

IN THE NEWS

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Indigenous-led protest against budget cuts outside Nova Scotia legislature in Halifax, March 3, 2026

In late February, the Nova Scotia government introduced major changes affecting both the regulation of social work and the funding of social programs across the province. These moves, expanding government authority over the social work profession while cutting social programs,

particularly those serving Mi'kmaw communities, raise urgent questions about accountability, safety and whose interests are being prioritized.

At a time when many Nova Scotians are facing increasing attacks on their right to housing, food and a livelihood, the provincial government's actions show a longstanding position. It is one which is not about guaranteeing the rights of all and nation-building, but instead moving toward centralized control and economic policies focused on resource extraction, militarization and pay-the-rich schemes.

Expanding State Oversight of Social Work

On February 25, the Nova Scotia government changed the status of the Nova Scotia College of Social Workers (NSCSW) from an independent, self-regulating body to one subject to increased government oversight. The College stated this move was made without prior notice or consultation.

Under the change, the Minister of Health and Wellness now has the authority to intervene in the operations of the College if deemed to be in the "public interest." The government also repealed the *Social Workers Act*, the legislation under which social workers have historically been self-regulated, and folded regulation into the *Regulated Health Professions Act* (RHPA).

Previously, the *Social Workers Act* empowered the College not only to license and discipline practitioners, but to organize collectively, exercise decision-making power over their own affairs, and act in accordance with the needs of the people.

The government argues it "modernizes oversight" by aligning social workers with other regulated health professions such as nurses and counsellors. The people, however, see it as part of a broader trend: consolidating authority over the right to decide and undermining decision-making power under government bureaucracy at a time when social conditions are worsening for many people.

For the Mi'kmaw people and the African Nova Scotian community, state control of social services is not a new phenomenon. From the Indian residential school system to the Sixties Scoop, the Millennial Scoop, and ongoing over-representation of Indigenous children in care and youth custody, government intervention in family life has been used as a tool of dispossession, destabilization and violence.

Increasing state power over social service professions while completely disregarding the root causes of poverty, social problems and systemic discrimination, threatens all peoples and their ability to determine their working conditions and defend their right to a livelihood.

2026-2027 Nova Scotia Budget Cuts to Social and Mi'kmaw Programs

On February 23, Premier Tim Houston's Progressive Conservative government tabled its 2026-2027 anti-social, racist and discriminatory budget. It initially sought to impose \$130 million in cuts. Among those cuts were all social programs spanning African Nova Scotian programs, disability supports, community food, services for those fleeing domestic violence, caregiver benefits and hundreds of civil service jobs. After militant protests by Nova Scotians, the government reversed \$54 million of these cuts to 50 programs or services for people with disabilities and seniors, and for African Nova Scotian and Indigenous students. This does not change the fact that, even with some cuts reversed, it is those who are the most vulnerable and who experience the most discrimination that the Houston government has targeted.

Particularly notable are the reductions to Mi'kmaw-related programs and initiatives. The reversal of some cuts still means that only two of 21 Mi'kmaw-specific programs affected by the cuts have been restored, specifically \$83,000 for a program to increase Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian

representation at the Schulich School of Law and \$50,000 to the Unama'ki College at Cape Breton University. Thus, reductions that impact programs across health, justice, culture, governance and language in Nova Scotia remain in place. Funding was fully eliminated for Mi'kmaw Services in public education and for Tajikeimik (aimed at improving health and wellness in Mi'kmaw communities). Many cultural and community programs like Mi'kmaw History Month, Treaty Day events, community development funds and the Tripartite Forum were also fully cut, while others like the Mi'kmaw Language Revitalization Strategy were partially reduced. The total funding cut to Mi'kmaw-related social programs totals over \$1,852,000



Halifax, March 3, 2026

Leaders of the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs described the cuts as targeted and harmful, saying they disproportionately affect Mi'kmaw-led programs that support language revitalization, health planning, education, justice and community development. They stated, "The Maw-lukutikij Saqmaq question how the Province can decide to defund initiatives developed to support our Nation-to-Nation relationship, yet at the same time claim the initiatives are important enough for them to remain part of these discussions."

According to the Chiefs and the people, these reductions undermine reconciliation commitments, disrupt decision-making and erode accountability surrounding treaty implementation and self-determination.

Programs that support language revitalization, treaty education, cultural celebration and Indigenous governance are not symbolic. They are pillars of nation-building and self-determination.

Investments in Destruction and Extraction

While social programs face damaging reductions, the provincial government has emphasized investment in resource extraction projects for 2026-2027. Several proposed developments are located on or impact Mi'kmaw lands and have previously faced opposition from Mi'kmaw communities, including mining expansion and uranium exploration policy.

The government frames these initiatives as job creation and economic growth. But we must question who benefits, and who bears the environmental and health risks. They present the issue as either protecting jobs while sacrificing the environment or safeguarding the environment but leaving people unemployed -- framing the two as if they are mutually exclusive. By structuring the debate this way, they narrow the range of acceptable solutions. It is an attempt to control how the problem is defined, which ultimately steers the conversation toward the outcomes that suit their narrow interests.

Required to Ensure Our Security and Safety

These developments raise fundamental questions. Does expanding direct ministerial decision-making over social work make families and children safer? Who decides what is in the "public interest"?

The evidence, from Canada's history of colonial child welfare to current overrepresentation of Indigenous children in care, points to the truth: the control of what continues to be a colonial state has not protected communities, particularly Indigenous families. In fact, the current Canadian state and its provincial counterparts have not only participated in the violent and racist attacks, they have actively planned, directed and carried them out.

We know the right to food and housing, right to culture and language, right to self-determination and right to education are all rights that uplift the people and belong to them by virtue of being human. Neglect of these programs are direct attacks on the people, their health, safety and economy.

Nurses, doctors, social workers and educators are taking up the fight for the right to decide and for emancipation and empowerment. They know their working conditions best, and because their working conditions are inseparable from the living conditions of the people, they are at the forefront of this struggle.

Our Future Lies in the Fight for the Rights of All, by Humanizing the Natural and Social Environment



Protest against cuts to arts and cultural funding, Halifax, March 4, 2026.

The budget cuts to social programs and negligence represent a greater pattern -- the people, and professionals in their respective fields, being left out of decision-making. The Nova Scotian government has made it clear that nation-building and investment in social programs are not their priority. Instead, their focus is enriching their crony club. Therefore, the Nova Scotian people, along with the Canadian people, must take up the fight, alongside Indigenous Peoples, for the right to decide.

Security lies in protecting rights and Mother Earth, and investing in our youth. It lies in establishing integral Nation-to-Nation relationships with Indigenous Peoples and does not include the

undermining of the very programs that keep society afloat in the face of the anti-social offensive which targets language, culture, arts and health programs.

Shame on the Nova Scotia government for choosing austerity, extraction and pay-the-rich schemes over investment in the people.

All out to rise up and assert the decision-making power and right of the people to decide!

Organizing Together, Deciding for Ourselves, Building Our World!

Power to the People Who Speak in Their Own Name!

The World As It Is Has No Takers. The World As It Should Be Has Billions of Makers!



Halifax, March 4, 2026

Ontario

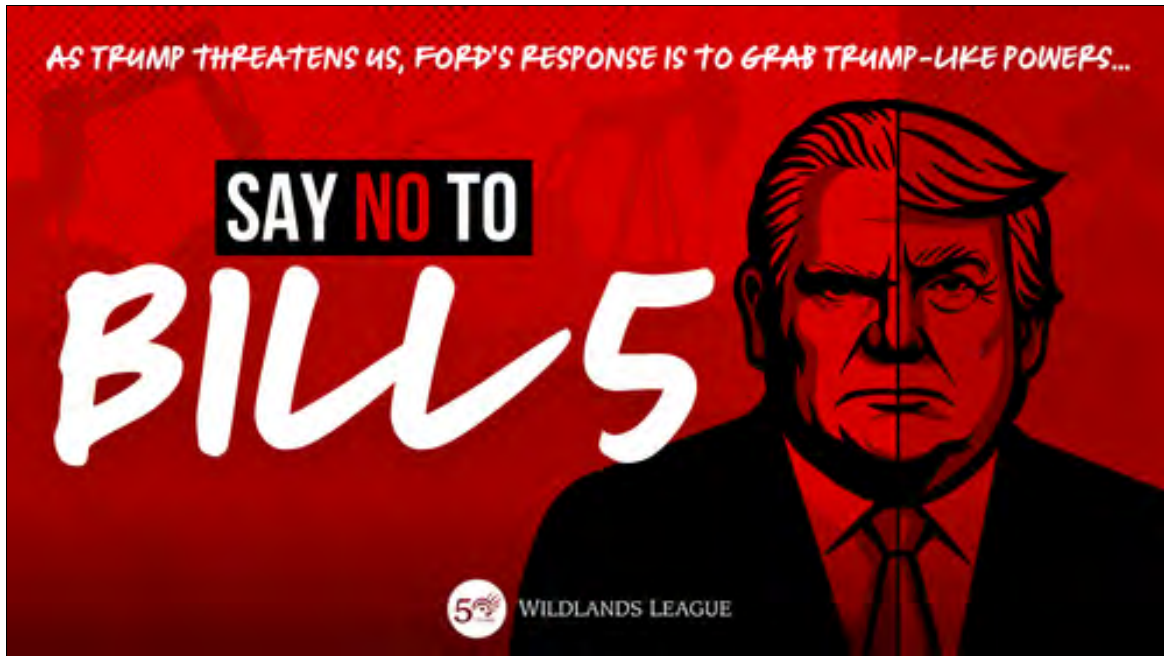
Public Interest and Environment Groups Launch Constitutional Challenge Against Ford Government's Bill 5

On April 7, four public interest and environmental groups launched a constitutional challenge to Bill 5, the *Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act*, passed in June 2025 designed to speed up mining, infrastructure and resource projects by cutting "red tape," suspending laws that protect the environment and endangered species and creating "special economic zones," which the groups characterize as "lawless zones," where Cabinet can override legal rights and protections and accountability to the public.

Wildlands League, Environmental Defence Canada, Friends of the Earth Canada and Democracy Watch filed their case at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. Lindsay Beck, an Ecojustice lawyer representing the organizations told media, "This case is about whether Ontario is governed by laws passed through public legislative debate or behind closed doors by Cabinet members."

"The Premier and his cabinet now have unfettered power to exempt any person or business they

like ("trusted proponents" and "designated projects") from any provincial or municipal law they choose, in as much of the province as they like ("special economic zones"), for any purpose, and based on whatever criteria they themselves decide," said Phil Pothen, Counsel with Environmental Defence.



Duff Conacher, Co-founder of Democracy Watch notes, "The law is dangerously undemocratic as it gives the Doug Ford cabinet unconstitutional, king-like powers to change any law without a review or vote of approval by Ontario's legislature."

The group argues that the law violates the Constitution by concentrating law-making authority in the Cabinet, bypassing the Legislature. They underscore that this undemocratic law will cause environmental harm, limit oversight, reduce public participation, sidestep labour and health and safety measures, and disregard environmental assessments in favour of projects linked to "trusted proponents."

Premier Ford has already indicated his intent to use these executive powers for infrastructure development including building a tunnel under Highway 401, expediting mining in the Ring of Fire and other locations in the province, building nuclear power generating stations, a deep water port in James Bay and a massive expansion of the Go Train System.

On March 23, the day of the opening of the Ontario legislature after a 14-week break, Ford announced that he was using the legislation to declare Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport a "special economic zone" in order to expropriate the City of Toronto's interest in the airport and expand it to allow jets to land. The City has and continues to oppose landing jets at the site. Ford wants to expand the main runway by hundreds of metres into Lake Ontario and, by invoking the legislation, to exempt the project from any



provincial environmental, labour or other laws and void the need for approval by the city. The current agreement, signed in 1983 between the city, the Toronto Port Authority (a federal agency), and the federal government, bans jets. Ford says he has the support of the federal government for his plan.

Bill 5 and its federal counterpart Bill C-5, the Carney Liberal government's *One Canadian Economy Act*, aim at expediting major infrastructure and resource extraction projects which they deem to be in the national or provincial interest. Last year, nine Ontario First Nations launched a *Charter* challenge to Bill 5 and Bill C-5, asking the Ontario Superior Court of Justice for an injunction against these laws which they say are a "clear and present danger" to their hereditary and treaty rights and their right to be.

These laws are part of the rapid restructuring of the state demanded by the oligarchs who have taken over state power in Canada and are directing the cartel parties to subsidize them through handouts, tax incentives and other pay-the-rich schemes, laying claim to the resources and assets that belong to the Indigenous Peoples, Canadians and Quebeckers by right. These anti-democratic laws underscore the need for political renewal so that it's the workers and people who decide and together with Indigenous Peoples establish a modern Canada with a modern constitution that upholds rights and put the needs and claims of the people in first place.

(With files from Ecojustice, CBC and The Pointer)

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