

UPDATE ON DESMOND FATALITY INQUIRY PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2021 (Halifax, NS) – The Desmond Fatality Inquiry will resume evidentiary hearings at the courthouse in Port Hawkesbury, N.S., at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 16. The proceedings are expected to run Tuesdays to Fridays for a period of four weeks.

The courthouse is located at 15 Kennedy St. in Port Hawkesbury. Please note that due to physical distancing requirements, in-person access to the hearing room will be restricted. Anyone not essential to the proceedings must get advance permission from the Judge Warren Zimmer to attend in person.

To maintain the open courts principle, members of the media will be permitted to attend the proceedings in person, if there is space available in the hearing room. Unless otherwise ordered by the judge, the proceedings will also be livestreamed on the Inquiry website (www.desmondinquiry.ca/). Transcripts and archived video footage from earlier in the Inquiry are also available online.

Members of the media covering the Inquiry are reminded they must review and abide by the attached Media Protocol. This document is also available on the [Media Page](#) of the Inquiry website.

Background on the Inquiry

On Jan. 3, 2017, the bodies of Lionel Desmond, a veteran of the war in Afghanistan, his wife Shanna, their 10-year-old daughter Aaliyah, and Mr. Desmond's mother Brenda, were found in a home in Upper Big Tracadie, Guysborough County. It is believed that Mr. Desmond took the lives of his family members, before he took his own life.

Nova Scotia's Chief Medical Examiner reviewed the circumstances of the deaths and recommended to the Minister of Justice that an inquiry be held under the province's *Fatality Investigations Act*. Judge Warren Zimmer of the Provincial Court was appointed to preside over the Inquiry.

The Inquiry's mandate is to determine the circumstances under which these deaths occurred, as well as some specific issues, including, but not limited to whether Lionel Desmond and his family had access to the appropriate mental health and domestic violence intervention services leading up to their deaths.

The evidentiary hearings began on Jan. 27, 2020, in Guysborough County, and adjourned on March 2, 2020. The Inquiry had anticipated resuming the evidentiary hearings in late May; however, due to COVID-19, the judge opted to wait until he was confident the proceedings could continue safely and in compliance with public health directives. With that in mind, the venue for the proceedings was moved from Guysborough County to the courthouse in Port Hawkesbury.

At the conclusion of the Inquiry, Judge Zimmer will prepare a written report containing his findings and recommendations. His report will not contain findings of legal responsibility. A copy of the report will be provided to the Minister of Justice.

For more information on the Desmond Fatality Inquiry, go to www.desmondinquiry.ca.

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