



210 Gloucester Street, Suite 101
Ottawa, ON K2P 2K4

February 6, 2022

Mayor Jim Watson
City of Ottawa

Chief Peter Sloly
Ottawa Police Services

Dear Mayor Watson and Police Chief Sloly,

We write to express our deep concerns regarding the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Police Service's appalling failure to protect and support Centretown residents, businesses, churches, and other organizations during the ongoing occupation by the Freedom Convoy.

To be clear, the Centretown Community Association (CCA) respects, values, and endorses the right to peaceful protest.

But this is not a peaceful protest. It is an illegal occupation. These occupiers have used their vehicles to blockade downtown streets since arriving last week. They have displayed obvious symbols of hate, including Swastikas and Confederate Flags. They have defecated on a local residence bearing an LGBTQ pride flag. They caused significant damage to the Happy Goat coffee shop on Elgin, which similarly bears an LGBTQ flag. They have assaulted local residents and workers. They are preventing people from working. They have blocked garbage pick-up trucks from accessing condo and apartment buildings in the north end of Centertown. They have blocked laneways, obstructing deliveries to local businesses. They have driven vehicles on sidewalks, endangering pedestrians. They have flouted parking and noise by-laws, incessantly honking and shooting fireworks into the early hours of the morning. They have created air quality issues, spewing diesel fumes into the air. And they are now building semi-permanent structures and accumulating supplies to continue this occupation.

As a result of the occupiers' actions, schools, businesses, and social and medical services such as libraries and COVID vaccination clinics have been forced to close for a period. Paramedics have required escorts after rocks were thrown at them and racial slurs were hurled at them. Centretown businesses have been forced to make the choice between closing or having their employees be harassed, resulting in some people being forced to stay home from work without pay or to endure an unsafe workplace. Cornerstone Housing for Women has reported that the vulnerable persons they serve are afraid to go outside. And, as has been widely reported, volunteers and staff at the Shepherds of Good Hope were harassed by occupiers and forced to provide them with meals that should have been for those in actual need.

Our members feel increasingly abandoned by the City of Ottawa and Ottawa Police Services. Trust in both institutions continues to erode. The current state of affairs has escalated because of the utter failure of the Police and the City to properly plan for and manage this situation. This occupation was entirely foreseeable. The mainstream media widely reported on the significant number of protestors intending to take over our city with trucks and other large vehicles. The demands of these protestors, including the overthrow of our democratically elected government, were shared widely – as was their intent to occupy the city until those demands were met. Similarly well known was the involvement of the protest organizers in extremist political organizations and groups that promote racist and anti-LGBTQ hate.

Despite all this, the City and the Police failed to put in place a plan to effectively deal with these occupiers. For example, the Police and City could have closed portions of the downtown core close to Parliament Hill and prevented any vehicles from entering this area prior to the occupiers arriving, as is commonly done when major protests are anticipated and as Toronto is doing. The use of numerous large vehicles has no place in a peaceful protest. These vehicles have the potential to be used as deadly weapons, can easily be used to intimidate, and unnecessarily exaggerate the footprint of a relatively small group of people. It is these vehicles that have allowed the occupiers to gain control of our streets and have been a root cause of much of the mayhem.

Since the occupation commenced, the Police and City have failed to enforce the law against occupiers, allowing them to engage in significant unlawful activity without penalty. Only 70 tickets had been issued and few arrests made. Despite a reported \$800,000 per day for extra resources, there is still an ongoing failure of the Police to fulfill its mission to “protect the safety and security of communities”.

We note that Friday’s press release promises a “surge and contain” strategy that purports to add additional officers who will now be directed to enforce the applicable laws and bylaws. While we welcome this news, we wonder why it has taken so long for our law enforcers to enforce the law.

With the failure of the City to provide help, Centretown residents have taken up the challenge to protect and support one another by organizing safety walks and grocery pick-ups. These kinds of initiatives are what makes Centretown great, but our strength and resilience does not absolve the city of responsibility. Far from it.

We call on the City and the Police to take immediate action to protect the residents of Centretown, including the following:

- Enforce all applicable by-laws on the occupiers, including for illegally parked vehicles which should be ticketed and towed, and for noise violations such as incessant honking in residential areas;
- Obtain court injunctions where required to clear residential areas and allow residents to safely access homes, workplaces, and amenities in the community.
- Support existing community initiatives, including efforts by local Councillors McKenney, Menard, and Leiper, to provide aid to residents;
- Engage in efforts to contain the protests to a strictly limited area preferably with only foot traffic;
- Impose deadlines and strict fines on occupiers for not moving to a designated zone;

- Work with the federal and provincial government authorities to intervene with proper support;
- Ensure that no further vehicles are able to join the occupation;
- Apologize to residents for grossly mishandling the situation and failure in the mission to protect the safety and security of communities.

We expect you to take immediate action on these measures for the safety and security of Centretown residents.

Sincerely,

Mary Huang
President
Centretown Community Association
president@centretowncitizens.ca

cc: Catherine McKenney, Councillor Ward 14 Somerset, City of Ottawa
Yasir Naqvi, MP, Ottawa Centre
Joel Harden, MPP, Ottawa Centre
Tobi Nussbaum, CEO, National Capital Commission
Matthew Luloff, Councillor Ward 1 Orléans,
Laura Dudas, Councillor and Deputy Mayor, Ward 2 Innes
Jan Harder, Councillor Ward 3 Barrhaven
Cathy Curry, Councillor Ward 4 Kanata North
Eli El-Chantiry, Councillor Ward 5 West Carleton-March
Glen Gower, Councillor Ward 6 Stittsville
Theresa Kavanagh, Councillor Ward 7 Bay
Rick Chiarelli, Councillor Ward 8 College
Keith Egli, Councillor Ward 9 Knoxdale-Merivale
Diane Deans, Councillor Ward 10 Gloucester-Southgate
Tim Tierney, Councillor Ward 11 Beacon Hill-Cyrville
Mathieu Fleury, Councillor Ward 12 Rideau-Vanier
Rawlson King, Councillor Ward 13 Rideau-Rockcliffe
Jeff Leiper, Councillor Ward 15 Kitchissippi
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Shawn Menard, Councillor Ward 17 Capital
Jean Cloutier, Councillor Ward 18 Alta Vista,
Catherine Kitts, Councillor Ward 19 Cumberland
George Darouze, Councillor and Deputy Mayor, Ward 20 Osgoode
Scott Moffatt, Councillor Ward 21 Rideau-Goulbourn
Carol Anne Meehan, Councillor Ward 22 Gloucester-South Nepean
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Federation of Citizen's Associations of Ottawa Board
Centretown Community Association Board