

# The Peterborough Rally

By Eric Blair

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Maxime Bernier and Randy Hillier at the Peterborough Rally

Early Friday morning on April 23, 2021, we checked the weather to find Peterborough would be 16 Degrees Celsius (and sunny) on Saturday – with little or no chance of rain. That settled it. We would drive to Peterborough to hear Randy Hillier and Maxime Bernier speak against the lockdowns that have been imposed across Canada for over a year.

In past weeks, we attended rallies in Whitby and Cobourg, met some nice people and enjoyed the sunshine and outdoor air. But Cobourg had a heavy police presence at their rallies; we wanted to go somewhere a little more joyful. The idea of a live

band and enthusiastic speakers – not to mention a large crowd was just what we needed to raise our spirits.

It took almost two hours to drive from Whitby to Confederation Square in downtown Peterborough. While the police had cordoned off all the streets approaching the park, we were still able to walk from our distant parking spot all the way to the rally. We weren't alone. The streets were crawling with groups of people all wanting to be part of something, a little larger than themselves.



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The crowd was made up of people of all ages, from little kids who frolicked with one another on the grass, to elderly people who had had enough of lockdowns. Randy Hillier estimated there were 1,200 people in attendance – all polite, cheerful and happy

to be there.

As we arrived, the band was playing the National Anthem and a young woman was standing at the microphone singing it beautifully. Around the park, we could see hundreds of people chatting with one another and enjoying the day.

Soon the speeches started and we were treated to some first-class oratory. Speaker after speaker made the case for stopping the never-ending province-wide lockdowns – in favour of directing government efforts to hot spots and helping those most vulnerable to the virus.

Children have little to fear from Covid-19, but schools all across the province have been shut down. People have lost their livelihoods and thousands of businesses are closed or bankrupt. Never before have governments embarked on such a damaging policy with so little debate or concern.

Many vulnerable people, including a dear friend, have serious health issues. They are receiving no care. Unless you have the 'Holy Malady' called Covid, there is no room for you in Ontario's hospitals.

You may think this is due to an overwhelmed hospital system, but you would be wrong. According to a recent article by Conrad Black, there are fewer than 2,000 Covid patients in intensive care in all of

Canada. Considering that our population is more than 37 million, perhaps the government should be adding hospital beds, rather than halting health care for those who need it desperately.



A group of people at the Peterborough Rally

Randy Hillier told us there were 1,200 people at the rally. Judging from my vantage point in the crowd, it could easily be so. But don't forget – this battle against the lockdowns has been fought for months by a handful of individuals, walking downtown with signs and pamphlets (in all kinds of weather). It must be gratifying to them to see so many people in attendance.

As Randy promised, this is only the start. More and more people are coming out, hoping to stop this madness. Soon thousands will be marching in the

streets, peacefully and respectfully to assert their rights as a free people.

As you might expect, Maxime Bernier and Randy Hillier made the best speeches. But rather than speaking from a prepared text – consisting of drivel and boilerplate – you could feel the passion in their voices. It was very moving to be a part of this rally.

A former military man, who spoke for a few moments, invited veterans in the crowd to stand with him. When six of them (of various ages) moved forward, he introduced them, asked where they served and spoke about the sacrifices soldiers have made over the years. The juxtaposition of soldiers fighting for freedom, while governments seem intent on ending it, seemed particularly ironic.

Another speaker who had spent a lot of his own money to buy 'Enough is Enough' T-shirts for the crowd also spoke briefly. And while he was doing so, youngsters of elementary school age, came up to the podium to drop loonies in a box for the purchase of more T-shirts for future rallies.

The police presence was everywhere, but for the most part they acted respectfully and minded their own business. It was only at the end of the rally, when the police forced their way into the crowd to issue 'a ticket' to Maxime Bernier, that things grew tense.

Hundreds of people moved towards the police to shout 'Shame', 'Shame'. The military man who spoke earlier, came back to the microphone to calm the crowd and keep the peace. There was no need. This crowd was civilized, peaceful, friendly and merely wanted to make their voices heard.

We left the rally after two hours. It was another lovely day. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. It was nice being part of something a little larger than yourself.



*Sample signs at the Peterborough Rally.*

*Eric Blair is a pen name used by a local writer who would prefer to remain anonymous.*

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