

Canada Freedom Rights Movement

Will Say Statement of Margaret (Maggie) Hope Braun

Background

1. I am 37 years old mother of two and I live and work in Peterborough, Ontario. I am in the natural health field as a hydrotherapist.
2. For the past 12 years I was a stay-at-home mother and homeschooled both of my children. I have been an organizer of community gardens and helped with community church organizations. Prior to my children, I was more politically active meaning that I voted, participated in the political system, doing my civil duty. I ran in the 2011 Federal Election for the Canadian Action Party. I am a born and raised Canadian with a background in environmental studies graduating from Sir Sandford Fleming College.
3. I was raised in an atheist and protestant home. I grew up travelling the world with my parents through CUSO and learned to appreciate many cultures throughout my travels and longed for a deeper connection to cultural traditions of my own mixed ancestry. To Me , being Canadian meant participating on our political process, respecting democracy, respecting multiculturalism, upholding and appreciating rights and freedoms, celebrating common Canadian holidays and enjoying the outdoors, and Canadian "cottage life". I have always been deeply moved by the messaging around Remembrance Day, my grandfather being a strong voice for Canadian WW2 Veterans and the Algonquin Regiment.
4. It wasn't until the Convoy in Ottawa that I got a sense of what it is to be Canadian and the Canadian spirit. Canada truly is very multicultural and that was evident at the Protest. In Canada, we believe we live in a free country and that we have rights and we were in Ottawa standing up for those rights. People immigrate to Canada because the value the freedoms and rights we have here. The Convoy made me feel, for the first time, very proud to be Canadian, to stand with fellow Canadians of all races and backgrounds and defend our rights and freedoms in sight of the whole world. To inspire people around the world to do the same. I was glad to be there to support that.

What led me to be involved in the Protest

5. As previously mentioned, I have always been a world traveller and when all other countries started lifting their mandates and Canada did not, I couldn't understand why. Not being able to travel really pushed me over the edge with respect to the Government Covid restrictions.

6. I have breathing issues and was many times unable to wear a mask, as were my children and husband. We faced constant discrimination for our reluctance and inability
7. My husband works in engineering and was not allowed to go to work due to his vaccination status. Thankfully, he was able to work from home but we were already having marriage difficulties due to being a neurodiverse couple and his presence, the change to our normal routines and the shutdown of all social events exasperated this. When everyone else was brought back to the office, he had to stay home working remotely. Our marriage did not thrive during the covid restrictions.
8. I also heard what was happening to the University students and government employees losing their jobs due to their vaccine status. This caused me a lot of fear and anxiety.
9. I used to live in British Columbia and still have many friends there who were feeling the same way I was. About 50 of those friends, that didn't live as close to Ottawa as I did, supported me going and some sent me money that helped pay for my hotel and gas money while I was there. I felt I was there not only to represent myself but to represent all my friends and fellow Canadians who were not able to make it to Ottawa.

My Experience in Ottawa

10. My first experience with the Convoy was when they passed through Port Hope and where I went with my children and a friend to stand on the road to support them as they passed through. After this experience, I reached out to another friend to go with me to Ottawa on the first Saturday of the Protest. On Friday before we left, we were reading the Global News and they were reporting the Protest in a certain way. They reported that they did not have an official number of how many rapes had taken place in the city since the convey arrived." After reading this, I became anxious by the extent the news media would go to cast the convey and its supporters in a bad light. I questioned whether I should still attend but we ended up going anyway to see for ourselves.
11. Upon our arrival the first weekend, we saw that what was being reported on the news was the opposite of what was actually happening on the ground. I witnessed grown men in tears hugging each other, Sikhs handing out tea on the street, and Quebecois uniting with the rest of the country. A group of men helped me find my vehicle when I had forgotten where I had parked and my phone battery died due to the temperature. There was no sense that anyone was there to hurt anyone else. It was the most gentlemen-like experience that I have ever felt. As a female, I felt I could embrace my femininity, like the men were there to protect and care for us. I returned for the second weekend and returned the Wednesday after that, staying until the very end, February 19th.

12. The whole experience was very peaceful, and I did not witness any hate, aside from news reporter standing back and falsely reporting us to be terrorists. I did not see any hateful flags, I only felt and saw an outpouring of love and Canadian spirit. I mainly saw flags representative of Canada, Every Child Matters and LGBTQ. I saw people with masks who were curious and who approached, and I welcomed them to the space. These people came, and saw, and walked away with me and everyone else being kind to them while they were there. I did see a lot of respect being shown at the Terry Fox Memorial and the War Memorial. The trucks were there, it felt, to keep us safe and to give us a safe space to be protected after many months of being isolated, discriminated against and gaslight for expressing this experience.
13. I witnessed the Centennial Flame being shut off; this flame is supposed to symbolize our constitution. On the last day, I also witnessed barricades being erected at Parliament Hill which is where protestors are legally supposed to be allowed to go. They made sure that everyone saw them put the barricades up, telling us that we were not welcome there. It did not matter if people came with the purist intentions wanting the government to acknowledge their frustrations, they were not welcome.
14. I did donate \$20 to the Convoy and as a result, all my information was released to the public when GiveSendGo was hacked. Once I was at the Protest, I started pulling out cash from the ATM as I was concerned that my bank account was going to be frozen due to my donating or participating in the Protest. It was so out of the ordinary to be concerned about such a thing in Canada.
15. When I returned the second time, I also brought toe warmers, emergency blankets for people sleeping in cars, NeoCitran, and ColdFX. There were people whose immune systems were wearing down due to the cold weather and with a interest in health, I did what I could to help out.
16. I witnessed camera crews from CBC, CTV, or other mainstream media, be brought in with a police escort. They would have 50 to 100 police officers standing in uniform so they could get their photoshoot to show the police presence in Ottawa. The protestors just stood back perplexed by what they were seeing.
17. The Government and Medias' divide and conquer strategy was failing. Canadian born and immigrant, Men and Women, Black and White, Gay and Straight, Athiest and Religious, First Nation and colonist decedents, Retired RCMP and Residential School Survivors, Quebeqious and Albertians, were all represented and came together in the protest. The healing circle that manifested in Ottawa was very powerful. The world was watching

through thousands of live videos. The police vs. the protestors was the last card of division to be played.

18. The level of so called “emergency” kept escalating. First, it was just Ottawa, then Ontario, then Canada. New police forces arrived after each escalation and saw only peaceful protests, so they couldn’t just arrest us. Then they would call the next level of emergency and bring in fresh police. On February 14th, Valentines Day, the day the Emergency Act was invoked, almost every police officer was offered a rose from the protestors. Hundreds of roses filled the streets around the Parliament. Likely, the majority of the police did not want to participate in what would clearly be a violation of our civil liberties, so the government invoked the Emergencies’ Act, revoking our right to peaceful protest and therefore us.
19. On this last day, the police were very aggressive. There were at least three different levels of police present on the ground that day. They would take a certain area over and then they would push forward some more before putting up a lower-level police officer to stand there for a while until they were ready to make their next push with the riot police. There were non-English speaking, military-like police officers present, who wore green uniforms and had no identifying markers on them. There were snipers on the rooftops and police officers on horseback. Tanks were there shooting rubber bullets and some sort of gas into the crowd. The riot police were very aggressive and didn’t care if you were in their way, they would go right through you, and you would be arrested on the other side. The riot police were fully armed and tore up all the signs. It didn’t matter if someone was standing there with a peace sign, they were tackled to the ground.
20. It felt to me like watching the Titanic sink. There were musicians in the street singing songs of freedom and being pushed back as the police moved forward. It was startling to see that kind of force used on Canadian citizens.
21. As the protesters were pushed off Wellington onto O`Conner, I looked back to see around a thousand people in the crowd behind me and in front of me I could see Parliament Hill and the police line. This was a surreal moment for me. There was a man standing handing out large printed Charters and I took three copies. I put a charter in front of each of three police units and told them that they may have been able to justify there actions up until this point to get the trucks but now their actions were not justifiable, that if they took one more step, they would be trampling our charter into the ground with their boots”. I knelt down in the center of O`Connor, the Charter in front of me. Next to me, there was a Muslim man on his mat praying to Allah and three others near me on their knees praying. As they moved forward, I tucked my arms head and was thrown behind the riot line as they stomped on my back and pointed a rifle at my head.
22. I was arrested. The police officer I was handed off to after my arrest saw a tear rolling down my cheek as I looked back at the charter caught in a wind gust circling in the air. His first words to me were “I want you to know that you guys won this today. There is nothing more you could have done to prove to the world that this was a peaceful protest, and it will be known”. I think he was surprised at how rough they were with me and didn’t

realize I was a woman until I was in front of him, as I was wearing a large jacket and am very tall.

23. After my arrest, I was given the option of being taken outside of Ottawa or being booked and charged. I chose to leave the City and I was driven 30 minutes outside of town in the middle of nowhere to the same place the trucks were being towed to. I heard of others choosing to be booked and charged who were also just driven outside of town and dropped off.
24. I now suffer from PTSD and still suffer from pain in my back after being stomped on. I require ongoing treatment from a Chiropractor, Osteopath, and physiotherapist and attend psychotherapy almost weekly. I have many flashbacks of a rifle being pointed at my head. After learning more about trauma, I realized that my window of tolerance is now quite small and after this event my tolerance for stress, conflict and any intrusion on my personal space is quite low.
25. We all attended the Protest to unite our country and all shared that same love of freedom and it was a beautiful thing to witness.