

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

Stakeholder Consultation Session

Séance de Consultation des Parties Prenantes

Commissioners / Commissaires

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

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

Dr. Kim Stanton

Audio file: Sept29_CommunitySafety

Held at : Tenue à:

Mass Casualty Commission Office 128 Esplanade Street Truro, Nova Scotia B2N 2K3

Bureau de la Commission des pertes massives 128, rue Esplanade Truro, Nouvelle-Écosse B2N 2K3

Thursday, September 29, 2022

Jeudi, le 29 septembre 2022

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II Appearances / Comparutions

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Turning the Tide Initiative

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Society

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Stakeholder Consultations Session with Ms. Janet Watt, Bobby-Jay Aubin, and Ms. Stephanie Watson

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1	Videoconference
2	Upon commencing on Thursday, September 29, 2022, at 1:00 p.m.
3	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Great, maybe we could take a
4	second and go around and make introductions. So my name is Selena Henderson. I'm
5	part of the Research and Policy team here at the Commission, and I'll be facilitating the
6	session today along with Megan.
7	MS. MEGAN HARRIS: Hi folks. I'm Megan. I know a lot of you
8	know me. I work in I'm a Stakeholder Engagement Advisor with the Commission.
9	MS. JANET WATT: I'm Janet Watt. I'm the Senior Manager for
10	VON, ColchesterEast Hants, here in Truro.
11	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: I'm Bobby-Jay. I'm a Youth Outreach
12	Worker with Turning the Tide in Digby, with Inspiring Communities.
13	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: I'm Stephanie Watson, Operations
14	Manager for Truro Housing Outreach Society.
15	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Okay. I think that's everyone we
16	have with us today. So thank you, everyone, for being here. One of the most important
17	outcomes from this Commission is to make meaningful and effective recommendations
18	that will help make Canadian communities safer in the future so your input is critical in
19	shaping those final recommendations from the Commission.
20	So my role today as facilitator is just to help the conversation along
21	with the flow, keep track of time, and kind of explore any related topics as well that
22	might be helpful when the Commission's making its recommendation and understanding
23	the feedback. My co-facilitator, Megan, is here, and we also have Hannah available to
24	help with any technical issues.
25	So perhaps I think, Megan, you distributed the questions in
26	advance for people to think about.
27	MS. MEGAN HARRIS: Yes, I did.
28	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Yes, so great. So perhaps what we

1	will do is just start with those questions and give everyone about 10 to 15 minutes to
2	contribute.
3	So the first one is, what does community safety look like in rural
4	communities?
5	And Bobby-Jay, do want to start us off?
6	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: Sure, making sure all the street lights are
7	on. Having harm-reduction outreach happening in the communities I know it's very
8	lacking in this community. The need of shelter for some folk, young and not so young -
9	we have a lot of youth that are couch surfing right now and the shelters that are
10	accessible are out of this town and they're at capacity so there's nothing there for
11	safety, if that's where we're going with this. And having access to affordable housing,
12	food there's a lot of food insecurity here. And that's all I can think of right now, sorry.
13	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: No, that's wonderful. Thank you.
14	Thank you.
15	Janet?
16	MS. JANET WATT: I think, for me, a little different dynamic at it,
17	and a safe community is a place where not only our clients but also our service
18	providers are able to have some reassurance that when they're out on the road going
19	from home to home and when they're in the home that they are safe. And that could be
20	from any number of things, anything in the environment that could be causing a risk,
21	posing a risk to them, whether it's a hurricane, or flooded roads, or a fugitive on the
22	loose, whatever it may be, that they feel comfortable and secure and safe when they're
23	out there providing their services in the community.
24	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Thank you, Janet.
25	Stephanie?
26	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: I guess I can kind of echo what both
27	of these folks are saying. Of course, what could be considered safety here would be
28	access to mental health supports as well as affordable support of housing. Food

- security is a huge issue. Like, Bobby-Jay said, harm-reduction outreach support is a
- 2 massive one. Space for people to just be who they want to be and feel like they can
- connect with community members, which is another issue we see a lot of, is people
- 4 feeling very torn apart from their communities and not being able to relate to them.
- 5 which creates all kinds of wonderful behaviours. Yeah, so again, just kind of echoing
- 6 what both of these folks are saying in terms of safety.
- 7 **MS. SELENA HENDERSON:** Thanks, Stephanie.
- The second question -- that leads well into the second question
- 9 which is, what resources or strategies will help rural communities be safe, welcoming,
- and inclusive places for everyone?
- Stephanie, do you want to continue, to start that off?
- MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: Sure. Would you mind repeating the
- 13 question? Sorry.
- MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Sure. It's, what resources or
- strategies will help rural communities be safe, welcoming, and inclusive places for
- 16 everyone?
- MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: Oh, Lord, yes, I can definitely speak
- to that. Safe, affordable housing is the number one. That is, above all else, the biggest
- need in our community, and that's not just for our, I guess, typical clientele that we see
- every day, but we see whole family units right now that are living in tents and, you know,
- 21 they're not able to connect with their normal group of people because of, you know,
- 22 humility and shame and things like that.
- So affordable housing is the number one need. The second being
- there's no access to mental health supports in this community, none. It's an absolute
- thunderstorm to try to get through and get access for that type of support for people. So
- once we can start kind of bridging the gap on that foundation, then we're going to be
- able to come up with more long-term sustainable plans for folks to keep them in kind of
- a better headspace, a better situation altogether, if that makes sense.

1	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: It does. Thank you.
2	Janet, would you like to go next?
3	MS. JANET WATT: Yeah, I think, for me, it would go back to some
4	comments I made the other day, and that is in terms of communication and public
5	awareness of events that are happening. Rumour mills tend to magnify issues
6	sometimes and sometimes things get made out to be a little worse than they actually
7	are. I think, for me, the biggest resource would be communication, and then rely on
8	people to make the appropriate decisions when they have the necessary information.
9	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Thank you.
10	Bobby-Jay.
11	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: I, too like Janet, I'm going to go back to
12	what I said the other day about having training the first responders and having mental
13	health present when they when they're called in. And again, Hanna [sic] said,
14	affordable housing - big time, food security, and education on safety and I know they
15	do some in the schools but it's not enough. You know, there's still a lot of harm being
16	done out there and it's not safe for a lot of youth in our communities, especially
17	surrounding the Two-Spirited and LGBTQ+ communities.
18	MS. JANET WATT: I know something that just came up here this
19	week or last week when we were trying to prepare for [hurricane] Fiona was that
20	some of our managers had actually taken some Emergency Management Organization
21	training before, some EMO training, and they said they found that very beneficial. So
22	that's something I'd like to look into further, just some training for management, how to
23	deal with these crises when they come up. So that's a resource that I'm going to be
24	looking for.
25	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Thank you.
26	That leads well into our next question, your comment, Bobby-Jay,
27	in particular, which is, what do police services need to do or understand better to
28	contribute to community safety in rural areas?

1	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: Mental health training, how to be an ally.
2	That's all I can think of right now, sorry.
3	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: No, that's
4	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: But mental health training is huge so there's
5	all kinds of pieces to that, right? And how to approach situations in terms of mental
6	health. If somebody's in a mental health crises, don't go in the guns blazing.
7	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: I think that's a great piece of advice.
8	I know for us, we try hard to rebuild our relationship with our local police but it can be
9	quite hard when they can only do so much and they don't understand a lot of the
10	clientele that we're working with, so more understanding around mental health and, like,
11	how to meet the needs of those when their in crisis would be huge. Also, how to
12	communicate with other stakeholders that are serving this type of population, I think,
13	would be another beneficial [sic] because, you know, they have a job that they need to
14	do but so do we and sometimes it seems like a power struggle on how who's going to
15	bend the rules a little bit to get that job done, and it's quite difficult to navigate that. And
16	also, like, the piece on being an ally. A lot of the folks that we serve mutually, amongst
17	everybody in the area, they don't trust the police, and how can we fix that and how can
18	we rebuild that relationship so that they see them as people worried about their safety
19	versus people worrying about catching them doing something wrong, if that makes
20	sense.
21	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Yeah, it does, yeah.
22	Janet, did you have anything you wanted to share on that question?
23	MS. JANET WATT: I don't think so. I think it's back to, you know,
24	totally respecting the position that the police are in when they decide what information is
25	to be divulged and what information is not, what information would put their own
26	members at risk. It's a difficult position for them to be in and I don't think there's any
27	way to cut and dry and say, you know, "When A happens, we're going to do B." I think
28	they just need to be I think the RCMP just need to be very conscious of how it is

1	affecting other people in the community. And I know their phones were ringing off the
2	hook the day of the mass casualty shootings because a lot of those were from us trying
3	to find out, you know, "What's the current situation and, you know, what do we need to
4	do with our staff to make our staff safe out there?" And again, it just it goes back to
5	communication.
6	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Thank you.
7	Does anyone have anything else they wanted to share on that
8	question before we went on the next? Okay.
9	The next question is, how can we consider the needs of vulnerable
10	or marginalized individuals in communities?
11	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: Communication. Have conversations.
12	Sorry, Janet.
13	MS. JANET WATT: No, no. I was just kind of chuckling at the
14	recurring theme.
15	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: I think that's definitely something that
16	we can all agree on. Like, there's you can't physically be in someone else's shoes to
17	understand them.
18	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: That's right.
19	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: And the best way to do that is to start
20	conversation and build relationships, and understanding that when people experience
21	trauma, it actually physically affects your brain and changes that chemistry so what
22	might seem like common sense to us is not necessarily common sense to other people.
23	MS. JANET WATT: I think that's a good point, Stephanie. And
24	common sense these days has a very broad scope, you know, when people are not in
25	the when people are not in a crisis, right, and when you get into a crisis, yeah, it sort
26	of multiplies.
27	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: Yes.
28	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: And be a good listener as well. It's good to

1	have conversations but also listen to what the communities have to say, right, and take
2	note of that.
3	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Okay. Thank you.
4	The next question is, are you involved in or aware of initiatives
5	designed to improve community safety since the mass casualty?
6	MS. JANET WATT: Not aware of any, not involved in any.
7	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: Same.
8	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: Same here, same here.
9	MS. JANET WATT: I mean we've done internal things but nothing
10	community based.
11	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: And I mean work with youth, and 12 to 24. I
12	was not here when that happened, I was still Ontario, but people do talk about it, which
13	is good. And yeah so yeah, my work with youth is we talk about safety all the time,
14	especially when it comes to racism, and homophobia, and transphobia, and all of the
15	above. So we have conversations with the youth surrounding that because it's
16	happening the schools as well, so.
17	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: I think from a personal perspective,
18	too, I know that that event took place extremely close to my home. Sorry, I'm working in
19	a very busy office, and it's noisy. And I know, for myself, like, it was a matter of just
20	timing that I was lucky enough not be involved in any of that. So, on a personal level, it
21	would have been nice to know if there was any follow-up on safety measures that we
22	could keep, you know, in our toolbox on how to avoid being in those situations, if it was
23	possible, you know what I mean? Yeah, it was scary for everybody. But I don't I'm
24	not aware of any initiatives at all for community that have taken place.
25	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Okay. Thank you.
26	How can we oh, sorry, Bobby-Jay, go ahead.
27	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: Can I ask a question? Has anything come
28	out of that, like, in terms of a task force or safety do you know what I mean? Or you

1	don't know?
2	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Do you mean, Bobby-Jay, in terms
3	of
4	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: The Mass Casualty, yeah. So has any
5	has anything come about in terms of a task force or a, you know, community I guess
6	that's why we're doing this question-and-answer thing today.
7	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Yeah.
8	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: I get it.
9	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Yeah.
10	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: Okay.
11	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Well, there's the general Inquiry, and
12	certainly what we hear from people will help
13	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: Okay.
14	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: inform the recommendations
15	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: I got you.
16	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: of what we with a drive towards
17	community safety. And also, trying to find out what's in place now or if there's anything
18	
19	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: Exactly.
20	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: that can be brought to the
21	Commission's attention, I think is important, too. So we're hoping to
22	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: Yeah, I think it would
23	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: hear
24	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: It would be good to know what's in place
25	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Yeah.
26	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: now, but I guess that's what we're here
27	for.
28	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Yeah, and if they are improving

1	safety, and if it's
2	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: Exactly.
3	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Yeah. The next question is, how
4	can we consider the needs of vulnerable or marginalized individuals in communities in
5	improving community safety.
6	MS. MEGAN HARRIS: Sorry, Team, we already did that one.
7	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Oh, sorry, that's my fault.
8	MS. MEGAN HARRIS: I guess we repeated
9	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: I was going to say, conversations.
10	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Right. No, I was repeating. So I
11	think the next question might kind of draw upon your visioning skills and your expertise.
12	It's, what will make the biggest impact?
13	MS. JANET WATT: It's kind of like the magic-wand question
14	again. I don't know. I mean the whole thing, for me, has been focused on
15	communication, and appropriate communication.
16	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: And yesterday should that conversation
17	should have happened yesterday, and not in the future. Do you know what I mean?
18	Yeah, community conversations.
19	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: Yeah, like a strategic community
20	safety plan that's built around a conversation including the community, not just, you
21	know, the RCMP to do it internally, or whatever that might look like, but reaching out to,
22	especially, stakeholders that they're going to deal with a lot and getting their
23	perspectives and asking them to help develop the plan, I think would be great but,
24	ultimately, if we don't address the foundational needs of the community, it's not going to
25	keep things from happening, which would go back to the mental health, the addiction
26	supports, the housing. It just all keeps like, for us, anyway, my minds always stuck in
27	homeless-shelter mode so it all just keeps coming back to that. But they definitely
28	should be including the community in a community safety plan.

1	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Are you aware of any collaboration
2	like that, Stephanie, that's happened in the past?
3	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: I've been here three years and no.
4	And if there was, we were never a part of the conversation so I don't want to speak for
5	everybody, but no. I know that as far as the RCMP go, like, on a, like, individual level,
6	I've had conversations with a few officers and we've developed kind of a plan for some
7	of our situations here, but in terms of, like, community-wide safety, no.
8	MS. JANET WATT: If we want to take sort of a different spin on
9	this and just look at last week, again, when we were looking for [hurricane] Fiona to hit
10	us, and I know in Halifax, in particular, it was in the news, you know, where they had set
11	up some temporary housing for the homeless people and the folks who were living in
12	the tents and the camps and/or whatever. So it's just something we can apply to that
13	situation as well in terms of the safety of these people. I mean did somebody go by the
14	parks and say, you know, "This shelter A, B, and C is going to be available for you for
15	the next 2 nights"? Like, how did those people find out that they had an alternative to
16	riding out [hurricane] Fiona in their tents?
17	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: That is such a good point, Janet.
18	That's something that really frustrated us here during [hurricane] Fiona because there
19	was nothing even close to that in place for our community members. It took us kind of
20	driving around, and word of mouth, and trying to find people that we knew because they
21	access services here so we were able to communicate with them, but we have a larger
22	homeless population in our community that hasn't even touched base with us. So in
23	terms of how those people survived that storm, I have absolutely no idea but it was a
24	mad rush on Friday trying to put people in hotels and find shelter space in other
25	shelters, and those pop-up shelters in the city were completely stogged full by the end
26	of the day Friday. There just there was not enough and there was nothing in place for
27	rural communities. It wasn't even on the radar.

28

MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Bobby-Jay, did you have anything

1 else on that?

2	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: Same as everyone else, there's like,
3	there's nothing that I know of in Digby. We're constantly either putting up folks in hotels
4	or shipping them out when there is a space available. And that's that's got a very
5	small window. Like, you know, if we call and they say there's a bed there, we drive the
6	one and a half or one hour over, and then, by the time we get there, the bed's gone. So
7	then we have to bring them back here and then so in terms of that kind of safety, I
8	think we're I think we're all in the same boat, so to speak.
9	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: Janet, I actually have a question for
10	you. So you work with VON, right?
11	MS. JANET WATT: Correct.
12	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: Yeah. So that was another thing that
13	we were worried about here, was, like, our seniors in the community. I know my
14	grandmother lives in a seniors' complex and there's so many that live in those types of
15	environments that don't have family to support them through, you know, being days,
16	and days, and days without power. So I don't know, other than VON helping as much
17	as they can, if there was any other support in place for even our senior folks who might
18	be alone or disconnected from their community on supporting them through it.
19	MS. JANET WATT: Not that I'm aware of, other than the comfort
20	zones that were open to folks anywhere who needed to get, you know, a hot cup of tea,
21	coffee. Some offered showers; some didn't recharging and whatnot. But those were
22	mostly just during the day and you had to go back to your apartment or your home at
23	night in the dark for the night.
24	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: Yes. Yeah, the comfort centres were
25	great but they closed at like, I think the latest one was 6:00. That wasn't super
26	helpful. And that's, you know, assuming that most people have the ability to physically
27	get to those comfort centres because another issue in rural communities is lack of
28	transportation. So how were people being you know, if there wasn't a comfort station

1	in Bible Hill area, now are they getting into Truro or other communities to get access to
2	this? Like, were they just left in the dark until the power came on? Like, it's you
3	know, it's frustrating. It's extremely frustrating.
4	MS. JANET WATT: I feel I don't have any numbers but I feel
5	quite confident that there's elderly senior people who have been in the dark since last
6	Friday night. Just on a side note again, we have found that a lot of our clients have
7	gone to stay with a family member who has power. Maybe they don't have power but at
8	least they can manage better when somebody else is there with them. But yeah, it's
9	been a struggle for everyone.
LO	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: Yeah, definitely.
l1	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Megan, did you have anything that I
12	may have missed or that you wanted to follow up on?
L3	MS. MEGAN HARRIS: No, I don't think so, just continuing to hear
L4	similar messages throughout these meetings so the themes the main themes and
L5	needs are starting to come out, for sure. But no, I don't have any follow up.
L6	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Does anyone have anything else
L7	they wanted to share before we conclude? That would be the end of the questions that
L8	we had but I don't want to stop anything else that you wanted to share or contribute.
L9	MS. JANET WATT: I think I'm okay.
20	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: We do as a youth outreach worker, myself
21	and my co-worker, Morgan, we do weekly drop-ins for youth and oftentimes we'll talk
22	about safety or whatever topic comes up, right, in having conversations with the youth,
23	so at least there's something in Digby. But then we're trying to reach out to other
24	communities, even more rural communities, to start up more drop-ins for youth. So it's
25	a little step.
26	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Thank you.
27	Stephanie, did you have anything else you wanted to share before

28

we conclude?

1	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: No, I think that we kind of covered
2	everything that I guess it's a good time to have it with [hurricane] Fiona fresh in
3	everybody's minds. And I, for one, am still dealing with no power so definitely really
4	fresh for me. Yeah, it's very frustrating but I just hope that all of these conversations
5	I've been a part of quite a few conversations around similar issues and I'm hoping to
6	see some results from some of this collaboration soon. I understand it's not easy. We
7	get put in positions every day where we're damned if we do and we're damned if we
8	don't, so but it would be nice to see something in place. We've got to do something
9	soon because there's a lot of folks hurting out there right now.
10	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Thank you, Stephanie.
11	MS. JANET WATT: I think, for me, hindsight's great. And again,
12	there's been a lot that's come out through this Mass Casualty about the relationship
13	between Gabriel and Lisa Banfield and, you know, just last night the cops we're
14	watching because he made frequent trips across the border and/or whatever. And I
15	don't know if that's part of the Mass Casualty mandate, is to go back and look at some
16	of the things that happened before and, were there things that happened before that
17	should have been triggers that could have possibly eliminated and/or minimized the
18	mass shooting.
19	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Yes. Thank you, Janet. So that
20	would definitely be part of our Phase 2 work, looking at why, why this happened.
21	MS. JANET WATT: I hope you're not looking for an answer.
22	BOBBY-JAY AUBIN: Or what steps could have been taken.
23	MS. JANET WATT: Yeah. Is there another case out there right
24	now that is kind of running parallel to that circumstance, you know? And, you know, the
25	RCMP, the police, and whoever have their eye on somebody for whatever reason and,
26	you know, are their hands tied because there's nothing they can technically charge
27	them with or whatever? But, you know, I think we need to look at some of the pre-event
28	stuff as well and how many more how much more of that similar stuff is actually

1	nappening out there. It just hasn't come to a nead yet.
2	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: I believe there was recently and I
3	might be getting the area wrong but there was a crisis in one of the Indigenous
4	communities. I believe it was in Saskatchewan where there was a stabbing, like a mass
5	stabbing of multiple community members, so it rang very similar to what we were
6	experiencing during the shooting. So it's I mean it's happening all over the world but
7	trying to find out why it's happening I think is going to be very hard but we definitely
8	need to.
9	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: Thank you, everyone. We so
10	appreciate you being here today. And on behalf of the Commission team, thank you for
11	sharing the perspectives that you have. And if you have anything else that you want to
12	share, as Megan mentioned earlier in the week, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.
13	We've also developed a Discussion Guide summarizing the kinds of issues that the
14	Commission's exploring and asking questions to help you think about the
15	recommendations. It's available on our website so please use it, share it with others
16	who you think might have ideas and recommendations to bring forward. And you can
17	always call, email, mail us, whatever works for you. We'd appreciate hearing your
18	feedback. So that you again for participating. Thank you.
19	MS. JANET WATT: Selena, what was the document you just
20	referred to?
21	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: It's a Discussion Guide
22	MS. JANET WATT: Okay.
23	MS. SELENA HENDERSON: that's on the Mass Casualty
24	Commission's website.
25	MS. JANET WATT: Okay, it's to community safety. Okay.
26	MS. MEGAN HARRIS: I can send you a link, Janet.
27	MS. JANET WATT: Oh, thank you, Megan. All right, well, thank
28	you, ladies.

14

1	MS. STEPHANIE WATSON: Thank you, everyone.
2	MS. MEGAN HARRIS: Thank you.
3	
4	Session concludes
5	
6	
7	
8	CERTIFICATION
9	
10	I, KAREN NOGANOSH, hereby certify the foregoing pages to be an accurate
11	transcription of the audio recording provided to the best of my skill and ability, and I so
12	swear.
13	
14	Karla Defaust
15	KAREN NOGANOSH