

Canada's ruling elite pressures Trudeau to meet with far-right Ottawa occupiers

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With the far-right occupation of downtown Ottawa continuing and more protesters set to arrive today ahead of another weekend of menacing and violent mobilizations, sections of Canada's ruling elite are intensifying pressure on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to meet with the fascistic leaders of the Freedom Convoy.

The opposition Conservative Party and right-wing media outlets have now been joined by the Ottawa Police Service in demanding Trudeau and his Liberal government find a "political solution" to the standoff. That is, make concessions to the protesters and their murderous demand that all COVID-19 public health measures be immediately lifted, even though daily deaths from the virus are now as great or greater than at any previous point in the pandemic.

The official opposition Conservatives summarily ditched their leader, Erin O'Toole, Wednesday morning. O'Toole has long been under fire for allegedly "moderating" the Conservatives hard-right policies, but the coup de grace as far as Tory MPs were concerned was his failure to give the Convoy full-throated support.

As party interim leader the Conservative MPs have chosen Candice Bergen, who in internal party emails last Monday advocated that the Conservatives back the Convoy's continued occupation of Ottawa and make this the "PM (prime minister)'s problem." "I don't think we should be asking them to go home," reads an email Bergen sent to O'Toole's closest caucus allies and that has now been leaked to the *Globe and Mail*. "I understand the mood may shift soon," continued Bergen. "So we need to turn this into the PM's problem. What will he take the first step to working toward ending this?"

Bergen's email confirms the *World Socialist Web Site's* warnings that in the event of a clash between the far-right Convoy thugs and security forces, the Conservatives and most rapacious sections of the ruling class will seek to pin the blame on Trudeau and his government with the aim of pushing politics far to the right and, if possible, engineering its ouster.

In her very first public action as Conservative leader Wednesday afternoon, Bergen pressed Trudeau to meet Convoy leaders. Opening Question Period in the House of Commons she declared, "I know the Prime Minister doesn't agree with the truckers and their supporters, but he does have some responsibility as a Prime Minister, to bring some resolution. Can the Prime Minister tell this House and tell all Canadians, if he has any plans to help these folks feel like they've been heard?"

The forces Bergen seeks to portray as ordinary working people by referring to them familiarly as "these folks"—or "patriotic,

peace-loving Canadians" as she described them earlier this week—are in fact hardened far-right and outright fascist activists. Police officials in Ottawa have confirmed that the several hundred occupiers who remain in the area around Parliament Hill are armed and "highly volatile." Patrick King, a leading protest organizer, declared recently that only "bullets" could bring about an end to all COVID-19 restrictions. Canada Unity, the group that initiated the convoy and to which King belongs, openly advocates a putsch to remove the democratically elected government.

The police have confirmed that a substantial portion of the more than \$10 million raised by the Convoy in a GoFundMe campaign has come from US sources, and that a significant portion of those now occupying downtown Ottawa and vowing to continue to lay siege to parliament until their demands are met are Americans. Given the shout-out the fascist-minded ex-US president Donald Trump gave for the Convoy at a mass rally last weekend, it is reasonable to assume that many of the Americans now encamped in Ottawa are veterans of Trump's failed fascist coup of January 6, 2021.

The Ottawa Police also increased pressure on Trudeau, with Police Chief Peter Sloly stating Wednesday, "There may not be a policing solution" to the occupation. He added that it is not his job as chief of police to "negotiate the end of any demonstration, no matter how large or small, no matter what the reason is," and that "other solutions are going to have to be considered, well beyond my ability to dictate or even influence."

Sloly noted that discussions are under way to deploy military forces on the street, and that additional resources from the RCMP and unspecified "intelligence" agencies have been called up. Sloly remarked that "military aid to civil power" is "extremely rare." "That option in particular would come with massive risks," he added. "Mixing them into a population in the downtown core, in a highly volatile demonstration without any much more than days in advance warning may mitigate some risks and may create and escalate a whole bunch of other risks."

A statement from the Ministry of National Defence denied that plans exist to deploy the armed forces. Trudeau also ruled it out Thursday, commenting, "One has to be very, very cautious before deploying military in situations engaging Canadians." However, Trudeau did acknowledge for the first time publicly that the occupation is aimed at overthrowing his government. "Having a group of people who disagree with the outcome of an election who want to go a different way and bring in an alternative government

is,” he declared, “a non-starter in a responsible democracy.”

The hard-right *National Post* and *Toronto Sun*, which have played a major role in the ruling class’ incitement and mobilization of a far-right extra-parliamentary movement from the dregs of the Freedom Convoy, are intensifying their fire against Trudeau and “liberal elites” in Ottawa. Rex Murphy denounced the prime minister in the *Post* for not meeting with the “decent folks” who travelled to the nation’s capital. Trudeau behaved like a “woke Pope by assuming the right to make the judgement on which views of Canadians were ‘unacceptable.’” An editorial published by the *Sun* Monday accused Trudeau of having “further divided the nation” by not responding favourably to the “peaceful event that drew people from all walks of life” last Saturday.

While the immediate goal of the Conservatives, right-wing media outlets and their big business backers is the abolition of all COVID-19 restrictions, they are pushing more fundamentally to shift all official politics sharply to the right. This shift has already begun. O’Toole’s removal has set the stage for the consolidation of far-right control over the Conservatives.

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Anita Anand, who has been touring Ukraine and Latvia this week, has revealed that the Liberal government is considering deploying additional Canadian troops to Eastern Europe as part of the US-led buildup to war with Russia and, on her return, will review a renewed request from Kiev for arms. Virtually the entire corporate media has joined with the Conservatives in chastising the Trudeau government for “limiting” its support to Ukraine’s ultra-nationalist, pro-western regime to an enlarged and extended military training mission, increased intelligence collaboration, and more financial aid and non-lethal military supplies.

The greatest political danger in the present situation is not the small band of violent far-right and fascist thugs encamped in Ottawa and supported by significant sections of the ruling elite, but the continued political muzzling of the working class by the New Democrats and trade union bureaucracy.

The latest example of this came in a statement Wednesday from the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), Canada’s main trade union confederation. The statement was not only conspicuous by its delayed appearance, six days after the far-right occupation of downtown Ottawa began, but because of its slavish support for the Trudeau government even as it shifts further right.

The CLC statement deliberately covered up the support the convoy has received from powerful sections of the ruling elite, failing to mention the Conservatives and right-wing media outlets by name. It then absurdly sought to present one of the main issues as being the “right to protest,” before concluding with a pledge of loyalty to the government. “We respect everyone’s right to protest and have their say but we ask those protesting to respect everyone else’s rights,” it declared. “Including respecting the outcome of the recent election and letting Canada’s elected MPs get down to work for Canadians.”

It is hard to say what is more pathetic, the appeal to armed far-right activists who are openly agitating for a putsch to “respect the right to protest,” or the demand that “Canada’s elected MPs get down to work.” What this latter call means in practice is that the NDP should be allowed to continue propping up the Liberals,

while the Liberals make concession after concession to the right-wing and far-right forces currently stepping up pressure on Trudeau. This political dynamic, which, absent the independent political intervention of the working class guarantees a further lurch to the right, is justified by the union bureaucrats with bogus rhetoric about standing against “hate speech” and “racism.”

The Liberal/NDP alliance, which has operated uninterruptedly since the federal election of 2019, has already proved devastating for working people. The union and NDP-backed minority Liberal government has overseen hundreds of billions of dollars in cash handouts to the banks and big business, the premature slashing of financial aid to workers as the Omicron variant rages, and a vast expansion of Canadian military spending and operations in Eastern Europe and the Asia-Pacific, against Russia and China.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained in a recent perspective, “Everything now depends on the building of an independent political movement of the working class to oppose the ruling elite’s policy of mass infection and death, the drive to war, and the threat of the fascistic far-right. The defence of democratic rights is inseparable from the struggle to break the stranglehold of the financial oligarchy over all aspects of social and political life, which requires the socialist transformation of society. Workers in Canada must wage this struggle on an international basis by unifying with working people in the United States, Europe and around the world, all of whom confront the twin threats of dictatorial forms of rule and imperialist war.”



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