

Statement of: Brian Haggith, Chair
Haldimand Police Services Board

Re: Trucker's Protest and Blockade 2022 - Ottawa
Democratic Rights and the Rule of Law

It was with interest and concern that I read about the Trucker's Freedom Convoy which travelled to our nation's capital on January 28, 2022.

Many protesters interviewed stated that the convoy was going to Ottawa to "protest and wouldn't leave the city until their demands were met".

That statement was very powerful and concerning. Whether you agree with, or support the Trucker's position, that statement alone should cause concern. They basically announced they were not in Ottawa to simply exercise their democratic right to protest. Their actual stated goal was to force governmental change without using the due process of law, contained within our democratic system.

In order to achieve their goal, the truckers occupied sections of downtown Ottawa, and blocked roads in an attempt to enact their change on Canada. This was not a protest. It was the blocking of roads and disruption of citizens' rights; it was a criminal act.

This blockade lasted for three weeks from January 28, until February 18, 2022. The people of Ottawa were outraged that a small group of Canadians were allowed to disrupt their daily lives. Canadians from all walks of life demanded police action and were concerned at the lack of police response to this criminal behaviour.

Prime Minister Trudeau – Tweeted - February 07, 2022: - *"Canadians have the right to protest, to disagree with their government, and to make their voices heard. We'll always protect that right. But let's be clear: They don't have the right to blockade our economy, or our democracy, or our fellow citizens' daily lives. It has to stop."*

CTV News Friday Feb. 11, 2022: - Ontario declares State of Emergency – Premier Ford stated; *"Today, I am using my authority as Premier of Ontario to declare a state of emergency in our province."*

Ford said *demonstrations in Ontario are no longer a protest but rather a "siege," adding there will be "severe" consequences for those involved.*

"Your right to make a political statement does not outweigh the rights of one million people in Ottawa to live peacefully, free of harassment and chaos in their own homes,"

Police were ordered to remove the barricades and open the roads in Ottawa. Police started doing so on February 18, 2022 and within a few days returned the city of Ottawa back to its citizens.

Critics have argued that police and other authorities had the necessary tools at their disposal to end the blockades but simply lacked the will to use them.

It is very clear that the majority of Canadians do not support road blockades as a democratic right, or as a legal form of protest.

I realize the blocking of roads in Caledonia may be on a different scale as to the size of protest that occurred in Ottawa, but the basic principles are the same: - Roads are Blocked, - people's lives are affected, - the local economy suffers, and - the "rule of law", our democracy, is being challenged.

The Prime Minister, the Premier of Ontario and the citizens of this country have set a standard for police as it relates to road blockades and the rule of law.

If Haldimand county roads are blocked in the future, based on comments and actions of our Provincial and Federal governments about the blockade in Ottawa, there is an expectation that the Commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police will act swiftly, enforce the law and clear the blockades. To do anything less is irresponsible and unacceptable, not only to the citizens of Haldimand county but to Canadians as a whole. Canada is one country and it is time for all double standards to be eliminated.