



No. 46

October 15, 2021

IN THIS ISSUE

- Prorogation of Quebec National Assembly**
- **Complaints About Diversions Are the Diversion**
- **What to Expect from New Session of Quebec National Assembly**

Prorogation of Quebec National Assembly

Complaints About Diversions Are the Diversion

On October 13, the current sitting of the Quebec National Assembly was prorogued. The prorogation period coincides with a planned break. The reason the Premier gave for prorogation was that the Assembly needs to start afresh with a new “opening address” on October 19.

Announcing the prorogation in a press release on October 7, Premier François Legault said:

“This will mark the beginning of a new parliamentary session and will be an opportunity to prepare Quebec for the post-pandemic period.”

“Thanks to the efforts of all Quebeckers, we can begin to plan for the post-pandemic. The past year and a half has transformed us and brought forward the issues critical for Quebec. In addition to completing our 2018 commitments, we must now begin the major changes for the coming years,” he added.

In other words, with the new session he will begin his campaign for re-election in October of next year, unless he uses his prerogative powers to call an election earlier so as to further enhance the odds which favour his party, the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ).

All the parties with seats in the National Assembly have pointed this out as have media and pundits. They say the new session is to divert the attention of voters from what is really going on. Presumably they would do better.

These complaints about diversions are really the diversion because what the situation reveals is that it is the people who should be empowered, not political parties who are said to represent them.

The opening of a new session means that bills presently before the National Assembly die on the order paper unless the Premier recalls them. He will not recall Bill 39, *An Act to establish a new electoral system*. Bill 39 provides for a mixed voting system with a form of regional representation. Understandably, this has upset all those who have worked hard for several years to have this bill

reach the National Assembly. Letting it die on prorogation precisely underscores what is wrong with a system where unrepresentative governments can rule with impunity. This government has become past master at using prerogative powers to advance a self-serving agenda adopted by narrow private interests behind the backs of the people.

Clearly, the Quebec government wants to bury its commitment for an alternative to the first-past-the-post system, just as the Trudeau government has done. This is seen to be crass opportunism based on the belief that the unrepresentative voting system favours his party at present. And it is indeed crass opportunism. However, what must not be lost from sight is the fact that any form of party government does not represent the people who require a system which empowers them to make the decisions which affect their lives. This, ruling elites want nothing to do with.



Today the role of governments is to simply dictate measures which suit the oligopolies. These oligopolies have taken over the functions of the state, of the public system and civil society organizations which are systematically replaced with private agencies. Unions, civil society organizations and an electorate have become nuisances to the ruling elite who want direct control over wages and working conditions and other conditions of life, and who treat the working people as disposable.

When it comes to the system of representation, the think tanks and pundits are promoting schemes where parties have no members and more pretexts are created to justify taking money from the state treasury to pay expensive marketing agencies to run self-serving electoral campaigns and impose what is called a preferential voting system. Such a system operates along the lines marketing agencies use to get people to pick particular products. Keeping extensive data banks on the personal information of voters is used to microtarget them.

The system of preferential voting is based on the electorate ranking their preference of candidates, usually from one to five. Those who receive the least votes are weeded out, with their votes transferred to other candidates until there is a “last man standing” with more than 50 per cent of the votes, who is then declared elected. Governments formed using this last man standing method of redistributing votes are said to reflect the consensus of the electorate — the mainstream everyone can live with.

None of this has anything to do with citizens and residents being represented in government.

What to Expect from New Session of Quebec National Assembly

The inauguration of a new session of the National Assembly of Quebec ushers in the election year. The next general election in Quebec is scheduled for October 3, 2022 under the *Act to amend the Election Act for the purpose of establishing fixed-date elections*. The Act provides that the Premier retains his prerogative to call the election earlier if he wishes, but the government is using the

prorogation to strengthen its domination over the other cartel parties by controlling the agenda until the October election date.

The Premier has said he will recall Bill 96, *An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec*.

Bill 96 was first introduced in the Quebec National Assembly on May 13, 2021 by Simon Jolin-Barette, in his capacity as Government House Leader. He is also Minister Responsible for the French language, Minister of Justice, Minister Responsible for Laicity and Parliamentary Reform and Minister Responsible for the Montérégie region.



It is a project of political diversion, narrow-mindedness and increased deployment of police powers against all the people of Quebec. In an interview, Minister Jolin-Barette made it clear that one of the primary goals of the bill is to increase the number of complaints, denunciations and lawsuits for violations such as, for example, not being served in French by a business. This is accompanied by increased powers for police to enter places of business, search any computer, hardware, or other equipment to examine data and impose fines for violations of the law.

The bill has nothing to do with solving any problem and it will not encourage people to learn French or improve the quality of the language. It does not represent the social solidarity that drives Quebecers that can only be expressed in the defence of the rights of all and in the building of a modern nation that affirms the right of the people to be the decision-makers on all matters that concern them, including the matter of language rights.

Such things are not new but they are unacceptable nonetheless. They are not related to the issue of language or how to defend and develop a language. This bill, along with all others the CAQ government has introduced, is a blatant manifestation of the neo-liberal, anti-social tendency to approach problems by increasing the use of prerogative powers.

Criminalizing issues and resorting to the use of force are par for the course to push an anti-social offensive of privatization and destruction of civil society arrangements and organizations. This is what the Legault government has done on all the issues related to infrastructure, healthcare, education and resources where narrow private interests are demanding arrangements which serve them.

The Legault government is already on a very wrong path for the control it intends to exercise, through the powers of the state, over immigrants, in the name of integration into the neo-liberal labour market.

As well, one of the bills expected to be introduced during this election year is on “health reform” which, according to the Minister of Health and Social Services, Christian Dubé, will see amendments to many existing laws. Dubé has announced that the proposed legislation will be introduced in the fall and that he hopes to have it



passed within a year.

The new law's intent will be to increase "the efficiency of the health care system," Dubé says. This is government-speak for privatization. In blatant disregard for the lived experience of Quebeckers during the pandemic, he referred to the health care system's performance during the pandemic as an example of renewed efficiency. It is an astounding assertion given the crisis of the healthcare system and the fact that entire emergency departments have had to close in the middle of a pandemic due to shortages of staff. Even urgent surgeries have been postponed for months with the people waiting for them suffering a great deal. A system where ministers can speak in this way is a system in deep trouble. Enacting more legislation that increases control over the population using false pretexts will not be good for the polity.

The language law will be divisive and introduce all kinds of police powers to criminalize those who do not adhere to it. Meanwhile, in the name of economic recovery, Quebeckers can expect more pay-the-rich schemes including further privatization of health care through the new health care legislation and integration of the Quebec economy with that of the U.S. imperialist war machine.

These are dangerous times which will require the people to speak out and step up their fight for conditions of life and work which they and society require at this time.

The future will be guaranteed by the fight for the rights of all.

Send your articles, photographs, reports, views and comments to editormlpc@cpcml.ca