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NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

**EVIDENCE
QUEBEC HEARINGS**

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**Quebec City, Quebec, Canada
May 11 to 13, 2023**

ABOUT THESE TRANSLATIONS

The evidence offered in these translated transcripts is a true and faithful record of witness testimony given during the Quebec City hearings of the National Citizens Inquiry (NCI). Hearings took place in eight Canadian cities from coast to coast from March through May 2023.

Raw transcripts were initially produced from the audio-video recordings of witness testimony and legal and commissioner questions using Open AI's Whisper speech recognition software. From July to November 2023, a team of volunteers assessed the French AI transcripts against the recordings to edit, review, format, and finalize all NCI witness transcripts.

The testimonies in Quebec City were presented primarily in French. To provide greater public access, a small and dedicated team translated the transcripts into English, employing human resources with the aid of digital translation tools.

With utmost respect for the witnesses, the volunteers worked to the best of their skills and abilities to ensure that the translated transcripts would be as clear, accurate, and accessible as possible.

Many testimonies were accompanied by slide show presentations or other exhibits. The NCI team recommends that transcripts be read together with the video recordings and any corresponding exhibits.

We are grateful to all our volunteers for the countless hours committed to this project, and hope that this evidence will prove to be a useful resource for many in future. For a complete library of the over 300 testimonies at the NCI, please visit our website at <https://nationalcitizensinquiry.ca>.

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NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Quebec, QC

Day 1

May 11, 2023

EVIDENCE

(Translated from the French)

Opening Statement: Philippe Meloni

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[00:00:00]

Philippe Meloni

Hello everyone, I'm Philippe Meloni, President of the National Citizens Inquiry for Quebec. So, welcome to this first day of the National Citizens Inquiry into the management of COVID in Quebec's capital. This inquiry is the fruit of the commitment of hundreds of people who have been working for months, on a voluntary basis, giving of their time freely. I'm not going to name anyone, not that they don't deserve it—they all deserve it a thousand times over. Unfortunately, I won't be able to name them all. So without exception, thank you everyone. It's thanks to you that we're here.

What is this Inquiry? From my point of view, it's the quintessential citizen act. During this crisis, which has affected everyone to varying degrees, governments at all levels and the mainstream media have delivered a single message, a single vision of the situation.

Many citizens have tried to take their cases to court. Unfortunately, the response has essentially been: "We can't judge the substance of the case because this court does not have the requisite expertise in this subject area; we have to assume that the government is acting in good faith and is, in its view, doing what's best for its citizens." So it's not a question of justice; it's a question of politics. The judicial follow-up was, "Prepare complete case files." But when it came time to talk about the substance, the ruling was: "The measures are no longer in place. The case is now moot. We can therefore no longer process it."

However, for many the damage is irreparable: side effects, broken families, children with impaired development, businesses—sometimes generations-old—bankrupt, dreams shattered. For all these people, moving on is not an option. They can't accept: "It's behind us. No one could have done a better job anyway. Get over it and look to the future". All these citizens need to have their suffering acknowledged and their legitimate questions answered.

They say there are four powers: the legislative, the executive, the judiciary, and the much-vaunted fourth power, the media. But when all four speak with one voice—when even the

opposition parties join in the chorus—what’s left for citizens who aren’t satisfied? We are, according to all levels of government, in a democracy. And what is democracy? It’s government of the people, by the people and for the people. If that’s the case, this Inquiry is the finest example of democracy we can dream of. Hundreds of men and women have come together across the country, despite differences of political opinion, culture, and language, to peacefully set up the tool they need, financed solely by citizens’ donations, to answer their questions.

From the outset, long before I became part of this adventure, it was decided to look at every angle of this crisis. Not having the power of subpoena, we therefore invited all the government players who took part in the decisions to speak in addition to all those who haven’t had a voice for all these years. Unfortunately, so far, unlike all the specialists who have already testified as well as all those you will hear from here in Quebec and next week in Ottawa, none of them have come here to explain their point of view. I find this deplorable.

Our work will be remembered for posterity. A hundred years from now, historians who want to understand how this crisis took shape, how it was managed, and what the consequences were for the population will have access to over 150 hours of testimony, provided by eminent specialists and ordinary citizens alike. Everything will be brought together in one place, with all the evidence and documents that have been recorded. And they’ll be able to see—with evidence to back it up—that governments have preferred to ignore all this work. This work will also be of use to any lawyers who want to start proceedings. They will have at their disposal exceptional raw material to prepare their cases.

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The mainstream media, too, have so far chosen to ignore us. Only the CBC, in a Manitoba regional broadcast, did its job by reporting on the Winnipeg hearing. They noted the seriousness of our work, without bias: journalism that reminded us that it’s still possible to do honest work. Fortunately, nature abhors a vacuum. Independent journalists have taken up the baton. Several of them are here, and I thank them warmly. It’s thanks to them that many of you are here in the room, and even more of you are listening to us live or recorded around the world. It’s also thanks to them that, for the past three years, we’ve been able to hear different points of view.

“You have to believe the science”: we’ve been hearing this phrase ad nauseam for years. But it makes no sense. We don’t believe in science; at most, we believe in the relevance of the scientific method. Belief is a matter of spirituality. We’ve also been told repeatedly that there is a scientific consensus. You’ve already been able to verify, by listening to the six previous hearings, that this is far from the actual situation. Over the next three days, you will be able to hear internationally renowned specialists explain their point of view in French. You will observe that, contrary to what has been repeated, the truth is not so simple. As responsible citizens, you can make up your own minds. We invite you to do so. I’d also like to point out that it won’t all be about science. We’ll also hear from ordinary people who have had to face difficulties that were, and for some still are, far from ordinary. Like many of us, I’m sure you’ll come away changed by the experience on many levels.

Finally, from all this testimony, the four commissioners here today will produce a report. I have the utmost respect for the colossal amount of work they will have to do to distill the essence of everything they have heard. Let me introduce these commissioners.

First of all, who will be the spokesperson for the commissioners in Quebec City? Bernard Massie. Bernard Massie has a PhD. He graduated in microbiology and immunology from the Université de Montréal in 1982 and completed a three-year postdoctoral fellowship on studying DNA tumour viruses at McGill University. He worked at the [National] Research Council of Canada, NRC, from 1985 to 2019 as a biotechnology researcher and held various management positions, including the position of Acting Director General of the Therapeutics in Human Health Centre from 2016 to 2019. He has devoted a significant part of his career to the development of integrated bioprocesses for the industrial production of therapeutic antibodies and adenovirus vaccines. He was also an associate professor in the department of microbiology and immunology at Université de Montréal from 1998 to 2019. He is currently an independent consultant in biotechnology.

Next, who is the spokesperson for the commissioners in the rest of Canada? Ken Drysdale. Ken is a professional engineer with over 40 years of experience as a Professional Engineer, which includes 29 years in the development and management of national and regional engineering businesses. Ken is currently retired from full time practice as a consulting engineer, but continues to be active in the area of forensic engineering, investigations, preparation of expert reports, and expert testimony in trial, arbitrations, and mediations. He has testified as an expert witness at trials in Manitoba and Ontario. He has also acted as arbitrator and mediator in disputes.

We will continue with Janice Kaikkonen. Janice's passion is community outreach. She works primarily with vulnerable populations and youth. Janice holds degrees in Island Studies, English and Political Science, as well as in Public Administration. Janice has taught at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels (in the Faculty of Arts, Education, Journalism and Pre-Med). Her research specialization concerns the intersection of public policy and the social fabric, which led Janice to pursue a Doctorate in Theology and Discipleship.

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Professionally, Janice has been a researcher with the PEI Task Force on Student Achievement, a coordinator with Canadian Blood Services, and a contributing member of the Supply Chain Management Sector Council. At one point, Janice established a transportation service for adults with special needs, and owned and operated a summer day camp for youth. In her spare time, Janice enjoys reading and writing and facilitating workshops on effective communications and media.

Currently, Janice is a school trustee in the Bluewater District. Janice and her husband Reima have 7 children and 17 grandchildren, and live on a farm in Southgate, Ontario.

Last but not least, Heather DiGregorio. Heather is a senior partner in a regional law firm based in Calgary, Alberta. Heather has nearly 20 years' experience in tax planning and dispute resolution, which involves assisting her clients navigate Canada's complex and constantly evolving tax landscape. She is a past executive member of each of the Canadian Bar Association (Taxation) and the Canadian Petroleum Tax Society. She continues to be a frequent speaker and presenter at these organizations, as well as the Canadian Tax Foundation and the Tax Executives Institute. Repeatedly recognized in the legal community as an expert and leading lawyer, Heather has represented clients at all levels of court, notably the Alberta Court of King's Bench, the Tax Court of Canada, the Federal Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada.

To conclude, I'd like to say that the world is watching. Those of you who have, or will have, taken part in this project in one way or another—whether by financing it, working on it, sharing the information, or honouring us with your presence; whether here, online, or in rebroadcast—I thank you from the bottom of my heart. We couldn't have done it without you. You are making history.

Without further ado, you can now listen to a man whose courage was admirable and whose name will undoubtedly be associated with this crisis throughout the French-speaking world and beyond: a man for whom I have the utmost respect, Professor Raoult.

[00:12:33]

Final Review and Approval: Erin Thiessen, October 26, 2023.

The evidence offered in this transcript is a true and faithful record of witness testimony given during the National Citizens Inquiry (NCI) hearings. The transcript was prepared by members of a team of volunteers using an “intelligent verbatim” transcription method, and further translated from the original French.

For further information on the transcription process, method, and team, see the NCI website: <https://nationalcitizensinquiry.ca/about-these-translations/>



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