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Addressing Concerns and Confusion

Many Canadians have reached out expressing their concern and confusion with the current dispute with the directors of Citizens Inquiry Canada.

We too are concerned, and quite frankly confused as well.

In an effort to provide further clarification on the current disagreement with Citizens Inquiry Canada, I've drafted the following high level overview of the situation.

Understanding the Governance Structure of the NCI

Let me begin by explaining the governance structure of the **National Citizens Inquiry (NCI)**. I think it's important that people understand how the NCI was and is governed.

The National Citizens Inquiry was formed by eleven individuals in July 2022. Collectively we made a commitment to launch a national, citizen-led, citizen-funded inquiry into the government's response to COVID that would be independent of government influence.

This group included Preston Manning, Brian Peckford, Shawn Buckley, Scarlet Martyn, Kari Simpson, Ryan Penn, Max Daigle, Jonathan Bower, Andrej Litvinjenko, and myself. Ches Crosbie and others were added later.

David Ross, Shawn Buckley and Andrej Litvinjenko, along with lawyer Michael Collins drafted the bylaws and supporting documents for the NCI which were approved unanimously.

This founding group was named the "NCI Support Group" to avoid any public perception that we were steering the Commissioners. **The NCI Support Group is the Board of Directors of the National Citizens Inquiry. It is the strategic, operational and management team for the NCI.** We hold all authority to make decisions on behalf of the NCI initiative.

In our planning we recognized the need to create a not-for-profit to receive and disseminate the funds donated to the NCI. The not-for-profit was named **Citizens Inquiry Canada (CIC)**. It's mandate/authority was very simple and narrow - to receive and disseminate funds on behalf of the NCI Board of Directors. It was not named the National Citizens Inquiry on purpose because it is not the National Citizens Inquiry. The NCI Board of Directors predated the CIC and is the body responsible for the incorporation of the CIC.



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All of the documents to support this position are available on the NCI website: <https://nationalcitizensinquiry.ca/transparency/>

We operated under this governance structure the entire time that both Preston Manning and David Ross served as Chair of the Board of Directors of the NCI. There was never any question that the NCI Board of Directors is the decision-making authority for the NCI. The NCI Board appointed the Directors of the CIC, and the membership of the CIC was to mirror the NCI Directors to enable a high level of oversight and accountability.

Brian Peckford stepped off the NCI Board of Directors because he was concerned that his presence might negatively impact the perception of the NCI as independent from government influence. Mr. Peckford was openly critical when Preston Manning continued on with the NCI because of the perception of political influence. Preston eventually resigned as the NCI Board Chair and NCI member, and we were led to believe that he was not involved in the decision-making of the NCI or CIC. We have since learned that this was not the case and that Preston and Andrej were given “*Director Emeritus*” status and invited to CIC meetings by David Ross and Ches Crosbie and allowed to vote. The NCI Board of Directors was not aware of this, nor was the public.

On December 13, 2023 David Ross resigned from the NCI Board at the request/direction of the Board of Directors. I replaced David Ross as Chair of the NCI Board at the request of the NCI Board of Directors. David emailed me the next day to congratulate me on my appointment and offered his assistance to make the transition in leadership as smooth as possible. Two days later he assisted in moving the domain for the NCI website (nationalcitizensinquiry.ca) from him to me. A clear statement that David understood who owned the NCI website and who had the decision-making authority.

Something Unexpected Happened

The work of the NCI took a sudden and unexpected shift on December 19, 2023 when Ches Crosbie declared in an NCI Board meeting that - *the CIC was the decision making authority for the NCI, and that the CIC would determine the future of the NCI at the upcoming CIC AGM.*

Ches Crosbie claimed that by incorporating Citizens Inquiry Canada, that the NCI Board of Directors turned over all authority and NCI assets to the CIC, and that the NCI Board was simply “*a committee of the CIC*” and had no authority.

This was never the understanding while Preston Manning and David Ross were the Chair of the NCI Board. Our bylaws, rules of inquiry, and meeting minutes all confirm that the NCI Board is the sole decision-making authority for the NCI.



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In early January 2024 Ches Crosbie directed our three social media contractors to change the access codes to our email, social media and live streaming accounts and not to share these codes with the NCI Board and staff that were responsible for communications. This was done without NCI Board discussion or approval, and at a time when we were receiving over 100,000 social media impressions daily.

For a group that claim they simply wanted to ensure the Commissioner's Report and recommendations will be disseminated, the CIC directors took steps to prevent those actually doing the work of the NCI to disseminate the report.

The CIC directors also refused to provide written financial statements on funds received, spent and currently being held by the CIC on behalf of the NCI. The National Citizens Inquiry Board has not received detailed financial statements since October 2022. David Ross has simply ignored the formal written requests from the NCI Board for financial statements.

This is when we realized that there was what some have described as “a coup”.

Given that the two CIC directors, David Ross and Ches Crosbie (and two hidden directors – Preston Manning and Andrej Litvinjenko) were acting unilaterally and no longer following the direction of the NCI Board, we made a decision to incorporate a new not-for-profit to receive and disseminate funds donated to the NCI. We established the new not-for-profit on January 17, 2024.

On January 29, 2024, as Chair of the NCI Board, I served formal notice to the directors of the CIC that their services to the NCI were no longer needed and to transfer all remaining funds held on behalf of the NCI as of that date to the new not-for-profit corporation. Also to return all social media, email and live streaming accounts to the NCI. **To date they have refused to do so.**

Efforts to Silence the NCI

The bottom line is that the CIC directors have taken assets belonging to the NCI and refused to return them; have set up a new website (nationalcitizensinquiry.com) and sent emails to our 47,000 subscribers purporting to be the NCI; and in recent weeks stacked the membership of the CIC that violates the governance structure set up to ensure the CIC was accountable to the NCI Board.

In an interview with Cathy Jones last week, David Ross described the NCI Board as a “*minority group*”. He is referring to our membership with Citizens Inquiry Canada. What David didn't explain to Cathy is that he and Ches Crosbie stacked the membership of the CIC in the weeks prior to the March 1st CIC AGM. This stacking changed the NCI Board of Directors from the governing body of the CIC into a minority of the members.



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Most disconcerting is the added CIC members now include paid contractors, which is a clear conflict of interest. Added members also include individuals who never did serve on the NCI Board, and individuals who no longer serve on the NCI Board. This is not the intended membership of the CIC corporation.

Of even greater concern is that there appears to be an agenda to prevent future citizen led, citizen funded inquiries. This was one of the motions put forward by David Ross at the CIC AGM that failed to pass. Ches Crosbie was very clear in his messaging during his interview with Jason Lavigne on February 3, 2024, that he doesn't want the National Citizens Inquiry conducting further inquiries.

This is what Ches stated:

*"I think that, personally, and I think many would agree with me that **we don't want the National Citizens Inquiry to become an open ended, ongoing, you know, inquiry into the state of government in Canada** . . . But then that needs to come to an end, maybe within three years. I don't know if that's the exact right time period. But **all great things need to have an end.**"*

My question is – Why would Ches Crosbie want to end *"the ongoing inquiry into the state of government in Canada"*? Why do *"all great things need to have an end?"* Does he think the work of the NCI is done and that life in Canada has been restored to normal? And, whose agenda is he representing?

The NCI Board is being portrayed by David Ross and Ches Crosbie as some "rogue group" that took over the NCI. We are the group that founded the NCI, and the group that the bylaws and the rules of the Commission authorizes to direct the NCI. Their statements contradict the rules under which we have operated for the first 18 months and still operate, including during David Ross' time as Chair of the NCI.

The individuals that set up the new non-profit are the individuals that operated and ran the NCI hearings, and have the right and the authority to either carry on with hearings or discontinue them. Also the right to decide which corporation will hold the NCI funds. To describe the NCI Board as a "minority group" is dishonest and intentionally disruptive.

To those of us who founded the National Citizens Inquiry and have put in hundreds and in some cases thousands of hours over the last 18 months, this is a betrayal of all of our efforts and the wishes of Canadians, and a violation of the governance structure of the NCI.

It appears that there is clear intent to prevent the National Citizens Inquiry from continuing its mission of citizen led, citizen funded inquiries that are independent of government.



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Who Is Behind This?

The question we get often is - *Who do you think is behind this effort?*

The visible agents of this effort are David Ross, Ches Crosbie and Preston Manning.

My question is – *Who else is behind this?*

And, what happened between December 15th and 19th such that the understanding of the governance structure of the NCI in the minds of David Ross and Ches Crosbie changed so radically?

Who benefits by shutting down or discrediting the National Citizens Inquiry?

We are still trying to figure this out.

The actions of the CIC, however, rather than being of service to the NCI, have become a disruptive force that undermines our efforts to disseminate the Commissioner's Report and recommendations, to get the truth out, and to hold our various institutions to account.

The NCI Board of Directors is committed to continuing the mission of citizen led, citizen funded inquiries. We have already planned inquires for 2024 in Regina, Vancouver and Toronto or Ottawa.

We welcome your continued support.

Respectfully,

Ted Kuntz, Chair
National Citizens Inquiry