



NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Saskatoon, SK

Day 3

April 22, 2023

EVIDENCE

Witness 11: Louise Wilson

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Shawn Buckley

So our next witness is Louise Wilson. Am I saying your first name right? Okay. And Louise, can you state your full name for the record, spelling your first and last name?

Louise Wilson

My name is Louise, L-O-U-I-S-E. Wilson, W-I-L-S-O-N.

Shawn Buckley

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

Louise Wilson

Yes, I do.

Shawn Buckley

Now, my understanding is that when this pandemic started, you owned and ran two Dollar Stores.

Louise Wilson

Yes.

Shawn Buckley

Can you tell us actually how business was in 2020?

Louise Wilson

We have a Dollar Store. So it has a variety of merchandise that, when the pandemic hit, they deemed essential because we have a lot of school supplies and craft supplies and household items. Some health and beauty items that, I guess, would be used for PPE. And we were fortunate to be able to stay open during the pandemic.

Shawn Buckley

Now, you have two stores, can you tell us where they're located?

Louise Wilson

Yes, in southeast Saskatchewan: Esterhazy and Moosomin.

Shawn Buckley

And I'm sorry?

Louise Wilson

Moosomin.

Shawn Buckley

Oh, Moosomin. Okay, thank you. Can you tell us how business was in 2020? You told us that you guys were deemed essential, so you could stay open. And I'm just curious what the effect of that was.

Louise Wilson

Well, we were very busy. And the reason why we were very busy was because no one wanted to go to the city. Everybody was very afraid of going to the city. They just stayed close to home. Like I said, we had requests for certain things by the thousands that we could source out because we could custom-order things. We were very busy, actually.

Shawn Buckley

Right. Just so I understand you: People are afraid to go to the city because they're going to catch COVID, so they would shop at the local Dollar Store instead of going to the city.

Now, when the first mask mandate rolled around, how did you respond both personally and with your business?

Louise Wilson

Well, personally, I knew right away the masks were useless. I'm very informed. I've done a lot of research over many years on health issues—and I knew this was ridiculous. I went along with it. I did wear the mask very reluctantly and not very well, mostly under my chin.

Shawn Buckley

You were one of those chin-wearers, okay.

Louise Wilson

I was.

Shawn Buckley

What happened when they imposed the mask mandate a second time?

Louise Wilson

I wasn't very happy about it and I refused to wear a mask. I had put out a memo to all of my staff, "You will not be harassing customers to wear a mask." I have never, ever put signs on my floor or Plexiglass in my store. And I told them if they wanted to wear a mask, they were welcome to wear one, that I wasn't going to wear one.

Shawn Buckley

And how did your employees react?

Louise Wilson

Mostly good. Some quit. Yeah.

Shawn Buckley

Do you recall why they quit, was anything said?

Louise Wilson

They were afraid. They were afraid that customers were going to be in my store. It was going to be a not-healthy environment and they were afraid that they were going to get COVID and worse. So they quit.

Shawn Buckley

I thank you for telling your staff not to harass customers. The first store I got kicked out of for not wearing a mask was a Dollar Store. Now, eventually you had a visit.

Louise Wilson

Yes.

Shawn Buckley

Can you tell us about the visit?

Louise Wilson

Well, there are a lot of people in town that could see what was going on in my store,

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and made complaints. So this representative from the Saskatchewan Health Authority paid a visit and I was issued a \$2,800 fine.

Shawn Buckley

Twenty-eight hundred dollars.

Louise Wilson

Yes.

Shawn Buckley

And what was that ticket for?

Louise Wilson

Not complying to wear a mask.

Shawn Buckley

Okay, so that was on you personally?

Louise Wilson

Yes.

Shawn Buckley

Do you know how it came about that the person made a visit to your store?

Louise Wilson

Yes, it was— Someone from the town would have made a complaint to the Saskatchewan Health Authority and, right away, that triggers somebody to come out to make a visit.

Shawn Buckley

Do you know, in Manitoba we learned that there was a special name for these people. They're called ambassadors.

Louise Wilson

Yes.

Shawn Buckley

Did they have a similar name in Saskatchewan?

Louise Wilson

We call them Karens.

Shawn Buckley

You called them what?

Louise Wilson

Karens.

Shawn Buckley

Okay. So now, what happened with that ticket?

Louise Wilson

Well, I told this representative from the Saskatchewan Health Authority that I was not going to pay it and that I was going to fight it out in court.

Shawn Buckley

And why did you decide to fight it? Because you weren't wearing a mask.

Louise Wilson

I decided to fight it because I didn't think that it was lawful. And I didn't think that what they were doing was right. And I was very determined to stick up for myself.

Shawn Buckley

And what happened?

Louise Wilson

Well, we had several court appearances. I had a ticket and I recognized that the ticket had some errors on it. I was basically just trying to figure out, by any knowledge that I could amass, how I could go about dealing with this ticket that I had. And there were things wrong with the ticket, as far as: it wasn't filled out properly; things were not spelled properly; and I was going to just start there.

I thought, "Well, this should be just thrown out, it wasn't properly filled out." And I tried to say that at my first appearance.

And it turns out that the prosecutor— At that time, I should point out that we were not actually face-to-face with the prosecutor and the judge. I was in Esterhazy, the prosecutor was in Yorkton, and the judge was in Kamsack. So when I mentioned that there's problems with the ticket, he said, "Well, I don't have the ticket in front of me, we'll have to look at the ticket." And then the judge also mentioned she didn't see it in her docket neither.

Shawn Buckley

I just want to make sure people understand. So you had a court appearance on the ticket.

Louise Wilson

Yes.

Shawn Buckley

But neither the judge nor the Crown had a copy of the ticket for your court appearance.

Louise Wilson

Right.

Shawn Buckley

Okay, so what happened then?

Louise Wilson

Well, from the investigation that I had done, I realized that—their failure to present the ticket in front of them was wrong. Later on, I did ask for the transcript from them actually saying that. That they didn't have the ticket. Because I was there, but they weren't ready for me. So that was wasting my time, really, and that's not really proper.

So what they did then is they scheduled another court appearance. A month later, I came back into court, where they then set a trial date. They asked me if I was planning on using the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. And I said I was. And they informed me that I needed to give four weeks notice. I said I was very aware. And we set a trial date for August 9th of 2022.

So then I did send the briefs. I sent the briefs to the prosecutor,

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the provincial courthouse. I did it all by myself. I was “presenting myself,” is what I should say. I didn't have a lawyer. So I wrote a brief. And then in July, I decided to put forward a motion to dismiss because I had a lot of, I felt, reason for them to drop it. So I put together a package with exhibits in it and sent it on to, again, the prosecutor and the courthouse and waited to hear back from them.

Shawn Buckley

And what happened after that?

Louise Wilson

The day before my trial date, I was preparing for court and doing trial prep. What was I going to do? And decided, “Well, I'm just going to phone and see if they've made a decision or not.” So I phoned the Crown prosecutor. And I said, “Have you come up with a decision as to what you're going to do with this motion to dismiss?” And I heard back that they made a decision to withdraw the ticket.

Shawn Buckley

And did they tell you when that decision had been made?

Louise Wilson

No, no. If I had not phoned, I'm sure I would have just appeared in court and at that point they would have informed me.

Shawn Buckley

Right. Well, at least that had a happy ending.

Louise Wilson

It did have a happy ending. It was a good day; it was a happy dance involved. I felt very happy that I endured it, like, that I followed through and to the end, and didn't give up.

Shawn Buckley

And can I ask you to share with us why that made you feel good?

Louise Wilson

Because I learned a lot. I learned a lot about how to present myself, what my rights were, and I felt that it worked out. It worked out. I was— I won, I felt like I won.

Shawn Buckley

Now, Louise, I don't have any further questions for you, but I'll ask if the commissioners have some questions for you. And there are no questions.

Louise, on behalf of the National Citizens Inquiry, we sincerely thank you for attending and sharing with us today.

Louise Wilson

Thank you for giving me the opportunity.

[00:13:31]

Final Review and Approval: Jodi Bruhn, August 21, 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.

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