

Local News

# COVID-19 pandemic unmask anger on Parliament Hill, picnickers elsewhere

Bruce Deachman

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“5G kills”

“End the lockdown now”

“No Saudi vision”

“Honk for freedom”

“#pizzagate”

“Say no to masks”

“Make Canada righteous and godly again.”

“An iron curtain has descended across Canada”

“Unmask female pedophiles in government”

“Wanted: A Canadian Trump”

Very few in the crowd wore masks, but perhaps the handful of signature yellow vests on site did the job just as well. The protest was organized by The Canadian Revolution, a group dedicated “to ending the systemic corruption in our Parliamentary system,” its website listing what it calls 34 examples of treason committed by the government. The group promised to stay on the Hill until “every one of our demands are met.”

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Canada Day 2020 in the Byward Market. TONY CALDWELL/Postmedia

By mid-afternoon, the cacophony created by so many causes was almost deafening. As Dominion carillonner Andrea McCrady played her 30-minute afternoon Canada Day concert on the Peace Tower's 53 bells, pounding out The Log Driver's Waltz, a megaphoned preacher (of sorts) was standing on the ledge of the Centennial flame urging listeners to "repent and be converted," while refusing to budge for tourists hoping for a clear selfie shot ("I was here first," he rebuffed one visitor in Old Testament style). At the same time, an array of organized speakers addressed the crowd, warning of people like George Soros and "so-called medical experts."

"Our plan," said one, "is to infect as many people as we can with the truth."

Another described these times as "the summer of united non-compliance."

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## TRENDING

Fears this year of the spread of COVID-19 (not to mention the COVID-related lack of programming) left Parliament Hill largely abandoned by the tens of thousands who typically congregate there to celebrate each Canada Day as party-goers found other venues and ways to mark the nation's 153rd birthday.

Instead, Canada's front lawn was occupied Wednesday by hundreds of protesters and proselytizers, many carrying signs urging Canadians to answer the clarion call of numerous causes, including (but not limited to):

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“Make Trudeau a drama teacher again”

“Enough tyranny”

“Hugs over masks”

“We love Alberta oil”

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while enjoying picnics and books, or tossing footballs or Frisbees, a modern-day version of pointillist painter Georges Seurat's *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*.

"We'd usually go to a friend's house for a big house party and barbecue on Canada Day," said Kathleen Chandler, who along with three twentysomething friends sat playing cards in the park. "But since we're distancing, this is our social bubble. We usually avoid downtown because there are so many tourists."

"This is kind of nice," added Gareth Rurak. "It's not as insane as normal, so it's actually nice to be in the park."



From left, Kathleen Chandler, Gareth Rurak, Tyler Seal and Lisa Westlund spent Canada Day enjoying a picnic and games in Major's Hill Park. BRUCE DEACHMAN/Postmedia

In the ByWard Market, Lisa and Randy Henderson were making the best of a bad situation. The Pickering couple had booked a three-day Canada Day stay in Ottawa — their third consecutive year coming here — back in January, to be followed by an Independence Day weekend in Vermont. The U.S.

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Despite the pandemic, Randy and Lisa Henderson decided to go ahead with their plans to spend Canada Day in Ottawa. The Pickering residents confess they were somewhat disappointed. BRUCE DEACHMAN/Postmedia

Arriving Tuesday afternoon, they discovered some patios open, but little else. Lunch at the Château Laurier, a walk along the canal. “We’re chilling,” said Lisa. “But at least Randy’s not grabbing my hand, rushing me to get a spot on Parliament Hill.”

“This sucks,” added Randy. “Everything about this sucks, but we’re trying to make the best of it.”

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Canada Day on Wellington Street in Ottawa on Wednesday, July 1, 2020. Tony Caldwell

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A father and daughter celebrate Canada Day Wednesday in Ottawa. TONY CALDWELL/Postmedia

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OTTAWA – Canada Day in the market in Ottawa Wednesday July 1, 2020. Tony Caldwell TONY CALDWELL/Postmedia

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There were more protesters than Canada Day celebrations on the Hill Wednesday. TONY CALDWELL/Postmedia

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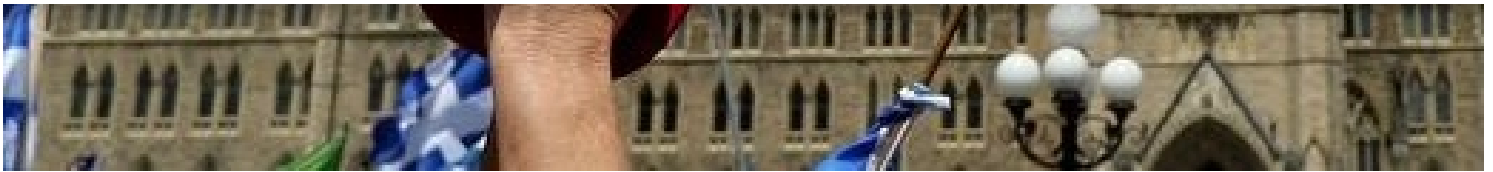
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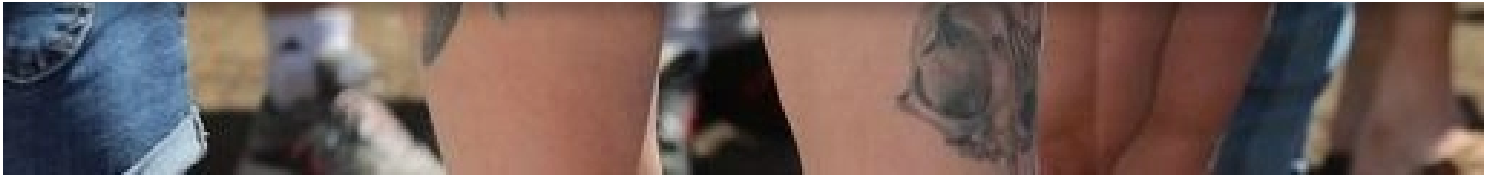
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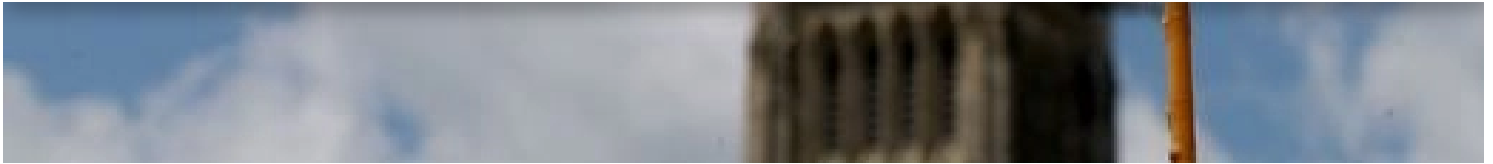




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Venezuelan expat Jesus da Armas was spending his third July 1 here in Canada and the ByWard Market. Despite a few incidents such as the recent shooting in Nova Scotia, Canada, he says, is a safe country in which to live. BRUCE DEACHMAN/Postmedia



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- 3 One person dead, at least 20 displaced after McArthur Avenue fire**
- 4 Masks may soon be mandatory inside all public premises. Here's what you need to know**  
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- 5 Egan: When 'content' means choosing the day you die**

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