



NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Saskatoon, SK

Day 3

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EVIDENCE

Witness 9: Mandy Geml

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[00:00:00]

Wayne Lenhardt

Can you give us your full name please, then spell it, and then I'll do an oath with you.

Mandy Geml

Mandy Geml: M-A-N-D-Y G-E-M-L.

Wayne Lenhardt

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

Mandy Geml

I do.

Wayne Lenhardt

Thank you.

Okay. Mandy, I think just summarize to begin with. I think you had all sorts of problems because of the mandates, including with your daughters and your school and whatnot. So I think I'm going to let you just start and tell us your story, and I will interject if there's something more that I need to know.

Mandy Geml

Okay.

Wayne Lenhardt

What year did all this start? Let's start there.

Mandy Geml

Okay, I think it all really started in 2019. Me and my husband found out that we were pregnant after years of infertility and having one daughter through fertility drugs. We found out we were pregnant on our own and we were super excited, and—

Wayne Lenhardt

Can you hear her?

Mandy Geml

I can talk a little louder.

Wayne Lenhardt

I think you may have to talk a little louder.

Mandy Geml

For sure.

Wayne Lenhardt

I was told that too, so.

Mandy Geml

So we were pregnant with a daughter. We suffered a loss in the second trimester only to find out the month later we were pregnant again. And that was at the end— That was New Year's Eve, 2019. It was a really hard pregnancy and I was on bed rest for a lot. And it was just a lot of fear. And then everything happened.

And we have a 15-year-old and a toddler, three-year-old at the time. Or sorry, my 15-year-old was 13 at the time, in grade 7, and everything shut down. June of 2020, we lost a cousin—my younger cousin that I was really close with—and I couldn't attend the funeral because of everything that was going on and my pregnancy.

In August, we welcomed a son. And everything hadn't fully shut down, so my husband was allowed in the hospital with me but nobody else could come up and visit. My kids couldn't come up and it was hard. He was almost a month early; he had jaundice; he was colic; he had acid reflux. And throughout that, both my daughter's school and my toddler's preschool had shut down for the last couple months. So we were all at home. All their activities stopped. And life just halted.

And it was scary. We didn't know. We did comply with everything at first and we were scared: it was a scary pregnancy; it was a scary birth. And then things just weren't adding up. And you try to ask your doctor questions—with no answers. And you see the fear-mongering starting in the schools, my daughter's school especially, with her teachers and everything. And we—

Wayne Lenhardt

Your daughter in particular was having some trouble at school I think, wasn't she?

Mandy Geml

Yes, so that was grade 8.

Wayne Lenhardt

You were not vaccinated nor was your daughter, correct?

Mandy Geml

No, none of us were. It wasn't really even an option for us. We have allergies. I have anaphylactic allergies to different medications. And so I just wouldn't. Why would I take the chance? And my daughter as well.

She started facing extreme hardship at school. She would sit in in class and hear her teachers go on about: "The unvaccinated are murderers; nobody with a brain would ever choose not to get vaccinated."

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Her entire friend group dropped her. Her friends' parents banned her from their houses once they found out that she was unvaccinated. Every time I called the school— I called the vice principal, the principal, the superintendent to discuss, calmly and politely, these things that were being said in class. With no avail. I finally got a phone call from the principal saying that, because my daughter—who joins every activity that she can and is involved in everything and honour roll— but because somebody else had tested positive, she wasn't allowed to participate for 10 days.

And I said, "Well, how does that make sense?" My daughter not once came to school sick. Not once. And she wasn't allowed to participate in her activities because somebody else, who was vaccinated, tested positive? But they could all participate: if you were vaccinated you could participate. But if you were unvaccinated, you had to stay away for 10 days.

Well, every day kids were testing positive, so she was basically kicked out of everything. And I asked the principal, "Where's your line? Where do you say, 'No, we're not going to segregate these kids. We're not going to put hate between them and division between them?'" And she refused to answer. She told me that I was lucky that kids like mine were even allowed in school and it's— It's so hard when you're—

Wayne Lenhardt

You were living in Regina at this time, correct?

Mandy Geml

We live in Regina, yeah. And it's really hard when you're trying to keep yourself together: mentally strong, dealing with postpartum, you're dealing with a baby. My infant was colic for almost a year and these issues.

And then you see your daughter, who— I mean, teenage-hood is so hard already and she's coming home in tears. Shaking because her teacher's calling her a murderer. Her teachers are singling her out. None of her friends will talk to her. None of their parents will allow her over. Her world's ending.

And then you have the leaders of your country and your province saying, “Time’s up. We’re not going to be lenient anymore. Things are coming down. How do we tolerate these people?” I mean, fear takes over you. And it’s wild to think that you have to sit there and make plans of, “What do we do if they take it further and they decide to take your kids away because you’re unvaccinated?” Or they deem you as not responsible because you’re not doing this?

We went to the grocery store—me and my husband and my toddler—and I was dealing with such bad postpartum and anxiety, I couldn’t wear a mask. My toddler of course wasn’t wearing one. The police came and escorted us out of the grocery store: me and my toddler, while my husband paid. And even though the police officer agreed, “This is so ridiculous.” You know, we had friends and family say that our children should be taken away from us, wishing illness and death on our kids and ourselves. And it was so overwhelming. And it just creates this fear inside of you as to what’s next. How do you reassure your kids that everything’s going to be okay? How do you— You know, my daughter faced such hate from everyone around her that she even received an anonymous letter mailed to our house saying horrible things about her. And for what?

And the teachers say, “Oh, well, we’re not telling people her vaccination status,” but she’s being removed from everything that she’s in, so how is that not? She’s the only one being singled out. She can’t go on bus trips. I fought to get her on a ski trip and at first, they said, “No, the bus lines won’t allow anybody unvaccinated.” Well, I called the bus line: that’s not true. “The ski resort’s not letting anybody unvaccinated.” I called the ski resort in Manitoba. I talked to the manager and she said, “Well, they’re just not allowed in the chalet.”

My daughter went and she had to eat her lunch in a shack at the bottom of the hill with a barrel that had a fire in it,

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because she wasn’t allowed to go sit with the people that she had just spent hours going up with. Like, how is that fair? Why is this allowed? Kids are mean enough as it is. Why would you put that out there for them?

So with all of that happening, it took such a strain on my mental health especially. But my kid— She has so much anxiety and she had so much anxiety. She was so scared when she’d meet somebody new that they would find out that she was unvaccinated. I can’t imagine that fear inside of her, having to go to school every day and sit with her classmates and her teachers and that feeling of, “These people hate me; these people wish me dead.” For a child? Like, that’s horrible.

And you see people online—doctors, nurses—saying they have no sympathy for the unvaccinated, they treat them differently when they come in, things like that. And as parents, you worry about your kids. What if something happens and you have to bring them in? Are you going to be separated from them? Are you going to have social services called on you? There’s just so much fear.

Wayne Lenhardt

Your mother also had some problems during this time. Can you maybe quickly tell us about that?

Mandy Geml

Before everything started, she went to go seek some help at the Dube Centre. And without getting into too much detail, she suffered from depression. When the lockdown started, they put her on really high-dose medication and they locked her in her room for a month straight—maybe 15 minutes out of her room a day. There was no housekeeping, nothing. She lived in bathrooms that were filled with urine and feces. And it broke her psyche. And it's a hard— She struggles now with being in touch with reality because of the medication and that. Nobody knows how to help her. The psychologist said, “We don't know what to do.”

Who's responsible for this? My kids don't have a grandma. I don't have a mom. I do, but I don't have an active mom. For what? For what? She was vaccinated.

Wayne Lenhardt

I'm going to stop at this point and ask the commissioners if anybody has anything they'd like to explore or questions here. Anyone? No.

This may seem obvious, but what two or three things could have been done better in order to save you some of this grief?

Mandy Geml

Oh, everything. Just understanding. How quickly everybody turned on each other and villainized certain people. And I tried to stay so respectful and positive through it all. And tried to keep the message that there's always two sides to a story and there is a happy medium in the middle.

And I think just hearing other people's stories could have—hearing other people's reasons why. Because people have reasons why and those should be taken into consideration.

And have our leaders accountable. How did we get to this point where they can go and spew hate in the media for a large portion of Canadians? How did we get to this point?

Wayne Lenhardt

Okay, I want to— On behalf of the National Citizens Inquiry, I want to thank you for coming today and giving your testimony. Thank you.

[00:14:51]

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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