



East Coast Prison Justice Society  
Annual Report  
September 30, 2021  
– National Day of Truth and Reconciliation –

TRC Calls to Action #80: ". . . to honour Survivors, their families, and communities, and ensure that public commemoration of the history and legacy of residential schools remains a vital component of the reconciliation process."

*We give thanks to the Mi'kmaq people on whose ancestral unceded lands we live and work. We remember those we have lost to and those who have endured the residential schools, prisons and other colonialist violence, this day and every day.*

## **Mandate**

This is the fifth AGM for the East Coast Prison Justice Society ("ECPJS"). ECPJS is a collaborative partnership of individuals and organizations helping criminalized and imprisoned individuals through advocacy, research, scholarship, legal support, education, public service, and the provision of grassroots services. In service of our mandate, ECPJS works to advance the rights and well-being of prisoners in prisons and jails and upon community re-entry. More fundamentally, ECPJS seeks to promote decarceration and increased investment in redressing the social determinants of criminalization and incarceration.

ECPJS is a small but mighty organization that takes on an array of advocacy, legal education, law reform, and policy reform projects, most of which are entirely volunteer-led. In September 2021, ECPJS graduated from one to two staff persons, both of whom support our Visiting Committee project (described below) and help build out our organization's capacity to conduct both individual and systemic advocacy for incarcerated persons in the province.

As with last year, despite the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, fiscal 2020-2021 has been a year of significant growth for ECPJS. We are profoundly grateful to all those who devoted their time and energy to our initiatives, whether in volunteer or staff capacity. We also want to thank the many currently and formerly incarcerated Nova Scotians with whom we worked this year. Their generosity and strength of spirit are a consistent source of inspiration and guidance for us in all the work we do.

## **Projects Undertaken in Fiscal 2020-2021**

In fiscal 2020-2021, ECPJS took on a wide array of advocacy, legal education, law reform, and policy reform projects in three main areas: (1) conditions of confinement, decarceration, and community re-entry, (2) prisoner health, and (3) police practices, governance, and accountability.

### **1. Conditions of confinement, decarceration, and community re-entry**

#### **a. Visiting committee project**

##### **i. The development of the visiting committee**

The Visiting Committee (“VC”) began discussing plans for civil society monitoring with Corrections and Justice officials in the fall of 2018. An agreement with senior correctional officials was reached on July 24, 2019, determining that Committee volunteers would be allowed scheduled entry into CNSCF to discuss conditions of confinement with groups of the detainees, provide information sessions, and then engage in follow up conversations with the administration.

The VC project was designed in light of models and processes adopted in other jurisdictions as well as our own, including:

- I. the Regional Advocacy model adopted by national and provincial Elizabeth Fry Societies (we consulted with former Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies Executive Director, Senator Kim Pate, and Nova Scotia Mainland Executive Director, Emma Halpern),
- II. the work of the federal Correctional Investigator (we consulted with former correctional investigator Howard Sapers), and
- III. civil society organizations internationally, e.g., in Australia, involved in monitoring places of detention under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture.

Because ECPJS’s sister organization, Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia (“EFMNS”), already has a program of human rights monitoring for women and non-binary prisoners housed in the women’s (East) unit of CNSCF and the federal Nova Institution for Women in Truro, ECPJS focused this initiative on the men’s units (acknowledging that those residing on these units may not always be male-identifying). ECPJS and EFMNS are in regular contact and where appropriate share information about conditions of confinement to coordinate systemic advocacy strategies.

The VC had initially also hoped to engage with Nova Scotia Health Authority (“NSH”), which provides healthcare services in the provincial jails. Concerns about healthcare are among the most common and most serious complaints raised by people in provincial custody. For this reason, the VC felt that the involvement of NSH was important to its capacity to meaningfully engage in systemic advocacy. However, the Committee was unable to develop a common understanding of the initiative with NSH administrators, despite an initial meeting and subsequent attempts to re-engage. Recently, in 2021, the VC has begun to develop a better working relationship with the Manager of the renamed Correctional Health Branch. The Committee hopes to further explore with NSH the prospect of expanding its civil society

monitoring project to include a concentration on, and methods of systematically pursuing with NSH officials, the systemic healthcare concerns that are raised by Nova Scotia prisoners.

## **ii. The visiting committee's operation in fiscal 2020-2021**

With the generous support of funding from the Law Foundation of Nova Scotia ("LFNS"), we were able to hire Hanna Garson to serve as the VC Coordinator for fiscal 2020-2021. As VC Coordinator, Hanna was responsible for operational matters in relation to the VC project and reports to the steering committee.

Our plan had originally been to start our visits at the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility ("CNSCF") beginning in fall 2019 and then, by April 2020, to expand to the other three facilities. The four facilities in the province are the Northeast Nova Scotia Correctional Facility ("NNSCF") in New Glasgow, the Southwest Nova Scotia Correctional Facility ("SNSCF") in Yarmouth, and the Cape Breton Correctional Facility ("CBCF") in Sydney.

However, as is normal when dealing with Corrections, this initial plan was delayed. As a result, the VC's inaugural visit to CNSCF began with an orientation and tour provided by CNSCF staff on November 19, 2019. The orientation was very informative and the tour included access to all areas of the institution but the North wing. We look forward to continuing to take part in a tour of the institution as part of our regular periodic visits to the institution. Four members of the Visiting Committee then met with prisoners at CNSCF on February 4. The committee was granted access to the West and North wings: 22 prisoners in each wing participated in the facilitated conversations sessions. We heard subsequently from the CNSCF Superintendent that 44 people was a 'good spread', as there were only 52 prisoners in total in the West unit at the time of our visit, and 87 prisoners in the North.

Our February 4 visit was followed by a meeting with CNSCF Superintendent Adam Smith on February 13, at which we raised many of the issues we heard on the February 4 visit and made note of his responses. All of this information was then put into a letter which we sent to correctional administration on February 19. In a subsequent meeting with senior correctional staff, we were told that we would receive a written response to this letter, however no such response has been received.

Shortly after the first visit to CNSCF, Nova Scotia declared a public health emergency due to COVID-19 (in March, 2020). One of many impacts of COVID-19 was that in-person attendance in Nova Scotia correctional facilities was no longer possible; all visits to facilities were discontinued to prevent viral transmission into the facility.

At this time, the VC's focus, and that of ECPJS at large, shifted to advocating for a reduction in the number of people in the provincial jails to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Over a few weeks in late March / early April of 2020, the population in provincial custody was reduced by 42 per cent. Many people worked across traditionally siloed systems to effect these releases; the subsequent challenge was to obtain sufficient funding and system coordination to

ensure those vulnerable to incarceration or re-incarceration had access to critical community supports.

To facilitate some level of information flow between the VC and individuals in custody, the model for this project shifted from in-person visits to a free telephone line. With cooperation and support from the Director of Correctional Services, the VC launched a free phone line (1-877-589-9294) that individuals in custody could call on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM and 1:00 PM and 4:00 PM, and leave a voicemail at any time. Starting in Fall 2020, the VC model was shifted to permit prisoners to call and leave a voicemail at any time. Two differences between the telephone line and in-person visits are that telephone calls are restricted to 20 minutes and involve one prisoner at a time, whereas in-person visits are not limited in this way. Additionally, in person visits provided both time out of the day room as well as more dynamic interaction.

It became clear that individuals in custody were less interested in phoning the VC than attending in-person meetings, as the calls offered less immediate utility. As a result, the uptake was lower as compared to our in-person visits. Due to the reduction in calls, and an inability to enter the facility, means of information gathering was delegated to ECPJS board members and volunteers who received calls regarding conditions of confinement on their personal and professional phone lines, providing a summary of the calls to the VC.

In July 2021, the VC released its [Annual Report](#) for 2020-2021. This report summarized what was heard from prisoners, the responses from correctional administrators, and the recommendations of the VC in relation to the most common complaints about conditions of confinement. The issues were divided into the following categories:

- a. deprivations of liberty and related concerns,
- b. cleanliness and hygiene,
- c. communication issues (such as access to phone calls with lawyers and family, as well as access to visits), and
- d. other institutional concerns (including strip searching, racism, and health care).

The most common complaints related to lockdowns, as well as difficulty navigating and accessing healthcare.

### **iii. The visiting committee's operation in fiscal 2021-2022**

In summer 2021, the LFNS permitted ECPJS to carry over the remaining funds from its initial grant application, which were not spent due to changes to the project necessitated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, ECPJS developed a plan in conjunction with EFMNS to carry forward the operation of the VC into fiscal 2021-2022 beginning September 2021. In particular, EFMNS and ECPJS have together hired two staff persons to support the work of the VC: the Provincial Advocacy Coordinator (the "Coordinator") and the Provincial Advocacy Assistant (the "Assistant").

The Coordinator is a full-time position, with 20 hours of the Coordinator's time devoted to work with the ECPJS VC and 20 hours devoted to EFMNS. In their work with ECPJS, the Coordinator

will be the lead contact for organizing visits, logistics, and access among Corrections, NSHA and members of the ECPJS VC, as well as facilitating our collaboration with other organizations. As the monitoring project unfolds, the Coordinator will continue to liaise with Corrections and NSH regarding scheduling of visits as well as discussing follow-up on issues identified and problem-solving when problems arise.

The Coordinator will also be primarily responsible for the VC phone line, including by overseeing all administrative aspects of the phone line such as identifying, training, and supervising volunteers; scheduling shifts; promotion of the service; and troubleshooting issues that arise. The Coordinator will also regularly take calls on the phone line. The Coordinator will be responsible for mailing legal information materials to prisoners when they are requested through the phone line. If issues are identified during in-person visits or through phone calls that require legal representation, the Coordinator will if necessary play a role in triaging these cases to professionals in the community. The Coordinator will also play a role in organizing and writing the research, analysis and interpretation of information for the purpose of our periodic reporting letters, as well as our annual report.

The Assistant is a two-day per week (16 hours) part time position. The Assistant will work exclusively for ECPJS. The Assistant will prepare first drafts of any advocacy letters needed, including monthly reporting letters or issue-specific or individual-specific letters. The Coordinator, in conjunction with the VC Steering Committee, will then review and finalize these letters before sending them off. The Assistant will also prepare briefing notes overviewing the work of the VC on a biweekly basis for the VC Steering Committee and on a monthly basis for the ECPJS Board of Directors.

Both the Coordinator and the Assistant will work out of the EFMNS office in Dartmouth. On a day-to-day basis, the two staff persons will be supervised by the EFMNS Executive Director. Additionally, Hanna Garson will be the main “point person” on behalf of the ECPJS VC who will work with the Coordinator and Assistant. Hanna will be available for calls and meetings with the two staff persons and can answer any questions or address any issues that may arise. The Coordinator and Assistant will also have regular meetings with the full VC Steering Committee on a periodic basis.

For fiscal 2021-2022, Laura Ferris has been hired to act as the Coordinator beginning in September 2021. She will work half-time for ECPJS directing the VC and half-time for EFMNS, where her role also focuses on advocating and doing release planning for incarcerated clients. She completed her Bachelor of Social Work at Dalhousie University in 2021 and previously worked for EFMNS, with a focus on EFMNS’s Domestic Violence Strategy. For fiscal 2021-2022, Margaret Anne McHugh has been hired to act as the Assistant. She has extensive experience working with a variety of unions, political groups, non-profits, and government departments across the country.

#### **b. Third wave of COVID-19: Vaccines and decarceration 2.0**

In January 2021, ECPJS called upon the government to renew its efforts to protect people incarcerated in provincial jails, as well as correctional staff, from COVID-19. At that time, there were three major concerns, informed by the communications through the monitoring project:

1. Government had been silent on the need to prioritize incarcerated populations and correctional staff for COVID-19 vaccination;
2. In-custody numbers had risen to pre-pandemic levels (with approximately 70-75% of those inside remanded to custody pre-trial);
3. Through no fault of their own, people in custody were being subjected to ongoing, indefinite lockdowns and solitary confinement causing serious harm to mental and physical health and infringing on human rights.

No response to this letter was received.

Subsequently, on April 26, 2021, ECPJS issued a [press release](#) highlighting the fact that there had been no vaccination rollout either for provincial prisoners or correctional staff. This was despite the fact that, according to Public Health's plan, Phase Two of the vaccine rollout was intended to include "those who live in large group settings and those who work directly with them, including Correctional facilities, shelters and temporary foreign workers' quarters."

ECPJS called on the NS government, including Justice, Correctional Services, NSHA, and Community Services to:

- Offer vaccinations to prisoners and staff in correctional facilities and staff and residents of transition houses commencing the week of the press release;
- Ensure frequent COVID-19 testing of correctional staff and prisoner and transition house staff and residents;
- Promote mass release by re-instituting expedited bail hearings and bail reviews, including on weekends and by video/telephone, and use of statutory powers to effect conditional release of sentenced persons;
- Collaborate with the non-profit sector (including Elizabeth Fry Societies, Coverdale Courtwork Society and John Howard Society) to provide short- and long-term supports for persons released from detention and alternatives to pre-trial detention ("bail beds") as well as supports for East Coast Forensic Hospital patients granted community release.

Reports from individuals in provincial jails and in the media confirmed that the vaccine rollout for prisoners began shortly thereafter, in the first week of May. In addition, over the next few weeks and following sustained advocacy on the part of many, the non-profits with whom we work, including Elizabeth Fry Societies (Mainland) were given resources for providing temporary wraparound supports for those granted preventive release during the third wave.

The above-noted interventions by ECPJS and allied non-profits were informed in part by the communications the VC was able to maintain through the telephone line, as well as other community-based contacts. These communications extended over a period of over 12 months, during which Nova Scotia's provincial jails were effectively sealed off from visitors, including family, volunteers, and external programming and other service providers.

The events of the past year have only made clearer to ECPJS, as well as the non-profits and incarcerated people with whom ECPJS works, the importance of independent monitoring of places of detention. The VC seeks a return to in-person visits as soon as possible, consistent with public health protocols and reflecting the relaxation of restrictions across the public service and in particular across other congregate institutions. While the health and safety of prisoners is paramount, independent visits and inspections must be facilitated whether in nursing homes, hospitals or prisons/jails.

### **c. *Habeas corpus* working group**

On February 22, 2021, Justice Scott Norton of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court sent a letter on behalf of a *habeas corpus* judicial working group, proposing various amendments to the Civil Procedure Rules (“CPR”) in relation to *habeas corpus* applications.

This letter specified that the amendments proposed sought to accomplish two, oftentimes competing goals: (1) protecting inmates who are asserting an illegal restriction of liberty by the facility in which they are incarcerated, including providing more precise forms to assist them in framing the facts and issues that are necessary for the court to determine whether the application is *bona fide*; and, (2) making the process more efficient, with earlier dismissal of applications, that are clearly improper or vexatious, consuming limited judicial and court time, and thus improving access to justice for deserving cases.

A number of ECPJS members were gravely concerned by these proposed amendments. In particular, they feared that the new CPR rules and forms risked undermining the mandate of the superior court to provide oversight to prisons, which is necessary to safeguard the human rights and civil liberties of prisoners, by eroding their section 10(c) *Charter* rights.

Accordingly, ECPJS put forward a number of submissions expressing our opposition to the proposed changes. Hanna Garson prepared a [submission](#) to the working group on behalf of the VC. Hanna argued that any modification of the rules should be supplemented by a shift in provincial policy making state-funded representation available to prisoners where deprivation of liberty is at stake.

Likewise, ECPJS co-chair Sheila Wildeman put forward a [submission](#) critically analyzing major shortcomings of the new proposed *habeas corpus* application form. In her view, the way the form is drafted impermissibly, and potentially unconstitutionally, narrows the scope of the writ in a manner that is contrary to the guidance of the Supreme Court of Canada that *habeas corpus* must remain flexible and responsive to the circumstances of persons in detention.

Finally, ECPJS affiliate and VC member Claire McNeil also prepared a [submission](#) arguing that the “Notice of Contest” procedure introduced by the amendments is procedurally unfair to the extent that it runs the risk of setting the stage for a summary dismissal of a *habeas corpus* application in the absence of evidence or a full opportunity to respond.

## **2. Prisoner health**

### **a. Liaising with Nova Scotia Health**

A major goal of the medical committee, which is chaired by ECPJS Board member Dr. Tiffany O'Donnell, is working to develop a collaborative relationship with the leadership of the Correctional Health Services Division within Nova Scotia Health ("NSH") to ensure open lines of communication. In service of this goal, this year NSHA made a commitment to regular community stakeholder engagement sessions moving forward. ECPJS Board members attended one such engagement session on March 2, 2021 this year with NSHA senior management.

The medical committee also reviewed and provided feedback to NSH on their Correctional Health Services orientation pamphlet, which is distributed to people upon arrival in the jails. Further, the committee drafted a letter to Derek Leduc, Manager of Correctional Health Services, outlining health service concerns identified through the monitoring project and through other means of communication with people experiencing incarceration, referencing national accreditation standards for provision of health services in provincial jails. ECPJS members then met with Derek Leduc to discuss the contents of this letter and potential remedies for the concerns raised.

### **b. Support for the Visiting Committee project**

Many concerns raised by prisoners through the VC project relate to healthcare delivery in provincial jails. To better assist these individuals, Tiffany engaged with Dalhousie Medical School Office of Global Health to provide a Service Learning opportunity to a first-year medical student, who will be responsible for reviewing healthcare concerns that are identified through the monitoring program, follow up on healthcare complaints made by people who are incarcerated, and bring system issues to regularly scheduled meetings with Correctional Health Services Leadership.

## **3. Police practices, governance, and accountability**

### **a. Alternatives to the drunk tank**

In January 2020, ECPJS members learned that Chief Dan Kinsella from the Halifax Regional Police ("HRP") would be requesting [additional funds](#) from the HRM Regional Council in order to hire more police officers to work in the prisoner care facility after two special constables were convicted of criminal negligence in the 2016 death of Corey Rogers in the HRP drunk tank.

Accordingly, ECPJS members Harry Critchley and Leah Genge appeared before the Halifax Board of Police Commissioners, the civilian body that provides governance and oversight for the HRP, in January 2020 to advocate for re-investing these funds into non-criminal alternative approaches to dealing with public intoxication. Harry provided a [presentation](#) on "sobering centres," which are civilian-led emergency shelters that allow people to sleep off the effects of alcohol or drugs under the supervision of health-care providers. Leah presented on "[managed alcohol programs](#)" ("MAP"). MAPs provide persons experiencing chronic alcohol use disorder with regular amounts of beverage alcohol throughout the day in order to help them remain stable and address other issues they may be having.



Leah and Harry’s advocacy on this issue resulted in the HRM Regional Council ordering a [feasibility study](#) on implementing a sobering centre and/or a MAP in Halifax in February 2020. This study, which was completed and [released publicly](#) in July 2021, recommended establishing a sobering centre in order to divert some frequently-detained persons out of the drunk tank.

Later than same month, Regional Council [approved a motion](#) directing staff to “examine potential changes to existing alcohol policies and regulations at the municipal and provincial levels to reduce harmful patterns of alcohol consumption” and “develop options for Regional Council’s consideration for establishment of a sobering centre in HRM.”

## **b. NS Policing Policy Working Group**

In June 2020, together with Wellness Within and EFMNS, ECPJS members El Jones and Harry Critchley established the NS PPWG. The objective of the coalition is to advocate for legislative and policy reform objectives relevant to the delivery of policing in the province. For governance purposes, the NS PPWG is a subcommittee of ECPJS.

The NS PPWG had a busy 2020-2021:

### **i. 2020 municipal candidate questionnaire for HRM election**

In September 2020, the NS PPWG circulated a [survey](#) on policing to all declared candidates for the municipal election on October 17, 2020. The survey asked questions on:

- implementing the Wortley Report and the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls;
- scrutinizing the Halifax Regional Police (HRP) budget;
- moving non-core policing responsibilities out of HRP;
- applying a gender-based lens to policing;
- examining the current policing arrangement in HRP, where policing services are provided jointly between HRP and the RCMP;
- working with the province to repeal section 15(c) of the *Municipal Elections Act*, which provides that “a person serving a sentence in a penal or reform institution” is not entitled to vote in a municipal election; and
- defunding the police.

The NS PPWG received a response rate of 71% for Council candidates, and also received a response from mayoral candidate Mike Savage (who was re-elected as Mayor). The [report](#) outlining the questionnaire results was [released](#) on October 7, 2020 (10 days before the election), with promotion on social media and [coverage](#) in the mainstream media.

### **ii. *Municipal Elections Act* advocacy**

In 2020-2021, members of the NS PPWG continued their advocacy on repealing the ban on incarcerated people voting in section 15(c) of the *Municipal Elections Act* (“*MEA*”). This included meetings with representatives of the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities in January 2021 and the Association of Municipal Administrators of NS in February 2021 to discuss this advocacy.

While both organizations were supportive of the ban being repealed, and keen to continue discussions with ECPJS, there were political constraints and a perceived lack of urgency, as the next municipal election cycle is not until 2024.

NS PPWG members also consulted with the NDP regarding a bill to amend the *MEA*. In April 2021, the NDP put forward a private member’s [bill](#) to repeal the ban and provide the infrastructure to enable incarcerated people to vote in municipal elections. Unfortunately this bill did not make it past First Reading, but hopefully it will come back in the next sitting of the Legislature.

### **iii. Online spying by the Nova Scotia RCMP**

In December 2020, ECPJS [joined](#) with the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association to ask the Halifax Board of Police Commissioners and the provincial Minister of Justice to hold the RCMP accountable after it was reported that the RCMP had been using the Web Identity Search Tool (WIST), a surveillance mechanism that enabled the RCMP to acquire personal information from Facebook accounts, without prior judicial authorization.

### **iv. HRP/RCMP budget for fiscal 2021-2022**

Members of the NS PPWG made [submissions](#) regarding the HRP/RCMP budget for fiscal 2021-2022. In a [letter](#) to Regional Council in February 2021, Harry argued police were spending too much on budget items like polygraph tests (\$260,300 in 2020-2021) and the mounted unit (\$266,100), while underfunding victim services (\$211,000). He maintained that Council should cut the funds for polygraphs and the mounted unit, make victim services independent from police, and subject the HRP budget to greater scrutiny overall.

Likewise, in his own [letter](#), Tari Ajadi spoke to the Budget Committee about the HRP’s body-worn camera proposal, arguing that the \$85,000 request for a one-year term position to write a report on body-worn cameras is an unwise investment that ought to require broader scrutiny from Halifax council and the board of police commissioners. Tari maintained that the police budget shouldn’t increase at a time when the municipality is studying the role of police and the police board has struck a committee to look into defunding the police. He contended the final report on body-worn cameras would be biased because the last two reports on the matter from police ignored the numerous academic studies showing the cameras are ineffective. Speaking to the issue of bias, Tari also noted that the city’s auditor general reported one week prior that the police had recently lied to the Board of Police Commissioners regarding their progress in remedying critical security issues with their IT network.

On a related note, the NS PPWG also [spoke out](#) in December 2020 about the HRP's plan to request \$3.7M in 2021-2022 for the study and implementation of body-worn cameras. The NS PPWG's press release included a Q&A with Dr. Christopher Schneider of Brandon University and Erick Laming of the University of Toronto's Centre of Criminology and Sociolegal Studies. In the NS PPWG's view, shared by Schneider, the evidence does not support the use of BWCs as a tool to increase police accountability and decrease officers' use of force.

#### **v. HRP handling of eviction protests on August 18, 2021**

The NS PPWG issued a [press release](#) on August 19, 2021, detailing the violent police response during the forced evictions on August 18 and calling on the Board of Police Commissioners to launch a full and independent review of that day's events. This was followed by a [change.org petition](#), which currently has over 2,000 signatures.

Members of the NS PPWG sent the petition to the Board, and it was presented at the Board's meeting on Monday September 20, 2021. The Commissioners decided that they needed more time to study the materials. They are planning to discuss the petition, and to consider the call for an independent review of the police actions on August 18, at their next meeting, which is scheduled for October 18, 2021.

#### **vi. Volunteer engagement**

The NS PPWG engaged volunteers in two main ways in 2020-2021. First, Jennifer Taylor supervised one project through Pro Bono Dalhousie on police governance, and supervised two additional students who conducted research on alternatives to having the police respond to 911 calls (focusing on drug overdose and mental health calls). Thanks to ECPJS member Dr. Tiffany O'Donnell, the Pro Bono Dalhousie team was able to connect with Dr. Monty Ghosh, who has been a [leader](#) on this issue. This research will continue in 2021-2022, and it will inform the report of the Subcommittee to Define Defunding the Police (see below).

Second, Tari Ajadi engaged a volunteer to set up and run a new [ECPJS Instagram](#) account, which has extensively promoted the initiatives of the NS PPWG.

#### **vii. Support for Subcommittee to Define Defunding the Police**

Members of the NS PPWG are supporting the [Subcommittee to Define Defunding the Police](#), which is chaired by Dr. El Jones and will be reporting to the Board of Police Commissioners later this year. In addition to providing research and drafting assistance, the NS PPWG helped with the Subcommittee's survey (which received about 2,400 responses) and the Subcommittee's [virtual](#) public engagement session, which was held on June 19, 2021.

#### **c. Mass Casualty Commission**

The Mass Casualty Commission (“MCC”) is an independent joint federal and provincial public inquiry created to examine the April 18-19, 2020 mass casualty in Nova Scotia and to provide meaningful recommendations to help protect Canadians in the future.

Together with the BC Civil Liberties Association (“BCCLA”), the oldest and largest civil liberties advocacy organization in Canada, ECPJS has been accepted as a [participant](#) in the MCC. The precise details of our participation will be worked out in coming weeks but may include involvement in public roundtable discussions and written submissions on matters including police practices and accountability mechanisms.

#### **4. Other Initiatives - Pro Bono Students**

Beyond the students who, as noted above, have assisted with the intensive work of the NS-PPWG in the past year, other Pro Bono Dalhousie student volunteers contributed to our work in 2020-21 in important ways. Two students have been using the ECPJS-EFMNS *Handbook for Prisoners in Provincial Jails in Nova Scotia* as a basis from which to create brief, accessible ‘know your rights’ information sheets on matters such as disciplinary processes; in the coming year we will finalize these and work to ensure they are distributed inside NS provincial jails. A further volunteer, Josie Bauman, assisted enormously with the creation (at long last) of an ECPJS website: [www.ecpjs.com](http://www.ecpjs.com).

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Harry Critchley  
ECPJS Co-Chair

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Sheila Wildeman  
ECPJS Co-Chair

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Hanna Garson  
Outgoing Director, Visiting Committee Project