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▲ People in support of the "Freedom Convoy" to Ottawa gathered at Peace Arch State Park on January 29 to protest vaccine mandates for truck drivers. Photo by Grace McCarthy

## Mandate ...

From page 1

up I-5 in support of the truckers.

Dozens of trucks with large American flags attached lined the Peace Arch State Park parking lot. The Flame newspaper, an alter-

native newspaper that includes Covid-19 stories that counter county and state health officials' data, was handed out at the event. People held signs including "End all border mandates" and "Stand for health freedom."

This was the second of such border protests under the Peace Arch in the past two weeks, with the last being against Covid-19 travel restrictions on January 23.

Edge Logistics and Transport Inc. vice president Dennis Wilson said he was unaware of the peaceful protests at the Peace Arch this weekend but was pleased the port of entry remained open. Truckers have blocked ports of entry in Alberta and Montana and on the East Coast in protest, closing the border to northbound travelers.

"Can you imagine what that would be like here, on I-5?" Wilson said.

Edge is a shipping company that offers daily pick-ups and deliveries from the U.S. and Canada. Based in Blaine, it transports goods mainly between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C.

Wilson said Edge was lucky its nine truck drivers are all vaccinated, giving them no issues crossing the border.

Kam-Way Transportation Inc. founder and CEO Kam Sihota said his company has drivers unwilling to get vaccinated and so they have been put on different routes that would not require them to carry supply into Canada.

Kam-Way is a Blaine-based freight brokerage with a network of over 15,000 carriers nationwide, according to its website. It has a fleet of 140 trucks, 80

tractors and 600 more company trailers.

Sihota showed some sympathy for unvaccinated Canadian truckers. "They're in fear their livelihoods are in jeopardy," he said.

With the Occupational Safety and Health Administration withdrawing its vaccination and testing requirement January 26, unvaccinated U.S. employees of large employers with 100 or more employees are protected. However, the Canadian government's border requirement prevents unvaccinated truckers from being able to travel across the U.S./Canada border, lowering their value to their employers and possibly putting them at risk of losing their job.

Both Sihota and Wilson said this only stresses the already buckled supply chain. There's a demand for truck drivers, warehouses are overstocked, shipping costs are rising and Canadian retail customers are in high demand for product, they said.

"A lot of regular retail customers are asking for double, triple the amount of product being shipped into Canada," Sihota said. He added there's a huge shortage of trust for carriers headed to Canada due to issues crossing the border and U.S. customers often have doubts whether they will receive their Canadian product.

"There are a lot of customers in Canada that are freaking out," Wilson said. "Plus, they're pissed with what's going on."

Grace McCarthy contributed to the reporting of this article.

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