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Hon. Bill Blair
Minister of Public Safety
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

August 12, 2020

Dear Hon. Minister Blair,

As you are aware, the tragedy that occurred in Nova Scotia on April 18 and 19, rocked the lives of many Nova Scotians. The impacts are wide-ranging, and the sadness, concern, confusion, and anger is felt across the province and country.

There are so many questions that we must try to have answered in order to restore our trust and faith in the administration of justice and our own public safety. We must learn any lessons that can be learned to help prevent future harms. But above all else, the families of those 22 victims deserve answers on how this could have happened to their loved ones.

In that vein, I was pleased that the public pressure by the victims' families and concerned Nova Scotians caused you and Minister Furey to change course and order the full public inquiry. I was disappointed our Nova Scotia Members of Parliament did not speak up until the public pressure mounted, but nonetheless, I am thankful that you eventually came to the right decision.

A full inquiry is the only way to answer the questions that so many of us have. It is the only way to show that the federal and provincial governments are doing everything possible to protect residents.

As you can appreciate, given the initial efforts by Provincial and Federal Liberals to dilute the review process, there are mounting concerns that similar efforts will be made with the inquiry, particularly where the terms of reference have not been set.

In that vein, as Leader of the Official Opposition in Nova Scotia, I felt it incumbent that I share with you the concerns that have been raised with me to ensure that all efforts are made to have them addressed. I am writing to you as opposed to Minister Furey as there are obvious concerns about his conflict that have been presented to the Conflicts Commissioner for consideration. As such, I would ask that in preparing the terms of reference, you include the following:

- The inquiry must take place in Nova Scotia. Families should not be forced to relive the horror while travelling away from their loved ones, *or worse*, be prevented from attending in person and serving as the face of the 22 Nova Scotians taken from us.

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- The circumstances surrounding the shooter's access to weapons and RCMP vehicles and uniforms, including a review of the ongoing sales of those items.
- The roles, responsibilities, and actions of the RCMP related to the events of April 18 and 19, along with a broader review of the related policies that led to any decisions that were made. A full review of policing policies such as "risk it out" and general rural policing, should take place.
- The role of confidential informants within the RCMP and an analysis on whether the shooter was an informant; his historic involvement with the RCMP; and his engagement with them during the period he was active on April 18 and 19.
- The provincial procedures surrounding the deployment of the emergency alert system.
- The impact of domestic violence on this incident, and a broader review of domestic violence in Nova Scotia.
- The composition of the panel should be amended. At the very least, the panel should consist of five members, with at least three residing out of province. It is essential that this inquiry be conducted by an independent and impartial body, free of bias or political interference. It is only through this elevated level of transparency that the public will have confidence in the process, and that the findings that will result in real and meaningful change. For greater confidence in the process, the forum could be changed to a judicial inquiry, allowing for greater transparency and disclosure from witnesses.

Additionally, it is my understanding that the RCMP handbook on confidential sources (section 3.3) may preclude honest testimony on subjects like confidential informants, unless that information is demanded by a properly empanelled Judge.

Can you confirm that the makeup of the inquiry as it currently stands is judicial in nature and assure Nova Scotians that those called to provide evidence would have a legal obligation to be truthful and/or provide accurate information? Conversely, if the makeup of the inquiry is not judicial, and does not require truthful testimony, is it your intention to support a toothless process in which witnesses are not required to provide open and honest testimony?

This above-noted list is just a start. Any inquiry must be broad enough to spur wholesale, systematic changes and ensure necessary legislative and procedural changes are enacted, both provincially and federally.

Yours truly,



Tim Houston
Leader, Progressive Conservative
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Cc: Mark Furey, Minister of Justice (Nova Scotia)
David Lametti, Minister of Justice and Attorney General (Canada)