



News / Local News

'Here for the long-haul': No end in sight to Coutts blockade on Day 7

Protesters got a boost to their cause as they wrapped their sixth day of blocking the only 24-hour border crossing in Alberta when Premier Jason Kenney said the province would move toward lifting restrictions, including the Restriction Exemption Program, early next week.

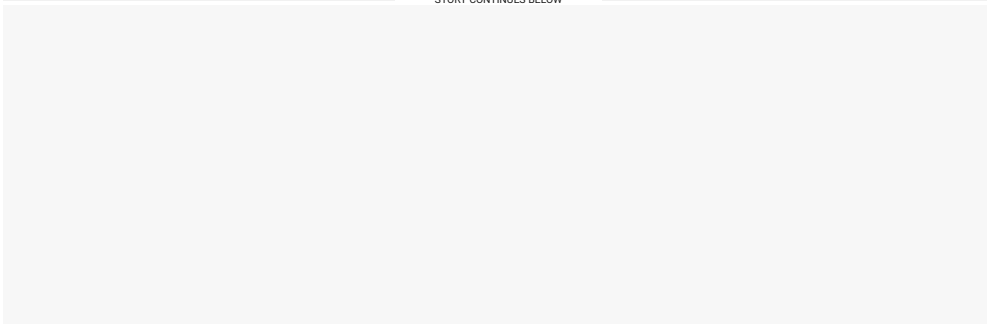
Josh Aldrich
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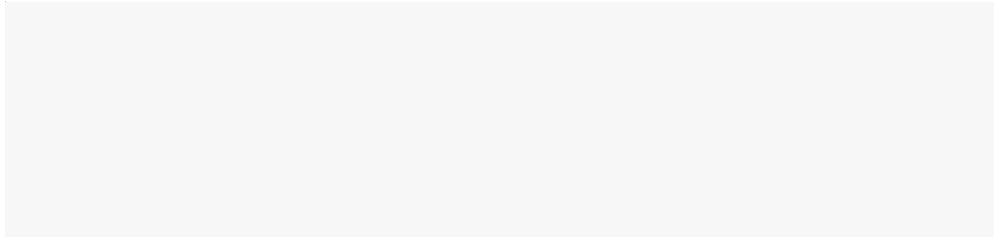
Trucks were coming and going at the Coutts border crossing on Thursday, February 3, 2022. PHOTO BY DARREN MAKOWICHUK/POSTMEDIA

Fried egg sandwiches served as a victory breakfast for protesters at one of two truck blockades near Coutts on Friday morning.

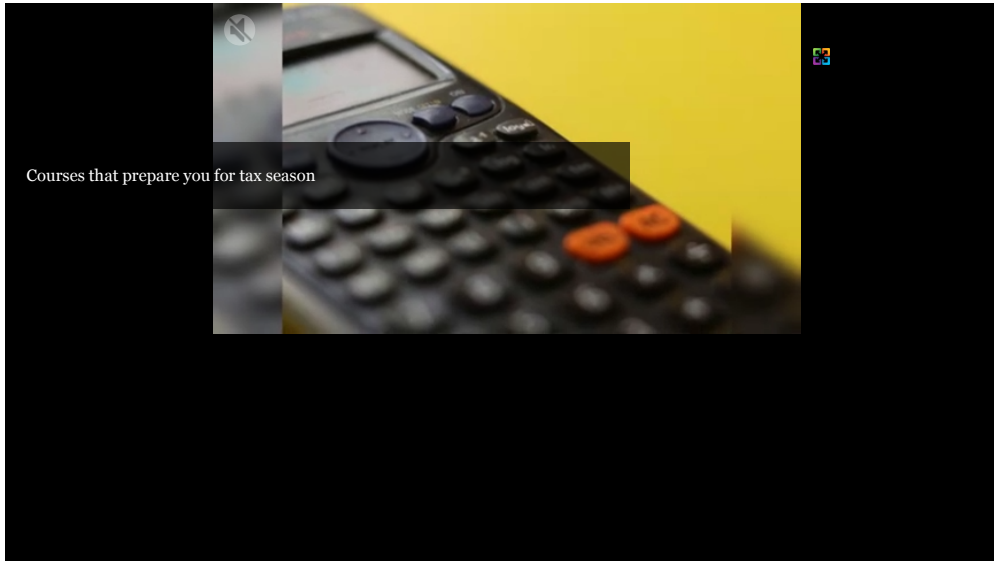
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Protesters got a boost to their cause as they wrapped their sixth day of blocking the only 24-hour border crossing in Alberta when Premier Jason Kenney said the province would move toward lifting restrictions, including the Restriction Exemption Program, early next week.



But it is just one small battle for truckers and their supporters.

“He makes it sound like it was his own idea and this had nothing to do with it. We take it as a win, to an extent,” said a protester named Frank who declined to give his last name while huddled around a bonfire at the blockade along Highway 4 at Highway 501. “But federally, it needs to change too. The provincial thing is not what this is about, it’s the whole thing.

“Kenney’s just following the suit... He’s not a conservative leader; he didn’t have the balls to do it.”

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The blockade has been in place since Jan. 29, forming in support of Freedom Convoy 2022 which has clogged Ottawa for the past week. Initially, truckers were protesting vaccine mandates to cross the border which went in place on Jan. 15, but the protest has since evolved as an affront to all health orders and mandates.

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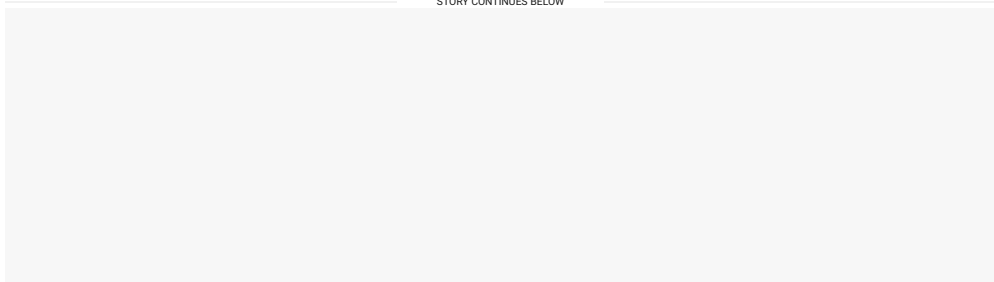
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RCMP Cpl. Gina Slaney said on Friday morning that communication remains open with the protesters and their legal council.

RCMP Cpl. Curtis Peters, told the Canadian Press that he understands the frustrations of Coutts Mayor Jim Willett, who has been calling for an end to the protest due to the impacts on the small Alberta village. However, he did not have an answer for how long the “unlawful protests” would last.

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“I don’t have a line in the sand. This is a constant state of evolving evaluation right? This changes minute by minute, hour by hour.” he

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There had been some talk that the demonstration would move up Highway 2 to the Alberta Legislative Assembly on Saturday, but it appears those plans have changed.

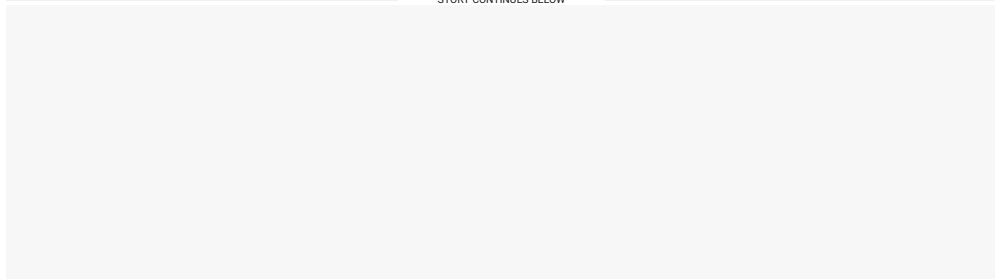
Frank says they are resolute in their goals to stay until all health orders are lifted.



"We're here for the long-haul," he said. "There are people saying they'll be here for months. Something's got to change; the last two years have sucked.

"It's the working-class guys, wearing Carrhart. It's not the people in the city. They're not suffering like these guys are, for sure."

Alberta NDP leader Rachel Notley tweeted her frustrations out on Friday morning, calling on the province to seek an emergency injunction to end the blockade.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW







Rachel Notley  
@RachelNotley

Another full blockade at Coutts.

This is out of control. It must stop.

We need the UCP to go to court, secure an emergency injunction and compel the authorities to end this blockade and reopen Alberta's primary border crossing. #ableg #yyc

7:58 AM · Feb 4, 2022 

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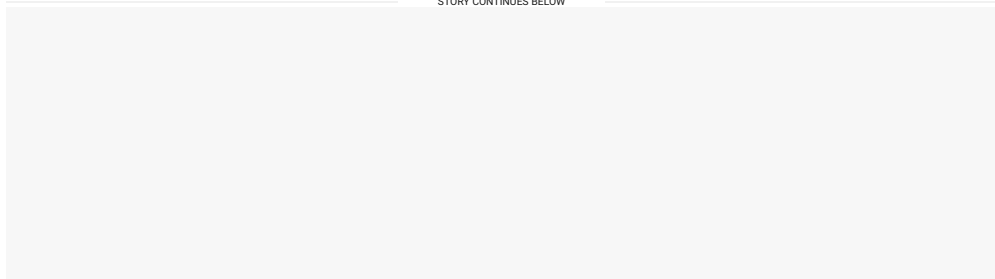
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Calgary Mayor Jyoti Gondek also lashed out at protesters in an interview with Global News on Friday morning, pointing to all of the impacts of the blockade.

"I'm not sure what they're protesting. It's a freedom rally, and you're protesting the fact that you don't have freedoms yet you're free to get in a giant truck and block a border and no one's doing anything about it. I don't understand what freedoms you're missing. What are they actually protesting? Are they protesting the ability for kids in Coutts to get to school? Are they protesting beef, because the ranchers and beef producers are a little bit upset with their product being stuck at the border. I wouldn't call it this discourse. I think it's chaos."

The Alberta beef industry on Thursday joined together in calling for an end to the blockade.

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Bob Lowe, president of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, said the industry is entirely reliant on international trade with 50 per cent of the beef produced in Canada being exported to the U.S.

He respects the right to protest but said this has gone too far.

"The right to protest is great, but as soon as they closed the border they lost my sympathy. I cannot support a blockade like that," he said. "Our whole agriculture industry relies on free and open trade — it doesn't matter why a border is stopped, I'm not going to support it."

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