

MISSING WOMEN COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

NORTHERN COMMUNITY FORUMS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. WHAT IS THE MANDATE OF THE MISSING WOMEN COMMISSION OF INQUIRY?

The purpose of the Commission is to inquire into and report on the conduct of missing women investigations. There are four parts to this mandate:

- (a) Conduct hearings, inquire into and make findings of fact respecting the conduct of investigations in 1997-2002 respecting women reported missing from the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver;
- (b) Conduct hearings, inquire into and make findings of fact with respect to the decision of the Criminal Justice Branch to enter a stay of proceedings on charges against Robert William Pickton;
- (c) To recommend changes considered necessary respecting the initiation and conduct of investigations in British Columbia of missing women and suspected multiple homicides; and
- (d) To recommend changes considered necessary respecting homicide investigations in British Columbia by more than one investigating organization, including the co-ordination of those investigations.

The Commissioner must report to the Government of British Columbia on his findings and his recommendation for change. The report will be tabled in the Legislative Assembly and made public.

2. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE HEARING COMMISSION AND STUDY COMMISSION FUNCTIONS?

Hearing commissions investigate and make findings of fact in matters where there is the possibility of a finding of misconduct. Hearings are formal legal proceedings that are similar to court processes.

Study commissions may conduct research and consult with interested parties and the public as a whole by receiving oral and written submissions. These activities are more informal and are accessible to all interested parties.

The Missing Women Commission of Inquiry now has the powers of a joint hearing and study commission. The Commission will hold hearings in Vancouver beginning in October 2011. These hearings must focus only on the investigation of women reported missing from the Downtown Eastside between 1997 and 2002 and the decision to stay proceedings on charges against Pickton in 1998. The Commission is also undertaking a number of research studies and consultations, including the Northern Community Forums. These study commission activities are designed to ensure that the Commissioner has additional information needed to carry out his advisory and policy functions and, in particular, to enable him to make recommendations on a province-wide basis as required under his mandate.

The Commissioner will draw on the evidence gathered both through the hearings and the study commission activities in developing his report and recommendations for changes respecting the initiation and conduct of investigations in British Columbia of missing women and suspected multiple homicides, including the coordination of those investigations involving more than one investigation organization.

3. *WHY IS THE MISSING WOMEN COMMISSION OF INQUIRY HOLDING COMMUNITY FORUMS IN COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA?*

The Commission is holding Community Forums in several communities in Northern British Columbia to gather information about, and suggestions for improvement of, the investigation and missing and murdered women in this region. The Commissioner is charged with the responsibility to make recommendations for the initiation and investigation of cases of missing and murdered women that are relevant to the province as a whole. Community input is required to assist in developing policy recommendations that are practical, workable and effective within the specific cultural and community context in this region.

4. *WHAT WILL THE NORTHERN COMMUNITY FORUMS BE LIKE?*

An Elder will be invited to open each Community Forum. Commissioner Oppal will make brief opening remarks that provide an update on the work of the Commission. Individuals who have registered will each have approximately 10 minutes to make a presentation. Commissioner Oppal and/or Commission Counsel may ask questions but the sessions will be informal.

5. *WHEN AND WHERE WILL THE FORUMS BE HELD?*

The Northern Community Forums will be held in a number of communities from September 12 – 22, 2011. Locations and venues will be confirmed soon. Details regarding each date, time and place will be posted on the Commission website and will be publicized by local media.

6. HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE IN THE NORTHERN COMMUNITY FORUMS?

Individuals who wish to make a presentation must contact the Commission office by Thursday, September 8, 2011 by email (info@missingwomeninquiry.ca) or by phone (toll free 1-877-681-4470). You must provide your name and contact information and a brief description of what issues you plan to address at the Community Forum.

The Community Forums will be open to the public. You are free to attend even if you are not registered to speak.

7. ARE THERE OTHER WAYS THAT I CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMISSION'S WORK?

The Commission invites members of the public to make written submissions on the subject matter of the Inquiry. Submissions will be reviewed by Commission staff, and may be considered by the Commissioner. See the Questions and Issues For Discussion document for examples of the topics to be addressed by the Commission.

The Commission will accept submissions by email, fax or mail; please see below for contact details. Submissions must be relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference. Submissions that are not relevant, or are otherwise inappropriate, may not be considered. You may wish to refer to the Questions and Issues for Discussion document prepared by the Commission in writing your submission.

To ensure your submission receives full and careful attention, please be concise and clearly identify any recommendations you are making.

The closing date for the receipt of written submissions is November 30, 2011.

8. WILL MY SUBMISSIONS BE MADE PUBLIC?

Submissions received by the Commission may be posted to the Commission's website along with the author's name, city and the date that the submission was made. Relevant submissions will also be acknowledged in the final report.

CONTACT DETAILS

Telephone: 604-681-4470 (toll-free 877-681-4470)

Fax: 604-681-4458

Email: info@missingwomeninquiry.ca

Mail: #1402 – 808 Nelson Street, Vancouver, BC V6Z 2H2