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AIVFA Final Submission: Part I

Commission of Inquiry into the Investigation of the Bombing of Air India Flight 182

September 17, 2007

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Joint Counsel to Air India Victims Families Association (AIVFA)



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Introduction

The bombing of Air India Flight 182 on June 23rd, 1985, was first and foremost a Canadian tragedy. This tragedy appears to have been perpetrated by Canadians against Canadians and others. Of the 329 innocent victims, most were Canadians. They were spouses, parents, children, friends, co-workers, neighbours, and loved ones. 29 families were completely wiped out, 32 families left with one spouse, 8 couples lost all their children, and two children lost both parents. Over 80 victims were children 12 years of age and under. The magnitude of those affected by this tragedy reaches into the thousands and spans continents. Its reverberations and the pain caused by this heinous act of terrorism are still deeply felt today, more than 22 years later.

The Air India Flight 182 tragedy was Canada's introduction into the modern age of terrorism. At that point in time, it was the single worst act of terrorism against the traveling public known to the world. According to commentary by Thomas Walkom, "...while Air India never grabbed this country's attention in the way the 2001 twin tower attack did, Canadians should not be sanguine. As a proportion of the population, the 331 people killed in 1985 are equivalent to the 3, 044 murdered in N.Y. and Washington 16 years later."¹ The Air India Flight 182 bombing was Canada's 9/11 awakening – or certainly should have been as the world was moving into a more dangerous period.

This tragedy, and its lessons to be learned, are perhaps more relevant today than had this Inquiry been held twenty years ago. While we waited long to address these issues, the time is now to understand what happened, why it happened, and how to avoid such a tragedy from ever happening again. We face even greater threats today from home grown terrorism; terrorism similar to what caused the bombing of the Air India Flight 182.

This is why this Commission of Inquiry has been so important in today's world, albeit more than two decades after the catastrophe. The Air India Flight 182 tragedy speaks directly to the complexities of our current world. This is what motivated the Air India Victims' Families Association (AIVFA) to continue in its advocacy efforts to push for an Inquiry through all these years; not simply for themselves but for the benefit of all Canadians and all those who look to Canada for guidance, as a beacon for other nations.

With this stage of the Air India Flight 182 Inquiry now concluded, we need to fully synthesize and understand what this Inquiry has taught us, with a view to improving national security, the protection of Canadians, and the manner in which government responds to and assists victims of terrorism. Ultimately, the best memorial for the loved ones lost and the thousands of families impacted by this horrific tragedy is that Canada, as well as other nations, implement policy, regulatory, and procedural changes, thus ensuring that those lives cut short in such a heinous way were not lost in vain.

¹ Thomas Walkom, "Unanswered questions" *The Toronto Star* (17 March 2005).

Canada's Inadequate Response to the Victims of the Air India Flight 182 Bombing: "Tears and sympathy are just not enough"

(i) Introduction

For 22 years, AIVFA wanted to be heard. AIVFA wanted to ensure that light would be shed on the reprehensible act of violence that was the Air India Flight 182 tragedy, a terrorist bombing which caused immeasurable sorrow and grief upon all those connected to its victims. This Inquiry provided an opportunity for the victims of this Canadian tragedy to be heard and to share some of what they suffered. Those who spoke did so eloquently. Canadians now understand and appreciate the human dimensions of this catastrophe.

This Commission heard dozens of emotional testimonials of lives affected in countless ways. AIVFA appreciates having had the opportunity to seek closure that this Inquiry provided, through the sharing of stories of personal tragedy with fellow Canadians. Testimony by AIVFA members covered the lives lived by those who perished in the Air India Flight 182 bombing, the emotional, psychological, and financial impact of losing loved ones, and the hopes and aspirations for this Commission of Inquiry with respect to its Terms of Reference.

In particular, the testimony submitted respectfully by AIVFA members revealed their crushing sadness and the truly inadequate and unacceptable response by the Canadian government to them as victims of terrorism. While we are critical and will express our deep concerns about the inadequacies of the Canadian government in the manner in which it dealt with the families of the victims of Air India Flight 182, we have only praise and heartfelt respect for the manner in which the Irish opened their arms and hearts to the family members who came to Ireland in their state of shock and grief to retrieve the remains of their loved ones. To today, the Irish have demonstrated warmth and love by their feeling to those who suffer in this tragedy. An edited synopsis of the testimony provided by each AIVFA member that appeared as a witness follows.

(ii) Summary of Testimony by AIVFA Family Members

Dr. Bal Gupta:

- I am a physicist and an engineer and a Canadian citizen. My late wife, Ramwati Gupta, was murdered in the Air India Flight 182 bombing. I thank the Prime Minister, Mr. Stephen Harper, who established this Commission of Inquiry. I expect this Commission to get answers to the questions raised in the Terms of Reference.
- My late wife was a jolly, loving and family-centered person. In June 1985, we had been married for over 20 years and we had two sons, 12 and 18 years old. After coming to Canada, we visited our relations in India every four or five years. It was four years after our last visit to India in 1981 and we had planned to take a trip to India in 1985. Our whole family had confirmed seats to go on an Air India flight on July 6, 1985. However, one seat became available for Air India Flight 182 and my wife decided to book a flight on June 22, 1985, so that she could spend two extra weeks with her parents before the rest of the family was to arrive in India. On June 23, I was awakened at 5:30 a.m. by a phone call from a very close friend who told me to listen to the radio, which informed me of the tragedy.

- The government of Canada did not set up any information line and did not offer any other administrative or emotional help immediately after the tragedy. Air India set up an information phone line and kept its offices open on Sunday. It was the only source of information to families. Air India offered to take two family members from each family to Ireland, so on June 25, my younger son, Susheel, and myself flew to Cork, Ireland. At the Cork airport, the Indian Ambassador's wife, Mrs. Dr. Razia Doshi, received every single family member arriving at the airport. On June 27, we were taken to Cork Regional Hospital to assist with the identification of bodies. The Irish were very well organized and very helpful. That evening in an interview with CTV news, I expressed my great dismay and anger that no Canadian staff was present to help the Canadian families. On Friday, June 28, we saw Canadian officials on scene for the first time, five days after the tragedy.
- Upon returning home to Canada, there was no emotional, psychological, physical or administrative help or grief counselling or guidance from any government agency. The legal wrangling with lawyers over the settlement agreement was very taxing. The Canadian government's contribution was very small. I don't think it was much more than a \$1,000,000.00 total package to all the 329 families.
- Since that faithful day in June 1985, my sons and I have suffered immeasurable pain and suffering. My late wife's parents never recovered from the loss of their eldest child until their death. All happy occasions, for example, my sons winning a game, passing examinations, getting awards, getting married, myself getting a promotion or an award or some recognition, have been tainted by an underlying pain. In the absence of any help or counselling from the government, the families shared each others pain and helped each other as much as possible.
- The families have worked very hard to keep together. We were and are a very diverse group brought together by this tragedy. We informally started the Air India 182 Victims Families Association in 1987. Right from the beginning we asked for an effective investigation and prosecution of the culprits and for an Inquiry into the Air India Flight 182 bombing. No Inquiry was promised and no responsible government Minister or Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officer apprised the families about the state of the criminal investigation until June 1995. Often, and I have no qualms in saying that, we, the families, felt like we were being treated as second-rate citizens of Canada.
- In April 2005, Parliament passed a Private Members Bill asking for an Inquiry and all opposition members of Parliament as well as five Liberal Members of Parliament supported this Bill. The Honourable Bob Rae was appointed to examine Air India related matters. Finally, Prime Minister Stephen Harper ordered an Inquiry in May 2005.
- With respect to the Inquiry, tears and sympathy are just not enough. The families and Canadians at large hope that this Commission will be able to point out clearly which deficiencies and problems in many areas outlined in the Terms of Reference of this Inquiry existed before, around, and following the Air India tragedy, and at the same time will point out those deficiencies and problems which continue to exist today. It is also hoped that this Inquiry will suggest remedies to prevent the recurrence of similar tragedies in the future.

- I also have a request. Although it is not strictly within the Terms of Reference, I would like to see some friendly advice by the Commissioner to the government about how to treat victims' families in terrorism-related cases and also of the need for an automatic establishment of a Commission of Inquiry into such cases. We would not like any victims of terrorism to be treated the way we have been treated. The Commission's findings and recommendations may possibly start a recovery from the loss of faith in the capability of the Canadian government to prevent terrorism and deal appropriately with the aftermath of terrorism acts.

Mr. Deepak Khandelwal:

- I lost both of my older sisters age 19 and 21, in the bombing of Air India Flight 182. They were both Canadian citizens. In June 1985, I was 17 years old and finishing my last year of high school in Saskatoon. My sisters were going back to India to attend our uncle's wedding. It was a very happy time for our family. All three of us were going to be in university. We were a happy family of five. The bombing was the beginning of many potential happy situations being taken away from my family.
- The next couple of years were very hard. The pain and suffering has continued for the last 21 plus years. I became an only child because of the bombing. There are painful reminders of loss on a regular basis, such as every birthday, anniversary or holiday, all without my sisters.
- I believe that there were many failures that led to this preventable tragedy before June 23rd, 1985. There is also a serious issue of how inhumanely and disrespectfully the government has treated the victim families in the past 21 years. I, along with all Canadians are looking to you Mr. Commissioner, to make sure the deficiencies that lead to this event are exposed so that this type of preventable tragedy never happens again in Canada.
- I would like to see this Commission identify deficiencies and make actionable recommendations with respect to the following issues, such as: the effectiveness of Canadian government agencies, i.e. the RCMP and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), deficiencies that existed in the assessment by government officials on the potential threat posed by Sikh terrorist, and aviation security.
- I deeply believe that racism has affected how the families have been treated in the past 21 years. If the victims had been Caucasian, how differently would they have been treated? How would the subsequent criminal investigation have differed? Would the families have been constantly told lies throughout the whole process?
- All Canadians, Commissioner Major, are counting on you. We have waited 21 years for this Inquiry and the truth to come out. Please don't let us down like everyone else.

Ms. Rama Bhardwaj:

- I was born and married in India. My connection to Canada began in 1967 when my husband, an engineering architect, came here to work. He found success here. He landed in Montreal in 1967. He moved to Toronto and was offered a good position in Brampton. I

came to Canada in 1969 and my two sons arrived in December 1970. My son Harish perished in Air India Flight 182. He was born in India in 1966. He was a bright and loving young boy. He was very close to his brother and parents. At the time of the bombing, he graduated with an average of 94.5 percent. He had been accepted into the University of Toronto medical program with full scholarship. He was a talented child, an all-rounder placing first in music, math and biology and earning an Efficiency Award Trophy.

- At 2:00 a.m. a friend called my house and told me that one of the Air India flights had been blown out of the sky. It was my cousin from London who first informed me about the crash but said there were some survivors. The second call came from Air India and my friend answered because I was upset. A third call was from my brother who was cursing about the situation. People started to come to our home. After realizing the situation, after it began to sink in, I was so overwhelmed that I fainted. Meanwhile, my husband had arrived in Delhi on a separate flight and was expecting Harish to be there to receive him. When he learned of the bitter truth, he fainted at the Delhi Airport. He went to Cork to locate Harish but his body was never found. I was in no condition to travel to Cork and face the chaotic situation there.
- No government official ever showed any support, moral or otherwise. It was unthinkable cold treatment. It was our grief. There was no sympathy or support. We were left to face this horrible crime alone. We never received any communication or support from the government or from Air India.
- We were Canadian citizens. The government of Canada seemed to think this was an Indian tragedy. I remember on the second anniversary of the bombing there were speeches on how the Air India victims' families were being cared for. That was untrue. My surviving son Jatindr, who was very close to Harish, is still dealing with Harish's death to this date. He does not talk about it. My husband Parkash had a heart attack in 1986 because of the grief, stress and financial strain.
- I still feel very alone. People say that time is a big healer. It's not true. You never get over a tragic loss like this.

Ms. Jayashree Thampi:

- I lost my husband and my daughter on Air India Flight 182. We were married in May of 1974. He got a job offer in Montreal and we decided to move to Canada in 1976. My daughter was born on December 14, 1977. My husband and daughter booked their ticket for Air India Flight 182 from Montreal to attend a wedding and to visit families. Since I did not have enough vacation days, I decided to join them a couple of weeks later.
- On the morning of June 23, 1985, I was asleep when the phone rang around 6:30 in the morning. It was a friend calling from Montreal with the news of the disaster.
- I went to Cork, Ireland, with my sister. I don't remember seeing any Canadian government officials there. I never found the bodies. No Canadian official offered us any help. After a few weeks, I returned to Toronto. Nobody from the Canadian government ever called to see how I was doing. There was no offer of counselling from Air India or the government. The only thing I remember is the kindness of the Irish people.

- After my son was involved in an Air France non-fatal accident at Pearson International Airport in Toronto some years later, Air France offered counselling to my family and I accepted the offer. The therapy allowed me to start dealing with the issues I had never dealt with before. I got involved in the creation of the memorial for the victims of Air India Flight 182.
- The establishment of this Commission has been a consolation for the families and we are grateful for the conviction of the Prime Minister in living up to his pre-election promise. Mr. Commissioner, I feel that the Inquiry should not be guided by the rules of expediency but by the relentless pursuit of truth so that the failures will be analysed and any potential security lapses will be identified, incompetence and any ineptitude will be relieved, and appropriate recommendations to stem such lapses will be made.
- A few of the issues I wish to see this Inquiry address are: how did the system fail, has the government taken any serious administrative and executive decisions in reprimanding the officials whose ineptitude caused this disaster, and have they done enough to avoid such bungling of investigations in the future? Will the Commission be able to provide a recommendation for the automatic adoption of a three-judge system today for terrorist cases, and will the Commission be able to look into the details of the culture of fear and intimidation that prevails in different communities? Will the Commission be able to set guidelines as to the government's role in providing support for the families of victims of terrorism? I know that the Commission cannot penalize the individuals who are responsible for this crime. However, I personally would like to see the Commission bring out into the open the systemic errors in the operation of the various agencies that culminated in the loss of 331 innocent victims.

Ms. Zerina Pai:

- I am originally from India. I arrived in Canada four years ago. My brother was an assistant flight purser with Air India. He had flown for 7 or 8 years and was only 37 when he died. He was unmarried.
- My brother made friends very easily. As a kid he would pick up the strangest people in the world because they were poor and didn't have proper clothing and they were hungry. He would feed them and literally give them the shirt off his back. His name was Noshir. As we grew older, he turned into a responsible man taking care of his two young sisters. He would drive me to school.
- I knew so many families on that plane. My best friends, S.P. and Joy and their son, who was my godson, Ratik Singh, were all on that flight. We lived in each other's homes.
- On the day of the tragedy, the phone rang. It was my ex-husband on the phone. He asked me if I was sitting down. He told me that the plane had gone down and there were no survivors. When my mother heard the news, she passed out on the floor. My father began running around the house, turning on the TV, radio, anything to try and catch the news. I tried to call Air India but nobody picked up the phone. As news spread, people started calling our home. All I could think of was that I needed to ring my good friends, S.P. and Joy; maybe they could help. Then I realized they were gone as well. It was late evening

around 9:00 p.m. when two Air India representatives came to our house and asked if there was anything they could do for us. I said I wanted to go to Cork and they arranged it for me. I left with my parents for Cork that night.

- When we arrived in London, the Cabin Crew Association had people there who met families of the crew. When I arrived in Cork, I went directly to the hospital. The people of Cork were fantastic. There were priests, nuns, and social service workers to help us at the hospital. We had strangers walk up to us and console us. The Consul General of India had people meet us at the airport to take us to our hotels or to the hospital. Going through this process was the most difficult thing I have ever done.
- In the aftermath of the bombing, we never heard from the Indian government except for a condolence letter from Rajiv Ghandi. We received a couple of calls from Air India accountants who wanted to do the settlement. There was a ton of pressure to settle. I said we were not ready to go through something like this as in our religion we have prayers every day for the first month. We kept getting calls and finally we set a date, and after I signed, I remembered the Air India representative standing up, shaking my father's hand and saying, "It has been a pleasure." And my father said, "Not under these circumstances". My parents gave all the money to charity. Once we settled, we never again heard from Air India.
- After the loss of my brother, my parents never recovered. My mother didn't leave the house for 15 years, save and except for temple and then home. She never went to a wedding or party for 15 years. To her, the loss of her own son, her firstborn, meant her life was over. My father also never recovered. He lost all interest in his businesses and sold them one by one. The only thing he refused to sell was his home because his children grew up there. To this day my brother's room is intact. His books are still there. His hats still hang there.
- My role in all this was to hold the family together. My mother was so out of it. There was so much emotional pressure on me at the time. I quit my job. Between Air India and the government, something could have been done to ease our pain. India is not the sort of country that believes in counselling but I think Air India, as an international organization, should have offered us some help.
- I cannot believe it has taken 20 years and so much money and we still have no closure for any of the families and have been unable to punish the killers. Look at the USA and how they pursued the Lockerbie bombers. To me the real tragedy is that no one has been held accountable for this tragedy. This is a true Canadian tragedy. I would hope that from this Inquiry we would learn from the stories we have to tell so that no Canadian or any family has to go through what we are still going through. I would hope that something is done to improve security at airports. There has been no accountability from the governments of Canada or India and neither have the security agencies been held accountable for what happened.

Dr. Padmini N. Turlapati:

- I am a paediatrician. My husband, Lakshminarayana, also known as Babu, is a chartered accountant. We've lived in Canada for 24 years. After working in Nigeria for 10 years, we

immigrated to Canada in 1982 for the sole purpose of giving our two sons a broader perspective and dreamt of providing them with better opportunities and education. My children loved Canada. Sanjay, 11 years old, born on December 30, 1970, was my oldest son. He was brilliant, bright, dignified, mature and gentle beyond his years. Deepak, 8 years old, born October 1973, my second son, was also very bright, full of life and zest.

- In 1985, both my children did well and won numerous academic and athletic awards. In the summer I wanted them to go to India and spend time with their grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. The children were 11 and 14 years of age that June of 1985. We bought tickets six months prior and my husband was going two months later to bring them back. Deepak was going unaccompanied. Air India had agreed that Sanjay could go with his brother so they wouldn't be separated.
- After the Air India Flight 182 departed, my husband and I went to bed and at about 6:15 the telephone rang. Babu answered the telephone and he collapsed. I ran into the drawing room, put on the television and that is how I found out. I called my brother-in-law in Chicago, a friend in Toronto and my brother in India who was getting ready to receive the children. I told him to break the news gently to my 83-year-old father and 72-year-old mother. I packed my luggage and then I sat with Babu in front of the television. Friends came and went and we sat without any contact from the government, any social agency or Air India for about 4 days. The government totally neglected us, and to add insult to the injury, Brian Mulroney sent condolences to Ghandi.
- We left for London on the 26th of June. In the UK, friends and family received us as we proceeded to Ireland with my brother and friend. In Cork, Ireland, we were received by Irish personnel who took us to a hotel in Cork. There we were received by Mr. Doshi, the India Ambassador to Ireland, and his wife, Mrs. Doshi, who along with locals had prepared Indian food. There was no one from the Canadian Embassy. All through this, the Irish nurses and nuns were supportive. The Irish took us by bus to the site in Ahakista, 80 miles from where the crash had taken place. The local Irish opened their hearts and homes to all of us and brought us flowers, rice and candles. They offered to bury our dead in the church ground and even offered to cremate if we so wished. Their unconditional love humbles me even today.
- We were only able to locate Sanjay's body. We took Sanjay's body in the casket provided by the Irish to India as per my mother's request. During this entire time, no one from Canada met or spoke to us. When we reached Bombay, there was no representative from Air India or the Indian government.
- I learned that the Indian Civil Service were informed of a possible threat and took security measures to safeguard the airports, bus stations, trains, etc. I also learned that intelligence had made Ghandi aware of possible threats to Air India Flight Number 182. The Canadian government was informed and that explained why the flight had a separate entrance with all that security in Toronto. I could not stomach the thought that such callous neglect was possible and it broke my heart.
- Within two weeks, I was back in Newfoundland. I never had a social worker or the support of a psychiatrist. I coped on my own. Likewise, my husband was in Toronto by himself. No one called me either and no services were offered. I lost my father in 1986 as he could

not recover from the loss and my mother and siblings were further traumatized. My life seemed aimless and purposeless except for working.

- Each year my husband and I have gone to Ahakista, Ireland, on a pilgrimage for a week to ten days. The Irish have nurtured and sustained us through all these years at all levels. But for their unconditional love, I would never have been able to believe in humanity.
- In 1995, my siblings came for the 10th anniversary of the Air India Flight 182 bombing and then onto Canada. The tragedy has shattered their lives as well. They looked up to me now in place of our parents and I was touched. I thought things would get easier with time. Parents are not supposed to outlive their children.
- For 20 years we had asked for a public Inquiry, which was stalled because of the investigation. Not only had no one taken responsibility but at each step the system had failed us. However late they started the public Inquiry. For me it is paramount, more than a ray of hope, that maybe someone will look into this mega mess and give us some answers. For 21 years, we have hung in limbo with no closure as living dead. We want to know how, where and why the system failed us Canadians. I cannot take the guilt of sole responsibility that as a mother I put both my sons on that plane. I cannot look into their eyes in pictures and say any more, forgive me. I have to be able to say "Your deaths were not in vain and those who were responsible will be accountable, justice will be served irrespective of colour and creed in Canada". My mind goes out to those in witness protection who live in fear for their lives. I want to know that the government can and will protect those in the witness protection while trying to get to the root of the problem. I have special interests in knowing and finding out what happens to the funds for Palestine and Sikh Temples.
- As for myself, I have no dreams or future, I just live day by day. My husband, recently retired, and will soon be working on the private trust in memory of our children, set-up for underprivileged children. We, and all the families started a memorial fund in 2000 and since then, the families have been given scholarships yearly, both in Ireland and in Canada.
- In summary, I would like to find the answers to the following questions: How did the government agencies responsible for safety and security of Canadians in Canada ignore the threats they knew against Air India Flight 182; why did the RCMP and CSIS suddenly stop the surveillance of criminals they were shadowing days before the tragedy; how do you stop criminals intimidating witnesses willing to testify against those who commit the crimes; how do you change the current judiciary system and ensure that cases of this magnitude are heard and decided by a bench of at least three judges; how do you recognize all of those associations that are involved in criminal activities and prevent them from collecting funds for their activities?

Mr. Susheel Gupta:

- I was born in India in 1972 but came to Canada when I was only six months old. Canada has really always been my home. It is with great pride that I call myself a Canadian citizen. I grew up much like any other child living in Canada. I played hockey, was a Cub Scout,

and had a paper route. Sadly, because of the Air India bombing, I had a mother for only 12 years of my life.

- On the morning of the Air India disaster, I woke to the sound of our home phone ringing at around 6:30 in the morning. Soon our house was full with family members and I remember my father getting very angry with whom ever he called in the government as that unknown individual indicated that they were not interested in assisting, that he should call Air India. Canadian government officials did not seem to care at all. This was not their tragedy to deal with but India's. It didn't matter that we were Canadian citizens.
- My dad and I travelled to Ireland. When we arrived in Ireland at the airport, Mrs. Doshi, the Indian Ambassador's wife to Ireland, greeted us. But there was no Canadian official at the airport. It's a strange thing to say but if there's any place in the world where my mother could have been murdered, I am happy it was Ireland. The generosity and kindness we received was something I have never experienced anywhere else in the world to this day in my life.
- On one particular day as we were departing the Cork hospital, my father expressed anger to a reporter and her camera man as he informed them that there was not "one damned Canadian official" here and we were not receiving any support, guidance or information from our own government. That night, the interview aired back in Canada on CTV National News. It was the first media piece that let Canadians know that there were no Canadian government officials and that they had not responded and were taking no role in assisting the victims families in Ireland. The next morning at around 7:30 a.m. Irish time, the phone rang in the hotel. It was a Canadian government official I believe from London, England, at the embassy. That official let my father know there would be someone in Ireland shortly. Certainly the timing of this official's telephone call was no coincidence after the airing of that TV interview.
- When we got back to Canada our family was devastated. I was devastated. My father struggled to be both my mother and father for both my brother and I, while at the same time he was mourning the loss of his wife. There was not a grief counsellor, not a social worker, not a doctor and certainly no government official to help. All we had were our family friends.
- Unfortunately, from the first day of this mass murder, most Canadians failed to recognize it as a terrorist activity and failed to respond to the needs of the victims. As a nation we somehow failed to prevent this tragedy. More importantly, we failed also to incorporate this terrorist attack into our history. As a result, we have collectively acted as if terrorism has never happened here, as if we are somehow immune from the current threat of global terrorism. We always have thought of terrorism as occurring somewhere else, but terrorism in Canada has already been a fact of life and the sooner we learn from it, the better.
- With respect to the Terms of Reference, I am personally deeply concerned about our laws in relation to the financing of terrorists, terrorists organizations and the relationship of these organizations to political interests. Moreover, I want to know as a proud Canadian that CSIS and the RCMP are working together. That's what I'd like to know. I'd like to

know if that is the case, effectively working together to protect my family, all Canadians and myself.

Mr. Murphy Subramaniam:

- I came to Canada in 1969, joined George Brown College to study further in industrial technology for one year. In 1972, I went back home to India. I got married to Lakshmi and a few months later she joined me here in Canada. Our first child was born in 1975. One or two days after the birth of my daughter, she became very ill and passed away at Sick Kids Hospital. Our second child Veena, was born in November 1975.
- Veena enjoyed learning piano and swimming. She had been working on her knitting skills before the trip and there were so many things Veena wanted to do and be. She had such potential. Veena brought home her report card. Her grades were all A's.
- At around 6:00 a.m., a friend of mine called and asked whether I was up or still sleeping. He told me to watch TV as there was some important news coming on. A few seconds later, my daughter's babysitter telephoned and asked whether I watched the news on TV. When friends started coming over, then I turned on the television and saw that they were pulling bodies out of the water. I went upstairs and cried.
- I went to Ireland with my brothers. Canadian officials did not contact us, but I received a letter of condolence from then Prime Minister Mr. Brian Mulroney. The relatives of the victim's family were given free passage and all of it was arranged by Air India. I flew from Toronto to Heathrow. At Heathrow, Air India set up a room with photographs of victims. I was asked whether I could identify any of the bodies from the photographs displayed in the room. I was so emotional I could not do the identification. There was no assistance provided to us at Heathrow by the Canadian government, no psychologist, no counsellors. We comforted each other.
- When we landed in Cork, the government of Ireland made arrangements in cooperation with Air India staff. The Indian Ambassador was very helpful and supportive. I don't recall there being any Canadian staff on hand.
- On my third day in Cork, we were given a particular time to go to the hospital. At the hospital, one of the staff nurses was assigned to us and she was with us until we departed Cork. I found my wife's body but my daughter's body was never recovered. I took my wife's body in a casket to Bangalore. Air India arranged for us to take an Air Lingus flight to London and from there, by Air India, to Bangalore.
- In 1998, in the name of my wife and my daughter, I established a scholarship award yearly to meritorious students in the final year at an India College where my wife graduated. I also started one at my daughter's public school in Canada.
- My company was very supportive. They gave me six months holiday with pay and again on the first year anniversary I was given three months. My company even collected money for me. I donated it all to Sick Kids Hospital and gave it in the name of my wife. The Canadian government never contacted me to help me. They may have sent a condolence letter but nobody ever came. Bal Gupta organized for the families to meet with a

psychiatrist on weekends.

- I would like to know who was responsible for this disaster? How did the government agencies responsible for safety and security of Canadians ignore the threats they knew existed against Air India and allow Flight 182 to leave Canadian soil with so many Canadian lives in danger? Why did the RCMP and CSIS suddenly stop the surveillance? How can we stop criminals from intimidating witnesses who are willing to testify against them? How can we recognize all those associations that are involved in criminal activities from collecting funds for the criminal activities and preventing them from being recognized as charitable organizations for tax purposes?
- This disaster could have been averted. We should have been told that Air India was a target. Had I known, I never would have let my family travel.

Ms. Esmie Alexander:

- I was born in Kerala, India, and was married in 1968. I immigrated to Canada with my husband in 1971. I am a Canadian citizen. I have three children; Robbie, the eldest, is 36; Tania is 33; and Jamie is 31. My father and mother were already living in Canada when we came here, so my husband could complete his post-graduate medical degree. My husband was very well liked and respected. Anyone who came to meet him even once thought of him as a friend. His motivation in coming and training in Canada was to gain skills in the medical profession that he could bring back to India where he could help those who were less fortunate. We had planned to go back to India as soon as the children were old enough to be in Canada on their own. I remember attending at talk about relationships between husbands and wives and realized that my husband had all the qualities of an ideal husband. He was understanding, supportive, loving, and enjoyable to be around and valued my opinion.
- Prior to my husband travelling on Air India, we received news from India that my mother-in-law was ill and we all felt that he should go to India to see her. He was the only child that could make sure all her affairs were in order.
- At about 6:00 a.m., a distant relative of my mother called us. Upon hearing the news, I screamed and put the phone down. In the days afterwards, my father came and dealt with all the paperwork and arrangements. I was not in any state of mind to do anything. I can still remember the look on Rob's face when he found out. I have pictures of Jamie before and after. I could see the changes on their faces.
- In the months after this happened, the government said they would provide us with counselling, but I didn't follow up on this and never ever heard anything from their side. Once we knew there was no support from the government, I relied on my church community for support. I don't remember anyone from Air India contacting us. In a time when we needed the support of this country with deficiencies that they perpetuated, there was no support at all. The government should have helped to make victims' families lives easier. With a bit of support many lives could have been different.
- I hope this public Inquiry can fix some of the deficiencies that caused this tragedy to occur. I hope no one has to go through anything like this ever. I hope the Commissioner

will operate openly and make meaningful recommendations to the Prime Minister. I hope something changes in our legal system that cannot convict known terrorists in our country. I hope that support to the families in its different forms will be looked at. We as Canadian deserve it.

Mme. Monique Montpetit-Castonguay:

- I am married to Maurice Castonguay, the brother of Rachelle who died in the Air India bombing. At the time of the bombing Rachelle was 32 years old, single with no children.
- For 21 years, the circumstances surrounding the tragedy of Air India Flight 182 have remained enigmatic. It is necessary that changes to the laws and regulations in Canada are brought about in order to prevent a similar disaster from occurring again in Canada.
- In the first days after the explosion, there was not any official government messages addressed to the families that were done in our own Official Language (French). Some of the Castonguay family members do not speak English, especially Rachelle's own mother. On June 27, 1985, a representative of the RCMP communicated with our family. However, no body from the government helped us.
- In the autumn of 1986, Mr. Salim Jiwa revealed the political content of the bombing plot of Air India Flight 182, to us in a book. It was a terrorist group that was at the origin of this collective assassination. Rachelle had nothing to do with this internal war. We had no way other than the media to keep us informed. It seems that information was provided (to some degree) only to the families of Indian descent involved.
- With respect to the trial, the RCMP and provincial authorities in the province of British Columbia endeavoured to keep families of the victims informed, however, in our country with two Official Languages, all the information and material that was made available to us was made available in English only. Someone from the BC Victim Services contacted Rachelle's father from time to time by phone to discuss, in French, the latest news during the trial preparation and duration of the trial.
- The gesture on the part of the federal government to defray a part of the costs of travel for the 20th anniversary of the Air India disaster was highly appreciated. However, when I tried to get more information about the ceremony in Ireland, this was another occasion where the families that were not of Indian descent were excluded from the circle of knowledge about the ceremony events. I was not aware then of the existence of the Air India Victim Families Association either.
- The Air India Inquiry is our last chance to clarify all that was the tragedy in our country's democratic system. Since this collective assassination, the members of our family have passed through a whole a range of feelings relating to mourning, the initial shock, the refusal to believe, anger, and sadness. Acceptance should be the last stage for us. A normal mourning lasts six months to four years. However, for twenty-one years, the course of the criminal investigation, the resumption of communications after years of silence, the law suit, the unbelievable verdict, the meetings, the interviews of the media and the reading of

books published on Air India, have brought us back to the beginning of the process of mourning over and over again.

- It is of primary importance that the Air India Inquiry gets to the bottom of things. For example, in 1985, the mandate of the RCMP and CSIS did not envision collaboration between these organizations. However, without collaboration in the future between these two organizations, the planning of other deplorable terrorist actions will occur. This public Inquiry grants an opportunity and possibility for family members of the victims to complete their mourning.

Mr. Mahesh Chandra Sharma:

- There were four members of my family on Air India Flight 182. I will be talking about three of them. My wife's name was Uma Sharma. She was a very bright student. At the time of the Air India bombing, my children were 14 and 11. My daughter Sandhiya was very bright. My other younger daughter always assisted me with my fashion and I still miss her opinion.
- On the morning of June 23rd, 1985, I got a phone call from my friend who dropped my family off at the airport. He told me to listen to the radio. Afterwards I went to Cork, Ireland with my brother to identify the bodies. I am happy that my brother was the one who identified the bodies because I wanted to remember them the way I saw them the last time.
- My biggest problem was after I lost my family there was no communication with the government. We had no particular support from the Canadian government to counsel us. With respect to compensation, we were asked to sign on a dotted line to release CP Air, CSIS, RCMP, government of India, government of Canada, and Air Canada. That was not the right thing to do. Our government should have given us some sort of counselling before we did this.
- Terrorism is one thing that you cannot stop. It doesn't matter what you plan they are always a step ahead. We have to make sure that there is some sort of mechanism in place to assist people if something happens again.
- I attended the verdict in the Air India trial in March 2005. The verdict shocked me. After the verdict I was interviewed on television and I believe I was the only person who said we should have at least two or three judges. I know the Lockerbie trial had three judges in that instance.
- I understand there was friction between the RCMP and CSIS. This friction brought nothing except it delayed the investigation and delayed the trial. This should not have happened. A lot of people think had it been an Air Canada plane, it would have been different. I don't believe in that. There was no racism here. The only thing present was that the government of Canada was not competent enough to deal with this problem. It was the first time that such a monstrosity happened and they had no idea what to do. Until then, they did know the friction that existed between CSIS and the RCMP and what was going on. I hope that in the future these two organizations work together so that we can live safely in this world.

Mr. Rob Alexander:

- I lost my father, Doctor Anchanatt Mathew Alexander, a family physician, and Chief of Staff at a local hospital. Losing a father at such a young age has meant losing the mentoring and moulding of character and confidence that a father would usually instil in his children. I was only 15, my sister 11 and my brother 10, and my mother 40 years of age when my father died in the Air India bombing. The void that he has left can never be filled.
- My father was not originally supposed to travel on Air India Flight 182. My mother had booked him on an Air France flight. However, a family acquaintance that worked for Air India offered a first class ticket on Air India for the same price as his Air France ticket. We cancelled the Air France ticket, all along not knowing of any bomb threat against the airline even though certain government agencies may have known of more specific threats.
- After the Air India crash, we did not know whom to call and we were not contacted by any government agency, or representative from Air India. It was almost a day later when we got word that there were no survivors. We found out on the news. No one from the Canadian government or from Air India called us to let us know that.
- In late October 1985, after a few months, we received a call that my father's body had been recovered. This call was from the Foreign Affairs Department. My father's body was the last body to be recovered in the recovery effort in the Atlantic Ocean. Prior to this contact, I don't think there was any other government contact whatsoever with our family or any other family for that matter. In particular, there was no form of support from the government or by Air India in the form of grief counselling or other forms of support that could have been useful.
- I do not like to live in the past but the outstanding questions are too big to leave unanswered for us as victims' families and as the Canadian public. I want to understand what happened in the RCMP/CSIS dealings. I want to know why there was no contact made by the Canadian government when more that 75% of the victims were Canadian taxpayers. Why was the criminal trial in BC handled the way it was? The government obviously has and had the resources to provide support in that tragic situation so why wasn't it offered to us? My feeling is that this wasn't recognized as a Canadian tragedy until very recently and that it did not really matter to them. There has been no accountability in over 21 years; it is time there was some accountability. We have waited too long.

Ms. Anita Gupta:

- My only sister Mita was murdered on Air India Flight 182. She was 16 years old. I am providing my statement to the Inquiry because perhaps by telling my story a future victim of a violent and terrible crime will not have to do the same, will not have to wage a fight just to have a long overdue and necessary dialogue about our approach to preventing and prosecuting terrorists acts, surveillance of terrorist organizations, as well as our approach to helping victims of terrorism.

- My parents and I did not find out about the bombings until late in the afternoon on June 23rd, 1985. In some ways I remember that day as the last day I was a child but in other ways it feel like part of me has been stuck at 11 years old ever since.
- The truth is that my sister was not unlike the other children that died on Air India Flight 182. She was gloriously normal, but so special to me and to those who knew her because she was ours. The one thing that strikes me most about my sister is what a truly good friend she must have been. The stolen opportunity to become friends with my sister is my continuing loss. The five-year age difference seemed enormous when we were eleven and sixteen, but in a normal lifespan we would have had so much time as we grew up together celebrating with each other the joys of life, like our weddings, choosing our careers, raising our children, as well as supporting each other through the sadness, such as the death of my parents.
- With respect to the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry, I would like to know how our present system deals with tracking down monies that support the activities of known terrorist organizations in Canada. I would also like to know what happens to the assets of organizations once they are banned as a terrorist group. I also have several questions regarding the current relationship, not just the policies, but also the actual workings between CSIS and the RCMP. I have to wonder for what purpose was CSIS conducting surveillance prior to the bombings? If there was adequate justification to conduct the surveillance, wouldn't it have only been logical to actually understand the language of the information gathered? We are not a country without the resources of speakers of many tongues, and this was true 20 years ago.
- Our strategy for terrorism and acts of mass murder can't be simply that we will try to prevent them. We must be prepared to deal with such things when they happen because they will happen. I am also astounded that there is no assignment or acceptance of responsibility, or accountability, by individuals following what happened in the Air India disaster. I wonder why we do not expect accountability and culpability from members of our investigative and enforcement agencies when things go very wrong? If we do not expect accountability from our agencies, why in the world would we expect better behaviour in the future?
- One of the Terms of Reference refers to the protection of witnesses in cases in which there is serious threat of intimidation and bodily harm. Sadly, if any lesson can be learned from the Air India investigation and trial, perhaps it is how ill equipped we are in dealing with witnesses, identifying them, fostering trust with them, interviewing them, and protecting them.
- I think back to 1985 and I believe that there was one Air India flight a week leaving from Toronto. There were clear threats to Air India's safety expressed to the Canadian government. If there was a clear threat to a specific airline and there was only one flight a week, how hard would it have been to take extra steps?
- Although it is not officially a Term of Reference, one of the issues that keeps coming up in testimony is the need for available and appropriate mental health care for victims of terrorism. I know from speaking with Canadians who have lost their loved ones in 9/11,

that need for affordable and lasting care from a therapist trained in grief and trauma remains to date.

Mr. Krishna Bhat

- I came to Canada with my wife in 1974. Our son Deepak was born in 1976. In 1983, we moved to Sherwood Park, Alberta. After we came to Alberta, my wife Muktha was able to stay home full time with our son while I worked. This was a very happy time because when she was working, we both were on shift work and saw very little of one another. We had a happy home. She was active in the community, involved in the church and enjoyed singing. She was a very talented classical singer. She was also good at knitting and making her own dresses. Deepak was a very talented boy and a good piano player. He liked track and field at school.
- Originally, the three of us were supposed to travel together to India on July 6, 1985, but Muktha's niece from New Delhi called and asked her to come early and spend some time with them. As a result, Muktha and Deepak left early on June 23, 1985. I stayed behind and intended to follow them in a couple of weeks.
- I took Deepak and Muktha to the Edmonton International Airport that morning at 8:00 a.m. I left for work around 6:00 p.m. that day. At around 3:00 a.m., I turned the radio on to CBC. I heard the news that an Air India flight had disappeared off the air traffic control screen. You can't believe how I felt.
- After it happened, my friends and neighbours came to be with me. I felt I did not belong to this world or my mind was totally obliterated or a strange feeling of void or helplessness prevailed around me. After the disaster, I went to Ireland with my brother-in-law. When we arrived, there was no Canadian presence in Ireland. The High Commissioner from India was there and he had contact with the family. We felt at home in Ireland. After a few more days, some Canadian officials arrived. I described one of them as having his hands in his pants' pocket all the time. They did not comfort us. Ultimately, I went to Cork. They found my wife but not my son.
- After the disaster, I was not offered any counselling. Instead, I threw myself into my work just to get myself through the day. My co-workers were also very kind during this time and on the anniversary of the disaster.
- I remember now that the Wednesday before they left, I heard a report on CBC News that the ISYF, International Sikh Youth Federation, warned all Sikhs not to travel by Air India. Why weren't we advised not to fly? Why didn't the Canadian authorities take these threats seriously? I do not understand how at the height of Sikh militancy they could have overlooked such comments. Why was the surveillance on militant Sikhs called off at that time? I understand that threats were made at a gathering at Madison Square Gardens that 50,000 people would die. How could they ignore that? What more was required to wake up CSIS and the RCMP? I felt like I was totally in the dark during the investigation. I can't believe that CSIS tapes were mistakenly erased at a time when the entire world was looking at this tragedy. We are not a banana republic. Are we supposed to believe that CSIS was such a Mickey Mouse operation? If we are just supposed to believe that this was a case of incompetence, was someone fired?

- I would like to say that I am a great admirer of Doug Henderson and the way he assisted us, as well as Gary Bass and Maryam Majedi, from Victim Services. Nunziata needs a special mention. These people shared our pain and fought for us. I also want to give thanks to Kim Bolan. She put her life on the line and went to Punjab as an investigative reporter. Such people give us a lot of hope. She was very brave not to let go. I also think Bob Rae is a very genuine person.
- I recall at some point after the disaster there was an attempt at a civil claim. It felt to me the conclusion was mainly driven by the lawyers for Air India, not by our lawyer. Perhaps the settlement would have been a whole lot different had this tragedy happened to mainstream Canadians. The settlement was peanuts.
- Right from the beginning, I felt that the public, particularly our leaders, assumed it to be purely an East Indian issue, a bunch of East Indians travelling to India by Air India plane that was blown apart in open skies by Indian thugs, so why bother? It was not considered to be a Canadian issue at all. Were these not talented children, including Deepak...the future of Canada?
- I hope the Inquiry can bring some answers. This tragedy must not be allowed to repeat. I do not want Canada to be known as a safe haven for terrorists.

Mr. Promode Sabharwal:

- My daughter travelled from India to Canada for holidays in 1985. She spent three months in Montreal before returning to India on the 23rd of June. She was going home to my wife and my son in India. She was 12 years old when she died on Air India Flight 182. My daughter had ambitions to become a leader in the field of teaching; she was very outgoing and very bright.
- At the time of the tragedy I was living in London but after the tragedy I decided to move to Montreal and I had my family come after two years to stay. It was a fresh start. Only in about the last three or four years did I have any contact with government officials.
- I support this Commission. I don't think the Commission can recommend compensation but I think it should be done. For those who originally received compensation, it was not enough.

Ms. Chandra Vaidyanathan:

- I lost my kid brother who was 13 years younger than me and the darling of our family of three children. Even now when I think about the Air India disaster, I sometimes end up with nightmares and sleepless nights, thus affecting my routine life and straining my relationship with others on occasion. My brother Krishan had a good sense of humour, loved animals, and was very loyal to his friends.
- My mother, more than anyone in the family, has suffered the most with the loss of her sweet boy. After she heard the news of this tragedy, she went into dark depths of despair, never to recover. While the Canadian officials in Canada were remiss in providing counselling services to the victims' family, the Irish officials and the Irish people in the

Town of Cork were extraordinarily kind and compassionate throughout the entire ordeal to my living brother and mother.

- With respect to the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry, I feel that the knowledge of security threats against Air India in intelligence circles should have resulted in fore warning. I hope that a warning to the Canadian population will take place in the future as a code red or orange, as is issued in the US from time to time. Moreover, what evidence was destroyed either intentionally or unintentionally by certain institutions? If there were failures or incompetence in the government, will this Inquiry be courageous enough to highlight these, so all Canadians can take note and react? As a follow up of this Inquiry, would the Commission ensure that all recommended changes are made and reported to Canadians on an ongoing basis and ensure the recommendations are followed through?

Ms. Perviz Madon:

- At the time of the disaster, I was in India with my children. My husband could not travel with me as he was a professor at Marine College. I am a Canadian citizen but I travelled to India to visit friends and family.
- My husband was an excellent instructor. He often assisted students with their studies outside of the class and at no charge. As a husband and father he was always a very proud man. He was proud not only of his parents and his brother, but he was extremely proud of his children and me, his wife. He was a devoted and loving father. He was a good provider.
- After I heard about the tragedy, I flew to London, England. Those were hard days. I was not with my children. Upon arriving in London, I realized that I had left my children so far away and as such, I constantly kept in touch with my brother-in-law who had a phone, so that I could talk to them. I think they must have felt I abandoned them. Upon the Irish authorities calling us and letting us know it was okay for families to travel to Ireland, we decided to leave for Ireland. I was one of the so-called lucky ones to have found my husband's body. We identified his body based on the ring that was still on his finger. It was our wedding band and it had my name inscribed on the inside portion of the ring.
- I do not recall receiving any assistance from any Canadian officials while in Ireland. I think the only people that really helped us at that time was Air India personnel.
- Upon my return to Canada I was a widow with two young children and no body from the Canadian government came to ask if they could be of assistance to me. I think the only time somebody from the government contacted us was the RCMP when they called me once or twice to find out whether my husband wasn't the one carrying the bomb in the suitcase.
- I think that when it is a matter of putting people's lives in harms way, it is the duty to warn the public who can then decide whether they want to fly on that particular airline or not. Would you put your own wife and your own child and your own father or your own mother on that flight if you knew those flights were threatened?

- If the families hadn't kept this Air India issue in the public attention, I don't think I would have had an opportunity to share my story with Canadians. I strongly believe that whatever we got in the last 21 years has been our hard work, our perseverance, our fight, and I don't see why we had to do that. Just the other day there was highway that collapsed in Montreal. Automatically they are talking of an Inquiry. Did anybody have to start lobbying and say, "Hey, we need an Inquiry for this"?
- I love this country. This is my home. I am, of course, a proud Indian because everybody knows I am Indian. I look Indian but I am also a very proud Canadian. I raised two Canadians. They were born here. My husband wished to emigrate because he believed in this country. I did not think my country would let me down so badly. I feel that maybe, as Mr. Rae said, that if the victims were Anglo-Saxon passengers on an Air Canada flight that maybe the outcome would have been different.
- With respect to whether a trial of this magnitude should be left in the hands of a single judge, we were actually hoping for a jury to sit on the criminal trial, but it is the prerogative of the defendants to choose whether they want jury or judge. So they went with the judge obviously, and I think, in hindsight from now, for a trial of this magnitude we should have a panel of at least three judges, because it all came down to one judge's interpretation of the law.
- With respect to the tapes that were erased, I honestly believe that had these tapes been properly used, legally transcribed, documented and not erased, they would have been a great tool for the prosecuting team.

Ms. Natasha Sam Madon:

- I have a Masters in Criminology from the University of Toronto. My life has been consumed by the Air India tragedy and it was this tragedy that pushed me in the direction of my current career. I lost my father, Sam Madon, on Air India Flight 182.
- Unlike many Canadians, my 9/11 happened sixteen years prior, on June 23rd, 1985. While only four-and-a-half years old at the time, I too can recall the precise moment I was informed of the tragedy. I will likely never forget the moment while sitting in the back of a taxi cab in Bombay, when my then eight-year-old brother had to explain to me that our father had been killed. Losing my father at the age of four has left a void in my life that will undoubtedly never be filled. I will never have the comfort of having more than a handful of memories of him to turn to, as I was robbed of my father at such a young age. What has prolonged my pain is the fact that at the age of twenty five I feel as though I have spent a vast majority of my life waiting for some explanation as to how and why such an act of terror occurred.
- After twenty-one years, it is not asking too much to be able to obtain some of the answers to my burning questions that have haunted me for the greater part of my life, questions such as: whether this tragedy could have been avoided with the greater cooperation of RCMP and CSIS; was protocol simply been followed throughout the criminal investigation, or was it grave negligence that plagued this investigation from the very beginning; while Canadian policies and legislation were created soon after 9/11, what have

Canadian security agencies learned from Air India Flight 182; is the Canadian criminal justice system adequately set up to deal with cases of this magnitude; are there alternative ways available, perhaps a panel of judges rather than one, that would improve the manner in which the justice system responds to these types of crimes; whether the existing legal and law enforcement mechanisms address the real issues of witness intimidation and the impact it has on legal outcomes; and finally, does the Canadian government truly have a handle on emerging terrorist groups and their ability to legally raise funds under the guise of their non-profit status?

- While this Inquiry has been called through duress of what can only be described as a great Canadian tragedy, I believe it has the potential to do a great deal for the future of all Canadians.

Mr. Eric Beauchesne:

- I lost my father, Gaston Beauchesne in the Air India tragedy. My father was a real bon vivant. He just loved life to the fullest. My dad was a pharmacist and his actual job was to replace other pharmacists when they went on vacation. So we would travel around Ontario and Quebec and it was something he enjoyed doing. He also travelled extensively throughout the world and enjoyed this a lot. My father and mother were estranged when I was young and we were reconnecting as father and son prior to the events in 1985. In the years preceding his death we actually saw quite a bit more of each other and I think we were really starting to develop a good strong relationship.
- I was on the bus at the time listening to my Walkman when I heard about the explosion and the crash of Air India Flight 182. However, I didn't connect the dots. I had no idea what airline he was taking. It was not until a couple of days later when my Mom and my stepfather and my sister all got together and they told me that they felt he was on the plane. When we confirmed that my father was on Air India Flight 182 and had perished in the disaster, we arranged through Air India for my sister to travel to Ireland.
- I don't think the Canadian government felt any responsibility for helping us in any way. We received no contact at all. There was nobody to help us to offer any sort of support, either emotional or logistical. There was nobody there to call us to offer any kind of counselling at all. I felt as if this was an invisible tragedy because it happened on another airline that was not a Canadian airline and it happened to people, a majority of whom were from one particular part of Canadian culture.
- I think that what happened to us after the disaster was indicative of a complete departure from the government of any responsibility or acknowledgement of a part in this tragedy. I guess the thing that shakes me the most is that there was no Canadian ownership of this. It made me feel a certain sense of shame in my country because I think in a certain sense nobody was embracing this as a Canadian tragedy. They felt that these people who died on the flight weren't Canadians.
- I truly believe that the government still owes us, family members, a deep apology. The government has a definite lack of accountability. It hasn't taken responsibility and it is indicative of the invisibility of this tragedy. I think it is ironic to think that a lot of things

that have been done recently had nothing to do with Air India, in terms of our security. It all came from 9/11. All the new legislation that came up, all the security measures, all these things came from an American tragedy, but this Canadian tragedy was virtually swept under the carpet. I think that the Canadian government should be held to account for its inability to protect us and its inability to prevent this tragedy. It's inability to understand what had happened. It failed us utterly and has left a bad taste in my mouth for more than twenty-one years.

- I am hoping that the Commission can review the idea of a tribunal system when it comes to crimes of such a horrendous scope as terrorism and mass murder. In such situations, it may not be feasible for a jury to sit the amount of time it would take to try a case of such magnitude. Alternatively, however, I find it unreasonable to place the responsibility of determining guilt or innocence on the shoulders of one man, in such a circumstance as was done to Justice Josephson. However, I cannot underscore the personal importance to me of having the government stand up and take responsibility for the failures they have made from the beginning to the end, and to apologize for them. For me, personally, that would bring a great deal of comfort.

Dr. and Mrs. Ramji Khandelwal:

- We lost both of our daughters on Air India Flight 182. My oldest daughter, Chandra and my younger daughter, Manju. At the time of the disaster, Chandra was twenty-one and Manju was nineteen.
- In 1980, I became a Canadian citizen and all three of my children became Canadian citizens in 1983 and my wife became a Canadian citizen in the year 2000.
- In June 1985, my daughters were travelling on Air India Flight 182 to attend their uncle's wedding on June 27th. The tragedy that was Air India Flight 182 could have been worst for my family if we had gone through with our original plan. Originally, except me, all four of them were booked on that flight. My wife and all three children. My wife decided to go to India two weeks before so that she could spend more time with the family and our son, at the last minute, decided it was more important to attend a computer club at the University of Calgary.
- My daughter Chandra, at the time of the disaster, had passed second year pharmacy at the University of Saskatchewan and was promoted to third year and she was to start third year that September. She was also a great musician. She had a poem on her desk and she believed it and practiced it and it simply said, "Give the world the best you have and the best will come back to you." I think that poem really says a lot about her.
- My daughter Manju completed her first year of medicine and was promoted to second year to start in September at the time of the Air India disaster. She was an academically talented person. She was an avid reader and had a photographic memory. Like her sister, she also liked music. She used to play the clarinet. We are really proud of both of these girls. In the aftermath of the tragedy, my wife and I became a nervous wreck when we started to get nightmares just remembering that we will never see our daughters again in our lives. Our

son Deepak has lost his youth and he started to act as a mature person to deal with the situation. The stress put lots of strain on our family.

- In the ensuing years after the Air India tragedy, the struggle to get questions answered was an uphill battle. It was very frustrating. We also started to think that nobody wanted to do anything because we are Canadians of Indian origin. Nobody really ever contacted us as to whether we needed anything or any help.
- With respect to the Terms of Reference, I hope that some recommendations will come out of this Inquiry that will shed light on the issue of judge versus jury with respect to cases involving terrorism. In my personal opinion, a tribunal of three judges would be better than just one judge in these complicated cases. Our last hope is this Inquiry, and we hope this Inquiry will answer our questions. I think we also have to do something so that these associations which get a charitable number and then are really terrorist-based, do not get money. We have to make sure that Canada is not a haven for terrorists or terrorism.
- It is our hope that such a tragedy never happens again and that all efforts are made to prevent any such tragedy in the future. This can only be done by knowing what went wrong, who is responsible for this bombing, and how we can fix it so that such things never are repeated in the future again. We are putting our fullest trust in you Mr. Commissioner, and we hope that you will not let us down.

Ms. Renee Saklikar:

- I lost my aunt, Dr. Zebunnisha Jethwa and her husband, my uncle, Dr. Umar Jethwa on Air India Flight 182. My mother who lives in New Westminster, British Columbia, was her youngest sister and I am testifying today in order to read a statement by her.
- The Air India bombing destroyed something in my mother who has never been quite the same since. I often think of my cousin, Irfan, being a world away waiting for his parents return and then receiving news that his parents had died in the bombing. He had to grow up alone as he was ten or maybe eleven years old at the time.
- My aunt, Dr. Zebunnisha Jethwa, was a particular boon for the Muslim women of the area in India because Muslim women generally did not want to see male doctors for obstetrics. In 1985, Umar and Zebunnisha attended a medical conference in Florida. Irfan remained in India. My mother convinced them to come pay a visit to Canada and they agreed and spent three weeks in Canada, about ten days in Vancouver with my Mom and ten days in Toronto with my other uncle. When my Mom heard the news of the Air India disaster she was inconsolable. She was in no shape to go to Ireland to identify the bodies. In Ireland, they found Zebunnisha's body. They did not find Umar's body and they returned Zebunnisha's body to India. On hearing that her body was returning to the City of Ankleshwar in India, my aunt's hometown, the town closed. Forty thousand people gathered at the City's railway station awaiting the arrival of her body. My aunt was a loss to her son and her entire family. She was also a loss to a generation of Indian women who could not afford medical services, and relied on her for free or less expensive medical services.

- I think the whole notion of what it means to be Canadian for me is quite idealized and despite my education as a lawyer, I found the aftermath of living with the trial and everything about the investigation leading up to the trial, forced me to question my own belief in Canada as a just and inclusive society. I think for a long time it did not seem to matter to other Canadians, to friends and family, and to other good people. There never really was a feeling of how this disaster was our 9/11.
- With respect to the policy of multiculturalism in Canada, in 1985 and throughout the following decade continuing to the present day, there existed and exists, what I think of as an ethnocentric attitude in Canada, that may have contributed to Canadian government officials not realizing that they had to recruit and hire into the federal Public Service a diverse workforce of men and women, with sufficient language skills as well as historical and cultural education, to be able to understand the subjects of their surveillance. There may have been a lack of sophistication in the approach Canada took to handling sub-cultures which significantly hampered the ability of government agencies to work with the Crown in successfully preparing a case against the accused. I think a lack of a genuine multicultural perspective and the almost surrendering to superficial and exaggerated differences regarding dress and food and dance, might cause a blindness to warning signs that extremists points of view are being allowed to flourish. Official multiculturalism might allow for unscrupulous and criminal elements to take advantage of Canada.
- If we are serious about being a multicultural society, we might have to move beyond food and dance recognition and actually have a discussion about core values like the rule of law. Canada might be a bit soft and might need to educate all citizens on the rule of law, so that it is not an abstract idea and that if you disagree with someone you can't just blow them up, and if you do blow them up, you will be punished. There may be a tendency in this country to allow too much of a "ghettoization" of communities in Canada which directly hampered the investigation of Air India, specifically this idea that if people don't genuinely believe that you cannot threaten or kill or you will be punished, then the intimidation and threatening witnesses becomes much more pervasive.
- Thank you, Mr. Commissioner, for the opportunity to speak and for listening to our questions. I hope our personal statements and comments will be of some use to you and that you will be able to bring some good out of so much pain.

Ms. Smita Bailey:

- I lost my grandmother, Shakuntala Sharma. I also lost my cousins, Sandhya Sharma and Swati Sharma. Sandhya was 14 years old and Swati was 11 at the time of the Air India Flight 182 disaster. I was very close in particular with my cousin Sandhya. It wasn't just like having a cousin; she was like my sister and we spent summers together during summer holidays and we had a very, very close bond. I was also very close to my aunt, Dr. Uma Sharma.
- Before the Air India Flight 182 disaster, I was an honour student. My elder cousin, Sandhya, was very modest but also a very excellent student, achieving marks in the 90-95 percent range.
- In 1985, my grandmother came to visit us in Canada. She stayed with me for the spring of

1985 at our house. I shared my room with her. She decided that she would fly from Edmonton to where we were living in Montreal to spend a bit more time with my uncle and aunt and cousins in Montreal, and then fly back to India with my aunt and two cousins. I was supposed to fly back with them to India as well. However, I changed my mind.

- After the tragedy, the biggest thing I lost was my hope. I didn't know how to grieve. I didn't know how to express myself. I found I lost my concentration and it was such a struggle. I did not receive any support, in the form of guidance or counselling from the Canadian government.
- When I was younger I used to be quite naïve and innocent and I remember I always the best of people. I didn't know that people could hate so much that they could kill innocent strangers on such a mass scale. But what was worse is afterwards people didn't care and the government didn't seem to care. I thought it was because we were a bunch of Indians; we deserved to die.
- After working on the victims' families memory book, I felt like I was breaking down so I sought help from a psychologist who helped me go through the grieving process, which I hadn't gone through before. She said that I was suffering from post-traumatic stress. My mom internalized her grief. She tried just to be strong and carry through. She can't talk about my grandmother and her daughter without crying. It was such a huge impact on our family.
- With respect to the Swiss Air tragedy, I paid attention to it because after the Air India Flight 182 tragedy, I became more sensitized to anything involving air accidents. People seemed to pay attention to it and have compassion towards it, and I remember them saying that counselling was provided after. More recently, I was watching the news again and there was a collapse of the overpass outside of Montreal, and the media was interviewing a representative of the municipal government who reported that the flags of Quebec were at half-mast because they had lost 5 of their citizens. The fact that they just said, "These were five of our citizens", was such a beautiful statement because it embraced everybody as being Canadian and they cared about them as they should.
- In terms of the criminal investigation and trial process, I had no idea that anybody was doing anything with respect to a criminal investigation. I grew up thinking that nobody – nobody cared about this. Nobody mentioned it. It wasn't important and 15 years later in 2000, we were contacted by two very kind people who approached us, Doug Henderson and Kate Galiford of the RCMP and they said that they wanted to notify the families of the victims and to let them know that an investigation had been carried on all those years and it was important for them to inform us. They said they were sorry and I was just quite taken by the fact that somebody said they were sorry for what we had gone through and that we didn't know anything was going on. Our family did not know of an Eastern Families Association, nor did we know about a lawsuit or class action proceeding. The only contact we had, was when Doug Henderson and Kate Galiford talked to us.
- With respect to attending the trial, my observations were that Victim Services was very supportive. They would come and sit by us and hold our hand and say to stay strong and don't let the accused bother us. With respect to aviation security, it would be nice to have a

little bit more consistency. Sometimes they confiscate certain items, and sometimes they don't, there is no consistency between airports. In addition to that, I also wanted to express that we seem to be very reactive here. We aren't proactive. Despite the fact that we have information and we know that we can prevent things, we don't seem to take action unless other countries seem to do it, namely the US. Years ago, we knew that planes could be used as weapons. We didn't do anything about that. There was nothing done. And now that 9-11 has happened, now we're looking into being more realistic and saying that these issues can occur.

- I really hope that nobody else has to go through this. It has been painful to have to suffer for 20 years and I wish that things could have changed the past but if something happens it should be taken care of quickly and efficiently and I don't think people should be made to feel like they are not part of a country.

Ms. Mukta Laforte:

- The crash of Air India Flight 182 was the single-most driving factor in changing my outlook on life and dreams, my emotions and health. I was 19 years old at the time of the explosion on my way to Vancouver after one week of camping in our beautiful Rocky Mountains. My friend and I were driving and listening to tunes on the radio when the news came on.
- I turned around and after driving 17 hours straight through the night, fog and rain, I arrived at home at 5:00 a.m., just when my mother was going out the door to catch a flight. She had just lost her mother, sister and two nieces. Upon arriving in Ireland, she was greeted by the generosity and caring of the Irish. The newcomers identified their kin and in doing so were forced to do something that should never have happened. The Irish were right there. Where was the Canadian contingent? I lost my best friend, my grandmother and also my aunt and two first cousins who had been on the plane.
- My words cannot describe how many times optimism was undermined, not only in the last year but in this last week. How did this affect me? My cousins were smart at their studies, easily bilingual, excellent swimmers, well liked and respected and missed by their friends. The optimism of their future had also died. If optimism is crushed in so many respects what happens, man ceases to live and instead just exists. That is mainly what I did for the next 19 years.
- In June of 2005, I was informed of the memorial in Ireland. When I heard about this, I was amazed that the Irish people were taking such interest, but on visiting Ireland, I came to realize that this had impacted their lives almost as much as our own.
- At the Air India memorial, I heard Paul Martin speak in such a concerned way. As Prime Minister at the time, I was surprised since the government had shown minimal to no acknowledgement that this was even a tragedy involving their citizens. My jaw dropped I am sure when Mr. Martin said that he is proclaiming June 23rd to be a National Memorial Day, not just for the victims of this tragedy but for the victims of terrorism everywhere. The flags across Canada would be half-mast on every June 23rd. I thought, finally, the Canadian government is taking steps to claim ownership of their own responsibilities and actions.

- It is time to make changes so that the disheartened people like myself, Canadian citizens who elect their government, do not have to be that way but instead can start to believe again in a country that I know somewhere has people that can get together and identify the different components of the tragedy, the events leading up to it and after it, and ensure preventative measures are put in place for any such future occurrences of terrorism and also how to deal with the survivors of terrorism and their own stresses. Children sing the National Anthem each day at school. Shouldn't the adults heed the words now? "I stand on guard for thee". It also refers to protecting the persons living in this country.

Ms. Usha Sharma:

- My husband emigrated from India to live in Canada and after two years, I joined my husband in 1972 in Canada. My husband became a Canadian citizen in 1976 and I became a Canadian citizen in 1983. In 1985 my mother came to visit me in Canada.
- My relationship with my family changed after the Air India disaster. We were very close. However, after this event, everyone thought that I was the person to be blamed for killing one of my sisters and my mother because I invited her to come to visit me in Canada. After the disaster I left for Ireland the next day and identified the body of my mother. I still have pictures of her in my mind from the pictures that were posted on the walls in the hospital in Cork, Ireland. Afterwards, I went to India and did all the burial rituals.
- With respect to the Terms of Reference, when Air India was getting threats regarding their flights, why was Air India Flight 182 allowed to fly? Before machines were invented, people checked luggage manually. Because the X-ray machine had failed, was it okay to send the luggage without checking it thoroughly? When baggage without a passenger was booked on the flight connecting to Air India Flight 182, why was this luggage allowed to travel without a passenger? I did not, nor did my family, get any emotional support, nor financial support, nor any kind of counselling. Who is going to be blamed? No one, because no one did anything. If people died, so what? Minorities always suffer.
- Since the Air India disaster, my family is not the same. My sisters are not the same. The closeness is gone forever. I hope something constructive will come out of this public Inquiry.

Ms. Shridhar Sharma:

- The Air India bombing of Flight 182 killed four family members. Shakuntala, Uma, Sandhya and Swati are four members of our family who were aboard Air India Flight 182 leaving from Montreal to Delhi in India. This victim family to date got no support, either emotional or mental, or compensation from the government. No guidance, direction or options in seeking help of any sort, including financial. All we got is consistency in isolation and depression.
- Maybe this current Inquiry will end up laying the future course of action. The then Prime Minister of Canada washed his hands by sending condolences to the Indian Prime Minister over the Indian Airline disaster. There's no trauma counselling or post-traumatic counselling. There was no attempt to compensate the terrorist victims, at least not us.

Ms. Donna Ramah Paul:

- I am testifying here today before the Inquiry not to ask for sympathy from Canadians. I don't need pity. I don't need consideration. I don't need mercy. I want justice from the Canadian government, CSIS and the RCMP.
- I have been in Canada for thirty-six years. I didn't run away from my country. I came to this country as an educated person. I didn't come here as a refugee. I didn't come here asking for money. I came here to contribute what skills I have got. I work hard and pay taxes. After the Air India disaster, I wanted a little bit of justice and a little bit of moral support when I needed it from the government but they were not there for me. I lost my family and my children and the government was not there for me. The Prime Minister of Canada called the Prime Minister of India offering condolence and sympathy after the Air India disaster. Why was the Prime Minister of Canada calling to offer condolences to the Prime Minister of India when I was not given anything? Where was Canada in this disaster?

Mr. Ramachandran Gopalan:

- We lost my younger brother, Mr. Krishnakumar Gopalan. We call him Kishen. He was 10 years younger than me and was only 23 years old when he departed. I have come from India to share with you the thoughts of my mother primarily.
- Krishnakumar was a landed immigrant in Canada and he got his degree in Mechanical Engineering from Carleton University, here in Ottawa. It's sad that he graduated only a couple of days before the tragedy. He did not even live to see his own photograph of his graduation. He also excelled in his sports. He was the team captain of his college team. After graduation, he was hired by the aerospace firm Pratt and Whitney in Toronto. He wanted to travel to India before starting this job in order to get his mother's blessing and bring her to Canada. He promised her that once he got his job, he would set up a house for her and provide her all the opportunities to go ahead and get back into her routine with respect to music, which she was hoping that she would get a chance to revive in this country, but the whole thing went to waste after the Air India tragedy.
- Once we reached Ireland, like the previous speakers noted, the Irish authorities were really helpful. They took care of us very well and went beyond what was necessary to make sure we were happy and to see that our problems were being addressed properly. I do not have any words to describe their generosity, their kindness, especially the nurse who took care of us and even when I went for the 20th anniversary memorial, she could identify us. Even after retirement she was there to participate in the memorial service and recollected all those incidents that took place when we were there to identify the body. I also think I will fail my duty if I don't mention the Irish communities' thoughtful action of putting up an Air India memorial. The Ahakishta community, the place where the memorial has been put up, I believe every year the children from the school go and play music at the very same time the accident was supposed to have happened, indicated by the sundial there. In particular, one gentleman by the name of Mr. David Twomey, helped us a lot. He, by his actions in Ireland, became our family friend and I believe he visits the memorial every year. We as a family are deeply thankful to him and we keep exchanging mail even today.

- As a result of the tragedy, my mother withdrew from all her activities, withdrew herself into a shell. She had formed a group in Canada and was planning to expand this when she came with Kishen. However, after the tragedy, life was not one of heights of hope but depths of despair for her.
- We do many things to remember Kishen. We arrange for feeding at an orphanage every year, all these 21 years, on the anniversary of his death. We also donate money to a local Lions Hospital, which was built when my parents were members of the Lions Club Hospital and they were on the committee, which built that hospital. So we conduct free eye surgery for a deserving patient every year on that date. In Canada, we created a longstanding scholarship for Carleton University Mechanical Engineering students. In India, we also created a scholarship in the school where he was studying. Because it is electrical and computer skills, we instituted a scholarship award in his memory to the top ranking computer science student from that school.
- Canada's failure to solve the puzzle of the Air India tragedy, whatever be the reason, be it lethargy, incompetence and carelessness in the investigation process, long drawn out legal system, botched up evidence gathering, lack of political will to get to the bottom of it, has allowed the people who carried out the plan so successfully to escape the consequences of their actions. This will remain a nasty chapter in the history books of Canada and will continue to bring immense grief to thousands of people who are directly and indirectly affected by this senseless tragedy.
- Despite the status of Canada as an advanced industrial country with its technical superiority, space technology, and vast amount of resources, one cannot fathom how the criminals have still not been identified and prosecuted successfully. I feel this Commission should undertake in-depth study and review the laws and regulations of governance with respect to security and immigration. Why did CSIS and the RCMP fail in their duty to forewarn Air India, government and the airport staff about the threat the plane carried in spite of having evidence with them? Why was some CSIS evidence destroyed either intentionally or unintentionally? Whatever be the reason my request to this Commission is to evaluate all the issues carefully and bring out all the facts even if they are not complimentary to the Canadian government and its interests. Why is it not possible for the Canadian justice system to handle a sensitive case in a totally different manner, like it is being done in India, where usually such sensitive cases are heard by more than one judge, maybe a bench consisting of three judges or five judges?
- I am confident that this Commission will attempt to unravel the circumstances surrounding the tragedy and will be quite thorough and free from any political influence, and the new revelations will be pointed and progressive so that future generations do not suffer such incalculable grief.

Mr. Mohammad Irfan Umar Jethwa:

- At the age of 12, I lost my parents in the Air India Flight 182 bombing tragedy. Presently I am 33 years old and still wondering what went wrong on the day of the tragedy. Both of my parents were doctors and they graduated from colleges from the same state of Gujarat. I still remember they used to tell me that they wanted to serve mankind and money would come naturally. Serving mankind was better than anything else they taught me. The used

to treat poor and needy people free of charge and even paid for their medicines. Both of them were working very hard day and night and had very strenuous professional lives for many years. They decided to go on a vacation. They visited Europe first, the United States and then Canada.

- On June 23, 1985, at approximately 7:00 a.m., I got up from sleep. I was at my aunt's house. My cousin tuned in the local radio station. All of us were stunned to hear that Air India Flight 182 was missing from the radar screen. This event changed the course of my life. A 12-year old boy, darling of the house, so pampered was suddenly turned into an orphan with very few good and honest relatives around. It is very hard for me to explain how my relatives treated me through all these years. Most of them did everything for their own good. I grew up learning how mean this world was. None of the governments of Canada or India ever cared to ask what was the only son of Dr. and Mrs. Jethwa doing?
- This public Inquiry is like the silver lining outside a dark cloud. I fully agree with the issues mentioned in the Terms of Reference of this Inquiry. It is my request to you, Mr. Commissioner, to treat all victims' kin the same from now on. Those who were killed were humans and it should not matter if they were Canadians or non-Canadians. Humans are humans. All humans should benefit from the outcome of this Inquiry.

Mr. Mandip Singh Grewal:

- When I was 12 years old, I lost my beloved father, Daljit Singh Grewal, to the Air India tragedy. My father was born on January 3, 1943, in the village of Kila Raipur in India. In 1969 he emigrated to Canada and shortly after he married my mother, Jagit Kaur. My father was a compassionate and loving man who believed in truth, loyalty and true friendship. He had the gift of giving without the expectation of receiving anything in return. He was dedicated to his family, friends and work. My father was very proud of us.
- My father was travelling to India to visit his ailing mother. On the morning of June 24, I was at my uncle's house and was awoken by he telephone ringing non-stop. I saw my uncle frantically looking through his papers to locate the travel agency's telephone number. I remember all my family and my father's friends rushing through the front door. My father's body was never found. The sudden loss of my father was devastating. My best friend was taken from me in a heartbeat and my whole world was shattered. I was forced to grow up fast and take on many more responsibilities. We will never have the opportunity to celebrate any of life's milestones or daily joys of my father. It saddens me that his grandchildren will never have the opportunity to experience his love.
- I am disappointed at how the investigation was handled prior to and after the bombing. It saddens me that there was no support or guidance from the Canadian government for victims' families. Many of the deceased were Canadian citizens whose families were suffering without any support or guidance from the government.
- I request that the following questions be addressed in the next phase of the Inquiry: What was the motivation behind why CSIS erased the tapes? Why did CSIS not have enough Punjabi-speaking translators so that they could interpret the tapes effectively and in a timely manner? Why did the RCMP and CSIS agents not take any form of action when they heard the test bomb in Duncan? I understand that two days prior to the bombings,

CSIS surveillance of Parmar and his associates was abandoned. I would like an explanation as to why the surveillance was abandoned and upon what grounds they took this action? Who authorized this abandonment and what authority did they have to do so?

- My wife and I visited Ireland last year for the 20th anniversary and we felt an overwhelming sense of warmth, comfort, longing and respect that we will never forget. The way in which we were treated and acknowledged compels us to return and visit Ireland again and again.

Mr. Haranhalli Radhakrishna:

- I was born in India in 1938 and came to Canada in 1964 to do my doctorate work in engineering at the University of Waterloo. I became a landed immigrant in 1968 and a Canadian citizen in 1973. I started a family in Canada with my wife, Nagasundara, and two lovely children.
- In 1985, my wife was 37 years old when the accident took place. She was very social and a very friendly person. She helped with many social activities, especially in the school activities of our children, and the Girl Guides. My daughter who was thirteen in 1985, had a particular interest in humanitarian issues. She always talked about working with people in distress and she had some kind of a spiritual insight and she was a rare child indeed. My son who was eight in 1985 was bright and active. He was a very friendly person and had no inhibitions. He would have grown up to be a fine young man and successful in any career of his choice.
- Both my children really wanted to go to India to visit their cousins, nephews and nieces. Since their decision to go had been made literally in the last minute, I was not able to plan around my work so I planned to join my family a month later.
- Losing my wife and two children completely changed my life forever. I had no contact from any of the Canadian officials at any stage. Air India was the only primary source of information. About four to five days after the crash, we left Cork, Ireland. The tickets were arranged and paid for by Air India. In Cork, I identified the bodies of my wife and son but they could not find my daughter's body. She is still probably in the bottom of the ocean. We took the bodies to India. Air India and the Irish hospital made all the arrangements for shipping the bodies. If it had not been for the support of my friends' things would have been even worse. We had no social support of any kind from any level of the government. It's only when the families got together that we were there for each other.
- In spite of the fact that this was the largest mass murder in recent Canadian history, there were no victims services offered to us. We did not receive any type of counselling to cope with this immense tragedy in our lives. In my case, I did not even receive any assistance from the government in my effort to bring one or two of my nearest family members from India to Canada to help me in rebuilding my family. The victims of the Air India tragedy struggled to convince politicians that this was a Canadian tragedy; that this was Canada's burden.
- What do I expect from this Inquiry? We have endured unthinkable loss. Our pain has been aggravated by the burden of struggling to make the government take the necessary action

from the day of this tragedy in June 1985. We want answers to many unanswered questions left behind by this colossal human loss. Now that it has reached the stage of a public Inquiry, we hope that the Inquiry will get to the bottom of how things were handled or mishandled by the various agencies responsible, how they failed, first in averting the tragedy then later in bringing the terrorists to justice. I would strongly urge this Commission to examine and document all the socio-political factors, besides the technical aspects contributing to such negligence of failure. My concern today is that Canada has many little groups whose motives and activities may be harmful to Canadians.

- I sincerely hope that this Inquiry is not going to be a mere exercise in appeasing the victims' families but will attempt to address the real issues and offer many solutions. Let this Inquiry be a wake-up call, not a whitewash.

Mr. Rattan Singh Kalsi:

- I lost my beloved daughter, Indira Kalsi, who was twenty-one years old. Parents should die in their old age in front of their children, not the other way around.
- My daughter used to tell me, "Dad, would you show us your roots? We'd like to see the village where you were born. We'd like to travel with you." I decided to travel to India two weeks ahead because my children who grew up in Canada were unfamiliar with India and I wanted to check their accommodations. Upon learning of the airplane bombing, I travelled to Ireland to try to identify a body but was unable to locate Indira's body. The Irish people were very nice and good to us.
- With respect to the Terms of Reference, I ask you Mr. Commissioner to make Canada a safer place by stopping people from funnelling money overseas to buy bombs to kill innocent people. That must be stopped. I also ask that if it is possible, that you Mr. Commissioner, request that the Canadian government help the victims of the Air India tragedy to buy the house that is in front of the memorial in Ireland, so that when we go over there we can rest there. I always wanted to buy that house but I don't have that kind of money.

Ms. Ann Venketeswaran:

- Both Canada and I lost the most caring and wonderful man I have known to the Air India Flight 182 bombing. T.K. Venketeswaran was a true Christian Canadian man who gave so much of himself to better our Canadian society. On January 29, 1966, we were married in the Salvation Army. We were a happy couple. We shared ourselves with our community. We often billeted visiting young people from other churches. On June 3, 1970, Esther was born. On August 11, 1971, our son David was born. After the Air India disaster, my children thought that I was to blame for encouraging their father to go, that I made him lose his life. Through tears they said that I had sent him to his death.
- I found out about the bombing while I was working a night shift. Since I was in no shape to travel to Cork, Ireland, my daughter, Esther, who was fifteen years old at the time of the disaster travelled to Cork, accompanied by our Minister. As a result of the disaster, I found it hard to cope and I had financial worries about the future and of getting my children

through university, of making repairs to the home, and my career. No one ever called me to offer support to our family. Over the years, I actively petitioned politicians to let them know about our plight but nothing came from my letters. In 1987, I voluntarily asked to be committed to the Homewood Sanatorium in Guelph, Ontario. I was so overcome with grief and isolation I couldn't stop crying. I had heard that the program had helped others. So I decided to give it a try. My son David dealt with his grief through drugs and alcohol and I felt at that time that I lost another loved one. However, he eventually got through it and is clean and sober today.

- The concerns I would like addressed by this Inquiry are two main concerns. I would like the Commission to address the lack of support and compensation for family members. When we lost TK, we lost not only a loving and caring person, we also lost a wonderful husband and father and the security that his occupation would have provided the entire family. We were doing well when we lost TK so tragically and suddenly. Since then we have learned to go without. I received a small pension from TK's old work places, along with the government pension. But in all, it adds up only to \$20,000 per year. We all feel that a lot of our life has slipped by and we had no say. This situation has permanently altered our lives.
- My second concern is multiculturalism in Canada. While it is a good thing, we have simply taken it too far. While trying to accommodate all the diverse cultures in Canada, we have treated the extreme movements in a deferential manner. This allows Canada to be a place where terrorists can get away with things that they would never be able to do elsewhere. People should not be able to hide behind multiculturalism to spread hate and division within our Canadian communities. We are too lenient. We need to define ourselves as Canadians: Canadians against terrorism, Canadians against divisions within communities and hatred of others.

Ms. Esther Venketeswaran:

- I lost my father, Trichur Krishnan Venketeswaran, when I was fifteen years old. My life before the bombing was that of a normal typical teenage girl. I played the piano. I joined the 4-H Club. I enjoyed going to youth group. I was my dad's "little love". For fifteen years the man I called father taught me the value of hard work, loving God, and being courageous enough to make a stand for what you believe in.
- My father was returning to the land of his birth, India, to attend the wedding of his youngest brother, my uncle Seetharaman. I lost my father on June 23rd, 1985. I was an utterly devastated fifteen year old girl. My life changed forever. I was never to be the same person I was before the disaster. Going through the remainder of my teen years without a father's love, care, comfort and guidance was indescribably painful. The Air India tragedy defines who I am as a person and everything I do in my life has been coloured by this backdrop example of international terrorism. Serious, withdrawn, angry and depressed came to describe my nature instead of bright, happy, positive and extroverted.
- I am not alone in not having a father, but the way in which the airplane disaster has been handled by the Canadian government has added great insult to injury and fuelled raging indignation. Initially, I did not see any value in this Inquiry. However, my stance has

softened considerably since then, especially in view of seeing many of the families share their private stories of pain. If my fellow country men and women can learn from the example of my family and my suffering through terrorism and draw insight, inspiration and knowledge about how to better equip future victims of terrorism, I consider it the highest privilege and honour to serve my country, Canada, in this way.

- I believe compensation issues need to be addressed by the Commission. We lost a husband, a father, decision maker, and breadwinner. I cannot even begin to list the numerous financial and economic consequences resulting from the impact of the Air India bombing that have impacted my life and my family. Words, plaques and platitudes don't carry the same weight or seriousness as handing a victim a compensation package that takes into account the financial, economical, physical and emotional losses a person suffers through an act of terrorism.
- I hope this Inquiry is not another fruitless exercise in repackaging some of the old information we have learned over the years and that is now all readily available on public record, or part of an appeasement process that is wasting valuable taxpayer dollars in a misguided effort to serve social justice. Compensation for me would mean justice for twenty-one years and counting of suffering, the inaction of an indifferent government, the indignity of a trial, being forced to go along with this Inquiry, and the economic, emotional and psychological impoverishment. While in a civilized society we cannot resort to vigilante justice, we can ensure in the aftermath of innocent bloodshed that the family members most affected are well taken care of in both body and soul. Compensation would mean closure on the past.

Mr. Chandar Sain Malhotra:

- My second son, Atul, was a passenger on the ill-fated Air India Flight 182. He was a young man born in Delhi, full of promise and a good future. He was just 26 years old and working as an engineer with Indian Airlines. My son had just started his life when we lost him. He was travelling to North America on a holiday to see a bit of the world and visit relatives in Toronto.
- I heard about the crash from the media and immediately called my brother in Toronto to confirm whether my son had actually taken that flight. Once my brother confirmed that my son had boarded the flight, he made arrangements for himself to travel to Cork. I was in no position to travel to Ireland to search for the body of my young son. I was totally lost and could barely understand what was happening around me. My brother told me that the Irish people were extremely helpful and warm.
- After losing my son so suddenly and unexpectedly, I was a finished man. I lost all my energy; I do not know how I survived those days. What I saw at the trial made me very frustrated with the Canadian justice system. When I heard about this Inquiry, two of the Terms of Reference stood out as issues that have concerned me for some time. First, I feel that to deal appropriately with terrorism cases, the Canadian criminal justice system and its rules of evidence must be changed. In these complex cases, the hands of the judge should not be tied by what is being said by the witnesses. The judge must have more investigative powers to uncover the truth of the matter. The strictness of the evidence rules combined with the burden of proof beyond a reasonable doubt will not work in dealing with terrorist

activities. Terrorists do not leave much evidence behind and it makes it difficult to convict. I feel that the burden to decide these complex cases, which often rely on more circumstantial than direct evidence, should not be placed on a single judge, but rather a bench of two to three judges.

- Second, after spending over 30 years with India Airlines, I have some insight into the deficiency of aviation security and the challenges that still need to be faced. On June 22, 1985, the baggage was placed on the flight without the passenger on board. This is a basic flaw. Today, we have to worry about suicide bombers. The problems created by the terrorists change constantly and we must ensure that our system changes adequately to react to them. More stringent checks of both the booked and hand baggage is needed.

Ms. Krishna Sharma:

- I lost my husband, Om Prakash Sharma, in the Air India disaster. We got married when I was fourteen years old and my husband was sixteen years of age. Our family was not rich by any standard but my husband was a very hardworking individual and he always encouraged me, inspired me and supported me. He always helped his brothers and sisters progress and make advancements in each of their own lives.
- We had eight children, five daughters and three sons. My husband was the principal at a local middle school. His salary was not sufficient to be able to give a good life to each of our eight children. That is why he decided to come to Canada. It was neither an easy decision nor a minor step to come here, leaving behind his eight children. What made it possible was our ability to give strength and encouragement to each other. It was based on this kind of encouragement that we were able to manage fourteen years while still living apart from each other. Slowly as my children grew up they decided that they would move to Canada as well. By 1985, I was still in India looking after my mother-in-law and father-in-law. My husband used to come to India every year to visit me. In 1985, he decided to visit me again. He wanted to come to India to get my daughter, Saroj, engaged.
- The thought kills me every moment of every day of my life, that for the first fourteen years we lived separately and when the time finally came for us to be reunited, these terrorists killed my husband. I have become totally handicapped because of this tragedy, because my husband was everything for me. He was the one who earned the money and ran the entire expenses of the household. I was not able to help in any monetary form and the government here was no help either. My children were compelled to make compromises in their own lives because of our situation after the tragedy.
- I would like that the government learns and educates itself as a result of this Inquiry and that any potential donors to these terrorists are shut down permanently.

Ms. Saroj Gaur:

- I lost my father in the Air India tragedy. My father, Om Prakash Sharma, was a school principal in India, a father of three children, my Mom's husband, with two brothers and three sisters.

- In 1980 when he came to India, I expressed my interest to come to Canada. He sponsored me in 1981. I got my visa and joined him in May. He was so happy with my immigration.
- I found out about the Air India disaster when I was in Toronto after moving there to get a job. My father had arranged accommodation with one of his friend's daughters. Upon arriving at this house, I was informed of the news. I didn't know these people. My Dad is the one who arranged my accommodation with them. I came for the time to Toronto and it was the first news for me. I had no money so I couldn't fly to Newfoundland. I didn't know people here so I couldn't borrow their money. I never worked so I didn't have any savings. I felt like I had no roof or ground. I was in shock.
- Twenty-one years have passed since the Air India tragedy. The questions we had the very first day are the same questions we have now: How was it possible to bomb a plane? Why did the RCMP not catch these people? Why are these people living free in Canada? Why did the airport security fail at the time?
- From this Inquiry I expect security in the future so we can board a plane without any fear, so that my children can fly without any fear.

Ms. Neelam Kaushik:

- My family and I have been waiting for the last twenty-one years for justice to be served. That's a long time to wait when you are living with the constant pain and agony of losing your father at a young age. As a result of the tragedy, I had to drop my courses at University and I lost tuition for that semester because it was too late for a refund. I totally lost my mental balance and I isolated myself. I had to work part-time in order to continue my education. The anger and frustration my family felt at the Canadian system for not producing anything constructive regarding this case, resulted in us taking our anger out on each other. Our family that was once very close drifted apart to the point that we don't even talk to each other anymore, and that's very disheartening for our mother.
- It pulls at my heart every time I think of how the system has failed us again and again in regard to this case. First of all, how could such a law exist in a country like Canada that when the biggest mass murder was being planned and the Canadian investigation services had knowledge of this, not only did they get away with not informing the police, they also managed to destroy the tapes and nobody questioned this serious irresponsible action. Secondly, how did the airport authorities neglect to detect the explosive device? I have lost complete faith in the Canadian government, police department, intelligence agencies, airport security and our so-called justice system since the Air India disaster. I believe a large-scale investigation should be launched into the practices of the Criminal Justice Inquiries Compensation Board for the neglect of awards to victims of terrorism.
- My father was a very humble man, with many responsibilities as the eldest of a large family. In my family there were eight siblings, plus our extended family. Two of my father's sisters were widowed so we had full responsibilities for those families too. He took care of the finances while my mother took care of the house. For these reasons, it is very important for the Commission to strongly recommend to the Canadian government that my mother be compensated for what she has endured in the last twenty-one years. My parents

worked hard to build a better life for us and our extended family, in addition to living apart for fourteen years for financial reasons.

- After my father's death, my oldest brother from the United States flew to Cork, Ireland, to find our father's body. It was never recovered. Without the body we were denied the ability to perform many of the official religious rituals that in our culture is the way we find closure. In our religion if you don't die a peaceful death your soul will not find salvation.
- The victims' family had to create their own support network amongst themselves. It would have helped a great deal if the government of Canada had programs that could have helped my mother learn how to raise children in a Canadian social system and how to obtain a job. We felt we were treated differently because this was not a tragedy with "mainstream white" Canadians. Just like they have a support system for recovering alcoholics we should have a support system for those who suffer from terrorist-related or other sudden unexpected deaths.
- When one becomes a Canadian citizen and chooses to spend the rest of their life here they are declaring their loyalty to this country. If that person decides to promote hatred and raises funds to kill innocent Canadians, then the authorities should automatically deport that individual to their country of origin. Their Canadian passport should be forfeited so that that person cannot escape to another country and their dual citizenship should be revoked.
- It was 9/11 that opened the eyes of the government of Canada to terrorism and they started banning some of the terrorist organizations in this country. It is time that we, as Canadians, get together and decide not to have a repeat of June 23rd, 1985. We have to learn from past mistakes. It is very important that terrorists do not make Canada into a launching pad for criminal activities. This is not the time to whitewash onward. Somebody has to take responsibility.

Ms. Veena Sharma:

- I was born in New Delhi, India. I moved to Newfoundland, Canada, with my brother Prem in 1983 to join my sister, Saroj, my brother, and my father.
- My father was the eldest in the family. He had three sisters and two brothers in India. My parents got married at a very young age; my father was only sixteen and my mother was fourteen but they did not start their married life until my mother was sixteen. My parents were living in a joint family. Being the eldest in the family, he was responsible to care for my aunts and uncles financially, emotionally, and morally. He was a role model to them. He wanted to give us and his brothers and sisters better lives so he applied for a job in Canada and accepted a teaching job in Newfoundland.
- My father used to come to India during his summer holidays for two months. His arrival day was like a festival to all of us.

- Once my father was settled in Canada, my brother Ram and sisters, Saroj and Neelam, joined him in Canada. He opened a convenience store for my brother. He had a small but strong supportive Indian community in Grand Falls, Newfoundland. My father was not only well-known amongst the Indian community but he was known in Grand Falls and Middle Arm, Newfoundland as well. He was a very caring and loving person.
- In 1985, my father was preparing for the yearly trip to India and was looking forward to bringing my mother to Canada so we all could be united. He was happy and excited. My mother was still in India taking care of my grandfather because he did not want to live with his other sons or daughters. India was having a lot of terrorist and political problems at that time. There were lots of rumours about Air India security. My mother was scared and requested that he cancel his trip, but he did not take her concerns seriously.
- After the tragedy, my brother went to Ireland to take care of the formalities with respect to my now deceased father, and to take care of the formalities with the Canadian Embassy to bring my mother to Canada. I saw that my mother on her arrival in Canada was weak, pale and was looking older than her age. All of our dreams were shattered.
- Personally this tragedy has affected me emotionally and financially and has left me with feelings of insecurity. If a person is sick, you can prepare yourself but when they have left their home with a smile on their face and they are gone just like that, it is not easy for families to move on. I was not able to finish my education. We missed him on each occasion such as my high school graduation or family wedding.
- After the disaster, Air India did call us and tell us what the next steps should be. We had some financial support but it was only from friends and family in our community. There was nothing from the government of Canada in terms of support.
- I would like to see the laws in Canada become stricter. Laws are lenient in Canada in comparison to other countries. The government should do proper background checks before granting any type of visa to anyone. Proper training should be provided to security employees, baggage handlers and to related workers. They should be trained to handle crisis or emergency situations. The government should find out the sources of funding from criminal and terrorist activities and punish those organizations who continue to support and provide this funding.

Ms. Madhu Gaur:

- I lost my father, Om Prakash Sharma, in the bombing of Air India Flight 182. I was a young wife waiting a long waited return of my father to India. He never arrived and we have felt his loss every day. I am the fourth child in my family. My father was always affectionate with me. We were a happy family of eight children; three sons and five daughters living in Canada, India and the USA. My father worked to make our dreams a reality. My father was a man of excellent character and was well respected in Canada. He was a man of education who contributed much to Canada.
- On the day of the bombing, I travelled from Jodhpur to Delhi to receive my father when he arrived in India. The news came as a shock. Our lives took a 180-degree turn after we lost my father. Losing a parent is a great loss that cannot be fulfilled. We found support from

friends and family elders. However, we did not ever find justice from the Canadian justice system.

- My hope for the Inquiry is that it will make recommendations that ensure this type of tragedy never occurs again. We must look at the Canadian system to determine what is preventing the punishment of the perpetrators of this crime. I applaud the courage of the Canadian government in establishing this Commission of Inquiry after the close of the criminal trial that left so many disappointed. The decisions you make in this Inquiry are important ones that mean a lot to people around the world.

Mrs. Amarjit Bhinder:

- At the outset on behalf of my family, children and myself, I wish to thank everyone for this Inquiry and the people of Canada for all their concern for the families of the victims. I also wish to thank the seamen who put their own lives in danger to pull victims from the sea. My heart goes out to the Irish people, hospital and administrative authorities of Ireland for their compassion shown at the time of the crash and during the memorial service in Ireland. I would also like to thank the media all over the world for supporting our cause for such a long period.
- In October 1977, my husband, Captain Satwinder Singh Bhinder, was selected by Air India to be a pilot. We were not given the opportunity to enjoy my husband's life for a very long period. Destiny cut short the life of a brilliant pilot and a person whose vision was unparalleled in Air India and whose intelligence rare to find. He was tall, handsome, intelligent and a very honest man. He loved his small world, which had his wife and two little children. Ever since our son, Ashamdip started to speak, he used to express the desire that, like his dad, he too wanted to be a pilot. Our son did become a pilot but was not lucky enough to fly as his father's co-pilot.
- I was supposed to travel with my husband from Canada back to London on Air India Flight 182 but decided to stay home with my family. This was first time that I ever said no to a foreign trip as I am very fond of seeing new places. On the 23rd of June 1985, I felt very uncomfortable right from the early morning. I was missing him terribly. At about 3:30 p.m. the doorbell rang and one of our close friends was standing at the door. He said an accident had taken place with Air India Flight 182. I lost control over myself. My children heard my cries and they too started howling. I can never forget their faces.
- Air India officials came to our house that evening. Air India asked us if we wanted to go to Cork. My children and I went to Cork later. No one from the Canadian government had contacted us till then, but the arrangements made by the India High Commissioner were good and they made us feel very comfortable. My state of mind did not permit travel immediately but Air India was considerate enough to let us travel later in July 1985. His body was never found, nor any of the crew members.
- We became penniless. I did not have enough money to make two ends meet. We had no regular income other than my husband's salary. The Indian Pilots Guild came to our rescue by giving us a cheque of 55,000 Rupees. By the end of July, I got some dues from Air India as well. We received no compensation from the Canadian government. Crew

members do not have tickets. So the family members did not even get the equivalent of up to a maximum of \$75,000 US insured against their ticket.

- We did not know how to handle our lives without him. I could not fulfil my husband's dream of sending my daughter to England after she finished high school. Financially it was not viable. My children miss their father tremendously. It was very tough to raise two young children with a demanding full time job with Air India that I started after my husband's death. The grades of my children suffered in school.
- As we understand from various sources, Kanishka is known as a Canadian tragedy. Why is it so? It was and continues to be an international tragedy. The majority of the passengers were of Indian origin and settled in Canada. Because the Canadian government believed it was solely a Canadian tragedy, compensation was given to families of only Canadian victims. Air India Flight 182 took off from Canada and its safety and security was wholly and solely the responsibility of Canadian authorities. We too have been through many hardships in our lives and have had to struggle constantly, both emotionally and financially, just to keep going and stay afloat. There is still time for Canada to show the families that this is their moral responsibility to see that this small gesture can make some difference to the ones who have been ignored and have been suffering too long, by the Canadian government providing the money to the families of the victims of Flight 182.
- Whose responsibility is it to ensure that a flight departing from a particular country takes off safely, without compromising the safety of the people on board the aircraft? Who is responsible for the lapse in security that led to an explosion and consequently the loss of 329 lives on board the ill-fated aircraft? Was the Canadian government unaware of the Indian army attack the Golden Temple? Did the Canadian government not get any warning or intelligence reports to safeguard Indian interests in Canada, including Air India?
- We hope that no one has to endure the pain, the struggle, and the uncertainties that we have had to face over the last twenty-one years. The Inquiry will not be able to answer all our questions about who committed this crime and why. But we have no choice but to console ourselves and hope that finally there will be a conclusion to the Air India tragedy.

Mr. Tahir Sadiq:

- My name is Ali Tahir Sadiq, and I lost my mother, Sugra Sadiq in the bombing of Air India Flight 182. After university in India, I immigrated to Canada in April 1970 with the hopes of living a peaceful and better life.
- Our mother was a passenger on Air India Flight 182. She volunteered as a nurse and then joined in the first batch of female students of medical school. She graduated with distinction. She went on to lead the movement to create jobs for women doctors at government hospitals. After a successful and distinguished completion of a whole tenure of service, she retired at the highest level and she was always an anchor in the circle of the medical profession.
- Our parents decided to immigrate to the safety of Canada. For me my mother was everything, right from childhood. In Toronto she used to teach her mother tongue to the students of the University of Toronto. In Sunday school she taught religion. We

remember our mother and the many people she has touched, people she cared, educated and inspired to follow her profession. She was a woman ahead of the times, an anchor for a large family and many friends. Those she left behind were left helpless without her.

- My sister was the first to find out about the bombing. Her colleague told her. My phone rang at 9:00. My brother told me the news. I then went to the Air India office. We were hooked to the radio. No official was giving us any news or support. Finally, my brother bought a ticket from the USA and flew to Cork from there. The rest of the family soon followed. By the grace of God we found the body. My brothers brought it after 3 or 4 days to London. We then flew it back to Canada.
- I was put in a humiliating and painful situation by the RCMP shortly after the bombing. While I was still grieving for my mother, the RCMP started phoning me. They called my home and my office to schedule an interview with me. The interview was very insulting. They did not hide the fact that they were treating me, someone who had just lost his mother, as a suspect. They thought that I was the person that put the bomb on the plane or was paid to do it.
- Our concerns with the Inquiry are why the government ignored the information given to them about this plan, why CSIS erased the tapes, why one of the CSIS officers was allowed to resign without getting charged for erasing the tapes, why Canadian justice agencies were late to take action and why could they not successfully prove guilt? I also wonder why the judge does not have the full right to ask questions, especially of a witness which appears to be evading questions? I also wonder why the government of Canada did not help us at all? I wish that the government would help the families pursue their case in a civil court. My families have lost their earning members and prospects for the future. If we cannot prosecute the perpetrators to a reasonable doubt standard in the criminal court, the government should assist the victims to prosecute to a balance of probability standard in civil court. Something must be given to the families who are still suffering to make up for lack of support over the years. We must understand the reasons and consequences of these crimes in order to understand the importance of appropriate punishments and support for the victims.

Mrs. Sheroo D. Dumasia:

- The Air India disaster was the day my husband, the late Dara D. Dumasia, flight engineer of Air India 182, was snatched away from me so cruelly. My husband worked for 31 years at Air India. He was due to retire from service on October 30, 1985. He left behind me and my two daughters, Dilshad and Farnaz. Our lives were shattered. We were absolutely inconsolable in our grief. Nothing that anyone would do or say would stop our tears from flowing.
- He was the only male member in our family and the only earning member. Lack of security was immense, both financially and emotionally.
- The verdict “not guilty” seemed to be a mockery of the entire case. As my daughter said, 20 years later it was still the same. With justice denied, we cried again. To us, the family members of the victims of Air India Flight 182, it seems to be inconceivable that after so many years the culprits still walk shamelessly and fearlessly free, and all I can say is the

cross we bear is heavy indeed; the price we pay unfair.

Mr. Ratheish Yelevarthy

- I am the eldest son of the late Y. Nayudamma, who was a victim of the Kanishk tragedy. I had various interests prior to the tragedy but later confined myself to my work and my family and listening to Yanni, a Greek musician, in whose music I still continue to derive solace. I still remember my father used to take me for long walks during my childhood. He used to teach me about life.
- My father wrote some very interesting thoughts in his journal, thoughts I wish to share. “I have no regrets. I who lived a full life; loved, enjoyed, worked hard, contributed to the country...My assets are not in the bank. My assets are my friends in all parts of the world ...”.
- In the aftermath of the Air India tragedy, my mother just could not take the shock and attempted to take her life even though she was a doctor. She was declared in critical condition and she had to be air-lifted to the US, but was not fit to go. I had to leave for Cork to trace the remains of my father. Upon arrival in Cork, motherly understanding and affection were showered on us by the people of Cork. The Air India disaster changed my way of looking at life. I had to return without the remains of my father. After only a few hours in Cork, I had to rush back to India to see my mother. I flew back in silence only to arrive to the next blow; the news that my mother had died from her suicide before I could reach her. Family rituals for my parents were held. There was a large gathering to mourn them. After this, my son died of accidental drowning.
- Life has never been the same after my father’s death for all the family members and some of his grandchildren never got to see him. He would have given us high moral support.
- This brings me to the depressing subject of terrorism. In my opinion, it was a cocktail of poor communications and shoddy intelligence work procedures. We have on hand a problem with terrorism that could be a monster in the next decade and we should not be surprised. I call it the terrorism industry. It will be a part of life and make the most profitable business of the century for some. People will judge not by immediate reaction or verbal statement, but by what actually we do against terrorism.

Dr. Chandra Sankurathri

- My wife’s name was Manjari, my son’s name was Sirkiran, and my daughter was Sarada. My wife and my children were going to India in June of 1985 to attend the marriage of my brother-in-law, which was supposed to be in August of that year. I was supposed to join them a month later and we were all planning to travel before school started again in September.
- My reaction to the Air India disaster was one of disbelief. It took me almost three years to erase what had happened, and I studied a lot to cope with the situation because it was not easy. That was the most difficult part of my life. As a result of this tragedy, I felt I had to be productive in my life, so that I could be useful to other people. With that intent, I left Canada in 1988, to start working with people, mostly children, in India.

- In India, I started a foundation to honour my lost loved ones. It's called the Manjari Sankurathri Memorial Foundation. It is a registered charity in Canada. Given that I wanted to work with children in India, I helped to start a school in memory of my daughter that is called the Sarada Bidyalayam. This school covers free schooling to all the poor children in that area. In addition to this, we also started a hospital, an eye hospital, named after my son. It is called the Sirkiran Institute of Ophthalmology, which covers quality eye care with compassion, which is equitable, accessible and affordable to all in the region.
- I would like to acknowledge all the supporters in Canada, in this cause to fight illiteracy and blindness in the region. Other than that, I am really happy about this Inquiry. I hope this Inquiry will prevent further loss like this and further suffering to many people.

Ms. Dianne Beauchesne:

- How do you say goodbye to a loved one? Even if we are prepared it doesn't make it any easier. The last time I spoke with my father, Gaston Beauchesne, I was mad with him before he left on Air India Flight 182. I told him I loved him but it was forced. That memory stays with me for the rest of my life. The next time I saw my father was in Ireland when I had to identify him in the morgue. I feel guilty that I did not have the bravery to touch him at the morgue. I decided that I did not want anyone back home to see my father in death.
- My father was a pharmacist and loved all nationalities and was a true person of the world.
- When I heard news of the crash, I had not been able to cry. After I identified my father, I went through feelings of total desperation to total exhilaration. My exhilaration came from being able to take my loved ones body home. I felt guilty that I got to take my father's body home, when so many others could not find their loved ones.
- I eventually cried because my father would not be able to see me graduate or marry or see me make accomplishments in my life that he would be proud about. It was so unbearable.
- The government of Canada wanted me to fill out a form to quantify how much my father was worth to me. How often did I see my father and how close were we? Why are these questions relevant when I am trying to grieve? How can I put down on paper a whole potential of a life remaining?
- My father was not supposed to be on Air India Flight 182. His other flight was overbooked. Why did Air India Flight 182 have seat openings? Why were there seat cancellations? Were people in the know? Nobody told us that there were threats against Air India.
- Our main questions revolve around what had led up to threats being made and being known by CSIS. Why did they not share their information with the RCMP or other factions of government that may have put higher security or some warning for those booked on the flight?

- I was woken up by the phone ringing in the early morning. I couldn't believe the news. I thought I was still dreaming. When I told my mom, she crumpled to the floor. I tried to comfort her.
- In Cork, Ireland, I did not get treated as a family of the victims because I was Caucasian. The government didn't care because they didn't see this as a Canadian tragedy. However, the Irish people treated us with open arms and took care of me. If it wasn't for the Irish people, the horrible situation wouldn't have been made better. My experience in Cork was that the Irish cared more about this than the Canadians did.
- When will we find peace? When can we move on with our lives? When will we rest that their lives were not lost in vain and that something good will come out of this? 21 years later is too late.
- My father was born in Quebec. My father was brought up to be understanding and compassionate of other languages and races. He was somebody who embodied the multicultural spirit. He loved people. My father was Canadian. We are Canadian.
- If inquiries were done sooner, Lockerbie might have been prevented. Why did it take 9/11, an American act, to get people to wake up to terrorism? The Canadian government did not take ownership. We are looking for answers. We are looking for some kind of closure, someone taking responsibility for what happened and to admit that many mistakes occurred. What can we do with Canadian policies to fix things? We have to protect Canadian citizens from those that want to harm us. We need to revisit Immigration policy. I care to have some answers and changes that should have been done a long time ago. Can the Commission help us find some answers? Can we equip ourselves for terrorism court cases? Can our government lead us to somewhere a bit better than where we are today?
- I did not receive any type of assistance from the Canadian government, such as grief counselling and nor did my brother. We were never approached by the Canadian government.

(iii) The Post-Bombing Experience of AIVFA Members

The sentiment that the Canadian government's response was woefully inadequate to the victims of the Air India Flight 182 bombing was a consistent theme in the testimony provided by AIVFA members. In the aftermath of the Air India Flight 182 bombing, according to the testimony by AIVFA members summarized above:

- without a comprehensive terrorist response plan in place, the government failed to immediately establish and maintain effective informational lines of communication with the families of the victims;
- upon arrival in Cork, Ireland, the government failed to meet and assist all families of the victims;
- while in Cork, Ireland, government officials were unprepared to assist families with all facets of the tragedy, such as transportation of bodies back to Canada and burials/cremation, etc.;

- the government did not communicate to the families of the victims in both Official Languages;
- the government did not offer any administrative or emotional support in the form of grief counselling or other forms of social assistance;
- the financial compensation by the government was insufficient and no offer of legal assistance was provided by the government to assist families in negotiating compensation;
- the criminal investigation and eventual laying of criminal charges was long, drawn out, and ineffective, in addition to failing to adequately keep families of the victims informed;
- the government waited 21 long years to establish a Commission of Inquiry into the Investigation of the Bombing of Air India Flight 182;
- in the end, the government failed to take any responsibility and hold itself accountable for its part in preventing the Air India Flight 182 bombing, in addition to failing to effectively investigate the bombing and prosecute those responsible for it; and
- the Canadian government failed to fully recognize the Air India Flight 182 bombing as a terrorist incident and failed to incorporate this tragic event into its collective conscience and history, and as such, the families believed that they were ignored and that this tragedy was not seen as a Canadian tragedy.

While AIVFA recognizes that in the initial aftermath of the Air India Flight 182 disaster, government officials such as Mr. Scott Heatherington, Mr. Gavin Stewart, Mr. Daniel Molgat, Mr. Terry Sheehan, and Mr. David Dewhirst, among others, made efforts to assist families of the victims in an empathetic manner, this does not absolve the government of responsibility for a woefully inadequate response to the needs of the victims of the Air India Flight 182 bombing.

(iv) The Inadequate Post-Bombing Response by the Canadian Government

In testimony before this Inquiry, government officials acknowledged that the consular response to the Air India Flight 182 disaster by the Canadian government was deficient and could be improved. The government press release with toll-free hotline information for persons in Canada to call their government with respect to the disaster was released in an untimely fashion, two days after the bombing at 4 p.m. on June 26th, instead of as soon as possible after the disaster.² By this time, many families of the victims had understandably already departed for Ireland and the lack of information from the Canadian government on how families could contact them, was a source of frustration for families. Upon arrival in Cork, Ireland, an overwhelmed staff of consular officials attempted to assist families of the victims. The human resources needed to fully assist the families of the victims were grossly underestimated. According to Mr. Stewart, "There was a period where we were stretched. There's no doubt about it."³ Mr. Molgat echoed this sentiment when he testified that, "With the benefit of hindsight I would have asked for more

² Testimony of Mr. Terry Sheehan, *Transcript of Proceedings* (Vol. 13), November 7, 2006, p. 1240.

³ Testimony of Mr. Gavin Stewart, *Transcript of Proceedings* (Vol. 13), November 7, 2006, p. 1171.

people from the beginning.”⁴

The small group of consular officials that were deployed to assist families of the victims lacked the full complement of appropriate resources and skill sets to respond effectively. This served to add to the discontentment and frustration of the families of the victims present in Cork. At the Cork airport and at hotels in and around Cork where families of the victims were staying, the disaster response by government officials was hampered because it was not always immediately apparent to families of the victims who the delegation of Canadian government officials in Cork were who could provide assistance. According to Mr. Stewart, “...we were a group of people in suits...It wasn’t clear when they were talking to us, especially outside of Jury’s Hotel, that we were representatives of the Government of Canada...We indicated to them verbally but we didn’t have maple leaf flags on our shirts or anything like that.”⁵

None of the seven consular officials deployed to Cork spoke Hindi, Punjabi, or Urdu fluently.⁶ Mr. Molgat testified that he only had the opportunity on occasion to speak friendly conventional phrases in Urdu to family members.⁷ The consular response did not employ a Hindu, Sikh, or Muslim religious figure capable of providing religious guidance for grieving families. According to Mr. Stewart, “No, we didn’t employ anyone, any person as giving religious guidance.”⁸ Mr. Molgat also acknowledged that, “...none of us were trained social workers or counsellors.”⁹ This further exasperated the already stressful circumstances under which families in Cork were grieving.

All the while in Canada, government officials were attempting to respond to a major terrorist incident without the benefit of a written guidance document of policies and procedures. According to Mr. Sheehan, with respect to whether there was a particular written document or a policy or procedure that he or other government officials could turn to in order to assist with responding to a terrorist incident involving mass casualties, “No, no, not at all.”¹⁰ When the federal government did manage to organize a counselling program co-funded by the provincial government of Ontario, it appears that they failed to provide adequate notice about the availability of this program to the families of the victims, as many of them testified that the federal government never contacted them for any purpose after June 1985.¹¹

(v) The Canadian Government Remains Unprepared Today

Unfortunately, despite the passing of much time since the Air India Flight 182 tragedy in June 1985, the Canadian government continues to remain unprepared today to effectively respond to the needs of the families of the victims of a future terrorist attack. In the event of a terrorist incident today, a manual drafted to respond to natural disasters, not terrorism, guides the government’s response. This manual, *Government of Canada Standard Operating Procedures in Response to Natural Disasters Abroad*, fails to document clear procedures for establishing a

⁴ Testimony of Mr. Daniel Molgat, *Transcript of Proceedings* (Vol. 13), November 7, 2006, p. 1191.

⁵ Testimony of Mr. Gavin Stewart, *Transcript of Proceedings* (Vol. 13), November 7, 2006, p. 1195-96.

⁶ Testimony of Mr. Gavin Stewart, *Transcript of Proceedings* (Vol. 13), November 7, 2006, p. 1163.

⁷ Testimony of Mr. Daniel Molgat, *Transcript of Proceedings* (Vol. 13), November 7, 2006, p. 1164.

⁸ Testimony of Mr. Gavin Stewart, *Transcript of Proceedings* (Vol. 13), November 7, 2006, p. 1165.

⁹ Testimony of Mr. Daniel Molgat, *Transcript of Proceedings* (Vol. 13), November 7, 2006, p. 1169.

¹⁰ Testimony of Mr. Terry Sheehan, *Transcript of Proceedings* (Vol. 13), November 7, 2006, p. 1239.

¹¹ Testimony of Mr. Terry Sheehan, *Transcript of Proceedings* (Vol. 13), November 7, 2006, p. 1246.

presence, building an office, and establishing lines of communication, etc.¹² Likewise, the contingency plans for Canadian consulates do not address responses specific to a terrorist episode. In light of this, Mr. Desjardins stated that, "And you're right in your suggestion, maybe this policy could be refined to include those or a separate set of guidelines be developed. That's a fair suggestion...I guess the policy would be more complete if it was, indeed."¹³

Reforms that would serve to improve the response by the Canadian government to a terrorist incident remain unimplemented. Although it is a need that the government has identified, they do not possess rapid deployment teams that can be deployed on short notice to respond to a terrorist incident. According to Mr. Desjardins, "That is something that we have as a plan which we have not implemented because we don't have the resources required to do that..."¹⁴ Even if the government had the resources to deploy such a team, they do not train consular officials to be conversant, or at the very least, competent in a variety of languages that correspond to the ethnic makeup of Canada.¹⁵ Mr. Desjardins also indicated that having a single point of contact for families within the government in the aftermath of a terrorist attack would "[d]efinitely" be an improvement.

The bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001, sixteen years after the Air India Flight 182 bombing, attests to the poor state of Canada's current preparedness to respond effectively to the needs of the families of the victims of a future terrorist attack. Ms. Maureen Basnicki, founding director of the Canadian Coalition Against Terror, lost her husband on 9/11. Expressing how frustrated she was by the manner in which the Canadian government failed to respond to her needs as a victim of terrorism, Ms. Basnicki testified about how the government neglected to communicate with her and assist her in the aftermath of 9/11. Ms. Basnicki cited the significant length of time it took to obtain a death certificate from the government, that the government neglected to assist her with arrangements to bring her husband's remains back to Canada, and that the government afforded her no special consideration such as forgiveness of her late husband's taxes that fell into arrears, as evidence of the poor response by government officials to her situation. Stated simply, "I did not get help from our federal government after 9/11."¹⁶ One need only imagine the devastation that falls upon a close loved one of a victim of terrorism, to realize the assistance that must be provided in the days after a terrorist attack.

¹² Testimony of Mr. Robert Desjardins, *Transcript of Proceedings* (Vol. 14), November 8, 2006, p. 1295.

¹³ Testimony of Mr. Robert Desjardins, *Transcript of Proceedings* (Vol. 14), November 8, 2006, p. 1311-1312.

¹⁴ Testimony of Mr. Robert Desjardins, *Transcript of Proceedings* (Vol. 14), November 8, 2006, p. 1299.

¹⁵ Testimony of Mr. Robert Desjardins, *Transcript of Proceedings* (Vol. 14), November 8, 2006, p. 1301.

¹⁶ Testimony of Ms. Maureen Basnicki, *Transcript of Proceedings* (Vol. 13), November 7, 2006, p. 1265.

Recommendations

In light of the experience of AIVFA members with respect to the Canadian government response abroad and at home to the Air India Flight 182 bombing, the following recommendations are provided so that Canadian victims of a future terrorist-motivated tragedy do not have to endure what AIVFA members did in the aftermath of their loss:

1. Government Terrorist Response Policy & Procedure

- Development of a Terrorist Response Policy and Procedure document to coordinate the government's response at federal and provincial levels to a terrorist incident, in addition to contingency plans for Canadian consulates that specifically address response by consular offices to a terrorist incident involving Canadian citizens.

2. Government Communication & Administrative Action Plan

- **In the immediate aftermath of a terrorist incident:** Execution of an effective government Communication and Administrative Action Plan that among other things, provides timely information in both Official languages to the families of the victims of a terrorist attack vis-à-vis an Internet website, 1-800 telephone number, and multi-media news releases.
- **In the short-term after a terrorist incident:** Timely administrative assistance provided by government to help with such things as obtaining passports and visas on an expedited basis, and facilitating the transportation, home or elsewhere, of bodies of deceased family members.

3. "1-800" Government Victims' Families Liaison Officer

- **In the immediate aftermath of a terrorist incident:** Establishment of a dedicated toll-free government Victim's Families Liaison Officer who will serve as a "one-stop shop" for communication by telephone in both Official languages with families of the victims.
- **In the period after a terrorist incident:** Continued assistance provided by the dedicated toll-free government Victim's Families Liaison Officer with respect to on-going communication during any subsequent criminal investigation and trial.

4. Government Rapid Deployment Team

- Establishment of a government Rapid Deployment Team with the full complement of appropriate skills and resources, including relevant language skills (at a bare minimum both Official languages) and cultural background, adequate physical resources including Canadian government identification-related materials, adequate human resources with relevant training in such things as grief counselling and religious/spiritual guidance, in order to respond effectively and in a sensitive manner, while ensuring every effort is made to accommodate the unique needs of families of the victims of terrorism, wherever in the world a large terrorist tragedy involving Canadian citizens occurs.

5. Government-funded Counselling

- **In the immediate aftermath and period after a terrorist incident:** Provision of government-funded counselling for grieving families of the victims that is made available on an on-going basis, in provinces and cities across Canada.

6. Government-funded Financial Assistance

- **In the immediate aftermath of a terrorist incident:** Immediate provision by the government of interim financial assistance to families of the victims in need where appropriate and necessary, for such things as travel to and accommodation at the location of a terrorist disaster, etc.
- **In the short-term after a terrorist incident:** Provision of government-funded financial assistance to families of the victims in need where appropriate and necessary, for such things as burial/cremation, etc.
- **In the period after a terrorist incident:** Adequate and timely government financial compensation, as well as the availability of government-funded legal counsel to assist with all facets of the consideration of compensation and related negotiations. In addressing compensation, the government should avoid applying a strictly legal assessment with respect to its potential liability. The government should recognize the suffering families of the victims of a terrorist attack experience, in addition to the devastating economic and psychological impact, loss stemming from a terrorist attack can have on such families.

7. Public Acknowledgement

- **In the immediate aftermath of a terrorist incident:** In a timely and appropriate manner, the government should provide a clear public acknowledgement of the loss of Canadian lives.
- **In the short-term after a terrorist incident:** Honour the victims of a terrorist attack by appropriate means, such as flying flags across Canada at half-staff.
- **In the period after a terrorist incident:** With input from the families of the victims of terrorism, consideration by the government of a permanent memorial where appropriate.

8. Public Interest-Based Presumption in Favour of Inquiry

- A public interest-based presumption in favour of the establishment of a full public Commission of Inquiry, with respect to the circumstances that led to a terrorist incident, and the appropriate response by government to the recommendations reached by such Inquiry.