

A report published on October 28, just ahead of COP26, shows how the Government of Canada is, based on erroneous assumptions, underreporting total carbon dioxide emissions from the forestry sector, misrepresenting the extent of deforestation, and promoting biomass energy as a clean-energy alternative. The report, by Environmental Defence Canada, Nature Canada, Nature Québec, and NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council) is entitled *Missing the Forest -- How Carbon Loopholes for Logging Hinder Canada's Climate Leadership*.



The report's executive summary notes: "Protecting the world's forests ... is essential to avoiding the worst impacts of climate change. Forests, in addition to their importance in maintaining biodiversity, play an irreplaceable role in global carbon regulation, absorbing one-third of human-caused carbon emissions from the atmosphere annually and storing this carbon long-term in their soil and vegetation. ... Preserving primary forests, which are forests that have never been impacted by significant human disturbance, is particularly critical. ... Once gone, [these forests] are irreplaceable on any meaningful human timescale."

The report points out that Canada's boreal forest holds some of the world's last large stretches of remaining primary forest and plays a crucial role in achieving a sustainable, livable future. The boreal forest stores twice as much carbon per hectare as tropical forests, making it an essential ally in the fight against climate change. The report warns, "Despite the boreal's global importance, it is facing considerable threats from unsustainable industrial logging. ... [T]he logging industry continues to clearcut more than 400,000 hectares of the boreal each year -- about five NHL hockey rinks every minute -- much of this in irreplaceable primary forests. This conversion of primary forests into second-growth forests, which store less carbon, is transferring large amounts of carbon into the atmosphere, driving significant climate impacts." The report highlights that "the Government of Canada is neither adequately accounting nor regulating these climate impacts."



In this respect, the report sets out how the Government of Canada has crafted a different set of rules for the logging industry that downplay its emissions and exempt it from carbon regulations, misrepresenting the actual carbon cost of industrial logging and therefore undervaluing the benefit of protecting existing forests. Industrial logging is one of the largest threats to the Canadian boreal's carbon stores and ability to continue to sequester additional carbon. More than 90 per cent of the logging in Canada is in the form of clearcutting, a practice in which the logging operation removes nearly all the trees from a given area. Much of this occurs in carbon-rich, biodiverse primary forests. When these forests are clear-cut, carbon in the soils and remaining biomass is released into the atmosphere, which doesn't just impact the vegetation but also undermines the integrity of the boreal's soil carbon vault. In addition, scientific

research shows that boreal forests logged today will not return to their initial carbon absorbing capacity — at least not within time frames relevant for climate action under the Paris Agreement.

In a section entitled “Deforestation vs. Forest Degradation,” the report points out that Canada claims that there is nearly zero deforestation of its forests — upholding itself as a positive example in contrast to countries such as Brazil and Indonesia that have much higher rates of forest loss. However, the report says, this claim relies upon the fact that under many international definitions “deforestation” is narrowly defined in a way that excludes much of the clearcutting in Canada.

For example, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization defines deforestation as the conversion of a forest to non-timber land use. The logging industry in Canada, as in many other northern countries in temperate and boreal latitudes, clearcuts with the intention of allowing the forest to regrow so clearcut landscapes are presented as healthy forests and clearcutting is thus not deforestation but “forest degradation.”

The report also reveals that biomass energy, which is derived from burning plants such as trees, is not a clean energy alternative to fossil fuels. Industry though often claims that biomass energy is carbon-neutral. Canada’s most recent climate commitments submission to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change mentions investments in biomass expansion as evidence of its climate progress.

Among the report’s recommendations to deal with the logging industry’s climate impact and the value of primary forest protection are: to ensure unbiased accounting of logging emissions, to improve accuracy of carbon emissions measurements associated with industrial logging, to ensure better governance and oversight of logging’s carbon emissions and to prioritize forest protection and restoration under Indigenous leadership.



See the full report: *Missing the Forest: How Carbon Loopholes for Logging Hinder Canada's Climate Leadership*.

(Photos: Fairy Creek Blockade Facebook)

Quebec Agenda for a "Green Economy" - A Formula for More Sellout

Enriching Private Foreign Interests and Strengthening Anglo-American Global Domination

- Fernand Deschamps -

The one-hour speech delivered on October 19 by Quebec Premier François Legault to the National Assembly, as expected, made a big case about Quebec being a leader in “renewable green energies.” “(A)mongst all U.S. states and Canadian provinces, Quebec is the one that emits the least greenhouse gases per resident,” Legault claimed.

To make his point, he added that Quebec, with its surplus hydroelectric power, is becoming the

“battery of northeast America” with its recently signed contracts with the State of Massachusetts and the City of New York for decades-long export of hydro power. In an earlier interview, a spokesperson for Hydro-Québec pointed out that the agreement with the State of Massachusetts for the future supply of 9.45 terrawatt-hours over 20 years is worth around 10 billion dollars. This amounts to roughly five cents per kilowatt-hour, which is 25 to 50 per cent lower than the rates paid by Quebec residents. The details of the latest contract with the New York Power Authority, with regard to the hydro rates paid by them, are still unknown. What is known, however, is agreements like these always have clauses which provide for huge fines in the event of power outages and demands to restore power to the U.S. states before looking after the people of Quebec. This does not mean that U.S. residents are looked after, but those of the U.S. private interests which receive the cheap power.

Legault also announced that as of now, his government will definitely be banning drilling for fossil fuels on Quebec’s territory. However, not a word was said about how much the Quebec government intends to pay the private oil and gas exploration companies in compensation, buying back the tracts of land on which they were drilling for fossil fuels.

The day following Legault’s address to the National Assembly, the consortium representing the oil and gas exploration companies operating in Quebec were knocking at the government’s door saying they want to be “fully compensated.” Éric Tétrault, President of Quebec’s Energy Association, a “non-profit organization representing promoters, enterprises, investors and subcontractors interested in natural gas and renewable energies,” estimates that for the St. Lawrence Valley alone, where fracking for gas has been stopped because of the people’s resistance and opposition, they could claim “lost profits” of “\$3 to \$5 billion.”

That same day, in response to a journalist who wanted to know what his stand was on that issue, Legault answered, “We are ready to put the financial and judicial resources,” and that it will be along the lines of the “market value”. There are presently 182 oil and gas drilling permits outstanding, covering some 32 000 square km of Quebec’s territory, an area the size of Vancouver island, or of Belgium.

To further emphasize that Quebec is taking the lead towards a “green economy,” Legault went on to say that his government’s ambition is to create a “world hub” in Quebec for “electrical transportation” that would include “electric buses, trucks, trains and even planes.” In that regard, his government wants to also create a “world hub” for the battery sector. Here he is referring to rechargeable lithium-ion batteries in which lithium and graphite are respectively the main components that make up the battery’s cathode and anode.

It so happens that lithium and graphite are part of the 35 “strategic minerals” identified in 2017 by the U.S. administration as “critical” for the U.S. imperialist war machine.[1]

Lithium Mine and Major Graphite Deposit in the Hands of Foreign Private Interests

The Whabouchi mine located near the Eeyou Istchee (Cree) northern community of Nemaska, will be North America’s largest lithium mine. The mine’s previous owner, Nemaska Lithium, emerged from creditor protection in August 2020 under the joint ownership of Investissement Quebec, the government’s “investment arm,” Pallinghurst Group, a UK-based mining and metals private equity firm, and Orion Mine Finance, a U.S. based mining and metals private investment firm.

Besides putting \$80 million of public funds in the Nemaska Lithium private mining and metallurgical venture in May 2018, the Quebec government again came to its rescue last year by buying it back, along with Orion and Pallinghurst. It will also be paying a huge portion of the \$146.5

million in liabilities owned in part by Orion. Many small investors who had put their life savings into this venture lost everything.[2]

Matawinie Graphite, a graphite deposit planned to start as an open-pit mine operation by 2023, is located at Saint-Michel-des-Saints, 100 km northeast of Montreal. This mining project of Nouveau Monde Graphite Inc. would extract 100,000 tons per year of graphite concentrate that would then be shipped to their Bécancour processing facility which is being built to produce the anode material needed in lithium-ion batteries. This is similar to the situation with the Whabouchi lithium mine, where the mine operator intends to build a chemical conversion facility to produce battery grade lithium hydroxide on a 500,000 square metre plot of land in the industrial park in Bécancour, Quebec.

UK-based mining and metals private equity firm, the Pallinghurst Group, is also the largest shareholder in Nouveau Monde Graphite Inc.



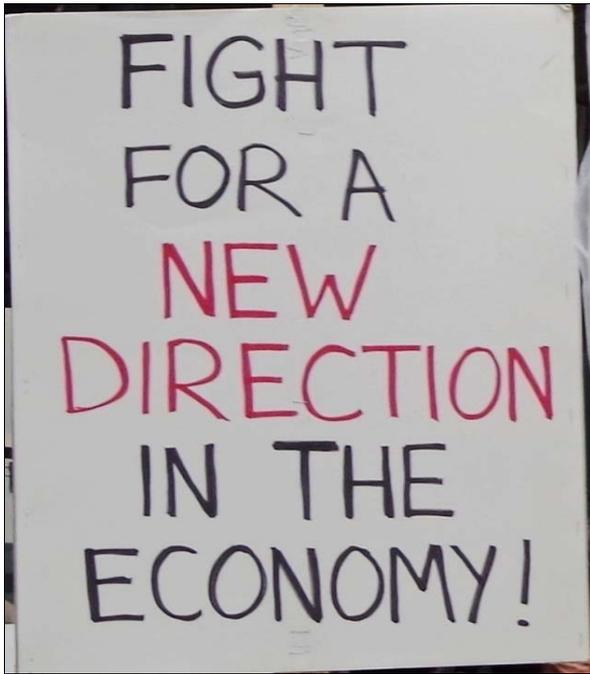
Even though these strategic minerals being mined in Quebec are under foreign ownership, this doesn't seem to bother Legault who could not stop thinking out loud in his inaugural speech when he declared "In Quebec, we need important companies that are owned by Quebec interests." It seems that critical minerals such as lithium and graphite are not important enough for him to consider them as part of "Quebec's green sustainable economy."

Pay-the-Rich Schemes in Mining Reveal the Essence of Legault's "Nationalist" Stance

For the first time, Legault alluded openly to "the international scene" and what he described as "a great concern of many nations about China's preponderance in the critical mineral markets" that are "crucial for many products that make up the green economy," giving lithium-ion rechargeable batteries as an example. As mentioned before, Quebec, like many Canadian provinces and territories, has different rock formations within its territory that contain lithium/graphite deposits as well as rare earth elements and other mineral-bearing rock crucial to the U.S. imperialists' striving for domination of the world market, in rivalry with China and Russia.

Premier Legault conveniently overlooked the fact that on February 23, 2021, as part of the *Roadmap for a Renewed U.S.-Canada Partnership*, Canada and the Biden administration renewed the *Canada-U.S. Joint Action Plan on Critical Minerals Collaboration* which was originally signed with the Trump administration in January 2020. These are measures which further integrate the Canadian and Quebec economies into the U.S. war economy so as to compete with Chinese interests and further the cause of U.S. imperialist domination on a world scale.

With his claim that his government is "creating more wealth for Quebec" Legault is bending over backwards to support private foreign interests mining critical minerals with all kinds of pay-the-rich schemes. These are in the form of direct grants and subsidies, interest-free loans, infrastructure such as roads, hydro power and, in the future, new railroads such as the one being studied that would link the trans-Canadian railway system at Senneterre, in Abitibi, to Baie-Comeau, a deep-sea port facility on Quebec's North Shore.



None of this has anything to do with building a self-sufficient economy as Legault was so keen on repeating in his speech, and even less an economy in whose direction the Quebec people would have a say. Legault's entire so-called nationalist stance, that he doesn't want "any federal government intrusion" in Quebec, is to hide the fact that his party, the Coalition Avenir Quebec, like the Trudeau Liberals, seeks to serve specific sections of finance capital while submitting to the demands of the U.S. military. It is a clash between one level of authority and another but neither authority serves the interests of the people. It is a dangerous path that must be opposed by the working class constituting the nation and imbuing it with its own aims of a humanized natural and social environment. Being part of the U.S. war economy is not something that the Canadian or Quebec people want.

Notes

1. See *Renewal Update*, September 24, 2021, [Join Global Climate Strike! - Canadians Can Only Rely on Themselves to Sort Out Climate Crisis.](#)
2. See *TML Weekly*, October 24, 2020, [Bailouts of Private Mining and Metallurgical Ventures.](#)

Note to Readers

With this issue, *Renewal Update* concludes publication for 2021 and will resume in the New Year.

We wish you all a safe holiday and success in your work in 2022. Please continue to send your reports and views and join us in increasing the readership of *Renewal Update* and in funding this important work for renewal.

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