

The NCC helped convoy dig in Ottawa Citizen April 14, 2023 A1, 7
By Ken Rubin

The National Capital Commission's role as an enabler of letting convoy vehicles use their parkways to come to downtown Ottawa and park on their roadways and use their Confederation Park property is not widely seen as that important.

But documents from the NCC obtained through an Access to Information and Privacy request tell just how important their decisions were.

On the use of NCC roads, the NCC Security Advisor, Phil Kibsey, warned his superiors in a January 24, 2022 e mail to that we may want to consider closing the parkways with barriers to vehicle traffic in order to avoid disruptions". That did not happen.

Instead, on January 27, 2022, NCC's Land Manager Ian Grabrina, e mailed Ottawa Police Service (OPS) saying the NCC "authorizes the City of Ottawa and OPS to close the Sir John A. MacDonald Parkway (SJAM), Sir George Etenne Cartier Parkway (SGEC) and Aviation Parkway in response to the inbound truck convoy(s)... but that (these parkways) will be the primary routes used (by the convoy) into the downtown core and not (be the) secondary routes."

Grabrina also indicated to OPS that "the NCC approves the use of Queen Elizabeth Driveway (QED) from Pretoria Bridge north to Laurier for protest vehicles overflow storage". Additionally, he wrote that "the NCC approves the use of SJAM and SGEC for protest vehicle overflow storage in curb-side lanes" (meaning convoy vehicle parking allowed on parts of those roads).

On letting convoy organizers use Confederation Park as a home base, NCC security advisor Phillip Kibsey warned his colleagues in a January 24, 2022 e mail that the convoy organizers' intent was to use Confederation Park "to bbq, (set up) food tents, porta potties, medical tents etc", and that "regardless of whether permits are issued (to the convey to use the Park) or not they plan on using the park".

In addition, Ian Grabrina indicated in a same day e mail that the coming convoy people wanted to "use Confed Park as a home base... until such time as the government met their demands."

But the NCC did not quickly erect barriers to prevent Confederation Park's occupation. Shortly thereafter, convoy people made Confederation Park a base erecting a food shack, storing propane and diesel gas containers there.

By January 28, 2022, Ian Grabrina noted that "the escalation of encampment-style protest along Freiman Lane, adjacent to Confederation Park (new structures, fuel tanks, ongoing fires and hay bales) needed OPS's immediate help". Otherwise, "this fringe protest group will entrench itself at the location causing significant burden to the NCC, NAC, Parks Canada, PSPC, Bytown Museum, City of Ottawa and the OPS".

Only after several days, on February 4, 2022, did NCC Chair Toby Nussbaum, e mail Ottawa police chief Peter Sloly, authorizing OPS to clear out "the illegal camping and parking", requesting the police act as the NCC agent under the Ontario Trespass to Property Act.

Next day, the City of Ottawa's general manager, emergency and protective services, Kim Ayotee emailed the NCC and OPS before the clear out happened, saying he hoped that "we are also gathering

evidence in order for Fire Services to lay charges!". No such charges seemed to have been pursued.

The forewarned overrun of Confederation Park, along with the Wellington Street area and Coventry Road site occupation became the symbols of failed prevention and community disarray.

Official and community-run inquiries have largely put the responsibility for allowing the lengthy convoy siege of Ottawa on other actors - the Ottawa Police, the City of Ottawa, the absent Ontario government and federal security authorities.

But let's not forget and hold accountable the NCC for their disastrous miscalculations.

Ken Rubin, an investigative researcher and community activist, helped set up the resident's inquiry into the convoy occupation. He is reachable via kenrubin.ca