

## **ANTI-AUTHORITY AND MILITIA MOVEMENTS IN CANADA**

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Academic explorations of anti-authority movements are virtually nonexistent in Canada. We have no reliable primary data or empirical insights into Freeman-on-the-Land (FOTL) or other similar contingents. What we do know comes largely from Associate Chief Justice Rooke's decision in *Meads v. Meads* (2012). He refers to the loose collection of individuals and small cells as "vexatious litigants." In the absence of any academic assessment of these movements, we embarked on a one-year pilot project, bringing an exploratory and multi-method approach to this first such study. It is grounded in interviews with law enforcement, lawyers, judges, notaries, and movement adherents (n = 32), along with analysis of open-source data which included media reports, court documents, and movement websites.

In terms of distribution of the movement, the largest concentrations appeared to be in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario. Quantitatively, participants noted the challenge in measuring how expansive adherence to the movement might be. Most, however, roundly rejected the oft-cited estimate of 30,000, suggesting instead numbers closer to 5,000 to 10,000. Another shift in thinking that emerged over the course of our study was that the "movement" we were examining was slightly more diffuse than simply the FOTL bloc. It is, instead, a broadly-based anti-state or anti-authority movement consisting of many diverse, and frequently contradictory arms. In fact, some adherents explicitly distanced themselves from the FOTL label, while others embraced ideologies and practices that bore only passing resemblance to FOTL specifically.

### **Canadian Anti-Authority Factions**

We identified five distinct variants of anti-authority adherents in Canada. As the name suggests, *Detaxers* are a single-issue arm of the movement, focusing primarily on the gamut of taxation regimes, and how they can avoid tax payment of all kinds, but especially income tax. Their rationale is that, as "sovereign" and independent entities, they are not bound by governmental rules and regulations, including the responsibility to pay taxes. This paper is drawn from an earlier report, broadening our understanding of Anti-Authority Movements in Canada. Others focus more on legal arguments revolving around tax loopholes, division of powers, and use of tax dollars. In any event, the core motivating factor is likely

greed more than a true ideological opposition to the concept of taxation. Indeed, the leaders of the Detaxer movement make a considerable amount of money by offering seminars, and even legal representation for a fee.

The Freeman-on-the-Land are the best-known anti-authority movement in Canada and constitute the majority of Canadian anti-authority adherents. Unlike the Detaxers, which are a single-issue anti-authority movement, FOTL adherents engage in active resistance to government beyond the simple question of taxation. They take the “Common Law” precepts to their fullest limits, challenging virtually every expression of government regulation. Despite obvious similarities between Canadian Sovereign Citizens and FOTL, there is a sharp contrast between the core beliefs and methods between both movements, although not as pronounced as their American counterparts. Netolitsky (2016a) implies that one distinction may be along the left-right political spectrum. He characterizes FOTL as leftist, often engaging in environmental, anti-globalization, and pro-marijuana activism (p. 624). Sovereign Citizens, on the other hand, are more ideologically associated with their similarly named American counterparts, who embrace right-wing values surrounding issues such as gun ownership, identity politics, antisemitism, and more recently, anti-Muslim worldviews (*Meads v. Meads*, 2012). They also appear to be much more aggressive in their tactics, language, and behaviour (*Meads v. Meads*, 2012).

There are some references in several interviews to another small bloc with limited visibility and activity in Canada: Moors. Adherents of “Moorish Law” follow a racially charged variant of Sovereign Citizenship that centers around issues and ideas involving African Canadian/American identity. Formally known as the Moorish Divine and National Movement, what seems to distinguish the Moors is that their brand of anti-authoritarianism is more firmly grounded in criticisms of structural forms of racism and discrimination. They insist that they were among the original inhabitants of North America, and thus entitled to self-governing, nation-within-a-nation status (Nelson, 2011). Their strategies, however, are not much different than other antiauthority movements in that they employ pseudo-legal tactics to challenge the status quo. They appear to favour, in particular, laying false liens that then allow them to occupy homes – typically expensive ones. However, according to study participants, the Moors here are generally thought to be a “smokescreen” for illegal activities. Officers are of the mind that they are hiding their motives behind religious and FOTL ideologies.

The final class of anti-authority adherents active in Canada are those who are either genuinely connected to Indigenous communities or who make false claims

to such affiliations. There is a great deal of uncertainty about the identities and status of these actors among our participants with respect to whether they constituted "...a subset of FOTL or are a completely different set of anti-authority umbrella" (Participant 8), as one participant noted, and whether they are authentic or not. Some suggest that parts of the "Idle No More" and other self-governance movements share many core ideas with FOTL, especially with respect to the role of the Canadian and provincial governments in repressing Indigenous communities. Others suggest that the similarities are coincidental and not attributable to an alliance with FOTL.

What also became apparent during the data gathering portion of this study is that a number of groups have emerged that embrace inauthentic Indigenous identities for their own purposes. The Sovereign (sometimes Sovran) Squamish Nation Government (SSNG) is one such entity, but it should not be confused with the authentic Squamish Nation in British Columbia. Indeed, the self-proclaimed "Hereditary Squamish Chief Kiapilano" once attempted to usurp the legitimate band council of the Squamish Nation using pseudo-legal tactics and bullying methods.

### **Core Ideological Concepts of Anti-Authority Adherents in Canada**

Much like the political affiliations of the larger Canadian anti-authority community, it is impossible to describe a single unified ideology embraced by the many different anti-authority groups active in Canada. As noted by Hofmann (forthcoming), individual anti-government adherents and small groups of like-minded individuals tend to take a "bricoleur" approach to their worldview, borrowing heavily from the wide availability of teachings of gurus, journalists, blogs, and radical opinions on the internet. As a result, Canadian anti-authority adherents tend to cobble together individual viewpoints that resonate with their own personal experiences with the government and other authoritative bodies. It is more productive to conceive of Canadian anti-authority ideology as a collection of common beliefs of practices, rather than a monolithic ideological body. Below, we discuss three of the more prominent and common ideological pillars that we have identified across a myriad of different writings and teachings proffered by Canadian antiauthority gurus.

*The Strawman Argument:* A near universal ideological component across multiple interpretations of anti-authority ideology is the concept of the "Strawman," which is conceived as a government-created legal persona that is distinct from the actual physical representation of an individual. In other words,

adherents believe in a double/split person: the “Strawman” is a legal fiction that is beholden to the laws and authority of the state and its agents, while the living/natural person is only subject to natural law. As outlined in Netolitzsky (2016b, pp. 4-6), the “Strawman” argument has several important motifs: (1) that the government tricks individuals into creating the “Strawman” when registering for a birth certificate, (2) the “Strawman” is a parasitic entity that attaches itself to the living/natural person, which allows the government to exercise control over individuals, (3) the primary purpose of the “Strawman” is to deny the individual to natural or inherent rights and freedoms, and (4) the existence of the “Strawman” persona is concealed from public knowledge, but is known and exploited by the government and other legal authorities and their agents. Anti-authority gurus argue that severing the connection between the “Strawman” and the actual human being to which it is attached means that they are no longer beholden to the laws and obligations that are solely attached to the shed legal fiction.

*Joinder:* Adherents believe it is relatively easy to re-enter into a contract with the government if they are not wary, and that the government is constantly attempting to trick them into doing so. Therefore, adherents are on guard against entering into any sort of verbal or written contract with the government which puts them at risk of “joinder:” the recombination of the double/split person into a single entity beholden to the authority of the government. Joinder may occur from a simple act, such as acknowledging and claiming to be their “Strawman” identity when queried by a police officer or judge. As a result, adherents typically eschew the possession and use of any form of official identification and documentation (e.g., Social Insurance Numbers, driver’s licenses, license plates, passports, and so on). They will also employ formulaic pseudo-legal documents, canned phrases, and guarded language when interacting with the government, legal courts, and their agents, meant to shield them from inadvertently engaging in joinder.

*Pseudo-legal tactics:* The basis of the alternative legal system espoused by the majority of Canadian anti-authority adherents, dabblers, and sympathizers is called “Common Law,” which arguably refers to their particular interpretation of an idealized foundation of modern law developed in 13th century England that subsequently spread to its colonies. Based upon a distorted interpretation of common law, adherents believe that, as natural/living persons, they hold equal status with judges before the law. Therefore, they believe that they have the ability to negotiate with the government and other legal entities/individuals as to which laws they are obliged to accept and follow. Adherents believe that case

law (i.e., legal precedent set by courts and judges) and statutory law (i.e., legal decisions made by an executive or legislative body) only apply to the “Strawman” identity, and that any attempts of government and legal authorities to exercise these laws over their natural/living person is illegitimate and unjust. In simpler terms, adherents believe that their interpretation of Common Law means that the government must negotiate with them on any point of dispute. The failure to do so is perceived as the government acting ‘in dishonour,’ and will result in an automatic default judgment in their favour. In order to advance their rights and claims under their interpretation of Common Law, anti-authority gurus advocate a number of pseudo-legal tactics and methods (i.e., use of notary publics, sending claims/disputes by registered mail, and the use of pseudo-legal fill-in-the-blank forms). These tactics/methods are employed to make claims such as free use and possession of drugs and firearms (Bell, 2013), to expropriate or make fictitious legal claims for the free use and possession of land/homes owned by other individuals (CBC, 2013; Graveland, 2013a), to avoid financial obligations and burdens such as taxes or the repayment of loans (Humphreys, 2013), and to threaten government, legal officials, and private individuals (Vandenbrink, 2011).

### **Typologies of Anti-Authority Adherents in Canada**

Regardless of ideological differences across Canadian anti-authority groups, adherents and sympathizers are attracted to one or more of these movements for a variety of different reasons. Consequently, we identified diverse levels of commitment to and motivation for adherence to any of the above noted factions. In all, we noted eight distinct categories of anti-authority adherents in Canada.

*Fantastical believers:* In the *Meads v. Meads* (2012) decision, Justice Rooke explicitly stated that some among the vexatious litigants facing the courts might well be suffering from some form of mental impairment. More specifically, he argued that many are “delusional” in their assessment of their situation. There is a distinct possibility that some small proportion of adherents fit this description, although we caution not to fall into the easy trap of type-casting all forms of antisocial behaviour as a form of mental illness. It is unlikely that most antigovernment actors are suffering from anything that would be considered, clinically, mental illness. In assessing legal “fitness,” Pytyck and Chaimowitz (2013), for example, caution against dismissing adherents as “psychotic” or “demented.” They remind us that within the community, what seem to outsiders to be bizarre or even nonsensical notions are culturally normative. At worst, they are engaging in “psychotic mimicry,” but in ways that are consistent with beliefs,

standards and scripts derived from the historical legacy of antigovernment practices. To an outsider, the language may appear irrational. However, to those “in the know,” there is a recognizable and standardized pattern.

Whether or not an individual adherent suffers from mental illness, we describe this genre of adherent as “fantastical believers”: someone who has constructed an alternate/fantastical reality or frame of reference that is disconnected from the way in which the real world operates. This differs from conspiracy theorists who take this alternate reality further by blending it with conspiratorial explanations and justifications.

*Conspiracy theorists:* Kent (2015) suggests that “paranoia” is another common characteristic associated with anti-government adherents. This reflects the tendency to assign blame to entities and figures outside of the self – the state, court officials, law enforcement, etc. In fact, this is inherent in the belief systems of the majority of adherents and, as such, should not be taken as a sign of mental incompetence, but a “rational” outcome of subscribing to the core values of the movement. Central to most variants of the conspiracy theory community, the government is willfully, knowingly, and illegitimately infringing on individual rights through the imposition of varied forms of regulation. From this perspective, the state and all its representatives are understood as wholly corrupt and morally bankrupt. They deprive citizens of their social and fiduciary rights. One of the most interesting of these conspiracy theories, held by Canadian anti-authority adherents, revolves around the notion that the Bank of Canada holds secret bank accounts tied to birth certificates. We need only find the “magic number” to access those accounts to collect millions of dollars that the government would otherwise hold for itself.

Some take their paranoia further, insisting that they are under constant surveillance. One interviewee, for example, suggested that some adherents “...perceive themselves as surrounded by strong powerful malevolent actors, that their food is being poisoned, aircraft exhaust destroys their brain or reproduction, that their communications are being monitored” (Participant 15). One of the adherents interviewed for this study fits this characterization very well. They distrust the government, saying that “...they control everything” and that police, legal system, and government works on cronyism and corruption that makes it so the average person cannot properly protect themselves and their families (Participant 14). This adherent further claimed that “...if you own property, they’ll [the government] steal it from you, even if you’re right.” Again, this is not

necessarily a sign of delusional thoughts, but a reflection of their particular worldview.

*Escapists:* There is a contingent of anti-authority activists in Canada that can perhaps be best described as a living embodiment of Timothy Leary's 1960s mantra to "turn on, tune in, drop out." For diverse reasons, escapists choose to withdraw from broader society, shunning both their rights and responsibilities in order to seek out and embrace alternate ways of living. Moreover, there seem to be two distinct types of antiauthority escapists in Canada: (1) drug users who want to be left to their own devices in terms of possessing, manufacturing, and consuming illicit substances, especially marijuana, and (2) geographical isolationists who believe that physical distance from broader society should afford them some form of autonomy. The former's anti-authority stance is grounded in state regulation of their drugs of choice. The latter – loners – are not necessarily hostile toward the state so much as they simply "opt out of" the social contract. Individually, sometimes in very small groups, they detach themselves from the social milieu to establish isolated enclaves far from "civilization."

*Dabblers/Opportunists:* It is likely that the vast majority of antiauthority adherents in Canada can be conceived of as short-term opportunists who engage with the community for a short period before moving on. These are individuals who find themselves in sudden dire straits – immediate family, financial, civil or other difficulty – and turn to FOTL tactics to try to work their way out of a tight spot. Often referred to by adherents interviewed for this study as "cherry-pickers," dabblers subscribe to FOTL strategies, but not FOTL ideologies. These individuals stumble upon "free" legal advice on the internet or from face-to-face interactions with anti-authority adherents, and through sheer desperation begin to inform themselves about pseudo-legal arguments. Almost inevitably, dabblers fail in their legal challenges when employing pseudo-legal techniques and decide to move on, with little further consideration or adoption of anti-authority tenets. Netolitzky (2016b) estimates that upwards of 95% of Organized Pseudolegal Commercial Argument (OPCA) litigants whose documents are rejected do not reappear on the docket.

*Sympathizers:* In contrast to dabblers/opportunists, there is another subset of anti-authority activists who can best be understood as "sympathizers": those who embrace and believe in anti-authority ideologies, but for one reason or another, do not employ pseudo-legal tactics or fully embrace an anti-authoritarian lifestyle (e.g., destroying government identification, refusing to pay taxes, and so on). These are the individuals who hold some sort of animus against the government

but are not willing to engage in pseudo-legal or confrontational activities with the government and court system. Sympathizers tend to be active in online anti-government communities (e.g., World Freeman Society), and play an important role akin to Netolitzsky's (2016b) "cheerleader" type in bolstering the morale of committed adherents. These are the people on Facebook that might be understood as "free riders," that is, who will not put anything at risk through concrete action but want the benefits if the movement should prove successful.

*The Committed:* These individuals are the "true-believers" who are fully invested in the ideology and practice of anti-authority activism. Those committed adherents that we identified during this study have almost universally had some form of direct and ongoing conflict with the government, the court system, or law enforcement. It is likely that their initial foray into exploring anti-authority worldviews is motivated by paranoia, or by the "dire straits" characteristic of the dabblers. However, several committed adherents that we interviewed during this study indicated some form of watershed event (e.g., geopolitical events that caused them to re-evaluate their worldview, direct confrontation with the police and/or legal system, an intense personal crisis, etc.) that helped solidify their commitment to an anti-authoritarian lifestyle. In order to avoid sharing information that might lead to the identification of study participants, we chose not to provide direct quotations or details about specific watershed moments described to us during interviews.

For example, one of the adherents indicated that their initial interest in the movement stemmed from what they identified as "...getting slapped around [by the government] three or four times" during incidents with child services and negative incidents involving the local police (Participant 14). As a result of these incidents, the adherent decided to explore anti-authority ideology, and made the choice to not "...keep anything in [their] name", out of fear of the government coming and taking it away from them.

*Violent Extremists:* While admittedly rare, some of those who might otherwise be considered among "the committed" cross the line into violent extremism. These are adherents who are willing to take a stand to defend their position, their land, or their sovereignty. Looking ahead, it is possible that the emergence of something akin to a militia movement in Canada may provide the context for more anti-authority adherents to make this transition toward either defensive or offensive violence in support of their "cause." However, recent incidents of violent extremist anti-authority adherents in Canada have been largely the efforts of isolated individuals, with two notable examples.

On June 4th, 2014, Justin Bourque murdered three RCMP officers and injured two others during a 28-hour rampage in Moncton, New Brunswick. Prior to the attack, Bourque was known for his antiestablishment internet rants. His Facebook page, for example, portrayed him as a gun enthusiast and libertarian with an anti-authority mindset, and his account was awash with pro-gun, cop-hating, and liberal-bashing propaganda (CBC News, 2014; Friscolanti & Patriquin, 2014). It is argued that Bourque was a self-motivated ideologue, a lone actor, and had no ties to any larger organization. Bourque used social media to educate himself on far-right libertarian preoccupations, such as the “militarization” of police, anti-authoritarianism, survivalism, “crownless kings,” confiscation of guns, and Canada’s readiness for a Russian invasion (Brean, 2014).

Norman Raddatz was the alleged shooter in the death of an Edmonton police officer on June 8, 2015. When members of the hate crime unit visited Raddatz’s home to serve him with an arrest warrant and court documents, the man refused to come outside. Officers left to get a warrant and returned with a battering ram, all in an effort to gain access to the West Edmonton residence. Upon entry, the suspect unloaded a high-powered rifle on officers, killing Constable Daniel Woodall, 35, on scene and injuring 38-year-old Sergeant Jason Harley. The house was later set ablaze, most likely by the suspect, and his body was located in the basement of his burned-out home (CBC News, 2015; Simons, 2015).

Raddatz was also known as “Dino Stomper” on Facebook, and he had a lengthy criminal record of hate-related offenses. However, he did not have a significant criminal record beyond the harassment charges, and it is unclear whether he was affiliated with a particular far-right group. Still, he was clearly anti-Semitic, anti-government, homophobic, and an online bully, posting hateful messages about “sodomites” and “f-bomb Jews,” and sharing crude jokes about the film “Brokeback Mountain.” Public Safety Minister Steven Blaney described the lone offender as a member of the extreme right (Kornik, 2015), and an individual who was battling alcoholism and depression. Raddatz had recently become divorced, lost his business and motorhome, and was in the process of losing his bungalow (CBC News, 2015; Simons, 2015).

*Entrepreneurs:* The financial “payoff” associated with OPCA, FOTL, or other related pseudo-legal strategies, can serve as a motive for involvement in anti-authority movements. These individuals, who we have dubbed “entrepreneurs,” capitalize on the desperate nature of dabblers and more committed adherents seeking some form of alternative resolution to ongoing conflicts by offering them “for pay” easy-to-deploy pseudo-legal techniques that they guarantee to work.

These can include: (1) “money for nothing” schemes (e.g., using hidden numbers contained in your birth certificate to access a secret bank account held in trust by the Bank of Canada) in order to cancel out debts; (2) paid services where an entrepreneur acts in the role of legal consultant or lawyer; and/or (3) access to pseudo-legal “fill-in-the-blank” documentation meant to circumvent or defeat legal or financial challenges, and many more. Entrepreneurs market themselves as holders of esoteric knowledge who are willing to share their strategies to naïve and often desperate “knowledge seekers” attempting to resolve legal, regulatory, or financial dilemmas. It is important to note that some entrepreneurs may not necessarily be solely motivated by profit. Many are themselves fully committed to both the ideologies and the strategies associated with the movement. They may also support litigants beyond simply providing them with information and scripts. Rather, they are also likely to represent them in court – again for a fee. They may create the relevant documents – for a fee. They may even lead “study groups” in which members read and discuss legal precedent and strategy.

*Established/Emergent Gurus:* In simple terms, gurus are individuals who are actively engaged with a body of followers connected with antiauthority movements in order to offer their thoughts of the dismal state of the world/society, and then offer an array of solutions based upon their particular interpretation of Common Law. Their primary goal is to gain a measure of greater visibility and for their teachings to resonate with the sympathetic and supportive elements of the Canadian antiauthority community. Gurus often present themselves as some mixture of entrepreneur and committed adherent. There are several examples of Canadian gurus who began their careers by freely offering their knowledge, and upon obtaining a measure of popularity, moved to monetize their teachings through seminars and printed material (e.g., Robert Menard and Dean Clifford). Almost universally, gurus connect with established and potential followers by skillfully employing social media (mainly Facebook and Twitter) to promote their YouTube channel, written work, or upcoming seminars.

We distinguish between two different “types” of gurus within Canadian anti-authority movements. The first are *established gurus* (e.g., Robert Menard and Dean Clifford) who have at some point managed to gain a measure of credibility among the larger anti-authority community in Canada. As a result, they wield a measure of authority, and their opinions are valued and consulted by dabblers, sympathizers, and the committed followers. The second type are *emergent gurus* (e.g., John Spirit and Mika Rasila) who are individuals actively engaged in the production and dissemination of a particular interpretation of Common Law, or a “spin” on established FOTL or anti-authority ideology. These are anti-authority

activists who are attempting to gain credibility and authority among the larger anti-authority community in Canada in order to attract a devoted following.

### **The Potential for Crime and Violence by the Anti-Authority Community in Canada**

Contrary to expectations going into the project, there has been very little violence associated with the anti-authority movement in Canada. Indeed, many adherents in our study explicitly rejected the very notion that violence could in any way advance their agendas. Certainly, they pose very little threat to the general public. Participants indicated the public risk associated with anti-authority groups is rare, and typically very specifically targeted toward those whom adherents see as connected with “illegitimate” authority: law enforcement, judiciary, and notaries, in particular. Nonetheless, any such violence was rare, the obvious exceptions being Justin Bourque’s murder of three Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers in Moncton, and Norman Raddatz’s murder of an Edmonton police officer. We were able to identify three distinct classes of violence.

*Offensive/Extremist Violence:* Offensive violence (i.e., a planned attack with no precedence of provocation) is the least common action associated with the anti-authority movement in Canada. When asked, none of the study participants were able to recall any incidents of antiauthority offensive violence, aside from Bourque’s attack on RCMP officers in 2014. The only other incident of anti-authority offensive violence that we were able to identify was John Carlos Quadros’s violent attacks in St. Paul, Alberta in May of 2014. After fatally shooting a local priest, Quadros proceeded to a local RCMP detachment where he opened fire on the building. He was immediately pursued in his pick-up truck which he then used to purposefully ram a police vehicle at high speed, trapping an officer inside. His next move would prove fatal, as he opened fire on several officers. He was shot and killed in that exchange. In the end, he had wounded three RCMP officers (Ramsay, 2014). When officers were able to access the truck, they found several weapons, including a high-powered rifle, two shotguns, a pistol, and several rounds of ammunition for each (Weber, 2014). It is apparent from his actions and from this arsenal that he was ready for a sustained assault on law enforcement. Police at the time said that it was not “a random occurrence” (Ramsay, 2014). However, aside from the obvious role of police as agents of the state, it is not clear why he focused his animosity toward them.

*Defensive/Reactionary Violence:* In contrast to the rarity of offensive anti-authority violence, defensive or reactionary anti-authority violence directed

toward law enforcement and other agents of the state are much more common. Police traffic stops were highlighted by many law enforcement officers as a primary context fraught with tension and risk. There are countless videos available online, posted by adherents, that indicate the nature and depth of the antagonism that arises when antiauthority adherents are confronted by police. Yet the vast majority of these incidents do not escalate beyond minimal physical violence. Law enforcement officers in our study most often described incidents of pushing or shoving, largely as means of resisting arrest. One officer did, however, mention a case in which a suspect attempted to grab an officer's gun. Had they been successful, the consequences could have been dire.

Aside from traffic stops, officers indicated to us that they feared the potential for anti-authority violence during disturbance calls to homes, or when serving official papers (e.g., evictions and notices). This is best exemplified by Norman Raddatz's 2015 murder of Edmonton police officer Daniel Woodall. Raddatz's social media accounts provided clear indications of his affiliation with FOTL ideologies. He often complained about how he had been consistently "harassed" with bylaw tickets, which he characterized as an "extortion racket." He posted a photo of one such ticket on his Facebook page, with the notations "No Consent" and "No Contract" written on it. He also insisted that police engaged in such tactics as threats, intimidation, and illegal behaviour (Kornik, 2015). His contempt for authority – and especially law enforcement – came to a tragic head when he opened fire on two Edmonton police officers who attended his home to serve warrants, one of which was related to ongoing anti-Semitic harassment.

*Harassment and Intimidation:* The original title for this project referred to FOTL as "paper terrorists," referencing the common pseudo-legal techniques employed by FOTL and OPCA movements to harass and intimidate their detractors or opponents. One interviewee characterized this "threat" as "...the disruption of government functionality that causes a lessening of services available for others [...] because they are spending so much time on being with them" (Participant 7). From this perspective, the risk posed to officials by anti-authority movements that employ "paper terrorism" revolves more around misuse of time and resources rather than any physical harm. However, several of the law enforcement participants in this study took issue with this characterization, arguing that it trivialized the activities of anti-authority adherents in Canada. For them, even the bureaucratic approach to challenge the law and the state constitutes out and out intimidation. The filing of claims against state actors, for example, is often associated with language and behaviour that constitute harassment, intimidation, and persecution. Lawyers and notaries, for example,

often bear the brunt of this pressure. In a very early assessment of the risk associated with FOTL, Bilinsky (2012) published an article in the Law Society of British Columbia *Bencher's Bulletin* issuing a warning about the growth and activism of the movement. He cautioned that thwarted attempts to have their frivolous documents notarized had the potential to escalate into anger and violence, including verbal tirades and threats in person and by letter and email. Ron Usher, of the British Columbia Society of Notaries, also remarked that “they’re [FOTL] very confrontational. We’ve had a number of instances now where they’ve needed to call police or security” (Moore, 2013, p. 1).

The illegal occupation of homes and property is perhaps one of the few contexts where members of the general public may be at risk of harassment or intimidation by anti-authority adherents. A highly publicized case in Alberta in 2013 was that of Andreas Pirelli, who rented a property from Rebekah Caverhill, then proceeded to gut and “redecorate” the house. When Caverhill came to check on the house, she found that Pirelli had also changed the locks and would not let her enter. He claimed the rental home as ‘an embassy house’ to which Caverhill had no rights (Graveland, 2013a). Pirelli was a self-proclaimed FOTL, and “Senior Chief Justice” of the TSILC (described above). It was later learned that he had previously occupied a rental home in Quebec, where he had been known as Mario Antonacci. He was accused in that province of pushing his landlady down a flight of stairs, resulting in a broken pelvis, arm, wrist, and ankle (Graveland, 2013b). Around the same time as Pirelli was occupying Caverhill’s house, trappers near Grande Prairie, Alberta also faced FOTL “squatters” in their hunting cabins and on their trap lines. The squatters threatened the owners with raised guns, and also made it clear to Forestry personnel that they would defend “their” cabins “with all necessary force” (Lazzarino, 2013). One of the men removed from the cabins was found in possession of two firearms and ammunition. Ultimately, he was charged with uttering threats, using a firearm in the commission of an offence and possession of a firearm while prohibited (CBC News, 2013).

*Cause for concern:* We did note two emerging areas that cause some concern and that are worthy of close monitoring. The first is that there are some adherents who subscribe to the belief in an unrestricted right to bear arms, and to defend themselves with lethal force where necessary. While the anti-authority adherents almost universally eschewed violence or violent tactics, there is nonetheless an element within the Canadian anti-authority community that embraces the idea, inspired by a conservative interpretation of the American second amendment, of the “right” to bear arms and to use force when threatened (see, Bell, 2010). This confrontational worldview, which combines gun ownership woven into a

defensive narrative of standing one's ground in the face of hostile external forces, demands attention and care from police, security agencies, and the Canadian government. While perhaps not as overt as in US anti-authority movements, rhetoric involving the justification of violence to defend sovereignty and individual rights is present in Menard's foundational writings. Menard is also one among a handful of adherents who have taken this a step further to lobby for and in fact establish a cadre of civilian "peace officers."

Second, emulating trends in the US, is the risk that some elements of the Canadian anti-authority movement might potentially blend into an emergent militia movement. Despite their rarity, there are several known far-right militias operational in Canada. One salient example was brought to our attention by a Vice journalist seeking commentary on the activities of the "III%ers" in Canada, a far-right "prepper" militia movement who are actively arming and engaging in paramilitary training in Alberta (email correspondence, January 2017). In June 2017, Vice published a disturbing article on the ideologies, aims and activities of this explicitly paramilitary group (Lamoreux, 2017). Informed by rabid Islamophobia, the Alberta group in particular – numbering in the area of 150-200 – is actively training to defend Canada from what they see as the inevitable invasion by Muslims. Lamoreux quotes the leader's Facebook post, in which he claimed that "we are at war folks, we have been at war, and we are in the middle of the fight of our lives . . . It's on mother fuckers. It's time to do patriot shit. You wanna fuck around, you've seen nothing yet. We will win this war." While not technically Sovereign Citizens or FOTL, militia groups share their anti-authority positions. Moreover, the US experience suggests a cautionary tale. In that country, it appears as if the line between the two movements is growing ever narrower, and that they are far more likely to endorse and engage in extremist violence. We have yet to see that level of violence in Canada.

### **Challenging the Anti-Authority Movement**

*Role of Law Enforcement:* Throughout the interview process, law enforcement and other legal experts were explicitly asked their thoughts on how we should respond to anti-authority movements in Canada. Somewhat surprisingly, they did not provide much guidance in this respect. In fact, among law enforcement, there was a tendency to deny that they had any role to play aside from responding to criminal incidents. Granted, the role of law enforcement is just that – to enforce the law. However, as we argued in our earlier assessment of RWE in Canada (see, Perry & Scrivens, 2015), police also have a role to play with community partners in countering emerging threats. We have highlighted the value of multi-

sectoral responses to extremism (see, Scrivens & Perry, 2017). Approaches that combine the resources and capacities of several agencies stand the greatest likelihood of success (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2016). Countering anti-authority movements can be in part, but not only, a law enforcement responsibility; it also requires the engagement of educators, social service providers, and even the media. Collaborative action is key to building resilient communities. Local police services can work with local notaries to identify risks, they can work with local academics or open-source analysts to counter the narratives that might be emerging, and they can certainly work with local court officials to challenge the legitimacy of pseudo-legal arguments.

### **Education, Awareness and Violence Reduction**

What this amounts to, in short, is enhancing understanding and awareness of anti-authority movements in Canada. We hope that this report goes some way in supporting this approach. We have provided insights into the history and ideologies of the Canadian movements. We have also provided typologies that will help to understand the often subtle elements that differentiate the multiple parts of the broader antiauthority movement found in Canada. This was accompanied by a careful consideration of the different kinds of adherents', according to their motivation, level of commitment, and activism. Bringing these threads together will certainly deepen our general understanding of the contours of the movement.

Some officers in our study also suggested that they would like to see indicators that suggest the risk associated with anti-authority adherents. However, it is not clear that we are in a position to do so, or whether we can even get there. As our discussion of related violence suggested above, there are considerable challenges with predicting the violent potential associated with adherents. Most significant is the fact that, contrary to media reports, at least in the Canadian context, the movement tends not to engage in a high level of violence. The fact that there are so few Canadian cases makes it exceedingly difficult – perhaps even irresponsible – to attempt to identify indicators of the escalation to violence. Unfortunately, there is not much advice to offer in this context. It is not even the case that those who most persistently challenge the courts – and lose – are most likely to escalate to violence. Rather, violence is often an unpredictable outcome of a single interaction.

The long history of right-wing violence in the United States suggests that a major determinant in the genesis of anti-authoritarian violence is correlated with how

law enforcement officials respond to crises and standoffs with adherents (see, Wright, 2007). Although far-right and antiauthoritarian movements have not been as violent in Canada when compared to the US, our findings suggest that front-line officers who mishandle a situation, such as when pulling over an adherent driving with fake licence plates, may not only lead to a standoff, but may precipitate a bloody conflict at the time of the event, or at some point in the future. Canadian law enforcement should pay attention to the hard lessons learned by their US counterparts during the aftermath of the 1992 standoff at Ruby Ridge and the 1993 siege at Waco, Texas (see, Levitas, 2002; Wright, 2007). Both of these violent encounters with American far-right activists were fuelled, in part, by the aggressive tactics embraced by law enforcement that played into the conspiratorial threat narrative embraced by the far-right. Anti-authoritarian culture is steeped in the perceived “threat” by the government and its agents. In short, law enforcement cannot give besieged anti-authority groups or individuals a reason to engage in violence, or a reason to confirm their worldview that the government is “out to get them”. To this end, there should be a collaborative effort between government, law enforcement, and scholars to create provincial and/or national training material for front-line and response officers who may come into contact with Freemen, Sovereign Citizens, or other anti-authority groups.

### **Acknowledgement of the Violent Potential of Canadian Anti-Authority Movements**

We observed during the interview process that there was a hesitancy among law enforcement officers to acknowledge the more extreme forms of violence committed by anti-authority adherents as concrete acts of terrorism. Interestingly, only one of the officers interviewed during this study identified that violent incidents such as Bourque’s murder of two RCMP officers should be considered as acts of terrorism. However, there were very few references among study participants that connected Canadian anti-authority violence with terrorism. This ambivalence puzzled us, given the obvious congruity between the motivations, tactics, and targets of violent anti-authority actors and other more “clear cut” Canadian terrorists such as the Toronto 18, Momin Khawaja, and so on.

Consider the case of Justin Bourque, who murdered three Moncton RCMP officers in 2014. Ironically, Bourque is a good fit for the sorts of “terrorist” profiles of which both scholars and government officials are so enamoured (e.g., Pliner, 2013; Pressman, 2009; UK Home Office, 2010). According to standard sketches, some of the potential indicators that may reveal vulnerability to violent

extremism include: (1) military or paramilitary training; (2) an ideological attachment to and glorification of violence; (3) possession of extremist and/or militaristic literature, and; (4) “us versus them” societal views, generally expressed through feelings of disconnection, and expressions of anger towards the government (Pliner, 2013; Pressman, 2009; UK Home Office, 2010). Indeed, Bourque fits this particular profile just as well, if not better, than his “contemporaries,” Couture-Rouleau or Zehaf-Bibeau (Perry & Scrivens, forthcoming), as the above discussion suggests. The characteristics noted there are clear indicators that Justin Bourque, an obvious anti-authoritarian, did in fact fit the common terrorist profile.

We suspect that the myopic focus of current terrorism scholarship and Canadian security policy upon radical Islamist terrorism has created a blind spot against the threat posed by far-right and anti-authority violence. While Canada has not yet suffered from a large-scale violent incident akin to Waco, Ruby Ridge, or the Oklahoma City Bombing, a real and present threat exists from a certain minority of Canadian antiauthority groups and a small number of radical-fringe individuals that needs to be taken seriously. It is important that Canadian law enforcement and security agencies take a proactive, rather than reactive, stance against the threat posed by these types of actors. If we are to avoid future violent incidents involving the Canadian anti-authority community, law enforcement and legal practitioners need to recognize and acknowledge the potential for violence and dedicate similar attention and resources to combating it as we currently do for radical Islamist terrorism.

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