



NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Saskatoon, SK

Day 2

April 21, 2023

EVIDENCE

Witness 10: Charlotte Garrett

Full Day 2 Timestamp: 08:53:04–09:17:45

Source URL: <https://rumble.com/v2jlxvm-national-citizens-inquiry-saskatoon-day-2.html>

[00:00:00]

Louis Browne

Good afternoon, Miss Garrett. Can you please state your name and spell your last name for us?

Charlotte Garrett

Charlotte Garrett, C-H-A-R-L-O-T-T-E G-A-R-R-E-T-T

Louis Browne

And would you prefer to swear an oath or solemnly affirm?

Charlotte Garrett

I'll swear an oath.

Louis Browne

Do you swear that the testimony you are about to give in this National Citizen's Inquiry will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

Charlotte Garrett

I do.

Louis Browne

Ms. Garrett, what city or town do you reside in?

Charlotte Garrett

Saskatoon.

Louis Browne

And how long have you lived here approximately?

Charlotte Garrett

About 18 years.

Louis Browne

And what is your profession?

Charlotte Garrett

I'm a teacher of English language.

Louis Browne

Okay, and are you currently employed?

Charlotte Garrett

I am.

Louis Browne

Have you been employed throughout the evidence that you're about to give to here today?

Charlotte Garrett

Yes, I have.

Louis Browne

In your own words, please tell us from start to finish what brings you to the National Citizens Inquiry, and then afterwards we'll go back and ask some specific questions. The floor is yours.

Charlotte Garrett

I feel that many people do not know the inside stories of schools or occupations or the punishments that many people suffered through COVID. And I would like to be able to contribute to the truth.

Louis Browne

Sure, go ahead, Ms. Garrett, and just tell us why you're here today. You can start from start to finish and then we'll come back and ask some specific questions.

Charlotte Garrett

Okay. I'm here because, as a language teacher, I teach refugees and newcomers who— My particular bunch are illiterate, and I have a responsibility to be honest and truthful with my students.

And then, as when COVID came, my family was absolutely convinced that I needed to have a vaccine. I had one. And work was also a great deal of pressure to have one.

I had AstraZeneca in April of 2021. And I was sick for three days, and then a few days later I developed tinnitus—quite rapidly, it was just like a tap turning on. It was very strong and deeply uncomfortable, very hard to focus.

Does that answer your question?

Louis Browne

Sure. Yeah, you bet.

Let's just start then in April 2021. You said that you received the AstraZeneca vaccine. And did you do that willingly? Were you happy to do it?

Charlotte Garrett

No.

Louis Browne

Had you thought about it? What was the process that you went through?

Charlotte Garrett

Thanks. No, I was not happy. I did not want to do it. I have three adult children and five grandchildren. And between my family and my work, I felt totally pressured to do it. I really didn't want to, but I did.

Louis Browne

Okay, and how did you feel after that?

Charlotte Garrett

You mean physically how did I feel?

Louis Browne

Yeah. Was there any reaction? Did you have any sort of symptoms or anything or were you just fine?

Charlotte Garrett

Well, I had the flu-like symptoms. I was achy and I had a fever for three days. I was in bed. And then about 14 days later is when the tinnitus began.

So that was—I can't say it's painful. What it does is it's a noise in my brain and it interferes with being able to think or focus.

Louis Browne

Okay, and how long how long did the tinnitus last?

Charlotte Garrett

Well, I actually still have it.

Louis Browne

Okay.

Charlotte Garrett

But it's not quite as strong as it was in the first year and a half.

Louis Browne

Okay. Now you mentioned that you had your first shot in April 2021. Did you have to take any time off of work as a result of any of this, or did you work straight through regular?

Charlotte Garrett

In May I took two weeks just to— I was teaching remotely, and I needed to be able to just rest, so I took two weeks. And then later last year, actually, I took two months away from work.

Louis Browne

Okay. Now, at any point did you consult with your family physician? What role did your family physician play in all of this, if any?

Charlotte Garrett

He was very doubtful that my reaction was the vaccine.

[00:05:00]

Although later, I found that many, many, many people had the same reaction. He still wanted me to continue getting vaccines, but he decided to get me tested to see if there was something that could prove that I had a reaction to it. Although I don't know how, because they didn't know what was in the vaccine.

And I wound up having to— I refused to get further vaccines and didn't want mRNA in my body, and I decided to ask my doctor if he would support me to have an exemption. And he did.

I guess the ability to get an exemption in Canada is very limited: you have to have a severe allergic reaction, anaphylaxis or myocarditis. I didn't have either, but he said he would give me an exemption based on that I wasn't ready to get more and that he would recommend testing. My employer actually accepted it.

Louis Browne

Okay. And as far as masking, what was the role of masking at your place of employment, if any?

Charlotte Garrett

It's an absurd policy that my employer— In fact, he wears two. Still. It was so intense at my work that people are still wearing masks. My employer will not drop the mandate for our work, for our students, even though the Saskatchewan government made it very clear that we didn't need them anymore. And he won't accept that.

Louis Browne

Can I ask you, Ms. Garret: you mentioned earlier that you had been teaching remotely. Are you teaching remotely now, are you or are you back in the classroom?

Charlotte Garrett

No, we're back in the classroom.

Louis Browne

Okay. I want to ask you about when you are teaching remotely.

Are you able to give us any rough dates or any rough timelines as to when you were teaching remotely?

Charlotte Garrett

So remotely began, as with all the schooling, in March of 2020. And then we went back to the classroom in a very limited manner almost a year ago. But I was teaching remotely for almost two years.

Louis Browne

And while you were teaching remotely, what was happening with the so-called vaccine mandate?

Charlotte Garrett

Well, it didn't matter whether I was teaching remotely or not, I still had to have the vaccines. Which meant that I had to— Even though I had an exemption, I still had to test. And even in order just to go into the building, even if it was empty, I would still have to prove a negative antigen test.

I would have to go into the building in order to prepare mailing materials, to do photocopying, to check some materials there. So even if I, if there was nobody there, it didn't matter. I still had to have the antigen test.

Louis Browne

Okay. And I understand that at your place of employment there have been regular bimonthly meetings on Zoom, is that correct?

Charlotte Garrett

Yes. And they still continue on Zoom.

Louis Browne

What was your experience? Or what can you tell us about those bimonthly meetings and your response or reaction to them?

Charlotte Garrett

It felt like I was sitting in the middle of a propaganda campaign, where the employer and the employees were all— It's all safety-jabber. It's all about keeping everybody safe. It's all about how dangerous COVID is. It was about encouraging the students, insisting that the students get vaccinated.

I actually had to record how many vaccines the student had, when they had them, which I thought was illegal. I asked my employer. He said, "No, it's fine in this circumstance." I felt like I was complicit, that I was committing a crime. I hated it.

The Zooms continued; they're still continuing. Last week was the first meeting in three years where we did not discuss COVID first, for at least half an hour.

Louis Browne

And as you described this, where you felt you were committing a crime, essentially on behalf of your employer and whatnot, how did that impact you? How did that impact your own mental health, your own physical health?

Charlotte Garrett

I was deeply demoralized, actually. I trust the Nuremberg Code.

[00:10:00]

I think that my job as an educator is not to insist any kind of medical practice, but to support the students as best I can in their learning journey.

Can you repeat the question again? Would you mind?

Louis Browne

No, of course. Just how, you're enforcing essentially the mandates, you're asking the students about their medical status, you said that you felt like you were committing a crime. I wanted to ask you a follow-up: How did all of that impact your mental health? How did that impact your health?

Charlotte Garrett

Well, at the time and it still is. I'm finding— I'm quite discouraged by it all. Because the students trust me, and they trust me to give best information.

So other teachers were teaching people how to do the antigen tests. One teacher was doing demonstrations online. They told they had programs up for vaccinations and I felt that that was not my purpose to do that. I felt that it was a violation of my students' trust.

It still bothers me. I still feel— During the online classes, I would have students coming into a Zoom class, huddled in blankets or lying down and then I'd say, "Maybe go to bed." Or a young woman came to me secretly, two weeks or three weeks ago, to tell me that she had had two miscarriages. I was just so heartbroken by that, because I know that— At the time, I wasn't her teacher, she came to my class a little bit later. But I still felt that we were doing the students a disfavor. We weren't helping them.

I knew that, in my research, the vaccine could cause all of these consequences with fertility and with damage to the fetus, and with future problems. And the spike protein going to the womb and going into the ovaries, the testes. We don't know what the consequences are. And yet part of my job, supposedly, was to tell the students to go get vaccinated. I was appalled by that.

Louis Browne

And Ms. Garrett, since you were the one asking them about their vaccination status and whatnot, you were in a position to know when they were vaccinated. Did you observe anything among the student body as they were getting their jabs?

Charlotte Garrett

I noticed they were more tired, less focused. As I said, some were sick. As far as I know, not one of my students— Maybe, actually that's not true: two had COVID. The rest, nobody did.

Louis Browne

I want to ask you about your decision with respect to the jabs. Did you feel like people respected that? What was your response vis-a-vis other people? And we can talk about your friends and family and invitation to family events and these sorts of things.

Charlotte Garrett

Two of my children live outside Saskatoon—one in Ottawa, one in Calgary. They were very displeased that I wasn't getting more vaccinations. They didn't understand it. We actually have very damaged communication for the last number of years, because they felt that I needed to do it.

I've lost friends. Most of my social circle has changed completely. People at work, at first, did not know that I was not vaccinated. In fact, it only came up actually a week ago. Everybody I work with has five, so that's pretty appalling.

I was invited for Thanksgiving dinner, or for Christmas dinner—and then immediately, an hour later, I was uninvited because I hadn't had more vaccines. One of my neighbors is quite angry with me, but she's tolerating me.

It's been incredibly challenging, very demoralizing, very isolating. Almost a sense of like I'm a carrier of disease or something and people don't want to associate with me. Very, very painful.

Louis Browne

And those who were in your circle of trust prior-to shall we say: what was their response when you shared information with them that question, shall we say, or undermine the COVID narrative?

Charlotte Garrett

They become angry with me. They think that I'm a conspiracy theorist.

[00:15:00]

Even my own family. My son told me once I was crazy. My son-in-law refused to speak to me. It's terrible.

Louis Browne

And Ms. Garrett, you mentioned earlier— I just want to get a sense of how this factors into your analysis, but you mentioned the Nuremberg trials earlier. Can you just tell us a little bit about how did that impact you? How did that impact your decision-making throughout all of this?

Charlotte Garrett

Well, I'm older than a lot of people in the education field. When I was a very small girl, my father introduced me to the Nuremberg trials. We watched something on TV. I think we were six when we got a TV.

I remember him explaining to me what was right and what was wrong, and the sense of medical experimentation on human beings is not right.

And that has stayed with me. I really feel that people need to have autonomy and to make their own choices. And that we need to be honest with each other and not impose laws that limit our freedoms and our expressions, which is what's happened across Canada for three years, and is continuing.

Does that answer your question?

Louis Browne

It does, thank you. Now, Ms. Garrett, I'm not sure if you wanted to maybe explain to the Commission that you also had some exemptions from your family physician regarding masking and whatnot. And there was a bit of an exchange between you and your employer. Are you wanting to go into that or read anything into the record, or have we covered it?

Charlotte Garrett

Actually, I'd like to.

Louis Browne

Okay, yeah. Just go ahead and explain to the Commission what you're doing.

Charlotte Garrett

Sure. As a teacher, one of the things I did was, I questioned all along. Why are we doing this, why are we doing that? I'm not accepting it. I filed a grievance. I filed an update to a grievance. I gave a PowerPoint presentation on science and what was happening statistically in Canada.

And I did wear a mask at first. But I discovered that there was something happening with my breathing. And I went to see a specialist and found out that actually, when I had fallen as a child, I had broken my nose, and nobody knew it. And so breathing was difficult. So putting a mask on was torture.

I had several— My employer basically has accused me of being an incredibly difficult person, undermining the health and safety of our students, because I keep questioning, “When are we going to drop the mask mandates?” I mean, as far as the government is concerned, we no longer need them.

He has actually sent me some rather difficult things. He said to me, maybe I'll just read this. He said,

I am sorry to hear that you have a medical condition that causes discomfort. However, I need to point out that since the start of the pandemic, we've had a lot of communication in written form, where you've questioned the necessity of steps designed to provide reasonable protection, in line with expert and public health guidance on a repeated basis. Whether that is masking, vaccination, or other means of reducing the threat to others. This dialogue, including over issues not related to breathing at all, creates great concern that you're bringing into the workplace the whole of a body of thought based on resistance to measures designed to protect our clients.

Louis Browne

And just to be clear, Ms. Garrett, that was part of an email exchange between you and your employer where you were providing your employer with your medical exemption from your doctor.

Charlotte Garrett

Yep. I got my mask mandate, and it was not accepted. He still does not accept it. I mean emailed him again on April 18th and said, “You know, in light of the change, we are stopping now, I would expect.” And he responded not even with a hello. Just, “nope.”

Louis Browne

Okay, we are running short on time, Ms. Garrett, so I just want to check in with the commissioners. Any questions?

Commissioner Kaikkonen

Tell us how remote learning affected the students' education, mental health, or social wellness.

Charlotte Garrett

Could you say that again? I couldn't quite hear you.

Commissioner Kaikkonen

Can you tell us how remote learning, for two years affected the student's education mental health or social wellness?

Charlotte Garrett

I would say for one thing, it delayed the learning process; it slowed that down. The other thing, though, is that if I did group lessons, then nobody missed them because they were desperate for contact.

[00:20:00]

And so, the lessons became more important than just about anything. Because then they could— Even on a WhatsApp call, then I might have eight, and they're able to see each other and speak to each other, and that was a good thing.

But it was so hard for them, because: they're new in the country, they don't have that many people that they can see, and so they're isolated. So, they were also demoralized, it was hard on them, and I felt terrible for them.

Commissioner Kaikkonen

And you mentioned that the school has, for the students, a record of the students that were vaxed. Where would that information go? Just to the school? Did it go up to the health people?

Charlotte Garrett

As far as I know, it just went to the employer. Because what they were doing is they were trying to figure out how many students would be coming back into the classroom when we opened. They would have to have the minimum of two vaccines to get into the building.

So as far as I can tell, it only went to the employer and then I deleted my files. I was so embarrassed to have them, so I just got rid of them.

Commissioner Kaikkonen

What was your employer's response to the students who were still not vaxed?

Charlotte Garrett

They couldn't come to school. They would have to do some kind of online learning.

Commissioner Kaikkonen

Thank you.

Charlotte Garrett

Thank you.

Commissioner DiGregorio

Thank you so much for coming today to give us your testimony. Did you say that you taught English to newcomers to Canada?

Charlotte Garrett

Yes.

Commissioner DiGregorio

These are people who English is clearly not their first language?

Charlotte Garrett

That's right, second or third.

Commissioner DiGregorio

And when the mask mandates came in, you were teaching English with your mouth covered?

Charlotte Garrett

Yes.

Commissioner DiGregorio

Do you think it's important when learning a new language to see the speaker's mouth?

Charlotte Garrett

Let me share my experience. So if you can imagine a fairly small classroom with the white board behind me, an air cleaner directly to my left— If this is my table— An air cleaner and the smart board and a fairly small room. And in order to access the laptop, I have to stand right beside the air cleaner. And then the students all are masked.

They're illiterate in their first language. So speaking is hard. Then they put their mask on and they mumble to begin with. So then they have the mask on and they're mumbling. And I get desperate. I ask them to pull their mask down to speak. I make sure the door is shut so my employer can't see it. I pull my mask down and I show my, I explain my lips. This is how you make the "s." This is how you do the "th." It's hard. It's really hard. And my employer has no understanding of that. Does not respect it at all.

Commissioner DiGregorio

Thank you.

Louis Browne

Thank you, commissioners. Ms. Garrett, I just have two questions left. We're almost done, so second-last question. In summary, in 60 seconds or so, what would you like this Inquiry and Canadians at large to take away from your evidence today?

Charlotte Garrett

That it seems that employers— I think it's because of the federal government and the Saskatchewan government and the way that they put through their mandates: they made it possible for an organization such as mine to do whatever they wanted. If they want to continue on with isolating students, they will. If they want to continue on with mask mandates, well, they will.

It's almost arbitrary. Well, it is arbitrary, and I find that deeply insulting—and dangerous! Masks are not healthy.

I think it's really important for Canadians to know the extent to which people were affected, even the English language learners—like, how hard it is for them to be in a classroom right now.

Louis Browne

Thank you. Last question. Is there anything else you would like to share with us today?

Charlotte Garrett

I don't think so.

Louis Browne

Okay, Ms. Garrett, thank you very much for your evidence here today.

Charlotte Garrett

Thank you.

[00:24:41]

Final Review and Approval: Jodi Bruhn, August 21, 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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