

REES' Pieces

Is there a Double Standard – RCMP vs Average Citizen?

If you probe around and ask the question, "Is there a double standard - RCMP Vs Average Citizen?" Basically the answer is YES.

Without a doubt you could conclude, there are almost as many opinions as there are people on whether or not there is sufficient transparency at the Mass Murder Commission hearings currently underway in Halifax and Truro. If you are a family member or friend of victims, you certainly feel a lot is lacking and the playing field is not level and the general public is supportive of victim's families.

We'll examine some of these reasons, in a moment, but there are even more important situations which will determine the "Double Standard" outcome.

Those questions revolve around "Whose reputation is one the line? There are four possible answers: family members, RCMP, provincial and federal governments, or the MCC Commission Commissioners and advisory staff.

Much of the media coverage has followed complaints leveled by surviving family members: feeling marginalized; not being listened to; lack of forthcoming information requested via their legal team; not being assured, their lawyers could cross question certain witnesses; not being provided with list of witnesses who would appear before the commission and the list of dissatisfaction is much longer.

However, two episodes upset families the most and really called into question the reputations of MCC's three Commissioners. The first was MCC admission they would permit certain RCMP staff (brass or higher ups), fearing being re-traumatized, to appear via Video link, in pre-recorded messages and family member legal team would not be permitted to question them.

Whoa! Full Stop! Let's Look at this a little deeper.

Are the three commissioners deaf, dumb, stupid, or biased? Who in their right mind would conclude, certain members of the RCMP management, who are trained and highly paid would be more vulnerable to being re-traumatized than surviving family members who unwillingly have been given a life-long sentence.

This begs another question. Are the MCC commissioners and their investigative / advisory team blind? Are they not able to see the trauma on the faces of the probably 100 members of the 22 victim family's? What about the constant heart ache of friends and community numbering into the thousands?

Is it fair for the commission to show leniency toward a few RCMP management members, rather than go for the "greater good" of getting the truth out for family, friends, community and demonstrate every fact of truth has been exposed. Often the truth hurts, but in the long haul knowing the truth has been confirmed is invaluable. Truth is #1 in therapeutic value.

Because shielding certain RCMP members from family member legal teams and open questioning was permitted, the legal teams followed family member instructions and boycotted attending the pre-recorded session. How shameful of the Commissioners to permit their personal reputations to be damaged to that extent, perhaps beyond repair, and questioning the validity of commission findings.

Raises the question are they answerable to truth and the families, or to invisible masters?

Probably several more instances of non-transparency will emerge before the final report is presented.

What really caused this column be written was the revelation two "grief" members were assigned to Cst Heidi Stephenson family, when only one was assigned to members of 22 victim families. Plain and simple showed the true colours. RCMP are protective of members and reputation rather than serving the "greater good" of the Canadians.

PROOF: Yes, there is a double standard, in favour or RCMP organization and members.

When RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki appears before the MCC, I hope she will be questioned: Should RCMP management officers be given preferential treatment by being permitted to appear via pre-recorded messages and not be questioned by family members legal team? Will you ask the MCC to permit those officers to re-appear in person and be questioned if so warranted? Will you publicly state and direct them to appear in person?

REPUTATION: The only way the MCC commissioners can save their own reputations is do an about face, bringing down a final report confirming the request of family members and public for truth and transparency have been achieved. Truth and transparency are paramount.

Maurice

Letters to the editor

This is an open forum for your opinions and comments.

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OP-ED

The following is an op-ed from Tory Rushton, Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables

By Tory Rushton

Nova Scotians care deeply about their natural environment and about our collective efforts to ensure a sustainable, prosperous future for generations to come.

Part of that bright future for Nova Scotia is clean air and water, an abundance of biodiversity, spaces where we can connect with nature, climate change mitigation - and economic prosperity.

From farming, fishing and forestry to our growing renewable energy sector, thousands of jobs, families and communities depend on the responsible and sustainable use of our natural resources, particularly in rural Nova Scotia.

To succeed, we must all recognize that environment and economy go hand in

Sustainable Forestry for Nova Scotia



Tory Rushton

hand. Our government is committed to succeeding on both fronts.

That is why we are transforming Nova Scotia's forestry sector. We are building the triad model of ecological forestry on Crown land as recommended in the independent review of forestry practices. This complex, integrated model balances many interests and will secure sustainability for our environment and our forestry industry.

It ensures that more than a third of Crown land will al-

ways be conserved and makes more than half available for lower-intensity forestry that prioritizes biodiversity. A small portion will be allocated for high-production timber harvesting in areas where this activity won't conflict with other interests. This is truly transformational for an industry that's been a key driver of Nova Scotia's economy for decades.

We could have advanced this work faster alone, but we believe our collaborative approach improves transparency, builds stronger relationships and achieves the best policy decisions and outcomes for all Nova Scotians. Our efforts to date are built on consultation and partnerships with industry, environmental groups, the Mi'kmaq, Nova Scotians and other stakeholders. I thank all of them for their input and ongoing involvement as we continue this work.

I also thank the dedicated staff in the Department of Nat-

ural Resources and Renewables for their focus and leadership in doing the research, analysis and consultation needed to put the pieces of this complex puzzle together. I look forward to giving an update on our progress soon.

Tory Rushton, MLA for Cumberland South, is Minister Natural Resources and Renewables

OP-ED

The following is an op-ed from Brian Comer, Minister responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health.

By Brian Comer

I've had the honour of serving as the province's first Minister responsible for Addictions and Mental Health for almost a year now. I've had the opportunity to travel around the province and to visit with many who are working in our hospitals, in community clinics and in community organizations to support people experiencing mental health challenges - and I will continue doing so this summer.

I, too, worked on the front-line as a registered nurse. Time and again, I'm inspired by the great work that is happening in the field.

There will always be those who want to paint a dismal picture of the state of mental health and addictions care. This does nothing to help. I want those who are struggling

Access to Hope & Healthcare



Brian Comer

to know they are not alone. Help is available.

We know that there are challenges in accessing care and we are committed, as a government, to making the much-needed improvements. I know from first-hand experience that there are solutions, if government is willing to be bold and put in the work - and we are.

We need to do more for those who are suffering. We need to address the stigma that so often stops people from reaching out for help. We need to create a system where all Nova Scotians can get the

support and care they need, whether or not they can afford to pay. And we need to provide access to early interventions and care that reflect the diverse experiences of all Nova Scotians.

We are committed to doing more and doing better. For example, we opened the province's first acute mental health day hospital and recovery support centres, which are allowing Nova Scotians to get the treatments they need, close to their families and communities.

The past two years have been tough on Nova Scotians' mental health, and we must come together in response. These challenges are too big for politics. We must work together with compassion and hope, and a commitment to better care.

We need to lift each other up and ensure the right care is available to support us when we're struggling, and to catch us when we fall.

Brian Comer is Minister responsible for the Office of Addictions and Mental Health.

The Shoreline Journal

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The Shoreline Journal

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