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### **Liberals' Public Relations Exercise on Public Security and Bill C-51**

## **Another Attempt to Escape Canadians' Demand to Repeal Secret Police Powers**



**Hundredth weekly picket in Vancouver demanding the repeal of Bill C-51, January 31, 2017.**

On May 19, the Trudeau government released a report on "What We Learned" from its consultations on Canada's "national security framework" which were held from September 10 to December 1. The report was produced by New York-based public relations firm Hill + Knowlton Strategies (formerly Hill & Knowlton), described by the *Ottawa Citizen* as "the busiest lobbying firm in Ottawa for foreign takeovers." [1] Hill + Knowlton is infamous for its criminal role as the architect of a public relations campaign to destroy opposition to the first Iraq War in 1990, crafting and publicizing the later-disproved claims of Iraqi soldiers taking babies out of incubators and



leaving them to die.[2]

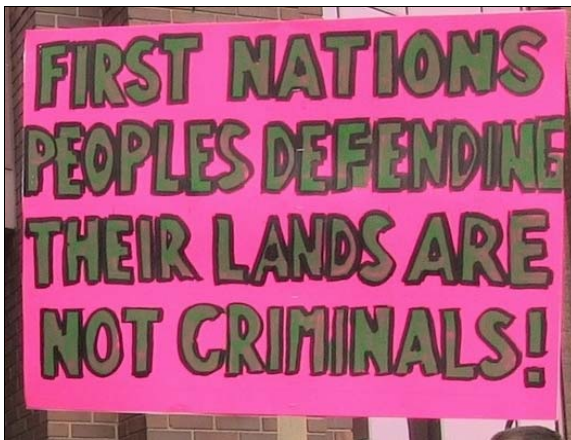
On behalf of the Trudeau government and the Canadian and U.S. intelligence agencies which operate with impunity, this private PR monopoly is undertaking the same work. This time the target is Canadians' opposition to Bill C-51, the *Anti-Terrorism Act, 2015* which codified new but often already-practised secret police powers used to violate rights and criminalize conscience.

Using convoluted language, Minister of Public Safety Ralph Goodale shamelessly covered up the consequences to the polity of putting private interests such as Hill + Knowlton in command of "consultations." The report was "produced by an independent third party," Goodale declared, and it therefore provides "an impartial overview of what Canadians said"!



Before the consultations on national security began, many were leery of whether the government would base it on information that would permit the polity to draw warranted conclusions. The Liberals' track record of phony consultations on other matters of concern and their defence of Bill C-51 and its police powers did not bode well. The consultation did not get off to a good start with the government's official *Green Paper on National Security* diverting the discussion that was required on the need to eliminate measures that violate rights to one on new proposed powers and the alleged threats posed by "radicalized" individuals.[3] But to put this consultation in the hands of one of the most disreputable, dirty international spin artists, whose only claim to fame is willingness to do anything as long as the price is right, adds insult to injury.

The essence of the Liberals' and Hill + Knowlton's report is the cover up of Canadians' clearly and consistently-expressed opposition to the legislation passed in the post-9/11 period in the name of fighting terrorism. The Harper government fine-tuned this anti-terror legislation in 2015 in the form of Bill C-51. Its main feature was to further enshrine in law the use of police powers which by definition are above the law. The use of covert police powers has been a hallmark of the bourgeois state since Canada was founded in 1867 and before. Since the Cold War was launched following the Second World War, the use of covert police powers to undermine the people's movement for justice, peace and freedom has been a constant.



to receive overwhelming support from the people.

The fact that more than 300,000 Canadians signed petitions calling for the repeal of Bill C-51 -- roughly four times as many people as participated in the consultations -- is not mentioned in the report. Virtually every sector of society -- workers, Indigenous peoples, experts in the fields of rights, law and security, journalists, young people and many others -- denounced the powers in Bill C-51 as a violation of the rule of law and demanded that it be scrapped. In Vancouver, weekly pickets have been held without let-up since March 2, 2015 demanding the repeal of Bill C-51 and continue

This well-known opposition of Canadians to Bill C-51 and its legalization of black ops against Canadians is a likely explanation for why the Liberals did not hold consultations on Bill C-51 itself

but on a "national security framework." The inescapable fact that the majority of those who participated in the national security consultations did so in order to demand the repeal of Bill C-51 is begrudgingly given a one sentence mention: "a majority of stakeholders and experts [not only opposed new powers but] called for existing [security measures] to be scaled back or repealed completely, particularly Bill C-51, the *Anti-Terrorism Act, 2015*..." On this basis, the Liberals and Hill + Knowlton have managed to produce a report that does not affirm loud and clear that Canadians continue to demand the repeal of Bill C-51, oppose strengthening police powers in the name of security, and call for rights to be defended.

To disinform the public, the problem the government faces and for which it launched the consultations is presented as a "growing level of distrust in key institutions involved in national security and law enforcement." To deal with the "growing level of distrust," the serious matters of security and rights are reduced to objects of public relations.

The Liberals' well-paid public relations firm also declares that the issue facing Canadians is a "delicate balance that must be struck between the secrecy and covertness in the fight against terrorism and the constitutionally protected rights and freedoms of individual Canadians."

Talk about striking a "delicate balance" covers up the fact that the police powers contained in Bill C-51 are already outside the rule of law and that they are exercised with impunity against those defending their rights, including Indigenous peoples affirming their right to decide on developments in their territories, workers and progressive political forces.<sup>[4]</sup> The secret police powers in Canada are further subordinate to the nefarious interests of U.S. imperialist intelligence agencies and the private interests contending for control over them, not a government of laws over which the people can exercise control.

The statement and entire report are irrational and take Canadians for fools. They are not, and this poses a real problems for the Liberals' public relations exercise aimed at "restoring trust." True to public relations form, the exercise ends up as one more example of paying the rich for their services which contribute nothing to resolving the serious problems rooted in the anachronistic political institutions in Canada.

Whatever its price tag, the Liberals' and Hill + Knowlton's public relations exercise cannot cover up the fact that the Liberals' "national security framework" seeks to further enshrine increasing violations of the rule of law through the "legalization" of the use of arbitrary powers. The fact that the government wants to introduce amendments to make sure these powers in Bill C-51 are "constitutional" is ample evidence of their nefarious aims.



In Canada, the 1867 Constitution, whose 150th anniversary is being celebrated this year with so much hoopla, enshrines privileges not rights. At every phase of Canada's development, these privileges and to whom they are accorded have been made a matter of definition decided by police powers, not the citizens of the country. This Constitution, including its *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, does not provide rights with a guarantee or vest sovereignty and decision-making power in the citizenry. It is indeed anachronistic and requires renewal.

Rights today are not a matter to be decided by the police powers and those who hire private firms to perform a delicate tightrope act to further their own interests. Rights belong to people by virtue of

being human, and, for the vast majority by virtue of being the actual producers of society's wealth, those on whom its well-being depends. The Indigenous peoples whose land and resources are taken over by force by private interests and their state, and who with their defence of their rights and well-being and the natural environment protect all working people, also have rights by virtue of their being. This includes the affirmation of their sovereignty against which police powers must not be used. Human beings have rights by virtue of being human and these rights must be recognized and affirmed.

In this regard, the most important human right is the right to conscience. The fact that human beings have conscience and can abstract absence -- see what is lacking and grasp what must be done to fulfill a need -- is what distinguishes them from all other animal species. The highest expression of the right to conscience today is the right of the people to take all decisions which affect their lives as individuals and collectives, and the natural and social environments. Without defending these rights and the rights of all, the "security" promised in the "national security framework" is not the security of the people and their well-being and that of their society, but a self-serving defence of secret police powers for the private gain of those who wield them.

*TML Weekly* calls on Canadians to persist in upholding their clear and consistent demands for the repeal of Bill C-51 and opposition to impunity.

***Repeal Bill C-51!***  
***Our Security Lies in Our Fight for the Rights of All!***



**May 30, 2015 action on Parliament Hill demanding repeal of Bill C-51.**

## Notes

1. Hill + Knowlton Strategies is owned by WPP plc (Wire and Plastic Products), a deceptively-named British advertising and public relations firm which owns various other huge public relations firms including IMRB, Millward Brown, Grey, Burson-Masteller, Hill & Knowlton, JWT, Ogilvy & Mather, TNS, Young & Rubicam and Cohn & Wolfe. Its annual revenue is more than \$18 billion.

2. Hill + Knowlton organized for Nayirah al-Sabah, daughter of the then-Kuwaiti ambassador to the U.S., to testify before the U.S. Congressional Human Rights Caucus to this effect when they were hired to orchestrate a "Citizens for a Free Kuwait" campaign. Al-Sabah did not reveal her identity, giving only her first name, and falsely testified that she had witnessed soldiers removing babies from incubators. This testimony was repeatedly cited by U.S. President George H.W. Bush and others as justification for the war.

3. The BC Civil Liberties Association said on November 28 that the *Green Paper* "reads like it was drafted by a public relations firm tasked with selling the current state of extraordinary,



unaccountable powers," which, if this latest report is any indication, it was.

4. For one example, see material from [TML Weekly](#) on the activities of CSIS, the RCMP, the federal government and energy monopolies coordinating the use of Bill C-51 at Carleton University.



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## Misrepresentation of Canadians' Views on Security

- Sam Heaton -



The aim of the "modernization" of Canada's national security laws since the first *Anti-Terrorism Act* following September 11, 2001 and before has been to eliminate legal restrictions on what the intelligence agencies can do -- all obstacles that exist in the law. To do so has been a consistent call of the biggest private concerns, their political representatives and the agencies themselves to strengthen the police powers at the heart of the state to serve their interests.

In particular, for the security agencies, there are demands to legalize practices that are already in effect. This was the case with Bill C-51 and its granting powers of "disruption" to CSIS when that agency has been known to harass Canadians and engage in nefarious activities including organizing "terror plots" for decades. The government's recent report on its consultations on national security notes that at this time, "Government and police agencies want greater collaboration and information sharing..."

Despite this, the report is forced to acknowledge Canadians' opposition to existing "security measures" as well as new ones. To blunt this opposition it establishes various themes and presents the issue as a debate over various ways that the powers could be maintained or amended



and presents Canadians as "divided on whether [measures] should be repealed, modified or retained (albeit with modifications)."

The various measures in Bill C-51, rather than being treated as a whole based on Canadians' rejection of the use of police powers, are dealt with piecemeal. To create confusion, the responses to spurious survey questions are presented which conclude that Canadians are divided and suggest that the government is justified in not repealing Bill C-51.

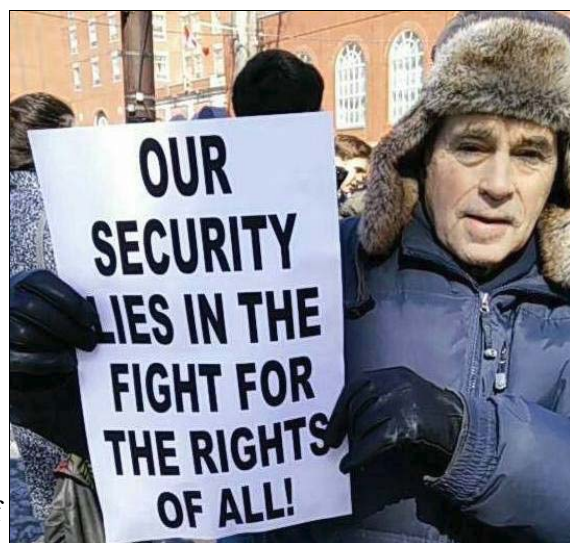


About survey results on Bill C-51's *Criminal Code* offence which criminalizes speech that allegedly "promotes terrorism," the report states, "While almost half (47 per cent) of online responses say the advocacy offence should be clarified so that it more clearly resembles the existing offence of counselling [an individual to commit terrorism], almost one-quarter (23 per cent) disagree and one in five (21 per cent) think the *Anti-Terrorism Act, 2015* should be repealed in its entirety or that sections of the *Criminal Code* regarding advocating and promoting the commission of terrorism should be repealed."

Despite the fact that most of those consulted called for Bill C-51 to be repealed -- overwhelmingly so for those who took part in public meetings -- questions were presented separately on whether specific aspects of Bill C-51, such as the *Security of Canada Information Sharing Act*, should be subject to greater oversight. The support for oversight is then presented to lend credibility to the idea that rather than repealing the bill, "oversight... should be strengthened to protect personal privacy and... institutions... should only use that information lawfully and in accordance with the rules..."

On Bill C-51's far-reaching CSIS "disruption" powers and ability to use force, among the most widely-opposed aspects of the bill, the report claims respondents were "essentially divided between the need to decrease CSIS's powers and the need to maintain or increase them..."

The use of the consultations to diffuse opposition to Bill C-51 is made more clear by the fact that questions were introduced about how to improve the "efficiency" of the dubious "terrorist watch list." Again Canadians were declared to be divided on this aspect even though they have expressed their opposition to the abuse of power the government is condoning with such arbitrary lists. However, this issue, presented as a matter of how to improve something illegitimate, "tended to generate less feedback, with the responses that were received suggesting a certain amount of collective ambivalence," the report said.



Far from providing any coherence or expression of Canadians' collective consciousness, the national security consultations and report distract attention from ongoing state-organized attacks against the rights of all. Besides phony consultations, this includes the ongoing criminalization and disruption of workers' struggles, surveillance and harassment directed against those opposing war and defending the natural environment and violence against Indigenous peoples affirming their right to



a say over what takes place on their territories.

At the same time, governments, "think-tanks" and university bodies are introducing retrogressive definitions of rights which claim that the collective actions of the people in defence of rights are a violation of individual rights, and must be criminalized on that basis.

All of this is proof positive that the police powers continue to operate with impunity no matter what laws are passed. Canadians must ensure they build their own public opinion as a defensive wall which continuously increases in strength and cannot be breached. This can be done by uniting in action in defence of the rights of all and building collective self-defence on this basis.



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### **General Strike of Quebec Construction Workers**

## **All Out to Support Quebec Construction Workers!**



**Striking construction workers in Montreal, May 24, 2017.**

At midnight on May 24, 175,000 construction workers in Quebec launched a general strike against unacceptable concessionary demands from organizations representing construction employers. Workers in all construction sectors are on strike: industrial, institutional, commercial, civil engineering, highway maintenance and residential sectors. The five construction unions grouped for negotiating purposes within the Construction Union Alliance are FTQ-Construction, the Quebec Building Trades Council (International), CSN-Construction, CSD-Construction and the Quebec Construction Union.

The main issue that forced construction workers to go on strike is the employers' unacceptable demand to disrupt existing work schedules. They want workers available on a loose schedule without strict and universal rules, a demand already rejected in 2013, when construction workers also went on strike in defence of their rights.





**Mass meeting in Montreal as strike begins, May 24, 2017.**

Employers' organizations want workers available from 5 am to 8 pm five days a week. In the event of working days lost due to bad weather, they want workers to work on Saturday at straight time to replace the lost days. With workers made available on demand in such a loose timeframe, employers would be able to set shifts as they please, greatly disrupting workers' lives.

Workers immediately denounced this backward step in scheduling. They pointed out that construction work has to have strict rules for work time, including overtime, as anything less is a fraud. Construction workers do not have job security and can be dismissed, not called back or refused work on the next site if they do not "behave" and work at assigned times even if the time is voluntary such as Saturday work to replace lost time.

Workers strongly reject this unacceptable arbitrary demand from employers' organizations that disrupts rest and their lives away from the worksite. They argue that construction workers need to be rested and alert at all times to combat the already-high accident and mortality rates in their sector. Workers view loose and voluntary rules around work time as an irresponsible provocation by the employers' organizations, which should be denounced as retrogressive and an attack on their dignity and rights. Construction workers know full well that concessions on basic issues such as wages and work time just whet the appetite of the oligarchs who immediately come back for more.



Construction workers said No! in 2013 to disrupting their lives and work schedules. No! still means No! in 2017!

All workers must stand firmly with construction workers and provide them with all possible support!





Quebec City, May 24, 2017



Trois-Rivières, May 25, 2017



Saguenay, May 25, 2017





**Montreal, May 24, 2017**

*(Chantier politique, online newspaper of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Quebec. Photos: CP, CSN.)*



## **Oppose Back-to-Work Legislation**



**Montreal construction workers' picket, May 24, 2017.**

The government of Philippe Couillard has declared its intention to criminalize construction workers and force them to end their strike. The working class and its allies throughout Quebec and Canada soundly denounce the Liberal government as a flunkey of the construction oligarchs that is unfit to govern.

Such an unjust action would be a repeat of 2013, when the Quebec government criminalized the right of construction workers to strike in defence of their working and living conditions. The Couillard government and its servile accomplices in the mass media stand opposed to the right of workers to negotiate their terms of employment and withhold their capacity to work until an equilibrium acceptable to themselves can be found. This is a basic right of workers who are

compelled by the current relations of production to negotiate the terms of the sale of their capacity to work to employers. The fact that a strike disrupts the economy and the creation of value is testament to the essential nature of the modern working class and its position as the actual producer of the value the people and society need for their existence.

Instead of upholding the rights of the working class and giving it the respect it deserves, the government, construction oligarchs and monopoly media are on a warpath to criminalize construction workers and attack them. They are using the fact that the construction workers and their industry are central to Quebec's economy to attack the strike and order workers back to work or face state-sanctioned penalties. The working class and its allies across Quebec and Canada denounce this state-organized assault on rights.

***Denounce the Liberal Government for Attacking the Right to Strike!  
Hands Off Construction Workers!  
Their Cause Is Just!  
Stand with the Quebec Construction Workers in Their Just Struggle!***

(Chantier politique)



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## State-Organized Attacks on Construction Workers

The construction sector accounts for 12 per cent of Quebec's GDP and 255,600 direct jobs -- one out of every 20 -- as well as thousands more in related sectors. The government and monopolized media do not use those facts to show respect for workers who produce such immense value for society. In the manner that best serves themselves and favours the construction oligarchs, they are using the essential nature of construction workers to modern life as a reason to attack their right to defend themselves and to negotiate working conditions and a claim on the value they produce that is acceptable to themselves.



The government and monopolized media are using the importance of the construction sector to generate hysteria and an urgency to end the strike not on terms acceptable to workers but on terms the construction oligarchs demand. This must not pass!

Already, construction workers face special conditions regarding Quebec's labour laws that trample on their rights. For example, they are not entitled to wage increases retroactive to the date the collective agreement expired. Their collective

agreement expired on April 30, and any wage increase they receive will not apply until the new collective agreement comes into force.

The "anti-scab" law does not apply to construction workers, which means employers' organizations have free rein to keep work sites open during the strike using scab replacement workers. When workers intervene to close any sites that use scabs, they can be charged with "intimidation" and even violence if they resist organized attacks on them by hired security guards and mercenaries.

The special clause in the law prohibiting construction workers from engaging in "intimidation" is very broad. The clause applies only to them and not to the employers and any actions on their part.



The charge of intimidation can be used to attack workers who encourage fellow construction workers to refuse dangerous work or deal with other problems at the workplace or to take action to defend their strike. The use of the charge of "intimidation" against workers is an attack on their right to conscience and their right to organize fellow workers in collective actions with analysis. The monopolized media often use the broad charge of intimidation to portray workers as criminals when they organize themselves to defend their rights.

These state-organized attacks must stop!

(Chantier politique)



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**Alberta Workers Oppose Current Anti-Worker, Union-Busting Labour Law**

**Step Up the Fight to Unstack the Deck!**

**No Means No to Legalizing Anti-Worker Measures!**

**- Peggy Morton -**



Unstack the Deck rally at Alberta Legislature, April 30, 2017.

The NDP government in Alberta introduced Bill 17, the *Fair and Family-Friendly Workplaces Act* on May 24. Bill 17 introduces changes to both the *Employment Standards Act* and the *Alberta Labour Code*.

The *Employment Standards Act* will now provide for job-protected unpaid leaves for personal and family illness, death of a family member, and domestic violence and enforcement measures for violations by employers. Significant changes to the *Alberta Labour Code* do not include the crucial ban on "double-breasting," where contractors can establish spin-off companies to negate collective agreements.

The organized workers' movement has demanded major changes to the *Alberta Labour Code* for many years, and in recent months and weeks these demands have been put front and centre by the



organized workers' movement and its allies with an *Unstack the Deck!* campaign. Some demands, like an end to double-breasting, date back to the 1988 *Labour Code*. Many are even more long-standing, and have been on the agenda of the labour movement for as long as 60 years. These include:

- guaranteed access to non-unionized workplaces for union organizers. This takes on special importance in Alberta where workers in many projects live in camps only accessible to those authorized by the employer;
- the right to union certification when a majority of workers have signed cards to join the union. Existing legislation requires a vote and provides employers with an opportunity, often used, to threaten, intimidate and fire workers and carry out various kinds of black ops;
- first contract arbitration at the request of the bargaining unit. Employers are notorious for refusing to sign a first agreement, prolonging strikes for months and even years;
- a ban on scab replacement workers;
- the legal right of all workers to refuse to cross a picket line. At present where workers respect a picket line, their union will be faced with an injunction and threat of massive fines and even decertification;
- an end to double-breasting and spin-offs in the construction industry;
- a prohibition on company-dominated unions such as the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC);
- pay equity legislation to cover all working people.

Bill 17 makes changes regarding three of these demands. It mandates first contract arbitration after 90 days. Arbitration can be triggered by either the union or the employer at the discretion of the Labour Board, in which case a strike or lockout becomes illegal. Union certification will be allowed by card check if 65 per cent of the workers have signed union cards. A vote will still be required in cases where 40 to 64 per cent of workers have signed cards. The Labour Board can order automatic certification of a union in case of unfair labour practices during an organizing drive, and also decertify a union found guilty of unfair labour practices. The Labour Board can also order the union to be given access to workers at remote sites where access to housing is controlled by the employer or other third-party. Bill 17 also extends essential services legislation to all private sector long-term care, continuing care and home care facilities as well as lab and blood services, placing a huge restriction on the right of workers in these sectors to take strike action to defend their wages and working conditions.

Neither the *Employment Standards Act* nor the *Alberta Labour Code* have been revised since 1988, a time when the neo-liberal, anti-worker offensive began in all earnest and was met with militant action by the workers to defend their rights. Their passage at that time was an act of bowing down to the oil, gas, construction and other oligarchs and their narrow private interests and the law remains stacked against the workers and their collectives.

Even before the legislation was introduced, the government had indicated in response to the "unstack the deck" campaign that banning double-breasting would "destabilize" the construction industry. These monopolies make a killing in boom times from the wealth the workers create, and use low oil prices and recession to launch vicious attacks on the workers and seize an even greater share of the wealth the working class produces. "Stability" cannot be achieved by attacking the rights of workers.





The government is suggesting the legislation constitutes a "compromise." This is nonsense because it is the interests of the oligopolies that are being served by maintaining anti-worker laws. For example, everyone knows that the legislation permitting double-breasting was written by the construction monopolies. The basis of the old social contract was that the right of workers to organize unions was recognized, and in return workers gave up various rights. But the existing laws have the express purpose of blocking the workers from organizing. No balance or equilibrium can exist when workers' rights are not even recognized. The owners of capital and ruling elite appear determined to finish off the social contract and old balance or equilibrium once and for all and trample in the mud the rights and dignity of workers.

But this fight is far from over! No Means No! when it comes to union-busting, double-breasting, collusion between employers and company unions to deny workers their right to organize their collectives, to use scab

replacement workers, and other anti-worker laws.

The demands of the workers are not just a defence of the rights of workers, but a defence of the rights of all. Now is the time to put full force behind the fight to Unstack the Deck!

The working class is already moving beyond the limits of the post-World War II social contract. Supreme Court decisions have upheld the right to a process of collective bargaining, but the aim of defending rights has been severed from the process. Furthermore, everyone can see what happens when all the decisions about the economy are left in the hands of the global monopolies and their oligopolies which follow their own greed and narrow interests. With 210,000 workers unemployed in Alberta, the status quo is not an option. It is a time for workers to discuss how to establish a new equilibrium with the owners of capital where the workers' rights are upheld.

***Unstack the Deck!***  
***Defend the Rights of Workers!***  
***Defend the Rights of All!***  
***No Means No! to Anti-Worker Laws!***

*(Discussion of these and other changes to the Employment Standards Act and Alberta Labour Code will be published in a subsequent issue of TML Weekly.)*



## Workers Demand Labour Legislation that Recognizes Their Rights

Hundreds of construction workers were joined by delegates from the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) Convention on April 30, in a militant rally in front of the Alberta Legislature. The workers

came together to demand that the government guarantee in law the right of workers to organize their collectives and join the union of their choice. The current *Alberta Labour Code* enacted in 1988 contains provisions that not only hinder union organizing, but permit construction contractors to violate their collective bargaining obligations with impunity.



The NDP government introduced legislation to amend the *Employment Standards Act* and *Alberta Labour Code* on May 24. The legislation does not address the most blatant union-busting, anti-union provisions such as double-breasting in the construction industry. Prior to the legislation being introduced, the organized workers movement made it clear that refusal to act is unacceptable. No Means No! when it comes to laws that violate the rights of workers, and those laws have to go. The law should assist not hinder workers to organize to defend their rights.

*TML Weekly* is publishing below the stands of the organized workers' movement on the need for labour legislation that recognizes their rights expressed at the April 30 rally at the Alberta Legislature.

### **AFL President Gil McGowan**



Gil McGowan, President of the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) emceed the rally. If we were to watch a hockey game in which the rules had been deliberately set to favour one team, we would say that those rules are illegitimate, he said. We are here today to cry foul, to make the argument that the rules of the game that govern our workplaces and relationships with employers, and to join unions of our choice are rigged, he said. We are calling on the government to *Unstack the Deck*.

The *Alberta Labour Code* dates from the era of Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Brian Mulroney, President McGowan continued. Their agenda was privatization, deregulation, tax cuts for the wealthy, and attacks on working people. Their offensive was focussed on attacking the power of working people that comes from collective action, where we come together in unions and federations, set goals and priorities and work to realize them, he said. The code enacted in 1988 did



not even recognize the existence of trade unions in its preamble. Its purpose was to inhibit organizing and bargaining, McGowan pointed out.

### **Scott Crichton from the IBEW**

Scott Crichton from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) explained the practice of double-breasting and why the government must get rid of the law that permits this practice. Double-breasting allows contractors to create spin-off companies to make it difficult to organize, and to create non-union companies that pay workers a lower wage. This has been going on for 33 years in Alberta and the time to stop the practice is now, he said. He reminded everyone that the current Premier's father, Grant Notley, stood in the Legislature at that time in support of the building trades workers. Mr. Notley said that the change to the labour law would deprive workers of their economic power and that is exactly what happened. In 1982, 70 per cent of building trades were unionized. By 1984, this had dropped to eight per cent and it has been an uphill battle ever since.

### **Martyn Piper from the Alberta Carpenters**



Martyn Piper from the Alberta Carpenters said workers are those who create wealth and provide critical services. At this rally, we represent all working people who should be given the opportunity to pick the union of their choice and keep it until they decide otherwise, he stated.

Thirty-four years ago, we stood in front of this Legislature to protest a grossly unfair, unjust piece of legislation, which overnight allowed unionized building trades companies to open non-union affiliates, compete with themselves and violate their obligations. Today, employers use the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) as a barrier to prevent workers from having a union, he said. This is an affront to every honest working man and woman who wants legitimate representation. These sham double-breasting companies have not done this anywhere else in Canada, Piper pointed out. This practice and the law that permits it are shameful and show a blatant disregard for the workers' freedom to associate with the labour union that they choose, he said.

Piper concluded that the practice of double-breasting is a well-designed, systematic strategy to destroy the building trades unions and then the rest of our unions. It's an ideology fostered on the U.S. Gulf Coast where workers earn less than \$15 an hour with no benefits, putting themselves at risk every day. It is time that the government made a courageous decision by bringing an end to this legislation.

### **Heather Smith, UNA President**

Heather Smith, United Nurses of Alberta President, said that the *Employment Standards Act* is also under review. This act sets the floor for working conditions for those who do not have a union and collective agreement. It is important that the Act respect workers' rights.

Smith said that nurses have been at the Legislature many times, always because of an unjust order: ordering nurses to return to work, taking away the right to strike and making criminals of nurses. While the law prohibiting strikes has now been removed, many other changes enacted in the 1980s still remain, with double-breasting perhaps the most outrageous.

The government needs to enact real penalties for employers who violate the Employment Standards and Labour Relations codes. There should be automatic certification of unions when companies engage in unfair labour practices; as well as, first contract arbitration to stop employers from being able to use intimidation and threats with impunity, Smith said.



McGowan called on everyone to go to *UnstacktheDeck.ca* for more information about the campaign and to send a letter to MLAs, the Labour Minister and the Premier. Tell the government that the new *Labour Code* must include provisions that outlaw the practice of double-breasting, he said.

The spirit of the rally showed the determination of workers to bring to an end the current anti-worker, union-busting Alberta labour law. The working class will not tolerate an *Employment Standards Act* or *Alberta Labour Code* that does not recognize their rights in law and in practice.



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## Historical Notes on the Neo-Liberal, Anti-Worker Assault on Construction Workers in Alberta

- Alberta Worker -

The assault on unions in the construction industry began in all earnest in 1982 during a major recession which brought the boom in Alberta to a screeching halt. The contractors launched an all-out offensive on the wages and working conditions of workers in construction and to destroy the unions. Many workers still remember this bitter period, both for its hardships and the courageous battles fought in defence of the rights of all.

In 1979, non-union companies were involved in relatively small projects, including residential construction. Between 70 and 80 per cent of commercial, industrial and institutional construction



was carried out by unionized companies in the period before the 1981 recession. The construction monopolies hatched a scheme to effectively tear up the collective agreements they had signed, by setting up "spin-off companies" which they claimed were not covered by the collective agreements they had signed.



**Construction workers participate in 1986 Alberta Labour Federation demonstration demanding changes to Alberta labour law.**

By May 1, 1982, 805 non-union contractors were operating in Calgary and Edmonton. Some were spin-offs of unionized contractors, in others "joint venture" arrangements were used to hide the true owners. Unionized contractors set up no-name, numbered payroll companies to hire and pay workers. These companies could be registered, used for a short time and then replaced by a new paper spin-off. The practice came to be known as "double-breasting."



The existing labour code gave the Alberta Labour Relations Board discretionary power to declare a common employer. A common employer declaration meant that union certification and existing collective agreements would apply to the new entity. In 1983 the contractors pressed the government to change the law, and eliminate this discretionary power. The Lougheed government complied with Bill 10.

Building trades workers organized mass demonstrations at the Legislature and carried out actions on construction sites. They were known as a force which stood as one with workers of every sector fighting for their rights. For example, in 1986 hundreds of unemployed construction workers came day after day to play their part in the historic "Battle of 66th Street" to defend the strike at the Gainer meat-packing plant

and stop the scab replacement workers from entering the plant. Bill 10 was passed, but in the face of the massive resistance of the workers and their unions, it was never proclaimed into law.

Almost all the building trades contracts in industrial, commercial and institutional construction had a common expiry date of April 30, 1984. The minute the contracts expired, the contractor monopolies locked out all the unionized workers for 25 hours. They then offered to "re-hire" the workers in their spin-off companies at wages 30 to 50 per cent lower and even more when benefits and allowances are included.

Although legislation legalizing this practice was not passed at this time, the Lougheed government used its police or arbitrary powers to achieve the same result. The Alberta Labour Relations Board (ALRB) reversed long-standing practices and changed its "interpretation" of the existing law, declaring that the practice of "double-breasting" was perfectly legal and that existing collective agreements did not apply.

All the contractor had to do was say, "Oh no, I am not an employer. I am a project management company." To which the Labour Relations Board would say, "Great, you have set up a dummy company to hire and pay workers. So you are not an employer. But the law deals with employers, so the Labour Board has no jurisdiction. Go ahead, do as you please. Contract out the work to yourself, through a nameless, numbered company that you have set up precisely to eliminate the union."

This travesty was initially upheld by the courts, but the contractors were concerned that the ALRB might not continue to collude so readily in sanctioning the establishment of spin-off companies. In 1988 the government enacted a new *Labour Relations Code* which gave the construction monopolies exactly what they had been seeking.

Unions continued to organize under these onerous conditions, and the monopolies responded with another scheme, where they would either voluntarily recognize the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC), or arrange for CLAC to carry out a "vote" when as few as two workers were on site. To add insult to injury, the law declared that the onus was on the union to prove two companies were one and the same and then provided no retroactivity. So even if a challenge was successful at the ALRB, the project was in all likelihood already completed by the time the decision was reached.

When the Carpenters Union applied in 2001 to be certified to represent the carpenters working for J.V. Driver, replacing CLAC, the collusion of CLAC, the employers and the Labour Board was fully revealed. CLAC had signed a new agreement before the old one expired so that there would be no open period and no opportunity for workers to vote for the Carpenters Union. But the workers were kept completely in the dark, not even informed that an agreement had been signed, much less being able to vote on it. The Labour Board had no problem with this, but the courts said it was patently unreasonable, although the decision was declared moot for other reasons.



Yet another legacy of the Lougheed years which was used to attack the right of workers to organize collectively dated back to the building of Syncrude in 1974. Syncrude insisted on a no-strike site agreement with the construction unions as a condition for the project. In response the Lougheed government changed the law to allow a declaration of special project status which meant that provincial collective agreements did not apply.



The intent and effect of the legislation was to ensure the unrestricted rights of the oil and construction monopolies to "labour peace" in the oil sands. Nowhere in the legislation was there any guarantee that when a project was designated for a separate agreement, that it would be a union site. This special project status legislation was used by Canadian Natural Resources Limited, to shut out the unions on the Horizon oil sands project site and sign an agreement with CLAC.

It was clear that the old arrangements with the working class were dead. The neo-liberal anti-social offensive began in earnest with the rise to power of Margaret Thatcher in Britain, Ronald Reagan in the U.S. and Brian Mulroney in Canada. The oligopolies declared that they had no responsibility to society and no responsibility to uphold their end of the then existing arrangements with the working class. The aim of society was to make the monopolies competitive, using any means necessary. If the unions would not submit, then they could be reduced to a small "market share" of the work, where their role of providing skilled and experienced workers through their hiring halls would be preserved and used when needed.



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## **Calls to Hold the Quebec Government to Account for Damages Due to Flooding**

### **Need for Serious Investigation into Failures Surrounding the Quebec Floods**



**Severe flooding in Gatineau, Quebec, early May 2017.**

### ***Organize to build the new!***

No serious official investigation and evaluation of the federal and Quebec governments' roles in the floods which have caused extensive damage in Quebec has begun. Yet media and political commentators have jumped to the defence of the ruling elite, even saying the Couillard government has "done a good job" and that it did "everything that had to be done" in this crisis. Everything is made superficial and measured in terms of the "performance" of a particular political party of the cartel system, which blocks any serious investigation and finding out what went wrong and what can be changed so that it does not happen again.

The Professional Association of Engineers of the Government of Quebec has sounded an alarm and has raised a number of questions that are definitely relevant in finding out and understanding why this spring's runoff was disastrous and out of control. Included in this is the necessity to grasp the scope of the government's responsibility for nation-wrecking, destruction of public assets and the public good, and, consequently, depriving the working people of their capacity to defend themselves within the system.

These crises are moments to reflect on not only how to mitigate and control the forces of nature but more importantly how the working class and its allies can and must organize to bring the human factor/social consciousness into the centre of economic, political, and social life with democratic renewal and a pro-social direction for the economy. To bring science and the boundless pro-social energy of the people into the centre of life, the working people must have control over all those affairs that affect their lives. For this to happen, we must begin with the existing conditions and build the new to deprive the ruling imperialist elite of the power to stop us!



Laval-sur-le-lac, May 8, 2017

(Photos: TML, S. Leduc)



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## Government Disregards Experience of Its Own Engineers

Quebec engineers had decided before the floods to go on strike to defend their rights in the face of the Quebec Couillard government's attacks on them. When the floods unleashed their destructive force, the Professional Association of Engineers of the Government of Quebec (APIGQ) announced it would postpone their strike for at least a week.

Quebec engineers have been negotiating their terms of employment for the past two-and-a-half years without achieving an agreement acceptable to themselves. The APIGQ union president declared in the face of the flood crisis: "We will not go out on strike when people need us so badly."



One of the engineers' main demands is directly connected with the flooding and the danger to the public. The engineers insist that the government stop subcontracting in areas that are linked to public safety and that it raise the level of expertise within the Quebec Transport Ministry. They point out that subcontracting reduces the capacity for follow-up and control to ensure the mandates dealing with public safety and the people's well-being are upheld.

One of the public mandates of the Quebec Transport Ministry is dam safety. In a press release dated May 4, the APIGQ deplores the fact that the media must turn to a private firm, Hydro Météo, for details of the floods and the dangers to public safety and health. Also, in the face of the very real dangers of flooding, the Quebec Ministry of the Environment, Sustainable Development and the Fight against Climate Change refuses to make public all the necessary information so as to adequately inform the population and the municipalities so that they may be prepared to face the floods, the APIGQ says.

The APIGQ goes on to say: "The population and the municipalities are thus deprived of important information concerning flooding, information which the Ministry has access to in advance. Not a single shred of information is available on the government website on this matter or on the real causes to explain such a deluge, which is affecting a great part of Quebec.

"Let it be known that 12 Environment Ministry engineers are continuously compiling hydrological data with regards to weather forecasts and work on a number of dams which play a role in controlling the water levels. **Ministry engineers are therefore on top of things and are fully capable of informing the population in a timely fashion so that everyone can know how things are evolving.** [*Emphasis added*]

"As a matter of fact, a surveillance team of engineers has been on the alert for many weeks now and has made recommendations to the Ministry to allow it to limit damages. The information is available at the Ministry and in light of this we would like to know why the population was kept in the dark. In certain areas the water levels rose all of a sudden and without any warnings being issued."

In another press release dated May 9, the APIGQ said it obtained internal memoranda of the Quebec Environment Ministry dated 2015 and 2016. The memoranda state that the automatic discharge valves on Quebec's public dams are no longer safe and that, in whole or in part, it will be almost impossible to respect the Quebec Action Plan on Dam Management, including the *Quebec Dam Safety Act*.

"The documents indicate very clearly that failure to meet requested resources for the 2017-2018 budget would mean that dam operations would have to be stopped no later than Spring 2017 by opening the floodgates and by lowering the water level in light of the unsafe lifting mechanisms. This would have to be done until required resources are respected so as to ensure the mechanical maintenance required for corrective and preventive measures to the discharge apparatus," affirms the APIGQ.

On the day the APIGQ announced it would postpone its strike action, President of the Quebec Treasury Board Pierre Moreau seemingly welcomed the union's decision saying, "It is an expression of the government engineers' professionalism, their great sense of responsibility and social awareness which can be seen everywhere in Quebec."

But in sharp contrast, the Environment Ministry immediately rejected the engineers' concerns regarding the dams. The office of Minister David Heurtel without any supportive scientific expertise said bluntly, "There is no issue of safety with regards to these dams. The structural stability of the dams is ensured."

The government's disregard for the expertise of its own engineers and even internal information collected by its own Ministry is telling in this regard. Also damaging to the public interest is the contracting out of public services to private interests whose aim and primary preoccupation is to make profit not serve the people.

Instead of taking up the concerns of the engineers in a serious manner, officials in the Quebec government and certain media have tried to divert attention from the lack of preparedness for much of the flood damage and blame uncontrollable natural forces and climate change. Statements are circulating that people will have to "get used to it" and that "nothing can be done against the forces of nature."

Such blithering idiocy is not worthy of a modern society and shows that the ruling elite and their democratic institutions are unfit to rule. Human life and society have evolved through unremitting struggle and acts of finding out to understand the forces of nature, bring them under control and even harness and use them to benefit humans. Humans have never declared defeat and become passive in the face of destructive elements in nature or class society.

Statements of passivity in the struggle with nature and in class struggle are aimed at stopping the people from getting to the bottom of things, solving problems, moving forward and, if need be, holding to account those responsible for failures.



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## Federal Military Involvement and Government Irresponsibility



**Armoured military vehicles deploy to Gatineau in the name of "public safety" during the floods.**

In a style similar to what is seen regularly in the U.S., Quebec Premier Couillard organized many of his press conferences regarding the floods with the backdrop of government ministers and a uniformed army major sending the message that the government and army together are here to "ensure the safety of the population."

Reminiscent of the militarized "lockdown" imposed on Ottawa at the time of the shooting on Parliament Hill, the government and army, on May 8 and 9, ordered all government buildings,



schools and other institutions to close. People were told to "work or stay at home" and to restrict their movement. This was an exercise in population control to demobilize the people from taking organized collective action to defend themselves and their personal and public property and to demand an economy and society fit for human beings.

The standing army exists primarily for warfare and repression. Its use during the flooding reflects the lack of preparation of the government and its socially-irresponsible attacks on public service workers and the necessary services and social programs they provide.

Using constant propaganda extolling the virtues of balancing the budget and eliminating deficits, both the federal and Quebec governments have made every effort to decrease investments in social programs and public services. With the incessant cries of the ruling elite and media of the necessity for austerity, they are destroying the public service and turning the services and social programs necessary for a modern economy and society into factors to pay the rich, through privatization, and the use of state funds to prop up the private interests of the oligarchs and expanding state institutions for warfare and repression.

Along with manufacturing and resource extraction, infrastructure, public services and social programs -- especially public education and health care -- are the necessary pillars of a modern economy and society. Not to increase investments in social programs and public services necessarily leads to natural and social disasters.



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## The Working Class Is the Essential Human Factor of Modern Life

*Workers must be at the centre of decision-making and in control of their work and lives*



Emergency workers evacuate residents from the Cartierville neighbourhood, Montreal, May 8, 2017, near Rivière-des-Prairies. (*Exile on Ontario St*)

The flooding in Quebec and the response of governments are testimony to the need for profound changes. How the Quebec and federal governments managed the crisis reflects democratic institutions that act to block the people from making the crucial decisions affecting their lives, and deny them the collective resources to carry out the necessary actions to protect themselves in a conscious organized manner. These democratic institutions consider the interests of the rich, their social wealth and private property above everything, even the security of the people facing natural, economic and social crises and disasters.

Despite the negligence and even interference of the Quebec and federal governments, municipal workers in the regions affected by the floods have made heroic efforts to limit the damage and threat to life. As the rivers have receded, workers and volunteers have worked tirelessly to clean up, repair and ensure that roads and other infrastructure are secure and safe. Many of the volunteers who lent a hand to fill and move sandbags and other tasks are themselves workers who rushed to participate purely from their sense of social conscience.

In the current anti-social atmosphere in Quebec, will the municipal workers and others who battled the floods be commended as indispensable and praised for their dedication and courage? The opposite is the norm for the ruling elite and their so-called democratic institutions. The silence surrounding the role of the workers is an integral part of the profound contempt the economic and political elite hold towards working people. Above all else the ruling class seeks to block the emergence of democratic renewal and modern forms of governing that would allow the working people themselves to make the decisions affecting their lives and have at their disposal the collective resources of the state to carry them out.

The contempt and hatred the ruling elite and the democratic institutions they control harbour for the working people is exhibited in the relations of production. When public workers are forced to take job action to defend their working conditions, wages and pensions, the ruling elite condemn them as irresponsible and selfish and use the power of the democratic institutions to attack their right to defend themselves, and criminalize and force them to accept the dictate of the state.

The ruling elite bellow that the service public workers provide is essential, yet in the same breath declare that the essential workers have no right to defend or negotiate their wages, pensions and working conditions free from state coercion and dictate, even though their working conditions are the necessary conditions to provide the essential services the public deserves and the economy needs to function.

The ruling elite use the power of their democratic institutions not to negotiate in good faith the wages, pensions and working conditions of public sector workers and at least find some equilibrium with them, but to browbeat them and criminalize their defence struggles and organizations, and force them to accept the deterioration of their terms of employment. Those holding political power within the cartel party system refuse to recognize the essential role public sector workers and all working people play in society. On the contrary, the ruling elite have declared open season on public services and workers in the interest of the rich and their huge monopolies looking for private profit and places to invest through privatization and the seizure of public assets.





The private interests of the rich to expand their social wealth are the essential consideration behind free trade, the privatization of public works and assets, and all the anti-social actions of the cartel parties and governments. The private interests of the rich are driving the nation backwards into social retrogression with their insistence on austerity for the working people while the billionaire oligarchs show off their limitless luxuries and degenerate lifestyles.

The modern era belongs to those who do the work. They must become the decision-makers in control of all those affairs that affect their work and lives. In this way, the working class can build the nation, vest sovereignty in the people and guarantee the rights of all.



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## **Governments Ignore In-Depth Scientific Investigations into Predictable Natural Phenomena**

**- Fernand Deschamps -**



**Abnormally high spring runoff on the Ottawa River, as seen at the Chaudière Falls in Gatineau, May 10, 2017.**

After the first floods on April 5, nearly a month elapsed before the massive intervention of the federal and Quebec governments to rescue the thousands of people whose main residences had been inundated as a result of heavy rainfalls that swept across Central and Northeastern Ontario, Southwestern, Central and Eastern Quebec and New Brunswick throughout April.

For weeks, firefighters, municipal workers and volunteers worked day and night to help the disaster victims in over 125 Quebec towns and villages affected by the torrential rains.

At the request of the Couillard government, the Canadian army was called in at the beginning of May. On May 7, Montreal Mayor Denis Coderre announced he was declaring a state of emergency

for at least two weeks in the northern parts of the Island of Montreal affected by the overflow of the Lake of Two Mountains and Rivière-des-Prairies, two tributaries of the Ottawa River.

The Mayor of Montreal is empowered to exercise emergency powers and declare a state of emergency when one of the following conditions is met:

- the municipality is dealing with a major disaster, real or imminent;
- the municipality must act immediately to protect citizens' life, health and integrity;
- the municipality's civil security plan or regular operating procedures do not allow it to adequately carry out the actions required.

Through such emergency measures, the police and the military have the power, amongst other things, to force residents to leave their homes, which was done in some parts of Quebec, including the Roxboro-Pierrefonds area.

As for the requests from Quebec and Ontario for military support, Prime Minister Trudeau said his government was "happy to give it." "When Canadians are facing natural disasters, we put our energies together, that's who we are," he said.

### Science in the Service of Private Interests

Many of the affected residents have criticized governments for taking too long before becoming involved, claiming that the flooding could have been avoided.

Amongst others, they point fingers at state-owned Hydro-Québec, which could have released large quantities of water trapped in its Gouin and Baskatong reservoirs that flow into the St. Maurice and Ottawa rivers, simply on the basis of existing scientific data pointing to the need to do so, including:

- significant on-the-ground snow accumulation during the winter of 2016-2017;
- reduced snow evaporation from the sun's radiation due to heavy cloud cover during February and March, which normally accelerates the melting of snow on the ground, and helps to distribute water runoff over a more protracted period of time;
- temperatures in March at least 4 degrees Celsius below normal further delayed the melting of accumulated snow.

All of the above helped to create the conditions for abnormally high spring river runoffs, even before the record April rains.

A simple review of rainfall data for the Montreal area from 2011 to 2017 compared with the average over the last 20 years shows the general trend of increased precipitation in February and March, as well as an increased total accumulation of liquid and solid precipitation between January to April.

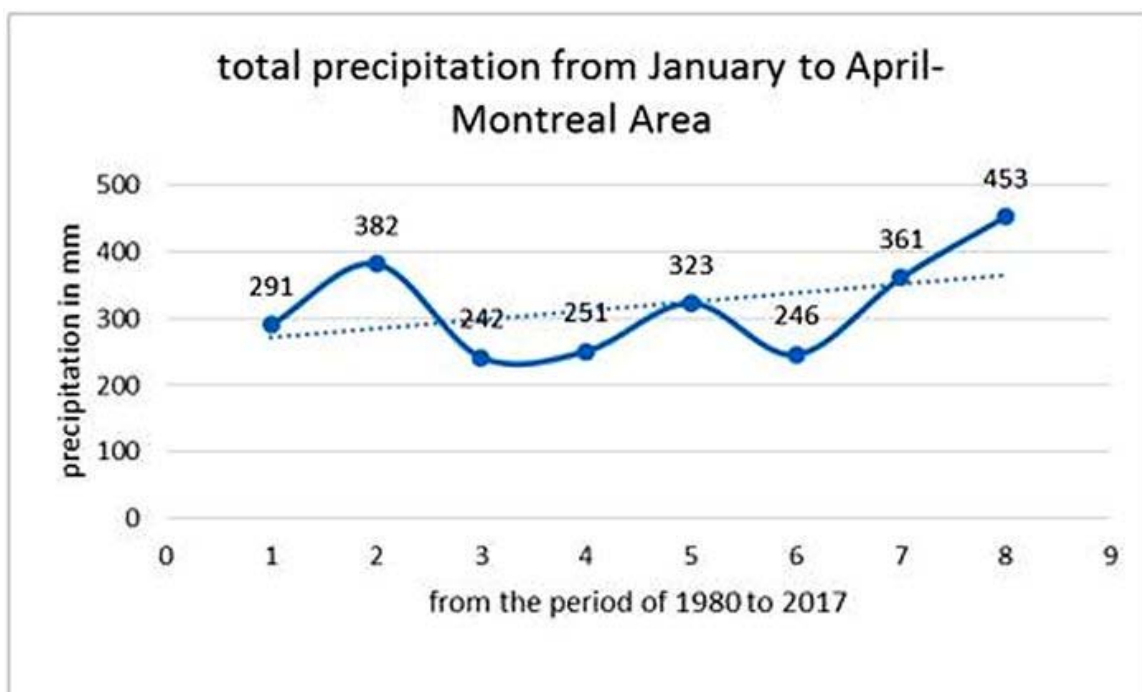


Location of Gouin and Baskatong reservoirs.  
Click to enlarge



Annual Period	January	February	March	April	TOTAL in millimeters
1980-2010 [1]*	77.2	62.7	69.1	82.2	291.2
2011	31.4	89	128	134	382.4
2012	84.2	33.4	57.8	67	242.4
2013	64.8	62.2	64.4	60	251.4
2014	52.7	60.2	74.6	136.2	323.7
2015	81.2	47.8	38.6	79	246.6
2016	39.8	113.8	106.4	101.4	361.4
2017	73.2	106.2	114.6	159.8	453.8
*: 30 year average					

**Total monthly precipitation in the Montreal area in millimetres, 1980-2010**  
 (\* historical average). (Environment Canada)



**Total monthly precipitation (liquid and solid) in the Montreal Area**  
**between January and April, from 1980 to 2017.**

What the data seems to indicate is that during the period 1980 to 2017, total precipitation during the winter months has tended to increase over the years.

That trend is confirmed by researchers involved in studying global warming of the Earth's atmosphere phenomena. Philippe Gachon, Chair of Strategic Research on Hydrometeorological Risks Linked to Climate Change at the University of Quebec in Montreal, recently gave an explanation in an interview during the annual conference of the Association francophone pour le développement des sciences (ACFAS). He said that any average increase of one degree Celsius of the Earth's atmosphere necessarily results in an average increase of seven per cent in air moisture, thus resulting in more precipitation. In the case of southern Quebec, that increase can vary from five to nine per cent, according to Gachon. He bases his findings on the laws of thermodynamics, in particular the Clausius-Clapeyron relation, named after a 19th-century German physicist and mathematician and French engineer and physicist respectively, who established the equation governing the transition between different phases of a body of matter -- solid, liquid and gaseous -- according to the pressure and the temperature applied to that body. In this case, the body in

question is the moisture content of the Earth's atmosphere. Because the density of liquid water is greater than that of its solid phase (ice), water has important and unique properties that play a special role as a thermal regulator in Nature.

Gachon pointed out that his research group does not receive any funding from the Quebec and federal governments. He also noted that the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences (CFCAS) was established in 2000 by the federal government to address the issue of analyzing climate change to better predict its accompanying weather phenomena. The foundation's activities were greatly reduced by the Harper government in 2011 when it made significant cuts. According to Gachon, no new funding was allocated to the CFCAS in the Trudeau government's latest budget.[1]

Canada is also a leader in remote sensing. Researchers employed by Canadian government agencies contributed to the design and construction of the RADARSAT satellite, which provides quick and accurate mapping through the use of radar imagery that resolves details down to one metre in size to delineate flood-prone areas around waterways. This has all been privatized by the federal government and is now marketed to serve private interests. Instead of using this state-of-the-art remote sensing technology to assist government agencies involved in managing Quebec's territory to minimize flooding risk by monitoring the evolution of land-use planning, it becomes one more mapping tool amongst others whose merits are promoted and commercialized by the private sector throughout the Americas.

## **Importance of a Nation-Building Project That Defends the Rights of All**



**Gatineau**

What emerges from the events surrounding the 2017 floods in Quebec and Ontario is that despite the Quebec Premier's statements that his government "did everything" to minimize the impact of the floods, the various levels of government have no interest in defending the rights of the people.

For example, those who manage Quebec's rivers within the Ministry of the Environment, Sustainable Development and the Fight against Climate Change, as well as state-owned corporations such as Hydro-Québec, must be able to predict trends as accurately as possible. However Hydro-Québec's spokespersons are silent when it comes to explaining why it did not begin opening the floodgates of its reservoirs this winter, even though all facts pointed to exceptional spring floods. Was it because Hydro-Québec was concerned that by lowering the level of its reservoirs too soon, it would not be able to supply the water that flows downstream to its hydro-electric power plants during the summer season? At the same time, it is well known that each year, Hydro-Québec is required to hand over to the Government of Quebec a significant portion of the profits it makes from its power generating operations. Those same profits are re-routed to the



moneylenders of Wall Street and elsewhere for so-called debt repayment.

The Quebec Ministry of the Environment, Sustainable Development and the Fight against Climate Change did not take the necessary measures to prepare the people living close to major rivers for the spring floods, a predictable natural phenomenon well known to all and now worsened by climate change. It could have requested that Hydro-Québec open the floodgates of its reservoirs located upstream from the Gatineau, Ottawa and St-Maurice Rivers as early as March. Before spring arrived, it could have called on a local business located in Victoriaville, Quebec that designs and manufactures a system of pontoons called "Water-Gate" that transforms into dikes within minutes to stop the flow of water. The effectiveness of the pontoons is recognized worldwide, even by the U.S. Army, which certified them for its own use. Instead, the Couillard government waited for the floods to occur and then declared that it was "forced" to call in the Canadian army for sandbagging and transportation, a slow and costly operation which, for many, was "too little too late."

### Note

1. For the Radio-Canada interview with Gachon in French, click [here](#).



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## BC Election Results

### BC Election and the Right to Conscience



The first casualty in the BC election was the voters' right to conscience. The ideological offensive of the electoral machines of the big parties and the media during and now in the aftermath of the election is aimed at browbeating the people into voting and thinking in a particular way for a particular aim. The aim is to maintain the status quo, entrench the anti-social offensive, and divide the people on a sectarian basis. The ideological offensive is meant to ensure the polity cannot even think and instead will succumb to waiting and seeing what others will do "on their behalf." A climate is created to overwhelm the people into believing that there is no alternative.

During the election, the tools in the hands of the electoral machines, in addition to mountains of money to throw into advertising, included cheap shots to coerce a vote for either the Liberals or NDP or another party presented as an alternative. All the arguments of the electoral machines of these parties and the mass media are aimed at depriving the people of an outlook where they can find their own bearings, fight for their own interests and unite with others within the situation.

The overwhelming electoral noise diverts the people from deciding how to occupy the space for change which has presented itself in BC at this time. This is why everything is geared to making sure no discussion takes place on either the problems that have beset the working people since the onset of the anti-social offensive and before, or the possible solutions to these problems. Everything is geared against discussing a program that will actually end the anti-social offensive and empower the working class and people. This is done by targeting the conscience of each member of the polity.

One way this was done during the election was by making believe that the aim of the election was to defeat the Liberals. But a program to defeat the Liberals does not present the people with a strategic consideration or alternative. It therefore reduces itself to devising tactics to defeat the Liberals and not to further the working people's own cause. By contrast, defeating the anti-social offensive is a strategic consideration and tactics to achieve that aim become an important concern. In other words, to participate in an election based on the demand that everyone should vote for the narrow aim to elect this or that party goes against dealing with the burning political issue of the day, in this case: how to bring an end to the anti-social offensive. The same is the case following the announcement of the final results. The people are expected to wait and see what the horse-trading between the cartel parties will give rise to.

Current speculation over which cartel party can guarantee itself enough seats for a majority in the Legislature leads to crass opportunism. Regardless of the outcome, it will not turn things around in the workers' favour. The party that sees itself as the king-maker and is pleased to be at the negotiating table does not oppose the fact that this system is based on providing the rulers with positions of privilege and that this is very much part of the overall corruption. That party's stand on choosing whom it will support and when is not based on principle. A stand based on principle recognizes that this electoral system constitutes an attack and block to the right of the people to decide all those matters that affect their lives.

The people cannot permit themselves to be put in a passive "wait-and-see" position watching those who claim to be elected to rule make unprincipled alliances. All three of those parties are opposed to building the political unity of the people based on a modern political vision of a society that serves the people and guarantees their well-being and rights, in particular their basic right to conscience.



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## **Step Up the Fight for the Rights of All!**

The results of the 41st BC General Election held on May 9, reflect the crisis in which the ruling elite are mired. No cartel party was able to secure a majority of 44 seats, with the ruling BC Liberal Party winning 43 seats down from 47 going into the election. The NDP increased its seats from 35 to 41 and the Green Party went from one to three seats, all on Vancouver Island. Voter turnout increased from 57.1 per cent in 2013 to about 60 per cent, according to Elections BC.

Results were very close in many ridings. Elections BC granted two of six requests for recounts. Recounts took place in the ridings of Courtenay-Comox and Vancouver-False Creek. The Final Voting Results, including the recounts and the counting of absentee ballots, were announced after the counting was completed on May 24. Elections BC published the Final Voting Results with no change in the number of seats held by the Liberals, NDP and Green Party, 43, 41, and three respectively. The published results show that the Liberals received 40.36 per cent (796,672 votes), the NDP 40.28 per cent (795,106 votes) and the Green Party 16.84 per cent (332,387 votes). These results reflect the completion of counting of absentee ballots and two recounts. A judicial recount



under certain circumstances can still be requested within six days of the declaration of final election results by each district electoral officer but it is unlikely that there will be any such requests. The recounts resulted in the NDP increasing its margin in Courtenay-Comox from nine votes in the initial count to 189 in the final count. In the other riding where there was a recount, Vancouver-False Creek, the Liberals won by 415 votes, down from the original margin of 560 votes.

As 44 seats are required for a majority, for the Liberals to remain in government they need the support of the Green Party which would give that coalition 46 seats. Should the NDP succeed in wooing the Greens that coalition would govern with only the barest of majorities, 44 seats. Both the Liberals and the NDP are "negotiating" with the Green Party whose leader, Andrew Weaver, said on May 24 that he will make a decision by May 31 or possibly sooner. The *Globe and Mail* reported that Weaver said "he's working in good faith to hear out both the Liberals and the New Democrats, saying 'it's all on the table.'" The same report says that Weaver has set out three "deal-breakers" -- official party status for the Greens despite only having three seats (current legislation requires four seats for official party status), campaign finance reform and proportional representation, and that there are other issues that are likely factoring into the negotiations that are ongoing.

NDP leader John Horgan told reporters that negotiations with the Greens continue and "I'm optimistic we'll be able to put forward a framework that has a majority of the support in the Legislature." A sticking point in the negotiations between the two parties is apparently a disagreement on electoral reform, with the Greens wanting legislated electoral reform without a referendum and the NDP wanting a referendum. Neither party has spelled out its proposal beyond "some form of proportional representation."

Liberal Premier Christy Clark met with BC Lieutenant Governor Judith Guichon on May 10, who granted Clark permission to continue to act as Premier pending the outcome of the final count and the horse-trading amongst the cartel parties to determine which one will govern for the moment. For the time being, the Liberals continue to form the government and Premier Christy Clark issued a statement following the final results that "with 43 BC Liberal candidates elected as MLAs, and a plurality in the Legislature, we have a responsibility to move forward and form a government." In response, Weaver threatened, "Actually, the Premier erred in that statement. The Premier has a responsibility to ensure she gains the confidence of the house to form government... I would suggest that was a bit premature. We have not tested the confidence of the House yet."

During the election, the Liberals and NDP concentrated their electoral efforts in the Lower Mainland plus a few select ridings on Vancouver Island and in the BC Interior. Altogether, eight ridings changed from Liberal to NDP; all but one are in the Greater Vancouver area. The lone exception was the Courtenay-Comox riding on Vancouver Island won by the NDP.

## **Opposition to the Current Direction of the Province**

Momentum has been building against the anti-social offensive amongst workers in sectors from forestry to education, truck drivers and those in health care. They are against the neo-liberal agenda of putting all the human and natural resources of the province at the disposal of the financial oligarchy. Workers from many sectors took up the call to defeat the governing Liberals in this election, as did Indigenous nations and environmental activists and others fighting against the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion project and the Site C dam. To defeat the Liberals was presented as a "faint hope" that something positive would come from one of the other cartel parties. At the very least, a vote against the Liberals expressed the opposition of the people to the anti-social offensive and the desire for an alternative but much more can and must be done to organize the workers' opposition.

The cartel parties are now, and were throughout the election, focussed on winning and/or holding onto power. The new situation where no cartel party won a firm majority of seats was pushed as a lull and a time to "wait and see." The final results still indicate that neither the Liberals nor NDP can claim a "mandate."



For the working people and others concerned with the direction of the province, the situation is seen as a time to step up the fight for a new direction for the economy and for solutions to problems that favour the people and not the oligopolies in control. Now is the time to step up demands to break the stranglehold of the financial oligarchy over the economy, which is especially obvious in the big projects of Site C, Kinder Morgan, liquefied natural gas and the Metro Vancouver public transit authority TransLink, and in the housing, transportation, and forestry sectors. The people demand that the rights of all to health care, education and a livelihood be

provided with a guarantee.

The ruling elite are doing everything to ensure that the people remain passive in the face of the crisis and rely on the rulers to find a solution. This should not be the case. Only when the solutions to problems are in the hands of the working class and its allies will society's path to progress be freed from the self-serving obstruction of the financial oligarchy that presently puts its social wealth and political power towards depriving the working people of having any control over the political, economic and social affairs that affect their lives.

### **Voters in Greater Vancouver Area Turn Away from Liberals**

Voters in the Greater Vancouver Area turned away from the ruling Liberal Party. Working people in the GVA are increasingly faced with an impossible situation. The housing crisis alone is forcing many, especially younger workers, to pay over 50 per cent of their wages for a place to live, usually far from work, or if possible, live with their parents. The serious housing situation is coupled with constant traffic gridlock, especially in the Massey Tunnel and on the bridges, of which two of the busiest have expensive tolls. The wholly inadequate and anti-people mass transit system is more and more viewed not as a reliable, efficient and comfortable public service but as a source of infighting amongst the ruling elite and a means to pay the rich.

The Liberal government's assault on public education has also resulted in great anger amongst the polity, in particular in Surrey and Vancouver East. People in the Lower Mainland are also faced with the Trudeau and Clark Liberal governments' proposal to expand the Kinder Morgan pipeline along with a tripling of oil tanker traffic in Vancouver's Burrard Inlet, which have aroused enormous passions and opposition. These issues became the focus of both the Liberal Party and the NDP's election promises and policy objectives for the GVA, along with the constant attack ads denigrating the two leaders as self-serving and corrupt.

Four GVA cabinet ministers lost their seats in the Legislature: Attorney General Suzanne Anton; Minister Responsible for TransLink (mass transit) Peter Fassbender (who was previously Minister of Education); Minister of State for Emergency Preparedness Naomi Yamamoto; and Minister of Technology, Innovation and Citizens' Services Amrik Virk. Premier Clark lost her seat in the Vancouver Point Grey riding in the last election and has since found refuge far away in the Okanagan Valley in the so-called safe Westside-Kelowna riding.





## Actions Against NATO Meeting in Brussels

### Militant Opposition to NATO Expressed in Brussels



On May 24 and 25, the streets of Brussels were filled with people from all walks of life, from across Europe and around the world, expressing the opposition of the world's people to the warmongering alliance NATO during its Leaders Summit held in that city. They also opposed U.S. and European state-organized campaigns which target sections of the people based on their race and religion. Actions throughout the two days took place under the call to invest in peace and not in war and to dismantle NATO. People also made it clear that U.S. President Donald Trump was not welcome in Brussels, a city he labelled a "hellhole" to stoke anti-Muslim sentiment during his presidential election campaign. Belgians opposed this characterization of their capital city and rejected his presence in the country with many signs indicating that it is NATO, warmongers like Trump and those who collude with him who are the real threats to peace and security.

On May 24, the day NATO heads of state and government arrived, 10,000 people participated in a #TrumpNotWelcome rally and march called by Belgian college students. Thousands more marched on May 25 while the NATO meeting was underway.

#### May 24











May 25







(Photos: Vrede, CND, No G20 International, N. Eggermont, The Journalie, Friends of the Earth, Agir pour la Paix, TTIP Game Over, PPICS.)




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