

# PEOPLE'S VOICE

CANADA'S LEADING SOCIALIST PUBLICATION



**SEND CUBA OIL!**

Sign the parliamentary petition by April 20 - Pg 5

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# KEEP THE PROMISE!

As Ottawa shifts more of the federal budget toward military spending, childcare advocates are warning that the promised \$10-a-day system is on the line. Pg 3

PHOTO: CHILDCARE RESOURCE AND RESEARCH UNIT

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The BC NDP is amending its own legislation to limit Indigenous rights in order to boost profit  
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Pages from our past...

The Worker Vol 5 No 170 ~ March 27, 1926

## Government brings down the worst old-age pension in the world

Provisions of the old age pensions bill, which the government intends to bring down in the House are:

Maximum pension to be \$240 per annum, subject to reduction by the amount of the income of the pensioner in excess of \$125 per year.

Pensions to be paid every person who, at the date of the proposed commencement of the proposed pension:

(a) Is a British subject or, being a widow, was such before her marriage.

(b) Has attained the age of seventy years.

(c) Has resided in Canada for twenty years immediately preceding the date of commencement of pension.

(d) Has resided in the province in which application for pension is made for the five years immediately preceding the date of commencement of pension.

(e) Is not [Indigenous] as defined by the Indian Act.

Pensions are to be on a half and half basis with the provinces. The bill will empower the Dominion government to make an agreement with government of any province "for the payment to such province quarterly an amount equal to one half of the net sum paid out during the preceding quarter by such province for pensions pursuant to a provincial statute."

Before an agreement with a province comes into operation, the Dominion government is to approve the scheme for the administration of pensions proposed by the province. No change is to be made in the scheme without the approval of the Dominion government.

This legislation bears out our worst fears. It is the worst Old Age Pension legislation in the world. Even several American states have set the pension applicants' age at 65. There is no provision made for naturalized citizens here at all.

Twenty dollars a month is ridiculously inadequate to keep body and soul together. And once more the buck is passed to the provinces.

We demand Federal responsibility in point of administration and financing because there is a large group of migratory workers in Canada who will be excluded by this division of jurisdiction.

We hope that the labour representatives in the House will not be slow in condemning the entire inadequacy of this legislation and present their alternative proposals from a working-class viewpoint. ■

*Notes: The Old Age Pensions Act was passed by parliament in 1927, and was intended to provide income security at a time when few people had private pensions.*

*The proposed pension benefit of \$240 per year was one-quarter of the average industrial wage in 1926 and is equivalent to about \$4,300 today, hardly enough to live on. Furthermore, applicants were subjected to a means test to ensure their income was below \$365 per year (around \$6,500 now).*

*Indigenous people remained excluded from public pension plans until amendments in 1966, although work on reserves remained excluded until 1988 and even that coverage was only declared retroactive following a 2001 Supreme Court ruling.*

## Federal cuts to public agriculture research are catastrophic for climate progress

SARAH MARQUIS

Extensive cuts to public agriculture research will set back climate progress in agriculture, and the harm will be felt for generations. Earlier this year, Agriculture and AgriFood Canada announced that seven research facilities – at Lacombe, Indian Head, Scott, Portage la Prairie, Guelph, Quebec City and Nappan – and the Organic and Regenerative Agriculture program will no longer receive funding.

These funding cuts would throw away more than a century's worth of public investment in people, science and infrastructure, while increasing risks to the food system and the people who work within it. The cuts would be devastating on multiple fronts; however, the immense costs to agricultural climate science must be considered in their own right, as the closing of these facilities and programs will be consequential well into the future.

As farmers and farm workers feel the worsening financial, emotional and existential stress of climate change, the loss of crucial research facilities and programs is all the more reprehensible.

Drought in southwest Saskatchewan has left some areas severely depleted of moisture for the past eight years, leading to crop failure and financial losses, and there's not much relief in sight. BC farmers, still rebuilding from catastrophic flooding four years ago (the most expensive weather disaster in BC's history), found themselves underwater once again late last year, as more than a month's worth of rain in two days caused evacuation orders, landslides and road closures.

Record-breaking wildfire seasons across Canada have had serious impacts on crops, livestock and agricultural communities. And guilt, panic and hopelessness are becoming familiar emotions as farmers face uncertain weather and extreme events.

Meanwhile, researchers at Lacombe Research and Development Centre have found ways to reduce the environmental impact of livestock production. Scientists at the Nappan Research Farm in Nova Scotia have found that feeding kelp supplements to heifers reduces their methane emissions, a potent contributor to greenhouse gases. The Organic and Regenerative Research Program at the Swift Current Research and Development Centre, one of the only public programs dedicated to the study of organic agriculture in the Prairies, is a "front line for climate adaptation research," helping farmers manage increasing climate vari-

ability, soil degradation, and emerging pests and diseases.

As farmers struggle, the facilities and programs on the chopping block have been contributing to indispensable climate mitigation and adaptation research.

Consider climate impact in agriculture through a financial lens: crop insurance payments in Canada surged from \$890 million in 2018 to \$4.9 billion in 2022. In 2021, Saskatchewan's crop production fell by 47 percent and the provincial economy contracted by 0.3 percent due to extreme drought. Given the amount that the provincial and federal governments are spending on insurance compensation and business risk management program payments after climate-related extreme weather impacts on farms, public research into climate mitigation and climate adaptation should be protected, invested in, and expanded.

Halting agricultural research that has been on the cutting edge of emissions reductions research will cost the government billions, and will have long-lasting negative impacts on the climate and the food system.

These cuts to public agriculture research fit into a larger pattern of the federal government's disregard for climate action. Last year, Carney announced a deal with Alberta Premier Danielle Smith to build a pipeline intended to boost crude oil production. The majority of the proposals on the federal government's Nation-Building initiatives list are extractive projects, like mines and liquefied natural gas plants, that will harm the environment.

The federal government is determined to increase Canada's defense spending, a move that will increase fossil fuel emissions both in Canada and abroad. The decision to redirect spending from programs, facilities and research networks that have been increasing farmers' abilities to both mitigate and adapt to climate change into carbon intensive military infrastructure should concern not just agricultural organizations but all of us.

Now is not the time to cut funding for research centers, farms and programs that are on the frontlines of agricultural climate science. Public interest research on sustainable agriculture should be a central part of Canada's climate action strategy. Research capacity is essential to facilitating transitions towards a more sustainable Canadian agricultural sector. Public science is a public benefit. ■

Excerpted from NFU.ca

## LAST CALL FOR 2026 MAY DAY SOLIDARITY GREETING ADS!

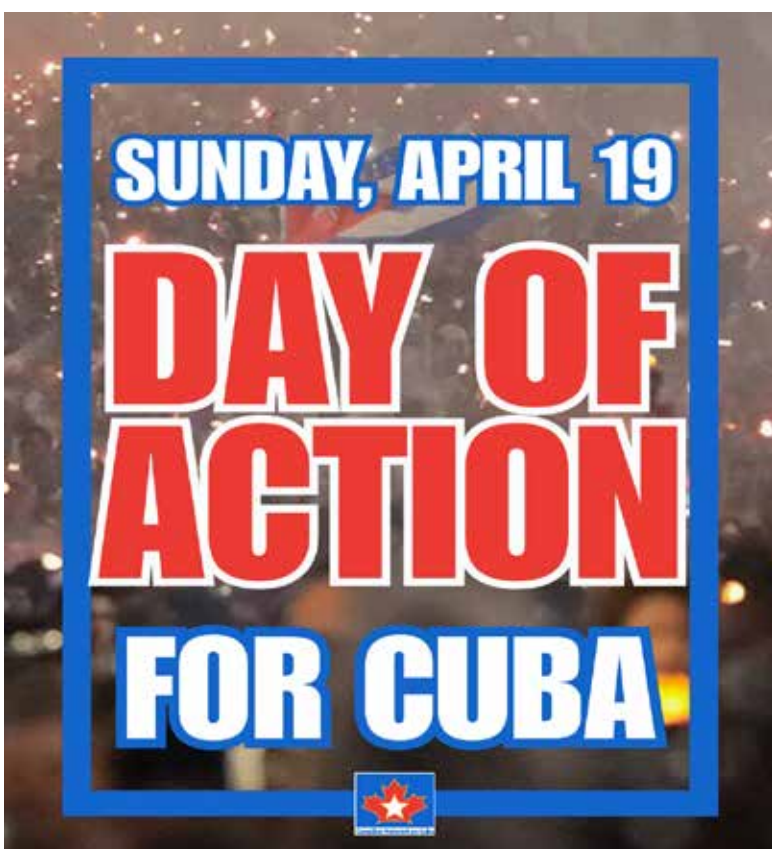
Our annual May Day issue, celebrating International Workers' Day, is a great opportunity to express solidarity with the struggles of working people across the globe for peace in the face of war, aggression and genocide; for jobs and incomes in the face of unemployment, poverty and income disparity; for socialism in the face of rising reaction.

As we've done for many years, PV is inviting unions and progressive organizations to take out May Day greeting ads to express working-class internationalism. These greetings form a rich display that tells the story of working-class culture, struggle and solidarity.

We have a range of sizes and prices available. The deadline for camera-ready ads is April 20; if PV is preparing the layout, the deadline is April 17.

This is such a critical time for solidarity. Make sure your movement purchases a greeting, by emailing [peoplesvoiceditor@gmail.com](mailto:peoplesvoiceditor@gmail.com).

|                     |      |                     |       |
|---------------------|------|---------------------|-------|
| 1 inch x 2 inches   | \$25 | 4 inches x 4 inches | \$120 |
| 2 inches x 2 inches | \$40 | 4 inches x 5 inches | \$150 |
| 2 inches x 3 inches | \$55 | 6 inches x 4 inches | \$175 |
| 4 inches x 2 inches | \$70 | 4 inches x 7 inches | \$200 |
| 4 inches x 3 inches | \$90 | 6 inches x 7 inches | \$300 |



## BC NDP announces it will make sure Indigenous rights don't interfere with business, profits



ROB CROOKS

Premier of British Columbia and provincial NDP leader David Eby has announced that he will be introducing legislation to suspend sections of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA) for three years. This announcement comes in the wake of fierce backlash received by the premier over recent comments that amending the Act is “non-negotiable.”

The plan to suspend sections of DRIPA was introduced by the premier to provincial Indigenous leaders via a private Zoom meeting on April 2. The transcript of the meeting has since leaked. While at least one attendee to the meeting warned that public criticism of Eby could pave the way for a Conservative government that wants DRIPA stricken from the books altogether, the majority of those in attendance expressed deep frustration over the betrayal of the current provincial government.

The BC NDP currently holds a single seat majority in the legislature. If they vote in a block, the proposal to suspend DRIPA will pass. This government has been disciplined in that regard; however, one wonders how long Eby will be able to rely on his party's loyalty. For example, NDP MLA Joan Phillip is married to Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, one of the most vocal critics of Eby's treatment of Indigenous issues.

The *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* was passed unanimously by the BC legislature in 2019. It was the result of centuries of struggle by Indigenous peoples in the province, and marked a truly progressive step towards reconciliation.

In 2021, BC's Interpretation Act was amended in line with DRIPA to declare “that every provincial statute and regulation be construed as being consistent with UN-DRIP” and Section 35 of Canada's Constitution. This meant that the right of Indigenous nations to free, prior and informed consent over projects that could affect them or their ancestral lands was now part of British Columbian law.

This hasn't stopped the capitalist government from encroaching on this right, however. *Bill 14, the Renewable Energy Projects (Streamlined Permitting) Act* and *Bill 15, the Infrastructure Projects Act* were introduced into provincial law last year to expedite the approval of projects that would give ownership rights over land and resources to private corporations. The Union of BC Indian Chiefs warned at the time that these bills “appear to be designed to turn back the clock on all of the progress we have made together toward reconciliation in this Province.”

The NDP government's reaction to two 2025 court decisions only deepened this concern.

In August, the BC Supreme Court (BCSC) agreed that the Cowichan Tribes have the right to Aboriginal Title over a large swath of land that was thought to be owned by the federal Crown, the Vancouver Port Authority, the city of Richmond and a handful of private citizens who own property on the territory.

The land had been set aside for the Cowichan peoples by Pre-Confederation British Governor James Douglas in the mid nineteenth century but was stolen and sold off by BC's first Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, Richard Moody. The BCSC made a ruling based on the facts presented and in doing so corrected a historical crime that has had intergenerational impacts.

Provincial Attorney General Niki Sharma, however, made it clear that the BC NDP “strongly disagree with the decision.” She went on to claim that Aboriginal Title and fee simple (private property) “cannot coexist,” a claim that is not only legally but also empirically incorrect. These two forms of ownership co-exist currently in BC, as outlined in the Gaayhllxid/Gúhlagalgang “Rising Tide” Haida Title Lands Agreement – signed by the province and the Haida Nation in 2024.

Sharma also said, “the Province prefers to resolve land claims through negotiation – where we can protect property rights directly – rather than risk considerable uncertainty through court decisions.” This statement obfuscates the fact that Indigenous nations have been trying to negotiate on equal footing with governments since first contact. It's probably safe to say that taking legal action was not the preferred approach of the Cowichan Tribes either.

In December 2026, the Gitxaala and Ehattesaht First Nations successfully argued in the BC Court of Appeals that the province's *Mineral Tenure Act* violates the right to free, prior and informed consent. The on-line portal for granting mineral rights allows practically anyone to claim ownership over resources without consulting those to whom the land containing those resources actually belongs.

Premier David Eby responded to this decision by calling it “overreaching and unhelpful” and promising to amend DRIPA. Criticism from First Nations and legal organizations was swift. By openly undermining the courts in BC, Eby exposed his belief that he and his government are above the law and that Indigenous rights should only be upheld when they don't interfere with business.

David Eby is currently one of Canada's least popular premiers, with a 37 percent approval rating; only Doug Ford and François Legault rate lower. His party, the BC NDP, has failed to deliver on promises such as electoral reform, tax reform and \$10/day childcare. Healthcare is a disaster in the province, with a recent study published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal demonstrating that this summer's upcoming FIFA World Cup tournament could collapse the whole system should there be an influx of visitors requiring medical attention.

While BC's cost-of-living crisis continues to deepen, the government is making major cuts to public sector jobs. The NDP has promised the elimination of 15,000 public service positions over three years, on top of the 40,000 federal public jobs losses promised by Carney's government. The province lost 20,200 jobs in February alone.

Eby has used Trump's tariffs as an ex-



## \$10-a-day childcare — Keep the promise!

JEANNE MCGUIRE

In order to work, parents need to be able to find and afford care for their children. What is optimal is care provided by highly trained early childhood educators within a system that is operated for the wellbeing of the children, not for the profit of an owner.

For too many parents, going to work meant accepting arrangements for care that were less than optimal. And sometimes, within two parent families, it meant one parent stayed home because care was not available. Given the income disparity between men and women, the one that stayed home was usually the woman. For working people, having only one income in the family means less money to spend on housing, food and clothing, along with life-enhancing activities like participation in higher education, recreational activities, entertainment, travel and so on.

In other words, the availability of high-quality, affordable childcare allows parents to work, improving the standard of living and the wellbeing of families. It improves communities by adding an important service to their attractions. It improves the economy by increasing the available workforce and, interestingly, by lowering inflation. And it enhances the learning experience of children.

That is why, when the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system was announced in 2021 and begun in 2022, parents were delighted, childcare advocates celebrated and communities looked forward to seeing improvements to the availability of care within their jurisdiction.

According to the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, the primary goals of the CWELCC when it was established were:

- Building a system of affordable, high-quality, inclusive early learning and childcare for all families and children
- Making childcare affordable by reducing parent fees to \$10 a day (average) for children aged 0-5 years old by 2026
- Expanding primarily public and non-profit childcare by 250,000 licensed spaces by 2026, to ultimately provide quality childcare for all
- Addressing early childhood educators' low wages, poor working conditions and lack of recognition that have historically affected the over 95-percent female childcare workforce
- Making meaningful progress in before- and after-school childcare
- Building a strong baseline of publicly available data to ensure accountability, measure progress, report to the public and improve the system
- Addressing the early learning and childcare needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities as a critical element of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples

That was the promise – it wasn't perfect, and it wasn't enough. There is much more that needs to be done. Childcare needs to become part of the public education system – free, based in every community, with highly qualified staff whose pay packet reflects the important work they do. We also need childcare available 24 hours for shift workers and for parents experi-

encing crises like healthcare emergencies.

Accessibility has become the major hurdle facing parents. Parents, especially new parents, are facing long wait lists. If care is not an option but a necessity, they end up having to send their child to care providers not covered by the program and paying the fees demanded. These fees can quickly mount up, consuming a big chunk of parents' income.

What the CWELCC program reveals is that the demand is huge, and the supply is not being developed – this is what needs to be addressed now. It requires a commitment to build new facilities and expand existing ones, and this increase must be in the not-for-profit sector.

Like in education, the government should not be funding the for-profit sector. Even the CD Howe Institute, a think tank created to defend corporate interests, acknowledges: “Without faster growth in licensed spaces and more early childhood educators, many families will remain stuck on waitlists.”

To meet that need, governments in Ottawa and across the country – apart from Quebec which launched its own \$5-a-day (now \$9.35) childcare program in 1997 – need to make the financial commitment needed to solve the accessibility issue.

CWELCC didn't offer everything that working parents need, but it was an important start. Parents want what it would have delivered. They want what was promised. But now, childcare organizations across the country are raising the alarm that government commitments are being walked back.

The federal budget introduced in November 2025 failed to increase the funding and is no longer on track to reach the targeted goal of 250,000 new childcare spaces across Canada.

Ontario is balking. The Conservative government – which refused to sign the 5-year renewal, finally agreeing to a one-year extension – is freezing the reduction in fees at the current rate of \$19-a-day, abandoning the goal of the promised \$10-a-day.

Alberta also signed a one-year extension and insisted on making the funding available to the for-profit providers.

These changes erode the goals set out when the CWELCC was established. In fact, the very success of the plan in the first four years of operation expose the real need described above – the need for substantial investment in the creation of many more spaces in the program.

Child Care Now/Un Enfant Une Place, a country-wide advocacy organization has summarized the results of the most recent report of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit and noted that while improvements were recorded:

- All provinces and territories have substantially dropped parent fees, but not all were set to achieve the goal of an average fee of \$10 a day by March 31, 2026.
- Parents in several provinces are being charged additional fees for “extras” such as meals, wait listing or outings.
- The number of childcare centres has increased substantially under CWELCC, as have active licensed family childcare homes, which had

# EDITORIAL

## LAND DAY — 50 YEARS ON, IT REMAINS A PIVOTAL MOMENT FOR THE STRUGGLE

March 30 marked the 50th anniversary of Land Day, which commemorates a pivotal moment in the Palestinian national liberation struggle.

On that day in 1976, the Israeli government announced its plan to confiscate twenty square kilometres of Palestinian land in Galilee. The plan was part of Israel's ongoing strategy of Judaizing the Arab-majority region, which involved aggressive efforts to increase Jewish settlement.

The response to the announcement was a literal uprising. Entire Arab towns declared general strikes. Israeli Arabs, West Bank residents and refugees from the camps rose up.

The Israeli military and police met the protests with brute force, killed six unarmed Arab demonstrators, injuring one hundred, and arresting hundreds more.

This was not, as some deceitfully argue, a spontaneous uprising. Rather, it was the result of careful and deliberate preparation and organization by trade unions, student associations and, particularly, communists. Among the key leaders were Taoufik Ziyad, a cadre of the Israeli Communist Party, and student leader Mohammed Barké who was a communist organized within the Jordanian Communist Party which, at the time, included communists in the West Bank.

The hard work and leadership provided by people like Ziyad and Barké led to and made possible the March 30, 1976 uprising, a critical event in the Palestinian national liberation struggle.

From June 1967 onward, the Palestinian question objectively shifted from an Arab-Israeli conflict to an Israeli-Palestinian confrontation, and the events of March 30, 1976 subjectively marked this new reality.

From that date onward, the just demand to create a Palestinian state within the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, guaranteeing the right of return for refugees, gained traction and became the Palestinian Liberation Organization's cause. This undermined the Arab national ruling classes, who had hoped to exploit the Palestinian question for their own interests.

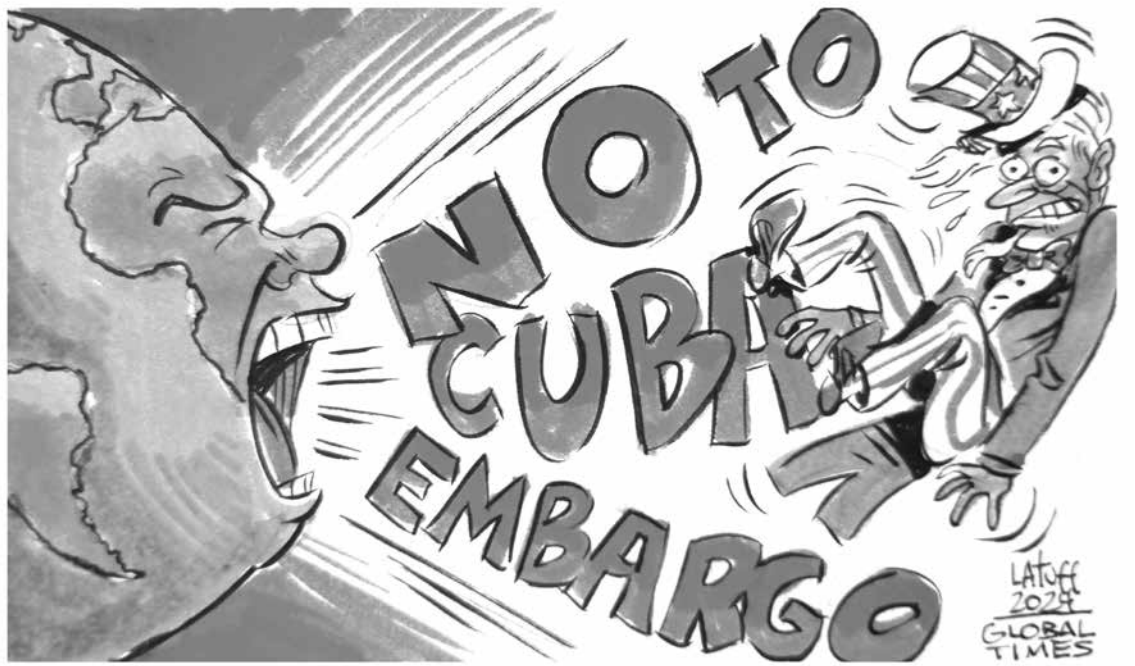
Very quickly, the PLO became a genuine Palestinian political force. In April 1976, Israeli authorities forced local elections in the West Bank, hoping for a victory by pro-Hashemite candidates to quell the Palestinian people's anger. But it was the candidates of the Palestinian National Front, and primarily the PLO, who won the day and solidified their role as the Palestinian people's legitimate representatives.

Today, Gaza lies in ruins. Colonization continues in the West Bank, where Zionist extremists, including ex-convicts and criminals ordered to kill Arabs, are being armed. Iran, the last bulwark against the implementation of the US "Greater Middle East" plan, is being pounded in an ongoing struggle for control of the region.

In this context, the Palestinian national liberation struggle takes on a particular dimension. While we redouble our opposition to the ongoing genocide in Gaza and Israel's continuing repressive measures, we must work to broaden support for the struggle, to strengthen it so that the people of Palestine may actually win rather than be reduced to the history books.

Whether in Palestine or in Canada, this is a struggle against imperialism, Zionism and corporate monopolies. It is first and foremost a political struggle, and without engaging it on a political level, we are reduced to begging imperialism to manage the world for us.

This is what commemorating Land Day means. It is not about spontaneous outbursts or ultra-radicalism for its own sake — it is about land, political power, and the organization and preparation necessary to win it. ♦



## IN BRIEF

PEOPLE'S VOICE welcomes your contributions. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity, and to refuse to print articles or letters which may be libellous or which contain personal attacks.

### Canada needs an alternative beyond social democracy

Avi Lewis has been confirmed as the new NDP leader, comfortably beating the other candidates by securing 56 percent of the total vote on the first ballot.

His campaign borrowed heavily from recent campaigns run by progressive candidates in North America, specifically Zohran Mamdani. This includes a bombastic social media presence, high focus on new membership signups and utilizing the "non-establishment" candidate card. Lewis has advocated for a number of progressive ideas and gave an adrenaline shot to an otherwise downward spiraling NDP. But will it change things substantially for workers across Canada?

The NDP is still considered by many to be a viable left alternative in Canada's political landscape. It's a landscape that is moving in a dangerous direction, with right-wing populism gaining momentum in Canada and with xenophobic ideas finding more acceptance than before.

To counter this, we need a strong progressive presence — but the NDP simply does not offer that.

Time and again, the party has been entrusted by progressive voters to stand up for the underprivileged and the oppressed. What it has offered, at the best of times, is watered down social democracy. There is a lack of taking on the billionaire class head-on and following through on it. There is a lack of slashing big corporations down to size. There is a lack of putting ownership of these big corporations into public hands. There is a lack of more worker control. There is at worst a complete and absolute absence of the critique of capitalism, and at best a rather cursory comment about its ills.

Left leaning voters in Canada may continue sympathizing with the NDP, but a change in leadership

alone will not fix the party's inability to address working-class issues. Safe social democracy? Sure. Some progressive ideas? Why not. Unabashed critique of the racist socioeconomic dynamics of capitalism and the resolve to fundamentally replace it? No please, that's going too far.

This lack of criticism of capitalism isn't limited to the NDP, but extends to the broad left in Canada. There is welcome criticism of oligarchy and standing up for tenant rights among other things. But again, complete and absolute silence when it comes to critiquing capitalism and the rotting system we function under.

There seems to be a conscious, if not explicit effort by the broad left in Canada to not sound too left wing. Perhaps there is a fear that this will evaporate whatever limited breathing room they enjoy currently in the form of electoral presence. There might also be fears that sounding too left wing will put them in the firing line of rehashed anti-communist propaganda.

This is why some of the best-known progressive voices in North America make a conscious effort to disassociate themselves from Marxism and communism, while happily calling themselves "socialists" — they hope that doing so sanitizes their ideas and makes them more acceptable. It's also why they often make every effort to demonize states like Cuba and peddle capitalist talking points of the country being a dictatorship.

The socialism represented by the NDP isn't one that will transform society towards a substantially humane and egalitarian direction. It isn't socialism that will eradicate inequality. It isn't one that will make the ruling class accountable. It is socialism that aims to work within the current state of capitalist affairs and merely aims to transform it into something softer. Any such initiatives, no matter how

well meaning, are bound to fail. They are akin to conducting a dental filling on a decaying tooth — a temporary fix at best, that is unlikely to permanently fix the problems.

This is precisely why Canada needs an alternative on the left beyond social democracy. We need a left that fights for real socialism, in which workers control the means of production. We don't need a "left" that is at peace with gains involved in electoral politics alone. ■

Salman Zafar  
Surrey, BC

### April 25 "Fight Ford" protests

On March 28, I participated in a rally to "Fight Ford" that was staged in front of Windsor MPP Andrew Dowie's office. Unsurprisingly, Dowie was nowhere to be seen to engage with his constituency. But who did attend were a variety of community and labour organizations including the Ontario Health Coalition, Council of Canadians, Windsor District Labour Council, CUPE locals, ONA, OSSTF, ETFO and many young students who demanded that their voices be heard.

More than 50 attendees listened as nurses, students, retirees, teachers and others spoke on how Ford's cuts affected their lives, with hopes to push back.

The protests were organized in about 21 cities across Ontario. If readers have not engaged with this budding movement, it may be a sound idea to participate and help them build a broad coalition of people with labour at its center, to fight Ford and demand an end to austerity and corruption. An April 25 day of action has been called, giving ample time to prepare an injection of the interconnectedness of these austerity attacks. ■

AD Frat  
Windsor, ON

# PEOPLE'S VOICE

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## DEADLINES FOR NEXT ISSUES

Please send submissions (articles, photos, events, announcements) for our May 1-15 issue by April 20 and for our May 16-31 issue by May 11 to peoplesvoiceditor@gmail.com

### \*CHECK YOUR LABEL! RENEW YOUR PV TODAY!\*

Please check the address label on the front page to see if it's time to renew. Subscribers who find "26/05/01" on their label, for example, will have their subscriptions expire with the next issue, MAY 1-15, 2026. Send your renewal today!



## Israel continues attacks on Lebanon after Iran ceasefire announced: “Netanyahu is a liar and an international pyromaniac”

At publication time, about fifteen hours after the US-Iran ceasefire was announced, the far-right Israeli government had still not issued a statement in Hebrew on the deal or addressed Israeli citizens on the matter.

In its first official response in English to the ceasefire agreement, Benjamin Netanyahu's said in a statement early April 8 that Israel supports the move but insisted that the deal “does not include Lebanon.”

That same morning, eight people were killed and 28 wounded in an Israeli strike on a cafe in Sidon, in southern Lebanon, according to the country's health ministry.

Afternoon the Israeli occupation forces launched, “against Hezbollah across Lebanon involved 50 fighter jets dropping some 160 bombs on 100 targets within 10 minutes,” according to the military. The Lebanese Health Ministry and Lebanese media issued an emergency call for people to clear roads in Beirut for ambulances and preliminary reports indicate that at least 80 have been killed and over 200 injured in the latest wave of Israeli airstrikes.

Many people reportedly remain trapped beneath the rubble, while hospitals in the area are under heavy strain. According to the Lebanese Red Cross chief, the Israeli attacks were aimed at densely populated areas in Beirut and the Dahiyeh.

On April 8, Hadash Member of the Knesset (MK) Ofer Cassif said, “Congratulations to the brilliant duo, Orange and Purple [referring to the tints of Trump's and Netanyahu's hair] on their impressive list of achievements – economic, strategic and political – culminating in finding the lost key to the Strait of Hormuz. We warned from the very beginning that this was nothing more than a futile and pointless war of deception that would only lead to bloodshed, widowhood, orphanhood and devastation, without achieving anything. No to occupation, yes to peace.”

Hadash, the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, is a left-wing political coalition formed by the Communist Party of Israel and other groups. It currently holds four seats in the Knesset.

According to Hadash MK Ayman Odeh

(photo above, at centre), “Israel should learn three main lessons from the war: To recognize the limitations of power, that there is no stability in the region without Israeli-Palestinian peace, and that Netanyahu is a liar and an international pyromaniac.”

Meanwhile, according to an investigation published April 7 in the New York Times, the war began after Benjamin Netanyahu presented Donald Trump with an action plan for Iran during his visit to the United States on February 11, with Mossad head David Barnea and senior IDF officials participating remotely in the discussion online.

The Israeli side promised a complete victory: the ballistic missile program would be destroyed within weeks, the weak regime would not be able to close the Strait of Hormuz, and the damage to American interests in the Gulf states would be minimal. Netanyahu even presented Reza Pahlavi, the son of the late pro-American Shah, to Trump as a possible future ruler of Iran.

Israel's inner political-security cabinet reportedly expects that Iran will respond its continued attacks on Lebanon by launching missiles towards Israel. Israeli public broadcaster Kan stated on April 8 that the Israeli government and military establishment demanded of the US that Lebanon be confirmed as not being included in the ceasefire arrangements with Iran.

The Kan report quoted an Israeli official as saying that there is a sense of frustration among the Israeli leadership. An Israeli source was quoted as saying that the ceasefire was “imposed” on Israel, adding that after this became clear, Israel asked US President Donald Trump to separate the Lebanese arena from the Iranian one, “and that is what happened.”

Meanwhile, a coalition of organizations and movements in Israel is continuing the protests it has held against the war and the right-wing government in major cities and dozens of locations across the country. ■

Prepared by PV staff with files from the Communist Party of Israel

## Yuri's Night cancellation: Erasing voices for peace in the wake of a new arms race



CAM SCOTT

On April 12 1961, Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin exited earth's atmosphere aboard the Vostok 1, completing one full orbit of the planet and securing his legend as the first person to travel into outer space.

In just under two hours, Gagarin's flight expanded the scope of human experience, and a popular imagination spanning all sides of an escalating Cold War. And although the so-called “Space Race” of the era remains inseparable from US and Soviet military accumulations, Gagarin was correctly hailed as an international hero and a figure of both working-class power and scientific promise the world over.

A 1961 commemorative statement from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union explains the significance of the event for working people everywhere: “When the working class took power into their hands in October 1917, many people, including those who were honest, doubted whether the working class would be able to govern the country and to preserve at least the achieved level of development in the economy, science and engineering ... The working class, the Soviet collective farm peasantry, the Soviet intelligentsia, the entire Soviet people are now demonstrating to the whole world their remarkable success in science and engineering. Our country has taken the lead over all other states in the world and is the first to blaze the trail into outer space.”

In the Soviet idiom, the honour of this milestone belonged to the whole people – not to a specialized class or profession in isolation of its many supporters.

This vision of collective achievement considerably exceeds any narrow nationalism, as well as the familiar terms of Cold War military contestation. In fact, the CPSU used the occasion to repeat a plea for disarmament: “Let all people, irrespective of race or nationality, colour, religious creed or social status, spare no efforts to ensure a lasting world peace. Let us put an end to the arms drive! Let us carry out general and complete disarmament under strict international control! This will be a decisive contribution to the sacred cause of peace.”

Gagarin passed away in 1968 during a training flight, and would not live to see the jointly crewed Apollo–Soyuz mission in 1975 – often described as a symbolic

“handshake” between Soviet and US cosmonauts. But Gagarin's memory continues to resonate with working people everywhere, as a reminder of their own capacities and of the possibilities for research programs motivated by our common dreams rather than by profitable scheming.

As a symbol, the Soviet cosmonaut sits at the crossroads of poetry and science; urging technical innovation but calling us back to its imaginary complement, which is the property of all.

For this reason, April 12 (“Cosmonautics Day”) has long been observed as a politically secular event in cities across the globe. Though originated in the former USSR, the commemoration of Gagarin's flight continues today by way of the International Day of Human Space Flight, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2011, or “Yuri's Night” – a North American celebration of “the human aspects of spaceflight” launched by the non-profit Space Generation Foundation in 2001.

### Yuri's Night

In Winnipeg, the Manitoba Museum has celebrated Yuri's Night since 2010. The annual event includes games and activities, a dance party in the planetarium, and presentations by astronomers and engineers including members of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. As a multi-generational and experiential evening, Yuri's Night was a great success, continuing until the COVID-19 pandemic placed the event on pause for several consecutive years.

This April 12 ought to have been the first celebration of human space travel and of Yuri Gagarin since 2019 – until the Manitoba Museum decided to cancel the event under pressure from a small but influential chorus of Ukrainian nationalists, determined to see continuity between the present Russian government's war in Ukraine and the achievements of the Soviet era.

The historical illiteracy of this lobby cuts two ways.

On one hand, the present Russian Federation is a direct outcome of the dismantling of the Soviet system and its social innovation. On the other hand, the Ukrainian nationalist movement and its allies clearly mean to launder a more fundamental anti-communism through their opposition to Russia's current government. This mis-

■ POPULAR EDUCATION, PG 10

## LET CUBA LIVE!

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## NL Housing failing in its mandate as government focuses on market-based "solutions"



SEAN BURTON

Late in March, Newfoundland and Labrador's auditor general Denise Hanrahan released a scathing report on the severe shortcomings of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation's practices relating to public housing construction.

In addition to the generally slow progress of the waitlist process and for approving and building or repairing units, applications for public housing have increased 71 percent during the audit period 2021-2025, from 1523 households to 2603 households. Most outrageous of all is that despite the sharp increase in demand, the actual number of available units has decreased by just 57 during that period.

Although the report does have important recommendations for improving the organizational practices of NLHC, the housing needs of the province demand something more far-reaching. Public housing in Newfoundland and Labrador, much like public transit, is widely viewed as something only for the most desperately poor people to avail of. Everyone else is expected to survive at the whims of the real estate market.

Even in a largely rural province like NL, home ownership is increasingly inaccessible for many, and apartment rent is high. Working people of this province have been struggling with affordability in virtually every facet of their lives, exacerbated now with unstable fuel costs stemming from the unjust US-Israeli intervention in Iran. Real estate developers, driving for higher profits, have little incentive to make their properties affordable in the true sense of the word.

Public housing has a vital role to play not only for those who desperately need housing the most, but also for driving down real estate prices if built on a large enough scale.

The provincial government might "agree" that housing is a human right, but it has done little of substance to make that statement mean anything. Affordable housing should be the reality for all, and that will never happen so long as our governments adhere to hands-off market-oriented "solutions." Public housing to be constructed on a large-scale, hundreds of units per year, not the paltry dozens currently planned.

Instead of subsidizing big oil companies, our government should be supporting its working people. ■

Photo: Rally for housing in St. John's, NL in 2023 (Credit: SaltWire)

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## Even with new leadership, NDP is no substitute for a militant and united fight against monopoly, imperialism



CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,  
COMMUNIST PARTY OF CANADA

As more working people reject the corporate agenda advanced by Mark Carney and the Liberal Party, many are actively searching for a political vehicle to organize a fightback. This is partly reflected in the enthusiasm generated among the left wing of the New Democratic Party by Avi Lewis' leadership victory.

This search for an alternative to austerity, militarism and corporate plunder is welcome but the NDP, even under new and more "left leaning" leadership, is no substitute for a genuinely militant and united fightback rooted in the working class and its independent political action.

The immediate response from senior NDP figures to Lewis's victory reveals the deep contradictions within that party. The NDP leaders in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and the Premier of British Columbia have launched open attacks on the new leader. Naheed Nenshi, who won the Alberta NDP leadership in 2024, has made clear his desire to serve the interests of the US-dominated oil and gas sector. In BC, David Eby is pursuing a frontal assault on the public sector through mass layoffs, while rolling back Indigenous consultation rights for corporate extraction projects.

Lewis has downplayed these battles and welcomed "disagreement," but the contradiction between the corporate agenda of provincial NDP governments and his own stated policies cannot be resolved by goodwill alone. This is a civil war between right-wing social democrats who have embraced neoliberalism and are openly content to manage capitalism with a human face, and "left" social democrats who believe the party should return to its roots with "bold" reforms. These conflicts reflect two sides of the same coin – social democracy, despite left or right slogans, remains rooted in the idea that capitalism can be reformed and that electoral struggle is the primary path forward. As such, the NDP remains, at best, an unreliable vehicle for leading a genuine fightback.

Beyond the personalities and barbs arising from this specific leadership race, a deeper phenomenon emerges: The NDP is attempting a tactical shift leftward precisely because its decades long strategy of trying to "out liberal" the Liberals has hit a dead end. That strategy has produced demoralization, declining working-class support, and the party's worst electoral result in history in the April 2025 federal election. The recent defections to the Liberals of Nunavut MP Lori Idlout and former Ontario NDP deputy leader Doly Begum further demonstrate the failure of this approach.

Even before the confidence and supply agreement with the Trudeau government, the NDP repeatedly backed regressive Liberal policies, including the renegotiated USMCA and massive COVID corporate welfare that funneled tens of billions of public dollars into corporate monopolies. Then came the formal agreement which tied the NDP to the deeply unpopular Liberal government while most people's living standards took a beating through inflationary attacks on wages. It is telling that Lewis and none of the other lead-

ership candidates criticized the confidence agreement. A tactical shift leftward, while potentially attracting disillusioned activists back into the party, cannot solve the more fundamental crises of social democracy.

Beyond its internal contradictions, the NDP remains largely confined to English-speaking Canada, with no ties to Indigenous struggles for sovereignty and with no roots in Quebec. This latter point was illustrated superficially but tellingly by the fact that the French language leadership debate was conducted mostly in English. Moreover, the NDP continues to support the Clarity Act which places conditions on Quebec sovereignty, and the Sherbrooke Declaration by the party's Quebec section in 2005 further fails to recognize the right to national self-determination up to and including secession. The NDP is not reflective of the pan-Canada unity required for a genuine countrywide fightback against corporate rule.

As a social democratic party which views capitalism as fixable, the NDP also lacks a credible answer to the most urgent questions facing working people today. The current moment is one of escalating imperialist barbarism internationally, and at home it is characterized by rapid militarization, deep austerity and the continued erosion of sovereignty. On questions of trade and peace, the NDP has accommodated itself to the corporate paradigm for 40 years – it abandoned its criticisms of NAFTA and NATO, advocated for more military spending, and voted for Canada's participation in the wars in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Libya. The present moment demands struggles against military spending, against NATO membership, and for withdrawal from the USMCA. Boldness in policy rings hollow as long as there are not clear answers to these immediate central questions.

Avi Lewis calls himself a democratic socialist, but his party fully expunged the word "socialism" from its constitution in 2013. A simple and opportunistic return to using the word "socialist" does not mean the NDP is now a partner in fighting for socialism in Canada. Democratic socialism is a form of social democracy, and it continues to reject the need for a revolutionary political party of the working class, to negate the historical achievements of working people under real socialism, and to define the communist movement as undemocratic. The history of social democracy in Canada, especially since 1945, is intertwined with anti-communism and class collaboration. That fatal flaw cannot be rectified by new incarnations of social reformism.

Electing more left-wing candidates is important and can help advance the class struggle. But electing the NDP will not bring socialism; even electing the Communist Party, which would guarantee parliament had strong fighters for the working class, would not in itself win socialism. We need to move beyond a narrow focus on electoralism, and work to build working class political power through extra-parliamentary organizing that finds reflection in the parliamentary arena.

To the extent that the Lewis-led NDP participates in building the extra-parliamentary struggle, we should welcome it. But we must also be wary of attempts to co-opt la-

bour and social movement energy into narrow partisan campaigns for the NDP. The trade union movement is not well served by automatic affiliation or permanent organizational ties to the NDP or any other party including the Communist Party. Rather, the labour movement needs to take independent political action in mass extra parliamentary struggle, while giving support to particular electoral candidates, coalition programs or policies where appropriate.

The crises facing working people today demand much more than managerial reforms within capitalism. We are confronted by the drive towards world war, the rapid militarization of the Canadian state, new attacks on labour and democratic rights, and a deepening affordability crisis driven by corporate profiteering. The existential threat of climate change continues to accelerate as well as the threat of nuclear apocalypse. A genuine fightback requires a program that directly challenges the power of monopoly capital.

We must fight for Canadian withdrawal from NATO and the dismantling of Canada's military subordination to the Pentagon. The \$150 billion that Carney is set to divert to militarization each year must be redirected to social programs, housing, health and education. We must demand an end to the USMCA and its corporate protections, replacing it with multilateral, mutually beneficial trade relations. Public ownership over natural resources and the energy industry is the main pathway to combating climate change – only democratic public control of oil, gas, hydro and renewable energy can enable a planned, just transition that protects workers and communities while rapidly reducing emissions.

We must confront the massive assault on living standards. We need a public program that builds two million units of social housing, to help decommodify housing and address the housing crisis. We need to fight for sovereignty through a program that nationalizes key industries – banks and insurance, auto, steel, shipbuilding and aerospace – and puts them under democratic control to guarantee jobs and production for social needs.

Beyond these measures, we need a democratic anti-monopoly, anti-imperialist people's coalition, with the working class at its core, that fights for a full employment economy funded by cutting the war budget and taxing the corporations and the rich. This coalition will necessarily involve many social democrats, perhaps including left NDP leaders. But the key task in this volatile and dangerous period is to bring an anti-monopoly, anti-imperialist program to the working class and build the movement capable of winning it. For this we need a stronger Communist Party – history has shown that the stronger the Communist Party, the stronger the fightback and the more militant the whole working-class movement.

As monopoly capital attacks the living standards of the working class, a broad cross section of the people are compelled to fight back. That fight cannot be led by a party that remains trapped within the logic of capitalism and entirely reliant on the electoral process. It must be built through struggle, in the streets and in the workplaces. ■

## WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST: Who pays ... and who profits?



JAD KABBANJI

The US-Israeli war against Iran and Lebanon is into its second month. While there is a form of ceasefire as of publication time, the bombings have inflicted unprecedented damage on energy and oil infrastructure, and as the Strait of Hormuz was closed and oil prices topped \$100 a barrel, the US oil and gas industry has enjoyed an unexpected windfall. The Trump administration – which had promised it would bring oil down to \$50 a barrel and control inflation – is tolerating a sustained rise in prices which wholly benefits corporate monopolies, in order to help finance this war and other operations.

Behind the airstrikes lies a global economic war crafted by the United States. For Canada, whose oil-based prosperity depends almost exclusively on the US market, this situation mirrors its own energy and political servitude.

Why, during an imperialist war in which US monopolies are raking in record profits while making the working class pay the price of inflation and destruction, does Canada remain a silent accomplice? And why does it so stubbornly reject efforts to secure its own energy sovereignty – the only thing capable of breaking this bondage?

### Shale revolution and reorientation

Thirty years ago, the idea that the United States could do without Gulf oil was the stuff of science fiction. In 1990, the country was still importing a quarter of its crude from the Middle East, and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait had sent a clear signal that US energy security depended on projecting military power in the region. Domestic production, in steady decline since its 1970 peak, seemed doomed.

Yet, starting in 2009, the situation shifted dramatically. Mastery of hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling unlocked previously inaccessible hydrocarbons in the shale basins of Texas and New Mexico. In fifteen years, US production more than doubled, rising from five million barrels per day to over thirteen million. This meteoric rise has made the US the world's leading producer and, for the first time since 1949, a net exporter of crude oil and refined products.

This transformation has profoundly redrawn the map of energy geopolitics. No longer needing stability in the Gulf to guarantee its own supplies, the US could now view the region from a more aggressive perspective – one in which chaos would be deliberately maintained.

The shale revolution did not merely transform production; it redirected import flows. By 2025, more than 84 percent of oil entering the US came from the Western Hemisphere. Canada became the near-exclusive supplier, accounting for over 60 percent of volumes. The share from Gulf monarchies, which still stood at 24 percent in 2008, fell below 10 percent.

This realignment is no accident. It stems from a coherent industrial strategy:

US refineries, built to process heavy crude, sourced their supply from Canada, Venezuela and Mexico, while light shale crude was exported to Europe and Asia. This specialization transformed the US into a global market hub, capable of importing and exporting on a massive scale.

The Trump administration has given this shift a political dimension by reviving the Monroe (“Donroe”) Doctrine which asserts Washington’s right to intervene preemptively in the hemisphere to ward off any foreign influence.

The January 3 military operation against Venezuela, which culminated in the capture of Nicolás Maduro, illustrates this logic. Behind the political coup, many believe that control over Venezuela’s oil resources is at stake. Washington has announced \$100 billion in investments to rebuild the country’s energy sector, with the ambition of making Venezuela a captive supplier to US refineries. Chevron, already present in the country, promises to increase its production by half within two years. Oil revenues are deposited into accounts controlled by the United States and will be used to purchase American products.

But doing so requires massive investments – investments that are not forthcoming without an oil price hovering around \$100 per barrel.

### Economic logic to the war against Iran

The official goal of the offensive against Iran is to neutralize the nuclear and ballistic threat, but in reality, the strikes follow a ruthless economic logic.

Within the first few weeks, the Strait of Hormuz, through which one-fifth of the world’s oil passes, was closed and dozens of energy facilities were damaged across nine countries in the region. The Ras Laffan LNG terminal in Qatar, the heart of the global market, lost 17 percent of its capacity with repairs expected to take several years. This destruction is having a lasting effect on the markets – the price of Brent crude has surpassed \$119, and the International Energy Agency describes the situation as “the most significant disruption in oil history.”

This tension directly benefits US producers. LNG exporters such as Cheniere Energy are seeing their contracts with Asia and Europe multiply, capturing market share that Qatar can no longer supply. US shale oil, whose break-even point is around \$65, is becoming highly profitable. Even if production cannot increase overnight, high prices send a clear investment signal: drill more.

But what about the contradiction between this strategy and the White House’s official rhetoric of bringing oil and gasoline prices down? To understand that apparent inconsistency, we need to place this military campaign within the broader logic of the war economy that the US is currently adopting.

The cost of military operations is staggering, at nearly a billion dollars a day, so high oil prices are a prerequisite for sustaining the war effort. Revisions to the

Energy Information Administration’s forecasts confirm this: before the conflict, the agency projected an average Brent price of \$55.58 for 2026; after hostilities broke out, it raised that figure to \$79. US oil production, which was expected to remain stable, is now projected to rise by 2027 with LNG exports surging.

In addition to major industrial investments, the war economy also involves a massive reversal of wealth distribution. Since the start of the conflict, the oil giants’ profits have surged by nearly 50 percent; meanwhile, inflation is eroding working people’s purchasing power. Every more expensive tank of gas, every soaring heating bill represents a transfer from households to corporate coffers. The rise in energy prices, deliberately sustained by the strategy of tension, is the mechanism through which the working classes are unwittingly financing the war effort.

### Canada must break complicity, regain sovereignty

Canada’s position in this landscape is paradoxical. On the one hand, more than 90 percent of Canada’s crude is exported to the US, meaning this country has resoundingly replaced the Middle East as the main supplier. This energy integration is the result of a deliberate political choice, pursued for decades, in which Canadian oil pipelines run overwhelmingly along a north-south axis.

On the other hand, this dependence has made Canada an objective accomplice to US imperialism. Every barrel shipped south frees the United States from the constraint of importing from the Gulf and gives it a free hand to wage wars without fear for its physical supplies.

Nothing illustrates this servility better than Canada’s powerlessness in the face of Cuba’s energy needs. Strangled by the US blockade, which was tightened under the Trump administration, the island is in desperate need of oil. Canada has the resources and historical ties with Cuba, yet it cannot meet this legitimate demand because almost all its oil exports are already tied to the US market.

The structural integration of Canada’s energy industry with that of the United States deprives Ottawa of the commercial freedom to choose its partners without Washington’s tacit authorization. This energy dependence silences Canada and makes the Carney government an accomplice to the blockade.

Canada must now break this blockade and send oil tankers to Cuba.

It is time to rethink this country’s oil wealth, specifically around the question of whose interest it serves and under whose control it operates. The current logic reduces it to exclusive dependence on the US market, primarily providing corporate profits and serving Washington’s hegemonic strategy. This approach must be countered with another perspective, that of popular sovereignty.

This means, first and foremost, controlling the channels through which the resources flow. It means refusing to allow them to serve as a tool for imperialist wars. It means demanding that the resulting profits fund the energy transition, public services and the collective wellbeing, rather than padding the margins of Canadian or foreign monopolies or enriching a handful of shareholders.

This independence requires strengthened public control over the sector. It means asserting that resources belong to the nations that make up Canada: they must be managed in the public interest, not according to private interests.

In short, regaining control over energy is now a political imperative. The objective is not to perpetuate an extractivist economic model, but to ensure that these resources serve independence and collective prosperity, and cease fueling imperialist wars whose consequences the population suffers without ever having a say in them. ■

Clarté

Translated from French by PV staff



## Quebec students call on Ottawa to send oil to Cuba, restore flights

In response to the escalating US blockade of Cuba, CEGEP (college) students in Quebec have launched an open letter calling on the Canadian government to actively oppose the blockade, including by sending oil and restoring flights to the island. Nearly 400 students have signed the letter, which appears below.

We, current and recent CEGEP students, urge the Government of Canada to take immediate and concrete action to support the Cuban people in response to the United States’ escalating economic blockade and the resulting fuel crisis.

Many of us have had the opportunity of traveling on school trips to Cuba, with support from Dawson College and Les Offices jeunesse internationaux du Québec. These experiences have greatly broadened our perspectives on the issue.

We have learned in partnership with Cuban communities, studied with grassroots organizations, and built relationships grounded in mutual respect. Alongside our hosts and friends in Cuba, we have gained understanding that solidarity is not a slogan. It requires action. It means we stand with one another, across borders, in defense of dignity and justice for all.

We are devastated to witness the extreme escalation of the US blockade against Cuba, which has cut off the Cuban people’s access to fuel and other essential goods. Our friends in Cuba are facing food shortages, hospital and school closures, a total lack of transport, and constant blackouts. A humanitarian crisis has been created, not by a natural disaster, but by state policies. Let’s put solidarity in practice.

Where is our government? Canada has long maintained diplomatic relations with Cuba and, like, nearly every other country in the world, has consistently expressed opposition to the decades-long US blockade. Yet, at this critical moment, Canada’s response has been strikingly inadequate, solely offering food aid that amounts to less than a dollar per person in Cuba. Mark Carney spoke at Davos about the need for middle powers like Canada to act together against “great powers” like the United States. Canada’s failure to respond to the violent and lethal scarcity imposed by the US on Cuba stands in stark contrast to those promises. It’s time to put words into action.

Alongside other solidarity groups, we demand the Canadian government:

- Urgently send more humanitarian aid to Cuba, including oil.
- Publicly condemn the blockade and the violations of international law by the United States government.
- Take all necessary measures to restore flights to Cuba.
- Deepen Canada’s economic ties with Cuba.
- Unequivocally uphold and promote the right of peoples to self-determination around the world, including the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

We want Canada to be a leader on the international stage by standing publicly and materially with the Cuban people. We, Canadian and Quebec youth, refuse to stay indifferent! ■

# LABOUR

## Fairmont Empress workers vote to strike

The employer's insufficient offers on wages, mental health benefits and protections for gratuity earners has forced Unifor Local 4276 members at Victoria's Fairmont Empress Hotel to vote to strike if a resolution cannot be negotiated this month.

Local 4276 members voted 99% in favour of job action if negotiations with the employer cannot achieve a new contract, although no strike deadline has been set. The union is required to give 72 hours notice of job action.

This is the first round of negotiations involving the hotel's spa workers, who joined Unifor in 2024.

"World-class customer service cannot be maintained without industry-leading wages and benefits," said Unifor Western Regional Director Gavin McGarrigle.

## Alouette bus drivers strike for wages

Eighty school bus drivers at Alouette Bus Lines have been walking a picket line since February 23 in Sturgeon Falls, Ontario, cancelling routes for some 2,000 students in North Bay, West Nipissing and surrounding area.

Drivers in Nipissing-Parry Sound, members of USW Local 2020, currently earn \$18.11 per hour for the critical responsibility of safely transporting students to and from school. The union is seeking \$21.10 per hour in the first year, followed by \$1 increases in each of the next two years under a three-year agreement.

Alouette Bus Lines is using scab workers to restart some bus routes, and the union is organizing protests against this"

## Extendicare facing summer of strike action in Ontario

Members of CUPE's central negotiation table are preparing for a summer of action after negotiations with Extendicare's management team stalled. CUPE represents over 30,000 Long-Term Care and Retirement Home workers across the province and has consistently set the pattern followed by other unions bargaining in the Long-Term Care and Retirement sector in Ontario.

CUPE locals 1182, 1307, 1394, 2770, 2951, 3127, 3128 and 4788 serve seniors in Extendicare's Laurier Manor, Crossing Bridge, Timmins, Sudbury, Bayview, Oshtawa, Tri-Town, Kapuskasing, and York facilities. The central table agreement frames the conditions for other Extendicare facilities across the province, representing over 1100 long-term care workers.

CUPE notes that Extendicare made \$96.6 million in profits in 2025. "This for-profit provider can afford to provide fair wages, good benefits, and correct the issues caused by their systems. Instead, they have withdrawn from bargaining without meaningful engagement."

## Public works employees strike for wages

Twenty-two public works employees in Taché, Manitoba have been on strike since February 23. The workers, members of Operating Engineers of Manitoba Local 987, have been without a contract since the end of 2024.

The key issue in the strike is wages, with the union wanting wage parity with similar workers in neighbouring rural municipalities.

Since the strike began, snow has not been cleared and ditch work to mitigate spring flooding has not started. The workers recently warned Taché councillors that overland flooding could be imminent if they don't get back to work soon.

Local 987 business representative Trevor Yuriy said the municipality's response is to try to change the essential services bylaw to include spring maintenance.

# Labour has no truck with the war economy, but CLC convention has a chance to put the right foot forward



## PV LABOUR BUREAU

At the end of March, the government and mainstream media breathlessly announced that Canada had met its NATO commitment to spending 2 percent of the GDP on the military. They seemed to believe that people in Canada would celebrate by eating poutine, getting red maple leaf tattoos and proudly humming the national anthem.

In fact, there is nothing for working people to celebrate in this announcement.

The 2-percent target, which Ottawa says is over \$63 billion dollars for the current fiscal year alone, is a completely arbitrary benchmark that NATO cooked up in response to the war in Ukraine – which NATO itself precipitated through its aggressive expansionism.

Furthermore, it's just a stepping stone on the way to even higher arms budgets, as NATO countries including Canada have committed to spending 5 percent of GDP on the military by 2035. That even more arbitrary target would mean about \$160 billion for Canada.

When NATO announced the new target at its Summit last summer, labour bodies around the world were quick to critique it, albeit unevenly.

The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) immediately condemned "the new provocative soaring of military expenditures, the increase of the NATO budget ... which are deepening the confrontation and increasing the risk for a generalized imperialist conflict with disastrous consequences." The federation warned that soaring arms budgets will "negatively impact the standard of living of the working people [who] pay with their lives for the wars conducted for the increase of multinationals' profitability."

The more conservative International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) also criticized the increase in military spending, although it took care to not call out NATO as being the source of that decision. "Militarism is the natural consequence of this profit-at-all-costs political economy. As militarism takes centre stage, resources that could address the urgent challenges of climate change, poverty, and inequality are diverted into weapons systems, expanding arms races, and dangerous geopolitical standoffs."

Prior to the NATO Summit, in March 2025 the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) issued a joint statement with other union centrals in G7 countries. It said, again with no mention of NATO: "In recent months, the resources have been found to significantly increase military spending, when for more than a decade, public services have been starved of resources under wrongheaded fiscal consolidation and austerity policies. This armament race must not undermine social spending nor deprive countries and people of necessary investment in health, education, infrastructure, the ecological transition, job creation, skills development, and social protection."

Just four months later, in response to

Mark Carney's July 2025 instruction for cabinet to chop operational budgets, the CLC complained that the new arms race was indeed undermining social spending. "Now the government is considering cuts of up to 15 percent in some departments, risking the most significant downsizing of Canada's public service at a time when the Prime Minister is committing to significant new spending on defence and tax cuts for the rich."

In truth, the CLC is pinched between the varied political viewpoints of its affiliates. These include unions with a significant base in heavy industries that may benefit in the immediate term from higher military spending. The United Steelworkers (USW) for example, has cautiously endorsed the arms budget increases as long as they prioritize jobs for workers in Canada. "We welcome the news that the government is prepared to put Canadian workers and jobs at the heart of infrastructure and defence spending. This will benefit our members, our communities and our economy."

Similarly, Unifor called for a "made-in-Canada" approach to the new arms race, lobbying Ottawa to "revamp defence procurement processes that empower Canadian companies to build the equipment Canada needs to defend its sovereignty." Unifor remains outside the CLC, but its approach reflects that of several CLC affiliates including the building trades unions.

It's true that unions like USW and Unifor have taken an economic walloping – one that has only worsened with Donald Trump's trade war. But this apparent embrace of the Carney-NATO war economy, and the effect that has on the broader labour movement, is a big concern because labour (whether its leaders realize it or not) has no truck with rising military spending.

It harkens back to the days of Lane Kirkland, the long-time AFL-CIO president who supported and advocated for huge US military increases in exchange for government commitments that union shops would get procurement contracts. Corporate monopolies got the last laugh on Lane – while their profits exploded as a result of his pro-militarist policies, his presidency witnessed a precipitous decline in union membership and some of US labour's most historic defeats.

The AFL-CIO should have known better. After all, high military spending in countries like the US and Canada isn't for national defence – it's for aggression overseas that boosts profits, further shifts the balance of power from workers to capital and, eventually, drives down wages and working conditions at home.

Furthermore, while military spending can produce industrial jobs, it has long been identified as one of the weakest and most expensive ways to do so. Studies from Brown University show that military spending produces an average of 5 jobs per \$1 million, while the same investment creates nearly 13 jobs in education, 9 in healthcare, and 7-8 in infrastructure and clean energy.

The upcoming CLC convention in May

has a chance to put a better foot forward.

In the lead-up to the convention, labour activists across the country have been promoting resolutions calling on the Congress to mobilize a mass campaign against austerity and military spending. Submitted by several labour bodies – from union local to labour councils – these resolutions note that Carney's \$150 billion war economy is paid for by the 15-percent across the board cuts to programs at the federal level as well as cuts to transfer payments to provinces. They point out that this money could – and should – be used to pay for things that the labour movement has long called for: job creation, construction of desperately needed housing, expanded healthcare, university and college funding, a green transition that works for workers and the climate.

Carney's \$150 billion war budget could build around 430,000 publicly owned and delivered social housing units each year. That's more than 2 million truly affordable units in the space of five years, which is precisely what is needed to confront the housing crisis across the country.

That amount could also be used to build around 3,600 new schools, or 60 new hospitals, each year. Or it could create in the area of 1.7 million full-time jobs paying \$40 per hour.

Workers in Canada need the CLC to come out of this convention with a commitment to leading this kind of action campaign against military spending, and for jobs and services. There is a broad basis for building this struggle, but delegates will need to make sure that the resolutions hit the floor and that they are passed with strong and widespread support.

That support needs to include funding and staffing a country-wide, escalating campaign against Ottawa's massive military budget and the cuts that are going to pay for it. Local labour councils need to strike action committees that unite labour and community groups in leading local campaign work. The CLC can connect affiliates to resources to educate their members on the negative impacts of excessive military funding and the austerity it will cause, as well as alternatives for workers.

At a time of economic and social crisis – with a soaring cost of living, declining real wages, gigification of employment, a looming climate crisis and an absolute lack of anything resembling affordable housing – how is spending more on the military even remotely responsible?

Workers in Canada need the CLC to demand that Ottawa reject this outrageous war economy, and adopt an economic program based on peace, jobs and public investment in infrastructure, health, education and social programs. We need the CLC to demand a big reduction in military spending, and for those funds to be dedicated to people's needs.

There's no good reason for labour to not take up a campaign like this, but there are at least 150 billion reasons why it should. ■

# Alberta budget increases public sector workers, but still falls short

KIM SIEVER

At the end of February, the Alberta government released their 2026–2027 budget.

Lots of other people are analyzing spending in various areas, but there's one area that most people seem to be overlooking. And it's in my wheelhouse.

Let's look at how many people will be working in the public sector during the next budget year. Specifically, I want to examine post-secondary workers, K–12 workers, and health care workers.

The first chart, below, shows the number of full-time equivalent positions from last year and the projected numbers for this year. (Acute Care Alberta, Assisted Living Alberta, Primary Care Alberta and Recovery Alberta are the new health organizations the UCP government created to replace Alberta Health Services.)

Interesting that the provincial government has no plans to increase the number of assisted living workers they employ nor the number of primary care workers they employ. These would include medical clinics, long-term care homes, and so on.

Most areas – other than assisted living and primary care, of course – will see an increase of between 1.2 percent and 4.1 percent more workers over the next year.

Interestingly, Recovery Alberta will see an increase of more than 13 percent over the next year. We have no money to hire more workers in long-term care homes and local family doctor's offices, but we seem to have money for recovery workers.

Which is not to say that I think we should not have recovery workers. I think we should be increasing workers across the board.

I wonder if the fact that most workers in assisted living and primary care are unionized and those in the recovery sector are less likely to be unionized has anything to do with it.

Speaking of unions, some of the unions representing workers in these sectors are not happy.

Sandra Azocar, the president of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees is worried about assisted living and postsecondary investments by this government. AUPE represents workers in these sectors.

"Alberta is desperately short of continuing-care spaces, but this budget simply does not invest enough in Alberta's aging population. AUPE members see it every day. Acute-care patients are already shipped to facilities where they're not getting the level of care they need. It's only going to get worse now."

"[Post-secondary] students and staff will pay the price for the government's decisions."

The United Nurses of Alberta, naturally, is also concerned.

"While Alberta's population has boomed over the past three decades, the number of hospital beds has decreased from 13,000 in the early 1990s to around 8,000 today."

"With few exceptions, past governments have closed hospitals and closed beds instead of increasing the capacity to keep up with Alberta's population. The last new hospital built in Alberta was opened 14 years ago and the last new hospital built in Edmonton was opened almost 40 years ago!"

"The government should build up the public system we all rely on by investing in health care workers, improving urban hospitals and rural health centres, and keeping our health care public, safe and accessible, no matter your postal code."

The president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Raj Uppal, agrees.

"For the last six years, the UCP slashed corporate taxes, underfunded education, underfunded health care, cut post-secondary funding, and cut municipal funding. In today's budget, we have a huge deficit, tax increases, and they've still not reversed their own cuts to education and health care."

"There's a crisis in health care, but no new funding for hospitals or primary care. Classrooms are overcrowded, but no funding for a single new public school."

Since Uppal brought it up, let us look at how staffing levels have changed since the UCP took power. (See second chart, below.)

The 2026–2027 budget does not project full-time equivalent positions for Alberta Health Services, so I added up the numbers for the four replacement organizations.

The province's population at the end of 2018 was 4,292,556. At the end of last year, by comparison, it had grown to 5,029,346. That is a 17.16% increase.

While the number of people working in these 4 sectors has increased compared to the NDP's last year in office, they have increased slower than population growth.

In all 4 cases, the number of workers per capita has increased over the last 8 years. That means more students per teacher, more patients per nurse, and more residents per long-term care worker.

In their budget document, the provincial government said that they are "investing in programs and services important to Albertans like health care [and] education". While that technically is true, the investment falls short. Again. ■

AlbertaWorker.ca  
Slightly edited for space

|                             | 2025–2026 | 2026–2027 | Change |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------|
| Post-secondary institutions | 33,741    | 34,151    | 410    |
| K–12 certified              | 39,434    | 41,034    | 1,600  |
| K–12 non-certified          | 27,926    | 28,726    | 800    |
| Acute Care Alberta*         | 51,473    | 53,321    | 1,848  |
| Assisted Living Alberta*    | 10,930    | 10,930    | 0      |
| Primary Care Alberta*       | 9,607     | 9,607     | 0      |
| Recovery Alberta*           | 8,190     | 9,284     | 1,094  |

|                         | 2018–19 | 2026–27 | Change | % change |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|--------|----------|
| Post-secondary          | 33,588  | 34,151  | 563    | 1.68%    |
| K–12 certified          | 37,197  | 41,034  | 3,837  | 11.42%   |
| K–12 non-certified      | 26,452  | 28,726  | 2,274  | 6.77%    |
| Alberta Health Services | 80,570  | 83,142  | 2,572  | 7.66%    |



# BC's paramedics on the frontlines of the crisis in rural healthcare

MONICA SHANNON

On March 16, the Ambulance Paramedics of BC (CUPE Local 873) ratified a new collective agreement. The union's 6,000 members, primarily paramedics and 911 dispatchers, had voted 97 percent in favour of job action in February, with their demands including wage increases, sufficient staffing and improved supports around burnout and other psychological injury.

For years, the union's members have been on the frontlines of a deepening healthcare crisis shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, a decade-long toxic drug emergency and privatization efforts. As hospital overcrowding, emergency room closures and systemic failures mount, these first responders are increasingly forced to fill the gaps, providing urgent care and transporting patients to increasingly distant facilities with limited available capacity.

Alongside their fellow healthcare workers, paramedics are facing unsustainable workloads and escalating rates of burnout. BC paramedics accessed critical incident supports 3,636 times in 2022, reflecting the psychological toll of their work. In August 2025, the Ambulance Paramedics of BC reported that nearly a third of their members were either off for mental health leave or receiving related treatment while continuing to work.

Union spokesperson Ian Tait also emphasized that "there's actually a certain percentage of our members up there that are suffering and getting no treatment whatsoever" owing to stigma. The consequences have been fatal, with five BC paramedics dying from suicide in 2025, a sharp increase from previous years.

As first-responders take leave or exit the profession without adequate replacement, their absence intensifies the workloads of those who remain. Chronic understaffing in healthcare eventually cascades into emergency room closures, forcing patients to travel farther for care and placing added pressure on paramedics tasked with keeping them alive during longer transports. As Tait explained in a recent interview, these diversions can add hours to crises where every second can make a difference between life and death, and further grind down overstretched medics.

In response, BC Emergency Health Services began instituting restrictions on overtime and created more permanent full-time positions as a cost-saving measure intended to provide more consistent coverage.

However, the policy has had the opposite effect: staffing flexibility has been reduced, leaving shifts unfilled and ambulances sitting empty. By limiting overtime and flexible scheduling, BCEHS reduced the availability of auxiliary and part-time support, making it harder to backfill shifts when full-time medics need to step away. The result is greater pressure on medics who are increasingly pushed into overtime anyway (often with little to no notice) while facing unsustainable workloads and deepening burnout. To date, 400 of these positions remain vacant.

Patients across the province are seeing the consequences. There were almost 200

emergency department closures in the first half of 2025. Analysis of ER closure data by Health Data BC demonstrates the disproportionate impacts of the crisis in rural, remote and Indigenous communities. This data, obtained via a Freedom of Information request, documents 1,800 unplanned ER closures between January 2023 and April 2025.

The data is revealing. In northern BC, Chetwynd's hospital was closed 196 times – the closest hospitals are over an hour away. The ER in neighboring Hudson's Hope was closed 182 times. Mackenzie's hospital was closed 177 times – patients were forced to drive to Prince George, more than two hours away. During the 2025 holiday season, repeated ER closures in 100 Mile House forced paramedics to drive patients nearly 100 kilometres to Williams Lake.

In each case, longer distances and delays placed added strain on paramedics, who must work harder to keep patients alive in transit.

Even when rural emergency rooms remain open, access to care is not guaranteed. Until recently, the northwest community of Stewart only had two medics to serve roughly 500 residents. When both medics were unavailable last summer (one on medical leave, the other on a much-needed vacation) 911 callers were told it would take up to five hours for responders to drive up from Houston.

The failure is not on these overextended medics, but on a system that refuses to make necessary investment in public healthcare. As journalist Rob Shaw points out, northwest BC's mining bonanza has led to "billions of dollars of industrial activity [flowing] in and around the community. And yet, it can't even get basic emergency services from the province."

Similarly, the northern town of Kitwanga, located about halfway between Houston and Stewart, has been lobbying the province for almost a decade to replace its ambulance station. The station is currently unusable due to mold infestation. In this case, the province is willing to fund paramedics for the town and the three local First Nations, but so far has refused to provide a safe site for them to work.

All of this is preventable. Addressing paramedic burnout requires more than mental health supports: it means eliminating the conditions that produce it. No healthcare worker should be forced to choose between stress leave and unsafe workloads, and no patient should have to travel hundreds of kilometres for basic emergency care.

What is needed is a major expansion of public healthcare, particularly community-based primary and preventative services, so that emergency rooms are not overwhelmed by unmet primary care needs. As the BC Rural Health Network has argued, the system must shift from a reactive model to one that proactively supports health and wellbeing in rural communities.

From a class perspective, the crisis reflects political choices about where resources are directed. Stopgap measures like a travelling paramedic program may provide temporary relief, but they do not address

# Popular education for peace overpowered by reaction

■ FROM PG 5

recognition remains steeped in a seething Russophobia that transcends politics, even as it borrows ferocity from any number of historical vignettes.

The task of disentangling these complicated histories would be a fool's errand in itself, but the premise that world historic feats of discovery should be disqualified from celebration by national origin smacks of a deep-seated chauvinism.

In this respect, the cancellation of Yuri's Night marks a real concession to reactionary logic by a prominent educational institution.

"The Manitoba Museum values meaningful dialogue and believes it is important to listen, reflect, and take responsibility when our decisions fall short of the expectations of the people we serve," reads a March 26 statement on the cancellation. But which voices should the museum serve? How, and when, are they heard? And which perspectives does this jarring cancellation omit?

Like so many public relations debacles, this controversy started on social media. "Celebrating such events, especially at a time when Russia – the self-proclaimed successor of the USSR – is waging an aggressive war against Ukraine, is incredibly tone-deaf and offensive," reads one prominent comment beneath an online review of the Manitoba Museum.

While the museum responded to this non sequitur with cowed deference, many commentators leapt to the event's defence. Several pointed out that by this logic, NASA's integration with the US military industrial complex ought to discredit any mention of space exploration whatsoever.

Another post honoured the legacy of Sergiy Korolev, the Ukrainian engineer and fabled "Chief Designer" who oversaw the launch of Gagarin's craft. In fact, the Vostok 1 program was a multinational effort at every moment, launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan and involving engineers from throughout Soviet Central Asia.

Both historical coherency and logical consistency are beside the point of this pressure campaign, however.

One can imagine any number of ways to defend this celebration, insisting on the scientific neutrality of Gagarin's advance, or correcting the record as to the friendship and collaboration of both Russian and Ukrainian Socialist Republics in the era under consideration. Neither approach is likely to satisfy

the demands of a Ukrainian nationalist diaspora that has forged its identity in contradiction to their Russian neighbours on one hand, and their twentieth-century socialist counterparts on the other.

This reactionary movement has deep roots in Canada, where it seeks to obliterate all memory of the progressive Ukrainian identity that was instrumental to the construction of the Canadian socialist and labour movements.

It may in fact be naive to depoliticize Gagarin, who took flight bearing a ribbon from the Paris Commune into space. But we can say with certainty that he did not bomb Ukraine fifty-four years after his death simply by dint of his nationality. Such prejudice and narrative manipulation ought to have been ignored entirely, but these voices have been coddled instead.

This sets a disturbing precedent for all educational institutions in an era of soaring war budgets and corresponding racial jingoism.

## Popular education for peace

The attempt by Ukrainian nationalists to backdate a present conflict and conscript the whole of Russian culture and identity in its cause isn't only historically bizarre. Ironically, these spokespeople are themselves the more reliable conduit between the terms of twentieth-century Cold War and post-Soviet geopolitics, insofar as their attempt to dehumanize Russians and portray their very mention as tantamount to invasion authorizes Canada's ruinous contribution to the war in Ukraine.

Canada has sent almost \$22 billion to Ukraine since 2022, more than \$8 billion of which has gone towards armoured vehicles, drones and munitions. Last December Prime Minister Mark Carney pledged even greater arms expenditure for Ukraine under NATO's Prioritized Ukraine Requirements List, and in January he signed a pact alongside NATO allies pledging to continue arming Ukraine, even entertaining the possibility of dispatching Canadian troops.

At this meeting in Paris, Carney was clear on Ukraine's strategic priority and its benefit to his swelling war budget. In his words, "the largest military buildup in generations is coming over the course of the next five years, an additional \$80 billion of investment, in part because of issues like this." Bluntly, Carney's resolve to use Ukraine as an investment outlet for financial capital is

sure to forestall any possibility for peace in the region, which means more working class Ukrainian and Russian deaths.

This is the backdrop against which the Manitoba Museum finds itself under scrutiny from a hardcore anti-Russian chorus, determined to propagandize on behalf of this interminable war in every available venue.

The susceptibility of Canadian institutions to such propaganda is another problem, however, that threatens the very premises of public education. Although the Manitoba Museum is largely reliant upon private benefactors and provincial funding, all such institutions have been affected by serious cuts amid the sweeping austerity of Carney's war budget.

The Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau and the associated Canadian War Museum in Ottawa are cutting permanent staff levels by 18 percent over the next three years due to a \$2.4 million reduction in the most recent federal budget. In Winnipeg, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights – an ideological minefield and place of advocacy – faces \$3.2 million in cuts over the next three years. According to a statement from the Canadian Museums Association, "the federal budget has abandoned Canada's museums."

These funding shortages are the flipside of a massive military accumulation, justified in large part by Canada's undeclared war against Russia – a chiefly financial involvement at expense of Ukrainian life. Given this larger context, the capitulation of a Manitoba institution to war propaganda feels particularly bitter. If the teaching of science and history can be so easily distorted by national antipathies, then our movement for peace and disarmament must focus as strongly on the repressed past as on our endangered future.

If anything, Gagarin's spaceflight defies the logic of narrow nationalism. Rather, his achievement belongs to an ingenious sequence that ennobles not just the entire species, but the working classes who compose its larger and most innovative part.

Though Yuri's Night in its more recent conception has nothing to say about this lesson per se, its many organizers have nevertheless grasped the universalism in Gagarin's lesson and the optimism of his symbol – everywhere except in Winnipeg, that is, where the forces of ultranationalism and anti-communism appear to have overpowered a scene of popular education and of scientific awe. ■

# Healthcare crisis demands increased public funding

■ FROM PG 9

chronic understaffing rooted in underinvestment. At the same time, spending within BC's health authorities has increasingly flowed toward administrative and corporate expenditures, while frontline services face shortages.

More broadly, public funds continue to be diverted toward military expansion and industrial enrichment rather than social needs. The result is a system that asks workers to do more with less while communities are left without care. Reversing this trend requires sustained public investment in healthcare infrastructure and staffing, and a reorientation of priorities toward meeting human needs rather than preserving existing economic and political arrangements. ■

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JUAN GOBERNADO GOMEZ

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The working needs its own media now more than ever!

And this means PV needs to grow. We need to be able to publish more material, more frequently and on more platforms. We need to continue growing our print circulation while also expanding our digital reach. We need to be the educator, agitator and organizer that the working class is looking for.

This year, we have bold plans to achieve this growth. We are launching a campaign to increase subscriptions by 40 percent. We are working to produce more multimedia content and expand our social media reach. And we are developing a larger network of writers and researchers.

And that's why we are asking you to help with our 2026 Fund Drive. We need to raise \$51,000 during this year's campaign, and we're relying on readers like you.

Please donate by sending cheques payable to People's Voice to 290A Danforth Avenue, Toronto, ON, M4K 1N6; by sending an e-transfer to [pvoicepayment@gmail.com](mailto:pvoicepayment@gmail.com), or by visiting [PVOnline.ca/donate](http://PVOnline.ca/donate) to contribute through PayPal. ■

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# WHAT'S LEFT

## CANADA-WIDE

### APR 19 | DAY OF ACTION FOR CUBA

Cross-country Day of Action for Cuba, called by the Canadian Network on Cuba. Check your local Cuba solidarity group for events in your area.

## CUMBERLAND

### MAY 1 | FILM SCREENING: "UNION"

7 PM at Weird Church, 2688 Penrith Ave. Screening of "Union" about the Amazon union effort, with proceeds to benefit People's Voice. \$10 suggested donation.

## VICTORIA

### MAY 10 | FILM SCREENING: "MOTHER"

7 PM at 10A-620 Judah Street. Mother's Day screening of 1926 Soviet film "Mother" with proceeds to benefit People's Voice.

## VANCOUVER

### APR 26 | PUENTES DE AMOR RALLY

12 PM at the corner of Commercial and Broadway. Cuba solidarity rally with CCFA Vancouver. End the blockade! Send oil now!

## WINNIPEG

### APR 26 | END THE BLOCKADE

1-2 PM at the corner of River and Osborne. Join the Manitoba Cuba Solidarity Committee for monthly action calling for an end to the US blockade of Cuba. End the blockade! Send oil now!

## TORONTO

### APR 26 | END THE BLOCKADE

1 PM at the US Consulate, 360 University Ave. Join CCFA Toronto and other solidarity activists for a monthly picket against the US blockade. End the blockade! Send oil now!

## TORONTO

### APR 26 | DINNER AND A MOVIE

5 PM at 290 Danforth Ave. Spaghetti dinner and screening of "Cabaret" with proceeds to People's Voice. Tix \$20.

## OTTAWA

### APR 17 | CUBA SOLIDARITY PICKET

4:30 PM at the US Embassy, 490 Sussex Drive. Join Ottawa Cuba Connections for monthly action to call for an end to the blockade and the return of the Guantanamo base to Cuba.

## OTTAWA

### APR 26 | PUENTES DE AMOR RALLY

11 AM at the Cuban Embassy, 338 Main St. Monthly action in solidarity with Cuba. End the blockade! Send oil now!

## MONTREAL

### APR 18 | DREW GARVIE TOUR

2 PM at 5359 Avenue du Parc. Meeting with Communist Party leader Drew Garvie to discuss recent convention.

## MONTREAL

### APR 25 | SOLIDARITÉ LIBANAISE

18h30, Association des travailleurs grecs, 5359 Avenue du Parc. Soirée de solidarité avec le peuple libanais, et de collecte de fonds pour le Secours Populaire libanais. Mouvement québécois pour la paix, entrée 20 \$.

# Abby Martin's latest documentary is great anti-war agit-prop

*Earth's Greatest Enemy*

Abby Martin

Empire Files Production

REVIEW BY ALEX SCHERGER

On a chilly January evening, peace lovers, climate activists and members of the anti-war movement packed Toronto's Paradise Theatre to attend the city's premiere of the latest film by documentarian Abby Martin (*Gaza Fights for Freedom*, 2019). The evening also included a post-viewing Q & A with the director, while she toured the film across North America.

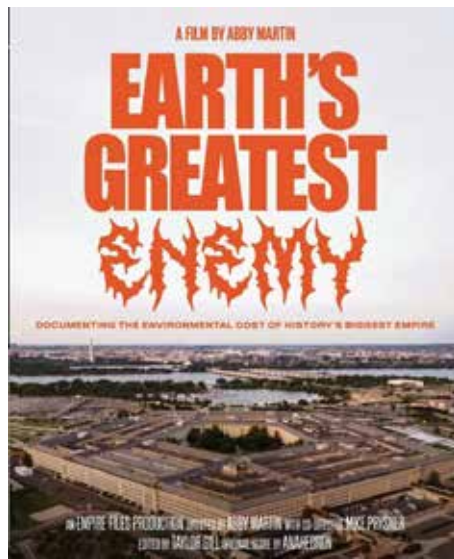
*Earth's Greatest Enemy* is an exposé of the entrenchment in global climate destruction of the US-led military industrial complex, a significant contributor frequently ignored in climate discussions. Both domestic and international sites are investigated, with testimonials throughout from veterans, climate scientists and directly impacted communities.

The experience of viewing this in a room full of like-minded community members, while also realizing the far-reaching impacts for any and every living being on this earth, was beyond visceral. The power of these grotesque climate atrocities studied in the film – committed against humanity and the earth itself under cover of manufactured consent, emissions exemptions, state crackdowns and “constant gaslighting,” as Martin laments – evokes a stomach-churning response from the viewer.

Martin attends various environmental and green energy summits in the film, and notes how they shamefully amount to chiefly networking trade shows for Silicon Valley tech, oil and gas giants and, of course, military contractors. She adeptly searches for answers and pressures spokespeople or industry figureheads on how and why their emissions exemptions are permitted to exist, but receives doublespeak or avoidant answers – a common thread we see in capitalism, of abstaining and forgoing accountability.

Martin's continuing investigations lead her all the way onto a military aircraft carrier, where she gets a tradeshow-style first-hand view of where US taxpayers' wasted social welfare money is going. Her prying bewilders military media and defence contract investors looking to get a firsthand look at their latest tools of death and destruction.

Indigenous land defenders in Hawaii and Japan use non-violent resistance to protect their home water and ecosystems where US military bases are stationed – a few of the over 800 worldwide (compared to China which Martin cites as having 8). Troubles like these ring true close to home as well, as American citizens living at or near stateside



US bases have also encountered poisoned or contaminated water supplies, dating back many decades.

As domestic austerity rises and contradictions sharpen amidst hostile global tensions garnered by rogue states like the US, and NATO-obliged Western countries such as Canada, we can expect to see even more continuation of the current “poverty draft.” This will spread social and environmental disarray at home and globally, as *Earth's Greatest Enemy* has illustrated with just a few of the aforementioned instances.

The documentary serves as an exceptional form of agitprop, and perhaps a good jumping-off point for the less-informed, while uncovering and highlighting many examples of which people in the peace and disarmament movement are well aware.

Studios were excited by the surreal realities and depths the film portrayed, touting it as a modern “An Inconvenient Truth.” However, due to its content (including a glimpse of Gaza) and Martin's uncompromising steadfastness, no funding could be found from Hollywood or other major sources for a proper red-carpet rollout.

In the Q & A period, some attendees eagerly awaited Martin to reveal a panacea to solve all our common woes. Of course, this does not exist in such a direct and simple sense, but the anti-war documentarian encouraged activists to keep their tactics diverse and relentless, applauding the (at the time recent) power of the general strike in Minneapolis against ICE and the ports shutdown in Oakland.

Let the dismal realities of this documentary provide us with revolutionary optimism to push on and continue our struggle against earth's greatest enemy: the capitalist ruling class. ■

To arrange an Earth Day screening, visit [earthsgreatestenemy.com/booking](http://earthsgreatestenemy.com/booking)



## Singing the news: the legacy of Phil Ochs

JORDAN PHIZACKLEA-CULLEN

One of the saddest stories of the 1960s counterculture movement came to an end 50 years ago today. Phil Ochs, a songwriter whose acerbic wit combined with an earnest humanism perfectly captured the spirit of the anti-war movement, died by suicide on April 9, 1976.

The weight of his alcoholism and bipolar disorder, combined with numerous political heartbreaks he had witnessed, finally culminated at the age of 35.

The silencing of that plaintive, tremulous yet powerful voice and the pen behind “I Ain't Marching Anymore,” “Too Many Martyrs,” “Love Me, I'm A Liberal,” “The War Is Over,” “The Crucifixion” and many more peerless anthems robbed a generation of a figure frequently spoken of with the same admiration as his contemporary Bob Dylan.

Yet Ochs's early death and his body of work have not ensured him Dylan's level of recognition; despite their proximity, there was no mention of Ochs in the 2024 Dylan biopic *A Complete Unknown* and his albums remain largely out of print.

Why might this be?

Ochs certainly achieved a level of success during his lifetime comparable to his contemporaries Dylan, Joan Baez and Judy Collins, playing New York's Carnegie Hall and proving there was a public appetite for his intention to be “a cross between Che Guevara and Elvis Presley.”

Initially training as a journalist, he dropped out of college to pursue a music career after being introduced to folk music and leftist politics, venerating giants of the period like Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger.

An admirer of John F. Kennedy, like many Ochs was devastated by the US president's assassination but drove his heartbreak into supporting the civil rights movement, labour struggles and the anti-Vietnam war campaign.

He recognized the power that a song could have, conveying complex topical issues into an accessible three minutes; not for nothing did Ochs call himself a “singing journalist” rather than a protest singer, echoed in the title of his debut album, *All The News That's Fit To Sing*.

Ochs's talent for encapsulating current events, however, meant that many of his songs quickly became dated, a case of “you had to be there” to truly appreciate the message; see “Hazard, Kentucky,” “Talking Cuban Crisis,” etc. And while

there continue to be modern updated cover versions of “Love Me, I'm A Liberal” and “Here's To The State Of Mississippi” all over YouTube, Ochs remains firmly a figure of his time, his songwriting concerned with the injustices he saw around him.

It was also his talent for putting unpalatable subjects into song format that put Ochs's music outside more mainstream acceptance. Take his sarcastic honky-tonk ditty on the murder of Kitty Genovese, “Outside Of A Small Circle Of Friends.” It is hard to imagine polished acts like The Kingston Trio or Peter, Paul & Mary taking a risk warbling something like this to their cozy liberal faithful.

Phil Ochs lived fast in a flurry of fevered activity, touring the world and lending his support to solidarity movements wherever he went. The merciless beating of protesters by police he witnessed at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, however, had a profound and damaging impact on him, as did the crushing of Salvador Allende's government in Chile – including the murder of his friend Victor Jara – and an attack on him in Tanzania caused permanent damage to his vocal range.

He also hit a serious case of writer's block after 1970 that left him struggling to provide new material; all the above, combined with his aforementioned health problems ensured a tragic decline.

In his 1990 biography *Phil Ochs: Death of a Rebel* (Omnibus Press, 1990), Marc Eliot ponders what Ochs would have made of the era of Reaganomics. It's tempting, in 2026, to go further and imagine how he would have used his talents to respond to the break-up of the Soviet Union, September 11, 2001 and the Iraq war, the 2008 financial crash and, of course, Donald Trump. Tempting but ultimately futile: Ochs's flame burned brilliantly but briefly and it seems he realized too, in his own words, “that there [were] no more songs.”

For all that is tragic about Phil Ochs, there is still that extraordinary back catalogue to enjoy today, and the ideals he fought for and tried to bring to the public consciousness are still worthwhile. Perhaps his ultimate message to all of us today is to use our time here productively and save silence against injustices for the grave:

“Can't say who's to praise and who's to blame when I'm gone / So I guess I'll have to do it while I'm here.” ■

Morning Star (Britain)

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Canadian author and journalist  
Shamini Peres  
Journalist and Co-Founder of the Analyst News  
Nicolai Avendaño Ruiz  
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## Vancouver coalition hosts peace forum, sounds alarm on military spending



NIGAN JUNIPER

Nearly 100 people filled the Russian Hall in East Vancouver on March 19 for the Peoples Forum for Peace, an event organized by a newly formed coalition of labour and grassroots peace organizations including the Canadian Cuban Friendship Association (CCFA-Vancouver), Vancouver and District Labour Council (VDLC), CoDevelopment Canada (CoDev), Vancouver Peace Council (VPC) and International League of People's Struggle Canada (ILPS).

The coalition was formed in the wake of the January 3 kidnapping of Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro. CCFA-Vancouver, VPC and ILPS responded to this act of naked imperial aggression by holding a joint rally on January 4. Understanding the necessity of strengthening the link between the broad peace movement and organized labour, the trio of anti-imperialist groups drew on their working relationships with CoDev and the VDLC to integrate the perspectives of the organized working class into the coalition's work.

Collectively, the coalition agreed to four points of unity to focus its work.

The first is the need to draw the connection between imperialist attacks on countries in the Global South, such as Venezuela and Cuba, with US President Donald Trump's aggression towards Greenland and Canada. It was reasoned that a focus on the Western Hemisphere would fill in a gap in Vancouver's current peace movement, while leaving open the possibility of supporting the work of other organization's focused on imperialism in Africa and Asia.

The second point was to connect Canada's lack of an independent foreign policy to ballooning military spending and the resulting austerity that is eroding the social wage and creating mass unemployment.

Third, the coalition is united around the need to emphasize the right of Indigenous peoples to self-determination. The Vancouver-based coalition was formed while BC Premier David Eby is openly attacking the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA), framing it as a danger to private property rights in the province. Truthfully, it is an obstacle to his government's extractivist policies meant to firmly situate BC into the supply chain of the military-industrial complex.

Finally, the coalition emphasizes migrant rights. Imperialist intervention across the Caribbean and Latin America is causing mass displacement, sending millions of working people across the continent in search of work to feed their families, leaving them vulnerable to extreme forms of capitalist exploitation.

Since forming, the coalition has organized a series of rallies and a screening of *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*, a documentary about the 2002 failed coup attempt of then-Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez by US backed right-wing forces.

The March 19 People's Forum for Peace was the first attempt by the coalition to hold

an event focused on bringing activists and organizers from different areas into an open discussion on the importance of organized collective action.

The evening's tone was established by a special pre-recorded message from Rodrigo Malmierca Díaz, Cuba's ambassador to Canada. Malmierca underscored the dangerous situation Cuba currently faces due to the intensification of the blockade under the current Trump administration.

The complete blockade on oil amounts to nothing less than collective punishment of the entire population – a war crime and illegal under international law. Yet this did not begin just in January of this year: during Trump's first term, over 200 new measures were added to the more than 65 year old blockade, including the arbitrary and baseless designation of Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism.

Malmierca emphasized the extraterritorial nature of the blockade, through which the United States, by financial and economic coercion, prevents other countries from trading with and normalizing relations with Cuba. He made it clear that these new measures will not destroy the revolution and that the Cuban people will continue to resist the terrorism of the United States. He reminded everyone that solidarity is now more important than ever.

**Speakers stressed the importance of forming coalitions to strengthen the peace movement, arguing that collaboration is essential as working people face deepening crises in housing, healthcare, education...**

Speakers from Canada Palestine Association, International Migrants Alliance, CoDevelopment Canada and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom took the stage to share experiences from the frontlines of their work. Topics ranged from Indigenous rights and migrant justice to the gendered impacts of austerity and the decades-long US embargo on Cuba.

Despite the breadth of topics, the evening circled back to a single idea: these struggles are not separate. With Canada's military budget set to reach 5 percent of GDP (\$150 billion) by 2035, speakers argued that the political establishment is making a choice. The question now is whether working people will organize to demand an alternative.

Speakers stressed the importance of forming coalitions to strengthen the peace movement in Vancouver and across Canada, arguing that collaboration is essential as working people face deepening crises in housing, healthcare, education and more.

With this country's military spending set to soar over the next decade, the evening's discussions made it clear that the true front lines of conflict are not overseas but at home, in our underfunded schools, precarious housing, and communities targeted by systemic violence. In a political climate that increasingly treats war as inevitable, we need to see more gatherings like this in Vancouver as we struggle for peace. ■

## Budget priorities must shift from military to social programs

■ FROM PG 3

been declining for a decade, but the system has not expanded sufficiently to meet demand.

- Contrary to governments' commitments to build a primarily not-for-profit system of early learning and childcare, CWELCC has increased the provision of for-profit childcare.
- In seven jurisdictions, new and expanded for-profits receive new operating funding and receive capital funding in three, and for-profit spaces represented more than 40 percent of net full-day growth in seven jurisdictions.

The Liberals campaigned during last year's election to preserve the CWELCC program. The failure of the Carney government to provide the funding required to strengthen the program to achieve its goals breaks that promise.

This is in stark contrast to the increase of \$9 billion for the military, an increase demanded by Donald Trump. So much for standing up to the bully. Increasing military spending, maintaining Canada's membership in NATO and NORAD, and investing in the arms and "defense" industries, which the Liberal government has also promised, will have a variety of very negative effects.

First, it gobbles up money that could otherwise be spent on valuable social services like childcare, healthcare and education.

Second, as any computer search will confirm, the number of jobs created by money spent on those services greatly exceeds the number created by the same amount of money spent on the military. Moreover, unlike the military, those services are what you might call user-friendly.

Third, arms industries create products of absolutely no use to people – we can't eat them, can't live in them, can't wear them, and can't even sing along with them.

Fourth, once you hook your economy on armament production, and when there are workers and maybe whole communities whose life blood is now being pumped by those industries, the government becomes a supporter of those industries – encouraging the development of ever new and better weapons, recommending them to foreign buyers, accommodating the demands for tax incentives and less regulation. Ultimately it becomes increasingly tempting to support those events which promote their use: armed conflict. Every war is a profit bonanza for the armaments industry – just check which corporations are doing well during this latest US violation of sovereignty and international law.

This is a recipe for Canada to lose sovereignty, being held hostage by our very own military-industrial-complex. Canada has too often been a partner in the US agenda of world domination by joining it in its military aggression against other countries.

Trump stated earlier this month: "WE'RE FIGHTING WARS, WE CAN'T TAKE CARE OF DAY CARE." It's a fine reminder to people everywhere that even in the biggest economies more guns always mean less butter, whether in the form of medical care, housing, education or childcare.

Canadians were promised affordable childcare provided by qualified childcare workers. Parents and those who support them need to tell their elected federal and provincial representatives: "Dump the Trump agenda. Kick the militarization habit. Keep the promise." ■

## Reconciliation must address the question of the right to the land

■ FROM PG 3

cuse for the province's poor economic performance and as justification for his attacks on DRIPA. However, BC's economic troubles predate the current US administration, and can be attributed more so to corporate tax cuts implemented by Liberal premier Christy Clark almost a decade before Trump's second term. These tax cuts have resulted in school closures, privatization in healthcare, disinvestment in public housing, selling of public lands and widespread austerity.

The NDP have been in power since 2017, giving them nine years to change this trajectory by reversing these tax cuts, but have refused.

Eby has instead banked on Carney's promise to make Canada a world market for raw materials. The demand for BC's lumber isn't what it used to be, but LNG and critical minerals are abundant in the province. Eby is hoping that the federal strategy will position BC advantageously along global supply chains to bring investment into the province that will in turn create jobs.

Even if this gamble pays off, however, the province will have replaced permanent unionized employment with temporary private sector jobs while keeping BC at the bottom of the value chain. Eby's focus on courting foreign investments will only further entrench our dependency on our southern neighbour, all in the name of sovereignty.

David Eby's call to suspend DRIPA is a move to eliminate any barriers to this strategy. In January, Eby struck a different tone, telling the BC Natural Resources Forum in Prince George that overriding Indigenous rights would destabilize the investment environment. "The nations will file court actions, injunctions based on their title rights," he warned, which will scare off capital.

More nuanced observers are predicting that Eby's reversal on this position will cause more instability and doubt for potential investors. Eby's government is currently challenging court decisions on the Cowichan case and the Mineral Tenure Act, and is hoping to suspend DRIPA until these legal challenges are resolved. In the meantime, Indigenous rights will be left in limbo and effectively gutted.

These undemocratic actions won't go unchallenged, however.

All of this only reveals the contradictions of pursuing reconciliation under capitalism. Reconciliation cannot only be about land acknowledgements – it must address the question of the right to the land. The land, transformed by labour into everything from food to cell phones, is the source of all wealth. To deny a people access to their land is to deny them the right to self-determination and economic development.

As Grand Chief Stewart Phillip said on CBC TV, addressing the Cowichan case, "We need to commit to serious negotiations, that does, in fact, recognize the reality, the legal reality, the constitutional reality, of Aboriginal Title in British Columbia. The Richmond residents have been living on Aboriginal lands ever since they first purchased those properties, as did the previous owners. That's the reality that British Columbians refuse to accept, but it's the reality we need to work with." ■

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