



NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Red Deer, AB

Day 2

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EVIDENCE

Witness 4: Michelle Ellert

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[00:00:00]

Shawn Buckley

Our next witness is attending online, Michelle Ellert.

Michelle, can you hear me?

Michelle Ellert

Yes, I can hear you.

Shawn Buckley

Okay and we can hear you, so let me start by asking you to state your full name for the record, spelling your first and last name.

Michelle Ellert

Yes, my name is Michelle Ellert, and it's spelled M-I-C-H-E-L-L-E. My last name is spelled E-L-L-E-R-T.

Shawn Buckley

And Michelle, do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Michelle Ellert

Yes, I do.

Shawn Buckley

Now, I'm going to introduce you without saying what you do or mentioning who your employer is because my understanding is you don't want there to be any repercussions for your testimony today.

Michelle Ellert

Yes, that's correct.

Shawn Buckley

Okay, but your employer mandated vaccination.

Michelle Ellert

Yes, they did.

Shawn Buckley

Can you tell us about that? My understanding is that that came about in 2021. So can you share with us basically what happened?

Michelle Ellert

Yes, there was numerous communications that I received through email from my employer, and I was notified that I would need to be fully vaccinated to work in my workplace as of November 1st, 2021. So the mandate stated that if we were not fully vaccinated, it would be an unpaid leave or potentially termination of my employment. So the deadline for the first dose was September 21st, 2021.

Shawn Buckley

Now, were you apprehensive or hesitant about getting vaccinated?

Michelle Ellert

Yes. Absolutely.

Shawn Buckley

And can you share with us why?

Michelle Ellert

There's a few reasons why I did not want to take the vaccine. First of all, my mother, she's an elderly lady and lives in a care home. So they were mandated as well to take the vaccination or receive the vaccination. Pardon my words: they're maybe not mandated, but it was very encouraged. Since she did get her first vaccine and I noticed after that there was a lot of falls, and she was continually taking trips to the hospital for these falls. And then her blood pressure was quite out of whack after these shots.

So we're very similar: she's allergic to amoxicillin, so am I. She's allergic to sulfa drugs, so am I. So I was very concerned that if she was having any reactions to it, I might be in line for that as well. Secondly—

Shawn Buckley

Can I just, can I just stop? So had your mom ever been falling before the vaccine?

Michelle Ellert

No.

Shawn Buckley

What was she like before the vaccine? She was able to walk around and—?

Michelle Ellert

Yes, she was able to walk around and talk normally. And as times kind of progressed, she can't talk anymore, and she's no longer able to walk anymore. She's in a wheelchair at this point.

Shawn Buckley

Okay, sorry to hear that. I'm sorry, I interrupted you. You were giving another reason why you were hesitant.

Michelle Ellert

Yes, number two reason for not wanting it was just the timeline of things. I remember being in the hospital with my dad, who had passed away in December 2020, and I was watching the news and they came out with this brand-new novel Corona virus. The world's never seen this virus before. It was brand new. So then to think in a year and a half, and I'm not a logistics expert or anything like that, but how a new virus could be researched and developed a vaccine, and then tested and then produced and then distributed out to the world in a year and a half? It just seemed like a really short timeline, and I didn't feel comfortable with, Was there enough time for testing? Do they know what happens to people in five years from now after taking this vaccine?

Shawn Buckley

Right okay. So kind of your own research you were apprehensive, and yet you did eventually decide to take it. So what was it that overcame your hesitancy?

Michelle Ellert

Ultimately, I could live without going to a restaurant or a concert or any extracurricular activities, but when it came to threatening my employment of not being able to bring home a pay cheque to provide for my daughter and for my family. To be able to pay the mortgage and pay for food. I really didn't want it.

[00:05:00]

So I was looking at other jobs online, but the majority of those jobs were requiring the vaccination as well, so I kind of felt if I didn't do it, I didn't know what was going to happen. My employment was going to be threatened, and we have a house to pay for. How are we going to do that?

Shawn Buckley

So it was it was really economic necessity that led you to do it.

Michelle Ellert

Absolutely. Yes.

Shawn Buckley

Now, my understanding is that then you and your husband and your daughter, on September 24th, 2021, then all went together to get the first shot.

Michelle Ellert

Yes. That's correct.

Shawn Buckley

Okay, and can you tell us how you reacted to the shot?

Michelle Ellert

Well, they told me that I'd probably feel like flu-like symptoms and maybe not very well for a couple of days after the shot, which I did experience some of those symptoms. But I thought well, this is probably just what happens. I noticed that a few days after the shot when I used the bathroom, it was hard to urinate and I'm— I've never have this problem before. And I was like, what? What is happening here? So it wasn't burning. There wasn't any blood or anything like that. It was just kind of an odd feeling. Like, I couldn't use the bathroom like I usually did.

So days went by, October 5th came and it was the same kind of experience in the morning using the bathroom. But by the time 4:30 in the afternoon hit, I went to use the bathroom is like, wow, it feels normal again. Like things are moving here a little more freely. But by the time I hit the end of that, it was burning like fire. It was burning and then there was blood on the paper. So I thought, wow, this has to be like a bladder infection. This is the only kind of thing I could kind of relate this to.

So at that point, I needed to go get a rapid test done in order to continue on carrying on with my work, because I wasn't fully vaccinated at that point. And I went to the drug store where I was getting the rapid test. And here where I live, there's like 40,000 people who don't have a family doctor. So it's very hard to get in to see your family doctor. And being a urine infection, you're supposed to deal with those quite quickly. So I asked this pharmacist if she would be able to prescribe me some ciprofloxacin, because this is a drug that's normally prescribed for bladder infections for me due to being allergic to amoxicillin and sulfa drugs. So I went home. I took one of the ciprofloxacin and then by 6:30, I use the bathroom and now there was blood clots and my urine was bright red, blood red. It was something I'd never seen before.

So at that point, I went to the emergency department. They took some blood and they took urine samples and I was basically told at the end of that visit that, “Well, it was just a bladder infection. Just go home and keep taking the cipro.” I’ve had a few bladder infections in my life, so I know that the drug does work, and by two days later, I’m like, “Why? I don’t feel well. I just— things don’t feel right. I don’t feel good.”

So I phoned my family doctor. Pardon me, not my family doctor, my kid’s doctor. My family doctor was retiring at the time and they would not book an appointment to go in and have an appointment with her. So I begged and I pleaded with my kid’s doctor, “Please, can somebody see me? There’s blood in my urine and I’m not feeling well after taking this medication.”

So at that point, I went to see the family doctor and he told me, “Well, I don’t believe that the ciprofloxacin is working for you, so let’s try a different drug. But if miraculously, you start to feel better by the end of the day, then just carry on with cipro.”

So I went home from the appointment and I noticed like, I didn’t really feel any worse. I didn’t really feel any better, and I was quite confident that the drug I was taking would work for this bladder infection, I thought. So I didn’t switch to the nitrofurantoin, and I kept taking the ciprofloxacin, and then it came to the end of my prescription. There was no more pills left and I still wasn’t feeling well.

So I went to the emergency department again, and at that point, the doctor there in the emergency wouldn’t allow me to explain what had happened to me in the last five days. I wasn’t allowed to talk about anything prior to why I was in the hospital at that moment. And I said, “Well, it’s my heart. My heart is like pounding out of my chest. It’s running away from me.” And so they did some heart tests, and he came back and he said: “Well, you have anxiety. You’re fine. Just go home.”

Shawn Buckley

Now my understanding, your blood pressure was really, really high.

Michelle Ellert

Yes, yes, it was. It was like 190 over 130 that day I believe. I have some notes here written about that. So yeah, it was quite high.

Shawn Buckley

So when they’re telling you it’s anxiety, this is anxiety with blood pressure through the roof.

[00:10:00]

Michelle Ellert

Yes, and he also informed me at that time that the urine sample I provided a few days before didn’t grow a culture of a bladder infection. And he said, “Well, you don’t have a bladder infection.” And at that moment in time, being kind of overwhelmed with what was happening with my heart and the awkward feeling of being in the hospital, I didn’t think about, “Well, if I don’t have a bladder infection, then why am I peeing blood? Like what’s happening here?”

So after that, I contacted my kid's doctor again, and I told her—told the nurse—about this experience at the hospital and how I was told that there wasn't a culture of a bladder infection. And so why would I be peeing blood? So she had told me that she was going to get a ultrasound or speak to Dr. Cunningham. And anyhow, they have arranged a ultrasound for me to go to. I went to that, and all the results of course came back normal.

With the blood test that I was given on the first trip to the emergency room, there was abnormal things in my blood work, and none of that was ever really discussed with me as to what that meant. But as the months kind of went by, I was put on a medical leave as of December 1st, 2021, and I haven't been able to return back to work.

I've had a barrage of symptoms that are somewhat softening at that point, but are really quite debilitating. I've got the chronic fatigue. Last year at this time, I was in bed 90 per cent of the day. I couldn't get out of bed. I was just chronically fatigued. There was muscle weakness and lots of pain in my hips and my knees. My vision is blurry. There's kind of a haze over the top. Like I said, some of these have kind of softened, but there's been just these symptoms have carried on from this point in October till today.

Shawn Buckley

Can I just back you up? When the ultrasound was done, am I correct that the doctor suggested that perhaps you were having an immune response to the vaccine?

Michelle Ellert

Yes, after that point of getting the normal results on the ultrasound, he did tell me he believed it was an immune response to the vaccine. And there's numerous paperwork that he filled out for the time off of work that stated that it was because of a vaccine injury and an immune response to the vaccine.

Shawn Buckley

Right. Okay. Now you've shared with us some of the symptoms that you've experienced since then. Can you tell us a little more about that brain fog? Because you were telling me about, you know, a manual that you had basically written and the fact that you couldn't go back and make amendments, that your mind was so affected at the time.

Michelle Ellert

Yes. So this would have been the last week that I worked. Because I wasn't fully vaccinated, I was sent home to work from home because I wasn't allowed to be at my place of employment. So we were about five days into the work week, and I just had a headache going on for five days constantly on this right-hand side of my head, and it wouldn't go away. I had written a manual. It was 425 pages, and it was a procedure manual for the unit that I work in. At that point, I had notes and things that I needed to add and things I needed to adjust, but by that end, last week, I was scrolling up the document and down the document. I couldn't figure out where to add things, how to word things. It would just take me forever to really complete any of my work at that point. Reading has been quite difficult for me since then. There was a point where I was having to read things out loud to understand things because as I read, it just doesn't seem to go in like it once did. You know, you just read it and you understand, but that's not how it seems to work for me now.

Shawn Buckley

So now it's been 13 months, or 13 months after you ended up seeing a specialist.

Michelle Ellert

Yes.

Shawn Buckley

And the specialist, what did the specialist tell you? At that point, you had basically been suffering for 13 months.

Michelle Ellert

Thirteen months. Yes, that's correct. And I went to see— I was told it was an internal medicine specialist, but at this point, I'm not sure if it was a cardiologist. Sorry. The brain fog and confusion over the last few months. So it was one or the other. I told him my story of what symptoms I had, and how things kind of went. And so we did some more urine tests and some more blood tests and all of that came back normal. And I'm still having these symptoms and he says, "Well, first of all, we can't call this a vaccine injury."

[00:15:00]

He says, "We don't have any proof." So for the first 13 months of going through all of these unexpected symptoms and being all of a sudden disabled, and being told it was an immune response to the vaccine, I was told that "No, we can't call it a vaccine injury anymore. We don't have any proof." So at that point, he referred me to a sleep study and the sleep study came back, was normal. And then he's now referred me on to a neurologist. That was January, and I still have not to this day received the phone call or a booking for the specialist with the neurologist.

Shawn Buckley

Right, my understanding is you also suffer from POTS [Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome]. And can you explain what that is?

Michelle Ellert

So I have been seeing a doctor through the Canadian COVID Telehealth system. And also because of my long-term disability that I'm currently on, of course, they want me to return to work, so I've been seeing a physiotherapist to kind of assess when I'm able to return to work. So through these kind of assessments, they've talked about dysautonomia and POTS, Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia [Syndrome]. So it seems like when I stand or I do physical activity of any sort my blood pressure will skyrocket. I start to get weak in the knees, I start to feel nauseous, and basically at that point, I've got to sit down. The last time I went I was in with the physiotherapist for an assessment and they had me lifting a box with a 10-pound weight from my waist to over my shoulders. I did this a matter of four times, and my blood pressure had skyrocketed to 182 over 132. That's where the assessment kind of ended.

Shawn Buckley

Right, so they basically stopped that assessment because your blood pressure was at a dangerous level?

Michelle Ellert

Yes.

Shawn Buckley

Now can you tell us what happened to your daughter after she was vaccinated?

Michelle Ellert

Yes. I wish I could give you a lot more detail than I can, but given the circumstances, I was dealing with a lot of new features happening in my body, that I wasn't quite sure why things were happening to me. But my daughter, after her shot, came and it started with the burning in her mouth. Looking back through my notes today, I did note that she had like boils and kind of boils and white dots on her tongue, and this was kind of the first symptom, I guess, that she brought to my attention.

So we went to the doctor and he said, "Well, usually we only see this in patients who are lacking vitamins and minerals." My family eats fairly well, and so I don't know, we're eating the same diet. There shouldn't be kind of that issue of lacking vitamins and minerals, but he gave her a mouthwash after, to kind of deal with that burning. The burning stopped after that, but given a week or two later, we were back there again for the same reason: she had burning in her tongue.

Then she had an episode of burning in her scalp, which required a steroid shampoo. She's also been diagnosed with tachycardia as well, and I apologize, there was some words before the word tachycardia, and I just don't know if they said postural orthostatic tachycardia, or if it was a different type.

She's also been diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome. She's 14 years old. She should be full of life and energy, but she comes home from school and she's absolutely pale and white, and you can see she's completely exhausted. And this goes on week after week here. She missed a lot of school last year. This year she does seem to be somewhat improving, but it seems like it's hard for her to make it through a full week of school without having a nap between four and seven, for about three to four days a week.

Shawn Buckley

Okay, so your daughter when she comes home from school about three to four days a week, she'll actually nap when she gets home, from about four to seven. Now how does this compare with how she was before she got vaccinated?

Michelle Ellert

At that time, I had a happy 13-year-old kid. She was full of energy. She was healthy. She was happy. Like she would go to school. Things were normal, just like myself, things were normal. We would go to work and go to school, and it wasn't exhausting. We were still able to do things after a day of school or a day of work. So she's completely changed in that regard. She's just not, there's no life, there's no energy left in her, I feel anymore.

Shawn Buckley

And how do you feel that the medical system has treated you since you were vaccinated?

[00:20:00]

Michelle Ellert

I'm very thankful for my daughter's doctor who has put me on a medical leave because there is absolutely no way I would be able to work five days a week, eight hours a day. The fatigue and the headaches and things that I experienced in a day, there is no way. So I'm very appreciative of that.

But the only problem is there has not been, at this point—how many months were passed—no diagnosis. I was told in the beginning it was an immune response to the vaccine, and then I see a specialist, and then I'm told we don't have any proof. But I'm still sitting here this many months later, and I don't have diagnosis of what's wrong with me or how to treat what's happening to me.

Shawn Buckley

So I just want to be clear because you were vaccinated back in September of 2021, and we're now near the end of April 2023. You've been off work on disability leave since December 1st, 2021, and still no one has provided you with a diagnosis.

Michelle Ellert

Not from AHS, nope. There's been no diagnosis from them. I'm still sitting here waiting. I'm very thankful for Canadian COVID Telehealth at this point. I feel like if it wasn't for the doctor that I'm able to see that I would still be in bed 90 per cent of the day.

Shawn Buckley

Right. Now those are my questions. I'm going to ask if the commissioners have any questions of you. And there's no questions.

So Michelle, on behalf of the National Citizens Inquiry, we sincerely thank you for coming and testifying today.

Michelle Ellert

Thank you so much for having me. It's appreciated.

[00:22:02]

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