

## **Small Group Session**

## **Séance en petit groupe**

### **Commissioners / Commissaires**

The Honourable / L'honorable J. Michael MacDonald,  
Chair / Président

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

Dr. Kim Stanton

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Best Western Truro - Glengarry  
150 Willow Street  
Truro, Nova Scotia  
B2N 4Z6

Monday, September 19, 2022

#### **Tenue à:**

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## II Appearances / Comparutions

Ms. Tara Long	Sister of Aaron Tuck
Ms. Charlene Bagley	Support
Mr. Leo Artalejo	Facilitator
Ms. Emily Hill	Commission counsel
Dr. Kim Stanton	Commissioner
J. Michael MacDonald	Commissioner
Leanne Fitch	Commissioner
Maureen Wheller	Commission Community Liaison Director

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--- Upon commencing on Monday, September 19, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.

**MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** So, thank you for being here today. We are really grateful that you have made time to help ---

**MS. TARA LONG:** Please don't thank me for coming ---

**MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Okay.

**MS. TARA LONG:** --- about this. This is not -- I don't know what the word for it is, but don't thank me for coming. I don't want to be here. This is a horrible, horrible place to be.

**MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Yeah.

**MS. TARA LONG:** So, I don't know what to say.

**MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Well ---

**MS. TARA LONG:** This doesn't seem like it works.

**MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Okay. We are hoping to learn from you today because you have a unique perspective and we are hoping that what you share with us will help us make meaningful and effective recommendations that will help protect Canadians in the future during tragedies like the one that your family has been through.

So, we are hopeful to hear today about your experience as a family member, how you accessed information during the mass casualty, how you gathered support and services that were helpful to you and if there was anything missing that in the future we could ensure is there for Canadians in the future.

I am here to support you. We have already talked about it. If you need a break just let me know. I will offer you a break as we go between questions.

**MS. TARA LONG:** Yeah, I am good, yeah.

**MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** And when you are talking, we will listen to you respectfully and if you need any help from me or you need a break just let me know.

**MS. TARA LONG:** Fair enough.

1                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Yeah, okay. So, round one is, what do you  
2 want to tell us about your experience seeking information and getting support during  
3 and immediately after the mass casualty?

4                   **MS. TARA LONG:** Well, to this day I haven't had a counselling  
5 session, nor has my nine-year-old daughter. My brother is dead, my niece and my  
6 sister-in-law and nobody gives a shit. So, there is that. I didn't --- still to this day, get a  
7 proper confirmation from the RCMP of the identity of my family.

8                   I was told by the Medical Examiner's Office that since they were on  
9 their way to her, she assumed that they were dead. That is how I found out. So, there  
10 was a lot missing when this happened.

11                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** How can we help people in the future get  
12 mental health support after an event like this?

13                   **MS. TARA LONG:** Give them guns so they can protect  
14 themselves. So that they don't have to go through this. People need to protect  
15 themselves because the RCMP doesn't show up. Do you know how many wellness  
16 checks there were for my family and nobody came until after 3:30 on Sunday  
17 afternoon?

18                   Why are we paying these people? Paying our taxes to not show up  
19 when we call them. And the government uses this to take away our protection so they  
20 can protect us. Then why aren't they doing it?

21                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** What ---? Can you talk a little bit about the  
22 interactions or the communications you had after the event? Who reached out to you?  
23 How you were able to find out what had happened?

24                   **MS. TARA LONG:** I called the RCMP office nonstop until I finally  
25 got hold of Rodney Peterson who had just come on shift and he didn't know what was  
26 going on but he had just heard that there was an evacuation centre and he would see if  
27 my family was there. And he called my phone call in for somebody to look at. And that  
28 phone call started a record of what is going on and that phone call sent people down to

1 Cobequid Court when they should have been a long time ago. They didn't reach out to  
2 me. I got some return phone calls.

3 I don't even know what to say. I was angry and I am still very  
4 angry. And I got kicked out of my family immediately. I was told that because my  
5 brother was adopted, we didn't count. And it didn't matter that he was my brother for 25  
6 years. You guys, not you guys but you represent.

7 So, we didn't get to go to their house to say goodbye. I didn't --- my  
8 brother didn't have anything. He didn't have money. I just wanted something that  
9 smelled like him. I wasn't even allowed to go down ourselves and get, like, a hoodie or  
10 something to hold onto. They kicked us out of our own family when everybody was  
11 dead and Aaron had no one except for me and my daughter. His adopted mum was  
12 dead. Our birth mother was dead. His adoptive and his step adoptive dad were dead.

13 I am his only sibling in the whole world and I found him when we  
14 were sixteen and nineteen. Like, he has been my brother for 25 years and now we  
15 don't count. And the RCMP --- everybody knows, right. They act like they don't know.  
16 there is nothing in the Commission that says definitively who I am.

17 There is no mention of my 9-year-old daughter who --- Emily was  
18 her favourite cousin. Emily will be the little [inaudible] **C1** at breakfast, she played  
19 the ABCs. And **C1** did nothing. She doesn't get any kind of recognition for her  
20 cousin and her uncle and her aunt. We don't even seem to count. Even on the list of  
21 Participants we are under individuals. I have asked to be put as a family member and  
22 nobody will do it and I don't know why.

23 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Tara, do you need a break?

24 **MS. TARA LONG:** No, I don't. I don't need a break at all.

25 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Okay.

26 **MS. TARA LONG:** What is your question? Did I answer it? I don't  
27 know.

28 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Well, you did talk about --- So, what I am

1 hearing you say is, communication was difficult.

2 **MS. TARA LONG:** It was fucking non-existent. It was worse than  
3 not communicating. I was kicked out of my family. Very much communicated. Right?  
4 Very much communicated and supported by the RCMP who threatened me with  
5 harassment charges if I contacted the Olivers' who told me to contact them.

6 Right, I don't know what happened in the background. I was  
7 maybe asking too many questions. I don't know what happened that it was okay for the  
8 --- Everybody knows who I am. There was no communication. So, if that's the  
9 question. Is there another one?

10 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Were you working with the Family Liaison  
11 Officer?

12 **MS. TARA LONG:** Skipper Bent who --- he tried. I mean, I had ---  
13 I --- let's not say he tried. Let's say that he did the least that he had to do for me. The  
14 least that he had to do for me because I was a fucking pain in the ass. I was calling  
15 people. I was making videos that were talking about what really --- what they ---  
16 everything that didn't make sense. And I was making people mad and so he made sure  
17 that I wasn't taken care of.

18 I mean, I got a blanket. Fuck. I mean, its nice for someone to  
19 make me a blanket but that is --- you know. I had to ask for everything and at the  
20 beginning, he told me to send him a picture of Aaron for identification purposes and I  
21 typed in the wrong email address. And I didn't know until like, a year later when I found  
22 out that he said, in a document that I never sent it.

23 Like, I sent it. Oh, my God. I went through and I saw it and then I  
24 realized what I did and by then it was all too late. And I did message him and say that  
25 this is what happened but I never heard back from him.

26 Not to mention like, let's talk about Skipper Bent for a minute. We  
27 were making phone calls, wellness checks down by the --- to the RCMP at my house.  
28 So, why is it that Skipper Bent sent a text message to my brother at 1:15 in the

1 afternoon on Sunday saying, are you guys okay down there? Are you shitting me?  
2 Come on. What is going on down there? What is going on that has to be so hush,  
3 hush. There is something going on down there and it is not okay.

4 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** So, if we are thinking about families in the  
5 future, what I am hearing you say, is there needs to be proactive outreach. There  
6 needs to be ---

7 **MS. TARA LONG:** I didn't say that. I said they need guns. I didn't  
8 say they need outreach, communications, none of this stuff. This stuff shouldn't  
9 happen. Right? We pay people to look after us and if this kind of thing happens, if you  
10 really think that a 51-year-old denturist with a limp got pissed off at his girlfriend and  
11 killed 23 people, I want just a little tiny bit of what you are smoking. Come on. Like, if  
12 you people can't see that there is more to it than that this is what happened, I don't  
13 know how you are RCMP. Like, a Judge --- Oh, my God.

14 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** So, Ms. Long, what we are here today to  
15 do is to talk about the recommendations that will come out of this Commission.

16 **MS. TARA LONG:** Okay, okay. I recommend you give citizens  
17 guns. I recommend that you train them how to use them. Instead of paying for --- like,  
18 the RCMP were talking the whole time about how they don't have funding. They don't  
19 have training and they can't get to where they need to go because it is too big of an  
20 area for them to cover. So, let's help them out, right.

21 If they are supposed to be there to protect us, are we not  
22 responsible for ourselves at least a little bit? Especially in a rural area. We have so  
23 many --- so much area and so few people. So, if my brother had a gun that night this  
24 would have stopped at his house. It is that simple.

25 And then afterwards, things need to be transparent. Things are not  
26 transparent. We don't know what is going on down there. The documents have huge  
27 holes in them. I mean, be transparent. When people ask to see things. Like, certain  
28 people want to see certain things. They want --- I want to see what happened in my

1 brother's house for closure. And I am not allowed to see it.

2                   So, here I am left, two-and-a-half years later without any closure. I  
3 haven't seen crime scene photos. I didn't get to go to their house. The communication  
4 --- I mean, I don't know if it is communication or what happened but the law seems to be  
5 that, you know, he was adopted so we don't count. Maybe if the law was different with  
6 the adoption thing, we would have been able to count at least and had some more  
7 communication.

8                   So, I don't know what the answer to the communication thing is.  
9 Just be transparent. Committee let's talk communications. What about all this GPS  
10 communications? Like at this point in time they're -- we just went through the --- the  
11 thing in the House of Commons or the Senate or whatever where they were talking  
12 about everyone's spying on everybody. Well, they are spying on me.

13                   Why aren't they tracking where the GPS is going? I mean, come  
14 on. It is all there. We --- just --- there is too much that is missing for it to just be a  
15 bunch of stupidity. So, communication, we need transparency.

16                   We need to see GPS logs. We need to see phone records, radio  
17 logs, everything. This is not transparent. The documents we have are not transparent.  
18 So, how can I make you recommendations on something I didn't even know what  
19 happened. Do you guys know any more now than you did two years ago? I don't. I  
20 have more questions. More questions than answers by a lot.

21                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** So, what you are hitting on is why this  
22 report is so important to get right because that will have the lessons that we have  
23 learned so far in this Inquiry and it will have recommendations. And we are also  
24 thinking about implementation. Do you have any thoughts about implementation that  
25 might be helpful?

26                   **MS. TARA LONG:** I am trying to think about what to say because  
27 right now I feel like you are talking to me like I am an idiot. I really do.

28                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** I am sorry you feel that way.

1                   **MS. TARA LONG:** Me too. Absolutely.

2                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Yeah. Why don't we just take a break?

3                   **MS. TARA LONG:** I don't need a break. I just --- I don't know how  
4 to fix the communication problems. So, I don't know how to do that. I mean, I know that  
5 --- I don't know. I don't know how to fix that because they're not using the technology  
6 they are given, it is not being tracked properly. How do you fix that? You just fix it. It  
7 seems pretty clear. Nobody should have to deal with this and the fact that we are  
8 paying a federal agency that --- a ton of money to do this.

9                   I mean, lets defund the RCMP. If they can't do their job and we  
10 don't want to give people guns, lets figure out somebody else to look after us. Chief  
11 MacNeil is very accountable. Right? He keeps track of all the things that go on in Truro  
12 and arrests that people are making. And they are all accountable. They are out in the  
13 community.

14                   We don't -- it used to be like that when I was younger. We would  
15 have basketball tournaments in the parking lots and the RCMP would be mingling with  
16 us and playing basketball and hanging out and now you don't know who they are. And  
17 if you do know them you don't trust them, right. Like, I mean, we have got people  
18 drinking on the job. Let's fix that. That is a pretty big problem. Just not communication.  
19 It is accountability and action, right. They didn't even use the tools that they had. The  
20 Alert. Do you guys have Twitter? Do you have Twitter?

21                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** No.

22                   **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** No.

23                   **MS. TARA LONG:** Do you? Yes, you do. I don't. I don't have  
24 Twitter, not at all.

25                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** So, policing organization, that kind of  
26 structure is important to get right. Public alerting important to get right.

27                   **MS. TARA LONG:** Absolutely. Yes, I would say that that is  
28 accurate.

1                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Is there anything else that would be helpful  
2 for us to understand about your experience?

3                   **MS. TARA LONG:** In general? Like, I mean, that is a pretty big  
4 question. I could go on.

5                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Well, is there anything else you would like  
6 to share that you haven't had a chance to share yet? When you think back over what  
7 you really wanted to share with us today.

8                   **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** With respect to recommendations.

9                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** With respect to recommendations, yeah.

10                  **MS. TARA LONG:** Oh, I recommend you guys call us 23. The  
11 whole family --- all the family members have been asking since the beginning for people  
12 to recognize the 23. I don't know why it is such a problem for everywhere you look it is  
13 22, right. Ask Kristen Beaton if she thinks her baby was a person. I think that she  
14 would think that it was. So, why can't we say 23. It just seems like basic courtesy.  
15 Like, this is a baby and we don't count that baby? Come on.

16                  **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** I will check with the Commissioners. Do  
17 you have any other comments or clarifying questions?

18                  **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** It hasn't been easy for you to  
19 come here and we greatly appreciate it. Thank you.

20                  **MS. TARA LONG:** Is that my whole thing? Was that like one  
21 question?

22                  **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** We did three questions.

23                  **MS. TARA LONG:** Did we really? Okay, has it been an hour?

24                  **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** It has not been an hour. It has been half  
25 an hour.

26                  **MS. TARA LONG:** Wow, alright. Well, let me just make sure I  
27 covered everything.

28                  **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Yeah, please. Take your time.

1                   **MS. TARA LONG:** This is for everything that I want to cover  
2 because we spent a lot of time on feminist bullshit and I will call it bullshit because it is.  
3 We spent millions of dollars listening to experts talk about how women are victims and  
4 men are abusive and it doesn't matter if they are poor or rich as long as they are white,  
5 basically. They are going to abuse their wives and ---

6                   But we give millions of dollars to feminist groups. What do they do  
7 with it? I mean, I don't personally know a single woman who is being abused right now  
8 by her husband. I really don't and I live in Nova Scotia. Like, we have a reputation.  
9 The closest ---

10                  **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Ms. Long, the Orders in Council specify  
11 that gender-based violence is an important part of this Commission so that is why ---

12                  **MS. TARA LONG:** But I disagree and I am allowed to disagree  
13 with that.

14                  **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Okay.

15                  **MS. TARA LONG:** There is nothing --- there's --- I mean, even  
16 your one witness, this Brenda chick who can't remember being interviewed by the news  
17 in her own house is a hearsay witness to violence against Lisa Banfield. Her sister ---  
18 nobody has ever seen anything that we have heard of where they can say, I watched  
19 this person or I saw the bruises. None of it. So, I mean, if you want to touch on it, that  
20 is fine but how many days do you have to spend talking to ---

21                  I mean, there are relevant issues. No question about it. I  
22 absolutely --- like, women should not be --- nobody should be abused. People just  
23 shouldn't be hitting each other but it has not a place here any more than the Indigenous  
24 stuff has a place here. Not a single native was murdered in all the 23 so why any of that  
25 stuff --- We have experts from like, Australia and other parts, England --- like, oh my  
26 Gosh. The money that has been blown on nonsense and bullshit is astronomical.

27                  **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** So, in terms of --- I just want to give you  
28 one more chance before we close the session. So, really right now we are focused on

1 recommendations coming out of the report.

2 **MS. TARA LONG:** Okay.

3 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Not so much opinion about which topics  
4 are out of scope or not relevant. So ---

5 **MS. TARA LONG:** Okay, well I recommend that you pick topics  
6 that are more within the scope and more relevant.

7 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** So, great. So, can you just help us  
8 understand from your perspective which topics are most relevant?

9 **MS. TARA LONG:** So, which topics are most relevant?

10 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Yeah, which ones are most relevant for the  
11 Commission to focus on as we finalize those recommendations? We have heard public  
12 alerting. We have heard rural policing. I just want to see if there is anything else there  
13 that you would like to put on the record as important.

14 **MS. TARA LONG:** Let me think for a minute. I really --- I need to  
15 think about that. I mean, there are just so many things. Transparency is a huge one.  
16 There is so --- not any. You know, you ask for documents, you ask for proof of things  
17 and you don't get it. You ask for questions and I mean, everybody in here --- well, I  
18 shouldn't assume that, I guess. Most of us, I would assume, have looked at original  
19 documents and they are vastly different from the public documents. So, the  
20 transparency is just not there. So, I think that is probably the number one thing.

21 Accountability, somebody needs to stand up and say, I fucked up or  
22 you know --- I mean, we've got people not doing their jobs. People coming in off an all-  
23 day shift when they don't even tell their superior officer that they are coming on shift.  
24 How ---? That doesn't seem to ---

25 I mean, I grew up in a house where my grandpa was in the Navy  
26 and you just don't break rank. You know? Come on. You were RCMP if I am not ---  
27 were you something in the RCMP? No? Why was I thinking that? I am really sorry.  
28 For some reason I had that in my head.

1                   But I mean, you know, that is just not how you do things. You don't  
2 break rank. You don't ---- Your boss doesn't come in in the morning and find out that  
3 you have been working all night. So, accountability is a big thing. People need to be  
4 called out and then really, in this Commission, nobody is going to jail for anything, right.  
5 It is not a court. Nobody is being punished.

6                   So, if ever there was a forum for people to actually stand up and  
7 say, like, dude, I screwed up. I am not going to be punished for it but I, you know, have  
8 a guilty conscious for, you know, not doing my job the best I could. Or whatever the  
9 case is. I don't know. I wasn't there but I mean, there is a lot of problems.

10                  You know, if you just assume that people screwed up. I mean, I  
11 screw up all the time. You just have to stand up and say, I did that and, you know, I am  
12 accountable. Being accountable for what they did or didn't do when they should have.

13                  I don't know if I am answering your questions but apparently this is  
14 the shit that needed to come out so I apologize for using this as like a therapy session.  
15 I really do. I haven't had therapy yet, right? It has been two-and-a-half years and we  
16 don't count so we don't have counselling.

17                  We keep getting the notices but nobody ever wants to help us. You  
18 know, we keep getting the "Do you need counselling?" And we say yes and then we get  
19 it again. So, sorry about that.

20                  **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Yeah, that is okay. So, we have a mental  
21 health support person here.

22                  **MS. TARA LONG:** Oh, I am well aware. Oh, I am aware that they  
23 exist. They just don't exist for us.

24                  **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Well, she is here today so after we close  
25 the session, I can go get her and you guys can spend a little bit of time.

26                  **MS. TARA LONG:** Oh, I don't --- I probably don't need that at this  
27 point. I have dealt --- well, I mean, I don't know. People tell me I need counselling but  
28 maybe I am just a bitch now since this, you know.

1                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Yeah, well you are not and we are grateful  
2 that you did spend time here with us today.

3                   **MS. TARA LONG:** Well, I am glad that I actually had a chance to  
4 because I do feel better. I will let you know that tomorrow I speak. I am not a very good  
5 public speaker and you will all be pictured in your underwear. So, just so you know.  
6 (laughter)

7                   **COMMISSIONER FITCH:** That is a good tactic. Could I just say  
8 one thing?

9                   **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Sure.

10                  **COMMISSIONER FITCH:** Just because, like my fellow  
11 Commissioners, my word means everything to me. Like, you know, I always speak my  
12 truth. So, you asked if I was in the RCMP and I said no. And you said, but I thought  
13 you were something with the RCMP. So, I was with the city police.

14                  **MS. TARA LONG:** Oh, my apologies.

15                  **COMMISSIONER FITCH:** No, that's okay but what you might be  
16 thinking of is that when I retired the federal government hired me to be part of getting  
17 some strategic direction on matters relating to the RCMP but I did not work for the  
18 RCMP.

19                  **MS. TARA LONG:** Oh, Okay.

20                  **COMMISSIONER FITCH:** Yeah, it was about the modernization  
21 and transforming the RCMP and I only did it for a little period of time before I got asked  
22 to do this work. So, I just --- I didn't want you going away thinking that you were a long  
23 way ---

24                  **MS. TARA LONG:** Way out in left field, yeah.

25                  **COMMISSIONER FITCH:** Because you weren't way out in left field  
26 so I just wanted to make sure that you understood that.

27                  **MS. TARA LONG:** Cool, thank you. I appreciate that. I thought I  
28 had something there but, you know, you never know.

1                   **COMMISSIONER FITCH:** Yeah.

2                   **MS. TARA LONG:** Yeah.

3                   **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** Would you rather tell us now, what  
4 you were going to tell us tomorrow, so that you don't have to stand up and picture us in  
5 our underwear? Would that be easier for you? Because I mean, you are right here now  
6 and if you would like to, you could do that. Other than that, if that is ---

7                   **MS. TARA LONG:** I --- I don't want to be up there tomorrow but I  
8 have to be up there for my family. I have to stand up there and say --- I have to  
9 because I am the only one left. But I don't want to but thank you.

10                  **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** Okay.

11                  **MS. TARA LONG:** And I know, like, I really do -- I don't know,  
12 obviously but I feel that you guys sit in those chairs but I don't get the feeling you are  
13 making the high up decisions. Like, I don't hold you responsible for the shit show that is  
14 this Mass Casualty Commission. I really don't.

15                         I feel like there is a lot of high-level government interference here  
16 and it would be nice if we didn't have to deal with that.

17                  **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Alright, well, I am going to close the  
18 session. Thank you.

19         --- Session concludes

20

21

## C E R T I F I C A T I O N

22

23 I, SHIRLEY BENNETT, hereby certify the foregoing pages to be an accurate  
24 transcription of the audio recording provided to the best of my skill and ability, and I so  
25 swear.

26

*Shirley Bennett*

27

28 SHIRLEY BENNETT