



## NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Truro, NS

March 17, 2023

Day 2

### EVIDENCE

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**Witness 5: Paula Doiron**

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[00:00:00]

**Ches Crosbie**

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

**Paula Doiron**

I do.

**Alison Steeves**

Can you please state your full name, where you live, and your occupation?

**Paula Doiron**

Paula Doiron. I'm 48 years old. I'm from Moncton, New Brunswick, and I work in a nursing home.

**Alison Steeves**

And what's your role in the nursing home?

**Paula Doiron**

I was a cook, but I demoted my position to custodian when I got ill.

**Alison Steeves**

Okay, so you were a cook and then became a custodian in the same business.

**Paula Doiron**

Yes.

**Alison Steeves**

And how long have you been working there?

**Paula Doiron**

Seven years in all. One year with the new position.

**Alison Steeves**

And are you currently going to work?

**Paula Doiron**

Not presently, no, I'm on sick leave.

**Alison Steeves**

And when did you go on sick leave?

**Paula Doiron**

October of 2021.

**Alison Steeves**

You were there in 2020 and 2021 up to that point throughout the height of the pandemic?

**Paula Doiron**

Yes, I was there during the beginning of the pandemic, yes.

**Alison Steeves**

And can you describe what it was like to work there prior to the pandemic, like before early 2020?

**Paula Doiron**

I really love my job. It's a good work environment, but we were very short staffed, so we had a lot of complications before the pandemic with keeping staff. So this means that the residents don't always get the proper care and attention that they need or want. Before the pandemic, we have a pretty big facility. There's three different wings. They have access to a great big common room that they could go have activities in, have bingo nights; their families would come visit, and they were able to be everywhere in the nursing home.

**Alison Steeves**

So there was a lot of social interaction among the residents?

**Paula Doiron**

Yeah. Once a week there would be entertainment that would come in, bands that would perform for them, music.

**Alison Steeves**

And in your role, did you interact much with the residents?

**Paula Doiron**

I did, yes.

**Alison Steeves**

So you observe their day-to-day. And how were the relationships among staff members and sort of that atmosphere?

**Paula Doiron**

It was good. A lot of people are tired because you're short-staffed, but we always kept busy and jovial. It was a good work environment.

**Alison Steeves**

And can you talk about how things changed around 2020, when the government started implementing COVID-19 measures? How that changed in the nursing home for staff, for residents, and sort of what specific measures you saw being implemented.

**Paula Doiron**

In the beginning, it was very chaotic and disorganized. For a long time, we didn't have PPE, so we were very anxious, but everybody was healthy. We sanitized our hands and after a while they started introducing the vaccines.

**Alison Steeves**

I just want to take you back to even before that—like sort of, say, March 2020, around that time, with nursing homes being sort of one of the hardest-hit. I believe around that time, they had locked down and prevented visitors from entering.

Did you see some of those types of impacts taking place early on?

**Paula Doiron**

Right away, we locked down. Families weren't allowed to visit anymore. The residents all were set into their assigned wings, so they didn't have access to the big common rooms. The entertainment was done. So they got segregated more into their specific wings. The families couldn't visit anymore. Families would come visit through the windows. That was sad.

**Alison Steeves**

Did you see the impact on the residents from these measures?

**Paula Doiron**

Yeah, it was hard for them because that's what they live for, to see their family, and the activities. So yeah.

**Alison Steeves**

So before they would have had fairly active days, be out and about.

**Paula Doiron**

Yes.

**Alison Steeves**

And were there always activities to be scheduled every day?

**Paula Doiron**

Yeah, yeah—in each wing, there's activities every day, but the common room was like the bingo night, and bingo was their favourite activities.

**Alison Steeves**

And where would they eat? Would they usually eat together?

[00:05:00]

**Paula Doiron**

They ate in their wings. Every wing has an eating area for each wing, so that's more like satellite common rooms.

**Alison Steeves**

And during the lockdowns, how did that change?

**Paula Doiron**

During the lockdowns, they could still. But after the vaccines and stuff like that, staff members were diagnosed with COVID, so they actually put the residents into their tiny little rooms, so they wouldn't be contaminated.

**Alison Steeves**

So the protocol was, if somebody tested positive for COVID, there was kind of further segregation.

**Paula Doiron**

Yeah, further segregation in their specific little rooms.

**Alison Steeves**

And were they permitted to leave their rooms?

**Paula Doiron**

No, they were not. They couldn't go in the dining rooms anymore and their assigned wings, or they couldn't visit each other anymore. They were in their little rooms.

**Alison Steeves**

Did that affect their roommate situations?

**Paula Doiron**

Most of them have their own personal rooms, but there are a couple of residents that share rooms that have two living areas in it.

**Alison Steeves**

So they went to be in their rooms on their own, but no visitors.

**Paula Doiron**

Correct.

**Alison Steeves**

For how long? If someone tests positive, how long would that sort of lockdown last for?

**Paula Doiron**

I believe the first one was for until Public Health said that it was okay to keep them out of their rooms, but at one point they were put into their rooms for almost two months.

**Alison Steeves**

So around January 2021 when they rolled out the vaccines: elderly and people working nursing homes were first in line, or close to first of line, correct? To be eligible to take the vaccines?

**Paula Doiron**

Yes, we were.

**Alison Steeves**

Did you notice the introduction of the vaccine and discussion of the vaccine have further impact in the nursing home?

**Paula Doiron**

A lot of us were very happy that we were first, because we wanted to get back to normal. We wanted to see the residents get normalcy again, so most of us were very eager—but not everybody.

**Alison Steeves**

And was everyone very eager to take the vaccine, or were people outspoken about their choosing not to take it, and did that sort of have any impact on—

**Paula Doiron**

No, they only became outspoken when it became mandated.

**Alison Steeves**

And can you elaborate. How did that change things?

**Paula Doiron**

We lost some staff members. They decided against the shots. We were already short-staffed. This means that we're shorter staffed. Less assistance for the residents.

**Alison Steeves**

And were there any issues prior to the mandate of staff or residents being concerned about who was vaccinated, who was not vaccinated?

**Paula Doiron**

Well, everybody kept their distance. I remember one of our coworkers: she hadn't been vaccinated yet. It was starting to be mandated and she was sad. She was on the fence on what to do. And just people kept their distance from her. One day, I just went up to her and I gave her a hug and I said, "I accept you for whatever you decide." But it was sad to watch them being outcasted.

**Alison Steeves**

And how was morale at this time? How were people feeling?

**Paula Doiron**

Anxieties. Anxieties. Always busy because, when you're short staffed, you're doing the job of more than one person. You're doing a two-person job. So you don't really have time. You're just kind of on autopilot.

**Alison Steeves**

And did you decide to take the COVID-19 vaccine?

**Paula Doiron**

I did, yes.

**Alison Steeves**

And you took another shot that year as well?

**Paula Doiron**

Yes, yeah. I took the flu shot, 2020, before the rollouts of the COVID. I figured I was adding that to protecting the residents.

**Alison Steeves**

And then how many COVID-19 shots did you take?

**Paula Doiron**

After the flu shot, I had three Moderna.

**Alison Steeves**

Moderna. And when did you take those?

**Paula Doiron**

The Moderna were in 2021. So the first one was in January, the second one February, and then I had my booster in November.

**Alison Steeves**

And where did you take the COVID-19 vaccines?

**Paula Doiron**

The three first shots that I received, including that flu shot, was at my place of work because we have nurses there. It's a hospital, so it was done there.

[00:10:00]

And my booster was done at a drugstore.

**Alison Steeves**

And who administered the shots?

**Paula Doiron**

Nurses, where I work. And at the drugstore, it was an attendant.

**Alison Steeves**

And did any of these people speak to you about the potential risks of taking that flu shot and the vaccines?

**Paula Doiron**

No, they did not. I had no idea that it was a gene therapy. I thought it was a vaccine. Also, I figured if I got sick, that I would get assistance, get medical help. And I had another thing, but I forget.

**Alison Steeves**

Why did you think that if anything went wrong, you would have support?

**Paula Doiron**

It's common sense. If you harm somebody, you're going to help them.

**Alison Steeves**

With any of these vaccines, did you experience symptoms afterwards?

**Paula Doiron**

I did, yeah. I experienced with the flu shot, 2020. The night when I got home, I was fine. When I went to bed, my legs started pulsing. I fell asleep. When I woke up, I woke up with a horrible headache. My neck was so sore I wasn't able to lay on it. And it felt like a flashing light had gone in my head. And I was also having issues breathing.

**Alison Steeves**

And that was the evening that you took the shot.

**Paula Doiron**

That was the evening of yes, yeah.

**Alison Steeves**

And did you speak to health—

**Paula Doiron**

I fell asleep. The next day I felt a bit better. I didn't think— It took a couple of days. For three nights, my neck was really sore. I wasn't able to lay on it.

**Alison Steeves**

And did you see anyone about those symptoms or get a diagnosis?

**Paula Doiron**

No, I didn't. I just—

**Alison Steeves**

And had you experienced similar symptoms in the past?

**Paula Doiron**

No, no ma'am.

**Alison Steeves**

And then did you mention a booster. You also experienced symptoms?



**Paula Doiron**

The booster: I had a reaction with the booster as well. That one was worse. When I had my booster, three weeks after, I had to go to the ER. My head and my spine felt like it was on fire, and I was having issues breathing. So 8-1-1 suggested I go.

**Alison Steeves**

Did you say head or neck, sorry?

**Paula Doiron**

My neck, my head, and my spine felt like it was on fire. My neck felt like it was melting.

**Alison Steeves**

And what happened at the Emergency Room?

**Paula Doiron**

After the booster, it dawned on me that, because I'd been feeling ill for a while— It dawned on me that this was possibly because of the vaccines that I'd been receiving.

At that point I'm like, "I'm going to go to the ER and I'm going to ask them if it's normal to have a headache and a sore neck at the same time." I looked it up and they say, "You'll have the sore arm and you could have a headache." But the sore neck and sore head were indications that it could have been Guillain-Barré syndrome, meningitis, Parsonage Turner Syndrome, SIRVA [shoulder injury related to vaccine administration]. So I did a bit of research before I went. When I got there, the triage nurse— I asked her if it was normal to have the headache and the sore neck, and she didn't answer me, and she gave me a really dirty look. When I got with the ER doctor, I asked him, and his words to me were, "What do you have against vaccines?" And then I told him, "Well, I've had four in the span of 14 months. There's something wrong with me." But they wouldn't answer my questions.

The next day, I figured I'm going to go ask the pharmacist. I was picking up my prescription. I thought maybe the doctor and the triage nurse were having a bad shift, so I'm like, "I'm going to go speak with the pharmacist." And I asked the pharmacist, "Is it normal to have the sore neck and the headache, or the headache." And then he asked me what side I had received my injection, and I told him it was the different side of where I was hurting. And then his words to me were, "I'm not buying it." Like I'm trying to like sell him Tupperware or something! And then I asked him about the 2020 flu shot recall.

[00:15:00]

Because I had found information that this flu shot had had a recall. And he looked at me; he's like, "I'm too busy. I'm not talking about this with you right now."

**Alison Steeves**

Did they run any tests at the ER?

**Paula Doiron**

When I went to the ER, I had to beg for testing. At that point, I'd already done a bit of research myself, and I was concerned. And I asked him if I could get an MRI. And he told me that I didn't need that. He did authorize an X-ray, so I received the X-ray that evening. And then after the X-ray from my results, he came and he told me that the MRI would be approved, because he had found some issues in my neck.

**Alison Steeves**

Okay. And did you provide me with a copy of the MRI results?

**Paula Doiron**

Yes.

**Alison Steeves**

Okay. Do you have that in front of you?

**Paula Doiron**

I sure do.

**Alison Steeves**

So that is Exhibit TR-0006b. And it reads, "The impression as moderately advanced C5-6 degenerative disc disease. There is severe disc slash Luschka joint osteophyte narrowing of the right C6 neural foramen. There is mild central canal narrowing at this level." Is that correct?

**Paula Doiron**

That's correct.

**Alison Steeves**

And the recommendation was surgery consultation, correct?

**Paula Doiron**

Correct.

**Alison Steeves**

And did you have the surgery consultation?

**Paula Doiron**

I did speak with my family doctor after he received these results, over the phone. And my family doctor told me that a surgery wouldn't be approved for me. I asked to be transferred or referred to a neurologist. He said that there's a big waiting list. It would be about three years. And I said, "well you, you can put me on the list, I could get worse by then." And he's

like, “yeah, I’ll put you on the list, but they’re not going to approve this type of surgery for you.”

**Alison Steeves**

And what was his suggestion?

**Paula Doiron**

I would have to live with it.

**Alison Steeves**

So in 2020, you took the flu shot. You experienced severe symptoms that persisted, and then you got your two Moderna vaccines. And then when you had your booster, you had more severe symptoms. Were they sort of different symptoms? Did you say they exacerbated the original, or it was completely different?

**Paula Doiron**

After the booster, it was different. That’s when I started getting, like, body jolts. I started having menstrual issues. I also had brain zaps, brain fog, fatigue. I had to take three naps a day, and nerve pain, a lot of nerve pain. And the sensation of my legs, the pulsing, has never gone away.

**Alison Steeves**

And had you had any issues in the past or any pre-existing conditions that would explain any of those symptoms?

**Paula Doiron**

No, the only issues I had in the past: I had asthma, I have a bladder condition called interstitial cystitis, and I was on antidepressant.

**Alison Steeves**

And what made you think there could be a connection with the vaccines?

**Paula Doiron**

Well, I’m having all these issues with my neck a year after. And when I received that flu shot and other shots, I was always having a sore neck. I kind of put two and two together that—

**Alison Steeves**

And how did you feel about the response you received from the various healthcare providers when you inquired about that connection?

**Paula Doiron**

It's very frustrating. I think I deserve to be treated better than that. I did my part, and I actually mentioned this to the ER doctor. I said, "You know, I did this to protect others and residents, but now I'm injured and somebody needs to protect me."

**Alison Steeves**

And do you know if any of the healthcare professionals you spoke with filed an adverse event following immunization form?

**Paula Doiron**

No, they did not.

**Alison Steeves**

And Paula, you also had a gene analysis done. Is that correct?

**Paula Doiron**

Correct, yes.

**Alison Steeves**

So that's Exhibit TR-0006a. And do you have that in front of you?

**Paula Doiron**

I sure do.

**Alison Steeves**

Can you explain? So who provided you with this gene analysis?

**Paula Doiron**

This was done with a naturopathic doctor.

**Alison Steeves**

And how did they do it?

**Paula Doiron**

It's with your saliva sample, so they're able to see your gene makeup. And I was explained that I have a mutation, a gene, that's actually very sensitive when it comes to vaccines.

**Alison Steeves**

And that's the MTHFR [gene], is it?

[00:20:00]

**Paula Doiron**

I had the worst one she told me.

**Alison Steeves**

So these notes, the handwritten notes on the results: is that your handwriting?

**Paula Doiron**

That's my handwriting, yes.

**Alison Steeves**

And when did you write that?

**Paula Doiron**

As she was explaining to me, because I need to take some vitamin B, I guess. So I just dabbled.

**Alison Steeves**

So that supports that you might be at risk of having bad reactions, to suggest the possibility?

**Paula Doiron**

Yes.

**Alison Steeves**

And had you had any bad reactions with vaccines in the past?

**Paula Doiron**

Well, I didn't think so but now that I'm looking into past, I had received a vaccine as well in 2005 while I was pregnant. It was a DTaP. And not long after this DTaP, I had massive muscle and joint pain to the point that I was on the couch for a month. I went to the hospital then and the doctor at the time told me that it was from— I was newly pregnant, and I was expanding, so I would get muscle sores and aches. But I was so sore that I was on the couch for about a month. And I think it was five months after, my water broke early, and my son was only alive for one day.

Speaking with the doctors then, they said, "We can't explain why these things happen. We don't know why." And now that I see these type of— This type of documentation, it kind of makes you wonder if that's the case? I'm not saying it is, but unfortunately, I can't go speak with a doctor and say, "Hey, is this what happened to my son?" Because I don't think they would be honest with me.

**Alison Steeves**

In terms of the impacts that these symptoms have had on your life, you're currently on sick leave due to these symptoms?

**Paula Doiron**

I am, yes.

**Alison Steeves**

And when did you go on sick leave in relation to the various vaccines?

**Paula Doiron**

It started October, 2021. I tried to return to work a few times, but I was getting more sick.

**Alison Steeves**

And was that before your booster?

**Paula Doiron**

This was before the booster. Yeah, I actually got my booster as I was on sick leave because I didn't know that I was having issues with the previous vaccines at that point. It only clicked in when I got my booster.

**Alison Steeves**

And what has the financial impact been of being off on leave? Are you getting benefits or disability, or—?

**Paula Doiron**

No, I'm not. Right now, I'm kind of living on my credit card. My brother is helping me as well. I got help in the beginning: I think it was 15 weeks for EI for a sick leave. But once that ran out, I tried to go back to work and I couldn't. So I've just been footing the bill.

**Alison Steeves**

You tried to go back to work when your benefits ran out?

**Paula Doiron**

I did, yeah.

**Alison Steeves**

And what happened?

**Paula Doiron**

I couldn't move for a long time. For months, I was on the couch. I couldn't even walk. I would walk kind of hunched over. I'm just starting to be able to walk straight now after a couple of years.

**Alison Steeves**

And how else have these symptoms and your diagnosis impacted your day-to-day life?

**Paula Doiron**

I used to be very active. I used to be very happy and social. I'm not so much anymore. I'm isolating more now.

**Alison Steeves**

And why is that?

**Paula Doiron**

I've lost connections with some of my family, my friends. I've tried to reach out to explain to them what's been happening to me, and they have blinders on. They don't want to speak to me about it. They've kind of disconnected from me.

**Alison Steeves**

And has this experience impacted your mental health at all?

**Paula Doiron**

Yes—yeah, it has. It's made me very anxious. I mean, I'm doing research now, and I'm seeing these doctors come up with heart attacks, cancer, and I'm still trying to figure out what issues— I have some diagnosis, but I know there's still something wrong with me. I still—

Actually, in a couple of weeks from now, I have someone that's going to go through my blood work. And there's discrepancies in my blood work as we speak and my urine sample. So yeah, I'm anxious. I don't know what's wrong with me. And it's been two years of being sick and I'm having to run around, "Please, someone help me."

**Alison Steeves**

And how are your symptoms today?

**Paula Doiron**

I'm still sore. I'm still sore. It's chronic.

**Alison Steeves**

Has anything helped?

**Paula Doiron**

When I was at my worst, I did do ivermectin. It cleared my spine and my head from burning within two days of using it. I've used it a bit more since, but it doesn't— I think it was a one-shot deal.

[00:25:00]

But I've been on supplements, and DMG [dimethylglycine] is one that's been a big game-changer for me. I'm trying to go all natural, and I'm slowly healing. I'm not worse.

**Alison Steeves**

And do you have any idea if or when you might return to work?

**Paula Doiron**

I'd like to return in May, but the last couple of days I've been in a flare-up, so we're going to see how that goes.

**Alison Steeves**

What would you say has been the hardest aspect of this experience for you?

**Paula Doiron**

Getting treatment, getting taken seriously, my relationship with my family members and friends. And I had to leave a three-year relationship because he didn't believe me that I was going through these issues, and I started going public to warn others. And his words to me were, "I can't go out with a conspiracy theorist." So I chose my health over the relationship. So yeah, I've lost a lot, but I've gained a lot too.

**Alison Steeves**

What do you mean by you've gained a lot?

**Paula Doiron**

I've gained a lot of knowledge. I've gained that I need to take my instincts. I need to follow those because in the beginning, I think I was on the right path, but I let people convince me to do something. Yeah, so follow my own instincts. And just—I met a lot of great people too, and there's a lot of good people out there. And there's a lot of people like me that's injured as well.

Purple is kind of— If you see a Facebook profile picture and there's purple in there, reach out to them, because they're probably injured like me and we're all in the same boat.

**Alison Steeves**

Thank you, Paula. I have no further questions. I'll just turn it over to the Commission.

**Commissioner Drysdale**

Thank you. You did an excellent job of describing for us what you've been through. But I want to go back just a little bit, because there's some people that really haven't talked about it. And that was the patients, the people in the elderly residents. I don't know a lot about that. That's what my question is going to be, you might not know some of these answers.

Are the residents highly regulated by the government? How they take care of the residents? What are their ratios of staff?

**Paula Doiron**

Where I work, yes. It's supposed to be regulated, but we can't keep staff. Nobody wants to work for very long. I work there and I'm one person, but I have to do like a two-person job,



because there's not enough people that want to work. And you're working with sick people too. Like, their needs need to be met. Personally too, they deserve a bit of attention. And you can't even give them that attention of a conversation for two minutes because it's so busy that you kind of have to brush them off.

**Commissioner Drysdale**

Were there never inspections of the facility to ensure that the residents were getting the care that they were supposed to be getting?

**Paula Doiron**

Yeah, no. We do get some inspections, but not about the care. No, I don't remember any.

**Commissioner Drysdale**

When you were talking about them going into lockdown— I think you said that there were times when the residents were locked up for months at a time, I think there was several months—

**Paula Doiron**

It was almost two months.

**Commissioner Drysdale**

Did the workload on the staff as a result of that go up or down?

**Paula Doiron**

It was probably the same because, for the nurses, they have to suit all up with that gear, so it was more strenuous actually. And for the nurses as well—

Their food was being served in their rooms as well. I worked in the food department, so we make their trays. And then, usually they have a common room that they can go eat, where now it was like the nurses were having to go bring the food to them, and not so much us. So it probably caused more work.

**Commissioner Drysdale**

Well, you know, with people being locked up for a long period of time, especially elderly people, did you notice an effect on their mental health and happiness?

**Paula Doiron**

Yes, it was heartbreaking.

**Commissioner Drysdale**

Did the regulator come in and assess that at all?

**Paula Doiron**

No.

**Commissioner Drysdale**

Did anybody ask questions about that?

**Paula Doiron**

I wanted to ask questions, but when you ask questions, “We’re just following public health.”

[00:30:00] [The livestream was inadvertently cut off at this point.]



***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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