



Press Release

Air India Commission Delivers Opening Statement

June 21, 2006, Ottawa: The Honourable John C. Major has launched the Inquiry into the Investigation of the Bombing of Air India Flight 182 by pledging to renew the quest for truth on behalf of the families of the victims of the worst terrorist attack in Canadian history.

“Their concerns are largely unresolved and it is not yet possible for them to achieve any peace of mind with knowing what happened and why it should not happen again,” said Justice Major. More than 80 family members attended the Commissioner’s opening statement, which launched the public work of the Commission.

The Commission of Inquiry was established by Prime Minister Harper on May 1, 2006, to provide a report on the events surrounding the bombing of Air India Flight 182. All of the 329 people on board the aircraft died when it exploded over the Atlantic Ocean on June 23, 1985. Eighty-two of the victims were children and 280 were Canadian citizens.

Justice Major noted that the Inquiry is not connected to nor involved with ongoing police investigations or court proceedings related to the explosion. “This Inquiry will not focus on dissecting the past,” he said. “It will look to how we can establish parameters for the future – to help shape a system that contains sufficient safeguards to prevent tragedies from occurring.”

While the Commission has broad powers of subpoena, it is not a court of law. It cannot find guilt nor make any award.

Justice Major released a tentative schedule for hearings, and Rules of Procedure and Practice. The Rules provide various definitions about the Commission and its operations, and outlines the procedures for those who are seeking standing as intervenors before the Commission.

Applicants for standing must notify the Commission in writing by July 7, 2006. The Commission will hear oral presentations from applicants on July 18-20. Applications for intervenor funding must be submitted by August 16, 2006.

The Commission will begin hearing evidence at public hearings on September 25, 2006. The hearings will begin with statements from the families of the victims. Family members will not be required to give their testimony under oath, and will not be subject to cross examination.

“The Air India tragedy or its like must never be repeated,” said Justice Major. “Many issues remain unresolved relating to the 1985 attack. This inquiry will provide recommendations to public policy and procedural questions that can continue to repair the system that allowed such horrific acts to take place.”

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For a full text of the Commissioner’s statement, the Terms of Reference, the Rules of Procedure and Practice, and other information about the Commission, please visit the Commission’s website at www.majorcomm.ca

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