

February 8, 2022

Honourable Heather Stefanson
Room 204 Legislative Building
Winnipeg, MB
R3C 0V8

Premier Stefanson,

We are a group of citizens that have come together to express our perspective and concerns regarding the COVID-19 mandates. We are mothers, fathers, grandparents, children and community members who have had our lives disrupted by divisive policies that have split our families, friends and communities apart. We are not a group of extremists, and we condemn all manifestations of hate, racism, misogyny and disrespect. It is time that we learn to live with COVID-19 and end the COVID-19 mandates by establishing a clear path forward with set calendar dates. It is time for healing to begin while at the same time supporting our health care workers.

We are writing this open letter to express our deep concerns about the current COVID-19 mandates and how they restrict our freedoms and use coercion rather than communication, data and dialogue. These measures have heightened distrust, especially among the most vulnerable members of our society. Tools, particularly vaccine passports and rules that restrict freedom of movement and association, are significant infringements of citizens' rights as laid out in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms – and they have created substantive and lasting harm on the citizens of Manitoba.

We do not take the overriding of our liberty lightly, as these are constitutional freedoms that our veterans fought and died for. When liberty is restricted, the onus is on our government to ensure that it is done as a last resort and that it is justifiable based on the overall risks to society. Given the evidence that the vaccines have an increasingly waning ability to prevent transmission and infection, and given that effective treatment options are now available, it is exceedingly clear that it is time to transition to a society free of COVID-19 mandates and to allow individuals to access and manage their own health risks and decisions in consultation with their medical care providers.

Our children have been among the most impacted by many of these policies despite being the least impacted by the COVID-19 virus. School closures, cancellation of many extra-curricular programs, limitations to social gatherings with peers and mentors, and restrictions to access to sports and physical activity all have taken their toll over the past two years. While we appreciate the Province's efforts to keep schools operational and safe for both students and staff, nevertheless, children have endured significant hardship throughout this time and depression, anxiety and feelings of isolation in children are rising.

Over the past two years, there have repeatedly been situations where restrictions have been implemented while open dialogue has been stifled. Rather than transparent discussion, decisions have been made behind closed doors and divisive restrictions have been announced without openly acknowledging aspects of the broader scientific discourse that is occurring. Overall, mandates and coercion as a means to achieve public health objectives have a checkered history and limited efficacy. Furthermore, when they are implemented without broad discussion and in a manner that divides society, they are harmful and undemocratic, leading to decreased trust in our government structures and health care providers.

As organizers of Freedom Convoy Winnipeg, we call on our provincial government to:

- Implement an immediate return to democratic dialogue and engage in conversations with all stakeholders.
- Create a plan with hard end dates to all Manitoba COVID-19 mandates.
- Immediate reinstatement of Provincial employees who were placed on leave or terminated due to COVID-19 mandates.
- Openly advocate to the Federal Government to remove travel/border restrictions and reinstate all employees who were placed on leave due to COVID-19 mandates.
- Review the Emergency Measures Act and Public Health Act to ensure that citizens' constitutional freedoms will be adequately respected in the future.

In light of the February 4, 2022, hit-and-run incident where four individuals at the Freedom Convoy Winnipeg rally at the Manitoba Legislature were struck by a male driving a white Jeep, we respectfully request your leadership in de-escalating this situation by immediately scheduling a time to meet together to further engage in conversation. Together, as Manitobans we can move forward in a manner that brings a peaceful conclusion to this movement and provides an actionable timeline that removes the COVID-19 mandates.

We would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Province, the City of Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Police Service for your cooperation in facilitating this peaceful protest.

Sincerely,

Freedom Convoy Winnipeg

CC:

Hon. Audrey Gordon, Minister of Health, MLA for Southdale
Wab Kinew, Leader of the Official Opposition, MLA for Fort Rouge
Brian Bowman, Mayor, City of Winnipeg
Hon. Candice Bergen, Leader of the Opposition, MP for Portage–Lisgar
Right Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, MP for Papineau