

DESMOND FATALITY INQUIRY WILL RECONVENE JAN. 27

Tuesday, Jan. 21, 2020 (Halifax, NS) – The first evidentiary session of the Fatality Inquiry into the deaths of Lionel Desmond and his family will reconvene in Guysborough, N.S., on Monday, Jan. 27, 2020.

The Inquiry proceedings will be livestreamed at www.desmondinquiry.ca. The archived video and the written transcripts of the proceedings will also be posted online.

Media and members of the public are welcome to attend the proceedings in person at the Guysborough Municipal Building, 33 Pleasant St., Guysborough, N.S. The Media Room downstairs is equipped to view the livestream and if needed, there is also a public overflow viewing room at the nearby Chedabucto Lifestyle Centre, 60 Green St. in Guysborough.

This session of the Inquiry is expected to continue through to Thursday, March 5, 2020. During that time the Inquiry will sit Mondays through Thursdays, starting at 10 a.m. each day. The building will be open to media and the public starting at 8:30 a.m.

Visitors are asked to use the side entrance of the building and to refrain from smoking near any building entrances. The hearing room is located on the main floor. There are signs on site and a Deputy Sheriff will be on hand to help direct visitors.

There is free public parking in the lot behind the municipal building and along the road on Church Street. If needed, there is additional parking at the nearby Guysborough Historical Society on Pleasant Street.

There will be guest Wi-Fi available for media and other visitors attending the Inquiry. Temporary passwords are valid for up to five consecutive days and are available at the Inquiry Administration Office.

Members of the media covering the Inquiry are expected to review and abide by the attached Media Protocol. This document is also available on the Media Page of the Inquiry website at <https://www.desmondinquiry.ca/media.html>.

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, Dr. Matt Bowes, 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*.

A recommendation under S. 26 of the Act requires the Minister to order that an inquiry be held. With that order, the Chief Judge of the Provincial and Family Courts of Nova Scotia appoints a Judge to conduct the inquiry and make recommendations on any issues identified in the order of the Minister.

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 Inquiry opened on May 21, 2019, with opening remarks by Judge Zimmer, followed by Applications to Participate in the Inquiry, pursuant to S. 36 of the *Fatality Investigations Act*. Judge Zimmer's decision on who may participate is available online at <https://www.desmondinquiry.ca/decisions-rulings.html>.

The Inquiry reconvened on Nov. 18, 2019, to begin hearing evidence. However, at that time several parties requested an adjournment until January, to allow time for new counsel to prepare for the proceedings. Judge Zimmer granted the adjournment until Jan. 27, 2020.

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

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