

Canadian Emergencies Act, Justin Trudeau, and Civil Disobedience in Context

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On Valentines’ Day 2022, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau declared the 1988 Emergencies Act in response to the [Trucker Freedom Convoy](#) in Ottawa and US-Canada border protests in Windsor (ON), Emerson (MB), Coutts (AB), Osoyoos and Surrey (BC). This stunning political development ignored the House of Commons in favour of making the announcement at a press conference.

Prior to the September 2021 election, Trudeau spoke of “consequences” for the unvaccinated.

He [described vaccine passports](#) as a reward for Canadians who “did the right thing,” and said he had “little patience” and “no sympathy” for those who were “anti-vaxxers.”

In the weeks and months after the election, the unvaccinated learned what type of punishment the Prime Minister had in mind.

Unvaccinated travelers were no longer allowed to board a plane or train.

Unvaccinated workers in many job sectors were fired, and [prohibited from collecting employment insurance](#).

In Quebec, the [unvaccinated couldn't go](#) to Walmart or Costco, and the government considered imposing a tax on those who refused to get the shot.

In New Brunswick, unvaccinated people could be refused entry to a grocery store. Premier Blaine Higgs pledged to make life “increasingly uncomfortable” for the unvaccinated, prohibiting entry to liquor and cannabis stores.

When Prime Minister Trudeau mandated on January 15 all truckers crossing the border must be vaccinated, he sparked a protest.

An estimated ten percent of Canadian truckers were unvaccinated. Factoring in American truck drivers, the Canadian Trucking Alliance and the American Trucking Associations estimated that as many as 32,000, or 20%, of the 160,000 Canadian and American cross-border [truck drivers could be taken off the roads](#) by the vaccination requirement. The mandate would trigger huge supply chain issues and disrupt the economy. As well, the Trudeau minority government announced plans to require vaccination for all inter-provincial trucking.

In protest, a Metis woman and a Jewish-Canadian truck driver forged a trucker convoy drive to Ottawa.

[The idea](#) took off. Once the 50KM long convoy arrived in Ottawa on January 29, its first official event was a prayer service. It was opened by two clan mothers, one Dene and one Cree. Others leading [the prayer service](#) included an Iraqi-born Arab Shia Muslim and an Afro-Canadian evangelical Quebecois pastor from Montreal, and a white Mennonite pastor from Ontario.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Trudeau went to an undisclosed location. He occasionally emerged to [name-call](#) those in the convoy white supremacists, Nazis, homophobes, racists, misogynists, transphobic and more.

An orphan protester with a black mask walked outside the Parliament Buildings carrying a Confederate flag. He was shunned by all he met. A Confederate flag? To what end? To incite the original eleven Confederate States of America (South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee and North Carolina) who fought against the Union in the American Civil War (1861-65) to secede from the USA in 2022?

Canadian and American mainstream media were eager to report about the lone balaclava-clad Confederate flag protester. They implied truckers in Ottawa longed to establish slavery well north of the Mason-Dixon Line. *Spectator World* reported convoy protesters disavowed the Confederate flag balaclava clad protester, asking him to leave. Could the masked man waving a confederate flag be an agent provocateur? A [\\$6,500 reward](#) was issued by convoy protesters to identify the mystery man with the swastika.

Back in the early 1980s, Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs, spoke to a passionate group of peace protesters at a hall in downtown Vancouver.

They were protesting the Cruise Missile and nuclear arms race. As I listened to MacGuigan, suddenly, a masked grim reaper costumed with an outstretched 8-foot arms stood on stilts above the seated crowd. The Dickensian reaper accusingly pointed its fingers at MacGuigan who left the stage.

That night on the local Vancouver TV stations, there was news footage of the grim reaper chasing MacGuigan into his waiting limousine. Its ghoulish mask and stilts made for great political theatre. Former Vancouver City Councillor, David Cadman, remembers people in the peace movement asked around to find out who the masked reaper was. I was told phone calls were made to far-left Marxist and anarchist groups in the Vancouver area. But no one knew who the reaper was. News headlines shifted focus away from peace protesters concerns about the nuclear arms race and cruise missiles. Now, the Vancouver peace movement was blamed for intimidating a member of the Federal cabinet. How convenient for the government. Could the masked grim reaper on stilts have been an agent provocateur?

After all, we have seen this before. Violent protesters at economic Summit protests in Quebec turned out to be government agents. Handcuffed and lying on the ground, their police boots gave them away as agents infiltrating and violently undermining the peaceful protests.

Former elite RCMP sniper Daniel Buford, charged with protecting Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, has been part of the Ottawa convoy.

He recently warned that firearms were stolen in Peterborough, and that people in the convoy needed to be vigilant to prevent anyone from planting weapons in any of the trucks on Parliament Hill. Buford was arrested this afternoon. There are reports that firearms have been seized from protesters in Coutts, Alberta. But, history has shown that sometimes [government agents will go to any length to frame and discredit](#) those engaging in peaceful protest or civil disobedience. Just ask the RCMP who burned down a barn in Quebec and blamed the barn-burning on the FLQ.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau contends the Emergencies Act is required because the Freedom Convoy involves activities that are “directed toward or in support” of terrorism. He has said in Parliament that his declaration is “proportionate” to what is happening in Ottawa and across the nation. Yet, the “national emergency” had already been [resolved peacefully](#) with local law enforcement at the Ambassador Bridge from Windsor to Detroit on February 13, and subsequently at the [Coutts, Alberta-Sweetgrass, Montana border](#) on February 15. The latter involved reports showing footage of protesters and police shaking hands and giving each other hugs.

Rosemary Barton of the CBC alleged the protesters were trying to overthrow the government. She must not be familiar with world history.

The Truckers Freedom Convoy is no storming of the Bastille in Paris in 1789. It bears no resemblance to the October Revolution in Russia in 1917 when Lenin, with armed workers, sailors and soldiers clashed with government forces. Playing ball hockey, honking horns and staying away from the Parliament Buildings is no way to overthrow a government. Nonetheless, the Liberal minority government’s key ally in Parliament, NDP leader Jagmeet Singh, [warned](#) the truckers were engaged in “an act to overthrow the government.”

In other reports by Canada’s national broadcaster, security expert David Shipley suggested the [Russians were behind](#) the trucker convoy protest.

Some in the media have dubbed the truckers protest as Canada’s January 6. In any event, no one in the trucker freedom convoy has barged into the Parliament Buildings. They waited

in vain for Prime Minister Trudeau to give them a hearing. Trucker freedom convoy leaders wanted to air their grievances and have a discussion with the Prime Minister. But Justin Trudeau, despite his long history campaigning on empathy, had no interest in understanding, or listening, to what these ordinary working-class citizens who've provided basic essential services to the nation for the past two years had to say.

Trudeau must have forgotten his March 2021, tweet "While many of us are working from home, there are others who aren't able to do that - like truck drivers who are working day and night to make sure our shelves are stocked. So when you can, please #ThankATrucker for everything they're doing and help them however you can." Having arrived in Ottawa, helping the truckers however he can was the [last thing on the Prime Minister's mind](#).

Questioning the media "Narrative," Rex Murphy [wrote](#) in the *National Post*: "In Ottawa, the sky isn't falling, despite what the political elite would have you believe," underscoring "[Trudeau's Monumentally Misguided Emergency Measures are an Insult to Canadians.](#)" While the *Wall Street Journal* in [an Editorial](#) cautioned the Prime Minister, "you've lost the political plot. Time to adopt a new strategy more tolerant of the need to return to life not dominated by pandemic fear and government commands."

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Before February 14, 2022, only once had a Canadian government sought Emergencies Act powers. This was when Justin Trudeau's father, Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, passed the War Measures Act to deal with the FLQ Crisis. In [October 1970](#) British diplomat James Cross and Quebec Deputy Premier Pierre Laporte were kidnapped. Although negotiations led to Cross's release, Laporte was murdered by FLQ kidnappers.

Since January 29 in Ottawa, there have been parking tickets issued to truck drivers by the Ottawa Police. There have been a couple of people arrested for carrying gas cans to truckers who run their engines overnight to keep warm. (Carrying gas to refuel a vehicle is a new punishable offense). When Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson wrote to the convoy leaders asking that all trucks be removed from residential neighborhoods, the truckers agreed. Unlike the FLQ Crisis, no one had been kidnapped. No one has been murdered.

The overwhelmingly peaceful protests in Ottawa have featured children playing on bouncy

castles, protesters playing ball hockey, hourly singing of the national anthem, dancing to House of Pain's "Jump Around," linking arms and singing "We Are The World," feeding the homeless, cleaning downtown streets of litter, shoveling snow – and yes honking. These protests have been mild compared to other acts of civil disobedience over the past century.

In 1914, the War Measures Act was passed in Parliament and in effect during the First World War, and was enacted again during World War II.

From May 15 to June 16, 1919, there was [the Winnipeg General Strike](#). More than 30,000 strikers brought economic activity to a standstill in what was at the time Canada's third largest city. Numbers of people died. There was gunfire.

In response to the Winnipeg General Strike no War Measures Act was declared.

In late 1934, unemployed workers planned to trek from Vancouver to Ottawa. In Regina in mid-June 1935, eight elected representatives of the trekkers were invited to Ottawa to meet R.B. Bennett on June 22. The meeting turned into a shouting match, with Bennett accusing Trek leader Arthur "Slim" Evans of being an "embezzler." Evans, in turn, called the Prime Minister "a liar" before the delegation was finally escorted out of the building and on to the street. Back in Regina, trekkers were thwarted by the RCMP in attempts to travel east by car, truck or train.

On July 1, 1935, there was a clash between trekkers and police in Regina. Charles Miller, a plainclothes policeman, died, and Nick Schaack, a Trekker, later died in the hospital from injuries sustained in the riot. Prime Minister R.B. Bennett characterized the [On-to-Ottawa Trek](#) as "not a mere uprising against law and order but a definite revolutionary effort on the part of a group of men to usurp authority and destroy government." The Federal Minister of Justice Hugh Guthrie falsely stated on July 2 in the House of Commons that "shots were fired by the strikers, and the fire was replied to with shots from the city police." During the lengthy trials that followed, no evidence was ever produced to show that strikers fired shots during the riot.

The War Measures Act was not declared.

In May 1962, a meeting of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan passed a resolution vowing physicians would close their practices if Medicare came into force. "[Keep Our Doctors](#)" committees were established throughout the province and a campaign, backed by the *Regina Leader-Post* was undertaken, with warnings that most doctors would leave Saskatchewan if socialized medicine was introduced. On July 1, 1962, the doctors strike began and 90% of the province's doctors shut their offices. The strike by doctors lasted 23 days, and numbers of people died for lack of care.

The War Measures Act was not declared.

In 1990, for 78 days between July and September, Mohawks blocked the Mercier Bridge. There were numbers of [violent confrontations](#) between the Mohawk and non-indigenous commuters. 31-year-old Sûreté du Québec Corporal Marcel Lemay died after he was shot in a gun battle between SQ and Mohawk warriors. Mohawk elder Joe Armstrong, age 71, was struck in the chest by a large rock and died of a heart attack the next day. Routes 132, 138 and 207 were all blocked to the blockaded Mercier Bridge. (24)

The Emergencies Act was not declared.

In 1993 in [Clayoquot Sound, British Columbia](#), more than 700 people were arrested in 1993 during a peaceful three-month anti-clearcutting protest on Vancouver Island. They objected to the B.C. government's logging plan for the Clayoquot, which would have allowed some form of logging in two-thirds of the 350,000 hectares of forest, home to some of Canada's largest and oldest trees. Logging companies said the protests imperiled economic growth.

The Emergencies Act was not declared.

In the summer of 2021, after news of [unmarked graves of First Nations children](#) were reported in Kamloops, nearly fifty churches across Canada were vandalized, and desecrated, over 30 burned down by arsonists.

The Emergencies Act was not declared.

And in 2020 and 2021, Black Lives Matter and anti-colonialism protesters variously 1) [toppled a statue of Prime Minister John A. MacDonald](#) in Montreal, decapitating his head, 2) [toppled statues of Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth II](#) in Winnipeg, and 3) [Captain James Cook](#) in Victoria, among others. Those opposed to the Trucker Freedom Convoy [were outraged](#) that Terry Fox was draped with an upside-down Canadian flag, and was holding a "Mandate Freedom" poster. Yet, the Terry Fox statue by Parliament Hill remains unharmed, the flag and poster removed.

Ironically, while truckers protest a mandatory vaccine mandate for driving trucks across the Canada-US border, those charged with keeping the peace near Parliament Hill – the Ottawa Police – are [not required to get vaccinated](#). They can opt to take COVID tests instead.

Back in 2013 at a Liberal fundraiser, Justin Trudeau, in response to a question about which country he admired the most – [said China](#). "There is a level of admiration I actually have for China because their basic dictatorship is allowing them to actually turn their economy around on a dime. There is a flexibility... having a dictatorship where you can do whatever you wanted, that I find quite interesting."

In passing the Emergencies Act, Justin Trudeau may hope to turn the Canadian economy around, vaccinating our way to an economic boom with his newfound "flexibility," freezing protesters bank accounts, cancelling their licenses to drive, and doing whatever else he wants to crush dissent. (Many hundreds of police are beating and arresting protesters as I write this). But, when political power is fueled by political calculations to divide citizens between an "in-group" and an "out-group," at what point does the damage done to society become permanent?

During a press conference on February 17, a Francophone reporter pointed out that Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino had been "insinuating for days" that weapons were being brought to Ottawa, or were in Ottawa with the convoy. Mendicino [replied](#), "I am not saying that there is an intelligence saying there are weapons in Ottawa."

Trudeau is getting pushback. Seven provinces have registered their opposition, stating the Prime Minister has not satisfied them that the nation is faced with "an urgent and critical situation of a temporary nature that ... seriously endangers the lives, health or safety of Canadians and is of such proportions or nature as to exceed the capacity or authority of a province to deal with it," as outlined in Section 3 of the Act. That development [was reported](#), among others, by signatory to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, former Premier

of Newfoundland, Brian Peckford.

Speaking to protesters gathered in Ottawa, Peckford expressed his firm opposition to the actions of the Liberal government. He added that former Charter signatories – Premiers Peter Lougheed, Alan Blackney, and Angus MacLean – would also view the actions of the Prime Minister as unconstitutional. Peckford emphasized key provisions of the Charter guarantee every citizen “the right to pursue the gaining of a livelihood in any province” and “the right to enter, remain in and leave Canada.”

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Ray McGinnis is author of [Unanswered Questions: What the September Eleventh Families Asked and the 9/11 Commission Ignored](#). [Read other articles by Ray](#).

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