



1st Anniversary of the Portapique Mass Murder in Nova Scotia - 18th April 2021

On April 18th 2020, a madman began his murder spree killing 22 people. As RCMP Veterans, our sympathies continue to go out to all of the families of the victims of this horrible crime, which should never happen to anyone, anywhere. Unfortunately, this is the new reality in our society today. This was a mass murder of a scale never seen anywhere before because of the duration (two days) and the mobility of the murderer and the distances between crime scenes. This was more like a military operation in a war zone, not the traditional mass murder with one scene. This has never been seen before.

In our family of RCMP Veterans, this has affected many of us profoundly. First by the sheer number of people killed, the dynamics of it, the murder of one of our own (Cst. Heidi Stevenson), and another member injured. We all feel pain and grieve the loss of any of our members who die in the line of duty. It reminds us all of the risks we face in police work, service to our country, honour, valour and bravery displayed by the serving members of the Force.

We also feel the pain and frustration caused by the media and public opinion, especially how quickly it turned from hero to zero (in this case less than 12 hours). Forgotten was the heroism of the men and women of the RCMP responding to this call. They rushed into harm's way to find multiple scenes, victims and little information to go on. Members came to the scene from neighboring Detachments, called in from home, and volunteering to help. They had the scene cordoned off rapidly, advised people to stay inside, helped those who were hiding outside, searched for the suspect. They did this all while the chaos continued and their safety was always at risk. They did all of these things calmly and methodically while collecting evidence in the case.

Forgotten is the loss of one of our own who bravely engaged the murderer and unfortunately lost her life trying to stop him. Forgotten is the work of the ERT team, who responded and rushed in to rescue members caught inside the danger zone. They rescued civilians at the scene. They continued to try to locate the murderer and were constantly chasing false leads. Forgotten is the dog master and the ERT team members who brought the whole murder spree to an end, identifying the murderer and engaging him.

Then there was and is the continuous blame game pushed by the media and the public. The armchair quarterbacks who know all, yet have never served or been there. We can all understand that there is frustration by the public, fueled by fear and misinformation. The reality is when the murderer is dead they have no one to lash out at, so the only people they can lash out at is the police, the only ones who ended this murder spree. Only those of us who have served can ever understand how we feel. So stick together, talk to each other and console each other.

Only we as Veterans can help each other when this pain and anger surfaces on this anniversary. The media will bring all of the negative forward for sure. To show our support for those who worked on this case that night and following day, and most importantly for the loss of Cst. Heidi Stevenson, you can lower your flags at half mast on the 18th and 19th. Show our support for the brave selfless actions of those men and women who were there trying to end this horrible event. We have to stick together and support each other and stay positive. The Force is in good hands and we can be proud of all of them, just as we are proud to have served.

**Brian Carter, President
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