

# Canada's "Freedom Convoy" Is a Front for a Right-Wing, Anti-Worker Agenda

Tuesday 8 February 2022, by [LEEDHAM Emily](#) (Date first published: 5 February 2022).

**Workers in Canada's trucking industry have suffered during the pandemic. The "Freedom Convoy," a right-wing, pro-business social movement, purports itself to be the people's champion of liberty — yet it couldn't care less about the hardships and burdens of its fellow workers.**

The so-called "[Freedom Convoy](#)" of truckers currently [occupying](#) Canada's capital city claims to be a broad [people's movement](#) concerned with the plight of workers — specifically truckers — who have suffered throughout the pandemic.

The convoy has received plaudits from the likes of [Elon Musk](#) and [Jordan Peterson](#), sympathetic coverage from [conservative media](#), and [acclaim](#) from some Canadian members of parliament. The Freedom Convoy's GoFundMe has thus far raised [\\$10 million in donations](#). Despite this wide recognition and support, the convoy presents itself as a scrappy coalition of working people who, fed up with the hardship they have undergone, are now speaking truth to power.

But a closer look at key "Freedom Convoy" participants reveals that many of the concerns of the protesters have little to do with workers' rights or labor issues within Canada's trucking industry. In fact, Convoy organizers have previously harassed workers on the picket line and ignored calls for support from racialized truckers fighting against wage theft.

## Union-Busting History

What motivated the Freedom Convoy to protest was a new piece of [federal regulation](#) that requires [unvaccinated Canadian truckers](#) to isolate for fourteen days upon returning to Canada from the United States. Unvaccinated foreign truckers, however, are not allowed into the country. Despite [90 percent](#) of Canadian truckers being vaccinated, this policy galvanized a vocal minority on the Right whose anger had been brewing long before the pandemic.

Freedom Convoy organizer and Canada Unity founder [James Bauder](#)'s allegiances are to the far right — he certainly didn't emerge from the labor movement. Two years ago, Bauder participated in another convoy called United We Roll which had [connections](#) to far right elements in Canada's Yellow Vests movement and other white nationalist hate groups. United We Roll toured the country in opposition to Canada's federal carbon tax and the [UN migration pact](#), garnering support from Conservative politicians across the country.

United We Roll also planned an [anti-union protest](#) where convoy members [threatened](#) to dismantle the picket line and run over workers. Bauder livestreamed the protest at which workers say [convoy members](#) harassed them and shouted obscenities from a megaphone. The episode's anti-labor *pièce de résistance* came when the employer of the picketing workers gave the convoy an in-person shout out at a press conference before the protest.

Just months before that, United We Roll shared articles critical of another strike on its Facebook page. Teamsters CN Rail workers had shut down railways for [one week](#) demanding better scheduling, pay, and working conditions. United We Roll was more interested in the concerns of an agribusiness CEO. To say that Bauder or any Freedom Convoy participants who were involved with United We Roll are friends of organized labor is to stretch credulity past its breaking point.

## **No Solidarity With Immigrant Truckers**

In addition to Bauder, other Freedom Convoy organizers, such as Pat King, Tamara Lich, and BJ Lichter, have a history of [associating with hate groups](#) and expressing [racist and anti-immigrant sentiments](#). This could explain why the Freedom Convoy is strangely silent on [labor issues facing immigrant truckers](#) who now make up [over one-third of truckers](#) in Canada. Over half of truckers in major cities like Vancouver and Toronto are South Asian immigrants.

Some of these immigrant truckers believe the Freedom Convoy is distracting attention away from [serious labor issues](#) within the industry. The Freedom Convoy has plenty to say about vaccine mandates but little about [predatory recruitment scams](#), [inadequate training](#), lack of [rest stops and highway safety infrastructure](#), worker misclassification, and the “[billion dollar scam](#)” of employer wage theft.

Over the past several months, immigrant truckers in Brampton, Ontario have [marched in the streets](#), protested [outside of employers' homes](#), and even [disrupted a political candidate's rally](#) with the simple demand of being paid for their work. The grassroots group [Naujawan Support Network](#) formed to support these truckers and launched a [legal defense fund](#) which currently sits at over \$18,000.

The difference between legal defense funds and the [\\$10 million dollars](#) raised by the Freedom Convoy is that the former will actually be used constructively to help working people. Conversely, because there's no clear idea where the Freedom Convoy money even came from or [how it will be used](#), GoFundMe is [pausing](#) the Convoy's fundraiser page.

Freedom Convoy truckers have also blocked the US-Alberta border, leaving fifty to a hundred South Asian Canadian truckers [stranded](#) in Montana for two days without food in the middle of a blizzard.

“A lot of truckers, they don't even have food, some of them have medical issues, some of them have asthma, some of them have thyroid issues,” Lovepreet Singh said in a [social media video](#) calling on government officials. “Nobody's even listening to us, so please help us out.”

## **Freedom for Me, Not for You**

The Freedom Convoy wants to put an end to [all COVID-19 mandates and restrictions](#), including mask and vaccine mandates and gathering restrictions.

[Anti-union](#) Conservative politicians across the country have [expressed support](#) for the Convoy, even [showing up](#) to meet them [in person](#). In stark contrast with the police [treatment](#) of other protesters in recent Canadian history, Ottawa's law enforcement have thus far used a [gentle hand](#) in their dealings with the group's members. Canada's small business lobby, the [Canadian Federation of Independent Business](#), has also called upon the federal government to [reverse the vaccination requirement](#) for truckers.

There is no doubt Canadian federal and provincial governments have [botched the pandemic response](#) over the past two years, causing much harm to workers, their families, and communities. It is also true that Canadian leaders have placed an [outsized amount of blame](#) on unvaccinated

individuals for prolonging the pandemic. Scapegoating an intransigent minority is evidently preferable to holding employers accountable for [unsafe workplaces](#) and reversing the decades-long [underfunding and slow privatization](#) of our public health care system.

But Freedom Convoy organizers aren't making calls for policy changes that would ease workers' suffering either. The Freedom Convoy can seemingly only bleat "no vaccines" when it comes to issues of utmost importance for the demographic they purport to speak for and to. There has been no discussion within the Convoy's ranks of investment in [public health care](#), [employer accountability](#), [paid sick days](#), [rent control](#), or [financial support](#) for workers who lost their jobs. And the convoy certainly isn't advocating for workers to organize collectively into unions.

Convoy organizers promote a selfish, libertarian mindset where "individual freedom" includes the freedom to ignore how one's decisions impact others. The freedom that matters to the Convoy's organizers is the market's "freedom" to operate without interference from both unions and government regulations that cover workers' health and safety. In short, the Convoy only purports to be a people's movement. In reality it is the populist wing of right-wing interest groups, actively undermining real worker solidarity.

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**P.S.**

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