility vest. He was not wearing a hat and did not appear to have anything in his hands.

Almost simultaneously, Cst. Andrew Ryan, Cst. Jason Barnhill, and Cst. Brent Kelly of the H Division Emergency Response Team parked their vehicle at pump 8 of the same gas station. The canopy pillars were situated between the two vehicles. The nose of the ERT vehicle was pointing in the opposite direction of the nose of the Mazda 3. The three constables exited the ERT vehicle just as the perpetrator was picking up the fuel hose at pump 7. All three members were dressed in tactical gear.

The perpetrator had parked the Mazda 3 with its fuel hatch on the side facing away from the pump. He attempted to stretch the fuel hose around the back of the vehicle, but the hose was too short to reach the gas hatch. A Petro-Canada employee who did not recognize the perpetrator advised him over the intercom that he would have to move to a different pump to get gas. The perpetrator placed the fuel nozzle back on the pump.

At the same time, Cst. Barnhill and Cst. Kelly were positioning themselves to provide cover while Cst. Ryan refuelled. Both members were armed with carbines. Cst. Barnhill made his way from the passenger side of the ERT vehicle to the front. Cst. Kelly rounded the back of the ERT vehicle, from the passenger side to the driver's side, to provide watch at the rear.

At this point, Cst. Kelly was positioned at the back left corner of the ERT vehicle, several metres away from the perpetrator, with the gas pump and a canopy pillar between them. Cst. Barnhill was positioned near the front of the ERT vehicle, also with the gas pump and a canopy pillar between him and the perpetrator.

After replacing the fuel hose, the perpetrator got back into the Mazda 3. He pulled forward and turned sharply to his right, making a 180-degree turn in order to pull up to pump 5. There were now two sets of fuel pumps and canopy pillars between the Mazda 3 and the ERT vehicle. The perpetrator parked the car with its nose pointing in the same direction as the ERT vehicle and the gas hatch facing the pump. Cst. Kelly remained positioned at the left rear of the ERT vehicle while the perpetrator moved the Mazda 3 to pump 5.

After parking at pump 5, the perpetrator sat in the vehicle for what appears in the footage to be six to seven seconds. He then opened the driver-side door. The door remained open for what appears to be five to six seconds, but the perpetrator did not exit the vehicle. The perpetrator then closed the car door and drove out of the parking lot without having obtained fuel. His approximate time of departure from the Petro-Canada was 11:17:05 am, 44 seconds after his arrival. After leaving the gas station without obtaining fuel, the perpetrator travelled south on Highway 102 to Enfield.

Cst. Kelly saw the grey Mazda 3 hatchback at the gas station and noticed that it had a tennis ball on the antenna. In an interview with the Commission, he said he saw a male in a white T-shirt and jeans, which did not match the description of the person he was looking for: an individual in a yellow vest, possibly wearing a police uniform, driving a silver SUV. While he did notice that the individual had a slight bump over his left eye, nothing about his behaviour caused Cst. Kelly suspicion or concern.

Cst. Kelly and Cst. Barnhill continued to provide cover to Cst. Ryan as he attempted to get gas at pump 8. Cst. Kelly's notes indicate that Cst. Ryan said he could not get the gas pump to work. The members decided to continue to Enfield and left the parking lot shortly after the perpetrator. Cst. Kelly recalls that their ERT vehicle travelled on Highway 102 toward Enfield in order to obtain fuel.

Several moments later, the H Division TAV which had been on scene at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf following the gunfire, pulled into pump 8 at the Elmsdale Petro-Canada, along with other RCMP vehicles. Video surveillance footage shows an RCMP member exit the TAV and appear to fuel it using pump 8. The manager of the Petro-Canada later explained that the pumps had to be activated by an employee in order to operate, and this had been done for the TAV. The TAV was able to obtain gas at the Elmsdale Petro-Canada before continuing the search for the perpetrator.

Route to Enfield



Map Data | Google, ©2023 Maxar Technologies

“Shots Fired”: The Perpetrator Is Killed

The perpetrator arrived at the Enfield Big Stop from Highway 2, after turning off Highway 102. Well known to Nova Scotians, the Big Stop is a service hub on the busiest stretch of highway in the province. It is located one exit north of the region’s largest airport, the Halifax Stanfield International Airport. It comprises a gas station, truck fuelling station, convenience store, and restaurant, with additional amenities on an adjacent property. Highly visible and accessible, the Enfield Big Stop is a common stopping place for motorists on the doorstep of Halifax Regional Municipality.

Surveillance videos from this site were a key piece of evidence in making findings about the perpetrator’s death. Although motion activated and grainy in image quality, they helped us to establish the sequence of events. The “Big Stop Videos” text box explains the Commission’s handling of issues relating to the publication of these videos.

Big Stop Videos

The encounter between the RCMP and the perpetrator that ended in the perpetrator’s death was captured on five surveillance video recordings from the Enfield Big Stop. These videos were produced to the Commission under subpoena and shared with Participants. Some of them depict the perpetrator being fatally shot and removed from the stolen car. In accordance with Commission procedure, three of these videos were shared with accredited media representatives, under embargo. (Two videos were inadvertently not shared.)

At the time these videos were tendered into evidence, we did not post them to the Commission website. We opted to post still photographs of relevant moments in the videos in order to ensure that the public had access to the information necessary to understand the encounter between RCMP members and the perpetrator. This decision was intended to prevent harms arising from posting videos of a person being shot and killed to the internet, including harms that might arise from making these videos available for uses unconnected with the Commission’s mandate and fact-finding responsibilities.

Our decision was taken in accordance with the direction in our Orders in Council “to be guided by restorative principles in order to do no further harm” and to “be attentive to the needs of and impacts on those most directly affected and harmed.”⁴³

Coltsfoot Publishing Limited was an accredited media outlet within our process. Dissatisfied with our decision, it applied to the Commission seeking to publish the videos. The Commission provided notice of this application to all Participants and accredited media. We received submissions supporting Coltsfoot’s position. No submissions were made opposing Coltsfoot’s application.

We remained concerned that a serious public interest would be placed at risk by publishing the more graphic videos. However, the fact that no one with a direct interest to protect submitted evidence to oppose Coltsfoot’s application meant that the legal criteria for restricting publication were no longer met. Accordingly, we lifted the limitation on public dissemination of the videos.

The Enfield Big Stop surveillance videos show that the perpetrator initially pulled in next to pump 7 and then pulled around to pump 5 at 11:24 am. He parked the Mazda 3 at pump 5 but remained in the vehicle. Twice, he reached his right arm

toward the passenger side of the vehicle. The perpetrator appears to have had something in his right hand as he pulled his arm back toward him, though we cannot be conclusive about the nature of this item.

Less than 30 seconds after the perpetrator parked the Mazda 3, Police Dog Service member Cst. Craig Hubley, travelling with Emergency Response Team member Cst. Ben MacLeod, parked their unmarked RCMP SUV at pump 6 of the Enfield Big Stop. The gas pump and canopy pillar were between them and the Mazda 3.

Earlier that morning, at approximately 8:15 am, Cst. Hubley had attended the command post at Great Village after being called in to support the critical incident response. He had studied the photographs of the perpetrator that were posted on the wall closely: "I remember trying to burn them into my mind's eye. Yeah, I wanted to know who we were looking for."⁴⁴ Cst. MacLeod had been called out as part of the ERT call out, and had also looked closely at the perpetrator's photographs when they were shared with that team.

For added context, we note that both these members had attended some of the crime scenes in Portapique and seen victims who had been killed by the perpetrator. Cst. MacLeod was involved in the extraction of Lisa Banfield from Portapique. He described her as "distraught" and "scared, like, just scared to be out in the open. She wanted immediately to get into our truck. She thought he was out there searching for her."⁴⁵

The members had also seen the shooting injuries to the Blair family's dog, an act that struck Cst. Hubley in particular as an indication of "just how intent he was on causing harm, I guess."⁴⁶ Cst. Hubley extracted the dog from Portapique and handed it over to two RCMP members who had arranged veterinary care, recognizing that it would likely be important to the Blair children that they make every effort to save the dog.

The two members had attended the scenes at Glenholme in separate vehicles. After the call came in that the perpetrator had killed two victims on Plains Road in Debert, Cst. MacLeod joined Cst. Hubley and his police service dog in Cst. Hubley's vehicle, to provide cover in the event that Cst. Hubley encountered the perpetrator while handling his dog. With Cst. Hubley driving, they attended the scene of Kristen Beaton's death before continuing their search for the perpetrator. In testimony before the Commission, Cst. Hubley recalled that after driving for much of the morning at high speed, he concluded that it would be prudent to fill the gas tank of his vehicle. He initially pulled into the Elmsdale Petro-Canada but decided

to carry on a little further. He pulled into pump 6 at the Enfield Big Stop at approximately 11:25 am.

As he was exiting his vehicle, Cst. Hubley noticed a lone man in the driver's seat of the grey vehicle on the other side of the pump. The man was staring straight ahead. Cst. Hubley explained his observations of this individual in testimony before us:

[H]e was wearing a white t-shirt and he looked very sweaty, very run-down ... He was breathing heavy. He had a bump on his head, there was blood coming from it, and what struck me the most in that quarter of a second was that he had a wound that he wasn't addressing, and just his demeanour sitting there. It was enough of a concern for me that I began to draw my pistol and realized that it was him.⁴⁷

Cst. Hubley recognized the perpetrator from the photographs he had reviewed that morning. The two were about 15 feet apart. As he drew his pistol and pointed it at the perpetrator, Cst. Hubley shouted "It's him" to Cst. MacLeod.

Cst. Hubley saw the perpetrator react by "jerking back while seated and immediately raised a silver coloured pistol in my direction with his right hand."⁴⁸ Cst. Hubley stated the perpetrator "was looking at me as he did this" and that he had "no doubt" in his mind that the perpetrator was about to shoot him.⁴⁹ In this moment, Cst. Hubley feared for his life. He knew the perpetrator had already shot two police officers and killed at least six civilians.

Meanwhile, Cst. MacLeod had already begun to exit the SUV to provide cover for Cst. Hubley as he fuelled the vehicle. In testimony before us, Cst. MacLeod recalled that Cst. Hubley called out "something to the effect of it's him" as Cst. MacLeod was in the process of exiting the vehicle.⁵⁰ He explained, "I didn't have a good view ... I wasn't able to safely shoot past Craig if I needed to at that point."⁵¹ Accordingly, he moved to the front of the unmarked RCMP vehicle and "ended up in a roughly 45 degree angle off the front of that Mazda hatchback."⁵² Cst. MacLeod also witnessed the perpetrator raise his right hand, holding a pistol. He explained that he knew the perpetrator had stolen Acting Cpl. Stevenson's service pistol: "[R]ight away I knew it was an RCMP-issued pistol. And it's at that time, I believed he was going to try to shoot either myself or Craig, and I made the decision to start shooting him."⁵³

Both Cst. Hubley and Cst. MacLeod testified that they followed their training, shooting multiple rounds in a short period of time to ensure the threat presented by the perpetrator was addressed. After firing these rounds, the two members moved to the passenger side of their vehicle, using the engine block as a barrier in case the perpetrator was still able to shoot them.

The surveillance video shows that as Cst. Hubley approached the Mazda 3, the perpetrator changed his position in the vehicle. The Mazda 3 then made a rocking motion, and the windows of the vehicle remained intact during this motion. Based on the forensic evidence set out in the next section of this chapter, we conclude the rocking motion was caused by the perpetrator discharging his firearm, shooting himself in the head immediately prior to or at the time when the RCMP members fired upon him.

At 11:25:10 am, Cst. MacLeod created an open emergency broadcast on the ERT radio channel. He aired “Break,” and then said: “Enfield Big Stop! Enfield Big Stop! Come to me now, get to me. Use your cover. Back up – back up. Use your cover, don’t rush here now. Use your coms – your coms. (Inaudible).”⁵⁴

This broadcast ends approximately 18 seconds later with a loud noise. This sound was initially interpreted by Commission staff as gunfire, but in testimony before us Cst. MacLeod suggested that it was in fact high wind. Cst. MacLeod’s explanation is consistent with the video surveillance footage, which shows that Cst. MacLeod and Cst. Hubley backed up to take cover behind their vehicle after firing shots. It is also consistent with subsequent radio transmissions that include similar sounds that are contemporaneously attributed to wind interference, and with evidence from other witnesses that the morning of April 19, 2020, was notably windy. Cst. Hubley testified that after firing on the perpetrator:

Cst. Hubley: ... I remember Ben voicing commands, telling me to move to him. I was in the black for a few seconds.

Commission Counsel: In the black?

Cst. Hubley: I had auditory and visual exclusion, kind of tunnel vision opening back up again, for lack of a better expression. I remember Ben voicing out to me, and the language he was using was consistent with our training. It kind of brought me back, I guess, and I moved to him, and then we moved around to the passenger side of the Suburban[.]⁵⁵

We find that this is the point at which Cst. MacLeod pressed his Emergency Request to Talk button, and that the instructions Cst. Hubley recalls are those that were captured in the ERT radio channel audio.

At 11:25:38 am, Cst. Hubley broadcast over the Colchester radio channel that there were “shots away” at pump 6 at the Enfield Big Stop.⁵⁶ Within two minutes, Cst. Hubley broadcast over the ERT radio channel that there were “shots away” and that the suspect was “down.”⁵⁷ RCMP H Division and Halifax Regional Police (HRP) Emergency Response Team members, as well as RCMP Police Dog Service, all of whom were positioned nearby, quickly arrived on scene.

About six minutes after Cst. Hubley and Cst. MacLeod had arrived at the Enfield Big Stop in their unmarked SUV, additional ERT members arrived. They approached the Mazda 3 in tactical formation. At 11:31 am, they opened the driver’s door of the vehicle. RCMP members observed that the perpetrator had a firearm in his hand or lap. Within 30 seconds, the ERT members extracted the perpetrator from the vehicle, placed him on the ground, and zip-tied his hands behind his back. Cst. Ed Clarke, an RCMP Emergency Medical Response Team member, checked the perpetrator’s vital signs and confirmed that the perpetrator was deceased. Cst. Hubley had already broadcast the perpetrator’s death at 11:27:12 am on the ERT radio channel.

Forensic Evidence About the Perpetrator’s Cause of Death

Nova Scotia’s chief medical examiner, Dr. Matthew Bowes, conducted the post-mortem examination on the perpetrator. His report states that the perpetrator sustained gunshot wounds to the head, neck, chest, abdomen, and both arms, and that the cause of death was multiple gunshot wounds.

Forensic reports revealed that, aside from the wounds sustained as a result of Cst. Hubley’s and Cst. MacLeod’s gunshots, the perpetrator also sustained two additional head wounds caused by bullets or bullet fragments. Based on eyewitness evidence, observations by Nova Scotia’s chief medical examiner, and results of firearms and toolmark analysis, we conclude that one head wound was inflicted by Acting Cpl. Stevenson during her encounter with the perpetrator at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf. We further conclude that the other head wound was self-inflicted immediately prior to or during the RCMP members’ discharge of their firearms.

Neither of these wounds was immediately fatal. The immediate cause of the perpetrator's death was the multiple bullets fired by Cst. Hubley and Cst. MacLeod, which caused lethal damage to the perpetrator's internal organs.

In his post-mortem examination of the perpetrator, Dr. Bowes identified two head wounds. The first was on the perpetrator's right frontal scalp, or forehead. Given the lack of soot or stipple, the bullet would have been fired from farther than two feet away. The wound's trajectory was front to back, but it was not debilitating. Dr. Bowes explained that an individual could still operate a vehicle despite the wound. The fragments from the wound were determined to be copper. They were examined by a firearms and toolmark examiner who found rifling patterns on two of the fragments. After comparing them to all the firearms discharged at the Enfield Big Stop that morning, RCMP firearms expert Mr. Jacques Rioux concluded that the fragments came from Acting Cpl. Stevenson's firearm. As we explained above, community members had witnessed the exchange of gunfire between Acting Cpl. Stevenson and the perpetrator. We conclude that Acting Cpl. Stevenson wounded the perpetrator at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf, causing this first, non-fatal head wound.

The second head wound was an entrance wound on the right side of the temple and is consistent with having been self-inflicted by the perpetrator. Based on his examination, Dr. Bowes determined that a projectile entered from the right side and exited to the left side of the brain. The projectile associated with the injury is a grey fragment that was determined to be lead bullet core material. Stippling around the entrance to the wound indicates that the firearm was discharged no farther than two feet from the perpetrator's head. Dr. Bowes further concluded this wound was not the cause of his death, but would have been deadly "in the course of minutes or more."⁵⁸

Forensic evidence shows that Cst. Hubley discharged 12 rounds and Cst. MacLeod discharged 11. These 23 rounds were accounted for following the mass casualty. Thirteen 9mm casings were found at the scene. As noted above, Cst. Hubley discharged 12 rounds. Both Cst. Hubley's firearm and the gun the perpetrator had taken from Acting Cpl. Stevenson shot 9mm rounds. Cst. MacLeod's firearm shot a different calibre of bullets, and they are accounted for separately.

A number of pieces of evidence support our conclusion that the perpetrator shot himself in the head with a bullet from Acting Cpl. Stevenson's firearm. This includes the presence of a 13th 9mm casing at the Enfield Big Stop scene. Cst. MacLeod and Cst. Hubley also observed the perpetrator raise a firearm. Cst. MacLeod noted that

it was a RCMP-issue Smith & Wesson pistol. The perpetrator's blood was found on Acting Cpl. Stevenson's Smith & Wesson pistol. Emergency Response Team members also observed a handgun in the perpetrator's lap or hand when they were extracting him from the Mazda 3 at the Enfield Big Stop, and some identified it as a Smith & Wesson handgun.

An examination of the magazines loaded in Acting Cpl. Stevenson's Smith & Wesson pistol indicated that one bullet had been fired. After the exchange of gunfire at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf, the perpetrator had stolen not only Acting Cpl. Stevenson's gun but also the two additional magazines on her duty belt. Fourteen casings – one full magazine – had been discharged and accounted for at the cloverleaf scene. This empty magazine was found in the Mazda 3. Of the two magazines taken from Acting Cpl. Stevenson, one full magazine was found in the Mazda 3 and the other was loaded into the gun.

Based on the totality of this evidence, we conclude that in the last moments of his life the perpetrator used Acting Cpl. Stevenson's service pistol to shoot himself in the head at the Enfield Big Stop. However, the perpetrator's death was caused by the shots fired by Cst. Hubley and Cst. MacLeod. These shots were immediately fatal.

Critical Incident Command and Operational Communications Centre

Transition to New Critical Incident Commander

As explained in Chapter 4, S/Sgt. Dan MacGillivray had arrived at the Great Village command post at approximately 10:00 am on April 19, 2020. He took command at approximately 10:20 am. Again there was a delay in broadcasting the change of command, this time due to the amount of traffic over the radio. CIC MacGillivray's broadcast of the command change did not occur over the Colchester radio channel until 11:21 am.

As the transition was occurring, S/Sgt. MacGillivray suggested operational changes to the structure of the critical incident response. S/Sgt. MacGillivray had

been monitoring Colchester radio for an hour on his way to the command post and noted that radio traffic was very heavy. He addressed this challenge by shifting Emergency Response Team members to a separate radio talk group from general duty members. ERT began switching over to a dedicated radio channel at approximately 10:36 am, and the switch was complete by 10:39 am. S/Sgt. MacGillivray also decided that general duty members would be directed from the Operational Communications Centre, by RM Bruce Briers, while S/Sgt. MacGillivray would continue to direct ERT resources as critical incident commander.

At 10:14 am, Acting Insp. Steve Halliday advised RM Briers that RM Briers would be responsible for allocating general duty members to positions to contain the perpetrator. A few minutes later, CIC Jeff West broadcast over Colchester radio that all general duty members were now under the control of the risk manager. This information was rebroadcast by CIC MacGillivray at 11:21 am for the situational awareness of responding members.

RM Briers also remained responsible for the usual duties performed by a risk manager; for example, monitoring information coming in via the OCC and managing responses to unrelated calls for service. S/Sgt. Steve Ettinger, a trained risk manager, called RM Briers at 10:27 am offering to attend the OCC to assist in operations. He arrived by 10:43 am and was tasked by Acting Insp. Halliday with blocking off Highway 2. S/Sgt. Ettinger began directing members on the Hants East radio channel to operationalize this command. However, RM Briers and S/Sgt. Ettinger found that having a second risk manager engaged was less helpful than anticipated, largely because they shared a single desk, computer, and phone line. Since the mass casualty took place, the RCMP has moved its OCC to Dartmouth, which is a more adaptable set-up.

In his interview with the Commission, S/Sgt. MacGillivray explained that RM Briers was directed to take control of the uniformed resources because he had better situational awareness of where they were, given his access to the Computer Integrated Information and Dispatching System. CIIDS permits a risk manager or supervisor to see the location of members driving marked RCMP vehicles, provided that those members have logged in to the mobile work station in their vehicle. CIIDS was also available in the command post via OCC Commander Glen Byrne's laptop and external monitor.

CIC MacGillivray's scribe, Ms. Jennifer Reid, did not start taking notes until 10:40 am. In her interview with the Commission, Ms. Reid explained that she had not previously attended or practised for an incident that entailed a handover from one

critical incident commander to another. She was called in to the Great Village command post by OCC Commander Byrne, who did not tell her anything about the nature of the incident to which they were responding: “I wasn’t told ... I had seen on social media there were fires out that way, so, I assumed, like maybe there was some arson going on or something. I had no knowledge of what was happening.”⁵⁹

Accordingly, Ms. Reid – who is a civilian employee of the RCMP – drove to Great Village without any awareness that a perpetrator disguised as a police officer, driving a replica RCMP cruiser, was killing people in rural Nova Scotia. When she arrived, she observed Sgt. Rob Lewis’s activities for some period of time to get a sense of what was going on. (Sgt. Lewis was scribe to CIC West.) She later reflected, with striking understatement, “it was a bit more than what I had anticipated.”⁶⁰

In his interview with the Mass Casualty Commission, S/Sgt. West stated that after turning over command and control to CIC MacGillivray, he chose to stay at the command post and help out.

Positioning Directives

At approximately 10:20 am, CIC MacGillivray, S/Sgt. Kevin Surette, and CIC West had a conversation with Acting Insp. Halliday in which they collectively decided that they should not close down any highways. One concern was the possibility that closures could endanger members of the public should the perpetrator come upon a line of stopped vehicles. Another concern was that given the number of rural roads it would be very difficult to effectively set up roadblocks on all of them. In his interview with the Commission, Acting Insp. Halliday observed, “[T]here’s just not enough cars or people to do that.”⁶¹ A third concern was that given the perpetrator’s RCMP disguise and replica cruiser, closing roads might create additional confusion. In S/Sgt. West’s words: “Okay, if we do shut down highway, have a marked PC parked there with its lights flashing and a member standing outside, does Joe ... is concerned citizen, is he going to think that’s a police officer or is he going to think that’s a bad guy?”⁶²

Instead, the decision was made to have members set at strategic locations to observe traffic. At the time, this was viewed as being consistent with a paramount concern for priorities of life. However, this decision may not have been communicated to RM Briers, and, in any event, it appears not to have held for very long. S/Sgt. West’s notes indicate that at 10:38 am he directed Insp. Rob Bell

and Acting Insp. Halliday to look into shutting down Highway 104 at exit 15, as well as exits 10 to 13.

At 10:23 am, RM Briers instructed Sgt. Marc Rose to set up a roadblock on Highway 104 to stop incoming traffic to Truro. At this time, RM Briers began to station as many general duty members as possible on major thoroughfares, including on Highway 4 near Wentworth; west of Truro near the intersection of Highway 102 and Highway 104; and on Highway 102 around Milford and Shubenacadie, heading toward Halifax. It was around this time that RM Briers requested that two carbine-trained members from the Enfield detachment be sent to Colchester County, as discussed in the first section of this chapter. Most of these members were monitoring traffic, as Cst. Morrison was doing before he was shot. They were not blocking highways. As the number of crime scenes increased, a growing number of general duty members were also providing scene containment. OCC dispatchers reminded general duty members to advise colleagues of their positions, particularly when crossing from one county to another, in order to avoid the risk that a member would be mistaken for the perpetrator. S/Sgt. Ettinger was using the Hants East radio channel to ensure that Enfield and Indian Brook members were in position on Highway 2 and Highway 102.

At 10:37 am, RM Briers directed an OCC dispatcher to call Truro dispatch and direct the Truro Police Service to “lock down” Truro, as the perpetrator’s movements indicated he was heading in that direction.⁶³ At 10:43 am, S/Sgt. Ettinger advised members on the Hants East radio channel that “[w]e’re gonna try and start ah, locking things down.” At this time, despite the help being provided by S/Sgt. Ettinger, RM Briers was overtasked. He later reflected: “[T]he phones and the radios never stopped ringing. I’ve had – I had times I had three phones ringing, the work phone, the desk phone, and my risk manager cell phone. So it’s – yeah, it was a busy day.”⁶⁴

Following the shooting of Cst. Morrison and the murder of Acting Cpl. Stevenson and Joey Webber, Acting Insp. Halliday directed RM Briers via Colchester radio to coordinate a shutdown of Highway 2 southbound from Shubenacadie to Enfield. However, RM Briers did not confirm receipt of this direction. In Acting Insp. Halliday’s broadcast over Colchester radio, he mistakenly said Highway 4. At this time, RCMP command considered using the Emergency Response Team to close roads. The decision was made to leave highways open, and for members to have “moving coverage of intersections.”⁶⁵

RM Briers and CIC MacGillivray also discussed members blocking highways near the Halifax Stanfield International Airport.

During this time period, the radio channels were inundated with broadcasts by RCMP members, RM Briers, and others tasked with setting up checkpoints and roadblocks. Many members did not know the area well and had to seek directions and confirmation about locations. As well, many RCMP members were working outside their normal detachment boundaries. The critical incident response was hindered by an insufficiently strategic and coordinated approach to controlling the roadways to contain a mobile active shooter.

MAIN FINDING

Overall, the RCMP did not adopt a strategic, coordinated approach to the positioning of members while searching for the perpetrator on April 19, 2020. However, individual supervisors and risk managers tried to coordinate member positions in response to the information available to them.

Air Support

As we explained in Chapter 4, the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forestry helicopter joined the critical incident response at approximately 8:45 am on April 19, with RCMP Cst. Kyle Josey acting as a “spotter.” The helicopter arrived in the Debert area at approximately 10:11 am and remained in this area until 10:41 am, when it landed at the Debert airfield to refuel. The pilot had been having difficulty accessing the encrypted police radio channels, and so was using an unencrypted mutual aid channel. Cst. Josey was able to use a portable RCMP radio at times to broadcast from the helicopter. At 10:17 am, he confirmed on Colchester radio that the perpetrator’s replica RCMP cruiser had not been spotted from the helicopter. The helicopter was grounded when the perpetrator shot Cst. Morrison and killed Acting Cpl. Stevenson and Mr. Webber.

By 11:02 am, the Department of Lands and Forestry helicopter was refuelled and airborne. It rejoined the search, this time with Cst. Aaron Lawless as spotter. Pilot Ken Corkum flew over Shubenacadie between 11:12 am and 11:14 am. He reported

seeing the vehicle fire at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf, and S/Sgt. Surette asked him to continue to a position near Milford. After landing briefly in Milford at 11:16 am, the helicopter continued toward Elmsdale. Cst. Lawless was following the ERT radio channel by portable radio. At 11:27 am, he heard Cst. Hubley's broadcast confirming that the suspect was down. Pilot Corkum landed the helicopter at the Enfield Weigh Station, very close to the Enfield Big Stop, to drop off Cst. Lawless. He then flew the helicopter back to the Shubenacadie hangar.

Throughout this time period, the OCC dispatch supervisor and critical incident commander continued their efforts to locate alternative air support from other RCMP divisions, the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre, or the Royal Canadian Air Force.

CIC MacGillivray called RCMP Atlantic Region Air Services and was informed that the helicopter was down for maintenance. He was told that someone would call back about utilizing RCMP Air Services from Quebec or Ontario. CIC MacGillivray believed that it was important to have an RCMP air platform. At 11:14 am, the J Division RCMP risk manager, S/Sgt. André Pepin, confirmed that Ontario Division's Air Services had been approved to fly to Nova Scotia. At that time, RM Pepin expected that the helicopter would be airborne shortly. S/Sgt. MacGillivray later reflected that the Ontario helicopter "was literally spooling up to travel to Nova Scotia when the events ended and eventually I had to call off that air asset."⁶⁶

After the perpetrator was killed, members of the command group and OCC employees advised relevant agencies that air support was no longer required.

Additional Resources

RM Briers began calling various RCMP detachments at 10:14 am to organize resources. Members were sent from a number of detachments: Kings County sent three members; Lunenburg County sent two members; Antigonish County sent two members; the Baddeck detachment in Victoria County, Cape Breton, sent two members; and Inverness County sent two members. Some of these members were unable to effectively join the critical incident response because they were not provided with clear direction. For example, at 11:16:19 am, Cpl. John Nash of the Antigonish RCMP detachment sought direction from RM Briers and was told by RCMP dispatch to stand by. Cpl. Nash radioed twice more, at 11:34:51 am and 11:43:46

am, offering to assist with containment, but does not appear to have received a response.

At 11:00 am, RCMP J Division Emergency Medical Response Team member Cst. Troyan Keirstead advised S/Sgt. Surette that the Fredericton Police Force had two EMRT members who were available and willing to attend in Nova Scotia to aid in operations. CIC MacGillivray approved their attendance, and S/Sgt. Surette instructed Cst. Keirstead to make the necessary arrangements. By this time, the J Division tactical armoured vehicle was en route to the command post in Great Village. S/Sgt. Surette tasked Cst. Keirstead to aid at the command post security until the J Division TAV arrived. The request for assistance from Fredericton Police Force EMRT members was cancelled following the perpetrator’s death in Enfield.

J Division EMRT members Cst. Keirstead and Cst. Jean-François Adams arrived at the Great Village command post at 10:45 am and 11:19 am, respectively. They advised S/Sgt. Surette that C Division (Quebec) had a “tactical ambulance” at their disposal.⁶⁷ S/Sgt. Surette asked the J Division EMRT members to check the availability of the tactical ambulance. This request was also cancelled before it was operationalized.

At 11:11 am, S/Sgt. Monica Jodrey, RCMP Halifax Federal Policing and acting federal operations officer, called the OCC. She explained that she had members on standby ready for deployment but could not reach the officer in charge, Supt. Jason Popik. She was put through to S/Sgt. Ettinger at 11:13 am and offered RCMP Federal Policing resources to aid in the operation. S/Sgt. Ettinger explained that they had a lot of resources on the ground at that time and were trying to figure out where to place everyone. He advised that the OCC would contact S/Sgt. Jodrey if they need more resources.

MAIN FINDING

The critical incident response was hindered by the inability to scale up resources in a timely fashion. The steps taken to seek additional resources were ad hoc and diverted the attention of the command post and risk managers.

MAIN FINDING

Handing coordination of general duty members to the risk manager created additional difficulties in coordination between the command post and general duty members, and it further overburdened the risk managers and Operational Communications Centre.

Incident Commander Announces Mission

At 11:23 am, CIC MacGillivray gave orders that the perpetrator, if met by RCMP members, was not to be permitted to leave the scene:

Objective at this point is to locate this ah, vehicle - this suspect vehicle believed to be a silver Tracker. Locate, use ah, all caution as a - extremely high-risk situation. However, this individual, if contacted, is not to leave the scene. Copy?⁶⁸

At 11:25 am, the perpetrator was engaged by RCMP members and died at the Enfield Big Stop gas station. Shortly thereafter, RM Briers and S/Sgt. Ettinger directed general duty members to contain the scene.

911 Calls About the Perpetrator

As more information about the perpetrator was publicly released, and more members of the general public became aware of the unfolding incident, the RCMP began to receive additional information about the perpetrator via 911 calls from members of the public. This underscores the dual importance of public communications during a critical incident: to warn as well as to invite and receive information that may assist in the response. As might be expected, some of the information shared by the public proved true, while other information was shown at the time or subsequently to be inaccurate.

A civilian named Robert Doucette called 911 at 10:12 am and advised a call-taker at the Halifax Integrated Emergency Services centre that he knew the perpetrator

and had information to share. Within 15 minutes, Halifax Regional Police Sgt. Nick Pepler spoke to Mr. Doucette on the phone. Mr. Doucette advised that he was a friend of the perpetrator, and that the perpetrator had multiple types of firearms: AR-15, Glock 40, 12-gauge assault shotgun, 50-calibre sniper rifle, and nail grenades. Halifax Regional Police officers were tasked to bring Mr. Doucette in for an interview, and the information was relayed to RCMP Cpl. James Skinner of the Major Crime Unit. At approximately 10:25 am, Cpl. Skinner attempted to update RM Briers with this information but could not reach him (this is about the time that RM Briers was tasked with coordinating general duty members). Cpl. Skinner passed the information on to S/Sgt. West at 10:32 am.

Members of the public also shared information that subsequently proved inaccurate. At approximately 10:50 am, an Ontario resident named Chris Lamoureux called to inform the RCMP that the perpetrator was a sharpshooter and used to own a cabin near Manitoulin Island in Ontario. This tip was received at H Division RCMP headquarters and quickly made its way to Acting Insp. Halliday via the RCMP Major Crime Unit. At 11:00 am, Acting Insp. Halliday broadcast on the Hants East radio channel that the perpetrator was a sharpshooter.

A member of the public made this Facebook post about the perpetrator at 10:26 am:

IF YOU LIVE IN THAT AREA, DO NOT GO NEAR AN RCMP CRUISER. HIS MAIN HOBBY IS BUYING EX POLICE CARS AT AUCTIONS. HE DID MY DENTURES IN JANUARY, AND SHOWED PICS OF A CRUISER THAT HE REDID. IT'S EXACTLY LIKE AN ACTUAL RCMP POLICE CAR, AND HE HAS THE UNIFORM TO GO WITH IT!⁶⁹

This was reposted on Twitter at 10:42 am, and the RCMP Strategic Communications Unit shared it with the command post at 10:55 am.

Until the events at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf, RCMP command continued to be concerned about the perpetrator's white 2017 Ford F-150 truck, which had not been located by this time. In 2021, Commission investigators confirmed that photographs of the rubble of the perpetrator's warehouse taken in April 2020 depicted the burnt vehicle frame of the F-150. This was consistent with statements given by Lisa Banfield, but the burnt-out frame was not discovered by RCMP members at the scene.

MAIN FINDING

Inadequate public communications constrained the flow of information and assistance from the public to the critical incident response.

Scene Control

The RCMP command attempted to organize the containment of multiple crime scenes throughout this time period. S/Sgt. Allan (Al) Carroll and Sgt. Andrew (Andy) O'Brien were tasked with securing the scenes in Portapique. Acting Insp. Halliday's notes indicate that he determined which members were providing scene security in Portapique and at scenes elsewhere. At 11:03 am, CIC MacGillivray checked to confirm that Acting Insp. Halliday and Insp. Bell were managing the various known crime scenes. S/Sgt. Carroll and Sgt. O'Brien were then on scene in Portapique. From 11:45 am onward, CIC MacGillivray and district command directed containment and management of the various known crime scenes.

Six fatalities were not discovered until later on April 19, 2020. As discussed in Chapter 2, five of these fatalities were on Cobequid Court in Portapique. At 10:41 am on April 19, Cory Bond called to ask about the welfare of his parents, Joy and Peter Bond. He advised the call-taker that he had been unable to reach his parents and confirmed that they lived in Portapique. He was not asked to provide their address, and his call was not logged on the RCMP incident log. At 11:10 am, Cheryl Blaikie called to request that the RCMP check on Aaron Tuck. She advised that she had last heard from Mr. Tuck at 9:30 pm on April 18, and that Mr. Tuck knew the perpetrator. She provided Mr. Tuck's address. This call was logged in the RCMP incident log, but was not broadcast by radio. No member was dispatched to check Mr. Tuck's address on Cobequid Court in response to this call.

In addition, Joey Webber's remains were not found in the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf until sometime after 11:45 am, when the fire set by the perpetrator had been extinguished.

Tom Bagley's body was found at the Hunter Road scene by neighbour Darren Thurier, who alerted Darrol Thurier and Lisa Owen. Ms. Owen called 911 at 11:07 am to report that she had identified Mr. Bagley but was not sure if he was deceased.

When the call-taker asked “and there’s no fire or police on scene there anymore?” Ms. Owen confirmed, “No, they didn’t come. They had them put, uh, put down because of the shooter.”⁷⁰ RCMP members Cst. Matthew Bray and Cst. Richard Harvey attended the Hunter Road scene at 11:12 am. They were the first RCMP members to attend this scene in response to 911 calls raising concerns about Hunter Road and its residents, the first of which had been placed at 9:19 am. Chief medical examiner Dr. Matthew Bowes subsequently determined that Mr. Bagley had died from gunshot wounds that would have caused death almost immediately.

Next of kin notifications were not yet being delivered to many families. At 10:24 am, Justin Zahl placed his third phone call asking police to check on the well-being of his parents. He called again at 11:01 am. Joanne Thomas’s sister, Lori Thomas, called the Operational Communications Centre from Brandon, Manitoba, at 10:37 am. They were not given any information, but Justin Zahl’s first call and Lori Thomas’s call were logged in the Computer-Aided Dispatch log.

MAIN FINDING

Despite receiving information that some residents of Portapique were unaccounted for, the RCMP did not conduct a timely search for additional living or deceased victims.

MAIN FINDING

In the absence of coordinated victim support arrangements, and with no organized notification process for confirmed deaths, concerned family members called 911 to both seek and provide information. These calls added to the Operational Communications Centre’s workload at a very busy time in the critical incident response.

Critical Incident Command Winds Down Operations

After the perpetrator was killed, the command post began to wind down. CIC MacGillivray noted the need to contact “Kelly Sullivan’s shop,” member assistance, Major Crime Unit members, and the Strategic Communications Unit to update on the situation.⁷¹ Kelly Sullivan was the H Division employee management relations officer at the time. The mandate of Employee Management Relations is to foster a healthy workplace, including providing mental health services to assist members.

At 11:45 am, S/Sgt. MacCallum travelled to the Shubenacadie cloverleaf scene and directed scene containment and security. Acting Insp. Halliday worked on organizing security and containment for the other crime scenes. S/Sgt. Carroll left Sgt. O’Brien in charge of the Portapique scene and returned to the command post in Great Village. He aided in dismantling the command post before returning to Bible Hill for an initial high-level debriefing.⁷² We delve into the adequacy of the RCMP’s efforts to analyze the effectiveness of the critical incident response in Volume 5, Policing.

RCMP Executive Leadership

Commissioned officers continued to play a limited role in this time period. Insp. Rob Bell had joined the command group at the Great Village command post at approximately 10:10 am, initially with the intention of relieving Acting Insp. Halliday. However, after it became apparent that the perpetrator had become an active mobile threat, Acting Insp. Halliday remained in his role. Insp. Bell provided support, including by liaising with Halifax Regional Police to seek additional resources and briefing the Strategic Communications Unit about the perpetrator’s Ford F-150. After the perpetrator was killed, Insp. Bell called the Serious Incident Response Team to report the Onslow fire hall shooting and the RCMP shooting of the perpetrator.

Supt. Archie Thompson had received occasional updates from Acting Insp. Halliday by text message overnight and in the early morning of April 19. At 10:57 am, he received a text message from Acting Insp. Halliday: “We have major issues.”⁷³ He requested a phone call. From the briefing Acting Insp. Halliday provided at 11:15

am, Supt. Thompson initially understood that two RCMP members had been killed, but later confirmed that only one member – Acting Cpl. Stevenson – had been killed. At 12:30 pm, Supt. Thompson “got dressed for duty and travelled to [H Division] Headquarters.”⁷⁴ He explained that it would have been inappropriate for him to attend the command post or scene, as his presence as a higher-ranking officer would have been a distraction from the authority and responsibilities of the command group.

Insp. Dustine Rodier arrived at the OCC at approximately 10:40 am, in her capacity as officer in charge of operational support and communications centre. She called Supt. Darren Campbell from the floor of the OCC and stayed on the phone with him. This arrangement was intended to relieve the pressure on RM Briers, as it would ensure that the senior officers did not need to call the OCC for updates. She later explained to the Commission: “[W]e thought ... I’ll just stay on the phone with him so, he’s getting real time updates because he was with the CrOps Officer [C/Supt. Chris Leather]. And I think Lia Scanlan [director of strategic communications] was in the room with him as well.”⁷⁵

Supt. Campbell and C/Supt. Leather were at that time situated in RCMP’s H Division headquarters, in Dartmouth. These officers learned about the perpetrator’s death by this means.

A/Commr. Lee Bergerman left her home after learning that Cst. Morrison had been shot and injured. She learned while driving to RCMP H Division headquarters that Acting Cpl. Stevenson had been shot and killed. At some point, A/Commr. Bergerman joined Supt. Campbell and C/Supt. Leather to listen to the police radio. The precise time of these activities is not recorded in A/Commr. Bergerman’s notes.

After learning that the perpetrator had been killed, Supt. Campbell attended the Enfield Big Stop. As support services officer, he was responsible for Emergency Response Team and Forensic Identification Services members. In an interview with the Commission, he explained: “I wanted to make sure that they were okay ... So I went there to ... not to engage in any detailed conversations in terms of what had happened, but just looked them in the eye, gave them the nod, and ask them if they were okay.”⁷⁶

He travelled from the Enfield Big Stop to the scene at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf to ensure that this scene was not being worked by anyone who had known Acting Cpl. Stevenson personally, and to ensure that members on scene were okay. He was also aware that the post-incident investigation of this scene would fall within his remit.

Other Agencies and Interagency Communications

Truro Police Service

Between 10:11 am and 10:20 am on April 19, the perpetrator drove his replica RCMP cruiser through Bible Hill and Truro. He approached Bible Hill from the northwest via Highway 4, headed south on Main Street to the bridge over the Salmon River, crossed through central Truro via Walker Street, Esplanade Street, and Arthur Street, and then proceeded south on Willow Street/Highway 2 out of Truro toward Millbrook. The perpetrator drove through Truro, not far from the hospital where Cst. Daniel Taylor of the TPS had been stationed since replacing Cst. Michael Young at about 7:00 am. Information about the perpetrator's route was gleaned from video surveillance footage after the mass casualty and was not known by the RCMP or TPS on April 19, 2020.

Earlier that morning, at 9:43 am, OCC dispatcher Brittany Oulton had informed TPS dispatch of the scene at Highway 4 in Wentworth and said she would call back with any updates. At 10:22 am, Ms. Oulton called TPS dispatch to update them that the RCMP had received multiple calls related to the active shooter. She spoke with TPS dispatcher Brittane Steeves and told her that the last call was 15 minutes prior, on Plains Road in Debert, that the perpetrator might be heading toward Truro, and that the RCMP believed he was still in the replica RCMP cruiser. Shortly thereafter, RM Briers confirmed over Colchester radio that the TPS had been or was being alerted that the perpetrator might be heading toward them.

At 10:25:45 am, Cst. Scott Milvary of the TPS called the Operational Communications Centre. He reported that 10 minutes prior he had seen a marked RCMP cruiser in Onslow, near the Onslow school, heading east toward Truro. He was off duty and "didn't know about the vehicle at the time" he saw it. At about the same time, Insp. Darrin Smith reported for duty at the TPS station. After the mass casualty, he recalled "coming into work and trying to get information and the challenge to get anything actionable."⁷⁷ He remembers receiving a verbal briefing from TPS Cpl. Ed Cormier, who advised of "multiple shooting[s] in the county" and noted that the suspect could be "driving a police vehicle and in uniform."⁷⁸

According to Acting Insp. Halliday's notes, at approximately 10:30 am, he suggested to CIC MacGillivray that the TPS be contacted and told to shut down the entrances to the town.

At 10:37 am, on instructions from RM Briers, OCC dispatcher Kirsten Baglee called TPS dispatch and told them to "lock down" the town.⁷⁹ Ms. Baglee then updated Cpl. Cormier and Insp. Smith on the perpetrator's known movements, vehicles, firearms, and known casualties, and reiterated the request to "shut down" the town.⁸⁰ Both TPS officers were unclear about what they were being asked to do:

Kirsten BAGLEE: Um, the Risk Manager has just asked us to call you and tell you to shut down Truro. The, like um, it, we've had a multiple shooting complaints um, really recently. Kind of Highway 4, Debert, he's, he's working in this area it seems. The last one was in Debert.

...

Cpl. Ed CORMIER: Okay. What, okay. Um, all right. Uh, when you say shut down, what do you mean?

Kirsten BAGLEE: Well I don't know if you need, uh, maybe you can do some, some road blocks on the main. So we've got some road blocks on some highways so that he's not going back and forth and uh, going into different areas. There's, I mean obviously there's um, a lot of members out on the road right now.⁸¹

At 10:39:40 am and 10:40:28 am, while Cpl. Cormier was on the phone with Ms. Baglee, Insp. Smith radioed to all TPS members to instruct anyone walking outside to go home immediately: "[T]ell them there's an emergency going on, it's not safe to be outside ... All units just advise everybody they see to go home. Right now."⁸² Cst. Jason Reeves asked, "Is there anywheres I should be other than driving around?" Insp. Smith replied, "I don't have that much information yet. We're just getting calls that, um, person's still active and I'll get you an update as soon as I have it."⁸³

Cpl. Cormier then passed the phone to Insp. Smith to speak to Ms. Baglee:

Insp. Darrin SMITH: Okay, it's uh, Darrin SMITH uh. Okay, what can we do uh, at this point uh, I know I caught some of what you were saying to Ed [Cpl. Cormier], but not too much.

Kirsten BAGLEE: Um, the uh, uh, the Risk Manager has asked me to call to tell Truro to shut down. So it, some, some road blocks probably in the like towards the Colchester, Bible Hill area. Um, the last file that we had was he shot two more people in two separate vehicles on Plains Road.

Insp. Darrin SMITH: Jesus, okay. And do we have uh, when he did this? Was this over night or have been recent?

Kirsten BAGLEE: No, this is, just, as it was coming, as it was happening it was coming in.

Insp. Darrin SMITH: Okay. Okay, we're ...

Kirsten BAGLEE: There's been multiple since last night.⁸⁴

Ms. Baglee updated Insp. Smith on the Glenholme and Plains Road scenes and the potential suspect vehicles. Insp. Smith indicated that the TPS would try to join the RCMP encrypted radio channel.

After the mass casualty, Insp. Smith explained the difficulties he faced in implementing the RCMP request to "lock down" Truro:

It sounded like to me, it was a ... a comment made out of panic, just, "We don't know what's going on here, just do something." It was that sort of thing. Once I got off the phone, I said, "Okay, like, I don't have enough information to decide on whether we should be setting up roadblocks." I just didn't have anything. It was ... it was obvious to me that the information was coming in was ... it was all over the board, all over the map, so to speak.

...

[I]t almost like it was in a panic statement thrown out by somebody to the dispatcher without any real forethought of what they were asking us to do. It didn't seem like it was a well-thought-out statement. It ... didn't think it was, I don't want to use the word coordination, like in terms of planning; it didn't seem like it was a coordinated response based on a threat that was coming towards us. It was just something at that point they felt like, throw it out there, just throw it out there and I said, "Okay, if we're going to take the necessary steps like that, we're going to start blocking off towns and controlling access, then I need more information on what's going on here."⁸⁵

Several additional TPS officers came on shift to assist, including: Cst. Jeff Tremblett, Cst. Matthew Poupart, and Sgt. Robert Hunka.

Insp. Smith told dispatch “to start calling any business that might be open, and suggest they lock their doors.”⁸⁶ TPS dispatch called Walmart at 11:02 am and advised them to lock down their store, and the Superstore was locked down at 11:10 am.

At 10:59 am, Insp. Smith called RM Briers, who advised that the perpetrator was in a grey SUV in the Milford area and that he was heading toward Halifax. RM Briers had to end the call quickly to address reports of a downed member. A few minutes later, at about 11:03 am, RCMP dispatch telephoned TPS dispatch and said that an RCMP member had been killed on Highway 2 in Milford (at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf), and that the perpetrator was now in a silver Tracker. TPS dispatch communicated this information to Insp. Smith, who in turn updated TPS members over the radio.

Sometime between 10:25 am and 11:07 am, Chief David MacNeil arrived at TPS headquarters. Earlier that day, he had received a text message from his deputy chief advising that there had been an incident in Portapique and that five people had been killed. The deputy chief instructed the senior member on duty to call the RCMP for an update on the situation. According to Chief MacNeil, he decided to come into the office after 10:00 am, when his daughter heard from a friend that there were gunshots in Onslow. He explained that “later on in the morning, things started to break on social media. And that’s where we got most of our information from.”⁸⁷ When he arrived, Chief MacNeil was briefed by Cpl. Cormier and Insp. Smith. Insp. Smith had instructed TPS members to tell those community members who were outside to head home. Chief MacNeil explained that few businesses were open because of the COVID-19 lockdown.

At 11:12 am, RCMP dispatch told TPS dispatch to send members to the Sobeys in Lower Truro because of a 911 call reporting that the perpetrator was there. TPS members and RCMP J Division Emergency Response Team members attended the grocery store, but the perpetrator was not there. At 11:16 am, TPS dispatch called the RCMP to advise that TPS members at the Sobeys saw no sign of the perpetrator.

At about 11:23 am, TPS dispatch asked the RCMP to connect the RCMP and TPS radio channels. These radio channels were not patched before the perpetrator was killed. At the time of the mass casualty, patching these radio channels together would have meant that the police services were working on an unencrypted channel.

At 11:29 am, RCMP dispatch advised TPS dispatch that the subject was down. At 11:31 am, Insp. Smith issued the following broadcast to TPS members: “All units, I just had an update from our dispatch via their dispatch. Suspect is down, no longer a threat. I repeat, suspect is down, no longer a threat. I don’t have any more information at this time.”⁸⁸

The RCMP critical incident response did not fully engage the Truro Police Service despite the fact that the perpetrator was active in close proximity to the TPS jurisdiction and travelled through it. The delayed and partial coordination with the TPS was one example of the systemic failure to have a planned, coordinated critical incident response. When the RCMP eventually called upon the TPS for assistance, the request to lock down Truro was unclear and difficult to implement. Very soon after this call, the RCMP asked the TPS to assist in responding to the 911 call that suggested the perpetrator might be at the Sobeys grocery store, and the TPS diverted its members to answer that call. The lack of radio interoperability created additional hurdles to joint action and placed an additional burden on both OCC and TPS dispatchers.

MAIN FINDING

The critical incident response was hindered by a lack of coordination, communication, and interoperability between the RCMP and the Truro Police Service.

Halifax Regional Police

The Halifax Regional Police were involved in the critical incident response within the first hour of the mass casualty. They had assisted by attending the perpetrator’s Dartmouth home and denture clinic, investigating the perpetrator and searching for his vehicles, surveilling his Halifax clinic, and interviewing and providing security to Lisa Banfield’s family members living in the Halifax area. Several HRP members were also deployed to strategic positions along Highway 102.

HRP Emergency Response Team members had planned to search the interior of the perpetrator’s Portland Street property in Dartmouth. However, at 9:44 am,

before additional members could be brought in and the plan executed, HRP officers learned that there had been a shooting in Wentworth. The perpetrator was therefore believed to be in Cumberland County. The planned search was called off and HRP Emergency Response Team members were deployed to the Halifax Regional Municipality border in order to intercept the perpetrator should he travel toward the city.

At approximately 10:00 am, Insp. Derrick Boyd called S/Sgt. Jeff Clarke and instructed him to call in all HRP members who were working from home. Twelve HRP constables were called in. S/Sgt. Clarke then monitored radio communications as the perpetrator travelled through Debert toward Truro and Halifax and HRP members were deployed at various locations.

At 10:12 am, HRP officers spoke with Robert Doucette, a long-time friend of the perpetrator, and obtained information on the perpetrator's weapons. This information was shared with HRP officers and RCMP members.

At 10:53 am, Supt. Andrew Matthews instructed ERT team leader Sgt. Charles Naugle that the perpetrator's vehicle was not to be allowed to enter the city. At 11:02 am, Supt. Matthews reiterated this order, telling Sgt. Naugle that ERT must devise a plan to ensure that the perpetrator does not enter the city. As HRP Emergency Response Team members were deploying to various exits and overpasses, Sgt. Naugle gave an initial "shoot on sight order" to his ERT members.⁸⁹ However, once it was reported that the perpetrator had changed vehicles, this order was rescinded. Sgt. Naugle then gave the order to use "whatever force necessary on the force continuum up to and including lethal force" to stop the perpetrator.⁹⁰

Between 10:51 am and 10:56 am, HRP officers were dispatched to observe both the MacKay Bridge and the Macdonald Bridge. H Division RCMP members and HRP officers also set up checkpoints in Enfield and Elmsdale. These two communities are close to the boundary of Hants County and Halifax Regional Municipality. HRP Emergency Response Team members were nearby the Enfield Big Stop when the perpetrator was shot by the RCMP at 11:25 am. Those members and other HRP officers assisted in scene containment and gathering evidence thereafter. HRP officers proceeded to break down the containment of the Halifax bridges but kept a presence at the perpetrator's denture clinics to maintain continuity until search warrants could be obtained.

The Enfield Big Stop is very close to the boundary of Halifax Regional Municipality. After the mass casualty, Sgt. Naugle reflected on his experience of HRP's preparedness for and response to the events of the morning of April 19, 2020. He

characterized the HRP response as “just chaos, not chaos because the people that work for me are not good at their job, because my constables are great, chaos because we didn’t have direction from anybody.”⁹¹ In particular, he criticized HRP’s failure to respond proactively to intelligence that suggested that the perpetrator was likely to head toward Dartmouth:

When I came on duty, they knew he had a relative in Dartmouth, they knew he had a place in Dartmouth, they knew he had a place in Halifax and there was no indication he was down and out ... I had members in paddy wagons on cell phones calling members up on the other side of the RCMP they knew, getting information. Our information, we didn’t have anything going on ... [ERT] didn’t have enough to make a safe, active [Immediate Action] team to go in ... [We] asked for extra members just to have enough to fill out a squad, and that was denied.⁹²

He also criticized HRP supervisors for failing to offer assistance to the RCMP:

[W]e had ample resources to help. We didn’t make ... not make one effort whatsoever to stand those resources up, one, in anticipation of a problem in Halifax, which everybody could see coming down the pipe or standing them ... standing them up and saying, “RCMP, here’s what we have to offer you.”⁹³

When asked about these criticisms in our proceedings, Chief Dan Kinsella of the Halifax Regional Police took a different view: “[M]y expectation was the RCMP was in command of the situation, that they’re well equipped, that they would be doing what they needed to do.”⁹⁴

Message to All Nova Scotia Police Forces

At 12:31 pm and 12:32 pm, messages were sent out to all Nova Scotia police departments and all Nova Scotia RCMP detachments to cancel the Be on the Lookout notices regarding the perpetrator.

Public Communications

Social Media Messages and Media Release

Beginning at 10:17 am on the morning of April 19, 2020, the RCMP became more active in communicating with the public about the mass casualty. Over the following hour and a half, the RCMP issued eight tweets, posted several Facebook messages, and issued an email media release. As had been the case throughout the critical incident response, the RCMP's public communications did not appear to be based on a coherent strategy for public information.

At 10:17 am, more than 12 hours after Jamie Blair's 911 call providing information about the perpetrator's police-decaled cruiser, the public was first alerted by the RCMP via Twitter that the perpetrator was driving a replica RCMP cruiser. As we discussed in Chapter 4, the command group had decided to release information about the replica cruiser earlier that morning, before they received word that the perpetrator was actively killing community members in Cumberland County. Preparations to release this information began in earnest around 9:00 am, and the message was approved by Acting Insp. Halliday at 9:49 am. Twenty-eight minutes elapsed between the approval of the tweet's content and its posting on Twitter.

The 10:17 am tweet included a photo of the vehicle with a circle around the fake 28B11 call sign. Posts noting that the perpetrator was in Central Onslow or Debert, driving what appeared to be an RCMP vehicle and wearing what appeared to be an RCMP uniform, were made on Facebook at 10:19 am and Twitter at 10:21 am.

Between 10:26 am and 10:39 am, the RCMP issued an email media release and posted messages to Facebook and Twitter noting that further updates on the active shooter situation would be provided via Twitter.



Twitter post made by RCMP NS, April 19, 2020 at 10:17 a.m.: COMM0013638



Twitter post made by RCMP NS, April 19, 2020 at 10:21 a.m.: COMM0013639



Twitter post made by RCMP NS, April 19, 2020 at 10:39 a.m.: COMM0013635

The media release listed contact information for Cpl. Lisa Croteau and stated:

RCMP Engaged in Active Shooter Investigation:

Information Available on Twitter April 19, 2020, Portapique, Nova Scotia ... RCMP is currently responding to an active shooter investigation in Portapique. This is an active and evolving situation. Residents of the area are asked to remain inside their homes and lock your doors. Call 911 if there is anyone on your property.

All further communication regarding this situation will be done via the Nova Scotia RCMP Twitter account, @RCMPNS. You can also search for RCMP Nova Scotia. Thank you for your understanding as we work to provide the most updated information while addressing public and officer safety.⁹⁵

The next public communication was a two-part tweet. At 11:04 am, the RCMP tweeted that the perpetrator was last sighted heading southbound on Highway 102 in Brookfield. At 11:06 am, another tweet updated that the perpetrator was



Twitter post made by RCMP NS, April 19, 2020 at 11:04 am: COMM0013640



Twitter post made by RCMP NS, April 19, 2020 at 11:24 am: COMM0013641

driving a small silver Chevrolet SUV. At 11:24 am, a third tweet indicated the vehicle was a silver Chevrolet Tracker and that the perpetrator was last seen in the Milford area.

At 11:35 am, the RCMP tweeted that the suspect might be in an RCMP uniform but was not an RCMP employee. At 11:40 am, the RCMP issued their last tweet of the mass casualty, stating that the perpetrator was “in custody.”⁹⁶ This information was posted on Facebook at 11:41 am. These last two tweets and the Facebook post were issued shortly after the perpetrator’s death.

The RCMP had issued a total of 17 public communications over the 13 hours of the mass casualty. Eleven of these messages were shared with the public in the 75 minutes before the perpetrator’s death, and two were posted after his death.

Emergency Alert

The RCMP H Division Emergency Management Section operates the Divisional Emergency Operations Centre (DEOC). The DEOC is a coordination centre that is “stood up” or activated when required in an emergency. The DEOC was not



Twitter post made by RCMP NS, April 19, 2020 at 11:35 am: COMM0013642



Twitter post made by RCMP NS, April 19, 2020 at 11:40 am: COMM0013643

activated during the mass casualty. There had, however, been conversations between the provincial Emergency Management Office personnel and the RCMP about the availability of the Alert Ready messaging system earlier on the morning of April 19.

At 11:14 am, Mr. Michael Bennett, the Emergency Management Office's incident commander, called Mr. Glenn Mason, the civilian manager of the RCMP Emergency Management Section. During this call, Mr. Bennett advised Mr. Mason that the Emergency Management Office incident command was prepared and ready to use Alert Ready upon request by the RCMP. In Chapter 2, we explained that the RCMP Operational Communications Centre, command group, and executive leadership told the Commission they were not aware that this was a mechanism by which information could be shared directly with the public during a critical incident. We recounted that this lack of knowledge was at least partly due to historical decisions made by the RCMP about Alert Ready.

Immediately following his call with Mr. Bennett, Mr. Mason tried to reach Insp. Rodier by phone but was unable to do so. He then called the OCC to inquire whether the RCMP wanted a public alert sent via the Alert Ready system. After a

brief telephone exchange, Mr. Mason was told by S/Sgt. Ettinger to go ahead with a public alert. The direction was to use “the bare minimum.”⁹⁷ Mr. Mason relayed this information to Mr. Bennett at 11:21 am. The request to issue a public alert, therefore, was made approximately five minutes before the perpetrator was killed in Enfield.

No Alert Ready messages were broadcast in relation to the mass casualty.

MAIN FINDING

Alert Ready was the best available tool to warn the Nova Scotia public about the mass casualty and to provide updates as the information available to the RCMP changed.

MAIN FINDING

The critical incident response was hindered by the failure to coordinate with key emergency management services including the Divisional Emergency Operations Centre and the provincial Emergency Management Office.

Status on April 19 at Noon

The death of the perpetrator was communicated by radio to RCMP responding members at 11:28 am on April 19, 2020. Senior leadership in H Division also learned this information at that time. Thereafter, information was gradually rolled out to RCMP executive leadership, other police agencies and emergency services engaged in the critical incident response, and police forces across Nova Scotia.

Within minutes of the perpetrator’s death, the critical incident command began to wind down its operations. The mass casualty had “ended,” and yet much work was still to be completed. Some casualties had yet to be discovered, and a great deal of investigative work lay ahead. Fires were still burning at several locations.

Seventeen crime scenes had to be managed - including two that had not yet been identified. Next of kin had to be notified and would require additional information and support services. First responders and service providers had immediate needs for support and debriefing. And a shocked public required information and reassurance.

CHAPTER 7

Events from Noon on April 19, 2020, Onward

CHAPTER 7 Events from Noon on April 19, 2020, Onward

Overview

The perpetrator's death ended the carnage, but the harm did not stop with his death at approximately 11:27 am on April 19, 2020.

Our mandate is a comprehensive one; it directs us to inquire into the steps taken to inform, support, and engage those most affected and other citizens. In addition, it directs us to examine a range of issues during the aftermath of the mass casualty, specifically including communications with the public after the event and information and support provided to the families, affected citizens, police personnel, and community members. The Orders in Council do not direct us to review the adequacy of the RCMP H-Strong criminal investigation of the mass casualty, and we refrain from doing so.

This chapter extends our narrative account to the immediate after-effects of the mass casualty and critical incident response on April 18 and 19. The first section examines crime scene management in general and the consequences of the lack of a coordinated door-to-door search in Portapique during the mass casualty. The second provides an overview of forensic evidence concerning items used by the perpetrator to commit these crimes, with a focus on his firearms. The third section outlines the information and support needs of those most affected and the immediate steps taken by the RCMP and the Nova Scotia Department of Justice Victim Services (NS Victim Services) to meet these needs. (The needs of community members and first responders are further discussed in Volume 4, Community. Volume 4 also covers community-based activities to meet needs, including support through the Canadian Red Cross and GoFundMe initiatives.) The fourth section of this chapter assesses the RCMP's public communications from the first press conference held on April 19 through to the end of 2020. The final section focuses on the steps taken by agencies that were involved in the critical incident response to

examine their work and responses. We probe the RCMP's debriefing process and after-action reviews, and the outcome of other internal and external reviews. We also summarize after-action review processes undertaken by other agencies that took part in the critical incident response.

Crime Scene Management

Crime scene management is a fundamental policing function that is guided by best practices and policy. It requires proper supervisory direction and typically involves a team of people working together in various roles. Our narrative account of what happened during the mass casualty has shown the virtually single-minded RCMP focus on pursuing the live threat, the perpetrator. As is clear from our earlier findings, this unwavering focus resulted in some negative consequences and missed opportunities for investigation, including, for example, inadequate follow-up with primary witnesses who had vital information. Some unintended consequences of this singular focus became visible in the late afternoon of April 19, with the discovery of five additional fatalities in two residences on Cobequid Court in Portapique. Over the subsequent days, victims' family members began to find missed evidence at their loved ones' properties. In the immediate post-incident period, basic policing procedures, such as a coordinated door-to-door search, were not followed. This produced additional difficulties for family members and community members.

Discovery of Additional Fatalities

Cobequid Court in Portapique

In Chapter 2, we concluded that the perpetrator was responsible for the deaths of Joy and Peter Bond and of Jolene Oliver, Aaron Tuck, and Emily Tuck, in two households at Cobequid Court in Portapique. We found that the perpetrator shot these five individuals sometime between 10:08 and 10:20 pm on April 18, 2020. Despite the fact that family members called 911 to express concerns about these victims, the RCMP command group was not aware of these fatalities before the command

Cobequid Court



Map Data | Google, ©2023 CNES / Airbus

post at Great Village was dismantled. Nor, by this time, had they directed either a systematic search for additional fatalities or a targeted search for those reported missing.

At about 9:30 am on Sunday, April 19, community residents in Wentworth began to call 911 to report that the perpetrator had fatally shot Lillian Campbell. The RCMP command group realized the perpetrator was no longer in the Portapique community, and the focus of the critical incident response shifted first to Wentworth and then to subsequent scenes. Sgt. Andrew (Andy) O'Brien and S/Sgt. Allan (Al) Carroll travelled to Portapique at about 10:02 am. S/Sgt. Carroll explained that their purpose was to ensure continuity of scene control for future evidentiary purposes. According to Sgt. O'Brien's typed member report, S/Sgt. Carroll directed him to take charge of the various crime scenes within the Portapique community. After giving this direction, and after the perpetrator had been killed, S/Sgt. Carroll helped to dismantle the command post and returned to Bible Hill detachment to participate in an initial debriefing meeting.

On the morning of April 19, Cst. Nicholas (Nick) Dorrington was also stationed in Portapique after most responding members had left to pursue the perpetrator. Standard policing procedures involve coordinated door-to-door canvasses to gather eyewitness evidence and to confirm there are no other victims.¹ This task was not assigned to Cst. Dorrington, or to any other RCMP member, that morning.

In consultation with S/Sgt. Carroll, Sgt. O'Brien directed Cst. Dorrington to drive around Portapique. Cst. Dorrington described his understanding of the task he was assigned as follows:

[H]e wants me to do kind of a quick drive through Portapique to see if I can see anything crazy, if there's any more fatalities on front lawns and so forth, and anymore structural fires that haven't been reported or ... So, I do a ... a quick loop through, nothing in particular, and I return to the first scene that he wanted me to return to and hold.²

From 9:57 am, Cst. Dorrington drove back and forth through the small Portapique community several times. He entered Cobequid Court for the first time at around 10:26 am, and stopped in front of the Bond residence on Cobequid Court for about 28 seconds. He drove along portions of Cobequid Court two more times before returning to Orchard Beach Drive and continuing his patrol.

In testimony before the Commission, Cst. Dorrington recalled being on Cobequid Court, but had not seen anything of note about the residence. It appeared to him the same as the other residences and he could not differentiate in his mind between the two residences on Cobequid Court where deceased persons were later found. He did not have any recollection of the specific period in which he stopped outside the residence, and could not speak to noting whether the door was ajar at one of the residences on Cobequid Court. He testified that he had not been instructed to make specific checks at residences.

In his interview with the Commission, Cst. Dorrington recalled his displeasure at being unable to join in the chase for the perpetrator:

So, there's myself and [Cst. Trent] Lafferty, [Sgt.] O'Brien, [S/Sgt.] Al Carroll and another member all at Portapique. I said, "You don't need me here." He declined, wouldn't allow me to go. From that point, we hear of the contact with [Cst.] Chad [Morrison] and that he is subsequently injured and withdrawn. Very shortly after that, we hear of the contact with [Acting Cpl.] Heidi [Stevenson], and again, I go to O'Brien

and request that he allow me to go. I tell them that realistically, I'm one of the only ones that stands a chance to get close enough to him in an unmarked car. I said, "Every cop car he sees, he knows it's the enemy." I said, "By the time we get close enough and try to figure out if his cop car is the real one or not," I said, "we're done." I said, "we're done." I said, "At least in the unmarked, I may stand a chance to get close enough to take him off the road and do what needs to be done." I said, "I got no problem doing it." I said, "You know that, just let me go." He said, "No," so I remained on scene.³

Based on its proximity to Acting Cpl. Stevenson's death, this exchange would have taken place at approximately 11:00 am on April 19.

At 11:10 am, Cst. Dorrington became aware that Cheryl Blaikie had requested a wellness check for Aaron Tuck at Cobequid Court. He explained in testimony why he did not check that address when he received this information:

[A]t that point, we still had an active threat on the go. He had not been neutralized. We still had multiple structures that had not been cleared properly, so that was a challenge. And it should not fall within the scope of the individuals that are currently tasked with multiple tasks within the scope of trying to preserve the scenes and access points within Portapique itself proper.⁴

In short, he explained that he did not consider it his responsibility to perform this check. Nor does this task seem to have been assigned elsewhere.

Family Members Contact the RCMP

At about the same time as Cst. Dorrington was tasked with driving around Portapique to check on the situation there, family members began to call 911 requesting wellness checks on their relatives who were resident in that community. For example, Cory Bond called 911 at 10:41 am on April 19 to inquire about his parents, Joy and Peter Bond. Members of the Oliver / Tuck family were calling the RCMP Bible Hill detachment from Alberta between 10:00 am and 11:00 am (AST) and called 911 at 12:40 pm.

At 3:11 pm, Cpl. Rodney Peterson received a message from the Operational Communications Centre (OCC) dispatch informing him that Tara Long was looking for information about Aaron Tuck and Jolene Oliver. Cpl. Peterson was not in Portapique at that time. His notes record that he spoke to an unnamed RCMP member who was providing scene security in Portapique. This member said that he would send a member to their residence.

At 3:20 pm, Cpl. Jarret MacDonald took over from Sgt. O'Brien as scene security commander at Portapique Beach Road / Highway 2. His notes indicate that over the course of his shift, the OCC sent messages about inquiries from people worried about the well-being of residents who they knew lived in the area.

At about 4:45–4:50 pm, Cpl. MacDonald attended the Bond and Oliver / Tuck residences in response to inquiries from concerned family members. He was the first RCMP member to physically investigate the homes. This was approximately 19 hours after the first 911 call from Jamie Blair at 10:01 pm on the evening of April 18, and more than five hours after the perpetrator was killed.

Cpl. MacDonald's notes indicate that he then travelled to Cobequid Court and approached the residence. Without entering the home, he looked inside the main door and observed a deceased male lying inside the door and a deceased female on the living room floor. They were later identified as Peter and Joy Bond.

Cpl. MacDonald's notes indicate that when he approached the Oliver / Tuck residence, he looked inside the main door. He observed a deceased male lying inside the door and he could see one additional person. He did not enter the home. Cpl. MacDonald contacted the OCC over the Colchester radio at 4:51 pm to notify them of his discovery. These two victims were later identified as Aaron Tuck and Jolene Oliver. Emily Tuck was not found at that time.

Lack of Coordination at the Scene

We conclude that the unacceptable delay in locating the fatalities on Cobequid Court was due to a number of weaknesses in the command structure and coordination on April 19, 2020. As discussed in Chapter 3, members of the Major Crime Unit (MCU) had begun preparing to take over scene control early in the morning of April 19. They were diverted from this task when they joined the pursuit of the perpetrator. As a result, the MCU had no presence in Portapique that morning, despite

the fact that the RCMP was aware of eight deceased persons and several burnt-out buildings and vehicles across numerous crime scenes in that location. In the normal course, the MCU would communicate with general duty members, such as Cst. Dorrington, to instruct them on what was needed for investigative purposes. Often this work would be coordinated through the scene supervisor.

It wasn't until sometime after 5:30 pm that Cpl. Gerard (Jerry) Rose-Berthiaume of the MCU tasked Cst. Wayne Bent to go to every home in Portapique and check for more victims or persons requiring help. In his interview with the Commission in April 2022, Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume said the following about his decision to task Cst. Bent with checking homes in Portapique for victims:

I know that the members were going systematically, checking each residence, as per the briefing by the CIC [critical incident commander]. Again, not anticipating to point at anything else, really, at that time. There's obviously a number of other things going on with some scenes. And then getting a call that they located another body, and I asked Skipper [Cst. Bent] to go down there, as a Major Crime resource, to report back as to what was going on, and to make sure – not that I didn't trust the GIS [General Investigative Section] guys down there, but I felt, I know Skipper is already tasked out, but, you know, you're in the office, another body comes in, you're kind of looking around, like, okay, we want somebody down there now. And I tasked Skipper to go down and, you know, make sure that things were, you know, being processed properly and be, again, a direct conduit to me so he could kind of be my eyes on the ground, because there's still a number of – hundreds of things coming in at that time still that he could relay to me as to what exactly he was seeing down there.⁵

Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume explains elsewhere in his interview that the briefing to which he refers in this passage was “a lengthy briefing with CIC, with [Supt.] Darren Campbell, the SSO [support services officer] in charge of Major Crime at that time, and began that transition process from the CIC to do our investigation.”⁶ This briefing was conducted at Bible Hill detachment on the afternoon of April 19, 2020. It appears from this passage that Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume believed that general duty members were conducting a systematic canvass of the Portapique community. However, we have no evidence that this task was ever conducted by general duty members.

The delay in assigning a door-to-door canvass in Portapique was magnified by the decision to assign it to only one person. Cst. Bent's notes state that while he was checking homes in the Portapique area, he located a third deceased person at the Oliver / Tuck residence, later identified as Emily Tuck, 17 years old. According to his notes, between 5:30 pm and 8:33 pm, Cst. Bent checked the Bond residence and observed a deceased male inside the door and a deceased female on the living room floor. In the ensuing days, the MCU organized a more systematic canvass of Portapique residences together with a tactical search for evidence throughout the Portapique subdivision.

On the afternoon of April 19, 2020, Cst. Nathan Forrest was also in Portapique and was directed by Sgt. O'Brien to start covering bodies with tarps or blankets so the fire department could put out any remaining fires. He met up with another member, who is unnamed within our record, and began checking the homes on Cobequid Court. By this time, Cst. Bent, Cpl. MacDonald, and Cpl. Bradley (Brad) Wood were also checking homes in the area. Cst. Forrest's notes indicate that other members had stated there were two to three bodies in the homes on Cobequid Court. Cst. Forrest's notes say that all homes in Cobequid Court were checked.

By 8:35 pm, Cpl. MacDonald, Cpl. Wood, and Cst. Bent completed the search of all buildings on Orchard Beach Drive, Bay View Court, Cobequid Court, and Portapique Beach Road. At 8:35 pm, Cst. Bent informed Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume that all residences were cleared and no further deceased had been located in the area.

On April 20, Harry and Cory Bond – after being unable to reach their parents or receive any information despite repeated calls to 911, the RCMP Bible Hill detachment, and the Truro police – decided they had to travel to their parents' home to find out what had happened to them. They drove to their parents' house in Portapique. When they arrived at the top of Portapique Beach Road, the road was blocked off by police. Harry approached the RCMP members, told them who he was, and said that his parents lived down the road and that he was worried about them.

About 5 to 10 minutes later, Sgt. William (Bill) Raaymakers, along with two female medical examiners, came to talk to Cory and Harry Bond. Sgt. Raaymakers told them that they did not have to go down to their parents' house to identify them because he had people who could do that for them. Sgt. Raaymakers asked the brothers for a picture of their parents and said he would go down himself and identify them. Harry Bond texted pictures to Sgt. Raaymakers. Sgt. Raaymakers then

spoke with Harry and Cory Bond and confirmed that their parents were deceased. Harry Bond later recounted his experience:

The only reason my brother and I and my wife found out we just drove down, we took the two and a half hour drive to go down and demanded. And once they gave us the answers we wanted or answered our questions, they told us they would have been there. That was Monday afternoon; it wouldn't have been 'til Wednesday that we found out. Why? ...

You've got one crew down there with multiple, multiple scenes, your priority is ... as far as I'm concerned, it should be number one: ... let the families know. 'Cause families know there's something going on; ... we knew something was going on because it's right in Mom and Dad's backyard. That ... right there that's troubling. The not knowing ... that's a killer.⁷

It is unacceptable that it took the RCMP 19 hours to discover the bodies on Cobequid Court.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP's failure to find the fatalities at Cobequid Court in a timely manner resulted from inadequate RCMP scene management and an emphasis on pursuing the perpetrator at the expense of other police responsibilities. A systematic door-to-door search was not conducted until 19 hours after the first 911 call from the Portapique community. This is an unacceptable delay.

MAIN FINDING

These problems were exacerbated by the RCMP's failures to act on information shared by family members and lack of communication with concerned family members and community residents. In some instances, it took far too long for the RCMP to make next of kin notifications or provide updates to family members who were anxiously seeking information about the well-being of their loved ones.

Other Crime Scene Management Issues

In the days and weeks following the mass casualty, crime scenes and evidence were not always treated with care. This was upsetting and stressful for families and also affected their trust in the RCMP's investigation. We include three prominent examples to illustrate these systemic failures.

On April 20, 2020, Amelia and David (Dave) Butler asked the RCMP whether the home of Gina Goulet (Amelia's mother) had been cleared for entry. The RCMP confirmed that the property had been released and that it was now the Butlers' responsibility to secure the home. After learning the property had been cleared by police, Mr. Butler went to the hardware store and purchased "no trespassing" signs to put on the property.

About a month later, on May 23, Ms. Butler called Cst. Bent to tell him she had found a "chunk of lead" in a bathroom vanity drawer.⁸ This was a bullet, or portion of a bullet, that had been fired by the perpetrator. Mr. Butler also found a shell casing in a closet just outside of the bathroom door. Cst. Bent called Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume, who confirmed he wanted the bullet retrieved. Cst. Bent arranged to meet Ms. Butler at the house on May 25 at 10:00 am to retrieve the bullet. He took photos of the scene and then placed the bullet in an exhibit bag. At 2:29 pm, Cst. Bent provided the exhibit bag to exhibit custodian Cst. Lori Thorne for processing. Cst. Bent notes that he spoke to Cpl. Jason Anthony, who told him "this was the bullet they had not been able to locate."⁹

It was frustrating and upsetting for Amelia and Dave Butler to find this evidence at the scene of Gina Goulet's death. Mr. and Ms. Butler wondered how they could trust that the RCMP did a good job, given that their investigators did not find all the evidence at the scene of Ms. Goulet's death.

When Heather O'Brien's car was returned to her family, the RCMP warned them that it was a "little messy."¹⁰ The family advised us that they were not warned that the car had not been cleaned and that there was biological matter in the car. The family of Joey Webber also had concerns over the handling of his car after the mass casualty. The Webber family were given misinformation, and this affected their confidence in the police. For example, they had been told by the RCMP that the perpetrator had poured furnace oil all over the other cars before burning them, but they found the furnace oil still in the back of the vehicle when they picked it up.

Evidence was also overlooked by RCMP Forensic Identification Services (FIS) at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf scene. A pair of handcuffs was found there by a community member on April 20, 2020, after the RCMP had released the scene. In Chapter 2, we concluded that these handcuffs were those used by the perpetrator to handcuff Lisa Banfield on the night of April 18. These handcuffs were charred, and before returning them to police, the community member attempted to clean them with the solvent WD-40. Subsequent forensic testing determined that the handcuffs did not have an adequate amount of human tissue to warrant DNA testing. For this reason, the conclusion that these were the handcuffs used by the perpetrator could not be conclusively determined via forensic analysis. Had these handcuffs been found by the RCMP before they released the crime scene, such testing would likely have been possible and may have been conclusive. We also note that, in correspondence with the Commission, the RCMP initially suggested that these handcuffs had been “located by FIS at the Clover Leaf Circle scene.”¹¹ The claim that FIS had recovered these handcuffs from the scene was inaccurate and should not have been made.

The following year, on April 5, 2021, a private investigator retained by Patterson Law found a charred piece of metal at the Shubenacadie cloverleaf. Patterson Law believes that this object is what remains of the push bar that had been attached to the perpetrator’s replica RCMP cruiser. As at December 16, 2021, Patterson Law informed the Commission that no testing had been conducted on this object. We do not have sufficient evidence to conclude that this object is, in fact, the push bar from the perpetrator’s replica RCMP cruiser.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP did not find all forensic evidence at crime scenes. In some instances, evidence was found by family members and the public (and, eventually, by Commission investigators) after crime scenes had been released.

Forensic Evidence

Forensic analysis conducted after the mass casualty has assisted us to understand some aspects of the perpetrator's actions on April 18 and 19, 2020. Much of this understanding is integrated in our findings in earlier chapters, including, for example, our findings with respect to the perpetrator's cause of death in Chapter 6.

In this section, we summarize forensic evidence on two main issues that had an impact on those most affected and on subsequent public understanding of the mass casualty. These are items found in the vehicle driven by the perpetrator at the time of his death, and the weapons he used to commit the homicides.

Items Found in the Stolen Vehicle in Which the Perpetrator Was Killed

On April 19, 2020, RCMP FIS was dispatched to the Enfield Big Stop following the perpetrator's death, and began its investigation of the scene. As part of this investigation, various items associated with the perpetrator were found in the stolen Mazda hatchback (Gina Goulet's car), which was the third and final vehicle that he drove during the mass casualty. Police found five firearms in the vehicle. A Glock 23 .40-calibre semi-automatic pistol with a pressure-activated laser pointer on the grip was located on the front floor on the driver's side. An RCMP-issue Smith & Wesson pistol, stolen from Acting Cpl. Stevenson, was found between the centre console and the driver's seat. Two RCMP-issue Smith & Wesson magazines were also located in the vehicle; one was empty and the other full with 15 rounds. The other weapons were on the rear seats under a blanket:

- a Colt Carbine 5.56mm semi-automatic rifle, magazine loaded with 25 rounds of ammunition, nothing in the chamber;
- a Ruger Mini-14 semi-automatic rifle, magazine loaded with 24 rounds of ammunition, one in the chamber; and
- a Ruger P89 9mm semi-automatic pistol with a CTC laser-point grip attached, empty magazine loaded (15-round capacity), with one in the chamber.

The Mazda hatchback also contained a large amount of additional ammunition and accessories for some of the weapons. Other items found in the Mazda included

Sean McLeod's wallet, which the perpetrator had presumably stolen from the Jenkins / McLeod residence earlier in the day. There were also several key chains with car keys and fobs. Police also found a handcuff key and a black duty belt with an extendable baton, empty handcuff pouch, and flashlight. A duty belt is a heavy-duty waist strap typically used by police and corrections officers to carry equipment in a readily accessible manner. It was found on the front passenger floor of the vehicle, and its origins are unknown; the duty belt was not stolen from Acting Cpl. Stevenson.

Firearms Used by the Perpetrator

RCMP Forensic Firearms Analysis

RCMP forensic firearms analysis permits three conclusions, which the RCMP defines as follows. An analysis can result in an "identification," which means that the class and individual characteristics of the bullet or cartridge match the firearm, such that the analyst considers that the bullet or cartridge was fired from that firearm. "Elimination" means that the bullet or cartridge did not come from the firearm. A conclusion of "neither identified nor eliminated" means that the bullet or cartridge was neither positively identified nor eliminated as coming from a specific firearm.

This section sets out our findings connecting the perpetrator's weapons to the people whose lives were taken by him on April 18 and 19, 2020.

Forensic firearm examination is the process of systematically examining the characteristics of firearms or bullets left behind at a crime scene. Specialists in this field try to link bullets to weapons and weapons to individuals. RCMP forensic firearms analysis permits three conclusions (see textbox above). It is rarely possible for firearms examiners to conclude that a specific bullet was fired from a specific firearm. The conclusion that a firearm is "neither identified nor eliminated" means that the bullet came from that *type* of gun, but that the firearms examiner cannot determine that it came from a *specific* gun. Additional crime scene evidence is often used to link a specific gun to a given crime.

Based on forensics firearms analysis, together with other evidence, we conclude that the Glock 23 pistol was likely used to kill the following victims: Greg Blair, Lisa McCully, Corrie Ellison, Frank and Dawn Gulenchyn, Kristen Beaton, and Heather O'Brien. Bullets from the Glock 23 were also found in Andrew MacDonald's car and in Cst. Morrison's vest and car.

We also find that it is likely that the Ruger P89 pistol was used to kill Gina Goulet. An expended cartridge case that was fired from the Ruger P89 was found at the Hunter Road scene where Sean McLeod, Alanna Jenkins, and Tom Bagley were killed.

Forensics analysis indicates that the Colt Carbine rifle was likely used to kill Jamie Blair, Joy Bond, Jolene Oliver, Aaron Tuck, and Emily Tuck.

Forensic analysis does not permit us to identify which weapon was used to kill Cst. Stevenson.

The Ruger Mini-14 rifle was likely used to kill Joey Webber.

In combination with other findings, these conclusions show that the perpetrator switched between firearms, even within single crime scenes.

Forensic analysis was not available or conclusive for Peter Bond, Lillian Campbell, Joanne Thomas, and John Zahl.

We set out our findings about how the perpetrator acquired these firearms in Chapter 1 of Volume 3, *Violence*.

Information and Support Needs of Those Most Affected

The profound impact of the mass casualty started on April 18, 2020, in Portapique. Over time, it extended outward, touching more and more people, and deepened, affecting people in more intense and extensive ways. People experience grief, bereavement, and trauma differently and on their own time. There is no single set of needs, nor a timetable for when needs begin or end, and there can be a range of individual impacts, including physical, psychological, financial, emotional, and

practical ones. Grief and trauma are also collective experiences, and communities can be centres both of shared trauma and of shared healing. We heard evidence about the many ways the COVID-19 pandemic was an additional barrier or complicating factor to seeking and receiving support. For example, family members from out of province could not travel to Nova Scotia as quickly as they wanted to, and some missed important rituals because of travel restrictions; communities could not come together to grieve; and support services were harder to access in person.

During our roundtables on post-event support, local, national, and international experts encouraged us to consider the virtue of human-centric models and best practices for understanding, recognizing, and meeting support needs. They also emphasized the importance of seeing that services are required on more than one time horizon (immediate, short-term, and long-term needs) and for a continuum of people and groups (individuals, families and communities, first and secondary responders, and so on).

Here, in this chapter, we begin our examination of the steps taken to inform, support, and engage, with a focus on the needs of survivors and surviving family members as they arose during the events on April 18 and 19, 2020, and soon thereafter. In this early period, many from this most affected group had information needs – including for official notification of the death of their kin – and support needs. In Volume 4, *Community*, we take a more comprehensive approach to our examination of support provided after the mass casualty. In that volume, we pick up the thread of the ongoing needs of survivors and surviving family members and broaden our frame of reference to encompass the time horizon and the continuum of needs from additional groups of people and communities. Community-based initiatives are also discussed in Volume 4, *Community*.

Overarching Failure to Develop a Plan to Meet Needs

In this section, we set out our findings about the needs of the individuals and families who were most affected in the immediate aftermath of the mass casualty. Our overall finding is that none of the families who provided evidence to the Commission received the full information and support that they required and that should be provided according to the policies of the RCMP and Nova Scotia Department of Justice Victim Services. These policies are also inadequate. We address these broader policies in Volume 4, *Community*, along with our assessment of whether

these information and support needs were met in the short term and in the transition to meeting longer-term needs.

The mass casualty was of a magnitude rarely seen in Canada. The RCMP H Division and Nova Scotia Victim Services had responsibility for meeting the information and support needs of survivors and surviving families. They were unprepared for the immense need in the aftermath of the mass casualty for family liaison and a range of support services. Attempts were made to adapt existing services to these needs, but, despite the best efforts of individual service providers, these attempts fell short. Service providers were unable to scale up their services to meet the heightened demand, and the resultant gaps showed a lack of institutional preparation and coordination for an incident of this scale. The Medical Examiner Service also had an important role to play in assisting family members. It was better able to augment its services, but other factors – particularly an RCMP directive to hold back information – inhibited its ability to meet family needs.

The Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) Mental Health and Addictions Program mobilized to assess the need for supports to survivors and families of the deceased as well as within communities across Nova Scotia. NSHA developed a plan to support the mental health and psychological needs associated with the mass casualty. We examine this plan in Volume 4, Community.

MAIN FINDING

The services offered by the RCMP and Nova Scotia Victim Services did not fully meet the needs of those families and communities most affected by the mass casualty. In the absence of a coordinated and planned approach, ad hoc attempts to scale up services were insufficient.

Next of Kin Notifications

Definition of Next of Kin

Nova Scotia's *Fatality Investigations Act*, SNS 2001, c 31, outlines who is considered the nearest relative, or next of kin (NOK), in section 2(2):

For the purpose of this Act, the nearest relative of a deceased person is the first person on the following list of categories and, if there is more than one person within a category, the eldest person within that category;

- (a) the spouse or common-law partner of the deceased, if the spouse or common-law partner was cohabitating with the deceased in a conjugal relationship immediately before that person's death;
- (b) the children of the deceased;
- (c) the parents or guardian of the deceased;
- (d) the siblings of the deceased;
- (e) the grandchildren of the deceased;
- (f) the grandparents of the deceased;
- (g) the uncles and aunts of the deceased;
- (h) the nephews and nieces of the deceased;
- (i) the next in order of kin after those persons referred to in clauses (a) to (h).

Next of Kin Notification Policy

The national *RCMP Operational Manual* says an RCMP member should arrange death notification to the next of kin as soon as possible (3.1.2); should provide information about resources and supports available to the next of kin when performing the notification (3.1.3.); and should "confirm with the coroner / medical examiner that the identity of the deceased has been verified, and that their name may be released" (3.1.6).¹² The Human Deaths policy and Next of Kin Death Notification

Checklist, summarized below, apply to all deaths investigated by police, not only those that are the result of a criminal act such as homicide.

The RCMP Next of Kin Death Notification Checklist provides that members should:

- deliver notifications respectfully with professionalism, clarity, and compassion;
- depending on the circumstances of the death, collaborate with the coroner before any notification to the next of kin, by ensuring positive identification has been made and the notification will not interfere with any ongoing coroner's investigation;
- complete the notification as soon as possible;
- identify and verify the legal next of kin to be notified;
- verify the victim's full name, age, and relationship with the family members being notified;
- provide the family with information about the location of the victim and the process for family members to see the victim and/or make arrangements to recover their loved one;
- know and provide the family with contact information of Victim Services and the medical examiner's and coroner's office;
- provide family members with the details of when, where, and how the death occurred;
- answer all questions honestly, but provide only information they know to be true and that can be released; and
- following the notification, not leave the family alone and offer that Victim Services can attend the residence.¹³

In addition, an RCMP H Division (Nova Scotia) checklist prohibits family members from being "asked to identify the deceased when facial injuries and/or decomposition are present" and notes that alternative methods of identification include "fingerprints, dental records, etc."¹⁴

The RCMP's policies do not explicitly state whether next of kin notifications are to be done in person or by other means of communication, such as phone calls. In-person notifications are presumptive in some documents, though, for example, the RCMP's Next of Kin Death Notification Checklist instructs members to "[a]sk to come inside and ask or encourage family members to sit down."¹⁵ The RCMP

delivered next of kin notifications both in person and over the phone during the mass casualty. The decision to deliver some of the notifications by phone may in part have been influenced by public health measures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Next of Kin Death Notification Checklist provides instructions about post-notification issues under the subheading “After the Notification.” This advice is specific to the immediate period after delivering the next of kin notification. For example, members are advised to “[b]e prepared for any type of emotional or physical reaction.”¹⁶ The RCMP’s policies do not provide guidance about longer-term management of post-notification issues, such as expectations around ongoing communication, frequency of communication, and responsibility to provide information to family members other than the individual identified as the victim’s next of kin.

The RCMP has a specific guide related to next of kin death notifications when one of its own members has been killed in the line of duty. The *Critically Injured and Fallen Member Guide* requires that the divisional Strategic Communications Unit be engaged, and that the casualty member not be publicly identified until all next of kin death notifications have been completed.¹⁷ It says that the family should not be left alone and should be supported in any reasonable manner. The next of kin notification for a fallen member will normally be handled by a senior non-commissioned officer or commissioned officer assigned to the area where the incident occurred. The guide notes that as more details become known, critical information must be relayed to the family as soon as possible.

Responsibility for Next of Kin Notifications

The process of identifying next of kin for Greg and Jamie Blair and Lisa McCully began when the Blair and McCully children were evacuated from Portapique at about 12:30 am on April 19, 2020. This process was carried out in conjunction with identifying the children’s relatives so that the children could be picked up from the Colchester East Hants Health Centre (CEHHC). Through the night and into the morning of April 19, the OCC and RCMP detachments at Bible Hill and Oxford received dozens of calls from concerned family and community members who were unable to reach loved ones who may have been harmed in the unfolding mass casualty. Others called hospitals and went to crime scenes seeking information. In

most cases, those who placed phone calls were told that information could not be given out. Many callers were asked to provide contact information and told that someone would return their calls. Information about the Portapique fatalities was circulating through family and community networks, including by social media; for most people, this was their main source of information.

Between 1:52 pm and 2:58 pm on April 19, the RCMP's Northeast Nova Major Crime Unit (MCU) took over responsibility for completing the next of kin death notifications for victims of the mass casualty. Similarly to the critical incident response structure, the RCMP manages the investigation of major cases through a Major Case Command Triangle. The Major Case Command Triangle for the mass casualty included team commanders Acting Sgt. Angela McKay and Sgt. Glenn Bonvie, primary investigator Cpl. Jerry Rose-Berthiaume, and file coordinator Cst. Shawn Stanton. These members worked closely together after the mass casualty, and the national *RCMP Operational Manual* chapter regarding Major Case Management sets out defined responsibilities for each of their roles. Team commanders, for example, have "overall authority, responsibility, accountability and control of the major case investigation, its resources, e.g. human, material and financial, and its mandate."¹⁸ The primary investigator "controls the speed, flow and direction of the overall investigative process," and the file coordinator is responsible for file management.¹⁹

The process for transition from the critical incident command to the MCU began after the perpetrator was killed. According to Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume, "The amount of information that was flowing in at that time was astronomical."²⁰ The MCU was faced with processing 17 crime scenes and 22 deceased. At the same time as managing the crime scenes, the MCU was processing a large number of requests for information about possible victims. Acting Sgt. McKay's note states that from 4:02 pm on April 19 to 8:00 pm on April 20:

[W]ell over one hundred family / Portapique resident related emails came in and needed to be addressed ... Many messages were not from immediate family members and therefore all had to be reviewed to ensure any information provided was correct and not released without ascertaining the caller's relationship to the victims.²¹

At 2:00 pm on April 19, 2020, Cst. Wayne ("Skipper") Bent began reviewing the "enormous number of emails" received by the RCMP (described further below) to determine who was next of kin for various victims.²² Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume and

Acting Sgt. McKay assigned Cst. Bent to the task of family liaison for all families except Cst. Stevenson's family. The impact of the decision to assign a single member to provide family liaison is discussed in the next section. One of Cst. Bent's responsibilities was to complete outstanding next of kin death notifications or, in the cases where a positive identification had yet to be made, to explain to family members that the investigative team believed their family member was deceased. He also began developing a list that identified one family member as a contact who would disseminate information from the police to additional family members.

Uneven and Inadequate Notifications

Following the mass casualty, next of kin notifications were not always provided to families in a manner that is consistent with RCMP policies. Concerns raised by family members include that notifications were not carried out as quickly as possible and that in some cases the notifications were carried out poorly. In some instances during and after the mass casualty, next of kin notifications were provided on road-sides or near crime scenes, because family members came to the place where their loved ones had died.

Some family members experienced delay before a next of kin notification was provided to them. Patsy Bagley, spouse to Tom Bagley, was dissatisfied with the manner in which she was informed of her husband's death. On the afternoon of April 19, Ms. Bagley said that she was visited in person by an RCMP member and was asked to describe her husband's clothing and tattoos. She was then informed that Tom Bagley had died, and no other details were provided. She had a friend present with her when this news was delivered. Ms. Bagley questioned "why the RCMP could not have come to her sooner" given their proximity on Hunter Road.²³

Crystal Mendiuk, sister to Jolene Oliver and aunt to Emily Tuck, lived in Alberta at the time of the mass casualty and was seeking information on behalf of her family. On April 19 at 8:38 pm, Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume contacted the family and told them that deceased individuals had been located at Ms. Oliver's residence on Cobequid Court, but that identification of the bodies was still pending. He concluded the call by saying he would contact her once he had more information and they had been able to positively identify the individuals at the residence. Ms. Mendiuk recalls this conversation with Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume differently. She recalls pleading with him

for more information and telling him that it was “cruel to expect a family to wait until the next morning for information about their family members.”²⁴

Dan and Susan Jenkins are the mother and father of Alanna Jenkins. They had driven to Wentworth on April 19, 2020, seeking information about Alanna and her partner, Sean McLeod. They were advised to leave by an RCMP member who pointed her firearm at Dan Jenkins. This member promised to call Mr. Jenkins, but Mr. Jenkins never heard from her again. According to Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins, on April 20 an Amherst RCMP member contacted them to say the police were unable to confirm whether Alanna Jenkins had passed because they were unable to identify her body due to the fire. A coroner’s report and additional investigation would be required. Thereafter, Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins spoke with Cst. Bent, whom the family described as being very good to them. He confirmed that it was unlikely that Alanna Jenkins was alive. Approximately six or seven weeks after the events, Dan and Susan Jenkins received official confirmation from the medical examiner’s office of Alanna Jenkins’s death.

In a small group session with us, Mr. Jenkins reflected on aspects of his experience on April 19, 2020, and afterward. He reflected: “You know the only thing - we never heard from any RCMP officer or anybody to address us and say, ‘Listen, your daughter, this is what’s happened at her property.’”²⁵ Mr. Jenkins identified the RCMP decision not to send fire services or a responding unit into Hunter Road as a decision that had many consequences: delaying the identification of his daughter’s body and ultimately resulting in a situation in which many of his questions about what happened on the morning of April 19 will never be answered.

Other families experienced both delay and insensitive delivery of notifications in a manner that does not fully accord with the RCMP guidelines set out above. On April 19, Nick Beaton had been actively searching for his wife, Kristen Beaton, and had spoken with several RCMP members over the course of the morning and afternoon. Mr. Beaton provided the police with information that helped to identify his wife. He described pleading with police to tell him where Kristen Beaton was and requesting that a police officer attend his home. The police said that they could not tell him anything but advised that there was going to be a press release at 6:00 pm. Mr. Beaton continued calling 911 because he was concerned that he was going to find out that his wife was dead at the same time as the media. Even before the Plains Road scene was processed, RCMP members told Mr. Beaton that they were on their way to see him.

Mr. Beaton recalled an RCMP member named Curtis (likely Cpl. Kuchta) calling him. The member said, “This is Curtis and this is my number.”²⁶ Mr. Beaton recalls that this RCMP member told him what happened “in his own way, without saying it.”²⁷ He related that the RCMP member was crying on the phone.

At 6:00 pm, Cst. Jeffrey (Jeff) MacFarlane and Cst. Michael (Mike) Woolcock arrived at the home of Nick Beaton. He was waiting outside with several family members. Mr. Beaton recalls that the first thing the police officers said to him upon arriving was, “You’ll be happy to know you’re the first one to be notified.”²⁸ Cst. MacFarlane asked to speak with Nick privately. Nick replied that everyone present was Kristen’s family and deserved to know the information they had to share. Cst. MacFarlane told everyone there that Kristen had been killed. Nick asked about the delay in notifying them about her death. Cst. MacFarlane responded that the size of the tragedy caused certain steps to be delayed.

On April 19, members of the O’Brien family attended the scene of Heather O’Brien’s death several times over the course of six hours between about 10:20 am, when they first became concerned about Ms. O’Brien, and 4:54 pm, when the death notification was provided. On one of these occasions, Cst. Ian Fahie and Cst. Devonna Coleman pointed a weapon at Ms. O’Brien’s daughter, Michaela Scott, to prevent her from approaching her mother’s car and used threatening language. Ms. O’Brien’s husband, Andrew O’Brien, recalls that an officer at the Debert side of the roadblock on Plains Road later directed him not to approach his wife’s car, saying, “Mr. O’Brien, don’t make me shoot you.”²⁹

Shortly after 4:25 pm, Cpl. Kuchta, who had earlier assumed charge of the crime scenes on Plains Road, told Cst. MacFarlane that seven members of Heather O’Brien’s family were at the scene boundary looking for information about her. Cpl. Kuchta asked for direction about providing a next of kin death notification. Cst. MacFarlane told Cpl. Kuchta that he should take a photo of the face of the deceased believed to be Heather O’Brien, if appropriate, to complete identification and next of kin notification at the scene. Two of Ms. O’Brien’s daughters, Molly O’Brien and Michaela Scott, recalled arriving back on scene around 4:35 pm. They said that Cpl. Kuchta told them to get Mr. O’Brien to come back to the scene.

At approximately 4:54 pm, Cpl. Kuchta asked Mr. O’Brien if they could go for a walk and speak privately. Once alone, Cpl. Kuchta told Mr. O’Brien that he was going to share a photo of the woman found deceased at the scene and ask whether Mr. O’Brien could identify her as his wife. Cpl. Kuchta warned Mr. O’Brien that the photograph showed blood on the victim’s face. Mr. O’Brien identified the

photograph he was shown as depicting his wife, Heather. Cpl. Kuchta returned to the scene and informed Cst. MacFarlane that the next of kin death notification for Heather O'Brien was completed.

The RCMP's policies do not address what members should do when a victim's family members are aware that their loved one is deceased. During the mass casualty, some family members found their loved one's body before the RCMP could complete a formal next of kin notification. Clinton Ellison described the impact of not receiving a formal notification. On April 19 at around 8:00 am, Mr. Ellison was interviewed by S/Sgt. Greg Vardy. At the start of the interview, Clinton asked S/Sgt. Vardy if his brother Corrie was dead, because no one had confirmed the news to him.

Clinton ELLISON: So what I'm hearing now is my brother's dead.

S/Sgt. VARDY: That's what you're hearing.

Clinton ELLISON: Is that what you're telling me now finally, my brother is dead?

S/Sgt. VARDY: As far as I know yes. As far as I know your brother is dead, yes.

Clinton ELLISON: You don't even know if my brother is dead.

S/Sgt. VARDY: Well, yes he is dead. Um, now, here's the thing. Clinton what you have to understand um, there are multiple, multiple, multiple scenes. Ah, it's taken a lot of time and um, so, I was actually thought of the understanding that you knew he was dead, um ...

Clinton ELLISON: I found him dead but no one told me.

S/Sgt. VARDY: Okay. Um, well um, obviously that's why I'm saying I'm sorry my condolences are with you um, you know so I, what I want to do and, and what you have to understand that this, this is um, due to the multiple areas, the multiple scenes, the multiple people involved ah, we're trying to piece everything together ...³⁰

It is unclear from the RCMP's policies whether and how this circumstance affects the next of kin notification process. For example, the RCMP's Next of Kin Death Notification Checklist notes that RCMP members should provide family members with more specific information in addition to the notification of death, such as "the

details of when, where, and how the death occurred,” the victim’s current location, and the contact information for the medical examiner’s office.³¹ It also notes that members should make themselves available to answer questions, but the responsibility to provide such information when a family is already aware of their loved one’s death is not set out in the RCMP’s policies.

In some instances, the RCMP had difficulties in identifying the legal next of kin. For example, Cst. Bent initially provided information to Richard and Clinton Ellison following the mass casualty. At the time, Cst. Bent was not aware that Corrie Ellison had an adult son, Connor Reeves. Mr. Reeves was Corrie Ellison’s legal next of kin. The RCMP did not contact Mr. Reeves until Cst. Bent learned who he was several months after the mass casualty. This happened when Cst. Bent was delivering a package of blankets that had been donated to Richard Ellison’s house in Portapique and saw a blanket labelled “Connor.” Cst. Bent and Acting Sgt. McKay determined that Connor was Corrie’s son, located Connor Reeves, and began communicating with him. When Cst. Bent told Corrie Ellison’s father, Richard Ellison, that Mr. Reeves was Corrie’s next of kin, Mr. Ellison disagreed, and this ended communication between the two of them. Mr. Ellison advised Cst. Bent that he did not want to talk to the RCMP about what happened and did not think the RCMP would answer his questions.

Richard Ellison also voiced a concern that he had not been provided with notification of his son’s death in a timely way. Cst. Bent explained his decision to liaise with one family member for each family “as the sheer numbers makes it insurmountable to speak individually with each family member.”³² This decision was frequently mentioned by family members as a source of ongoing concern in obtaining information from the RCMP.

RCMP members experienced challenges in providing timely death notifications to next of kin. Some of these challenges are attributable to the magnitude of the critical incident. However, we find that many of these difficulties were systemic rather than situational. There was a lack of a coordinated and adequately resourced plan to carry out this important function. In addition, there are gaps in the RCMP policy and guidelines, and not all members were adequately trained to carry out these duties with the required sensitivity. The inadequate handling of next of kin notifications caused additional distress to family members. In some instances, this led family members to begin questioning the RCMP’s response at this important juncture of transitioning from critical incident to major case investigation.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP's next of kin notification policy and guidelines are inadequate. These notifications were not carried out in a coordinated and timely manner. RCMP members were not adequately trained to carry out these duties with skill and sensitivity.

Information Needs

Overview of Information Needs

Family members and survivors of the mass casualty experienced a range of information needs as a result of the mass casualty. The types of information they sought included:

- Information about the death, such as
 - ◊ if their loved one had suffered,
 - ◊ when and how they had died, and
 - ◊ whether the RCMP investigation revealed a motive for the perpetrator killing their loved one.
- Information required for funeral arrangements, such as
 - ◊ where the body of their loved one was,
 - ◊ when they could access it,
 - ◊ how they could travel to Nova Scotia (during public health restrictions), and
 - ◊ how they could get items seized as evidence back.
- Information to deal with the aftermath, such as
 - ◊ what supports were available to them,
 - ◊ what to do to secure or clean homes and vehicles in which loved ones had been killed, and
 - ◊ how to manage wills / estates / money / insurance.

Information and Support for RCMP Members and Their Families

The RCMP's *Critically Injured and Fallen Member Guide* defines the "Designated Family Liaison Officer (DFLO)" as "the individual who is assigned by the Team Commander to represent the RCMP chain of command and provide support to the family (next-of-kin) of a casualty member and/or fallen member."³³ At 1:28 pm on April 19, 2020, Insp. Sean Auld phoned Cst. Randy Slawter and appointed him as the family liaison for the family of Acting Cpl. Heidi Stevenson. Cst. Chad Morrison also received information and support consistent with this guide. There is no equivalent policy or definition for family liaisons for the deaths of civilians.

Services were provided to the family of Heidi Stevenson by the RCMP, Veteran Services, and Victim Services and the family was assisted by Cst. Slawter and Cpl. Ron Robinson. The family said these two members were genuine and caring, and that "much of what they did and how they did it isn't something you can train someone for."³⁴

Role of RCMP H Division Family Liaison

The RCMP's major crime investigations are supported by two coordination roles. The first is the file coordinator, who is responsible for addressing the investigation's documentation management needs. These needs entail not only the development and maintenance of a document library system with applicable business rules and protocols, but also assessing evidence in the file, its significance, and what investigative follow-up is required. The file coordinator is also involved in disclosure and support to the Crown. While the file coordinator is a key member of the investigative team, and needs all the competencies and skills that go with being a member of a team, the role requires an administrative aptitude and independently driven, analytical work.

The second position is the family liaison officer. The family liaison acts as a link between the RCMP and stakeholders who are engaged in the support of affected victims and families. The family liaison helps to identify victims and reunite them with their families, as well as assess the needs of families and surviving victims, in order to connect them with needed services. They also coordinate the identification and notification of next of kin.

The family liaison helps to coordinate activities on matters of mutual concern, and this role should be assigned to someone who can help groups work effectively together. With the backdrop of a critical incident, this can mean dealing with emotional and difficult conversations. Competencies include communication, networking, facilitation, conflict resolution, and problem-solving skills, along with emotional intelligence and empathy. The RCMP post-critical incident support rests to a large extent on the role of the family liaison officer.

On April 19, Cst. Bent initially understood that he had been assigned to the role of file coordinator for the RCMP H-Strong investigation. Within a few hours, it was clarified that he would serve as family liaison officer. As noted above, he was tasked by Acting Sgt. McKay with family liaison responsibilities to the families of those whose lives were taken during the mass casualty and the civilian survivors. He fulfilled this role virtually on his own. The role was too great for one individual, with the result that families' needs were unevenly met, despite Cst. Bent's best efforts. This decision also placed unacceptable stress and expectations on Cst. Bent. The RCMP failed to scale up its policies and practices to fully address the needs of the large group of family members bereaved by the mass casualty. In this section, we outline some of the gaps created by this failure.

On more than one occasion, Acting Sgt. McKay discussed with Cst. Bent the possibility of adding another family liaison to help with his responsibilities. Cst. Bent resisted this offer. In his Commission interview, he said, "I was a little bit selfish, I think, in that you know I had these relationships with people and I had worked hard at building these relationships with people and I also felt – and I mentioned this to Angela [Acting Sgt. McKay] – that I wanted the same message going out to each of the families that we were sending out."³⁵ Cst. Bent briefly had support from another RCMP member, Cst. Rodney MacDonald, before Cst. MacDonald was transferred to another division. Cst. Bent continued to be the sole family liaison to the families affected by the mass casualty (with the above-noted exceptions of the Stevenson family and Cst. Morrison). This decision should not have been left to the discretion of an overtasked constable. Rather, Cst. Bent's preferences should have been overridden by a senior supervisory officer. It was the RCMP's responsibility to ensure that adequate arrangements were in place, regardless of the position taken by an individual member.

Families of those whose lives were taken were not well served by the decision to have Cst. Bent as the sole RCMP liaison. While some families expressed appreciation for Cst. Bent's work, he was often overwhelmed by his job. Every aspect of Cst. Bent's role was undefined by policy or direction from superiors, including to

whom he was responsible to provide information (for example, which survivors); what information he was supposed to provide; and with what frequency. He had received no formal training and, at the time, none existed. Other RCMP officers said they had some experience working with families, albeit not at this scale.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP did not provide adequate information services to those most affected because of systemic gaps in policy, the inadequate allocation of personnel, and the lack of provision of training for personnel charged with providing these services.

RCMP Information-Sharing Practices

Many survivors and family members had specific questions about what had happened and wanted to be kept up to date about the RCMP H-Strong investigation. Family members were invited to attend at RCMP detachments for individual briefing sessions on June 25 and 26, and July 2, 3, and 24, 2020. The families who attended these meetings generally described them as unhelpful.

Another practice that was hard on families was Cst. Bent's decision to choose only one family representative to deal with. This decision placed the responsibility to convey difficult information – and to advocate for more information – on a single family member, thereby placing a great burden on that representative. This approach was untenable when family members did not agree about how best to engage with the RCMP or there was conflict within families. Both these circumstances were predictable manifestations of the traumatic grief experienced by family members who were bereaved in these circumstances, and not reflective of the families themselves. This approach also did not recognize that families might have different people who might need different information or that an individual family member's capacity to serve as liaison might change over time. In short, it was an approach that was not well suited to the delicate work of supporting families in the wake of a mass casualty.

The RCMP did not share all the information it had publicly or even with family members. The reasons for not sharing information were not always clear, as is discussed further in the section below on public communications. One specific aspect of these problematic practices was that the RCMP did not have a mechanism in place to share information with families in advance. For this reason, families often learned important information from the media. This was partly a result of Cst. Bent being the only liaison. It was also because, in the initial stages of the investigation, the RCMP did not appear to prioritize sharing information with family members first, nor have a policy or practice to do so.

Some improvements were made after Jennifer Zahl Bruland, the oldest daughter of John Zahl, advocated that families should receive information from the RCMP directly before it was shared publicly by the media. However, problems continued to arise.

These problems most frequently arose in the context of Information to Obtain documents (ITOs). ITOs are legal documents drafted by police officers to seek court approval for a search warrant. The ITO contains information explaining the reasons why a search warrant is being sought and can contain potentially sensitive information. The media can apply to the court to have the ITO unsealed so that they can gain access to the information in it and publish that information. As a result of Ms. Zahl Bruland's advocacy, the RCMP began to share with families ITOs that were being released or unredacted as part of a media application. However, these documents were shared without explanation and without the context that could help family members to understand the information in the ITOs or the investigative strategy behind it.

In some cases, family members' access to timely information was also negatively affected by RCMP efforts to limit the release of information by other parties. For example, the RCMP directed the Medical Examiner Service not to release the cause or manner of death to families. In Chapter 4, we made a finding that the RCMP directive to the Medical Examiner Service not to release information about cause, manner, and circumstances of death to family members was unnecessary and harmful in the circumstances of this investigation, and that it compounded some family members' grief and mistrust. After the Commission became aware of this directive, we took steps to ensure that it was lifted. The Commission connected those families who wished to learn more with the Medical Examiner Service so that they could receive information about their loved ones' deaths and have their questions answered in private.

Some family members' accounts of their experiences receiving information and support differ from other information that we received from the individuals and organizations who were providing the information. For example, Amelia Butler said she initially found getting information from the Medical Examiner Service to be "terrible" and said the office would not answer her questions.³⁶ The medical examiner's perspective was that the office could not provide her with her mother Gina Goulet's cause and manner of death because of the RCMP direction prohibiting them from doing so, which placed them in a predicament. The Medical Examiner Service did provide information where they were at liberty to do so.

Nick Beaton also experienced frustration because he was told by the RCMP that it was the medical examiner who would not release information, and the Medical Examiner Service said that they could not do so due to the RCMP policy.

The support services provided to grieving family members should be responsive to their expressed needs, and time should be taken as necessary to ensure that they receive accurate information, including information about why certain facts might be unknown or withheld.

In the wake of the mass casualty, the RCMP prioritized institutional and investigative imperatives over the needs of survivors and family members. This prioritization led to serious shortcomings in the RCMP's information-sharing practices.

MAIN FINDING

After the mass casualty, the RCMP prioritized institutional and investigative imperatives over the needs of survivors and family members. The RCMP's information-sharing practices with survivors and family members were inadequate.

Support Available Through NS Victim Services

The Nova Scotia Department of Justice Victim Services offers a range of services to victims of crime. These services include the provision of information, counselling, referrals to other services, and assistance navigating the legal system. The Province of Nova Scotia made funding for individual counselling available to survivors

and family members of those whose lives were taken, through the Criminal Injuries Counselling Program administered by NS Victim Services. The fund normally requires that there be an ongoing criminal case and caps the funding, but in some instances, NS Victim Services relaxed these rules to help victims of the mass casualty. Some of those most affected found the process to access this funding smooth, while others found it challenging.

Difficulties in Navigating Support Systems

After the mass casualty, NS Victim Services established the Stronger Together support navigation program and opened three community support navigation centres in Portapique, Debert, and Shubenacadie. In early June 2020, a fourth centre was opened in Wentworth. These centres were intended to provide support for families and individuals in the four most affected communities.

Staff at the community support navigation centres were available to connect those affected by the mass casualty with available mental health services and supports. They made calls on behalf of clients and, when requested, liaised with other services on a client's behalf. Cards providing information about the available supports were created and mailed to all households in the affected communities. Cards were also provided to the provincial 211 phone navigation service, the Nova Scotia Health Authority, the Government of Nova Scotia Contact Centre, the municipal advisor at the Nova Scotia Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing, local members of the Legislative Assembly, and municipal councillors.

Those who visited the community support navigation centres were able to speak one on one with professionally trained support navigators who connected them to available services, including grief and trauma counselling, help with settling estates, family resource centres, supports for youth and families, and financial supports. COVID-19-related public health restrictions placed some limits on access to services at these centres. Those who could not make it to one of the community support navigation centres in person were able to access the service remotely by calling a toll-free number or contacting NS Victim Services via email.

Despite this thoughtful initiative, many people reported experiencing difficulties in navigating support systems to access the services they required. Problems included being provided a list of support services that was outdated and included irrelevant services.

Most fundamentally, those most affected reported that they had to seek out support services. Some, if not many, counsellors on the lists were simply not taking new clients at all, so some family members made many calls before finding someone who would accept them. Many were overwhelmed by having to navigate multiple systems. No proactive navigation services were provided by NS Victim Services. Nick Beaton explained the difficulties he faced in navigating support systems:

So, I felt that there was a kind of a big gap there because at first, they were reaching out saying, hey, do you need help, do you need help, do you need help, and I didn't. And then when I needed it, it was hard to kind of find it, I guess, from Victim Services or them avenues.

...

I just started seeing a professional and I tried to go through the EA [Employee Assistance] program at work which was – that caused me trauma. I just ended up giving up on that. It was like, whatever. So, then I reached out to Victim Services and it was kind of my own fault for waiting so long that I needed help right then. I was like, I need to talk to someone like right now. Just dark and just everything hit me and it just piled up on me and I literally was having some extremely dark thoughts.

And I was like, I need help now. And it was still three weeks to get it. So, it was like, well here is a list of people and then they give me a list like this and me trying to focus on anything for any amount of time since this happened, it was very difficult. So, it was like, oh, these are the people and this person does this. Like, it just – it was almost too much and I almost like – I am going to say, babysat or it should have been like, clear.³⁷

Even when those most affected found a counsellor who could take them on, we heard that the amount that would be paid by NS Victim Services was less than what many of the counsellors who were listed on the sheet charged. This meant that people could again not access the counsellor of their choice and some made up the price difference. In some cases, NS Victim Services approved a varied hourly rate, but on a case-by-case basis.

Disparate Experiences with NS Victim Services

Some family members were very satisfied with the services provided by NS Victim Services. For example, Chris McLeod described Victim Services as “fantastic.”³⁸ Dan and Susan Jenkins said Victim Services had been good to the family, but that they had decided to seek support elsewhere.

On the other hand, Andrew and Kate MacDonald and Amelia Butler told us about the challenges they faced in finding support services that met their needs. The O’Brien family described the services as “a crock” and “messed up.”³⁹

Portapique residents also described encountering significant obstacles when they sought support after the mass casualty. Leon Joudrey explained that it took two or three weeks for NS Victim Services to follow up with him after he had indicated that he would like to receive assistance. Even after he had been contacted, he was left to seek out support services himself. Eventually, he concluded, he found it “more helpful just talking to a couple of good friends.”⁴⁰ In September 2022, Mr. Joudrey and his Portapique neighbour Mallory Colpitts attended a consultation with the Commission in which they reflected on their experience of seeking support. Mr. Joudrey observed, and Ms. Colpitts agreed, that while mental health services were made available to them, they found it hard to recover while continuing to live in Portapique. Ms. Colpitts reflected, “healing or attempting to heal in a place that contributed to a sickness is not easy.”⁴¹ Both these residents would have preferred to relocate, even temporarily, for the sake of their mental health, but no financial assistance was available to support them to do so. Like Mr. Joudrey, Ms. Colpitts found NS Victim Services unresponsive. She suggested that proactive, routine check-ins from Victim Services would have been “exceptionally beneficial ... because sometimes statuses can change along the way, and ... expecting people to reach out when they’re struggling isn’t always feasible or practical.”⁴² In Volume 4, *Community*, we discuss best practices for victim support after a mass casualty, including the advantage of proactive approaches.

Lisa Banfield also experienced problems in accessing services. After she was criminally charged, Ms. Banfield stopped receiving services from Cst. Bent. She was not provided with another RCMP liaison. Her experience is discussed in greater detail in Volume 3, *Violence*.

People out of province and out of country faced substantial hurdles in accessing NS Victim Services funding. For example, Crystal Mendiuk, who lives in Alberta,

described her and her family's experience as a "continual uphill battle."⁴³ Her entire family had "enormous ... difficulties in getting approved for the program," she said.

[W]e found it extremely difficult to utilize from afar. The documentation that was set out for the families with regards to, you know, the funding that was being made available was very confusing. Our family, across the board, you know – my other sister, my niece, my daughter, my parents, myself, all of us had an enormous amount of difficulties getting approved for the program.

A vast majority of that problem was they didn't have any approved vendors in Alberta that they could put into their system. So, it took my daughter and I probably eight months or sorry, eight weeks before we were able to actually get counselling. My sister, my mum, my niece, we all had the same problem and we all had the same issue.⁴⁴

In addition to the challenges of accessing funding for services from out of province, the family struggled to gain recognition that they required additional funding because they had lost three members of the Oliver / Tuck family.

At the outset of this section, we concluded that RCMP information services and NS Victim Services were not coordinated within an effective overall plan. Although NS Victim Services did design and implement navigation centres to facilitate access, there were still pronounced gaps in services. These gaps arose in part because, apart from the community-based navigation centres, their approach relied on existing service providers and access points. A failure to offer services on a proactive basis meant that those most affected were often left to navigate a complex system without support. Family members who resided outside of Nova Scotia faced additional barriers to services.

MAIN FINDING

Nova Scotia Victim Services did not fully meet the need for support services after the mass casualty. Gaps arose from the lack of proactive service provision and from limited navigation assistance. Support services were not adapted to address the needs and circumstances of those most affected, including the distinct needs of those who lived in Portapique. People residing outside of Nova Scotia faced additional hurdles to accessing provincially funded support services.

RCMP Public Communications Following the Mass Casualty

Introduction

In the days and weeks after the mass casualty, the province of Nova Scotia entered a state of shock. Members of the public looked to the RCMP and to civic leadership for reassurance and for information. They were to be disappointed by the RCMP's public communications on both counts; starting with the first press conference on April 19, 2020, and continuing until the federal and provincial governments announced a review of (and subsequent inquiry into) the response to the mass casualty. The RCMP response to the federal-provincial announcement of an independent review (and subsequent inquiry) was to stop sharing information almost entirely, on the basis that it was inappropriate to do so while a review or inquiry was ongoing.

In Volume 1, Context and Purpose, we described what we learned about how the general public response to the mass casualty was shaped, in part, by the RCMP's public communications about it. Immediately after the critical incident, many members of the public expressed goodwill toward the RCMP and other agencies involved in the emergency response. However, for many people, this goodwill evaporated over time and was replaced by distrust in the RCMP. In some quarters, this distrust grew into a more general distrust of public institutions. To some extent, this distrust continues today, as we write this report. Others were and continue to be sympathetic to the challenges faced by the police and other emergency services in responding to an incident of this magnitude.

We also recognize that the mass casualty took place in the early stages of a global pandemic, which was a period of great uncertainty for many people; and against the backdrop of a larger climate of distrust in police and institutions, including mistrust related to a growing understanding of their role in perpetuating systemic racism, colonialism, and sexism. On May 25, 2020, George Floyd was murdered in police custody by a police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This crime was video-recorded by eyewitnesses and shared around the globe, galvanizing an already strong mistrust into a powerful movement for greater police accountability. We return to the broader context of calls for police reform in Volume 4, Community, and Volume 5, Policing. We cannot parse out and attribute what portion of

public distrust in police, and in particular the RCMP, can be directly attributed to the events of April 18 and 19, 2020, and to the public communications that followed the mass casualty, but we conclude that the mistrust is real and that it persists.

This section provides an overview of the RCMP's public communications following the mass casualty and identifies some examples of where information was withheld unnecessarily or miscommunicated. We also note concerns about what information was presented and, at times, how information was communicated. The immediate context for the RCMP's decisions about what information to share was the new and ongoing H-Strong investigation and the RCMP's stated respect for the privacy of grieving families. But as we saw in the last section, families were eager for answers too.

Our findings on the RCMP's public communications after the mass casualty are presented in five parts. The first section sets out the legal and policy constraints on public communications by police agencies. The second section takes an in-depth look at the content of the media releases and press conferences during the initial post-incident phase, from April 19 to 28, 2020, before discussing the meeting of April 28 called by Commr. Lucki with personnel from national headquarters and H Division. The third outlines the RCMP's shift to providing periodic briefings. The fourth comments on the RCMP's announcement concerning reviews of its critical incident response. A fifth section highlights the evidence provided by Ms. Lia Scanlan, who was the RCMP H Division director of communications during at this time, and by H Division Criminal Operations Officer C/Supt. Chris Leather. It also contains our main findings about the public communications strategy.

Legal and Policy Constraints on RCMP Public Communications

The RCMP's public communications are constrained by legal obligations and some of its own policies. The RCMP's *Operational Manual*, ch. 27.2 on Media Releases, instructs RCMP members to “[e]nsure information released to the media does not ... interfere with an investigation,” “result in injury, injustice, or embarrassment to the victims or the accused,” or “contravene the provisions of the *RCMP Act*, *Privacy Act*, *Access to Information Act*, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* or *Canadian Human Rights Act*.”⁴⁵

Within the RCMP policy, focused attention is placed on the federal *Privacy Act*, RSC 1985, c P-21. For example, media communications cannot include information about a person’s marital status, employment, criminal history, or medical status, or the relationship between individuals. These provisions safeguard individual privacy and are not within the control of the RCMP. In *R v Barton*, 2019 SCC 33, the Supreme Court confirmed that deceased persons retain the right to privacy, and so these protections also apply to those whose lives were taken.⁴⁶ The RCMP’s public communications were also restricted in what they could say about matters that had been referred to the Serious Incident Response Team (SiRT). SiRT independently investigates all serious incidents that arise from the actions of police in Nova Scotia. Finally, RCMP policy prohibits the release of information about the cause of death before an autopsy is conducted and the cause of death is determined by a medical examiner.

Initial Phase: April 19–28, 2020

The RCMP H Division held five press conferences in the first 10 days after the mass casualty. In this section, we describe each of these press conferences and then supply an analysis of the discrepancies and shortcomings of these public communications. We also discuss the meeting of April 28, 2020, at which Commr. Lucki expressed her frustration and disappointment with H Division’s public communications and internal briefing practices about the mass casualty.

First Press Conference: 6:00 pm on April 19, 2020

Public information officer Cpl. Lisa Croteau opened the press briefing and announced that Nova Scotia RCMP commanding officer A/Commr. Lee Bergerman would deliver a statement about the events of April 18 and 19, following which Nova Scotia RCMP criminal operations officer C/Supt. Chris Leather would provide an update on the criminal investigation.

In her statement, A/Commr. Bergerman acknowledged that “many families are experiencing the loss of a loved one.” She notified the public of the death of RCMP Cst. Heidi Stevenson, the injury of another member, and the death of “many victims outside the RCMP.” A/Commr. Bergerman paid tribute to Cst. Stevenson and

her family and colleagues. She identified that “[c]ountless families are in mourning today. Each person who lost their life had family and friends and they too will need support.” She called on Nova Scotians to “come together” and “support one another.”⁴⁷

C/Supt. Leather then provided an update on the criminal investigation. He began by offering his condolences to the family of Cst. Stevenson and to the families of all the victims. He also acknowledged, but did not name, the member who was injured (Cst. Chad Morrison) and his family. C/Supt. Leather said the RCMP’s focus was “to gather all evidence and information about these incidents and to get answers to many unanswered questions.”⁴⁸

C/Supt. Leather described the RCMP’s initial response to the mass casualty and the search for the perpetrator. He confirmed that the perpetrator was deceased and that the matter of the perpetrator’s death had been referred to SiRT. He said the perpetrator was not known to the police and that it was too early in the investigation for the RCMP to discuss the perpetrator’s possible motive. He noted that during the mass casualty, the perpetrator “was armed,” appeared to have been wearing “a portion of a police uniform,” and was driving “at one point a mock-up or a vehicle that was made to look like an RCMP police cruiser.”⁴⁹ In response to journalists’ questions, C/Supt. Leather stated that “in excess of 10 people have been killed” in “several locations across the province.”⁵⁰ He did not answer, or did not give accurate answers to, many of the questions posed including information about crime scenes outside of Portapique, the perpetrator’s past interactions with police and history of violence, and the number of people injured.

Analysis

The first press conference was problematic in several respects. First, the tribute paid to Cst. Stevenson and her family and colleagues, and the highlight placed on the fact that another member had been injured, stood in stark contrast to the lack of information provided about other victims of the mass casualty. The RCMP also released information that there were at least 10 victims, even though they had then confirmed 17 victims. Director Scanlan explained this decision to the Commission:

So, in those early days, the body count would change, and you just have to land on a number to go with for the press conference, knowing you’re

going to be providing an update the next day. So that's why 10 was decided upon.⁵¹

After the press conference, media requests for information about the number of victims continued to roll in, but despite the availability of more accurate information, the opportunity was not taken to correct the number. Director Scanlan's plan was to release information at press conferences rather than to individual journalists, and she had determined that the next day's press conference, on April 20, would start with information about the number of victims. This inaccuracy about the crucial fact of the number of victims was compounded by other inaccuracies in the responses to media questions. The RCMP prioritized the integrity of its investigation over providing answers to the public, but the public wanted answers right away. Members of the media sought to fulfill their responsibility to obtain those answers for the public.

H Division RCMP's public communications strategy was undermined by a lack of coordination with national headquarters. Commr. Brenda Lucki participated in one-on-one interviews with different media outlets throughout the evening hours of April 19 and into April 20. During these interviews, Commr. Lucki provided updates on the rising death toll of victims, directly contradicting the information that had been provided by the Nova Scotia RCMP at its press conference. This resulted in different news outlets receiving and reporting different information about the number of victims throughout the evening of April 19. Media outlets that had not received direct updates from Commr. Lucki started emailing RCMP communications personnel to confirm the numbers they were seeing reported by other outlets.

By 8:00 pm, Commr. Lucki had confirmed to the Canadian Press that 17 people had died. At 10:15 pm CBC News aired a pre-filmed interview with Commr. Lucki, where she shared that "there were 13 victims so far plus the suspect that are deceased." She also shared information about the perpetrator's motive, again taking a different tack than the one taken by C/Supt. Leather. In an interview with CBC journalist Ian Hanomansing on the evening of April 19, Commr. Lucki said in response to a question about the perpetrator's motive:

I believe that at the beginning that there was an initial motivation. And then I think that it turned to randomness. And our investigation will tell that. We don't know for sure. And we're going to have to do a lot of work

on finding the motivation, a lot of background, a lot of profiling type of events and a lot of crime scene processing.⁵²

Director Scanlan attempted to ensure a more coordinated effort between the provincial and national public communications strategies. It took several days for these problems to be addressed. But by then, damage had already been done.

Second Press Conference: 2:00 pm on April 20, 2020

The second H Division press briefing commenced at 2:00 pm on April 20. C/Supt. Leather named Cst. Chad Morrison as the member who had been injured, and shared that Cst. Morrison was recovering at home from gunshot wounds. He confirmed there were “in excess of 19 victims” and that this total was expected to rise as RCMP members continued to process the crime scenes that had structure fires. He said that the victims, some of whom were known to the perpetrator, were “both men and women, and all were adults.”⁵³ C/Supt. Leather also provided information about the perpetrator’s replica RCMP cruiser and police uniforms, the use of Twitter as opposed to the emergency Alert Ready system, next of kin notifications, and the sequence of the perpetrator’s activities during the mass casualty. He added that the RCMP had made two further referrals to SiRT, in addition to the referral regarding the perpetrator’s death, as the investigation progressed. C/Supt. Leather was pressed for information about the SiRT referrals but did not provide information other than to say one involved the “final take down of the suspect.”⁵⁴

A journalist asked C/Supt. Leather if the mass casualty “began at the home of the suspect’s spouse and partner, and whether she has passed away?” He replied: “I’m not at liberty to discuss that ... it’s too early for me to confirm that.”⁵⁵ As for other relationships between the victims and the perpetrator, RCMP and government officials shared different degrees of information over the course of the day.

C/Supt. Leather was imprecise in his response to questions about emergency alerting. He said, “I believe there was an Amber Alert that went out at some point.” Cpl. Croteau corrected him, saying: “No, we just used the Twitter and Facebook just because it was unfolding. We were in contact with the province about it though, but it just never ... We apprehended the suspect prior to - .”⁵⁶

Analysis

C/Supt. Leather’s statement and response to questions from the press contained a number of inaccurate statements, including that all the fatalities were adults. (Emily Tuck, aged 17, was not an adult.)

The emergency alerting issue would have a particularly strong impact on the RCMP’s credibility in the days and weeks to follow. Draft statements prepared by Director Scanlan’s team on April 21 address the RCMP’s internal knowledge about the use of the Alert Ready system during the mass casualty. The draft statements, which were to be released under C/Supt. Leather’s name, stated that the RCMP “did not consider the option of using the public emergency alert system” until the morning of Sunday, April 19.⁵⁷ That line was removed from the draft before the statement was released to the public on April 22. The media continued to press the RCMP for information about this decision in the ensuing days. Different opinions were expressed among RCMP executive leadership about how to respond to the “incessant questions” about emergency alerting.⁵⁸ In subsequent statements, the RCMP told the public only that it had been in the process of preparing an emergency alert when the perpetrator was shot and killed.

Questions about the number of victims and their identity arose repeatedly. On April 21, the RCMP published an update on its Facebook page. The text of the post originally stated that there were 23 victims. Four hours after it was posted, the RCMP edited the number of victims reported in the Facebook post to 22 victims, and wrote a comment on the Facebook post saying: “The above post was edited to reflect that there are 22 victims. The suspect ... also died in the incident.”⁵⁹

Also on April 21, the RCMP clarified in a written statement that one victim was 17 years old and the rest were adults. They did not provide the names of the victims, but said they continued to work with the Nova Scotia Medical Examiner Service to identify victims and notify their next of kin.

Third Press Conference: 4:30 pm on April 22, 2020

Cpl. Jennifer Clarke opened the Nova Scotia RCMP’s press briefing on April 22. She announced that A/Commr. Bergerman and C/Supt. Leather would provide an update on the events of April 18 and 19. A/Commr. Bergerman read a statement acknowledging the “pain and heartache” caused by the mass casualty. She said

that the RCMP continued to “thoroughly investigate” and acknowledged that community members have “many unanswered questions.”⁶⁰

C/Supt. Leather then delivered a statement that included information about the ongoing investigation, the emergency Alert Ready system, the chronology of the mass casualty, and the RCMP’s response. He confirmed that the perpetrator acted alone, adding that the RCMP continued to investigate whether anyone may have assisted the perpetrator leading up to the mass casualty.

After reading the statements in French, Cpl. Clarke opened the floor to questions from the media. By this time, reporters had carried out independent investigations and were posing more challenging questions. They asked about the use of Twitter during the mass casualty, the emergency Alert Ready system, the perpetrator’s police paraphernalia, the chronology, the perpetrator’s firearms, and the victims.

Media asked C/Supt. Leather when and how the RCMP first became aware that there was “a man in the province with a fake but real looking police car and a uniform.” He replied: “Those details came in their totality to us early in the morning of Sunday, after a key witness was located and interviewed. Prior to that time, we did not have all those details. The bulk of the details about our suspect came to us at that time.”⁶¹ C/Supt. Leather stated that this information came to the critical incident commander between 7 am and 8 am on Sunday, April 19. We explained in Chapter 2 that information about the perpetrator’s replica RCMP cruiser was shared by the first three 911 callers on the evening of April 18. As set out in Chapter 6, the RCMP first alerted the public that the perpetrator may have been disguised as a police officer, and driving a replica RCMP cruiser, in a tweet at 10:17 am on April 19.

In the April 22 press briefing, a journalist noted that the RCMP knew about at least one homicide by the time it issued its first tweet, but the tweet described the incident as a firearms complaint, “which sort of vastly undersold it.”⁶² The journalist asked if C/Supt. Leather was satisfied with the RCMP’s messaging on Twitter. C/Supt. Leather replied that he was “very satisfied with the messaging.” He said “the communications that were being provided were the best and clearest information that could be provided.”⁶³

The RCMP was also asked for a timeline of events. C/Supt. Leather responded that it was a “work in progress” and it would be “unfair and inappropriate” to give it out in its current state because errors can have a negative impact on the investigation, victims, and their families.⁶⁴

Analysis

By the third press conference, the media were providing more information to the public than they were receiving from the RCMP. The RCMP statements did not seem forthright and gave the impression that information was being withheld. This lack of transparency became increasingly apparent in contrast with the information presented by the press as a result of their own investigations. The apparent lack of reflection and inability to acknowledge the shortcomings of the RCMP's public communications during the critical incident was also problematic.

Later that day, the RCMP published some further details about the mass casualty and RCMP investigation in a statement from C/Supt. Leather. In our view, while this statement added some information, it was not adequately responsive to the questions posed during the press conference.

Fourth Press Conference: 11:00 am on April 24, 2020

At 11:00 am on April 24, Cpl. Clarke opened the press briefing and introduced Supt. Darren Campbell, who delivered a statement that was later posted on the RCMP's website. Supt. Campbell shared a timeline of the mass casualty and first responders' actions in Portapique, noting that "the initial complaint was of a shooting."⁶⁵ He described the incidents in three parts:

The first cluster was in the Portapique area on Saturday night. On Sunday, there was a second cluster of incidents in the areas of Wentworth, Glenholme, and Debert. And then, a third and final cluster of incidents were in the Shubenacadie area, Milford and in Enfield.⁶⁶

Supt. Campbell did not name the victims at the press briefing on April 24, and he did not discuss their relationships with the perpetrator other than to say some were known to the perpetrator. In response to journalists' questions about whether the perpetrator had a "hit list," Supt. Campbell said "there seems to be a trail of individuals who had had problems with [the perpetrator]."⁶⁷

In response to questions about the replica RCMP cruiser, Supt. Campbell said:

You know, I've been a police officer for almost 30 years now, and I can't imagine any more horrific set of circumstances when you're trying to search for someone that looks like you. The dangers that that causes. The complications that that causes. That obviously was an advantage that the suspect had on the police, that he had on the public[,] that he had on every person that he encountered through the course of his rampage.⁶⁸

Supt. Campbell told the media that multiple witnesses had come forward to the RCMP to report that they had seen the perpetrator with his replica RCMP cruiser and “several different types of police agency uniforms” before the mass casualty.⁶⁹ A CBC journalist said that “a former employer” of the perpetrator had told media that the perpetrator had informed a police officer about his replica RCMP cruiser in 2019, and that the perpetrator was instructed to keep it on a trailer off the road. The reporter asked Supt. Campbell what information the RCMP had about the perpetrator's replica RCMP cruiser before the mass casualty and how the RCMP had handled that information. Supt. Campbell said he was not aware of this information and asked the CBC's source to come forward and provide the information directly to the RCMP.⁷⁰

At the April 24 press briefing, a reporter asked Supt. Campbell whether the RCMP thought it was a mistake not to use the emergency Alert Ready system earlier in the mass casualty. Supt. Campbell answered that the critical incident command group believed they had the perpetrator contained in the perimeter they established in the Portapique area on April 18. The RCMP thought they had a “localized incident” and therefore an emergency alert was “not a consideration” at that time.⁷¹ However, the RCMP had continued to use Twitter updates when they learned the perpetrator was not contained in the Portapique perimeter on the morning of Sunday, April 19. The RCMP did not request the Nova Scotia Emergency Management Office (EMO) to issue an emergency alert until it was contacted by EMO at 11:14 am that morning.

At this press conference, Supt. Campbell also said, “So, you know, a full review is obviously done after every critical incident and that review will take place.”⁷² We discuss the fate of the after-action review later in this chapter and provide more detail in Volume 5, Policing.

Analysis

The RCMP public communications strategy changed at the fourth press conference. Fuller and more accurate information was provided and Supt. Campbell engaged with some of the criticisms of the RCMP critical incident response. However, misstatements still arose. For example, Supt. Campbell explained that the first-responding members in Portapique located a victim who had been shot and injured when they first arrived. (These details suggest that the victim in question was Andrew MacDonald.) Supt. Campbell said:

He did describe this vehicle as a vehicle that looked like a police vehicle. He also indicated to the responding officers that that vehicle was driving towards the beach and that there was one way in and out of the community. And it's important to note that.⁷³

As we explained in Chapter 2, Kate MacDonald had in fact advised Cst. Vicky Colford that there was an alternative way out of Portapique, and Cst. Colford shared this information by police radio at 10:48 pm on April 18. Mr. MacDonald also described a back way out of Portapique in the interview he gave to the RCMP at 5:00 am on April 19. On the evening of April 18, Cst. Aaron Patton shared the details provided by Mr. MacDonald by police radio, but did not mention any information about routes in and out of Portapique. We find that Mr. MacDonald did not make any statement that night that suggested that there was only one way in and out of Portapique. The RCMP suggestion that they were acting on information from local residents when they assumed that there were no alternative routes out of Portapique was simply not the case.

The statement also glossed over some information that was important to families and, likely, to community members. For instance, the RCMP shared that people were found deceased in “over seven locations” in Portapique.⁷⁴ The manner in which this information was shared implied that all these crime scenes were identified in the course of the initial critical incident response on April 18. However, as we have seen in this chapter, two of these crime scenes, involving five victims, were not located by RCMP until almost 5:00 pm on April 19.

Fifth Press Conference: 4:00 pm on April 28, 2020

At 4:00 pm on April 28, the RCMP held a press briefing at which Supt. Campbell provided an update on the investigation and information learned to date. The update was later posted to the RCMP's website.⁷⁵ Supt. Campbell began this press conference by recognizing that April 28 is the national day of honouring those who have died or been injured while working. He accordingly acknowledged Cst. Stevenson and Cst. Morrison. He also extended condolences to the families of the 22 victims of the mass casualty. Supt. Campbell recognized the investigation was a "significant endeavour" and acknowledged assistance from external agencies including the Canadian Armed Forces, the Halifax Regional Police (HRP), and the Canada Border Services Agency.⁷⁶

In his statement on April 28 and during the question-and-answer period with journalists, Supt. Campbell provided information about the RCMP's investigation on topics such as the perpetrator's access to police uniforms and decommissioned police vehicles and his movements during the mass casualty. He responded to questions on topics including the perpetrator's history of intimate partner violence, the role of misogyny in the mass casualty, and the RCMP's public communications during the mass casualty. He declined to provide further information about the firearms used by the perpetrator during the mass casualty, explaining:

I can't get into the details about those weapons outside of the fact that, as I stated on Friday, that the gunman was in possession of several semi-automatic handguns and two semi-automatic rifles. In terms of the calibre of those, I can't get into those details because the investigation is still active and ongoing.⁷⁷

Charles Hatch of the National Firearms Association asked a follow-up question: "was the murderer in possession of a so-called military style assault weapon?" Supt. Campbell replied "there was what would be considered a weapon that could be described that way, but I don't want to get into those details" due to the ongoing investigation. Mr. Hatch asked in follow-up whether this weapon had been used in the mass casualty, and Supt. Campbell confirmed that the perpetrator was seen "carrying a long barreled weapon" but that he could not yet answer that question.⁷⁸

Supt. Campbell's speaking remarks were accompanied by a link to maps he referenced to explain the perpetrator's movements during the mass casualty, which were posted to the RCMP's website on the same day.

Analysis

By the time of the RCMP's press conference on April 28, the media was actively investigating several issues potentially arising from the mass casualty, including public communications during the critical incident response and the role of misogyny and violence against women in the mass casualty. Media and the National Firearms Association were also pursuing more information about the types and origins of firearms used by the perpetrator in the mass casualty.

As is now widely known, after this press conference, Commr. Lucki called a meeting of H Division executive leadership and communications staff.

April 28 Meeting with RCMP National Headquarters

In Volume 5, Policing, we describe the circumstances and content of the April 28 meeting between Commr. Lucki, representatives of RCMP national headquarters, and senior H Division officers and personnel. In the days after the mass casualty, the strong public support initially expressed for the RCMP dwindled as media and public attention focused on the RCMP's failure to provide clear answers to fundamental questions about the mass casualty and its response. Minister Bill Blair (at that time the federal minister for public safety and emergency preparedness) and Minister Mark Furey (at that time the attorney general and minister of justice for Nova Scotia) expressed concern about the content and quality of the RCMP's public communications to Commr. Lucki and (in Minister Furey's case) to A/Commr. Bergerman and D/Commr. Brennan. It was appropriate for the ministers to have these conversations in their capacity as the responsible minister for the RCMP, federally and in Nova Scotia. It was also appropriate for these ministers and their staff to seek information about the mass casualty and the RCMP's response. In Volume 5, we explain the principle of police accountability to responsible ministers, and the limits of that principle.

Inside the RCMP, internal communication challenges persisted both between H Division and national headquarters, and within national headquarters. H Division was providing fewer internal briefings to national headquarters than expected given the scale of the mass casualty, and H Division appeared slow to provide information requested by national headquarters, including some information that had been requested by Minister Blair. National headquarters had offered additional

assistance to H Division, and H Division had requested additional assistance for some tasks, but public health measures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic made national headquarters hesitant to send additional communications staff to Nova Scotia. With hindsight, Commr. Lucki acknowledged that it took national headquarters too long to provide additional resources to the H Division communications unit:

[I]t's one thing for something to happen, but if you can't communicate it, the families deserve no less, the people in Nova Scotia deserve no less. Canadians want to know what was happening ...

They just didn't have the capacity, and we didn't provide them.⁷⁹

In other instances, H Division employees did provide information to national headquarters personnel, but national headquarters personnel did not convey this information to Commr. Lucki. A key example of the latter dynamic arose with respect to the question of whether Supt. Campbell would provide information about the perpetrator's firearms in the media briefing of April 28. Before the briefing took place, Ms. Scanlan advised D/Commr. Brennan that they would not include this information in the briefing. However, the director general of the National Communication Services mistakenly informed Commr. Lucki before the briefing that this information would be included. D/Commr. Brennan did not advise Commr. Lucki any differently based on his communications with Ms. Scanlan.

Commr. Lucki explained to the Commission that the meeting of April 28 reflected "a buildup of frustration"⁸⁰ about the problems with public and internal communications, and that the purpose of the meeting was to "outline my expectations. I wanted to outline where I felt things weren't going well."⁸¹ During the meeting, Commr. Lucki expressed her frustration and disappointment and suggested that the RCMP's inability to promptly deliver information to the responsible minister and the prime minister reflected poorly on the organization. She also emphasized that when the RCMP is not forthcoming with information, the public will look to other sources for answers.

Commr. Lucki specifically addressed the fact that information about the perpetrator's firearms had not been included in the press conference that day. She stated that she had received a request from the Minister's office as to whether that information would be forthcoming and had "shared with the Minister that in fact it was going to be included in the news release, and it wasn't."⁸² Ms. Scanlan advised Commr. Lucki that, more than two hours before the press conference, she had

advised D/Commr. Brennan what information the investigative team felt able to share. Commr. Lucki referred to firearms legislation in this context, identifying that legislation then proposed by the federal government “is supposed to actually help police.”⁸³ She requested an explanation for why she had been told that information about the perpetrator’s firearms would be included in the press conference, when that was incorrect. National headquarters staff explained that this had been a misunderstanding on their part.

We conclude in Volume 5, Policing, that Commr. Lucki’s audio-recorded remarks about the benefits to police of proposed firearms legislation were ill-timed and poorly expressed, but they were not partisan and they do not show that there had been attempted political interference. However, the April 28 meeting both reflected and contributed to the deterioration of the relationship between H Division and RCMP national headquarters after the mass casualty.

Periodic Briefings Begin

As the RCMP’s investigation continued, the RCMP provided periodic briefings, but on a less frequent basis compared to the initial period between April 19 and 28.

On May 11, 2020, the Nova Scotia RCMP issued a news release about its investigation into the mass casualty, which had been named Operation H-Strong. The statement said the investigation was

being led by the RCMP Major Crimes Unit (MCU) with the assistance of specialized resources from across the country, including crime analysts, digital forensic services, federal policing officers, forensic anthropologist, forensic identification and laboratory services, forensic pathologists, legal application supports, national weapons and enforcement support, special tactical operations, victim services, among many others.⁸⁴

The May 11 statement noted that the RCMP continued to explore many areas of investigation as it continued “to piece together the gunman’s movements, possible motivation and whether he received assistance leading up to the incidents.”⁸⁵ RCMP investigators had already interviewed 500 witnesses and were continuing to conduct interviews. In addition, the statement said “[t]he special tactical operations team has completed its ground searches, and all 17 scenes and search areas

have been released.”⁸⁶ The statement highlighted a few of the key findings of the investigation to that point, including that:

- they believed the perpetrator used an accelerant to set fires during the mass casualty, and they knew from witness statements that the perpetrator had a significant supply of gasoline at his home in Portapique;
- they had identified the supplier of the RCMP decals on the perpetrator’s car, and the business and individual involved were both co-operating with police; and
- the perpetrator was in possession of two semi-automatic handguns and two semi-automatic rifles. One of the guns had been traced to Canada, and the remaining guns were believed to have been obtained in the United States. Investigations were ongoing in this regard.⁸⁷

The statement also said forensic identification officers had searched the underground of the perpetrator’s property in Portapique and did not recover anything of interest to the investigation. In fact, on April 20, the RCMP had found ammunition cans containing large amounts of cash at the perpetrator’s cottage.

The statement said the RCMP’s Behavioural Analysis Unit was conducting a “psychological autopsy” of the perpetrator “with the intent of gathering insights into why he committed the acts of violence. This includes an analysis of his personality, past behaviour and how he related to others.”⁸⁸

As the press conferences continued, members of the press had many questions about the perpetrator’s violent past, community knowledge, and previous reports to the police. Following a pattern set during the first few media briefings, journalists appeared to be ahead of the RCMP investigation in these matters. Questions also began to be posed about the level of communication between the RCMP and other Nova Scotia police agencies during the mass casualty, including “an apparent lack of requests from the RCMP to other Nova Scotia police agencies for assistance on April 18th and the 19th.”⁸⁹

On July 30, 2020, the RCMP published a statement by the Nova Scotia RCMP to provide context to information relating to the H-Strong investigation that had been recently released to the media in an unredacted form. The release commented on some of the information that was unsealed and released from the Information to Obtain documents.

The RCMP stated the information was “from one individual who was interviewed and provided information which described the gunman as someone who was involved in the importation and trafficking of illicit drugs and firearms.”⁹⁰ The statement went on to explain that as part of H-Strong, investigators had conducted close to 700 witness interviews and only this one witness had come forward with information that the gunman was actively and recently involved in the importation and trafficking of illegal drugs. No other persons interviewed of the close to 700, including those closest to the gunman, had provided similar information that proved the gunman was an illegal drug smuggler and or drug trafficker. The statement concluded: “Therefore we cannot corroborate this information.”⁹¹

Announcements Concerning Reviews of the RCMP Response

At the May 11, 2020, press conference, C/Supt. Leather also announced to the public that two separate and independent investigations into the RCMP critical incident response were underway. Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), an agency that investigates any workplace occupational injury or death at federally regulated workplaces, would undertake the first review. It would take “an in-depth look at overall response including training and equipment, communications, and tactics of the RCMP.”⁹² The second would be undertaken by the internal Hazardous Occurrence Investigation Team (HOIT), created to investigate the incident from a *Canada Labour Code* perspective. C/Supt. Leather explained, “The Hazardous Occurrence Investigative Team will also identify any occupational causal factors and corrective measures that can be implemented.”⁹³

C/Supt. Leather pledged that the RCMP would participate fully in these independent investigations. In addition, he said there were “discussions underway to determine the best approach regarding a formal comprehensive review.”⁹⁴

On July 23, 2020, federal Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Bill Blair and Nova Scotia Justice Minister and Attorney General Mark Furey announced a joint review into the events of April 18 and 19, 2020. On July 28, 2020, following public pressure led by the families of persons whose lives were taken by the perpetrator during the mass casualty, this review was converted to a public inquiry, the Mass Casualty Commission. (The Commission’s formation is discussed in Volume 1, Context and Purpose, and Volume 7, Process.)

On December 4, 2020, the RCMP published a statement by Supt. Campbell on its website. The statement announced criminal charges against three individuals (James Blair Banfield, Lisa Diana Banfield, and Brian Brewster) accused of providing ammunition to the perpetrator. The statement noted that, to “ensure a fair trial for those who have been charged and with the public inquiry now ongoing,” the “RCMP will respectfully refrain from further commenting on these matters outside of the inquiry.”⁹⁵ The impact of this charging decision on Ms. Banfield, and on the Commission process, is discussed in Volume 3, Violence.

Findings About the RCMP’s Public Communications

After the mass casualty, the RCMP’s public communications strategy mirrored many of the systemic limitations of the critical incident response that we have identified throughout this volume. These public communications demonstrated a lack of strategy; a failure to share vital information, including about the number of victims (a list of victims has not provided by the RCMP to this day); and a lack of coordination between the Nova Scotia RCMP and national headquarters.

Communications are a reflection of the operations plan. The RCMP had no clear operational plan to address public safety concerns arising from the mass casualty. Importantly, RCMP communications underestimated the public’s need for information as a means to regain a sense of public safety and security. This should have been the clear priority, but it was not.

In hindsight, both Director Scanlan and C/Supt. Leather recognized that the public communications strategy employed following the mass casualty had not served the public interest well. C/Supt. Leather agreed that the RCMP should keep the public informed about major cases, and that providing timely and accurate information builds public trust. In short, he agreed that if the RCMP has key information about an event like the mass casualty, “we should do our best to release the information to the public.”⁹⁶

MAIN FINDING

After the mass casualty, the RCMP public communications strategy did not provide timely and accurate information about the mass casualty and the ensuing investigation.

Reviews of the Critical Incident Response

Introduction

Learning and adaptation are key practices for strengthening institutions, and especially for improving decision-making in high-stress situations. We highlight the conclusion reached by Dr. Bjørn Ivar Kruke, professor of risk management and societal safety at the University of Stavanger, Norway, in his expert report:

The willingness and commitment to learn from a traumatic mass casualty event can be decisive for building future capacity in response organizations and for rebuilding or even enhancing the relationship of trust between the population and the authorities. Learning is in many ways about changing behaviour based on the recommendations in after-action reports. In change, we see that learning is a priority.⁹⁷

During our roundtable on Critical Incident Preparedness, the Commission explored some of the best practices in post-event debriefing and after-action reviews. Several of the experts engaged in that dialogue emphasized the many learning opportunities that arise both in modest critical incident responses and in bigger events. One important point was that learning aspects can be found in all levels of the response. There is value in prompt and relatively informal debriefing and in more comprehensive after-event reviews.

In the final section of this volume, we set out an overview of the debriefings and after-action reports carried out after the mass casualty. The first part provides an overview of reviews of the RCMP critical incident response. Several teams within the RCMP have carried out after-action reviews. These include the H Division Emergency Response Team (ERT), the Emergency Medical Response Team (EMRT), and the OCC's review of response to critical incidents. We also examine the fate of the internal after-action review announced by the RCMP in its public statement on May 11, 2020, and the reviews carried out by Employment and Social Development Canada, the RCMP's Hazardous Occurrence Investigation Team, and the Serious Incident Response Team.

Some of the other agencies that contributed to the emergency response also completed debriefings or after-action reviews. We conclude this section with an overview of the learning opportunities undertaken by a number of organizations: the review of Emergency Health Services (EHS) of the Medical Communications Centre, Halifax Regional Police's review of its critical incident command, Nova Scotia Health Authority's review of the site lockdown at Colchester East Hants Health Centre, and the response report of the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON).

Internal RCMP H Division After-Action Reports

RCMP Emergency Medical Response Team

The RCMP's EMRT prepared an After Action Report dated July 4, 2020. Cpl. Duane Ivany, the H Division EMRT coordinator, prepared this report for the RCMP national Tactical Medicine Program and Critical Incident Program in Ottawa. It provides a timeline and summary of EMRT's involvement throughout the mass casualty, followed by comments on what went well and what could have been done better.

The report concludes that EMRT had limited resources, both in terms of staff and in not having a dedicated vehicle capable of transporting members and gear and extricating an injured person. During the incident response, EHS could not attend scenes until the perpetrator was known to be elsewhere. Communications challenges prevented EMRT from providing updates to EHS, and EMRT members were uncertain as to which protocols applied. The report recommends that two members be scheduled for paid on-call, since EMRT members are required to respond to a critical incident with at least two members. As well, EMRT should have a designated vehicle that is equipped to support both the ERT and Special Tactical Operations. The report also recommends that an EHS paramedic operations supervisor should attend the critical incident command post in certain incidents. This would allow immediate and direct communication between the RCMP, EMRT, and EHS. For smaller incidents, a mutual aid channel between the RCMP, EMRT, and EHS should be considered. EMRT training on mass casualty events should be revised to include mass casualties in a geographically diffuse area.

In his interview with the Mass Casualty Commission, Cpl. Ivany indicated that the EMRT did get some new equipment after this report was submitted, but that he hoped it was only an interim solution and more resources were still to come.

H Division ERT

Cpl. Tim Mills drafted an H Division ERT After Action Report, which appears to have been authored by the H Division ERT as a whole. The undated report provides a timeline and summary of operational response for each scene and the ERT's involvement, followed by a list of best practices, operational gaps, and investigational gaps. We explain in Volume 5, Policing, that the normal protocols for finalizing and submitting this report were not followed.

A number of best practices are identified for each scene, as well as operational and investigative gaps. Best practices include the availability and use of resources, interoperability between division RCMP and ERT, and appropriate training, including Immediate Action Rapid Deployment and Technical Casualty Management training. Operational and investigative gaps include poor communication, limited human resources, lack of RCMP air support and other resources, and gaps in situational awareness. The report recommends a light armoured vehicle that is more mobile, as the tactical armoured vehicle was too heavy to use during a mobile search.

In his interview with the Mass Casualty Commission, Cpl. Mills indicated that the report was never finalized or forwarded up the chain of command when he left the RCMP. Insp. Don Moser, in his Mass Casualty Commission interview, confirmed that this report was never approved or completed but was sent to national headquarters in draft form.

H Division RCMP Summary Report: Wellness Assessment

Senior RCMP leaders in national headquarters engaged Quintet Consulting to conduct a wellness assessment of H Division leadership. It is summarized in the *Summary Report: Wellness Assessment*, dated September 30, 2021. The purpose of the assessment was to identify factors affecting morale and issues of concern in the work environment within H Division. The stated objective of this process

was for affected employees to feel heard and supported, senior management to be informed of real and perceived issues, and recommendations to be made for constructive ways forward. The team conducted 24 interviews with H Division management. A wellness survey was also circulated, with results to be analyzed and reported after this report's completion. Quintet did not evaluate the veracity of statements or interviewees' credibility.

The report documents that before the mass casualty, H Division members had concerns about the legal and administrative framework in the province, weak leadership, and operational and emotional stress caused by the pandemic. During the mass casualty, H Division managers had concerns about trust and leadership from national headquarters. After the mass casualty, there were concerns about the worsening relationship between H Division and headquarters, relationships with media, and ongoing mental health support. The report makes short-, medium- and long-term recommendations to national headquarters, including reviewing and sharing the report, providing support to the incoming H Division commanding officer, developing a mental wellness follow-up, funding professional support for H Division executive leadership, developing procedures for any future mass casualties, and distinguishing between issues caused by the mass casualty and the ordinary course of duty. The report also advises national headquarters to direct H Division to develop an onboarding package for officers with information specific to policing in Nova Scotia.

In her interview with the Mass Casualty Commission, Commr. Lucki indicated that she received and read the wellness assessment report shortly before travelling to Nova Scotia in the summer of 2022 and that when she read it she "was wishing [she] had seen it a lot earlier."⁹⁸ In his interview with the Commission, Insp. Moser stated that he and other H Division management who participated in the wellness assessment did not see this report until the summer of 2022, despite asking for updates. In her testimony at the public proceedings, A/Commr. Bergerman indicated that she had requested support after several senior officers came to her with mental health needs. She had hoped that strategies and coping mechanisms would be provided for those members, but instead this assessment was pursued. In Volume 5, Policing, we analyze the Quintet report, the circumstances in which it was commissioned, and the reception of the report in greater detail.

RCMP After-Action Reviews

An after-action review is a process used to assess the quality of an institution's work on a project or during an incident, in whole or in part. It is designed to help the institution and its employees understand what happened, evaluate the institution's work, and identify gaps and areas for improvement. When those who were involved in the work being evaluated are engaged in an after-action review, the process secures the additional benefits of building operational debriefing skills, fostering organizational learning, and establishing a culture of continuous improvement.

Post-action Operational Debrief

Operational debriefings are distinct from psychological debriefings. In the former, the focus is on the operational aspects of an institutional response. In the latter, the focus is on the health and well-being of employees who may require psychological support after performing demanding work. The RCMP held psychological debriefings for most of the RCMP members who were involved in the critical incident response. (We heard of some instances in which psychological debriefings were delayed because the RCMP list of involved members was incomplete.) However, very few members participated in any form of operational debriefing in the days and weeks after the mass casualty.

At 2:10 pm on April 19, 2020, some members of the command group including critical incident commanders, Insp. Rob Bell, Acting Insp. Stephen (Steve) Halliday, S/Sgt. Allan (Al) Carroll, and S/Sgt. Allan (Addie) MacCallum met with Supt. Campbell at Bible Hill detachment. Risk managers did not participate in this meeting. Supt. Campbell also met with the Major Crime Unit Command Triangle, investigative needs, and Forensic Identification Services. As may be expected at this very early post-incident stage, these meetings focused on providing Supt. Campbell with a more thorough briefing on the critical incident response and assigning tasks for the days ahead. They were in no way a systematic operational debriefing, nor would it have been appropriate to conduct one at that time.

Some units also conducted operational debriefings as a matter of course. For example, Cpl. Croteau advised us that the Strategic Communications Unit conducted debriefings after each press conference in the early days after the mass

casualty: “just what went well, what didn’t go well, what ... what can we improve the next day.”⁹⁹

While these early meetings were important, they did not constitute systematic reviews of the operational decision-making or other aspects of the critical incident response of April 18 and 19, 2020. In Volume 5, Policing, we explain the value of operational debriefing and examine the policy gaps and circumstances that led to a failure to conduct operational debriefings after the mass casualty.

Use of Force Reporting

Since 2010, the RCMP has required its members to report on intervention options used in interactions with members of the public. A Subject Behaviour / Officer Response (SB/OR) reporting form assists RCMP members to “properly articulat[e]” the circumstances when force is used or threatened.¹⁰⁰ The SB/OR form captures occurrence information; environment; situational factors; what substances and weapons were present; a description of the subject’s behaviour and the officer’s corresponding response; injuries, if any, to the subject and the officer; and a short description of how the event unfolded.

An SB/OR report is mandatory for all members who apply or display:

- Physical control hard, intermediate weapons, firearms, police service dog, specialty munitions and/or other (weapon of opportunity);
- Physical control soft resulting in an injury to the subject, member, or other person. “Physical control soft” are control techniques include escorting and/or come-along techniques, joint locks, and non-resistant handcuffing, which have a lower probability of causing injury.¹⁰¹

The SB/OR reports are one aspect of the RCMP’s supervision framework. The reports are reviewed at the supervisory level, and further review and oversight is provided at the divisional levels where the incident occurred. The SB/OR reports are periodically reviewed on a national basis or audited for accuracy and adherence to policy. The RCMP states SB/OR data allows for evidence-based decision-making for the development of policy, training, and equipment.

Several community members reported to us that on April 19, 2020, during the RCMP's critical incident response, RCMP members had raised or displayed firearms at them. For example, Michaela Scott said that Cst. Fahie and Cst. Coleman raised their weapons at her. Dan Jenkins also told us that Cst. Brenna Counter had raised her firearm at him. The Onslow fire hall shooting also falls within the SB/OR framework.

The only SB/OR report provided to the Commission related to the incident at the Enfield Big Stop, in which RCMP members shot and killed the perpetrator.

Operational Communications Centre Review

The OCC created a document titled "OCC Response to Critical Incidents – Enhancements and Initiatives." The document lists the initiatives taken since the mass casualty as well as recommendations from the OCC commander. The undated document states:

[S]ince the Nova Scotia Mass Shooting, the Operational Communication Centre has been reviewing our Standard Operating Procedures and Practices to ensure they are meeting and/or exceeding Division and National Standards and to ensure that H Division employees are as prepared as possible and have all the tools they need to do the job they do.¹⁰²

The recommendations speak to interoperability and radio communications. Regarding radio, the report recommends that the RCMP should have GPS-enabled portable radios and all members should be required to log in with the OCC. Further, TMR2 (Trunked Mobile Radio 2 system) training should be done annually, and all members should complete training on the mobile work stations and be required to regularly recertify.

Recommendations promoting interoperability include requiring OCC staff and risk managers to complete active threat and critical incident training with H Division members. Also, the OCC should be staffed with a criminal intelligence analyst during a critical incident. Further, the report suggests that all police agencies should have a way to distribute information, including photos, and the ability to query files. Interoperability should be regularly tested, and officer safety bulletins should be stored and retained, and searchable, during a critical incident. The OCC

should also work with the Nova Scotia Emergency Management Office to develop protocols for responding to a significant incident like an active shooter.

The document also recommends that a post-incident review be conducted.

Hazardous Occurrence Investigation Team Review

The HOIT is an internal review process created by the RCMP to investigate an incident from a *Canada Labour Code* perspective. This review will also identify any occupational causal factors and corrective measures that can be implemented. It was announced in May 2020 and is still ongoing. The RCMP asserted a claim of privilege over records related to the HOIT review. The Commission does not know the scope of the review, or whether any interim findings have been made or measures implemented.

The Idea of a Critical Incident Response Review

During the early press conferences following the mass casualty, both Supt. Campbell and C/Supt. Leather suggested that the RCMP would carry out a full review of the critical incident response. Members of the RCMP H Division executive leadership told us that they had wanted to carry out this review, but by October 2022, when we closed our public proceedings, no review had been implemented. The Commission sought answers to why the after-action review was not carried out, but we did not receive a clear or satisfactory explanation. We examine the evidence we heard about an after-action review in Volume 5, Policing. Our analysis of the documentary record and answers given by executive leaders to our questions about this review suggest that the delay was a consequence of disagreement among executive leadership about whether to conduct a review.

Commr. Lucki was also asked in testimony before the Commission to account for the RCMP's failure to conduct an after-action review. She replied that many people within the organization were looking at the critical incident response, but that the RCMP was also holding back on implementing changes out of respect for the Commission's process. She agreed that this delay had implications, for example, because basic and ongoing training had not been adapted to reflect lessons that might be learned from the mass casualty.

We conclude that an after-action review should have been undertaken in the aftermath of the mass casualty. This type of review should be mandated by national policy and not left to the discretion of individual officers. Operational effectiveness and public trust are both served when after-action reviews are undertaken expeditiously, so that improvements can be identified and put into effect. Operational debriefing is also important for RCMP members and agencies involved in a critical incident response. After-action reviews can help identify needs of personnel and communities affected and ensure attention and resources are dedicated to attending to those needs.

We note that the RCMP is reported to be launching an after-action report quite soon after its response in Saskatchewan to the James Smith Cree Nation mass casualty, as should have happened in Nova Scotia.

MAIN FINDING

The RCMP did not undertake an after-action review of its response to the mass casualty.

External Reviews of RCMP Actions

Employment and Social Development Canada Review

The ESDC review process was initiated in May 2020 and is still ongoing.

Serious Incident Response Team

The Serious Incident Response Team (SiRT) conducted two investigations arising from the critical incident response. One related to the Onslow fire hall shooting and the other related to the police shooting of the perpetrator. In both cases, SiRT concluded that there was no basis to lay charges against the involved RCMP members. We discuss SiRT's work in more detail in Volume 5, Policing.

Reviews Undertaken by Other Agencies

Many agencies were involved in the critical incident response on April 18 and 19, 2020. The Commission received information on after-action reviews undertaken by four of these agencies. We present brief overviews of these reports in alphabetical order: Emergency Health Services' review of the Medical Communications Centre, Halifax Regional Police's review of its critical incident command, Nova Scotia Health's review of the site lockdown at Colchester East Hants Health Centre, and the Victorian Order of Nurses' response report. These summaries are provided to acknowledge these initiatives and to promote the sharing of information about the approaches taken by a range of different agencies and the lessons they have learned.

Emergency Health Services Medical Communications Centre

EHS Medical Communications Centre conducted an after-action review and published the report "Major Incident After-Action Report: Portapique Active Shooter 18-19 April 2020." The undated report does not specify its process or methodology, but does note that staff were invited to an operational debriefing after the incident.¹⁰³

The EHS report lists the performance gaps identified by the involved staff who attended the debriefing. These gaps fall into five categories: disaster management protocol adherence, Medical Communications Centre staffing complement, command and control, human resource management, and other. The report then summarizes the staff members' ideas for preparing for and responding to a similar incident in the future. The recommendations are divided into three categories: planning and preparation, incident response, and interagency co-operation.

Under planning and preparation, suggestions include developing an agency reaction plan for active shooter incidents as well as a policy for paramedic station security and lockdown procedures. Further, active shooter incidents should be added to the list of code yellow incidents. Finally, Medical Communications Centre staff should have training for active shooter incidents, and there should be more opportunities for practical training for disaster response.

Under incident response, the recommendations include locking down the operational area immediately during an active shooter event. Further, staff should use

cellphones or tablets to communicate because EHS radios are not encrypted. During the critical incident, management should consider requiring or requesting additional staff to report for work to relieve affected crews. The report suggests that management should also consider requiring a mandatory critical incident debriefing for those involved.

Finally, under interagency co-operation, the report recommends that the responding agencies' communication centres have an open line of communication during a critical incident and that there should be joint training between the agencies to promote better working relationships.

Halifax Regional Police Critical Incident Command: After-Action Report

Supt. Andrew Matthews, the HRP level II critical incident commander, completed what appears to be a standardized form or reporting tool on May 12, 2020.

The report notes that Halifax Regional Police were beginning to deploy a critical incident response based on the possibility that the perpetrator was heading toward Halifax Regional Municipality. However, the perpetrator was stopped at Enfield before HRP Emergency Response Team was engaged. Under the sections "what worked well" and "what needs improvement," the author notes, "no techniques deployed."¹⁰⁴ However, the report notes a number of operational and administrative concerns, including difficulty with technology and communication. The report also identifies that there had been uncertainty as to where the transition would occur from the RCMP to the HRP.

Nova Scotia Health Authority: Colchester East Hants Health Centre Lockdown

NSHA conducted a review and completed an after-action report titled "Site Lockdown - CEHHC After Action Report / Improvement Plan."¹⁰⁵ The purpose of the undated report is to summarize the timeline, lessons learned, and recommendations for improvement from when the CEHHC went into lockdown on April 18/19, 2020.¹⁰⁶ The after-action review involved one-on-one interviews with

key responders and leaders and small group meetings. Further, all staff were given an opportunity to participate in an online survey.

The NSHA report identifies primary areas for improvement under the categories of notification, designated entrances, and threat assessment process. Under notification, the report finds that notifying specific units and staff groups worked well, but incoming staff were not properly notified. It recommends that a process for notifying other sites and templates for messaging and notifying staff be developed. The report also notes that the designated entrance was far from staff parking, which required staff to walk longer distances outside. Further, the sign-in process at the designated entrance created a backlog at that entrance. The report recommends clarifying or revising the process for assigning a designated entrance and conducting lockdown drills that include shift change scenarios. Finally, the threat assessment process would be improved if a lockdown checklist or template was available and if there was greater education and awareness about the available resources and process for a lockdown.

Victorian Order of Nurses: Response Report

On October 23, 2020, the Victorian Order of Nurses published “Response Report to the Nova Scotia Critical Incident,” the purpose of which was to evaluate and improve the processes in place for responding to a similar incident.¹⁰⁷ VON employees Kristen Beaton and Heather O’Brien were victims of the mass casualty, and Ms. Beaton was on shift when she was killed.

The report reviews four areas relating to incident response – sources of information, notification of employees, incident management, and workplace safety – and makes findings in each area. It does not provide details about its methodology but does note that staff interviews were conducted.

Regarding sources of information, the VON report notes that because of a lack of information directly from the RCMP, employees and management relied on social media for information. However, they needed more information from reliable sources in order to make decisions. The report recommends that the senior management team explore opportunities to strengthen relationships with other provincial authorities like police, the EHS, and hospitals.

On the topic of employee notification, the report finds that communications were hampered by lack of information and at times communications were unclear. VON uses a “fan-out process” of communicating with employees by sending email, phone, and text messages. In this instance, the fan-out process was inefficient because staff did not know who was on duty and did not have enough resources to implement the process. The report recommends that the senior management team review the communications plan and procedures section of the Disaster and Emergency program. Attention should be paid to which communication method is used and when, the frequency of communications, and the effectiveness of a fan-out process. The report also recommends developing instructions for when fan-outs should be done, as well as standardized wording for notifying employees.

Regarding incident management, the report finds that there was a delay in flagging and escalating the situation to management and that the management team did not know about, and did not use, existing processes and resources. The report recommends that the senior management team review the process for establishing a command centre, and that there should be training for senior management on incident management and escalating processes.

On the topic of workplace safety, the report finds that the delay in escalating the situation posed a threat to employee safety. It recommends that the senior management team develop a code, procedures, education, and training exercises for addressing threats to employee safety. Further, that senior management should consider how CellTrak (which is technology used by VON to track employee locations) can be used to alert and notify others about when a VON nurse does not come to an appointment, and should also look into creating safe zones for employees to use during the time between appointments, instead of waiting roadside.

Notes

CHAPTER 1

Events Before April 18, 2020

1. Statement of Glynn Wortman: COMM0008447 at lines 100-1.
2. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 20, 2020: COMM0003436 at p 3.
3. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Lisa Banfield, May 17, 2022: COMM0059014 at p 82.
4. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 20, 2020: COMM0003436 at p 19.
5. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Lisa Banfield, May 17, 2022: COMM0059014 at p 83.
6. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Lisa Banfield, May 17, 2022: COMM0059014 at p 83.
7. Statement of Maureen Banfield: COMM0003019 at lines 818-29.
8. GC Surplus website, accessed January 26, 2022, online: <https://www.gcsurplus.ca>.
9. Written statement from Lisa Banfield to Commission provided June 22, 2022: COMM0059355 at p 11.
10. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 2171-89.
11. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 2171-89.
12. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 2171-89.
13. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 2171-89.
14. Written statement from Lisa Banfield to Commission provided June 22, 2022: COMM0059355 at p 11.
15. Written statement from Lisa Banfield to Commission provided June 22, 2022: COMM0059355 at p 11.
16. Written statement from Lisa Banfield to Commission provided June 22, 2022: COMM0059355 at p 12.
17. Written statement from Lisa Banfield to Commission provided June 22, 2022: COMM0059355 at p 11.
18. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 1026-
19. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Lisa Banfield, May 17, 2022: COMM0059014 at p 25.

20. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 2004-15; Mass Casualty Commission interview of Lisa Banfield, May 17, 2022: COMM0059014 at p 25.
21. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 345-55.

CHAPTER 2

Events on April 18, 2020 – Portapique

1. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 20, 2020: COMM0003436 at p 9; Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 170–87; Mass Casualty Commission interview of Lisa Banfield, April 11, 2022: COMM0058495 at pp 102–5.
2. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at line 1471.
3. Lisa Banfield Video re-enactment with RCMP dated October 23, 2020: COMM0013732, Video #2, approximately 4:00–5:00 mark.
4. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 20, 2020: COMM0003436 at p 2; Lisa Banfield Video re-enactment with RCMP dated October 23, 2020: COMM0013732, Video #2, approximately 4:00–5:00 mark; Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 194–97.
5. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Lisa Banfield, April 11, 2022: COMM0058495 at pp 106–7.
6. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Lisa Banfield, April 13, 2022: COMM0058496 at pp 12, 15–16.
7. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Lisa Banfield, April 13, 2022: COMM0058496 at p 17.
8. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 20, 2020: COMM0003436 at p 11.
9. Lisa Banfield Video re-enactment with RCMP dated October 23, 2020: COMM0013732, Video #2, approximately 15:00–16:00 mark; Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 20, 2020: COMM0003436 at p 11.
10. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 20, 2020: COMM0003436 at pp 11–12.
11. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 213–16, 407–9.
12. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Lisa Banfield, April 13, 2022: COMM0058496 at p 17.
13. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 404–13.
14. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 411–13.
15. Lisa Banfield Video re-enactment with RCMP dated October 23, 2020: COMM0013732, Video #2, approximately 18:00–19:00 mark.
16. Lisa Banfield Video re-enactment with RCMP dated October 23, 2020: COMM0013732, Video #2, approximately 18:00–19:00 mark.
17. Lisa Banfield Video Re-enactment with RCMP dated October 23, 2020: COMM0013732, Video #2, approximately 20:00–21:00 mark; Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070.
18. Lisa Banfield Video Re-enactment with RCMP dated October 23, 2020: COMM0013732, Video #2, approximately 19:00–20:00 mark.
19. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 220–24, 465–66; Lisa Banfield Video re-enactment with RCMP dated October 23, 2020: COMM0013732, Video #2, approximately 19:00–20:00 mark.
20. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 224–27.
21. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 20, 2020: COMM0003436 at p 4.

22. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 20, 2020: COMM0003436 at p 4.
23. Lisa Banfield Video re-enactment with RCMP dated October 23, 2020: COMM0013732, Video #2, approximately 20:00–21:00 mark.
24. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 20, 2020: COMM0003436 at p 4; Lisa Banfield Video re-enactment with RCMP dated October 23, 2020: COMM0013732, Video #2, approximately 20:00–21:00 mark.
25. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 234–35.
26. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Lisa Banfield, April 13, 2022: COMM0058496 at p 42.
27. Lisa Banfield Video re-enactment with RCMP dated October 23, 2020: COMM0013733, Video #3, approximately 3:00–4:00 mark.
28. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Lisa Banfield, April 13, 2022: COMM0058496 at p 48.
29. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Lisa Banfield, April 13, 2022: COMM0058496 at pp 49–51.
30. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Lisa Banfield, April 13, 2022: COMM0058496 at p 52.
31. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 264–71.
32. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 20, 2020: COMM0003436 at p 13.
33. Transcript of recorded 911 call of Jamie Blair: COMM0003870 at p 2.
34. Statement of AC: COMM0002712 at lines 410–13, 422.
35. Affidavit of Joseph Sadoun, March 29, 2022: COMM0059091 at p 8.
36. Affidavit of Joseph Sadoun, March 29, 2022: COMM0059091 at p 9.
37. Statement of Kate MacDonald: COMM0002706 at lines 19–22, 25–30, 341–44.
38. Statement of Kate MacDonald: COMM0002706 at lines 155–65.
39. Transcript of recorded 911 call of Andrew and Kate MacDonald: COMM0003851 at pp 1–2.
40. Transcript of recorded 911 call of Andrew and Kate MacDonald: COMM0003851 at p 2.
41. Transcript of recorded 911 call of Andrew and Kate MacDonald: COMM0003851at p 3.
42. Statement of Andrew MacDonald: COMM0002703 at lines 41–48.
43. Mass Casualty Commission interview of David Faulkner: COMM0040424 at pp 2, 9–10, 12–16, 28–29, 31–33.
44. Statement of Alan Griffon: COMM0003902 at lines 19–27, 31–38, 59–61, 120–87; Transcript of recorded 911 call of Peter Griffon: COMM0002874 at lines 75–90, 108; Report of Cpl. Kathy Lugosi: COMM0003636 at p 1.
45. Statement of Richard Ellison: COMM0003079 at lines 14–17.
46. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 313–20.
47. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 18, 2020: COMM0002628 at lines 1741–73, 1989–2000, 2018–33, 2208–73.
48. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 18, 2020: COMM0002628 at lines 1741–73, 1989–2000, 2018–33, 2208–73.

49. Mass Casualty Commission interview of David Faulkner: COMM0040424 at p 2.
50. Mass Casualty Commission Participant Consultations Transcript, Consultation Group 02: COMM0065699 at p 12.
51. Transcript of recorded 911 call of Jamie Blair: COMM0003870 at p 2.
52. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, March 28, 2020: COMM0053615 at p 65.
53. Statement of Andrew MacDonald: COMM0002703 at p 2.
54. RCMP Operational Manual – IARD: COMM0039858 at p 2.
55. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 223-26.
56. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, June 1, 2022, at p 48.
57. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 313-20.
58. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 323, 328-30.
59. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, March 28, 2022: COMM0053615 at pp 102-3.
60. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, March 28, 2022: COMM0053615 at p 103.
61. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 503-8.
62. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 779-80.
63. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 423-25.
64. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Hearing, March 28, 2022, at p 58.
65. Public Proceedings Transcript, March 28, 2022, at p 86.
66. Public Proceedings Transcript, March 28, 2022, at p 86.
67. Public Proceedings Transcript, April 14, 2022, at p 18.
68. List of employees working at OCC April 18-19, 2020: COMM0014640; Mass Casualty Commission interview of Glen Byrne: COMM0015499 at p 71; Mass Casualty Commission interview of Jennifer MacCallum: COMM0018362 at pp 8-9, 20.
69. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 223-28.
70. H Division Risk Manager Program: COMM0043160 at p 1.
71. Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. S. Halliday: COMM0019379 at p 24.
72. Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. J. West: COMM0035916 at pp 10-12.
73. RCMP Tactical Operations Manual, ch. 1.2: Scribes: COMM0040029 at p 1.
74. H Division RCMP Operational Manual 33.100: Critical Incidents: COMM0018406 at p 3.
75. CIC HDIV Support Services Presentation to Chiefs of NS Policing: COMM0018408 at pp 1, 31-3; RCMP Tactical Operations Manual, ch. 1.1: COMM0018405 at pp 1, 3-4; H-Division RCMP Operational Manual 33.100: Critical Incidents: COMM0018406 at p 3; H Division Risk Manager Program: COMM0043160 at p 2.
76. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, May 31, 2022: COMM0058858 at pp 26-27.

77. Final Written Submissions on behalf of the Attorney General of Canada: COMM0065680 at p 4.
78. Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. J. West: COMM0035916 at pp 16-17.
79. Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. S. Halliday: COMM0019379 at p 8.
80. Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. S. Halliday: COMM0019379 at p 9.
81. Member report of S/Sgt. S. Halliday: COMM0010697 at pp 1-2.
82. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 18, 2020: COMM0002628 at lines 768-70; FD-COM para 89.
83. Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. S. Halliday: COMM0019379 at p 77; Timeline of actions taken by S/Sgt. S. Halliday: COMM0017931 at p 1; Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. B. Rehill: COMM0049655 at p. 18.
84. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 118-24.
85. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 118-24.
86. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 18, 2020: COMM0002628 at lines 4667-81, quote at lines 4678-79.
87. Hearing Transcript (Rehill), May 30, 2022: COMM0058857 at p 94.
88. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 18, 2020: COMM0002628 at lines 3740-74; Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 1050-52.
89. Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. B. Rehill: COMM0049655 at p 33.
90. Hearing testimony (Rehill), May 30, 2022: COMM0058857 at pp 92-93.
91. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 705-12.
92. Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. A. MacCallum: COMM0019382 at pp 25-29; Member report of S/Sgt. A. MacCallum: COMM0009498 at pp 1-2.
93. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, June 1, 2022, at p 30.
94. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Glen Byrne: COMM0015499 at pp 59-60.
95. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Donnalee Williston: COMM0043476 at pp 36-37.
96. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 1105-22.
97. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 1113-22, 1151-58.
98. Mass Casualty Proceedings, Transcript of Proceedings, June 1, 2022, at p 92.
99. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 751-55.
100. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 1092-96.
101. Timeline of actions taken by S/Sgt. S. Halliday: COMM0010696 at p 1.
102. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 1240-42.
103. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 18, 2020: COMM0002628 at lines 4019-49.
104. Timeline of actions taken by S/Sgt. J. West: COMM00010715 at p 1.
105. Transcript of call between S/Sgt. A. MacCallum and Chief A. Grue: COMM0002898.
106. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Alfred Grue: COMM0040547 at p 21.

107. Standard Operating Procedures, Media Relations for Risk Managers: COMM0043156 at p 2.
108. Standard Operating Procedures, Media Relations for Risk Managers: COMM0043156 at p 2.
109. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cpl. L. Croteau: COMM0015504 at p 12; Mass Casualty Commission interview of Lia Scanlan, September 14, 2021: COMM0015883 at p 15.
110. Member report of Sgt. A. O'Brien: COMM0014752 at p 1.
111. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cpl. L. Croteau: COMM0015504 at p 5.
112. RCMP tweet, April 18, 2020, at 11:32 p.m.: COMM0013645; Social media captures: COMM0017953.
113. RCMP tweet, April 18, 2020, at 11:32 p.m.: COMM0013645; Social media captures: COMM0017953.

CHAPTER 3

Events Overnight

1. Statement of Brian MacDonald: COMM0008444 at lines 25–25.
2. Statement of Valerie Smith: COMM0008869 at p 1.
3. Statement of AG: COMM0010055 at line 107.
4. Statement of AG: COMM0010055 at lines 21–29, 68–70, 75–78, 168–78, 237–96.
5. Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. J. West: COMM0035916 at pp 11–12.
6. RCMP Tactical Operations Manual, ch. 1.2: Scribes: COMM0040029 at p 1.
7. H Division Operational Manual, 33.100: Critical Incidents: COMM0058881 at p 659.
8. CIC HDIV Support Services Presentation to Chiefs of NS Policing: COMM0018408 at pp 1–31–3; RCMP Tactical Operations Manual, ch. 1.1: COMM0018405 at pp 1, 3–4; H Division RCMP Operational Manual 33.100: Critical Incidents: COMM0018406 at p 3; H Division Risk Manager Program: COMM0043160 at p 2.
9. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 00:00–08:00: COMM0006368 at lines 1420–85; Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. B. Rehill: COMM0049655 at pp 26–27.
10. Member report of S/Sgt. K. Surette: COMM0003913 at p 1.
11. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 1863–64.
12. Timeline of actions taken by S/Sgt. J. West: COMM0010715 at p 4.
13. Typed notes of Sgt. R. Lewis, Scribe of S/Sgt. J. West: COMM0003901 at p 5.
14. Typed notes of Sgt. R. Lewis, Scribe of S/Sgt. J. West: COMM0003901 at p 5.
15. Typed notes of Sgt. R. Lewis, Scribe of S/Sgt. J. West: COMM0003901 at p 5.
16. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 00:00–08:00: COMM0006368 at lines 4293–95.
17. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 00:00–08:00: COMM0006368 at line 4297.
18. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 00:00–08:00: COMM0006368 at lines 9406–07.
19. Member report of S/Sgt. A. MacCallum: COMM0009498 at p 1.
20. Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. S. Halliday: COMM0019379 at p 10.
21. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 18, 2020: COMM0002628 at lines 2515–49, 2712–28; Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. A. MacCallum: COMM0019382 at p 27.
22. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 00:00–08:00: COMM0006368 at lines 8718–19.
23. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 00:00–08:00: COMM0006368 at lines 8503–5.
24. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 1378–83.
25. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 00:00–08:00: COMM0006368 at lines 1880–99.
26. Member report of S/Sgt. A. MacCallum: COMM0009498 at p 4; Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. A. MacCallum: COMM0019382 at p 36.

27. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cst. T. Brown: COMM0053561 at p 13.
28. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 00:00–08:00: COMM0006368 at lines 8674–838; RCMP, Transcript of Recorded Statement of Dave Lilly, May 5, 2020: COMM0010033 at lines 39–84.
29. Member report of S/Sgt. A. MacCallum: COMM0009498 at p 3.
30. Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. A. Carroll: COMM0019386 at pp 25, 28–29; Hand-drawn map of Portapique used by the command team: COMM0011833.
31. Member report of S/Sgt. A. MacCallum: COMM0009498 at p 3.
32. ERT After Action Report: COMM0054285 at p 3.
33. COMM0015513, Commission interview of Cpl. Tim Mills, p 86.
34. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 00:00–08:00: COMM0006368 at lines 5501–4.
35. Mr. Ellison shared this information with the Commission on September 21, 2022, as part of a small group session he attended with his brother Corrie's son, Connor Reeves. The Commissioners, Commission staff, counsel to Mr. Ellison and Mr. Reeves, and a support person were also present. Unfortunately, the recording of the session was inadvertently deleted prior to a transcript being made. The Commission sincerely apologizes for this regrettable mistake.
36. Email correspondence re ATAK requirement: COMM0058427.
37. Member report of S/Sgt. Halliday: COMM0010697 at p 5.
38. Typed notes of Sgt. R. Lewis, Scribe of S/Sgt. J. West: COMM0003901 at pp 1–2.
39. Email from Donna Lee Williston to S/Sgt. Addie MacCallum entitled Portapique door knock addresses: COMM0007869.
40. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cpl. Tim Mills: COMM0015513 at p 98.
41. Mass Casualty Commission interview with Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume: COMM0057748 at p 25.
42. Text message log of Supt. D. Campbell: COMM0006880 at p 1.
43. Transcript of TPS Dispatch Audio: COMM0001649 at pp 2–3.
44. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 00:00–08:00: COMM0006368 at lines 1996–2034; Transcript of TPS Dispatch Audio: COMM0001649 at pp 7–8.
45. Message from H Division OCC to All Police Agencies Nova Scotia, April 19, 2020, at 00:07:56 EDT: COMM0001653 at p 2.
46. Message from H Division OCC to All Police Agencies Nova Scotia, April 19, 2020, at 00:07:56 EDT: COMM0001653 at p 2.
47. Statement of Nancy Hudson: COMM0011647, at lines 253–57.
48. Statement of Leon Joudrey: COMM0009109 at lines 152–53.

CHAPTER 4**Events on April 19, 2020 – 6:00 am to 10:15 am**

1. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 28, 2020: COMM0004070 at lines 325–26.
2. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 00:00–08:00: COMM0006368 at lines 9792–830.
3. Transcript of recorded 911 call of Leon Joudrey: COMM0002876 at lines 8, 34–40.
4. Description of events on behalf of Cst. B. MacLeod, SiRT Investigative File: COMM0012927 at para 10.
5. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cst. Ben MacLeod, September 10, 2021: COMM0015510 at pp 14, 17.
6. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 19, 2020: COMM0002948 at p 16.
7. Statement of Lisa Banfield, April 19, 2020: COMM0002948 at p 29.
8. Statement of Carlyle Brown: COMM0004209 at lines 8–12, 40–93.
9. Statement of Carlyle Brown: COMM0004209 at lines 31–38, 132–40.
10. Statement of April Dares: COMM0006957 at lines 78–85, 210–21.
11. Statement of Jody MacBurnie: COMM0004250 at lines 26–32.
12. Statement of Jody MacBurnie: COMM0004250 at lines 51–54.
13. Summary of Mass Casualty Commission interview of Bagley family: COMM0051974 at p 1; Statement of Lisa Owen: COMM0004259 at lines 25–28; Statement of Darrol Thurier: COMM0004267 at lines 39–41, 44–48.
14. Summary of Mass Casualty Commission interview of Bagley family: COMM0051974 at p 1; Statement of Lisa Owen: COMM0004259 at lines 25–28; Statement of Darrol Thurier: COMM0004267 at lines 39–41, 44–48.
15. Summary of Mass Casualty Commission interview of Bagley family: COMM0051974 at p 1.
16. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 08:00:00–11:29:52: COMM0014806 at lines 3650–55.
17. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 08:00:00–11:29:52: COMM0014806 at lines 3679–83.
18. Transcript of second recorded 911 call of April Dares: COMM0002868 at lines 5–24.
19. Cumberland radio: COMM0043478 at p 26
20. Cumberland radio: COMM0043478 at p 35.
21. Member report of Cst. R. Harvey: COMM0013937 at pp 1–2; Member report of Cst. M. Bray: COMM0014169 at pp 2–3.
22. Transcript of recorded 911 call of Mary-Ann Jay: COMM0002875 at lines 14–27.
23. Transcript of recorded 911 call of Mary-Ann Jay: COMM0002875 at lines 14–27.
24. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 4558–77.
25. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 4558–77.
26. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cpl. R. Peterson: COMM0018365 at p 10.

27. Statement of Carole Fisher: COMM0003471 at lines 127-34, 162-63.
28. Statement of Adam Fisher: COMM0003467 at lines 85-130, 162-63; Statement of Carole Fisher: COMM0003471 at lines 131-48.
29. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 08:00:00-11:29:52: COMM0014806 at lines 4097-106, 4220-35; Statement of Adam Fisher: COMM0003467 at lines 122-24, 154-69, 171; Statement of Carole Fisher: COMM0003471 at lines 131-48.
30. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 08:00:00-11:29:52: COMM0014806 at lines 4097-106, 4220-35.
31. Transcript of recorded 911 call of Carole Fisher: COMM0002871 at lines 52-54, 74, 109 (also at Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 08:00:00-11:29:52: COMM0014806 at lines 5166-77, 5193-98, 5351, 5368 with timestamp); OCC Master Ledger of Calls: COMM0038801 at pp 60-61.
32. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Public Proceedings, June 8, 2022 at pp 206-7.
33. Screenshot of Kristen Beaton's Facebook post: COMM0040571.
34. Extraction report for Kristen Beaton's cellphone: COMM0003838 at p 15.
35. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Leona Allen: COMM0051972 at p 7.
36. Statement of Leona Allen: COMM0003818, at lines 11-14.
37. Transcript of recorded 911 call of Leona Allen: COMM0002866 at line 5-7; Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 08:00:00-11:29:52: COMM0014806 at lines 5916-69.
38. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Leona Allen: COMM0051972 at p 5.
39. Statement of Starr Moore: COMM0003502 at line 79.
40. Statement of Starr Moore: COMM0003502 at lines 15-17, 96.
41. Transcript of recorded 911 call of Jessica MacBurnie: COMM0002889 at lines 4-5.
42. Statement of Bruce Higgins: COMM0003836 at lines 9, 38.
43. Statement of Bruce Higgins: COMM0003836 at lines 13-15.
44. Statement of Tiffany McMaster: COMM0003831 at lines 53-55.
45. Statement of Cst. A. Comeau: COMM0003843 at lines 14-24.
46. Hants East radio: COMM0003809 at lines 221-29.
47. Cpl. Calvin Byard, who had been the night shift team leader, was still engaged driving the H Division ERT TAV until the perpetrator was killed, and was therefore unavailable to brief the day shift.
48. Hants East radio: COMM0003809 at lines 285-88; Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 4148-50.
49. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings May 25, 2022, at p 49.
50. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Public Proceedings, May 5, 2022, at p 125.
51. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Public Proceedings, April 13, 2022, at p 59.
52. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Public Proceedings, April 13, 2022, at p 60.
53. Mass Casualty Commission interview of A/Commr. Lee Bergerman: COMM0062441 at p 10.

54. Email from Duane Cooper, "SITREP to Comm – Multiple Homicides, Portapique, NS (2022-020)": COMM0015960.
55. Email from Duane Cooper, "SITREP to Comm – Multiple Homicides, Portapique, NS (2022-020)": COMM0015960.
56. Email from Duane Cooper, "SITREP to Comm – Multiple Homicides, Portapique, NS (2022-020)": COMM0015960.
57. Email from Duane Cooper, "SITREP to Comm – Multiple Homicides, Portapique, NS (2020-020)": COMM0015960.
58. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cpl. Duane Ivany: COMM0050856 at pp 34-35.
59. Email from Chief D. MacNeil to C/Supt. C. Leather, April 19, 2020: COMM0001659 at p 3.
60. Email from C/Supt. C. Leather to Chief D. MacNeil, April 19, 2020: COMM0001659 at p 3.
61. Email from Chief D. MacNeil to C/Supt. C. Leather, April 19, 2020: COMM0001659 at p 3.
62. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Public Proceedings, May 10, 2022 at p 10; Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Public Proceedings, May 11, 2022 at p 8.
63. RCMP tweet, April 19, 2020, at 8:02 a.m.: COMM0013636; H-Strong Communication Product Timeline: COMM0037113 at p 1.
64. H-Strong Communication Product Timeline: COMM0037113 at p 1.
65. H-Strong Communication Product Timeline: COMM0037113 at pp 1-2.
66. Email from S/Sgt. B. Briers to S/Sgt. A. Carroll, "RE: further to our conversation": COMM0016121.
67. Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. S. Halliday: COMM0019379 at pp 45-48.
68. RCMP tweet, April 19, 2020, at 10:04 a.m.: COMM0013637; H-Strong Communication Product Timeline: COMM0037113 at p 2.
69. H-Strong Communication Product Timeline: COMM0037113 at p 2.

CHAPTER 5

Onslow Fire Hall Shooting

1. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Darrell Currie and Greg Muise: COMM0053354 at p 20.
2. Supplementary report of Cst. D. Gagnon: COMM0011972 at p 1.
3. Mass Casualty Commission interview of David Westlake: COMM0015901 at p 5.
4. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cst. D. Gagnon, COMM0053754 at p 14.
5. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cst. D. Gagnon, COMM0053754 at pp 14-15.
6. Statement of David Westlake: COMM0011844 at lines 45-51.
7. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 11, 2022, at p 28.
8. Statement of Cst. D. Gagnon: COMM0011840 at lines 41-47.
9. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cst. D. Gagnon, COMM0053754 at p 15.
10. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 4986-89.
11. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Darrell Currie and Greg Muise: COMM0053354 at pp 23, 26.
12. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 11, 2022, at p 31.
13. Supplementary report of Cst. D. Gagnon: COMM0011972 at p 3.
14. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cst. D. Gagnon, COMM0053754 at p 25.
15. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Darrell Currie and Greg Muise: COMM0053354 at p 23.
16. Mass Casualty Commission Interview of Cst. D. Gagnon, COMM0053754 at p 28.
17. Supplementary report of Cst. D. Gagnon: COMM0011972 at p 4.
18. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 5161-65; Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, May 5, 2022, Testimony of Cst. Brown and Cst. Melanson at p 35.
19. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cst. D Gagnon, COMM0053754 at p 21.
20. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings April 11, 2022, at 39.
21. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 11, 2022, at 29.
22. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 11, 2022, at 33.
23. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 11, 2022, at 35.
24. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 11, 2022, at 36.
25. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 11, 2022, at 38.
26. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 11, 2022, at 38.
27. Annex B: Reports "Community Conversations: Report"; Mass Casualty Commission interview of Sharon and Tim McLellan: COMM0051422 at p 24.
28. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, May 26, 2022, at p 102.
29. Colchester Radio: COMM0003806 at lines 4635-38.

30. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 5577-85; Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, May 5, 2022, at pp 36-37.
31. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings May 5, 2022, at p 37.
32. Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. A. Carroll: COMM0019386 at p 45.
33. Remarks from C/Supt. C. Leather - June 4, 2020: COMM0058921 at pp 1-2.
34. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 11, 2022, at p 43.

CHAPTER 6

Events on April 19, 2020 – 10:15 am to Noon

1. Internal BOLOs: COMM0007862 at pp 6-7.
2. Hants East radio: COMM0003809 at lines 285-88.
3. Hants East radio: COMM0003809 at lines 470-71.
4. Statement of Cst. C. Morrison: COMM0003086 at lines 375-76.
5. Hants East radio: COMM0003809 at lines 510-12.
6. Statement of Cst. C. Morrison: COMM0003086 at lines 129-37.
7. Statement of Cst. C. Morrison: COMM0003086 at lines 159-61.
8. Statement of Cst. C. Morrison: COMM0003086 at lines 611-14.
9. Hants East radio: COMM0003809 at lines 528-35.
10. Statement of Shanda MacLeod: COMM0003787 at lines 19-28.
11. Statement of Shanda MacLeod: COMM0003787 at lines 19-28.
12. Statement of Shanda MacLeod: COMM0003787 at lines 19-28.
13. Surveillance video from Esso Milford Wilson's gas station: COMM0019392 (timestamp shows 10:37:32. Note: Esso Milford Wilson's Canvass Report (COMM0003378) does not note the accuracy of the timestamp).
14. Statement of Kenneth Hood: COMM0003826 at lines 52-54.
15. Transcript of recorded 911 call of Katie Rodler: COMM0003745 at pp 1, 3-4.
16. Transcript of recorded 911 call of Gerald Whitman: COMM0003746 at pp 2-4.
17. Transcript of recorded 911 call of Colleen Nesseth: COMM0003744 at pp 1, 4, 5.
18. Statement of Eric and Rosalie Fisher: COMM0003560 at lines 39-40.
19. Statement of Eric and Rosalie Fisher: COMM0003560 at line 134.
20. Statement of Gerald Whitman: COMM0003089 at line 23.
21. Statement of Gerald Whitman: COMM0003089 at lines 24-25.
22. Statement of Bernard Myra: COMM0014272 at lines 38-40.
23. Statement of Elizabeth Small: COMM0003841 at lines 30-32.
24. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 11, 2022, at p 81.
25. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 5405-6, 5416-17; Handwritten notes of Cpl. T. Mills: COMM0003828 at pp 26-30.
26. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Sgt. D. Bernard: COMM0015888 at p 15.
27. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cpl. D. Ivany: COMM0050856 at p 35.
28. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Sgt. D. Bernard: COMM0015888 at p 18.
29. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Sgt. D. Bernard: COMM0015888 at pp 18-19.
30. Hants East radio: Hants East radio: COMM0003809 at line 562.
31. Hants East radio: Hants East radio: COMM0003809 at lines 567-68.
32. Hants East radio: Hants East radio: COMM0003809 at line 626.

33. Statement of Cst. C. Morrison: COMM0003086 at lines 237-38.
34. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 08:00:00-11:29:52: COMM0014806 at lines 10335-39.
35. Audio recording of radio communications between ambulance M-122 and EHS dispatch: COMM0001381 at 9:53.
36. Statement of Daniel Storgato: COMM0003789 at lines 66-69.
37. Shubenacadie Foundational Document: COMM0053830 at para 208; Medical records of Cst. C. Morrison: COMM0003398 at p 3.
38. Incident Detail Report 041920-00136: COMM0001331 at p 1.
39. Forensic Identification Occurrence Report of Cpl. J. Anthony: COMM0002740 at p 3.
40. Extraction report for Gina Goulet's cellphone: COMM0010441 at p 5.
41. iMessage conversation between Gina Goulet and Amelia Butler: COMM0051450 at p 3.
42. Statutory Declaration of David Butler: COMM0051448 at paras 28-29; Statement of David Butler: COMM0004078 at lines 102-4.
43. Joint Public Inquiry into the Nova Scotia April 2020 Tragedy, PC 2020-0822 at s (e)(i); OIC 2020-293 (Nova Scotia, Public Inquiries Act) s (e)(i).
44. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 14, 2022, at p 11.
45. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 14, 2022, at p 24.
46. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 14, 2022, at p 15.
47. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 14, 2022, at p 49.
48. SiRT statement of Cst. C. Hubley: COMM0003914 at p 8.
49. SiRT statement of Cst. C. Hubley: COMM0003914 at pp 8-9.
50. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 14, 2022, at p 54.
51. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 14, 2022, at p 54.
52. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 14, 2022, at p 54.
53. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 14, 2022, at p 55.
54. ERT radio: COMM0003808 at lines 1173-78.
55. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 14, 2022, at pp 64-65.
56. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 5678-79.
57. ERT radio: COMM0003808 at lines 1197-98, 1208.
58. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, April 13, 2022, at p 39.
59. Mass Casualty Commission interview of J. Reid: COMM0059569 at pp 30-31.
60. Mass Casualty Commission interview of J. Reid: COMM0059569 at p 31.
61. Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. S. Halliday: COMM0019379 at p 36; Timeline of actions taken by S/Sgt. S. Halliday: COMM0010696 at p 8.
62. Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. J. West: COMM0035916 at p 39.

63. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 08:00:00-11:29:52: COMM0014806 at lines 8421-8425, 8433-43, 8448-52, 8472-80, 8514-21.
64. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, May 25, 2022, at p 84.
65. Member report of S/Sgt. K. Surette: COMM0003913 at p 7.
66. Mass Casualty Commission interview of S/Sgt. D. MacGillivray: COMM0050861 at p 37.
67. Member report of S/Sgt. K. Surette: COMM0003913 at p 7.
68. Colchester radio: COMM0003806 at lines 5655-60.
69. Email from Cindy MacKenzie to HDIV_Comms and S/Sgt. Halliday, "FYI - Twitter Info," with attachment: COMM0016230; COMM0016231.
70. Transcript of recorded 911 call of Lisa Owen: COMM0002885 at lines 43-44; Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 08:00:00-11:29:52: COMM0014806 at lines 11614-616.
71. Member report of S/Sgt. K. Surette: COMM0003913 at p 8; Typed notes of Jennifer Reid, Scribe of S/Sgt. D. MacGillivray: COMM0026772 at p 2.
72. Handwritten notes of S/Sgt. A. Carroll: COMM0013915 at p 12.
73. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Supt. A Thompson: COMM0059933 at p 23.
74. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Supt. A Thompson: COMM0059933 at p 23.
75. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Insp. D. Rodier: COMM0015496 at p 48.
76. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Supt. D Campbell: COMM0059847 at p 91.
77. Debriefing notes of Insp. D. Smith: COMM0001654 at p 5.
78. Debriefing notes of Insp. D. Smith: COMM0001654 at pp 5-6; Mass Casualty Commission interview of Insp. D. Smith: COMM0058529 at p 7.
79. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 08:00:00-11:29:52: COMM0014806 at lines 8417-41; Transcript of TPS Dispatch Audio: COMM0001649 at pp 20-21; Transcript of TPS radio: COMM0046243 at p 10.
80. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 08:00:00-11:29:52: COMM0014806 at lines 8442-52; Transcript of TPS Dispatch Audio: COMM0001649 at pp 21-23.
81. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 08:00:00-11:29:52: COMM0014806 at lines 8448-52, 8472-79.
82. Transcript of TPS radio: COMM0046243 at p 11.
83. Transcript of TPS radio: COMM0046243 at p 11.
84. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 08:00:00-11:29:52: COMM0014806 at lines 8512-27; Transcript of TPS Dispatch Audio: COMM0001649 at pp 23-24.
85. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Insp. D. Smith: COMM0058529 at pp 7, 12.
86. Debriefing notes of Insp. D. Smith: COMM0001654 at pp 5-6; Mass Casualty Commission interview of Insp. D. Smith: COMM0058529 at p 8.
87. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Chief D. MacNeil: COMM0003767 at p 86.
88. Transcript of TPS radio: COMM0046243 at p 18.
89. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Sgt. C. Naugle: COMM0015522 at p 19.

90. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Sgt. C. Naugle: COMM0015522 at p 19; HRP Primary East radio, April 19, 2020, 00:00 – 11:37: COMM0058807 at p 79.
91. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Sgt. C. Naugle: COMM0015522 at p 4.
92. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Sgt. C. Naugle: COMM0015522 at p 67.
93. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Sgt. C. Naugle: COMM0015522 at p 78.
94. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, August 25, 2022, at p 108.
95. H-Strong Communication Product Timeline: COMM0037113 at p 2–3; Email from rcmpns-grcne to rcmpns-grcne, “RCMP Engaged in Active Shooter Investigation: Information Available on Twitter / *La traduction suivra” “RCMP Engaged in Active Shooter Investigation: Information Available on Twitter”: COMM0016229.
96. H-Strong Communication Product Timeline: COMM0037113 at p 3; Twitter post made by RCMP NS, April 19, 2020, at 11:40 a.m.: COMM0013643.
97. Transcript of recorded 911 calls, April 19, 2020, 08:00:00–11:29:52: COMM0014806 at lines 13140–42.

CHAPTER 7

Events from Noon on April 19, 2020, Onward

1. RCMP Operational Manual, ch.1.1 First Response Investigations: COMM0017889 at clause 2.2.3. Clause 2.2.3 states, “complete neighborhood inquiries at the location of the offence, not only for eye witness evidence, but to confirm there are no other victims.”
2. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cst. N Dorrington: COMM0035926 at p 13.
3. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cst. N Dorrington: COMM0035926 at p 15.
4. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Public Proceedings, June 20, 2022, at p 70.
5. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cpl. G. Rose-Berthiaume: COMM0057748 at p 33.
6. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cpl. G. Rose-Berthiaume: COMM0057748 at p 26.
7. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Participant Consultation, September 16, 2022; online, https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/documents/transcripts/ParticipantConsultationGroup01_20220916_Transcript.pdf at pp 17-18.
8. Summary of meeting with the family of Gina Goulet: COMM0049600 at p 5; Task Actions Report, Task Action ID 561: COMM0007219 at p 1.
9. Task Actions Report, Task Action ID 561: COMM0007219 at p 1; Transit Slip to Supt. Darren Campbell from Cpl. Rose-Berthiaume: COMM0007228 at p 2.
10. Summary of meeting with the family of Heather O'Brien: COMM0054272 at p 5.
11. Mass Casualty Commission, Investigations – Supplementary Report, Answer from RCMP Regarding the Recovery of Handcuffs Place of Lisa Banfield by the Perpetrator (May 18, 2021): COMM0015908 at p 1.
12. RCMP Operational Manual, ch. 41.3 – Human Deaths: COMM0039885 at p 3.
13. RCMP Operational Manual, App. 41-3-1, Next of Kin Death Notification Checklist: COMM0040046
14. HDIV Supplemental Operational Manual, App. 41-3-1– Assistance P/T/M Agencies Next of Kin Death Notification Checklist: COMM0040307 at 5.2 and 5.3.
15. RCMP Operational Manual, App. 41-3-1, Next of Kin Death Notification Checklist: COMM0040046 at p 1.
16. RCMP Operational Manual, App. 41-3-1, Next of Kin Death Notification Checklist: COMM0040046 at p 2.
17. RCMP Critically Injured and Fallen Member Guide, Version 1.5 (September 2019): COMM0053641 at p 13.
18. RCMP Policy Operational Manual, ch. 25.3 – Major Case Management: COMM0039869 at clause 2.2.2.1.
19. RCMP Policy Operational Manual, ch. 25.3 – Major Case Management: COMM0039869 at clause 2.2.3.1.
20. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cpl. G. Rose-Berthiaume: COMM0057748 at p 13.
21. Overview of Next of Kin Notification Notes, Cpl. A. McKay: COMM0002938 at p 2.

22. Overview of Next of Kin Notification Notes, Cpl. A. McKay: COMM0002938 at pp 1-2; Next of Kin List Task Action Report: COMM0002930 at p 6; Family Liaison Task Action Report: COMM0002649 at p 4.
23. Member report of Cst. M. Bray: COMM0014169 at p 3; Summary of meeting with the family of Tom Bagley: COMM0051974 at p 2.
24. Summary of meeting with the family of Aaron Tuck, Jolene Oliver, and Emily Tuck: COMM0049603 at p 2 .
25. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Small Group Session, August 30, 2022, online: https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/documents/transcripts/SGS_20220830_JENKINS-Dan_Transcript.pdf at p 12.
26. Summary of meeting with the family of Kristen Beaton: COMM0053749 at p 3.
27. Summary of meeting with the family of Kristen Beaton: COMM0053749 at p 3.
28. Summary of meeting with the family of Kristen Beaton: COMM0053749 at p 3; Next of Kin List Task Action Report: COMM0002930 at p 2.
29. Summary of meeting with the family of Heather O'Brien: COMM0054272 at p 4.
30. Statement of Clinton Ellison: COMM0002720 at pp 1-2.
31. RCMP Operational Manual, App. 41-3-1, Next of Kin Death Notification Checklist: COMM0040046.
32. Internal email re: the Ellison family: COMM0021150.
33. RCMP Critically Injured and Fallen Member Guide, Version 1.5 (September 2019): COMM0053641 at p 9.
34. Summary of meeting with the family of Heidi Stevenson: COMM0055669 at p 1.
35. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cst. W. Bent: COMM0057740 at p 23.
36. Statutory Declaration of Amelia Butler: COMM0051449 at pp 19-20.
37. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Small Group Session, September 20, 2022, online: https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/documents/transcripts/SGS_20220920_BEATON-Nick_Transcript.pdf at pp 2, 3.
38. Summary of meeting with the family of Sean McLeod: COMM0049602 at p 3.
39. Summary of meeting with the family of Heather O'Brien: COMM0054272 at p 5.
40. Mass Casualty Commission interview with Leon Joudrey: COMM0058518, at p 25.
41. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Participant Consultation, September 17, 2022, online: https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/documents/transcripts/ParticipantConsultationGroup02_20220917_Transcript.pdf at p 16.
42. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Participant Consultation, September 17, 2022, online: https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/documents/transcripts/ParticipantConsultationGroup02_20220917_Transcript.pdf at p 18.
43. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Small Group Session, August 31, 2022, online: <https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/documents/transcripts/SGS-20220831-MENDIUK-Crystal-Transcript.pdf> at p 6.

44. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Small Group Session, August 31, 2022, online: <https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/documents/transcripts/SGS-20220831-MENDIUK-Crystal-Transcript.pdf> at p 8.
45. RCMP Operational Manual, ch. 27.2 – Media Releases: COMM0039872 at p 1.
46. R v Barton, 2019 SCC 33 at para 83.
47. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at pp 4–5.
48. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 5; Accessed online: RCMP say at least 10 people dead after N.S. gunman rampage | Streamed live on April 19, 2020 | CBC News YouTube channel, online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3L7aPtIFm4>.
49. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at pp 8, 9.
50. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 6.
51. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Lia Scanlan, February 2, 2022: COMM0058826 at p 65.
52. RT: CBC News' Ian Hanomansing Interviews RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki regarding the fatal incident in N.S.: COMM0038513.
53. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 12.
54. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 15.
55. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 14.
56. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 13.
57. Emails – Re: Statement – track changes: COMM0027595; Emails – Re: Urgent review, please: COMM0022781; Email – As discussed: COMM0027596.
58. Email – Phone call: COMM0020287; Email – Public Alerting: COMM0027573.
59. Update on investigation into the incidents on April 18 and 19, 8:26 p.m. April 21, 2020 – Facebook: COMM0058909.
60. Remarks from the Commanding Officer, Assistant Commissioner Lee Bergerman, accessed online: <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/news/2020/remarks-the-commanding-officer-assistant-commissioner-lee-bergerman>; Remarks from A/Commr. L. Bergerman, April 22, 2020: COMM0058910; Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at pp 29–30.
61. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 32.
62. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 33.
63. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 33.
64. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 32.
65. Speaking remarks – Supt. D. Campbell – April 24, 2020: COMM0058913; Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 38.
66. Speaking remarks – Supt. D. Campbell – April 24, 2020: COMM0058913; Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 38.
67. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 49.
68. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 44.

69. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 46.
70. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 51.
71. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 47.
72. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 47.
73. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 38.
74. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 38.
75. Speaking remarks: Supt. Darren Campbell – April 28, 2020, online: <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/news/2020/speaking-remarks-supt-darren-campbell-april-28>; Speaking remarks – Supt. D. Campbell – April 28, 2020: COMM0058916.
76. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at pp 51-52.
77. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 60.
78. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 62.
79. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, August 23, 2022, at p 100, lines 8-12.
80. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cmmr. Brenda Lucki: COMM0062475 at p 34.
81. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cmmr. Brenda Lucki: COMM0062475 at p 34.
82. Transcript of telephone conference between H Division and the RCMP Commissioner Lucki, April 28, 2020, Part 1 of 3: COMM0065721 at p 1, lines 13-14.
83. Transcript of telephone conference between H Division and the RCMP Commissioner Lucki, April 28, 2020, Part 2 of 3: COMM0065721 at p 2, line 112.
84. Update on investigation into the incidents on April 18 and 19, May 11, 2020: COMM0058918; Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at pp 62-63.
85. Update on investigation into the incidents on April 18 and 19, May 11, 2020: COMM0058918; Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 63.
86. Update on investigation into the incidents on April 18 and 19, May 11, 2020: COMM0058918; Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at pp 63-64.
87. Update on investigation into the incidents on April 18 and 19, May 11, 2020: COMM0058918; Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at pp 63-64.
88. Update on investigation into the incidents on April 18 and 19: COMM0058918; Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 63.
89. Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 68.
90. Statement from the Nova Scotia RCMP, July 30, 2020: COMM0058923 at p 1; Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 81.
91. Statement from the Nova Scotia RCMP, July 30, 2020: COMM0058923 at pp 2-4; Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at pp 81-83.
92. RCMP update on investigation into Nova Scotia attacks – June 4, 2020 | Streamed live on June 4, 2020 | cpac YouTube channel, accessed online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clazRdQz7QM>; Remarks from C/Supt. C. Leather – June 4, 2020: COMM0058921; Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 71.

93. Remarks from C/Supt. C. Leather – June 4, 2020: COMM0058921; Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 71.
94. Remarks from C/Supt. C. Leather – June 4, 2020: COMM0058921; Appendix of Press Briefing Transcripts: COMM0057762 at p 71.
95. Statement from Supt. D. Campbell re: H-Strong, December 4, 2020: COMM0058924 at p 2.
96. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, July 27, 2022 at pp 25, 29.
97. Bjørn Ivar Kruke, Police and First-Responder Decision-Making During Mass Casualty Events, May 2022, online: <https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/commissioned-reports/COMM0058374.pdf?t=1670346581> at p 58.
98. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cmmr. Brenda Lucki: COMM0062475 at p 103.
99. Mass Casualty Commission interview of Cpl L. Croteau: COMM0015504 at p 29.
100. Public Safety Canada, Deployment of Police Intervention (March 18, 2021), online: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/trnsprnc/brfng-mtrls/prlmntry-bndrs/20210722/027/index-en.aspx>.
101. Public Safety Canada, Deployment of Police Intervention (March 18, 2021), online: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/trnsprnc/brfng-mtrls/prlmntry-bndrs/20210722/027/index-en.aspx>.
102. OCC Response to Critical Incidents – Enhancements and Initiatives: COMM0062294 at p 1.
103. Emergency Health Services – Medical Communications Centre, Major Incident After-Action Report: Portapique Active Shooter 18-19 April 2020: COMM0001387 at p 12.
104. HRP CIC After Action Report: COMM0061351 at p 7.
105. Nova Scotia Health, Report: Site Lockdown – CEHHC After Action Report/Improvement Plan: COMM0001276.
106. Nova Scotia Health, Report: Site Lockdown – CEHHC After Action Report/Improvement Plan: COMM0001276 at p 3.
107. Victorian Order of Nurses – Response Report: COMM0049653.