

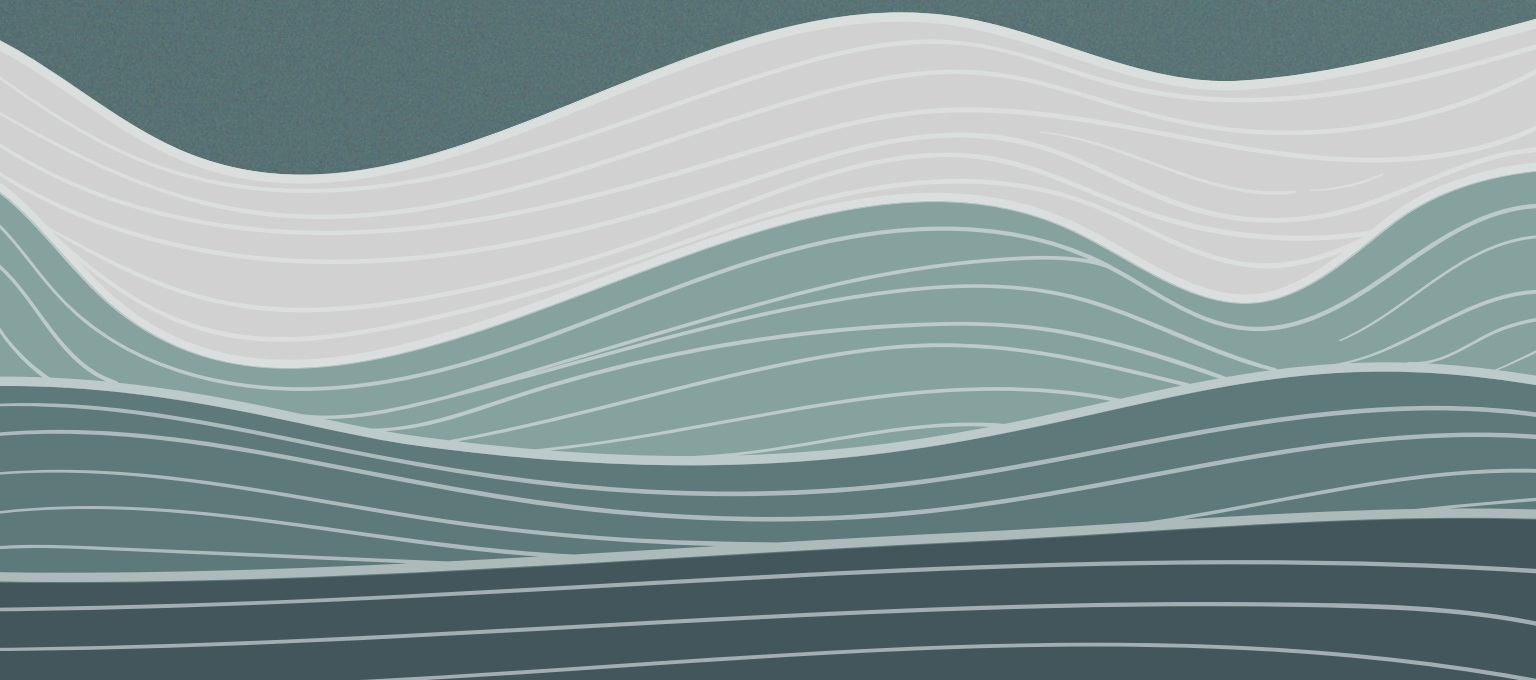
The Joint Federal/Provincial  
Commission into the April 2020  
Nova Scotia Mass Casualty

**MASS  
CASUALTY  
COMMISSION**

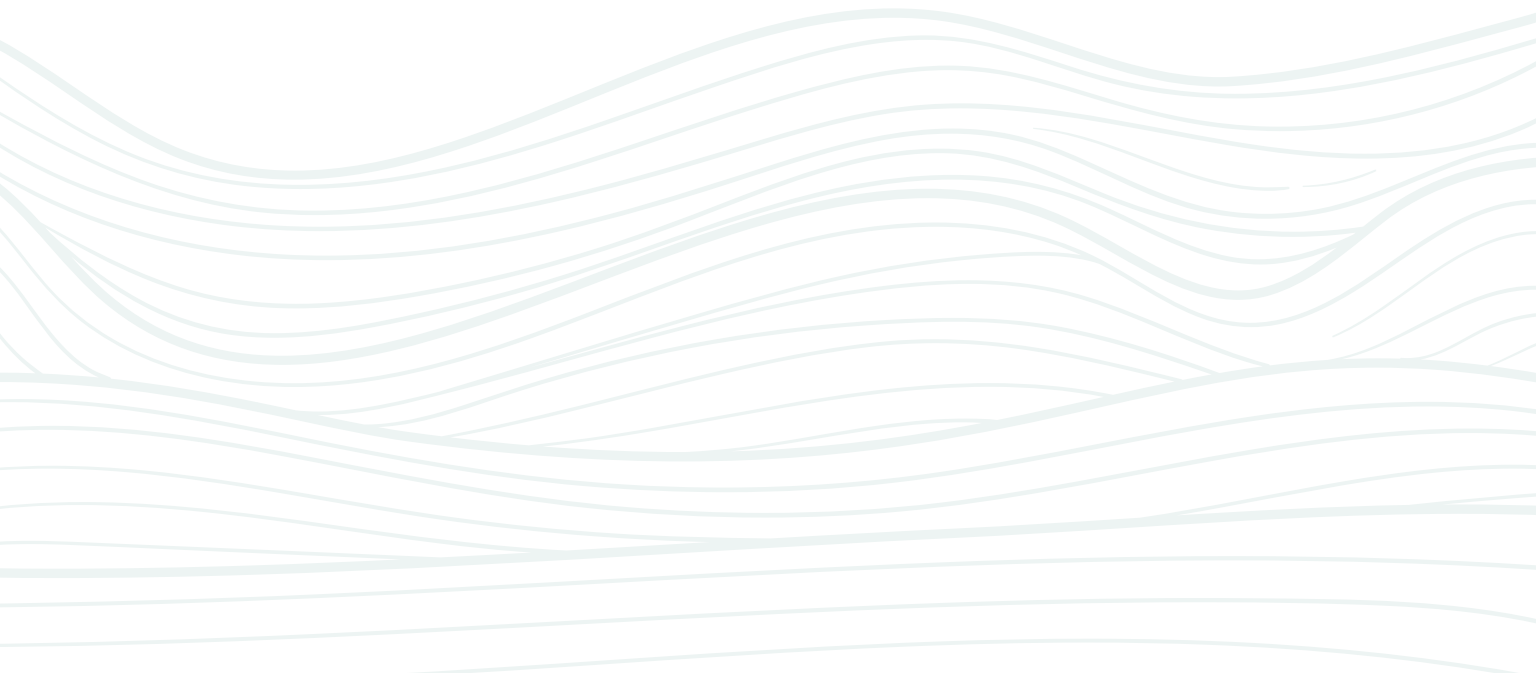
# Turning the Tide Together

**FINAL REPORT OF THE  
MASS CASUALTY COMMISSION**

**Volume 6**  
Implementation  
A Shared Responsibility to Act



# 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 6**

Implementation

A Shared Responsibility to Act

**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 6: Implementation – A Shared Responsibility to Act

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*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 / viii**

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS / viii

REPORT STRUCTURE / ix

**We remember / xi**

**Introduction to Volume 6 / 1**

**An Extensive Agenda for Change / 3**

**Moving Forward in a Good Way / 5**

**Engagement, Communication, and Action / 6**

**Overview of Volume 6 / 7**

**CHAPTER 1 A Purposive Architecture of  
Recommendations / 9**

**Introduction / 10**

**Three Foundational Ideas / 11**

PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES AT THE CENTRE / 11

PREVENTION FIRST / 18

A COHERENT, EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE PUBLIC SAFETY SYSTEM / 19

**Scaffolding to Achieve Our Common Purpose / 21**

STRENGTHENING OUR PUBLIC SAFETY SYSTEM / 21

FOSTERING CULTURAL SHIFTS / 23

INVIGORATING ACCOUNTABILITY  
AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS / 25

IMPROVING WAYS OF WORKING / 27

DEVELOPING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE / 28

CHANGING LAWS / 29

RECONSIDERING AND ADJUSTING FUNDING / 30

**Buttressing the Storm Wall: Critical Incident Response / 32**

**CHAPTER 2 Overcoming Barriers to Change / 34**

**Implementation Barriers / 36**

CULTURAL FACTORS IN SOCIETY AND IN INSTITUTIONS / 36

LACK OF POLITICAL WILL AND ACCOUNTABILITY / 37

FAILURE TO PROPERLY DISSEMINATE PRIOR RECOMMENDATIONS / 38

FAILURE TO INCLUDE DIVERSE, DISADVANTAGED,  
AND MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES / 39

INSUFFICIENT FUNDING AND LACK OF RESOURCES / 39

**Ways to Overcome Implementation Barriers / 40**

SHIFT HOW WE THINK ABOUT RECOMMENDATIONS / 40

PROMOTE COMMUNITY SAFETY AS A SHARED VALUE / 41

INVEST IN EDUCATION ABOUT CULTURAL NORMS THAT  
MUST BE CHANGED / 42

MAKE PLANS THAT WILL WORK FOR THE NEAR AND LONG TERMS / 42

**CHAPTER 3** **Keystone: Fostering Collaboration  
and Ensuring Accountability / 44**

**Background and Rationale / 47**

**Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body / 50**

**CHAPTER 4** **Next Steps to Make  
Our Communities Safer / 56**

**Those Most Affected / 59**

**Community Organizations and Advocacy Groups / 60**

**Policy Specialists and Researchers / 61**

**Members of the Public / 61**

**Media / 62**

**Businesses / 63**

**Educators / 64**

**Children and Youth / 64**

**Conclusion / 65**

**Notes / 66**



# 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](http://cmha.ca) to find resources in your area. A list of services is also available on the Commission website [MassCasualtyCommission.ca](http://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](http://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](http://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 6

## INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 6

As Commissioners, we grounded our work every day in the memory of those whose lives were taken.

Interacting with and learning from the individuals, families, and members of the communities most affected is an additional catalyst to the completion of our tasks. We have also been spurred on by the remarkable wisdom and generosity of everyone who contributed to our work: Participants and their counsel, witnesses (both through interviews and in public proceedings), experts, stakeholders, the media, community members, the wider public, and Commission staff. To all of you, we express our gratitude.

This Report marks the end of our mandated responsibilities as a public inquiry and the shift to a shared responsibility to act. We do not absolve ourselves of obligations to contribute to the implementation of the Report's recommendations in the days, weeks, and years to come. Yet acting on our recommendations is clearly in the hands and purview of others once the Commissioners have produced the Report. The leadership for this next phase includes those who participated in the Commission's work; those external to the Commission, such as those who have reported on it and followed it; and others who have a formal, recognized duty to contribute to public safety and community well-being. We have said many times that this is a *shared* responsibility and opportunity.

In Volume 6, Implementation, we expand on the importance of this collective responsibility, highlighting the significance of co-operation among politicians, policy-makers, institutions, organizations, community groups, and individuals right across society.

# An Extensive Agenda for Change

We have employed strong language in our recommendations, and they set out an extensive agenda for change. We could do no less given the traumatic scale of loss resulting from the April 2020 mass casualty and what we all learned through this Inquiry. Our lessons learned start with understanding the causes, context, and circumstances giving rise to the incident. From this base, they extend knowledge gained from a close scrutiny of the responses of police and particularly the RCMP, and the steps taken to inform, engage, and support the individuals, families, and communities most affected during the incident and afterward.

The comprehensive set of recommendations outlined in this Report is appropriate, given the scope of the mandate and the breadth and depth of the mass casualty's impact. In Volume 1, Context and Purpose, and throughout our Report, we have documented the information we have gathered about the immediate, short- and medium-term, and ongoing effects. We recognize our descriptions of impact could never fully convey these consequences. One common theme is that many people in Nova Scotia, Canada, the United States, and beyond have been deeply shaken by the mass casualty and the response to it. In our Share Your Experience survey responses, we heard that individuals were “shaken in a particularly fundamental way because of the extended idea of neighbours and neighbourhood”; that they were “shaken by these events in a way that is somewhat indescribable”; and that the events had “shaken my foundation of belief that law enforcement is there to protect you.”

The expansive set of recommendations is also commensurate with our mandate. It will not be enough to learn from the response to the April 2020 mass casualty only by taking steps to plan and ensure preparedness for critical incidents and their aftermath, though this is a clear priority. In requiring us to look into causes, context, and circumstances of the mass casualty, our mandate opened up the Inquiry to considering some of the fundamental issues facing Nova Scotians and Canadians today: the epidemic of gender-based, intimate partner, and family violence; the failed approaches to keeping women safe; the need to prioritize cultivating healthier masculinities; the role of law enforcement partners and policing generally, as well as specifically by the RCMP, in our communities; the limitations of current health and social service systems to deal with mental health challenges and their effects on individuals, families, and communities; the challenges facing rural communities; and firearms control.



We welcomed the mandated requirement to inquire into the causes, context, and circumstances because it provided us with the opportunity to take a close look at prevention: something that few reviews of mass casualty incidents have done. Addressing this constellation of factors – their root causes and manifestations, and the limited responses to them – is the only approach that has the potential to prevent mass casualty incidents.

**If there is only one lesson to be learned from the deep and far-reaching harm and loss that continue to ripple out from those two shattering days, it is this: mass casualties occur infrequently, but women, children, and other marginalized people and communities experience violence every day. Our perception of where the real danger lies is misconceived, and we ignore the hard truth of the “everydayness” – the commonness and seeming normalcy – of violence between intimate partners and within families and the ways in which this violence spills out to affect other people too. For far too long, society has viewed mass violence as our greatest threat without considering its relationship to other more pervasive forms of violence. We do so at the expense of public safety and community well-being. Among many variables, safe communities begin with safe personal relationships in our homes, families, schools, and workplaces. To learn this lesson, we need to recalibrate our approach to ensuring safety resources, prioritizing prevention over response, and centring and resourcing community within a system that maintains a collaborative and clear role for police.**

The scale of the mass casualty created an opportunity for fundamental change. Critical incidents shake us deeply and can force us to question basic premises, leading to an unfreezing of beliefs. During our roundtable on contemporary community policing and community safety and well-being, Cal Corley, chief executive officer of the Community Safety Knowledge Alliance and former assistant commissioner of the RCMP, referred to the ways that this type of event can “punctuate the equilibrium,” and how at such a time societies and institutions “can respond very quickly with incredible changes.”<sup>1</sup>

# Moving Forward in a Good Way

Our Report is primarily focused on the future. We were tasked to inquire into and examine the mass casualty and the response to it for the purpose of discerning lessons to be learned. As we say in Volume 1, Context and Purpose, in the description of our approach to writing this Report, we use “back-sighting” to move forward. In order to move forward in a good way, however, there is a need to incorporate an ethic of collective care toward those most affected by this incident.

**Many of the individuals, families, and communities most affected require additional support to deal with the ongoing grief and traumatic loss resulting from the mass casualty and the response to it.** In May 2022, we drew attention to this concern in our Interim Report, stating: “Unfortunately, we have heard from several sources that, despite their best efforts, many of the individuals, families, and communities most affected are yet to receive the support they need.”<sup>2</sup> At that time we encouraged “governmental and non-governmental agencies to act now in a concerted way to provide the necessary mental health, trauma, and bereavement supports that are needed.”<sup>3</sup> We noted that we anticipated making recommendations for the future based on the lessons learned from this mass casualty.

In Volume 2, What Happened, and Volume 4, Community, we make a number of findings about post-incident support, and Volume 4 contains several recommendations on this topic. In particular, we underscore that the experience of traumatic events varies widely among individuals, as does the timeline on which people experience grief, bereavement, and trauma and require support services. Studies have clearly demonstrated that many of those affected by mass casualties continue to experience health impacts for many years after the incident. In some cases, it takes years before a survivor is in a position to seek and receive assistance. We found that, as a group, those most affected by the April 2020 mass casualty continue to experience a health deficit, partially attributable to the inadequacies of the post-incident supports they have been able or unable to access to date. Furthermore, this Report is being published nearly three years after the mass casualty, and we have heard that some of the people affected will require assistance to support them in their efforts to recover and build resilience for years to come. Residents of Colchester, Cumberland, and Hants counties have expressed the need for a positive and a substantial shift for their communities after the mass casualty, and they will require community-led support to turn the tide of the after-effects.

We preface our more general discussion about the shared responsibility to implement the recommendations contained in this Report by calling attention to this public health emergency and urging the governments of Nova Scotia and Canada to act swiftly to reverse the course by jointly funding a program to address the extensive unmet need for mental health, grief, and bereavement supports in these most affected communities (Recommendation C.13).

## Engagement, Communication, and Action

Our recommendations are only words on a page. Giving meaning to these many words requires actions by others. We concluded our Interim Report with a call for continued engagement from all the readers of that report. You remain the key to this process of giving meaning, and the stakes are even higher at this juncture. Before, our call was for engagement in a structured process – the public inquiry. Now engagement requires a multitude of steps in a wide range of forums, and there is no automatic next step – everything depends on collective action. We write this volume of the Report to provide our guidance for the collective next steps, including the creation of a structure for implementation and accountability.

**Receipt of the Report is passive; activation requires reading, engaging with its content, talking about it with others, and ultimately taking action. We recognize that the extensive agenda is daunting. But we emphasize that inaction is also a form of action and that spectatorship is an inadequate response. In order to turn the tide and improve community safety and well-being for everyone, we propose a framework and some specific suggestions for helpful actions that are within everyone’s reach. Every change, from the smallest to the most consequential, begins with a first step.**

# Overview of Volume 6

Our mandate required us to conclude our work as Commissioners by submitting findings, lessons learned, and recommendations. Rather than the end of a process, however, we encourage you to think of this Report as a beginning or, even better, as a continuation of the effort many people have already made to strengthen community safety and well-being, including by advocating collectively for the Inquiry. Recommendations alone cannot bring about change unless they are adopted, championed, and acted on.

**Implementation has been an important consideration for us throughout our work. We have made it a priority to hear perspectives and insights related to implementation from many people – including many of those who lead or who are part of institutions and groups that will need to drive important changes. We drew on what we have learned and heard in preparing this volume, which is motivated by the urgent need to ensure that action is taken and positive changes in our communities can – and will – happen. We have attempted to weigh and propose answers to many questions, including who is responsible for making change happen; how to ensure barriers to change are overcome; how to ensure the people responsible for change remain accountable; and what steps we can all take to build and maintain momentum. Some of the recommendations we make might be described as low-hanging fruit that can be picked and implemented relatively quickly by specific groups or institutions. Other recommendations will require many more hands and a longer time to realize.**

Chapter 1 explores the interconnected nature of the recommendations in the Report and makes the case for why they must be implemented on a comprehensive basis and with a “whole of society” approach. In this chapter, we explain the purposive architecture of our recommendations built of three components. Two components – foundational ideas and a scaffolding that will together guide the construction of a new approach to community safety – illustrate the unity of purpose and strategic directions that underlie the many proposals for cohesive community-engaged safety ecosystems. Recommendations directed to effective critical incident response are a third component – the storm wall that will protect the structure in difficult times.

Chapter 2 acknowledges that the path to change has many potential barriers, and it sets out strategies to overcome these obstacles. These strategies to enable change draw on what we have heard and learned from many practitioners and

experts over the course of our work, as well as on what we have learned through the environmental scan of prior recommendations and the international scan compiled by the Commission (available in Annex B: Reports). These are our general lessons learned about how to effectively implement reports of public inquiries, task forces, and reviews that we hope will provide guidance and assistance with implementing this Report.

In Chapter 3, we share our recommendation for a broadly representative Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body that should be appointed by the federal and Nova Scotian governments to ensure that the recommendations drive ongoing focus and action. In keeping with our architectural metaphor, this body is the keystone: the last building piece, the one on which other structural elements can depend for support. A keystone is considered essential to maintaining optimum function of a structure.

Finally, in Chapter 4, we share steps and actions that those most affected, community members, community organizations, advocacy groups, policy specialists, researchers, the media, and the public can take to maintain the momentum behind implementation. We believe these steps and actions will grow in depth and impact when people come together with intent to make change happen. The examples we provide are not exhaustive, and individuals and groups will have their own ideas about how to make changes that are best for their communities.

CHAPTER 1

# A Purposive Architecture of Recommendations

## CHAPTER 1 A Purposive Architecture of Recommendations

# Introduction

**Our recommendations are designed with two objectives in mind: preventing violence and ensuring effective critical incident response. These objectives require a fundamental reorientation of current approaches to community safety and well-being, both on an everyday basis and in response to extreme events. Attaining both of these objectives will reduce the likelihood of mass casualty incidents and minimize the lethality of critical incidents. We cannot eliminate mass violence, but together we can substantially decrease its threat and impact.**

In this chapter, we set out the purposive architecture of our recommendations: the carefully designed structure of these proposals that reflects their unity of purpose, as well as the interconnections and shared themes. The various entities engaged in the implementation process will focus, naturally enough, on the recommendations within their spheres of activity and responsibility. Yet it is important that individual recommendations are understood, pursued, and fulfilled in a holistic way, with reference to the Report's recommendations as a whole. In many cases, coordination and collaboration will be required for execution, as even singular efforts will benefit from information about parallel endeavours. Additionally, a grounding in the entire project is required to enable us to effectively and sustainably turn the tide for change in intertwined areas.

The architecture is purposive in these senses: it demonstrates the shared purpose of the recommendations as a whole; it shows how recommendations are grouped together to serve a purpose; and it helps to guide the process of carrying out the recommendations so it is done with a purpose.

An appreciation of this architecture is particularly important given the scale of effort and protracted length of time involved in attaining the overarching objectives. With concerted efforts, the path to ensuring effective critical incident

response should be relatively short and direct. The journey to violence prevention – including ending gender-based, intimate partner, and family violence – is a longer, more complex road but ultimately the most constructive in terms of overall community safety and well-being in the future. It may be tempting to select from among the most easily achieved recommendations and be satisfied with quick successes. But our environmental scan of past reviews and inquiries underscores the importance of resisting this temptation. As discussed in Chapter 2, the quick-win approach is an obstacle to long-lasting reform and the type of substantive change that we call for in this Report. To continue our architectural metaphor, choosing to focus only on selected “bricks” or individual parts of the “blueprint” will not result in a stable structure for community safety and well-being, which is key to preventing mass casualties.

## Three Foundational Ideas

Three foundational ideas provide the blueprint for the architecture of the Report’s recommendations: (1) people and communities at the centre; (2) prevention first; and (3) a coherent, effective, accountable public safety system.

### People and Communities at the Centre

The Report’s starting point is the need to put people and communities at the centre of our public safety system. At some level, the very idea of public service, including the role of police, is to serve people and communities. In practice, however, the mandates and operations of institutions and agencies tend to take precedence. Many reports, for example, have shown that the formalities of the justice system often operate against the interests of those who seek to access it. In our findings, we have documented the ways in which institutional drivers have worked to the detriment of community safety.

The Report contains five sets of principles to guide the redesign of central elements within the public safety system: community safety and well-being, policing,



public warning, critical incident response, and post-critical incident support. These five sets of principles are set out below.

## **Principles for Redesigned Safety Systems**

### **Community Safety and Well-Being**

We have recommended a national framework for community safety and well-being, to be based on these guiding principles:

1. The centrality of a commitment to equality and inclusion as foundational principles for community safety and well-being.
2. A prevention-first approach to safety.
3. An understanding that social determinants of health are also the social determinants of community safety and well-being.
4. An understanding that police and corrections are layers of this approach to community safety and well-being as decentred and collaborative partners.
5. The need for community-informed municipal / provincial / territorial multi-sectoral processes to ensure more efficient collaboration between different agents of community safety and well-being.
6. A focus on community engagement, including input from and consultation with historically overpoliced communities.
7. While respecting the privacy rights of an individual, the sharing of personal information between public sectors.

These principles should guide the work of community safety and well-being councils and the plans developed by each community to build their local safety ecosystem (Recommendation C.14).

## **Principles of Policing**

We have recommended that all levels of government and Canadian police agencies adopt the following principles of policing:

1. The basic mission of the police is to improve public safety and well-being by promoting measures to prevent crime, harm, and disorder.
2. The police must undertake their basic mission with the approval of, and in collaboration with, the public and other agencies.
3. The police must seek to carry out their tasks in ways that contribute to social cohesion and solidarity.
4. The police must treat all those with whom they come into contact with fairness and respect.
5. The police must be answerable to the law and democratically responsive to the people they serve.
6. The police must be organized to achieve the optimal balance between effectiveness, cost-efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness.
7. All police work should be informed by the best available evidence.
8. Policing is undertaken by multiple providers, but it should remain a public good.

These principles should govern how police do their work and how they are accountable for the work they do (Recommendation P.36).

### **Public Warning Systems**

We have recommended that public warning systems should be designed on the basis of eight principles:

1. Centring the public.
2. Building a “system of systems” by integrating public warning systems and ensuring effective communications interoperability.
3. Enhancing governance by shifting toward a national framework that is operationalized by provincial and territorial public service agencies.
4. Formulating a concept of operations – a document developed with input from key stakeholders (both users and recipients) that sets out the high-level requirements and expectations of the system.
5. Protecting privacy in the design and implementation of public warning systems.
6. Focusing on preparedness by ensuring readiness to provide a public warning (through updated standard operating procedures and training) and readiness to receive one (through public education about public warning).
7. Assuring equality and inclusiveness: for example, by using appropriate language, accounting for a lack of access to technology or wireless coverage in remote areas, and not perpetuating stigmatization and marginalization.
8. Promoting continuous learning and improvements to maintain modernized, high-quality public alerting systems and good practices of effective public alerting.

These principles should be considered in reviewing Canada’s national public alert system and may provide continuing guidance for the operation and evaluation of the system over time (an abbreviated version of these principles is included in Recommendation C.4).

## Critical Incident Response

We have identified five principles of effective critical incident response and recommended that all Canadian police agencies implement them:

1. Prepare for critical incidents before they happen, first by acknowledging that they can arise, by training personnel, and by establishing clear roles and responsibilities for critical incident response.
2. Recognize that every critical incident is unique, and therefore that training and preparation must equip first responders, communications (911) operators, supervisors, and commanders to make decisions and act in conditions of considerable uncertainty.
3. Ensure that planning, policies, and training include other agencies that will be involved in a critical incident response, fostering a culture of interoperability among emergency responders.
4. Recognize that affected community members are the “true first responders” to a critical incident, and that they will play a crucial role in any critical incident response including by providing information to police and communications operators. Police agencies should engage in clear, timely, and accurate public communication – including by providing information that will help community members to protect themselves and others during a critical incident.
5. Evaluate every critical incident response after it takes place, whether the response went well or not. Identify lessons learned, areas for improvement, and practices that should be emulated. All personnel who are involved in a critical incident response should be included in a post-incident evaluation. In turn, these lessons should be shared in purposeful and coordinated ways to ensure institutional and public learning.

These principles should guide the work of police agencies before, during, and after a critical incident to ensure that community members and emergency responders are safe (Recommendation P.1).

### Post-Mass Casualty Incident Response

We have recommended that post-mass casualty incident support plans should be based on six guiding principles:

1. Respectful treatment of those most affected, including through recognition of their unique perspective, experiences, and needs and their involvement in the implementation of the post-critical incident support plan.
2. Recovery and resilience established as the desired outcomes.
3. Trauma-informed and victim-centred service provision.
4. Proactive, comprehensive, and coordinated support services that include navigation assistance.
5. Commitment to providing services in the immediate, short, medium, and long term.
6. Ongoing needs assessments, monitoring, and periodic evaluation of programs and services.

These principles should ensure that community members who are affected by mass casualties receive comprehensive and effective supports (Recommendation C.12).

The heart of each of these sets of principles is a commitment to people-centred, community-centred processes. This commitment necessitates ascertaining what the person or community needs from *their* perspective, and developing and operating these processes on the basis of equality and inclusion. Becoming and staying people- and community-centred also reaffirms the commitment to being attuned to and actively redressing the processes and conditions that marginalize some people and privilege others.

In several cases, our recommendations focus directly on redesigning systems and processes toward this end. The main theme of Volume 4, Community, is ensuring community-centred processes, and the vast majority of its recommendations refer to the need for effective community engagement and/or public education and awareness on topics such as public alerting, critical incident response, post-incident support, planning for community safety and well-being, and so on.

In Volume 3, Violence, we recognize the need to take effective steps to put women at the centre of strategies and practices to counter and address gender-based

violence and to put their safety in focus to a much greater extent than is currently the case. We shift from people-centred to women-centred in recognition that violence is a gendered phenomenon in that it is mainly perpetrated by men and it has a disproportionate impact on women. We use the term “women” inclusively, as an imperfect stand-in for the more nuanced and complex diversity of women and girls in Canada including Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and additional sexually and gender diverse (2SLGBTQI+) people who identify as women, acknowledging that they too are disproportionately subjected to gender-based violence.

Proposals for women-centred strategies and practices include these points:

- Ensuring that risk assessments for intimate partner violence are carried out from the perspective of victims / survivors, who are predominantly women, with a view to ensuring their safety (Recommendation V.8).
- Facilitating women-centred strategies and actions by actively listening, learning from, and situating the most marginalized and oppressed women and women living in precarious circumstances (Recommendation V.15).
- Developing and supporting a coordinated approach to advocacy, support, and services (Recommendation V.15).
- Prioritizing women’s safety in all strategies to prevent, intervene in, and respond to gender-based violence and in those designed to support recovery and healing (Recommendation V.16).
- Shifting priority and funding away from carceral responses and toward primary prevention and supporting healthy masculinities (Recommendation V.16).
- Ensuring women are resourced so they can stay safe and develop and implement paths to safety when they are threatened, including by lifting women and girls out of poverty with a focus on marginalized and oppressed women and women living in precarious situations (Recommendation V.16).

In Volume 5, Policing, we identify the harms that arise when community members lose trust in the police or see the police as a source of threat rather than safety. Our recommendations emphasize democratic policing, including the principle that police agencies should promote equality and social cohesion through their work and that they should be open with and responsive to the communities they serve. Proposals include:

- Recognizing that community members are the “true first responders” to a critical incident and can play a crucial role in a critical incident response; and planning for public communication and information gathering accordingly (Recommendation P.1).
- Acknowledging the ethic of care for community members that should govern the work of 911 call-takers (Recommendation P.13).
- Strengthening local community involvement in RCMP staffing decisions (Recommendation P.45).
- Encouraging police agencies to consult with community subject matter experts on questions that will help them better understand and serve their communities (Recommendation P.73).
- Making the goal of identifying and countering the operation of misogyny, racism, homophobia, and other inegalitarian attitudes central to strategies for improving the quality of everyday policing in Canada (Recommendation P.74).

## Prevention First

The second foundational idea of our recommendation architecture is prevention first. By this, we mean that prevention should be a primary motivation to be integrated through the entire cycle of addressing violence, with the others being early intervention, response, and recovery and healing. This Report underscores the priority of prevention by endorsing community-engaged public health approaches to reducing the risk of mass violence, more generally to ending gender-based, intimate partner, and family violence including through cultivating healthier masculinities, and to improving gun safety.

In Volume 3, Violence, we introduce the public health approach to identifying risks of mass casualty incidents and developing predictive models. Recommendation V.2 establishes a public health orientation as the most promising approach for mass casualty prevention. We go on to further describe and refine this public health orientation to prevention by focusing on identifying and addressing root causes and social determinants of violence. The main features of this approach to prevention are as follows:

- A rebalancing of roles in promoting safety and well-being: recentring community, and decentring police and the criminal justice system.
- A whole of society response.
- Four levels of activity: individual, relational, community, and social.
- Four overarching strategies: prevention, intervention (primary, secondary, tertiary), response, and recovery and healing.

In Volume 5, Policing, we suggest that Canadian police agencies should understand themselves as working within a prevention-oriented ecosystem of community safety. Recommendation P.75 identifies that preventing an escalation of violence and protecting the safety of those who experience violence should be the primary purpose of every police response to a complaint of violence or the expressed fear of violence.

## **A Coherent, Effective, Accountable Public Safety System**

The third foundational idea of the Report's recommendation architecture is that our public safety system must be coherent, effective, and accountable. Yet our findings reveal that there is currently no coherent, effective system for public safety in Nova Scotia. In Volume 1, Context and Purpose, we describe Nova Scotia's public safety system (elaborated on in Volume 5, Policing, as a community safety ecosystem) as one that is forged in shared responsibility among governments, community service agencies, professional and volunteer first-responder organizations, communities, and individuals alike. We point out the system is further shaped by laws and public policy, and influenced by our daily choices and actions. Yet systems are not spontaneous. It takes work to build and maintain them through effective interorganizational structures that support co-operation, collaboration, and communication at the leadership level. In addition to joint leadership forums, a system requires shared practical tools, such as interoperable communications systems and protocols, as well as joint planning and training.

Many of our recommendations are aimed at systems-building, including recommendations to



- reflect the rebalancing in roles and responsibilities between communities and the police / criminal justice system;
- activate shared responsibilities among public sector safety agencies, including police and other emergency responders;
- extend responsibilities to others outside the formal sector by involving groups / organizations not always considered part of the public safety system, such as businesses, media, professional licensing bodies, and so on;
- ensure effective coordination, collaboration, and communication among these sectors;
- develop collaborative forms of leadership; and
- enhance accountability, ongoing learning, and continual improvement.

The Commission's examination of the April 2020 mass casualty and its aftermath has led us to conclude that there are serious concerns about the current structure and operations of the RCMP. We therefore make three recommendations designed to ensure a fundamental review of the RCMP as a critical step in working toward a coherent, effective, and accountable public safety system:

- a comprehensive external review of the RCMP (Recommendation P.49);
- following this comprehensive review, Public Safety Canada and the federal minister of public safety should establish clear priorities for the RCMP, which could entail a restructuring of the RCMP and a reconfiguration of policing in Canada (Recommendation P.50); and
- measures to address the unhealthy aspects of RCMP management culture, which should not wait until these reviews and restructuring have taken place (Recommendation P.59).

The structure and operation of RCMP contract policing and the structure of policing in Nova Scotia are closely linked, but not interchangeable. Participants made a wide range of submissions about the best structure of policing in Nova Scotia, and we conclude in Volume 5, Policing, that this is a matter for broader public and expert discussion. We therefore also recommend that the Province of Nova Scotia engage the public and a range of experts to determine the future of policing in this province (Recommendation P.67).

# Scaffolding to Achieve Our Common Purpose

In this section, we build up from the blueprint shaped by these three foundational ideas to show the ways in which our recommendations join together to achieve the common purpose enshrined in the dual objectives of preventing violence and ensuring effective critical incident response. We identify seven points where scaffolding is needed to help us build a new structure: strengthening our public safety system; fostering cultural shifts; invigorating accountability and accountability mechanisms; improving ways of working; developing and sharing knowledge; changing laws; and reallocating and committing to adequate funding.

## Strengthening Our Public Safety System

One of the systemic inadequacies that contributed to the limited response to the April 2020 mass casualty was a lack of coordination, collaboration, and communication among public safety agencies and between these agencies and the public, particularly in the communities most affected. Recommendation P.1 invites public safety agencies to plan and train together for critical incident response and to foster a culture of interoperability among emergency responders. This recommendation also emphasizes the importance of planning for effective public communications during a critical incident. Recommendation P.16 identifies the importance of having clear protocols for unified command posts, agency roles, and responsibilities among all agencies involved in critical incident response.

These same shortcomings also exist in the ways police and other public sector agencies and services interact on an everyday basis and in restricted day-to-day community engagement with municipal and Indigenous governments and community groups. Recommendations C.3, C.4, and C.5 therefore focus on building a functioning system through a leadership body that brings together all these disparate elements. Community Safety and Well-Being Councils will be mandated to develop plans that meet local community needs and link up to broader provincial, territorial, and national public safety systems. Some jurisdictions have already begun to take these steps, most notably Ontario.

The Report also contains several recommendations for practices that will strengthen this system, such as the provision of safe spaces to report and community-based warning systems. Recommendation V.9 calls on governments and community-based organizations, particularly the gender-based violence advocacy and support sector, to develop safe spaces through which people affected by violence can report their circumstances and seek help. Developing safe reporting spaces requires learning from women and other survivors of violence about the barriers they face in reporting and collaborating to overcome them. It also requires building the capacity to move beyond individual incidents and identify and address patterns of violent behaviour.

Another important aspect of our public safety system is the capacity to warn community members about dangers so they can take steps to protect themselves, both individually and in common. Priority reform is three-fold:

- Reviewing the national public warning system (Recommendation C.4).
- Recognizing, promoting, and supporting the duty to warn that is incumbent on police and other agencies mandated with emergency management, as well as educating the public about its correlated responsibility to understand the warning system and how to respond (Recommendations C.4, C.5, and P.17–P.22).
- Facilitating as needed a “system of systems” for warnings that take into account the needs of distinct communities and to ensure the ability to reach individuals and groups encountering barriers to accessing alerts (Recommendation C.4 and P.18).

For example, the Unama’ki Emergency Alert System is a community-based system developed and operated by the five Mi’kmaw Communities in Cape Breton. Mainland Mi’kmaw communities have also established a Mainland Mi’kmaq Alert System. These alert systems warn community members about a range of serious safety concerns, including missing persons.

We also make a number of recommendations for enhancing co-operation, collaboration, and communication among public safety agencies and institutions. They include recommendations to develop a collaborative framework for all law enforcement agencies to develop fully interoperable systems for the sharing of records and information to ensure effective scrutiny at the border to stop the illegal entry of firearms into Canada (Recommendation C.24). Recommendation P.68

addresses information sharing among police agencies in Nova Scotia on an every-day basis.

This Report draws attention to the importance of ensuring that measures to build and strengthen safety systems take into account the practical realities of rural communities. With respect to policing, we recommend that funding to municipalities and local communities, including Indigenous communities, must be sufficient to ensure adequate police services in rural and remote communities (Recommendation P.53). Measures are required to revitalize rural policing, and Recommendation P.54 contains our proposals for the RCMP to develop, support, and promote attractive career streams for the specialization in rural or remote policing and that this expertise be represented in all levels of decision-making with that police agency. Recommendation P.55 highlights the importance of community orientation for RCMP members who are new to a district.

## Fostering Cultural Shifts

The Report's blueprint of three foundational ideas (people and communities at the centre, prevention first, and a coherent public safety system) are far-reaching. They cannot be addressed by focusing solely on the police and other safety agencies. To achieve the objectives of violence prevention and effective critical incident response, we must change all across society. This Report proposes a number of ways to mobilize a society-wide response and identifies a number of specific cultural shifts to facilitate these goals. Fostering cultural shifts is the second point in our scaffolding for change.

A “cultural shift” means changing the beliefs and behaviours, which in turn leads to changes in outcomes. Our Report urges a move away from seeing gender-based violence as a “normal” and inevitable phenomenon and toward naming it as a fundamental, shared problem, one that we have individual and collective responsibilities to address. To shift our culture away from this normalization, we first have to name it as a problem, reframe the way we see, and talk about it. Changing this societal narrative about gender-based violence is as important as modifying specific responses to it (for example, how police address it).

In support of this cultural shift, Recommendation V.14 calls on governments and a range of other actors to recognize that gender-based, intimate partner, and family violence are an epidemic that warrants a meaningful and sustained society-wide

response. We suggest that men in particular take up individual and concerted action to contribute to ending this epidemic. Several recommendations promote shifts in specific attitudes and practices that perpetuate the normalization of gender-based violence, while others address the need to counter myths and stereotypes. Recommendation V.7, for example, deals with the pernicious tendency to blame victims and hold women survivors responsible for violence at the hands of others. Recommendation V.12 makes the case for educational and public awareness campaigns about coercive control, and Recommendation C.32 calls for a national public health education and awareness campaign to promote healthy masculinities.

Changing our culture on gender-based violence also requires changing the way we behave every day, and we ask individuals and a range of organizations to consider how they can take part in a society-wide response. For example, we promote seeing bystander intervention as a daily practice (Recommendation C.17), and we ask business, professional licensing bodies, and government regulators to consider ways they can integrate violence prevention into their work (Recommendations C.18, C.19, C.20).

A cultural shift is also required to institute a public health approach to gun safety. We recommend that governments take steps to strengthen public knowledge about: existing firearm-related laws and regulations; options for raising complaints and concerns; the risks associated with firearms in the home, including risk factors associated with accidental injury, suicide, domestic violence, hate crimes, and diversion of lawfully owned guns; and storage requirements for firearms and ammunition (Recommendation C.26).

While the shift we envisage extends well beyond policing, we have also concluded that some cultural patterns within Canadian police agencies are at odds with the principles of substantive equality, public accountability, and fostering social cohesion that we have identified as foundational to democratic policing. Recommendations P.57, P.58, and P.66 focus on improving the conflict resolution skills of police and establishing use of force policies that respect human rights and adhere to principles of minimum intervention. Other recommendations in Volume 5, Policing, address specific aspects of police agencies' culture, from education, recruitment, and retention (Recommendations P.56, P.69, and P.70) to how police work with the communities they serve (for example, Recommendations P.37, P.54, P.55, and P.73), and from identifying and countering the operation of myths, stereotypes, and systemic bias in policing (V.3, V.11, P.20, and P.74) to RCMP management culture (P.59).

## Invigorating Accountability and Accountability Mechanisms

A third point that requires scaffolding in order to build up from our blueprint entails enhancing accountability of the public safety agencies to communities through a revitalization of existing accountability mechanisms and the creation of some new ones. We call for a national accountability framework for the shared goal of ending gender-based, intimate partner, and family violence. This national framework should include an independent and impartial gender-based violence commissioner whose position and effective powers are established through statute by the federal government and whose responsibility will include reporting annually to Parliament (Recommendation V.17).

Enhancing the accountability of police agencies to the communities they serve is a central focus of Volume 5, Policing. The eight principles of policing that we set out in Recommendation P.36, reproduced above in the text box, establish standards of democratic policing by which the activities of Canadian police agencies can and should be assessed.

We make numerous recommendations that are designed to increase the accountability of the RCMP to the Canadian public. Recommendations P.38 to P.41 focus on strengthening the democratic accountability of the RCMP and its responsible minister by enhancing public transparency. These recommendations call for clear rules and policies, including changes to the *RCMP Act*, to be put in place to ensure that both the minister and the RCMP are publicly accountable for the ways in which they discharge their responsibilities. Recommendations P.51 and P.52 address public access to RCMP policies and procedures.

Recommendation P.26 proposes that the RCMP's national communications policies be revised to state clearly that the objective of the RCMP's public communications is to provide accurate information about the RCMP's operations, and, in particular, to respond to media questions in a timely and complete manner. Recommendation P.37 calls on the RCMP to adopt a policy of admitting its mistakes and accepting responsibility for them.

Also in Volume 5, we make proposals that are similarly designed to clarify the roles and responsibilities of police boards in Nova Scotia (Recommendation P.61) and to ensure public access to the policies and procedures of all police agencies in Nova Scotia (Recommendation P.62).

We also make recommendations that are designed to strengthen accountability bodies such as the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission (Recommendations P.42, P.43, and P.44) and the Nova Scotia Serious Incident Response Team (P.27 to P.35) and to protect the independence and public accountability functions performed by these bodies.

Finally, in Part D of Volume 5, we make recommendations that address everyday police practices. These recommendations pertain especially to the low-visibility decisions made on a daily basis by police that constitute much of front-line policing. Recommendations that address police practices such as note-taking (Recommendation P.71) and front-line supervision (Recommendations P.48 and P.72) will improve the quality of everyday policing in Canada and facilitate external oversight of police decisions. Specifically, Recommendation P.72 provides that general duty members receive routine and effective supervision, including regular feedback on the quality of low-visibility decision-making; that shift meetings should become standard practice at the beginning of shifts; and that supervisors should receive training on running effective shift meetings. These changes will ensure that front-line police officers are better supported in doing their jobs safely and effectively. Other Volume 5 recommendations build on our findings in Volume 2, *What Happened*, that relate to technology and training (for example, member tracking technology, uniform design and radio training for members, supervisors, and dispatchers). They are focused specifically on improving the safety of front-line officers responding to critical incidents (Recommendations P.4 and P.14). These recommendations supplement those that relate to effective critical incident responses, which will also keep officers safer.

In Chapter 3, we discuss the need for a body charged with championing action to implement the Report's recommendations, to foster dialogue among responsible agencies, to monitor progress, to ensure accountability for actions taken by all entities charged with responsibilities in these recommendations, and to engage the public in this process. We also make a specific recommendation for the creation of an Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body with this mandate (Recommendation I.1).

## Improving Ways of Working

Our fourth point of scaffolding brings together recommendations to improve how actors and agencies carry out their work within the community safety ecosystem. In addition to calling for system-level change, our Report details numerous areas of inadequacy in the ways that current agencies and institutions work, both on an everyday basis and with respect to the response to the mass casualty. Agencies and institutions have a responsibility to contribute to and reflect the shifts in culture outlined above, in particular to counter the normalization of gender-based violence. New and improved ways of working are required to support a coherent public safety system that puts people and communities first, ensures efficacy, and incorporates cultural change.

For the most part, ways of working are established through policies, procedures, and programs and are reflected in specific practices and techniques. The vast majority of our recommendations in this regard therefore address approaches to policing and the methods and protocols used by police services, with a particular focus on the RCMP.

We also address the requirement for a shift in other roles – for example, firearms officers (Recommendation C.25) The effective, consistent, and accountable enforcement of firearms regulations requires new, collaborative ways of working. We recommend that the federal government engage with communities, particularly the gender-based violence advocacy and support sector, as well as firearms regulatory officers, to develop practical guidance policies for the enforcement of these regulations.

Another specific area for a broader policy change is the shift away from mandatory arrest and charging policies and protocols for intimate partner violence offences and replacing them with frameworks for structured decision-making by police with a focus on violence prevention (Recommendation V.10). These reforms also engage the role and responsibilities of Crown attorney / counsel and police, as does Recommendation V.6, dealing more broadly with the issue of discretion in situations of intimate partner violence.

We also make a suite of proposals to deal with the regulation and management of police paraphernalia, specifically with respect to GCSurplus tracking, training, and oversight as it pertains to the sale of decommissioned vehicles (Recommendation C.31).



In a few cases, needed improvements to our “ways of working” relate to the broader political system or public sectors that are adjacent to public safety. For example, Recommendation C.1 addresses the fact that increased rural safety and well-being depend on more meaningful inclusion of rural communities in overall policy-making. On another front, we conclude that chronic limitations on access to mental health care in Canada’s healthcare system circumscribed the ability to meet the needs of those affected by the April 2020 mass casualty and, more generally, has a negative impact on community safety and well-being. It is also a barrier to addressing and preventing gender-based violence. We therefore recommend a national action plan to fully integrate mental health care into the Canadian healthcare system so that access to these services will be on the same basis as physical healthcare (Recommendation C.10). We also recommend that changes be made to mental health care in Nova Scotia (Recommendation P.60).

## Developing and Sharing Knowledge

Moving from blueprint to an effective and supported community safety ecosystem will require evidence about promising practices among other topics. This transition can be achieved through a further locus of activity: developing and sharing knowledge. In some areas, our Report identifies significant gaps in knowledge, and we have recommended measures to fill these gaps. One priority is defining, tracking, and studying mass casualty incidents (Recommendation V.1). This work engages a range of law enforcement agencies and research institutions, and, in addition, we propose that the Canadian Disaster Database be amended to include mass casualty incidents so there will be one complete national repository of information (Recommendation C.3).

In Volume 5, Policing, we conclude that, outside of Quebec, Canadian police agencies’ approaches to police education and research are inadequate to equip police for the important work they do and for the increasingly complex social, legal, and technological environment in which they work. The shortcomings produced by this approach have a disproportionately adverse impact on those who have historically been overpoliced and underserved by police. We make recommendations to the RCMP (Recommendation P.56), governments, and all Canadian police agencies (Recommendation P.70) to design and adopt a three-year bachelor’s degree program in policing as a minimum standard for police recruitment by 2032. Volume 5 also emphasizes that police have a public responsibility to learn and to then

share the lessons they have learned from their own critical incident responses with other agencies and the public. So, for example, Recommendations P.24 and P.25 propose mechanisms for completing and publicly sharing the outcomes of after-action reports and after-action reviews. Recommendation P.56 also makes a more general recommendation to government and police boards to ensure that Canadian police agencies become more open to research collaborations, and more evidence-based in their approach.

We make a comprehensive recommendation for a multifaceted approach to enable effective prevention of, intervention in, and responses to coercive control (Recommendation V.12). One aspect of this recommendation is the establishment of an expert body to examine whether and how the law could better address the context of persistent patterns of controlling behaviour at the core of gender-based, intimate partner, and family violence.

Our Report also seeks to build knowledge and capacity through ongoing reviews of essential aspects of the Canadian public safety system. In addition to calls for an urgent review of the national public warning system noted above, we recommend triennial reviews of this system thereafter (Recommendation C.5). In particular, we propose that these reviews integrate public input and take into account the diverse needs of all people living in Canada, including urban, rural, and remote communities, official language minorities, and marginalized communities. These reviews should be designed to build knowledge about how the system functions and how it can be improved, and they are closely tied to performance monitoring. They underscore the overlap among building knowledge, capabilities, and accountability. We take a similar approach with respect to the relatively new field of psychological assessments of perpetrators of mass casualty incidents. Recommendations V.3 and V.4 propose an external review of the RCMP Behavioural Sciences Branch and periodic reviews thereafter.

## Changing Laws

A sixth point of scaffolding is legislative change. Two of our recommendations require enactment of new statutes: federal, provincial, and territorial laws to create Community Safety and Well-Being Councils (Recommendations C.14 and C.15) and a federal law to establish the office of a gender-based violence commissioner (Recommendation V.17).

We also recommend revisions to existing legislation, including:

- an amendment to the *Criminal Code* to recognize that reasonable resistance violence by the victim of a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour is self-defence (Recommendation V.12);
- amendments to provincial and territorial family law statutes to incorporate a definition of family violence that encompasses patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour as a factor to be considered in proceedings under these statutes (where that is not already the case) (Recommendation V.12);
- amendments to the *Criminal Code* and the *Firearms Act* to reduce gun lethality (Recommendation C.21);
- amendments to the *Firearms Act* to automatically revoke the firearms licences of persons convicted of domestic violence or hate-related offences to reduce gun lethality (Recommendation C.22);
- federal, provincial, and territorial legislative and regulatory changes required to prevent unlawful transfers of firearms from estates (Recommendation C.23);
- amendments to the Nova Scotia *Police Act* and *Serious Incident Response Team Regulations* to clarify the Serious Incident Response Team’s jurisdiction and powers (Recommendation P.28) and improve public reporting by the Serious Incident Response Team (Recommendation P.35); and
- amendments to the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act* to strengthen the democratic accountability of the RCMP and its responsible minister (Recommendations P.38 and P.39), increase the public transparency of the RCMP Management Advisory Board (Recommendation P.41), and improve public complaints processes (Recommendation P.43).

## Reconsidering and Adjusting Funding

A seventh point of scaffolding to move from blueprint to the realization of this architecture of recommendations involves reconsidering and adjusting funding to enable community-engaged safety and well-being. Our recommendations will require a shift in funding toward prevention, and this will be an important issue during the implementation process. Investing in prevention is cost effective: public health prevention approaches have been shown to save healthcare costs by

addressing the social determinants that cause disease.<sup>1</sup> The classic example of this approach is that it is more rational and less expensive to build a fence at the top of the precipice as opposed to stationing an ambulance at the bottom of it.

In Volume 3, *Violence*, we conclude that funding related to preventing and effectively intervening in gender-based violence has been inadequate for many years and endangers women's lives. We call for epidemic-level funding to address this underinvestment in safety (Recommendation V.13).

A series of recommendations propose rebalancing public spending within the community safety ecosystem. For example, we propose placing public spending toward crime prevention on equal footing with criminal law enforcement (Recommendation C.14). We also recommend adjustment in funding priorities to focus on moving away from criminal justice system approaches, including by minimizing the role of policing as a first response in some situations; reducing an emphasis on incarceration; and moving toward prevention (Recommendation V.16). We recognize the importance of placing priority on traditionally underserved marginalized communities (Recommendation V.16) and taking rural and remote contexts into consideration in funding formulas in support of preventative strategies in these communities (Recommendation C.16).

More generally, we recognize that public spending will be required to implement recommendations for additional services and new structures for collaboration and accountability.

The recommendations we make about funding in Volume 5, *Policing*, are consistent with our overall emphasis on preventative measures, increasing the democratic accountability of police, advancing equality, and promoting social cohesion. For example, Recommendation P.70 identifies that funding should be available to prospective police students from historically marginalized and under-represented backgrounds to support them through a police education. We emphasize, and Recommendations P.69 and P.70 reflect, that recruitment strategies designed to increase the number of police officers from under-represented backgrounds will fail if they are not accompanied by educational and cultural change in Canadian policing. Similarly, Recommendations P.34, P.44, and P.61 address the importance of providing adequate funding to police accountability and governance bodies such as the Serious Incident Response Team, Civilian Review and Complaints Commission, and police boards.

# Buttressing the Storm Wall: Critical Incident Response

**The majority of our recommendations aim to establish an effective, prevention-oriented, people- and community-centred system for community safety and well-being. Our findings lead us to conclude that focusing on the everyday is the best course toward preventing mass casualties. All efforts should be made to lessen risks through a public health prevention approach, yet risks cannot be completely eradicated. We must also plan and ensure preparedness for critical incidents. The stronger the foundation of daily practices, the greater the potential to put into place an effective response.**

At the same time, our Report recognizes that Nova Scotia's public safety system was not adequately prepared to respond to the mass casualty during or after the incident. Our purposive architecture therefore includes a series of recommendations to build effective and community-engaged critical response management. Critical incident response is the storm wall that protects our structure, the community safety and well-being ecosystem, in difficult times. It is crucial to buttress this storm wall between incidents through careful planning and active, collaborative preparation.

Recommendation P.1 sets out five principles of effective critical incident response to establish a sound footing for future responses to critical incidents in Canada. Recommendations P.2 to P.9 elaborate on these general principles by addressing the core capabilities of decision-making and supervision during a critical incident response, including measures to ensure the rapid deployment of a fully trained critical incident commander. Recommendations P.10 to P.16 address information management during a critical incident response, including how to ensure that information shared by community members is properly captured and shared with first responders and critical incident decision-makers; effective police radio protocols and other practices of internal communications; sharing information with other agencies; and accessing resources such as air support. Recommendations P.17 to P.22 establish practices for effective public communications during a critical incident response, including the use of the Alert Ready system. Police and other emergency services agencies can hope to be effective only if they take the opportunity to learn and share the lessons from critical incident responses. Recommendations P.23 to P.25 set out the measures that should be taken by the RCMP to ensure that institutional learning happens and is sustained.

Buttressing is also required to ensure that communities are at the centre of critical incident response planning, management, and implementation. Our recommendations to ensure community-centric approaches are focused on two outcomes: the design and regular review of effective public warning systems and the capacity to meet the needs that arise during and following a mass casualty. These two sets of recommendations are based on and promote the Report's guiding principles for public warning and post-critical incident support set out above. We make recommendations to address three categories of need arising from mass casualty incidents: those of survivors and affected persons (families of individuals whose lives are taken or are injured), emergency responders, and affected communities and their members.

Police agencies bear the primary obligation to meet the needs of survivors and affected persons arising from serious crimes, including mass casualties. We make recommendations for revitalizing these police-based victim services including through the integration of a duty of care (Recommendation C.6) and for the integration of victim services in critical incident planning, management, and response (Recommendation C.7). Our findings lead us to conclude that steps must be taken to proactively enhance the wellness of emergency responders in advance of critical incidents (Recommendation C.9) and that meeting the needs of this group after a mass casualty requires the appointment of a post-incident mental health lead to coordinate services and oversee and evaluate the provision of services. An important aspect of critical incident response planning and preparedness is planning to provide support for all those affected by a mass casualty incident, both for individuals and for communities as a whole. We conclude that a national initiative is required to establish policies and protocols to meet immediate, short- to medium-, and long-term needs (Recommendation C.8). This group of recommendations will be supported by the creation of a National Resource Hub for Mass Casualty Responses, with a mandate that includes research and the development of promising practices and technical assistance (Recommendation C.2).

CHAPTER 2

# Overcoming Barriers to Change

## CHAPTER 2 Overcoming Barriers to Change

Our findings about the April 2020 mass casualty and its aftermath make clear that change must happen. The previous chapter lays out the purposive architecture of our recommendations and explains how the different parts of this Report’s “blueprint” interconnect and are designed together to achieve the overarching objectives – to prevent violence and ensure effective critical incident response. This chapter focuses on the challenges we collectively face to ensure that the change we make is meaningful and long-lasting.

Public inquiries develop more effective recommendations when they hear from the range of people who will need to implement those changes. That is why we also made it a point from the outset to ask questions about implementation barriers and opportunities. As we heard from those most affected, including families and emergency responders, witnesses, institutional Participants, experts, researchers, practitioners, and the public, many people pointed us to earlier inquiries and reports related to our mandate, particularly to prior recommendations that had varying degrees of success.

Issues related to policing, violence, and community well-being have been the subject of many other inquiries and the focus of considerable research. The environmental scan of earlier recommendations, prepared by the Commission and available in Annex B and on our website, clearly illustrates the breadth and depth of past reviews. The scan, while not exhaustive, looked at 71 reports released between 1989 and 2022, which collectively made over 2,000 recommendations relating to key areas in our mandate, including:

- police oversight, training, preparation, and culture;
- communications among and within law enforcement agencies;
- communications with community, including contemporaneous response to victims and community as well as emergency alerts;



- mass casualty incidents; and
- gender-based and intimate partner violence.

The scan, along with the experiences of many people we heard from, provided a host of information about the nature and scale of past recommendations. When formulating the recommendations in this Report, this information galvanized us to continually consider the potential barriers to implementation. In this chapter, we examine some of the more common implementation barriers before discussing potential ways to overcome them.

## Implementation Barriers

### Cultural Factors in Society and in Institutions

Cultures run deep and can be extremely difficult to fully appreciate, challenge, and change. Often without our fully knowing it, culture shapes how we perceive the world and our place in it, defining norms that underpin what we believe and how we act. Over the last 50 years, there has been a growing focus on uncovering and challenging cultural norms related to gender, race, sexuality, and other forms of unconscious and systemic bias, with the goal of breaking down harmful norms and changing cultures so they are more inclusive, fair, and safe for everyone. For example, as we have argued elsewhere in this Report, addressing the root causes of mass casualties requires a consideration of certain widespread expressions of masculinity that contribute to violence and oppression against women and other marginalized groups in society at large, including within systems such as criminal justice and within institutions such as policing.

As we heard many times during public proceedings, and as our broader research has reinforced, culture within police forces such as the RCMP, and how that culture is expressed both inside the RCMP and in how police officers interact with different groups in society, has come under increased scrutiny. Past reports such as *Broken Dreams, Broken Lives: The Devastating Effects of Sexual Harassment on Women in the RCMP*, *Final Report on the Implementation of the Merlo Davidson*

*Settlement Agreement* by the Honourable Michel Bastarache,<sup>1</sup> have zeroed in on patterns of misogyny and sexual harassment within RCMP culture. In Volume 5, Policing, and Volume 7, Process, we note challenges that we encountered during our work around timely disclosure from the RCMP, which may be indicative of a culture where the transparency that is a necessary condition of public accountability is not prioritized. We also heard that the RCMP is not alone among police forces in its apparent resistance to transparency. In their Participant submissions, the BC Civil Liberties Association and the East Coast Prison Justice Society stated that a significant barrier to ensuring accountability and transparency is the “‘profound resistance ... from police services with respect to access to data in general,’ including their view of data as ‘intelligence’ and any potential disclosures as threats.”<sup>2</sup>

Changing institutional cultures requires more than top-down policy directives. As we explain in Volume 5, the culture of a police service can have a determinative impact on the success of attempts to reform the organization and how it does its work. We note that structural and behavioural changes must be accompanied by attitudinal shifts, and that leadership within the ranks and from the top is necessary to improve the possibility of culture change. If they are to succeed, change processes must also engage rank-and-file officers. Any attempt to implement change on a wide scale must account for the challenges of culture, particularly within significant institutions such as the police and significant sectors such as businesses and healthcare.

## Lack of Political Will and Accountability

Political will includes the commitment of political and institutional leaders at the local, provincial, and national levels to undertake actions to achieve certain outcomes. Without a real commitment to reform from those who can ensure that the right tools and resources are in place to achieve these outcomes, the Commission’s recommendations are unlikely to be implemented. All the work carried out by many people over the course of the Inquiry will be wasted.

We might also think of political will more broadly, taking into account the dynamic relationship between the public, civil society organizations, and our political and public institutions. For example, politicians pay attention to the concerns of their constituents, who in turn might be influenced by the work of advocacy groups or community organizations. In this sense, a failure of political will is tied to collective

engagement, partnership, and accountability. As Kaitlin Geiger-Bardswich of Women’s Shelters Canada noted in a Participant consultation:

So the barriers to this implementation, of course, is political will ... and also partisanship. So we really need to get to a place where it’s obvious to every politician and every member of the general public as well that gender-based and intimate partner violence are ... non-partisan issues.<sup>3</sup>

It can be easier to articulate and rally around discrete issues. Tackling larger, systemic ones can be more challenging, and political will around such issues is more likely to wane. That is why we all must remain vigilant and persistent. Inquiries are costly, but the cost of not implementing recommendations is far higher.

## Failure to Properly Disseminate Prior Recommendations

Many past inquiries and other kinds of reviews have made recommendations for change related to policing, violence, and communities. During public proceedings, we learned that some first responders were aware of previous reports, but their organizations had not systematically disseminated prior findings or educated members on the things that needed to change. For example, several RCMP members said they were aware of the MacNeil Report, which was commissioned following a mass casualty in Moncton, New Brunswick, in 2014. Some had even been part of that critical incident response. Yet these members did not recall any official process within the RCMP to share that report and its findings. RCMP officers in Nova Scotia advised us that no formal transition plans were in place when they moved into their roles, which meant that even when there had been plans to implement recommendations, there was no structure to hand over those plans and to ensure the continuation of reform processes.

In her submissions, counsel for Participant Bev (Beverly) Beaton, mother-in-law of Kristen Beaton, stated that the “implementation of the Commission’s recommendations amount to lip service if Members are not fully informed, educated, and trained on the changes.”<sup>4</sup>

## Failure to Include Diverse, Disadvantaged, and Marginalized Communities

Implementation can be affected by who gets a seat at the table. If those involved are few in number or come from similar backgrounds, the limitations of their experiences and perspectives can be reflected in implementation. For example, those most affected by the mass casualty should be represented when decisions are being made about how to implement recommendations that reflect their experience. As well, it is crucial to involve people from marginalized communities, especially if those same communities are differentially affected by proposed reforms. Similarly, a failure to hear from residents of rural communities will mean that the particular needs and perspectives of these communities are not taken into account, which can allow an urban bias to set in. Inclusivity, besides being a value in and of itself, will improve the chances that the recommendations and reforms will succeed. As Kristina Fifield of Avalon Sexual Assault Centre observed at a Participant consultation:

When we talk about designing and implementing policies, programs and interventions we need individuals coming from marginalized and vulnerable communities and we need more diversity. Because we cannot inform policies, practices and implement programs if it's all being built from individuals that are white and individuals that have never had presence or stepped into the communities, especially rural communities in our province.<sup>5</sup>

## Insufficient Funding and Lack of Resources

Finally, implementation will falter or fail altogether without adequate funding and resourcing. Public institutions must operate within constrained budgets, staffing, and other resources. Developing new plans in order to implement specific recommendations takes work from managers and teams who must assess what is required and how to prioritize the changes. It all takes time and money. For example, in order to succeed, our recommended police education degree will require institutional support and funding from both federal and provincial governments and numerous departments / ministries as well as police agencies. Even

more fundamentally, shifting the ecosystem of community safety to one that is community-engaged and prevention-oriented will require governments to commit sustained funding to institutions that have, until now, persevered with grant funding. Dr. Amy Siciliano, public safety advisor for the Halifax Regional Municipality, stated:

[C]ommunity shouldn't be expected to know which funding comes from what stream or what level of government, but they should, if they're coming to the table and working with us, they should know that we're committed for the long haul in this work. Much like police are core funded, community-based safety needs to be core funded in order for it to sustain those good relationships and work effectively.<sup>6</sup>

## Ways to Overcome Implementation Barriers

### Shift How We Think About Recommendations

As Commissioners, we have been empowered to make recommendations; it will be up to many people across society to ensure that the recommendations become action. The gap that has often arisen between recommendations for change and action for change has prompted some to question whether the word “recommendation” carries an adequate sense of urgency, necessity, or even mandatory compliance. Others have expressed fears that the notion of recommendations perpetuates an over-reliance on top-down leadership. Both concerns are valid. Terminology aside, many past public inquiries, though conducted by qualified and committed reviewers who were thorough and incisive, have not led to meaningful and lasting change. These lessons make clear that there must be an extensive shift in how we collectively understand public inquiries and their resulting recommendations.

Our recommendations are based on extensive consultation with community members, Participants, and those with expertise and lived experience. We invite every reader of this Report to consider their own role in realizing the changes envisioned by these recommendations.

## Promote Community Safety as a Shared Value

We have already identified that cultural barriers can prevent society and institutions from changing for the better. Given the intrinsic role that values play in cultures, one important way to overcome this barrier is to have discussions about how we evolve our shared values and vision for the future. **Change that comes from a technical or bureaucratic place is unlikely to engage people or motivate them to act. Change that is grounded in an aspirational purpose, in values and vision, will engage people’s hearts and heads, intrinsically motivating them to take part. Cultural change sounds challenging, but it happens all the time.** The societal shifts on actions such as drinking and driving or smoking indoors around others are examples of how educational campaigns paired with policy can result in broad cultural shifts.

Throughout our work, while acknowledging the different and sometimes opposing viewpoints expressed by Participants and others who engaged with our process, we listened carefully and tried to understand the perspectives we heard. In our Report, we have sought to come back to the shared goal to make our communities safer. This simple but powerful goal must be a rallying point for the work ahead, bridging the divides among different agencies, institutions, groups, and individuals. As Professor Denise Martin of Abertay University in Scotland told us:

I think it’s having those overarching principles that everybody has to work for or towards ... the national framework, this is key, national performance targets, but they’re really holistic. They’re not just about reducing crime. They’re not just focused on very kind of narrow indicators. They’re actually thinking about people’s welfare, improvements to people’s lives, fundamentally underpinning this approach. And it drives a responsibility. It drives responsibility across all agencies, that all agencies and government are responsible for meeting these targets.<sup>7</sup>

## Invest in Education About Cultural Norms That Must Be Changed

Canada has a long tradition of investing in public education to help inform, protect, and improve the lives of its citizens. Past governments have funded heritage moments to help celebrate Canadian history and achievements. Governments continue to fund public health campaigns that warn about the very real risks of smoking or not wearing a seatbelt. More recently, we all likely remember federal and provincial education programs about COVID-19 that promoted crucial public health measures and steps we could take to help keep ourselves and each other safe. Similar investment in and care must be given to broad public education about the harmful effects of a particular idea of masculinity – which we term traditional masculinity – that is closely connected to violent behaviour. The phrase “traditional masculinity” refers to a cultural understanding that emphasizes male authority and perpetuates certain cultural messages that implicitly and explicitly teach men and boys particular notions of how to be a man. We need to continue shifting norms based on gendered myths and stereotypes so our shared sense of what is acceptable and unacceptable evolves in ways that afford safety to everyone.

## Make Plans That Will Work for the Near and Long Terms

We do not underestimate the desire to improve community safety and well-being by leaders and members in government, by police and other emergency responders, by community and advocacy groups, by universities and other places of learning, by the media, and by the wider community. We are confident that regardless of their nature, every organization has what it takes to help make our recommendations a reality. This includes taking the time to review, understand, and make plans for implementation, identifying what can be done quickly, and developing longer-term strategies for those things that might take months or even years to deliver. It also includes dedicating funding and teams to oversee these processes; and people with the passion and drive to be champions, who can inspire others and get things done. As then RCMP Commr. Brenda Lucki observed in her testimony:

So culture change in a big organization of 32,000 people takes time. And for it to be sustainable, it has to take time, because if it's a quick fix, it will come and go. It will be the treat of the week, the flavour of the month. I don't want to make change like that. I want things to be very strategic, very succinct, and very sustainable.

So it's all about creating processes, which we will do in Nova Scotia, so that ... when [A/Commr. and Commanding Officer of H Division] Dennis Daley comes and goes, it's not going to drop because Dennis Daley had a good idea and as soon as he leaves, "Oh, it's gone." No. It has to be processed and protocol, policy, procedure. People have to know what you're doing. You have to communicate it. So there's a lot of work to changing a culture.<sup>8</sup>



CHAPTER 3

**Keystone: Fostering  
Collaboration and  
Ensuring Accountability**

## CHAPTER 3

### Keystone: Fostering Collaboration and Ensuring Accountability

Working together to enhance community safety and well-being requires systems to enhance collaboration and accountability. The same is true of all stages of effective management of critical incidents: prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Volume 3, Violence, Volume 4, Community, and Volume 5, Policing, contain our recommendations for approaches and structures that facilitate communication, co-operation, and coordination between and among community members and organizations and public safety actors and agencies. In this chapter, we recommend an Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body, to be charged with the responsibility to foster the collective action required to implement our recommendations and to hold the responsible governments, institutions, and organizations to account.

In keeping with our architectural metaphor, this body is the keystone: the last building piece, the one on which other structural elements can depend for support. A keystone is considered essential to maintaining optimum ecosystem function. In our case, the implementation body is a keystone designed to support the building of coherent, effective, and accountable safety systems through operationalization of the Report's recommendations. Once this architecture is in place, the body will no longer be required. It will be replaced by the permanent mechanisms for fostering collaboration and ensuring accountability: federal and provincial community safety and well-being councils, enhanced accountability mechanisms for the RCMP, and a gender-based violence commissioner.

In Volume 3, Violence, we recognize that ending gender-based violence requires sustained collective action, which we refer to as a whole of society response. We recommended a national accountability framework, led by a federal gender-based violence commissioner with effective powers. The commissioner's mandate would be developed in consultation with governments, women survivors, and the gender-based violence advocacy and support sector. The mandate could include

such initiatives as coordinated monitoring and evaluation, an advisory committee, evidence-based policy reform, and the promotion of knowledge sharing.

In Volume 4, Community, we emphasize that the promotion of community safety and well-being also necessitates a whole of society response; indeed, the two are inextricably entwined. We accentuated the need to establish a community safety and well-being ecosystem, which is a framework of governmental, institutional, agency, and service provider relationships, including processes for community engagement. The safety ecosystem is a way to manifest collective action among organizations and actors that have a formal responsibility for public safety conceived broadly, as consistent with a public health approach. To be effective, this ecosystem must operate in a comprehensive, coordinated, and holistic manner and in co-operation with active community members.

To ensure ongoing collaboration and accountability, we recommend federal legislation that would include the establishment within a year of the release of this Report of a Community Safety and Well-Being Leadership Council composed of leaders from all sectors, including non-police sector partners (e.g., health and community-based organizations, gender-based violence advocacy and support sector, historically marginalized communities). This council would formulate strategies for addressing social issues together by facilitating shared responsibility for this work. It would lead a multisectoral approach that centres prevention by collaboratively addressing the social determinants of community safety and well-being. We also recommended a provincial and territorial statutory framework for community safety and well-being initiatives that would include the establishment of a Community Safety and Well-Being Leadership Council parallel to the federal counterpart with liaison or joint members.

In Volume 5, Policing, we recommend that the RCMP must provide semi-annual written updates to the responsible minister and management advisory board on its progress in addressing the recommendations made in this Report, with timelines for the achievement of each milestone. We urge the responsible minister, the management advisory board, the media, and the public to hold the RCMP accountable for making these necessary changes. We conclude that the RCMP's future as a police service that has the trust of the communities it serves depends on its capacity to meet this challenge.

From our first meeting together as Commissioners, we agreed that our aim was to make practical recommendations for change and to pay attention both to their substance and to the steps that would be needed to put them into action.

Throughout our mandate, we have sought advice on this topic from everyone we engaged. The broad lessons learned are set out in the previous chapter. Here we focus on what we have grasped about an overarching accountability process and the need for collective leadership. First, we provide an overview of what we learned and then we explain our recommendation for a body to champion implementation, establish and maintain mutual accountability among responsible actors, agencies, and authorities, and report to the public on progress.

## Background and Rationale

Our Orders in Council required us to consider the findings of relevant previous examinations and investigations. As we explain in detail in Volume 7, Process, in undertaking a concerted review of relevant existing reports, we applied two framing concepts:

- What areas unique to this mass casualty might give rise to new recommendations?
- What areas that arose in this mass casualty have been the subject of past inquiry or review recommendations? If those recommendations were not implemented, what were the barriers to implementation?

The Commission's environmental scan, a compilation and analysis of the findings and recommendations contained in past public inquiry reports and institutional reviews, provided us with a solid understanding of problems previously identified and paths already proposed by others. It also allowed us to assess patterns in the implementation of recommendations and to identify some common obstacles. Knowing what recommendations have been made in the past, and with what success, was an important part of our work to generate recommendations about the issues within our mandate.

One of the main critiques of public inquiries is that their recommendations are not binding and therefore depend on a mix of political will, timing, and public scrutiny to avoid relegating their reports to the fate of gathering dust on a shelf. We sought advice from Participants and others in our public proceedings on ways to improve the uptake and implementation of our recommendations. We also sought

and received personal commitments from leaders such as RCMP Commr. Lucki that they would champion implementation. Although Commr. Lucki has retired, we expect her successor to uphold this commitment.

Several Participants urged us to recommend the establishment of an implementation committee to track progress and obstacles and to report publicly on them. In their final written submissions, counsel for Bev (Beverly) Beaton, mother-in-law of Kristen Beaton, suggested that a provincial implementation committee be struck to ensure that recommendations made and then implemented are not lost with the passage of time or a change in government. Ms. Beaton's counsel suggested that such a committee should comprise representation from all stakeholders but specifically with respect to the RCMP, representation from National Headquarters, the H Division senior executive officer, critical incident commanders, the Emergency Response Team / Emergency Medical Response Team, other provincial public safety partners and agencies, and, most important, representation from those most affected by the mass casualty. She further suggested that the mandate of the committee include preparation of an annual report updating the public on the implementation / execution of the recommendations, with an accompanying website. The LEAF / Avalon / Wellness Within coalition's final written submissions suggested we appoint a core working group consisting of Participant representatives with survivor representation to create a timetabled, reported, and collaborative action plan for the implementation of gender-based violence recommendations.

Scott McLeod, brother to Sean McLeod, also made a recommendation for an implementation body:

Why is it necessary to have implementation and oversight with respect to the Commission's recommendations? Because things change. The RCMP leadership may change, the Minister of Public Safety may change, the Government may change, Government priorities and funding may change. Transparency and accountability will both be served by implementation and oversight.<sup>9</sup>

He recommended a small body with representatives from the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia, the RCMP, and "a representative on behalf of the families acting as a type of family advocate." He suggests a "two-tier" system of implementation oversight with the implementation committee reporting to a "Decider" who would hold the main stakeholders accountable and ensure that the recommendations are being implemented in a timely manner. During our conversation with him

in a small group session, Mr. McLeod explained the role of this body and accentuated the importance of dialogue:

This way, you've got a neutral group for something like this and it's not anybody with an agenda based on anything else.

You've got a legal representative to say, "Well, yeah, we can do this this way," and the government and the policing agencies, or whoever it's directed at, you know, they can feed back into this group and they're there to be able to say, "All right, well, here's what's going on," and they can verify that this was implemented, or this is being worked on, and they can meet with the powers to be in whatever organization so that they can make sure that it's not just something [that], as the term was put out there before, "falls off the desk," and just so that, coming to the future, we can say at the end of this, when all is said and done and recommendations are put forth – and if the case that was brought up of some things just aren't going to be feasible to do, "All right, well, if it's not feasible, what are we going to do about it? How can we fix this or what would work better?"<sup>10</sup>

Past reviews and inquiries have made efforts to improve the likelihood of their recommendations being implemented by proposing various implementation mechanisms be established, with varying degrees of success. We note that the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Call to Justice #1.10 called on the federal government to create an independent mechanism to report annually to Parliament on the implementation of the National Inquiry's Calls for Justice. The implementation of the National Inquiry's recommendations has been sluggish. This recommendation was a short-term priority of the 2021 National Action Plan, and in January 2023, the federal government announced that a First Nations organization had been chosen to develop recommendations for an oversight mechanism to fulfill this recommendation.

In 1999, the government of Manitoba established the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission to review the recommendations of the 1991 Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and advise the government on recommended methods of implementation. In particular, the Implementation Commission was tasked with recommending "practical, cost-effective and attainable implementation and funding strategies for the activities recommended for priority action." The Commission issued quarterly reports and concluded its work in June 2001.

The 2007 report of the Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP (the Brown Task Force) concluded that major changes were “essential for restoring the Force to the position of confidence and respect it had enjoyed since its inception.”<sup>11</sup> The Task Force recommended that the government immediately appoint a Reform Implementation Council to advise, oversee, and report on the progress of reform. The RCMP Reform Implementation Council was appointed by the government in March 2008 with a mandate to:

- provide advice to the minister of public safety on implementation of reforms approved by the government;
- provide advice and assistance to the commissioner of the RCMP respecting the RCMP implementation plan;
- monitor the progress of reforms approved by government and undertaken by the RCMP; and
- submit regular progress reports to the minister of public safety.

In March 2009, the minister of public safety extended the council’s initial term by a further year to March 2010. In 2010, the final report of the RCMP Reform Implementation Council confirmed it was “convinced that ongoing reform of the RCMP requires a new approach to governance and management of the Force, one that opens the way to outside advice and provides an external challenge to executive decision-making.”<sup>12</sup>

## Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body

Given the weight of past recommendations in the main areas of our mandate that have remained unimplemented, we too now make this recommendation for an Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body with determination to succeed in overcoming the many obstacles that hinder implementation.

In developing our recommendation, we have been mindful of the dual goal of fostering collaboration and ensuring accountability. The Scottish Collective Leadership model is the structure that appears to be the most promising embodiment

of both these objectives. At our roundtable on contemporary community policing, safety, and well-being, Denise Martin, professor of criminology at Abertay University in Scotland, provided information on the Christie Commission's 2011 report on public service delivery in Scotland and the collective leadership model established to facilitate implementation of its sweeping recommendations. Collective Leadership for Scotland brought together leaders from across different organizations to tackle the issues, so as to provide different perspectives and expertise across cultures. Given the systems change that is necessary at this critical juncture in Canada, this kind of multisector collaboration and leadership is absolutely necessary. This approach mirrors the purposive architecture of our recommendations as a whole, and in particular the proposals for the three accountability regimes responsive to lessons learned in relation to violence, community, and policing.

Our recommendations call for substantial rebuilding of our public safety system and embedding it in a strong community safety ecosystem. A coordinated, thoughtful commitment is required from people with knowledge of the relevant systems and a passion for improving public service delivery and community safety and well-being. Stakeholders will need to draw on the expertise of the various constituencies to find the best methods for achieving their potential. These recommendations need people from across the safety ecosystem to be their champion and to hold up a mirror to us all.

An Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body is required to ensure that the lessons of the April 2020 mass casualty are fully assimilated. To truly turn the tide, implementation will require lifelong learning at the individual, relational, communal, and societal levels. Our proposed body can also support ongoing learning processes as we collectively gain experience in collaborating toward the shared goal of enhanced safety and well-being.

The Commission was established to serve the public interest, and we worked in a transparent fashion and took steps to engage a wide range of people and organizations. Our successor, the Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body, should pick up and expand this mantle. We have recommended that this body be established on an urgent basis: framework, funding, and founding chair in place by May 31, 2023, and the appointment of the membership, after consultation with all interested individuals and organizations, by September 1, 2023. The Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body should become active that month and issue its first report to the public before the year ends.



## LESSONS LEARNED

No one person or organization has the authority or formal responsibility to implement all of the recommendations made in this Report.

Recommendations in some public inquiry reports are not fully implemented because of obstacles to reform and the lack of clear lines of accountability.

Implementation of the recommendations in *Turning the Tide Together* is a responsibility shared among many agencies within the Canadian and Nova Scotian public safety systems and a large group of other actors and agencies, including community groups and members of the public.

Shared responsibility is effective only when it is led by champions; advocated for by stakeholders, communities, and individuals; and supported through mechanisms for monitoring and accountability.

Mutual accountability, clear public reporting, and ongoing public engagement are key to overcoming obstacles and supporting institutional change, cultural shifts, and substantive change over the short, medium, and long term.

## Recommendation I.1

### TURNING THE TIDE TOGETHER IMPLEMENTATION AND MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY BODY

The Commission recommends that

- (a) By May 31, 2023, the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia should establish and fund an Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body with a mandate to
  - (i) provide mutual accountability, exchange of knowledge, and support among all organizations and actors involved in the implementation process;
  - (ii) consult with community members on priority areas for action and on implementation strategies;

- (iii) establish a monitoring framework and monitor on an ongoing basis, including through the power to request information from federal, Nova Scotian, and municipal public authorities;
  - (iv) take active steps to encourage members of the public to participate in the whole of society engagement recommended in this Report;
  - (v) provide public information about the process of implementing the recommendations;
  - (vi) provide public updates on progress on the implementation plan every three months and publish an annual report on the status of implementation of each recommendation; and
  - (vii) liaise with implementation efforts in other provinces and territories.
- (b) By May 31, 2023, the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia should appoint the Founding Chair and Champion of the Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body following consultation with all Commission Participants and representatives of the communities most affected by the April 2020 mass casualty, including the Mi'kmaw communities most affected and representatives of African Nova Scotian communities.
- (c) By July 31, 2023, the Founding Chair, in consultation with representatives of organizations with responsibility mandated by this Report's recommendations and other interested individuals and organizations, should present the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia with a proposed list of members and budget for the Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body.
- (d) By September 1, 2023, the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia should jointly appoint the membership of the Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body.
- (e) As soon as practicable, the Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body should develop a plan for monitoring implementation and establish reporting and accountability mechanisms; it should provide the plan to Parliament and the Nova Scotia Legislature, and take other steps to make it available to members of the public, including through the establishment of a dedicated website that tracks updates and progress.

- (f) The Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body should provide public updates on progress on the implementation plan every three months and publish an annual report on the status of implementation of each recommendation.

#### IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

Composition: The Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body should include the following members:

- at least two representatives of those most affected by the mass casualty (including families of the deceased and/or survivors);
- a civic representative from one of the affected municipalities;
- a representative of RCMP National Headquarters senior management with authority to act on behalf of the commissioner;
- the RCMP deputy commissioner of Contract and Indigenous Policing
- the assistant commissioner of RCMP H Division;
- a representative of the RCMP Management Advisory Board;
- a senior representative of Public Safety Canada;
- a senior representative of Nova Scotia Department of Justice Public Safety and Security Division;
- at least one community-based representative from the gender-based violence advocacy and support sector;
- at least one representative of Indigenous community organizations engaged in policing reform;
- at least one representative of African Canadian community organizations engaged in policing reform; and
- on their establishment, delegates from the other bodies established under the Report’s recommendations:
  - ◊ the federal and Nova Scotia Community Safety and Well-Being Leadership Councils (Recommendation C.15);
  - ◊ the gender-based violence commissioner (Recommendation V.17) or their appointee.

Advisory Group: The Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body should consider establishing an advisory group consisting of other agencies engaged in the Canadian and Nova Scotian public safety systems, policing organizations, the health sector, and victims' advocacy organizations.

Facilitating implementation: The Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body should

- circulate this Report and recommendations to stakeholder communities, and communicate and consult with community members on priority areas for action and on implementation strategies; and
- provide this Report to the Auditor General of Canada and the Auditor General of Nova Scotia so they might inquire into the progress of implementing these recommendations.

Status reports: Updates should include analysis of information to identify trends, obstacles, delays, problems, issues, and best practices.

Rationale for non-implementation: To encourage transparency, where an organization has decided not to implement a recommendation or part of a recommendation, the Implementation and Mutual Accountability Body will request a written explanation of this decision and publish it in reports under the implementation plan.

CHAPTER 4

**Next Steps to Make  
Our Communities Safer**

## CHAPTER 4 Next Steps to Make Our Communities Safer

This Report provides a range of recommendations for how to reach our shared goal of making our communities safer. Some of the changes we are calling for can be made relatively quickly and easily, while others will take more time and collaboration between different people, groups, and institutions. In order to build and sustain momentum over the months and years required to make these longer-term changes, people from many different settings and roles across society will need to keep working and pushing, taking action, being advocates, and holding each other to account in ways that are supportive and constructive.

We have made many recommendations that will need to be taken up by political leaders, policy-makers, and the RCMP, along with other public institutions and service providers. As discussed, it is critical that these recommendations are taken seriously and with the required degrees of urgency by the relevant leaders and institutions.

In this chapter we look beyond public leaders and institutions, focusing instead on the next steps and actions that individuals and groups in our communities can take to make the places we live in safer for everyone. This chapter may also be relevant to political leaders, first responders, and other institutional representatives acting in their capacity as family members, neighbours, and community members.

Many people who participated in the Commission's processes let us know they were prepared to act as champions for the report. During our roundtable on exploring the connections between mass casualties and gender-based and family violence, Dr. Amanda Dale, former executive director of the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, emphasized the importance of individual and collective engagement:

[This] has been 40 years of advocacy for many of us and there are new advocates coming into the roles every day, every week. There are families

who demanded a public inquiry who are in this room. It's all of us who will hold governments to account. We can't – we can't just hand over that mantle and then hope that our retirement is around the corner.<sup>1</sup>

We were also heartened by the commitments to remain actively engaged made by several members of the families of those whose lives were taken in the April 2020 mass casualty. In Chapter 3, we noted Scott McLeod's willingness to promote implementation, and others made similar comments during our sessions with them in September 2022. Crystal Mendiuk, sister of Jolene Oliver, aunt of Emily Tuck, and sister-in-law of Aaron Tuck, said: "You know what? You give me the list of people that are responsible for the changes and I have no problem holding people's feet to fires. So, you know, and it is going to take – it is going to take people like myself, you know, and other Canadians alike, you know, to ensure that that happens."<sup>2</sup> Dan Jenkins, father of Alanna Jenkins, said:

[We] need to go further than just making recommendations; we have to follow through. And I would love to know who to talk to or whatever to find out how that's going to work ... this isn't just about – this isn't a blame game, as much as sometimes people like to think it is. It is about what happens afterwards, and, to me, that's most important.<sup>3</sup>

He concluded: "And I will be the dog with a bone. I would definitely be that."<sup>4</sup>

We know that the scale of the task ahead can seem overwhelming, and it can be difficult to know where to begin, let alone how to remain engaged and to sustain momentum. Here are some reflections on the potential strengths and capabilities that different individuals and groups could tap into based on both what we have observed during the course of our work and on learning from other instances of mass violence and harm.

While we have organized the following into categories based on different groups, we know there are many areas of overlap. In addition, there are some core things we can all do every day that will help to make our communities stronger. They include reaching out to build relationships with each other, checking in and listening to each other regularly, and supporting each other to speak up and seek help whenever it is needed.

# Those Most Affected

Those people most affected by the mass casualty, including the survivors and the families and loved ones of those whose lives were taken, played an integral role in advocating for a public inquiry. Many of them continued to be involved in the work of the Inquiry as Participants, working with their counsel to shape the Commission's approach, providing input as we built the factual record, and taking part in public proceedings, including providing regular oral and written submissions.

We remain grateful for the contributions made by those most affected as both advocates and participants in action, and we encourage them to keep going. Next steps for those most affected could include:

- Stay in contact with each other, providing mutual support based on your shared experiences.
- Continue to find ways to commemorate those whose lives were taken, both to honour their memories but also so others can learn about what happened and be inspired to act.
- Continue to urge your elected representatives at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels to take action based on the recommendations in this Report. This could include writing letters and requesting meetings to talk about actions, accountability, and progress.
- Form an ongoing advocacy group to coordinate and organize your efforts. Similar groups have been formed by people affected by other mass casualties. For example, family members of the children whose lives were taken during the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012 went on to create Sandy Hook Promise. This national non-profit organization promotes gun violence prevention education to youth and adults in the United States.
- Join a local community organization or board, sharing your unique experience and perspective.
- Continue to seek help if you or someone you know needs it. Reach out to your family, friends, or a dedicated support organization in your community.



# Community Organizations and Advocacy Groups

The Commission's work received support from many community-based organizations in Nova Scotia and beyond. In preparation for and then in parallel with public proceedings, Commission team members held regular meetings with community service providers and other community-based organizations, helping those groups to know what to expect and how they could best support their communities throughout the Inquiry. A number of advocacy groups also took part in the Inquiry, as Participants and roundtable members or by making submissions. These groups typically represent people who are passionate about a shared interest, such as gun ownership, or a shared area of concern, such as family violence, community safety, mental health, and support of those most directly affected by mass violence. Next steps for community organizations and advocacy groups could include:

- Talk about how the findings and recommendations included in this Report are relevant to your community, and discuss ways to incorporate them into your ongoing activities.
- Inform your community about the factors that can lead to mass casualties, including gender-based, intimate partner, and family violence, and help to create a culture in which it is okay for people who are experiencing violence to speak up and get help.
- Build on the networks and coalitions that have been established or strengthened between your group and other organizations. This collaborative approach will make everyone stronger.
- Continue to urge your elected representatives and public institutions to pay attention and to take action.
- Use this Report, along with the Commission's commissioned reports and other materials, as a resource to inform your discussions and work. These documents include input from many people, including those who experienced the mass casualty and its related issues, and experts who specialize in mass violence, gun control, policing, community resilience, and other relevant issues.

# Policy Specialists and Researchers

Throughout our work, we were supported by specialists in policy and research on the Commission team, and we received important input from many experts in these areas through the commissioned reports, roundtables, expert witnesses, and other kinds of submissions. This broad examination into relevant areas of policy and research assisted us in fulfilling our mandate and in exploring in depth the related issues that contributed to the mass casualty. Next steps for policy specialists and researchers could include:

- Use this Report, the commissioned reports, and the many other materials created during the Inquiry as a resource for ongoing discussion, research, and policy development. We heard and learned from many experts, and we encourage you to continue to draw on this wealth of information in your work too.
- Consider designing research projects that will help to track the progress that is being made to implement the recommendations in this Report and to address the underlying issues that contribute to mass casualties. This work could contribute to a broadening of accountability, ensuring sustained and shared responses toward building safer communities.
- Continue to foster and build networks with your policy and research peers, both here in Canada and around the world. This Inquiry benefited from the input of many academic collaborators, and we believe future collaboration will play an important role in building our shared understanding of common challenges and the progress being made to overcome them.

# Members of the Public

Over the course of our work, we heard from many members of the broader community in Canada and internationally, including during several rounds of public submissions. As Commissioners overseeing a public inquiry, it was important to us that members of the public participate in the Inquiry for a number of reasons, including the need to understand the broad impacts of the April 2020 mass casualty in Nova Scotia; our desire to hear from as many people as possible with

suggestions for relevant research or potential recommendations; and our realization that implementing the recommendations in this Report will rely in large part on ongoing public engagement and focus on the leaders and institutions who will need to make changes. Next steps for members of the public could include:

- Be good neighbours, reaching out to the people in your community and supporting them to find help if they need it.
- Be champions for change in your families, communities, and workplaces, speaking up about the issues that contribute to mass casualties and steps we can take to improve community safety.
- Volunteer in your community by joining a group or board that is focused on making your community stronger.
- Continue to urge your elected representatives and public institutions to pay attention and to take action.
- Seek help if you or someone you know needs it. Reach out to your family, friends, or a dedicated support organization in your community.

## Media

The media has played an important role in covering the April 2020 mass casualty in Nova Scotia and its aftermath, including helping the public to stay informed about the Commission's progress and outcomes. Next steps for the media could include:

- Continue to hold public leaders and institutions accountable, reporting on their responses to the recommendations in this Report and their implementation plans, progress, and outcomes.
- Help inform the public about the broad and systemic issues detailed in this Report that contribute to mass casualties, including gender-based, intimate partner, and family violence.
- Contribute to building a culture where everyone feels safe to speak up and seek help if they need it.

# Businesses

We recognize the leading role that businesses, both large and small, play in our communities. They are employers responsible for teams of people. They are providers, delivering services and products that enable communities to flourish. The majority of businesses also strive to be good corporate citizens, participating in and giving back to their communities in ways that support sustainable prosperity. Given these important roles, next steps for businesses could include:

- Make sure everyone working in your organization feels supported to speak up if they need any kind of help, including if they are experiencing gender-based, intimate-partner, or family violence. This could form part of your organization's safety and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) commitments and programs.
- Direct some of your corporate giving and employee volunteering efforts toward community organizations and non-profits that focus on community safety.
- Host forums that encourage discussion about the role that businesses play in contributing to safer communities for everyone. Such events could be in collaboration with other businesses or with a chamber of commerce in your community.

## Educators

From working with young children in elementary school right up to supervising graduate students at university, educators help to shape people’s understanding of the world and how they fit in. Given this, we believe educators have an important role to play in helping to address some of the systemic issues related to community safety. Next steps for educators could include:

- Ensure that your school or classroom is a respectful and inclusive environment where students feel supported to speak up.
- Talk with your students about the mass casualty, the Commission, and this Report, encouraging discussion about the recommendations and collective responses to terrible events and shared challenges.
- Help your students learn about gender, masculinity, and power, encouraging them to think about ways of being that are inclusive and safe for all.
- Lead and provide opportunities for research projects in colleges and universities to address the gaps identified in Volume 3, Violence.

## Children and Youth

Children and youth are integral to our communities as the young people of today and the adults of tomorrow. Next steps for children and youth could include:

- Talk with your parents, families, friends, and teachers about your ideas to make your community safer.
- Seek help from a teacher, someone you trust, or a dedicated support organization if you or someone you know is experiencing any kind of violence, mental health issue, or just generally needs help.

# Conclusion

This Report marks the end of the Inquiry into the April 2020 mass casualty in Nova Scotia, capturing our findings about what happened, how and why it happened, and our recommendations for change. While our work as Commissioners has concluded, the broader work required to take action and implement the recommendations in this Report remains part of a collective, ongoing process of reflection and improvement.

Community safety is a shared responsibility and a shared opportunity. We all need to be champions for change, taking the recommendations from this Report and implementing them in our communities, workplaces, organizations, and policies. The time to act is now.

# Notes

## INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 6

1. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, September 7, 2022: COMM0064721 at p 81 lines 6, 10-11.
2. Mass Casualty Commission, “Interim Report” (May 2022) at p 8, online: <https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/documents/Mass-Casualty-Commission-Interim-Report.pdf>.
3. Ibid.

## CHAPTER 1

### A Purposive Architecture of Recommendations

1. Public Health Agency of Canada, Investing in Prevention – The Economic Perspective. Key Findings from a Survey of Recent Evidence (May 2009).



## CHAPTER 2

### Overcoming Barriers to Change

1. The Honourable Michel Bastarache, *Broken Dreams, Broken Lives: The Devastating Effects of Sexual Harassment on Women in the RCMP, Final Report on the Implementation of the Merlo Davidson Settlement Agreement* (11 November 2020), online: <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/wam/media/4773/original/8032a32ad5dd014db5b135ce3753934d.pdf>.
2. British Columbia Civil Liberties Association and East Coast Prison Justice Society, Phase 3 submissions (7 October 2022), online: [https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/documents/Final-Written\\_ECPJS\\_BCCLA.pdf](https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/documents/Final-Written_ECPJS_BCCLA.pdf) at p 15, quoting Dr. Scot Wortley [footnotes omitted].
3. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, August 31, 2022: COMM0064439 at p 50 lines 25–28.
4. MDW Law, *Final Written Submissions* (5 October 2022), online: [https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/documents/Final-Written\\_MDW-Law.pdf](https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/documents/Final-Written_MDW-Law.pdf) at p 11 para 43.
5. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, August 31, 2022: COMM0064439 at p 103 lines 21–26.
6. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, September 7, 2022: COMM0064721 at p 60 lines 10–15.
7. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, September 7, 2022: COMM0064721 at p 68 lines 17–24.
8. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, August 23, 2022, at p 73.
9. Thomas Macdonald, *Final Submissions – Scott McLeod* (7 October 2022) at p 5, online: [https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/documents/Final-Written\\_Blois-Nickerson.pdf](https://masscasualtycommission.ca/files/documents/Final-Written_Blois-Nickerson.pdf).
10. Mass Casualty Commission, Small Group Session Transcript of Scott McLeod, September 16, 2022, at p 22.
11. David A. Brown, et. al., *Rebuilding the Trust: Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP*, Public Safety Canada (December 2007) at vii, online: [https://www.pub-licsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/tsk-frc-rcmp-grc/\\_fl/archive-tsk-frc-rpt-eng.pdf](https://www.pub-licsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/tsk-frc-rcmp-grc/_fl/archive-tsk-frc-rpt-eng.pdf).
12. RCMP Reform Implementation Council, *From Reform to Continuous Improvement: The Future of the RCMP*, Government of Canada (December 2010) at p 14, online: Public Safety Canada <https://www.securitepublique.gc.ca/cnt/rsracs/pblctns/archive-frm-rfrm-cntns-fnl/archive-frm-rfrm-cntns-fnl-eng.pdf>.

## CHAPTER 4

### Next Steps to Make Our Communities Safer

1. Mass Casualty Commission, Transcript of Proceedings, July 18, 2022, at p 75.
2. Mass Casualty Commission, Small Group Session Transcript of Crystal Mendiuk et al, August 31, 2022, at p 23.
3. Mass Casualty Commission, Small Group Session Transcript of Dan Jenkins, August 30, 2022, at p 16.
4. Mass Casualty Commission, Small Group Session Transcript of Dan Jenkins, August 30, 2022, at p 17.