**Mary’s Harbour Roundtable via Zoom in Goose Bay**

**November 8, 2021**

COMMISSIONER: The first thing we offer from the Commission is our sincere condolences first of all because there are personal losses here as well as losses for your wonderful community and community Council. We took the time when the incident was occurring, when we had the searchers and search teams of Deer Lake and Corner Brook, to open our first meeting with a recognition of what was happening off Mary’s Harbour. And I think people wanted to express to yourself and to your fellow council members that, you know, this was a very tragic event.

Secondly, I want to say thank you on behalf of Geoff Budden, Marcella Mulrooney and myself for the use of your office. It’s very generous of you to do that and thank you for being so accommodating. Also to your staff here on very short notice, they made this work. So, Geoff, if you would like to say a few words of welcome, we will open it up to Mr. Russell.

GEOFF BUDDEN: Firstly, as Commissioner Igloliorte said, my name is Geoff Budden. I am the Commission counsel and my role is to assist Commissioner Igloliorte in the work of the Commission and also to represent the public interest and we’ve been looking forward to this for some time. I have had the pleasure of working with Jason Cooke in making these arrangements and we were so disappointed that at the very last minute we are not able to come to Mary’s Harbour as we’d hoped to. We were actually at the helicopter terminal this morning and the dispatcher explained to us that it simply wasn’t possible to fly to Mary’s Harbour today. So we are disappointed. We had hoped, and there is no substitute for face to face, but here we are and we thank you for being understanding and for so quickly using your resources to make this happen. And to the staff here as well for welcoming us here this morning and making us comfortable and being very friendly and helpful.

We have your materials. Jason Cooke sent them to us on Saturday, I believe, and it is obvious that a lot of work and thought has gone into them. That was my impression at first glance. And now that I have had the opportunity to review them, I certainly feel that more strongly. So we are ready this morning to listen to your voices and perhaps to have some questions ourselves.

One last thing before we turn it over to you, President Russell, has contact been made with MP Jones? I know she was planning to be in Mary’s Harbour today, and I haven’t reached out to her office. So I wanted to make sure she was aware of the change in plans.

TODD RUSSELL: On that point, Ms. Jones is aware of the situation and my understanding is that may be joining us by Zoom from her home in Mary’s Harbour. She will kind of be clueing up some of the comments at the end.

GEOFF BUDDEN: Ok. So if you wish to commence with some words, President Russell, and with your presentation, we are here ready to listen and to work with you.

TODD RUSSELL: Thanks. Is it ok, Commissioner, to begin?

THE COMMISSIONER: Please do.

TODD RUSSELL: Well, good morning to you and your team, Commissioner Igloliorte. We are sorry too that we didn’t have the opportunity this morning to meet face to face and to have this discussion and have some conversation about what is truly a life and death matter. And that would have facilitated conversations in a much more fulsome way but we are happy that we are meeting. And we are also grateful and we acknowledge Judge Igloliorte you taking on this very important role. We know that this Commission – that the talk around ground search and rescue has been, you know, on the go for about ten years and we are so pleased that this work is finally being undertaken. I believe as you will see during the course of our presentation, which includes the story of the recent tragedy here in Mary’s Harbour of Marc Russell and Joey Jenkins, and we will try to keep our comments, of course, as closely confined to the Terms of Reference of this Commission as we can. But we are also fully aware and cognizant of the overlap of how these systems move and interface with one another and we use the term “interoperability” on various components of search and rescue. And so, while we will keep our comments very much within the Terms of Reference, we will and we will have to make reference to other aspects of search and rescue generally.

In all things, we come before this Commission and you, Commissioner, to draw to your attention that search and rescue is really a life and death service and we here in this part of this country, and this part of this province, often feel that the value of our lives seem to have less or lessened by the types of services and types of resources that are employed in search and rescue generally. And so our whole presentation and why we come to you is to strengthen our position around ground search and rescue and the needs for an overall effective ground search and rescue system as well as a search and rescue system, whether that be on land or at sea.

And so we begin by providing you a little bit of context around Nunatukavut and our government. We are in Mary’s Harbour. This is a Nunatukavut community (inaudible) in this area from basically Mary’s Harbour, Lodge Bay to Cartwright is where we have the majority of our members and the Nunatukavut Community Council is the governing body for approximately 6,000 Inuit who reside primarily in south and central Labrador. Translated from Inuttitut, NunatuKavut means “Our Ancient Land” and it is basically home for our people. We still live a very much traditional lifestyle. People have moved with the seasons and the resources for generations. In time immemorial. We shifted sometimes between the headlands and the bays and the inlands in the various months and through the various seasons. This moving with the seasons and resources allowed us to hunt, to harvest and to fish, and to sustain ourselves and our communities, and our families. In fact, just like other parts of Labrador, our people did not live in permanent year round settlements until the mid-20th century. Today, NunatuKavut encompasses more than 20 different communities, with the vast majority of members residing, as I’ve said, along Labrador’s south coast, south of the Hamilton Inlet, and we have a significant membership within Hamilton Inlet and Upper Lake Melville as well. But as in the times of old, and still today, we are deeply connected to the land, the sea and the ice that make up NunatuKavut, our home.

The rights of our people are represented by NCC. We are led by a governing council elected by our people. It is comprised by the President, Vice-President, Councillors representing various areas in our territory and we also have a new area that represents people from outside our territory. And to round out our government we have an Elder and a Youth. Our primary function, of course, is to ensure that the land, ice and water rights as well as titles of our people are recognized and respected. We are also fully present at the grassroots level in our communities, providing a variety of services to NunatuKavut Inuit living within and outside Labrador.

In July of 2018, Canada announced the start of talks with NCC on the recognition of Indigenous rights and self-determination. This is a new and evolving process for the Federal Government and for NCC.

In September 2019, NCC signed a memorandum of understanding with Canada which outlines the general principles of discussion and sets the stage for next steps in this process. This will provide us an opportunity to advance such matters as self-governance on our lands, waters, resources and programs and services. It will also serve to better define our relationships and map a more robust way forward with our provincial partners. And in this regard, the provision of SAR, especially ground SAR, is an important subject and of great interest.

Some months ago when the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador announced this Inquiry, we approached the Commission. We approached the Commission because we knew how important this was to us and we had a very good opening discussion. At that time we said to the Commissioner we need to present, we need to be a part of this process and to be engaged. That was some months ago. I never thought that appearing before you today we would have a very personal story, a community story to tell, about what happened on September 17th. The current Inquiry is being followed with intense interest by our people and by all people throughout Labrador and the island. And in as much as we want to convey an array of issues and aspirations to the Inquiry, we also look forward, and we have learned from it as well. And to that point we have learned and heard first hand of the deep emotional distraught affecting the family of the late Burton Winters, which have been expressed through this Inquiry by his next of kin, their legal counsel and the community itself. This Inquiry has heard of the deep impact of the loss of Burton and the frustration endured as the result of a SAR system that presented notable challenges and failed in providing resources needed for an effective SAR effort. As a people who share many of the same kinship networks with those in the north, we feel the deep sense of pain of the Winters’ family loss. That deep sense of pain and loss is tragically part of the story of many families right here in this area, squarely in the heart of Nunatukavut.

This fall, Commissioner, on September 17th, two young men were lost at sea when their 28 foot fishing vessel failed to return to port from an inshore fishing trip in close proximity to Battle Harbour which is just a few miles from Mary’s Harbour. Two men, Marc Russell and Joey Jenkins, were barely into the infancy of their working lives. They represented what was so good about our community. They were pursuing traditional activities and were bringing hope into an industry that had been ravaged. They were continuing traditions of our people for centuries, and they were lost for reasons unknown. We know we face many risks, and every time one of our people ventures into the elements, which is nourishing, yes, but sometimes harsh and hostile, there are risks, whether it is on the sea or on the land.

As in the Burton Winters tragedy in Makkovik, the loss of Mark and Joey has raised questions and concerns around the search effort needed to undertake a search and rescue or a search and recovery mission that is adequate. Although there are certain facets of this particular mission which are beyond the scope of this Inquiry, it is important for the Inquiry to hear these stories so as to have a greater understanding and appreciation for their impact on GSAR operations. There are compelling lessons to be learned from these and other tragedies for NCC, for the Commission and for the entire province, and in fact our country, for search and rescue.

I am now going to ask Jeanette Russell, the mother of Mark, and Dwight Russell, his father, to come forward and to present to the Inquiry around the family’s experiences and what was observed and felt around ground search and rescue and ground search and rescue generally. I will turn it over to them. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.

JEANETTE RUSSELL: Good morning, Mr. Commissioner. I would like to start by thanking NunatuKavut Community Council for allowing an opportunity to speak today.

On Friday, September 17, 2021, our family and the Jenkins family was irreparably changed when our son Mark and his crew member Joey Jenkins went missing at sea. At 7:15 p.m. when the fish plant report of Mark’s vessel, the Island Lady, was overdue, my husband Dwight was already worried because Mark had not been active online. Each day while he fished at sea, Dwight monitored Mark’s online status to determine if he was in from fishing. When Mark was not active online that afternoon around the time he typically turned to port, Dwight sensed something was wrong. He immediately called a fellow fisherman in St. Lewis, Chad Strugnell to go up on Fox Harbour Hill to determine if he could see Mark’s boat. Chad reported back that he could not see anything. The Island Lady, a 28 foot vessel, should have been visible from Fox Harbour Hill since it overlooks the fishing grounds. Dwight asked Chad to get a crew and go look for Mark and Joey.

In the meantime, back in Mary’s Harbour, I called my brother-in-law to report that Mark and Joey were overdue and that I didn’t know what to do. My brother-in-law stated that he would leave in a speedboat to go look for them. Dwight next called the Coast Guard to report of an overdue vessel. They stated they would issue a Pan-pan alert. However, Dwight advocated for an immediate mayday alert because the Island Lady had not been seen since before noon that day by another fishing vessel.

The Coast Guard then connected Dwight with the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre for immediate assistance to coordinate a search mission and a mayday alert was issued. At the time, Dwight was on his fishing vessel in northern Labrador when all this was happening. So he was coordinating on a satellite phone with the JRCC.

I am not going to go into detail about everything that – a specific timeline - because there are so many parts to this story. But on Sunday, September 29th, JRCC reported that at 21:00 hours they would stand down and the search and rescue mission would be turned over to the RCMP as a recovery mission. Their decision was based on negative conclusions of insufficient floating debris found in the water. Up to that point, the search had recovered two fish tubs, one boot and one gas can. There was no conclusive evidence to indicate at that time that the Island Lady had capsized. In addition, the search had not included a full 48 hours of searching because bad weather conditions grounded many air and marine assets on Saturday, September 18th.

So at 9:00 p.m. in the evening we were forced into an impossible situation to reach out to MHA Lisa Dempster, MP Yvonne Jones, MP Seamus O’Regan and the Department of National Defence begging to have the search extended, a process that continued far into the early hours of the morning. Also here, I need to interject that without NCC President Todd Russell, obviously being my brother-in-law, his knowledge as a former member of parliament. My sister is Area Director for Labrador with Department of Fisheries and Oceans. So he had people, in addition to Dwight’s knowledge in the fishery – we had a lot of knowledge within our own family circle to know who to contact and how to contact these people. I don’t feel the average family would have had the expertise we had available to us in the middle of this event to have been able to contact people as proactively as we were able to make happen.

To further complicate matters, our efforts were being held hostage by the federal election process. We were given confirmation that the media release stating the search and rescue mission was over would be rescinded and that search efforts would continue. However, JRCC failed to honour this decision. The JRCC, in my opinion, failed to demonstrate any humanity and unilaterally decided the search was over. This search could have been continued for humanitarian reasons if JRCC chose to do so. Now labelled a recovery mission, JRCC handed over authority to the RCMP and walked away from the matter. We met with the local RCMP who openly acknowledged they had no expertise or immediate resources to throw at their mission. Once again, we were faced with an impossible decision. We were forced to take to social media to organize a demonstration at the Canadian Coast Guard headquarters in St. John’s to protest their decision and plead for additional resources to bring our boys home. Then we contacted the media. We had two fishermen missing at sea and it felt like JRCC had given up on them and had given up on our families. We were not ready to give up. We needed to ensure that the search continued. We felt forced to give an interview with CBC television to implore for continued resources to solve this mystery. Where were Mark and Joey? No bodies had been recovered. No debris had been recovered from the vessel. The only evidence that had been collected with items that could have floated away from the vessel. This was not conclusive evidence of a capsized vessel.

A large part of this search mission was coordinated by my husband and local people. Dwight was steadily on the phone, talking with fellow fishermen and tasking boats to join the search. To my knowledge, at no point was the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary tasked to join the search by JRCC. This is a plea for change so no other family ever experiences what we have experienced.

What is the value of a human life? As I reflect upon the access to search and rescue resources in Labrador, it begs the question ‘why is a life worth less in Labrador’? Once JRCC decided to stand down, they reported that the Molly Kool would be leaving the region. My husband asked if the vessel would be leaving to respond to an active search elsewhere or to be docked somewhere. He declared that we still had active local vessels conducting a continued search for Mark and Joey and what would happen if a search vessel needs support. The Coast Guard knew we still had boats in the water looking for our missing fishermen and they wanted to send the Molly Kool away where the vessel would not have been available locally to provide support if anybody else become in peril.

Our family and the Jenkins’ family have lived through a horrific experience of losing our sons at sea. To this day, we do not know where Mark and Joey are. Nor do we understand what occurred that day at sea. We may never know but I feel something good has to be derived from our shared experience so that no other family every has to experience what we have been forced to endure. Based upon our experience, these are the search and rescue system deficits we identify:

1. The time lag for air assets to arrive on site. Valuable time and daylight hours were lost on Sunday, September 19th waiting for air assets to arrive back in Labrador to join the search and on the 18th. Well, on the 18th the weather didn’t allow searchers, marine or air assets, to do a thorough search on Saturday the 18th. One air asset was on site in Goose Bay; however, we were informed that the next three air assets would arrive at approximately 11:00 a.m., 12:00 a.m., and 3:30 p.m. Valuable hours of daylight were lost prior to these air assets arriving on scene given the tremendous distance they are based from Labrador.
2. Lack of local resources. We had to immediately coordinate our own search and rescue mission team when we should have been able to just call a fast rescue craft to initiate the search. They are no fast rescue craft stations in Labrador. Why is this? Are the lives of fishermen in Labrador worth less than the lives of fishermen in Newfoundland? There is a huge differential between access to search and rescue resources in Newfoundland and Labrador. This disparity must be rectified. There is no current infrastructure in Labrador at this time.
3. Insufficient search given the weather conditions. No family should have to take to social media. We had to turn to the media and social media to lobby for an extension. We should not have had to advocate so hard for ourselves. The system should have been there for us.
4. Lack of transition between JRCC and the RCMP. Once JRCC decided that their search and rescue mission was over and it was now transitioning to a recovery mission to be spearheaded by the RCMP, they just walked away. There needs to be an intermediary process whereby the chain of command goes from one organization to the other to make things more fluid. We feel valuable time was lost in that transition as well as some expertise. JRCC are the experts in this type of work and they need to remain involved, whether in a different capacity, but to still have an active role in leading the recovery process.
5. Another deficit we see is a lack of sonar equipment on Coast Guard vessels. The Ocean Seeker was supplied by Nalcor Energy to participate in the search using top of the line sonar equipment to look at the ocean floor and help in the search for Mark and Joey. But currently on the new Coast Guard vessels that are being built, this sonar equipment is not being included. And in terms of timeliness, this type of equipment can really help in these types of searches.
6. There is no ground search and rescue facilities or organizations of any form in Labrador. This needs to change. These groups are the people with the expertise. They know what to do and they know how to do it. And we need to bring those types of operations to Labrador.

Additional factors that may have produced a different outcome, I realize President Russel said we would stay within the Memorandum of Understanding of what pertains to this Inquiry, but we have to see beyond just what is provincially required. The Province ultimately has a responsibility to make sure that the Federal Government is doing everything in their power to make sure resources and supports are in place. So the two additional things that may – I will never know for sure – but may have made a difference – all fishing vessels should have a need for – there should be a beacon on every vessel. If you want to be given a license to fish, you should be mandated to have a beacon on that vessel so that if something happens, that vessel can be found. I don’t know where my son lays on the ocean floor. I may never know, but that beacon certainly would have allowed me to bring my son home and to lay him to rest.

An additional factor that may have made a difference is that we need to improve cellular service in Labrador. Mark and Joey did try to make two calls on a satellite phone which were not successful. I think with cellular service it would have given them more time to make the calls or for the calls to have gone through.

In the interview that we did with CBC television I made a comment that I wasn’t worried about Mark fishing. I have been married to a fisherman for 27 years. Even when we dated for seven years, my husband was a fisherman. So I haven’t been afraid of the water and I worked with Battle Harbour Regional Development Association when the cod moratorium was called. And at that time we never thought anybody would ever fish cod again in this province. So when Mark went fishing at the cod, I was so proud. I was so proud to see the cod fishery open again and I was so proud that my son was partaking in the cod fishery. Now, as a mother, given what I know of the deficits in search and rescue and how little resources were available to my son to participate in that fishery, I wish he had never stepped foot in a fishing boat because the support that he needed, the support that our family needed was not there. And things need to change so that future sons of Labrador can participate in our traditional activities, specifically the cod fishery, so that we can make sure no family every goes through what we’ve endured ever again.

I am going to turn it over to my husband. Do you have any remarks?

DWIGHT RUSSELL: Yes, I am going to say a few things. Just getting back to the search there, one of the things I want to point out is – it wasn’t mentioned earlier - why wasn’t the auxiliary boats tasked by the Canadian Coast Guard? That’s one of the very first things that I noticed as a fisherman out to sea and there is a distress call. Coast Guard would always task vessels that were close to the area or anyone just passing through to stand down from fishing activities and work towards the search. But in this case, - and actually there was a lot of fishermen participated in the search – none of them were tasked through the Auxiliary program which offers a lot of support and these boats – also they carry, a lot of them, the gear that is necessary to do search and rescue. And that was a huge gap – basically the boats that was on that water, I basically called them. I called people individually.

Even boats like the Northern Osprey was on the scene at the time and travelling back to North Sydney. That evening I called the governing port(?) and asked that they stay around for two days to search. This was not something that was mandated. They were asked through the auxiliary system through the Coast Guard. And besides that there were boats that passed by that didn’t participate in the search. You know, I’m not bashing anybody for that but at least in any response, time is off the essence and obviously the first 48 hours is important to get a search out there.

And Canadian Rangers, that group, that’s a pretty prominent organization and very capable when it comes to search and rescue. They weren’t tasked either. Basically a lot of the coordination was done through family and then the RCMP got involved. It was just us sometimes and I was working through the coordination centre in St. John’s as well and (inaudible) I was trying to push the right buttons to get things changed. I remember one day in particular they were out twenty miles (inaudible) Cormorant helicopter. I asked the Captain how far was he searching. He showed me the grid. I said boy, from our local knowledge, you won’t find the boys there.

JEANETTE RUSSELL: No. A lot of time was spent exploring a particular area surrounding the last known position of the phone calls.

DWIGHT RUSSELL: But in that case, every one is 20 miles and I basically had to come back home and lobby the coordinator and say listen, from our local knowledge we know the tides (inaudible) the wind. You know, if anything is going to be found, you have to go further than 20 miles. So we stretched the search to 30 miles and that is when we found the first (inaudible). So what could have been may not have been anything. But sometimes you got to push these people because sometimes they throw something in the water and they thinks that’s what we got to go by. They have a buoy and use the drift patterns and that may be okay sometimes but sometimes it doesn’t work. It’s very important that you have the local knowledge and a lot of the fishermen were saying the same thing, we should be farther. We should be pushing farther. But, you know, no, this helicopter had a grid to do. You know, that’s what she was tasked to do and that’s all she could do. Things like that are the things that should be changed.

JEANETTE RUSSELL: Even some of the boats that were out there, they were extremely frustrated because they knew they were being tasked to search in an area where they knew that nothing was going to be found and they were like – some of the boats even communicated to us. We felt like saying the hell with the instructions we’ve been given and we’re going to go off further on our own accord. Because they knew, based – like my husband said, based on their traditional knowledge of knowing these waters, knowing the tide patterns, knowing the wind that we had experienced on Saturday, that they weren’t going to find anything where the search was being conducted.

DWIGHT RUSSELL: But when this all happened, the day before this event, on September 16th, I was out fishing off Hopedale and the first time I’ve ever got entangled in my trawl and I ended up having to get towed and luckily enough the Northern Osprey was on the scene at that time and she was going south. And she towed me. If I had to depend on Canadian Coast Guard vessels to get towed that day, she was probably somewhere on the southern part of the island and we were down there – probably the boat was 400 miles away, the Coast Guard boat. That night we had a gale of northwest winds. So just giving an example of what can happen out on the ocean when you have limited resources and you got small vessels. But I was being towed that evening, when I, you know, I basically sent out the alarm bells. I knew something was going on with Marc because I was looking at my phone and the system on my boat and he wasn’t active on it. It was 6:30 and then it became 7:00 and I started getting a bit worried. I knew darkness was coming on around 8:00 and I was just starting to sense there was something wrong. And knowing it was his last day, I was more interested in – you know, it was his last day and he was taking his nets aboard and he had a good day the day before. He had 1800 pounds of fish the day before. I said, he’s probably going in now after a real good day.

If you look at what’s happening in Labrador and indeed the north, and you know, you see more fishing boats from the mid coast right up to the north coast more than you ever had since the cod moratorium. So there’s a lot of activity on the water, not only through the fishery but through recreation and just people providing for their families. You know, (inaudible), the seas are higher. So I see it after (inaudible) boats and speedboats going all over the place. And you know, luckily enough there haven’t been any more incidents than we are now.

I have to say through all of this that there has to be some accountability and that comes from who controls where these FRC’s goes, these fast rescue crafts. Somewhere along the road someone had to say, whoever is controlling Newfoundland and Labrador, these people are not only in control of the island part of the province but they also are accountable for what happens in search and rescue Labrador. So I think you need accountability. How are these decisions made? Why was eight fast rescue crafts put around the island - which they are all needed. I’m not saying none of them are not needed. They should have them. Each one of those communities need them and they need them because they are like us. They are coastal people and they need these boats. But why was – why there’s none for Labrador? You know, it’s very hard to accept and you know what? For all these years at the fish, you don’t think anything is ever going to happen to you. Then you got to ask these questions yourself. It is very hard to accept.

But it’s something that really has to be looked into, I think. And no matter who we are, where we are, we’re heading up organizations and putting infrastructure, there is nothing any more important than search and rescue. Nothing. Ain’t nothing when it comes to infrastructure. Those resources have to be shared and if they can’t be shared, we have to question the process.

But, you know, we could be here all day talking until the sun would rise but, you know, we’re building new ships, new Coast Guard ships and we need to get this sonar equipment on there. We were out there one day and looked in the area, the last known position, because we did have their position when the last phone calls were made and it showed that this boat made two phone calls and the distance between them was short but they were travelling at 12 or 13 knots which says to me that’s as fast as the boat could go with the fish they had aboard that day. So they were on their way home and something catastrophic had to happen. It had to be catastrophic because he had the vhf that he could have just clicked and every second household has a vhf and we would have got a call. But it never happened. That boat overturned quickly without getting a call in. So, you know, the timeliness of anything happening is important. And I shouldn’t be calling (inaudible) to go up on the hill and look for my son. I should be calling the FRC station in St. Lewis and saying look, you should be looking for my son. And these boats are built for that. They are designed for that. They are trained for that. We’ve had the fast rescue craft from St. Anthony which was a great asset but she can only come down, steam for two hours and then go back because she burns a huge amount of fuel, right. And apparently the fuel over here is not what the boat needs.

So there’s a lot of issues. There was times that the Hercules had to go back to Greenland(?) because of the last refuel in Blanc St. Blanc. We know this because we had people listening to them over the radios. Everybody was in on Channel 16. And go to Gander and she used to have to go to Greenland. That’s a huge distance. The first morning of the search I can remember there was hours there was nothing in the air in the daylight hours of the first morning, which is probably the most crucial time. You know, because basically we hardly had any air assets in that area that next morning on the scene.

So there’s a tremendous gap here in the search. People on the planes, I know they need rest but we need a better back up plan. You know, when one helicopters come in, another comes out. You know, if you are only going to use 48 hours, at least give us 48 hours not 20 hours or 24 hours out of 48 hours?

And why are these protocols here 48 hours. There is planes that go down, from what I hear, they search for days and months. Where is the (inaudible). Giving 48 hours. We all know the number of fishermen that go down at sea. Plane goes down in Iran, they spend millions to go to Iran and bring them home. And they knew that they were all dead. They’ve done that. Where’s the compassion for the people who lose their life at sea. I think there is a lot lost in this.

JEANETTE RUSSELL: And where is the resources for people living on the sea?

DWIGHT RUSSELL: Where can we do better as a nation? There is lots of ways, lots of areas, and I don’t think we should be just looking at one area. I think there are so many there that we could make things better? As you guys know, and you ladies know, every - so many homes in the Atlantic provinces and anybody that’s even part of the fishery, there’s so much losses with no recovery. You know, sometimes the recoveries don’t have to happen. This is the thing. I’m not pointing fingers at anybody here but I’m just pointing out the flaws. I am not saying anything would change the outcome but we have to have a better setup for Labrador where we fish at, our home port. We fish mostly here through the north, as far as Hebron and we don’t see many Coast Guard vessels. They are almost non-existent to be honest with you. So there has to be more resources in this area and when you got to fight to keep a Coast Guard vessel in our own area when we are doing the search, you know it’s hard to understand.

JEANETTE RUSSELL: And it begs the question what is their role? If you’re just going to walk away when you know there are still boats on the water conducting a search, where is your concern for their safety, if you are just going to take that Coast Guard vessel and sail away? And I think from a historical perspective, since the Burton Winters tragedy and 10 years since, what has changed? And we learned in a very horrific way that nothing has changed in that 10 year period. And how many young lives or any lives have to be lost before we make the changes that are required. And for us, that’s the enduring legacy here for Burton, for Marc and for Joey is that we change the system. We make improvements in the system so that no other family has to have this experience and that hopefully we won’t have recovery missions anymore. We can have adequate searches that will bring people home.

DWIGHT RUSSELL: There’s a picture here of – and it’s not really clear because I took it off the camera before I came – it’s a picture of a boat, the Ocean Seeker that carried that sonar device and it’s called a Catfish and it has great abilities. But you know, some people say what’s the need of a sonar but if the Coast Guard boat got a sonar on its boat that day and they went out looking at the last known position of Marc and Joey, we don’t know, perhaps they would have found that boat right away instead of having to spend four or five or six days and all the money and air assets, millions of dollars. Sometimes we got to be a little bit proactive and have this equipment so that we can, you know, get the knowledge at least if the boat in that area wasn’t there and the only way you would have known that was through sonar.

It’s 2021 and they don’t have the ability to do that and we’re out there in our ocean and if an oil line breaks, they can send down sonar equipment with robots and they can attachment them and can repair it and change valves. And we can’t find a sonar that could go down a search for a boat? You know, it’s – it seems like these boats are very outdated and they’ve spent close to a million dollars a few years ago on the Molly Kool. And this is the service that we got to live with. It’s certainly not good enough and people might think that sonar is not important but it’s very important. It could save a lot of money and a lot of time and a lot of people wouldn’t be searching. Even in that first day, that sonar could have been down there in that area, and perhaps the boat would have been there and the rest of that search, you know, might not have been needed. So, it’s, you know, we’ve got company that makes these things is in Newfoundland (inaudible – voice very muffled). Poland has got one. Israel has got one. We haven’t got one. (Inaudible) You got to see what’s beneath the water as well as what’s above it. It’s part of the search and how we execute it going forward.

Me, I haven’t got much else to add. I just want to thank everybody for giving us the opportunity to speak here today and thank you for all the help in the search and all of the support.

JEANETTE RUSSELL: Thank you.

THE COMMISSIONER: Well, I just want to say to you that you have a lot of strength to be able to come and make a presentation so early after such a tragedy has occurred. And I am so sorry to see that you have to appear before a Commission where, as you pointed out, we’ve looked at exactly the same kind of frustration that a family had nine and a half years ago. The best message we can give right this moment is that everything you said will be part of the record that we pass on to government. It will be on the web page. It will be part of the report we hand over and while I may not have the authority as a Commissioner to repeat the recommendations that you and your wife have made, at least they will be there to be read.

You are right in saying that the whole question of interoperability has become a large part of the discussion that we learned from our expert on search and rescue and that he has recommended, and we have passed that recommendation on, that the province and the federal government have to continue to talk about how they speak to each other when you have areas of jurisdiction where one side says I handle marine and aeronautics and the other side says I handle ground search and rescue. We recognize that in between that there are services required, both from the sea and from the air, whenever any kind of search is started in any small remote community. But you have met us here and you have said in a way, which I have said, is very strong in you to be able to come to us so soon after this. We are so sorry that you have suffered this loss. But also, I think for many other people, you are showing the kind of strength that it takes, but also you are demonstrating there are gaps that need to be addressed. And while they may not be addressed immediately, your voice is added to at least half a dozen that we have heard so far, different kinds of circumstances that occurred where changes are needed.

So I really can’t say anymore except to say thank you. Thank you for your courage and your strength and thank you for making people realize that everyone has to work together to continue to save lives.

DWIGHT RUSSELL: Thank you, sir.

TODD RUSSELL: Thank you, Commissioner, for allowing that presentation that is so important. And as I have said, there is so much to be learned from listening to one another and understanding their experiences. And there is no greater reason, as I’ve said before, that we can save one life by the work that we are doing now. And it will all have been worth it and we hope that this will lead to many lives being saved and a part of our work, Commissioner, in preparing for this presentation was to reach out to the people in our communities to understand the various experiences and I want to thank my brother Dwight and my sister-in-law Jeanette for sharing part of this story, and I want to thank Joan Jenkins and Jody and Nicky, they are the mother, brother and partner of Joey Jenkins. They are also here as part of this presentation.

We certainly reached out, as I’ve said, to talk to people to get a better understanding of the concerns and expectations that our people have in relation to ground search and rescue. You’ve heard personal testimony and there are others that we have appended to our presentation. And they give a great sense of generational history in terms of our communities. And this one is no different how our communities and our people rally to meet the needs of one of their own in times of emergency.

Decades ago this was the way it was. There was no formal search and rescue. But as in the past, and as it is today, there is a great utility entrenched in community obligation spirit when the need arises to search for a lost and missing person. And as we were talking with our people in our communities, there were a wide range of concerns which were identified by our people. And these will sound familiar to you. You’ve already heard of some of them during the presentation that was just made. There is the impact of time limitations during life and death situations. This kind of artificial rule around 48 hours for instance. And the seeming (inaudible), even in the most dire situations. There is a loss of valuable time in organizing formal searches. There is the value of understanding local conditions of weather as well as on land and at sea. You will note one of the testimonies where local people involved in this particular search with Joey and Mark, you know, have relayed information about the local conditions and seemingly the system could not respond or did not respond in any way to these particular local concerns. And we all know the huge value of traditional knowledge.

We heard of the disparities between organizing a search at sea and land-based search efforts. We say the significant terrestrial and sea telecommunications deficiencies like cellular and mobile. We see significant shortcomings in dedicated air and sea resources needed for quick responses in such a huge, large geographical area. And we also note and witnessed the complete lack of ground search and rescue organizations along the southern Labrador coast. Our people told us there is also serious mental and emotional health issues for searchers and next of kin associated with those traumatic SAR outcomes and a serious lack of mental health support from professional health providers.

These personal testimonies provide graphic details and insight into community searches that resulted in successful rescues with only minutes and seconds to spare. And on the positive side NunatuKavut members who were consulted expressed a sincere willingness to organize and volunteer their services. They talked of a skill set suited for ground search and rescue, if properly organized. They spoke of the Canadian Rangers who were praised as a good organization with skillful volunteers, good leadership, suitable equipment and excellent training. Yet they were not asked in this situation, as you have just heard about. Many believed that the Canadian Rangers could provide adequate GSAR response and certainly be a great support for ground search and rescue response all along the coast, if they were called upon to do so. And there is also information provided that they are under-utilized, just like other assets like Department of Fisheries and Oceans. So there has been a lot of information gleaned from going out to our people and communities to understand the impacts of a deficient system of search and rescue, what those observations have been and ways to strengthen it.

And so I am going to turn it over now to Merv Wiseman who joined our team. We were very, very fortunate that Mr. Wiseman, with 35 plus years of experience in search and rescue, joined with us to help us prepare this presentation and to take us through what is a very, very complex system, a life-saving system. So I will turn it over to Merv who is going to take us through the resource gaps, talk about ground search and rescue gaps, bridging those particular gaps, command and control issues, a partnership that we agreed could be very, very important to ground search and rescue. Then I will talk a little bit about future trends. So I will turn it over to Merv, unless you have any questions on what I have just presented.

GEOFF BUDDEN: Thank you President Russell. We will hear from Mr. Wiseman now and perhaps have questions at the end.

MERVIN WISEMAN: I would be remiss if I didn’t offer my condolences. I am so sorry about the tragedy that happened here in Mary’s Harbour. (inaudible)

I do have some familiarity with (inaudible)

GEOFF BUDDEN: I am sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Wiseman. We are trying to adjust the volume.

THE COMMISSIONER: We need to get the volume turned up, Mr. Wiseman, one second.

GEOFF BUDDEN: We can see you now too, that’s good.

MERVIN WISEMAN: We will try this again. I’ll just say, in the interest of full disclosure, I have been granted standing for a concerned citizens group and I did spend a week in St. John’s and had an opportunity and privilege, as I have the privilege now, to have given some personal testimony about some of the situations that I see around ground search and rescue, and of course, maritime search and rescue. We are all familiar with our (inaudible) we have constraints. And because of the Terms of Reference, this being a ground and search rescue, but you know, often times the line is so razor thin that it’s hard to discern the difference between the two and I think to try to separate it too much would be really doing a disservice to one or the other.

In looking at some of the search and rescue gaps, first of all it’s obvious, and I am repeating again – in listening to the personal testimony a few minutes ago, I wasn’t quite aware of some of the things they were going to cover off but they hit the mark on the part about the gap in aircraft, fixed wing resources and service aircraft. The start reality illustrated in both the Makkovik tragedy and the most recent tragedy here in this community is the fact that NunatuKavut and its adjacent areas to the north are devoid of even a single, not even one, primary dedicated fixed or rotary aircraft with a standard search and rescue standby posture, stationed in an acceptable area of proximity to our land. The closest area for dedicated air resources is in Gander, of course, where the 103 Rescue Squadron has a primary, CH-149 Cormorant helicopters, or helicopters in some cases; one to back up the other. I think that’s one of the immediate standing features you need to understand about a dedicated primary resource is the fact that there is a requirement, there is a standard that says if one resource is out of commission for any particular reason, then there is a priority immediately to replace that aircraft or have another one maintained as a backup. That is extremely important. So it’s a 30 minute standby posture during the normal working days and two hour standby posture during the weekends and holidays and after hours.

If a fixed wing aircraft were required, it would have to come all the way from the 413

Rescue Squadron in Greenwood, Nova Scotia, which has the same standby posture as the 103 Rescue Squadron in Gander.

From a maritime or surface standpoint, there is not a single primary (dedicated) waterborne craftwith a standard national standby posture of thirty (30) minutes. And that’s the key, that 30 minute standby posture is nowhere to be found in NunatuKavut orany of its adjacent areas to the North. By comparison, and we have to make these comparisons because, you know, we didn’t set the benchmark here in Labrador and any other place. The stand has been set nationally and it’s important that – there’s no begrudging that island portion of the province would have the assets. That’s not the point. It’s the point of the benchmark and the service that is expected and that’s provided. The island portion of the province can boast of no less than seven multimillion‐dollar modern‐day lifeboat stations with thirty (30) minutes standby postures, spaced in ports all around the province. This is further reinforced by four seasonal Inshore Rescue Bases, or IRBs we call them, equipped with Fast Rescue Crafts in various areas of the island and additional designated primary search and rescue areas resourced by dedicated ships from the regional Canadian Coast Guard station in St. John’s.

And while it might be said these kinds of resources are part of a federal search and rescue program, the existence of these resources highlights the glaring inequity in search and rescue services from a geographical standpoint. More importantly, and for the purpose of this Inquiry, which is oriented, of course that is the Terms of Reference, exclusively towards the provincial mandate of ground search and rescue. This inequity affects the availability of resources related to humanitarian needs, which often arise during a ground search and rescue or recovery efforts. In emergency situations, where every minute and every second counts, the lack of adequate dedicated resources in NunatuKavut is indeed untenable.

Alternative options when resources are needed for ground search and rescue incidents in NunatuKavut are facilitated by provincial Emergency Services or by special request to federal agencies like the Joint Rescue Coordination Centres or the Canadian Coast Guard. Provincial resources, which often involve contracting from private sources, carry with them an inferior capability compared to federal SAR programming resources. Essential elements such as professionally trained crews, resource endurance, limitations on poor weather and night‐time flying are inhibiting factors when unavailable in life and death situations. So, the point is that when you look at contracting resources, it can be done oftentimes (inaudible) But when we get them, it really is an inferior product that we’re looking at and we learn and understand that the Cormorant out of Gander means it’s a dedicated resource but the crews are constantly in search and rescue mode. They are affecting missions, sometimes two and three times a day. If they are not doing search and rescue missions, they are doing exercises, honing their skills and this training onboard an aircraft tests endurance. These secondary resources simply don’t have – and you know, the search and rescue techniques that we’ve heard so much about, they are trained people. I’ve often said that I’d rather walk into a Cormorant with these search and rescue technicians than I would walk into a hospital with doctors and nurses. They are incredible resources. Not to have them available is certainly an inhibiting factor.

And I guess the other point as well, we talk about learning from presentations in this Inquiry, I did witness the presentation made in St. John’s by Cougar Helicopter Corporation in reference to aerospace. They detailed a world class rotary and fixed wing resource that could be contracted for dedicated search and rescue purposes. No doubt it would be expensive but we’re not talking expense at this point but we’re talking about capabilities and service.

In the absence of adequate search and rescue resources that may or may not be available from the federal search and rescue program on a humanitarian basis, there would seem to be an obligation within the scope of the provincial mandate on ground search and rescue to incorporate these kinds of life‐saving resource options into their provincial program. I know it might be a very significant ask to do that but if the federal resources are not there, these capabilities that exist in the private sector will have to be considered for all parts of the province and certainly in this case where we are lacking resources in Labrador and in particular in NunatuKavut.

On the ground search and rescue infrastructure and the gaps that we are seeing there, this has been talked about an awful lot. The NCC has relied heavily on the information it has acquired through the presentations of ground search and rescue experts who have participated in this Inquiry to date. So it’s nothing new.

Mr. Harry Blackmore, President of the NL Search & Rescue Association (NLSARA), talks about his twenty‐five teams of ground search and rescue divisions in the Province and so on, and the exceptional constraints that they have to work under when it comes to funding challenges and so on. You know, we can only look with envy at his 25 teams.

When we measure where the Province is in their capacity to effectively conduct a ground search and rescue program in NunatuKavut against the work of NLSARA and all its outreach, it is indeed concerning. We are encouraged by the existence of ground search and rescue teams in Happy Valley‐Goose Bay and Labrador West. I believe there are five altogether. I mention these because, you know, we are pretty much in the back yard, if you will. These communities are home to many of our members and border the vast area of NunatuKavut that are without similar infrastructure. There is concern about the tremendous void that exists in many NunatuKavut communities on the southern Labrador coast. It is unfathomable that there is not one single ground search and rescue team in place from Cartwright to the Quebec/Labrador border.

Bridging the gap in ground search and rescue preparedness, our current knowledge of the search and rescue system in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, as supplemented by what we have learned from participants at the Inquiry, tells us the police forces are the lead command and control agency in ground search and rescue matters. This extends to the organization and coordination of ground search and rescue capacity building in preparation for readiness towards search and rescue missions. Through our participation in this Inquiry, NCC is identifying and emphasizing a fundamental need for SAR resources and support in NunatuKavut. We are extending our outreach for help to the police, specifically the RCMP, and the NLSARA as facilitators, to help us fill the organizational and capacity gap in ground search and rescue for NunatuKavut communities on the southern Labrador coast.

On the command and control in ground search and rescue, a few words about that. In referencing phase one of this Inquiry, which is a big part in understanding the (inaudible) of search and rescue in all its aspects, a great resource paper that everybody should know and understand, but as you indicated, President Russell, it is complicated. When you read that paper, and it strikes me as a person working in the system for over 30 years, that it is a complicated system, search and rescue system in all its aspects, federal and provincial, Parks Canada, territorial, all the various command control structures. That paper is certainly a mandatory reading for anybody involved in search and rescue and perhaps even people not involved in search and rescue.

One of the most notable items contained in Mr. Smith’s discussion paper, as well as his subsequent presentation to the Inquiry participants in St. John’s, is his reference to the search and rescue command‐and‐control structure. The Department of National Defense is clearly delineated as the lead command and control agency in the case of maritime and aviation search and rescue matters. As the jurisdiction changes to include provincial and territorial mandates for ground search and rescue, command and control operative changes to reflect the authority under each jurisdiction. For example, if a ground search and rescue mission was at play anywhere in Parks Canada jurisdiction, Parks Canada would assume command‐and‐control lead. Likewise, if the ground search and rescue mission was located in a provincial jurisdiction the police force is the command‐and‐control lead.

I think this is an important point at this juncture. Consistent with our goals and objectives on self‐determination, our long‐term ambition is to be the lead command‐and‐control agency relating to ground search and rescue matters in NunatuKavut. In the interim, we must be pragmatic and responsible in our approach on that level of ground search and rescue. In the short and medium‐term, we see ourselves working in a very collaborative fashion under existing search and rescue structures. We see the police in their current role as lead in the command and control structure as our partners. Likewise, we see the NLSARA as a valued partner and an important gateway to acquiring the skills and infrastructure needed for us to be a full participant in the ground search and rescue regime for all of Nunatukavut. There is a transition period from getting where we are today to where we would want to be fully complemented to assume full responsibility of command and control.

So in terms of partnerships, we know that there is no question about the significant value that NunatuKavut can bring. Capable volunteers with a natural skill set passed down from generations of NunatuKavut Inuit living on the land. Our people also intimately know the lands, ice and waters around them. With additional orientation and added formal training, Ground search and rescue teams made up of NunatuKavut community members would represent a very powerful tool in times of emergencies related to lost and missing persons.

NCC has assets and skilled people already employed in protection and stewardship roles throughout NunatuKavut. One of our best examples is the Guardian Program, which has just acquired modern watercraft resources and trained staff empowered to conduct enforcement and conservation measures for our fish and wildlife resources.

NunatuKavut can also proudly boast of a number of our people in all communities along the Southern Labrador coast who are existing members of the Canadian Rangers. The Canadian Rangers are a reserve contingent made‐up of Canadian civilians operating in a volunteer capacity under the Department of National Defense. The ground search and rescue tragedy involving the loss of Burton Winters certainly illustrated the competency and value of this dedicated group of volunteers in humanitarian engagements for lost and missing persons. Again, this would serve as a significant complement to resources that also might be acquired in ground search and rescue (inaudible).

Similar things can be said about the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary, which already forms a large part of one of the best CGA organizations in Canada. CGA participants along the southern Labrador coast, which form a coastal network of communities within NunatuKavut, have already demonstrated exemplarily services for their role in search and rescue missions of a humanitarian and maritime nature within the Canadian search and rescue system.

NCC has documented and journalized vast amounts of knowledge and detail, which is digitized in what’s called a Cumulative Data Base (CDB). I was really struck by this research in the work I was doing for the NCC. It’s just an amazing amount of information that’s been gathered from very important and indepth studies since 1971, talking about so many of the traditional man routes and the trapping lines and pelts, cabins, and tenting areas. It’s just – the information is so invaluable and can be brought into this realm of training and contribution to those ground search and rescue efforts. I will pass it back to you to talk about your hand in the future trends that is there.

TODD RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Wiseman. And I really think we are painting a picture of what search and rescue looks like generally in our communities and looking at the number of testimonials that I believe the Commission should have an impression of a people, of primarily a lot of indigenous people who are on these lands, who are moving about for traditional purposes. And it just, I think, gives you the sense that there is great movement on these lands and on these waters, and the types of pursuits these people have in these various environments. The future tells us that there is going to be more activity and different types of activity, and you know, we reflect upon reconciliation and the fishing. There are greater accesses being provided to sometimes different types of species in different parts of the marine environment. And many times our fishers now go much further afield in order to prosecute fishing. They are also fishing in a different climate and a different environmental conditions that in previous years. So we have a changing landscape as well where we are seeing people travel different routes because of climate change. People are not going the same way they always did and continue to build that knowledge base. We have roads that are opening up our lands where there is no access and people are travelling different ways and in different areas. Again, some of the old travel routes are being replaced or new ones are being made. And all of this, of course, with parks happening and new types of industries coming to our territory, we are going to find a huge and increased need for adequate SAR resources and ground search and rescue resources. So the land has opened up more than it ever has been.

The waters are opening up in ways that we have not seen and all of these are going to present challenges. And we’re going to have more visitors it would seem as well, to the territories which also bring – there is a responsibility here that if you have people coming into the territory that they too are also – make sure that they have good search and rescue assistance in place. And so while all of these are evolving, it points to the need, the increased need for search and rescue, ground search and rescue services and response to what we know will be inevitable emergencies in NunatuKavut.

We believe that more study and analysis are needed on the issue of current and future trends impacting SAR for NunatuKavut and the north in general. And this is actually borne out by the study of the House of Commons Report on search and rescue in 2018 entitled “Every Minute Counts”. And it recognized similar conclusions as NCC. Climate and other pending pressures, many of them commercial, are creating a true paradigm shift in the north. Mining, northern fisheries, eco‐tourism and new travel routes are just some of the issues that have search and rescue implications.

In the face of these and other factors, the Senate Committee, in its report, was moved to recommend a highly enhanced and increased search and rescue infrastructure presence for the North. The Senate even advanced the idea of an innovative pilot project involving the contracting of dedicated SAR equipped air resources from private interests in order to fill current and future gaps. Clearly, the overall capacity of our search and rescue system in NunatuKavut and all northern areas will be tested again and again against the backdrop of these underlying trends and the deficiencies that currently exist. Our ability to manage and deliver to the people who depend on it may very well be an ultimate function and test of sovereignty for the lands we call home.

If we can’t protect and save harmless our people, what can we do? What greater obligation is there on a government than the health and wellbeing and safety of its people. In my view there is no greater obligation on the part of the government. I will turn it over now to Merv to speak specifically to Goose Bay and the triple 4 squadron.

MERVIN WISEMAN: Thank you. On the 444 Squadron, it’s an impressive facility. The Department of National Defence and all its facilities, along with the civilian commercial airport infrastructure in Goose Bay, create a tremendous presence against the backdrop of search and rescue in Labrador. It is practically in the backyard of NunatuKavut, in terms of aviation support.

It is true that significant secondary government and commercial resources are often available for search and rescue on both a humanitarian and contract basis from commercial companies. It is known that the CAF Bell CH‐146 Griffon Helicopters are often resourced for ground search and rescue recovery and humanitarian missions. Unfortunately, these are not a dedicated search and rescue resource, and consequently, often unavailable for critical search and rescue missions. This was the case during much of the Burton Winters tragedy when all Griffon aircrafts were unserviceable during critical periods of the search in Makkovik. Even when available, the Griffin aircrafts are inferior to the dedicated CH‐149 Cormorant Helicopter stationed at the 103 Squadron in Gander and the 413 Squadron in Greenwood, Nova Scotia.

This clearly begs the question of why dedicated search and rescue air resources with a search and rescue standby posture are not stationed in such a capable location. Likewise, it compels us to put forward the request for these facilities to play a strategic role in a dedicated search and rescue capacity. While we whole‐heartily endorse the pilot project concept put forward in the Senate report of 2018, we understand the constraints on this inquiry to venture into federal jurisdiction with recommendation on that front. Nevertheless, there should be consideration under the ground search and rescue mandate of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to introduce reasonable levels of dedicated search and rescue air resources to serve the vast geography of NunatuKavut and other areas of Labrador.

The 444 Squadron would appear to be a superior facilitating base for the Civil Air Search & Rescue Association. CASARA, of course, is a nation‐wide volunteer aviation organization with its main function tethered to supporting the Royal Canadian Air Force. Their work in a humanitarian capacity, when requested and authorized by the lead command and control agency (JRCC), is invaluable and one NCC would like to see having a presence in NunatuKavut. CASARA once had a zone organized in Wabush but has since ceased operations, which leaves only the Deer Lake and St. John’s zones active in all of Newfoundland and Labrador. With active hunting and fishing lodges in NunatuKavut, serviced by aviation vehicles, NCC would like to reach out to the organizers of the CASARA group to encourage an active volunteer zone within the Goose Bay airport facilities. And we did, of course, see a presentation made to this Inquiry by CASARA and they talked (inaudible), tremendous capabilities. Having trained spotters for example, to work with all other resources available. It’s just an incredible asset in and of itself. Certainly, their willingness and want to be involved in a volunteer capacity was so evident and really, they are being underutilized. I think again, this speaks to the idea that we can use you. We have the facilities that is there and we think there is lots of clients out there involved in the various aspects of small planes, aviation to join the incredible force that is there.

I’m going to pass it back again to Todd for concluding remarks.

TODD RUSSELL: Thank you again, Mr. Wiseman, for taking us through part of the presentation. I would like to conclude before Merv gets into the recommendations and we would like to read down through those recommendations for the record and then we can certainly open it up for questions.

In conclusion, we have taken our engagement and our participation in this Inquiry extremely serious in all our responsibility to our people, and above all to the responsibility for the health, safety and well-being of our people in our communities. And as the traditional stewards and guardians of our territory, we are certain that our people deserve better and we need to be involved.

Change must come. Change has to come. And we hope that with what you have learned here this morning, combined with what we have presented in written form, combined with the testimonies, that we will see reflected in your report strong recommendations, strong affirming recommendations that will see a world class, the best, ground search and rescue system in NunatuKavut and all of Labrador.

Commissioner, you are one of us. The people of Labrador deserve nothing less. Our families and our children deserve nothing less. We want to feel coming out of this Inquiry and we want to see the changes made where we can look at ourselves in the mirror and we can look at one another and say that our lives mean something. Our lives are worth saving. And our people who do pass deserve to be brought home.

Thank you. Nakummek. Thank you very much.

MERVIN WISEMAN: We will now move to the recommendations. There are 10 there. I certainly want to acknowledge the draft recommendations put forward by the Commission just recently posted online. (Inaudible) very complex and difficult situation - it’s no easy task and in some ways I certainly don’t envy the Inquiry to do that. But you know, what’s there is a lot of what we recognize is needed. The NCC just mentioning a few – funding mechanism and support that is needed for ground search and rescue to get equipment they need. Bottle drives and selling tickets, and all those kinds of things that you do seem to take so much time. I think that is clearly recognized and stepping forward, getting support for ground search and rescue personnel and next of kin who are exposed to stress related to SAR missions and accidents. Very pleased to see that there. Communications – better communications network. There’s been talk about a lot of stuff in Makkovik and other areas along the southern Labrador coast. Recruitment and retention, the efforts of volunteer organizations certainly fall in that category.

So to assist the Inquiry in deliberations towards the final report, the NCC provides the additional summary of recommendations.

1. The Inquiry acknowledge the unique characteristics of NunatuKavut within the scope of the provincial mandate on ground search and rescue and recommend that the provincial government undertake a full needs analysis within six months, in conjunction with the NCC, designed to formally identify the existing gaps in search and rescue infrastructure. We talked about it a lot, we gave personal testimony and so on, but the idea of a needs analysis from a technical standpoint to really drill down and get into the full depth of it, it’s a formal process and certainly something that’s been doing in the past and it should come as no surprise that that would want to take place.
2. Based on the formal “needs analysis,” Emergency Services of the provincial government, collaborate with the NCC in creating a long‐term NunatuKavut strategic plan for GSAR with special emphasis directed towards shortcomings in current SAR infrastructure.
3. Appropriate police forces and the NLSARA collaborate with NCC in creating additional GSAR volunteer teams in areas of NunatuKavut that are currently without this important organization.

4. Immediate measures be taken to address the serious deficiencies in dedicated surface and air resources for NunatuKavut.

1. Special emphasis be placed on the Goose Bay airport and the DND 444 Air Force Base in facilitating dedicated rotary and fixed‐wing air resources in support of SAR for NunatuKavut.
2. In conjunction with existing aviation companies and outfitters, outreach to the Canadian Air SAR Association (CASARA) be initiated to form a zonal team at the Goose Bay CAF Air Base.

7. Reliable communications networks, such as mobile and overall cellular towers and

repeaters, be established in NunatuKavut inland and coastal areas.

1. In order to address existing gaps in ground search and rescue teams in NunatuKavut and, where trained and competent Canadian Rangers are present in communities along the southern Labrador coast, special measures be implemented to detail and ensure their full utilization during search and rescue emergencies. Moreover, and where maritime resources are required on a humanitarian basis, a similar arrangement be made to ensure effective and efficient utilization of the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary.
2. In the interest of interoperability among search and rescue stakeholders, proactive measures be undertaken by the multi‐jurisdictional Command‐and‐Control leads to formalize a smooth and informed decision‐making matrix regarding available resources to be utilized during search and rescue emergencies. Furthermore, a formal inventory of available resources such as Department of Fisheries (DFO) Conservation and Protection watercraft vehicles and NCC Guardian watercrafts, as well as others of opportunity, should be journalized for utilization in SAR emergencies.
3. Due to the transient nature of police personnel in NunatuKavut, clarity and communications be required around the role and responsibilities of the RCMP in relation to search and rescue and that, at all times, RCMP officers be well‐trained and have the capacity to lead search and rescue missions. Furthermore, the RCMP have a clear understanding of the resources that are available to them and that this information is clearly communicated to NCC and NunatuKavut communities.

THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much. We are all impressed by the thoroughness, by the clarity that you’ve presented and the comprehensiveness based on everything we’ve heard, not only today but also all the previous months that we’ve been having roundtables and various sessions. As you know, your recommendations will be added to the general discussion we have and that will further allow us to refine the nature of your recommendations with the balance of the others we have. We appreciate the fact that you had so much detail and so much expertise, so much effort, in what you presented. We are very sorry that we can’t be there in person to offer our personal condolences to the families of the Russells and the Jenkins. We are so grateful for NunatuKavut Community Council saying you are welcome to use our facility for the hearing today.

Mr. Budden has some questions. I might have some comments later on. And please feel free after he is done to continue with any observations and presentations you have. But Geoff, go ahead.

GEOFF BUDDEN: Thank you. Firstly, again, I would like to express our appreciation for not only putting this together today on short notice and adapting to the weather and having to do it by Zoom on short notice. So we appreciate all of that. And I would also like to thank Jason Cooke and his firm for working with us as well as you working with us President Russell over the last, as you said, many months in the background to make this happen. I do have some questions and if you wish to reserve answering the questions until you consult further or even after answering you have anything further to add, that is always welcome. We are in a relatively tight timeframe but if you do wish to supplement your answers or even defer the answers for a few days and answer by email or telephone, that is all fine. We are looking to work with you folks and we realize sometimes a question put on the spot isn’t quite satisfactory.

So some basic education for me and for the record, if you could just run through the major communities of NunatuKavut to educate us. We are aware of some of them but if you could go down the coast and hit the major communities and as you do it, indicate what, if any, cell service is available in those communities.

TODD RUSSELL: Certainly, from a community perspective we have concentrated our presentation really south of Goose Bay.

GEOFF BUDDEN: That’s what I am referring to, yes.

TODD RUSSELL: So basically we are talking the communities in Sandwich Bay(?), Cartwright, Paradise River, obviously a lot of seasonal places in that vicinity just like there are all along the coast. Then we have Black Tickle, fly in and fly out community, no road access, very little infrastructure in that community. When that community has no water and sewer for instance, I think that gives you the sense of the direness of the infrastructure and certainly search and rescue is no exception to that. Again, as we mentioned in our presentation, some people who are in the Canadian Rangers for example. Then we go on to Norman Bay, a small community, no road connection. Charlottetown, Pinsent’s Arm, Williams Harbour, Port Simpson, St. Lewis, Mary’s Harbour, Lodge Bay. Those are the biggest areas that we have concentrated on. And this is where we have most of our members as well but as you see down in the Straits too there is a series of communities where we do have members as well that are present in those communities.

So those are the areas we certainly concentrated on, Mr. Budden, and I did, you know, your reports to the Commission you look at, and look at what we presented, the reality on the ground – and when it comes to the demanding ground search and rescue and to find that the entire area that we talked about has not one ground search and rescue team and then doesn’t have, you know, all of those – no dedicated resources whatsoever. So that’s the reason why we sort of concentrated on that particular vicinity. We have a significant membership in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and in Labrador City, Wabush area in particular. And we also spoke about the types of resources that might be there and how they relate to the lack of resources that’s found in other places.

GEOFF BUDDEN: And just for your benefit, the Commissioner and I attended the AGM of the NLSARA back about three weeks ago, I guess, and in attendance were the teams or representatives from the teams in Lab West, Churchill Falls and Happy Valley-Goose Bay, along with many other places. So they did at that time fill us in a little bit about what is happening with those teams. And you guys supplemented that today which is also quite helpful.

The communities on the coast that you just ran through for me, is there reliable cell service anywhere along the coast?

TODD RUSSELL: Not reliable no. What we have along the coast right now is what we call mobile cell. Really, I don’t have all the technical pieces of – I know that NCC was involved in helping with some of it. They put up fibre line in parts of the south coast, basically from the straits area down to as far as Charlottetown and on the back of that, they have what we call a mobile cell service which is basically just in the community. You might, you know, a little ways outside the community, you might have a bit of a signal but not that much. And so it’s very localized. We don’t have really, really reliable cell phone service even with that addition that came a couple of years ago.

GEOFF BUDDEN: Yes. And the point was made in the context of the search for your nephew and Mr. Jenkins that the absence of cell service or the presence of cell service might have averted that tragedy and that is a theme we’ve heard up and down the coast of Labrador north and south, and elsewhere in the island in the absence of cell service outside of urban areas. So what you are saying there is what we’ve heard elsewhere and certainly resonated.

Another thing we heard –

TODD RUSSELL: Can you just speak up a little bit, Mr. Budden?

GEOFF BUDDEN: Sure. I will sit more to the centre so that the mic will pick me up better. Sorry about that. I just made the observation that we’ve heard elsewhere in other hearings, other roundtables, the absence of cell service is a real issue and probably nowhere more so than the south coast and north coast of Labrador, and once you are outside of urban areas it’s a real hinderance to ground search and rescue.

We were in Hopedale back in September and at a roundtable there a gentleman made an observation of Hopedale residents being involved in search and rescue a long time. He said that these days the machines are bigger, people have GPS and they are perhaps not as careful as people might have been years ago about the weather and they are perhaps going a little further with the machines. And with reliance on GPS and so forth, people are going farther than perhaps – and getting lost in more inaccessible places. Is that something that you think would also be true for NunatuKavut region?

TODD RUSSELL: Oh yeah, without a doubt. You know, I guess, new means and different types of means of travel and moving about the land and the water, you know, it’s the same thing exists on the water. High powered outboard motors and people going various distances, and you know, looking at the collapse of the cod fishery, we lost a generation basically of people who were familiar with that type of enterprise and that type of activity and, you know, there is an absence of passing on traditional knowledge in that particular type of situation. But no doubt, yes, what the gentleman from Hopedale observed is very much an observation and an experience that exists here on the south coast of Labrador as well.

GEOFF BUDDEN: Okay. In other areas of the province where NLSARA teams operate, and there are 25 such teams, the NLSARA volunteers are volunteers. We understand that the Rangers, once they are engaged, are paid and is that – am I correct in assuming that is the way that the Rangers also operate on the south coast of Labrador or am I incorrect?

TODD RUSSELL: No, that is right.

GEOFF BUDDEN: Okay. I look at the recommendations, I guess just speaking as Commission counsel here for comment, it does point out the expertise of NLSARA and the specific skills that NLSARA has the training and resources. Of course, the Rangers also have training and resources and I realize it is difficult if you haven’t had experience or been at all the roundtables. But what advantages, do you think, bringing the ground search and rescue within your region under the umbrella of NLSARA would offer over the present arrangement? Is that something you want to reflect on before you answer or –

MERVIN WISEMAN: I’ll just – one of the most urgent needs of the RCMP in particular, and it has a lot to do with the command and control component from the police standpoint or RCMP standpoint. I mean if there’s a ground search and rescue effort that needs to be mobilized, their first outreach is with the ground search and rescue team. That’s their orientation and the ground search and rescue teams in the communities would have acquired – you know, the knowledge from one standpoint and from a formal standpoint they would have equipment, funding arrangements. So all that equipment is there and all that command and control is there. And I suppose if you really had the interoperability piece sorted out better, and with the right kind of understanding, whether it’s through an MOU, informally or otherwise, that if the Canadian Rangers were to, you know, provide the same kind of service, you may not see the discrepancies that are there now. But with this command and control structure, you know with the Canadian Rangers have to get their orders through an entirely different process. And we see that process getting very convoluted is a word I use lots of times. The command and control structure for the Canadian Rangers would be through the military. They make a request to the JRCC who then looks to facilitate this region through Gander and so on. So it does get a little convoluted. That’s not to say it can’t happen in the right level of interoperability that’s there, with the level of education and familiarity there, and that understanding – And this is why the recommendation was made that in lieu of having a ground search and rescue team that the resource can have (inaudible) right away, that they have command and control arrangements, that if that substitute could come in in an informal kind of way so that we don’t lose anything in confusion when it all starts to happen, it could probably take place. But in terms of capabilities, I mean I would even see some Rangers that would be ground search and rescue team members themselves who have that dual arrangement. Of course, our task for humanitarian purpose under their command control routine or structure, they would then take on that role.

GEOFF BUDDEN: And you may want to – Recommendation No. 9, you obviously have considered our recommendations. I would just say as an aside that that is one that deals with areas with reduced coverage. So that issue has been on our radar and this meeting today really drills down on that and informs us in a way that we weren’t previously.

The engagement piece, just so I understand that gentlemen, for the NLSARA model, the NLSARA only become engaged when a policing agency, be it the RCMP in Labrador West or St. John’s the RCMP for much of the rest of the province. The NLSARA doesn’t do anything, can’t do anything until – and won’t do anything until they get a call from the RCMP. So the basic model would be if I were out berry picking and I didn’t come home, then my family would perhaps call the RCMP or get there eventually, and they would engage NLSARA, the local NLSARA team, that would supplement and work with the police. What is actually happening at the moment along the south coast of Labrador? How does it go from a person not coming home when they are expected to a search actually commencing? Does it flow through the police or does it flow through the military or are you able to tell us what typically happens?

TODD RUSSELL: I think you got a little bit of a picture of this when Dwight and Jeanette made their presentation. It is not clear, you know. We were discovering things as this tragedy was unfolding, you know. Finding out who actually was in control, what their responsibilities and jurisdictions were, we were asking questions throughout, trying to understand this process as best we could. And when it eventually moved from say a search and rescue to a search and recovery, then it got transferred to the RCMP. I was in my brother’s house that night, you know, when the two RCMP officers, the poor guys, came in and looked at my brother Dwight and said, ‘you know, we just got a phone call that we’re now in charge’ and, you know, basically put their hands up and said ‘we have nothing. We don’t even have a boat to get across the harbour’, you know, ‘we don’t know what’s really available to us’. And we, for instance, were kind of coaching the RCMP, you know, this might be available. Ask for this, something else might be available. Why don’t you ask for this?’ You know, we find out after the fact that - you know, Mr. Wiseman, himself was phoning the Commissioner of the RCMP, making a plea for their command and control to ask for certain assets and to move the search in a particular way. So, you know, this issue with the RCMP, I mean, our experience is that they throw it over to the RCMP. We really don’t know how well equipped or trained. We do know in this situation what it was like, but there is no understanding of the proficiencies, the training, the capabilities, all of that in the RCMP. All we can say is that it looks pretty thin, you know, what they have available to them when, particularly when you don’t have a ground search and rescue team. And basically what we understood and what we helped the RCMP with was begging. We were begging for everything. We were saying, you know, you need to get this, you need to get that. And, you know, I can speak to my own experience of spending at least six hours trying to get through to the head of the ground search and rescue coordinating centre in Halifax to find that it’s some Admiral over in Dartmouth who basically leads these things and makes these ultimate decisions. And all those lobbying efforts that we have to be involved in in order to get these assets to come here. Basically we were helping the RCMP, you know.

And the toll that has on families and communities, it is astronomical. It’s hard to relate that kind of experience and so, you know, when we talk about RCMP and ground search and rescue teams and the Canadian Rangers, for instance, in this situation, you know, in this situation the Rangers weren’t even tasked. And I wonder now were the RCMP even aware they could task them? So I think – when we look at it from a capacity or capability perspective, we know that ground search and rescue teams can be quite excellent in terms of their training and their ability to do these things. We know that the Canadian Rangers also has certain capacities. But there is something wrong in terms of how we access these resources and the time limits in which we access these resources.

And you take here in the south coast of Labrador, my God, shouldn’t somebody have been aware there’s no ground search and rescue teams? Shouldn’t the RCMP be aware of this and shouldn’t the RCMP be aware that they can task, you know, ground search and rescue? You know, that they can task DFO, that they can task other types of assets? But seemingly, this is a real shortcoming with the current system, without a doubt.

MERVIN WISEMAN: If I could just add to that, again from personal experience, I think it is not a good testimony for anybody to make to say that we don’t understand from, you know, a community standpoint what happens. We know about the community spirit and the coming together, you know, that’s very automatic. But for the most part when we say we don’t understand as a citizen, and then we have to reflect on the fact that we don’t believe the RCMP understands either, that needs to be drilled into and we need to understand what the dynamics of all that is. And in a lot of cases they simply don’t – I don’t believe they understand the authority and the empowerment that they have to access the resources that they say they don’t have. I personally as a rescue coordinator got off a recorded telephone and say listen, could you call me on a certain number that I have down the hallway that’s not recorded so I can tell them to tell me on a recorded line what to say in terms of getting a resource because my authority as a rescue coordinator – when that command and control structure changes based on the maritime search and rescue authority, which I would have, when that changed to a humanitarian, I no longer have the authority to do things or get things other than to help where I can. The RCMP needs to be very clear and specific as to what they want, you know, and not to be that – yeah, I don’t know where to go – well, you know, a lot of these resources that are already engaged in search and rescue up to that point, that same resource is available just by the RCMP saying ‘we want that vessel, we want that FRC, we want that aircraft’, and in a lot of cases they get them.

I think we’ve heard about the transition from maritime search and rescues to recovery situations this morning. That seems to be a bit of a (inaudible) my experience, but nevertheless it obviously exists as somebody somewhere needs to understand that particular dynamic and make sure that in that transitionary process that those in authority, say JRCC, needs to have a clear understanding with the RCMP we will continue with the same level of effort, the same resources, the same people.

I didn’t mean to go into too much depth from a very simple question.

THE COMMISSIONER: No, those points are well made. We’ve heard now, as Geoff pointed out when he first made the point and asked the question, that you need to have trained police trained in SAR methodology but also trained in the command and control system before they come to a remote place. That has to be part of what they understand. Then they meet with the local individuals who do that kind of thing and familiarize themselves with the communities in their detachment area to say that if that happens, we know that – if you make the call to us, we will act quite quickly. So we really appreciate and understand what it is you are saying. Sorry, Geoff, go ahead.

GEOFF BUDDEN: No worries, thank you. This came up at other round tables as well. The necessity of having the ultimate authority which for ground search and rescue is supposed to be the police detachment with responsibility for that area, that there be an officer there that has expertise in search and rescue. And the RCMP actually offers programs and has a recommended policy that the search coordinator in the detachment have completed those programs. But it’s not mandatory. So as the Commissioner was saying, that’s something that we’ve heard elsewhere and it’s good to have it emphasized again here right now.

This is an observation piece for you, Mr. Russell, and perhaps for your comment. One of our – and it really grows out of what we heard here this morning. One of our recommendations, recommendation #16 – it’s fairly brief so I will read it. It is as follows: “The public Inquiry heard evidence that there sometimes has been an absence of consistent engagement and follow up with the families of lost and missing persons which can lead to distress and confusion on the part of families and survivors. The Commissioner therefore recommends that policing agencies in consultation with mental health professionals and NLSARA teams develop and implement policies to ensure that this engagement and follow up, including if necessary long-term follow up occurs, and that it includes a provision of trauma-informed counselling”. And I am not asking you to speak to matters that are very personal and painful, but as a general point, is that a recommendation that resonates with you?

TODD RUSSELL: Absolutely and I think you’ve seen that reflected in one of our own recommendations which hopefully will strengthen his preliminary recommendation on behalf of the Commission.

GEOFF BUDDEN: Thank you. I note as well, page four of the testimonials, there’s a lot of value in there and so the fact that I’m only pointing to one doesn’t mean that we haven’t considered and valued everything, but I was struck by Mr. Keith, his comment that while in this case the Canadian Rangers have support after search and rescue and the recovery mission, when the broader community becomes involved that there is little in the way of assistance in the way of remote community of Black Tickle that he spoke of. And the last sentence really resonates. “The loss of human lives have touched and will continue to impact all who live in Black Tickle. We are always seeing it but no one comes in to talk with us.” And our recommendation does speak to the need of providing trauma-informed counselling for members of NLSARA teams. What is said there goes further than that and speaks to the need to assist anybody who might be involved in a search. So that’s a point that I’m sure the Commissioner, now that he’s been informed in that very pointed way, will factor into our further work and deliberations.

TODD RUSSELL: Just as a reflection and with the Mark and Joey tragedy, you know, I have to take it upon myself basically to start making calls to the health authority and to others who are offering those services and say, we haven’t seen anything from you. There’s been nothing, you know. These are young people. There are people in the school system impacted. The whole community is impacted. And we didn’t see one resource. We didn’t see one resource, mental health, counselling, support until we started to make those phone calls. And you know, that statement there, we are always seeing it but no one comes in to talk to us. I have to tell you, even from my very own personal perspective, you know, the trauma that is associated with this is exceptional and we do – even though at times you are surrounded by your community – and I have to say that in this situation here, it happened September 17th, it was amazing. It was absolutely amazing the support from the people in the communities and all along the coast of Labrador and other places. It was amazing that that was happening and it was a comfort. And yet we didn’t have this help that is so required. While we were so thankful for the way that our communities gather around and support one another, this is needed. This is so, so needed and I am glad to see that the Commission is raising it up as a recommendation.

I would only say too, you know, many times this is after a traumatic event, and really, you know, we’d like to be in place where we don’t need it. We want a system that ensures that our people’s lives can be saved when our people do go missing. That they can be recovered. All of these things work together to strengthen families, to strengthen communities in its most difficult times, its darkest times.

GEOFF BUDDEN: Thank you. And another – just by background, recommendation #3 is entitled “Coastal Searches” and just to summarize, the RCMP policy or at least one policy with respect to search and rescue speaks of if a person such as Burton Winters is on land and leaves the land to go onto the ice, which is obviously not land, that remains a ground search and rescue operation. However, if you are out on a small boat and you end up washed up on an island offshore and are clinging to the rocks, even though you are on land, that is a marine search and rescue operation, which of course involves an engagement of different resources and so forth. And that particular recommendation – and I’ll just read the recommendation.

“The Commissioner therefore recommends that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Government of Canada in consultation with the policing agencies and GSAR and MSAR agencies, seek to arrive at a memorandum of understanding so that search and rescue operations in coastal regions are organized in an integrated and transparent manner.”

And again, the background of that is we have a Constitution of Canada that does assign responsibility for ground search and rescue to the province and marine search and rescue to the country, and that is a constitutional reality. But what we are recommending there as a draft recommendation is that there be an effort to integrate in a unique environment of the coast, the intersection of land and sea. Do you have any thoughts on that recommendation?

MERVIN WISEMAN: Yes, I am really encouraged to see that because we have had some background discussions, Geoff, about the idea that the maritime search and rescue, the federal portion of it, seems to have dare I say the more superior, or more competent, more clearer route to resolving situations and I think that – For consistency, I really think this jurisdictional thing is really a systematic problem because of varying jurisdictions if you must. But if you can do anything to harmonize the whole process, then I think you are going to solve some really serious problems that creeps into the logistics of the search at that particular level.

So I think that recommendation moves in the right direction. I know that it’s difficult to get into jurisdictional issues; who is responsible and for what. But at the same time with a memorandum of understanding, a very simple memorandum of understanding, that can somehow facilitate that process, then it has to be done. Like I said before, the line gets very thin between maritime search and rescue and ground search and rescue. And again, I’ll speak from experience. I coordinated a search and rescue case in Placentia Bay back quite a number of years ago before I retired and a speed boat was found. It had turned over and debris all over the place but the one man not to be found. And we searched the coastline for two days and in fact, I thought we should engage ground search and rescue teams. We didn’t. So we continued with the marine search. And on the third day when we were getting ready to hand it over to the RCMP as a recovery or missing person, one of the last phone calls I received was from the wife of the person that was lost, and one of the children ran in and said “Dad’s walking up the driveway”. And we should have been really doing a ground search and rescue effort. That person that we thought was a maritime search and rescue, but because it remained a maritime search and rescue effort, none of these serious inconsistencies and lack of understanding of command and control and all those things we talked about and so on. None of that was – we maintained that level of search. So here is a case where the line gets very thin and it happens. This not just a rare occasion. It happens in many different cases.

I just think that is a really good recommendation and it’s moving in the right direction. My dream would be that we have a consistent coordination of search and rescue, whether it’s on land or at sea, and that coordination centre with the empowerment that is given to search and rescue coordinators without having to consult up through all the lines of authority, that that search and rescue coordinator is trained. I’ve had as many as 25 cases in a day as a single rescue coordinator. You got to learn something from that. If that’s happening every day – Or it might be the first search and rescue for the year and they haven’t had the best training or experience or full familiarity with the command and control role, how can they be anything but confused. Whereas if that was a command and control structure with coordinators and call the RCMP, say, look we are going to make you the commander. We are going to maintain that level of authority. We understand where all the resources are and so on. All we want you to do as an RCMP officer is to help us facilitate the community process and let us know what it is you need. And all that. We really have a two-tier search and rescue in this country. (inaudible)

GEOFF BUDDEN: That’s good. I have no more questions and I emphasize again our appreciation for the thoroughness and engagement of your submissions. They really were – I found them very helpful and I may have – if I have anything further, I will contact Mr. Cooke. But there may be further questions. I focused today on the ones that seemed most immediate from your presentation. Thank you. And I will pass the mic back to the Commissioner now.

THE COMMISSIONER: So, did your brother have another point to make when he came up there? Anything that we should know?

TODD RUSSELL: He was just informing me that there was one time the RCMP did have their own RCMP boats, that they were proficient in maritime operations and all that type of thing. But most of those assets and capabilities have waned in recent years and there is nothing really replacing it. And I think it’s indicative that we want the best that we can have. We want to – When a person is out there on the water, on the land, they don’t see jurisdiction. They don’t see who’s command and control that is in place. They don’t see all of these things that are impediments and challenges to them actually having someone getting to them as quickly in the timeframe as possible to save their life. They don’t see it. The families don’t see this either.

And so when it comes to lifesaving incidents, whatever recommendations that this Commission can make to first of all, ensure that we have adequate resources, properly located adequate resources so that when things need to be tasked or individuals need to be tasked that there is clear command and control, that there is clear processes, seamless transitions that we don’t run into these obstacles that we’re facing.

For instance, one of things we were trying to impress during this is that when – let’s just say there is a different command and control but when a certain asset is asked for, you know, then it should be provided. It shouldn’t be another decision-maker say from – If a particular command and control has authority to seek an asset, then it should be provided to them. It shouldn’t have to be a secondary kind of decision-making process where someone then says, hold on, do you really need that Cormorant? Do you really need that Griffin? Do you really need that FRC? Do you really need this, that or the other thing? No, when you got somebody in charge of a search and rescue mission or a search and recovery mission, whatever resources that are available to be brought to bear to ensure the success of that mission should be brought to bear. And this Commission, I believe, should make clear that we got to reduce – we have got to take away the unclarity, these different obstacles that prevent timeliness of action that could save lives.

THE COMMISSIONER: That point is well made. Merv has struck us over the head with that one about four or five times anyway. So you are just adding to that point. Please go ahead with anyone else that would like to make a statement.

TODD RUSSELL: So we’re going to – this is from NunatuKavut’s perspective and I just want to close our particular portion of this by again thanking you Commissioner for making the time available for us to present and it is certainly appreciated. I can’t express just how important this is, given so many experiences of our people in our communities with regard to search and rescue and to honour all those have been lost, to honour all those who haven’t been found. Change must happen and it must happen quickly.

We should never, ever face another situation where the inadequacies of a life-saving system could have been a contributing factor to a loss of life and so, I will leave that with the Commission. And again, thank you so much. Nakummek for the work you are doing. Yvonne Jones, the MP for Labrador, who has a presentation, will be next.

THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you. I just want to say that your staff here has been so hospitable and we are very grateful for the use of your facility as well. Madam Secretary, please feel free to start your presentation.

MP YVONNE JONES: Thank you very much, Commissioner Igloliorte and also the experts at the Inquiry. It’s nice to have the opportunity to present to you from Mary’s Harbour today. I also want to acknowledge the presenters that went before me. President Todd Russell from NunatuKavut, Mr. Merv Wiseman as we all know has been a tremendous source of expertise and knowledge to all of us in this field. And also to acknowledge the parents of Marc Russell, Jeanette and Dwight Russell, who showed tremendous courage here this morning in coming before this panel to represent their particular case and the families, both the Russell and Jenkins families.

I am pleased to join you today on the southern Inuit territory and lands of the people of NunatuKavut. I also would like to virtually welcome you to our community of Mary’s Harbour and welcome you back to Labrador for your hearings as part of this important inquiry into search and rescue.

I would like to start this morning by thanking those who commit their lives to saving others in any capacity of our society. Whether they work for telephone dispatch to underwater divers, from boots on the ground to aeronautical surveillance, we know it is all critically important to search and rescue. And there are highly skilled experts who have tremendous knowledge and courage and commitment to the work that they do, and today I want to acknowledge and thank them.

I also want to acknowledge the family and friends and advocates of Burton Winters who never gave up on seeing this Inquiry coming to fruition. While it is ten years later, after the Burton Winters tragedy that saddened and angered Labradorians, we still don’t know if it’s valuable because the system continues to fail us in many ways as you have heard this morning.

Many of you might be saying why would a member of Parliament be presenting before a ground search and rescue inquiry in Newfoundland and Labrador. Well, first of all I want to indicate that I am a Labradorian, a life-time resident of the Big Land. I’m also in a role where people come to me on many issues, SAR being one of those issues. And I also represent many people who don’t often have the opportunity to speak to these issues for themselves and need people who have a voice and a presence to advocate on their behalf.

I know that this Inquiry focuses on ground search and rescue in Newfoundland and Labrador’s jurisdiction. But we all know that search and rescue is never limited to one entity or one jurisdiction but rather it has to be a team approach where all resources are pulled with one goal in mind and that is a successful rescue operation.

In the past ten years across Labrador search and rescue has been in the news on several occasions. Not just the tragedy surrounding Burton Winters but we heard stories, witnessed families waiting for a rescue aircraft, vessel support, ground search and rescue crews, navigation on salt water ice, in blizzards in search of those they love, of family members and community members. There has been many stories, many stories of families who live only kilometers from an air base waiting for air support from another province. There has been many stories with happy endings but not all. But despite the obstacles, some just tragic, despite all protocols and all resources being available, not all are successful and we know that.

We also know there are never guarantees but we also know that with the right resources, the right expertise and the will to improve upon services, response times and search capability, we know that prospects could be more successful in some of these rescue operations.

Today you are holding this hearing in a community that is devastated by grief. Suffering through heartache and loss. You know, it’s like a cloud that looms over the community and over the south coast of Labrador right now. The tragic loss of Marc Russell and Joey Jenkins, two young fishermen full of life, who chose a career on the ocean knowing the challenges that they would face every day, they were okay with that. Like many coastal people in this province, the ocean called to them like it calls to others. It is where they are happiest, where they are most content, where they are comfortable doing their job and earning their living from the sea. And that’s why many young people like Mark and Joey and others are drawn to the sea and to a life on the ocean.

My brother Keith Rumbolt, also drowned in February of this year while duck hunting in his boat and it capsized. His body was recovered with the help of friends, of family, of local Canadian Rangers and firefighters. Everyone and anyone who had any knowledge, skills or expertise that helped in that search they did so. And while the result was tragic the recovery helped the family deal with trauma and heartbreak that the families of Mark and Joey have not had that opportunity to do.

Today you heard from Jeanette and Dwight Russell. They are moms and dads, parents, loved ones that represent every person in this province who at some time will go through tragedy. They come here today because they want to see change. They want to see greater effort, coordination and resources deployed if ever it is required again. And we all hope it never will be.

We live in communities like many parts of rural Canada but we’re coastal people. We’re people who spend our daily lives on the open water, on frozen salt water ice, frozen lands, remote inland waters. It is a way of life. That is how we live, work and survive in our communities. It is to us the very being of who we are as Labradorians and we should have the same security network as all others in this province and across Canada. That means access to full SAR resources in a timely coordinated and effective way. It is when we are in greatest despair, it is when our lives are at risk, it is when the greatest and most effective skills of survival are required that citizens call upon search and rescue. It is when survival takes priority, when danger often lurks. It is when all resources must come to bear because we all know that it is in those minutes, hours and days to follow that all protocols should be triggered in a seamless, thorough and effective way with only one goal in mind; to search and to rescue. But for that to be effective, it starts with coordination, with response time and access to critical resources that are needed to carry out such a mission.

These are the key areas where I often hear from people across Labrador and areas where many Labradorians feel we are lacking when it comes to SAR services. I know I am talking to people who are very knowledgeable about Labrador, especially you, Commissioner. So you know that we are over 294,000 square kms of rugged land, harsh waters in one of the most beautiful yet remote areas of this country. We have lands that has known to be home to some of the most resilient and skilled, knowledgeable individuals that you could ever meet on the planet. We also know that those who call it home are ready to confront every and all challenges before them. Anything that mother nature or society can bring. And that resilience comes from many years of doing for ourselves without having these resources, without having this coordination. It was the people first in the communities who organized these searches and exercised those searches. But we also know we are at a capacity where we cannot do it alone anymore. And they have come to realize that.

In order to be ready to confront every and all challenges in remote, isolated areas like we live it requires having all the capacity we can muster. When you look around Labrador, I just highlight for you where we are. We have a base in Happy Valley-Goose Bay which I’m sure you’ve heard lots about. Five-wing Goose Bay is one of the most strategically positioned bases in northern and eastern Canada. They are also home to the 444 Squadron that has SAR capability but no mandate to provide for search and rescue services within the Labrador civilian community and region.

We have organizations and individuals like those that make up the community and armed forces, the Royal Canadian Airforce, the Canadian Rangers, the RCMP, firefighters most of which are volunteer, the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary, search and rescue volunteer associations, a number of skilled individuals who work in provincial and federal departments in indigenous governments, many that are trained in different aspects of SAR services. This list of people are assets that we have in Labrador and on the ground. We have big search and rescue teams that are based in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador City, Postville, Hopedale, Nain and Churchill Falls, Rigolet and Makkovik. As has been already outlined this morning, and I am sure in other presentations, we do not have any ground search and rescue teams in the southern Labrador or in the Labrador Straits.

Prior to doing this presentation, myself and my office reached out to many of these groups and organizations that I’ve just listed, including a number of the ground search and rescue organizations across Labrador, and this is what we heard. Many of them feel there is a lack of infrastructure for the volunteer teams. They feel as though there is a lack of dedicated resources in coastal communities and a complexity of obtaining air assets in their work to assist with missing persons in Labrador, especially during the winter for ground search and rescue teams, have been very difficult. They also felt that the core funding should be increased and that more skilled training should be provided to the volunteers. They also indicated that it was becoming more and more difficult to recruit volunteers and this is something they see as being a larger problem in this picture.

We also spoke with those involved in the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary and their concerns were similar. Funding needs to be increased to the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary to offset the higher operational cost. Auxiliary members maintain that training in accordance with national competency and standards needs to be improved. They also indicated that the need for a fund to support the purchase of equipment for Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary organizations is also needed.

So while we continue to lobby for more resources, and I have personally spoke to this issue many times, both in the House of Commons and outside and have made representations on these issues many times including in my time in the House of Assembly in Newfoundland and Labrador, I also know that it requires more than political and community lobbying. It requires those that currently work at the highest levels in search and rescue to understand rural Canada, coastal communities, northern regions of Labrador and the want to do more to serve the unique needs of regions like this.

Following the decision on September 20th by the Joint Rescue Command Centre with regard to the coordination of the search and rescue services for Marc and Joey, of course, we were all not just shocked but confused and failed to understand why handing over the case to the RCMP as a recovery operation at this stage in the game was being made. We also could not understand or fathom the timelines that were attached to this transition. I know that you heard this morning from the family and from President Russell with regard to the circumstances that unfolded during this time.

It was on that evening of September 20th that I spoke not just to the families and to President Russell, who at that time was coordinating a lot of the effort on behalf of the families, I talked to Premier Andrew Furey. I spoke to the Canadian Coast Guard, the Maritime Search and Rescue Centre, the RCMP, the federal minister – several federal ministers – including the Minister responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador for the Canadian Coast Guard and for the Canadian Armed Forces. In fact, I think I spoke with just about anyone that I could reach that evening and into the late hours of that night and the early hours of that morning, to keep both aeronautical and maritime resources onto the search.

It was a very difficult time for the family and for local people who were out there in high winds, high seas, risking their own lives at this point, in this search. In that transfer of coordination, there was one other thing that occurred. You heard earlier in testimony about the admission of the local RCMP in not having the resources or expertise to be able to take on that particular mandate at the time and they expressed concerns about it. I later learned that not only did they transfer the coordination to the RCMP at this point but they also had to deploy a coordinator to lead that piece of the search and recovery. It was quite obvious that the RCMP did not have the expertise that was required to oversee command of the search at this point. And without them assigning a coordinator from the Maritime Search and Rescue Centre, they would have probably been left with even less skills or direction in terms of where to go next.

And then it’s the issue of the time factor. Why didn’t they transition from one federal government department to another federal government department with regard to this search and rescue operation and do so with very little time in advance? That was very puzzling. It was done with giving notice within hours of when it would go from a search and rescue operation to a search and recovery operation. Those are protocols that definitely need to be changed whether you are dealing with ground search and rescue, aeronautical or maritime rescue operations. That protocol needs to be reviewed.

Shortly after the events that transpired with the chain of command and coordination of this mission, I also spoke to the media regarding my concerns with how the coordination shifted, what the timeframes that were used and how the shift occurred at a critical time during the search, a critical response time. I also expressed my concerns with the lack of equipment and technology that the Canadian Coast Guard had available and I’m telling you this because I received a letter. I received a letter shortly after that from a person who spent more than 20 years in search and rescue as a professional in this province and I wanted to share some of that with you from this professional, because I believe that this individual has done a lot of good and contributed greatly to search and rescue within Newfoundland and Labrador. But I also believe that many of them fail to understand the rural remote areas in which we require these services. And they also fail to realize that what often works in theory does not always work in practicality.

So they started their response – I’m not going to read it all but I will read certain sections and one of – they outline they have been personally involved in SAR operations for in excess of 20 years and they had participated in numerous missions in support of both federal and provincial SAR mandates and they said they have an excellent understanding of the role and responsibilities of each partner and the challenges they face every day. And I certainly don’t disagree with that.

They went on to say: “If I understand your concern correctly, you fail to understand how a massive search mission that arguably many resources could be handed off to law enforcement” – and in this case, the RCMP – “with very limited human resources and little or no air or marine transport” – and he’s accurate. That was my concern. He goes on to say: “Firstly, during the active phase of a search there are many moving parts and agencies involved. In the event of an aircraft or in a marine environment, the Royal Canadian Air Force with support from the Canadian Coast Guard would take the overall responsibility and coordination of the mission. This is accomplished through the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre and the Maritime Rescue Subcentre. Additionally partner agencies can be utilized. They include the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary or the Civil Air Search and Rescue Association. As well any civil aircraft or vessel in the area can be requested or tasked to join in the search efforts. The search mission is very detailed and thorough, utilizing the latest technology and includes calculating currents, drift and survivability in the given conditions. Of course the weather, especially in the North, makes the mission even more difficult. The job of the search coordinator or search master is a challenging one and one of the most difficult decisions is when to suspend a search. It is a decision not taken lightly and is only made after all reasonable and sometimes unreasonable efforts have been made. It is at this phase that legally it becomes a missing person case and is turned over to the local law enforcement. There is no expectation of finding survivors and even locating any remains is unlikely. Depending on the locations, notices are posted for individuals or vessels to be on the lookout but only occasionally it is during recovery.”

I’m sharing that with you because even in the circumstances that we experienced in Labrador with regard to search and rescue operations of Marc and Joey, there are so many people out there in the field at higher levels regarding the search and rescue that still feel that everything was done appropriately. And I think this is where we have a huge disconnect in what’s happening. I think what he is saying is correct and I am not disputing that. But it’s really hard to defend the course of action that people in this community and these families have had to go through.

I can see the success in theory of what they’ve outlined and why they’ve laid the plan the way they have. But we all know there is room for improvement and we also know that in practicality it did not work for us. During any SAR mission it is going to be an extremely difficult time for those families and the loved ones of missing individuals. And the grief they experience can only really be understood by those that have been through it, by them themselves. Fear, grief, feelings of helplessness and confusion, anger, believe me, all of these things come into play and I understand that. And they will always want more. That’s who we are as human beings. We understand that many times there is a way to give more and sometimes there may not be. But where do you find that balance?

There are many cases in Labrador, unfortunately, where we believe that more could have been done. More resources could have been deployed. We believe that the system really needs improvement despite the best efforts of all of those that make up search and rescue for our province. People are forced in the aftermath of those search operations pulling out, shifting the ground under their feet at the worst time in their lives. They are forced to look to charter private aircrafts, private vessels, hire equipment, hire people with skills and expertise to continue that search. That should not have to be the case. It should never have to be the case. And there should never be a case in search and rescue that requires a politician to interfere in any SAR operation. If the system works, it should work for all people. It should work for all circumstances.

What you are witnessing in Labrador through case after case is that the best laid plans for search and rescue, despite the great people involved both federally, provincially and all those jurisdictions, they are still not reaching the need that people are asking for and that is required.

There’s been a lot of recommendations and I had an opportunity to read through your draft recommendations that were online. I also read through your report that was prepared and I know there’s been a lot of recommendations that have come to your committee. And while I realize your jurisdiction is limited in terms of ground search and rescue, I am hoping that a lot of those other recommendations will make its way into the Report as part of the oral presentations that have been provided. I think that background information is going to be as critical as the recommendations around ground search and rescue that you will bring forward. And I’m not sure if there is an opportunity within the Report to include recommendations that are outside of what your scope of work is, but I would like to see that if at all possible. So it might be something that you can consider.

I won’t go through all of the recommendations that I’ve prepared because many of them have been discussed already this morning. But I have pulled out several of them that I do want to add my voice to as well and to reiterate for the panel.

So fast search craft, this came up several times, the need for primary search and rescue stations supplied by the Canadian Coast Guard with full search capacity. These exist pretty well everywhere in Atlantic Canada today, in Newfoundland and Labrador, in western Canada. But from the research that we were doing in the past number of months, we’ve come to realize that none of these have been established in northern and arctic regions and that includes Labrador. So establishing those primary search and rescue stations which are often called Life(?) Stations that have tremendous capacity to respond in a moment’s notice to Maritime searches is going to be critically important for communities across Labrador.

Improving technology and equipment, and I know a lot of people have spoken to this since we started, I don’t have a tremendous knowledge about the kind of technology and equipment that Coast Guard vessels currently have or what’s going to be installed on new vessels. But what I do know is this; that at the time of the search for Marc and Joey, the only real sophisticated equipment that could be used, whether it was infrared or sonar equipment from a maritime perspective was that which was retained by the family and the provincial government with a private company. Kraken Resources is using some of the most advanced technology in solar equipment that you can find in search and rescue today. And while this equipment is being retained by private sector companies like Nalcor and others, it is not retained as part of the search and rescue operations. I think that exploring equipment like this and ensuring that it’s incorporated, whether that can be done through a private sector company or through federal provincial government response operations, it has to be a part of any search and rescue that will be taking place in the oceans within Newfoundland Labrador. In this case, definitely in Labrador. And we would like to see it mandatory.

Additionally, ground search and rescue teams in Labrador, as I said earlier and I’ve already indicated the need to expand both investments for critical infrastructure that they need, but also for training, and also core funding for their operations.

In the case of southern Labrador and the Labrador Straits, I would like to see ground search and rescue established or an MOU partnership with the Canadian Rangers to ensure that they are adequately trained for ground search and rescue. And I give that option simply because in many personal communities we have the same people volunteering to do the same jobs and we have good Canadian Ranger teams that are working well in our communities. And I think if there was a partnership between the province and the federal government to expand the mandate of Canadian Rangers to look at ground search and rescue in remote and northern regions like those in Labrador, it would be a viable option for us.

We also believe that the Canadian Armed Forces and Royal Canadian Air Force will need to increase and diversify its search and rescue response in Labrador. They can do that in two ways. One, as part of their full mandate which means it will be provided to the Department of National Defence under the Government of Canada; or they could contract a civilian operator who specializes in aeronautical search and rescue. We have several of them in Newfoundland and Labrador and everyone would be most aware of them, would be Cougar and the work that they do, and also there are others as well. But I wanted to put this out there. Either this has to be provided directly through National Defence or it has to be through a civilian operator, both of which are highly trained and technical, have the technology and the skills to be able to deliver on these services. In having that operation based in Goose Bay, it will ensure there is strategic positioning and quick response and dedicated resources at a time when Labradorians need them.

A number of people talked about communications and the improvements needed in communication technology. Obviously we are no different than any other northern or arctic region in Canada where radio coverage, both by satellite and cell, is not significant when it comes to reliable service for search and rescue. There has to be an overall approach in terms of looking at how we improve upon radio, cell and satellite communications for all those who work in remote areas and work on the ocean. It is in desperate need of advancement and despite the fact that there has been significant investments in both internet and cell services within communities, those services have not been extended to those people who are really dependent upon it in critical times; people who work on the sea, especially those who work in the fishery.

Labrador, I believe, has long been insufficiently protected in the event of a tragedy, with too few assets being too far away. Many of those in distress who need those services have had to wait longer than most and conduct those searches with far less assets than most. We’ve already seen many times the communication breakdowns, the lack of coordination both federally, provincially and locally. The lack of services have contributed to multiple challenges in many of these search and rescue operations that may have been avoided. So we know there is time for change and we know that the time is now. When every minute is valuable there is no time to waste. I just hope that your recommendations, while they concern ground search and rescue, I hope there can be a section of other things that you’ve heard or other recommendations that will be made. Because I believe this is a holistic issue that has to take in a broader scope than just ground search and rescue at the end of the day.

I want to wish you your very best in your deliberations and in your Report. I am sure that much of what you’ve heard is outside the initial scope of what you’ve been tasked to do as part of this Inquiry. But I am very proud of the people who have made their voices known throughout Labrador, from Nain right here to Mary’s Harbour today. I want to thank all those people from around the province who have expertise and knowledge with regard to search and rescue, who weighed in and paid their perspective and are working hard to try and improve services for all of us within this province, and especially here in Labrador.

I look forward to reading your final report and I look forward to seeing results from all those recommendations put forward. So I thank you for your time today and I especially thank NunatuKavut for organizing this session on search and rescue and for allowing me to participate.

THE COMMISSIONER: MP Jones, thank you ever so much. As I mentioned in Mr. Russell’s recommendations – his statement – while we can’t honestly say that every recommendation that you’ve asked us to do will be repeated, we do know that there’s a great desire on the part of everyone who has spoken to us that they feel they should be heard on this question of the gaps between what happens in the province in search and rescue and the associated issues involved with marine search and rescue.

We, of course, can use the information you’ve given us because we also are given the mandate to look at air support in ground search and rescue and air support doesn’t only come from the province, it comes from the federal assets.

You’re very forceful, you’re very thoughtful and you’re very respectful of the people you represent. So I think that will go a long way in continuing this discussion because it may not be the Commission itself that finalizes this topic but the will of the people to make sure it is carried to a proper conclusion.

Geoff, did you have any questions or comments?

GEOFF BUDDEN: Sure, a housekeeping matter, Ms. Jones. I notice that in your presentation you occasionally were referring to a document or perhaps a series of notes, but if you do have written material that you would like us to enter as an exhibit, we would gladly do that. Then it would be part of the permanent record and available for other parties to look at as well. There is a recording of this and this is informing Commissioner Igloliorte. However, I would like to extend the opportunity if you either have a written presentation already done or your office would like to pull one together, I have been in touch with Mr. Clarke of your office. He has been quite good about that line of communication. So we would welcome any such material should you wish to put it before us.

MP YVONNE JONES: Thank you Geoff. I have a written presentation and my office will be forwarding it to you.

THE COMMISSIONER: Perfect.

GEOFF BUDDEN: Thank you.

THE COMMISSIONER: Well, sir, the last work is yours. We’re very happy to have been invited. You can please continue.

TODD RUSSELL: I want to thank MP Yvonne Jones for coming and presenting those remarks and the position of the people and reflecting their needs and aspirations of the Inuit and NunatuKavit, but as well, all Labradorians. I think, Commissioner, you have heard some powerful testimony. You have some presentations that were made as well as strong recommendations. As so many have said, every minute counts. Every minute counts. And in that vein, I am so happy to see that this Commission is not going on ad nausea but has a very tight timeframe. Because you too know the seriousness that every minute counts. When this report goes in, I think there has to be a strong and vigorous position put forth by the Commission to call upon all jurisdictions to move and to act upon your recommendations. They cannot sit. Every minute counts. Every minute counts. These recommendations cannot sit on a shelf. These recommendations have to be implemented and I would just encourage the Commission to be as forceful as it can be in terms of carrying that work forward.

I can assure you that NCC in conjunction with our representatives and our partners, and others that will do our best to ensure that those recommendations get implemented. And we will do our part to ensure that not only the people that we represent but all of Labrador has, as I say, the best search and rescue system anywhere in the world. We deserve nothing less than that.

COMMISSIONER: Thank you. And I would be remiss if I did not mention your counsel. He has been most gracious and professional, and helpful. The work between himself and Geoff has really carried this a long ways. So thank you very much.

TODD RUSSELL: Thank you very much.

ROUNDTABLE ADJOURNED