

Local convoy of truckers to join nation-wide protest

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Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A convoy of big rigs and motor vehicles will be rolling through Shelburne tomorrow (Jan. 28) in support of a nationwide protest against vaccine mandates for truckers and all Canadians.

The convoy, which organizers estimate will be roughly 50 vehicles long, with more than a dozen semis, will roll through town at 10:40 a.m., coming down Highway 10. There will be a local gathering of supporters at the intersection of Highway 89 and 10 in downtown Shelburne where they can cheer on the local convoy. This intersection will be patrolled by OPP for the convoy roll.

Once the convoy passes through Shelburne along Hwy 10, it will reach Orangeville before turning onto Highway 9 towards Highway 400 South. From there the convoy will get onto Highway 401 East to Ottawa, with Parliament Hill as the final destination for Saturday (Jan. 29).

There they will be joined by tens of thousands of truckers and supporters that left from Vancouver on Jan. 23 and Nova Scotia today (Jan. 27), in addition to countless informal convoys across the country for a massive protest.

The convoys that began in Vancouver and Nova Scotia grow larger with each city they pass through, as supporters and fellow truckers across Canada join in.

Bruce King, organizer of the 'Freedom Convoy' to Ottawa says he's anticipating 650 big rigs from South Carolina to join in as well.

The local convoy will kick off in Owen Sound at 9 a.m. before rolling through Chatsworth, Flesherton, Shelburne, and Orangeville.

A GoFundMe page titled Freedom Convoy 2022 has raised over \$5.5 million, which the page says will be used to cover costs associated with fuel, lodging and food for the truckers who are travelling from east and west to Parliament Hill.

Co-organizer of the local convoy that's passing through Orangeville and Shelburne, Ryan Elkerton said the protest is to support the truckers and fight against Canadian COVID-19 vaccine mandates resulting in job loss.

'A lot of people are sick and tired of it and they think that this is kind of the last chance they have [to fight the mandates]. That's why this convoy to Ottawa thing is becoming so massive,' Elkerton said. 'People have had enough and it's the last straw.'

Truckers protesting the COVID-19 vaccine mandate, which came into effect Jan. 15, say it will create driver shortages and fuel inflation.

Up to 32,000 or about 20 per cent of the 160,000 American and Canadian cross border truckers are being taken off the roads because of the COVID-19 mandates, estimated the Canadian Trucker Alliance (CTA). The CTA, which represents 4,500 truckers, said it condemns the protest or any demonstration that is on public roadways, highways and bridges out of disruption and safety concerns.

The nation-wide convoys are gaining a lot of traction due to Canadians seeing the impact of the vaccine mandate on truckers through bare grocery shelves, Elkerton told the Citizen.

He said he's also seeing it firsthand.

?I went to Metro the other day and I couldn't get meat so I had to go to the butcher, which is fine to me, I'd rather support the local butcher anyways,? Elkerton noted. ?But it is a massive issue that we're walking in on, especially with these mandates.?

He said he was recently speaking with a trucker who travels to Florida to transport strawberries back into Canada, who will no longer be able to fulfill that role due to the mandate, and worries about the impact on the supply chain.

?You go to these grocery stores, there's no fruit, there's no vegetables, there's no meat. Believe it or not, we rely on south of the border a lot more than what people think we do. And when we're not allowed to get down and pick up necessities for people, then we're going to have a shortage, and we're already seeing that,? said Elkerton.

He noted that his hoped outcome through the protest is a reversal of the cross-border trucking mandate, and all mandates resulting in workers being terminated for declining to receive a COVID-19 vaccine at this time.

?Ultimately, the mandates have to go, especially for the truckers. People's livelihoods are at stake now, not only the job losses, but now people are having trouble finding things to be eating [at the grocery store].?

Elkerton also said he expects the shortages to drive prices up, which will impact low-income families the most.

He told the Citizen he'd encourage anyone who's able to participate in the convoy to join in or come down to Parliament Hill for Saturday (Jan. 29) to protest the mandates.

?People need to get out and show their support. If you can't get to Ottawa, go stand on the side of the street. Be as loud as you can [when your local convoy passes through],? Elkerton remarked. ?Now is the time.?