



## Statement on Convoy Protest

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

The opportunity to express discontent with government decisions in a non-violent and peaceful manner is part of the democratic process. Ordinary people, though, expect that rights are balanced with responsibilities. Safety and consideration of everyone impacted in engaging in the democratic process must be prioritized. This means that police should respond to the acts of violence, harassment, hate speech and racist actions occurring, including responding to citizen calls and complaints *in a balanced approach*.

The occupation and blockades that have occurred at the Manitoba Legislature, health facilities, schools, and at the Emerson border are impacting people's lives, including their employment, health, wellbeing, and sense of safety. We know this group doesn't represent the views of science or everyday Canadians.

We are concerned with political representatives at municipal, provincial and federal levels creating a false narrative naming the Convoy Protest as equivalent to protests and marches by groups like Black Lives Matter and Idle No More.

**Unlike the Protest Convoy, Black Lives Matter, Every Child Matters and Idle No More protests are characterized by:**

- Absence of symbols of hate such as swastikas or that promote slavery (U.S. Confederate flags);
- Absence of harassment or threats to personal safety of others;
- Teachings offered and welcome made to people who may disagree or may not fully understand the issue;
- Disruptions are limited to acknowledge that while Indigenous, Charter and all Human Rights issues must be honoured, there are too many who struggle just to get by for a variety of reasons, poverty, mental health, addictions etc..., so potential harm to them must be limited;
- Media coverage is welcomed and dialogue encouraged.

We know that approximately 90% of Canadians have gotten vaccinated and are fulfilling their responsibilities to keep themselves, all of our loved ones, and every one of us safe. **The concerns brought by the convoy group do not represent systemic oppression and it is irresponsible and damaging to be making these statements and do not reflect that we have serious concerns to address in Winnipeg and Manitoba, including:**

- the highest rates of child and family poverty, 1 in 4 Manitoba children live below the poverty line;
- the number of children in the child welfare system in Manitoba, 90% of whom are Indigenous;
- community members without access to mental health and housing supports;

And sadly the list could just continue.

**We are calling for our leaders to provide leadership and bring an immediate end to the occupations and at minimum a public statement that police will respond to acts of violence, harassment, and racism when they occur, including responding to citizen calls and noise complaints in a balanced approach.**

Thank you to the 100+ organizations that are signatories to the Police Accountability Coalition [Policy Brief](#) and allies.

“We live in a democratic country, and everyone has the right to protest and air their grievances with civility and decorum. We should not be making connections between civil protests like Black Lives Matter, Every Child Matters and Idle No more with hate filled, swastika waving, racist individuals who have no respect for other people’s rights.” Abdikheir Ahmed, PAC Co-chair

"As the police accountability coalition we are calling for police accountability. All citizens of Winnipeg deserve safety and should receive appropriate responses when asking the police to address safety concerns in their neighbourhood." - Michael Redhead Champagne, PAC Co-chair

“There are almost 89,000 Manitoba children living in poverty. This means that their freedom is limited by their lack of resources and the stigma of being poor. Their parents, who struggle in poverty which is largely created by our systems, are at greater risk of infection by Covid 19 and of hospitalization. These freedom violations dwarf the misguided concept of freedom by the occupiers who demand that their liberty is more important than a democratic government’s actions to protect its citizens, especially the most vulnerable.” Sid Frankel, Campaign 2000MB

“I do worry about the false equivalency messages. Of the many reasons that what is happening at the Leg, the border, Ottawa etc... are out of bounds is because what they are asking for had already been signaled. Here, the provincial government had already said they were looking for a restriction free Spring. A move that was immediately questioned by front-line medical professionals as too soon. The data didn’t support it. Today they have released an accelerated timeline as they continue to announce more deaths. Time will tell but past lifting restrictions too soon has caused a resurgence of Covid hospitalizations and death.” Kate Kehler, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

We work with newcomer and Ethno-cultural groups and COVID-19 has taken a disproportionate toll on in terms of their income, education, health and social wellbeing. However the freedom these communities embrace is the one that is centered in people’s health, safety, inclusion and acceptance for all. The public health restrictions are about keeping us all as safe as possible in these very difficult times.” Reuben Garang, Immigration Partnership Winnipeg

“The protests and occupation are promoting dangerous far-Right ideas. For example here in Manitoba a geometric symbol with origins in antisemitism was marked in the snow outside Manitoba’s Legislative Building. Leaders of the protests have documented ties to anti-Islamic and white supremacist causes. We unequivocally condemn such ideas. Freedom gained through the oppression or deprivation of another is unworthy of the name. We stand for positive freedom: striving to make sure everyone has what they need to make a good life. This can only be achieved through democratically elected governments acting in the public interest, constantly pushed by an informed citizenry, and committed building of a fairer and more just society for all.” - Molly McCracken, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - Manitoba

“What we hear is: “We want our lives back, a return to normal, the pandemic over etc...” Who doesn’t? But they seem to want to impose what they deem to be an acceptable level of risk on the rest of us? We do call on the province to address the real harms caused by the necessary public health restrictions such as poverty, mental health and addictions all too prevalent prior to the pandemic and now are so much worse.” David Kron, Cerebral Palsy Association of Manitoba

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