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Independent review of COVID response needed

by PRESTON MANNING

Increasing numbers of Canadians are demanding a national, independent investigation into government mismanagement of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Because governments themselves would be the subject of such an investigation, its conduct would need to be assigned to a non-governmental commission whose commissioners possess the experience, expertise and personal integrity necessary to render their findings credible with the general public.

To illustrate what such an investigation might be like, the Canadian Covid Care Alliance (CCCA) recently co-ordinated a three-day in-person and online ?Citizens' Hearing? into Canada's response to the COVID outbreak. Some 60 people testified to a three-person panel about the effects on their personal lives of the health protection measures adopted or to offer alternative medical and scientific perspectives on which the response to the COVID outbreak might have been based.

I was one of the panellists who received this testimony. Information about the hearing is available for public scrutiny at CitizensHearing.ca.

Most of the testimony consisted of personal stories as to the impact of federal and provincial health protection measures on the personal well-being, rights, freedoms, jobs and incomes of those affected. These impacts included:

? Negative effects on personal physical and mental health due to adverse reactions to social distancing, lockdowns and vaccines;

? Violations of virtually every right and freedom supposedly guaranteed bythe Constitution;

? Negative economic impacts ranging from loss of employment and personal income to business closures and bankruptcies to supply chain disruptions.

What was most inexplicable was the absence of evidence that the governments conducted and published any in-depth assessments of the negative impacts of the health protection measures adopted on personal health, rights, freedoms, jobs, incomes and supply chains.

What was most disturbing and worrisome was testimony as to the widespread negative impacts on children of the health protection measures adopted ? impacts with serious long-term developmental implications for the one group of Canadians least susceptible to the coronavirus.

What was most heart-wrenching were the stories of those who faithfully obeyed governmental instructions to be vaccinated only to suffer unpredicted adverse effects, followed by misunderstandings and denunciations when those afflicted shared their experience with others.

What was most disheartening was that the vast majority of those testifying at the Citizens' Hearing reported receiving no reply when their concerns and questions were posed to health system officials and political decision-makers.

On the other hand, what was most inspiring was the courage displayed by so many in the face of physical and economic adversity, bureaucratic insensitivity, political arrogance and mainstream media hostility, coupled with a growing determination to ensure that lessons learned from the mismanagement of the COVID crisis are rigorously applied to the management of any future crises.

What was also encouraging was the testimony of experts offering different perspectives, interpretations, and conclusions than those

that have informed or misinformed health officials and governments over the past two years:

? The expert in respiratory technologies and protections who explained the ineffectiveness of masks in halting the spread of the coronavirus.

? The critique of COVID management policies by a doctor with academic and experiential credentials superior to those of most of the public health officers currently advising the provincial and federal governments.

? The testimony of a former chief medical officer of health for Ontario as to the inadvisability of any public health policy that employs fear to motivate compliance and denies the necessity of informed consent for any medical procedure.

Hopefully, more of these Citizens' Hearings will be held, in which ever-increasing numbers of Canadians will participate ? all contributing to public demand for a national, independent investigation into government mismanagement of the COVID outbreak and measures to ensure that future crises are managed more responsibly, effectively and democratically.

Preston Manning served as a member of Parliament from 1993 to 2001 and as leader of the Opposition from 1997 to 2000. He founded two political parties: the Reform Party of Canada and the Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance. Both parties became the official Opposition in Parliament and led to the creation of the Conservative Party of Canada, which formed the federal government from 2006 to 2015. This commentary was provided by the Frontier Centre for Public Policy.