Three people arrested in relation to Easter ?freedom? rally in Shelburne

By Paula Brown, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter & Sam Odrowski

Three people have been charged following another 'freedom' rally held in Shelburne over the Easter long weekend.Around 250 protestors gathered at Jack Downing Park, located on Main Street in Shelburne, on Saturday (Apr. 8) for the bi-weekly demonstration. Chris Saccoccia, also known online as Chris Sky, who rose to notoriety during the pandemic for his anti-mask and anti-lockdown rhetoric, was in attendance at the rally as a guest speaker.Dufferin OPP officers were there to monitor the demonstration and ensure the public's safety."We have been monitoring this for a while, we feel that the weekend was overall a great success," said Sgt. Terri-Ann Pencarinha, media relations officer for Dufferin OPP. "People have a right to gather and speak their minds, and [the] majority of those people were law abiding. Unfortunately, we had a few there that were not."A 44-year-old male from Shelburne was charged with assault with a weapon, intimidation ? use or threats, use of violence, and mischief under $5,000. Pencarinha confirmed a vehicle was used as a weapon in the alleged assault. The accused was transported to the Dufferin detachment, where he was held pending a bail hearing the following day.A 27-year-old man from Orangeville was charged with mischief, interfering with any person in the lawful use, enjoyment, or operation of property over $5,000. Video obtained by the Free Press of the Orangeville man being arrested shows him moving barricades set up by public works for the protest.Prior to the man's arrest, he is seen yelling at police, "Get your swastikas out. Why don't you just hang big swastikas on them [the barricades]? This is an event for children not for Hitler's minions."The man also called a police officer a "pig" and "failed soldier."The arresting officer responded that the barriers were there for safety and not to touch them."My job as a police officer to ensure the safety of the public," he remarked.As the Orangeville man dragged a barrier across the street and encouraged others to do the same, he was taken to the ground and handcuffed.The same man was charged again later that same day for failing to comply with their undertaking. The accused is scheduled to appear at the Ontario Court of Justice in Orangeville in May to answer to the charges.A 40-year-old woman from Scarborough was also arrested on a bench warrant at the protest.The Free Press learned that the 44-year-old man arrested from Shelburne is Jeremy Glass, the organizer of the bi-weekly rallies.In speaking with the Free Press, Glass said he's innocent and doesn't agree with charges."I've been very transparent with the police, right from the beginning of doing what I'm doing because I'm breaking no laws. I have broken no law yet," he said.Glass was arrested on the morning following the rally and shared with the Free Press his account of the incident that resulted in his arrest the day prior.He said he was in downtown Shelburne around 9 a.m. on Apr. 8 to begin getting ready for the bi-weekly rally and saw wooden barricades set up on certain parking areas and fencing around the curb.Glass began removing the barricades and stacking them off to the side. He was then asked by public works staff and police to stop moving them.Glass told the police, "I'm not negotiating my Charter [of Rights and Freedoms] here." He said he has the right to hold public space there and use the parking spots that were blocked off.Moments later, Glass climbed into his truck to pull into a William Street parking stall that had a barricade on it.As his truck rolled forward, a public works employee who had been setting up barricades stood in the stall and kept his hand on the barricade in what appeared to be an effort to prevent Glass from pulling forward.Despite this, Glass proceeded forward, slowly pushing the barricade, which fell apart, and after it broke, the public works employee stepped away.He told the Free Press that he believes this is where the assault with a weapon and intimidation charges stem from.The following morning, Glass recalls Dufferin OPP officers arriving at his front door, telling him he was under arrest. When he received the conditions from the officers of his arrest, they included that he can't be within 100 meters of Jack Downing Park or Shelburne Town Hall.Glass said he refused the conditions because the incident didn't take place at Town Hall or the parkn and the plaintiff, who's a public works employee, doesn't work out of either location.As a result of refusing the conditions, Glass was taken to the Orangeville Jail overnight, pending a bail hearing the following day. At the bail hearing, the conditions were reduced to 50 meters instead of 100. Glass is also allowed in Town Hall to attend council meetings at the time they're being held on Mondays."All my restaurants, my bank, my drugstore, everything's within that 100-meter radius, so they reduced it to 50, which wasn't much. But at the end of the day, I didn't want to sit in jail any longer to have it brought up again the next day," Glass said.He told the Free Press that he will abide by the conditions and take a different approach at the 'freedom' protests so he doesn't breach them.Meanwhile, Glass claims the charges were political in nature, but Pencarinha told the Free Press, "We don't do anything political; we're abiding by the law."The police have released no names of those charged on Apr. 8 to prevent them from gaining notoriety over the charges."When a protest becomes unlawful, and all these individuals were charged with something unlawful, we don't tend to give them a bigger claim to fame by broadcasting their names," said Pencarinha.Dufferin OPP said they respect the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. They also added that acts of violence will not be tolerated and that they will respond to unlawful

activities or actions in an appropriate and professional manner. The OPP has no role in resolving the underlying issues but will be there to respond.