



NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Quebec, QC

Day 3

May 13, 2023

EVIDENCE

(Translated from the French)

Witness 12: Dr. Patrick Provost

Full Day 3 Timestamp: 10:06:10–11:23:27

Source URL: <https://rumble.com/v2vbsoc-quebec-jour-3-commission-denquete-nationale-citoyenne.html>

[00:00:00]

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Good evening, everyone. My name is Louis Olivier Fontaine, lawyer. I'm acting today as attorney for the National Citizens Inquiry. And to conclude today's testimonies, we have Professor Patrick Provost. Good evening, Professor Patrick Provost.

Dr. Patrick Provost

Good evening.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

To begin, I'm going to ask you to identify yourself by saying your first and last name, please.

Dr. Patrick Provost

Patrick Provost.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Now for the solemn affirmation. I'm going to ask you to solemnly affirm that you are going to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Say, "I do."

Dr. Patrick Provost

I do.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

So Professor Patrick Provost, I'm going to introduce you briefly, and you can tell me if all this is in order. Professor Provost, you are a full professor in the Department of Microbiology-Infectious Diseases and Immunology in the Faculty of Medicine at Université

Laval. You are also an academic researcher at the research centre within CHU [hospital affiliated with university] in Québec, and have been for the past 21 years.

Dr. Patrick Provost

That's correct.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

You run a research laboratory on RNA [ribonucleic acid] and on lipid nanoparticles.

Dr. Patrick Provost

Exactly.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

So Professor Provost, I know you have a presentation that will help you with your testimony. I would ask you to describe any additional personal experience that is relevant to your talk today.

Dr. Patrick Provost

Okay, if I can have the presentation on the screen, please. Thank you. So just to let you know that throughout my research career, I've been able to benefit from financial support from governments—to the tune of about six million dollars in the form of salary awards and grants of all kinds. So maybe this is the best way I become like *The Six Million Dollar Man*.

In terms of scientific contributions throughout my career, I have published a total of 97 scientific articles in 45 different peer-reviewed scientific journals. My articles have been cited more than 15,000 times with an h-index of 45. So 45 of my articles have been cited at least 45 times. I've been invited to six countries to give more than 61 presentations, and I've trained more than 60 people in research. And more specifically, since 2019, I have carried out more than 208 communication activities for the general public. And my research work in 2003, 2014, and 2021 earned the distinction of "Discovery of the Year."

So perhaps I'll present the next five slides, which I've taken from the slide sets of the presentations that I usually give, to give you an idea of why I believe I hold some legitimacy to speak.

This slide shows the nature of my research activities over the last 20 years, which have been aimed at understanding the regulation of messenger RNA function by smaller RNAs called microRNAs. And my first discovery of the year was that of the ribonuclease dicer: an original discovery at the time. In this slide, you can see in the left-hand box a bunch of dark squares: they show that the new RNA type that we discovered is much more abundant than the family of micro RNAs shown in the red box on the right, which earned their discoverer a Nobel Prize.

Next, on this slide I'd like to show you that we've developed a new PCR [polymerase chain reaction] method in the laboratory to quantify and detect these new RNA types, which are the shortest ever discovered.

[00:05:00]

Next to show you is that when we do PCR, we don't consider results where the CT [cycle threshold] is higher than 30 because of a sensitivity limit. Above 30 there is too much risk of false positives, whereas public health has recommended up to 45 cycles to detect whether a COVID-19 test was positive or not.

And finally, this slide summarizes our research activities over the past ten years, which have focused on lipid nanoparticles found naturally in the cow's milk we drink. So our particles look like the image on the top right—this is a cow's milk nanoparticle—and it's schematized on the left. We see the ball, which is the nanoparticle, and in its center is a kind of RNA.

So that's the nature of our research projects in the laboratory. And that's why I put forward the idea that I have a certain legitimacy to express myself publicly.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Thank you for those explanations, Professor Provost. We'll now move on to another topic. I'd like you to tell us about your personal experience with COVID injections.

Dr. Patrick Provost

On July 5, 2021, I received my first dose of Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine. And following this injection, I experienced five unusual side effects that I had never experienced before, including a disturbance in my diabetes.

I informed my doctor of these effects but he never agreed to report them to the public health authorities. And that really made me question not only my own situation, but the whole crisis we were going through. Obviously, it also shook my confidence not only in my doctor, but also in the institutions.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Now as we all know: you've spoken out publicly about the COVID crisis. I'd like you to explain to the Inquiry why you decided to speak out publicly like that.

Dr. Patrick Provost

It was clearly the government's decision in the fall of 2021 to massively vaccinate children aged 5 to 11. I felt that this was going too far and that, in the case of this age group, the risk-benefit balance was not in favour of vaccination. So that's when I took action. I actually participated in a conference of doctors and scientists on December 7, 2021 to speak out about the risks or side effects that may be caused by COVID-19 vaccines in children, and to effectively sound the alarm.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Have you spoken out in other ways?

Dr. Patrick Provost

Yes. It was my first public appearance—and that first appearance led to a few problems with my institution. At the time, our society was going through a great upheaval; and I took the initiative of sending an e-mail message to a list that I had put together of 1,750 professors at Université Laval. I appealed for reflection and mobilization so that they could speak out publicly; and as an example I presented my participation in the conference of doctors and scientists.

And then, out of all these professors, only one—who doesn't like me, by the way—decided to lodge a complaint with Université Laval.

[00:10:00]

And Université Laval—rather than trying to reconcile us or invite us to a meeting, a discussion, or an exchange—decided to polarize the debate and said, “Okay, we have an accused person and we have an accuser, so we'll have to decide.” Even then I felt that Université Laval was deviating from its mission where, it seems to me, ideas should be debated and not sanctioned.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Among the other professors—so you mentioned 1,750—what were the other reactions?

Dr. Patrick Provost

I had a few opposing reactions, but I had three or four times as many sympathetic reactions and support for my initiative. So that first complaint led to an investigation process in which Université Laval placed university professors in a position of authority over me. They were able to impose their opinion over mine; and the Université Laval then used this to suspend me without pay for two months.

After this, on July 14, 2022, I was invited to appear on CHOI 98.1 Radio X. And after my talk, in which I criticized some of the health measures on air, one listener of the tens of thousands filed a complaint. And once again, instead of inviting the listener to come and meet me so that we could discuss and explain, Université Laval chose to use a “cut and paste” process leading to another suspension, this time of four months without pay.

Then at the beginning of the year, in January 2023, I received the third complaint that would lead to my dismissal. It concerned an article I had published as a preprint in *Research Square* magazine. The complainant used several labels that I won't mention to denigrate our work, but this time Université Laval decided to reject the complaint. And why? Because the day before, Université Laval had received a letter supporting me, signed by 281 fellow professors at Université Laval. And I'd like to mention that several professors confided in me that they didn't want to sign the letter—which was only addressed to the Rector—for fear of reprisals. So that is simply to illustrate the atmosphere inside the University.

My career as a professor and researcher is now seriously compromised because of all this. At present, my two main suspensions are being contested by the union and myself; and now it's up to an arbitrator to decide whether the University was right to sanction me or not. This is a very lengthy process, with 19 days of hearings scheduled until December 2023 and the arbitrator's decision due in March 2024—some two-and-a-half years after the events. There have been two favourable decisions so far: the arbitrator refused

Université Laval's request for *in camera* proceedings to protect the identity and testimony of its witnesses; and the arbitrator also refused to grant expert status to the four university professors recruited by Université Laval to act as investigators on the inquiry committee. So that is all going on right now, and we'll see what happens.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Another question I'd like to ask you is: What impact have these processes had on your life, your personal life, your family life?

Dr. Patrick Provost

The impact is major. My life has been turned completely upside down—well, notwithstanding a certain financial insecurity; obviously, anyone who would lose six months' salary is still losing a lot of money—but my whole life has been turned upside down.

[00:15:00]

My research— I no longer have access to my office. I can't get in touch with my students, who have been abandoned for months on end.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

What's stopping you from getting in touch with your students?

Dr. Patrick Provost

Well, because I'm suspended, I'm not allowed to report to my workplace. So if I did show up, I'd be violating the conditions of the suspension, and then I could be subject to other sanctions. So I have to respect the conditions.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Any other impacts you would like to mention?

Dr. Patrick Provost

On a personal level, it's clear that the whole situation I've been through has led to a reshuffling, so to speak, of my circle of friends. Obviously, I've lost a number of friends. But I've also made a lot of new ones, and I see this as a positive change. You have to find the positive in such an unfortunate situation.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Now, I'd like you to explain to the Inquiry the accusations made by your employer, Université Laval.

Dr. Patrick Provost

So as you can see on the screen, Université Laval is essentially accusing me of five things: demonstrating a deliberate confirmation bias in the choice of information; presenting biased interpretations or quotations used in a targeted manner; not treating the data with

all the necessary rigour, making a biased or partial collection, a non-objective presentation; delivering polarizing information; lacking responsibility towards the general public and not presenting the full body of scientific knowledge of the time.

So when you look at it from my perspective, all I can say is that it's a little like when children mirror everything. That's exactly what I feel inclined to do: tell them, "Look, all your accusations towards me can also be directed to the government, the professional orders, the professionals themselves, the experts, the journalists, and the media—all of whom have promoted vaccines in a quasi-advertising fashion without mentioning the risks of side-effects, which are furthermore poorly documented and grossly underestimated." But we'll get to this a little later.

So all these criticisms make me think that my academic freedom is in fact constrained by a doctrine. And that goes against Bill 32, which is supposed to protect academic freedom in universities. So if I can follow up on—

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Yes, so explain to us what the concept of academic freedom actually is.

Dr. Patrick Provost

Yes, okay. So you see on the screen: Bill 32 was passed on June 7, 2022. I had taken part in the public consultations on this bill, where I had spoken of my concerns about the influence of private interests on the university's mission. And in this law, article 3 defines the right to academic freedom in the university environment without doctrinal, ideological or moral constraint. And article 6 gives the Minister the power to intervene with an institution that fails to comply with Bill 32. So it's quite worrying to see that as things stand, the Minister has decided not to intervene in my case.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

So no intervention from the Minister?

Dr. Patrick Provost

None at present. She's decided to let the arbitration process run its course; except that in the meantime—for the two-and-a-half years it will have taken—well, the situation hasn't been resolved.

[00:20:00]

Other university professors see the way I'm treated and of course it totally discourages them from speaking out publicly. And so, academic freedom is in serious trouble here in Quebec and is clearly under threat, in my opinion.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

And tell us, Professor Provost, have there been any reactions at the political level, for example?

Dr. Patrick Provost

On the political front, not a single party represented in the National Assembly wanted to speak out. It's like a hot potato. Only Éric Duhaime showed support and put pressure on the Minister of Education to intervene, but she refused. *Québec solidaire* had dissociated itself from me as I was an ex-candidate myself.

So anyway, I'm very disappointed with politicians, who I don't believe really understand the importance of academic freedom for our society.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

And have there been other groups that expressed support for you, for example?

Dr. Patrick Provost

As a matter of fact, yes. La Fédération québécoise des professeures et professeurs d'université, the FQPPU [the Quebec federation of university professors]: it has a committee called COPLA, the Standing Committee on Academic Freedom, which looked into my situation. They analyzed my file; and in December 2022, they came back with the results of their analysis, which you can see here on the screen. You can enlarge the text in the box here.

And so the COPLA committee, which is made up of three jurists—so expert university professors—believes that academic freedom protects the right of any university professor to express ideas. They don't protect only those opinions with which everyone agrees. And so, an institution cannot start imposing sanctions on an academic for comments he or she has expressed if they do not contravene a law applicable in Quebec. As such, they mention that it's not necessary to conform to the consensus to be able to express oneself but rather, that academics have the right and duty to expose the pitfalls and falsehoods of a statement. And it is through refutation that professors involved in teaching and research must combat the statements of other professors according to recognized methods.

So clearly, it's the mission of the universities to let ideas circulate and to allow professors to debate, so as to gain the best possible comprehension of what's at stake in our society. And when we prevent these debates, obviously we no longer have the best picture possible. All we have is a distorted picture, which was distorted through the absence of the censored voices. And that leads us to confront Université Laval with its own contradictions.

So in February 2021, Université Laval adopted an institutional statement on the protection and development of freedom of expression at Université Laval. The text at the top of the red box is an extract I've taken from this statement. So the university talks about its essential role in the development of critical thinking in individuals; that any subject can be tackled; and in the face of controversial subjects, the establishment avoids censorship and encourages people to speak out. And as an institution, Université Laval is committed to: protecting the free flow of ideas—even controversial ones—in compliance with the law, collective agreements, and regulations; and providing an environment conducive to exchange, debate, and dialogue. So I didn't invent this.

And evidently, in my situation, Université Laval is doing just the opposite.

[00:25:00]

Université Laval does not respect Bill 32. It does not respect the collective agreement. It does not promote free speech and the free flow of ideas. It does not encourage discussion or debate. It does not foster the development of critical thinking. In short, it no longer fulfills its public-interest mission.

And of course you might ask yourself why Université Laval is doing this to me. Because we have a government that doesn't enforce Bill 32; the minister doesn't intervene; the media doesn't cover it. So why?

In response, I would put forward three hypotheses. One is that the current government wants to impose its political agenda by censoring academic scientists. So that's one possibility. The other is the influence of private interests. So at Université Laval, we know that pharmaceutical companies contribute to the Foundation and also to the funding of the university through research chairs, for example. And unfortunately—but curiously—the list of private donors to the Fondation de l'Université Laval was deleted from their website in July 2022.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Excuse me, Professor Provost. What might we find on that list?

Dr. Patrick Provost

Well, you could actually see the identities of the pharmaceutical companies that contributed large sums of money to the Foundation. So the Foundation decided to hide this information to avoid becoming even more embroiled in controversy. And the information is also very difficult to access, even in the annual report. And as a third point, I wonder if there isn't some kind of retaliation behind this. Because in the summer of 2021, I published not one or two, but four opinion letters that were critical of the Université Laval administration because of the influence of private interests it was subject to. And it's quite plausible that they didn't appreciate my opinion letters published in the mainstream media.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Okay, could you give the Inquiry more details about these opinion pieces?

Dr. Patrick Provost

Yes. By the way, my submission has been filed with the Inquiry—but I can do an overview of the four letters. So the first one is dated May 26, 2021, which I entitled *L'Université Laval et le Port de Québec: l'Absolugate* [Laval University and the Port of Quebec: Absolugate]. Why? Because there was an absolute confidentiality agreement between the two organizations, the very existence of which had to be confidential. And for a public institution, I found that unacceptable.

Then on June 4, I followed up with a letter to the *Journal de Montréal* about private interests and public universities, giving all kinds of examples of how private interests are interfering in our public institutions, including by way of research chairs.

Next, on July 29, *La Presse* finally published the letter I had submitted to them a month earlier, which I had entitled *Institution universitaire à vendre* [University Institution for Sale], in which I deplored the fact that Université Laval was actually selling the names of their buildings. That is why, on the Université Laval campus, there are buildings named in

honour of people, but now there is a Desjardins pavilion, there is a La Laurentienne pavilion. So we can clearly see who the sponsors are.

And then, in *Le Soleil*, I published an article on August 8, 2021 asking the question: Why don't we recruit Professor Alain Deneault to Université Laval? I should just mention that Alain Deneault wrote a book, *Noir Canada*, which was very critical of Canadian mining. And curiously, there's a research chair at the Faculty of Law that's funded by a mining company.

And so we see how private interests can influence the mission and decisions that can be made within a group of professors or within an institution, and thus compromise its mission.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Okay, so you're not shy about voicing your opinion against your employer.

[00:30:00]

You also chose to write, again in the media, on the famous COVID subject. Could you explain to the Inquiry what you wrote on this subject and how it came about?

Dr. Patrick Provost

First of all, I'd just like to correct the fact that when I express myself publicly, it can be perceived as being against Université Laval: in fact, it's constructive. What I deplore about this situation is that I feel it needs to be corrected so that Université Laval can better fulfill its mission. But I did speak out publicly on COVID-19.

On June 22, I was under my first suspension, so instead of being at the lab, I was at home and started writing. And what I did was simply draw up what I considered to be the true portrait of COVID-19 in Quebec at that time. And what I did was simply an objective analysis of official government data, mainly from the Institut de la statistique du Québec and the INSPQ [Institut national de santé publique du Québec]. And in that article, I raised 17 questions that remain unanswered today. And why? Because the article was censored some 40 hours later and removed from all Québecor platforms. And, well, it can only be found on the Wayback Machine or in *Libre Média*, which agreed to republish my text. This followed a protest by Doctor TikTok and investigative journalist, André Noël, who demanded that my article be withdrawn.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Sorry, did you say Doctor TikTok? For those who aren't familiar—

Dr. Patrick Provost

Mathieu Nadeau-Vallée. So these two people wanted Québecor to withdraw my article, but instead they were invited to write a review of my article. And two hours later, well, the text was finally withdrawn, so obviously— And in fact I was extremely disappointed, deeply disappointed by this censorship, because when I saw that my article was going to be published in the *Journal de Montréal*, I was hopeful. I said to myself, "This is it, we're finally ready to debate the issue in Quebec." And unfortunately, when I saw the censorship, I said—excuse me, but: "Shit, we've just turned the wrong way. And now we're headed down the road of censorship rather than debate."

And I wrote to the editor in charge of the *Faites la différence* column, the opinion column in the *Journal de Montréal*, Sébastien Ménard, whom I know. And I asked him, “But why did you remove my text?” If you look at the red box, he wrote back to me, “As I wrote on Twitter: ‘after verification, we found that this text contained inaccuracies that could mislead the public.’ I will not argue with you on this matter.” So you can see that my article was withdrawn and I was given no explanation. So what I take from this is that debate is no longer allowed, that critical thinking must be conformed, and I see here the imposition of a single mindset.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Tell me, Professor Provost, have there been other forms of censorship, other ways of preventing you from writing or expressing yourself that have affected you?

Dr. Patrick Provost

Yes. So you should know that in September 2019, I co-founded the Regroupement Des Universitaires, a coalition aimed to mobilize or inform the public about climate change, the environment, and biodiversity. And I succeeded in setting up a coalition that today includes 630 university graduates, mainly in Quebec. And we had a “*Tribune Des Universitaires*” that consisted of a full-page article every Saturday in *Le Soleil* and other newspapers in the *Coops de l’information* [a regional chain of daily newspapers].

[00:35:00]

And so, after 121 consecutive columns, Valérie Gaudreau, the editor-in-chief of *Le Soleil*, decided to end the column—suspend it actually—for the summer of 2022. But I’m still waiting to hear from her about a possible resumption.

So as you can see, for my initiative that was carried out in good faith, I was once again penalized in the media even though it was in the public interest. And I’d just like to add here that there were five of us coordinating the coalition and the other four left because of my public criticism of the management of the health crisis. And just to illustrate the division this has created, this coalition is currently on life support.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Okay. Let’s move on to another subject, which is the media’s treatment, you might say, of the Patrick Provost case. How has the media reacted to this whole affair, this whole saga?

Dr. Patrick Provost

So I was the subject of media coverage. And I’d just like to remind you that journalists are bound by the *Guide de déontologie journalistique du Conseil de presse du Québec* [Guide to Ethics of the Press Council of Quebec]. So I’ve put together a few statements for you to read, and I don’t want to go into too much detail. But what I’ve noticed over the past three years is that there have been many departures from good conduct and journalistic ethics, leading to media treatment that isn’t entirely respectful of the people or the information conveyed.

Let me give you a few examples. So first of all, in *Le Soleil* on December 30, 2021, Jean François Cliche reported on our laboratory discovery of a new form of RNA—a glowing article, all in all. It was a “Discovery of the Year” in Quebec City. But six months later, after I

had spoken out critically against COVID-19 vaccines, Monsieur Cliche changed his tune and made certain assertions in his June 26, 2022 article reporting on my eight-week suspension without pay.

I had criticized the lack of an active monitoring system for side effects, which is true because the current system is passive and we can see that there are many problems, whereas Monsieur Cliche said that this was patently false. Then I said that we don't know anything about the long-term side effects of vaccines, whereas Monsieur Cliche said that was not quite true. Monsieur Cliche claimed that messenger RNA didn't persist for long in our bodies, whereas vaccine messenger RNA has been detected several months after injection in human body organs. So what did he mean by "not long"? And furthermore, this makes the possibility of long-term effects highly implausible.

So he's showing a biased reassurance that everything's going to be fine, whereas when there are unknown factors such as these, it requires caution and moderation in what is put forward so as not to close the door on possible major side effects.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Professor Provost, when you see these answers in the media that you consider to be false information, what do you do?

Dr. Patrick Provost

There's very little we can do. The newspapers and journalists have the last word over us. No matter how much we write, e-mail, call, or demonstrate, they simply have the last word. It's really frustrating. And above all, we can't intervene, we can't correct. A journalist has the last word.

[00:40:00]

And if I decide, for example, to lodge a complaint with the Press Council, the Press Council can simply give a friendly slap on the wrist and say, "Don't do that again." But there is no sanction that can be imposed on a journalist who deviates from the Code of Ethics. So in the end, there's nothing we can do about it except contain our frustration.

Then on February 22, 2023, Monsieur Cliche repeated his disparaging remarks, calling me "Prof. Provost," a bit like Doc Mailloux. He attributed to me "ill-founded remarks" about messenger RNA vaccines, when in fact they were well-founded. He claimed that my methodological basis has convinced essentially no one in the scientific community. So I'd like to know where he gets his information from. Next, he attributed to me a largely erroneous position on messenger RNA vaccines.

I published three scientific articles in *IJVTPR* [*International Journal of Vaccine Theory, Practice, and Research*]*—* we will come to that*—*and instead of criticizing the content of my articles, he criticized the journal. So he had the audacity to call himself a science journalist. And so, anyway*—* He ended by talking about scientific consensus and when I hear people talk about scientific consensus, it makes my skin crawl. You can't reach a scientific consensus when you censor and vilify scientists who express dissenting opinions. You have to invite these people to the table and debate with them on the basis of scientific arguments; and that's how a consensus can emerge, there is no other way.

Then there is Québecor journalist, Dominique Scali, who doesn't actually reproach me with anything in the content, but rather in the titles of her articles—although she may not be the one writing them— Here, for example, where she says that I'm one of the professors feeding the disinformation. Again, "disinformation" here is a media label and is also used for political purposes. And Madame Scali keeps calling me a dubious expert. So if I may use her term, it's rather dubious to use such terminology when it is coming from someone who is much less qualified than I am on the subject. It's pretty frustrating.

Next, I'll conclude my examples with Isabelle Hachey of *La Presse* in an article from June 28, 2022, where she departed from journalistic ethics in several places in her text. So here she says that the effectiveness of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines based on messenger RNA no longer needs to be proven. This is quite astonishing coming from a journalist. So you have to wonder where she gets her sources. Then she says that the arguments I put forward have no scientific value and in fact that the scientific value is low, if not nil. So that's a nice way of saying that I'm talking rubbish. Then she says I've completely gone off the rails. And then she attributes her thoughts to others. So in her own words, she says, "You'll tell me: too bad for this researcher. After all, he is defending not a scientific point of view, but a lie." So she accuses me of telling lies and that I deserve what I get, and then she calls me irresponsible. Well.

So you can see how journalists handle the news. And given that I'm a critic of the health measures, they are much harsher; and they use arguments or terms to denigrate me and in fact disqualify me, to disqualify my remarks, because the people who know me don't recognize me in these articles. And the shame is that, unfortunately, I can't go out and meet the 8.5 million people in Quebec. But clearly, when those who know me read these articles, the treatment I am receiving allows them to see for themselves the bias of the media.

[00:45:00]

The question then arises as to why journalists and commentators deviate from their journalistic code. And the main reason is probably the government funding of the traditional media. Obviously in the crisis we were experiencing, the government wanted to control the message conveyed to the public—and it did so by heavily funding the media with advertising to generate and maintain support for the COVID-19 measures and vaccines. But at the same time, all those who expressed criticism or took a stand against the government's measures or decisions were discredited or censored in the media so as to once again promote a single mindset and avoid any debate. And so, in my opinion, this is not healthy. It's not the sign of a free and democratic society, and it's not the way to reach the best decisions.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Earlier, Professor Provost, you mentioned the scientific publications you produced during the crisis.

Dr. Patrick Provost

Yes.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Would you like to briefly present them to the Inquiry?

Dr. Patrick Provost

Yes, certainly. So the first scientific publication was published in August 2022 in the journal *IJVTPR [International Journal of Vaccine Theory, Practice, and Research]*. In fact, all three publications are in the same journal. This is a journal where you can submit and publish scientific observations and analyses that are critical of the management of COVID-19. In this publication, my co-authors and I presented a conscientious objection to using messenger RNA technology as a preventive treatment for COVID-19. The objection is based on two principles that are flouted by the COVID-19 messenger RNA vaccines, which are not genetic vaccines.

It is a pro-drug since the active ingredient is not in the vaccine. The active ingredient is produced by our body's own cells. And therefore, the dose of active ingredient and the biodistribution of the active ingredient are unknown. Whereas when you take a 325 mg aspirin, you know exactly what you're taking, when you receive a COVID-19 injection, you don't know which cells in your body will express the spike protein, or at what levels. And there can be more than a hundred-fold difference in the expression levels of the protein, which is the antigen that will stimulate the immune response. And there are studies that have correlated that a high level of spike protein is associated with myocarditis. So there are concerns here that justify a conscientious objection.

The second publication is a retrospective study using pharmacy records: patients' pharmacological records. In fact, what's interesting to know is that at the INSPQ, which analyzes side effects following COVID-19 vaccines, they use a window of only six weeks following injection. So if there are symptoms or manifestations that occur beyond this period, they are not considered. I got confirmation of this from a nurse who called me personally about my own side-effects. So in this article, we observed that three-quarters of the complications in patients' pharmacological records occurred beyond the six-week period following their last injection of COVID-19 vaccine. So what this suggests is that vaccine-related adverse events are underestimated by a factor of four. All right?

And finally, I published this article. The message here is that the under-reporting of adverse reactions to COVID-19 vaccines represents the pandemic's blind spot.

[00:50:00]

It was based on the study of two clinical cases in which we were able to list some 40 constraints on the reporting and analysis of adverse effects, and these were of a clinical, systemic, political, and media nature. Obviously, even before COVID-19 we knew that side effects were under-reported by a factor of at least ten. And with the testimonies we heard a little earlier during the Inquiry, we can see that doctors or healthcare personnel are not reporting side effects. And so in my opinion, this factor of ten—which had been estimated before the crisis—is even higher since COVID-19. And combined with the factor of four that I put forward: we can think that the undesirable effects following COVID-19 vaccination are perhaps underestimated by about a hundred times.

And so when the authorities assess the risk-benefit ratio of a vaccine, it is absolutely essential to know not only the benefits but also the risks as accurately as possible—in order to arrive at an assessment that is also as fair as possible. What I'm saying is that the risks associated with vaccination are grossly underestimated, which leads to a significant bias in the risk-benefit assessment. So at present, the authorities may have recommended vaccination or judged this balance to be beneficial and favourable to vaccination, whereas if they had had the real figures, these vaccines probably shouldn't have been authorized.

Now, this slide summarizes the messages of the three publications. So that brings me to a conclusion— I think there are three or four slides left— So the whole saga that I've been living since I went public on December 7, 2021 has enabled me to analyze the pandemic from a rather unique perspective. What I've been able to observe is that differences of opinion are now subject to legal proceedings, even within universities, which is quite incredible. Debates are forbidden. I asked the University to meet with the plaintiffs and they never granted it. So they're really going against their mission. And if we can no longer debate or even express our ideas in our universities, well, where will we be able to do so? So I think that the current fight for academic freedom is crucial because if we lose it, the freedom of an entire population is at stake.

Of course, we can go along with these interpretations depending on our values, our knowledge, and our intentions, good or bad. But what I'm experiencing at the moment leads me to see the situation in the following way: I have the impression that it is private interests that are attacking the last bastion of democracy and public protection, which academics represent. Because, in fact, university professors have that freedom; they have a unique function within society that enables them to express themselves on social issues and raise problems when no one else can do so.

And when this last bulwark falls—as it has in the past in other political regimes in other countries—then it gives free rein to private interests, who will be able to impose their agenda. And we can see that the level of capture and corruption of our institutions is at such a level that it's shaking the foundations of our society and our democratic life. And, well, I don't want to say any more than that because we heard quite a lot during the Inquiry. But I'd like to end with a few recommendations for the Inquiry members.

I think it's very, very important to defend academic freedom.

[00:55:00]

And to do that, we need to ensure the immunity of the professors who exercise this freedom, and not allow for them to have their heads chopped off as soon as they exercise it or speak out. So we need to encourage public speaking. And that's always in the public interest.

We must ensure compliance with the rules of ethics and good conduct in research. At Université Laval, I've been criticized for failing to comply with the policy of responsible conduct in research. But what I've done are public interventions for the general public; that's not research. In short, we have to apply the principles and rules of ethics and deontology in research and clinical practice, and not depart from them because of an emergency. Because these principles and rules were established precisely so that when a situation like this arises, these rules can help us remain respectful and not lose our minds. And that's what we heard earlier at the Inquiry: that emotions make us lose rationality, rational thinking, and then thinking becomes emotional. And that's when we allow ourselves to blow up our reference points, skip over the markers, and impose measures that are no longer in line with the ethical and deontological principles that otherwise have always guided our activities.

Personally, I'd like to be able to analyze the contents of COVID-19 vaccine vials. Okay? We have the expertise to do it. We have protocols already in place in the lab to analyze lipid nanoparticle and RNA content; and we can collaborate with other teams to evaluate other aspects of vaccine content. And above all, when you consider that these vaccines have been

repeatedly administered to billions of people all over the planet, to be at all responsible or accountable, these vials must be analyzed. And this has to be done by independent university scientists, free of any conflict of interest and influence, and also free of any reprisals for what they report from their analyses. I think this is absolutely critical. I appeal to the government to give me the money and the freedom to do this, as well as access to the samples.

Well, I've used the term "whistleblower." It's not a term we usually apply to university professors because they have academic freedom; we don't need whistleblower status. On the other hand, in my situation where my academic freedom is constrained, I claim whistleblower status because that's what I've done. Since December 7, 2021 my public interventions have been aimed at sounding the alarm, at saying, "Just a moment, these injections must be stopped because in my opinion, the risks outweigh the benefits for a larger part of the population." I will continue to maintain this position; and I demand to be able to debate it publicly with the experts, the people in positions of authority and decision-making. And it's thanks to these confrontations that we'll get to the truth, or at least to the best understanding of the situation. And it is essential that public interests be defended.

So if I speak publicly, it's because I truly have the public's best interests at heart. I have four children. I care deeply about their future and want to be able to defend their interests; and to do that, we have to allow public debate. Otherwise, we can't do it. And if we're not allowed to have public debates or speak out, then we're talking about censorship and decisions that aren't necessarily in the public interest. And I'm always going to speak out against that kind of behaviour. So really, I'm here to defend the public interest at the very cost of my career, which I know is currently in jeopardy. But anyway, I think I'll stop here. Thank you.

[01:00:00]

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Thank you, Professor Provost, for that excellent presentation. Now I'll leave the floor to the commissioners if they have any questions for you.

Commissioner Massie

I realize it's getting very late but I can't resist asking Professor Provost a few questions. My first question has to do with the climate we're in. Your description is so detailed, so accurate of all the steps that have been taken. What we're seeing in Quebec is not unique. We've seen the same thing in every other city in Canada. We've seen similar censorship in Europe, in the United States.

And my question is: When you mention, for example, Bill 32—which clearly states what the protection should be for academic freedom—and we see this discrepancy in what's happening in your case and others who are perhaps self-censoring to avoid having the problems you're facing, how can we imagine that the accountability necessary to enforce the law might eventually manifest itself? The institutions don't seem so willing to do it, even the justice system. Do you think it's going to take political reforms with a real willingness to enforce the laws? Because we seem to have the regulations in place.

Dr. Patrick Provost

Well first of all, Bill 32 has no teeth, okay? So Bill 32 is toothless, to use the term. So there's no penalty if an institution doesn't comply with Bill 32. And the fact that Bill 32 doesn't take precedence over a distorted disciplinary process is extremely worrying. I've always seen laws as taking precedence over administrative processes.

And that's when a political decision was made not to intervene with Université Laval. And I know that the Minister herself says that she is in contact with the university rectors, but I tried to contact the Minister to no avail. I went to see my MNA [Member of the National Assembly]. I wanted to meet the Minister of Higher Education but it's impossible. I've never heard back. So how can a minister be in contact with the management of Université Laval but not with me? We have to be able to talk to each other. I get the impression that the Minister of Higher Education doesn't understand the scope of Bill 32 and the importance of academic freedom for society, for our democratic life, and that's really deplorable.

Commissioner Massie

The other question has to do with the hope you had when you published your article in the summer of 2022, which seemed to show a certain openness that closed, I'd say, violently given all the backlash that followed. Today or yesterday— I can't remember, I'm tired— Monsieur Hamel came to testify about his career. I was surprised to learn from him that even radio stations that were more open to criticism of health measures—for example Radio X, where I know you are associated because you do weekly columns—hardly seem to be motivated or interested in talking about the Inquiry, for example. As you have contacts there, what is your assessment of this state of affairs?

Dr. Patrick Provost

It's really disappointing the way the traditional media—even media like Radio X—cover events. I think the National Citizens Inquiry is extremely legitimate and essential. It should have been a government-initiated public inquiry. Unfortunately, in Quebec, there has never been the will to do so and I deeply regret that. The fact that it's a citizens' initiative doesn't disqualify it at all; the Inquiry is highly relevant.

[01:05:00]

And I don't understand why any self-respecting media outlet doesn't cover your work because what we've been through over the past three years is really quite unique. It's going to go down in history. There has not been such a devastating event in our society for a very long time. And so, the fact that we don't even want to do a kind of *post mortem* to review everything that's been done—in order to draw lessons and establish recommendations or change our policies; so that if a similar crisis occurs in the future, we can react in a much more appropriate way—it's very worrying that the media aren't interested in this. And we can see it from the testimonies and from the people who attend the hearings: this crisis has had a major impact on all spheres of activity in our society.

So why aren't mainstream media covering this? For me, it's a mystery; and I'm outraged by it. I am outraged because, as a citizen, I ask to have access to complete information about what is happening in our society. And the work of the Commission is unique in that sense; and it should have filled the room with traditional media. And the fact that we simply want to pass over the Commission and the work of the Commission in silence, well, that says a lot to me. But what it tells me is that, ultimately, the traditional media don't really seek to

know the truth because that's what we are doing here. That's what the Commission's work is for: it serves to [reveal] all the truths that we no longer see in the traditional media.

And in any event, hat's off to the Inquiry's commissioners and organizers because it's really essential. Your mission is essential and I hope that people will take an interest in listening to all the witnesses who have testified before the Inquiry, and that the recommendations you make in your report can be widely disseminated in the media or to the public. Because given the way governments have handled the situation over the past three years, there are clearly many things that need to be changed and improved.

Commissioner Massie

As it's getting late, I'll limit myself to one last question. I think there's a landmark event in your journey during the COVID crisis, which is the famous conference organized by Réinfo Covid on December 7 [2021]. And I realize from your presentation that you had a bit of an obstacle course before that. And I must admit, I was surprised to see your participation in that conference because I anticipated that it might cause problems. I don't think you went in there innocently either but did you expect such a reaction?

Dr. Patrick Provost

Not at all. Maybe I was a bit naive but I never thought it would result in all the consequences that followed. It's all a bit beyond belief. But if you were to ask me if I'd do it again, yes. Yes, I would do it again; and all the months that followed proved me right. Today it's clear that I was right to sound the alarm and I'm going to continue to sound it wherever I can. Even if the decision-makers don't listen, that won't stop me from intervening whenever I see fit. But it's not just a responsibility, it's a duty for someone in my position to intervene publicly when I deem it necessary.

[01:10:00]

And I find odious the fact that I'm being punished for doing so. especially the way it's being done: where I'm being deprived of the chance to debate.

So if I can take advantage of this opportunity, I'd like to call for a public debate in front of the cameras. Bring in the experts, we'll bring in as many from my side: we'll debate and the public will be able to form an opinion. But until that happens, we're going to have this one-track thinking imposed on us, along with a very worrying future for society and for our children.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Thank you very much, Dr. Provost, for your testimony to the Inquiry.

Commissioner Drysdale

[In English] Dr. Provost, thank you for your testimony. Isn't what you've experienced here at the university really the crescendo of a wave that's been coming for decades? You know, in the social sciences, for years now they've been imposing certain thought processes on students and professors. This has been going on for years at the university, has it not?

Commissioner Massie

Do you want to translate?

Dr. Patrick Provost

Quite simply, is what I'm experiencing right now in fact the result and culmination of a whole succession of changes that have occurred in our university education system over the past few years or decades?

I wasn't necessarily aware of this possibility, because I thought these changes weren't going to affect me. I thought it was restricted to the use of words like "nigger" or words that are very loaded, but I didn't think they would attack hard science and censor scientists and prevent them from making their concerns known to the public. I didn't think it would go that far.

Commissioner Drysdale

[In English] The other item I would like you to comment on is: You were expressing concern and surprise that law 32 had no teeth. What we seem to have heard across the country in testimony is that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has no teeth, that the Ethics Commissioner has no teeth, that the courts have no teeth. So I guess I'm not giving you a lot of hope here, but do you want to comment on that in comparison to what you're experiencing?

Commissioner Massie

Can you translate the question?

Dr. Patrick Provost

I don't remember the wording.

Commissioner Massie

Okay, well, I'll do it then. Our colleague mentioned that, yes, according to your comment, Bill 32 didn't have any teeth. We also see that the courts don't seem to have many teeth either; the Charter of Rights doesn't seem to have many teeth; and under these conditions, obviously, it presents a rather bleak picture. But he would still like to hear your comment on this situation.

Dr. Patrick Provost

Actually, if I had just one comment to make, well, it would be that toothless people aren't who you think they are. Unfortunately, it does take teeth to assert our rights. And that's why a lion roars: it's to bare its teeth and really claim its rights.

Commissioner Drysdale

[In English] This just seems to be a lesson to us all in that when we think that we're immune because it's not knocking on our door, it's knocking on our neighbor's door, but it will soon be knocking on ours.

Dr. Patrick Provost

The point is, if we don't pay attention to what's going on around us, sooner or later it's going to affect us.

[01:15:00]

So yes. But again, in the current situation most people will only be inclined to act if they're directly affected. And personally, I was motivated by what I experienced after my first injection. I dare not think, for example, that if I hadn't had any side effects, would I still be asleep today? It's possible. So it's hard to blame people who aren't awake yet, but it's up to us to go and find them. But to do that, we have to open up, not resent them, and be positive in our approach, urging them to join us in building a society that's much more cohesive than the prospects we're presented with.

Commissioner Drysdale

[In English] Thank you, Professor.

Dr. Patrick Provost

Thank you.

Louis Olivier Fontaine

Professor Provost, in conclusion: on behalf of the National Citizens Inquiry, I would like to thank you for your testimony. Professor Provost, you belong to a very, very select club of Quebec scientists who have spoken out and demonstrated their integrity. So I recognize you for that and I thank you once again.

Dr. Patrick Provost

Thank you. Thank you to the Inquiry.

[01:17:17]

Final Review and Approval: Erin Thiessen, November 19, 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.

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