



NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Ottawa, ON

Day 2

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EVIDENCE

Witness 13: Laurier Mantil

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[00:00:00]

Wayne Lenhardt

Hello, Laurier. Could you give us your full name, and spell it for us, and then I'll do an oath with you.

Laurier Mantil

My name is Laurier Mantil, L-A-U-R-I-E-R M-A-N-T-I-L.

Wayne Lenhardt

And you promise that the testimony you'll give today will be the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth?

Laurier Mantil

Yes.

Wayne Lenhardt

Thank you.

You have been a letter carrier with a federally regulated corporation and you've done that for some time.

Laurier Mantil

Mm-hmm.

Wayne Lenhardt

So maybe let's pick up the story in 2021, and you can tell us what happened.

Laurier Mantil

Yeah, so in 2021, November, to be specific, my employer imposed a vaccine mandate. And at the time, at the end of November 2021, I was about six weeks pregnant.

Wayne Lenhardt

Okay, so a vaccine mandate came in. Everyone had to get it, no exceptions.

Laurier Mantil

Yeah, it was a blanket policy, so everyone had to get it. They weren't offering any rapid testing. It was no job, no job.

Wayne Lenhardt

But you had a specific reason for not getting it, correct?

Laurier Mantil

Yeah, I was pregnant.

Wayne Lenhardt

So you were pregnant for about a month at that point?

Laurier Mantil

Yeah, about six weeks.

Wayne Lenhardt

You weren't going to tell anybody, but at a certain point you ended up having to do that just because of the mandates, correct?

Laurier Mantil

Yeah.

Wayne Lenhardt

So your privacy got violated. But also, were you concerned about your baby?

Laurier Mantil

Yeah, absolutely. At the time, there was no evidence of safety. My employer did not provide any sort of handouts about any evidence of safety or why we should be taking these to keep our jobs. So I was really, really concerned. I was just trying to be really diligent and kind of decide my next steps because I was facing the loss of my employment, my job that I love, and I just wanted to be at work. I was an essential worker and I had worked the whole pandemic. And for my pregnancy, I felt for my mental health and for my physical health being pregnant, for me, the best thing was to stay at work and keep working and getting the exercise that I was getting. So I was really, really concerned, yeah.

Wayne Lenhardt

And at some point, did you apply for an exemption?

Laurier Mantil

I did. We had to attest our vaccine status and by a certain date. And if we hadn't attested, we would be kicked out and on an unpaid leave for we didn't know how long, if it was going to end up in a termination. So I did attest at the very last minute because I just wanted to stay at work, and so I tried to apply for an exemption at that time.

Wayne Lenhardt

And what happened with that?

Laurier Mantil

So I applied under a human rights exemption, not a medical exemption. I didn't really hear back from them right away. I was just allowed to be at work and keep working. But every day, I didn't know what was going to happen. I didn't know when I showed up to work if I was going to be booted out, like my other co-workers already had been at that time.

So here I was. I was waiting for them to get back to me about my exemption, waiting, waiting. Time went on. Months went on. And I never heard from them, and the only time I heard from them was at the very end, towards the end of my pregnancy. They contacted me and said, "This seems to be a medical case. Do you want to change your exemption to medical?" So I had gone this whole time—I guess I had an unofficial exemption—but I didn't hear from them. And they tried to get me to change over to medical, and I refused. And I went off on mat leave a couple months later.

Wayne Lenhardt

Okay, so you continued to work, but some of your cohorts ended up being put on leave without pay. Correct?

Laurier Mantil

Yeah, all my fellow employees that did not want to attest or did not get the jab were put on leave without pay—for seven months they were out without an income.

Wayne Lenhardt

So you kind of lucked out on that one and didn't suffer seven months without pay like some of your other cohorts.

Laurier Mantil

I was the only one in my post office that was unvaccinated, working.

Wayne Lenhardt

Okay.

[00:05:00]

So what other negatives did you suffer?

Laurier Mantil

Just the utter despair of not knowing where my career was going. I'm seven years in to my career, which is fairly new in my position, so I was just trying to figure things out. My partner and I just bought a house. This is our first baby, so there's a lot of things going on. I was having difficulty sleeping at night, difficulty even going into work because I felt so alone. All my other co-workers were not there, and I was the only that was allowed to be there, so it was very difficult.

Wayne Lenhardt

So again, you couldn't go to movie theatres; you couldn't go to gatherings; you couldn't go to restaurants, all that stuff.

Laurier Mantil

I was denied entry to a movie theatre, a local one, actually for not wearing a mask while I was pregnant.

Wayne Lenhardt

And given that you were pregnant, was there any issues with respect to your partner assisting you during that time?

Laurier Mantil

Yeah, like my partner was my rock. I wouldn't have got through this without him. At one point, he even said that he would get it if I had to get it. But I thought, you know what, there's too many red flags. I had worked outside the whole pandemic. I worked mostly alone, walking on an average 20 kilometres a day. I was very healthy and I said, "No, I'm not getting this. If I'm going to lose everything, I'm going to have to fight for it." So that's why I applied for the exemption and tried to get around it.

Wayne Lenhardt

And did you have to wear a mask during this period of time?

Laurier Mantil

Yeah, we had to wear a mask, and if I didn't, you'd be suspended.

Wayne Lenhardt

Okay.

Laurier Mantil

Inside. Outside, I didn't wear it when I was outside, delivering.

Wayne Lenhardt

Did you feel you were allowed informed consent when you made your decision, or did they pressure you to proceed?

Laurier Mantil

Well, I thought it was my job, or, you know, so there was coercion there. No, I didn't have informed consent because at the time there was no evidence that it was safe for the fetus. That's what I was concerned about. They were saying it was okay for pregnant women, go ahead and get it. But I never saw anything about the fetus specifically. So that's what I was really concerned about.

Wayne Lenhardt

Okay. Is there anything else you want to tell us about your situations at that time?

Laurier Mantil

No, I just want to say I'm a very private person, so it was very hard. It took courage to come here today. But I really wanted to do this for all the other pregnant women during this time that may have had a similar story to mine. Also, all the babies that are not here. All my co-workers that took seven months without pay. And obviously my baby and my partner, because I wouldn't be here without them.

Wayne Lenhardt

Are there any questions from the Commissioners?

Commissioner Kaikkonen

Real quick, did all of your co-workers that went without pay for seven months, did they come back?

Laurier Mantil

Yeah, they were asked to come back after seven months. They were allowed to come back.

Commissioner Kaikkonen

And did you suffer anything from anybody who remained at the post office that would have known that you were not vaxxed. Did anybody say anything?

Laurier Mantil

They said it was going to be a private matter, people wouldn't know. But everyone knew. I had a few comments, but everyone knew everyone's status pretty much there. So there was no privacy of people's decisions. Everyone who wasn't there, you knew that they weren't complying with the mandate. And there was nothing in our collective agreement about this either.

Commissioner Kaikkonen

Thank you.

Wayne Lenhardt

Any other questions from the Commissioners? On behalf of the National Citizens Inquiry, I want to thank you very much for coming and telling us your story.

Laurier Mantil

Thank you.

Wayne Lenhardt

Thank you.

[00:09:38]

Final Review and Approval: Margaret Phillips, 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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