



NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

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EVIDENCE

Witness 10: David Leis

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Shawn Buckley

And our next witness is a Mr. David Leis. David, can I get you to state your full name for the record, spelling your first and last name?

David Leis

Yes, my name is David Leis. My name is spelled D-A-V-I-D and my last name is L-E-I-S.

Shawn Buckley

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

David Leis

So help me God.

Shawn Buckley

Now my understanding is that you trained in public policy and administration at Waterloo, Toronto, and Ryerson universities.

David Leis

And at Queens.

Shawn Buckley

And at Queen's. You have a master's degree in public policy from Queen's.

David Leis

Yes.

Shawn Buckley

And you have extensive work experience in public policy, including working in many senior roles in government, locally and provincially, in post-secondary institutions, including universities and polytechnique. You have served as the mayor of Woolwich and as a councillor with the Regional Municipality of Waterloo.

David Leis

Yes.

Shawn Buckley

And you have served in policy roles for cabinet committees at the Province of Ontario, as well. You are Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Kitchener–Waterloo Chamber of Commerce.

David Leis

Yes.

Shawn Buckley

You are presently Vice-President at Frontier Centre for Public Policy.

David Leis

Correct.

Shawn Buckley

And the Frontier Centre was founded in 1999 as a non-partisan public policy think tank.

David Leis

Yes.

Shawn Buckley

And basically the mission is to advocate for better public policy.

David Leis

Correct.

Shawn Buckley

Now, I went through all of that just to point out that you've basically spent your life becoming an expert in public policy.

David Leis

Correct.

Shawn Buckley

You've been invited here today to comment on the public policy concerning how governments conducted themselves concerning COVID-19. Can you please share your thoughts with us on that?

David Leis

Yes, good afternoon, everyone. It's an honour to be here.

My points are several. But in essence, never in the history of, certainly in my lifetime, nor I believe, sadly, in the lifetime of recent memory, has there been such a policy disaster. And that policy disaster is very much articulated in many forms, both in terms of policy itself and associated principles of good practice of what makes for good public policy. But I would say also in terms of failure of critical institutions. Canadians were relying on institutions on the assumption that they would serve us. And sadly, they did not. And I could give you a 360 review.

But I also have the point that as a student of public policy, I'm also a student of philosophy and history. And sadly, we can see in history that this is an assault on our Canadian rights and freedoms. I cannot, respectfully, think of a right and freedom that was not violated. And finally— I'm deeply concerned.

Shawn Buckley

If you need to take a moment, you can. Understand, I think, and everyone in the audience appreciates that some of the witnesses are emotional, including myself when I give my opening addresses. So Mr. Leis, please feel free to take time to collect your thoughts.

David Leis

Thank you so much for your kindness.

I'm deeply concerned about the future of our society in the context of an assault on our civic society. I do not say this lightly. Because I am sure,

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like everyone, we're guided by particular values and principles. In my case, and certainly many of my colleagues at the Frontier Centre for Public Policy, those principles relate to principles of classical liberalism, principles that have an extraordinary history, over thousands of years. An extraordinary history, particularly in the last thousand years, that relate to principles on the assumption that we are born free. We are born free and that we have governments, the king, the queen, or whatever form of government is not above the law but rather serves the people. And there are very clear sets of principles that have been violated within those principles, and I could go through them extensively. But I am very concerned about our society, given the impacts on all individuals and the layers within that society. I apologize—

Shawn Buckley

No, I mean, I think several people in your position— And I was speaking with another member of the Frontier Society yesterday who shared the concern that literally liberal Western democracy is at a crossroads.

David Leis

Indeed it is.

Shawn Buckley

And depending on how this generation responds and how quickly, it might be the end of this experience or experiment in Western liberalism. And my understanding is that's why you're finding this emotional: because you are concerned about where this is going.

David Leis

Indeed I am. I have served my country in many different capacities. And it is atrocious what has happened. From the very beginning, there were numerous signs that would have tweaked in any rational decision-maker. Massive red flags. And I realize this is like peeling the perennial onion where we did not know all the information at the beginning. And that is part of being human. But it was also by design.

And in my opinion, it is indeed a travesty what has happened. And the signs were numerous. I am a student of statistics, and I know enough sense to also consult with a myriad of people. And from the beginning, it was very clear that the statistics of mortality did not make this the Spanish flu. It was obvious. And I have dared so many officials to debate this publicly, any time, any place. The mortality rate was not there. We knew that the persons that were vulnerable were persons classically of an older profile of multiple health challenges, and they needed to be protected.

But to lock down a society is outrageous. The costs are profound. If we look at the myriad of analyses—economic, social, psychological, education, on every age category, and not the least of which is on health—we know a lockdown measure was never, ever envisioned. And we didn't follow the plan.

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As a former mayor, I am trained in emergency management. I have gone through tough situations. And as a matter of course, we would always follow the emergency plan—Standard Operating Procedure. Part of that methodology, to be clear, is that in any emergency, it is the head elected official that takes charge and brings together an integrative team across all disciplines, all areas—fire, police, every department, including private actors—and brings them around a table like this and does the analysis. What is the situation? What are the risks? What are the options that we can undertake to not only deal with the disaster but to also mitigate it in such a way that minimizes the impacts on the rest of the community, the province, or the country?

It is a huge head-scratcher that those plans were developed and never followed. And from fairly early on in the pandemic, a colleague of ours—Lieutenant Colonel David Redmond, who has done so many emergency plans his head spins—he did the pandemic plans for a number of jurisdictions, including, I believe, the armed forces and the Province of Alberta. And they never followed those plans. These are huge red flags that needs to be looked into

in terms of judgment or competency. I'm not quite certain. Or whether it was just hiding behind the good name of a doctor to avoid political responsibility out of fear.

I know what it's like to be elected. I know what it's like to come in a room with a lot of people who are very upset and very concerned about their safety. And we just followed the core narrative that I believe was largely spilling out of the United States and facilitated elsewhere.

But we didn't do our job. I feel that decision-makers didn't do their job to do that kind of incisive policy analysis. And I get at the very beginning that there's known unknowns. But we knew that the People's Republic of China was not following World Health protocol. They signed that agreement. They did not share the information in a timely manner. And that raised red flags. They locked down Wuhan. But they continued international flights. They were facilitating the spread of this virus, and you could tell it from the very beginning. And that's from a layperson's point of view, so I want to be careful about that. But the reality is that there were signs from the very beginning that we were not following best practices on policy, and we were going to hurt a lot of people. And that's outrageous. And it's immoral.

Shawn Buckley

How do you feel about federally, and in the Province of Manitoba—not just the governing parties but the opposition and other parties that were in Parliament and the legislature—concerning whether or not they listened to the populace? I guess the frustration is, and I'll just rephrase my question.

It seems that every party fell in lockstep. So it seems like every institution fell in lockstep. Was there a College of Physicians and Surgeons in any province that acted differently than the others? Was there a political party in any province or federally that acted differently than the others? And you study this type of thing. So I'd like your comments on that. And if, as best you can, you could offer an explanation for how is it that that everyone is doing the same thing and yet nobody's following the plan.

David Leis

Well, sadly, we were shocked that we heard crickets on so many fronts.

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There were persons behind the scenes who clearly were concerned, asking what we thought were the logical questions and doing, I think, a fair amount of due diligence behind the scenes.

But peculiar things were going on that I think need to be kept in perspective. One of which is the media chorus was uniformly a message of fear and hysteria. And these are very disturbing for any elected official, then, because they do not want to be seen as being offside. They don't want to be seen as caring when, in fact, seeking the truth is actually caring. This is the supreme irony of this. It was so easy, I think, for any decision-making elected official, let alone a professional body, to go along with these narratives because they were placed in such an emotional, psychological quadrant. And this is dangerous. Because it disables the ability of a population to take a deep breath and say, look, we make decisions based on rational thinking, not just emotion. I can talk endlessly about what I think, around what was orchestrated there.

Shawn Buckley

If you don't mind if I kind of take you in a different direction. It's just that you have some experience and so your thoughts would be helpful.

It is not unfair to say that the public narrative that we were being fed was completely false and very destructive. Let's just say, hypothetically, we accept that as a proposition. And let's say I'm a premier of a province and I understand that the mainstream media narrative is incorrect. And it's going to be tremendously damaging in my province if I follow it. And you're sharing with us, though, that they don't want to be offside. I think a lot of us had wondered this.

How does a politician resist such a sustained and consistent media narrative that was terrorizing the community? Does the premier basically send in the police to be looking for evidence of fraud or misleading? What can a premier do? Maybe we'll have some premiers watching. I'm just trying to figure out, what on earth could an elected official that truly wanted to do the right thing but understands that the media machine can just annihilate him or her— How would they stop this in the future?

David Leis

Well, I can speak in a number of respects. One is I know what I did. When I went through crises, I would work to communicate the information that we had. And I would communicate with confidence, not fear but confidence, that we had a powerful team and we were going to get through this. We would share information with panels of experts on toxicology. I'm thinking, in this case, of a particular water crisis that we worked at. The onus was on us to intelligently share with people, as citizens, the information that we had and the associated risks so that they could have a fairly transparent picture of what we knew.

Shawn Buckley

Okay. So almost like daily briefings, like that fellow in New York was doing, except telling the truth and having experts telling the truth.

David Leis

I think that's an advisable thing to do. To tell the truth.

Shawn Buckley

Okay. And I'm just asking for ideas because, perhaps, some politicians or future politicians will be watching this and any suggestions that you would have could be helpful.

David Leis

I know it was a different time. But in my own experience working with the media, I was so fortunate that, by and whole, I had very good media relationships. But one of the things is I had a profound respect for their work and that they had a profound sense of desire to serve the community: to look into "the story behind the story" and to share information,

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all within the bounds of their professional standards.

And I'm not suggesting that there aren't journalists today. Because there are. But I think what we have is a long train wreck that has happened over years in the making. This didn't just happen overnight where our journalistic media mainstream outlets are not so much about journalism, they are about pushing a narrative. I think most Canadians would be shocked to know that 2,000 media outlets in Canada are systematically funded by the federal government— 2,000. So this local daily here in Winnipeg, as an example, has almost half its budget from the federal government. Now, you tell me how they carry out their ethical journalistic standards. I'm not saying that they can't do something, like reporting a tragic car crash. But their ability to contradict their funders' priorities— Because they do have it in an agreement. They carry their journalistic practice now through the lens of their funder. They have to.

Shawn Buckley

A conflict of interest. Are you aware— I have heard, anecdotally, that because the federal government just doles out so much cash to clubs and community organizations and the like that during COVID, there would be conditions on the funding that they would support and push the vaccine mandate. Are you familiar with that?

David Leis

I'm familiar with that. I would love to get my hands on a signed agreement. But I can tell you this: There are a proliferation of interests involved in this saga. And each one of them needs to be looked at carefully. But when Pharma is your main sponsor of so many things, one has to keep your head up and your eyes open and say, "What is going on here?"

So I see these institutions, and I've had enormous respect for them. There's a lot of very good people. But within that context, I think we underestimate that one of the principles of classical liberalism is the belief that we have a limited state for a reason.

Now I am not a socialist for many reasons. But a limited state is very important because you need to keep room for the majority of your society, which are working people who do not work in Ottawa for the federal government or otherwise. I'm not saying that those aren't important jobs. But the size of our state has mushroomed dramatically the last 30 years. And its tentacles are everywhere. When you are funding the media. When you are funding various institutions, including professional colleges. When you are even funding supposedly independent think tanks. And by the way, Frontier does not accept any government funding. And it does so for a reason. Because if you go along with the size of that state, you put yourself in jeopardy, sooner or later. Because depending on who is the king, or the queen, they may or may not understand governance. And I can tell you that time and time again it appears that, in our country, our leadership does not get governance.

Shawn Buckley

I'm wondering, just staying on classic liberal principles, if you can comment on the importance to societies, like Canada, of actually having freedom of expression and freedom of belief and freedom of conscience. Because those seem to be things that are becoming— Well, I mean, people wanting to be witnesses at this Commission backed down because they're concerned that there's going to be repercussions.

I'm just wondering if you can comment on how those things are vital to a liberal democracy.

David Leis

They are foundational. When we put into perspective the value of freedom of speech, it is one of the cornerstones of our rights and freedoms because it allows us to debate, respectfully, to get to a truth.

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Any student of history knows this to be true.

And as we look at this, it is also foundational for our livelihood. Freedom of speech is the cornerstone for innovation, for our economic standard of living to move forward and our quality of life. If you look at the last 4,000 years, our standard of living would be, basically, a flat line. It's only in the last 250 years that we have a standard of living that has increased exponentially— That we have a microphone before me on this table and that we can be in such a lovely room. This is very recent. And therefore, if we do not have freedom of speech but rather censorship and the imposition of the state that suggests that what is black is white and what is green is red, and what are facts are not facts. But the narrative is more important because winning is more important. And the ends justify the means. And that science does not matter. Then we have lost it all. It means that we cannot innovate. It means we don't have a future.

So we have to get a hold of this, now. We have a window, I believe, and I hope I am wrong. We need to wake up people from coast to coast of the significance of what has occurred. Because there are lessons learned in life and such is this time. To be able to look to each other with compassion, in the tradition of civil society, where there is a tolerance for diversity of opinion and intellectual thought. And it has nothing to do with your race or your gender or whatever. It has everything to do with a belief that we came to this place in time through a long history of hard-fought fighting and civil war where many have died, let alone served to protect those rights and freedoms in many world wars. And I am so sad that it seems like quote, "educated people," in my peer group of leadership, that have utterly forgotten this or do not have the courage to sustain it, to serve the people.

Shawn Buckley

Mr. Leis, I've been trying to think how do we— And obviously, the Commission's mandate is to come up with recommendations on how to change things. And one common theme that we've seen with witness after witness, and I think Dr. Bhattacharya was saying, is that you can't ever get a single public health official or even a private spokesperson. We had one person pointing out two people that get paid money to be the go-to experts for the media. One I think at the University of Calgary. But these people will never debate. And we had that radio journalist, I think, on Day 1, indicating that he tried to get a debate with Dr. McCullough and another. They'll never come to debate. It seems to me that one change going forward would be that public officials or anyone that is willing to privately comment in the media, plus our politicians, would have to be required by law to reasonably engage in debate and explanations so that things cannot be done without reasons being given anymore.

I'm just wondering if you could comment on that. And then if you had any other ideas— assuming we could get our institutions back—on how to prevent this.

David Leis

Well, debate is so essential. Intellectual friction, we call it at Frontier. Because it is remarkable what we can learn from our intellectual opponents or persons that, frankly, don't agree with us.

What I have noticed is that as our society has tilted more and more towards— I would refer to them as authoritarian impulse.

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We have lost or, frankly, don't teach enough about basic points of logic. There's some 26 logical fallacies, and one of which is the most important one, which is never attack your opponent personally— Ad hominem attack. And yet, this is the common theme that has gone on through this crisis. This is a huge flag that debate is being diminished. Because instead of discussing the issues or the concerns, the thoughtful questions that so many citizens have brought forward, it is endless attacks of being a white racist or a person of whatever privilege. When in fact, what is going on is not serving people.

What is going on is policymaking decision that protects privilege of the few. That protects power and money. And this is atrocious. And so therefore, debate is critical. We should be seeking that, requesting that, as a matter of course. And I would say that one of the institutions that I am deeply disturbed by, and I frankly believe is in crisis, is the law profession.

In a high-functioning healthy society, one of the most important responsibilities of the state is to undertake its judicial function, to ensure the rule of law is being respected: There are no arbitrary arrests on someone's property or in their garden. There is trial by jury. We're all equal before the law, and the state is not privileged before the law. The law is above the state.

And just to be clear, our tradition of freedom is dependent on the concept of the common law. The common law, beginning with the Magna Carta and the meadow in Runnymede, before an atrocious King John I and in that meadow, they agreed to basic things that are now in jeopardy. And as I recall, Chapter 18, by John Locke in his *Second Treatise of Government*, is essentially the point that with the end of law, specifically common law, comes tyranny. And that is what we face clearly in the eye today. And 2023 is the prospect of tyranny. And I do not use that word lightly. But this is the ugly reality that we face. So if we look at a 360-degree view of this crisis, it is one of policy disaster. But it is one where civil society has been assaulted.

Shawn Buckley

Well, it's curious that you cite John Locke and his principle that if the rule of law ends that we end up in tyranny. Because tyranny is simply unfettered discretion.

David Leis

Correct.

Shawn Buckley

And we've experienced, basically, unfettered discretion in our public health officials and absolute deference of those decisions by our politicians. So it seems to me that we've just

experienced the exact problem that John Locke described in the *Second Treatise of Government*.

David Leis

Indeed. And when we look at the courts then, the place for prominent public debate, then, is the judge who realizes that the responsibility is not to the state, not to the public health official but to the truth. This is where debate happens in a high-functioning society. Among other quarters, it's part of the culture. It's part of the ethos. It's in the media. It's in the universities, who were, many, on leave. Absent. Silent. What is the point of tenure, a job for life, if you can't speak up with confidence? I doubt if anyone here has tenure.

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And yet they're speaking up. But this has always been the lesson of history. I have studied thousands of years of history. It's always been the few who have stood up with courage and said, "No more."

Shawn Buckley

That's well said. I'm wondering if the commissioners have any questions for Mr. Leis.

Commissioner Kaikkonen

Thank you for your testimony. We've heard testimony from people who have earned despair, anger, cynicism with regard to government. We've heard testimony over the last few days and from Truro and Toronto about the political world bouncing from one negative and inhumane aspect to another, with less and less making sense. It used to be, not that long ago, that we could somehow interpret our world based on motivations of self-interest and greed, or something to that effect. At least it was a behavioural starting point by which we could then make our world, or model our world, and think about what we might change.

But post-pandemic, there is a form of irrational nihilism that makes little or no sense either from the point of view of rationality or the point of view of sensibility and feeling. And in fact, our freedoms and lives are now being circumscribed by all levels of government. Therefore, it shouldn't come as a surprise from an intellectual sense or maybe even a spiritual sense that there are many feeling lost in how our institutions are acting in that one-mind context that Shawn just alluded to.

But what steps can citizens, like the citizens here in this room or who are watching online, what steps can we take as just citizens to change what is happening in our institutions?

David Leis

Thank you for your question. It's a very wise and insightful one. I think that there's many things citizens can do. One of which is to speak up within your family context, within your community, to be involved, particularly, at the local level. I think that participating in the local democratic process is vital. I ran years ago when I was 19 years old. It was a natural part of my family culture. And I would encourage people, no matter what their age, to get engaged because there has been a vacuum of people engaged in the civic process. And that has, I believe, given a vacuum for other nefarious interests, quite frankly, who do not subscribe to these basic assumptions around freedom and what it makes for a fair and democratic society: They believe that in many ways their cause is beyond question. And

they believe the ends justify the means. I have, unfortunately, studied for years the world of the Frankfurt School. I know all their sorry stories, their tactics, and their strategies. And they have methodically done the long march through our institutions. And this is apparent.

We need to wake up to this reality and call it out. And citizens, I encourage you to read. Not dive into the mindless world of Netflix, as much as we enjoy entertainment, as well. But it behooves us to be informed about this history. And there's many resources I can recommend and also through the Frontier Centre. I encourage you to look at it. And do not be dissuaded by what people call you names. If they do so, then this is shame on them. And take heart and courage because this is the reality that we face: Frankly, an ideological, destructive, toxic opponent within our own communities who do not care about you. They only care about their twisted, idealistic, nihilistic view of the universe. And that kind of utopianism has done, throughout history, enormous damage.

This is the story of totalitarianism, whether it has been China—and I've seen the monuments to over a hundred million people—and I have been to the places in the former Soviet Union in Russia. And Nazism. The Nazis were socialists. And this is almost like a perverse hybrid that we have today. It's a toxic mishmash of a state that is out of control with crony capitalists,

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with people who don't seem to be grounded in basic things of freedom and respect for each other.

I was always excited about our society because I felt that wow, we live in a society where we as individuals respect each other. Because you're precious. Each individual is precious. And that we can cooperate, we can work together in freedom. That's the brilliance of it. We can innovate. We can start up a business. We can set up a church. We can set up a mosque. But we can be together, though, as shoulder to shoulder as Canadians.

Commissioner Kaikkonen

Thank you very much.

Commissioner Massie

Thank you very much for your presentation. I was wondering, when you see that there's many countries in the western hemisphere that have adopted more or less the same thing as Canada and many other countries, there's a few states, if you want, that stand out. There's a few states in the United States. But I'm thinking about Sweden that has been demonized by the mainstream media, initially, but now seems to get some sort of more positive coverage.

Based on your analysis of the way they managed the pandemic, what is it that makes them different? Is it the culture? Is it the institutions that somewhat were strong enough to resist to the temptation of moving in the same direction as everybody else? What is your take on Sweden?

David Leis

Okay, it's a very interesting question. Thank you. So Sweden is a very interesting case study for many, many reasons. We were very intrigued by Sweden from the get-go, based on the

approach that was taken by their public health officials. It was interesting because in many respects they would say they were following best practices. But Sweden was doing something in addition to that. They have an extensive culture and set of plans that relate to emergency management. And they followed those plans. This is not known by many people.

So this should inform any thoughtful decision-maker. Because what is interesting is the results of Sweden are stunning. They, in retrospect, did it right. And I was shocked when I read *The New York Times* last week that there was actually an article commending it. I'm just—anyways. So this is a situation that we can learn from Sweden.

What's also fascinating is that there's an associate of Frontier. His name is Dr. Martin Kulldorff. He's one of the three authors of the Great Barrington Declaration. And he said something very interesting to me the other day. Because I asked him this similar question about Sweden. And he said, unequivocally, the quote "consensus"—and I hate words such as consensus—but the consensus that Sweden did it right.

But what's also fascinating is he said something to me in the same conversation. He said, "During a dark time in the world, there was a select group of people in a country called Canada who got into their trucks and drove across a country and they woke up the world." And that's what he said. I said, "so Martin, are you saying—" Like, he is the preeminent public health official and biostatistician, I believe, in the world. And I said, "Martin, are you saying that the truckers made a difference and gave you hope?" And he said, "That's exactly what I'm saying." So take heart. By the way, he's a Swede.

Commissioner Massie

Thank you.

Commissioner Drysdale

Good afternoon. I have a couple of questions. First, I just wanted a bit of a clarification. I often find that details get lost when we use a blanket statement. And one blanket statement—and I know why we talk that way—is that our institutions have failed us. Well, our institutions in Canada don't just include government institutions, they include our private institutions. So I'd like to talk to you just a bit about those institutions and ask you some very pointed questions.

[00:45:00]

Did our police services fail us?

David Leis

I think it depends which one and what analysis I could look at there. I mean I've been certainly involved in police services. I don't pretend to be able to give a generalization. But generally, they went along with it. They're in a bit of a box when it comes to accountability and under the acts. But I think the type of testimony you heard today was astounding. And even within those units—because the police are essentially paramilitary—there needs to be strong leadership and debate. There needs to be debate. And if there isn't, that's bad leadership.

Commissioner Drysdale

You mentioned that it's a paramilitary outfit. And I don't want to dwell too much longer on the police because I'm going to get a hook come around me and pull me off the chair.

But you know, we heard testimony in Toronto by a fellow by the name of Vincent Gircys who was with the OPP. And he said, and I asked him a few questions. He said that when he went to the Ottawa protests, he immediately recognized—very, very, similar to Mr. Abbott realized when he went to Milk River—that this was a peaceful group.

And so, I said to him, “How is it possible, then, that the police who attacked that group, didn't also recognize that?” And I believe that was a failure. We don't want robots, even in a paramilitary outfit.

David Leis

Yes. That's right.

Commissioner Drysdale

So my next question is, did our health system fail us?

We heard testimony of health officials that were lying to us. We heard testimony yesterday of people who feel that they lost their loved ones because they wouldn't get treatment in the hospital. Because they were—a term that we all, perhaps, biblically understand—as “lepers,” we were treated. So did our medical system overall— Not individuals. There are individuals. There are heroes. There always are. But overall, did our medical system serve Canadians?

David Leis

I would say generally not. I think despite having extraordinary people in the system, the system itself is not able to serve Canadians. And I want to be clear, the system itself—and Frontier has done extraordinary work on this over the years with many different international partners—ranks at near the bottom of OECD countries. And number two, it consistently ranks as the most expensive or second most expensive in the world with some of the lowest performing outcomes. Our model should be France and Germany and Sweden, not Canada.

Canada, unfortunately, has an extraordinarily Soviet-style healthcare system that has at any one time, five to six million people on waiting lists. Many in chronic pain. It does not serve Canadians well. But it's not for not trying. And no amount of money—and I'm sorry to tell you this—no amount of money will change that.

Commissioner Drysdale

And my next one is—and I think you've already answered this—did our judicial system fail us? Has it failed us? Or is it continuing to fail us?

David Leis

It's continuing to fail us because so many decisions, certainly, that I've read, and others have read, that the fact pattern is obvious: that judges have forgotten their job. It is not to genuflect to the state. It is to do their job to seek the truth and to seek the common law.

Commissioner Drysdale

Did our educational system fail us? Did they protect our children? And by protection, I don't mean putting a mask on them. I mean serving the function of creating people that could be informed citizens.

David Leis

Generally not, because we have, again, a public monopoly directed by state actors and that has been largely infested now with ideologues that are seeking not a high-performing education system based on the fundamentals. And I can give a long list on Frontier evidence of what that is. But it is a system that's characterized by wokeism, if you will, an ideology that is seeking this endless parade of statements around tolerance when in fact it is intolerant.

Commissioner Drysdale

Do you believe that our religious institutions led us spiritually through this in general terms? There were always stars.

David Leis

Well, these are far-reaching questions, and I don't want to pretend to be an oracle. What I'm suggesting is that it depends on the specific case. And I'm part of that failure.

[00:50:00]

I was part of a church community that had enormous fear, and quite frankly, was in a context where there was not a willingness. A church is voluntary. That's part of the genius of civil society institutions. They're voluntary. They come together, and in our case, we had many people that were older who said, "I don't want to take a risk."

I am so sad that the powers that be—combined with the media—did a horrible number on the psychological well-being when their emphasis, time and time again, was fear. Why in heaven's name—any logical analysis—why would you feature on case count on a daily basis, is beyond me. It means absolutely nothing. And yet they did. Everybody knows this. But of course, the media are in a vortex where they want clicks and people that viewed.

But there was something else going on. And this is something that people should never forget. And you need to be informed about this. I have seen this unfold; there's a long history of this. And this is the control of much of our social media by nefarious state actors. The Twitter files show that. If you don't know that, please read just a part of the Twitter files. And if you want me to do a day lecture, I will. But this is the reality.

Commissioner Drysdale

There seems to be an ever-increasing marriage between corporations and government. Not for the benefit of the people. Historically, I'm aware of what happens when that has occurred in the past. And I wonder if you could comment a little bit about what you have seen or what your concerns are when the government and the corporate world become so large, so octopus-like that there's no escape from them. Which is, I believe, where they are now.

David Leis

Okay, so this is a profound question. When the state gets so large, it suffocates everything with its agenda and in a way that is very harmful to society. It nurtures a particular ecosystem within society. Namely, large corporations love large government because they're able to manipulate them. They're able to squeeze out their competition through regulatory frameworks. This is well known. I did it myself when I was a senior person in a corporation. I was always trying to squeeze out my opponent. But it does not mean that we shouldn't have fair laws and regulation that allows people to compete, including the little guy. So what they did during COVID-19 is a case study of stupidity. We could go to Walmart. We could go to the liquor store. But we can't go to church? We can't go to the local store? On what rational basis do you do that? There is none.

And more to the point, the attack on small business is an attack on democracy, in the sense that if you look at history, again, you look back to ancient Greece. The ancient minos was a cornerstone to Athenian democracy because the minos, the middle class, if you will, in some measure, had a small plot of land. They were able to farm. They were able to do their thing.

And now, and now our governments— It's almost like there's a systematic policy to get rid of the middle class, the people who are not poor and dependent on the state. And conversely— The super-rich who have their own agenda at the top echelons of power. It's like there's no middle. That's what they're doing. And I don't know if it's fully intentional, some would argue, or unintentional because of stupidity or incompetence, pardon my language.

Why is that important? For democracy to succeed, we need people who have the ability to earn a living, to be able to create a life, to create a family, to be able to participate in civic affairs. And that takes years of apprenticeship. It doesn't happen overnight.

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But these things have been dissolving around us for years. And we need to grab a hold of it now before it's done. That's my point.

Commissioner Drysdale

Yes. One of the things that is continuing to go along. I saw a news article just yesterday where, I think, it's Shaw and Global – is that Rogers?—are joining together in a monopoly, another monopoly. How is it that we have anti-combines laws in this country, but they seem to only apply to small companies?

And I'll give you an example. I'm familiar with a company who was trying to buy a grain terminal in a particular rural town. And they owned one already, but the other one had gone out of business some years before. So they decided they would buy that grain terminal. And the combines legislation—federal government—prevented them from doing it. So how is it that the federal government isn't preventing this union that was just announced in the press a day or so ago?

David Leis

Well, I could certainly talk about some of the analysis I've read. I just think that it's, for me, hard to square the circle how fewer providers, particularly in that market of telecommunications, serves anyone better. And I think part of the challenge that we face is

frankly one of culture. I think that in Canada— And culture is very important. It's the behaviours that we undertake every day and how we treat each other. There's wonderful strengths about Canadian culture, one of which is there's a lot of nice Canadians. The truly nice. I think people can realize that.

But it's nice to the point where, what would it take for us to wake up and realize that we're being abused? What would it take in our Canadian culture to wake up and realize that your rights and freedoms that you thoroughly take for granted are being trampled and usurped away by you? And I use the word usurp because usurp is one that John Locke used in his books, dozens and dozens of times. This is where the government, the state, along with their friends, are taking our rights and freedoms away. And this is wrong. This is the definition of tyranny.

Commissioner Drysdale

This will be my last question. Sorry for taking advantage of my opportunity here to talk to you.

Can you comment at all on the current rewrite of the *Canadian Broadcasting Act* and how that might affect some of our ability to counter the mainstream media narrative?

David Leis

Yes, I can. In particular, Bill C-11, as a case in point, is very disturbing. It is not, in my belief and so many others, about protecting and advancing Canadian content. It is positioning the chess piece for censorship. This is very disturbing. And so when it goes back to citizen action, you need to understand that this particular government is not about free speech.

And it also behooves each one of us to understand that your social media is still problematic. Part of the problem for democracy is, who controls information? And this has been the test of history. And this has always been the case. So when you look at any type of search with Microsoft to Google, all these have algorithms that— You can see that there's problems when it comes to the free flow of information. And this is part of the reason why so many Canadians are still, in many respects, asleep about this issue.

Commissioner Drysdale

Thank you, sir.

Shawn Buckley

Mr. Leis, it looks like there are no further questions. On behalf of the citizens inquiry, we sincerely thank you for your testimony.

Shawn Buckley

And Commissioners, I would suggest that we take a 10-minute afternoon break.

[01:00:07]

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