

The Joint Federal/Provincial Commission into the April 2020 Nova Scotia Mass Casualty MassCasualtyCommission.ca

Commission fédérale-provinciale sur les événements d'avril 2020 en Nouvelle-Écosse CommissionDesPertesMassives.ca

Small Group Session

Séance en petit groupe

Commissioners / Commissaires

The Honourable / L'honorable J. Michael MacDonald, Chair / Président

Leanne J. Fitch (Ret. Police Chief, M.O.M)

Dr. Kim Stanton

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Best Western Truro - Glengarry 150 Willow Street Truro, Nova Scotia B2N 4Z6

Friday, September 9, 2022

Best Western Truro - Glengarry 150 Willow Street Truro, Nouvelle-Écosse B2N 4Z6

Vendredi, le 9 septembre 2022

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II Appearances / Comparutions

Mr. Richard Ellison Father of Corrie Ellison

Ms. Grace MacCormick Counsel
Mr. Leo Artalejo Facilitator

Ms. Maureen Wheller Commission Community Liaison Director

Mr. Jamie VanWart Commission Counsel

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Truro, Nova Scotia 1 2 --- Upon commencing on Friday, September 22, 2022 at 2:00 p.m. MR. LEO ARTALEJO: As we discussed, we're using the audio 3 recorder. We'll make a public transcript that's translated [sic] into English and French 4 [sic], and it will be posted as a public document to be transparent about the 5 conversations that we have as a public Commission. 6 7 MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Yeah. MR. LEO ARTALEJO: As you know, your perspectives as a family 8 member and the experience you have seeking information, gathering support during 9 and after the mass casualty is something that we hope to learn from, and we hope that -10 - the work we have left to do is to formulate the recommendations that will help 11 Canadians in the future during these kind of events. So we're really looking forward to 12 hearing from you today. 13 My role as a facilitator is to support you, to offer you a break, but 14 15 some of the topics that we're hoping to hear from you today about is your experience as 16 a family member during the mass casualty event, how you accessed information during and after the mass casualty, the supports and services that were helpful to you, and 17 what was missing that could have been helpful to you that we want to ensure is there for 18 19 Canadian families in the future. 20 MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Well, when it comes to the Canadian families in the future, it's gotta come right from Ottawa. They're the ones that's got to 21 put the kiboshes to these, I call them terrorists. Like Gabriel Wortman was a terrorist, 22 23 eh. Once he decided to do what he did, sure. And they don't deserve anything better 24 than the police being able to take him right out of there without a search warrant once they've -- somebody says that he has firearms that he's not supposed to have, he's got 25 no permit or nothing and especially handguns, then, yeah, they should be able to take 26 him right out of his property and take him right to jail and say, "Listen, you're going to 27

stay here until you tell us where the guns are and don't worry about calling a lawyer".

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1	That's what's got to that's what's got to take place, that kind of I
2	know it sounds like Gestapo or whatever, but that's the only kind of language them kind
3	of people understand, eh.
4	MR. LEO ARTALEJO: So you're saying the Federal Government
5	has to implement
6	MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Yeah. Instead of instead of pointing
7	the fingers at law-abiding citizens saying, "Well, it's your fault".
8	Myself, I have firearms and if somebody breaks into my house and
9	steals them, then all the they're going to try to blame me for either improper storage
10	or whatever, eh, and I'm the bad guy because they can you know, they end up on the
11	street, type of thing, which they you know, they just take them and trade them for
12	drugs, kind of thing. Yeah.
13	MR. LEO ARTALEJO: Well, let's if it's okay with you, let's start
14	with the round 1 question.
15	What do you want to tell us about your experience seeking
16	information and getting support during and immediately after the mass casualty?
17	MR. RICHARD ELLISON: It's kind of a blur, actually, 'cause I went
18	down to my son's place down Halifax for I stayed at the motel down there one night
19	and then I left the next day and went down there till Wednesday and then come back up
20	and went down to my place. I had to wait at the end of the road for the to get
21	clearance from the Mounties, eh. But I didn't get any receive any any help from
22	them people at all.
23	MR. LEO ARTALEJO: So how did the Mounties reach out to you
24	after the event?
25	MR. RICHARD ELLISON: They didn't. The only ones that did was
26	down at the Portapique community hall. The people from Department of Justice were
27	there and I was talking to them and they suggested that I go to the hospital up on the
28	second floor there and talk to the sociologist there or psychiatrist or whatever they are,

but you know -- counsellors, I guess. Yeah, that's the word for it. Yeah, which they're 1 2 very nice people and that, but it didn't -- I didn't need that. I just -- I know it's -- what's going on and, you know, and why these things happen and what the ultimate outcome 3 is going to be. Yeah. 4 MR. LEO ARTALEJO: The Family Liaison Officer, was that role 5 helpful to you at all in terms of understanding the process of it? 6 7 MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Family Liaison? MR. LEO ARTALEJO: Constable Bent. 8 9 MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Oh, Bent (laughs). He made me feel like some of them have First Nations people, they used to give them all these beaver 10 pelts that are worth a fortune and -- type of thing, and then they give -- they give the 11 Indians nothing like a bottle of booze or something, eh, for these. I don't know. That's 12 about what it was. I -- I didn't get any gifts like that, kind of stuff, like pictures of Corrie 13 and things like that. I don't hang -- after a tragedy like that and then hanging their 14 15 picture on the wall and just -- 'cause you'll never get over it that way, but. So I almost 16 have to forget that I even had a son, for the most part, you know, 'cause you start thinking about these things and it just eat you up inside, eh. Yeah. 17 MR. LEO ARTALEJO: So were you able to access the mental 18 help support that you needed? 19 MR. RICHARD ELLISON: M'hm. 20 MR. LEO ARTALEJO: You said that the Victim Services ---21 MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Yeah, I was up there for three sessions 22 23 with -- I forget her name now, but yeah. I think I got their cards at home still. Yeah. 24 MR. LEO ARTALEJO: So it sounds like there's the short term, the 25 shock, and the immediate aftermath. How did you manage in the months that followed? What supports were helpful for you? 26

know that Corrie, for one thing, is in a better place. You know, he's only in the common

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MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Well, I just -- like I say, I know -- like I

1	grave of mankind, eh, and there's eventually people will be brought back. And you
2	got to believe that. It's right in the scriptures. Right in the scriptures, it says that. Yeah.
3	So I look forward to the day. All I got to do is make sure that I'm there. In other words,
4	got to behave myself. I can't C1 - Personal Information , I don't
5	know, 'cause I anyways, but I'm trying to get clear of that because it's an awful I
6	found it worse than C1 - Personal Information
7	C1 - Personal Information And then like alcohol, I keep
8	that too down. I could do without it, put it that way. But yeah.
9	MR. LEO ARTALEJO: Do you feel like you have the support
LO	needed now to help you have the life live the life that you want to live, now that we're
l1	two years on?
L2	MR. RICHARD ELLISON: I'm thinking about moving over to the
L3	Ukraine (laughs). That's that'd be my life, yeah, go over there and get shot and then
L4	that's the end of it. Yeah. Let somebody else do it, but anyways. No, I'm just joking.
L5	Yeah.
L6	But I would like to go somewheres, maybe, but I don't know where
L7	to go. Like down there is not bad. At least it's lots of privacy and yeah.
L8	MR. LEO ARTALEJO: Was there anything you can think of that
L9	was missing for you that would be helpful for families in the future to have access to?
20	MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Well, they were setting up the fire
21	department in Lower Onslow for people that well, like myself and then for Mr. and
22	Mrs. Blair and other, you know, like relatives of victims or, you know, friends of victims
23	or whatever there so that, you know, they had they were going to set that up for us so
24	that we could be comforted by that, you know, with hot coffee. Kindness is a big thing
25	they have handled well. Of course, love is is the key word. And that's
26	MR. LEO ARTALEJO: So a physical location like the fire hall or
27	MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Yeah.
2	MR. I FO ARTAL F.IO: a community hall are very important

That's how you found out about the Victim Services or the hospital. 1 2 MR. RICHARD ELLISON: No, it was at the -- at the Portapique hall. 3 MR. LEO ARTALEJO: At the Portapique hall. 4 MR. RICHARD ELLISON: M'hm. 5 MR. LEO ARTALEJO: Yeah. 6 7 MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Yeah, and that was ---MR. LEO ARTALEJO: It's important to have those kind of physical 8 9 gathering points for survivors, sounds like ---MR. RICHARD ELLISON: It is 'cause then you're in the hearing 10 with people that have experienced the same thing, so you can share your grief, you 11 know, with each other and try to say how you feel, you know and -- like to try to make 12 sense of what happened is just -- you just can't 'cause it's just -- it's not human, eh, 13 what he did, any of that stuff. You're going -- you're crossing a line big time, you know, 14 to do anything like that, even to think of stuff like that, you know. Him with all his money 15 16 and what good did it do him, you know. And you could get angry, too, eh, like, but I -- you know, I'm not 17 angry. I don't hate him. 18 That's what one of the -- there's one from CBC come down here to 19 interview me and that's one of the things she said. She said, "You must hate Gabriel 20 Wortman". I said, "Well, no, I never -- how can I hate him when he probably didn't even 21 know what he was doing?", type of thing, so. 22 23 MR. LEO ARTALEJO: In terms of dealing with the media after the 24 event, can you tell us a little bit about anything that might have helped you prepare for that or help you deal with it? 25 MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Well, not really. I just -- it's on the 26 27 stream of things now. It's ---MR. LEO ARTALEJO: Okay. 28

1	MR. RICHARD ELLISON: The media's there to get information
2	from us, type of thing, to so that they can put it on the radio or in the newspapers, you
3	know. Yeah.
4	MR. LEO ARTALEJO: So the work that lays ahead for the
5	Commission is to take all the lessons that we've learned and to formulate
6	recommendations that will be meaningful and effective in the future. We're interested in
7	hearing from you. This is question 2, which issues are most important to you for the
8	Commission to focus on as we finalize those recommendations?
9	MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Well, there's a lot of things are that
10	are totally lacking in society today which, you know, one of them's compassion and like
11	love, kindness, mildness, meekness. A lot of people have thrown that aside and they've
12	taken the opposite things, the meanness and the greed and the hatred that's out there
13	now that's everywheres, you know. And it's terrible. Like it's you know, to think that,
14	you know, we've digressed so far as a grace of you know, it's just I find that hard to
15	deal with. But then I know the reasons why people are like that, unfortunately.
16	MR. LEO ARTALEJO: I think you're touching on some of the
17	issues about the impact on children and starting earlier in education.
18	MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Well, there, speaking of children,
19	there's, what, four at least four. Yeah. Well, there's four children down there that are
20	now orphaned, Lisa McCully's two children, and Greg and his wife's children. Yeah. So
21	they'll have the rest of their life to think about, you know I don't know how it what
22	kind of trauma they experienced, you know, for whether I still find it kind of hard to
23	believe myself. Like it just you know, like how can something like that happen in this
24	country? But yet, here we are.
25	You know, it's that fellow out there with a knife and that in
26	Saskatchewan, that kind of stuff, eh. It just you know, like we we have an awful lot
27	of trouble, a lot of problems like the drugs and violence and this, you know, and then
28	there you know, the governments are trying to deal with that by council and, you

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know, whatever, but it's -- like I hear -- listening to the news here this morning, they
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- were talking about the Dalhousie students, they get these big parties going, eh. They
- don't care about their neighbours or nothing as long as they're doing what they want to
- 4 do. And it seems that's what things are today. That's what's broken -- boiled down to,
- is that people don't care as long as they get to do what they want to do. Just like the --
- today, now, go to the groceries stores and that and they were cleaning them places
- 7 right out. But what -- what's going to happen when the real thing comes, you know?
- 8 And it's coming, you know. It's just a matter of when. Yeah.
- 9 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** I know you have some notes there and you
- 10 have some notes there and you have some comments to ---
- 11 MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Well, I just -- okay. Yeah.
- 12 MR. LEO ARTALEJO: I'd like to hear ---
- MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Something I'd like to see happen, I'd
- like to see the -- down where I'm at here, that should be a no-fly zone for the aircraft
- coming from Debert 'cause they're -- they're flying around my place all -- every day
- they're flying around. And I -- you know, if it was the police or RCMP or realtors, you
- know, having to like take pictures of lots of land down there that people want to put up
- for sale, then, you know -- but these ones are just flying around just to be nosy, you
- know, sticking their nose in my backyard. You know, I don't really appreciate that, eh.
- 20 Yeah.
- 21 And I would like to see -- that's one recommendation I think
- wouldn't hurt, you know, 'cause the rest of the families down there are all gone, you
- know. Like wiped out just like what could happen over in Ukraine, type of thing. You
- know, terrible. Just lots of -- like I say, it's almost unbelievable, you know.
- MR. LEO ARTALEJO: Yeah, it must be hard ---
- MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Well, it is. It's ---
- MR. LEO ARTALEJO: --- for someone that's still in the
- 28 community.

1	MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Yeah. But there's nothing I can do. I
2	can't help Corrie any more. I wish he was still with me, but you know, 'cause I do miss
3	him, you know, terrible. Yeah. And that's why I can't even think say it 'cause then I
4	start to yeah. 'Cause it can come back just bang, you know. Like Clinton's phone call
5	to me when he told me Corrie was dead, so I was and that's the only way I found out
6	that Corrie was dead, was that Clinton called me. He said, "Corrie's dead. Call the
7	police".
8	So I did. I called 9-1-1 and at one one of my calls from 9-1-1 was
9	the person on the other end picked up the phone and said, "Hello". And I thought I had
10	the wrong number at first, and I said, "Is this 9-1-1?". "Oh, yeah. Yeah".
11	But very not very professional. Just like somebody, you know it
12	was like dialling
13	MR. LEO ARTALEJO: [indiscernible]
14	MR. RICHARD ELLISON: like dialling 9-1-1 and getting
15	Layton's Taxi instead, type of thing, you know.
16	MR. LEO ARTALEJO: So that would be helpful, especially in
17	times of
18	MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Well, yeah, it's it's necessary. Today
19	it's unfortunate 'cause, you know, years ago there was no 9-1-1. You know, years ago,
20	the police didn't carry guns, you know. Just it shows you people can't see, you know,
21	these different degradations where mankind is going today, it's you know. And they
22	can't, really, 'cause there's there's a person there that doesn't want them to see that.
23	And these are things that they are written down and I know you'd
24	know the Book, right. It's in the Bible. Yeah.
25	MR. LEO ARTALEJO: I wanted just to move on to round three.
26	Are there other things that would be important for the Commission to understand when
27	it comes to your experience seeking information and getting support during and after the
28	mass casualty? Anything else you'd like to share with the Commission before we

MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Well, the only thing I could say is just 1 2 pray that it never happens to you. You know, if you had grandchildren or children, that's the last thing you want to have happen to them. You know, bad enough to be, you 3 know, motorcycle accident or drownings and stuff like that. You can almost kind of not 4 expect it, but it's there. The hazard's there that, you know, if they're boating and 5 waterskiing or, you know, anything. You know, motorcycles, they're inherently 6 7 dangerous, especially if they're not driven properly. But to have your child or whoever 8 shot out from -- I say shot out from underneath you, but you know, it sounds like you're 9 talking about a horse, but it's just -- you know, if that's part of your family that, you know, you love and, you know, nurture and that and then, all of a sudden, they're taken away 10 from you by that means there, it's just -- it is. It's very hard to deal with. Yeah. Yeah. 11 That's -- I almost feel -- I feel bad for the other ones, you know, not 12 knowing what I know. Without that -- like without the hope, there's -- you know, what is 13 there? You know, it's as simple as that. And you're just going to keep going on and on 14 in misery the rest of your life, which we are 'cause they're not going to come back until -15 16 - like I say, God will set things straight eventually when his time comes, but right now, see, we don't know. Somebody is saying, you know, he's going to use nuclear 17 weapons and then you got climate change. We got a hurricane coming. 18 And people just -- they're at their wits' ends almost. Like they --19 20 you know, and there's nothing they can do about it, really. Just try to -- but you got to -like if people treated each other with decency and respect and the good qualities that, 21 you know, we should have, then things would be a whole lot better, you know. There 22 23 wouldn't be any Gabriel Wortmans 'cause he wasn't like that, eh. He was -- he had a 24 mean streak in him. I seen that, the way he -- more like he owned Lisa like a dog or 25 something, Lisa Banfield. Oh, yeah, just -- yeah, you're my, you know, possession, type of thing. 26 There's a lot of that today in maybe marriages or common-law type 27 things. Oh, yes. You don't know what -- what's going on behind closed doors, eh, that -28

1	- yeah. You know, no more respect for people and treat them like dogs.
2	You know, you look at everything, too, what happened to that
3	woman over in Iran there. See, that that should makes you sick.
4	And one of the best exemplars of women or C1 women was Jesus
5	Christ. There was a woman that first went to his tomb, eh, and then Jesus talked to her
6	and then Mary, Mary Magdalene, you know. And those were the women that attended
7	to the disciples, just treated like gold. Yeah.
8	And without that, then unfortunately, you see you know, it's sad,
9	too, like 'cause women are really in a lot of places, they're taking a back seat big time.
10	You know, over in Afghanistan they're only allowed a Grade 6 education. You know,
11	just strange. Like it's but then that's that's the work of the devil. It has to be.
12	You know, like the Taliban and what other religions there, I don't
13	want to start trashing religion, but it's it is what it is. You know, it's
14	MR. LEO ARTALEJO: So I'm hearing you say gender-based
15	violence is a contributor.
16	MR. RICHARD ELLISON: It is.
17	MR. LEO ARTALEJO: You would you would see that
18	MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Yeah.
19	MR. LEO ARTALEJO: the relationship between the event that
20	you saw.
21	MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Yeah. Yeah. Well, now, I wasn't the

MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Yeah. Yeah. Well, now, I wasn't the best father in the world, but I wasn't a violent person towards my wife or my children. I was just an idiot, eh, you might say, you know, 'cause I used to party a lot and I thought more about partying than I did my family, kind of thing. And that's just without -- without the knowledge of good and bad, well, chances are you're going to do what's wrong in this -- the way things are now, yeah. Yeah.

So -- but as far as this Commission goes, hopefully they're -- there can be some steadfast changes. But it -- you know, it has to be put right in Parliament.

- You know, it has to be right in our *Constitution*. Like when it comes to terrorists -- and
- that's what -- like I say, when people were smuggling guns into the country, yeah,
- they're terrorists. Nothing else. And they got to be treated that way. Treat them
- 4 harshly, too, eh, and don't give them any much of a quarter type, you know.
- 5 **MR. LEO ARTALEJO:** Well, that's one of the reasons we are
- 6 working very hard to get the recommendations finalized.
- 7 **MR. RICHARD ELLISON:** Yeah.
- 8 MR. LEO ARTALEJO: Implementation is something that the
- 9 Commission is very focused on.
- 10 MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Yeah.
- MR. LEO ARTALEJO: So I'll turn to the Commissioners and see if
- they have any questions or comments for you.
- 13 COMMISSIONER MacDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr.
- 14 Ellison.
- This is our last -- our last session with family members, and so
- we're honoured to have it with you. You've been with us throughout. You've testified
- for us. There's a statement ---
- MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Well, I'll do anything I can to see justice
- 19 done or -- you know.
- 20 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** And you did. Yeah, you've
- stepped up always. And last Saturday, you stepped up and helped us and here you are
- today, so I just wanted to thank you for that.
- I also wanted to express -- this is an opportunity just to express my
- 24 heartfelt sympathy for your loss.
- MR. RICHARD ELLISON: I appreciate that. Yeah.
- 26 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** And I -- you deserve to be
- treated with decency and respect and kindness, sir. So, thank you.
- 28 MR. RICHARD ELLISON: I appreciate that, but you have to set

- the example for people right in front of them, too. Don't hold nothing back, you know,
- like thank you, please, thank you. Talk, you know, with a mild voice and, you know, you
- get people's attention, too, eh. It's quite phenomenal. You know, I find it, you know,
- 4 like really uplifting to -- you know, when you are having a conversation with -- you know,
- at the bank or wherever and you say the right things to the people that you're supposed
- to say, then they'll really -- you know, it helps them, too, 'cause everybody's struggling
- today. It's -- you know, if it isn't one thing, it's something else, eh, in people's lives, you
- 8 know.
- 9 **COMMISSIONER MacDONALD:** You're right, and so thank you.
- Thank you for your sharing and thank you for your wisdom, and it's much appreciated.
- 11 You've helped us, so we appreciate it.
- MR. RICHARD ELLISON: I appreciate the -- you helping us, too,
- 13 'cause we sure need it. Yeah.
- 14 **COMMISSIONER FITCH:** I'm going to say much the same as
- 15 Commissioner MacDonald. It's quite remarkable how -- how you've continued to help
- us out. It's -- you know, we've -- we can't imagine what you and your family have gone
- through and -- and it's -- it's uplifting to know that you still have the hope and the faith
- that you have and -- and the kindness that you showed others, and I think that that's --
- that's a gift for -- that you have to give to other people, so thank you for that.
- MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Yeah. Well, it is. It's just too bad the
- 21 governments weren't like that, but they -- you know, everything's so by the book and,
- 22 you know, they can't -- they got no room to -- you know, to be that way, maybe. I just --
- 23 you know, it's just -- or they're not expected to so they don't. They don't go there, you
- know, type of, you know. But that's the heart of the matter.
- 25 **COMMISSIONER FITCH:** Thank you very much for sharing
- everything with us that you have.
- MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Yeah. Well, I -- like I say, I really
- appreciate and just, you know, hopefully something good comes of this for everybody

- involved, that it does make changes, but we got a long ladder up -- going up to get to
- the top of all the problems that we have. And even in this country, too. Like Canada's a
- beautiful, rich country, but it's -- you know, we have a lot of -- lot of trouble here to deal
- 4 with, you know, let alone you see lot of -- you know, I guess we have to be thankful that
- 5 we don't live in -- well, right now like Puerto Rico. Them people are up to their waists in
- 6 water everywhere.
- 7 **COMMISSIONER STATON:** That may be us tomorrow.
- 8 --- Laughter
- 9 Mr. Ellison, I wanted to let you know you've been a model of generosity before the
- 10 Commission and what you're talking about in terms of the need for more kindness and
- care of others, you've really shown here. And it's -- I know it's touched all of us and
- we're very grateful that you've ---
- MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Well, I appreciate -- I appreciate that.
- 14 **COMMISSIONER STANTON:** Thank you so much.
- MR. RICHARD ELLISON: And -- but see, when -- when those kind
- of traits are brought out, then there's no room for the things that -- the reason why we're
- here. There's no room for that, eh, if -- you know, you're too busy treating people the
- way they want to be treated or deserve, you know, respect and -- you know, that's the
- way it has to be to make real changes, but -- and that's -- that's another thing that all the
- law enforcement agencies in Canada, you know, municipality [sic] police forces, what
- they have to deal with, you know, drugs and, you know, crime and the whole bit, eh.
- MR. LEO ARTALEJO: Yeah. I think, you know, the hope for the
- Commission is just to try to tune those systems so they can work better, as you expect.
- MR. RICHARD ELLISON: Yeah. Yeah.
- MR. LEO ARTALEJO: So thank you. We'll close the session, and
- really appreciate you being here.
- MR. RICHARD ELLISON: All right. Thank you.
- 28 --- Session concludes

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2	CERTIFICATION
3	
4	I, JACQUELINE CLARK, hereby certify the foregoing pages to be an accurate
5	transcription of the audio recording provided to the best of my skill and ability, and I so
6	swear.
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