



## NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Quebec, QC

May 13, 2023

Day 3

### EVIDENCE

(Translated from the French)

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**Witness 1: Jérémie Miller**

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[00:00:00]

#### **Konstantinos Merakos**

So good morning, everyone, to our third marathon day. I'd like to thank everyone for their patience: the online viewers, the audience, the team, the commissioners, the lawyers and the technicians. So if you'll excuse me, I'm going to present myself for the third time, but it's for new people, new viewers who don't know us.

My name is Konstantinos Merakos. I'm a lawyer in Canada with Bergman & Associates. And just a little bit about us to explain why we're here: In 2020 and 2021 our firm, Bergman & Associates, on behalf of federal public service employees, took the federal government to court for having violated its employees' constitutional rights—rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms—and human rights, on grounds of the choice of bodily integrity, medical choice, and the right to privacy.

I'd like to congratulate the Inquiry first, for having offered its professionalism, for having offered a level of transparency and willingness to listen and learn among citizens, and for having an exchange that is respectful and conducted with honour among people. All this is extremely important for a free and democratic society, especially in today's world. I'd also like to congratulate you because there have been many testimonies so far from different people with different experiences, different cultures, and different backgrounds.

Today we have testimony from another unique perspective. I'd like to welcome Jérémie Miller, who is with us in person today. Hello, Jérémie.

#### **Jérémie Miller**

Hello.

#### **Konstantinos Merakos**

Do you prefer Jérémie or Monsieur Miller?

**Jérémie Miller**

It doesn't matter.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

It doesn't matter, okay. We'll say Jérémie, as we would among friends. Okay. I hope it'll be easier for you, for your testimony. I want you to be calm, don't worry. If you need a minute, don't hesitate to ask. I'm going to start by swearing you in. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? Say, "I do" or "I solemnly swear."

**Jérémie Miller**

I solemnly affirm.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

Excellent. Your name, please, and would you spell it?

**Jérémie Miller**

Jérémie Miller. J-E-R-E-M-I-E M-I-L-L-E-R.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

Okay. So Jérémie, let's start at the beginning of the story, around the vaccination. According to you, it was from that day onwards that you started to have questions. So go ahead.

**Jérémie Miller**

Yes, well, I'd had questions even before the vaccination but when it came time to decide whether I was going to get vaccinated—so we're talking about the end of May, the beginning of June in 2021—my wife and I were talking. And I said to her, "Well, listen, I don't really mind getting vaccinated. I don't see the importance of getting vaccinated, but I don't mind. I just don't think mass vaccination will ultimately have much effect on the continuation of the pandemic."

I was basing my opinion on the statistics available from Israel, which had a much higher vaccination rate at the time. And I won't go into the details, but I told her, "In six months' time, we'll be back to square one even if we have mass vaccinations." And indeed, three, four months later, the Delta variant arrived; about six months later, there was Omicron. Seven months later, in Quebec, we had serial closures around the holiday season in 2021 and even a second curfew.

My decision to take the vaccine was, in fact, because I was strongly against compulsory vaccination. I could see that this was what was coming, and I wanted to be able to speak from a position that would be accepted by the people around me, and not be categorized as a "whacko" who believes that vaccination is dangerous or bad or whatever. And at that time, people weren't listening at all to what I had to say.

[00:05:00]

That was really the only reason I wanted to be vaccinated, so “I’m going to get vaccinated.”  
The first dose I got—

**Konstantinos Merakos**

How did it go after the first dose?

**Jérémie Miller**

After the first dose—in fact, 24 hours later—I was in the office working quietly when suddenly, I began to have difficulty breathing. I had a pain in my chest. It lasted about two to three hours, so it wasn’t very long. It was long enough to be worrisome, but I didn’t go straight to hospital because eventually it passed on its own.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

Excuse me, how long after?

**Jérémie Miller**

Twenty-four hours after the first dose.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

Twenty-four hours later. Thank you.

**Jérémie Miller**

And I didn’t think about it again until the next dose—the second dose—which was a month later. And I arrived to get vaccinated and the nurses looked at me, and there were four or five nurses around me saying, “No, you should see a doctor before you have your second dose. With the side effects you had from the first dose, it could actually be quite serious.”

At that point, I made an appointment to see a family doctor. My question at the time was, “What’s the risk of taking the second dose in my situation, given that I had these effects with the first dose?” And we know that it can be up to ten times more serious after the second dose. So I wanted a rough idea: “What are the risks? Have you seen other cases like this? And how should I proceed with this?” The doctor’s response to this question was, “Well, there are more benefits than side effects or problems with vaccination.” And I wasn’t really satisfied with that. I’m a safety officer. I work in risk management. My question was to determine the level of risk, not to determine whether there are more benefits than side effects in the general population; it was in my personal situation.

Then I heard stories of two other contacts—not close friends but contacts—who were also told by their doctor, or by certain doctors, that they should receive the COVID vaccine, even though in one case she’d been told for a decade not to take any more vaccinations because she’d had an autoimmune disease triggered by another vaccination that I can’t recall. Then the second friend: this woman tended to have a lot of thrombosis and a doctor told her to take this vaccine anyway. She took it and of course she suffered from thrombosis as a result.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

So there were concerns. You went to the doctor looking for an answer because you were open, but you wanted to balance the risks and benefits. And in your opinion, were you satisfied that you'd been given free and informed consent, that you'd been given all the information, and that you could say, "Well, I got the answer I wanted: clear, neat and precise"?

**Jérémie Miller**

In fact, no. The answer I got was more or less the public health message. It wasn't an informed medical opinion on my situation based on my medical history, which is what I was really trying to get. It was just a very generic message, and I decided not to have the second dose because of that.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

Allow me to interrupt you. You mentioned history; Do you have a pre-existing history of problems here at this level [gestures targeting the heart and lungs]?

**Jérémie Miller**

No, actually, it's more the case history of the first dose.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

Okay, but in general—

**Jérémie Miller**

In general, no, I didn't have any problems. But I did know that I was in the population most at risk of heart problems following vaccination because I'm a relatively healthy young man. I already had this information before I went for the vaccination, after the effects of the first dose. But I wanted a clearer answer.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

What do you think were the effects for a young, healthy man? What do you think the risks are? What would your doctor have told you, for example?

**Jérémie Miller**

Well, I knew there were risks; it wasn't the doctor who told me about them: risks of pericarditis, myocarditis, among other risks for young men. And even my wife met a perfectly healthy young man in his early twenties who, for several months after his vaccination, couldn't even walk a long distance because he had heart problems. So I wasn't prepared to put that on the line.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

One last question before the next topic: Is this doctor a family doctor you've had for a long time, or is it someone you found because you previously didn't have a family doctor?

**Jérémie Miller**

It was a family doctor who was replacing my family doctor who was on leave, but even then, I'd only seen my family doctor once.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

Okay. Even then, there was something missing.

**Jérémie Miller**

Yes, I didn't have a relationship with that doctor.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

Okay. So the next step is for you to talk about your social experiences with the health measures in general.

**Jérémie Miller**

Yes, more broadly. I work in the aviation industry, so from the first days of the state of emergency, I lost my job within the first two weeks.

[00:10:00]

Then for six months, it was impossible to find another job. I was too qualified for unskilled jobs; they knew it was dangerous to hire me because I'd leave if other opportunities opened up in aviation. So I lost my job for six months. I got through it relatively well financially because I didn't have many expenses, but it's clear that my financial situation right now is much worse than it would have been if I'd kept that job and worked those six months. I wouldn't be in the same place at all in my life right now.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

And Jérémie, do you have a family? Do you have any children?

**Jérémie Miller**

I have gotten married and had children, but that was later.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

Okay. Excellent.

**Jérémie Miller**

As for the vaccine passport, well, I couldn't get one. I'd had only one dose. What I found most damaging wasn't necessarily not being allowed to go to certain places—although to me that seemed unjustified on the part of the government, and very questionable to say the least—but it was above all the message coming from the government, the message we were getting from everyone around us, saying, "It's your fault we're still in a pandemic; it's the fault of the unvaccinated."

In fact, since the first wave, the government has been looking for scapegoats. So at first it was the spring break, which was earlier in Quebec than elsewhere, that made the situation worse in Quebec. Then it was the fault of the “covidiot.” Then after mass vaccination, it was the fault of the unvaccinated.

And when I’d talk about my particular situation, a lot of people would say, “Oh yeah, you’re different,” but I’m no different. People don’t get vaccinated for many reasons. Some of them are really valid. And in implementing these requirements on a large scale, the government completely forgot about this impact: that there were people who had valid reasons, who were just completely forgotten in all of this, and who then suffered the consequences for something that was beyond their control.

### **Konstantinos Merakos**

Some had medical exemptions, religious exemptions.

### **Jérémie Miller**

Personally, I had to be vaccinated because I worked in the aviation industry. I managed to get a vaccination exemption, not for medical reasons because I didn’t have a precise diagnosis—I went to the doctor too late and I would have had to go straight away when I developed symptoms. But I managed to get it for religious reasons.

In fact, it’s a conscientious objection because at the federal level, the religious exemption is also a conscientious exemption. I was against compulsory vaccination; and I submitted this request for exemption, which was accepted because—among other things—the general manager of my company, the owner of the company, and several other people in the company were also against compulsory vaccination and were not vaccinated either. And the airport manager had no interest in playing police officer when it came to vaccinating employees at her airport.

So at that time, we had these exemptions that were authorized quite easily, but I know that’s not the case for everyone. I know I fell in with a company that accepted this kind of thing. It isn’t the case for everyone.

### **Konstantinos Merakos**

Yes, so here we could talk about exemptions based on freedom of religion, for example. So you offer an interesting perspective because in society, there are different cultures and there are different religions. And I imagine that for some people who don’t frequent religious venues, they haven’t had the experience of what happened, whether it be in a church, a mosque, a synagogue. So if you like, can you talk about what happened in the religious sphere?

### **Jérémie Miller**

So in fact, at the religious level it’s an interesting question. Because the right to practice one’s faith is a right that is protected by the Constitution with good reason, because someone who isn’t religious himself doesn’t have many conceptual tools to understand the religious phenomenon. And so there is constitutional protection to ensure that these values, which are central to the lives of believers, are protected from a government that might override certain elements that are important to someone who is religious.

What I found deplorable was that we had a government that is secular—that wants to be secular, that seeks to be secular, to be perceived as secular—that is generally also made up of atheists and agnostics at about probably the same ratio as the general population.

[00:15:00]

They were the ones who assumed the right to decide whether the Church was essential or not, even though they didn't necessarily have the requisite religious knowledge to have an enlightened perspective on the matter. They went so far as to decide where, when, how, why we could practise our faith—and even beyond that, who could practice their faith—at the outset. They did it by limiting the number of people in places of worship, which was problematic enough: in the churches I attended, we were obligated to hold two different services and to split the church in two, which is unheard of in a liberal democratic society. And then, by eventually imposing the vaccine passport, which is absolutely immoral from a theological point of view.

The government has no place deciding who has the right to come to church. And church leaders were put in a position where they were forced to say to believers, to the faithful who had been in their church for decades, “No, you—you don't have the right to come in.” There are many churches that decided to simply close and wait it out. Unfortunately, there are a few churches that decided to implement it. The church I grew up in—it's no longer the church I attend—decided to implement it. It led to a division in the church that is still present.

So the government, by interfering where it had neither the knowledge nor the right from a constitutional point of view, has caused damage that is potentially irreparable. They've inflicted it on families, but they've also inflicted it on religious families—on families of faith—and I find that irresponsible. Irresponsible.

### **Konstantinos Merakos**

Which means that in your opinion, according to the government's statements and actions, there's a division not only in the church or religious center, but in society as a whole. Would you agree that this would constitute a “divide and conquer” in society? What was your understanding of why the government was using such a divisive tactic in society?

### **Jérémie Miller**

I think it's mostly ignorance. I think it's ignorance, among other things you know. Because, well— Between the curfew issue that would not have impacted the homeless in Montreal and the Prime Minister saying, “Ah, there are plenty of resources for all the homeless,” that just demonstrated an ignorance of certain segments of society. It's because they were too small a group—just the executives—to be making all the decisions unilaterally as a crisis unit—even smaller than just the executives. I think that it's the same reason at the religious level too: it was just ignorance of the religious reality. That's how I understand it. I don't think it was deliberate.

### **Konstantinos Merakos**

Okay, excellent. Jérémie, do you have one last thing to add, something you'd like to say to the world here right now, or to our viewers?

**Jérémie Miller**

Well, there was only one subject I would have liked to cover, but I don't have the time.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

Go ahead in one sentence.

**Jérémie Miller**

As a safety officer in an airline company, I work in risk management and emergency measures management. And there are some really basic, conceptual elements that I have some really serious questions about in terms of how the pandemic was managed at the governmental level, mainly in terms of assessing the effects of the health measures and the long-term effects of the measures that were put in place: something that the government to this day systematically refuses to do at all levels of government. They don't want to hold investigations that question their decisions, either at the parliamentary level or even at the civil level—even though that's the basis of risk management: you want to learn from the past to prepare for the future. Governments systematically refuse and that, to me, is incomprehensible.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

Okay. So last comment: in your opinion, because you work in risk management, could things have been done better over the last three years? Would you agree that the approach could have been more humane?

**Jérémie Miller**

Well, first I think that the risk analysis of the health measures was botched and not well explained, and secondly that the analysis of long-term effects was not carried out. There was a refusal to do so and that's inexcusable. It's really inexcusable.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

Okay. Thank you, Jérémie. I'll now open the floor to questions from the commissioners. Go ahead.

**Jérémie Miller**

[In English] I can take questions in English also.

**Commissioner Massie**

But we will start in French.

**Jérémie Miller**

Excellent.

**Commissioner Massie**

First of all, I'd like to thank you, Monsieur Miller, for your testimony.



[00:20:00]

I have to admit, I was very impressed by the depth of your reflection and the range of elements you covered in terms of the dimensions of the health crisis; it is not just societal, but has a spiritual dimension that you brought into the discussion which is very interesting. In fact, when I closed my eyes, I wondered whether I was dealing with a young man or a very wise, mature man. And I have to admit that when I opened my eyes, I was always surprised, every time, to hear you. It's very refreshing to see young people like you expressing themselves so well and taking a stand.

I'd like to ask you a few questions about the various aspects you've covered. The first is about your approach. You mentioned that you carried out relatively rigorous analyses; and since you're in risk management, I think you have the mental framework to carry out analyses that will lead you to draw certain conclusions. And based on these analyses, you concluded that, in your case, vaccination was not indicated. But you decided to vaccinate anyway. I understand that where you worked, it was strongly recommended even if it wasn't yet compulsory at the time you decided to be vaccinated. Is this the case?

**Jérémie Miller**

Well, actually, there were a lot of dissenting voices at work even so. But more generally it was within society that made me—

**Commissioner Massie**

Within society.

**Jérémie Miller**

Within society in general.

**Commissioner Massie**

And your position was to say, "I'm not ideologically opposed to vaccination, but in this case, I want to express my opposition. I want to show that I'm not ideologically opposed by getting vaccinated." If I've understood you correctly, that's what you did?

**Jérémie Miller**

Well in today's world, image is more important than content. It's the reality of the matter and that's very unfortunate. But I knew that image. If I wasn't vaccinated, people would say, "Ah, but that's because you're just thinking about yourself, you just want your own freedoms and you don't want care about the rest of society." There are a lot of people I knew who weren't vaccinated. They were the most supportive people I've known, who gave a lot of their time to society. It wasn't a question of that at all. In fact, I wanted to get that image completely out of the way so I could speak out against compulsory vaccination. Because that's really what I found problematic. I knew it was coming too.

**Commissioner Massie**

So in the sequence of events, when you go back to get the second dose, what I understand is that you had a conversation with the people who were there to vaccinate; and in the course of that conversation you told them that you had had some adverse effects and that worried

you. What did they say when they advised you: “Well, maybe, in your case, it would be a good idea to seek consultation before getting the vaccine”? From all the testimonies we’ve heard to date in the Inquiry, it’s very rare that people who have been confronted with these situations have had this kind of advice.

Could you tell me a little more about the kind of conversation you had at the time when you were advised to see a doctor?

**Jérémie Miller**

Yes. In fact, when I went to get my second dose, I just wanted to get it over with and move on. So when the nurse stopped me and said, “Wait, I’m going to see my superiors”—they were other nurses but they were in charge of the vaccination center, which was pretty big—I was more concerned about it because I’d never made the connection to myocarditis or pericarditis either. In fact, the thing that really struck me was that I had a metallic taste in my mouth. I thought it was strange, and so I researched it, but I didn’t find anything about myocarditis or pericarditis. But when she told me, I questioned myself a bit more: “Ah, okay, maybe it’s more serious than I thought.”

And then there were four or five nurses, including those in charge of the vaccination site, who said, “No, that really doesn’t sound good, and we don’t feel comfortable giving it to you before getting a doctor’s opinion.” Because they didn’t want anything to happen at that time and to have to deal with a serious situation. They wanted to make sure they had a doctor’s opinion because they weren’t able to assess the risk at that level.

**Commissioner Massie**

So what you experienced was a clear indication that this kind of questioning could be done in the vaccination centres, even if many people told us that they were vaccinated without being asked many questions?

[00:25:00]

**Jérémie Miller**

Well for the first dose, there weren’t many questions; they were very generic. I’m in good health, I’ve never had any problems, so I was cleared to get vaccinated as a matter of course. For the second vaccination you had to go through another nurse who asked you what your side effects were from the first dose, so that’s when it was caught. What I found deplorable was that the nurses seemed much more worried than the doctor. As for the doctor, it seemed to be absolutely nothing because he didn’t examine me for another month.

**Commissioner Massie**

Finally, my other question concerns what I would call your conscientious objection to compulsory vaccination which, according to your analyses, you found to be unsupported, and also the element of social discrimination that this implies. And you made a comment that I find quite rare in people of your age, which was: “How can a society run by people who, for the most part, are non-believers or agnostics understand what religious practice means for people who practise religion?”

And when you made this comment, I was reminded of a phrase by [Alexis de] Tocqueville who wrote extensively on democracy. He said that in a democracy, firewalls or institutions have to be put in place to protect minorities from the tyranny of the majority. Isn't this what we experienced in this lockdown, particularly in terms of religious practice? As I travelled across Canada, I sensed that in other parts of the country, religious practice was, perhaps, more frequent than in Quebec. In Quebec, it seems to me that religious practice is rather low compared to the rest of Canada.

### **Jérémie Miller**

Well, that's one of the reasons I wanted to talk about it: because in Quebec, there are fewer of us. Well, historically, there are reasons for that too.

And what I deplore is the fact that—if we go back to March 2020—we see that at the start of the crisis, it was as if the government had touched a “panic” button. And all of a sudden, there were no more safeguards. All the institutions that were in place to protect minorities were completely sidelined in favor of a crisis unit run by a tiny group of people with a very, very, very limited perspective that would not allow the justifiable protection of minorities. As we've seen from a number of health measures, this had a disproportionate impact on marginal populations: the poorest, the most religious, and so on.

And for me, that's inexcusable because we have parliamentary institutions for a reason. But it's as if we had a government that—because it was quicker and simpler—just decided to say, “No, we'll put that aside and go ahead pragmatically.” This goes against the very basis of a liberal democracy. I was already of this opinion long before the vaccination campaign, and it's one of the factors that informed my decision in this respect.

### **Commissioner Massie**

My last question concerns the question put to you by Monsieur Konstantinos: What is your position on what happened during the crisis and on what we currently face? And I think that your attitude towards this is relatively Christian or benevolent, in the sense that your main explanation is ignorance, which is a perfectly plausible explanation. But with the accumulation of all the information available, how far can ignorance be pleaded today?

### **Jérémie Miller**

I have already said what I could be confident in saying. And further, in a society where there's no longer any trust in our fellow man, dialogue actually becomes impossible. That's part of our Judeo-Christian heritage. I think you need to have at least an inkling of the good faith of people who are of a contrary opinion in order to be able to work together constructively.

[00:30:00]

And this is another reason that I wanted to speak publicly. Because in my opinion, everything I said during the pandemic privately to the people around me— I think it is important in a democracy that it's said, that it's heard, so that we can work constructively. I don't think it's constructive or useful in the long term to simply repudiate the institutions that are in place. It's important to reaffirm their foundation and solidify the foundations that have been shaken, I believe, by ignorance; some might say by malfeasance but I'd only go so far as to say by ignorance.

**Commissioner Massie**

Thank you very much for your testimony.

[In English] Any questions, Ken?

**Commissioner Drysdale**

[In English] Good morning. In your testimony, you talked about government messaging that seemed to target—or not tolerate—the unvaxxed. And my question is: How did the messaging that you heard from Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Legault make you feel?

**Jérémie Miller**

Okay. In my testimony, I spoke about the messages from the governments. And the question is how I felt about the way Monsieur Trudeau and Monsieur Legault communicated with the public. I felt a lack of respect, a lack of listening, which was surprising at first. But eventually, after two-and-a-half years of this kind of situation, you get used to it. But it showed me that there was no possible way to make a government listen to reason when it had decided to distance itself from its parliamentary base, and that there was really no will to listen to the citizens they were supposed to serve at the grassroots level. And that's certainly deplorable.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

Jérémie, be a little more specific, especially towards the word that the commissioner used: the word 'tolerate,' especially the phrase that it was used in.

**Jérémie Miller**

[In English] "Do we tolerate these people?" [In French] That question, yes?

**Konstantinos Merakos**

Yes, just a clarification on exactly that question.

**Jérémie Miller**

If a prime minister doesn't even tolerate a significant portion of his population, how can we move forward as a country? Really, my reaction as a citizen was to say, "It's impossible to recover from this. Well, it's possible, but it takes a lot of work at the level—"

It doesn't demonstrate the integrity of our Prime Minister or the ability to listen that's necessary for someone in that position in order to move forward as a society together. The language is "exclusionary" [in English]; I'm not sure of the French word.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

That's perfect, yes.

**Jérémie Miller**

And these types of comments destroy our society in my opinion.

**Konstantinos Merakos**

Excellent. So Commissioners, thank you so much for your questions. Jérémie Miller, once again, thank you sincerely for your testimony today. You're a brilliant young man. Thank you very much and we wish you every success in the future. Once again, thank you, thank you.

**Jérémie Miller**

Thank you.

[00:33:46]

***Final Review and Approval:*** Erin Thiessen, November 21, 2023.

*The evidence offered in this transcript is a true and faithful record of witness testimony given during the National Citizens Inquiry (NCI) hearings. The transcript was prepared by members of a team of volunteers using an "intelligent verbatim" transcription method, and further translated from the original French.*

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