

‘Tears of Thousands of Canadians on My Shoulder’: Tamara Lich Gives Emotional Testimony at Emergencies Act Inquiry

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*Freedom Convoy organizer **Tamara Lich**, a mother and grandmother from Medicine Hat, explained why she got involved in the protest movement during her Nov. 3 testimony at the public inquiry into the use of the Emergencies Act to end [convoy](#) protests earlier this year.*

“I was growing increasingly alarmed with the mandates and the harm that I was seeing the mandates inflict,” said Lich, who got emotional several times during her testimony. “I heard from families that were living in their vehicles because they’d lost their jobs. I heard from people that had lost their jobs and lost everything. I have the tears of thousands of Canadians on my shoulder, who everyday told me that we were bringing them hope.”

Lich said she saw families torn apart due to COVID-19 policies.

“The suicides in my hometown were so numerous that they stopped reporting them,” she said. “Elderly people were dying by themselves in long-term care facilities and saying goodbye over iPads.”

Lich explained how the policies impacted herself and her family members as well. She said both herself and her husband lost their jobs due to COVID-19 policies, and her parents, who run a trucking business, could no longer cross the border.

Lich added that vaccine passports restricted many Canadians who decided against getting COVID-19 shots from entering any non-essential business, which meant she “didn’t go out.”



A protester holds a sign on Wellington St. during the Freedom Convoy protest in Ottawa on Feb. 12, 2022. (Noé Chartier/The Epoch Times)

She said her 94-year-old grandmother was “locked” in her apartment by herself for two years, and by the time lockdowns were lifted her grandmother “wasn’t healthy enough” to do things. She also said that her father, who lives in a small town in Saskatchewan, used to go to a local restaurant for coffee every day to see his friends, but “was asked to leave,” presumably referring to vaccine mandates that barred unvaccinated Canadians from non-essential business.

Lich said she didn’t want her children and grandchildren to live in a world like this.

“I listened to my prime minister call me a racist, and say that [people like me] shouldn’t be tolerated. I found his rhetoric to be incredibly divisive,” she said. “I’m a believer, that if you’re a leader of a country, you have to lead all of your people, even if you don’t agree with them.”

Freedom Convoy

The Freedom Convoy protest started as a demonstration against COVID-19 vaccine mandates for truckers travelling across the Canada-U.S. border. But it grew to a larger movement as people against COVID-19 mandates and restrictions joined the cause.

Lich said in her testimony that as the convoy travelled across Canada, many people offered them support.

“They said don’t stop until we are free. Don’t stop until the mandates are lifted,” she said.

When their GoFundMe campaign raised the first \$1 million, Lich said she was “exhilarated.” She said she never expected that level of support, but with it, came responsibility that caused her overwhelming anxiety.

She told the commission—to some chuckles from the room—that her previous fundraising experience consisted of “selling chocolate-covered almonds.”

The convoy’s fundraising campaign on GoFundMe gathered over \$10 million before it was shut down by the platform. The group raised the same amount of funds on GiveSendGo, but the funds were frozen by a court order.



Protesters stand on the back of a truck during the Freedom Convoy demonstrations against COVID-19 vaccine mandates and other restrictions on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on Jan. 29, 2022. (Adrian Wyld/The Canadian Press)

Lich, who was formerly part of the Maverick Party which calls for Western autonomy, says she didn’t want to be part of the movement anymore after bonding with people from different parts of Canada during the protest in Ottawa.

She said one day while in Ottawa, as she was talking with some protest organizers from Quebec through Google Translate, she realized “that they’re the same as us.”

“This division has all been a lie,” she said. “I knew that I didn’t want to see Canada divided at that point.”

Arrest

The Public Order Emergency Commission has been set up as required by law to evaluate if the use of the Emergencies Act to clear convoy protests was justified.

The act was invoked by the federal government on Feb. 14, and revoked on Feb. 23 after the protest in Ottawa was cleared.

Lich was [arrested](#) in Ottawa on Feb. 17 on charges of mischief, and was initially denied bail. She was kept in jail until March 7, when an Ontario Superior Court overturned the initial decision to deny her bail and set her free on bail conditions.

She was arrested again on June 27 for an alleged breach of bail conditions, related to a brief exchange she had with fellow convoy organizer Tom Marazzo at an award ceremony in Toronto on June 16. She was released again on bail on July 26, with the Ontario Superior Court Judge Andrew Goodman saying that the previous decision by another court to detain her was “clearly inappropriate.”



Freedom Convoy organizer Tamara Lich with her lawyer Lawrence Greenspon as she leaves court after being released on bail, in Ottawa on July 26, 2022. (Adrian Wyld/The Canadian Press)

Lich’s court hearing for her mischief charges is scheduled for September 2023. Her bail conditions include not talking with other convoy organizers, not using social media, and not organizing further protests.

Lich took a few minutes to contain her emotions before answering the commission about how her arrest and bail conditions have impacted her life.

“I’ve lost my job. I’ve lost my freedom of speech. I’ve lost my freedom to communicate with my friends, which was quite traumatizing because we just experienced something huge,” she said.

“I have to be very careful about every move that I make. As you know, I was arrested on an alleged breach charge for attending a dinner in Toronto. I have a daughter, and I don’t want her to be seen with me, because I’m worried.”

Lich’s testimony at the inquiry will continue on Nov. 4.

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Marnie Cathcart is a reporter based in Edmonton.

Featured image: Tamara Lich appears as a witness at the Public Order Emergency Commission in Ottawa on Nov. 3, 2022. (Sean Kilpatrick/The Canadian Press)

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