



## NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Ottawa, ON

Day 2

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### EVIDENCE

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**Witness 3: Marianne Klowak**

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**Shawn Buckley**

Welcome back to the National Citizens Inquiry as we continue our proceedings in Ottawa, Ontario. Our next witness is Marianne Klowak.

Marianne, can you please state your full name for the record, spelling your first and last name.

**Marianne Klowak**

It's Marianne Klowak, M-A-R-I-A-N-N-E, Klowak, K-L-O-W-A-K.

**Shawn Buckley**

Marianne, do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

**Marianne Klowak**

I do.

**Shawn Buckley**

Now, Marianne, my understanding is, and it might be easier for you to give the highlights, but I'll try and go through some of them.

You have been a veteran senior reporter for the CBC, which for our international participants is the Canadian Broadcast Corporation, for thirty-four years. And as a journalist, you've been involved in all aspects of news gathering and investigative reporting for radio, television, web live reporting, short and long-form documentaries. You have been involved with current affairs as a current affairs news anchor for radio and television. You've filed stories nationally for "World Report," "The World This Weekend" and the hourlies. You've basically done regional stories published on CBC National's digital

platform. And the highlights could go on and on. Are there any other highlights that you'd like to just, kind of, describe your career? Because you've been at this for thirty-four years, and I've got a whole list of highlights. I just don't know which ones to touch.

**Marianne Klowak**

The only other thing I'd want to touch on is the year I left, I was given an award for a series I pitched on "Pandemic Perspectives." And the piece that won the award was a homeless person's perspective of how their life had changed. So that was a national award.

**Shawn Buckley**

Good. And David, I'll ask if you can turn Marianne up because I'm having trouble hearing her. Or if you can speak clearly into the microphone, Marianne.

**Marianne Klowak**

Thank you. Is this better? Is that better?

**Shawn Buckley**

Thank you. Now you're here to share your experiences while you were still at the CBC and working as a reporter and some of the stories you tried to run and what happened. So I'm wondering if you can just start into that and then if we need any clarifications, I'll jump in.

**Marianne Klowak**

Before I get into that, I think there's a little bit of background that's required. I know that as a public broadcaster, you expect us to be telling you the truth, and we'd stop doing that. And there was another number of stories that I had put forward that were blocked. But it would seem to me as a journalist who'd been there thirty-four years, it's like the rules had changed overnight. And it changed so quickly that it left me just dizzy in disbelief.

I was blocked and prevented from doing stories that I'd pitched, that I'd put forward. They never saw the light of day: they never made it to air or print. And some of those stories were protests against vaccine mandates, people's safety concerns about the vaccines, and also the many problems with reporting adverse reactions in Canada. And for me what was so disorienting about this was that, you know, I had learned from the best of the best at the CBC. This is where I learned to think critically and fearlessly hold power to account, to break stories and uncover information that you, the public, has a right to know.

And I also would like to mention that the newsroom I worked in, in CBC Manitoba, that they were a leader in investigative journalism across the entire network, second only to Toronto. And this was a newsroom that produced award-winning stories that sparked change at the highest level of corporations and government. By the time I left in December of 2021, I no longer recognized the CBC. And I really didn't think my career would end this way, that the skills I learned and honed at the CBC would be used to hold power to account within the corporation.

**Shawn Buckley**

Can I just slow you down because I think it's important for people to understand what you're saying. And especially because you were working as a journalist and as an

investigative reporter for much of the thirty-four years. So my understanding is, when you're a senior reporter like yourself, you can just follow a story, like, "Okay, I'm going to report on this," and you can do the story.

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And generally speaking, you're not second-guessed or your story isn't changed. So your experience in learning from true journalists in the past was just to run a story, to be fair, and that was your experience until COVID hit.

**Marianne Klowak**

Absolutely. I would say, like, prior to COVID, I was expected to come into that editorial meeting. I would have two or three original stories, what we call enterprising journalism, original stories. And I was able to work on those unless there was big breaking news that day. But normally, I would be assigned that story, given the time. And within, you know, a day or two, I could turn those stories around on all three platforms, radio, TV, and web. And I would also like to mention that I had one producer vetting for TV and radio. And rarely were there any changes made in my script or the content. And for web, it was another producer, but it was minor things like, let's move this sentence, let's change this word, we'll tighten lead. That was prior to COVID.

**Shawn Buckley**

So I'll just follow up on that again because I think it's important for people to understand. So basically, your stories were standing as you made them.

**Marianne Klowak**

Absolutely, and they backed me in doing that. I was supported in doing it. That's what they wanted: original enterprising journalism.

**Shawn Buckley**

Okay. And so that ties into when you're saying the Manitoba news desk at the CBC prior to COVID, I mean, that was a hardcore journalistic news desk. They were expecting you to get truthful fair stories. And they were not censoring. They were wanting the news.

**Marianne Klowak**

That's the way it was prior to COVID.

**Shawn Buckley**

Okay. So COVID—that was a completely new ballgame when COVID hit. So even the swine flu? Because we experienced that, you know, during your career.

**Marianne Klowak**

Yes.

**Shawn Buckley**

None of this. It just started with COVID.

**Marianne Klowak**

No, it changed so quick that it left me spinning. And I mean, the way I saw it, I'm just going to give you a little bit of a synopsis, and then I'll get into specifics in terms of what was done with my stories.

But we betrayed the public, we broke their trust. And we had been riding on a reputation of excellence for years. And now we were quickly shutting down one side of the debate. And how were we doing that? We branded the doctors and the experts the CBC chose that we used in our stories: we branded them as competent and trustworthy. And those who questioned and challenged the narrative were portrayed as dangerous and spreading disinformation. And that was regardless of what their specialty was, what their background was, and what their experience was.

And I just also want to sort of give you a window into how this affected me personally. As a veteran journalist, I had solid contacts in the community. I had people calling me with stories. So I was seeing and I was hearing and I was absorbing all their stories of suffering and pain. And they were sharing them with me, and these stories weren't being told. Some of those were from the vaccine-injured. Some were from people who had lost their job because of their vaccination status. Those whose families had been blown apart, and they'd been ostracized. University students who were depressed over repeated lockdowns and mandates. And parents who were calling me that were agonizing on whether they should vaccinate their child or not. So all these stories were sitting inside of me. They were left with me. And I felt the crushing burden and the weight of their truth not being given a voice. And it affected my well-being because these people trusted me, and I felt I had failed them and I had let them down.

**Shawn Buckley**

So can I just interject? So when you're a journalist and people are coming to you with stories that should be reported, you're feeling a responsibility to give voice to those stories, but you're not being allowed to do so for the first time. And that's what was causing the distress internally.

**Marianne Klowak**

Absolutely. I was losing sleep, it was distressing. It was like I had failed these people as a journalist to give voice to their truth.

So I had witnessed in a very short time the collapse of journalism, newsgathering, investigative reporting. The way I saw it is that we were in fact pushing propaganda. And to define propaganda: it's information, ideas, opinions, or images that give one part of an argument which are broadcast, published, in order to influence a person's opinion.

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And mental health workers have their own definition of propaganda as manipulative persuasion in the service of an agenda.

In a published article written by a former CBC editor-in-chief in 2018, she outlines what's called the Journalistic Standards and Practices [JSP] [Exhibit OT-4]. And these are the most fundamental principles that govern who we are as journalists and who we are as a public broadcaster. Basically, these are the pillars—the holy grail for journalists. This is what every story we do can be measured against these: they are accuracy, fairness, balance, impartiality, and integrity. She goes on to say that “the JSP is not merely a guide for the people who work at CBC/Radio-Canada. It's a key component of our promise to Canadians that the work we do is, first and foremost, a public service.” Then she says, “The real test, of course, is ensuring that our journalism is credible, reliable and worthy of your trust.” So in other words, you the audience decide if we're trustworthy, if we're telling the truth. It's not up to us to hammer you with what we define, decide, or think that the truth is because the pillars of balance and fairness require us to present both sides. And after you examine them, you ultimately decide what the truth is. She says, “. . . you can hold CBC News accountable against the principles that are laid out in the Journalistic Standards and Practices.”

In my last year and a half at the CBC, we violated all of them. Not only had we shut down one side by silencing and discrediting anyone opposing the narrative, we had elevated and designated ourselves as the gatekeeper of the truth. We no longer believed our audience was capable of critically thinking for themselves. I'm going to give you very specific examples of that. But before that, I'd like to read you a page out of a journal that I wrote a month after I left the CBC. It gives you a sense of the culture and the toxic work environment that led me to leave before I had wanted to.

For months prior to my departure in December 2021, the complaints and criticism from listeners and viewers continued to mount from the public. Calls, emails, people stopping me on the street and saying, “What the heck is going on at the CBC?” People telling me they felt betrayed, lied to. A gut feeling that they weren't being told the whole truth. They no longer trusted the CBC to tell them both sides of an issue. What was most troubling for me as a journalist is that they no longer felt safe to tell me their story and have their voice heard by their beloved public broadcaster.

Passion for the truth has been my driving force as a journalist, and we become journalists because we see ourselves as truth tellers. The vast disconnect between the stories people were telling me and what we were broadcasting and publishing just tore me apart. So armed with documented examples and specifics, I voiced my dismay about our editorial direction to all levels of management over several months—both locally and at the highest level of power in Toronto. And I did this; I brought in a witness to every scheduled meeting who would document what happened in those meetings.

The narrative among mainstream media including the CBC emerged early on in the pandemic. By narrative, I mean presenting one side of a complex issue and effectively censoring, cancelling and silencing the other side—only giving voice to experts who control and reinforce the narrative. I'd seen it happen on issues in the past but never to this degree. For the most part, logic, common sense, and critical thinking are suspended, preventing deep dives on stories holding power to account. Facts may be omitted if they don't fit into the narrow focus of the narrative.

Who were we to deliberately withhold information the public needed to know and had a right to know in order to make a decision based on informed consent about their health? Canadians were starting to see this, and they were calling us out on it.

So for me things started to escalate, I would say it was early 2021.



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And I was disturbed and alarmed about the language that was being used in some of our editorial meetings. All of a sudden, the term “anti-vaxxer” came up and I said, “Whoa, whoa, let’s stop right there. What is an anti-vaxxer? Who is an anti-vaxxer? What do they believe? Because are you saying it’s someone who’s against all vaccines? Because the people I’m speaking to, who are vaccine hesitant, have had all their other shots, but they have problems with this particular one.” I also brought up those who couldn’t get it for health reasons because of allergies. And what about people who just needed more time and information to make a decision. And yet we were lumping them all in this same pot as being an “anti-vaxxer.” I said, “Using this term is dangerous. It’s discriminatory. And why are we talking about these people with such hostility and such contempt?”

**Shawn Buckley**

So Marianne, can I just stop you there because that’s a term that’s become very sensitive at this hearing. And I’ll explain that in a second. So when the term comes up in the newsroom, it’s being used in a really negative term? Like, it’s meant to be pejorative?

**Marianne Klowak**

Almost laughing, ridiculing. It’s like these people aren’t educated: that was the kind of term that was being used and that was what was inferred.

**Shawn Buckley**

And I’ll tell you why I’ve stopped you with that. So we’ve had, and I think it was the Saskatoon hearings where I started to notice it. So we’d have witnesses, like literally vaccine-injury witnesses, talking about how their lives were literally destroyed by this particular vaccine. But then they would add during their testimony, just literally out of context, “but I’m not an anti-vaxxer.” And then, we had a lady that really was part of one of the biggest freedom groups in Saskatoon that arose because of the mandates and things like that. And she made a point, “but we’re not an anti-vaxxer group.” So that told me—because my understanding, and it’s based on a lot of the evidence that was here, but also, you know, prior to me coming here—is that these terms are created basically to ridicule and basically to close our minds, right? Because no one wants to be labelled as an “anti-vaxxer.” So if somebody is labelled as an anti-vaxxer, you’ll close your mind to them, right? So it’s just interesting. I’m sorry to stop you, but it’s interesting to hear because you basically used laughter as a description: that these people would be laughed at in a newsroom.

**Marianne Klowak**

And ridiculed. And I think that was the prevailing consensus in the newsroom. That if you were educated and if you were intelligent, you got the shot. To question it meant you weren’t intelligent, which really flies in the face of critical thinking. And it’s opposite of journalistic practice.

In June of 2021, the Manitoba government had carried out its own survey on vaccine hesitancy.

**Shawn Buckley**

And we'll just pull up your slide for a second [Exhibit OT-4]. There we go.

**Marianne Klowak**

So in the next slide, you see the reasons for vaccine hesitancy—why you're not in a rush to get it/not sure if you will get it/you're not going to get it at all. Look at the top three: It found 25 per cent were concerned about long-term effects; 18 per cent were concerned about side effects and reactions; and 15 per cent said the vaccine was experimental and unproven. So more than half, that's 58 per cent, almost 60 per cent had concerns about safety and that it was experimental. Now notice where religion comes in, it comes in at 4 per cent.

So more than half of the people were listening to their gut and they weren't convinced by the mantra of "safe and effective." But instead of critically thinking, doing newsgathering and real journalism on safety concerns, scrutinizing the Pfizer data, and asking some of the hard questions people were asking me—like, "Why is the CBC the arm of public health?"—we chose to focus on that four per cent. Those who were hesitant for religious reasons. So our mission at the CBC now was to educate these people, or for that matter, educate anyone who was vaccine hesitant and eliminate it, because surely if they were educated, they would have changed their mind.

This to me was arrogant, it was condescending, and we were telling people what to think because we didn't trust them to think for themselves. Our tone implied they were a danger to society if their thinking didn't fall in line with the narrative. And to me,

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this was mind boggling because I understood our mandate of the CBC was to elevate the voice of Canadians to tell stories on a local, a regional, and a national level, reflecting Canadians to Canadians to promote understanding and unity. And instead, we were fanning the flames of fear, of division, of segregation and hatred against a particular group, the unvaccinated. So the stereotype we were creating emerged early on: The person who was unvaccinated was uneducated; they were likely a person of faith. They were denying that COVID was real. They probably lived in a rural community. And they were branded—"a danger to public safety."

**Shawn Buckley**

So I'm just going to stop you. So these are themes that the CBC in their newsroom came up, to actually use, to basically denigrate, create a group called "the anti-vaxxers" and denigrate them. So we actually have our state-funded news organization coming up with themes to create a separate group and to make them look uneducated and basically like "Luddites."

**Marianne Klowak**

That was the image that was portrayed.

**Shawn Buckley**

And this was a deliberate decision.

**Marianne Klowak**

It was a deliberate decision because look at the government survey: it showed that almost 60 per cent of people were concerned about safety, and yet we were focusing on religion. I'll give you a couple examples of the stories.

**Shawn Buckley**

And if I can just interact a little bit. Because it would seem to me the story is, "Here's what people's concerns are, and let's go talk to those people." Right?

**Marianne Klowak**

That would be the common thinking, wouldn't it?

**Shawn Buckley**

And then see what flows from that as the story develops. Okay.

**Marianne Klowak**

That would be the common thinking.

This is a story we ran in May of 2021: "Death bed denials" in southern Manitoba hospital patients, the doctor says. So it was a fact that pockets of Southern Health in Manitoba did have the lowest uptake of the vaccine. But I challenged the stereotype: I'm saying, you know, "I know doctors, I know educated people, I know people in the trades, I know people working in garment factories, social workers, people all over the province that are vaccine hesitant. They do not fit this stereotype." But many of them, by now, were too afraid to be interviewed because they knew it wasn't safe. They knew what would happen to them—that they would be labelled, stigmatized, and they would likely lose their job.

Here was another story we did in targeting people in faith communities that we ran a few months later. And that was in September of 2021. Manitoba health officials were targeting the low vaccination rate in the southern part of the province. They thought the best way to get through to these people is to get the community leaders and the religious leaders on board, and then "we can convince people to get the shot." The story says: There's "no legitimate reason for religious exemptions" to get the shot "across several major belief systems, the leaders say."

That's not what I was hearing from people. People were applying for exemptions and on their deeply held spiritual beliefs. And their applications were consistently being rejected, and they were losing their jobs because of it. These were gut wrenching stories that people were calling me saying, "I'm being escorted out of my workplace right now. I can't believe this is happening. I'm being discriminated against because of my faith." They said, "Where's the right to religion, freedom of religion and where's the right to bodily autonomy," and where was the CBC and why weren't we telling their stories?

I mean, there was one man that I had spoken with, he'd been with a company for 25 years and he was in a management position, and he was working from home and he applied for an exemption that was rejected. He lost his job and he was—because he wouldn't get the shot and he was continuing to work from home. It was ludicrous. It was absolutely ludicrous. And we didn't do these stories.



So this was all sort of coming to a head and on June 3rd, 2021, I called for a meeting with the managing editor of CBC Manitoba, the executive producer. And I asked that a witness be present at all of the meetings to hear my concerns about our editorial direction. Now that witness was a person who was recently hired as the executive producer of diversity and inclusiveness. So in that meeting, I raised a number of issues. I said, "Why weren't we investigating the safety of the vaccines when that's what came up at 60 per cent in a government survey? Why were we creating a dangerous stereotype of who we thought a vaccine-hesitant person was? Why were we creating a hate culture against them and demonizing these people as a threat to public safety?"

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"Why were we endorsing and promoting an experimental drug that we didn't know much about other than what the government and the manufacturer were telling us?"

And I'm going to give you an example of how that happened. Going back to the journalistic standards about how we're supposed to be impartial: We had reporters posting on their CBC Facebook page at the local and national level with a sticker on their arm and their hand up in the air saying, "I'm part of Team Pfizer and Team Moderna" with their hand up. And I said, "How is that being impartial and how is that being objective? And why were we getting behind Pfizer, which paid out huge criminal settlements? And would these images convince people who were not sure to get the shot?" I said, "Clearly, this is a journalistic breach." When I flagged this to management, they didn't have an issue with it. They didn't think it was a problem.

I also brought up to them.

**Shawn Buckley**

Let me just stop. The management didn't view those issues as a problem?

**Marianne Klowak**

No, they said if they want to do that, that's their choice.

**Shawn Buckley**

You mean, if who wants to do it?

**Marianne Klowak**

If a reporter wants to post on Facebook they've gotten the shot and they've got a sticker and they're part of Team Pfizer or Moderna, they didn't have an issue with that.

**Shawn Buckley**

Okay.

**Marianne Klowak**

I also brought up at that meeting what happened with thalidomide. That's a drug that was endorsed in the early 1960s for pregnant women who were nauseated: a drug that caused

severe birth defects. And that we shouldn't be getting on this bandwagon—we should be very cautious because this was a brand-new vaccine that had just become available.

Now I'm going to give you a specific example of a story that I was shut down on. So June 2021 was the time when Israel was starting to see some links between the Pfizer vaccine and heart inflammation. And I was getting calls from parents who were really distressed and just saying, "There's the potential risk of heart inflammation in young people. I don't know if I should vaccinate my child, I don't know what to do. How safe is this vaccine?" They were in angst about—they wanted more information. And at that time, the Center for Disease Control and the FDA had put a warning on their fact sheet about rare cases of myocarditis.

Some parents in Manitoba thought, you know, Manitoba should be doing the same for their fact sheet on Pfizer because that was the only one that was authorized in Canada for those twelve and older. They had sent letters to the province, the health minister, public health officials, and they shared all these documents with me. So I pitched this story on the June 3rd meeting, and I was given the go-ahead and I interviewed several parents.

And I approached this story like I would approach any other story: Is this true? The government and the manufacturer are saying it's safe and effective, and yet we've got parents worried about some evidence that's emerging that there could be some health concerns. So I set out to news gather, investigate, do the research, and find the answers to the questions people were asking.

And for me, this story was reflective of that 60 per cent where people were saying, "This is what we're concerned about." So I thought, great, we're going to do a story that the public has a right to know. And these were some of the things that parents said to me on the record. They said, "Giving youth a drug that's still in the trial phase is a terrible idea. It's dangerous." They wanted to know "who would be responsible if their child had an adverse reaction?" Most troubling in their opinion was that some of these children didn't need to have their parents' consent to get the shot. "Why was the state taking control of their children?" They were asking me this. This is all credible and legitimate questions. They were fed up with their kids being threatened and bullied in and out of school for not being vaccinated.

I'll tell you one story. There was a rural community, and this mother phoned me and there were two families. One family was vaccinated; one wasn't. And the daughters were best friends. And one of the daughters said, "Well, you know, if you want to get the shot, you can come over to my house on the weekend and my mom will take you. And your mother never has to know." So that was the end of that friendship. That was the end of that. And it divided the whole community.

And these people were questioning, they were asking me, they were saying, "Well, if this vaccine is safe, then why does someone who's vaccinated have to be afraid of someone who's unvaccinated?" Very logical questions. And they were angry with the CBC. They expressed that to me. They said, "Why was the CBC and the media cheerleading the government's message that the vaccine was safe and effective?" because they weren't convinced by it.

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So that's basically what they said to me on the record.

And most of them had referenced and voiced their support for a body of scientific research that was put forward by the Canadian COVID Care Alliance [CCCA]. Specifically, by Byram Bridle, a world-class immunologist from the University of Guelph. And the Alliance had been raising flags about the safety of the vaccine based on scientific studies. They'd even filed a petition with the federal government, and they were calling the feds to suspend the use of the vaccines in children, in youth, in adults, in women of childbearing age until there would be long-term and short-term safety trials that were completed and this would be published in peer-reviewed journals. Many of the parents I spoke with had signed this petition. Certainly, this was newsworthy and something the public had a right to know. These were Canadians that were voicing a different or dissenting voice, and up until now, all we were airing and publishing were experts aligned with the government's view. This is a story I thought that would bring some fairness and balance to our one-sided coverage, and it would punch a hole in the narrative.

I contacted the Alliance, and I spoke with a scientist by the name of Stephen Pelech. He's a highly reputable scientist. He's a professor of neurology in the Department of Medicine at the University of British Columbia. He had been doing COVID research in his lab for two and a half years. He also published more than two hundred scientific papers over the course of his career. He praised the parents I interviewed and he said, "You know, they're wise. They're wise to question this narrative" because he had serious concerns with vaccinating children with this new vaccine.

He shared with me the Pfizer data that showed with children, there's the least amount of data from testing on whether there's a long-term or short-term side effect. So according to the document I was looking at from Pfizer, it was just over 1130 adolescents between 12 and 15 in the U.S. were vaccinated in phase III trials. And in his opinion that was problematic. He said the tests were done on a very small number of children and the test wasn't powered enough: so what that meant is there wasn't enough participants to determine if, let's say, there was a reaction of one in five thousand, that wouldn't have been picked up by Pfizer. So I had Pelech on camera; I had these parents all lined up. And I told you what my workflow was like prior to COVID. But it changed with this story.

When it came to this story, I never had more hands in the vetting of this story. While it was cleared by the Manitoba managing exec and the director, a local web writer flagged it. And she said, "You know, maybe we should get a response from Pfizer." I said, "No, I think we've heard more than enough from Pfizer." Then she said, "You know, I don't think the vaccine is still in the trial phase." And I produced a document saying it is until 2023. But she sent out an internal email to several people in the newsroom, and she decided that my story should be forwarded to the Toronto Health Unit. Now this is a special unit within the CBC, and she wanted them to do a final vet of my story. So now the CBC Toronto Health Unit was in charge of my story. It was the end of June, and I was really getting anxious over how long this was taking because as I mentioned before, I was used to turning stories around in a day or two. But to me, it was critical timing because the rollout was ramping up for the vaccination of young people in Manitoba. It was in full swing. Finally, five weeks later on July 8th—

**Shawn Buckley**  
Five weeks?

**Marianne Klowak**

Five weeks. Remember, I could turn around stories in two or three days—this was five weeks. So I think they were sitting on the story. Maybe they were just hoping that I would go away and not persist in doing this story.

But five weeks after, July 8th, I pitched the story, I was called into a meeting. Well, this was on Zoom because we were all working from home by then, and they had a verdict from Toronto. And you know, I should mention to you that over three decades at the CBC, I'd say 30 to 35 per cent of the stories I did were health stories. Never had I had a story that had to go to the Toronto Health Unit. And never was a story given this level of scrutiny.

**Shawn Buckley**

So I just want to emphasize this because you had told us earlier that basically things changed at COVID. So what you're saying is, for your thirty-five years as a journalist

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like, 35 to 40 per cent of your stories were health stories. So you knew what it took to run a health story and that never before had it been sent to this Toronto Health Unit or no story in your career had ever been put under this much scrutiny.

**Marianne Klowak**

Never. Like I had mentioned, it was one producer, and the story was put through and it was published. And all of a sudden now, there were all these hands in the story.

And what I want to mention to you, which is key to know here, is that before I tell you what happened, that none of the facts, none of the data, none of the research, nothing I put forward in that story in terms of any of the information was contested. It was rock solid journalism. And I knew that I could put my name to that and defend every word I had written.

They raised two concerns that was an issue for them: Did I know that the Alliance promoted ivermectin? And did I know that some of the members of the Alliance chose to be anonymous? Those were their two concerns. So my thought was, okay, now the story is being blocked further up the chain.

I did know they supported ivermectin, but that was not the focus of the piece. And I had been sending for weeks links to management from medical journals about the success of ivermectin in treating COVID. I got no response. I said, We should be having a debate about ivermectin on air and hear from experts who support its use. But that was not the focus of this piece."

As for members being anonymous, I was confused by that because, I thought, I interviewed Stephen Pelech. He went full-face on camera with his credentials. So there was no anonymity there. And I could only guess that maybe some were choosing to be anonymous because they wanted to be able to continue to practise without fear of being disciplined anyway.

But what came next left me just speechless. I was just astonished. They said, "While there's a story to be told about the parents' concerns, the Canadian COVID Care Alliance was problematic." I should "drop them out of the story, keep the parents' concerns in, but

interview two experts that CBC Toronto was recommending.” And of course, I did my research, “Well, who are these people?” One of them was a pediatric immunologist who told me both of her kids were vaccinated. She had worked with the federal government. She chaired a national committee overseeing the approval process of COVID-19 vaccines in Canada. I was being told to drop Pelech out of the story who was raising flags about safety concerns and put this woman in.

I was just stunned. I was shocked. I could not believe that they were asking me to do this. I said, “This is unethical. This is immoral. You’re violating all our principles of fairness and balance and accuracy and being impartial and acting with integrity.” And I said, “What you’re asking me to do is dishonest and it’s manipulative.” The parents I had on tape, I’d interviewed, they were backing the science of Bridle and to include them in the story but leave the Alliance out, to me, defied logic. It didn’t make any sense. We were effectively censoring people in the scientific community with impeccable credentials because they just didn’t fall in line with the narrative.

I said to the managing editor, “I’m standing down. I’m walking away from this story. I’m not going to do what you’re asking me to do. I’ve invested too much in this. I’m not going to sell these people out. And why should I have to include two doctors that Toronto has picked out?”

And then I think, you know, what if this story had made it through and it went national? Wouldn’t that have changed the narrative across the country? If parents had been armed with this information, would we have seen fewer vaccine injuries?

### **Shawn Buckley**

Can I just stop you. Because another thing just kind of occurred to me when you were sharing that story and you mentioned how they were actually critical of the CCCA—and I’m thinking, well just wait, just so people that don’t know the term—so that stands for the Canadian COVID Care Alliance. My understanding is, I mean, if it’s not hundreds, it’s thousands of scientists and doctors. Like we’re talking very credentialed people that have formed an organization to basically look into COVID issues objectively and to provide fair and balanced information.

[00:40:00]

And you know if that leads them in a direction that goes against the government narrative. But isn’t the fact that that group formed and exists, itself, a story that should be covered, let alone cutting them out of a story. I was just thinking that in itself is somewhat fantastic and likely would be a story.

### **Marianne Klowak**

And they formed specifically because of COVID and to give an alternative perspective. And I had pitched, “Let’s do a story on them,” but it was like, they weren’t interested in it. They weren’t interested in hearing what these people have to say because they figured they supported ivermectin. So they didn’t want to do any of those stories.

### **Shawn Buckley**

And just to give perspective—because I know when we had a conversation and likely you’ll get to it—like, a reporter will go to a demonstration on an issue where there’s twelve



people and report a story. But when tens of thousands of people show up for a demonstration, that might not be covered if it's going against the government narrative now. So, just kind of along those veins, like just even the size of the CCCA itself is quite—

**Marianne Klowak**

The numbers.

**Shawn Buckley**

Yeah, and it's quite something.

**Marianne Klowak**

The fact that they had filed this national petition was to me huge. They were saying, "No, we need to stop, we need to pause, we need more information before we roll this out across the country for young people," and that story was shut down.

**Shawn Buckley**

And that was a petition backed by scientists and medical doctors citing peer-reviewed evidence.

**Marianne Klowak**

Correct.

**Shawn Buckley**

Okay.

**Marianne Klowak**

So the day that that happened to me, which was July 8th, it's burned in my memory because for me, part of me died that day with that story. And that was the death of journalism for me, July 8th, 2021. Instead, we were clearly pushing propaganda.

So I had to call back everyone. And I thought, how am I going to handle this? So I apologized and I told them the truth. And it was shameful and it was humiliating because these people had put themselves on the line to tell me their story. And I said, "This is why I can't do it. This is why I won't do it, and it wouldn't see the light of day." And I said, "I'm sorry that I have failed you and I have let you down."

I didn't go to work the next day because I thought I have to strategize. How am I going to deal with this? Do I quit right now? Do I stay and try to push stories through even harder? The following day I asked for a conference call with the managing editor, the exec, and the witness and I said, "Here's the deal." I say, "You know that story was solid journalism. I'm asking you to publish it. You have that power." And I said the timing was key as the province was ramping up the vaccinations of young people. It was urgent that this critical information get out there. And I said, "I'm asking you to do this despite what Toronto has said." And if they wouldn't, I could no longer continue to work in this environment. They didn't publish it.

It was also at that time I decided I had to start reaching out to other journalists because I felt like I was just losing my mind. Surely other people were seeing what I was seeing. And I did reach out. I reached out locally to a competing network. I also talked to someone south of the border. Through internal email at CBC, I sent out notes saying, “This is what I’m seeing. What are you seeing?” And I didn’t hear back from anybody.

So I thought, you know, I’m going to call the CBC Union. I called the CBC Union and they said, “Oh yeah, we’re getting all kinds of calls about people concerned about our biased reporting.” And I said, “Well, where are they? Put me in touch with them.” And she said, “Oh no, they’re not, it’s staying with the union. They’re not going to go past the union.” I say, “What does that mean?” And she says, “Well, they’re not prepared to do what you’re doing. They’re not prepared to go all up the ladder and call power to account.”

So then I reached out to somebody. And I guess, you know, I understand that because I was sort of at the end of my career, but a lot of the journalists that were calling the union were midway in their career and they were afraid of losing their jobs. I contacted a senior reporter from a competing network and I said to her, “What are you seeing?” She said, “Oh, I’m seeing the same thing, you know, why has the media become the mouthpiece of public health?” Then I managed to contact a reporter who worked for *The New York Times* who told me what was happening to me was exactly what was happening to him. His stories were being shut down: he was being blocked. As he saw it, we had two options. One of them was quit and be a whistleblower,

[00:45:00]

or to stay and fight it out and keep trying to push those stories through. He also gave me some advice. He said, “document everything that’s happened to you, as you would cover a news story. Who said what, when, who was present and the date.” I was just reeling from all this because I thought, you know, we have betrayed our audience on a massive scale, massive.

And even the CBC acknowledged that erosion of trust in a blog that was written by the editor-in-chief Brodie Fenlon in March of 2021. Forty-nine per cent of Canadians think journalists are purposely trying to mislead them. About half of the fifteen hundred people of the Canadians surveyed felt the CBC was more concerned with supporting an ideology or a political position than informing the public. And that the media was not doing well at being objective. How is the CBC going to rebuild trust in journalism?

In 2019, it became a member of the Trusted News Initiative—so that brings together news organizations from all over the world and tech platforms to combat coronavirus disinformation: to identify and stop the spread of it, false claims, half-truths, conspiracy theories, basically, a way to filter news through its own filter system. I saw it basically as a mechanism to “call people out” who disagreed with the narrative and to label them dangerous and extreme.

Why do you need a trust filter system if you’re consistently telling the truth? Why are tech platforms involved in combating disinformation? And who are these people in this Initiative? Are they journalists? Are they scientists? Is artificial intelligence involved? Who is the Trusted News Initiative? This was an effective way to stop the flow of information: to censor one side, skew reporting, and label opposing opinion and thought as disinformation. Sometime after signing on with the Trusted News Initiative, there was a shift in the lens of how we saw news. It was no longer from the bottom up—it was from the top down.

Let me give you a specific example of how this played out in the newsroom in another story that I was blocked in doing. I'd gotten a tip about a peaceful protest in Winnipeg about vaccine mandates, and it was in September of 2021. There was about two thousand people out on the street. We didn't cover it because it was decided at the editorial level these people were spreading disinformation. This was just unbelievable. I was stunned because I had been sent in, you know, to cover stories and do live hits from protests with twelve people present. But we were going to ignore a group this large and not send a camera and find out what these people had to say. I thought not only is the size of the group newsworthy, it was the fact that it was both vaccinated and unvaccinated people were walking together and they were united in their opposition to vaccine mandates.

I had gotten a call from someone on the protest line who says, "Where's the CBC? There's people here that are cutting up their vaccine passports as a show of solidarity against the mandates." And I thought, wow, this is a great story. This is great visuals. This is a powerful story of people at the grassroots uniting. Why wasn't the CBC there? It was a decision made at the top level rather than looking at the news that was unfolding on the ground.

When I asked why we weren't there, I didn't get an answer. It wasn't worthy of covering because in the CBC's eyes, these people were disseminating disinformation. How could we say that if we never even spoke to any of them? We ran a few lines of copy that day saying, "More than 250 people in Winnipeg held a protest against mandates." That was misleading and it was a half truth. There was at least 2000 people. By saying more than 250, we were trying to minimize, in fact, how large it was. And to me, we missed the story entirely, which was people uniting against a cause.

Instead that day, I was assigned a story about a cricket infestation. No one was sent to cover the protests, and the cricket story went national.

[00:50:00]

But there was nothing about the Manitoba protest.

### **Shawn Buckley**

So, Marianne, just so that we have contrast because you've told us about, listen, there's this protest, 2000 people. The real story is that both sides are coming together, that people with the passport are so concerned about the mandate, they're cutting that up. So tell us about the exciting cricket story that became national news in Canada. What was the story, just so we're not left in suspense?

### **Marianne Klowak**

That people's back lanes and garages and houses are being filled with crickets. And I'm thinking, really, we're going to tell that story, and we're going to basically ignore two thousand people walking through the city uniting in a cause. We are just going to ignore these people. To me that was just unconscionable.

### **Shawn Buckley**

And was the cricket story urgent? Like—

**Marianne Klowak**

No, I don't— Well, I guess if you were living in a house full of crickets, it might be, but that was not the story to be told that day. But that was the story they decided should be told that day. Later that month, I pitched another story, and it was shut down.

**Shawn Buckley**

Can I just stop and I'm sorry. So we have, literally, vaccinated people and not vaccinated people coming together against the mandate. And we have crickets from the CBC. I'm sorry I couldn't resist.

**Marianne Klowak**

It's shameful.

**Shawn Buckley**

That was just too easy. So okay, and I'm sorry to interrupt, I just truly couldn't resist.

**Marianne Klowak**

So later that month, I pitched another story that was also shut down. And it was about what vaccine mandates were going to look like at universities in Manitoba. I had a professor lined up, an immunologist lined up from Ontario. They were on a committee there helping to draft the rollout of mandatory vaccines at the University of Guelph and McGill. They talked about students having less freedom on campus: There'd be more security, more policing of students. Those who refuse to wear a mask could be hauled off by campus police. I also had an ethicist lined up who was willing to talk about his concerns over mandatory vaccinations for students.

And both the experts were saying they were worried about the mental health of students that were going into a second year of restrictions. Both were getting contacted by parents and students who just were not in support of this. And I thought this would be an excellent discussion to have in Manitoba with faculty and parents and students for our audience to hear because it was already rolling out in Ontario, and it was going to be coming into Manitoba; they were ahead of us. And I also said I had spoken with two legal firms that were fighting mandatory vaccines on campuses, and they felt the court ruling in Ontario could set a precedent for the rest of the country. There was no response to what I pitched that day. Instead, I was assigned another story about an infestation. This time it was bedbugs in a local housing complex. And no one else had been assigned to that story that I had pitched.

So I interpreted that as I was quickly becoming silenced and cancelled for trying to get the other side of the story out. I was battle weary. I was exhausted from fighting. I never felt more alone in my profession. And as a veteran journalist who is usually fearless and outspoken, I no longer felt it was safe to pitch stories that I knew that we should be telling. And I quickly felt that my existence there was becoming null and void. But I wasn't done yet.

In September, I decided I'm going to go directly to Toronto to voice my concerns about our editorial direction. And I was going to tell them what I was experiencing. I started sending emails to Brodie Fenlon, CBC's editor-in-chief, and Paul Hambleton, who was the head of Journalistic Standards. Now he's no longer with the CBC, he left a month after I did. I shared

with them what I'd documented about what was happening with my stories, specific details what was going on in the newsroom in Winnipeg, the language that was being used. How we had created this culture of hate and division, feeding people's fears. And why were we so hostile to people who had an opinion that was different from ours? And while I applauded the CBC's initiative of diversity and inclusiveness in hiring people of different cultures and ethnic backgrounds,

[00:55:00]

I said, "Where is our diversity in thought? Where is that?"

Again, I was hearing the word "anti-vaxxer" being used in the newsroom, and this is already a year and a half into the pandemic. We'd failed to create a safe environment for people to speak to us on the record so their voices could be heard. I told them we had violated all our journalistic standards. We'd broken the public trust. And we withheld information the public had a right to know, and we were guilty. I asked to have a conversation with them before I left. And Brodie Fenlon emailed me back. He thanked me for what I sent, said he'd be happy to talk to me. But with the federal election going on, could we schedule a time afterwards in October, and he would invite Paul Hambleton into this discussion as well. I was pleased he had responded.

At that point like I knew, I had my end date. I'd spoken to HR; I knew when I was going to be leaving the CBC, but I had one more story in the queue I wanted to get out. And it was about a woman who was vaccine-injured. I had several calls and conversations with people who had contacted me about they had been vaccine-injured, they knew someone who had been vaccine-injured, or there was a family member.

One of them was the mother of a teenage boy. He was an elite athlete, he had gotten the shots, he had chest pain. He was told he was going to have to spend his summer lying on a sofa recovering, and he could not do any sports that summer. A woman called me who got her first shot and she was really sick. And she was anxious because she went for medical help, and she was told that she should still get the second shot, but maybe she should be admitted to hospital to get the second shot in case she had a worse reaction. This to me was madness, was madness. The rest were afraid that they wouldn't be believed because of, you know, the media mantra we were putting there, "safe and effective."

The way I saw it, we were gaslighting these people. You know, let's say you have a refugee coming into the country, and you know they've suffered trauma and they've been through hell. How do we treat them? We treat them with mercy and compassion and kindness. And yet these people who were being injured—we were gaslighting them. One man who had an adverse reaction said to me, it had to be him, "It's got to be me. There's got to be something wrong with me because it's safe and effective."

So getting back to the woman I did the interview with. She had had an adverse reaction after her first shot in May of 2021. It took me weeks to gain her trust, for her to go on the record. She was thirty years old. She was an avid runner and she worked with the federal government. She had no previous heart condition. The very next day after getting the shot, May 27th, she had chest pain. Then she said she was short of breath. She felt like she had this huge weight sitting on her chest. The pain got worse, she had trouble breathing. She described it as the feeling like there was thick smoke in her lungs, but she wasn't a smoker. She knew something was really wrong.



She went to emergency at St. Boniface Hospital where she was diagnosed with pericarditis. And that's inflammation of the tissue around the heart. She shared her written medical report with me from the emergency room doctor. Since her shot in May—within the next month—she'd been to emergency five more times with increased chest pain. She could no longer run. She was winded from walking up a flight of stairs. And she said she thought that she was dying. And I had interviewed a cardiologist as well who told me, "if there's damage to heart cells as an adult, they don't regenerate. The damage is permanent." And yet we were running stories saying, "Take a couple of Advil, and there shouldn't be any lasting symptoms from heart inflammation." This woman was on anti-inflammatory medication for months. She was battling depression and anxiety because she was no longer the outgoing, active, happy-go-lucky person she used to be.

She also told me how difficult it was to get someone to document what happened to her as an adverse reaction. She said the first doctor who diagnosed it was hesitant to put it in writing. Some doctors didn't know how to fill out the form. Finally, a nurse had filed it for her, and that was another story I pitched.

The problems with doctors reporting adverse reactions in Canada.

[01:00:00]

They have to download a PDF, takes about fifteen minutes to fill it out. The doctor has to sign it. Then it goes to a health authority who has to approve it. And some of the doctors were telling me that their reports were getting rejected. And I was hearing more and more about the problems with reporting these adverse reactions in Canada. And there was even a period during the pandemic that the line that they used to report these adverse reactions was down, the link wasn't working. Surely, this was newsworthy. No interest in that story.

But getting back to the woman, I interviewed. I stayed in touch with her. After doing her own research, she connected with three other women who were diagnosed with heart inflammation after being vaccinated. I wrote her story. Here was my first line based on what she told me. This was the original before it was edited: "A 30-year-old Winnipeg woman says she's not confident the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for everybody and is advising people to do their research. She admits she was hesitant at first to get the shot, but she felt pressure from people posting online that she was selfish if she didn't." Two words the editors didn't like in there: "vaccine" and "hesitant." Again, several hands were in this story, several. A managing editor, two web writers, another producer, and I fought several edits that were made. By now at this point, I was sort of afraid because I thought if I pushed them too hard, they could pull the story entirely.

Okay, here's the story the CBC published on July 12th, 2021. This is my story, and this is what they changed: "Winnipeg woman shocked by heart lining inflammation after COVID vaccine, but experts say the risk remains low." Look at the first line. "A 30-year-old Winnipeg woman says she was shocked to be diagnosed with the condition involving inflammation of the lining around her heart days after she got her COVID-19 vaccination in late May."

The changes that they made didn't reflect what she was saying to me about the safety concerns. It was propaganda editing to change the meaning entirely. Any reference to vaccine hesitancy was taken out. I fought the web writer on that first sentence. He says, "Well, no, we can't say that; we don't want to scare people." I say, "That's not journalism." I said, "Maybe we should be concerned, look what happened to her." And I said, "We can't negate her personal lived experience: her story is one of caution and to do research."

And if you look at the next sentence which says, “But a Winnipeg cardiologist says despite concerns about heart inflammation, vaccines are preventing illness from COVID-19.” Why would anyone read any further in my story. Basically, the message was it happened to her, it’s too bad, it’s unfortunate, but vaccines are still doing what they’re supposed to be doing.

But there were medical experts who were disputing this, but they had been cancelled by the CBC because according to the CBC, they were spreading disinformation. The fact she was an avid runner was taken out of the story, and I fought to have that put back in. I say, “No, I think that’s important. You know, she was a runner and now she can barely walk up the stairs. It shows what happened before and after the shot.” And she never got the second one because her reaction was so severe after the first. And I also didn’t think there should be experts or stats negating what she was saying. Because we’d heard more than enough from all of the experts. It should be just a straight-ahead story about someone who suffered an adverse reaction, and we shouldn’t downplay it. Instead, the way I saw it, her story was buried in experts and health officials and stats—it was sanitized.

I lost sleep the night before that story was published. I knew we didn’t do justice to her story. I spoke with her the next day, and she was so traumatized she couldn’t read the story. I should also tell you I contacted her five months after I left the CBC, and she was still suffering from health problems, blood clots. That story was the breaking point for me. I was waiting for that final exit meeting with Fenlon and Hambleton in October. And when I had it, I told them what had happened to my stories. How devastated I was to be leaving the CBC after spending three decades in a career that I loved.

I asked them what’s the makeup of the CBC Toronto Health Unit, like who are these people: “Are they journalists, are they scientists, like who are they?”

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I was basically told they were experts who are really good at what they do. But I still don’t know who they are. Then I brought up the issue of mandatory training and seminars for journalists that we had to take on what was called conscious and unconscious bias. We had to sign off on this training. It was to identify any bias we may have in doing a story. And to be aware of it, to make sure it doesn’t impact the story that we’re doing and that we are more inclusive. I said, “You know what, we the CBC have a glaring bias, both conscious and unconscious, when it came to stories involving experts opposing the narrative and with those who were unvaccinated, we had a glaring bias.” I said, “I was worried about the next generation of journalists. They’re young, they’re inexperienced. And that the editorial meeting is not a safe place to have a different opinion. Why are we so mean and hostile to people with different opinions?”

And I said, “Did you know how we were being branded outside the walls, the corporate walls of the CBC?” I’ve seen those protests; I’ve seen those signs. We were being known as the Canadian Brainwashing Corporation or in faith circles, the Christian Bashing Corporation. Some of my final words to them, as I saw it, I said, “The CBC is morally and ethically culpable of the narrative that it pushed to the public, and we are going to be held accountable. We failed to hold power to account, and no one was holding the media to account. We failed to serve the public. We broke their trust.”

I told them, “You can silence and cancel scientists with impeccable credentials, you can even cancel me.” But I said, “My solace is that the truth will come out; it will come out.” Brodie thanked me, and he said he was sorry that it had ended this way and that he didn’t think the CBC had done all that bad. He wished me well. Hambleton, who is the head of

journalistic standards, he was still on the screen, and he told me, that the most heat that he took during COVID was over ivermectin. People calling and writing with letters with no let up. I said, “The CBC should have listened on many fronts. The truth will come out.” That’s what I said in October 2021.

So here we are a year and a half later, the truth has come out. Even though people still do not want to believe the truth. According to Health Canada’s own website up and to including March 3rd, a total 427 deaths were reported following vaccination, 427. Each and every one of those deaths was worthy of a story. Where was the CBC? Where was any media on this? And is that number accurate? The same Health Canada website posted more than 10,000 serious injuries for the same time period. Are those numbers accurate? Are they higher because of all the problems with reporting adverse reactions in Canada? Who are the injured? What are their names? What are their stories? What are they suffering?

Lawsuits are going on, and there’s a few people of the vaccine-injured who are getting settlements. We have one before the courts right now in Manitoba involving a young man from Steinbach.

If reporters were doing their jobs, we would not be here today in this forum, funded by citizens, telling our stories. Mainstream media would have done it. Where are they? Where are they?

On February 27th of this year, papers with hundreds of profiles of suspected COVID vaccine injuries and deaths were plastered onto the doors and windows of CBC Toronto. I had a really hard time looking at those pictures because that to me was proof and evidence that the public had trusted us and they had listened. And some of them paid dearly for it. I waited to see, is CBC going to cover this? Is any media going to cover this? How could you ignore this? It was just unconscionable and appalling that nobody covered it. I thought, I wonder how employees felt that day when they came to work and they saw that—those posters on the outside of the building. Did they stop? Did they look? Did they read? Did they look at the names, or did they just go into the building and carry on with work that day? The same thing happened in Winnipeg on a smaller scale.

[01:10:00]

Again, no media coverage.

And as mentioned earlier, CBC decided to pause its Twitter activity after it was labelled “government-funded media” by Elon Musk. Brodie Fenlon had responded by publishing a piece saying, “Journalistic independence is the cornerstone of who we are as a public broadcaster.” Then that tweet was removed. CBC is not impartial—it is not independent. I think what I shared with you gives witness to that.

There was some excitement over the fact CBC Manitoba covered the NCI when it stopped in Winnipeg in mid-April. Maybe, finally, the CBC was going to report the other side. But it was a low-impact piece in that it didn’t talk to anyone who was vaccine-injured. It didn’t delve into any of the Pfizer data. And it didn’t talk about safety concerns or side effects.

### **Shawn Buckley**

Can I give you even more shocking information? Can you go back to that slide? So Jay Bhattacharya is on the screen—while CBC is there—talking about CBC censoring him. And there was no mention about that.

**Marianne Klowak**

Those stories should have gotten out. And there's so much more that should have gotten out. I mean, basically, it was a low-ball story, in the sense, the bar was low. They didn't delve into what they should have dug into there.

I don't know if any of you have heard of Naomi Wolf. She's a famous American author and journalist. She posted a video on YouTube last month exposing what is in the Pfizer documents. I think it's something that all critically thinking journalists should have been digging into. The FDA wanted the documents to be hidden for 75 years. A judge said, "No." So Pfizer was ordered to release 55,000 documents a month. And according to Wolf, around 2,500 experts from all over the world are interpreting this data. They're churning out reports to tell everybody what's in it. The evidence in her words is dark, devastating.

One of the many findings is that Pfizer knew the vaccine didn't stop the transmission of COVID one month after rollout in November of 2020. But yet public health officials were telling us, were running campaigns to say, "Get the shot to protect those you love." And the media, including the CBC, was still demonizing the unvaccinated as a danger to public safety.

I'm inspired by Wolf and those outside of legacy media who are tenacious and fearless about reporting the truth, and they're truly independent. For me, that would be, on this side of the border: True North, *Western Standard*, podcast by Trish Wood.

I was fortunate that when I left, I was at the end of my career. I still wanted to work for two or three years, but to leave the way I did was crushing. It was heartbreaking, and it was definitely a journey of grief. I was able to take an early retirement.

**Shawn Buckley**

Marianne, I'm going to have to focus you just because we're really running over.

**Marianne Klowak**

I got 30 seconds. Maybe even less.

So my heart goes out to those who are starting out or midway in their careers. And for them the challenge is even more daunting. When I was asked to testify, I said, "You know it's dangerous to tell the truth but I think"—as someone with the Inquiry said to me—"it's even more dangerous to not tell the truth."

So getting our institutions back: Will we get the CBC, our public broadcaster back? I don't know. But I do know that more journalists need to stand up, speak out, and stand firm as a truth-teller.

Thank you.

**Shawn Buckley**

Wait, wait, we have commissioner questions. So, and the Commissioners have questions.



### **Commissioner Massie**

Thank you very much for your testimony. I'm learning on a specific story that you illustrated, what I have witnessed from the outside. So it's interesting to have this confirmation. I'd like to ask one question because I'm not a journalist, so I don't know. But when we, I would say, use or abuse the term "expert" in journals, shouldn't there be some sort of gold standard that,

[01:15:00]

first of all, you cannot cite experts that are faceless, you don't know who they are. And if you cite them, you give their credentials so everybody can judge by themselves what is their expertise.

Secondly, you mentioned that in many stories that were produced over the pandemic, it was one-sided, and it was the official narrative. And every time somebody was trying to come up with a different version, another expert, they were either dismissed or denigrated.

So about your story that went to be checked in Toronto, wouldn't that be a good idea to say, "Okay, you're proposing these other experts. I will accept if you agree that this expert has a public debate with the expert I'm citing in my article." What do you think of that idea?

### **Marianne Klowak**

That would be the ideal. But that was not something they were open to. And I think in Mr. Palmer's presentation earlier, in terms of that term "expert." You know, it goes back to when they were giving me the names of those two people. You know, do your research: Who are these people? Are they really experts? Are we just designating them experts? And that was a problem that I saw throughout the pandemic. It was very specific about who their experts were going to be, and they were going to be portrayed as competent and trustworthy.

But to have a debate. I mean, that's something I challenged them on many topics: like, ivermectin in terms of experts on both sides; the vaccine injuries, being concerned about safety. I was constantly putting that before them, but it was like, I wasn't being heard. And that was coming from the highest level of the CBC.

To be fair to CBC Manitoba, I mean, they cleared the story except for that one web writer. And then it was shut down in Toronto. And I had no power at that point in terms of— You know, I said, "I think these people should have a say, for the sake of fairness and balance, they should be heard." And I even challenged them to publish the story without Toronto's consent, but they wouldn't do that.

### **Commissioner Massie**

So just a complementary question. Was that a common practice in the past to do that sort of confrontation of expert with different view? Or is it something that was never practiced in journalism? You would do it like a common way of reporting on different opinion, [where] you had to really make sure that when two different views are presented that they were framed in a way that the reader could actually make it their own judgment about it. And now it seems that it's completely disappeared from what we're being exposed to. And I can tell you it's not only CBC; we see the same thing in Quebec with all of the journals. We are seeing the same story.



**Marianne Klowak**

It just happened to this degree I would say during COVID. Before we would do thorough vetting of people we put on the air as experts and thorough checking of their credentials and what their experience was. And usually, we'd even check them out with two or three other sources if they were legitimate. And were they in good standing? But that seemed to have all gone by the wayside.

**Commissioner Massie**

Thank you very much.

**Commissioner Kaikkonen**

I was going to say good morning, but I realize it's now good afternoon. Thank you for your testimony.

When I think of the daily PMO news releases that are sent out every day from the PMO's office to which CBC journalists would receive and how religious holidays are identified, recognized, and celebrated. And I should also add rightly welcomed in a democratic nation that recognizes freedom of religion and beliefs as a fundamental right in this country and, similarly, as a foundational principle in our constitution under the supremacy of God and rule of law. These PMO releases often offer very lengthy and detailed descriptions of respective religious traditions.

And then I think back to a comment made by the PMO prior to his first election—Christians need not apply. And then I combine it with a very short PMO release that came out one year, I believe it was 2017 or 2018. I believe it was one paragraph regarding the Christian holiday, the traditional Christmas.

[01:20:00]

Two things come to mind. It appears CBC is broadcasting the PM's personal opinion publicly, essentially becoming the PM's mouthpiece. But even more so, targeting specific faith groups, using hatred for these faith groups to which the PM has publicly disagreed. And if this is the case, how can Canadians be confident in a publicly funded broadcaster that deliberately and intentionally ignores entrenched protected grounds under human rights legislation? And two, should we as Canadians be considering CBC in its current mindset, a danger to society for not adhering to their own "DIE" ideology? That is diverse, inclusive, and equitable treatment of all persons regardless of their faith and personal beliefs to which they subscribe?

**Marianne Klowak**

Which part of that do you want me to respond to? That was—

**Commissioner Kaikkonen**

Whatever you think you should respond to.

**Marianne Klowak**

You know. Here's the thing. That was an issue I had brought forward a number of times in CBC, about the fact of how do we cover different faith groups? And we even had a working

group on that and we invited a number of people in from different faith communities to you know, say, “What are the stories that you think we should be telling?” And for a while there, we were doing that. We had a forum, and it was a wonderful forum: we had a rabbi in there, we had Muslim people, we had Catholics, we had Evangelicals, we had Mennonites, we had Jewish people in there. And there was a consensus working group on, how do we move forward stories that are faith based? And we were going in the right direction for a while.

And then all of a sudden, it just swung the other way where we’d become hostile again. And anyone who expressed their faith in a story—I mean, I look at all the pastors in Manitoba that stood out during the pandemic and defied rules and said, “How can you have 300 people in Costco when you’re telling us we can only have 25 people in our church at a service on Sunday? We’re not going to stand for this.” And they didn’t. And you know, they were hammered by the media for expressing their faith and standing up for it.

So there’s definitely a hostility towards faith in, I mean, just my experience at the CBC. And I was constantly bringing that to the forefront and trying to do more stories that way. And sometimes I was able to get those stories out and in some, I wasn’t able to. But clearly, like, we made a specific decision here in our coverage during the pandemic to hammer those communities in southern Manitoba that were faith-based, that were pushing back against this narrative in the agenda. And that was so wrong.

#### **Commissioner Kaikkonen**

Thank you.

#### **Commissioner Drysdale**

I’m from Manitoba, and I mourn the loss of the CBC as a fair and unbiased news reporter. I had personal friends who were on the I-Team years ago, and I remember the stories they used to bring out.

One of the things that we’ve heard over and over and over again in the testimony is that prior to 2020, things changed: Words changed. Definition of pandemic changed. Definition of vaccine changed. Definition of human rights changed. A lot of things changed. And my question is, usually, you know, there’s an old expression that a leopard can’t change its spots. Was there significant changes in the higher management of the CBC prior to 2020, like in 2018, ’19? How did they accomplish this complete change of philosophy without changing the management?

#### **Marianne Klowak**

Well, I think the management just bought into it. I think, you know, I look at other stories where the language changes in order to make it acceptable to the public. And that’s basically what was being done. The whole thing, the mantra of “safe and effective,” you know, like we didn’t even investigate that. And yet the people that were in management, I mean, these were people that had worked that I-Team you’re talking about.

So, for me, I was shocked and sort of disoriented about, why wasn’t there any pushback about the language and the words we were choosing to use that were dangerous and misleading?

**Commissioner Drysdale**

You know, we heard testimony from many witnesses about how they were treated,

[01:25:00]

specifically, by the CBC. And according to those witness testimony, didn't the CBC go beyond just ignoring certain stories? We heard testimony after testimony of personal character assassinations carried out by the CBC. Were you aware of any of that? Can you corroborate any of that?

**Marianne Klowak**

I was aware of that. I mean, to give the best example would be Byram Bridle. Look what was done to him. I mean, this guy is impeccable credentials, immunologist, and the smear campaign against him was just, it was unconscionable. What was done to his career was a character assassination to discredit him for all the safety concerns he was raising. And I raised that with management because I wanted to interview him in a story. And actually, what was interesting is I wanted to interview, as well, Dr. Christiansen in Saskatoon. He was the doctor, Dr. Francis Christian, he was the doctor who stood up and said, "You know, I haven't met a twelve-year-old yet that understands informed consent." And I wanted to interview him, and I was blocked from doing that as well. It was like, "Oh, no, his reputation, he stood up; he's pushing against the narrative." And I'm thinking that's exactly the people we should be talking to, to have fairness and balance.

**Commissioner Drysdale**

There was also something that you said that I just want to make sure I understood properly. When you were doing one of your original stories and you were quoting the doctors from the Canadian COVID Care Alliance, when comments came back from Toronto, I thought you said one of the comments was, "Well, some of the members are anonymous there." Is that what you said?

**Marianne Klowak**

That's right. That's what they said to me.

**Commissioner Drysdale**

But then, didn't you also tell us that when you asked the Toronto people who the members of the Toronto CBC health group was that you were told they were anonymous?

**Marianne Klowak**

I wasn't told they were anonymous. I was told they were experts at what they did, but I didn't know if that meant they were journalists or were they scientists. I still don't know who they are, but they were not anonymous. But the reference was the Toronto Health Unit was concerned that some members of the Canadian COVID Care Alliance were anonymous. And I said I didn't think that was an issue because the fellow I interviewed had gone full-face on camera. But the reason for their anonymity, they were concerned, like, what did that mean? And I said, "Maybe it meant the fact that they're trying to continue in their practice without being disciplined." But for them that was an issue.

**Commissioner Drysdale**

But they were—

**Marianne Klowak**

But it was unrelated to the story.

**Shawn Buckley**

Can I just break in for a second because we've got a couple of hard starts that I just need to inform you of. We have a person online that basically if we don't start immediately, she'll be a short witness. And then I was hoping, you know, then we have a shorter lunch break to hit another hard start. We could bring Marianne back like we had done with Rodney for questions at the end of the day.

**Commissioner Drysdale**

It's not necessary.

**Shawn Buckley**

So, yeah, and I'm sorry to cut that short, Marianne. It's just we're trying to manage some other witnesses too. So on behalf of the National Citizens Inquiry, I sincerely thank you for coming and attending. I know that it was a big step, but we really appreciate you sharing with us some insight that we couldn't get unless you came and shared with us. So deeply, thank you.

**Marianne Klowak**

Thank you for this opportunity. Thank you.

[01:28:58]

***Final Review and Approval:*** Margaret Phillips, September 6, 2023.

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