



## NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Saskatoon, SK

Day 2

April 21, 2023

### EVIDENCE

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**Witness 15: Lee Harding**

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[00:00:00]

**Shawn Buckley**

So we'll call our final witness of the day, Mr. Lee Harding. Lee, can you please state your full name for the record, spelling your first and last name?

**Lee Harding**

Lee Andrew Harding, L-E-E H-A-R-D-I-N-G.

**Shawn Buckley**

And, Lee, do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

**Lee Harding**

Yes, I do.

**Shawn Buckley**

Now my understanding is that you have a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from the University of Regina.

**Lee Harding**

Yes.

**Shawn Buckley**

You have a Master's degree in Public Policy from the University of Calgary.

**Lee Harding**

That's true.

**Shawn Buckley**

You interned as a reporter for CBC and then CTV in 2004 and then worked as a casual reporter and cameraman for Global.

**Lee Harding**

That's right.

**Shawn Buckley**

You are a research fellow with the Frontier Centre for Public Policy.

**Lee Harding**

Yes.

**Shawn Buckley**

And you're a regular contributor to *The Epoch Times* in Canada and also *Western Standard* online.

**Lee Harding**

Yes.

**Shawn Buckley**

Now, my understanding is that you had an interesting experience as a reporter during the COVID-19 pandemic, where you got to know our law enforcement people a little better. Can you tell us about that?

**Lee Harding**

Sure. There was a freedom rally in Victoria Park in Regina and I was there covering it as a journalist. I got in there a bit late in the event and heard Laura Lynn Thompson's speech and then they were walking away, her and other speakers, to travel together—I believe it was to Saskatoon because there was going to be a similar event that immediately followed. So I did an interview and talked with them as I was walking in that direction and the police were there at the parking lot of the Hotel Saskatchewan to issue tickets. So Laura Lynn Thompson got one, Maxime Bernier received a ticket, Mark Friesen did, and R.B. Winteringham did as well.

**Shawn Buckley**

Right. And what was the amount of the ticket?

**Lee Harding**

It was \$2,800. And I think they had actually increased the amount that they were eligible to receive just shortly before the event. It was a little bit of management—I think politically probably more than health-wise. And at the time, there was no outdoor gathering of more than 10 people that was allowed. So the entire gathering was against the public health regulations.

**Shawn Buckley**

Right. But my understanding is that you had identified yourself as a journalist.

**Lee Harding**

Yes, I did. I spoke to them. And—

**Shawn Buckley**

Can you tell us about this? And the reason why this is important is because the police are— Their attendance, it's more than 10 people by them attending there. I would assume that journalists are allowed to go and report on things that are happening that are important to the public. So I actually think it's important for you to share this part about you being a journalist.

**Lee Harding**

Right. I had said to them, "I'm a journalist and I'm covering this as a journalist. I want to know, if I go back there, if I'm going to be ticketed." And I received an indirect answer. They said, "Well, you probably shouldn't go back there." So as everyone had left, I heard a rapper who was performing there. And I thought, I want to interview this guy. So I walked back into the park, talked to him after his performance. I had an idea for a photo because Victoria Park is right at the edge of the Towers downtown. I thought I'd take a picture from below. It'd be a nice backdrop for his image, an urban image in behind.

When we got to the edge of the park, that's when the same policeman who had been there with his partner at the Hotel Saskatchewan parking lot served me a ticket and he also served the rapper a ticket. I was upset because I said, "Look, I'm very clearly here for this reason and I made that plain to you." And that didn't make any difference. I'd had some people say to me later, "Well, if you were with CTV or Global, they probably wouldn't have done that." And I tended to think they were right. But maybe they thought, "Well, maybe you're activist media, maybe you're part of what's encouraging this." I really don't know, but I got a ticket for \$2,800 as well.

**Shawn Buckley**

So you're just raising an interesting point. Because, just at the back of my mind, I seem to recall a Rebel News reporter being arrested or ticketed maybe in connection to the trucker protest. Are you aware of anything like that or am I—

**Lee Harding**

That kind of rings a bell. I think that happened. I mean, we saw lots of double standards with all of this. You know, if it was the Black Lives Matter Protest, everyone's there

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and they're all— They're not social distancing. But if it's anything else, no. I mean, some things got a complete free pass and others got the full brunt of the law, whether it was reasonable or unreasonable.

**Shawn Buckley**

And just because there would be a lot of people watching this internationally, who won't be aware of when the Black Lives Matter protests were happening in Canada. But they were basically happening around the same time as freedom protests.

**Lee Harding**

That's true.

**Shawn Buckley**

And so just for the international community, so the Black Lives Matter— You could have large protests. We had Mr. Abbott, I think it was, who was an Edmonton police officer, a commissioner at the time. And he entered an exhibit literally, of Edmonton police on their knees saluting the Black Lives Matter protesters. Nobody's getting arrested or ticketed but, if you had the next day a freedom protest, people are going to be getting ticketed or photographed and ticketed later.

**Lee Harding**

Oh yes, we saw the Premier of Ontario and the Prime Minister—lots of public figures that were involved in this, getting on the bandwagon.

**Shawn Buckley**

You seem to be suggesting, perchance, that there was a double standard, I think you even said that. Are you aware of any mainstream media people, CTV, CBC, any reporter such as that being ticketed or arrested?

**Lee Harding**

I'm not aware of any that were. I just think that's something they probably wouldn't want to do because they know how bad that is. But I think there was a perception that the alternate media was something else.

**Shawn Buckley**

Okay. We all had different things that we became concerned about. You became concerned about contact tracing. Can you share first of all, again maybe perhaps for the international audience, what we're referring to and what your actions were?

**Lee Harding**

Sure. In this province they had something going where if you went to the restaurant, not only was the capacity limited but you had to be socially distanced and the tables were apart and you couldn't have more than four at a table, which was sort of inane because as if we wouldn't breathe each other's air as we walk out the door. This was silly but, anyway, we're all doing this. But they also had something where they said you have to write down everyone who's come and their phone number and maybe their email so that you can contact them. So that if anyone had a COVID case, we could go back and track all these people. Which to me was very overbearing. This is more of the realm of a totalitarian state and a surveillance society. And that was one thing that I actually did talk to the Premier's office about, to express my displeasure with the way this was being done. I remember one

time though at a McDonald's, I was sitting there and the lady took her obligation, "What is your name?" I said, "I'm Dr. Shahab." "Oh," she says, "And what is your phone number?" "It's 306-555-1212." So sure, if you have all these spurious test results, where they're cranking up the PCR cycle so high you could find anything in anyone. And then what? We're going to be found, "Oh you were there when someone had it, now you're all locked down." This was a complete joke. And of course she knew that I wasn't Dr. Shahab so I'm not really deceiving anyone. Everyone just going along doing all these silly things that we were being made to do.

**Shawn Buckley**

And just for those that aren't in Saskatchewan, Dr. Shahab was the public health officer.

**Lee Harding**

He was the public health officer [Chief Medical Health Officer] in this province, yes.

**Shawn Buckley**

Now, I want to switch to experiences you had in trying to get stories out during the COVID pandemic. And my understanding is that you made some early attempts—early on, as the pandemic is unfolding and the vaccine is rolling out—to warn about the vaccine. And can you tell us what your experience as a journalist was? And then I'm going to ask you as you might as well answer too, if that ever happened to you before on any other topic?

**Lee Harding**

Sure. I had a YouTube channel and there were some reports coming out very early that there were some very adverse reactions to this vaccine. That did not surprise me because we had some people that were warning of such and those people were getting suppressed and dismissed and censored and everything else. So many people didn't get to hear about them. Well, somebody compiled a whole lot of public accounts of this—so this was social media postings, people telling their stories, it was some articles that did make either the alternate press or perhaps even the mainstream press in some places in the world—and put them all together. I did nothing but read them online for three hours. And I didn't even get through them all.

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That site was taken down. I cannot recall to you right now what it was. My YouTube posting was taken down. The thing that was really astonishing to me was, some people went through some absolutely horrible experiences with their first shot and they were still thinking about taking another one or saying, "I'm going to get the next one, but I sure hope it's not as bad as this." I couldn't believe that people would keep going when it was so plainly evident in their experience how risky it was for them.

**Shawn Buckley**

And I'm sure they would say they weren't anti-vaxxers also.

**Lee Harding**

Oh, there's lots of labels going around.

**Shawn Buckley**

Early on, you were also trying to get some stories published about the testing on the vaccine. What happened with that?

**Lee Harding**

Well, I had an article early on that was talking about how the process was rushed; it wasn't as thorough as it should have been; that the mRNA technology had not really been used in a mainstream vaccine and there were a number of problems with it. I had an article that I tried to submit to Frontier Centre first. And the feedback that I got, and I don't know if this was internal feedback or if it was people within the circle of an organization that they drew upon to assess submissions that were made, because I was writing policy commentaries, but there were three sources there that were dismissed. One of them was RFK Jr., Robert F. Kennedy Jr. He was dismissed as a legitimate source because he was an anti-vaxxer. Another one was RT.com, which is Russia Today, and they said, "Look, this is a Kremlin disinformation site." Well, the doctor who had submitted this article was Malcolm Kendrick and Malcolm Kendrick had a column in *The Guardian*. And so for whatever reason he couldn't get this printed in *The Guardian*. Russia Today would print it, so they did. There was a third one, Michael Yeadon, and they said, "Well, he's an anti-vaxxer." Michael Yeadon was the V.P. of Science at Pfizer in the past. And there's no way you can have that position and be an anti-vaxxer. So you have these authorities that were being dismissed. And I'm happy to say since then, we've run articles on RFK—

**Shawn Buckley**

I'm just going to slow you down. So you've submitted an article. You're an investigative journalist, you would have done your research. And you're reporting on how this was rushed and about the testing standard. Is that basically what you were writing on?

**Lee Harding**

Yeah. Now there were aspects, I think, that maybe if I had climbed that mountain a different way, I might have been able to get through. But the problem that we kept having was that everyone who was raising an alarm about this had the Big Tech censorship, had the authorities at WHO and at the FDA and whoever else and Dr. Fauci that were all dismissing them. So now it's hard to get credible voices. You can't get credible local voices because if you spoke out about this you were risking your medical licence and you were going against your board. And a lot of people just wanted to keep their heads down because anyone who stuck them up lost this game of Whack-a-Mole. You stick your head up and this hammer comes.

**Shawn Buckley**

Yeah, and you're making such an important point. I don't know if you listened to the opening this morning but we were talking about labels and— How we actually had witness after witness after witness yesterday who are clearly concerned about the current COVID vaccines and yet they would volunteer in their evidence, "But I'm not an anti-vaxxer," "I'm not an anti-vaxxer," "I'm not an anti-vaxxer." This concern about that label, I just find it interesting that you mentioned that two of your sources—RFK and then Dr. Michael Yeadon— My understanding is he was V.P. of Pfizer for decades in the U.K., that he would have brought vaccines to market, but because he's now being labeled as an anti-vaxxer, all of a sudden, he's not credible.

**Lee Harding**

Right, yeah. And so if you ever took a surface kind of view of these things, that's what you would get. You would Google it, you'd see this person's name and you'd see a whole page of denunciation. And you would conclude that in the sum of human knowledge, this person was no good. It took somebody who had some discernment or had been exposed to some of the things before the narratives had formed in order to have enough open-mindedness to look deeper to see the other side of it.

**Shawn Buckley**

My understanding is you also then did a story you tried to get published in the *Western Standard*, where a lady's husband had died within three days of the second Pfizer shot.

**Lee Harding**

I did get that one in. I wanted to say, with the other one with Frontier that I couldn't run, also *Western Standard* turned it down and they said it "wouldn't be good for our brand." So that's their prerogative, that's fine. When I tried this later story, I did get a couple of stories in.

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One of them was just as you had mentioned, with this couple in Saskatoon where the wife had deep concerns, did not take the vax. The husband took the vax and he died three days after the COVID shot. I did that story. Then someone else that I had acquaintance with—

**Shawn Buckley**

Can I just slow you down? Because there's something else important about that story and that's cause of death.

**Lee Harding**

Oh yes, well—

**Shawn Buckley**

And so can you share with this? Because, you know, you dug this out as a reporter and I think it's important for you to share it here.

**Lee Harding**

Sure. The coroner had mentioned that they had taken the vaccine. The emergency people that came to take away the body had mentioned that. But they could not get a doctor to say so. The M.D., their local doctor, said, "I'm going to talk to the smartest person I know about this and see if they think that that's possible, that there's a connection." And the so-called smartest person they know said, "I haven't even heard of any adverse reactions, so no, it couldn't be." And so they went back and she would not attest that it was that. At that point, my interview subject said, "That's when I stopped trying because I knew they were all lying."

**Shawn Buckley**

Right, okay. And then I had interrupted you because you were then sharing about a subsequent story.

**Lee Harding**

Sure. So after that, I did a story of a vaccine injury, someone who developed Bell's palsy and that one was acknowledged by the doctors. And then Carrie Sakamoto—that you'll hear from her tomorrow—I talked to her as well and she said to me, "I looked all over and you are the only one who has run a vaccine injury story in all of Canada." So I talked to her but in the meantime something else had happened, where I had tried to do a story for *Western Standard* saying that we should not be vaccinating the under 12s. And how people like Dr. Jay Bhattacharya—I hope I'm not butchering his name—had said that if you looked at the odds, it was worse to take the vaccine than not for the small risk, acknowledged already, of vaccine reactions versus your chance of getting a serious case of COVID.

I was told by the publisher, "Look, I'm not a doctor. I can't have you write a column like that. I don't know how to vet a column like that." And I said, "Well, it's the same way we draw on any other field of experience. We look at the witnesses and see what they have to say. And, is it reasonable? And let the reader decide." So then I had done a story on the— So this was another one and this was a breaking point: where there was a lady in Alberta who could not get a double lung transplant because she would not get the COVID-19 vaccine. I did a story on that and the publisher said, "Hey, I know from experience with my family that you need to have your shots because your immunity is very vulnerable in this transplant. So it's important to have them. So this is not a nothing issue. So find a doctor who will talk to you about this." Well, Dr. Hoffe had gotten back to me finally after an earlier request. I talked to him. I bounced it off of him. He said, "Well, it's absolutely absurd that they're asking her to do this. This is an experimental vaccine." And anyway, the article went up and then when the publisher saw it, he yanked the article. And—

**Shawn Buckley**

Oh, so the article actually went up?

**Lee Harding**

Yes, it did.

**Shawn Buckley**

So we have a retraction here.

**Lee Harding**

Yes, but I wasn't told that it was taken down. And then I found out and we had a conversation and I was dismissed. I patched it up maybe three or four months later. I'm very proud to be writing for *Western Standard* and for Frontier Centre. We've been able to talk about a wide variety of things, much wider than the mainstream. And I'm just telling you some of the experiences so that you can have a first hand— When the rubber hits the road, how do these things work themselves out? So eventually, actually I did an article on Carrie Sakamoto because her vaccine injury claim was accepted and she's getting some compensation and we ran that story. The reason it didn't run the first time was I was dismissed right then on the basis of the other thing, so that one never got in.



**Shawn Buckley**

Right, so how long was it that you were kind of dismissed?

**Lee Harding**

Well, I mean, it was indefinitely. But I made an overture maybe three or four months later. And so what happens now is I'll submit it. Most of the time it works. If it doesn't, I'm not going to put up too much of a fuss. And that's a working arrangement we can handle. The only time I had one lately that was not allowed was in January, when Dr. Fukushima was a Fukushima reactor of his own against the Japanese Ministry of Health.

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And I ran a story on that and how other Japanese scientists were finding spike proteins in skin lesions of people who had taken the vaccine and had some very strange growths. And I talked to a guest editor and I said, "Is that story going to run?" They're like, "No, they're not going to run that one." And he says, "The same thing happens to me sometimes. There's just some places where they're hesitant."

So journalistic institutions feel they have a moral responsibility. And if their coverage is going to influence a person's choice one way or another, that's something that they think about. The other thing I know from my work with local news is that it's not just that they are a media outlet, they consider themselves a community partner, and a lot of their advertising dollars come from crowns and government organizations, come from unions, and that's in the back of their mind. I remember one time I filmed a nice little event for the kids that SaskTel was putting on and they said, "When the tape is done give it to sales, so maybe they could use it for a commercial for SaskTel." The anchor at the time said to me, "You know, we used to have a brick wall between sales and news and right now, it's paper thin."

**Shawn Buckley**

Have you done any investigations into the amount of money that the federal and provincial governments and the pharmaceutical companies have spent on the media in the last two or three years?

**Lee Harding**

Well, the \$600 million of tax relief from the federal government for media institutions is well-known. There was also something called the Local Journalism Initiative that came out around the same time—I think started in 2018. So they will pay local papers through this thing. And I remember one time doing an interview with Brian Peckford and he had been called an anti-vaxxer by one of these Local Journalism Initiative journalists. I think he was writing for the Halifax paper, and it had also run in the *Toronto Star*. And later on, the journalist found the article—it took him quite a few months—and he says, "Hey, you could have talked to me first." And I'm like, "Well, we're talking now, would you like to say anything?" And he says, "No, I'm sure I'd just be speaking the mind of my corporate and government overlords." So he had that sort of sarcastic response. Anyway, there was another exchange and I said, "You may have come by your conviction sincerely." And he responded, "It's not just my convictions, it's the convictions of the medical authorities. And ivermectin is a faux cure and all you have to do is a simple Google search to find that out. And you let— You didn't challenge what Mr. Peckford said and you allowed him to say all this stuff." Well, we were getting enough of the mainstream message dismissing these

people. Let's hear about the other side. So he doesn't view his work as being influenced unduly by this money.

But I think in the back of the minds of these publications, when they know their survival may depend on it— And probably the organization that sucks up to Trudeau the most will get the most money. I mean, why wouldn't they be falling all over themselves? That's why the *Western Standard* applied for the money to see what they'd say. They acknowledged that we were a legitimate journalistic organization. And then we said, "Thanks but no thanks. We're not going to take it. Because we're not going to be influenced by this money." The bureaucrats weren't so happy.

**Shawn Buckley**

Now I'm going to have to cut us short because we've got a hard stop at 6:45 for an auction. But I'll ask the commissioners if they have any questions. Okay, so we're just about at 6:45.

Lee, on behalf of the National Citizens Inquiry, I sincerely thank you for testifying. You've given us some really valuable information this afternoon.

**Lee Harding**

Thank you very much. I want to thank everyone—from the volunteers to the commissioners, to you, to the audience—for being here. It is very difficult to hear such awful truth go hour after hour but this needed to be done. And we're going to make an impact and the whole world's watching.

You know in the pandemic, we heard a lot of people say, "be safe." It's not time to be safe. It's time to be bold.

**Shawn Buckley**

I think that is an appropriate ending to our day, so we will adjourn until tomorrow morning at 9 am for the third day of hearings in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan of the National Citizens Inquiry.

[00:24:49]

***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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