



NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Red Deer, AB

Day 2

April 27, 2023

EVIDENCE

Witness 7: Angela Tabak

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[00:00:00]

Shawn Buckley

So our next witness is Angela Tabak. Angela, can you please state your full name for the record, spelling your first and last name.

Angela Tabak

Certainly. Angela Tabak, A-N-G-E-L-A T-A-B-A-K.

Shawn Buckley

I'm sorry for mispronouncing your last name. You know that I know your family, and so I think of you as having a different last name. You are a small business owner. But before we go any further, I'm going to ask if you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth today.

Angela Tabak

I do.

Shawn Buckley

You're here today to basically share something that happened concerning your son, Kyle Quinton.

Angela Tabak

Yes

Shawn Buckley

Can you please share that story with us?

Angela Tabak

I can. The beginning of the COVID time or whatever we want to call it, March of 2020, my three children were all young adult age. My oldest had just given birth to my first grandchild, living in Virginia, in February of 2020. My son Kyle was 21 at the time. He was living on his own, working full-time. And my youngest was slated to graduate from high school in June of 2020. So we all know what happened with those kids at that time.

My son was of great concern because when he was in high school, he was involved in, I guess you could call it a freak accident, and sustained a massive head injury that really changed him and put him in a very precarious situation when it came to his mental health. We were dealing with anxiety, thoughts of depression, and those types of things. But in early 2020, he was doing pretty good. Like I said, he was living on his own and working full-time.

However, when COVID hit, he very much latched on to the fear and the messaging: the constant messaging that we were bombarded with, the daily case numbers that we were being shared with by our medical professionals, the media and the messaging that came with that. It was about mid or late April of 2020 when he first called me. He was extremely anxious. He was sick, he said. Pretty sure that he had COVID, and he had no food in the house, and he was asking me to go to the grocery store and get some groceries for him. So, of course, I did that. That happened a number of times over the next 18 months, where he would call me and ask me to bring him a meal or bring him some food.

Shawn Buckley

Can I just slow you down and make sure that this is sinking in?

Angela Tabak

Sure.

Shawn Buckley

So prior to COVID, he's living on his own, he's working full-time, and basically, he's managing well. But after COVID, you're having to bring him groceries because he's afraid to go out?

Angela Tabak

Pretty much, yes. Even though he worked in what was considered an essential service industry, he reduced his hours, reduced his hours, reduced his hours, and eventually completely quit his job.

Shawn Buckley

He was actually an agricultural lab field sampler, so he wouldn't be around people. He would be going out and taking samples in the field.

Angela Tabak

Right, he would be in a truck by himself taking samples and then bringing them to the lab.

Shawn Buckley

Okay, but he was so buying into the fear narrative that even that, he was afraid of.

Angela Tabak

Yeah, absolutely. So sometimes I'd bring him food. Sometimes he'd let me into the apartment. Sometimes he wouldn't; he would just ask me to leave it on the step. Sometimes he'd let me in, but he was extremely cautious and nervous and would look around to make sure that there was no neighbours watching for fear that he would be reported for having his mother over. So yeah, he just really, really bought into the narrative.

However, there was a little bit of a bright light for him in that he realized that the colleges were all online. He'd always had a dream of owning his own business.

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So he decided that he was going to attend Lethbridge College online for the year starting in September of 2020, starting a two-year program. So he did that, and he did pretty well, except he failed one course, which wasn't a surprise to me. When he told me about it, I knew because of the cognitive issues that he had after his head injury and the struggles that he had to graduate from high school that that particular course would have been a challenge to him.

So this was April of 2021. And I remember us talking and discussing what had happened with the course, discussing his head injury, discussing the anxiety, and all those things that he was experiencing. And he decided that he was going to get help, that he was finally going to go get help and get on top of this. He was nervous about attending school in September without getting some answers and getting some help. So he went to our family doctor, who referred him to a counsellor, who then referred him to a psychiatrist.

Shawn Buckley

Can I just slow you down? When you say he was nervous about going back to school, that was because it would be in person and he's afraid because of COVID.

Angela Tabak

That was part of it. I mean, that was all up in the air right then. We didn't know whether it was going to be in person or whether it was going to be online again. He was hoping for online but also just nervous because he wanted to succeed. And he felt that there was something in the way of him being able to succeed, that he had failed this one course. He felt badly about that. So it was both those things.

Shawn Buckley

Okay.

Angela Tabak

So, yes, he was referred to a psychiatrist. Now this particular psychiatrist insisted that he would not have in-office visits with his patients. They were all to be telehealth because of the COVID mandates and requirements and whatever we were dealing with. And so my son was sent a questionnaire. It was 120 pages long. He and I spent a number of hours on the

phone going through this questionnaire. There were a lot of things that he needed help finding out about because it was all my family history of mental, physical, emotional health, and his father's, and his own, and whatever traumas he may have dealt with. And I remember going through this questionnaire with him—and I've gone to doctors and counsellors all my life—and being struck by the fact that a lot of the things on this questionnaire were things that you would normally cover in an in-person appointment with your doctor or your counsellor. I just assumed that it was because of COVID that this doctor was having the patients do this at home, and then later, he was going to do something with it.

There was about a five- or six-week period between the first telehealth appointment with this doctor and then his follow-up appointment, which going back through my text messages, it looks like it was probably July 27th was his follow-up appointment.

So the night before, my son called me and had a few more questions that we just had to finish up. And I could hear him stacking the papers. We're on the phone, him on the speakerphone, stacking the papers. He was so proud of himself that he was finally getting help, and that he had gone through this very difficult process of filling out this questionnaire and opening up every can of worms basically that this kid ever had. And dealing with the monsters, basically, including all this anxiety and stuff that he'd been experiencing the last year up to that point.

The next morning according to my son, he took the questionnaire to the doctor's office and dropped it off as he was instructed to do. That afternoon he had his telehealth appointment with the psychiatrist, and, according to him, when the psychiatrist came on, he said, "How are you doing? What can I do for you?" Kyle explained, "Well, I dropped off my questionnaire at the office." And the doctor said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I'm not working in the office today. I'm working from home. I don't have your questionnaire. So, we can't really go over it. So you will have to call the office and rebook your appointment."

Shawn Buckley

Can I just interject? Because it just seems to me that a psychiatrist is dealing with people that are mentally fragile and would likely be dealing with people that would need to be seen in person. This telehealth thing for a psychiatrist, I find interesting. Did you think that was strange?

Angela Tabak

I had major concerns about that,

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major concerns. Because I knew how fragile he was and what had happened to him, how it had gotten even worse since COVID.

So when my son told me this three days later after the appointment, I said, "Well, when is your next appointment?" He said, "Well, the first one they could get me in was September 25th." And I was concerned about that because I knew the whole reason he's gone through this was because he wanted to be prepared to go to school whether it was in person or whether it was online. He was nervous about this. I even said to him, "Hey look it, if you want me to go all Mama Bear, I'll call up the office and we'll get this figured out." He said,

“No. No, no mom, don't worry. It's going to be okay. It's going to be alright.” At that time, I recognized that there was some resignation in his voice that I was not too happy about.

So it was Labour Day, September 5th. It was a Sunday night. He called me, and he call me quite late, which was nothing out of the ordinary. We chatted for about 10 or 15 minutes. We talked about the fact that he was starting school on Wednesday. It was going to be in person. He was nervous about that, but he also said, “But I'm looking forward to getting back to school.” Then, I was like, “Okay, great bud, like you've got it, you can do this. You're going to be all right.”

The next morning his father called me about 6:30 in the morning to tell me that he was gone. He had called 911 and told them what he was about to do. He had given them his address. He lived in a building that had multiple units. He was concerned that they would damage the front door; so, he had gone down and unlocked it and propped it open for EMS [Emergency Medical Services] to be able to come in. He told them that he didn't want anybody to find him a few days later. He had written his two sisters and his dad and myself each a personal letter. Each letter began in the same way with an apology but also stating that the pains, the anxiety, and depression can no longer get to me. He had laid out his wallet and his ID so that the police officers would be able to find it easily. He had written a letter of apology to the police officers and to the EMS apologizing for what they were going to have to come in and see.

Because he had made that call, we were able to get him on life support quick enough that we were able to save a number of his organs and donate them. That was the kind of boy that he was, always tender-hearted and always looking out for everybody else. I feel that the standard of care for the mentally ill was extremely, extremely compromised through these COVID mandates and that singular focus on a respiratory illness took the lives of many, many other people.

Shawn Buckley

I don't think that there's a dry eye in the house. I don't have any further questions for you. Perhaps the commissioners will.

There will be no questions. Angela, on behalf of the National Citizens' Inquiry, I sincerely thank you for sharing that with us.

Angela Tabak

Thank you for the opportunity.

[00:14:40]

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.

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