



## NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Regina, SK

Day 3

June 1, 2024

### EVIDENCE

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**Witness 7: Amanda Rodriguez**

**Full Day 3 Timestamp: 08:01:25–08:23:55**

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**Wayne Lenhardt**

Our next witness is Amanda Rodriguez?

**Amanda Rodriguez**

Rodriguez.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

Okay, could you spell your name? And then I could do an oath with you.

**Amanda Rodriguez**

A-M-A-N-D-A R-O-D-R-I-G-U-E-Z.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

Okay. I think you've got a story to tell about your father and his death as well as your own work experience. So can we start with January [2020], which is when the pandemic started. If you could maybe pick up your story there, please.

**Amanda Rodriguez**

My dad had cancer. Stage four. It was metastasized in his stomach, his lungs, and his bones. He ended up going through chemotherapy and radiation. We didn't want him in a home, so we were taking care of him at home. And on January 16th, I returned home and I just had a feeling I shouldn't go to sleep. And around 12:30, 12:45 he shot up in bed, seizing. He was stiff as a board, eyes closed, jaw clenched, completely unresponsive. He would fall over and things, so I had to hold him up. We called 911. Four paramedics arrived, and they took the information of what I said, but then they asked if we were vaccinated. I said, "No." They went pretty quiet after that—also very slow. So they took my dad outside. It was the middle of winter, as it was January.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

Can I stop you for a second? I forgot to swear you in. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your testimony today?

**Amanda Rodriguez**

Yes.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

Thank you. Sorry. Proceed.

**Amanda Rodriguez**

That's okay. When they took him outside, he was in his underwear and in a wheelchair. for some reason they didn't put him on a stretcher. They left him outside the ambulance for approximately five minutes in the winter just with a small hospital blanket. I was allowed to go in the ambulance. We got to the hospital and were met with the charge nurse. Same thing. The charge nurse asked if we were vaccinated. I explained to her my dad's condition. He was actually using an oxygen tank at the time because he couldn't breathe on his own. So I explained to her, "You know he's going through chemotherapy. He's exempt." I also told her he can't wear a mask because he can't breathe.

I was also exempt from being vaccinated, which I attempted to show her the exemption papers I had. She refused to look at them. She just said, "There's no exemptions. They don't exist. There won't be any accommodations made at the hospital." I pulled up the mandate at the time detailing exemptions. She was just asking me how did I even get in the ambulance because I shouldn't have been allowed in the ambulance, like, just a bunch of arbitrary things that had nothing to do with the medical emergency.

I explained his condition, that he had actually invoked his power of attorney, so he needed a designated person. Through palliative care, they gave him dexamethasone which is a steroid. He had a complication with that, and it made him lose his mind, essentially. He didn't make any sense. He couldn't remember anything. So I explained to her he needs a designated person for many reasons. I also pulled up the hospital's own policy around end-of-life care and COVID exemptions. She just said, "The hospital can determine what they will and won't do." Sorry, I need a minute.

She asked me if I was the power of attorney. I told her no, but I was next of kin and also responsible for his home care. She made me call the power of attorney for some reason. He was in Brazil. She just said that only vaccinated people would be allowed. I did offer to call my sister who's double vaccinated, but in the meantime I asked her, "How are you going to provide care? He's unresponsive. He is cognitively impaired." She said that I wouldn't be allowed with him, that I could stand outside the hospital in between the doors outside, or they would roll him down the hall, and then I'd have to go the opposite direction down the hall, wait down the hall, and then the doctor would come out and talk to me.

I just asked her, "My dad needs medical attention, but how are you going to get consent from him?" This was relevant for many reasons because he had a severe allergy to penicillin. Also, the chemotherapy is a known contraindication with the COVID vaccines. It was one of the only government-sanctioned exemptions. He also had broken his arm from a tumor. So there were many positions in which he couldn't sit or lie down because it would completely stop his breathing. And at that point, he was clearly incapacitated. So if they put

him in the wrong position, he would have suffocated to death—and also just the arm having extremely limited mobility. The point is that he needed somebody there to basically say all that. And to take him away for an indefinite amount of time without even knowing what was wrong with him, I didn't feel comfortable with.

As soon as I brought up consent, she got super upset with me. She said that I was rude and that I needed to leave the hospital. I did not get to talk to her again after that. Security guards came. They tried to restrain me. I knew my rights at the time. I knew that they weren't allowed to put their hands on me, so I evaded that. But, yeah, this was like the beginning of a six-hour standoff in the ambulance alley. Nobody ever came to check on my dad. He often would accidentally pull his breathing tubes out or knock them over. I would adjust them every time. If he was wincing or moaning in pain I would attend to him, put the blankets back on him, adjust the stretcher height, and things like that for him.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

He was virtually unable to talk about his—

**Amanda Rodriguez**

He couldn't talk. Yeah, he was completely stiff. Like, couldn't even open his eyes at that point.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

So was there any family there that was able to talk to the staff about the care that he was going to get?

**Amanda Rodriguez**

It was only me. I was the only one that was there. We didn't want him in a home, so he was at home with me, and I was sleeping on the floor beside his bed when it happened.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

Did they let you into his room, though?

**Amanda Rodriguez**

No. No, never. It's kind of hard to describe because it kind of feels like I was in a dream after that, because I came in on a 911 call with my dad unresponsive, and then she basically shunned us for not being vaccinated and then just left. And nobody ever came back. So I called my sister several times. I ended up calling the patient advocate line, but I couldn't get anybody on the line because it was around two and three in the morning. They just left. And the paramedics went to the front a few times because they wanted to hand off the patient, right? Like, they came in on an ambulance, and she just never came back, and nobody would come take him in.

So we were there for about four hours before I could get a hold of my sister. It didn't matter, any of the policies or anything regarding what she was trying to say— "Are you vaccinated for—?" I showed her my legal reasons for not having them, and she just said, "It doesn't matter. We're not going to accommodate that." But, yeah, my sister ended up showing up. I

had asked several times for somebody to give him his medication because he hadn't had his medication in several hours at that point. But for time's sake, I'll summarize.

My sister arrived, and we had been told that when she arrived to let them know and they would come escort her to where my dad was. Instead of that, they just told her, "No, you're not allowed in." And I asked my sister, "Why—

### **Wayne Lenhardt**

Was she vaccinated?

### **Amanda Rodriguez**

She's double vaccinated. Yeah. So they wouldn't let her in. When I asked her why, she said she didn't know. They just said that that was what the charge nurse told her to do. At that point, my dad began to collapse. Somehow he mustered the energy to look at me and he said, "I love you, Amanda. Goodbye." Obviously, I lost my mind at that point.

The paramedics got increasingly uncomfortable with what was happening as well. And I looked at them and I just said, "Why are they doing this?" And he said, "I don't know." So he went to the front trying to get a doctor to come out to attend to my dad. A doctor did come out. I had written down on a piece of paper his allergies and the things that he couldn't have and things like that, so that at least if they weren't going to let any of us talk to any doctor or attend to him, then at least they had a piece of paper with his care requirements on it. The paramedics took it.

The doctor came out and he immediately just started yelling in my dad's face because he wasn't answering, which was very hard to watch, and yelling in his ears because my dad was falling over and things because he was in extreme distress. He was pulling on his arms trying to adjust him. Again, very traumatizing to watch, knowing what was wrong with him. They took him away. We didn't see him again alive, ever.

The charge nurse had called the police saying that I wasn't wearing a mask and that I was becoming violent towards staff. So we weren't even allowed in the hospital. We had this standoff with the police outside where the two doors are. Like, you know how there's a sliding door to get in and then another sliding door to get in the hospital? They wouldn't even let us in the hospital. They made us stand outside. The cops threatened me with several tickets. They kept trying to convince us, like, "Oh, you're being dramatic. He's not going to die. Just go home," despite every government policy surrounding end-of-life care dictates that that person can have at least one person around—irrespective of COVID. I ended up calling his palliative care doctor as well, but he didn't answer. It was the middle of the morning.

Eventually, by that time, he had called me back and he also said he didn't know what was going on and that he was going to call the hospital himself. He did so. And I'm not sure what happened with that, but he texted me and just said, "I tried to outline his care," including basically giving credit to what I said—as in, he was cognitively impaired, he's end of life, the issues with going through chemotherapy, and taking other drugs. I asked him, "Why isn't my sister allowed in? That's what they told us we needed—for somebody to be by his side. And they told her, no." And he just stopped answering me, unfortunately.

The next day—or I guess I didn't sleep; I was very traumatized—I kept calling the hospital to see what was going on with my dad, obviously, because he was convulsing. I was

slapping him and talking to him, and he wouldn't answer. So I was calling the hospital to see what happened to him: "Is he okay?" He didn't have any clothes. He didn't have any shoes or anything because he was sleeping. He didn't have a wallet. He didn't have a phone, a health card, money—nothing.

So I called asking if we could bring him stuff, and they said that he was barred from having visitors. Any visitors at all were not allowed for him and that me specifically was banned from the hospital. I called back several times, just trying to see that if a shift change or something would change—like, someone would have some humanity and stop asking me to beg for my dad's life, one, and for him to die with dignity. Nothing changed. They just kept telling us, "No."

They ended up moving him to St. B. Palliative Care [St. Boniface Palliative Care Service] that night. And then the next morning, just before noon he was dead. When we saw him, he was completely paralytic. He was like a vegetable: one eye open, one eye closed, like tongue hanging out the side of his mouth. Which was very odd because when we called the hospital, they kept saying, "Oh, he's so chatty. He's awake. Oh man, he's so friendly. Like, he won't stop talking to everybody. He's actually so excited. We need to give him some medication to calm down." So I don't know. There's a big chunk of time we don't know what happened, but he ended up dying the next morning, just before noon.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

This all happened in the space of a couple of days.

**Amanda Rodriguez**

Yeah, it was—

**Wayne Lenhardt**

It was January 16th he went in.

**Amanda Rodriguez**

Yeah, 12:30, 12:45, just as soon as the 16th began. Yeah.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

2022 when the mandates—

**Amanda Rodriguez**

2022.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

—I think were already coming into place, or already were. Okay, I think I'm going to stop you there. We're going to talk about your employment also, because you weren't vaccinated, in a minute. But I'm going to stop and maybe ask if any commissioners have any questions on this part of it. Okay, I guess that's a no. This is all in Winnipeg, by the way. Which hospital was that in Winnipeg?

**Amanda Rodriguez**

HSC [Health Sciences Centre] Hospital. And then he was moved to St. B. palliative unit.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

St. Boniface.

**Amanda Rodriguez**

St. Boniface is where he died. But this whole event transpired at HSC Hospital.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

All right, you had a job doing what? Should we go back to 2020 or should we—

**Amanda Rodriguez**

2020, yeah.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

Okay. What were you doing for work at that point?

**Amanda Rodriguez**

I worked in group homes, so it was a government agency.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

Tell us what you were doing and what your problems were.

**Amanda Rodriguez**

Okay. We were in a group home with, I think, four or five kids at the time. I was a salaried, unionized employee. When COVID started we all had a meeting about how to keep the kids basically having a home and it not being like a jail, because their home is essentially 24-hours staff. So it's kind of unique in the sense that they don't get a break when they're at home from things like masking and all the COVID rules because they don't have a home—they live in a government home.

So we had a meeting. We agreed to certain things. Long story short, I did tell my boss at the beginning that I had a medical exemption for a mask. He was a brand-new supervisor at the time. And supervisors in that particular agency are not unionized, so their jobs are at risk. I told him that I knew it would be a point of contention, and he and I made a deal about how he would accommodate my medical exemption.

Fast forward to probably 2021, they started to get really extreme with COVID rules. They were testing kids to meet quota numbers, not because anybody was sick. They were bribing kids, like making them vaccine appointments and then saying, "I'll buy you McDonald's after," and things like that. But I am summarizing, just to be clear. It's obviously more nuanced than that. Eventually, when they came to employees needing to be vaccinated to keep their jobs, I did serve my employer with a notice of liability for vaccines, testing, and



masking, but I also gave them two exemptions: one for a mask and one for a vaccine. And then, yeah, all hell broke loose, kind of.

### **Wayne Lenhardt**

Was there an interaction that resulted in a union grievance or something?

### **Amanda Rodriguez**

Yeah. So because they were testing the kids without any reason and not telling anybody, sometimes they would test one kid four times in one day just to make sure that, I don't know, that he didn't have COVID, I guess. I'm not sure. But then when you would get a positive case, it would change: Who could work that day? Who was there that day? And then there would be isolation requirements and things like that.

So once I served them with my exemptions, they started to send me lots of mail saying they didn't believe that it was real or that I had a genuine exemption and that there wouldn't be any accommodations. But then, I don't know, I guess they'd have a meeting and then they'd say, "Oh, yeah, just send us your paperwork." So they're playing this cat and mouse of "we're going to accommodate." But then they would say I was being insubordinate. I ended up going on stress leave because they were pestering me so much.

And every time I went to work, it was kind of like you had to be careful what you say, who you talk to. You had to be super mindful of what you were and weren't doing around the kids because they would kind of point to things that were so insignificant, like how far away was your thigh from the client's thigh when you were sitting on the couch—like, in inches. So you had to be really careful about what you were doing. So I ended up going on stress leave.

When I came back after two months, they were as soon as I came in, "You need to wear a mask. You need to wear your PPE." In a union, they have to warn you before they can write you up. So they were trying to berate me with basically orders. And then when I didn't follow it or a week had passed before they had reviewed my exemptions or things like that, they would say, like, oh I didn't have one.

It ended up being that when they tested one of the kids, I worked that day, so my number was given to Public Health. Public Health called all the employees working that day, asked questions, and one of them being if you're vaccinated or not, to which I said, "No." And she said, "Okay, these are the rules for unvaccinated people with exposure," which meant that I couldn't work. The employer used that to say that I was insubordinate and that I knowingly put kids at risk and suspended me for a week without pay—despite the public health-care workers saying that it was of no fault of my own, that I had to isolate, and that there were just different isolation requirements for vaccinated and unvaccinated people.

And then that started like a two-year battle with them, because they started to threaten to fire me weekly at that point. Yeah, they said a whole bunch of stuff. To summarize, they used that event to say that I was putting the kids at risk and they could terminate me for such reasons. So it went back and forth. One minute they were willing to accommodate, the next minute I'm insubordinate and dangerous and I should be fired.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

We have various documents. For example this one is titled Circular. It's September 24th of 2021, and it's Circular COVID-19 2021-52, and it's a five-page document. It'll be an exhibit online. So I'll double-check those when I get home after these hearings and make sure all these documents are there if you'd like to have a look at them. So I don't know that there's much point in us going through this detail at the moment so—

**Amanda Rodriguez**

No, for time's sake, no.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

So eventually—

**Amanda Rodriguez**

Long story short, they tried to fire me because I wasn't vaccinated and I wouldn't get vaccinated. But I was unionized, so they tried to bring up things from nine months previous and write me up for them and create a file looking like this was a pattern of behaviour and I should be fired. But it all started when I served them my notices of liability and exemptions.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

And they finally managed to do it, didn't—

**Amanda Rodriguez**

Well, no, I won. I won. So I won my union case. They were not supposed to suspend me for a week without pay. They found it to be wrong on the employer's part, but what they offered me only addressed the money part and not the rest of the discrimination and lack of accommodation and things like that. So I didn't agree. And then we were in a stalemate for about a year and a half, and then they said, "Well, you can quit or we'll move you and give you your week's pay." But at that point that bled into when my dad died, and I just couldn't deal with it anymore. So enough time had passed that they considered my position abandoned, but I won.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

Did you get a different job after they—?

**Amanda Rodriguez**

Yeah.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

Yeah, okay.

**Amanda Rodriguez**

Yeah.



**Wayne Lenhardt**

And it has no mandates at the moment.

**Amanda Rodriguez**

No, I'm a free bird.

**Wayne Lenhardt**

Okay, all right. At this point, are there any questions from the commissioners? Okay. And I'll double-check to make sure all this material is there if you want to look at it. Okay, on behalf of the National Citizens Inquiry, thank you very much for coming and giving your testimony today.

**Amanda Rodriguez**

Thank you.

