



NEWS RELEASE

The Honourable Wanda Thomas Bernard – L'honorable Wanda Thomas Bernard
The Honourable Mary Coyle – L'honorable Mary Coyle
The Honourable Colin Deacon – L'honorable Colin Deacon
The Honourable Stan Kutcher – L'honorable Stan Kutcher

Senators Respond to the Announcement of an Independent Review of the Nova Scotia Mass Shooting

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OTTAWA, JULY 23, 2020 - On June 7th, June 29th and July 18th letters were sent to Ministers Blair and Furey calling for a joint federal/provincial, equally led, public inquiry into the April mass shootings and related events in Nova Scotia. The Senators clearly stated that only a comprehensive, open and fully transparent process would be able to address the complexities of this massacre and answer the legitimate questions and concerns of Nova Scotians and Canadians. The most recent letter to the Ministers was signed by Senate colleagues from every province and territory and every group and caucus.

This worst mass murder in Canadian history is of critical national importance and warrants an appropriately high-level response by both the Canadian and Nova Scotian governments.

Today's announcement by Ministers Blair and Furey follows a three month wait for action. The Senators are pleased to learn of the federal provincial initiative, but they had hoped for a different outcome. As had the families and friends of the victims.

While they are impressed with the distinguished panel that has been chosen for the announced task and note that many of the elements contained in the terms of reference are consistent with issues that they have previously identified, the Senators are concerned that the vehicle chosen may not best allow for the breadth, depth, openness and transparency that is necessary to answer all the complex questions arising from and related to the events of April 18 and 19, 2020. They also wish to underscore the importance of listening to the voices of families and friends of

those lost. Their concerns must be front and centre in the process that seeks to properly address this tragedy and they must be given the opportunity to take an active role in this review. The Senators acknowledge the commitment to conduct this review with a trauma-informed and restorative approach, but caution that these processes do have power imbalances and do not entirely eliminate the risks of re-traumatization.

The Senators also welcome the inclusion of gender-based and intimate partner violence in the terms of reference but encourage the panelists to ensure that a feminist lens also be applied to the entirety of this study.

A comprehensive and open public inquiry would have a greater chance of providing a more thorough vetting of the complex issues involved in this tragedy. The Senators' expectation is that the Ministers will take concrete steps in following through on their commitment to transparency and accountability. It is not a matter of how long this will take, it is about getting it right. It is about getting the answers that the victims' families, Nova Scotians and Canadians are asking for and determining recommendations for actions required to prevent such devastation in the future.

The Honourable Wanda Thomas Bernard, Senator
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