

Pharmacare Bill in the Parliament

- **Private Insurance Cartels Attack Public Health Care**
– *K.C. Adams* –
- **Key Issue When Discussing Pharmacare Bill**

People's Need for Decision-Making Power

- **Pay-the-Rich Scams Revealed by Privatization of Health Care**

Construction of Battery Component and Assembly Plants for Electric Vehicles

- **Made-in-Canada Plan Ensures Energy Security for United States and Its Military**
– *Fernand Deschamps* –
- **More Pay-the-Rich Schemes in the Name of Creating a "Sustainable Quebec Economy"**
 - **Who Said What About the Announcement of Construction of Northvolt Battery Assembly Plant**

Relations of Friendship Between Canadian and Cuban Peoples Affirmed

- **Warm Welcome for Cuba's New Ambassador to Canada**

Get Canada Out of NATO!

- **Military Exercises in the Canadian Arctic**
- **NATO Secretary General's Agenda for Canada**
 - **NATO Steps Up War Preparations**

Movement for Peace on Korean Peninsula

- **Resolutely Oppose Freedom Shield 24 War Exercises**
– *Philip Fernandez* –
- **South Korean Movement for Peace Calls for End to U.S.-Led War Exercises and a Peace Treaty**
 - **Korea Peace Petition Delivered to the UN and U.S.**

SUPPLEMENT
Legacy of Brian Mulroney
A Sow's Ear Presented as a Silk Purse

Pharmacare Bill in the Parliament
Private Insurance Cartels Attack Public Health Care
– K.C. Adams –

Bill C-64 -- *An Act Respecting Pharmacare* was introduced in the House of Commons on February 29. The summary of the bill on the House website says:

"This enactment sets out the principles that the Minister of Health is to consider when working towards the implementation of national universal pharmacare and provides the Minister with the power to make payments, in certain circumstances, in relation to the coverage of certain prescription drugs and related products. It also sets out certain powers and obligations of the Minister -- including in relation to the preparation of a list to inform the development of a national formulary and in relation to the development of a national bulk purchasing strategy -- and requires the Minister to publish a pan-Canadian strategy regarding the appropriate use of prescription drugs and related products. Finally, it provides for the establishment of a committee of experts to make certain recommendations."

In addition, the legislation includes coverage for contraception and diabetes medication and devices like insulin pumps but this can only be implemented if the federal government can negotiate deals with the provinces and territories to include these provisions in their medical systems. The Liberals and NDP had high praise for the legislation and consider that it fulfils one of the pillars in their Supply and Confidence agreement. Alberta and Quebec governments have already said they will not participate in a national program, Quebec because it has its own provincial drug plan and Alberta wanting their per capita share of funding in cash.

The bill contains no commitment for a universal single-payer program. It calls for the creation of a committee of experts to make recommendations. It provides no timelines for adoption of the bill, let alone implementation.

In a completely self-serving manner private drug insurers have denounced the tentative measures of the federal government for a pharmacare system calling it a "bad move." Through the monopoly media they are attempting to create hysteria around the supposed cost of public pharmacare to the people.

For the rich to characterize public health care including pharmacare as bad and a cost to the people and economy is a self-serving attempt to block Canadians from receiving universal free health care. Pharmaceuticals are an integral part of the health care system. A modern country is duty bound to guarantee the health of its citizens



with a universal free system encompassing all aspects of the sector including research, production, distribution, education and realization of its produced value. Healthy people are the backbone of a socialized modern economy and society and the essential human factor in the production of all goods and services.

Treating the need for drugs as an "accident" requiring insurance is a deliberate ploy to steal money from Canadians and their economy without providing anything worthwhile in return. Private or public insurance for health care is a fraud that deserves only to be denounced and put in the dustbin of history.

The Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association (CLHIA), a cartel of the most powerful private insurance oligopolies, says of pharmacare: "A single-payer program will spend unnecessary billions to disrupt existing workplace health benefit plans that are already making a larger number of prescription drugs more affordable for millions."^[1]

The statement deliberately distorts the reality of insurance cartels sucking billions of dollars away from the people and economy for nothing in return. They siphon away social value and concentrate it under the private control of fewer and fewer hands. The private insurance oligopolies are owned and controlled by a ruling elite who dominate and control all aspects of life including the mass media and so-called democratic institutions. Only a portion of the money they seize from workers and companies through contract agreements for drug insurance goes toward the purchase of drugs. The rest is not returned to the health industry but rather goes to pay the rich in insurance profits and for the bureaucracy the insurance companies require to operate.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) in a recent report says prescription drug spending was \$36.6 billion in 2021-22, a 28 per cent increase from 2015-16. Of this spending 40 per cent or \$14.64 billion was paid through the private insurance oligopolies. Forty-six per cent or \$16.836 billion was covered by governments through various schemes including for hospital inpatients and 14 per cent or \$5.124 billion was paid-out-of-pocket by individuals. Of note is that Canadians spent an additional \$6.7 billion on non-prescription drugs generally without any coverage.

The total amount the insurance companies receive in gross payment in return for prescription drug insurance both from collectives of workers and their employers, and from individuals has to be in excess of the amount they pay out for drugs. The aim of the insurance cartels is maximum private profit at the expense of the people and economy. This means the total the cartels receive in drug insurance premiums to accommodate their thirst for profit and to pay for their bureaucracy has to exceed the \$14.64 billion they paid for drugs or they would not have any reason to be in business. The additional amount paid to them above the \$14.64 billion in insurance premiums covers the price of production of the insurance service, which includes the profit and amount for their bureaucracy. This extra amount above the \$14.64 paid out for drugs is wasted on a service that does not need to exist in the first place and is contrary to the needs of the people and history for universal free health care.

Private payment for health care is not restricted to pharmaceuticals. Canadians pay for a wide range of health care services either out of pocket or through parasitical private insurance plans. The Canadian Institute for Health Information reports 29 per cent of the total health care expenditures is paid privately through plans or out of pocket with the rest paid publicly through government agencies. The amount Canadians pay for various forms of private insurance necessarily exceeds the portion of health care expenses paid through their private group or individual insurance plans.^[2]

The arguments of the rich elite against universal free health care including all parts of the body and pharmaceuticals from birth to passing away are self-serving and a reflection of the corruption, parasitism and decay of the imperialist system. Universal free health care at the highest level the productive forces have attained is a just and necessary demand of the people and times.

Notes

1. For a list of member companies of the CLHIA, [click here](#). The five largest insurance companies control 68 per cent of all group and individual private health care insurance plans. The five largest insurance companies are Manulife, Sun Life, RBC Insurance, Great-West Lifeco, and Desjardins.

2. A total of \$55.9 billion was collected by private health insurers in premiums in 2022.

Total refunds paid by private health insurers for health care expenses were \$43.9 billion of the total reported health care expenditure.

The \$12 billion in excess of the amount refunded for health care expenses went to the private insurers as profit and their bureaucracy.

Forty-four per cent of refunds paid by the private insurance companies is for drugs.

In 2022, 27 million Canadians had private supplemental health insurance, i.e. 67.8 per cent of the population, for which a portion of health care expenditures were paid depending on the coverage. Group plans are 90 per cent of the total with individual plans making up the other 10 per cent.

Key Issue When Discussing Pharmacare Bill

The key issue when discussing the pharmacare bill is not whether universal free pharmacare should come into being or not. What society needs is the immediate full implementation of universal pharmacare paid for by the enterprises that benefit from the increased value of the healthy workers they employ. The second issue that must be addressed is the pharmaceutical industry itself and the necessity to bring it under the full ownership and control of the people.

Pharmacare is the universal free distribution of prescribed and other necessary drugs. Much of the discussion of pharmacare does not debate the necessity or not of the program according to the needs of the people but rather its cost. And cost is itself calculated on the basis of narrow private interests, not on the basis of a public interest. This indicates that the need for universal free pharmacare has been generally accepted but that the issue is whether the economy can support it or not and if so how should this support be organized.



Modern mass health care along with mass education and other features of the socialized economy and society provide enormous value not only in terms of the benefit they bring to the people and society but also their economic value. The economic value is tangible and can be seen in the increased value of the capacity to work of everyone. This increased value of the capacity to work is then transferred through the production of goods and services to the social product working people produce.

It readily flows from this objective reality that the increased value of the fruits of labour of working people produced in the enterprises of the economy due to socialized health care, education and other social programs should be plowed directly back into the productive forces where they originate namely the productive

centres of health care, education and elsewhere. Realizing the economic value of health care and

education should not come via an indeterminate route of general taxation, most commonly income and sales taxes imposed on working people, but directly from the gross income of enterprises that benefit from the increased value.

Furthermore, many of the products required by the Canadian market could be produced within Canada on the basis of projects supported to carry out research, development, production and distribution.

The realization of the material means of production such as iron ore for steel mills or electricity for all enterprises does not come via general taxation but from the normal interaction of the buying and selling of commodities between enterprises necessary for the production of goods and services. Why do those in power, including pundits and media not acknowledge that how to sustain a pharmaceutical industry within the country on the basis of Canadian natural and human resources and know-how is not rocket science? It is known and can be done with imports only resorted to when justified. The economic value of the capacity to work of the human means of production, which is the most common purchase all enterprises must make to operate, must be taken into account.

The property relations of production in their current antiquated form are dominated by the dictate that the value of the capacity to work of the human means of production is purchased according to its presumed value. But the true economic value of the capacity to work in its enhanced amount arising from social programs such as mass health care and education is denied. The men of property in control and ownership of the economy who need the human means of production to operate their enterprises refuse to realize (pay for) the full value of the capacity to work they buy. They seek to avoid paying the full value of the capacity to work of their employees and thereby pocket that amount as private profit.

This theft from the economy, which generates great social damage on the people, economy and society must change and not wait for the overthrow of the imperialist system. It can be done now with the organized force of the working class.

People's Need for Decision-Making Power

Pay-the-Rich Scams Revealed by Privatization of Health Care

Scandals and outrageous decisions made by governments at different levels which involve the privatization of health care services, including senior's care institutions, and all manner of corrupt pay-the-rich schemes are often reported. Many times they are taken up as matters of corruption and bad social policy and proof is given about how people are made disposable while the quest for profits is put at the centre of the considerations of the providers. While it is important to raise our voices to protest the destruction of social programs and give evidence of their damaging consequences, what these pay-the-rich schemes reveal is the people's lack of decision-making power.

There are no mechanisms in society to permit the people to set the direction of social policy or how it is carried out. To say that the people have the option to vote to replace one cartel party with another, both of which engage in the same practices, will not do. The situation calls on working people to further develop new forms where they discuss the issues of concern to society and discuss a new direction, while selecting for election those who are their peers and speak in their own name to represent the claims the working class and people are entitled to make on society.

A crucial discussion is how to replace the fundamental premise of the electoral law which has as its aim to form party governments. This makes the fight of these parties for power so as to control

decision-making and serve private interests their end-all and be-all. When they form a government, they become as corrupt as or more corrupt than their predecessor.

The *Hamilton Spectator* on March 2 reported that Hamilton Health Services (HHS) signed six-month contracts with two private U.S. companies to supply perfusionists, the medical professionals who operate heart-lung machines. The Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), which represents perfusionists at HHS, says the agency workers are paid U.S.\$200 an hour, more than four times the staff wage of CAD\$48 to \$58 and that the companies are paid an additional amount on top of that. The HHS said that they are using three to four agency perfusionists a week and they are guaranteed full-time work.

HHS originally had 17 perfusionists before dropping to 12 in 2022 and down to four full-time and four part-time in 2023. In addition to agency staff, HHS also hires one to three visiting locums, usually retired or from out-of-town hospitals who come to work in Hamilton on their holidays. Last year locums were making about CAD\$121 an hour plus travel and hotel expenses and the union now says that locums who regularly worked for HHS have been hired by private agencies, one of which is Perfusion Life, a U.S. perfusion staffing agency.

A locum is a medical professional who substitutes for a practice's regular staff member for a period of time. Also, when hospitals or clinics experience higher traffic than their current staff can manage, facility administrators might request additional support from locums.



Not a word about the private agencies which get paid a premium to provide such medical professionals at public expense while health clinics and facilities deteriorate exponentially. Not a word about what kind of life the young people live who are attracted to work for the private rather than the public sector because of the higher remuneration. And why not but there are consequences. All these young people are forced into a fend-for-yourself dog-eat-dog world without union protection or the social solidarity which comes from being members of an organized force which regulates the competition with their peers and eliminates the need to market themselves or pay hiring agencies. Young people end up with total reliance on banks, insurance companies and investments for emergencies and pensions. What appears like a good deal when they are young, can turn into a nightmare when least expected.

HHS claims that the availability of locums to HHS has not changed as a result of the contracts. OPSEU says that one of the major causes of the shortage is that the perfusionists in Hamilton are paid \$10 to \$17 less per hour than perfusionists in Toronto hospitals making it hard to recruit and retain staff. Sara Labelle, chair of the hospital professional division at OPSEU said that HHS has used temporary bonuses to bring its wages up but that is not satisfactory because perfusionists need higher hourly rates that are pensionable and permanent. Natalie Mehra of the Ontario Health Coalition pointed out that HHS staff working side by side with agency staff making four times their rate may choose to leave and join an agency themselves. "They cannibalize the existing staff force which results in a vicious spiral in which hospitals that are short staffed turn to private staffing agencies to deal with the shortage and that creates even worse staffing shortages," said Mehra.

Construction of Battery Component and Assembly Plants for Electric Vehicles Made-in-Canada Plan Ensures Energy Security for United States and Its Military

– Fernand Deschamps –

A matter of serious concern for Canadians and Quebecers is the pay-the-rich schemes governments at the federal and provincial levels are engaged in. They are handing money over hand over fist to narrow private interests in mining and manufacturing, besides those in the health care and other public sectors, transportation, energy and communications. Public monies are handed over to narrow private interests, mostly supranational with U.S. ownership, in the name of a green economy, prosperity, and national security despite evidence that they are done at the behest of the U.S. administration and serve the U.S. war economy of which Canada has been made an appendage.

The pay-the-rich schemes further integrate Canada into the U.S. war economy and machine, against the most fundamental desire of Canadians and Quebecers who want Canada to be a Zone for Peace.

The Trudeau government's 2023 federal budget announced that Canada's role is "to become a clean electricity superpower with a cross-Canada electricity grid that is more sustainable, more secure, and more affordable. It must also provide essential minerals. "From the resource workers that mine critical minerals or provide clean energy to the world, to the engineers designing next generation batteries, to the autoworkers assembling the electric vehicles people want to buy, we can ensure that Canadians produce the goods and resources that Canada and our allies will need for generations to come," the promo for the budget said.[1]

Deputy Minister of Finance in Private-Public Revolving Door

Interestingly, the 2023 federal budget presented by Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland at the end of March had been prepared by a team that included Michael Sabia, appointed Deputy Minister of Finance in the Trudeau government in December 2020. According to *Le Devoir*, "He had his hands in the creation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), was in turn Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet at the Privy Council Office, number two at Canadian National, head of Bell Canada and President of the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec" and until December 13, 2020, held "the position of Chairman of the Board of the Infrastructure Bank of Canada." "Since February 2020, Michael Sabia has also been Director of the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the University of Toronto." The Munk School is a think tank co-founded by Janice Gross Stein, who in 2022 co-chaired Canada's Indo-Pacific Advisory Committee, which aims, among other things, to target China and engage in military exercises to provoke China.[2]

Michael Sabia was appointed CEO of Hydro-Québec on August 1, 2023 by Francois Legault's government to succeed Sophie Brochu, who left her post on April 11, 2023. In a radio interview on October 12, 2022 she openly said that she doesn't want Hydro-Quebec to become the "Dollarama" of electricity for huge private interests whose eyes are riveted on Quebec because Hydro-Québec can also generate what qualifies as "sustainable green energy." She said: "What we should not be doing is attracting an undue number of industrial kilowatt-hours wanting to pay cheap rates, and after that to be saying to ourselves: We'll have to build dams to power them because we lack the energy."

One of the mandates entrusted to Michael Sabia is to find "clean" electricity to power all the future plants being set up in Quebec for the production of battery components (anodes and cathodes) and their assembly into a final product that will have both civilian and military applications.

Proof of the stranglehold of private interests on governments is illustrated in concrete terms by the most important element of the federal budget: \$80 billion in subsidies to large corporations and their private companies to invest as they see fit in "low-carbon electricity, manufacturing and other elements of a clean economy." Private companies will be able to access federal public funds – which account for up to 40 per cent of federal government spending – as they see fit. The budget states that "the approach is not intended to substitute government for the private sector, nor to supplant market-based decision-making." In short, the people pay, but "the market" decides. Hardly a week goes by without government officials announcing, in one form or another, subsidies to private enterprises.

Announcements of Component and Battery Assembly Plant Construction in Ontario and Quebec

The announcements in 2022 and 2023 that the Stellantis Group and LG will build battery manufacturing plants in Windsor, and Volkswagen in St. Thomas, Ontario, were accompanied by billions of dollars of pay-the-rich schemes to build the plants and produce the batteries.

The Windsor Stellantis/LG facility, for example, is expected to manufacture 400,000 batteries a year, according to a *Toronto Star* report. This supranational conglomerate, should it be paid the lowest amount of subsidy per battery produced (\$3,600), will be paid approximately \$1.44 billion in public funds per year.

Volkswagen has said its plant in St. Thomas will produce 1 million batteries annually when fully operational by 2027. Volkswagen would be paid a total \$3.6 billion per year in public funds if paid subsidies at the lowest end of the range, and \$6 billion at the highest. The federal government has publicly committed to around \$13.2 billion in payments to Volkswagen over 10 years.

According to Pierre Fitzgibbon, Quebec Minister of the Economy, Innovation and Energy, this is "the price to pay" for complying with the conditions imposed by the U.S. *Inflation Reduction Act* (IRA), adopted by the Biden administration in 2022. The IRA provides a legal framework for the many pay-the-rich schemes to companies that manufacture everything the U.S. considers to be part of the so-called "green industry." Supranational companies across North America and Europe are now demanding such schemes wherever they set up shop.

From March to September of this year, U.S. car manufacturers GM and Ford, flanked by south Korean (POSCO Chemical, ECOPRO BM, SK and Volta Energy Solutions) and Swedish (Northvolt) battery component manufacturers, came to Quebec to announce the construction of plants at Bécancour, Granby and McMasterville to manufacture battery anode and cathode components and assemble these components into batteries for both electric vehicles and, eventually, other civil applications including energy storage. All have been offered generous loans and subsidies by the federal and Quebec governments to build the plants and produce the batteries.

At the August 17, 2023 press conference announcing Ford's arrival in Bécancour, Premier Legault declared among other things. "My objective in politics is to create better-paid jobs. What I want is for our young people to have challenges here and not have to go into exile to have exciting, well-paid jobs." The government and its partners are working to create a school for energy transition trades. The parties are aiming to have its doors open in September 2024. They will offer education at the secondary (DEP), college (technical) and university levels. The eight school boards in the Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec regions are involved, as are the four regional CEGEPs and the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières.

The union Unifor presently represents 39,000 workers at Ford, GM and Stellantis assembly plants and equipment manufacturers such as engines, transmissions and wheels in Ontario. It issued a statement last August in which Unifor National President Laura Payne declared: "Ford's investment announcement in Bécancour is an important step towards the reestablishment of a stronger and

more sustainable automotive industry in Quebec and Canada. Every job along the automotive supply chain has the opportunity to translate significant economic benefit not only to workers and their families, but also to its surrounding region, and our country." To show that it wants a slice of the pie, Unifor announced on October 6, 2023 that it will be setting up an office in Bécancour with a recruitment team. Already 1,000 unionized workers in the Bécancour industrial park are affiliated with Unifor.

Sleight of Hand to Circumvent Environmental Standards

In the spring of 2023, the Quebec government changed the existing regulations concerning the requirements for an environmental assessment through the Office of Public Hearings on the Environment (BAPE). The regulations had required that any project involving industrial chemical production in excess of 50,000 tonnes per year be subject to an environmental assessment in the form of public consultations. The threshold has now been raised to 60,000 tonnes. Many have said that this change was made to accommodate Northvolt, which plans to produce up to 56,000 tonnes of chemicals annually at its future McMasterville plant.

U.S. Imperialists' Interest in Securing Supply Chain for U.S. Army

The monopoly media often claim that lithium-ion batteries are being produced for electric vehicles and energy storage but military applications are rarely mentioned. According to the U.S. think tank American Security Project, "While the federal government is the largest energy consumer in the U.S., the Department of Defense (DoD) accounts for approximately 76 per cent of the government's energy expenditures. Most of the DoD's energy expenditures come from fossil fuels. Petroleum-based fuels power equipment, expeditionary bases, tactical vehicles, aircrafts, naval vessels, and other platforms. [...] The vulnerability of petroleum-based supplies continues to raise both risks and costs for the DoD. However, *the DoD is becoming a substantial investor in new energy sources.* [*our emphasis*]. New investments in alternative fuels and renewable energy can have long-term benefits for energy security by providing an alternative to oil. These investments will also play a vital role in combatting climate change by reducing the DoD's carbon footprint." [3]

The American Security Project quotes retired General David Petraeus, who led the U.S. forces in Afghanistan and was CIA director under President Barack Obama, to hammer home its point: "Energy is the lifeblood of our warfighting capabilities."

U.S. Ambassador to Canada David Cohen reiterated this point in his own way in an address to the Canadian Club of Ottawa on October 31, 2023, focusing on "Canada-U.S. relations and global partners in a changing economy and world." He recalled that Canada and the United States are "linked by their continental defence, and of course by NATO." He emphasized how climate change is a challenge for "global economic and energy security." He stressed the need to "develop new technologies and clean energy sources." He added that "critical minerals" are at the heart of the "energy transition" and that all stages of the supply chain are essential, starting with extraction, processing and manufacturing, where the U.S., Canada and what he calls "like-minded democratic countries" must collaborate. [4] He excludes China from these countries without further explanation, other than to say that Chinese processing and production of critical minerals is such that it threatens U.S. hegemony on the world scale.

To illustrate his point on the need to "deepen our economic integration," Cohen said that Canadian companies are also benefiting from financing and investment opportunities thanks to the IRA and the *Bipartisan Infrastructure Act* of 2021. He cited the example of the Canada-based mineral exploration company Graphite One which received U.S.\$37.5 million from the U.S. Department of Defense under the *Defense Production Act* to support the development of its graphite mine in Alaska. The Graphite One project is proposed as a vertically integrated enterprise to mine, process and manufacture anode materials primarily for the lithium-ion electric vehicle battery market.

Ensuring energy security for the United States and its military is critical, and the role that Canada and Quebec will play in securing a supply chain for critical minerals and batteries as new sources of energy is part of those plans.

Notes

1. Federal Budget 2023, "A Made-In-Canada Plan: Affordable Energy, Good Jobs, and a Growing Clean Economy Chapter 3," Ottawa, 2023
2. "Ottawa recrute Michael Sabia comme sous-ministre," *Le Devoir*, 8 décembre 2020.
3. "Defense Energy," American Security Project.
4. U.S. Ambassador Addresses Canadian Club of Ottawa, CPAC, October 31, 2023.

More Pay-the-Rich Schemes in the Name of Creating a "Sustainable Quebec Economy"

In Quebec, General Motors (GM) and POSCO Chemical announced on March 6, 2022 their intention to build a plant in Bécancour to manufacture battery components for electric vehicles (EVs), thanks to a \$152 million loan from the Quebec government. Of that loan, \$134 million will be forgiven if 200 promised jobs are maintained for a decade. The plant would process cathode-active materials (CAM), including nickel and lithium. These components, which account for around 40 per cent of the total cost of the battery, are found in GM's Ultium platform for its EVs. At present, most battery production takes place in Asia. A few days earlier, the German company BASF announced that it had acquired land in the same Bécancour industrial park to build a plant that would produce up to 100,000 tonnes of cathode-active materials for a refinery of intermediate nickel and cobalt base metals, and recycled all battery metals, including lithium. However, the BASF project has been put on hold, as no customers have been found for its production.

Rumours about the project for a cathode plant, the main input for the lithium-ion batteries that power EVs, circulated since autumn 2022 and the project was finally announced in August 2023. The plant is to be a partnership between Ford and south Korean battery manufacturing companies EcoPro BM and SK. EcoPro BM is the world's leading manufacturer of high-nickel active cathode materials, while SK is a conglomerate specializing in energy, chemicals, telecommunications and semiconductors. They are considered world leaders in the development and manufacture of batteries for EVs. The plant will be built in the Bécancour industrial park, and the site, located north of Highway 30, will face those of GM-POSCO and Nemaska Lithium.

Ford has signed an agreement to source lithium hydroxide, an essential component of battery cathodes, which will be produced at the Nemaska Lithium plant, also to be built in Bécancour. Announcing the construction of the \$1.2 billion plant, Lisa Drake, Ford's Vice President of Electric Vehicles, said: "We're building a new electric truck plant in Tennessee. This will be our fourth F-Series truck plant in the United States. Cathodes from here will be routed to battery cells and, ultimately, to this plant. It couldn't be a more strategic investment."

The federal and Quebec governments will advance more than half of the money needed to build Ford's Bécancour plant. They are providing loans of \$644 million for the construction of the new \$1.2 billion battery materials plant in Bécancour. The "forgivable" portion of Quebec's loan amounts to \$194 million, the equivalent of a subsidy.

Barely a month after the announcement of Ford's cathode plant in Bécancour, a plant in Granby, Quebec for the manufacture of copper foil – an important component of anodes for EV batteries –

was announced by Volta Energy Solutions, a south Korean company. It plans to produce its copper foil "almost entirely from recycled metal, notably from our computer hardware waste. The new plant is scheduled to come on stream in 2026, with a production capacity of 25,000 tonnes per year," explained the government. In its second phase of 63,000 tonnes per year, the equivalent needed for 2.5 million EVs, the Quebec government will lend them \$150 million on a project estimated at \$750 million.

Construction of Northvolt's Mega Plant

On September 28, 2023, Swedish firm Northvolt announced the construction of a battery assembly plant 35 kilometres southeast of Montreal. The plant site covers some 170 hectares – the equivalent of 1,000 professional hockey rinks – and straddles the municipalities of Saint-Basile-le-Grand and McMasterville, in the Montérégie region. It will be Northvolt's first plant outside Europe.

The Swedish company, founded in 2015, will be able to count on an investment of \$1.34 billion from the federal government and \$1.37 billion from the Quebec government. The construction and production of the plant will be 80 per cent financed by the governments of Quebec and Canada.

The remainder of the project's financing will be provided by BlackRock, the Canada Pension Plan and the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System. Goldman Sachs was the lead investor along with Volkswagen and Swedish pension plans when Northvolt was set up in 2015 by two former Tesla executives. With the latest investment in the form of convertible notes, Northvolt has sought over \$9 billion in debt and equity since 2017, the report adds. On top of this, la Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec (CDPQ), the Quebec government agency that manages the Quebec Pension Plan, issued a press release on November 16, in which they announced an investment of "U.S.\$150 million in Northvolt AB [...] in the form of convertible debt in the parent company located in Sweden."

Added to this start-up package are "production incentives," to be made available to Northvolt once it is up and running. These incentives represent another \$4.6 billion -- a third of it to be paid by the Quebec government. In total, the bill for the Quebec government could rise to \$2.9 billion in public funds over the next few years, of which \$900 million will be offered in the form of a repayable loan and an equity stake in Northvolt. Northvolt will in addition receive and \$4.4 billion from the Canadian government. For a \$7 billion project, the governments will eventually subsidize up to \$5.6 billion, or 80 per cent of the initial project cost.

This prompted a reaction from National Bank CEO Laurent Ferreira, who is "not a big fan of subsidies to attract foreign companies to the country." In a speech to the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal on September 21, a week prior to the Northvolt announcement, he told 1,300 members of the business community: "My point is that when we give subsidies to foreign companies, they go directly into the pockets of foreign shareholders who are mainly non-Canadian. I have my doubts about this model, in the longer term, in terms of wealth creation." He added, "In the long term, I don't think it's a good idea to tax Canadian companies more and give subsidies to Stellantis and Volkswagen."

Both levels of government justify the additional assistance as an amount equivalent to the Advanced Manufacturing Credit provided for in the U.S. *Inflation Reduction Act*, to which Northvolt would have been entitled had it chosen to build its plant south of the border. Northvolt's co-founder admitted in an interview that his company was considering locating in New York State, where it could also have benefitted from the "clean electricity" that Quebec already exports to the state. Premier Legault compared Northvolt's multi-billion-dollar investment to the investment required to build the James Bay hydroelectric complex under Premier Robert Bourassa.

The day after Northvolt's announcement, a Quebecker wrote an open letter to François Legault in the newspaper *Le Devoir*, pointing out that the Premier's comparison doesn't hold water, because

we're talking about investing billions of dollars in a private company, not in a state-owned corporation like Hydro-Québec, which defines itself as "responsible for the production, transmission and distribution of electricity in Quebec." The author of the letter reminds the Premier that "your comparison would have made more sense if you had quoted the \$110 million interest-free loan granted in 1987 by the same Bourassa government to General Motors (GM) in Sainte-Thérèse/Boisbriand. In 2002, 15 years later, operations ceased, and it wasn't until April 2017 that the full amount of the loan was repaid interest-free [...]" He concludes his letter with these words: "The amount granted to Northvolt is so outrageous – and the conditions are unknown – that one wonders where you found it [...]" However, we know who will foot the bill."^[1]

Environmental Impact Studies Circumvented

The fact that the Quebec government is a major partner in the plant's construction through payment, along with the federal government, of up to 80 per cent of the construction costs has led many to argue that it is in a conflict of interest since it has a vested interest in seeing the project completed as quickly as possible. Hence, the regulatory changes made by the Quebec Ministry of the Environment and the Fight Against Climate Change (MELCC) last spring to circumvent the need for public hearings on the environmental impact during the first phase of battery cell production at the plant. Already the Legault government authorized the Ministry of Economy and Innovation on November 1, 2023 to pay \$22.6 million to the municipality of St-Basile-le-Grand for the building of a "temporary road" that will provide Northvolt access to the project's construction site.^[2]

This is all taking place before the MELCC has completed its preliminary analysis to determine whether or not the project must undergo an environmental assessment study, like all major industrial projects. Environmentalists and experts have warned that the building of part Northvolt's plant will result in the destruction of wetlands that are home to birds and small mammals designated as vulnerable species. In March 2023, the MELCC blocked the previous owner of the land from building 2,400 housing units there because it would have been "detrimental to the conservation of biodiversity." The owner of the land had proposed to destroy 6.5 hectares of wetlands while Northvolt will destroy 13 of the 21.6 hectares of wetlands on the 170-hectare Northvolt plant site.

Stéphanie Pellerin, Associate Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at the Université de Montréal and a wetlands specialist, consulted the MELCC's analysis of the site. She commented: "What shocks me the most about this issue is that we're giving credence to those who say, 'We're going to create green industries, so we should accept destroying ecologically important natural environments.'"

Notes

1. "Northvolt is not Hydro-Québec," Letter to the Editor, *Le Devoir*, September 29, 2023.

2. Décret 1588-2023, *Gazette officielle du Québec*, November 1, 2023.

(With information from the Government of Canada, Government of Quebec, Northvolt, *Le Devoir*, *La Presse*, *Globe and Mail*.)

Who Said What About the Announcement of Construction of Northvolt Battery Assembly Plant

"Once again, with Northvolt's new facility, the world is choosing Quebec and Quebec workers. When electric vehicle batteries are made in Quebec, it's a win-win-win -- for workers, for

communities, and for the environment. We'll always keep doing our part to make sure global companies and automakers can keep setting up shop in Quebec. Because that's how we continue to build a strong economy with good middle-class jobs and clean air for generations to come." [1] -- *Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada*

"I am very proud to announce the largest private investment in Quebec's recent history: a structuring project by Northvolt with a total value of \$7 billion. Quebec is in the process of setting up all the components needed for its battery manufacturing sector, from mining to recycling. We are not simply going to export our natural resources as we did in the past--we are going to process them here. Our vision is beginning to take shape: Quebec has become a world leader for the green economy." -- *François Legault, Premier of Quebec*

"Today's announcement is more than just a battery cell manufacturing project; it is the culmination of our desire to attract the world's biggest players so that we're not only ready for tomorrow's economy, but we're making Quebec and Canada the green suppliers of choice. Northvolt's decision to pick Quebec to establish their project, amongst more than 70 sites, is a strong vote of confidence in the EV ecosystem we are currently building in Quebec, and all around Canada, and in our skilled workers. It also speaks volumes of our country's competitiveness when it comes to attracting major investments. Our government looks forward to working together with Quebec and Northvolt toward a cleaner, more sustainable and resilient economy." -- *François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry*

"Northvolt is the biggest private project in Quebec's history. It will provide an opportunity to process some of our natural resources here, in Quebec, before exporting them with significant added value. This announcement adds the final piece to a strategic industrial sector that will transform Quebec's economy. We can be proud of producing the world's greenest batteries. This is a great day for our economy and for Quebec as a whole." -- *Pierre Fitzgibbon, Quebec Minister of the Economy, Innovation and Energy*

"We established Northvolt with a clear vision to pioneer a sustainable model for the battery industry. Today, we begin an exciting new chapter for the company by establishing a foundation for North American operations in Canada from which to deliver solutions to accelerate the decarbonization of society." -- *Peter Carlsson, Co-Founder and CEO, Northvolt*

"The demand for battery solutions is growing, but so is the need for sustainable manufacturing and circularity within society. With access to clean energy, raw materials and world-class talent, Canada represents a natural base from which to support North American markets with sustainable, market-leading battery solutions. We are tremendously excited to begin exploring opportunities together with customers, suppliers, and local communities to make this a true success." -- *Paolo Cerruti, Co-Founder, Northvolt, and CEO, Northvolt North America*

"We support the development of a new battery industry cluster in Quebec, and welcome Northvolt to the Quebec manufacturing family. This announcement demonstrates that Quebec's manufacturing sector is an essential ally for the province's economic development, and will play an important role in Quebec's future environmental and energy shift.

That said, the challenges of enabling Quebec's manufacturing sector -- and its 14,000 companies -- to fully play its role in catching up with Ontario's economy are still present, and that's why we're calling on all players to create the right conditions in terms of labor, energy and training to support the growth of all companies." -- *Véronique Proulx, President and CEO, Manufacturiers et Exportateurs du Québec*

"Today's announcement isn't just the largest private investment in the province's history, it's confirmation of the metropolis' and Quebec's position as one of the most important battery development hubs on the planet. This success is the fruit of exceptional mobilization and collective work, and I would like to pay tribute to Minister Champagne and Minister Fitzgibbon. They have

once again demonstrated that their collaboration is a major asset for our economy.

"The arrival of a major new player in this sector of the future is a turning point for the economy of our metropolis and of Quebec. We're consolidating our position as a leader in the battery industry, and the entire ecosystem will benefit as a result. As such, the business community will be vigilant to ensure that all the winning conditions are in place to make this project a success. We must rise to the occasion of this historic economic opportunity." -- *Michel Leblanc, President and CEO, Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal (CCMM).*

Note

1. "Manufacturing the world's cleanest batteries in Quebec," Office of the Prime Minister of Canada, September 28, 2023.

Relations of Friendship Between Canadian and Cuban Peoples Affirmed Warm Welcome for Cuba's New Ambassador to Canada



On March 14, Ottawa-Cuba Connections and the Association d'amitié Outaouais Cuba held a well-attended meeting followed by a social gathering to extend a warm welcome to the new Cuban Ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Rodrigo Malmierca Díaz. Representatives of both organizations made brief presentations to convey the long history of friendship between the Canadian, Quebec and Cuban peoples and summarize the solidarity and friendship work in the region over the years.

The ambassador expressed profound appreciation for the solidarity organizations in the region and in Canada pointing out that he will work closely with them, and how, beyond the political and material support, it would be difficult for Cuba to survive without the human support and the international solidarity of the peoples of the world. He gave the example of the child Elián González and the international fight that he be returned to Cuba and to his immediate family in 1999. Elián is now a member of the Cuban National Assembly and is present in every way for the Revolution. He also expressed his appreciation for the international efforts to reward the Henry Reeve Brigade with the Nobel Peace Prize.

In his exchanges with the people present, Ambassador Malmierca repeated several times how the Cuban people are touched to see people every month picketing the U.S. Embassy and demanding that the criminal blockade against Cuba be lifted and that Cuba be removed from the U.S. list of State sponsors of terrorism. He thanked both solidarity organizations for their fight for truth against the ongoing disinformation about Cuba and the Cuban Revolution.

On the matter of the blockade, he said that no matter how dire the situation may be, no matter the hardships, the Cuban people will never back down. Under the leadership of their Revolutionary government, they will find the ways and means of overcoming all obstacles the U.S. throws their way.



Get Canada Out of NATO!

Military Exercises in the Canadian Arctic

On March 1, the Department of National Defence (DND) announced that Operation (Op) NANOOK-NUNALIVUT, a military exercise conducted annually since 2007, would take place in and around Resolute, Nunavut and Yellowknife, Northwest Territories from March 1 to 17. The exercise involved more than 300 Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members and about 50 military personnel from the U.S., Belgium, Germany and France. It involved long-range patrols, austere logistics and below-ice diving. According to DND, its aim is to strengthen the CAF's presence in the Arctic and help improve the military readiness of partners which "includes the delivery of training, as well as practicing techniques to ensure the CAF remains coordinated with our Allies and partners."



"Op NANOOK-NUNALIVUT is one of four comprehensive annual activities designed to exercise the defence of Canada and to secure our northern regions, all under the name of Op NANOOK. These exercises take place from early Spring to late Summer, demonstrating the CAF's presence and exercising Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic," DND says.

How the presence of foreign forces, especially U.S. military personnel, defends Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic is anyone's guess. DND says that Op NANOOK-NUNALIVUT is "an all-domain defence and security operation designed to foster greater combined and joint interoperability with regional and international partners." The CAF personnel included Regular and Reserve Force personnel from several units in Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick and the Northwest Territories. The approximately 50 foreign military members include "Around 30 members of the

U.S. 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (86th IBCT); With the Dive Task Force: Approximately 5 Belgian Naval Component Clearance Divers; Approximately 5 French Army Combat; and A German Dive Medical Officer as an observer."

Arctic Indigenous Peoples and non-indigenous residents have a long and proud tradition of fighting for a peaceful Arctic region. These include massive opposition to U.S. atomic bomb testing on Alaska's Amchitka Island in the 1960s and 1970s, peace campaigns in northern countries, and a long struggle led by Innu and Inuit peoples against low-level supersonic military flights by the Canadian government and various NATO countries throughout Labrador and northern Quebec in the 1980s and 1990s. From the time Canada first ratified the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949 which, amongst other things, it used to justify the establishment of U.S. military bases in Canada, the Innu nation fought every inch of the way against the appropriation of their traditional lands for U.S. and NATO bases and the damage to their way of life. During the 1980s and 1990s, Canadian federal authorities carried out over 400 arrests of the Innu people who heroically fought against the development of a NATO Training Base in Labrador.



Left: Innu women demonstrate in the mid-1980s against NATO overflights and for self-determination for their homeland which they call Nitassinan.

In 2009 at a conference in Reykjavik, Iceland, NATO declared the Arctic a "strategically important region." The U.S., Canada and NATO make no secret about why they need a military group deployed in the Arctic region. U.S. and some Canadian icebreakers have been deploying to defend what are called the national interests of those members of the alliance who claim their right to the natural wealth of this part of the planet despite what studies show regarding ownership of the sea bed. The Arctic contains about 90 billion barrels of unexplored crude and enormous reserves of natural gas, which could be comparable to those of Russia making up about 30 per cent of global gas reserves. The U.S. is keen on establishing its hegemony over the Arctic to make sure Russia cannot make use of the resources in arctic water and the seabed within its sovereign territorial limits. Experts say that by 2030 Russia will be using many of its Arctic gas deposits to extract about 50 per cent of its natural gas such as the Shtokman deposit in the Barents Sea which experts say contains 4 trillion cubic metres of gas.

Call to Make the Arctic a Zone of Peace

In 1989, in a powerful statement that still resonates today, Mary Simon, then President of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC), wrote eloquently about the need to establish an Arctic Zone of Peace. She pointed out in her article that a vital starting point is to "recognize that vast regions in northern Canada, Alaska, Greenland and eastern Siberia constitute first and foremost the Inuit homeland" and that Inuit people do not want their traditional territories treated as "a strategic military and combat zone between eastern and western alliances." [1]

Of course, today this same Mary Simon is Canada's Governor General which makes her Commander-in-Chief of Canada's Armed Forces. As such, she plays a major role in recognizing the importance of Canada's military at home and abroad and could no longer voice such opinions. Nonetheless, what is written in 1989 resonates today. She noted at that time that the Inuit people, who have lived in the circumpolar regions for thousands of years, are the Arctic's legitimate spokespersons. Because their lands and communities "transcend the boundaries of four countries" (i.e. U.S., Canada, Greenland (Denmark) and Russia), the Inuit are in "a unique position to promote peace, security and arms control objectives among Arctic states," she wrote.

"Any excessive military build-up in the North," she stated, "whether by the Soviet Union [which was still in existence then] or the United States, only serves to divide the Arctic, perpetuate East-West tensions and the arms race, and put our people on opposing sides."



Youth in Iqaluit, Nunavut defend their future and their right to a say in what takes place on their territories in a climate march, June 5, 2019.

From an Inuit viewpoint, an Arctic zone of peace would not allow nuclear weapons or testing of weapons of mass destruction, nor military activities that "disrupt or undermine the communities, territories, rights and security of aboriginal and other northern peoples." In that regard, safeguarding the Arctic environment "must take precedence over military exercises and activities."

It is unfortunate that today, Simon is Commander-in-Chief of the very armed forces Canada is deploying in the arctic to establish U.S. hegemony and conduct NATO military exercises to make Russia an enemy and endanger the cause of world peace. Another aim of the U.S. to seize control of the Canadian Arctic is to make sure the Northwest Passage cannot be used as a sea route by any country seeking to shorten the passage between Europe and Asia by 7,000 kilometers, as compared to the route through the Panama Canal. Nonetheless the position the ICC took in 1989 when Simon was its Chair remains valid today.

As a first step, the ICC proposed that Arctic nations must declare that an Arctic zone of peace should be a central objective for them, possibly brought about in stages. Furthermore, that, from these countries, "there must be an express commitment that their future military and arms control policies will be consistent with the objective of a zone for peace" and that Canadian and Nordic state territory "must not be used by any country for offensive and destabilizing military purposes."

In addition, nuclear weapons and all air- and sea-launched cruise missiles must be banned and the naval uses of the Arctic reviewed, keeping in mind that "the principle of unrestricted 'freedom of navigation' on the high seas is out-dated and open to abuse by military powers."

An important step in reversing the trend of militarization would be to develop an "international legal framework that codifies offences against the peace and security of humankind" and that these standards would include such human rights "as the right to peace, the right to development and right to a safe and healthy environment."

In closing, on behalf of the ICC, Mary Simon urged "all Arctic governments, regardless of their military affiliation or nuclear status, to embrace the idea of an Arctic zone of peace" and that for those whose ancestral home has always been the Arctic the future of the North merits no less!

Note

1. Mary Simon, "Toward an Arctic Zone of Peace: An Inuit Perspective," *Peace Research*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (November 1989). Canadian Mennonite University.

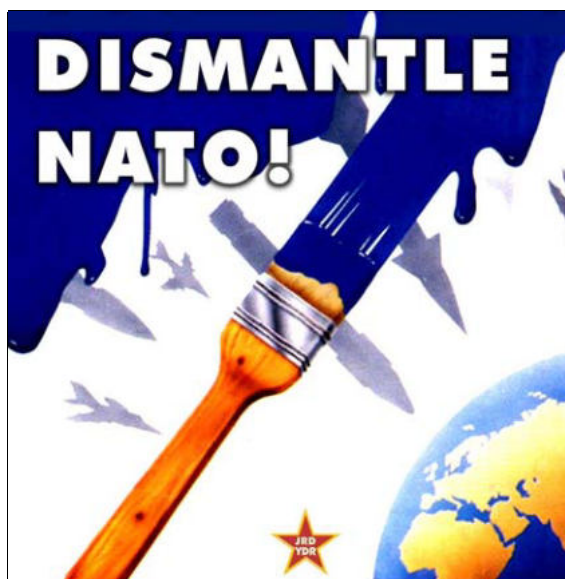
NATO Secretary General's Agenda for Canada

On February 20, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg was interviewed on CTV's *Power Play* where he said that he expects Canada to deliver on its pledge to invest two per cent of GDP on defence. He cited the government of Canada's announcements about increasing funding for NORAD, plans to purchase F-35 fighter jets, and increasing the presence of Canada's armed forces in Latvia as moves in the right direction. He said that NATO expects countries like Canada that are not yet spending on the military at two per cent of GDP to announce a date by which they expect to be.

When questioned at a press conference in BC the same day about Stoltenberg's comments, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that Canada would continue to put forward budgets and proposals at the appropriate time.

NATO Steps Up War Preparations

Sweden became NATO's newest member on March 7, after depositing its instrument of accession with the Government of the United States in Washington, DC. With Sweden's accession, NATO now counts 32 countries among its members, all under U.S. command.



Albania officially re-opened Kuçova airbase in March. NATO funded the base upgrade with around \$50 million. Kuçova is located about 80 kilometres south of Tirana. Acting NATO Spokesperson Dylan White said, "The makeover of Kuçova airbase is a strategic investment and shows that NATO continues to strengthen its presence in the Western Balkans, an area of strategic importance to the Alliance."

According to NATO's Supreme Allied Commander for Europe Christopher Cavoli, NATO's Steadfast Defender 2024 war game, currently taking place until May 31, features some 90,000 troops from all 32 member states. In addition, 1,100 combat vehicles, including 133 tanks and 533 infantry fighting vehicles, as well as over 50 naval vessels and 80 helicopters, drones and fighter jets are taking part. According to Cavoli, the war exercise is unprecedented and it signals "Alliance Unity and Preparedness." The exercise is "strategically located" in several key European countries, including Finland, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden and

the United Kingdom. It is a "multi-domain exercise, incorporating land, air, sea, cyber and space operations, which has been a major focus of doctrinal development at NATO Allied Command Transformation. It involves deploying forces from North America and other parts of the Alliance to Europe. Over several months, complex multi-domain operations will be conducted across thousands of kilometres, thereby enhancing civil-military cooperation and national and collective resilience." In this way, what is being stressed is NATO's concerted efforts to militarize all of life and make war preparations the new normal.

Spokesperson for the government of the Russian Federation Dmitry Peskov said the military drills are a threat and NATO is an "instrument of confrontation" used by the U.S. The secretary of the Security Council of Russia Nikolay Patrushev described Steadfast Defender 2024 as "a scenario of an armed confrontation with Russia being rehearsed." He said the drills "are undoubtedly increasing tensions and destabilizing the situation in the world."

Movement for Peace on Korean Peninsula

Resolutely Oppose Freedom Shield 24 War Exercises

– *Philip Fernandez* –

The U.S.-led war exercises Freedom Shield 24 were conducted in and around the Korean Peninsula, March 4-14, aimed at provoking the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and terrorizing the people of Korea and the region. This is one of the largest U.S.-led joint military exercises under the so-called Combined Forces Command involving the U.S. Forces Korea, the Republic of Korea (ROK) military and the so-called UN Command (UNC) made up of 11 countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, France, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, New Zealand, the Philippines and Thailand. A total of 48 field training drills will take place across the ROK during the year's exercise, more than double the number held last year. A parallel aerial drill called Buddy Squadron involved some 20 fighter jets, including south Korean F-15Ks and U.S. F-16s.



The U.S. military presented this exercise as "defensive" aimed to enhance "a high level of interoperability" that would enable the U.S. military to "respond swiftly and effectively to any threat." Furthermore, the U.S. military points out that Freedom Shield 24 was conducted "in the spirit of the Oct. 1, 1953, ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty and in support of the Armistice Agreement." The issue is that all the threats against the Korean people have come from the U.S. and its allies. It is spurious to claim that these exercises are "defensive" when all along the line the aim has been to achieve regime change in the DPRK, a gross violation of international law.

More to the point, the Armistice Agreement of July 1953, signed between the DPRK and the U.S. to end combat during the Korean War (1950-53), required the U.S. and all its satellite forces, including Canada to quit the Korean Peninsula and take all their military hardware with them, immediately following the signing of a peace treaty to formally end the war. Not only did the U.S. not abide by the terms of the Armistice Agreement, it refused to sign a peace treaty and actively blocked efforts by the Korean people to exercise their right to self-determination including to reunify their divided country.

The imposition of the U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty in October 1953 on the ROK, less than three months after the signing of the Armistice Agreement, has been used ever since to justify the annual U.S.-led war exercises on the Korean Peninsula, to keep Korea divided by force and turn the ROK into a U.S. colony and military forward staging ground for U.S. wars of aggression in Asia and around the world. It was the U.S. that first introduced nuclear weapons into the Korean Peninsula starting with the "Honest John" missile carrying a nuclear warhead in 1958, to impose their military dictate over the ROK and blackmail the entire Korean people.

The DPRK's Ministry of National Defence denounced Freedom Shield 24 on March 5 pointing out that the war games are provocative and aggravate the already tense atmosphere on the Korean Peninsula. This tension stems from the utter refusal of the U.S. to peacefully resolve its difference with the DPRK. The DPRK's Ministry of National Defence pointed out that while these war exercises are being carried out, the DPRK's military has been mobilized for economic construction for the benefit of the people. This fact confirms who is the troublemaker on the Korean Peninsula, the Ministry added. The Ministry added that the DPRK will be paying close attention to Freedom Shield 24 in order to monitor the situation and take any necessary countermeasures.

With the U.S. is facing a deepening political crisis at home and abroad, it is more and more threatening countries that stand up for their independence and dignity. It is vital for all peace and justice-loving people in Canada and around the world to stand with the people of the Korean Peninsula who are resisting the threats and aggression aimed at them by the U.S. It is important that Canadians speak out against these U.S.-led war games on the Korean Peninsula in which Canada is participating. What is needed more than anything else is for the U.S. to stop these acts of aggression on the Korean Peninsula and sign a peace treaty with the DPRK. This will immediately lessen tensions and create the conditions for the development of peace on the Korean Peninsula, the conditions which the Korean people north and south need to advance their nation-building project including work toward the peaceful reunification of their country.

(With files from KCNA, Bulletin of Atomic Scientists.)

South Korean Movement for Peace Calls for End to U.S.-Led War Exercises and a Peace Treaty



Korea Peace Appeal Press conference in Seoul, February 28, 2024

The south Korean movement for peace has stepped up its efforts to oppose U.S.-led war exercises and aggression on the Korean Peninsula. The organizations, gathered under the umbrella of Korea Peace Appeal, held a press conference on February 28 in Seoul, Republic of Korea (ROK) to call for the suspension of the U.S.-led Freedom Shield military exercise (that took place March 4-14), the further suspension of all U.S.-led war exercises on the Korean Peninsula, and a signing of a peace treaty with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to end the Korean War.

At the press conference, Korea Peace Appeal also opposed the U.S.-ROK-Japan military alliance as a threat to peace on the Korean Peninsula. The organization called for the re-establishment of a minimal dialogue between the ROK and DPRK, noting that this has been the longest period of hostilities since Inter-Korean dialogue was established.

Korea Peace Appeal also noted that disputes around borders such as in the West Sea are particularly vulnerable to provocations and hostilities, and therefore it is important to establish minimal lines of communication, noting "a thousand conversations are better than a single war."

They also called for an immediate stop to provocative anti-DPRK balloons that are being floated over the 38th Parallel, funded and supported by the Yoon government in the ROK, that are aimed at encouraging regime change in the DPRK. Korea Peace Appeal points out that these balloon campaigns have been used since the Cold War and serve only to provoke the DPRK and must be ended. The organization adds that people living near the border areas want to live in peace and have consistently opposed these balloon campaigns.

The organization points out that more than anything else the vast majority of people in the south want a government that upholds peace on the Korean Peninsula and that the in the coming period, the more than 70 affiliate members of the organization -- unions, student organization, religious organizations and other civil society groups -- will step up their work for peace on the Korean Peninsula and continue to oppose war exercises on the Korean Peninsula.

(With files from Korea Peace Appeal)

Korea Peace Petition Delivered to UN and U.S.



Korea Peace Appeal announced on its website that more than 206,629 signatures collected during its international Korea Peace Appeal Campaign were delivered to the UN Secretariat, Republic of Korea (ROK) Permanent Mission to the UN and to the U.S. State Department last October. The

petition calls for the ROK, the UN and the U.S. to exert all possible efforts to end the Korean War and for a peace treaty to be signed with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The campaign was launched on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the ending of the Korean War, July 27, 2023. More than 3,000 of the signatures were collected from Canada.

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