

Meet the Truckers: The Men and Women of the Freedom Convoy 2022

'My fourth child was born this past Saturday; I've decided I need to do this for my family': National Post talks to the truckers in the convoy

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The National Post has provided a different perspective to that of most of the mainstream media which have depicted the non-vaccinated as “extremists”.

*According to **Justin Trudeau**, unvaccinated truck drivers “may pose a risk of transmitting COVID-19 to the general public”. What nonsense.*

The National Post spoke to truck drivers and supporters as they were driving to Ottawa for this weekend’s “Freedom Convoy 2022” to protest vaccine mandates. Here is what they told us about their jobs, their frustrations with government measures during the pandemic, and the rule that could kill their livelihoods.

Slawek Pietraszek

Image on the right: Slawek Pietraszek is a 43-year-old trucker on his way to Ottawa in the convoy.
Credit: Rachel Parent/National Post



Slawek Pietraszek was born in Poland. After moving here in 1991, he spent the rest of his childhood in Brampton, Ont., where he still resides with his wife and four children. The 43-year-old trucker travelled approximately 30 kilometres to participate in a convoy launch in Vaughan, Ont., that will ultimately lead him to Ottawa, where he plans to stay as long as he needs to until a resolution can be reached. Pietraszek, who did not want to disclose his vaccination status, says he is motivated by his family and the birth of his fourth child this week. He hopes to leave a better future to them and that governments will agree to repeal all vaccine mandates. “My fourth child was born this past Saturday; I’ve decided I need to do this for my family,” he said. — *Rachel Parent, National Post*

Corey Bayne

Image below: Corey Bayne a truck driver at the Vaughan convoy takeoff to show his support. Credit: Rachel Parent/National Post



Growing up in Newfoundland, much of Corey Bayne’s family background and upbringing was surrounded by trucking. At age 18, he moved to Ontario, where he got his trucking licence and became a driver by age 19. The 44-year-old now lives in Georgetown, Ont., where he travelled from to attend the Vaughan convoy launch. While he can’t make it to Ottawa because he is working, he took a day off to show support and solidarity with the truckers that will be making the trip. “It’s exciting that everyone is getting together as one group,” he said. Bayne got vaccinated to keep his job, but says he understands and supports the opposition to the mandates. He hopes all vaccine mandates will be repealed. — *Rachel Parent, National Post*

Dave Ridell

Image on the right: Dave Ridell and his wife before leaving for Ottawa with the convoy. Credit: Rachel Parent/National Post



As a third-generation farmer in Alliston, Ont., Dave Ridell has been transporting his grains through trucking for the last 30 to 40 years. He travelled approximately 60 kms to participate in the convoy launch in Vaughan, and will be going all the way to Ottawa. The 59-year-old is concerned that government overreach has gotten out of hand, and that politicians need to be held more accountable for what they are doing and the impact vaccine mandates are having on people. He also said that truckers, being frontline workers, were once considered heroes along with health-care workers and other industries, but the mandate on truckers pushes aside many who worked through the harder moments. Ridell, who didn't want to disclose his vaccination status, hopes that the convoy to Ottawa will lead to all vaccine mandates being lifted. "The amount of people who are unemployed because it's their personal choice whether they want to be vaccinated or not, it's not fair, just totally unfair," he said. — *Rachel Parent, National Post*

James Smockum

Image below: James Smockum (right) a truck driver for the film industry at the convoy takeoff event in Vaughan. Credit: Rachel Parent/National Post



Growing up on a farm, James Smockum drove trucks from a young age, and as soon as he turned 19, he got his trucking licence. He knew he wanted to become a truck driver after watching *Smoky and the Bandit*. "I watched it 1,000 times growing up, pretty well from the first time I watched that, I figured that's what I want to do when I got older," he said. He was a trucker on the road for most of his life and now primarily does transport for the film industry. The 42-year-old said that while his job hasn't been impacted yet, there are sets that are starting to mandate vaccination and he has fewer options. He's planning to go up to Ottawa on the weekend to be a part of the events there. "My hope for this is that people see that there's this many people against what's going on," he said. "Most people see the mainstream narrative that everyone is vaccinated and anyone who's not vaccinated is a horrible person, which is not the truth at all." — *Rachel Parent, National Post*

Claudia Winterhalter

Image on the right: Claudia Winterhalter, a truck driver on her way to Ottawa as part of the convoy. Credit: Rachel Parent/National Post



Claudia Winterhalter lived in West Germany when the country was divided, and says she saw the impact of totalitarianism on East Germany. Growing up, she watched her dad work as a bus driver and wanted to follow in his footsteps. To qualify for driving a bus, you first have to drive a truck in Germany, she said, so she began her career in trucking in 1996. After she married a Canadian truck driver, she continued her career in Canada. The 54-year-old from Orangeville, Ont., has not been vaccinated, but is not against the vaccine. Most of her family and children have gotten it. She believes it is a personal choice. She says much of what is happening reminds her of what she grew up witnessing, with food shortages, political unrest and government overreach. She said even if the convoy doesn't achieve its goal to reverse all mandates, she hopes they can reinforce that they are all taxpayers and deserve the same freedoms. "I find it's sad that people are losing their jobs because they have to get vaccinated," she said. "This is not what Canada is all about, it's your choice." — *Rachel Parent, National Post*

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