

Police move in on Ambassador Bridge blockade after injunction deadline passes

Police have moved in to break up a days-long protest at the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, Ont., where vehicles have been blocking traffic on the crucial border crossing into the U.S.

“We urge all demonstrators to act lawfully and peacefully,” Windsor police said in a tweet as officers started to move in with other law enforcement at about 8:30 a.m. on Saturday.

They also advised people to stay away from the area.

While some protesters left immediately, a handful remained as of 10 a.m. Police formed a line and were steadily pushing back the demonstrators, some of whom were shouting “shame,” “freedom” and “you’re on the wrong side.”

Most of the big rigs cleared out, many laying on their horns as they left.

People have been parked at the bridge since Monday, opposing COVID-19 public health measures such as vaccine mandates. They have been bracing for police enforcement since 7 p.m. on Friday, after Ontario Superior Court Chief Justice Geoffrey B. Morawetz granted an injunction demanding they clear the bridge.

See below for CBC News’s overnight coverage of the protest.

When Chris Mayville heard that an injunction had been granted to clear out the protesters taking part in a blockade at the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, he immediately struck an angry and defiant tone.

“Bring it,” Mayville said. “Do you think I care? Do you think I care about a fine? I’m going to pay a fine? No. You think I care about their mandates? No. This needs to end.

“I’m going to stay until the arrests.”

It was a sentiment shared by others blocking the bridge, where protests against

COVID-19 public health restrictions have been snarling cross-border traffic since Monday. Some said they were determined to dig in and continue the blockade, whether or not they were confronted by law enforcement.

The protesters were bracing for police to enforce the injunction when it came into effect at 7 p.m. ET. But as the deadline passed and no police action was initiated, the crowd appeared to grow in size, jubilation and defiance. And by early Saturday morning, around 100 protesters remained.

Windsor Mayor Drew Dilkens told CBC News that the goal is to have the protesters leave voluntarily, “but if they refuse to leave, steps will have to be taken to remove them.”

Wave of protests

John Wiebe, a Kitchener truck driver whose rig was encamped near the intersection at the main protest point at the bridge, said he didn’t know what he would do if police told him to leave.

But he said he believed any potential legal consequences could be worth it.

“If all these mandates get lifted, sure, throw some of us in prison,” he said.

The protest is part of a growing number of truck convoy demonstrations that began in Ottawa and have since spread to other cities. The protesters say they want governments to lift vaccine mandates and other public health measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rick Armstrong said he would have no problem with being given a ticket or fine by police and instead would view it as a badge of honour.

“I will hang it on my wall with pride. I will be able to show it to my granddaughter and say where [was I] on this day, I was here — fighting for your freedoms,” he said.

“I will ask the officer if they’re kind enough to write me a ticket, ‘What are [you] going to say to [your] children?’”

Auto sector affected

The injunction was sought by several auto groups including the Automotive Parts

Manufacturers' Association, which has argued the protest blocking traffic along the major U.S.-Canada trade route is costing the sector tens of millions of dollars each day.

But it's a concern that doesn't seem to register with many of those taking part in or supporting the blockade.

Jill Goodman, who works for a manufacturing company in Windsor, said that the blockade has been the only effective way to get the attention of policymakers.

"We're not being listened to any other way," she said.

Armstrong said the blockade is the only tool they have and that they all have been losing money and their livelihoods for two years.

Wiebe said he understands that the blockade is having a significant financial impact on companies and that it's hurting the trucking company he works for as well.

But he points to all the businesses that have suffered from mandates, which, when lifted, he suggests, would be an economic benefit to all.

"Sometimes you got to lose money to make money," he said.

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Police presence

The trucks range from big rigs to pickups, many with Canadian flags draped along the hood and the phrase "Freedom Convoy 2022" scribbled on them.

On Friday, police cruisers parked on the major streets, not too far from the protesters, many of whom carried Canadian flags.

The protesters chatted with one another, some having brought their whole family to the blockade. One sold "Freedom Convoy" T-shirts, with proceeds, according to a sign at the counter, going to feed protesters.

Music blared during the day and night, interrupted by shouts of "Freedom" that grew much louder and much more frequent as the 7 p.m. injunction deadline drew near. The truckers were outnumbered by the many local residents who came

by to offer their support.

They mostly seemed to ignore the flyers being handed out by police headlined “Did You Know” explaining the ramifications of the province’s state of emergency declaration that day.

That declaration, repeated on the flyer, stated that it was illegal to block the movement of goods, people and services along critical infrastructure, and that non-compliance could result in a maximum fine of up to \$100,000 and up to a year in prison for non-compliance.

Source:

<https://ca.news.yahoo.com/protesters-dig-ambassador-bridge-blockade-092500226.html>

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