



## NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Truro, NS

Day 2

March 17, 2023

### EVIDENCE

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**Witness 5: Kathy Howland**

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[00:00:00]

**Ches Crosbie**

Good morning. Do you affirm that you will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

**Kathy Howland**

Good morning. Yes, I do.

**Alison Steeves**

Good morning, Kathy. Can you please tell us your full name, where you're from, and your occupation?

**Kathy Howland**

My name is Kathy Howland. I live in Meductic, New Brunswick, and I'm an education assistant.

**Alison Steeves**

How long have you been an education assistant?

**Kathy Howland**

Since 2018.

**Alison Steeves**

So approximately five years—four or five years?

**Kathy Howland**

Yes.

**Alison Steeves**

And what does an education assistant do?

**Kathy Howland**

I focus on primarily special education students: students with Down syndrome, autism, different learning abilities, ADHD students.

**Alison Steeves**

And you help them with the schoolwork that they're doing in the classroom, is that it?

**Kathy Howland**

Yes.

**Alison Steeves**

And can you tell us a bit about your current position?

**Kathy Howland**

I've been in my current position for the past two years. I'm working currently with children that have not had a diagnosis, but they are, we are quite sure, on this spectrum of autism. And I have also had, the past couple of years, a Down Syndrome student.

**Alison Steeves**

So you were working in this position when you became eligible to take one of the COVID-19 vaccines?

**Kathy Howland**

Yes.

**Alison Steeves**

And did you take one of the vaccines?

**Kathy Howland**

I did.

**Alison Steeves**

Which one?

**Kathy Howland**

I took the Pfizer vaccine.

**Alison Steeves**

Do you have the batch number by any chance?

**Kathy Howland**

I do. It is FF5109.

**Alison Steeves**

And when did you take the first vaccine?

**Kathy Howland**

I took the first one on November 3rd, 2021.

**Alison Steeves**

November 3rd. And why did you choose to take the vaccine?

**Kathy Howland**

It really wasn't a choice. I worked for the Province of New Brunswick, and they mandated that if I was to continue in my position as an education assistant, I would have to have the COVID shot.

**Alison Steeves**

Did you speak with your doctor prior to taking the vaccine?

**Kathy Howland**

Yes, I did.

**Alison Steeves**

And can you speak a bit about that conversation?

**Kathy Howland**

I called her and actually asked her if she could give me a letter pausing the process. At that time, I wanted to wait until the Novavax vaccine had been approved and I had read several articles that said that was going to happen. So her response to me was, "No, I can't give you an exemption for the vaccine." I tried to explain to her that I didn't want an exemption. The Novavax vaccine was non-mRNA and so I just wanted to hold off until that became approved and see where that went. And her response was, "Listen, there won't be any problem with the Pfizer shot. Just go get the damn shot."

**Alison Steeves**

And how long has she been your family doctor?

**Kathy Howland**

She has been my doctor for probably 10-plus years.

**Alison Steeves**

Did you find that interaction or that behavior or treatment sort of distinct from the way you had interacted with her in the past?

**Kathy Howland**

It was awful. Like, I was so shocked that my only response that I had to her after that little outburst was, "Okay, then. I guess that's where we'll leave it."

**Alison Steeves**

So she seemed upset that you were trying to delay taking the vaccine that was available to wait for another one.

**Kathy Howland**

Yes, yeah, she was not open to that at all.

**Alison Steeves**

So you went and got the shots. Do you recall who administered the vaccine to you?

**Kathy Howland**

Yeah, it was a pharmacist at the Guardian drugstore in Woodstock.

**Alison Steeves**

And did the pharmacist advise you of the potential side effects of the vaccine?

[00:05:00]

**Kathy Howland**

No. I asked if she had heard about any side effects. And she said, "Well, there's just a sore arm and maybe a fever, but nothing really serious."

**Alison Steeves**

Standard side effects. And did she give you an individual assessment based on your sort of personal medical history to see if the vaccine was right for you?

**Kathy Howland**

No.

**Alison Steeves**

So after you took the first shot, did you experience any symptoms?

**Kathy Howland**

Not really with the first shot. Just a bit of a sore arm. It was the second shot.

**Alison Steeves**

And when did you take your second shot?

**Kathy Howland**

I took my second shot on December 1st, 2021.

**Alison Steeves**

Okay, so almost a month later?

**Kathy Howland**

Yes.

**Alison Steeves**

Did you experience symptoms after your second shot?

**Kathy Howland**

Yes. I took the second one on December 1st. December 3rd, when I get up to get ready for work that morning, my ears were plugged full. My left ear was paining quite severely, and I had this awful ringing in my ears. It was so loud. And so I had to miss work that day. The following day, Saturday, December 4th, I ended up going to Emergency because of my symptoms.

**Alison Steeves**

So you spoke with the health care practitioner about the symptoms?

**Kathy Howland**

Yes.

**Alison Steeves**

And did they find anything?

**Kathy Howland**

No. He looked in my ears, he said, "I can't see really any infection or anything." So he gave me eardrops and a nasal spray and sent me on my way.

**Alison Steeves**

And did your symptoms persist?

**Kathy Howland**

Yes.

**Alison Steeves**

Did you eventually get any further testing done to assess sort of what was wrong with your ears?

**Kathy Howland**

I did. I talked to my family doctor, and she stopped the eardrops and the nasal spray. Because when your ears are already full, she didn't think that it was appropriate to add more to that. So then she referred me to an ENT.

**Alison Steeves**

Okay, and did you also get an audiology report?

**Kathy Howland**

I did.

**Alison Steeves**

Okay, and did you give me a copy of this audiology report?

**Kathy Howland**

I did.

**Alison Steeves**

Did you happen to have it in front of you?

**Kathy Howland**

I do.

**Alison Steeves**

So this is Exhibit TR-0005A?

**Kathy Howland**

Yes.

**Alison Steeves**

Perfect. Okay, and do you mind if I read from a bit of the finding here?

**Kathy Howland**

Not at all.

**Alison Steeves**

So it says, "Hearing sensitivity, left ear: mild to moderately severe sensorineural hearing loss, and right ear: mild to moderate sensorineural hearing loss." So stronger hearing loss in your left ear, but hearing loss in both.

**Kathy Howland**

Right.

**Alison Steeves**

So had you had an audiogram done in the past that they were able to compare this to, I assume?

**Kathy Howland**

I did.

**Alison Steeves**

So they found that you'd had some significant hearing loss in both ears. And then it also adds, "ENT consult." Did you end up seeing an ENT as you had said?

**Kathy Howland**

I did see an ENT.

**Alison Steeves**

And do you have a copy of your ENT report in front of you?

**Kathy Howland**

I do.

**Alison Steeves**

So your audiology report was January 14th, 2022. And then February 16th, 2022, you have your ENT report from River Valley ENT. Is that correct?

**Kathy Howland**

Right.

**Alison Steeves**

Okay and that's Exhibit TR-0005. And do you mind if I read from that report as well, a few excerpts?

**Kathy Howland**

Not at all.

**Alison Steeves**

So the ENT wrote, “I saw Catherine today in my otology clinic. She has an interesting history. She had her second dose of her Pfizer COVID vaccine December 1st, 2021. Within 24 to 48 hours, she started noticing fullness, pressure, and discomfort in both ears, worsening tinnitus, and subjective hearing loss.” And speaks about your audiogram, acknowledges the hearing loss and there is nothing else, no history or nothing, to explain it. And then he adds, “In summary, this is a patient with bilateral sensorineural hearing loss with left isometric sensorineural hearing loss.” And adds, “This may represent a vaccine side effect.”

Is that correct?

**Kathy Howland**

Right. That is correct.

**Alison Steeves**

So you have tinnitus and hearing loss in both ears.

**Kathy Howland**

Yes.

**Alison Steeves**

And did you and your ENT discuss the potential relationship with your COVID-19 vaccine?

[00:10:00]

**Kathy Howland**

Yes, we did. And he said it was quite possible. But he is prevented by coming right out and saying that. The government has stopped the doctors—apparently, from what I’ve been able to learn—has prevented the doctors from actually attributing vaccine injuries to the COVID-19 shots.

**Alison Steeves**

So he expressed that concern, that he was not permitted to directly attribute it as a cause?

**Kathy Howland**

Yes.

**Alison Steeves**

Okay, and so he put it in the report though, just as a potential effect.

**Kathy Howland**

Yes.



**Alison Steeves**

And have you spoken with your family doctor again regarding your diagnosis? You mentioned she sort of accepted there could be a link with the vaccine?

**Kathy Howland**

Yes, she did. She said that she had read some articles that did say that people were having problems with the vaccine and that their symptoms were hearing loss and tinnitus. But she, again, would not put that down on paper for me.

**Alison Steeves**

So the doctor who told you to go get the shot and not to wait for another shot that you had been waiting for was now acknowledging that you could have developed tinnitus and hearing loss based on having taken it.

**Kathy Howland**

Right.

**Alison Steeves**

Okay, so Kathy, can you speak a bit to what it's been like living with tinnitus and hearing loss? This report was approximately a year after your second shot, a little bit more. So how has that been? How has it impacted your life?

**Kathy Howland**

It's been difficult. I've always been a social butterfly, an extrovert, and I have completely flipped because it is so hard to be in crowds or around a group of people because I don't hear well. Background noise is particularly annoying, so you can imagine being in my job with a classroom of children, especially elementary kids. They're very boisterous and can be loud, and so I've withdrawn a lot and I've struggled with depression because I do miss those gatherings. I did direct a group of 30 booklists with a live band, and I can no longer do that. Because it's just too hard to be in a room with a lot of music. It's overwhelming, and my ears close up even more, and the tinnitus rings even louder. As far as my family goes, they don't believe that I would actually have been hurt by a vaccine, so that's another hurdle that's been difficult.

**Alison Steeves**

So you used to be quite involved in music. You said you directed a group of music and now it's too painful for you to be sort of surrounded by that many people in that level of noise. Is that correct?

**Kathy Howland**

Yeah. I can't, I just have a hard job with it now at this point.

**Alison Steeves**

And how has it affected your relationships? You said family members are doubtful or skeptical?

**Kathy Howland**

Yeah, my parents are very skeptical. My sister is very skeptical. In fact, they're just like, "Well, I mean, you're getting older. You're going to lose your hearing anyway." And I'm like, "Not necessarily, I was fine." And they just don't want to believe that it was part of the vaccine because they've all had several shots.

**Alison Steeves**

And so do you feel that you can't speak comfortably about this issue in social circles or in certain groups?

**Kathy Howland**

I can't talk about it. No, people: they shut down. If I say anything like, "I'm sorry, I can't hear you, I had a vaccine injury." And I'm not going to hide behind that; I'm not going to stop with, "I'm sorry, I can't hear you." I want to tell people that this is what this vaccine has done to me and thousands of other people.

**Alison Steeves**

And has this experience impacted your mental health at all?

**Kathy Howland**

Yes, I have become very isolated by times. I force myself to be out in a group of people because I know what's going to happen. The tinnitus is going to get louder. My ears are going to get stuffier.

[00:15:00]

But I don't want to become isolated altogether because that's not healthy either.

**Alison Steeves**

And what would you say has been the hardest aspect of this experience?

**Kathy Howland**

I think part of it is my parents not believing that I could possibly be injured by these COVID shots because they have so much faith in the government and the shots. And then another thing is my job. I love my job. I love my kids that I work with, and it's so hard to hear their voices. And I work mostly with literacy, trying to work with the kids to bring up their literacy skills so they can do math easier, science. Anything is based on literacy, so we will want them to be right in the top drawer. But if I can't hear whether they are saying a *D*, a *B*, a *V*, or a *T*, it's just crushing to lose that ability to know what those kids are doing and be able to help them. I just don't feel I can do my job as well as I did before.

**Alison Steeves**

Thank you very much, Kathy. I have no further questions, but the Commission might. I'll just give them a minute.

**Commissioner Drysdale**

Thank you for your testimony. I have a couple of questions. And perhaps you said them, and I missed them. And that was, I understood that you had your second audio test in and around January 4th of 2022?

**Kathy Howland**

Second audio test. I'm just looking for the date here. It was the 14th of January 2022.

**Commissioner Drysdale**

I can't read my own notes. There is a one there. Now my real question, though, is: what was the date of the first test, the record test you had prior to that?

**Kathy Howland**

I do believe that there was a previous audiogram on file from 2002, which showed normal hearing.

**Commissioner Drysdale**

Okay. One last question. I believe you said that you had a discussion with your family doctor with regard to this being a potential vaccine injury. And I believe I heard you say she thought that was a possible side effect?

**Kathy Howland**

Right. She had been reading some literature online that things were starting to come out that it was a potential side effect.

**Commissioner Drysdale**

Do you know whether or not she made a report to the CAEFISS [Canadian Adverse Events Following Immunization Surveillance System] system on that?

**Kathy Howland**

That, I don't know. I've got some paperwork to go in to her next week, but I really don't know if she reported that to VAERS [Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System] or not.

**Commissioner Drysdale**

Okay. Great. Thank you very much.

**Kathy Howland**

You're welcome.

**Alison Steeves**

Thank you, Kathy.

[00:18:31]

**Final Review and Approval:** Jodi Bruhn, August 3, 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.*

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