

A picture doesn't always have 1,000 words

by BRIAN LOCKHART

There is a rather famous painting by American artist Andrew Wyeth, titled Christina's World, that now hangs in the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

At first glance, you might see a young girl in a 1940s-style dress, reclining in a field, her head turned away from the viewer as she looks up to her house located on a hill some distance away.

It's a visually interesting piece, and you may wonder what the girl is thinking and why she is in the middle of the field?

If you leave it at that, and move on to the next painting, you won't know the whole story based on what you have just seen.

If you take a further look and hear the backstory, Christina's World becomes an entirely different work of art.

The sky is dark, the field brown, and the weather-beaten house is isolated and lonely.

The model, the real Christina, is not a young girl. She's a woman who was in her 50s at the time it was painted in 1948.

She's not just relaxing in the field on a nice warm summer day. She's disabled, and can't walk.

For some reason she was firmly against using a wheelchair and she crawled everywhere she went.

The artist was inspired after looking out a window of his home one day and seeing Christina crawling across an open field.

That painting takes on a whole different meaning when you know the whole story.

The entire trucker's protest that clogged Ottawa streets and caused chaos at some border crossings seems to have been painted in the light of a very narrow point of view based on assumptions and in some cases, outright fabrications.

At first, I was with truckers when this all started, based on their concern over mandates and quarantines regarding truckers returning to the country.

After all, the truckers are working and bringing in supplies and keeping commerce moving, while I have had friends fly to Caribbean Islands and return without any concern for spreading viruses, and little interest by the federal government to control travel ? as long as it's done by air.

Admittedly, by the time the Ottawa protest was a couple of weeks old, I wasn't sure exactly what was still being protested. I thought they had made the point and it was time to go home.

When it was decided the police were going to end the protest by physically removing them, I didn't have a lot of sympathy for the protesters. The police had issued warnings several days in an advance and that should have been enough for most protesters to realize they had accomplished something and it was time to go home.

If you were arrested after that point, well, you're going to have to blame yourself.

However, is the apparent follow up by police that will certainly need some scrutiny.

Protesting in itself is not a crime. In a democratic society, it is your right to have freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association. You also have freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression. This is all part of the Fundamental Freedoms in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Ottawa police stated, "If you are involved in this protest, we will actively look to identify you and follow up with financial sanctions and criminal charges."

That is a scary statement. Since when does just being part of a protest constitute "criminal behaviour"?

Why are police threatening "financial sanctions"?

It is the job of the police to enforce laws, not meddle with people's bank accounts and punish them without trial.

Why is anyone's bank accounts being frozen in the first place?

Even people charged and convicted of the most serious crimes in this country do not have their bank accounts frozen. If a murderer is not subject to financial hardship, why would a protester whose only crime was to be seen on a police video tape standing on a sidewalk and holding sign be punished without a court date or conviction and be denied being able to buy groceries or pay their rent or mortgage?

When asked if they would go after protesters who had already gone home, the police responded in the affirmative that they would.

If you happen to be walking down a sidewalk in Ottawa and show up on police video, you may be receiving a visit sometime in the next few months.

The protest is over. Unless police have knowledge and evidence of an actual crime taking place, there is no justification for going after people who exercised their rights.

Just like Christina's World, a simple glance at the situation does not tell the whole story.