



NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Quebec, QC

Day 3

May 13, 2023

EVIDENCE

(Translated from the French)

Witness 11: Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

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[00:00:00]

Chantale Collard

Hello. Chantale Collard: lawyer and attorney for the National Citizens Inquiry today, Saturday, May 13. Today we have with us Dr. Jean St-Arnaud. First of all, Dr. St-Arnaud, I'm going to ask you to identify yourself by your first and last name, if you could spell that too.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Jean St-Arnaud, J-E-A-N S-T-A-R-N-A-U-D.

Chantale Collard

And I'll swear you in. Do you affirm or swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? Say, "I affirm," or "I do."

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

I affirm.

Chantale Collard

So first of all, thank you very much for agreeing to testify at the Inquiry. We've had the chance to talk together, and I think that what you're going to tell us will benefit us all. First of all, yes, you're an expert, but you're also a father and a grandfather. And of course, you studied medicine in Sherbrooke some years ago. You were a family doctor but you also had a specialty with an obstetrics component. After that, well, there's even a book that was written, I think, jointly with your wife: *Le médecin accoucheur que les femmes ont fait naître* [The obstetrician that women gave birth to]. You're going to tell us all about it. And as I was saying, you're a father of three, grandfather of seven grandchildren, and retired family doctor—but only for the past three years. Is that correct?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Yes.

Chantale Collard

And I know how difficult it is for you to come and testify at the Inquiry. It involves a lot of emotions, one might say. So I'm going to ask you first: What motivated you to come and testify here today, your primary motivation?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Before answering your question, if I may, I'd like to add that social medicine has been a key element in my professional development. During the years when I was doing my residency in family medicine, the Université de Sherbrooke was developing the social medicine approach, and this has been a common thread running through my entire practice. The essential thread was that, for me, the doctor is at the service of the patient and not the other way around.

So I was very reluctant to testify before you because I feel very small, vulnerable, enervated, and often powerless. What motivated me to testify is that I don't think I'm alone in Quebec in experiencing such feelings. My journey began in 2020.

Chantale Collard

I was also going to ask you, Dr. St-Arnaud, about your underlying motivation, which is to ensure that people don't feel alone. That's one of the reasons why you're here before the Inquiry. So tell us about your journey in 2020. When the pandemic broke out in March or April 2020, did you buy into the narrative? Tell us about that. What happened, and how did you get there?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

So yes, I did buy into the "scientific consensus" that I now put in quotation marks, and I've been vaccinated three times.

Chantale Collard

So three doses.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Three doses. And then, oh surprise, I got COVID after that.

Chantale Collard

Oh, you did not have it before?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

That's it.

Chantale Collard

You had it afterwards.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Fortunately, it was an Omicron episode, and a harmless one that lasted five or six days with few symptoms.

[00:05:00]

Chantale Collard

Didn't you have any symptoms after the first, second, or third?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

No, I was spared. I've had no negative or adverse reactions to any of the vaccines I've received.

Chantale Collard

And I want to ask you: Why wasn't there a fourth dose?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Ah well, then there was a major change in my journey. One of my children, my daughter, had made the medically justified choice not to be vaccinated. My wife, Lise, and I were very supportive of our daughter's decision. Except that it was she who questioned us, who led us to change, who shared with us her convictions—and she has some solid ones—that led us to realize that vaccination was not as safe and effective as we'd been told. And that's when Lise and I went to the demonstration in front of the Collège des médecins [College of Physicians] organized by Réinfo Covid at the time.

Chantale Collard

So this was after the discussion you had with your daughter?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Yes.

Chantale Collard

Essentially, you supported her choice not to be vaccinated; and in the end, she supported you in your choice to be vaccinated. But in the end, the roles were reversed, so to speak.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Exactly. I remember my daughter's reaction when I told her I wouldn't be going for the fourth dose: "Yippee!"

Chantale Collard

Ah, okay, that's what we wanted to know; so your daughter's reaction was one of relief.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

She was very happy and relieved, yes.

Chantale Collard

Then you understood a little later why she was relieved? You went to a demonstration?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Exactly. So there was a demonstration in front of the Collège des médecins and I had the chance to meet several people: René Lavigueur, Patrick Provost, Bernard Massie. And Lise and I allowed ourselves to be challenged by their message. I learned that René Lavigueur is a competent family doctor, and I learned that Patrick Provost is a recognized, competent scientist. I still don't understand why he's been deemed a conspiracy theorist all of a sudden.

Chantale Collard

Did you know them beforehand?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

No, not at all. They were new to me. And then I got a call from René Lavigueur who said, "Jean, would you agree to come and testify with us at the Collège des médecins?" This was following the two letters that had been sent—one in October, I think, and the other in February—asking the Collège des médecins to impose a moratorium, to stop vaccinating pregnant women and children.

Chantale Collard

So you sent this letter following your meeting with Dr. Lavigueur and Patrick Provost. Have you had any feedback on this letter? Did you receive an answer? In what year were the first letters written?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

That was last February.

Chantale Collard

That you sent this letter?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

No, the first letter was sent in October. I was not a signatory to that first letter.

Chantale Collard

What year, Dr. St-Arnaud? 2021?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

I'm having a bit of trouble with dates at my age.

Chantale Collard

Was it during the pandemic?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Oh yes, it's October.

Chantale Collard

Probably 2021 or 2020.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

2022. And the second letter, which I co-signed with over a hundred others, led to a meeting with the Collège, which agreed to meet with us.

[00:10:00]

And so the aim of our action at the Collège des médecins was to ask that the precautionary principle be respected, and to call for a halt to the vaccination of pregnant women and children. And as this was an area in which I'd been involved all my professional life, I was interested. So I spontaneously replied to Dr. Lavigneur, "Yes, I'll gladly go along with you."

Chantale Collard

You were going to testify before the Collège des médecins directly?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

That's right.

Chantale Collard

Okay.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

We were received in a very structured way, with very limited time. And the main thrust of my testimony to the Collège des médecins was to talk about the scientific consensus that had been debunked during my 45 years of practice. I'm not going to talk about the four consensus I told them about. I'm just going to quickly tell you about the one that, for me, was the most important.

When I started work as a young doctor in 1975, there was only one way to give birth. It was called the surgical model: mom on her back on an operating table, legs in stirrups, sterile drapes, all the actors, including dad, who had only recently been admitted to the delivery room—before that, he couldn't go—disguised, excuse me, dressed up as if for surgery.

Chantale Collard

Okay.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

After that, I got a lot of requests from moms and dads saying, “Is there any other way to give birth?”

And then I went to train with Murray Enkin at McMaster University and I also went to train with Michel Odent in Pithiviers near Paris, to see how they managed requests for a different model, which we called the birth room. At that time, the big argument against abandoning the surgical model was: “You’re going to have infections; it’s going to be dreadful.”

Chantale Collard

That was back when?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Yes, in 1975, during the years '75-'80.

Chantale Collard

Okay.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

So we developed the concept of the birthing room, and it spread to many hospitals in Quebec. And there were no infections.

Chantale Collard

There were no infections.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

The big difference was that, while the medical authorities imposed a particular way of giving birth, which was always the same, we took this power and handed it over to the couples. And in the birthing room, it was the couples who decided how they wanted to give birth.

Chantale Collard

And now I imagine you’re going to draw a parallel with the COVID period from what you’re saying.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Yes. I think I’ll go there straight away, actually, because time’s running out.

Chantale Collard

How did the Collège des médecins respond? Because, basically, what you're saying is that there had always been a certain way of giving birth, which no one had questioned. At that time, you asked questions; and in the end, it's just another way of doing things and there are no infections. So it's more or less the same thought process that's been going on here. In the end, maybe science is all about asking questions.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

That's right. Of course, faced with the facts that women died in childbirth and that premature babies died or remained disabled for life, certainly the surgical model—the medical model—had its place and so much the better. The problem was that the model was generalized to all women in childbirth, whereas it only applied to, what? Ten, fifteen, twenty per cent of all women giving birth.

Chantale Collard

I'm going to ask you, Dr. St-Arnaud: I understand the framework, time is flying, and so I'd really like us to get to the point. Did you have a response from the Collège des médecins after your testimony? You've talked a bit about the gist of your testimony—but was there any response?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Well, we've had a recent response that isn't an answer.

Chantale Collard

So the response was—?

[00:15:00]

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

We were told that the Collège des médecins was not a scholarly society and that they deferred to Public Health.

Chantale Collard

Meaning to the INSPQ [Institut national de santé publique du Québec]?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Yes, that's it.

Chantale Collard

So in the end, it took a long time to get an answer, and the answer was no answer. That's where you are now. You personally haven't had any side effects, but do you see people around you who have?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

So yes, that's it. I came back from testifying at the Collège des médecins and I met people in my own circles who had.

The first news about this came the day after I returned from the Collège des médecins: it was that four women were suffering from severe menstrual disorders.

Chantale Collard

Did you learn that the next day?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

I found out the next day.

A mother told me that her 12-year-old daughter asked her on the way home from school, "Is it true, Mom, that I won't be able to have children later on because of my vaccine?" So here, there are two possible answers. If we believe the narrative, we'll say, "Don't worry, my daughter, there's no problem." But the real answer is that we don't know.

Chantale Collard

Exactly.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

And with the information that has been shared with us over the past three days, there are some serious questions to be asked. All the more if some women have experienced menstrual problems because this means that the vaccine is to be found in the ovaries. We also know that it can be found in the testicles. And, as has been shared here in great detail, Pfizer advised against vaccinating pregnant women even before the vaccines were put on the market.

I learned that two people in my circle had experienced shingles after the vaccines.

Chantale Collard

After the vaccines.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Three people reported problems related to blood clots.

And here's one I can't quite grasp: an immunosuppressed person was advised by his cardiologist—because he'd just undergone surgery to change a heart valve—to get vaccinated, which was contradicted by his oncologist because this same person was being treated for two cancers. So the oncologist told him, "It doesn't make sense for you to have a vaccine, you're immunosuppressed. Your body can't make antibodies in response to a vaccine. You're immunosuppressed." And then, a few weeks ago, when I heard the WHO [World Health Organization] is still maintaining that immunosuppressed people are prioritized to receive the vaccine, I started to wonder.

Chantale Collard

You've seen a lot of people with side effects.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

That's it.

Chantale Collard

So roughly speaking, what you're telling us here is that the people you're talking about are all ordinary people that you know, people in your circles.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

That's right, they're people in my circle.

Chantale Collard

That's a lot of them.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

And maybe I can add another one here. Because when I went to get my hair cut on Tuesday to come here and look presentable, my hairdresser told me that she knew three people in Coaticook—the town where I live—who had died after the vaccine. And I'm sure it'll continue like that when I return home.

Chantale Collard

What do you think of the traditional media? You name it, we've heard about it throughout the Inquiry. What do you think of mainstream media?

[00:20:00]

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Well, the media aren't present. It's as simple as that. I forgot to say: what really shook me was the lack of acknowledgement from the Collège des médecins. Added to that, the media don't really inform people. And so I lost trust in our journalists—knowing that they can't talk about it because their management forces them not to, knowing that they are sometimes even dismissed if they do.

Chantale Collard

Dr. St-Arnaud, we often think that vaccinated people—at least from what we've heard—see a wall between themselves and the unvaccinated. They don't understand how the reality changes whether people are vaccinated or unvaccinated. What do you think of unvaccinated people? You are triple-vaccinated.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Sorry, I misheard the end of that sentence.

Chantale Collard

You have been vaccinated three times.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Yes.

Chantale Collard

I think you're sensitive— You have your daughter who is unvaccinated: How do you see them? Explain that to us. What were the consequences of your daughter not being vaccinated? Were there any activities she couldn't participate in?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Ah yes, I understand. I'll give you an anecdote.

Chantale Collard

Go on.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

At one point, my daughter called me and said, "Dad, would you go with my son"—who is seven—"to the hockey game? I can't go with him because I'm not vaccinated." At my age, 81, I was asked and then I did it—I accompanied my grandson because his unvaccinated mother couldn't.

Chantale Collard

How did you feel?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Angry.

Chantale Collard

Angry.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

What's more, in the reactions of the people I mentioned earlier and others, there was so much anger—I'd even say rage—in some people about the situation of the unvaccinated. And what we're learning about the side effects, it's worrying.

Chantale Collard

You have a lot of support. You can feel it, you can see it, and that's why you're here too. You're here before the Inquiry to show your solidarity with everyone. And this kind of split between the unvaccinated [and the vaccinated] should never have happened. And I'd like to ask you: If this could be done all over again, what could have been done differently?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Well, to that question, I'd like to propose a ceasefire.

Chantale Collard

Go on.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Let's bury the hatchet, get out of the trenches that were dug at the dawn of our absolute certainties, and spark a real scientific debate. But after three days here, I find myself saying, "Not just yet. The truth has to come out first." And that's why I'm so grateful for the work our commissioners and all the people here and across Canada who are doing at this Inquiry.

Chantale Collard

And you, Dr. St-Arnaud, how did you manage to get through this period of crisis? What was your best support?

[00:25:00]

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

There were several. The first was my wife because Lise and I have been through this whole journey together. There are my children; I mentioned Paula earlier. And my grandchildren were also a motivating factor. And maybe I'll venture into the spiritual dimension—even though I know I'm on thin ice.

Chantale Collard

Go on.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Every birth in my life has helped me to understand the Paschal mystery. How many mothers have I tended to who told me: "The pain is so intense that if the baby isn't born, I'm going to die"? And this suffering, this fear of death, gave life.

Chantale Collard

Was it also your faith that sustained you?

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

The couples who allowed me to accompany them through childbirth revealed to me this central element of my faith.

Chantale Collard

Thank you very much. I think the main point has been made. I know you may have a chart if you need to present it following questions from the commissioners.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Well maybe I can just put it up quickly.

Chantale Collard

You can put it up right now.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

I don't even know how to put it up. I have it here on the screen and I'd like it there. I don't know if there's anyone who can help me. Ah, here it is.

Chantale Collard

It's already there.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

So if there's anything I'd like to see done differently from what's been done, it's to choose the learning approach over the blame approach. And I've characterized what the blame approach is.

The blame approach assumes that everyone must be perfect. The learning approach assumes that no one is perfect.

In the blame approach: one mistake, one blame. In the learning approach: recognizing the possibility of a mistake.

In the blame approach: blame creates a feeling of guilt. In learning: make it a learning opportunity for yourself and others by checking the facts.

Reaction to blame: attempt to deny or find someone else to blame. Doctors are pretty good at this with nurses. And in the learning approach: find a way to fix the mistake if necessary.

When approaching blame, defence mechanism: discredit the person formulating the blame instead of looking at the content of the blame.

Chantale Collard

"Conspiracy theorist," for example.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Yes, it's a trendy word.

Chantale Collard

Discrediting.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Whereas learning reinforces the feeling of belonging to a group.

Consequences of blaming: injury, isolation, rejection, division, and conflict. Consequences of learning: avoids injury, isolation, rejection, division and conflict.

An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth on the blame side. Requires great strength—called humility—on the learning side.

And finally, a quote from one of our favorite poets: “Everybody’s unhappy all the time” in the blame approach. Whereas in the learning approach, you never lose: either you win or you learn.

Chantale Collard

That sums it up very well. It couldn’t have ended better. Are there any questions? No? I think everything’s been said.

[00:30:00]

Dr. St-Arnaud, you have given us food for thought. You came here despite finding it difficult. You weren’t sure, you hesitated, but you did the right thing and I thank you. And I would tell you that, yes, a doctor heals the body, but he also heals the soul. What we call a good doctor does both. And not too long ago, I was in my car and I heard a song that I had never heard before. And I will share part of it with you: “The body is the workshop of soul.” So for the two to be united, you have to take care of both.

Thank you very much, Dr. St-Arnaud.

Dr. Jean St-Arnaud

Thank you for allowing me to speak.

[00:31:18]

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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.

For further information on the transcription process, method, and team, see the NCI website: <https://nationalcitizensinquiry.ca/about-these-translations/>