

# Canadian workers speak out against far-right Freedom Convoy and the dismantling of COVID-19 public health measures

**Our reporters**  
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The far-right Freedom Convoy was built up and incited by powerful sections of Canada's ruling elite and mainstream media as a battering ram against widespread popular backing for public health measures to combat the spread of COVID-19.

Over the past three weeks, the menacing presence of a far-right extra-parliamentary movement in downtown Ottawa and at US-Canada border crossings explicitly committed to political violence has been seized on by provincial governments across the country to scrap capacity limits, vaccine passports, mask mandates and other limited mitigation measures. The dismantling of what little remains of anti-COVID-19 measures was green-lighted by the Trudeau Liberal government.

Members and supporters of the Cross-Canada Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee (CERSC) spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* about the ruling elite's backing for the convoy and adoption of a policy of letting the deadly virus run rampant. The CERSC was established in March 2021 by educators, support staff and other workers to fight for an immediate halt to in-person learning and nonessential production with full compensation for all workers affected until community transmission of COVID-19 is reduced to zero.

Malcolm, a teacher from British Columbia, said of the convoy, "We need to recognize it for exactly what its demands show it to be: viciously anti-worker.

"Despite noise and chattering about the sociological construct of the protesters and who they represent, they have been unequivocal about their demands: the immediate repeal by all levels of government of any and all pandemic restrictions. This represents nothing less than a frontal assault on the right of the working class to protect itself from a disease that has killed millions, likely tens of millions, in the past two years alone.

"Already conservative elements across the country, emboldened by the protests, are demanding that the few limited and entirely insufficient public health measures that do exist, such as masks and vaccine mandates, be banned. In future waves, of which there will be more—there is no serious scientific disagreement about this—teachers will face a greater struggle than ever seen in previous waves to get these basic measures re-introduced. This result will inevitably lead to more

disease, more illness and more death for workers and the most vulnerable and marginalized in society."

Sterling, a school caretaker from Toronto, explained, "The 'Freedom' Convoy is a huge threat to working people because it will accelerate the spread of SARS-CoV-2 in the weeks and months to come. Their demand to end all COVID restrictions threatens our lives. They want the 'freedom' to infect everyone with a deadly virus, and they want the 'freedom' to expose workers to COVID to protect the profits of the financial aristocracy in Canada.

"Provincial governments have already begun to capitulate to the convoy's fascistic demands to purge all COVID protections! Premiers and unethical public health officials lie and try to claim removing COVID protections has nothing to do with the convoy. Their contempt for the working class is clear, they think we're stupid and cannot recognize their lies!"

An Ontario teacher described the convoy as "deeply, corrosively anti-democratic." He went on, "It bears strong parallels with the dysfunction I observed during the collapse of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

"For workers, we face a double problem. First, the protest is anti-worker and bears strong ties with right-wing, fascist corporatism both from Canada as well as being heavily influenced by the US. Second, in the necessary social response to this crisis, we risk this becoming a precedent our government can use to deploy the measures being considered for the current debacle against legitimate civil protest workers will need to engage in in the near/medium future."

A parent from Brampton, Ontario remarked, "I am completely baffled by the so-called 'Freedom Convoy' and its supporters calling for all mandates and restrictions to be dropped immediately. The 'let it rip' group wants it all, but offers no compromises or solutions. If they actually think that wearing a mask, getting vaccinated and following other health and safety protocols in order to protect the vulnerable members of our community equal persecution, then all I see are selfish, arrogant, irresponsible, entitled whiners that have zero clue as to what real tyranny or struggle is. They drive across the country to protest losing their freedom? The irony is lost on

them.

“Fascism still exists. To deny its existence is to give it a chance to flourish. Blind denial and intolerance often go hand in hand; it’s not uncommon for people with far-right/fascist tendencies to gaslight people and dismiss very credible proof of fascism. Freedom does not exist in a vacuum, and living in a free society does not mean one is free from being held accountable for one’s actions. Freedom without responsibility is an infringement on other citizens’ freedom. All freedom comes with responsibilities.”

Ken, a teacher from Ontario, stated, “Removing the safety measures that protect me, my students, and our families in Ontario schools is incomprehensible. What freedoms are they seeking? The freedom to infect others and to behave as they wish during a pandemic?”

“Do these individuals know or care what ending mask mandates would mean in a school with 1,800 people? Kids are packed into crowded hallways and classrooms! Community transmission is still high! Where is the public debate on this?”

“Why are we even having this conversation while hospitals and nurses are still struggling? Why are we letting a tiny minority of anti-vax conspiracy theorists, religious fundamentalists, fascist hooligans, and small business owners encamped in Ottawa dictate public health policy for the whole country? Where is the outcry in the media, with public health officials, and from our governments? What about teachers unions? Please tell me you all can do better than just moralize from the sidelines how this is all about racism or white supremacy. Public health is a working class issue! This convoy and the forces that support it are an attack against all workers. This is not a working class movement. It’s the exact opposite.”

Ken also addressed the backing the convoy has received from significant sections of the ruling class. “I believe the government and members of the business community are working with this far-right fascistic mob,” he said. “I think they want to force an end to the public health measures that all workers need in place to keep our schools safe and children safe because good public health practice is bad for big business and the economy. The unions and the NDP [New Democratic Party] look on and only moralize from the sidelines.”

Nella, the spouse of an educator in British Columbia, pointed out the cynicism of the provincial NDP government, which has sought to pose as bitter opponents of the convoy’s demand to let the virus run rampant. Premier John Horgan and his top public health official, Bonnie Henry, are notorious internationally for denying the airborne transmission of COVID-19 and covering up the extent of infections in the province’s schools.

“In BC, the (convoy) protests have turned political theater into an outright farce,” she said. “Horgan and Henry have now cast themselves as protectors of the working class and public health, a role they showed exactly zero interest in assuming for the previous two years. Still, the political implications point to

our provincial leadership using the protests as an excuse to not implement new restrictions, whenever the next wave hits, citing the ‘no public appetite for such measures’ canard. We know full well that the protests have little to no public support. The lack of ‘public appetite’ is code for governments not wishing to interrupt the flow of profits to the investor class and financial oligarchy.

“As the spouse of an educator, the convoy puts my partner at an increased risk of sickening both of us. For this reason, the most practical immediate political action is a mass mobilization of workers, not only against the convoy and its supporters, but against the ruling class’s pandemic policies of never-ending disease and death.”

Ken agreed with the need for educators and workers more generally to mobilize in struggle against the ruling elite’s homicidal pandemic policy. “It is now painfully clear that teachers, parents, students and all workers are the only ones who can end this occupation and force the government to keep mandates in place,” he commented. “But we need to organize. We really need to get moving before workers have no protections and we all get sick.”

Sterling agreed, concluding his message, “In the weeks and months to come a new COVID surge will come, which will see the working class get infected, disabled and die of COVID. The only way to end this madness is for workers to organize into rank-and-file committees in their workplaces to fight the criminal policies of the ruling class and their lackeys in the trade unions, and demand the elimination of COVID!”



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