



## NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Red Deer, AB

Day 1

April 26, 2023

### EVIDENCE

---

**Witness 12: Jacques Robert**

Full Day 1 Timestamp: 09:55:42–10:22:04

Source URL: <https://rumble.com/v2kjwek-national-citizens-inquiry-red-deer-day-1.html>

[00:00:00]

**Leighton Grey**

Next witness is Mr. Jacques Robert. Welcome, Mr. Robert, am I saying that correctly?

**Jacques Robert**

Yes, you are.

**Leighton Grey**

Okay. Welcome to the National Citizens Inquiry. Thank you for being here today.

**Jacques Robert**

Glad to be here.

**Leighton Grey**

Would you please start by stating your name and just spelling it for the record?

**Jacques Robert**

My name is Jacques Robert, spelled J-A-C-Q-U-E-S R-O-B-E-R-T.

**Leighton Grey**

And do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

**Jacques Robert**

I do.

**Leighton Grey**

Thank you. So Jacques, yours is a very troubling personal story of tragic loss. It's an important one to be told, but I understand that you lost your wife. Would you like to talk about that?

**Jacques Robert**

That's incorrect.

**Leighton Grey**

Oh sorry, I beg your pardon, different Jacques. You lost your job, beg your pardon.

**Jacques Robert**

That's it. Yes.

**Leighton Grey**

You were dismissed from your job after 15 years?

**Jacques Robert**

That is correct.

**Leighton Grey**

And that was because you chose not to comply with company policy for attestation for vaccination.

**Jacques Robert**

That is correct.

**Leighton Grey**

What type of work were you doing?

**Jacques Robert**

I was a manager of a technical services for a real estate services company. So property management was my field of engagement.

**Leighton Grey**

And you were engaged in that for over 15 years I understand.

**Jacques Robert**

Yes.

**Leighton Grey**

This dismissal, was it in the form of an actual firing where your employment was terminated, or were you put on what was called an involuntary unpaid leave of absence?

**Jacques Robert**

So the way it worked out, I'll sort of precursor this with the eventual date They put specific mandates to comply with their company policy and it was to take the shot. And there were a few stages to get to the end, and when it got to that end, they put me on an eight-week unpaid leave of absence. And I think their strategy was to think because it was an eight-week unpaid leave that they were real and certain about what their position was, and I knew what the outcome was going to be. So January 14th, 2022 was the last day of my employment following that eight weeks of unpaid leave. When it came to, I believe it was March 15th, maybe the 17th—isn't that funny that 2022 is a common day?—March 15th 2022 or 2020. I remember that day as well when everything shut down. They let me go. I still would not comply with their company policy, and really their company policy was to make you be vaccinated or have the shot. I was not willing to disclose my personal health information, although they knew what the case was, and that's when it all ended.

**Leighton Grey**

When did you first find out that this mandate was coming into effect?

**Jacques Robert**

I don't know specific dates, but it was in 2021, and it would have been around July, I believe is when the first wind of these mandates were going to occur. And it followed with a time in October.

And then, we knew they were always updating their policy and we knew that it was going to happen come January. So it was staged, and that's what caused, in my opinion, a whole lot of stress and angst even working, knowing that my demise or the certainty of my demise was coming. And I couldn't do anything about it. And how do you perform your job well under the knowing that it was going to end. That was a big challenge. And to work with your co-workers along the way, you know, was a challenge.

[00:05:00]

**Leighton Grey**

Were you provided with any information from the HR [Human Resources] department or somebody else at the company about why they were imposing the mandate?

**Jacques Robert**

They were following health guidelines.

**Leighton Grey**

So it was coming from the Government of Alberta, they were just trying to basically move in lockstep with the Alberta Government's position.

**Jacques Robert**

So I worked in a regional office, and we had regional offices in all the major centres across Canada. So they were really following Canada health guidelines. But, of course, it trickled down to whatever Alberta Health Services was imposing as well.

**Leighton Grey**

Is it fair to say that you had office type work, that's what you did?

**Jacques Robert**

Yes.

**Leighton Grey**

It seems to me that that would have lent itself readily to some type of accommodation where you could work from home. Was that ever offered to you or anything like that?

**Jacques Robert**

It was, yeah. There was a certain time when they shut everything down and they were willing to work with us, and to maintain the services that we needed for the buildings. My position allowed me to work from home. There were others that weren't. The operation staff had to be in the office to keep the building running, even though there was almost zero occupancy. So I was able to work from home, five days a week. What they slowly, like they did with the mandates, brought in the opportunity to have the flexibility to work from home and then two days in the office. And we had to kind of schedule with our crew workers when we could be in the office.

**Leighton Grey**

Were you told why that situation couldn't continue? Or was it a situation where they just insisted that everybody had to be uniformly and universally vaccinated?

**Jacques Robert**

I would say that they knew that everybody was going to have to be vaccinated. They just sort of eased everybody back into the opportunity to have faith in the company that we would all get back to work and everything would go back to normal. And I still think to this day that they still have the flexibility of working from home and mandatory days in the office too. So hopefully that answers your question.

**Leighton Grey**

That accommodation, that is working from home, that was not offered to you after you refused to provide your private medical information?

**Jacques Robert**

No, it was not.

**Leighton Grey**

What about something like testing? Was that accommodation offered to you?

**Jacques Robert**

Yeah. There was a point in time, and again, I don't remember the specific dates, but we were forced to be tested, if we were to come back into the office. They told us that we were supposed to be tested. We were supposed to take the test, and they worked on the honour system that if you tested positive, you had to stay home. If you didn't, then you were able to come into the office for your selected work days.

**Leighton Grey**

But they did not offer you the option of testing as an alternative to vaccination. Do you understand what I mean?

**Jacques Robert**

Yes, I do. No, that was not part of the plan.

**Leighton Grey**

Were there any exemptions offered, like religious or—

**Jacques Robert**

None.

**Leighton Grey**

medical?

**Jacques Robert**

No exemptions.

**Leighton Grey**

Why did you refuse to provide your personal medical information to the company?

**Jacques Robert**

Primarily, it's because I felt it was a real hit on our own rights and freedoms and to have our bodily autonomy, and it's none of their business, really. That's why I didn't want to disclose it. I mean, the fact of what I was learning and getting myself exposed to, as it related to the shots and how that was rolled out, I was suspicious of it from the very beginning. And when both sides of the stories were coming out, I could say that I was open to both, but I was really pushing away what I felt to be propaganda and the false narrative against what I was able to find in real, credible, documented, and proper, believable sources of information to say that

[00:10:00]

this vaccine or shot was ineffective. And I didn't want that in my body. I simply didn't want it, and that basically led me to fight against [sic] my charters of rights and freedoms and not have to disclose that information to anybody.

**Leighton Grey**

The loss of your employment must have been a significant financial stress to yourself and your family. Do you want to talk about that a little bit?

**Jacques Robert**

Sure, I mean I think they got— Just to support what I'm about to say, I'm the only one in the Calgary office who was let go because of my non-disclosure, my lack of attestation. There were others who were with me but they were coerced into complying. So because I was the only one, I can only speculate.

They did a pretty good job of looking after me. They gave me a pretty fair severance, but that doesn't last forever. So it was hard for me to go forward with the uncertainty of work, I guess. And yes, today I'm still bridging my finances, bridging my lifestyle and bridging my family support, with my life savings. So you know severance runs out and I still don't have any work and the uncertainty of the work I'm capable of doing is— How can I put it? I don't know if I can get a job there again because I feel they're still imposing those restrictions on the staff.

**Leighton Grey**

Have you tried to obtain other work in the same field?

**Jacques Robert**

Not in the same field, no. I choose not to because I think I know the answer. I feel like I know the answer. I probably won't be able to get in there. Because I'm not complying with their policy.

**Leighton Grey**

Are you concerned that this will sort of blackball you within your field, or that this will follow you around and prevent you from obtaining replacement employment?

**Jacques Robert**

Possibly because I have been vocal about my circumstances and my beliefs. So being open on social media and trying to share information, I feel as though I'm exposed, so the likelihood of that is possible.

**Leighton Grey**

Did you apply for employment insurance following your dismissal?

**Jacques Robert**

I did.

**Leighton Grey**

And what was the result of that, were you denied?

**Jacques Robert**

No, I was not denied. I think they gave me a shortened term of compensation. I'm still fighting for my eight-week unpaid leave time. They have a case against it. But yeah, I'm no longer collecting unemployment. I'm done.

**Leighton Grey**

Do you recall what your employer indicated on your record of employment as the reason for your dismissal?

**Jacques Robert**

Termination without cause.

**Leighton Grey**

I understand that this whole situation has also been a great deal of stress on your family. It has caused some family division and mental stress that you are unable to attend your grandchildren's recreational activities and other family events. Do you want to talk about that?

**Jacques Robert**

Yeah, for sure. Because we were never compliant with the mandates and the shots, I think it was the last year, or maybe over 2021 into 2022, we were unable to go watch our grandkids play in their indoor sports. So that in itself, I think, created some challenges within the construction of our family.

Families love each other, so we do have that love for each other, but there is still that piece that is hanging over the difference between our beliefs and what our kids' beliefs are. And so it did create a little bit of divisiveness within the family. You know, some challenging conversations were had, crucial conversations, but it never amounted to much because it was always, I don't want to talk about it. But I understand it, you know, I'm not against what they decided because they're adults,

[00:15:00]

they can choose whatever they want. That's what this is all about: freedom of choice.

**Leighton Grey**

Did you consider filing a human rights complaint against the employer over the discrimination that you suffered?

**Jacques Robert**

I did at first. I did speak with someone to try to obtain some legal guidance on that. I was advised that it would have been a really tough battle, at that time, because there was no precedence to this kind of event; they didn't know where this was going to lead. But it's in



the back of my mind of still being able to do that. Because I have that history and I have everything documented as well, in regards to all the history and everything that unfolded through my loss of employment. So it's in the back of my mind. I just don't know where I'm going to go with that.

**Leighton Grey**

Do you anticipate that you'll be able to return to work at some point?

**Jacques Robert**

Yeah, I am able to work. I'm trying to do something as a self-employed individual and trying to build something that way. So it's working from home and taking control of my own destiny. But again, I can't tap into my life savings and my retirement savings now, which I'm doing. There's an end to that. I feel I will have to go back to work sometime very soon, if my online business or my vision of working from home and being self-sustaining is not as successful. I don't want to put that in my vision, but that's what I'm working towards.

**Leighton Grey**

Sir those are my questions, is there anything else that you want to share with the inquiry that I may not have asked you about?

**Jacques Robert**

Yeah, I'd like to be able to share some of the experiences that we had within the work environment. The coercive nature, I feel that the corporation had on us as staff was, as far as I'm concerned, unacceptable. Not only did it apply to those who were working for the company, but we have a lot of service providers that were working for the company.

You can name them: cleaning, mechanical, electrical, maintenance, architectural firms, you just name it, there was a whole list of service providers to which, they too were forced to be vaccinated if they were to enter the front doors and do work within the company. So you can imagine how that effect of following these restrictive measures mushroomed out to the community. So it wasn't just us, it was the entire family who lived and breathed within those buildings that were also affected. So I really felt that was important to share because I'm just one, but what they did, was to many.

And also sometimes the environment within the building itself, when we were able to go back to the office and work. I remember the ridiculousness. I have to state this because it seemed so ludicrous. They put markings on the floors where you can walk, and you have to go this way. And there was a one-way direction in our office: all the perimeter offices and then, there's an aisle. And you had to go this way to go to the washroom and God forbid if you stepped out of line there, you had to wear masks in your office. And I worked in a perimeter office with a closed door, and they still expected you to wear masks while you were in the office. Needless to say, I did not comply. And when they finally relaxed that, you were also mandated to wear a mask if you opened the door from your office to go to the washroom. And even though it was a skeleton crew, there were times where I'd be at the office and there was two other people. And we're taking a whole floor plate of a 12,000 square foot building. And he's over there or she's over there and I'm over here, and they're telling me that I have to wear a mask to go to the washroom. So there was some ridiculousness attached to that.



And also. when you walked into the elevator, they told you, this is on a sign, "Please don't face anybody, you're only allowed two in the elevator.

[00:20:00]

And when you stand in the elevator, please stand facing the mirrored wall at the back." So it was like you had to stand looking away from the door and the other person had to stand at the kitty corner of the elevator car or a cab to make sure that you didn't share anything.

So those were kind of the stressors and the challenges of the environment and having to work in that, people complying with that and trying to have good conversations or open conversations with individuals about what ridiculousness that was going on in the office. So I felt it was important to be able to share some of that just to kind of add to the impact of the restrictive measures that it had on everybody. Those who complied and those who didn't and the divisiveness that it created, not only in the work environment but at home and everywhere else.

### **Leighton Grey**

Just by way of follow-up, I've represented a lot of people who've suffered similar treatment by employers, in my practice. And in talking with them, I was always struck by the fact that although they were interested in the more practical things, like loss of money and things of that nature, there were two things that really came through with all of the people that I talked to who were put into this situation, as you were.

The first one is a deep sense of betrayal, and the second one is a sense of dehumanization. That they were no longer a human being of value. Because when you think of the employment relationship, most of the time it starts out somebody applies for a job, there's a competition and they're picked. They're picked for the team, which is always a good feeling, if anybody's had that feeling. And then you begin that journey with the company, you devote your life, you spend your time, you devote your expertise, and all your skill and worry. You help, whoever you're working for, make money or succeed in whatever endeavor that they're doing. And then one day, suddenly, none of that matters. You rise through the ranks, maybe you're a senior manager, well-paid, you've got a sense of belonging and then suddenly, all of a sudden, that just stops and the employer says, you know, take the shot or else or you're gone. Does that resonate with you?

### **Jacques Robert**

It most certainly does, I felt human resources really was there to protect the company and not the individual. Because they're the ones that I felt had no compassion for what I was going through and what others were going through as well. And yeah, it really gave you the sense of, call it that corporate wheel, where everyone is dispensable. I did not feel indispensable. I felt, as things led to the end, that I was not being valued. And it even came across from some of my colleagues and some of the other employees who I interacted with. So yeah, dehumanizing? I could categorize it as that because it really felt as though my value that I had to give to the company, wasn't there, and it was ripped away, ripped away for sure. So thank you for asking that question.

**Leighton Grey**

Even if they offered you the same job again, you probably couldn't go back, could you? You couldn't go back as the person you were before they did this to you because that trust, that relationship, that sense of belonging, give and take, that's destroyed. It's severed, isn't it?

**Jacques Robert**

You're not the only one who's asked me that question, and yeah, I don't think I can go back to work there. I feel as though that relationship and that commitment to value that I could present and bring to the company, it wouldn't be there, that loss of commitment—it's gone. Gone.

**Leighton Grey**

When you multiply that, hundreds of thousands of times, you can get a sense of the incredible impact that has upon the Canadian economy, the Canadian workers.

**Jacques Robert**

Absolutely.

**Leighton Grey**

The Canadian workers are the bulwark of our economy, right?

[00:25:00]

**Jacques Robert**

Absolutely.

**Leighton Grey**

They're the people doing things, building things, making things, doing the risky, hard jobs.

Thank you, sir. Thank you for your testimony today.

**Jacques Robert**

Thank you.

**Leighton Grey**

I have nothing further, perhaps members of the panel do.

**Commissioner Kaikkonen**

I just have a quick question in terms of following up what the lawyer has just said here. Did either your employer or HR come to you and discuss the possible changes to your employment agreement at any point in this journey?

**Jacques Robert**

They didn't come to me personally. It was always communicated via the internet, their internal communications, as to what was unfolding and how the policies were going to be enforced.

**Commissioner Kaikkonen**

Thank you.

**Jacques Robert**

And if I could add to that, when I did try to go to them, all they would respond to is, that's company policy. That was it.

**Leighton Grey**

All right, sir, it appears that's all the questions from the panel, so thank you again for being part of the Inquiry.

**Jacques Robert**

Appreciate the time for everybody who's all here. Thank you.

[00:26:22]

***Final Review and Approval:*** Anna Cairns, August 30, 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.*

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