

UPDATE ON DESMOND FATALITY INQUIRY PROCEEDINGS

Friday, Nov. 27, 2020 (Halifax, NS) – The Desmond Fatality Inquiry is expected to resume evidentiary hearings at the courthouse in Port Hawkesbury, N.S., in mid-February 2021, pending any delays with the technical setup or any significant changes to public health directives related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Inquiry will receive an update in January on the delivery and installation of equipment to replicate the setup that had been in place at the Guysborough Municipal Building, where the evidentiary hearings began on Jan. 27, 2020. Following that update, the Inquiry should be able to publicly confirm the precise dates when the Inquiry will resume sitting. Once the proceedings are underway, the Inquiry is expecting to sit Tuesday to Friday, for a period of four weeks.

The Inquiry had anticipated resuming the evidentiary hearings in late May; however, due to the pandemic, Judge Warren Zimmer decided to wait until he was confident the proceedings could continue safely and in compliance with public health directives.

It soon became apparent the Inquiry could not proceed in Guysborough and still respect physical distancing. Using the COVID-19 Court Recovery Plan as a guide, Judge Zimmer worked with the Nova Scotia Department of Justice – Court Services Division to review alternative sites. After consulting with the judges who preside in Port Hawkesbury, that courthouse was confirmed as the new venue.

As the province works to prepare a courtroom, Inquiry counsel is continuing its work interviewing and preparing witnesses, providing disclosure to counsel, and conducting any research required for the next stage of the proceedings.

For more information on the Desmond Fatality Inquiry, including transcripts and archived footage of the previous proceedings, go to www.desmondinquiry.ca.

-30-

Media Contact:

Jennifer Stairs
Communications Director
Nova Scotia Judiciary
Cell: 902-221-5257
Email: stairsjl@courts.ns.ca