



Photo by Felix Chagnon

Protesters stand on a cargo of tree logs in front of Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Ont. during the Freedom Convoy 2022 protest last weekend. For more photos, see pages 5-6.

Protesters storm nation's capital

By Felix Chagnon

The final sections of the Freedom Convoy 2022 arrived Saturday morning in Ottawa's downtown core. Thousands of truckers and supporters rallied on the capital's streets, converging in one central area: Parliament Hill.

The initial movement of "Freedom Convoy" was organized by truckers challenging the government vaccination mandate for cross-border workers. The convoy made its way to Ottawa from Brit-

ish Columbia throughout the week, and the movement quickly snowballed into a national protest towards COVID-19 vaccine mandates and other public health restrictions.

The crowd arrived early Saturday morning and kept growing exponentially within the following hours. In the afternoon, Wellington Street was occupied by trucks and protesters nearly reaching the Byward Market, which forced the Ottawa Police to close the streets in the downtown core because of the gridlock.

Despite being loud and disruptive, the day unfolded peacefully, according to the update issued by Ottawa Police Service on its website.

"There have been no incidents of violence or injuries reported," stated the media release from the Ottawa Police Service. "There will continue to be a large presence of police to ensure public safety this evening and on Sunday."

However, some protesters from the crowd were seen placing signs and paraphernalia on the Terry Fox statue on the

corner of Metcalfe Street and Wellington Street, which were eventually removed by the police after images sparked outrage on social media.

The mayor of Port Coquitlam, Terry Fox's hometown, took to Twitter Saturday afternoon, expressing his thoughts on the acts of protesters and demanding the immediate removal of the paraphernalia.

"I'm the Mayor of Terry Fox's hometown. He's our city's hero, national inspiration and a unifier. Whatever your cause, you don't get to appropriate his legacy,

and you don't touch his statue. Ever. This should be removed immediately. [@ottawacity](#) [@JimWatsonOttawa](#)," tweeted Brad West, Mayor of Port Coquitlam, B.C., to the City of Ottawa and Mayor Jim Watson.

The Ottawa Police Service also had to attend to the cenotaph at the National War Memorial, where protesters were seen parking their vehicles, climbing the cenotaph, and dancing on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

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Parents await childcare deal in Ontario

By Christie Leja

Ontario is the last province to sign on to the \$10 per day daycare deal with Ottawa, which will reduce the average cost of childcare by 50 per cent by the end of 2022.

When Sarah Tjernstrom and her husband James relocated with their two children, to Trenton, Ont. from Halifax, N.S., in June of 2018, to be closer to family, they were shocked that the cost of childcare was going to be for them.

"We were looking at \$112 a day for both of them to be in daycare at the MRFC, and that was after having to wait who knows how long on a waitlist," Tjernstrom explains.

At the time, they had two girls, Abigail, 16 months, and Evelyn, just about three, when Sarah started working at CFB Trenton in her role as a supply tech at the Department of National Defence. The family luckily found a space in an unlicensed home daycare and have been there ever since.

"It's great, and all three girls love it, but there are some drawbacks to a home daycare. If she or her kids get sick, I have to stay home with the girls."

Ontario, once considered to be a leader in the childcare sector, has become the most expensive province in terms of the cost of childcare, averaging at \$1,774 for infant care per child per month in Toronto. This is in comparison to Vancouver, B.C., the first province to sign on to the Liberal government's \$30 billion national child-care plan. It has been estimated that families in B.C. will be saving \$6,000 per child by the end of 2022.

Deidre Palmateer, a DSW student at Loyalist College, just moved to Belleville with her husband Jake and their almost three-year-old daughter Alyssa.

"We live in a society where households need two incomes to survive.



Photo by Christie Leja

The Tjernstrom family decompresses at home, after a busy day of work, school and daycare. Sarah and Jim Tjernstrom have three girls, Evelyn, six, Abigaile, four, and Lillian, two, who have all attended an unlicensed, home daycare because the cost of licensed childcare was too high in Ontario.

Families are stuck with one income and one stay-at-home parent because daycare is so expensive...We've been blessed and lucky that Jake has a good job. Others haven't been that lucky. But even with his good job, we just pay bills," Palmateer says.

Currently, Alyssa is not in care, but while they were still living in Northbrook, Ont., the family found the cost of part-time care difficult as they didn't qualify for subsidies to help cover some

of their daycare costs.

"In our small-town daycare, I was paying half the amount I'd been quoted in the city. And for only two days a week, I was paying \$800 a month," Palmateer adds.

For individuals working in childcare, signing on to the federal funding will make a big difference. Ontario has long required that teachers complete a two-year Early Childhood Education (ECE) course, and has also established

a Professional College of Early Childhood Educators. The requirements are clear and yet the rewards have historically been very limited. The industry struggles with recruiting and retaining staff as salaries do not match the education, training, and effort required. Supervisors and directors of childcare programs are most often trained on the job with no formal leadership training. This funding would help change that.

"If the federal funding came through,

it would be a game-changer for everyone: for the families and for staff who would finally get a proper wage grid that matches their level of education and compensates according to their expertise and professionalism. We don't have that right now, we just have a patchwork system where you can make \$15 an hour in Belleville and \$35 an hour in Toronto. The gap is just so extreme," says Amy O'Neil, director of Tree Top Children's Centre, a non-profit childcare centre in Toronto.

During the pandemic, childcare staff have felt forgotten and ignored as front line staff working with the youngest – unvaccinated, unmasked children – and not receiving the same safety measures, protocols, or resources as schools.

"I feel incredibly frustrated that Ontario hasn't signed a child care agreement with the federal government. There have been months of delays and distractions from the Ford government, rather than approaching this with a sense of urgency. The pressure is really on now – if Ontario doesn't sign by March 31, we could lose the first year of funding. Over \$1 Billion could be lost. So I hope that motivates the Ford government to sign on to the plan," says Carolyn Ferns, the Public Policy and Government Relations Co-ordinator for the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care.

Education Minister Stephen Lecce said at a virtual press conference on Jan. 31 that a deal is "within reach" to sign Ontario onto the \$10 a day program. However, he declined to state a time frame for the deal's completion.

"Families in other provinces are already seeing their fees reduced. Educators in other provinces are receiving new funding for wages. Other provinces are putting together new plans for expansion. Ontario is falling further and further behind," adds Ferns.