

BACKGROUND

Amnesty International Canada, the BCCLA, along with numerous community groups and individuals, have raised a number of concerns in relation to the design and conduct of the Missing Women Inquiry.

September, 2010 – Limited terms of reference set without talking to women’s groups or First Nations

Community groups raise concerns that the terms of reference limit dates artificially to 1997 to 2002. Indigenous leadership groups and women’s groups say they weren’t consulted on the TOR.

September, 2010 – Commissioner with perceived conflicts of interest appointed

Community members express concern when Wally Oppal is appointed Commissioner for the Inquiry given his previous role in Cabinet as AG and his previous comments about the utility of a public inquiry.

August, 2011 – Peel police “volunteering” with Inquiry despite conflict of interest

The Commissioner announces that three police officers from Peel are reviewing all of the Commission’s documents, including documents from the RCMP, and advising the Commission. Multiple officers from Peel are currently under investigation by members of the RCMP for corruption and drug trafficking.

April, 2011 – Double standards for police officers vs. human rights, Indigenous and women’s groups

After a full public hearing, human rights groups, Indigenous leadership groups and women’s groups are given “limited standing”. They can’t ask questions without permission. No similar restrictions are put on any of the participating police forces or individual police officers who get full standing without a hearing.

June, 2011 – Gross mismatch: 7 funded government and police lawyers for each community lawyer

There are a minimum of 14 fully paid lawyers for police and government, and 2 paid lawyers representing community interests. The Commission itself has 9 lawyers. The families have 2.

July to October, 2011 – As groups that protect women in the DTES are shut out, police and government erode vulnerable witness protections

Sex worker groups and drop in centres for women say that they can’t set aside resources to participate because they’re too busy feeding, housing and protecting women in the Downtown Eastside. Simultaneously, publicly funded lawyers for the police and government resist a protocol designed to protect vulnerable witnesses from aggressive cross examination and lawyers for the provincial government argue that evidence from vulnerable women should be able to be used against those women in criminal proceedings later on.

September, 2011 – The Commission shuts community groups with standing out of discussions

In September, 2011, a police officer is granted “full standing” with two fully funded lawyers without a hearing or notice to any of the involved parties. A phone message left by the Commissioner for the AG is the topic of secret discussion among police and government lawyers and the Commission. Witness lists and document disclosure protocols are set without discussion or consultation.

September 2011 – All participating non-government parties and 17 families write to the Premier to ask her to save the Inquiry, and are ignored

Solicitor General Bond appears in media hours after the letter from 21 participating organizations is received to say that the Government will not be intervening to save the Inquiry. The Premier does not respond at all.