

# Public inquiry reveals broad support for far-right “Freedom” Convoy among Canada’s police, military and intelligence services

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Canada’s Public Order Emergencies Commission (POEC), which is mandated by law to review the Trudeau government’s invocation of the federal Emergencies Act in response to last winter’s “Freedom” Convoy occupation of downtown Ottawa and major Canada-US border crossings, concluded its public hearings Friday. The inquiry has heard testimony from multiple sources that reveal an ongoing conspiracy between the fascist far-right, sections of the political establishment, and elements within the police, the military, and security services.

The sources include top police and intelligence officials, the organizers of the far-right Convoy, and their lawyers.

Multiple witnesses have testified that:

- Convoy organizers received “a constant stream of leaks” from active-duty police and CSIS officers
- Former and active-duty police, military and intelligence agents embedded within the Convoy used the leaked information to run their own intelligence and security operations to frustrate police operations
- Support from within the political establishment “emboldened” the far-right Convoy

The testimony paints a devastating picture, one which the ruling class and its media are determined to obscure. Top police officials, right-leaning capitalist media outlets and sympathetic sections of the ruling class are waging a concerted campaign to obscure the political issues raised by the Convoy’s menacing 23-day occupation of the nation’s capital; and to present pseudo-explanations for the inability, or rather the refusal, of multiple police forces to disperse the occupation and border blockades, so as to put the heat back on the Trudeau Liberal government for invoking the anti-democratic Emergencies Act “without justification.”

## Support for the far-right from police, CSIS and the Canadian Armed Forces

All of the principal Convoy organizers were deposed.

Keith Wilson—the lawyer representing Convoy leaders such as the far-right trucker Chris Barber and the western separatist and Islamophobe Tamara Lich—told the POEC, “There was a steady stream of information and leaks coming from all of the different police forces and security agencies. There were numerous times where information would come into the operation centre from various police sources that a raid was imminent. And it happened many times.”

Convoy organizers, including Barber and the fascists Jerry Mackenzie and Pat King, corroborated the testimony of Wilson, who was himself a Convoy participant.

These astonishing admissions indicate that police officers with operational knowledge were leaking real-time intelligence about police activities to their fascist co-conspirators in the Convoy to thwart police operations. Wilson testified that leaks came from within the Ottawa Police, the Ontario Provincial Police, the RCMP and the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS), Canada’s premier domestic spy agency.

The Convoy’s “Security Operation” was run by a former member of Justin Trudeau’s RCMP security detail, the ex-sniper and intelligence officer Corporal Daniel Bulford. The inquiry learned that the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) believed that Bulford had leaked Trudeau’s schedule to far-right activists months prior to the Convoy. He was named as a “Person of Interest” in a January 30 OPP intelligence report.

Bulford resigned from the RCMP in December 2021 after 15 years of service, after refusing to be vaccinated for COVID-19. He founded “Mounties for Freedom,” which promotes various conspiracy theories associated with the far-right campaign to force the working class to “live with the virus.” In his testimony at the POEC he expressed resentment at vaccine passports and public mask mandates, much of it directed at the prime minister.

When questioned about the OPP claim, Bulford stated, “At no time have I ever leaked anything to anyone or any tradecraft that I obtained in my duties as a member of the RCMP and the Emergency Response Team.”

But whether or not Bulford leaked such information is only half the story. He acted as “police liaison” for the Convoy, essentially its official conduit for communications with police at the highest level. Bulford testified that he communicated regularly with the OPP, the Parliamentary Police and the RCMP. Further, Bulford testified that he established an “incident command post” at the Swiss Hotel, within 500 metres of Parliament Hill, where he mingled with other Convoy-supporting police officers (some retired, some on-leave, and some on active-duty), Canadian Armed Forces veterans, paramedics and firefighters. His sources would have consisted of intelligence from official channels, as well as leaked intelligence.

If a “constant stream” of leaked operational intelligence was incoming from the RCMP and other police agencies, Bulford would have been one of its principal recipients, and had the professional knowledge to exploit it.

What police intelligence did Bulford receive? How did he exploit any leaked intelligence? The POEC was silent on these matters. However, Bulford’s close relationship with multiple police officers during the protests was exposed. As the Convoy began, he drove around Ottawa with Sgt. Pat Frost, an active-duty member of the Ottawa Police Service, to plan how to bring the Convoy’s hundreds of trucks more deeply into the downtown core, and get around a roadblock.

“We were trying to determine what potential locations trucks could be brought in closer to Parliament,” explained Bulford.

A February 10 internal RCMP report obtained by the CBC reveals that the RCMP was aware of significant sympathy for the Convoy within its ranks. “The potential exists for serious insider threats... [T]hose who have not lost their jobs but are sympathetic to the movement and their former colleagues may be in a position to share law enforcement or military information to the convoy protests,” it warned.

Police sympathy for the far-right was clearly voiced in a January 25 “intelligence report” on the Convoy from the Ottawa Police Service, created by now-suspended Sgt. Chris Kiez. It consisted of an explicit justification for the Convoy occupation, based entirely on a political screed by right-wing media commentator Rex Murphy. Absurdly, the only “threat” identified by Kiez in his report was that of Islamic State! Kiez, it was subsequently exposed, has made repeated social media posts that repeat far-right canards. In one he railed against “teachers,” calling them “the most vile of the left-Marxist set.”

Diane Deans, a former Ottawa City Councillor and former chair of the Ottawa Police Board, its civilian oversight body, testified during the Convoy there was “a bit of an insurrection going on” in the Ottawa Police, “an insurrection from within.” Deans testified that then Ottawa Police Chief Peter Sloly, who is black, “faced racism” from the Police Association and “some elements within the Ottawa Community.”

Support for the Convoy was also evident from within the ranks of the military. At least seven members of the Canadian Armed Forces were under investigation in February for either expressing support for or participating in the Convoy protests. Two of these were from Joint Task Force 2, the force’s elite sniper and counter-insurgency unit, which was involved with CSIS in the interrogation and quite likely torture of Afghan detainees from 2002 to 2008.

Afghan campaign veteran Major Stephen Chledowski, a New Brunswick artillery officer in uniform, accused the government of “tyranny” in a February YouTube video, appealing to Canadian nationalism and the myth that Canadian soldiers “gave their lives for freedom,” as opposed to imperialism. Chledowski called the government “traitors to freedom” citing various conspiracy theories about vaccines, and unnamed “studies” purporting to demonstrate that COVID vaccines, and not the disease, were deadly. At the end of the video, the major declared that he was “calling on my military and police comrades... all of you who have sworn an oath to now stand up and protect our loved ones against this government enforced medical tyranny.” Calling on them to do what? The video is a more or less open appeal for a fascist insurrection.

The military claimed to be investigating Chledowski and other soldiers in February, but any “investigations” seem to have been quietly dropped.

## Keystone Cops

To cover all of this up with confusion, a “Keystone Cops” narrative of police incompetence is being promoted in the bourgeois press. The POEC has heard testimony from multiple sources about jurisdictional conflicts, turf wars, and episodic and systemic incompetence. We are asked to imagine that while the police and CSIS are easily able to leak operational and tactical information to the Convoy “in a constant stream,” the agencies themselves were completely incapable of sharing such information with each other!

Deputy Chief of Ottawa Police Trish Fergusson submitted a witness statement to the effect that the Ottawa Police were kept in the dark by the OPP about the intentions of the Convoy. While the Convoy trucks started occupying downtown on Friday, January 28 and the OPP’s “Project

Hendon” intelligence analysis concluded that the far-right demonstrators were determined to stay put, the Ottawa police were only given access to this intelligence around February 4 or 6. Sloly may have received the reports earlier, but the “constant infighting” prevented them from being shared.

RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki testified that although she claimed the RCMP had not exhausted all of its “tools” to deal with the Convoy before the invocation of the Emergencies Act, the RCMP did not inform the government of its view.

Multiple top police officials have also suddenly decided to simply change their stories. The Convoy was manifestly a far-right, anti-democratic mobilization. Its instigators openly declared their intention to remove the elected government and replace it with a junta. Convoy supporters ran amuck in Ottawa, threatening those who wore masks and otherwise adhered to public health regulations, and issued multiple death threats towards the prime minister and other elected officials. Meanwhile, Trump, other Republican Party leaders involved in his Jan. 6, 2001 coup attempt, and organizations like the Proud Boys that led the assault on the Capitol provided the Convoy political, financial and logistical support.

Yet much of the police leadership would now have us believe this was a peaceful protest that articulated the sentiments of “patriotic” Canadians. The current police campaign to revise its own prior claim that the Convoy threatened “national security” is so brazen that members of Parliament have been forced to intervene. NDP MP Alistair MacGregor demanded before the House of Commons standing committee on national security to know why police officials gave “one answer to the Public Order Emergency Commission but a completely different answer earlier in the year.” His motion received rare unanimous, cross-party support.

MacGregor referred to the contradictory testimony of OPP Commissioner Thomas Carrique, who testified in March that the OPP’s Provincial Operational Intelligence Bureau identified the Convoy as a “threat to national security” as well as a “public safety threat” a week before the Trudeau government’s invocation of the Emergencies Act.

On October 27, Carrique strained to claim that such a threat had only been a “potential” threat, trading on public ignorance of the careful manner in which police intelligence reports are actually written, and the guarded language most typically employ. A “potential threat” is in fact, very strong language.

OPP Superintendent Pat Morris also attempted to walk back OPP intelligence assessments in testimony which offered up multiple rationalizations for the convoy, as we reported previously.

The *Hill Times* quoted Jessica Davis, president of the Canadian Association of Intelligence Studies, as saying, “It really strikes me that there’s a fair bit of revisionism that’s taking place.” Davis went on to note that the “contemporaneous documents contradicted the testimony, not the other way around....”

## Political support for the far right

There were, no doubt, “turf wars” and animosity between various police officers and police forces surrounding the Convoy. But the reason for these conflicts was and remains political. The expressed far-right sympathies of many rank-and-file police officers and military indicate that one aspect of the police “insurrection from within” was resistance to carrying out orders to break up the Convoy protests. Ottawa’s police command was no doubt hesitant to issue orders that a section of the rank-and-file might not follow.

A declassified OPP “Hendon” intelligence report dated February 6, noted, “The apparent support from Canadian political figures is certain to

further embolden those organizing and participating in the blockade, lending credibility and validating their tactics.” The report, not surprisingly, specifically named the Conservative Party, which dumped its then leader, Erin O’Toole, in the middle of the Convoy for failing to give it full-throated support, and in September choose strident pro-Convoy advocate Pierre Poilievre as his replacement.

Former OPP Chief Superintendent Carson Pardy testified that Ottawa Police Chief Peter Sloly told him that elements within Doug Ford’s Cabinet “wanted him to fail... and he had sources within the Ministry letting him know that.”

Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson’s testimony revealed a transcript of a conversation between himself and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on February 8, in which Trudeau stated that Ontario Premier “Doug Ford has been hiding from his responsibility for political reasons.”

Those “reasons” remain. The erstwhile Trump wannabe Doug Ford and his government have cultivated close ties to the far right, while repeatedly resorting to authoritarian methods of rule, including their recent failed attempt to use the “notwithstanding clause” to trample on workers’ basic rights.

Ford was exposed in a leaked video promising a prominent Convoy supporter, whilst Ottawa was under occupation, that he would be “pulling these (vaccine) passports” and “getting back to normal,” contrary to the stated policy of his government. The corporate media has buried the story.

Canada’s ruling elite is trying desperately to keep working people in the dark as to the fact that a substantial and growing faction within its ranks is ready to promote and deploy fascist forces; and that it is bitterly divided over how to maintain its rule in the face of a systemic global capitalist crisis and a growing upsurge of the working-class, expressed most acutely in the recent strike by 55,000 Ontario education support workers.

The Liberal government’s strategy to deal with this upsurge is to use its “partners” in the trade unions and the social-democratic NDP to suppress it. An increasingly vocal far-right faction of Canadian capital, its political representatives and military-security forces would prefer to launch a direct assault on the working class by resorting to fascist violence and authoritarian forms of rule.

Earlier this month, top-ranking Canadian military officials gave a standing ovation to a retired senior officer after he gave a fascistic, “Make Canada Great Again” rant at a Conference of Defence Associations “Vimy Gala” awards ceremony held in his honor. In his acceptance speech, Lt.-Gen. Michel Maisonneuve railed against “entitlements” and “Woke” journalists, openly attacked the Trudeau government for failing to support the military, and heaped praise on notorious right-wing leaders, including Margaret Thatcher and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.



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