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## Terms of reference

Whereas the high number of deaths and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls in Canada is an ongoing national tragedy that must be brought to an end;

Whereas the Government of Canada has committed to launching an inquiry to identify and examine the systemic causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada and to make recommendations for effective action;

And whereas the Government of Canada is committed to taking effective action to prevent and eliminate violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada;

Therefore, His Excellency the Governor General in Council, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, directs that a commission ("the Commission") do issue, for the period beginning on September 1, 2016 and ending on December 31, 2018, under Part I of the *Inquiries Act* and under the Great Seal of Canada appointing five persons as commissioners ("the Commissioners"), namely, the Honourable Marion R. Buller as Chief Commissioner, Michèle Taïna Audette, E. Qajaq Robinson, Marilyn Poitras and Brian Eyolfson, to conduct an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada, which Commission must

- a. direct the Commissioners to inquire into and to report on the following:
  - i. systemic causes of all forms of violence — including sexual violence — against Indigenous women and girls in Canada, including underlying social, economic, cultural, institutional and historical causes contributing to the ongoing violence and particular vulnerabilities of Indigenous women and girls in Canada, and
  - ii. institutional policies and practices implemented in response to violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls in Canada, including the identification and examination of practices that have been effective in reducing violence and increasing safety
- b. direct the Commissioners to make recommendations on the following:
  - i. concrete and effective action that can be taken to remove systemic causes of violence and to increase the safety of Indigenous women and girls in Canada, and
  - ii. ways to honour and commemorate the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada;
- c. direct the Commissioners to conduct the inquiry under the name of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls ("the Inquiry");
- d. authorize the Commissioners to adopt any procedures that they consider expedient for the proper conduct of the Inquiry, to sit at the times and in the places, especially in Indigenous communities in Canada, that the Commissioners consider appropriate and to conduct the Inquiry, to the greatest extent possible, by means of informal processes such as the gathering of statements by qualified trauma-informed persons to record the experiences of families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and survivors of violence against Indigenous women and girls participating in the Inquiry;
- e. direct the Commissioners to take into account, in conducting the Inquiry, that the Inquiry process is intended, to the extent possible,
  - i. to be trauma-informed and respect the persons, families and communities concerned,
  - ii. to provide an opportunity for persons, families and community members to express and share their experiences and views, particularly on ways to increase safety and prevent and eliminate violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada,
  - iii. to be culturally appropriate and to acknowledge, respect and honour the diverse cultural, linguistic and spiritual traditions of Indigenous peoples, and
  - iv. to promote and advance reconciliation and to contribute to public awareness about the causes of and solutions for ending violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls in Canada;
- f. authorize the Commissioners to provide any person having a substantial and direct interest in the subject matter of the Inquiry with an opportunity to participate in the Inquiry;
- g. authorize the Commissioners to establish
  - i. regional advisory bodies – composed of families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and survivors of violence against Indigenous women and girls – to advise on regional matters that fall within the scope of the Inquiry, and
  - ii. issue-specific advisory bodies – composed of elders, youth, families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and survivors of violence against Indigenous women and girls, experts and academics, including academics specializing in Indigenous legal traditions, as well as representatives of national, Indigenous, local and feminist organizations – to advise on regional matters that fall within the scope of the Inquiry;
- h. direct the Commissioners to conduct the Inquiry as they consider appropriate with respect to accepting as conclusive or giving due weight to the findings of fact set out in relevant reports, studies, research and examinations, whether national or international, including
  - i. the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015),

- ii. The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996),
  - iii. Invisible Women: A Call to Action – A Report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada, Report of the Special Committee on Violence Against Indigenous Women (2014),
  - iv. Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (2014),
  - v. What Their Stories Tell Us: Research findings from the Sisters In Spirit initiative, Native Women's Association of Canada (2010),
  - vi. Report of the inquiry concerning Canada of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women under article 8 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (30 March 2015),
  - vii. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in British Columbia, Canada, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (21 December 2014), and
  - viii. reports of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry (Oppal Commission, British Columbia);
- i. direct the Commissioners to review the results of the Government of Canada's pre-Inquiry engagement process;
  - j. authorize the Commissioners to rent, in accordance with the applicable Treasury Board policies, any space and facilities that are required for the purposes of the Inquiry;
  - k. authorize the Commissioners to recommend to the Clerk of the Privy Council that funding be provided, in accordance with approved guidelines respecting the rates of remuneration and reimbursement and the assessment of accounts, to any person described in paragraph (f), where in the Commissioners' view the person would not otherwise be able to participate in the Inquiry;
  - l. authorize the Commissioners to make available to members of the families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and to survivors of violence against Indigenous women and girls, for the duration of their appearance before the Commission, the trauma-informed and culturally appropriate counselling services that the Commissioners consider appropriate;
  - m. authorize the Commissioners to refer the families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and survivors of violence against Indigenous women and girls who contact the Commission for information and assistance with respect to matters such as ongoing or past investigations, prosecutions or inquests to the appropriate provincial or territorial authority that is responsible for the provision of victim services;
  - n. direct the Commissioners to use the electronic data systems and procedures specified by the Privy Council Office and to consult with records management officials within the Privy Council Office on the use of standards and systems that are specifically designed for the purpose of managing records;
  - o. authorize the Commissioners to engage the services of the experts and other persons who are referred to in section 11 of the *Inquiries Act*, at the rates of remuneration and reimbursement that the Treasury Board approves;
  - p. direct the Commissioners to perform their duties without expressing any conclusion or recommendation regarding the civil or criminal liability of any person or organization;
  - q. direct the Commissioners to perform their duties in such a way as to ensure that the conduct of the Inquiry does not jeopardize any ongoing criminal investigation or criminal proceeding;
  - r. if the Commissioners have reasonable grounds to believe that any information obtained in the course of the Inquiry may be used in the investigation or prosecution of an offence under the Criminal Code, authorize the Commissioners to remit that information to the appropriate authorities;
  - s. authorize the Commissioners to remit to the appropriate authorities any information that was obtained in the course of the Inquiry that the Commissioners have reasonable grounds to believe relates to misconduct;
  - t. direct the Commissioners to follow established security procedures, including the requirements of the Government of Canada's security policies, directives, standards and guidelines, with respect to persons engaged under section 11 of the *Inquiries Act* and the handling of information at all stages of the Inquiry;
  - u. direct the Commissioners to not disclose publicly or in any report any personal information, as defined in section 3 of the *Privacy Act*, that has been received in evidence during any portion of the Inquiry conducted in camera, unless, in the opinion of the Commissioners, the public interest in the disclosure outweighs any invasion of privacy that could result from the disclosure;
  - v. direct the Commissioners to make any disclosure referred to in paragraph (u) in such a way as to minimize, to the greatest extent possible, any invasion of privacy that could result from the disclosure;
  - w. direct the Commissioners, in respect of any portion of the Inquiry conducted in public, to ensure that members of the public can, simultaneously in both official languages, communicate with and obtain services from the Commission, including any transcripts of proceedings that have been made available to the public;
  - x. direct the Commissioners to submit, simultaneously in both official languages, the following reports to the Governor in Council:
    - i. an interim report, to be submitted before November 1, 2017, setting out the Commissioners' preliminary findings and recommendations, and their views on and assessment of any previous examination, investigation and report that they consider relevant to the Inquiry, and
    - ii. a final report, to be submitted before November 1, 2018, setting out the Commissioners' findings and recommendations; and
  - y. direct the Commissioners to file the records and papers of the Inquiry with the Clerk of the Privy Council as soon as feasible after the conclusion of the Inquiry.

**Date modified:**