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In Re:

Application of Columbia Gas of  
Ohio, Inc.

Case No.  
21637GAAIR

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HEARING

DATE: Friday, October 14, 2022

TIME: 2:32 p.m.

BEFORE: Honorable Gregory Price

Commissioner Lawrence K. Friedeman

LOCATION: Toledo City Council Chambers

1 Government Center

Toledo, OH 43604

REPORTED BY: Michael R. Rennillo, Notary Public

JOB NO.: 5460108

Page 2	Page 4
<p>1           A P P E A R A N C E S</p> <p>2 ON BEHALF OF APPLICANT COLUMBIA GAS OF OHIO:</p> <p>3     JOHN RYAN III, ESQUIRE</p> <p>4     NiSource Corporate Services</p> <p>5     290 West Nationwide Blvd, 12th Floor</p> <p>6     Columbus, OH 43215</p> <p>7     (614) 285-2220</p> <p>8</p> <p>9 ON BEHALF OF THE OFFICE OF THE OHIO CONSUMERS'</p> <p>10 COUNCIL:</p> <p>11    ANGELA O'BRIEN, ESQUIRE</p> <p>12    Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel</p> <p>13    65 East State Street, 7th Floor</p> <p>14    Columbus, OH 43215</p> <p>15    (614) 466-9531</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p>	<p>1           E X H I B I T S</p> <p>2 NO.       DESCRIPTION           ID/EVD</p> <p>3           ( None marked.)</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p> <p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p> <p>12</p> <p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p>
Page 3	Page 5
<p>1           I N D E X</p> <p>2 WITNESS(ES):           DX CX RDX RCX</p> <p>3 ANDREA FLOWERS</p> <p>4 SHEENA BARNES</p> <p>5 STANLEY SMITH</p> <p>6 CANDACE BISHOP</p> <p>7</p> <p>8</p> <p>9</p> <p>10</p> <p>11</p> <p>12</p> <p>13</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p>	<p>1           P R O C E E D I N G S</p> <p>2       THE REPORTER: We are on the record.</p> <p>3       THE COURT: Good afternoon. The Public</p> <p>4 Utilities Commission of Ohio is set for a hearing at</p> <p>5 this time and place, case no. 21637GAAIR, et al, being</p> <p>6 in the matter of the application of Columbia Gas of</p> <p>7 Ohio, Inc. for authority to amend its filed tariffs to</p> <p>8 increase the rates and charges for gas services and</p> <p>9 related matters.</p> <p>10       My name is Gregory Price. With me is</p> <p>11 Commissioner Larry Friedman. We are presiding here at</p> <p>12 today's public hearing.</p> <p>13       At this time we'd go ahead and like to</p> <p>14 take appearances from the parties starting with the</p> <p>15 company.</p> <p>16       MR. RYAN: Thank you, Your Honor. On</p> <p>17 behalf of the applicant, Columbia Gas of Ohio, John</p> <p>18 Ryan, senior counsel, 290 West Nationwide Boulevard,</p> <p>19 Columbus, Ohio 43215.</p> <p>20       THE COURT: Thank you.</p> <p>21       MR. RYAN: Thank you.</p> <p>22       THE COURT: Service counsel.</p> <p>23       MS. O'BRIEN: Good afternoon, Your</p> <p>24 Honor. As on behalf of the Office of the Ohio</p> <p>25 Consumers' Council, Angela O'Brien, 65 East State</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 6</p> <p>1 Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215.</p> <p>2 THE COURT: Thank you.</p> <p>3 The subject of today's hearing is an</p> <p>4 application filed on June 30, 2021, by Columbia Gas</p> <p>5 seeking to increase rates and for approval of an</p> <p>6 alternative rate plan. The Commission staff caused a</p> <p>7 report of investigation of April 6, 2022. This report</p> <p>8 is a recommendation only and does not assert or</p> <p>9 reflect the final determination in the case. If</p> <p>10 you're interested in the report you can go on the</p> <p>11 commissioner's website at the docketing information</p> <p>12 systems app and download the staff report by entering</p> <p>13 the case number 21637.</p> <p>14 The purpose of this afternoon's hearing</p> <p>15 is to receive testimony about the application from the</p> <p>16 public who are affected by the proposed rates. This</p> <p>17 is your opportunity to let the commissioners know what</p> <p>18 you think about Columbia's application. Today's</p> <p>19 hearing is only one aspect of the process in this</p> <p>20 case. We have had five I believe prior hearings and a</p> <p>21 evidentiary hearing is scheduled to commence on</p> <p>22 November 1, 2022, at the Commission offices.</p> <p>23 Today's hearing is being transcribed by</p> <p>24 a court reporter. If you plan to testify, please</p> <p>25 speak clearly so that the court reporter can</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 8</p> <p>1 Commission, you can file those comments at 180 East</p> <p>2 Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215 and reference the</p> <p>3 case no. 21637GAAIR.</p> <p>4 With that, I'd like to turn to</p> <p>5 Mr. Commissioner and see if he has anything else.</p> <p>6 THE COMMISSIONER: Just a couple of</p> <p>7 brief remarks.</p> <p>8 First of all, thank you for those of</p> <p>9 the public who have taken the time to show up today</p> <p>10 and share your thoughts. As you could no doubt</p> <p>11 discern from Judge Price's comments, rate cases are</p> <p>12 complex and nuanced proceedings. Public testimony is</p> <p>13 an essential element of a rate case proceeding and one</p> <p>14 that the Commission takes very seriously, so your</p> <p>15 comments will in fact be considered.</p> <p>16 And just, once again, thank you so very</p> <p>17 much for taking the time to show up today.</p> <p>18 THE COURT: Okay. Call the first</p> <p>19 witness if I can, please. Andrea Flowers.</p> <p>20 Please raise your right hand.</p> <p>21 WHEREUPON,</p> <p>22 ANDREA FLOWERS,</p> <p>23 called as a witness, and having been first duly sworn</p> <p>24 to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but</p> <p>25 the truth, was examined and testified as follows:</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 7</p> <p>1 accurately reflect your comments on the record. If</p> <p>2 you prepared a written statement, please provide a</p> <p>3 copy to the reporter.</p> <p>4 Each person who has signed up today to</p> <p>5 present sworn testimony regarding the application. I</p> <p>6 will swear in each witness and ask you to state your</p> <p>7 name and address for the record. The parties of the</p> <p>8 case are permitted to ask you questions regarding your</p> <p>9 testimony.</p> <p>10 I'd like to note the chair commissioner</p> <p>11 who will be judging the merits of this application.</p> <p>12 Neither the commissioner nor I can answer any</p> <p>13 questions regarding the application. But again, I</p> <p>14 would refer you to the staff report as filed in the</p> <p>15 docket.</p> <p>16 Once again, this hearing is your</p> <p>17 opportunity to let the commissioners know what you</p> <p>18 think about the application. The testimony you</p> <p>19 provide will be part of the official record in this</p> <p>20 case and it will be reviewed by the commissioners</p> <p>21 before any decisions are made.</p> <p>22 If you decide you do not wish to</p> <p>23 testify after you hear me read your name on the signup</p> <p>24 sheet, please feel free to pass. If you decide that</p> <p>25 you prefer to file written comments with the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 9</p> <p>1 THE COURT: Please state your name and</p> <p>2 business address for the record.</p> <p>3 THE WITNESS: Andrea Flowers.</p> <p>4 THE COURT: Please proceed.</p> <p>5 THE WITNESS: Good afternoon, Your</p> <p>6 Honor and Commissioner. I am reading on behalf of the</p> <p>7 legal counsel of the Northwest Ohio Aggregation</p> <p>8 Coalition.</p> <p>9 The Northwest Ohio Aggregation</p> <p>10 Coalition negotiates the natural gas prices for about</p> <p>11 90,000 households, small business, and family farms</p> <p>12 located in 12 of the NOWAC communities. We thank the</p> <p>13 Commission for this opportunity to comment on Columbia</p> <p>14 Gas' rate plan to operate the pipeline and delivery</p> <p>15 system for the coming years.</p> <p>16 A customer's natural gas bill includes</p> <p>17 the cost of natural gas as well as the Columbia Gas</p> <p>18 charge to operate its pipe system and deliver gas.</p> <p>19 Columbia's current distribution charge and various</p> <p>20 riders cost a renter or homeowner over \$450 per year.</p> <p>21 Again, that does not include the cost of the gas.</p> <p>22 Columbia Gas proposes to increase this delivery charge</p> <p>23 by 27 percent or over 200 million dollars. This is a</p> <p>24 budget buster increase that would harm everyone from</p> <p>25 the most modest retiree to our most important</p>

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1 industries.

2           The Northwest Ohio Aggregation

3 Coalition represents customers. Customers want the

4 lowest price for both the gas and delivery charge. In

5 procuring gas for our customers, NOWAC uses a

6 no-frills approach. We keep our overhead

7 exceptionally low. NOWAC absolutely avoids signed

8 deals and favorable treatment for any special

9 interests. These add costs that are paid for by other

10 customers. NOWAC strictly insists on competition and

11 a competitive bid approach. The result is that the --

12 that over the past 20 years we have saved customers of

13 18 million dollars compared to the standard choice

14 offer.

15           Currently, Northwest Ohio Aggregation

16 Coalition natural gas participants pay slightly below

17 the current Columbia Gas FCO act. However, based upon

18 the expected adder next year, we anticipate savings

19 versus the FCO to increase. Our current gas supply

20 contract runs through May of 2024. All that said,

21 NOWAC cannot fully shield customers from the large

22 increase in the natural gas prices, and this has

23 stretched customers' budgets.

24           Columbia Gas delivery charge proposal

25 stands in stark contrast. It wants to add overhead,

Page 11

1 take a monopoly position for things readily available

2 in the competitive market, and favor special

3 interests. The PEO staff review recognized many of

4 these problems and it would reduce the Columbia Gas

5 proposed increased by about 150 million dollars to

6 between 35 to 58 million dollars. The suggestion by

7 the Ohio Consumer Council and the Ohio Manufacturers

8 Association show how to cut more unnecessary overhead

9 and suggest more cost-effective approaches. The Ohio

10 Consumer Council's proposal reduces the rate increase

11 to 10 million dollars.

12           We ask the Commission to follow these

13 recommendations in its decision. Our homeowners,

14 renters, schools, and institutions and our businesses

15 and industries depend on the Commission to protect

16 customers. Columbia's rate should be just and

17 reasonable and not one penny more.

18           The Commission should carefully

19 evaluate any settlement in this case because

20 settlement parties may be just in it for themselves.

21 We urge the commissioners to stick to first principles

22 that put together the lowest cost rate that delivers

23 reliable service for everyone.

24           Again, thank you for this opportunity

25 to comment. Again, this was read on behalf of Thomas

Page 12

1 Hayes, the legal counsel for the Northwest Ohio

2 Aggregation Coalition.

3           THE COURT: Thank you.

4           THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you.

5           THE COURT: Okay. Next, we have a

6 Sheena Barnes.

7 WHEREUPON,

8           SHEENA BARNES,

9 called as a witness, and having been first duly sworn

10 to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but

11 the truth, was examined and testified as follows:

12           THE COURT: Please state your name and

13 address for the record.

14           THE WITNESS: Sheena Barnes, director

15 of Inclusion and Access for Toledo Lucas County

16 Homelessness Board, 1220 Madison Avenue.

17           THE COURT: Thank you.

18           THE WITNESS: Thank you.

19           THE COURT: Proceed.

20           THE WITNESS: Thank you for letting me

21 come and speak this afternoon.

22           We at Toledo Lucas County Homelessness

23 Board stand with the community and agencies that are

24 asking you not to approve this increase due to several

25 factors that I will speak to and also my deputy

Page 13

1 director, Candace Bishop, will speak to later this

2 evening.

3           First, we know that right after the

4 pandemic many houses suffered financially and, like

5 many have stated, the timing is wrong. But what we're

6 not also thinking about is the impact on several

7 households that I would like to explain to you.

8           The first household that we always,

9 sometimes, most of the times don't think of when we're

10 talking about financial burdens and increasing those

11 is single-parent homes. And as myself, as a single

12 parent with a child with special needs, it's even a

13 bigger impact financially.

14           And that is another household that we

15 are going to definitely set barriers. And

16 unfortunately, if we do increase these rates, we could

17 force them to lose their housing. And that is the

18 community with disabilities. Several hundred of our

19 families or individuals in households are either

20 someone who identifies with disability, invisible or

21 non-invisible disability or as a senior or elder, if

22 you like to be called that. And we want to make sure

23 that we have accessible housing for them. And

24 unfortunately, if they receive these kind of rate

25 increases and therefore lose their housing, when we do

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1 find and relocate home -- houses for them or homes for  
 2 them, then they have the burden of trying to pay down  
 3 the past bearings of the bill that they owe.  
 4       And that's another barrier. With  
 5 limited resources right now, to cover utilities given  
 6 by the state we are finding a lot of individuals and  
 7 households are trying to figure out even how to have  
 8 accessible housing when we find them housing. So this  
 9 is definitely a -- an equity factor for several  
 10 different reasons -- more disabilities, age, and then  
 11 folks with children, but also just regular families  
 12 trying to make ends meet.  
 13       As we know, most households sometimes  
 14 now have to work two jobs just to make ends meet, and  
 15 now we're asking them again to sit there and live  
 16 check to check with two jobs. It's very unfair and it  
 17 will definitely increase a lot of things that we see  
 18 at the Lucas County Homelessness Board, unfortunately  
 19 house hopping or folks living in their cars because,  
 20 if you don't know, right now our shelter space is over  
 21 -- is over limitations, and we don't have anywhere for  
 22 those folks to go.  
 23       So I'm asking you, on behalf of Lucas  
 24 County Homelessness Board, do not approve this  
 25 increase.

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1       Thank you.  
 2       THE COURT: Thank you.  
 3       THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you.  
 4       THE COURT: Stanley Smith.  
 5 WHEREUPON,  
 6       STANLEY SMITH,  
 7 called as a witness, and having been first duly sworn  
 8 to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but  
 9 the truth, was examined and testified as follows:  
 10       THE COURT: Please state your name and  
 11 address for the record.  
 12       THE WITNESS: My name is Stanley Smith.  
 13 I work with Lucas Count Family Council, I am an  
 14 outreach specialist, and my job entails -- I deal with  
 15 people in Albany, in different communities to try to  
 16 help them to get ahead.  
 17       I'm here as a voice for -- not just for  
 18 myself, because I feel I'm just -- I'm one of them,  
 19 too. I'm in a two-income home with me and my wife,  
 20 and I'm pretty sure that would affect how we live. We  
 21 struggle, you know.  
 22       You increase that gas bill will cause  
 23 homelessness. I'm talking about families with kids.  
 24 I'm talking about it will put people back in their  
 25 cars trying to sleep. Right now is not a good time

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1 with the way the economy is to -- to hike prices up on  
 2 anything when we talking about we trying to get our  
 3 communities together.  
 4       Let's think about the greenbelt right  
 5 across the street. With the commissioner and the  
 6 field that we -- we work with that program to get them  
 7 to -- to live better. And yes, a lot of them live  
 8 under low-income housing, but just think. We trying  
 9 to get people to come out of poverty.  
 10       I'm the very first one in my family out  
 11 of three generations to come out of poverty. I'm the  
 12 first one in my family to be fully self-sufficient.  
 13 And I know if I can do it, a lot of other people can  
 14 do it. So there's a lot of different programs in  
 15 there that we're trying to get people to recognize  
 16 that we don't have to depend on everybody to take care  
 17 of us. We can take care of ourselves, but we need to  
 18 have the means to do that. And striking up prices on  
 19 everything, making it impossible for people to -- to  
 20 get ahead or to live, I think we know ourselves that  
 21 we're doing our country a disservice.  
 22       So I hope you guys really take into  
 23 consideration that this up hike would really hurt and  
 24 damage us and maybe our children. And they the ones  
 25 that most important here, I think. So I really wish

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1 you would take into consideration to not raise the  
 2 prices.  
 3       Thank you.  
 4       THE COURT: Thank you.  
 5       THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you.  
 6       THE COURT: And Candace Bishop.  
 7 WHEREUPON,  
 8       CANDACE BISHOP,  
 9 called as a witness, and having been first duly sworn  
 10 to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but  
 11 the truth, was examined and testified as follows:  
 12       THE COURT: Please state your name and  
 13 address for the record.  
 14       THE WITNESS: Candace Bishop, 1220  
 15 Madison Avenue, Toledo, Ohio, 43604.  
 16       THE COURT: Please proceed.  
 17       THE WITNESS: Good afternoon, everyone.  
 18 My name is Candace Bishop and I am the deputy  
 19 executive director of Toledo Lucas County Homelessness  
 20 Board. I stand before you today because this topic is  
 21 -- is -- because this topic is very disheartening  
 22 considering the population of folks that we serve.  
 23       I'd just like to say what it's like to  
 24 receive a call from a family that is in a place of  
 25 trying to make a determination of do they pay their

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1 rent? Do they pay their car note to get them back and  
 2 forth to the job that helps them pay their rent? Do  
 3 they pay their electric bill? Do they pay their gas  
 4 bill? Should they pay their water bill? This should  
 5 not be a decision that a family has to make month in  
 6 and month out because of the costs that are steady  
 7 increasing.

8           We see it already with our rent across  
 9 town. I've never seen -- and I'm a Toledo native, and  
 10 I've never seen our rents get so high. Landlords are  
 11 asking for three times the amount of first month's  
 12 rent just for us to get people into housing. Now  
 13 couple that with -- with back notes where folks have  
 14 fallen on hard times. We've seen bills upward 7 or  
 15 \$8000 per family.

16           Now the reality of the situation is our  
 17 resources are continuing to deplenish. We've seen  
 18 dollars in this community that we've never seen before  
 19 through the different cares packages that have come  
 20 down the pipe. But what happens when that money is no  
 21 longer here but the price is fixed above the average  
 22 family living wage to be able to simply have a roof  
 23 over their head with the necessary utilities to not  
 24 just be housed but to make that house feel like a  
 25 home? That's not something that folks in our

Page 19

1 community, especially exiting homelessness, should  
 2 have to worry about, and we have to do something about  
 3 it.

4           You know, this issue is close to my  
 5 heart because I -- I came from a low-income family.  
 6 I've been blessed now through the years to come out of  
 7 poverty and along with my siblings. But guess what?  
 8 If this was 40-some years ago, this would be my mom up  
 9 here and -- and affected by this situation. So I feel  
 10 that we -- on a personal level that we just can't let  
 11 this move forward. Not to say that it doesn't need to  
 12 happen at some point, but now is just not the time.

13           We just cannot put this burden on this  
 14 community right now. We just can't. We are just on  
 15 the cusp of swinging the pendulum in the opposite  
 16 direction, and this right here could really halt the  
 17 direction that we're moving in to turn homelessness  
 18 around in this community.

19           Thank you.

20           THE COURT: Thank you.

21           THE COMMISSIONER: Thank you very much.

22           THE COURT: That is our entire list of  
 23 people who signed up ahead of time. Is there anybody  
 24 who would like to testify today that did not sign up?  
 25           With that I'd like to thank you all

Page 20

1 again for participating in today's public hearing.  
 2 And the evidentiary hearing, as I noted before, in  
 3 this case will commence on November 1, 2022.  
 4 Commissioner?

5           THE COMMISSIONER: Just thank you again  
 6 for your thoughts.


7           With that, we're adjourned. Let's go  
 8 off the record.

9           THE REPORTER: Going off the record.  
 10 2:51 p.m.

11           (Whereupon, at 2:51 p.m., the  
 12 proceeding was concluded.)  
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Page 21

1           CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSITION OFFICER  
 2           I, MICHAEL R. RENNILLO, the officer before  
 3 whom the foregoing proceedings were taken, do hereby  
 4 certify that any witness(es) in the foregoing  
 5 proceedings, prior to testifying, were duly sworn;  
 6 that the proceedings were recorded by me and  
 7 thereafter reduced to typewriting by a qualified  
 8 transcriptionist; that said digital audio recording of  
 9 said proceedings are a true and accurate record to the  
 10 best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am  
 11 neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any  
 12 of the parties to the action in which this was taken;  
 13 and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of  
 14 any counsel or attorney employed by the parties  
 15 hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the  
 16 outcome of this action.  
 17

  
 MICHAEL R. RENNILLO  
 Notary Public in and for the  
 State of Ohio

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1 CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIBER  
2 I, MEAGAN THELIN, do hereby certify that  
3 this transcript was prepared from the digital audio  
4 recording of the foregoing proceeding, that said  
5 transcript is a true and accurate record of the  
6 proceedings to the best of my knowledge, skills, and  
7 ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to,  
8 nor employed by any of the parties to the action in  
9 which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a  
10 relative or employee of any counsel or attorney  
11 employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or  
12 otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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MEAGAN THELIN

<b>1</b>	<b>450</b> 9:20 <b>466-9531</b> 2:15	<b>adjourned</b> 20:7 <b>affect</b> 15:20 <b>afternoon</b> 5:3,23 9:5 12:21 17:17 <b>afternoon's</b> 6:14 <b>age</b> 14:10 <b>agencies</b> 12:23 <b>aggregation</b> 9:7 9:9 10:2,15 12:2 <b>ago</b> 19:8 <b>ahead</b> 5:13 15:16 16:20 19:23 <b>al</b> 5:5 <b>albany</b> 15:15 <b>alternative</b> 6:6 <b>amend</b> 5:7 <b>amount</b> 18:11 <b>andrea</b> 3:3 8:19 8:22 9:3 <b>angela</b> 2:11 5:25 <b>answer</b> 7:12 <b>anticipate</b> 10:18 <b>anybody</b> 19:23 <b>app</b> 6:12 <b>appearances</b> 5:14 <b>applicant</b> 2:2 5:17 <b>application</b> 1:3 5:6 6:4,15,18 7:5,11,13,18 <b>approach</b> 10:6 10:11 <b>approaches</b> 11:9 <b>approval</b> 6:5 <b>approve</b> 12:24 14:24	<b>april</b> 6:7 <b>asking</b> 12:24 14:15,23 18:11 <b>aspect</b> 6:19 <b>assert</b> 6:8 <b>association</b> 11:8 <b>attorney</b> 21:14 22:10 <b>audio</b> 21:8 22:3 <b>authority</b> 5:7 <b>available</b> 11:1 <b>avenue</b> 12:16 17:15 <b>average</b> 18:21 <b>avoids</b> 10:7
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