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Today, the Courts Drew a Line — and Every Canadian Should Pay Attention

Today, January 16, 2026, Canada’s Federal Court of Appeal confirmed something that will go down in Canadian History: the federal government overstepped its authority when it invoked the Emergencies Act, and it has now lost its appeal.

Two courts have now reached the same conclusion. The legal threshold for declaring a national emergency was not met. Existing laws were already available. And the extraordinary powers used by the federal government were not justified under Canadian law.

This decision is not symbolic, academic, or merely historical. It goes to the heart of how much power a government can claim over the lives of its citizens — their money, their mobility, and their fundamental rights — when it decides dissent has gone too far. I write this not just as an observer of the courts, but as someone who stood on Parliament Hill during the convoy protests. I watched rows of faceless, nameless, hired force advance — not against criminals or terrorists — but against citizens. Ordinary people. Truck drivers. Families. Protesters. It was terrifying. Not because of chaos in the streets, but because of what it revealed: how quickly a government can turn the very institutions meant to protect the rule of law into instruments of enforcement against its own people. This was not policing under ordinary law. It was authority emboldened by emergency powers — powers that bypassed normal safeguards, accountability, and restraint. And it was not just force. It was language.

Canadians were openly demeaned by their own government. They were labeled a “small fringe.” They were described as “unacceptable.” The country was asked, publicly, whether we should “tolerate” them. That moment should chill anyone who values a free society. When a government stops speaking about its people as citizens and starts speaking about them as a problem to be managed, the next steps are rarely gentle. This was not leadership under pressure. It was moral distancing — and it made what followed easier to justify.

What followed was exclusion. Canadians were told where they could and could not go. They were barred from boarding planes and trains. They were turned away from restaurants, workplaces, and public spaces. They were separated from family, from livelihoods, and from normal life — not because they had committed crimes, but because they did not comply.

Mobility, participation, and basic freedoms were transformed into conditional privileges. All of it was framed as temporary. All of it was described as necessary. All of it was enforced with certainty and zero tolerance for dissent.

The Emergencies Act allowed the government to freeze bank accounts without warrants, pressure financial institutions into acting as enforcement arms, and collapse the line between lawful protest and punishable dissent. Canadians were told there was no alternative.

They were also told, repeatedly and unequivocally, to “get the shot to protect others,” that it would “stop with you,” that it was “safe and effective,” with no room for discussion, no acknowledgment of uncertainty, and no tolerance for questioning. These assurances were delivered with moral certainty and enforced with social, professional, and financial consequences.

Over time, many of those claims were softened, revised, or quietly walked back. But the damage had already been done. Trust was broken — not because people asked questions, but because they were punished for asking them.

The courts have now said what many Canadians felt instinctively: the legal justification for this level of state power simply was not there. The situation did not meet the definition of a national emergency, and the government crossed a constitutional line.

This ruling matters to every Canadian, regardless of where they stood on the convoy. Because if governments can declare emergencies when faced with disruption, political pressure, or inconvenience, then none of our rights are as secure as we assume. Financial security becomes conditional. Protest becomes permission-based. And the rule of law becomes selectively applied.

And this pattern does not stop at the federal level.

We are seeing the same logic take hold in municipalities across the country. When an elected councillor steps out of line, asks uncomfortable questions, or challenges spending and decisions, the response is increasingly punitive rather than democratic.

Dissent is not debated — it is disciplined. Pay is suspended. Sanctions are imposed. Integrity commissioners, meant to safeguard ethical governance, are increasingly weaponized as enforcement tools rather than impartial arbiters.

The message is unmistakable: comply, or be punished. Fall in line, or be silenced — financially, professionally, and reputationally.

This is not accountability. It is control by process. And it mirrors, at a smaller scale, the same impulse that drove the misuse of emergency powers at the federal level.

The federal government appealed this ruling because it wanted the courts to defer — to accept its judgment without meaningful scrutiny. The court refused.

That refusal matters. It reaffirmed a core democratic principle: governments do not get to be the final judge of their own power.

This case is not about liking or disliking a protest. It is about whether Canadians live under laws — or under emergency declarations invoked when authority feels challenged. I stood on Parliament Hill and saw how quickly that line can blur.

Today, the courts reminded the government that it does not sit above the law.

And that matters more than ever.



When Common Sense Goes Up in Flames

Common Sense Health – Diana Gifford-Jones

By any measure, what happened in Switzerland a couple weeks ago is a human catastrophe. A room filled with young people full of promise was turned into a scene of lifelong grief. Families shattered. Futures erased. Survivors left with horrible scars.

Authorities will do what they must. Investigators will trace the ignition point. Building inspectors will scrutinize ceiling materials, fire exits, sprinkler systems, and renovations. Prosecutors will decide whether criminal negligence was involved. All of this matters. We should insist that regulations are enforced, and that those who ignored them are held accountable.

But more troubling than regulatory failure, this was also a failure of common sense. That night, someone thought it was a good idea to set off flaming champagne sparklers in a crowded, enclosed space. Not outdoors in open air. But inside, with people packed shoulder-to-shoulder. That decision set in motion consequences that will echo for decades.

And the truly chilling truth is this: it will happen again.

After every nightclub fire, warehouse inferno, or stadium stampede, we say “how could anyone have allowed this?” And yet, it happens again. Because novelty and spectacle overpower judgment. Because risk feels theoretical.

We like to think safety is something others provide. But real safety begins between our ears. When was the last time you didn’t do something because your analytical internal voice said, “This isn’t smart”?

A snowstorm is rolling in. You’ve been waiting months for that weekend getaway. The hotel is booked. The car is packed. Do you pause? Or do you say, “We’ll be fine” as icy roads turn highways into high-speed skating rinks?

Your smoke detector hasn’t chirped in years. You can’t remember the last time you changed the battery. You assume it’s working.

There’s no carbon monoxide detector in the house. You’ve meant to buy one. But it keeps getting bumped to next weekend.

Your barbecue sits against the siding of your home. You know embers can blow. You know vinyl melts. But you’ve done it a hundred times without incident—so why move it now?

Your phone buzzes while driving. You glance down. Just for a second.

These are not rare behaviors. They are risks that get normalized. Most of the time, nothing happens. And that’s what makes them dangerous.

The tragedy in Switzerland was not caused by mystery physics. It was not an unforeseeable freak accident. Fire and sparks in confined spaces have been setting buildings alight since long before electricity was invented. Every firefighter knows it. Building codes reflect it. Insurance companies price it.

So what possessed someone to light flaming devices indoors? The answer is brutally simple: the same human instinct that tells us, “It’ll be fine.”

The heartbreaking reality is that many of the victims in Switzerland were young. They did not light the flame. They were simply there, trusting.

If there is anything to be salvaged from grief on this scale, it is a renewed commitment to thinking ahead and to pausing in the moment.

The families of victims are living with terrible grief. Our hearts are with them. But sympathy is not enough. If we truly honor the victims, we must change how casually we flirt with danger.

I’ve written about fireworks before, and I am not a fan. It is beautiful what they do in the night sky with ever more sophisticated displays. But without caution and common sense, there will be more horrible accidents.

In celebrating life’s joys, let’s choose to marvel at the things that will keep us alive, not make us dead.

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