

# The Freedom Convoy and the Collapse of Canadian Liberalism

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*At any given moment there is an orthodoxy, a body of ideas which it is assumed all right-thinking people will accept without question. It is not exactly forbidden to say this, that or the other, but it is “not done” to say it, just as in mid-Victorian times it was “not done” to mention trousers in the presence of a lady. Anyone who challenges the prevailing orthodoxy finds himself silenced with surprising effectiveness. A genuinely unfashionable opinion is almost never given a fair hearing, either in the popular press or in highbrow periodicals.*  
- George Orwell, “Freedom of the Press”

Recently, a friend told me she’d taken part in a webinar conducted by the Council of Canadians. The webinar included First Nations people speaking about RCMP mistreatment of indigenous peoples on reserve. It was contrasted with the peaceful disbursement of freedom convoy protesters in Ottawa on February 18th.

The webinar narrative was partially true, likely informed by mainstream news reports. RCMP policing among First Nations people needs to be repaired. But, the Trucker Freedom Convoy in Ottawa wasn’t broken up peacefully. Just ask Candice “Candy” Sero.

Sero is a full-blood Mohawk woman from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory in Hastings County, Ontario. On February 18, I watched [live footage](#) online of mounted police officers charging through the freedom protester crowd and trampling Candy Sero as she stood with her wheeled walker. She fell to the ground. A horse stepped on her shoulder.

*A man in the crowd started yelling with growing desperation, “Oh my gosh. Oh my goodness. Oh my goodness. Look what you did. Look what you did to her. Look what you did to her. Look what you did to her. You trampled on the lady... Shame on you. Shame on everyone of you. Shame on you...”*

Candy Sero survived the trampling. But she suffered a broken clavicle.

However, what I saw unfolding live in downtown Ottawa wasn't part of the new orthodoxy. The live footage I saw wasn't part of what right-thinking people would be shown, would accept. The people hosting the webinar could be forgiven.

But why did I have to depend on independent reporters and footage from protesters cell phones to reveal an ugly side to policing in Ottawa on February 18? Why weren't the CBC or CTV covering these stories?

Why was I increasingly feeling set adrift from my NDP and Liberal political leaders?

My vote for Joe Clark in 1979 was the exception to my mostly voting NDP since 1980. My paternal grandfather voted for the United Farmer's of Alberta party from 1921 until it collapsed in 1935, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation until 1961, and its successor - the New Democratic Party - until he died. NDP leader Tommy Douglas was a hero in my family. And so I supported causes like funding for the CBC, and giving donations at times to the Friends of the CBC.

Over the decades, I've been on the 'left' on a host of political debates: against NAFTA, keeping Canada out of the Iraq War, and more. I enthusiastically supported Jack Layton, NDP leader from 2003 to 2011, and was acquainted with him when I campaigned for him as a city counsellor when I'd lived in Toronto.

## All governments require scrutiny

Still, I knew Liberal or NDP governments were fallible. Jody Wilson-Raybould was a star Kwak'waka indigenous Liberal candidate Vancouver riding next to mine in the 2015 federal election. She was given the dual portfolio of Minister of Justice and Attorney-General by prime minister Justin Trudeau. But in 2019, she was expelled from the Liberal caucus over the SNC-Lavalin affair.

Canada's Ethics Commissioner Mario Dion later found that Trudeau improperly pressured Wilson-Raybould to intervene in an ongoing criminal bribery case. Trudeau's impropriety concerned the Quebec-based construction company SNC-Lavalin and pressuring Wilson-Raybould to offer the company a deferred prosecution agreement.

In read her memoir, [Indian in the Cabinet](#), Jody Wilson-Raybould described a one-on-one meeting with Justin Trudeau at the Fairmont-Pacific Rim Hotel in Vancouver on February 11, 2019. It took place while the SNC-Lavalin affair dominated the headlines. These lines from her memoir haunted me:

He asked if I trusted him. I could see the agitation visibly building in the prime minister. His mood was shifting. I remember seeing it. I remember feeling it. I had seen and felt this before on a few occasions, when he would get frustrated and angry. But this was different. He became strident and disputed everything I had said. He made it clear that everyone in his office was telling the truth and that I...and others, were not. He told me I had not experienced what I said I did. He used the line that would later become public, that I had "experienced things differently." I knew what he was really asking. What he was saying. In that moment I knew he wanted me to lie - to attest that what had occurred had not occurred.

By the time the pandemic began in March 2020, I had brought my manuscript [Unanswered Questions: What the September Eleventh Families Asked and the 9/11 Commission](#)

*Ignored* to a boutique publisher.

Early on, I heard from some friends who were beginning to question the official narrative about the pandemic. But most of my friends accepted mainstream news stories. I was shocked by accounts of people being put on ventilators. And boggled by the daily case counts, death counts. But, mostly I kept my own council.

Over the next 18 months I worked with editorial staff on editing, copyediting, proof reading, graphic design, and marketing for my book, working with a publicist. The lockdowns, semi-lockdowns and occasional modest restrictions were inconvenient. But, I had my home. I had my computer. In Vancouver, I could order take-out from restaurants. I was rolling with things. Not altogether comfortably. But, I was comfortable enough. I had a deadline to get my book to publication on the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.

## Vaccine adverse events get personal

My comfort with the mainstream media pandemic narrative changed abruptly in June 2021. A close family friend I'd known since early childhood eagerly stepped up to get his first shot of AstraZeneca. Within 18 hours he suffered a brain aneurysm. He couldn't speak. He couldn't walk. He couldn't work. His mother suffered from greatly reduced lung capacity after her first dose.

As 2021 rolled along, several others in my wide circle across North America were injured by mRNA vaccines. Many [others](#) were learning about [adverse events](#), AND calling into question how rare the side effects were.

Still, the media daily reported these vaccines were "safe and effective." Though on August 6, 2021, CDC Director [Rochelle Walensky](#) told Wolf Blitzer on CNN that the Covid-19 vaccines did not stop or reduce transmission, or prevent infection. What was being offered as the *only solution* to the pandemic didn't seem to be able to deliver what it was peddled to solve.

## Tolerance

In late December 2021, prime minister Justin Trudeau called the unvaccinated "[misogynist, racist... We have a choice to make. Do we tolerate these people?](#)" Given Trudeau's carefully crafted image, this was jarring, illiberal. Classic liberalism has championed the value of tolerance. In 1789, the National Constituent Assembly of the French Revolution passed its Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.

Article 10 stated:

"No-one shall be interfered with for his opinions, even religious ones, provided that their practice does not disturb public order as established by the law."

But in 2021, the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada was signaling to Canadians that there were categories of people that maybe shouldn't be tolerated. He was characterizing legal protests, of the right and freedom to assemble - established under the Canadian charter - as illegal.

Since he'd become leader of the Liberal Party, Justin Trudeau's public image was that of someone who was inclusive. Trudeau was someone who cared about the average person.

He was someone who listened to their concerns. But now, the prime minister was openly disdainful, calling the protesters everything but classist. Justin Trudeau's unwavering rhetoric helped cement disgust toward the protesters among many Canadians.

## Collapse of liberalism in Canada

What did the Liberal Party of Canada have to do with liberalism in 2022? Classical liberalism emerged with the collapse of feudalism and the slow erosion of church authority in the Renaissance.

Liberalism began with the invention of the printing press, the flowering of culture in the vernacular (non-Latin) languages among the commoners, and widespread educational reform. Classic liberalism advanced the need for non-interference and independence of citizens under the rule of law.

In his 2003 book, [Liberalism](#), John Gray writes that classical liberalism consists of these four pillars.

First, "it is individualist, in that it asserts the primacy of the person against any collectivity."

Secondly, liberalism is "egalitarian, in that it confers on all human beings the same basic moral status." It is universalist in its inclusion of all persons regardless of any distinguishing features – all having the same moral worth.

And fourthly, liberalism anticipates the march of human progress attained through critical reason to advance social wellbeing. The word *liberal* comes from the Latin *liber* which means "free."

In the 18th and 19th centuries liberal politicians championed causes that included the 6-day/48-hour workweek, welfare, child labour laws and public schooling, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, universal suffrage, unemployment insurance, social security, and the abolition of slavery.

## Bodily integrity and security of the person

Liberalism also advanced the value of bodily integrity. This included i) a women's right to choose whether or not to have an abortion, ii) An individual's right to not be sold into slavery or forced labour, iii) The right not to be tortured, iv) The right not to be sexually assaulted, v) and The right to the security of one's person. The latter included informed decisions about taking [medical treatments and procedures](#).

After World War II the security of one's person was the catalyst for creating the [Nuremberg Code](#) of August 1947. In the Nuremberg Trial, German physicians were held responsible, and sentenced, for conducting unethical medical procedures on humans during the war. The judges at Nuremberg rendered this verdict in relation to any medical procedure or treatment, including:

- Point 1: *The voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential. This means that the person involved should have legal capacity to give consent; should be so situated as to be able to exercise free power of choice, without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, overreaching, or other*

*ulterior form of constraint or coercion; and should have sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the elements of the subject matter involved as to enable him to make an understanding and enlightened decision. This latter element requires that before the acceptance of an affirmative decision by the experimental subject there should be made known to him the nature, duration, and purpose of the experiment; the method and means by which it is to be conducted; all inconveniences and hazards reasonably to be expected; and the effects upon his health or person which may possibly come from his participation in the experiment.*

- Point 4: *The experiment should be so conducted as to avoid all unnecessary physical and mental suffering and injury.*
- Point 5: *No experiment should be conducted where there is an a priori reason to believe that death or disabling injury will occur; except, perhaps, in those experiments where the experimental physicians also serve as subjects.*
- Point 6: *The degree of risk to be taken should never exceed that determined by the humanitarian importance of the problem to be solved by the experiment.*

## Off-message data

Almost 75 years later, was there reason to be concerned that the Covid vaccines could result in death or disabling injury? Were these vaccines riskier than advertised? The prime minister declared “the science is settled.” The Covid-19 vaccines were safe and effective.

Yet, documents released by court-order in the USA revealed Pfizer knew by February 2021 that 1,223 people had died from taking their vaccine, according to the pharmaceutical companies [Cumulative Analysis of Post-authorization Adverse Event Reports](#).

At the Centers for Disease Control’s on Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS), the system was blinking red. In [January 2022](#) the number of Covid-19 vaccine deaths [stood](#) at over 23,000 in America.

As of [May 13, 2022](#), the CDC’s cumulative reported deaths after Covid vaccination in the USA stands at 28,141. This was in less than a year and a half. Since 1990, VAERS has been criticized for notorious underreporting.

Comparing VAERS data on Covid-19 vaccines with other CDC data is illuminating. Merck’s anti-inflammatory drug, Vioxx, was pulled from the American market in 2004 after five years. In 2004 VAERS reported 6,636 people had died in reaction to taking Vioxx. [An article in the Lancet determined Vioxx caused 88,000 heart attacks, and 38,000 of these died](#).

VAERS 6,636 reported Vioxx deaths turned out to reflect only 17% of the actual deaths. VAERS 5-year Vioxx data is less than 24% of deaths compared to experimental Covid vaccines reported in less than 18 months.

What if, like Vioxx, the 28,000 deaths from Covid-19 vaccines represent only 17% of the actual deaths and were 165,000? [Or higher?](#) It would appear the Covid-19 vaccines don’t meet the standards set in the Nuremberg Code, [based on Pfizer’s own internal reports alone](#).

[May 2022, Canadian hospital statistics](#) on Covid-19 admissions found 50% had received the 3rd shot (booster), 32% were “fully vaccinated,” 2% had one shot – “partially vaccinated” –

and 16% were unvaccinated. This is consistent with hospitalization trends since the start of 2022. Could this be due to a [National Institutes of Health and Moderna study](#) finding that the mRNA vaccine is “impeding the development of the anti-nucleocapsid antibodies” and suppressing the immunity of the vaccinated?

A study published by the NIH titled “*Pandemic of the unvaccinated? At midlife, white people are less vaccinated but still at less risk of Covid-19 mortality in Minnesota*” suggested what was at play was a “[pandemic of the disadvantaged](#).”

## Autonomy

Nonetheless, Canadians were required to get two doses. When I got fully vaccinated, I no longer believed the vaccine would keep me safe from infection or injury. A mix of social obligations, personal circumstances, and social coercion played a big role.

In America, Dr. Anthony Fauci was alleging the spread of Covid was due to a “[pandemic of the unvaccinated](#).”

The claim was repeated in Canada.

Yet Peter Doshi, editor-in-chief of the prestigious *British Medical Journal*, concluded “[We are not in a “pandemic of the unvaccinated](#).”

Doshi said,

“It saddens me that we as a society are oversaturated with the attitude of ‘everybody knows,’ which limits intellectual curiosity and leads to self-censorship.” If hospitalizations and deaths occur almost exclusively in unvaccinated people, “why would booster shots be necessary?” asked Doshi.

“And why would the [statistics be so different in the United Kingdom](#), where most hospitalizations and deaths from COVID occur among the fully vaccinated? There’s a correlation there that you should be curious about,” Doshi said. “Something’s not right.”

But Canadian authorities barreled along. The penalty for refusing vaccination in Canada for many has meant getting fired with [no employment insurance](#).

In New Brunswick the government let stores decide if they would [allow the unvaccinated to buy groceries](#).

In Quebec, the premier considered placing [a tax on the unvaccinated](#). Effective November 30, 2021, unvaccinated Canadians were [prohibited from traveling](#) by air or train domestically, and from leaving the country by plane, train or ship.

Though these policies are mandated by governments that are purportedly ‘liberal,’ they reveal a serious collapse of liberalism in Canada. For centuries, liberalism has advanced the cause of citizen autonomy: the capacity of individuals in a nation state to make informed decisions free of coercion. But, coercion has been a regular feature accompanying these measures.

## Heroes & villains

On March 31, 2021, Justin Trudeau lauded Canadian truckers as heroes of the pandemic. He [tweeted](#):

“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.”

But as 2022 began, the Trudeau government determined that unvaccinated truckers WOULD not be allowed to cross the Canada-U.S. border, effective January 15, 2022. The Canadian Trucking Alliance (CTA), the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters have all asked the federal government to either [eliminate or postpone the mandate](#). 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 highways by the vaccination requirement.

When the new trucker mandate was enacted on January 15th, it crossed a line for many Canadians. Based on transmission of the virus by the vaccinated, and truckers never being super-spreaders, there was no defensible medical reason to require them to be vaccinated.

By January 22 a Trucker Freedom Convoy formed in Prince George and Vancouver, British Columbia. Their destination was Ottawa. On January 26, prime minister Trudeau derided those joining the convoy as a “fringe minority” with “[unacceptable views](#),” and claimed he was “following the science.”

As the convoy headed east during January’s freezing temperatures, truckers reported what was [unfolding](#).

The convoy is 100kms long and growing all the time. The support people have is overwhelming. Coming into Winnipeg yesterday was pretty emotional the com radios went pretty quiet because no one could find words to express what we felt...people packed on the shoulders of the streets. Cars parked and people for miles and miles on the ring road around the city. On the four lane going out of Winnipeg...ended up driving 5 to 20 km/hr for hours and hours.

People had camp fires going in the ditches, fire works... Crane trucks with the booms up with signs, lights flashing, and flags. The shoulders of the four lane packed with people and cars. Overpasses packed with people. Tons of families little kids all bundled up. Everyone was jumping, dancing, waving signs, flags, and flash lights. All in -30C.”

CBC news footage on [January 27](#) confirmed a sea of Canadian flags greeting the convoy as it headed to Ottawa.

As convoys from British Columbia departed on January 23, those charged with standing on guard for Canada were remarkably passive. CSIS, the RCMP and the Canadian military had access to surveillance of everyone’s phone calls, text messages, and emails among the organizers of the convoy (and all Canadians). Yet, no one in the military, CSIS or the RCMP expressed any concern about a coup or insurrection. There was no attempt by those in

authority to halt Ottawa-bound convoys from the West or the Maritimes from arriving in Ottawa the week of January 23rd.

As the convoy arrived in Ottawa on January 28, on the Power and Politics show, CBC announcer Nil Koksai commented *“there is concern that Russian actors could be continuing to fuel things as this protest grows, or perhaps even instigating it from the outside.”*

Another CBC commentator mused

“I don’t know if it’s far-fetched to ask but there is concern that Russian actors could be continuing to fuel things as this protest grows... perhaps even instigating it...”

The allegations were retracted by the CBC on [February 4](#). As well, there was a lot of media hype about the convoy being a white supremacist conspiracy. But federal financial investigators found [no evidence of the charge](#).

## Peaceful protest

Prime minister Justin Trudeau went into an undisclosed location [after having caught COVID](#). The PM had received two vaccines and the booster, which might be seen as undercutting the need to mandate them. He ridiculed the whole convoy as *“an insult to truth.”*

Rex Murphy stood nearly alone, rebuking his counterparts in the Canadian media for its “alarmist rhetoric,” WHO WERE describing the arriving protesters as “an occupying force.” [Murphy observed](#):

The protest has been actually not mainly but *overwhelmingly* peaceful, and the political and major press response, wildly alarmist and ominous. Ottawa shops remain with their windows intact, no assaults on police stations or police being bombarded with sticks and stones, no *armed patrols* by the truckers telling people where they could go or not go, and a splendid number of rather endearing incidents that have failed to make it to national or local press.”

Murphy lambasted slanted media coverage depicting the protesters as Nazis, based on a lone swastika carried by a dodgy man shunned by the crowd.

The [New York Times](#) commented:

“The protests...blocked traffic on major streets downtown, disrupted business and tormented residents with incessant honking. But they were by and large nonviolent. Organizers inflated bouncy castles in the street, and people brought small children and dogs. DJs played music from a flatbed truck turned into a stage. At one point people soaked in a hot tub erected in front of the Parliament building.”

This was hardly a recipe for insurrection.

Barring Australia and China, during the pandemic Canada had some of the harshest restrictions in the world. Many citizens wanted government accountability and a public discussion about the rationale for the mandates. *National Post* reporter Rupa Subramanya, Bill Gates, Alberta NDP leader [Rachel Notley](#) and [Justin Trudeau](#) weren’t alone being triple-vaxxed and still getting Covid. Based on hospitalizations, this was happening to a lot of Canadians who got the booster.



## Allegations of property damage and arson

Trucker Freedom Convoy lawyer, [Keith Wilson Q.C.](#), reports that during the first week after the trucks arrived the trucks were vandalized.

Groups of Antifa were coming through at night in their black hoodies and backpacks and black jeans. And they would come when the truckers were sleeping and knife their tires and cut their air lines and spray paint the trucks. They would vandalize the trucks. So, each block had a block captain for that area of trucks. And they had a watch system so that when an Antifa person would show up, the trucker would grab them, call 9-1-1 and the police would come, arrest that guy and take him away. That would happen three instances in the night. Guess what the police chief would do the next day? He'd say 'we had three arrests for property damage in the downtown core last night' The arrests were Antifa, the 9-1-1 calls were from truckers."

But Ottawa police left it to the media to infer the vandals, those responsible for "property damage," were convoy protesters. But politicians and the press, hunting for any indication of violence on the part of the protests continued apace.

On the morning of February 6, Matias Munoz alleged two arsonists came to an apartment building at Metcalfe and Lisgar at 5 AM. with fire starter bricks into the lobby. He tweeted: *"One of them taped the door handles so no one could get in or out"* (including the arsonists).

According to the story, a tenant saw the arsonists lighting a fire in the lobby, asked if they were truckers. And then decided to go to bed without calling 911. Which is what you'd do if you knew you were in a building that was on fire.

Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson held an emergency meeting of city council condemning the "[malicious intent](#)" of the convoy protesters. *"Yesterday we learned of a horrific story that clearly demonstrates the malicious intent of the protesters occupying our city."*

But the [Ottawa Deputy Chief](#) told the press on February 8, "We don't have any direct linkage between the occupation — the demonstrators — and that act." On March 21, [Ottawa police](#) confirmed the person charged with the February 6th arson had nothing to do with the convoy protest.

On April 8th, Rex Murphy [reported](#):

This week, we found out that the attempt to burn down an apartment building in Ottawa, which was so widely and wildly heralded during the Freedom Convoy protest, had nothing to do with the truckers. Please let this sink in.

At the time, such was the volume of assumption, innuendo and outright allegation that everyone from Nanaimo, B.C., to Nain, N.L., formed the impression that this despicable action, an outrage by any standard, was the work of the truckers. Not true. False. Nothing to do at all with the protesters. It was allegedly the work of two Ottawa miscreants who were working alone."

## Crowdfunding

As the convoy protest continued, over 130,000 individuals contributed to crowdfunding on

GoFundMe. When this was shut down on February 4, donors gave to GiveSendGo. Funds raised for the truckers soon reached \$12.7 million, plus several million more in cryptocurrencies. The average donation was \$75.



NDP leader [Jagmeet Singh's brother-in-law](#) donated \$13,000 dollars to the Convoy. When the media found out, Jodver Singh Dhaliwal said he “didn’t know what the Convoy was all about.” It would seem prudent for anyone giving a \$13,000 donation to look into what the donation was in support of. But, never mind.

The CBC alleged on February 10 that donors to the crowdfunding efforts were largely Trump supporters and foreign racists meddling in Canadian domestic affairs. But, GoFundMe testified to the House of Commons Safety Committee on March 3 “Our records show that [88% of donated funds originated in Canada.](#)” This was about 113,000 Canadians. CBC eventually retracted their story that donors were mostly foreign.

## Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Former Newfoundland premier Brian Peckford was among those addressing the protesters. On February 12, [Peckford](#) told the Freedom Convoy he worked with the prime minister’s father and other Canadian premiers to enshrine the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#).

The April 1982 charter that Peckford and his counterparts signed gave Canadian citizens these inalienable rights:

- 2. Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: (including) c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and d) freedom of association.
- 6. (1) Every citizen of Canada has the right to enter, remain in and leave Canada.
- Every citizen of Canada and every person who has the status of a permanent resident of Canada has the right
  - a) to move to and take up residence in any province; and
  - b) to pursue the gaining of a livelihood in any province.
- 7. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right

not to be deprived...

Truckers who drove by themselves to take essential supplies to keep the economy running had for two years not been spreading Covid. Yet, now were being deprived of their charter rights: of mobility, to remain in and leave Canada, and to pursue a livelihood. Peckford slammed the vaccine mandates as a violation of the Charter.

## Legal protest

Justin Trudeau, Chrystia Freeland and other Liberal cabinet ministers, repeatedly referred to the convoy protest as “illegal.” But on February 7 [Ontario Chief Justice McLean](#) ruled the protest was *legal*.

He wrote:

the defendants and other persons remain at liberty to engage in a peaceful, lawful and safe protest.”

Ottawa city councillor Dianne Deans said the protesters were [terrorists](#). This is a nationwide insurrection.

Yet, Barry MacKillop, deputy-director of FINTRAC, the federal organization that goes after terrorism funds and criminal money-laundering, told the Commons finance committee that there was [not a shred of illegal activity associated with the trucker convoy](#). The protests had [nothing to do with domestic terrorism or money-laundering](#).

## Calls for dialogue

Several MPs with the Liberal Party disagreed publicly with the prime minister, advising the need for Trudeau to listen to citizens “legitimate concerns.” “It is time to stop dividing people, to stop pitting one part of the population against another,” said [MP Joel Lightbound](#) on February 8. [Liberal MPs](#) Nathaniel Erskine-Smith and Yves Robillard agreed with Lightbound.

While the protest continued, scientists and physicians present with the convoy wanted to have a discussion with politicians and Dr. Theresa Tam and Dr. Howard Njoo (Public Health Agency of Canada), and Dr. Shelley Deeks (chair of the National Advisory Committee on Immunization). For two years there was no public discussion, debate, or scrutiny REGARDING the veracity of the claims of politicians and public health officials about the Covid vaccines, mask mandates, lockdowns or social distancing. There was no media exposure to any dissenting or alternate opinion, no matter the credentials of those asking for accountability.

After two years of “we’ve got the science, so shut up,” protesters said back up your claims. But [Tam, Njoo and Deeks](#), along with the prime minister and his cabinet, avoided all opportunities to conduct public or private discussions.

## Racists, misogynists

The media made much ado about a single protester sporting a Nazi swastika, and another masked man with a confederate flag. Justin Trudeau emerged from HIS COVID WITHDRAWAL from time to time to denounce the “racist, misogynist” protesters.

But on the ground others experienced things differently. [Rupa Subramanya](#), reporting for the *National Post* and the *Wall Street Journal* is an Indo-Canadian. Throughout the protest, she was their daily visiting and interviewing people.

[Subramanya](#) said in an interview:

I wanted to go there and make up my own mind. The reality of these protesters, the truckers, starting from Day 1, is very different from the received narrative that was already in place - propaganda - because that is really what it amounted to. These people were a cross-section of Canadians. They were mostly working-class.

I encountered people of colour. I saw new immigrants. I saw children. I saw women. I saw the old, the young. Franco-Canadians, Anglo-Canadians. A lot of camaraderie. I spent three weeks at the protest every day, several times a day. I didn't encounter a single racist, white supremacist, or even a misogynist.

These were some of the warmest, friendliest, people I've ever met in my life, two decades here, in Canada. It was quite unusual that my perspective as a person of colour who went into the protests was so different from the mainstream coverage. There was this total disconnect between what was being said and what I personally experienced." Or as prime minister Justin Trudeau might have suggested, Rupa Subramanya "experienced things differently."

When Asian-Canadian Doctor Daniel Nagase spoke from the stage he received nothing but applause. The same was the case for longtime Global TV news writer Indo-Canadian journalist [Anita Krishna](#). [Dr. Julie Ponesse](#) was another woman providing leadership, and speaking to a receptive crowd. Nonetheless, a completely different political and media depiction of the protesters saturated the news from Day 1. The fascist insurrection needed to be stopped to prevent a coup.

### Who were these protesters?

Though the media framed the protest as "anti-vax," Rupa Subramanya found most were vaccinated in the Ottawa crowd. Numbers had been infected with Covid and recovered. They wanted to know why natural immunity wasn't accepted, for the first time in history, as part of a person's medical history? The protesters also had fundamental questions about the erosion of Canadian democracy and infringement of charter rights.



Rupa Subramanya interviewed *“Peter the trucker, who I spoke to very close to where I live (in downtown Ottawa). He pointed to my building and he said, you know, ‘I put the concrete stairs in that building.’”*

The truckers were the people who delivered the food, delivered the hospital supplies, the oil and gas, construction materials for building, road and bridge upgrades and repairs, and botox to keep news anchors looking ten years younger on their daily newscasts. They’d delivered books from Amazon, and more for two years.

A downtown Ottawa data scientist named David lived on Kent Street, and saw the protesters *“camped out below my bedroom window.”* Interested to meet his new neighbors, David introduced himself. He walked to many of the protesters, including an indigenous man from Manitoulin Island who showed David his medicine wheel.

[On his blog](#), David concluded that night he’d *“met someone from every province except PEI. They all have a deep love for this country. They believe in it. They believe in Canadians. These are the people that Canada relies on to build its infrastructure, deliver its goods, and fill the ranks of its military in times of war.”*

*“The overwhelming concern they have is that the vaccine mandates are creating an untouchable class of Canadians.... They see their government willing to push a class of people outside the boundaries of society, deny them a livelihood, and deny them full membership in the most welcoming country in the world; And they said enough. Last night I learned my new neighbours are not a monstrous faceless occupying mob. They are our moral conscience reminding us.... We are not a country that makes an untouchable class out of our citizens.”*

During the first week of the protest, news broke on February 2 raising concerns of many in the convoy that the lockdowns were nothing more than a government confidence game. That day the front page of the *National Post* ran with this headline: [“Lockdowns only](#)

[reduced COVID deaths by 0.2 per cent, John Hopkins study finds.](#)"

## Convoy and City of Ottawa letters of agreement

After February 8, Keith Wilson details how "there was a secret meeting between lawyers for the Convoy and City of Ottawa. The city wanted the trucks removed from the 5-way intersection near the Chateau Laurier. And the Convoy agreed to move the trucks.

Letters of agreement were signed and publicly released by the head of the Convoy, Tamara Lich, and Mayor Jim Watson. (This was) outlining a plan to move the trucks from downtown Ottawa side streets to a farm, and have people who wanted to protest be shuttled as pedestrians back to Parliament Hill. While Convoy leaders were moving trucks out of Ottawa Prime Minister Trudeau announced he was invoking the Emergency Act.

In an interview with Viva Frei, Wilson explained:

This was all in place by Friday, February 11 – Saturday, February 12. So, on Monday, February 14, the truckers started to move their trucks out of Ottawa. But not all the police were aware of this and so the police would stop them from moving the trucks out of the downtown core. However, after Convoy leaders got in touch with a Captain of the Ottawa police, they were able to get 40 trucks moved out of the downtown core to a farm. In Mayor Watson's letter he acknowledged that moving the number of trucks the city wanted moved out of designated areas was a big operation that would take a number of days to accomplish. However, as the Convoy leaders were getting more trucks moved out of the downtown to de-escalate things, as the Mayor had requested, more Ottawa police kept stopping truckers from moving their trucks out of downtown Ottawa."

Ottawa Police charged Tamara Lich with mischief for counseling truckers. Keith Wilson says:

"yes, she counseled truckers. She told truckers to move their trucks and open up emergency lanes in order to comply with the request of the City of Ottawa, and the Ottawa Police. They didn't counsel any truckers to block a road. The word the Convoy leaders got from the Ottawa Police on Friday, February 11, to explain why they were stopping truckers from moving their trucks out of Ottawa, and off the side streets over to Wellington Street, was that they got their instructions to stop the trucks from moving from the Federal Government."

Meanwhile, interim Ottawa Police chief [Steve Bell told reporters](#) "*The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa is funded by the Ontario government and is empowered to seize children from families if necessary.*" [One trucker](#) whose two teenagers were with him in his truck asked CBC reporter Joseph Tunney who was inferring his children were in danger said, "*Are my children in danger for being in Ottawa? Is that what you're saying to me? I have two teenagers here that are in my car. Are they in danger? Yes or no?*"

## Emergency Act

On the afternoon of Monday, February 14th, – Valentine's Day – [Justin Trudeau announced the invocation of the Emergency Act. The Emergency Act IS the successor to the War Measures Act.](#)

The War Measures Act ceased to be in force the moment the Emergency Act was passed in

parliament to replace it in [July 1988](#). It was drafted by Perrin Beatty, Minister of Defense.

By the time Trudeau made his announcement, protests at the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor had been cleared. While protests in Coutts (AB), Emerson (MB) and in the Pacific Highway Crossing (BC) were already in the process of being cleared by police using the legal powers they already had.

Yet, Justin Trudeau explained *“It was only after we got advice from law enforcement that we invoked the Emergencies Act.”* Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino said, *“We are listening to law enforcement. According to law enforcement we need the Emergencies Act.”*

But none of this was true. On May 11, [RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lecki](#) told a joint Commons-Senate Committee, *“No, there was never a question of requesting the Emergencies Act. We successfully used a measured approach and existing legislation to resolve (the) blockades.”* [Neither did the Ottawa Police or the Canadian Border Services Agency](#).

*The National Post* observed that:

The Ottawa Mayor, if requested by the chief of police, could invoke (municipal) Section 4 to prohibit public assemblies, or perhaps more simply just impose an overnight curfew in the downtown area, so police could fine and even detain anyone not in their residence. Emergency management, whether for public welfare or public order, starts at the lowest level of government before it — if necessary — escalates upwards. The prime minister shouldn't be declaring a national emergency if the only result will be to prohibit assemblies or impose curfews. Having declared a municipal emergency the mayor of Ottawa can do so, and the question is, why hasn't he?"

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.”*

At a March 24 House of Commons Standing [Committee on Public Safety](#), Conservative MP Dane Lloyd pressed Ottawa Police Service (OPS) interim chief Steve Bell to confirm *“Were loaded firearms (at the Freedom Convoy) found? Yes or no?”* Bell replied, *“In relation to—no, not relating to any charges to this point...at no point did we lay any firearms-related charges. ”*

The Trucker Freedom Convoy protest of 2022 paled in comparison to the FLQ Crisis in October 1970. In 2022 there was no organized terrorist group. Acts of terrorism had not occurred. There were no bombs, no explosions. No one had been kidnapped and held for ransom. The convoy organizers urged an end to vaccine mandates and pandemic restrictions. Unlike 1970, no buildings were destroyed. No one had been killed. Contained in the February 14 invocation was the clear wording of the Emergency Proclamation confirming Canadians had the right to go to downtown Ottawa to protest.

## Freezing bank accounts

As part of the passage of the Emergency Act, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland announced that bank accounts, pension funds, mortgages, insurance, and other financial assets by protesters – and those who donated to their cause – [would be frozen](#). Martha Durdin, CEO of

the Canadian Credit Unions Association, confirmed in her March testimony before a Parliamentary committee that there was a [run on the banks](#). This took place immediately after Freeland made her announcement that they were going to freeze people's bank accounts for making small donations to the Convoy cause.

Convoy lawyer, [Keith Wilson, told Viva Frei](#), "I have it from a very high source, that a) the banks realized what had happened when they saw how their customers reacted. Having people who don't trust your institution...is bad for your business model. There were some people withdrawing millions of dollars from their accounts.

As well, big financial players in the investment community in the USA weighed in. They were asking if investing in Canada was now like investing in Venezuela or Cuba. *"What just happened to Canada? I thought it had the rule of law. I thought it had checks and balances."*

There was a phone call to the PMO from Wall Street which cautioned, *"We are going to publicly distance ourselves from your actions. We are going to criticize your actions. You have 24 hours to reverse them."* So, Justin Trudeau held a press conference and said *"circumstances have changed and now it's time for Canada..."*

By March 30, 2022, authorities had the bank accounts of 206 people frozen. Despite some reports in the press, Keith Wilson was not aware of any of the crowdfunding donors having their bank accounts frozen. Wilson said, *"if someone in a retirement home in Lethbridge, Alberta, made a \$50 donation because it was important to him, I think he's just going to be fine."*

The implied threat by the Freeland to retroactively seize and freeze accounts of donors prior to invoking the Emergency Act on February 14, Keith Wilson claimed, was legal a non-starter.

The Freedom Convoy was a federally licensed non-profit organization. Media commentator Viva Frei remarked "The Convoy was never designated a *terrorist organization*. And you can't just make it one - a terrorist organization - because you don't like it."

## Cracking down on the convoy

On February 18th, police cracked down on the peaceful protest and disbursed the crowd. The mainstream media in Canada showed viewers tension in the air, but not police beating, or swarming, protesters with batons or ends of rifles. All-Day footage showed protesters experienced things differently [here](#), and [here](#).

The *Financial Times of London* wrote an editorial titled "[Canada's Illiberal Response to Protesters](#)."

FT warned:

"Canadian leader Justin Trudeau's invocation of the Emergencies Act this week in response to the occupation was a step too far... The measures are designed to respond to insurrection, espionage and genuine threats to the Canadian constitution rather than peaceful protest, no matter how irritating and inconvenient. The right to such protest is fundamental to a free society."



A [Wall Street Journal](#) headline asked “*Will Canadian Democracy Survive Justin Trudeau?: His father invoked emergency powers in 1970—but that was against terrorists, not peaceful protesters.*”

WSJ wondered:

will Canada return to its peaceful, democratic roots? Or will this episode transform into something more sinister and undemocratic. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has certainly acted like a tinpot dictator. Mr. Trudeau refused to meet with Freedom Convoy organizers or protesters in Ottawa...the PM was nowhere to be seen. Instead of finding ways to diffuse this tense situation, Mr. Trudeau’s approach was to throw more gasoline on the fire. The absentee Prime Minister would infrequently grace the nation with his presence to mock and smear his opponents.”

In another editorial, the paper concluded “*Government’s job is to maintain public order while respecting civil liberties. Canada has failed on both scores.*”

*The Economist* editorialized that “*a wise government would listen to them (Freedom Convoy protesters) and respond politely, taking their complaints seriously and patiently explaining why COVID restrictions, though onerous, are necessary for the time being.*” But if you followed the mainstream news in Canada, seldom was heard a discouraging word.

Canada’s mainstream media gave Trudeau’s decision to invoke the Emergency Act two thumbs up. Perhaps it helped that 1,500 Canadian media outlets received a total of [\\$61 million](#) from the Trudeau Liberals before the fall 2021 election.

## Emergency Act lifted

The Emergency Act was enforced by the Federal cabinet bringing the act into force on February 14. But both Parliament and the Senate had to pass the act. As senators debated the measure it looked like it was going to be defeated. 45 of 91 Senators debating the Emergency Act [indicated they would vote no](#). More had yet to speak.

As well, all the provinces had to pass the act within 30 days. Seven premiers had cautioned Trudeau against invoking the Emergency Act.

On February 23, once 45 senators indicated they would vote no, only one was more needed to signal a no vote and embarrass the Liberals. While the senators were still speaking, a press conference was hurriedly called. Prime minister Trudeau announced the Emergency Act was lifted, and it was now a time for “healing.”

[Brian Lilley](#) described the 180-degree turn-of-events in the *Toronto Sun*: “Less than 24 hours after defending the need to keep all the emergency powers he had granted his own government, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau dropped every single last one. Not just some of them. Not just the ban on taking minors into the area around Parliament Hill. He dropped all of them at 4 p.m. on Wednesday.

It is mind-boggling...

The worst part of this whole ordeal though is the precedent Trudeau and his government have set with the politicization of the Emergencies Act. Declaring a national emergency over concerns about tow trucks and some ineffective local policing is a pretty low bar.”

The convoy protest unfolded while most lockdown, or semi-lockdown, measures remained in force across Canada. Citizens made meaning of what was happening in their own bubbles, watching their [trusted news](#) sources to frame the story. The Liberals and the media succeeded in stampeding a majority of Canadians into a state of agitation and disgust toward the protesters. At most the protest could be construed as civil disobedience.

But an Ontario judge had ruled the protest was legal. It was never an insurrection, or an occupation. The long history of civil unrest has [numbers of other incidents](#), like the 78-day Mohawk blockade or the Mercier Bridge in 1990.

Even after September 11, when 26 Canadians died in the terrorist attacks in the USA, amidst great chaos and confusion, there was no invocation of the Emergency Act.

## Mandatory inquiry

In the United States, when the 9/11 Commission was impaneled, President George W. Bush declared the purpose of the inquiry was *“to examine and report on the facts and causes relating to the September 11th terrorist attacks”* and *“make a full and complete accounting of the circumstances surrounding the attacks.”*

However, it turned out the Bush White House didn’t actually want this at all.

Before the 9/11 Commission began its investigation, Executive Director [Philip Zelikow](#) drew up an outline of the final *Report*. Zelikow was the author of the paper justifying preemptive war in Iraq and neglecting Clinton White House briefings about al Qaeda in the transition to the Bush administration. Zelikow’s outline for chapter headings and sub-headings for the 9/11 Commission Report prescribed what narrative the inquiry would conclude.

During the course of the investigation, Zelikow decided who would speak before the commission, and whose testimony would be included or omitted from the *Report*. 9/11 victims’ families asked for Zelikow’s resignation.

The Trudeau government is mimicking the 9/11 Commission, viewed by many September 11th families as a cover-up. As required by law, an inquiry will report back to Parliament on February 20, 2023.

Trudeau has [mandated](#) Ontario appeals court judge Justice Paul Rouleau to focus on the actions of the Freedom Convoy protesters, rather than on holding the government accountable. [Rouleau donated over half a million dollars](#) to the federal Liberal Party between 1993 and 1997 alone. Rouleau’s instructions are:

(i) ...to examine and report on the circumstances that led to the declaration of a public order emergency being issued by the federal government and the measures taken by the Governor in Council by means of the *Emergency Measures Regulations* and the *Emergency Economic Measures Order* for dealing with the public order emergency that was in effect from February 14 to 23, 2022;

(ii) to examine issues, to the extent relevant to the circumstances of the declaration and measures taken, with respect to

(A) the evolution and goals of the convoy and blockades, their leadership, organization and

participants,

(B) the impact of domestic and foreign funding, including crowdsourcing platforms,

(C) the impact, role and sources of misinformation and disinformation, including the use of social media,

(D) the impact of the blockades, including their economic impact, and

(E) the efforts of police and other responders prior to and after the declaration...

The inquiry into the freedom convoy protest omits investigating the Trudeau government for its response to the protest. There is no requirement to scrutinize the choice not to meet with convoy leaders. No mandate to scrutinize the prime minister's rhetoric about the working-class protest.

No scrutiny about the merits of suddenly requiring vaccination for truckers crossing the U.S.-Canada border. No scrutiny into how the prime minister's own rhetoric may have been a catalyst for the protest itself. There is no instruction to Justice Rouleau to access the necessity to invoke the Emergency Act.

## What's left of the Canadian Left

In the midst of the freedom convoy protest, where was the Canadian Left? From the 1900s, the coming together of workers in a powerful way in order to demand greater rights, including the right to work, has been seen as a positive thing by the Left. Historically, whether it was the Dominion Labor Party, United Farmers of Alberta, Progressive, CCF, or the NDP, all have supported working-class strikes and protests of almost any kind.

But the face of the Left in 2022 is NDP leader Jagmeet Singh, egging on Trudeau to pass the Emergency Act.

It fell to former NDP MP [Svend Robinson](#), who served as NDP's Justice Critic when the Emergency Act was passed to replace the War Measures Act, to comment two days after Justin Trudeau invoked the Emergency Act,

I was in the House during 1988 debate on the Act, when we were promised that "emergency powers can only be used when the situation is so drastic that no other law of Canada can deal with the situation." That test has not been met. The NDP can stop this. Will they?"

Yet this view wasn't echoed by a single sitting member of the NDP parliamentary caucus in 2022.

In October 1970, NDP leader [Tommy Douglas](#), while agreeing that the FLQ kidnapping was serious, told parliament the federal government had the option:

to deal with it (FLQ Crisis) under the powers which it now has under the laws of Canada...There are very considerable powers there. I think the government deserves some criticism because some of those sections have not been used."

The same could be said for the considerable powers the federal government had at its

disposal, in the *Criminal Code*, in February 2022. Yet, Jagmeet Singh endorsed invoking the Emergency Act before it was debated, before it was declared. Singh was part of the hysteria, warning Canadians about sedition, and a coup. Meanwhile protesters played hockey, gave food to the homeless, danced to the Macarena, and honked horns, and sang O Canada.

The Freedom Convoy protest reveals a growing class divide in Canada. This is accompanied by a huge disconnect between the Left and the working-class. When a real insurrection comes along, I'll rush to my laptop and pen a call for patriots across our nation to "*stand on guard for thee.*"

Meanwhile, I'm waiting for our political establishment to reacquaint themselves with the meaning of words like inclusion, listening, tolerance, autonomy, mobility, accountability, and liberty. And why they still matter.

What is the future of civil disobedience, of protest, of liberty in Canada?

The Freedom Convoy has been framed as sedition, insurrection, a cause for the Emergency Act. What excuse will future governments cook up?

The convoy protests of 2022 has revealed, especially for the working class, not so much the fact of liberal democracy but the myth of liberal democracy. The mainstream narrative about the protest is a case study of how, through the clever and careful use of language, politicians and the media can manipulate the emotions of citizens, influencing their perceptions and actions.

The truckers for two years were lauded as heroes, but media spin and political ridicule turned them into enemies, "mercenaries." The story we've been told about the truckers must not stand. In May 2022, 5 to 6 million Canadians are unvaccinated. Accepting the media spin about the trucker convoy as *history* ensures another group of people will be shown the door as Canada morphs into a society, based on who is "in" and who is "out."

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*Ray McGinnis is the author of "Unanswered Questions: What the September Eleventh Families Asked and the 9/11 Commission Ignored".*

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