



## NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Toronto, ON

Day 1

March 30, 2023

### EVIDENCE

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**Witness 4: Marc Auger**

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[00:00:00]

**Marc Auger**

It's Marc with a C, M-A-R-C, Auger, A-U-G-E-R.

**Shawn Buckley**

And Mr. Auger, do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

**Marc Auger**

Yes, I do.

**Shawn Buckley**

Now, you were a professional firefighter for 30 years.

**Marc Auger**

Yes.

**Shawn Buckley**

And I want to say you had the good fortune of retiring just as COVID was hitting, but – you retired just before COVID hit.

**Marc Auger**

Yes, I did not have to deal with any of that.

**Shawn Buckley**

Right. But you had to deal with your father, Pierre. Can you please share with us what your experience was with him and the different COVID policies?

**Marc Auger**

Yes, my father had early onset dementia and he could not live on his own, so he moved in with my sister and lived with her for about three years. But on June 7, 2021, we had to admit him to long-term care. And that was at the height of COVID when there was a bunch of mandates and restrictions. And I was his power of attorney and at times I was not allowed into the home to visit him and it made my job as a power of attorney very difficult.

**Shawn Buckley**

Now, when he moved in, were you allowed in that day?

**Marc Auger**

The day he was admitted to the long-term care, yes. I had to go in to fill out a bunch of forms.

**Shawn Buckley**

Okay, so you were allowed in that day but then you weren't allowed in after that.

**Marc Auger**

Yes, there was periods of times I was not allowed in.

**Shawn Buckley**

And what was the reason you weren't allowed in?

**Marc Auger**

At that time, I was unvaccinated.

**Shawn Buckley**

And how did that make you feel?

**Marc Auger**

Segregated, very segregated. I don't think I should have been prevented from going into the home just because of my vaccination status.

**Shawn Buckley**

Right, so I mean, even if you tested negative, their policy was that you couldn't go in?

**Marc Auger**

Well, at the time, there was no testing when he was admitted. Later on, they did bring in rapid testing, and since I was a primary caregiver, I was allowed to get back in and see him

on November the 23rd. And the frustrating thing for me is, to this day, when I go visit him in long-term care, I still have to rapid test. Everyone rapid tests before they can go in and visit.

**Shawn Buckley**

So, you mean in March 2023?

**Marc Auger**

Yes, I was there last week and everyone who goes to visit in a long-term care home has to rapid test.

**Shawn Buckley**

So, he went into long-term care on June 7th of 2021. You weren't allowed back till November 23rd 2021. Did you notice a difference in your father when you were allowed back?

**Marc Auger**

Yes, I did notice. When I was in to visit him, his dementia declined. And I'm convinced that the decline was due to him being basically locked in his room. They received all their meals in the room. I couldn't come and visit. My sister could visit because she was vaccinated. And she had to try to explain to my father why I could not come in and visit him.

**Shawn Buckley**

Now, after you started being able to visit him, did you notice a change? So, you were able to start visiting again in November and you'd noticed a decline.

**Marc Auger**

Yes.

**Shawn Buckley**

Did anything happen after you started visiting him?

**Marc Auger**

After I could go in and visit, the very first time I saw him, he didn't even recognize me. And then after a few visits, he could recognize me; but it was like every time I went, there's different rules. So, sometimes we'd have to meet outside. They'd have a table set outside, and he would be in his wheelchair on one side and I'd be on the other side of the table, masks sitting outside, trying to carry on a conversation with someone with dementia. It was very frustrating.

**Shawn Buckley**

Now, I want to change subjects, and you went to the hospital back in October of 2021.

**Marc Auger**

Yes.

**Shawn Buckley**

And so, can you tell us about that experience?

**Marc Auger**

I ended up showing up at a hospital on a Friday night with severe abdominal pains.

[00:05:00]

And after a bunch of tests, I was diagnosed with appendicitis and I needed emergency surgery to remove my appendix. So, I was admitted to the hospital at that time, and I was laying on a bed, a stretcher in the hallway. And as they were doing the admitting to the hospital, the nursing team was doing all the paperwork and they said part of being admitted to the hospital and needing surgery is we have to do a COVID test. But they weren't concerned because they knew I was fully vaccinated. And once I informed them that I was not vaccinated, the whole demeanor changed. The nurse left the bedside, came back and said, "we have now found a room for you." Originally, they told me I'd have to spend the night in the hallway on a stretcher because there was no rooms.

**Shawn Buckley**

So can I just break in? So, what you're telling us is, you're told you got to basically spend the night in the hallway on a stretcher—

**Marc Auger**

Waiting for surgery.

**Shawn Buckley**

When they think you are vaccinated. But the minute they find out you're unvaccinated, they found a room immediately.

**Marc Auger**

Yes, I was rolled in on the stretcher into a single room, you know, glassed-in room. And that's where I spent the night in this glassed-in room, on the stretcher. They didn't even transfer me onto a hospital bed. I spent the night on the stretcher.

**Shawn Buckley**

Now, were you tested for COVID during your stay?

**Marc Auger**

Yes, they did the test. Once they knew they were admitting me, they did a test and the test did come back negative.

**Shawn Buckley**

So, the hospital knows that you do not have COVID.

**Marc Auger**

Yes.

**Shawn Buckley**

So, did the treatment improve when the test came back?

**Marc Auger**

I felt very segregated. I was in a room by myself, had to wear a mask the whole time I was in this room. And one of the most disturbing parts of it was: through the night I had to get up and go to the bathroom and there wasn't a bathroom in the room. So, I got up off my bed, went down the hallway to the bathroom. When I came back, I noticed there was a yellow Post-It Note stuck on the glass lighting door and it had one word written on it. Unvaccinated.

**Shawn Buckley**

And how did that make you feel?

**Marc Auger**

Not very good.

And it just sort of – I was on my own, you know. My wife could come in and see me. She went home for the night, but she was in in the morning again. But she was the only one that was allowed in.

**Shawn Buckley**

Did you get much nursing attention that night?

**Marc Auger**

I only recall a couple times the nurse came into the room to check on me.

**Shawn Buckley**

Now, you're waiting for surgery.

**Marc Auger**

Yes, I had surgery the next day.

**Shawn Buckley**

And this is emergency surgery?

**Marc Auger**

Yes, they had to call in a surgeon and an anesthesiologist and two surgical nurses to do my surgery, and I was the only surgery done that Saturday.

**Shawn Buckley**

And am I correct in suggesting to you that this was a life-and-death situation?

**Marc Auger**

That I cannot answer, but I was in a lot of pain and they told me that they had to come out. So, that's why they did it the next day.

**Shawn Buckley**

Right. Now, you were telling us that, at the hospital, you were treated differently once they found out you were unvaccinated. Has your status changed, your vaccination status?

**Marc Auger**

Yes, I did get vaccinated. I 100 per cent regret that decision I made. I was not anti-vaxx, I was vaccine hesitant. And the reason I was vaccine hesitant is, I have had two bouts of pericarditis in my lifetime: once as a teenager in high school and once in my 20s as a firefighter. And both times it was very painful and I required medication to get over the pericarditis. And I started doing research at the very beginning of COVID and what I could find out – it seemed like it was very hard to get information – but I did find out that the mRNA vaccines and the AstraZeneca vaccines both had possible side effects of heart inflammation, and I wasn't willing to take the risk. So, I researched Johnson & Johnson.

[00:10:00]

And, at the time, Johnson & Johnson was purchased by the Canadian government, but they did not release it to the provinces. So, I basically waited until it was available in Ontario before I considered taking it.

**Shawn Buckley**

Sorry, I turned my mic off.

Did you feel that you were perfectly free to take the vaccine or not take the vaccine?

**Marc Auger**

No, to this day, I feel like I was 100 per cent coerced into that decision. Mainly because of the experience I had in the long-term care home trying to look after my father, and the experience I received at the hospital as being an unvaccinated patient needing surgery.

**Shawn Buckley**

What happened when you were vaccinated?

**Marc Auger**

I was very hesitant at getting vaccinated. The last vaccine I did receive was a shingles vaccine and I did have a reaction to that, which was another reason I was vaccine hesitant. But I just felt like I was being coerced into doing this because if I wanted to do anything, I had to be vaccinated. So, I got vaccinated on December the 23rd, and the next day I felt like I got run over by a truck. I was in a lot of pain. I have arthritis. It just seems like my arthritis flared up. For the first week, I was in a lot of pain. Then ever since then, my arthritis has been worse. I've talked to my doctor about it, and my doctor has no explanation. She just suggested to increase my arthritis medication.

**Shawn Buckley**

And so, this was a sudden change?

**Marc Auger**

The day after being vaccinated, I was sore for a week. Like it was hard getting in and out of bed, walking up and down stairs; everything hurt, just hurt. And then for the first year, my shoulders: I had a hard time sleeping on my side, my shoulders would hurt. It's been progressively getting better because it's been well over a year, but I'm still not back to the way I felt pre-vaccination.

**Shawn Buckley**

Now, you have not gotten your second shot.

**Marc Auger**

Well, that's one of the reasons I did decide to go with Johnson & Johnson because it was a one-shot vaccination, you're considered fully vaccinated. And it was a viral vector vaccine, which was closer to the flu shot, which I have received before and didn't have reactions to. But one thing that really frustrates me is, when you see anything in mainstream media, they always talk about two shots. To be fully vaccinated, you need your two shots. But Johnson & Johnson wasn't that way, at one shot you're considered vaccinated, but they never talk about it. Why did the government push the mRNA vaccines? Did they want multiple shots? I don't have the answer.

**Shawn Buckley**

Mr. Auger, you've had several experiences concerning government policy decisions on COVID. What would you think we should do differently if we were to face this again?

**Marc Auger**

Everything. To me, anyone who spoke against it was silenced. There should have been more open conversation about getting vaccinated and not getting vaccinated, side effects. It just seemed very rushed to me and the government just kept moving the goal post, you know? It was, "get your two shots, you're done." "Now, get a booster," you know? "Now, mix and match vaccines." It just, it was like the science was changing constantly and they didn't really have the science to back it up. It just kept changing, it just happened too quickly.

**Shawn Buckley**

Thank you Mr. Auger I have no further questions. The Commissioners might have questions.

So, we're good, thank you so much for your testimony.

**Marc Auger**

Thank you for the opportunity.

[00:15:00]

