

Title:

Letter from Commissioner Bélanger to the residents of Elliot Lake

August 1, 2012

To the Residents of Elliot Lake:

I have been appointed as Commissioner of a public inquiry into the collapse of the Algo Centre Mall which caused the deaths of Lucie Aylwin and Doloris Perizzolo and injuries to a number of other individuals on June 23, 2012. I am also asked to inquire into the emergency management and response to this event. My Commission will review all relevant laws, regulations, by-laws, policies, processes and procedures relating to these two aspects of the inquiry. We will eventually report our findings and make recommendations to the Government of the Province of Ontario in the hope that this type of tragedy does not occur again.

The Commission considers it important that it hear from the residents of Elliot Lake about the impact of this tragedy on their lives and the community as a whole. One of the ways to do this is for the Commission to have an informal initial meeting with the residents. It seems to me that understanding the scope of the impact upon the residents will provide a foundation for further avenues of investigation and inquiry.

I have scheduled Wednesday, August 15th for the initial community meeting at 9:30 a.m. at the Lester B. Pearson Civic Centre. What I would like to do at the initial meeting is to introduce myself and the core members of my Commission, explain in general terms what we propose to do and invite questions from you. Then, we would like to hear from individual residents with respect to the impact this matter has had upon them. Individuals will be given the opportunity to come forward and speak about the impact this has had on their lives or to express their thoughts in writing. They may do so in public or in private.

At the more formal public hearings which will begin early in the New Year in Elliot Lake, the Commission will look into the causes that gave rise to this tragedy and to the emergency response. Prior to those hearings, those wishing to apply for standing will be given an opportunity to do so. Standing at a public inquiry gives a person or organization the right to participate in the proceedings, receive access to documents and examine and cross-examine witnesses. Participation in the earlier community hearings will not foreclose participation in the more formal hearings.

Some of you may be concerned that the formal hearings will not commence earlier. Let me explain that a tremendous amount of organizational and investigative work needs to be done before we can hold formal hearings. Large amounts of materials need to be gathered and analyzed. Witnesses and other individuals must be interviewed. Offices must be set up, facilities must be identified in Elliot Lake to hold hearings and to accommodate us. Notices to parties must be given with appropriate lead time. Rules of procedure must be developed. Standing

hearings must be held. The list of things to do is daunting and complex. I hope that you will understand.

If you wish to speak at the public hearing or wish to meet me privately, you may communicate with me as follows:

Mr. Justice Paul R. Bélanger

The Courthouse, 6th Floor judges' chambers

161 Elgin Street

Ottawa Ontario

K2P 2L1

E-mail: info@elliottlakeinquiry.ca

Fax : (613) 239-1506

A free 800 number will be provided as soon as possible.

I recognize that some of the residents may have sought legal advice about what has occurred. I do not want to interfere with that process in any way. However, it would be most useful to the Commission to hear from the people directly affected at the informal community meeting I have discussed above.

Yours very truly

Paul R. Bélanger