

Jordan Peterson: I will risk my licence to escape social media re-education

The Ontario College of Psychologists wants to retrain me to behave properly — and this should concern everyone

By Jordan Peterson

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The practice of psychology in Ontario, and in many other North American and western jurisdictions, is subject to regulation by “professional colleges” — essentially governmental organizations with a mandate to protect the public from misconduct on the part of physicians, lawyers, social workers, dentists, pharmacists, teachers, architects and many others, including (and most relevant to me) clinical psychologists.

Anyone anywhere in the world can levy a complaint to these regulatory bodies for any reason, regardless of whether the complainant has had any direct contact with the professional in question. The respective colleges have the responsibility to determine whether each complaint is serious and credible enough to warrant further investigation. Complaints can be deemed vexatious or frivolous and dispensed with. When the college decides to move forward, it is a serious move, essentially equivalent to a lawsuit. The Ontario College of Psychologists in fact recommends legal counsel under such conditions.

The Ontario College of Psychologists has levied a multitude of such lawsuits against me since my rise to public prominence six years ago (although none at all in the 20 years or so I practised as a psychologist before that). These have multiplied as of late, and now number more than a dozen. This may seem like a lot (and “where there’s smoke there’s fire,” or so people think), but I might point out that it is difficult to communicate with as many people as I do and to say anything of substance without rubbing at least a few of them the wrong way now and then.

For my crimes, I have been sentenced to a course of mandatory social-media communication training with the college’s so-called experts (although social media communication training is not a scientific and certainly not a clinical specialty of any standing). I am to do this at my own expense (some hundreds of dollars per hour) and for a length of time that is to be determined only by those retraining me and profiting from doing so. How will this be determined? When

those very re-educators — those experts — have convinced themselves that I have learned my lesson, and will behave properly in the future.

If I agree to this, then I must admit that I have been unprofessional in my conduct, and to have that noted publicly, even as the college insists that I am not required to admit to any wrongdoing. If I refuse — and I have (of course) refused — the next step is a mandatory public disciplinary session/inquiry and the possible suspension of my clinical licence (all of which will be also announced publicly).

I should also point out that the steps already taken constitute the second most serious possible response to my transgressions on the part of the college. I have been placed in the category of repeat offender, with high risk of further repetition.

What exactly have I done that is so seriously unprofessional that I am now a danger not only to any new potential clients but to the public itself? It is hard to tell with some of the complaints (one involved the submission of the entire transcript of a three-hour discussion on the Joe Rogan podcast), but here are some examples that might produce some reasonable concern among Canadians who care about such niceties as freedom of belief, conscience and speech:

- I retweeted a comment made by Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre about the unnecessary severity of the COVID lockdowns;
- I criticized Prime Minister Justin Trudeau;
- I criticized Justin Trudeau's former chief of staff, Gerald Butts;
- I criticized an Ottawa city councillor; and
- I made a joke about the prime minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern.

I did all that “disrespectfully,” by the way, in a “horrific” manner that spread “misinformation”; that was “threatening” and “harassing”; that was “embarrassing to the profession.” I am also (these are separate offences) sexist, transphobic, incapable of the requisite body positivity in relationship to morbid obesity and, unforgivably of all, a climate change denialist.

Every single one of these accusations (and now accepted evidence of my professional misconduct) is independent of my clinical practice — which, by the way, has been suspended since 2017, when my rising notoriety or fame made continuing as a private therapist practically and ethically impossible. Every single accusation is not only independent of my clinical practice, but explicitly political — and not only that: unidirectionally explicitly political. Every single thing I have

been sentenced to correction for saying is insufficiently leftist, politically. I'm simply too classically liberal — or, even more unforgivably — conservative.

For criticizing our prime minister and his cronies and peers, for retweeting Pierre Poilievre, the leader of the official Opposition in Canada, and for holding and for daring to express reprehensible political views, I have now been convicted by the College of Psychologists of “harming” people in some manner serious enough to justify my forced re-education. Now that I have refused, I will definitely face further exceptionally public, demanding, time-consuming and expensive disciplinary action, including the suspension of my licence. This, despite the fact that none of the people whose complaints are being currently pursued were ever clients of mine, or even knew clients of mine, or even knew or were acquainted with any of the people they claim I am harming. This, despite the fact (and please attend to this) that half the people who levied such complaints falsely claimed that they had in fact been or currently are clients of mine.

It may be of some interest to note that I wrote to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau this week, informing him of this situation. Here is the letter, for public consideration — which by necessity repeats some of what I have just covered in this introduction:

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

I thought it my duty to inform you and your office of the following proceedings against me.

The Ontario College of Psychologists, the provincial government-mandated and supported professional body charged with regulating the practice of clinical psychology, is requiring that I undergo a lengthy course of “media training” so that I “more appropriately” conduct my online communication. This is occurring, by the way, despite my 20 years as a research psychologist at Harvard University and the University of Toronto (with an unblemished behavioural reputation), my extensive clinical experience and my history of bringing psychological knowledge to people around the world.

Some 15-million people currently follow me on three main social media platforms, and the overwhelming majority of them appear to regard my words and the particular manner in which I formulate them as interesting, helpful and productive — some real evidence to the contrary with regard to the college’s accusations.

I have rejected this forced re-education request, and will in consequence soon be required to appear in front of an in-person “disciplinary hearing” to bring me into line — with the threat of the revocation of my clinical licence, and the public exposure and implied disgrace that would accompany that, hanging over my head.

It may be of interest to you to note that all of the complaints against me: (1) were brought by people with whom I had zero clinical contact; (2) have nothing whatsoever to do with my function as a clinical psychologist (except in the broadest possible public sense); and, most importantly with regard to this letter, (3) that half of them involve nothing more than political criticisms of you or the people around you (with all the remainder being complaints generated because I dared state some essentially conservative philosophical beliefs).

As the enclosed documentation indicates, I am being investigated and disciplined for, among a few other reasons not germane to my present communication with you:

- *retweeting Pierre Poilievre, the leader of Canada’s official Opposition;*
- *criticizing you, your former chief of staff Gerald Butts, New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern and an Ottawa city councillor; and*
- *objecting to the Ottawa police threatening to apprehend the children of the trucker convoy protesters.*

I am not suggesting or even presuming that you or any of the people associated with you had anything directly to do with this. However, the fact that it is happening (and that physicians and lawyers have become as terrified as psychologists now are of their own regulatory bodies) is something that has definitely happened on your watch, as a consequence of your own conduct and the increasingly compulsion-based and ideologically pure policies that you have promoted and legislated.

I simply cannot resign myself to the fact that in my lifetime I am required to resort to a public letter to the leader of my country to point out that political criticism has now become such a crime in Canada that if professionals dare engage in such activity, government-appointed commissars will threaten their livelihood and present them with the spectacle of denouncement and political disgrace.

There is simply and utterly no excuse whatsoever for such a state of affairs in a free country.

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Why should Canadians who read this care? Perhaps those reading in this country (and elsewhere) might ask themselves the following questions — and in all seriousness, painful as it might be to do so; requiring as it does the almost unbelievable admission that something has gone dreadfully wrong in our lovely country:

- What makes you think that something similar won't happen to you, or to someone you know and respect or even love?
- What makes you think you are going to continue to be able to communicate honestly with your physicians, lawyers and psychologists (and representatives of many other regulated professions) if they are now so terrified of their regulatory boards that they can no longer tell you the truth?
- What are your children going to be taught when all their teachers (that's a regulated profession, too) are so afraid of the woke mob that they swallow all the ideological lies that are now required of pedagogues — regardless if they believe what they are saying?
- Where are we going to be if we allow criticism of the public figures charged with the privilege of our governance to be grounds for the demolition of not only the critic's reputation but their very livelihood?
- How far are we willing to go down this road, without forthright resistance?

In any case: I'm not complying. I'm not submitting to re-education. I am not admitting that my viewpoints — many of which have, by the way, been entirely justified by the facts that have emerged since the complaints were levied — were either wrong or unprofessional. I'm going to say what I have to say, and let the

chips fall where they will. I have done nothing to compromise those in my care; quite the contrary — I have served all my clients and the millions of people I am communicating with to the best of my ability and in good faith, and that's that.

And to the College of Psychologists, I issue this challenge: I am absolutely willing to make every single word of this legal battle fully public, so that the issue of my professional competence and my right to say what I have to say and stand by my words can be fought in full daylight. I would and could post all the correspondence with and accusations levied by those who complained about me and the college itself public, and will do so, if the college agrees. But I can't, on legal grounds justified in normal times but rendered specious by the dominion of the politically correct and radical. I can't, because of this, and because it is not in the interest of the college or the complainants they are sheltering and abetting to allow it. They'll cite confidentiality concerns for their refusal, because it's 100 per cent OK for them to come after me publicly while they and those who complained hide cravenly and cowardly behind a wall of self-serving and self-protective silence.

And this of course does little but embolden those who have learned to weaponize college disciplinary processes, and to give the accuser and his or her lackeys the upper hand, practically and legally. And such weaponization risks placing all our once justly trusted institutions firmly in the hands of those willing and able to manipulate them for reasons both political and personal.

The sad and sorry state of this once-great Dominion at the dawn of 2023 ... and it's still going to get worse before it gets better.
