

MASS CASUALTY COMMISSION COMMISSION DES PERTES MASSIVES

Mass Murder Commission Recommendations Part 3 of 4 monthly installments

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: The Shoreline Journal purposefully did not attend or constantly report on the ongoing proceedings of the Mass Murder Commission. Our reasoning was based on several factors: It was not to avoid our journalistic responsibilities. Since we were a monthly as the hearings progressed information and the important data was changing so rapidly, we felt it would be impossible to be current, realistic and informative. However the main reasons were based on

our readers, residents, family and friends of victims and the reputation of the immediate area and surrounding communities. Everyone was so sad, broken and suffering they needed time to start healing instead of having our pages filled with information they had already heard as they followed the commission's ongoing deliberations. You may not agree with our decisions, but they were based on respect of others; compassion, empathy and to permit the healing process to take its natural course.

We further decided to let the MMC present its final report, give people a month or so to digest the outcome, before we published the MMC recommendations. Now that time has passed, the Shoreline Journal will publish all 130 of the commission's recommendations in four monthly installments, starting with the June 2023 issue, exactly as published and located on the MMC website.

This is Part 3 which includes recommendations 62 to 100.

NOTE: We, including you, might not agree totally with the entirety or feel the recommendations were not as "inclusive" as we personally desired, but the Final Report has been presented. As a result, "It is the responsibility of everyone to study the recommendations and to use the recommendations as a yardstick to hold those who bear responsibility for implementation to do so efficiently and in a timely manner." (Maurice Rees, Publisher)

62. Recommendation P.13

RESPONSIBILITIES TO 911 CALLERS

The Commission recommends that :

- The RCMP Operational Communications Centre training and procedures should be amended to emphasize the ethic of care for 911 callers and the central role played by 911 call-takers in eliciting important information from callers and helping community members to stay safe and share information even when they are injured or terrified.
- The RCMP instruction to call-takers, issued after the April 2020 mass casualty, to end the conversation with callers who can't see a perpetrator during a critical incident response should be reversed in favour of a policy that gives equal weight to strategies for obtaining relevant information about all aspects of a critical incident including, for example, the location of injured community members and advising callers about steps that will help keep them safe.

63. Recommendation P.14

EFFECTIVE USE OF POLICE RADIOS

The Commission recommends that

- The RCMP should: (i) commission and publicly share an international evaluation of best practices in radio transmission and incorporate the results of this evaluation into its training, policies, and practices; (ii) conduct a holistic review of radio training for members, supervisors, and dispatchers, including the means by which changes in policy, procedure, and equipment are communicated and implemented; (iii) prepare plans for managing radio communications during large-scale critical incident responses; (iv) evaluate radio and uniform design to ensure that the Emergency Request to Talk (ERTT) button is accessible when it is needed; and (v) incorporate radio use and challenges with radio communication into scenario-based and tabletop training.
- RCMP leadership, supervisors, and Operational Communications Centres should (i) emphasize effective radio use and adherence to proper radio protocols at all times to ensure that good practices are routine; and (ii) conduct an annual assessment of division-wide compliance with training and policy.

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

- RCMP radio protocol should: require that the speaker identify themselves by name, rank, and role if relevant; and identify the intended recipient of the transmission, deliver the message, and await confirmation of receipt by the intended recipient.
- Any upgrades to radio technology should be accompanied by member-wide training and practice.

64. Recommendation P.15

AIR SUPPORT

The Commission recommends that

- The RCMP should establish partnerships with other agencies to ensure that air support is available whenever necessary to a critical incident response. These agencies should be included in future training and preparation for critical incident response to ensure that they are able to provide the support required.
- The RCMP should adopt a single air support call-out process, to ensure that initial critical incident commanders do not waste time and attention looking for alternative sources of air support.

65. Recommendation P.16

INTEROPERABILITY DURING CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE

The Commission recommends that:

- Clear protocols for unified command posts and agency roles and responsibilities should be established among all agencies involved in critical incident response.
- All emergency response agencies in Nova Scotia should be given access to encrypted radios while responding to a critical incident, even if these radios are loaned for the duration of that response. Emergency responders must be given the opportunity to train with these radios on a regular basis so that they are familiar with their use, when needed.
- Interagency scenario-based and tabletop exercises should be incorporated into existing agency training wherever possible. If this is not possible, agencies should regularly make time for dedicated interagency training.

66. Recommendation P.17

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION DURING CRITICAL INCIDENTS

The Commission recommends that:

- The RCMP should amend its policies, procedures, and training to reflect the approach recommended in the 2014 MacNeil Report about the RCMP's response to the Moncton Mass Casualty; that is, that the RCMP should activate public communications staff as part of the critical incident package.
- ##### IMPLEMENTATION POINTS
- The responsibility to prioritize and engage public communications staff must be clearly allocated.
 - A public communications officer should be embedded within the command post.
 - Effective implementation of this recommendation requires far more than an email to RCMP employees.
- The RCMP should train critical incident commanders and front-line supervisors in their responsibilities to provide timely and accurate public communications about a critical incident. This responsibility should be stated within RCMP policies and procedures.
 - The RCMP should fully integrate public communications into its approach to critical incident response, including training and tabletop scenarios, and communications officers should train and practise alongside other members of the command group.
- ##### IMPLEMENTATION POINTS
- Procedures for approving the timing and content of public communications should be set out in standard operating procedures and regularly practised.
 - Strategic communications units should extend their template communications database to address a wider range of content and potential scenarios. This database should be continually updated on the basis of new incidents and insights from training and practice.
 - Consistent with their legal duty to warn the public, police agencies should disseminate public information using methods that ensure that public communications reach those who are most affected by an incident in a timely manner. When choosing communications strategies, police agencies should attend to matters of equity and substantive equality, including demographic differences in

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the use of social media platforms, as well as the accessibility of reliable internet and cell service.

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

- Effective public communications may require different strategies in different circumstances, or for different sectors of the community.
- When a public communication is issued about a critical incident or similar event, the strategic communications unit should conduct a post-incident review of the timeliness, accuracy, reach, and effectiveness of the public communication.

67. Recommendation P.18

ISSUING PUBLIC WARNINGS

The Commission recommends that:

- When an active threat to the public exists, police agencies should share the best available information about the nature of the threat and how to remain safe with the public as soon as possible. Police agencies should be prepared to correct or update information as necessary.
- Police and emergency services agencies should tailor the means by which public warnings are issued to the location, scale, and duration of a threat. Police and emergency services agencies should ensure that public warnings reach as many community members within an at-risk population as possible.

68. Recommendation P.19

TRAINING PERSONNEL TO ISSUE PUBLIC WARNINGS

The Commission recommends that:

- The training police agencies give to critical incident commanders and risk managers should emphasize the duty to issue public warnings and equip these personnel with tools to identify when a public warning is necessary and to decide how best to issue that warning.

69. Recommendation P.20

ADDRESSING MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES ABOUT COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO PUBLIC WARNINGS

The Commission recommends that:

- The RCMP and the Canadian Police College should incorporate material that identifies and counters the operation of myths and stereotypes about community responses to critical incidents into immediate action rapid deployment training, initial critical incident response training, and Canadian Police College training for critical incident commanders.

70. Recommendation P.21

NON-URGENT PUBLIC INFORMATION LINE

The Commission recommends that:

- The Nova Scotia Emergency Management Office should work with Nova Scotia police agencies to establish a phone line and website that can be used by community members to report non-urgent information during a critical incident and to obtain further information about how to respond to a public warning. Information about this facility should become a standard inclusion in public warnings about critical incidents.

71. Recommendation P.22

PUBLIC EDUCATION ABOUT PUBLIC WARNINGS

The Commission recommends that:

- The Nova Scotia Emergency Management Office and Nova Scotia

police agencies should engage in a public education campaign, including in schools, to increase public awareness about public warnings and public understanding of how to respond to these warnings.

72. Recommendation P.23 OPERATIONAL DEBRIEF AND AFTER-ACTION REPORT

The Commission recommends that: The RCMP should implement policies and procedures to require an operational debrief and after-action report for any critical incident response that required the active engagement of a critical incident commander.

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

The policies and procedures should include the following:

- The commanding officer of the division will direct in writing that the operational debrief process is engaged and assign a commissioned officer to oversee the completion of an operational debriefing and to prepare an after-action report.
- A supervisor who possesses the skills and training to conduct operational debriefings will be assigned to facilitate these sessions, and the debriefing will include all employees who played a part in a critical incident response.
- A written summary of the operational debrief must be submitted by the assigned supervisor of the operational debrief to the commissioned officer who has been appointed to oversee this process and produce the after-action report.
- A comprehensive after-action report should be produced by the assigned commissioned officer. This after-action report should highlight any risk areas for immediate action.
- The after-action report should be submitted to the commanding officer within 30 days of the event occurring. In the event that the 30-day timeline is not met, approval in writing is required by the commanding officer with a stated due date.
- The commanding officer should address any risk areas identified in the after-action report for immediate action, including any updates to relevant policy, procedures, and training, as soon as practicable. Reporting on implementation of these items should be a standing item on monthly bilateral meetings so that progress can be monitored and roadblocks addressed.
- The after-action report and a written response from the commanding officer should be shared within 60 days of the critical incident with every employee who participated in the critical incident response, with the RCMP Operational Readiness and Response Unit, and with the deputy commissioner of contract and Indigenous policing for their situational awareness and institutional review.
- Where the commanding officer or deputy commissioner of contract and Indigenous policing identifies the need for an after-action review, that review should be commissioned within 90 days of the critical incident. A copy of the after-action report and written summary of the operational debriefing should be shared with the independent reviewer.

73. Recommendation P.24

PUBLIC REPORTING ON CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE

The Commission recommends that:

- The RCMP should prepare and publish an annual report that explains what the RCMP has learned from operational debriefings and what changes it has made in response to after-action reports in the previous year. This report should provide an amount of tactical and operational information similar to that provided by other agencies; for example, ALERRT (Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training) Center reports and (US) National Policing Institute reports such as the Orlando Pulse nightclub report.

74. Recommendation P.25

AFTER-ACTION REVIEW OF MASS CASUALTY INCIDENTS

The Commission recommends that

- Within 90 days of a mass casualty incident occurring, the RCMP should initiate an after-action review to be conducted by an arm's length reviewer.
- ##### IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

- This review should be commissioned by the deputy commissioner of contract and Indigenous policing and should supplement, not replace, the process set out for operational debriefings and after-action reports.
- The after-action review should be completed and published within six

months of being commissioned. If this deadline cannot be met, the RCMP should provide a detailed public rationale.

- After-action reviews should provide a similar amount of tactical and operational information to that provided by agencies in other jurisdictions; for example, in ALERRT (Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training) Center reports and (US) National Police Institute reports such as the Orlando Pulse nightclub report.

75. Recommendation P.26

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AFTER A CRITICAL INCIDENT

The Commission recommends that:

- The RCMP's national communications policies should 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. This principle should be limited only by legal restrictions (e.g., privacy laws) and the minimum withholding necessary to protect the integrity of ongoing investigations.

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

- RCMP employees should work toward the goal of sharing as much information as possible and as quickly as possible.
- Where information is withheld to protect the integrity of an ongoing investigation, that information must be publicly shared as soon as investigative needs no longer apply.
- Where inaccurate information is provided, a public correction must be issued as soon as the error is identified.

- RCMP policy and guidance should be amended to require personnel in national headquarters to assist divisional personnel with the operational and communications demands that arise after a complex critical incident or an emergency of similar scale.

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

- When an incident has had a significant impact on divisional personnel or goes beyond the normal operations of the division, standard operating procedures should provide for additional resources to be assigned immediately to permit accurate and timely information to be conveyed to the public and to support internal briefing.
- National headquarters staff should respect pre-established reporting structures when seeking information from and issuing directions to divisional staff.
- The draft "RCMP Crisis Communications Reference Guide and Standard Operating Procedures" should be revised to reflect the findings and recommendations of this Report and it should be reviewed annually thereafter. This document should form the basis for mandatory training for RCMP communications personnel and officers who perform a public-facing role as spokesperson or liaison officer. These personnel should be required to review the guide regularly, and their performance should be evaluated in part by their demonstrated compliance with policy and with the principles set out in the guide.

76. Recommendation P.27

SERIOUS INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM INVESTIGATORS AND SPECIALIZED SERVICES

The Commission recommends that:

- Whenever feasible, the Serious Incident Response Team (SIRT) should perform its work using investigators and specialized services from an agency separate from the one that employs the officer who is the subject of the investigation. If this is not feasible, the decision to use investigators or specialized services from the police agency that employs the subject officer should be made by the SIRT's civilian director. In writing, and at the time when the decision is made, the SIRT director should document the reasons why using resources from the agency that employs the subject officer is necessary.

77. Recommendation P.28

SERIOUS INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM CONTROL OF CRIME SCENES AND EVIDENCE

The Commission recommends that:

- The Police Act and Serious Incident Response Team Regulations be amended to clarify that (i) the SIRT has exclusive control over investigations of serious incidents involving police; and (ii) when the SIRT assumes responsibility for an investigation, the SIRT will immediately assume command of all activities related to the scene,

exhibits, investigation, and direction of resources.

- Where a police agency, including the RCMP, requires access to a crime scene or exhibit in order to pursue a parallel criminal investigation, that access should be managed in accordance with protocols set by the SIRT.
- RCMP H Division Operational Manual Chapter 54.1 should be amended to reflect the Police Act and Serious Incident Response Team Regulations, including the above principles.

78. Recommendation P.29

KNOWING WHAT TO DO WHEN SERIOUS INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM JURISDICTION ARISES

The Commission recommends that:

- RCMP members in supervisory positions should know what steps they must take when a member discharges a firearm or is otherwise involved in a serious incident that attracts Serious Incident Response Team jurisdiction. This includes knowing: (i) who is responsible for reporting a serious incident; (ii) how to make such a report; (iii) the timeline on which such a report must be made; (iv) what information the reporting officer must obtain and provide to SIRT about the incident; and (v) to separate involved members (both witnesses and subject members) immediately after a serious incident occurs.
- Any failure to follow these procedures should be documented in writing by the RCMP, and a copy of that document should be provided to the SIRT.
- The RCMP should ensure that H Division members receive training in applicable legislation, RCMP policy, and their obligations and rights with regard to SIRT investigations. This instruction should be incorporated into annual use of force / incident response requalification training.
- Supervisory training courses and annual use of force / incident response curriculum should include instruction on legislation, RCMP policy, members' obligations and rights, and requirements of supervisors with regard to SIRT investigations.

79. Recommendation P.30

PROVIDING SUPPORT TO SERIOUS INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM WITNESSES

The Commission recommends that:

- The Serious Incident Response Team establish or revise its procedures to ensure that witnesses and other individuals affected by serious incidents involving the police are provided with updates about the progress of the SIRT investigation and are referred to available support services.

80. Recommendation P.31

RCMP LIAISON WITH THE SERIOUS INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM

The Commission recommends that:

- RCMP H Division policy should be amended to provide that all RCMP communications and coordination with the Serious Incident Response Team regarding an ongoing investigation must occur through a designated RCMP liaison, who must be a commissioned officer and trained in the responsibilities and expectations of this role. The SIRT should also implement a corresponding policy requiring its investigators not to communicate about ongoing SIRT investigations with members of the subject police agency besides that agency's designated liaison person.
- The only purpose for which any other RCMP member may communicate directly with SIRT about an ongoing investigation is when giving a statement or witness interview, which must be coordinated through the RCMP Liaison Officer.

81. Recommendation P.32

SERIOUS INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM PROTOCOL FOR INFORMATION EXCHANGE WITH POLICE AGENCIES

The Commission recommends that:

- The Serious Incident Response Team should adopt a protocol that it will not meet with members of the police agency that employs a subject officer to exchange information about an ongoing investigation.
- The SIRT should also adopt a protocol that sets out how information will be exchanged when two agencies are engaged in parallel criminal investigations. Any such exchange of information must occur in writing.
- While a SIRT investigation is ongoing, the SIRT should not share information with the agency that employs the subject police officer(s) for the purposes of an internal investigation conducted by that agency, including internal conduct or workplace investigations.

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