



## NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Ottawa, ON

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Day 1

### EVIDENCE

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**Witness 8: Madison Peake (Parts I and II)**

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#### PART I

[00:00:00]

**Wayne Lenhardt**

Next up, we have Madison Peake. So Madison, if you could give us your full name and spell it for us, and then I'll do an oath with you.

**Madison Peake**

My name is Madison Peake, M-A-D-I-S-O-N P-E-A-K-E.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

And do you promise that the evidence you'll give will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

**Madison Peake**

I do.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

Okay, a little bit of background. You're 21 now, and you've just gotten your degree this year, a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. But you were at Nipissing College when the mandates came out and you were still working on that degree. Is that correct?

**Madison Peake**

That's correct.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

Maybe I'll just let you start and tell me what developed as the mandates came into force in—I think that would have been in, what—2020, '21? Tell us what happened, and I'll bother you if I need to.

**Madison Peake**

Okay. So in 2020, when the pandemic started, I was 19 years old.

I have three younger siblings and I'm testifying today to speak on behalf of my family in terms of the psychological turmoil that we were under throughout the past few years. So at 19, I was home alone when the pandemic was declared.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

The vaccine mandate didn't come in right away, but it did come in for students at some point. Am I right?

**Madison Peake**

Yes.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

You would have been forced to take the vaccine, but you applied for an exemption, correct? Tell us about that.

**Madison Peake**

Yes. My post-secondary institution required that all students be vaccinated to be on campus. I immediately applied for an exemption under religious reasons.

And I felt really guilty about even doing that because I knew that so many others were not being accommodated. I still don't know to this day why I was granted the accommodation, but I was granted the exemption while many others weren't. My institution constantly put out emails that were—

**Wayne Lenhardt**

Your exemption was on religious grounds, correct?

**Madison Peake**

That's right.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

And although you were concerned you wouldn't get it, they did give it to you at some point, did they not?

**Madison Peake**

They did.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

But also, your mother and father were employed, so what was happening to them?

**Madison Peake**

Yeah. My father worked for a private company full-time from home. His company put into place a mandate that all employees be vaccinated, regardless of where they were working. He was told he should apply for an exemption. He did and it was denied. He applied for the same religious exemption that I had applied with to my post-secondary institution. And so he was left from November of 2021 to March of 2022 wondering if he would be let off, but in the end he wasn't. Our whole family was struggling at that point with severe mental health issues. This was the first time my siblings and I had to face possible financial issues.

And especially I'd like to speak to what happened with my mom. She was able to keep her job, but she underwent a severe mental break in January 2022.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

And there are three younger siblings as well as you in the family, correct?

**Madison Peake**

Yeah. So my mother had a major anxiety attack.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

Did anyone end up on medication during all of this stress?

**Madison Peake**

Yes. I ended up on anxiety—anti-depressants. And my mother was dysfunctional at this point because she was concerned for her kids in the face of the mandates. So I escorted her to the doctor. I really didn't know what to do. We tried telehealth. And we ended up fighting to get her in an in-person appointment at our family doctor.

[00:05:00]

And at that point, she was prescribed medication and also given leave from work for two months.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

And you dropped out for a semester, correct, so you could look after parts of the family?

**Madison Peake**

Yeah. I made the decision at that point that I needed to drop out, so I withdrew from my courses for that term.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

What about church services? What can you tell us there?

**Madison Peake**

Part of the complication, mentally, for all of us: our faith community was stripped away. As many people were, we were barred from attending our church. My teen brothers weren't able to play badminton at the club anymore. My younger sister and my brother were no longer welcome at the volunteer symphony locally because they were unvaccinated.

Just without these community supports we all were just crumbling. And we still describe it to this day as some of the darkest times, our darkest days. The only thing that brought us through it was that our family unit was very strong. One of my brothers, at 17, lost 30 pounds at this time. I ended up taking him to the doctor to assess his mental health.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

And for a good while there, it looked as if your father was going to lose his job. Although it turned out that he didn't, but if that had happened, it would have been pretty catastrophic for the family, correct?

**Madison Peake**

Yeah. We weren't sure what we were going to do. Earlier on in the pandemic, we were debating whether at least the breadwinners should get vaccinated. The culture at school was so intense in terms of pushing the government's— We were silenced.

And the university did not give scientific sources for their reasoning for the mandates that they put in place.

[00:07:13]

**PART II**

[00:00:00]

**Wayne Lenhardt**

We're back. Just so everybody knows, we were off air just because we lost our internet connection.

So Madison, I'm going to start you back where I asked you the question as to what we could easily do to have made that situation of yours better?

**Madison Peake**

I would have hoped that our leaders and our institutions would have allowed for discourse. Allowed for conversation without silencing. Allowed for us students to critically think and investigate, and to not treat us as dumb by just giving us slogans—but giving us scientific reasoning, scientific studies, to back up what they were saying and what they were forcing us to do.

And I'd also— I think, for the future, it'd be important for all of us to self-reflect on how we've treated people the last few years. Whether that was actively treating people, saying things, or just passively watching as it unfolded.

If we can have compassion for the individual rather than some abstract greater good, that would probably go a long way. It would make us feel more supported as youth and as young adults.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

Any last questions from the commissioners? No.

Okay. So Madison—

[Livestream cut off again].

[00:01:36]



***Final Review and Approval: Jodi Bruhn, September 6, 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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