

Transcript of interview with Marla McCartney by Marion Lougheed

Interviewer: Marion Lougheed

Interviewee: Marla McCartney

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Location (Interviewer): Toronto, Canada

Location (Interviewee): Toronto, Canada

Transcriber: Howard Clayberger

Abstract: Marla McCartney, former Chief Executive of an unnamed charitable organization, is interviewed by Marion Lougheed as part of an oral history project. The interviewee is asked about her experiences in the workplace and at home during the pandemic, and about her personal opinions on the handling of the pandemic by the public and government.

Marion Lougheed (0:00)

Um I guess we can get started. And you're ok with having your audio recorded?

Marla McCartney (0:07)

Yea uh I have a very general voice, so like someone's gonna hear me and be like that's Marla!

Marion Lougheed (0:16)

Haha. Um so what is your name?

Marla McCartney (0:18)

Uh Marla McCartney.

Marion Lougheed (0:19)

And what is the current date and time?

Marla McCartney (0:23)

Uh May 29th 2020 and it's 2:11 PM Eastern Standard Time or Daylight Time I don't know which one we're in right now.

Marion Lougheed (0:30)

Uh Daylight I think, yup. Um and what is your age if you're willing to share?

Marla McCartney (0:36)

37.

Marion Lougheed (0:37)

Gender?

Marla McCartney (0:38)

Female.

Marion Lougheed (0:39)

Ethnicity?

Marla McCartney (0:40)

Caucasian.

Marion Lougheed (0:43)

And where do you live?

Marla McCartney (0:44)

Uh downtown Toronto.

Marion Lougheed (0:48)

Downtown Toronto ok um-

Marla McCartney (0:49)

Specifically, St. James town unless you need something more general than that.

Marion Lougheed (0:53)

Oh whatever you, whatever you like.

Marla McCartney (0:55)

Yea St. James town.

Marion Lougheed (0:57)

Cool um so what are the primary things you do on a day to day basis normally, like pre Covid?

Marla McCartney (1:05)

Uh I was full time employed so your standard 9 to 5 Monday to Friday job. Um depending on the time of year I was doing theatre rehearsals for um a theatre troupe uh three times a week so Sundays, Mondays, and Wednesdays and um anything else that kinda struck my fancy, sax shows and stuff like that.

Marion Lougheed (1:35)

Um Ok and what was your job?

Marla McCartney (1:39)

Uh I was uh the executive assistant to the CEO of a charitable corporation.

Marion Lougheed (1:47)

Ok. When you first learned about Covid 19 what were your thoughts about it?

Marla McCartney (1:52)

Um I kinda had, I had some minor flashbacks to SARS cause I was living in Toronto during when SARS broke out in Toronto, in 2003? Something like that. So it kinda sounded like it could be something like that again um depending on how uh, it was handled.

Marion Lougheed (2:19)

Um and how have your thoughts changed since then?

Marla McCartney (2:22)

Um I would say it's a lot worse than SARS was, um I don't, I don't think even the people who were ready for it were actually ready for it like I think we... and I speak as we Canadians and not we North America, I think we Canadians were better set up uh from a healthcare standpoint and from a understanding standpoint um, because we had gone through SARS because we had had that happen and it kind of made the city like ok now- especially the hospitals were like we know what to do in this situation and we can handle this no problem, but I don't think the general public even myself, was completely ready for how drastically life \was going to change and I think there was a lot of like, I think there are a lot of comparisons still kind of going on where people are like well at least we weren't as bad as Italy or at least we're not as bad as the US or at least we're not as bad as wherever um but it is, it has been a big um.. eye opener for a lot of things that I don't think people were necessarily aware were a problem before this.

Marion Lougheed (3:51)

Such as?

Marla McCartney (3:52)

Oh I was gonna say you want me to expand on that? So uh I'm gonna include myself in this because it was stuff I wasn't aware of. So like you know a lot of people are saying now like with the, with the, when they instituted CERB to take care of Canadians to make sure people could like pay their rent and their bills and stuff for those of us who weren't working or weren't eligible for EI or whatever, um a lot of people kinda said excuse me this is why that whole basic income is a great idea maybe we should look a little more into that. But it also highlighted for people um, I have a friend of mine who, I have two friends of mine who are, who get ODSP because they're disabled uh and what, the support they were getting from the government was not the same that everyone else was getting there's a big disparity between the two of them even with like, even with the boost ups and the helps and the stuff like that they weren't getting the same, like they weren't getting the same support as your average Canadian was. Um and I don't, I don't, I think a lot of people weren't aware that that's what, how much ODSP people, the amount of money they survived on even pre-pandemic and now they're expected to survive on the same amount or less because now maybe they're partner wasn't working or something else was going on and just um.. I guess how, how angry a lot of people got like I haven't heard so much of it lately but I know like in the end of March when this started and then in April there's all these don't pay your rent advocates going around and I was just like but you should pay your rent or you should work something out with your landlord like why, why taking this as an opportunity to be like screw you I'm not paying you, that doesn't seem like, that's not fair to the landlord and corporate or not corporate, or if you're in the basement of somebody's house and you're paying the homeowner directly, how's that fair to say well I know you need money to keep your stuff running but I'm not gonna give it to you, like that's not how it work at least not,

it's not how it works to me at least if you can pay you should pay like we have not, I mean I became unemployed pretty fast, Kevin got his hours cut, that's my partner and um.. and our income went down drastically and then I had to fight EI for a month and a half before I started getting any money so we were living very sparsely but not once did we think we're not gonna pay our rent like that didn't even pass our, didn't even pass as a thought in our mind so I think there's been highlights to a lot of the inequality that exists even in Canada I mean as great as we are and we are pretty great um, I think there there's, there's big, there's a big disparity that people didn't realize between low income people, the essential workers, the people who are on welfare, the people who are on disability, the people who are homeless and had nowhere to go to isolate from the pandemic, like it just, I think it, to the average Canadian it became a lot more uh in your face then maybe previously that like they didn't have to think of it before because it, it wasn't in there face before and now it is.

Marion Lougheed (7:29)

Mmhm and what have been some of the issues that have most concerned you about the pandemic?

Marla McCartney (7:38)

Um... ok I'm gonna need a clarification on what you mean by issues, 'cause like the societal issues I was just talking about, the medical issues for if you actually catch it, like which issues?

Marion Lougheed (7:47)

Um any, any of the above whatever you've sort of found yourself thinking about the most.

Marla McCartney (7:51)

Um... I, I think, I think a lot of the stuff that is one of the first thoughts that I had was I'm lucky and I say that because I, I live with somebody you know I have another person with me all the time who I'm now, I've been isolated with for ten weeks um.. I think it, it, it, it's probably been a lot harder on people who don't have someone that they live with, like didn't have a partner or a family member or whatever the case may be they were living alone and um and I think its been harder for that and I mean I've seen it with my friends who live alone there reaching out a lot more to their other friends to video chat and talk and interact with people um.. so its been.. its been a bit of a... I think its been in some way like a bit of an eye opener especially for those um, like I have friends and myself and I know of, there's people who live with mental illnesses that are, they can be debilitating when you're isolated for a long period of time and you don't have contact with people in person or in any other form um, and I think it's you know.. I think in a weird way the pandemic has been good and I'm gonna put like quotation marks around that cause it's obviously not good but I think in one way its been good because the average person now its almost like if you live alone have no underlying mental conditions or mental issues of any sort, you just happen to live alone and you've been isolated for ten weeks and you're, and you're, now starting to get that gnawing feeling and that anxiousness and that wanting to get out and the wishing you could be outside and the wishing you could be with your friends and the, and that kind of um, I don't wanna call it a panic but it's kind of, it's a bit like a panic or just that complete isolation where maybe you have three or four days where you can't talk to anybody because you can't reach anybody, people are busy with their lives or their work or whatever's going on. I think it's given the average person what it can be like sometimes to live with mental illness and how absolutely isolating it can be to, to, to have to live like that because of things outside of your control um.. I find myself like, like I, I've been, in the last ten week I've been

outside seven times and not very far from my house other than the one time that I went a decent-like actually got on transit and went um.. and to see like those people at Trinity Bellwoods last weekend I, if I could have reached through my phone and slapped all of them I probably would have and I know a lot of people were probably on my side on that one but it's just, like it's so completely infuriating because it's just like your not, I mean not only are you all sitting together none of you are wearing masks, none of you are practicing any of the protocol that's been asked of us and there's a part of me that kind of wants Doug Ford to do what Andrew Cuomo did which is it's mandatory if you're outside, if you are in a public place, if you are on transit, if you are grocery shopping, if you are in a park, if you are wherever you have a mask on or you get a fine or arrested whatever the case may be. Because you know he is, he's desperately trying to protect his people and I think Ford is doing his best but I also think, and it's been pointed out to me quite a bit that a lot of the problems that exist in regards to the pandemic especially from a medical standpoint in terms of like long term care facilities and healthcare and whatnot are a direct response to the fact that not even a year ago those budgets were slashed. So its you know I, it's, I've been doing my best not to engage with people and like family members and stuff online about things that are related to the pandemic, or to politics and the pandemic, or whatever but sometimes you just kinda wanna reach through your phone and smack people and I've done that twice now to two family members so.. you know I held my tongue as long as I could and then they went really stupid and I'm like ugh I have to fact check you now. I am, I am the Twitter to your Trump

Marion Loughheed (13:05)

Um, so has Covid-19 affected your job? You mentioned you were employed now you're unemployed um.

Marla McCartney (13:11)

Yea so um so I lost my job on St. Patrick's Day on March 17th. They had started at the beginning of March so I started the job.. the last week of February. And the first, the end of the first week of March they started sending out emails about we were gonna be disinfecting the office and we were gonna cut down how many people came in because not everyone. cause it was a software company sorta like there was an easy work at home element. Uh and they were gong to, so like I was the first, one of the first people in and I was walking around with Lysol wipes and wiping down all of the doors and anything, common areas that people touched and then they kinda came down on the 17th and said uh.. first, so the 17th... So March, Friday the 13th they sent me home with a laptop and said you can work from home and then the Monday I worked form home and the Tuesday they said we've decided that uh you're the easiest to let go because you are the assistant to the CEO, you manage her calendar, take care of her meetings, and she's not doing any meetings right now and the very few that she is doing she can manage herself so w don't need you thank you very much and they put it on my ROE not as a loss of work or whatever but as a, not a quit, I can't remember the code they used but they used a code basically saying it's not us its not her and I'm like cool I'm alright with that and literally the next day I applied for my EI um cause this was before CERB and then um my EI took so long because I was a reactivation, so what they had done is anyone who had applied for EI before the 15th of March was going through the regular process to get their EI and anyone new who would apply for EI after the fifteenth was automatically booted over onto CERB or CERB (pronounced curb) I don't know what we're calling it but whatever. Um but what ended up happening is those of us who were reactivations got lost in the middle and I wasn't the only one and I fought for a month and a half with I was on- under review uh I couldn't call the numbers cause they were busy from everyone else calling

them, I couldn't get through. I had one day where I made 175 calls to the EI line and heard a busy signal 175 times and the only time I ever got through to the EI line I got an automated voice saying our call volume is very heavy try again later and I was like you're kidding me right? and I mean to the point where I ended up emailing Mayor Tori, Doug Ford the, the minister in charge of the economic development Canada which takes care of EI like I, I tweeted and emailed the world about this because it was like I have rent to pay, like I don't- I can't just sit here and do this and then finally the day my EI got approved, the following day the assistant to the minister called me to find out what was happening and I said it's fine now and she says you know, I saw the file um, she goes I'm not- like, were not entirely sure what happened here all we can see is that it was delayed for some reason and they were waiting for somebody to put hands on your file to deal with you rather than you being dealt with automatically and I went well... ok then like I mean I, I, I, I, I lucked out a bit because they did that GST top up so that gave me extra money that I threw at my partner to take care of bills and.. I had my last paycheck from the works I took that and threw it at my partner to help pay the bills and then I had, I had won an auction um, for one of my theatre things a couple week earlier for a theatre show that was now cancelled by Mervish so the person who donated the item wanted to pay me back for my donation because I would no longer be able to go to that and I kinda thought back and forth and they were like I insist so I was like ok. So there was more money for that you know, we got some money for that cat we're fostering you know so I hit a very lucky money patch before EI kicked in where I was able to keep, kind of like going and then it also helped that when your not able to go out you, you know- I wasn't able to go to my twice monthly trivia night over at the Storm Crow Bar, I wasn't able to go to the movies, you don't spend as much money you really don't.

Marion Lougheed (18:01)

Do you have any concerns about the economy more broadly?

Marla McCartney (18:10)

Um. I think I, I don't know, I've never been someone who's- I've always been peripherally aware of the economy um, cause like you know my dad's an IT computer guy so like eighties and nineties and early 2000's was like holy crap for him and I remember watching my parents go through it every time the economy sucked and those were the first jobs that went um, I think it's harder for me to kinda like.. it's harder for me to gauge the economy because I'm, I hold the type of position as an admin person, every field of every single kind of organization needs an admin person, someone to file, someone to do it, it doesn't matter what sector you're in so it's kinda like being a, kinda like you know working as a funeral director or taxman your kinda always gonna have a job, it may not be the best job and there may be large gaps in between but the people always need admin people, people always need you know counter people to work at Tim Horton's and retail people and grocery store clerks and those people are always needed because people are always buying food and doing etc right? It's not a, a specialized field so it's not like being um... it's not like being a theoretical physicist and you don't have a job but no one wants to hire a theoretical physicist right now because they don't need them it's not essential so I think that's, and that might be a bad thing I don't know if that was even a good analogy but hopefully you kinda get what I'm, I just- I'm just saying there's some there's, there's certain jobs that there will always, they will always need people for always, and there's certain jobs where it's like you're not essential so we don't need you. Right now I mean you can come back later but we can cut back on the number of people we have in this field, so.

Marion Loughheed (20:14)

And has the pandemic affected the employment of people you know?

Marla McCartney (20:19)

Yea well hmm. Some of them uh, like my partner didn't lose... didn't lose his, he didn't lose his job but they did like cut his hours and they're paying him basically to sit at home which is fine um, I do know and obviously was directly affected uh... I think its been for the people who still had to go into work like if their jobs haven't shut down whether they're grocery clerks or essential people or not I think those people um, life has been a lot, a lot different for them because it's like now you have to wear a mask, now there's a plexiglass shield in front of your face, now you've got angry people who are, are some angry people who don't wanna be wearing the mask and don't wanna be standing two feet you know, that don't wanna comply um.. with the guidelines. I think a lot of the um, a lot of my actor friends like, their work is gone and no idea when it's gonna come back you know, same with the (unintelligible) people, same with the theatre people, same with the- you know anyone who worked in an industry that had to you know, go away I think it, it's really it's really hard for them um.. especially if they were entertainers like um one of Kevin's coworkers uh also happens to be a drag queen well there hasn't been any shows so they've been missing a lot of money on that front um, and I don't know how it's gonna go I mean like I said are we gonna have another SARS live concert to bring people back to the city like we did? I mean hopefully not in Downsview Park cause that was a disaster, but you know it was, it was an absolute disaster as fun as it was, it was an absolute disaster but it's like I don't know, I think a lot of people thus far they, maybe they did some schooling, maybe they you know, decide to do some online classes cause that's a thing now. I mean I got my Smart Serve. I don't work in the service industry at all but in April Smart Serve

said hey if you wanna get your smart serve licence you can now do it for free for the month of April and I went ha ok I'm doing it. So now I have Smart Serve, I may never use it but I have it.

Marion Lougheed (22:49)

Mmhm

Marla McCartney (22:50)

You know it was another skill to learn so I don't know I think the people, I think that this, that have had a lot of um I don't wanna say effect, but I think a lot of people where the pandemic's been in a way and again quotation marks around this, "good" for them are a lot of the artists because a lot of people who don't normally have the time to sit home and work on their songs, or their paintings, or their poetry, or their anything have had that time now and you know if their job is disappeared or been reduced, and I have seen some of the most amazing things come out of people um, who I didn't even know had that kind of skill level and I've seen this stuff and I'm going damn like that's good like, so I think um, I think on the other side of this a lot of people may refocus how they think of their lives. I think um, I think we've learned about a lot of jobs that don't need to be in an office building anymore where it's perfectly possible to work from home and meet on Zoom and people don't have to go into the office which kinda connects back to the whole- my disabled friends who say see we can do the jobs because you can accommodate us to work at home and do our work from home and not force us to come into an office which is where the problem lies.

Marion Lougheed (24:25)

Mmhm mmhm. So, what does your living space and household look like?

Marla McCartney (24:30)

Um, two bedroom apartment about um, 7 or 800 square feet, I've never remembered how big it actually is um, and there's only the two of us plus the cat so uh it's, there's room to get away from each other when we've needed to and um... there's room to cuddle up if we need to so it's been very- again I'm, I'm lucky I'm not some bachelor in a basement somewhere.

Marion Lougheed (24:58)

Mmhm, and how has the pandemic affected your kind of, everyday activities? You talked about some of your expenses but like what do you spend your day doing? Including chores and stuff like that. Chores, what are chores?

Marla McCartney (25:15)

Uh, for me it, it's, it's varied a lot day by day, like I have some days where I've like, I've done the- the thoughts the day before and gotten everything together and I've gone on a baking spree where I've done like pies and bread and cookies and this and that and then making dinners and breakfasts and like it's a big thing um.. but I think uh, a lot of my days especially uh, especially in the beginning because in the beginning of the pandemic it kinda just felt like everything had been taken away from me, like I lost my job um.. my wedding was gonna have to move, so I wasn't getting married when I thought I was gonna get married, you know a lot hit me all at the same time and initially Kevin was still working cause they hadn't shut down the mall at that point so I was home alone for about a week and.. a week or two weeks or so before they shut the mall down and it was, it was, it was hard cause I'm, I'm used to, I'm used to having a purpose, I'm used to, to being you know, go to work and do that and go home and have my fun and do my things and the idea just sitting at home and, and not doing much of anything was really hard and

I had, especially in the beginning, I had a lot of days where I stayed in bed, I didn't wanna get out of bed I didn't have the, the energy I mean.. you know Kevin was pulling me saying ok you know you haven't eaten all day now you're getting out of bed to have something to eat and I'd nibble something of some sort and then I would get back in bed again. Like I just... it was a very hard time and then I kind of, I don't know, I just, I kind of decided that I needed to start climbing out on the other side of this somehow and focus on something, anything so I started looking for things to do. So then like so my theatre group gets to... some members of my theatre group and other people get together Wednesdays and we have a virtual pub night and I do karaoke twice a week over Zoom which is interesting, and I have, I have trivia nights like I've got a, I've got Disney bingo next Saturday and a Harry Potter trivia night next Sunday you know I'm just, I'm trying. I- my dad uses Duo, so I'm constantly messaging you know not constantly that sounds... but you know I'm talking with my family way more than I used to because I have the time to you know, I have the time to just sit and shoot the shit and oddly enough more my dad than my mom and it always used to be the opposite and you know, and at least every other day my sister calls and my nephew hops on the phone and says hello to me which is adorable, so, so adorable um.. you know uh, but I think it took a lot in ten weeks to get from there to here because it's... I, and I probably started this on Facebook I completely understand why the Trinity Bellwoods people were there you know, it was a Saturday, it was blue skies, bright and sunny 23 degrees, absolutely fricking gorgeous and we've been inside for ten weeks, this is hard you know I don't think this would be, I don't think this would've been as bad if this pandemic hit in like October, November and I mean the only part that would've gotten people would've Christmas if we couldn't see each other but I think the you know snow would have kept a lot of people inside. So I think the fact that this is happening you know, it started in the beginning of Spring and is

bleeding into summer and the warm weather and the, you know even, even Kevin's had moments where he's just been like this is beach weather I should be on the beach. He goes I'm not going to a beach but I wish I was on a beach right now you know? So, I think, I don't know it's uh, it's definitely been one of those reevaluate your life type of moments that happens apparently once a century at this point. I mean hey, this pandemic might become a regular every decade type of thing. I mean knock on wood no, but I'm just saying.

Marion Lougheed (30:11)

And what do you do, so you mentioned some of the things you do for fun with your friends and family um online or through other communication...

Marla McCartney (30:19)

Yup.

Marion Lougheed (30:20)

Do you do anything at home sort of recreationally? Shows, games, books, whatever?

Marla McCartney (30:26)

When it strikes my fancy like I can, I've been, I've been trying to read but I'm limited on what I'm reading because apparently everyone got the Libby app and getting books from the library is harder right just now um, I've never been one to binge tv, I don't have the attention span to sit and watch Netflix all day or binge through an entire series on Netflix or Disney Plus or anything else. I've started and stopped seven or eight movies where I make it about twenty minutes where I'm like yea I don't have it, I don't have it in me to keep going with this I just, that's not, I think there's a part of me that doesn't think that I should get to relax like that and watch movies when I

haven't done anything you know? It's different if you've worked all week and then you relax with a movie because like I have earned this but I have not earned this, I am just, I'm at home and there's not much I can do so I just, I kind of um.. I watch a lot, I watch a lot of YouTube videos or Facebook Watch videos. Depends on which platform I'm hanging on, um I uh you know, occasionally me and Kevin will play a video game together like nothing that's gonna stress my brain out or make me think too hard but just like.. Trivial Pursuit or something like that. Which I know is kinda the opposite of stressing your brain out but I kinda meant more on a strategic front not on an intellectual front. Um you know or I, yea for the most part it's either reading or watching videos unless I get the idea that I'm going to make something, like I've got a peach cobbler on my list right now which if Kevin got the ingredients for me is actually going to be tropical peach cobbler so.

Marion Lougheed (32:17)

Oh nice.

Marla McCartney (32:18)

Yea I found the recipe and said what the hell I mean that's the only thing that's been kind of cool is you know I found a great dinner recipe and I keep trying, I keep trying new things because I've never been a- the cook in the relationship I've been the baker in this relationship but I've never been the cook and I started just being like yes we've got this and this and this and I can make it and lets try it out and see how it works and some things have been fantastic and some things have been like well at least I tried so yea. Yea it's hard to keep busy but I'm, that's why I'm so grateful I'm going back to work next week even if it's only a half day of work because it's a half day I'm not in the house.

Marion Lougheed (33:00)

Mhmm. And that's at the new job?

Marla McCartney (33:02)

Uhh so the new job it's another admin position um up north work, I'll be up near York University but yea its uh, it's just uh, it's an admin job working for the owner of a company taking care of, well, basically everything they need being taken care of. I mean it is a full time job but they're working on what they're calling pandemic hours right now so instead of having an almost ten hour day I only have a five.

Marion Lougheed (33:33)

Right.

Marla McCartney(33:34)

Yea.

Marion Lougheed (33:36)

Um so how have the people around you been responding to the pandemic? Either what you've observed or opinions you might have heard?

Marla McCartney (33:46)

Um I mean in the immediate household Kevin's been having a lot of fun playing a lot of different video games that he hasn't had a chance to kind of sit down and play so he's really enjoyed that um... uh and I mean everyone kinda, it took a while but you know, now it's, it sounds like the Raptors won again at 7:30 off of- cause we face about seven apartment buildings off of our

balcony so when everyone comes out and starts banging their pots and clapping their hands and playing their music and setting off fireworks and all the rest it kinda feels like the Raptors won again. Um I find some people have, are taking this with grace and a lot of patience they wear their masks or they don't, they social distance, they sanitize their hands, they're polite especially to people who are working frontline whether my Timmies, or it's the Freshco, or the shop, everyone's very good but then there's like, those, those Karen people, the Karens and Kyles of the world who I see who just think everything is owed to them and they're entitled to everything and then- even when I saw this morning, I saw someone this morning and this is the first time I've actually seen it, I had to go drop a package off, I went to McDonald's to get some ice coffees cause Kevin was working and uh, I'm in the McDonald's and they have the little spots that tell you where to stand while you're waiting for your food and there's two, and there's two older gentlemen and when I mean older I mean 60 plus on the both of them um, Asian don't speak English, not uh, they're carrying masks but they're not wearing them. This one guy, I guess he's trying, like I've just gone to get my food and the guy was crossing in front of this other woman who was standing beside me to um, to go to where I had been standing because it was the other free spot to wait and she just like, the woman who was standing there just like lost it and was like backup you have to stay six feet away like she's wearing a mask and everything but just losing it every time he moved cause he doesn't understand what she's saying you know, she, she shrank back in fear and then I'm going, your face is covered what the hell he's not purposely trying to get in your space he's just trying to walk past you so I think there are people who have taken it to extremes, I think we've seen um, I know for sure I've seen videos on, on- I think people are starting to police other people and that's not the way it works especially if you're not gonna do it remotely politely like there's the um.. where was it, Syracuse somewhere

in New York, Staten Island um, where the woman didn't have a mask on but she was admittedly supposed to have, but rather than telling a store person that there was someone walking through the store without a, a mask eight or nine people with masks on just started yelling and screaming at her telling her to get the fuck out of the store and dadalala and I'm just like yea that's, that's not the appropriate response. Like I get it, you're upset, you're- cause you're wearing a mask so you're supposed to and she's not and what the hell and fine, but it's not your job you know it's not, it's not all these people who are like well I don't want to wear one like well then don't go out or do your shit online. Well where does it say the policy- I can't- where one I'm not medically able to not that they have a note proving it and they're not willing to tell you what they have and it's already been shown in studies that unless you're allergic to the actual surgical mask not the cloth or any of the other ones but the actual surgical ones, the blue ones or white ones unless you're allergic to the actual material, even if you have COPD you can breathe through that mask just fine so all these people are like, I can't wear one cause of medical whatever, well why are you even stepping out of the house then? If your health is that bad why are you stepping out of the house without a mask on? So it's just I think, I think there's, there's kinda just all, all sorts of people and majority are fine, majority are like I, I will wear my mask and I will, I- the gloves thing is stupid cause if you're not a medical worker you really don't need gloves but to each their own on that one. I mean, somebody pointed out you have the gloves on you touch anything in a grocery store now your gloves have whatever it is on there then you touch somebody's arm, or your face or whatever and you've just negated the purpose of having gloves so wash your hands and be done with it people. Uh but I, I think there's like the majority of people are fine like, the majority of people are like I will endure this and I will go through this because we will, will

come out healthier on the other side and I think it's a minority few that is going to ruin it for everybody, so.

Marion Loughheed (39:10)

Yea so related to what you're saying, some of the key ideas that have sort of come out are the idea of self isolation and the idea of flattening the curve so how have you and your family, friends, community, responded to these requests to self isolate and flatten the curve?

Marla McCartney (39:26)

Well I mean like, as I said in ten weeks I've been out seven times so if it hasn't been necessary or essential form to leave the house I haven't because I mean, I want to, oh god do I want to, but that's the, I mean me and everybody else doesn't want to be- nobody is sitting in isolation- ok I shouldn't say that, 99 percent of people aren't sitting in isolation going ooh this is fun everyone wants to be out but those of us who recognize that if, if we keep going this, this isn't like SARS where you catch it in a hospital and the transmission rate was different this is something that is really, really bad it's highly transmissible, you could be asymptomatic it could go from anyone to anyone with little to no contact you know, if you felt something that bad hanging around why why why would you risk going out? Why would you keep gathering in large spaces? Why would you without protecting yourself, why would you subject anyone to that and why, dear god why aren't you thinking about everyone in your life who's vulnerable I mean I've got my nephew right? He's three, I wouldn't want him to get this and it's hard, it's hard enough for my sister right now because her husband is still going to work he has to, his job was deemed essential so he wears his mask, and goes to work, and he washes his hands and he does his best not to catch anything and give it to his wife and kid but shit could happen. My mom is immunocompromised

I have not seen my mom in person since February, I think you know, kinda missing on her a little bit it's not everybody thinking about those people and even if you don't have any of those people in your life you have friends who have those people in their lives or coworkers you know, somebody who knows somebody who has somebody who is vulnerable either due to age or medical condition or whatever in their life and you're essentially going, well I, care about myself but I don't care about the people in your life they can die thanks. It's like, how, how can you be that selfish especially to you know, I've heard people say that it's like well they've already lived their lives they're old and I'm like and? And? So what? Like now if you're old you don't matter? What the hell? Like... I don't, I don't, I don't get it, I don't get it, I wish I got it I don't get it. Um I think you know, it's been easy for like-even my parents, and I mean my parents and my sister are lucky they don't live in Toronto, my parents live in Burlington which is not as populated as Toronto and my sister lives in Brantford which is even less populated and she has a house and a backyard and the ability to go outside and still keep isolated which is great. Um so her and my nephew will go on little walks everyday where they don't encounter anyone and my parents go on walks everyday where they'd not encounter anyone. I think, I think it's.. like in some in some of the stuff we looked in it was actually Kevin who found this, while the curve is flattening if you cover the whole of Ontario it's flattening, in the city of Toronto for the most part our cases have remained steady and have never flattened we got to our peak and we've been holding there. We're just like, we're gonna stay here at the peak and just keep cross and I think that it's a factor of a lot of things and um, and one of the, one of the arguments I made to a family member of mine who got all uppity about millennials in, in Trinity Bellwoods which was- first those weren't millennials thank you very much cause that's my age group, and it wasn't forty year old's in the park it was 20 somethings. The second part I, I you know in, in, in just

downtown Toronto just the core where I live the population density is 8,260 people per square kilometer, that's a lot of people on top of each other and most of us don't have green space and most of us don't have backyards, and most of us don't have houses, and most of like, even those of us in apartment buildings who have common areas whether they were gyms or patios or whatever all of the common areas have been closed we legitimately have nowhere to go and.. it's, that's a really hard thing and you're gonna get people who break that and your gonna get people who don't care and you're gonna get people like me and Kevin who other than essential necessity of going outside won't leave our house and I think, I think that's where we're stuck at right now I don't think... Without significant extreme measures not even on a provincial level because anywhere outside of Toronto is doing a lot better than Toronto with the exception of Ottawa but that's to the east. But anything that's not a major urban city Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, those are the big three that I can think of right now, um there's so much more space between people and the living conditions are different that it's easy for them to flatten their curve and have less people get ill but- so unless there comes a point where, and I think it'll have to be mayor Tori that does it, that says inside the city of Toronto if you're leaving your house for any reason and are going to be in a public area whether it be transit, or grocery shopping, or your a courier doing the delivery runs for any of the food places, or anything else if you're gonna be, if you're gonna be outside and in the general public you are gonna put a mask on and that's the end of the story and there's no ifs there's no buts there's no- if you're so sick you can't wear a mask don't leave your fucking house. Sorry pardon my French but like don't leave your house you know and I think until they're willing to lockdown the city that tightly we're gonna coast on the peak, maybe drop a little bit but winter's gonna kick in, seasonal flu's gonna throw off and we're gonna, it's gonna be an explosion of, of is it the flu or is this Covid we don't know.

Marion Lougheed (46:07)

Do you know anyone who's gotten sick during the outbreak?

Marla McCartney (46:12)

Um no I don't think I know anyone I mean I know there was a person in our building, one person in our building who had it and they made us aware of it, and then they deep cleaned all the public areas like the lobby and the elevators and everything when they found out and that person was pretty much quarantined in their house for two weeks. Um but I can't think of anyone that I know directly that- I mean me and Kevin were running on the potential belief that we were both asymptomatic very early on because not, not completely asymptomatic but just we had such minor- like we weren't, like at first it was me I wasn't well you know, I was you know uh, having a lot of trouble breathing, I had a bad cough, I was a little feverish and I was very lethargic uh but then it passed and then Kevin was also having trouble breathing but his could be one of a couple of things so we weren't to sure with him, but he generally just felt under the weather and not well for a few days as well so I mean without you know, going and getting a blood test and seeing if we have the antibodies that say we had Covid we don't know if we ever were but what we do know is in the timeline when we were sick we weren't outside we pretty much were isolated for 14 days like we hadn't left the house for anything, we had no interaction with anyone so even if we were we didn't pass it to anybody.

Marion Lougheed (47:47)

Mmhm mmhm. So what have been your main sources of news?

Marla McCartney (47:50)

Um.

Marion Lougheed (47:52)

If you've been getting news.

Marla McCartney (47:54)

Um I mean I am getting- my problem is I get a lot of American news because we don't, we don't have cable so I don't have like CP24 or whatever um. In the beginning, initially everyday Kevin was watching Mayor Tori's press conference Doug Ford's press conference Trudeau's press conference when, back in March and April when we knew nothing of what was happening. Um now it's kinda more like he's keeping more peripherally aware. If there's a big announcement of something important, so like he needs to know when they're gonna reopen the malls again because he knows that means he's gonna get recalled to work so you know when they first announced that they had a three stage reopening plan he watched that one only to find out that they had a plan to open in three stages but couldn't tell you what was in any of the stages so it was like well this is a useless press conference so the watching, that is gone down a little bit um I think for me, I mean I keep an eye out on, on like again if there's any big news, and I usually see people will link stuff and Twitter, Facebook. I've got google alerts that come up for certain things, I've got my google news which tells me every big new headline that comes up during the day like there's a sudden press conference or what the Covid case rate is at or um, things like that, things like that. Um but yea like I said a lot more of what I see and I think it's just because everybody likes to watch a dumpster fire and see what's happening in the States. You know I'm very, very, very thankful I live in Canada but I worry for my friends in the States, so.

Marion Lougheed (49:48)

So, you get, you get most of your news from social media and from Kevin?

Marla McCartney (49:52)

Yea Kevin will let me know anything that's going on that he hears and then like my news from social media isn't like someone typing out that they've read this certain thing or whatever it's people who've like, you know it's a direct link to Global new or CTV news or CP24 with an article and then I will click through and read the article and then the way my google is set up is three or four times a day it pops up and gives me the last major headlines for local and national cause that's what I have it set for I don't wanna know world cause I don't care right now I want to but I don't.

Marion Lougheed (50:32)

Uh what do you think are the important or the most important issues that the media is covering?

Marla McCartney (50:44)

Hmm um I don't know I think, I think there's been, I think lately they've been more distorted by other stuff. I think in the beginning the news stories were very, I'm gonna correct that, the Canadian news stories were very informative and fairly factual and covering the press briefing and like this is what's happening, this is what you need to know, this is how you apply to CERB, this is the help that's coming this is, like it was very informative and it always went back to go to canada.ca, or go to this website, or go to this government website, and please watch out for scams and shit that's going on. Um I think a lot of the stuff lately it's kinda gone back to- while they do cover like how many cases there is for Covid and if there's any big news regarding reopening, a lot of the news is gone back to like you know, you know, this person was shot in this part of the city last night or you know this is what's happening on the political front that's

not related to Covid or you know a bill that's passing through like, that new renters one that's working its way through the house of commons. Um, or yea whatever, parliament something, uh you know I think it's a lot its gone from like every headline in the first five news stories being about the pandemic both here and around the world to being more like here's what's going on in the city in regards to the pandemic, no big news today, here's how many new cases there's been lalalalala and now here's the rest of the life that's still happening. So I think, I think it's settled a bit, a very little bit but I mean that's up here I'm gonna say... yea we share an American friend we know what she's posting so um you know I think it's different elsewhere in the world focuses are kinda all over the place so, and there's a lot more commentary, a lot more here's my opinion commentary down there then there is up here at least as far as I've seen.

Marion Loughheed (53:01)

Is that in the media itself or more like social media sort of-

Marla McCartney (53:05)

Uh no no like, like, like in, in the media itself like I mean up here I, I haven't seen a lot, I've seen very few opinion pieces of what people think, I mean a few about like Doug Ford doing a good job or not blah blah is Trudeau doing a good job or not blah blah blah but I think if it's, it's vastly different from the US where it's like you've got CNN and SBC and Fox and Friends and all of them, and all of them you know, you know, and you know Tucker Carlson's got his two pieces and Sean Hannity's got his two pieces and Ann Colter's got her two pieces and you know there's just so much opinion and disinformation and misquoting and, and, and, and, and editing that's going on uh..., that I'm like I'd said I'm very thankful I'm north of the border because I personally, I personally even if it exists, I haven't seen it nor have I been really affected by it I've

kinda just gone for the what's going on this is what's going on fantastic thanks I'm out. It's all I wanna know because I don't feel the need to dwell or have an opinion about it cause I'm not a medical expert so I don't know shit.

Marion Lougheed (54:26)

Do you think there are any important issues that the media's not covering?

Marla McCartney (54:30)

Um I think there are... I think there are things happening in the background um, that are not making the first and second page of news so people aren't aware it's happening um, a for instance and again I was not, I, I was made aware of this by Kevin but there's apparently some like quiet rezoning stuff going on with the green belt that Doug Ford's doing for his developer friends because no one is really looking at him for that right now and so it's like, because it's not the big explosive news story because the pandemic's the big explosive news story you know and anything affiliated with the pandemic is the big explosive news story. I think this stuff is sneaking past and only people who are really vested and interested in this stuff are doing their best to bring it to other people's attention. So I have a friend who does um, affordable housing in Toronto and uh, and they've been very vocal about this bill that's in its second reading right now because of what it'll allow landlords to do to tenants and vice versa um, but most people aren't even aware that this exists like unless, unless it's something you're concerned with or an advocate for, you don't know and the media's not putting it on the first five pages because it's not news to them right now, everything else is so much more news so I think, I think that's gonna happen, is on the other side of pandemic we're gonna find out shit that happened during the

pandemic that we had no clue about and we're gonna go woah wait what the hell did you do?
Like excuse us you thought you could push this through quietly? We've got a problem sir.

Marion Lougheed (56:29)

Can you tell me about this bill, this housing bill?

Marla McCartney (56:33)

Um uhh... not without directly looking it up.

Marion Lougheed (56:36)

Oh that's ok if you don't know about it.

Marla McCartney (56:37)

Off the top of my head basically um, it's supposed to, it's, it's, most people think through reading it initially that it's supposed to help when tenants get, their called renovictions when people, landlord says they're gonna renovate a unit and so they get the tenant out of that unit and then they renovate it but then they don't let the tenant move back in but they put it at a higher market price so it's called a renoviction because they got evicted technically but they were supposed to come back and they could- it kinda happened with the Parliament Wellesley fire- all those tenants who got uh, relocated because of the fire, when they had finished and they had renovated, all the units rebuilt everything that had caught fire and all the rest of the stuff. They suddenly weren't letting people back in and suddenly the rent was higher and suddenly, and suddenly, and suddenly. Um but what a lot- and so people are like this is great that takes care of the landlords but then somebody kinda read deeper into it and basically um, it removes um a lot of the eviction hearings like if you're, if you're, paying- and specifically related to paying back rent uh like if

you make a payment plan but then something happens and you can't adhere to the payment plan with your landlord, currently your landlord has to take you to, to the landlord, to the tribunal um and say well they can't pay me and dadadada and all stuff goes on. The way, the way the bill is reading currently is that if you've gone into a payment plan with your landlord which you know, some people have currently because of the pandemic and something changes in your finances, finances and you can't make those payments anymore, like maybe he's just changed the payment plan, they don't even, they don't have to get to notification they can just evict you there's no more tribunal they don't have to do any of that anymore and a lot of people are like oh there's gonna be some shady landlords who take advantage of that shit so. Yea that's my basic understanding, I mean pretty easy to read up on, you just have to google it.

Marion Lougheed (58:47)

Yea that's pretty interesting.

Marla McCartney (58:49)

Yea.

Marion Lougheed (58:50)

So, we're almost done thanks for uh, telling me so much um, I just have a couple questions left. How does this pandemic compare to other big events that might have happened during your lifetime? So you talked a little bit about SARS but are there any other things you can think of?

Marla McCartney (59:06)

Uh the only, the only, so the, the big ones for me that I was living in Toronto for were SARS, the blackout, and the big garbage strike, those were the big three for me prior to this. Um I, I would

think like the only reason SARS affected me in any way was because I lived next to Toronto Western hospital at that time like literally like across the street from it um so it had always been my Tim Horton's place like I'd go into the hospital go to the Tim Hortons, get my coffee in the morning and carry on with my day, and I could no longer do that without bribing a nurse. Umm so the, I think that's the only reason I was peripherally aware that it was in existence because again it wasn't, it's not like Covid is. SARS was like, you'd have to get really close and comfortable with somebody who had SARS to catch SARS so it was pretty much an if you were in the hospital type of thing or if you'd been in one of the countries where it was... um rampant then that could happen but just passing somebody, passing close to the six feet to somebody and sneezing, you weren't gonna catch it but Covid yea, you totally could especially if they sneezed on you which would be gross at this time um... The, the blackout um... um the blackout was a whole other kinda animal because you know we hadn't seen the collapse of the electricity grid like that ever, like without a major storm, it wasn't even a storm or anything it was just like it is too hot and everything went down like whoops, what? I'm, I think that was different because it brought out the good and the bad in people like there was a lot of people who were trying to help people out and get them out of the city trying to make sure that they had food, trying to make sure that they were ok, if they were your neighbours. You know I saw, I had just gotten out of the subway when the power failed so I was really lucky and almost immediately, because there wasn't enough cops there were people in intersections doing the traffic directing to help keep the flow of traffic going as much as possible and I'm talking you know, teenagers, kids, I knew adults, the whole nine yards yea no one under the age of fifteen though because if you're too small you can't be seen but um but there's a lot of people trying to help people and I thought that was great and I mean it only, it only lasted a few days depending on where you were in the

city but it was still kind of like you know, it was, it was a bit of a different animal like I remember being at Queen and John because it was the only place in the city that had lights because they had their own- you know it was when CTV was still there they had their own generator so it's like light, it was a beacon in the centre of the city and everybody was there and it was very good natured and happy which was good. Um ugh the garbage strike ugh that was foul that was the worst frickin thing to hit the city, I hope it never ever happens again and I mean I don't know if you were in the city at that time.

Marion Loughheed (1:02:19)

No.

Marla McCartney (1:02:20)

It was right around, it right around SARS or whatever just after or just before one of the two, and I lived in Kensington Market and uh, uh walking into Chinatown you wanted to vomit there was so much garbage piled up by the side of the road and you know dead fish and just, just it was the most god awful thing I've ever smelled in my life and just, and people were, were rude about it like you know all of the city, all the city receptacles were overflowing because the city wasn't picking garbage up you know, restaurants unless you had private business sand I mean the fights that were going on for people who had private pick up like, who had had an outside company come and pick up the garbage for them that wasn't city contracted and the amount of- like they had to lock their bins and it was yea uh.. yea I mean this is, I think this, I think Covid not just in Canada, not just in Toronto, but worldwide has been a real holy shit wake up call for a lot of different things. Um I think on the, on the social spectrum, on the medical spectrum, on the

political spectrum, on the everything, I think you know even, even some of the best countries in the world with some of the best healthcare in the world were not ready for this, not even close.

Marion Lougheed (1:03:55)

So, what do you think individuals or communities or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

Marla McCartney (1:04:03)

Um. I think there's gonna be a lot of stuff that's gonna just um, that post pandemic isn't going to go away. I think, I think people have, I mean this has probably woken up a lot of people to the whole handwashing thing I think there's a lot of people who thought it was fine, you'd be ok without it and now it's like nope that's not the case please wash your hands this is the way it's gonna go. Um I hope, I hope the level of courteousness to people who were deemed essential workers during this time, like cashiers, and grocery stockers and the people who make your coffee and, and frontline workers um, nurses and all the rest of them. I hope, and I hope that the, that the majority of people who.. became very polite about everything and was very thankful that these people were there because without them there is so much stuff they couldn't do, I hope they remember that gratitude I hope, you know... I hope- it's weird cause I'm not a parent but I kinda hope parents you know, come the fall are very grateful that teachers exist after attempting to homeschool their children for the last three months, like I hope that because... you know anyone I think, I think especially the whole teacher thing, I think anyone who has ever said it's not that hard to be like how hard can it be to be a teacher and then had to suddenly teach their own children or keep on top of them to get their work done after they were done their thirty minute Zoom call with their teacher. Uh I hope they realize how hard it is now and are grateful

that there are people who take that on as a profession instead of just badmouthing them. Um yea I mean and who knows maybe, maybe it'll become very fashionable to walk around with a mask all the time I don't know, you know adopted the South Korean look.

Marion Lougheed (1:06:11)

Alright well last question, what do you imagine your life being like a year from now?

Marla McCartney (1:06:19)

Dear Lord. When's a year from now, next May? Hmm next June, ok. Um well hopefully I'll be married, like hopefully the pandemic is ended or at least released enough that I can actually have my wedding that'd be nice, I mean if not I'll reschedule again um.

Marion Lougheed (1:06:42)

That would be very sad.

Marla McCartney (1:06:44)

It would just be really funny if I had to get a third... sorry it's not happening a third time argh. Um I think, I think for the most part my life will be a lot of the same like, like just with more going out potentially I mean again it all depends on is it, is there still a pandemic still going on? Have they gotten a vaccine? Did I get the vaccine? Like you know there a lot of steps involved with it um, but I think, I mean the only change in my life from how my life was before to how my life is now is that I'm home, I'm home more now I mean, up until Monday and then I'll be out a little bit more but that- the only change is that I- instead of being out and going and doing things I've been home and doing things.

Marion Lougheed (1:07:37)

Mmhm.

Marla McCartney (1:07:38)

So um I think that'll be the biggest thing I know that like, when this is, when this is, past and I can see family and friends again everyone's getting such a big hug oh my god. I mean I'm fine hugging Kevin but sometimes you just wanna press yourself against a different body.

Marion Lougheed (1:08:01)

Really great. Were there any last thoughts or anything else that you wanted to share?

Marla McCartney (1:08:08)

Um I hope, I, the only thing that I would hope is, I don't know how many people are aware, I kinda told Kevin I found it myself, there's a um, there's a big group of studies going on and they're looking for volunteers for various things in regards to Covid about whether you are, you willing to medically test the vaccine when they get one. Are you willing to do this? Most of the tests across Canada, I mean the most tests are in, are uh, or the most clinical studies are in Toronto they're shifting clinical studies in Toronto right now but there's a bunch from coast to coast all dealing with different things. Most of them are looking for people who have Covid or have had Covid um, in various stages cause they wanna see how certain things react to certain stages.

Marion Lougheed (1:08:57)

Mmhm.

Marla McCartney (1:08:58)

Uh but they're big thing was that we just wanna know if there's you know, if we come up with a vaccine are you willing to take it, and I sent up and said absolutely as long as you know, you give me an outline of anything that could potentially happen to me and then I can make an informed decision, otherwise yes I'm more than happy to test this for you uh, I don't know I just... I mean, I think I like everybody hope this is over soon but I don't believe that this will just go away I don't, I don't think, I don't think Covid will be like SARS um I remember listening to doctor Fashito cause they're like well what if it'll be like SARS and he's like no it won't. There's also- SARS disappeared for several reasons we don't know how or why it disappeared before we made a vaccine but it was gone worldwide, not a single case um... and he and other people are of the firm belief that that's not gonna happen, that Covid may be one of those things that's just kind of like the seasonal flu even though it's not fluish but it'll be a similar thing there'll be a surge of it in the winter when it gets cold just like the seasonal flu uh, and that if you have the vaccination you'll be ok or less effected by it and if you don't have the vaccination you're gonna be really, really sick so I think, I think there's a great potential for this to change... how people kind of look at um, diseases and things that go around and how they interact with others and how um, and how they just- they behave um, I, I think it's gonna be interesting to watch from up here.

Marion Lougheed (1:10:55)

MMhm MMHm