



NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Winnipeg, MB

Day 1

April 13, 2023

EVIDENCE

Witness 6: Sharon Vickner

Full Day 1 Timestamp: 08:11:40–08:40:07

Source URL: <https://rumble.com/v2hz2rc-national-citizens-inquiry-winnipeg-day-1.html>

[00:00:00]

Kyle Morgan

And welcome back. Our next witness is Sharon Vickner. Ms. Vickner, can I just get you to state your full name, and then spell your first and last names?

Sharon Vickner

I am Sharon, S-H-A-R-O-N. Family name, Vickner. V, as in Victor, I-C-K-N-E-R.

Kyle Morgan

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

Sharon Vickner

The whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

Kyle Morgan

Can you tell us where you're from?

Sharon Vickner

Born and raised in Winnipeg.

Kyle Morgan

And what type of trade or profession?

Sharon Vickner

I am an ISA-certified [International Society of Arboriculture] arborist.

Kyle Morgan

Okay. Now I understand you were impacted quite a bit from the COVID-19 response, particularly regarding your employment, and I guess I would say your general well-being. Can you tell us a bit about what happened to your employment in 2020, what was going on at that time?

Sharon Vickner

Well, I did lose my job in November 2020. I can only speculate as to why. I was removed from my position, so I can't make a direct comment on the employer's part other than he said it was a financial concern. But prior to myself losing my job in November 2020, it was in November and it was a Wednesday, and myself and my employer had met up to discuss my success of the 2020 season, which I did phenomenal. And he gave me my new business cards and a gas card for the company vehicle. We went over how we were going to attack the sales of the following year. And that was a Wednesday.

On that Friday, Pallister went on the television and said, "Don't be surprised if we start naming names of those that got tickets during this COVID." The following week, I was told that I was no longer needed, and I lost my job.

Kyle Morgan

I understand you were working in sales at that time, is that right?

Sharon Vickner

Mostly, yes. Absolutely, yes, I was doing the sales for the tree care.

Kyle Morgan

Your employment would involve you attending to your customers and doing estimates, is that right?

Sharon Vickner

Yes, absolutely, and that's where my bulk of my mental health started to decline. The season for me in 2020 started for work in March, as did a lot of the talks about a potential Chinese Wuhan flu, or whatever you want to call it, came about. And so while I was going to visit strangers—for the most part to me, of course—I was consistently from March all the way to November hearing stories, unsolicited stories about the traumas that family members were going through with not being able to visit their family members in a care home or a hospital or travel to go visit a sick relative.

There's one story that really— Actually two stories that really stuck hard in my mind that I haven't really been able to shake, I guess that's PTSD. This one incredible woman went on to tell me, she was 84 years old and she was so happy to see me, and she went on to tell me that she came from a communist country. And she's got adult grandchildren, and her grandchildren are interested in her history. So she was telling her about what communism was about and why they fled from the country, and all the signs. And what she's seeing, what's happening in Canada and the rest of the world right now. And her own daughter told her that if she continued talking to her grandchildren about this stuff that she would never allow her to see her grandchildren again. So we cried together because the grandchildren were a huge part of her life.

And another quick scenario was this other gentleman. He was in his 80s as well. He had a wife that was extremely involved in community and philanthropy. She's been a huge name in the city of Winnipeg, actually, which I will not name, and she had passed away. And at that time, there was only allowed 10 people to attend a funeral. And I cried with him for probably 45 minutes because he loved her so much that he felt that she deserved more respect than 10 people.

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And he never did have a service for her. So that's just two out of probably a hundred stories that— I should have wrote a book, actually.

Kyle Morgan

So just to summarize, you would visit with your customers, and

Sharon Vickner

Yes.

Kyle Morgan

invariably they would tell you their stories.

Sharon Vickner

Yes, I guess, I don't know, maybe they just see my kind heart, my nature. I never once talked about my personal opinions or what was going on in this world to any of the clients or potential clients. I was there as a professional, not as a person walking down the street sharing an opinion. So yes, I was invited to a yard to do an estimate for tree work.

Kyle Morgan

Would it be fair to say that you got involved in some type of advocacy work involved in the community about some issues you had noticed going on?

Sharon Vickner

Absolutely, I certainly did. Well, everything was starting to ramp up in 2020 where there was masking this, stand on a dot, follow these arrows, don't see this person, go tell on your neighbours. I realized that my friends that I thought were my friends since junior high and elementary school, for that matter, were really not my friends any longer because I didn't stand on any dots or follow any arrow or anything like that. So I was driven internally.

I'm going to say this on record: I was never a girl that was of faith. And good things, I guess, do happen out of these scenarios. The Lord found me, and when that happened, the Lord actually told me that I had a voice and I had a heart in the right place. And I definitely started standing up in an advocacy sense of educating and sharing love and whatever I could do at that time.

Kyle Morgan

Would I be right in saying that you got some tickets? As a result of that?

Sharon Vickner

Yeah, about \$19,000 worth. Yes, that's not what's causing me my mental traumas, though, that's just part and parcel. I knew what I was getting into when I took a microphone or a bullhorn in my hand; I knew the possibilities. I just had hoped that the benefits of building communities within the fringe minority, I thought we could band together and find that unity where we could.

Kyle Morgan

Now you mentioned that you lost your job, was it October 2020?

Sharon Vickner

It was November 2020.

Kyle Morgan

Okay. Was there anything going on in social media at this time, regarding your advocacy?

Sharon Vickner

In what respect?

Kyle Morgan

Well, you had mentioned that you'd been trying to find your voice in the community. So I'm just wondering if there is increased attention on you at all at that time.

Sharon Vickner

Yes and no, actually. For the first while, I didn't even use my name at all. I never really said it. And then when it comes to social media, it just shows you about what's going on with censorship, way back then, and hatred, in the sense that some complete stranger ended up finding me. [Kolbie] something or other. I don't know. I don't know who this guy is. He ended up getting a picture of me with the company's logo on it, and he posted it and said, "Don't hire this girl," and he really slammed my character, really defamation of character in the big scheme of things. So that forced me to— I guess I should have just totally gotten off of Facebook. So forgive me, my friends, I stayed on. But I did change my name because I didn't want any fallout if someone searched me and found that I was standing up for what I believe to be the truth.

Kyle Morgan

Do you recall when that happened on social media? I'm just thinking about the timeline of your job situation.

Sharon Vickner

Right. That happened just prior, actually, I had to rethink that. It was about the very beginning of November when that occurred. Because I ended up telling my employer about it because I wanted him to know where I stood professionally and that this individual had done this to me. And that I had taken my picture off that stated the company I was working

for, and I changed my name so that there wouldn't be any backlash to his business or his potential clients.

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Kyle Morgan

Now, in your mind, why do you think you lost your job? You might have touched on that before, but—

Sharon Vickner

Again, I can only speculate. But it's just— Some say there are no coincidences. And I can't help but think that he was concerned that I may be unprofessional when I go to visit clients while I'm representing his business.

Kyle Morgan

Now I understand, unfortunately, you actually got arrested. Was that May 2021, around that time?

Sharon Vickner

Yes, it was. May 28th, I believe.

Kyle Morgan

Can you describe that experience to us?

Sharon Vickner

Well, thanks to James reminding me of something. I want to say that, firstly, I was not aware that I was on an arrest warrant. One of the others that were on the arrest warrant told me I was. Apparently, everyone else got a phone call to turn themselves in. I didn't do that. I didn't even get the phone call. I didn't even know until one of the fellows mentioned it to me.

And anyway, without going through that whole long process, I did get apprehended or arrested, I guess it's called. I don't know, I've never been arrested before. And it was interesting because when the police had put me in handcuffs and they put me in the car, they weren't wearing masks. I certainly wasn't, of course. And the first thing the police officer said to me, they said, "Do you know how pissed off we are?" And I went, "What do you mean?" Because I'm like a little talking girl, right? I'll tell him anything, right? And I have nothing to hide.

And they said, "Do you know what fentanyl is?" And I said, "I absolutely have heard of it. Yes." And he says, "We're the drug squad, and we're here arresting you." I couldn't believe that. I just point blank told him, "What a waste of taxpayers' money. You're supposed to be taking dangerous drugs off the street, and you're throwing me, a law-abiding citizen, into jail." And then, so when I ended up getting into the— I'll speed this up. I'm sorry, Kyle. I'm a little bit of a talker, and I'm a little nervous.

Kyle Morgan

That's okay, go ahead.

Sharon Vickers

When I did get out of the police car and they put me in the elevator, this is where the psychological whirlwind really began. They put me in this elevator, and there was initially two police officers that were tending to me, the ones in the car. But when I got into the elevator, there were six others and me, and it was like they did that intentionally.

And as soon as I was walking into the elevator, they said, "Now get in here and face the corner and don't say a word." And I'm thinking, oh, knowing me I can't bite my tongue. And I just told them that it was, "How humiliating. This makes absolutely no sense that you're doing this just for a freedom fighter." So anyway, long and the short of all of that, I ended up, of course, going through the scenario that they do: pat you down, la, la, la, la. And it's just full of lies. I guess that's what police officers do, so I'm not here to diss them if that's the proper procedure where they don't really tell you the truth, how long you're going to be there.

Anyway, I ended up getting put into a cell, and it was kind of disgusting, actually. I had to call them and tell them that— You know, you clearly know the character of who you're dealing with, like the floor had grossness all over it. It was a really vile room.

Anyway, I had to use the washroom. And this female cop walks me to the washroom and the toilet is completely up to the top, filled with yuck. And I just said, "Oh, you got to do something about this." And she said, she rolled her eyes and she said, "So you either got to go or you don't. We only clean it once a day." Well, that's a lie, of course.

I know that's not what you wanted to hear, but so I'm sorry. The whole thing is really kind of boggling my mind about being in jail. I haven't really wanted to think about it too much. So I guess what the hardest part on me, where it really started to stir my mental health, was clearly they had direction to cause me distress. And again, I don't know if this is normal, I really have no idea. So if it's normal, I guess it's just not normal for me.

I was in detention or the cell, or whatever you want to call it for, I believe, it was anywhere from 15 to 18 hours. I think it was a total of 18 hours I was in jail. And every five minutes, someone came and banged on the windows, and I'm not talking just a little tap. I know, someone says, "Oh, they're just making sure you're not, you know, dead," or whatever, right? But they knew why I was there. But every five minutes, they were banging on the window. And I'm going to say it, forgive me, women in the room,

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but the women were the worst. They actually took their keys out and they crash, crash, crash, every five minutes.

And I know that they had to have been directed to do this because there was a billboard, a clipboard on the side of the wall, and I could see them sign it and I could hear them flick the paper. And there was about 45 different officers throughout that whole time, or 45 times they did that anyway so—

Kyle Morgan

You were arrested because you were getting tickets for gathering outside. Is that right?

Sharon Vickner

Yeah.

Kyle Morgan

Outdoor gatherings?

Sharon Vickner

Yeah, I think it was a P210, I think was the bylaw infraction of inciting gatherings.

Kyle Morgan

I think in May 2021, there was a gathering planned for the legislature here in Manitoba? And that's why a warrant was executed to arrest you? Would that be right to say that?

Sharon Vickner

I'm uncertain, exactly, because they never told me any of that. Not only that, they didn't even read me my rights when they put me in the car either. So that's what I had heard, that it was on May, I think it was just before May 15th. Because the last event that I had something to do with, that I was an organizer for, me and my team, was May 15th. And then, yes, I believe the following one was the legislature, and then the very final one on the 28th was the day that they actually detained me.

Kyle Morgan

Now you were released on bail.

Sharon Vickner

Yes.

Kyle Morgan

And I understand there was a particularly onerous condition of your bail?

Sharon Vickner

Yes, that is correct. And that's the one that I'm— Part of me is embarrassed to admit what I went through. But I guess this is what mental health does when you're a positive person and you've never had to deal with things like this and always around people and always have a friendship circle. It's extremely difficult. So on one of my release conditions, I was not allowed to be on public or private property, in private or public gatherings with anyone other than which I reside.

I lived alone. So that meant I couldn't be anywhere, at any time, with anyone, or I'd be criminally charged. I would have been thrown in jail.

So when they gave me that, when I was going to be released, I signed. I wanted to get out of there; I did not want to stay there any longer. So when I went to sign the documents, I wrote “under duress,” because I certainly was. And then they called me back in front of the magistrate and said, “Well, you clearly need to call your lawyer.” And I said, “What do you mean?” You know? Because you signed “under duress.” And I said, “No, actually, I read it and I just don’t agree with it. And this is why I’m signing ‘under duress.’” I told them all the reasons as to why I signed “under duress.” And they kept me there for about another hour after I had done that.

Kyle Morgan

How long was this bail condition in effect?

Sharon Vickner

One week short of a year.

Kyle Morgan

Can you tell us what your experience was during that year? As difficult as it might be.

Sharon Vickner

Well, it just pulled me out of any kind of support system. I wasn’t allowed to— Aside from that particular release condition, the others on the arrest warrant, one was my spiritual guide, Pastor Tobias Tisson: I was not allowed to phone him, contact him at all. So I couldn’t have any spiritual support from someone that I trusted.

A friend of mine also on there, I hope this is okay that I mention Dr. Gerry Bohemier. He was also on there and a huge support to me as well. And I was not allowed to be in contact with him either, nor was he with me.

My family had written me off because I had ended up in the paper, and they had said that I had dissed the family name. I didn’t realize we were that important. So they wrote me off, and they still don’t talk to me.

What had ended up happening, where I lost my job, no one was hiring me because of small industry. I guess, I don’t know, word gets around, maybe. Or more importantly, my confidence was destroyed. So I went to a very, very dark place, which I had no idea I even had capability to do that. The first time that actually happened, I just wanted to disappear because, honestly, no one would have really known,

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because I wasn’t allowed to be anywhere, anyway.

I overcame that. And then it kind of spiraled more, when more of the— Like harassment in stores, for example. I’m sorry, but I did not wear a mask. I know how to take care of my health; I don’t need something like that on me. It’s just a suppression mask. But I was attacked verbally over and over again by managers and customers. The hatred in people’s eyes, oh, my gosh, the trauma that so many people must be going through. I was taking that on my own self as it’s painful to see people treat others like that. But this time, it was being treated to me.

It actually got to the point where, forgive me, Lord, it actually got to the point where I couldn't deal with it anymore because I couldn't handle what was happening to those around me. I took me out of the equation, actually, and I couldn't handle seeing children with masks on their face and little babies, and just all of the above that most of us know exactly what I'm talking about.

I actually thought, what would be the quickest way, what would be the quickest way that I could end my life? And I thought, oh, heroin. I'll just get a needle and I'll shove it in my arm and I'll die instantly. No, I did not look for it; nor did I go any further than that. But the thought entered my mind.

And just knowing that a thought like that entered my mind added to my mental health decline. Because I had no idea. I'm a loving person; I'm a peaceful person. I love life, I love nature. I never in my wildest dreams did I ever think something like that could come. I guess that's the devil for you, right folks?

But hallelujah, I think what really got me out of that is when you truly put your faith in something greater than yourself, you start to feel a hand on your shoulder when there's really no one there.

So I want to get this on record: I am of no harm to myself and I am of healthy, sound mind. I just want to make sure people know that I'm— Don't be concerned. I love life and I'm here for a long time.

Kyle Morgan

I think we're pretty tight for time. I wanted to ask you what you thought could have been done differently regarding the COVID-19 response. I don't know if you have anything quick you want to say.

Sharon Vickner

I do. I know I'm not supposed to have a piece of paper. But there's just one little statement I wanted to— Just one little sentence because I didn't want to forget it. And I think it might touch all of us. It says, "Holiness does not come from being removed from the world but from engaging it in it."

And that is exactly what I think should have been done differently. To protect our health, we need to be part of the world, and if we are removed from it, we're only going to get mentally ill. We're going to separate each other from everything. So what could they have done?

Well, tell us the truth, that would have been really great. And talked about our actual health, about vitamins and supplements. And how about playing outside? Getting sunshine? How about hugging your children? How about going to see your loved ones? All of those things is what they should have done.

They should have left our own health concerns or our own health solutions to ourselves. The government is overreaching. And they should have no say on how we tend to our own personal health.

Kyle Morgan

I don't know if there's any questions from the commissioners, Dr. Bernard Massie.

Commissioner Massie

This is very touching. I'm wondering how you're doing now. Did you gather a group of people around you that really helped you to go through life?

Sharon Vickner

Yes. I found some really incredible solid people that love me unconditionally, and I'm extremely grateful. I'm not, I'm not entirely healthy yet. I don't think any of us are. I think it's going to take a while for all of us, in the sense that there's constant reminders all around us, every single day, of what this pandemic has put upon us.

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But as for, like I say, again, I am in a place where I do love life. And I know that there is so much more that I have to do.

So I'm not harming myself. I'm not looking to harm myself. But my mental health definitely needs a little bit more love, I guess, in a matter of speaking. A little bit more hugs. Hugs are good. Because my confidence was taken away from me during that whole process. Because that's kind of what they did to us, right? They tore our confidence down, and they forced us to be scared of people. I'm not scared of people, by the way; they're probably more scared of me. But thanks for asking.

Kyle Morgan

Yeah, go ahead Janice.

Commissioner Kaikkonen

I just want to say from my own experience that it's never too late to write that book on those hundreds of testimonies that you heard from people. Can you hear me, okay?

Sharon Vickers

Yeah.

Commissioner Kaikkonen

And also, I was reading Proverbs 29 this morning, and I can tell you there's some interesting scriptures in there that you might actually enjoy.

As far as the question, I'm just wondering. You did feel bullied by those in authority. Do you feel stronger for it, even with all of the mental health issues that followed? But do you feel stronger that you were able to write the words that you're signing "under duress," for example? Did that empower you?

Sharon Vickner

Did it empower me to be able to write those words “under duress”? Oh, absolutely. It actually did. Because I think I would have handled my time in— I would have probably navigated the circumstance after, in my head, differently. Because words are powerful, and we should be very mindful of our words at all times. It does show me that our justice system is broken, and it is not just in any form. Because if the words “under duress”— They shouldn’t have followed through with any of those conditions because they would have been null and void, and they weren’t null and void.

Commissioner Kaikkonen

So it just lets me come to the next conclusion. If the justice system is broke, I guess we have a lot of fixing to do.

Sharon Vickner

I’d have to say it needs to be torn down and put back together. Because we need to even change the word “government.” Because when you take those two words, in Latin, it actually means mind control. And I don’t think any body governing us should have anything to do with controlling what we do, say, speak, or put into our body.

Commissioner Kaikkonen

Thank you.

Kyle Morgan

Any other questions? Okay. Thank you, Ms. Vickner.

Sharon Vickner

Thank you.

Kyle Morgan

Thank you very much.

[00:28:27]

Final Review and Approval: Margaret Phillips, August 10, 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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