



**NEW**

## Ottawa Police Investigated Allegations of 'Explosives' at Local Hotel During 'Freedom Convoy'

'Disturbing email' sent to Ottawa city councillor was not previously disclosed during the Emergencies Act Inquiry

by **Luke LeBrun**,  
Editor  
January 29, 2023

Ottawa Police launched an investigation into allegations about the possible presence of explosive materials at a local hotel during the first week of last year's "Freedom Convoy," information that has not previously been disclosed to the public.

The "disturbing" allegations about "explosives" appear in a chain of internal emails between a local city councillor and senior City of Ottawa officials recently obtained by *PressProgress* through a Freedom of Information request.

Despite confirming Ottawa Police launched an investigation into the allegations, the City of Ottawa, Ottawa Police and the local city councillor all refuse to share additional details about the allegations or the investigation – which may still be ongoing.

No details about the allegations have previously been disclosed publicly. It also appears the emails were not provided to the recent [Emergencies Act Inquiry \(https://pressprogress.ca/emergencies-act-inquiry-shows-how-ottawa-police-let-the-freedom-convoy-spiral-out-of-control/\)](https://pressprogress.ca/emergencies-act-inquiry-shows-how-ottawa-police-let-the-freedom-convoy-spiral-out-of-control/).

It remains unclear what steps, if any, Ottawa Police took to investigate the allegations and whether or not they found something that posed a danger to public safety.

## **Investigation triggered by email from Ottawa City Councillor George Darouze, internal emails show**

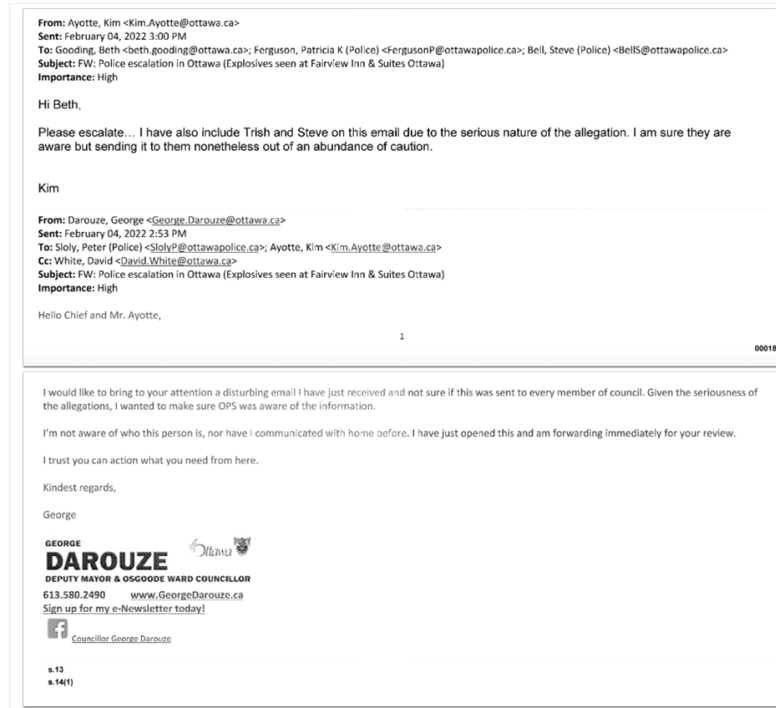
The threat was first reported on February 4, 2022 by George Darouze, a local city councillor representing the rural ward of Osgoode.

Records show Darouze directly contacted Ottawa Police Chief Peter Sloly and the City of Ottawa's General Manager of Emergency and Protective Services Kim Ayotte about a "disturbing email."

"Hello Chief and Mr. Ayotte, I would like to bring to your attention a disturbing email I have received," Darouze wrote. "Given the seriousness of the allegations, I wanted to make sure OPS was aware of the information."

The email's subject line states: "Explosives seen at Fairview Inn & Suites Ottawa."

Darouze's email implies he was contacted out of the blue. The local politician explains he was "not aware" of who the sender was and wondered if other city councillors had received the same message.



*Email from Ottawa City Councillor George Darouze to Ottawa Police*

The email chain shows Ayotte immediately instructed the city's director of public safety to alert Ottawa Police given "the serious nature of the allegation" in Darouze's email.

"Please escalate," Ayotte wrote, adding he was personally looping in two senior commanders with Ottawa Police – Deputy Chiefs Trish Ferguson and Steve Bell.

All details about the alleged presence of explosives contained in the "disturbing email" have been redacted by the City of Ottawa, citing exemptions to releasing information when it relates to law enforcement investigations.

The email also includes an attachment of photos taken in an unknown location featuring industrial bins and cardboard boxes. It also includes a photo of an unknown individual whose face is redacted under the same exemption relating to law enforcement investigations.



Photos forwarded to Ottawa Police by Ottawa City Councillor George Darouze

Experts familiar with explosive materials stress it's difficult to draw conclusions from the photos, but say it's "possible" there could be some cause for concern.

Glen Jackson, a West Virginia University professor of forensic and investigative science who specializes in explosives, says the labels on the containers bear similarities to ones that mark hazardous materials – though he cautions the photo quality makes it hard to say for sure.

"It is just too hard to tell what this might be," Jackson told *PressProgress*.

"Maybe it's a hazardous material, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it's flammable or explosive," noting that in theory it could be anything ranging from something like fertilizer to more mundane items like "bleach" or a "floor cleaner."

When dealing with bomb threats or potential explosives, Jackson said police generally take steps to secure the area before conducting a "peripheral analysis and assessment" of what they might be dealing with.

"The first thing we do is clear the area and bring in bomb disposal experts – the bomb squad – most jurisdictions have them," Jackson explained. "Depending on the nature of the potential threat, they will then try and disarm it."

"If it's just a container, and it was obvious it was just a whole lot of chemical, and not necessarily wires or a detonation device or anything like that, and it wasn't labelled, then they would want to assess it and ensure that the chemical inside is what they suspect it is."

## **Ottawa Police, City of Ottawa and George Darouze won't shed light on mysterious allegations or police investigation**

Despite confirming the allegations were the subject of a police investigation, both the City of Ottawa and Ottawa Police are declining to share any additional details about what really happened – even one full year later.

In a statement to *PressProgress*, Kim Ayotte confirmed Ottawa Police investigated the incident, but would not provide further details.

“The Ottawa Police Service is the lead on the investigation,” Ayotte told *PressProgress*. “As such, any further requests for information on the incident should be directed to them.”

Ottawa Police, in turn, told *PressProgress* they are unable to comment because the incident is the subject of unspecified “internal inquiries” that remain “ongoing.”

Several current and former members of Ottawa City Council told *PressProgress* they were never informed of any investigation into possible explosives at local hotels.

However, the one councillor who does have direct knowledge refuses to clear things up.

“Councillor Darouze has declined to comment,” Darouze’s office told *PressProgress*. Darouze’s office would not provide any rationale for declining comment or indicate whether he believed the public had reason to be concerned for their safety.

Darouze, who is also a Deputy Mayor of Ottawa, is a frequent champion of right-wing issues and a longstanding ally of federal Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, whom he [previously publicly endorsed](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=579889222806057) (<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=579889222806057>).



George Darouze and Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre at Osgoode Ward campaign event in 2022

## Ottawa hotels not aware of Ottawa Police investigation

If Ottawa Police did investigate the allegations, the manager of the hotel where the explosive materials were allegedly spotted may not have been informed.

While there is no “Fairview Inn and Suites” in Ottawa, two hotels owned by Marriott do operate under the name “Fairfield Inn and Suites” – one is located at Ottawa’s airport and the other is near the arena that is home to the NHL’s Ottawa Senators.

The managers of both hotels told *PressProgress* they had no knowledge of any threats or allegations about possible “explosives” on site and neither had been contacted by Ottawa Police as a part of any investigation.

“I am not aware of any police investigation at the Fairfield regarding presences of explosives,” William Guardado, manager of the airport Fairfield Inn and Suites told *PressProgress*. “During the month of February we did have several groups of out of town police officers to assist with the convoy.”

Steve Ball, President of the Ottawa Gatineau Hotel Association, said his organization was unaware of similar reports at any of the 56 hotels OGHA represents, but noted “OGHA generally would not have any involvement or details concerning things of this nature.”



*Fairfield Inn and Suites at the Ottawa airport*

## Emails not disclosed to Emergencies Act Inquiry

Some threats that emerged during the tense 23-day occupation of Canada's national capital later turned out to be false alarms, though they did cause very real concerns in the heat of the moment.

After 2,000 firearms was stolen in Peterborough (<https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/trailer-full-of-guns-stolen-from-peterborough-ont-found-unclear-if-any-firearms-still-missing-1.5783360>), both authorities (<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/a-serene-justin-trudeau-fails-to-justify-using-the-emergencies-act>) and convoy organizers ([https://twitter.com/\\_llebrun/status/1493437829774549002](https://twitter.com/_llebrun/status/1493437829774549002)) alike worried they may end up on the streets of Ottawa. There are other indications police were reluctant to take action out of concern that trucks could contain weapons (<https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/a-truck-fortress-with-kids-how-dozens-of-children-could-make-it-harder-to-end-ottawa-protest>) and children could be used as "human shields." (<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-childrens-safety-a-concern-in-ottawa-as-police-move-to-end-convoy/>)

These kinds of issues frequently came up during testimony (<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-trudeau-emergencies-act-inquiry/>) last fall during the Public Order Emergency Commission (<https://publicorderemergencycommission.ca/about/>), the public inquiry tasked with reviewing the federal government's decision to invoke the Emergencies Act.

The Inquiry also repeatedly highlighted failures (<https://pressprogress.ca/ottawa-police-intelligence-unit-relied-on-dubious-and-politically-biased-information-about-convoy/>) by Ottawa Police.

Paul Champ, a lawyer representing Ottawa residents at the Emergencies Act Inquiry, says there is clear "public interest" in finding out what actually happened.

"The people of Ottawa should know if there was indeed this kind of threat to public safety and what actions were taken," Champ told *PressProgress*. "It seems to me that the Ottawa Police should be the service to tell the public."

Under the Emergencies Act Inquiry's [Rules of Practice and Procedure](https://publicorderemergencycommission.ca/files/documents/Revised-Rules-of-Practice-and-Procedure-October-7-2022.pdf) (<https://publicorderemergencycommission.ca/files/documents/Revised-Rules-of-Practice-and-Procedure-October-7-2022.pdf>), all parties, including both the City of Ottawa and Ottawa Police, were required to "produce copies of all documents in their possession or under their control relevant to the subject-matter of the Inquiry."

Champ confirms Darouze's email was never entered as an exhibit and he is not aware that it was ever "disclosed by the Ottawa Police or the City of Ottawa."

While it could have been "missed inadvertently," Champ said it "seems like a pretty serious allegation though and I am wondering if it was withheld to protect an ongoing investigation?"

"I am unsure of the parameters of the information disclosure requests by the Commission to OPS and the City, but I would have presumed a document like this would have been covered."

Despite the absence of Darouze's email, the City of Ottawa insists it produced all documents to the Emergencies Act Inquiry as it was required under the law.

"The City of Ottawa provided documentation and information in response to requests from the Public Order Emergency Commission, in accordance with their Rules of Procedure," Ayotte told *PressProgress*.

"In order to respect the integrity of the Inquiry's process, the City will not be commenting on information provided to the Inquiry outside of that process."

Suzanne Valiquet, the Interim Chair of the Ottawa Police Services Board which provides governance and oversight to the Ottawa Police Service, would not say if the board was informed of the incident or whether it believed the information should have been disclosed to the Emergencies Act Inquiry.

"In light of the ongoing Public Order Emergency Commission, and the review by the City of Ottawa Auditor General into this year's convoy, I am unable to comment so as to not prejudice those proceedings," Valiquet told *PressProgress*.

"The Board is looking forward to reviewing the findings and recommendations from both of those reviews."



**Full document:**

**Godby, Kevin**

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**From:** Gooding, Beth  
**Sent:** February 04, 2022 3:03 PM  
**To:** Cochrane, Kelly; Arnold, Keelan; Roberts, Eustace A (Police)  
**Subject:** FW: Police escalation in Ottawa (Explosives seen at Fairview Inn & Suites Ottawa)  
**Attachments:** image.png; image.png; image.png

**Importance:** High

Please see below – is NCRCC and OPS aware and on it?

Beth

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**From:** Ayotte, Kim <Kim.Ayotte@ottawa.ca>  
**Sent:** February 04, 2022 3:00 PM  
**To:** Gooding, Beth <beth.gooding@ottawa.ca>; Ferguson, Patricia K (Police) <FergusonP@ottawapolice.ca>; Bell, Steve (Police) <Bells@ottawapolice.ca>  
**Subject:** FW: Police escalation in Ottawa (Explosives seen at Fairview Inn & Suites Ottawa)  
**Importance:** High

Hi Beth,

Please escalate... I have also include Trish and Steve on this email due to the serious nature of the allegation. I am sure they are aware but sending it to them nonetheless out of an abundance of caution.

Kim

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**From:** Darouze, George <George.Darouze@ottawa.ca>  
**Sent:** February 04, 2022 2:53 PM  
**To:** Sloly, Peter (Police) <SlolyP@ottawapolice.ca>; Ayotte, Kim <Kim.Ayotte@ottawa.ca>  
**Cc:** White, David <David.White@ottawa.ca>  
**Subject:** FW: Police escalation in Ottawa (Explosives seen at Fairview Inn & Suites Ottawa)  
**Importance:** High

Hello Chief and Mr. Ayotte,

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**Luke LeBrun**  
Editor

Luke LeBrun is the Editor of PressProgress. His reporting focuses on the federal political scene, right-wing politics as well as issues in technology, media and culture.

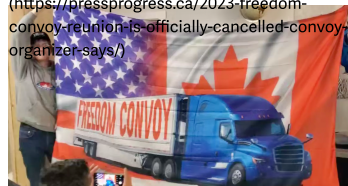
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