

March 14, 2020 - No. 8

**The COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Strict Comprehensive Measures  
Urgently Recommended to Contain the  
Disease and Protect the Population**



- **Oppose Attempts to Render the Population Passive in the Face of Pandemic**
  - **World Health Organization Advice to Public for COVID-19 Containment**
  - **Symptoms of Coronavirus Disease 2019**
    - **Measures in Canada**
- **One-Day Snapshot of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Affirm Indigenous Rights -- Stand with Wet'suwet'en**

- **Governments Cannot Hide from Their Responsibility to Abandon Colonial Relations and Act With Respect for Indigenous Rights**
  - *Barbara Biley* -
- **Letter Revealing BC Solicitor General Authorization of RCMP Deployment Released**
  - *Joint Press Release* -

## **75th Anniversary of Canada-Cuba Diplomatic Relations**

- **First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba  
Addresses the Bilateral Relations**

## **Latvian Exhibit in Ottawa**

- **Canadian War Museum Should Be Condemned for  
Falsifying What Canadians Stand For**

## **Supplement**

### **Important Anniversaries**

- **137th Anniversary of the Death of Karl Marx**
- **149th Anniversary of the Paris Commune**

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## **The COVID-19 Pandemic**

# **Strict Comprehensive Measures Urgently Recommended to Contain the Disease and Protect the Population**

The World Health Organization (WHO) has advised strict comprehensive measures to contain the coronavirus disease 19 (COVID-19) and to protect the population, including quarantine, testing, contact tracing, social distancing, and direct population/community mobilization. On February 20, the WHO published a report which noted:

"Much of the global community is not yet ready, in mindset and materially, to implement the measures that have been employed to contain COVID-19 in China. These are the only measures that are currently proven to interrupt or minimize transmission chains in humans. Fundamental to these measures is extremely proactive surveillance to immediately detect cases, very rapid diagnosis and immediate case isolation, rigorous tracking and quarantine of close contacts, and an exceptionally high degree of population understanding and acceptance of these measures.

"COVID-19 is spreading with astonishing speed; COVID-19 outbreaks in any setting have very serious consequences; and there is now strong evidence that non-pharmaceutical interventions can reduce and even interrupt transmission. Concerningly, global and national preparedness planning is often ambivalent about such interventions. However, to reduce COVID-19 illness and death, near-term readiness planning must embrace the large-scale implementation of high-quality, non-pharmaceutical public health measures. These measures must fully incorporate immediate case detection and isolation, rigorous close contact tracing and monitoring/quarantine, and direct population/community engagement."<sup>[1]</sup>

In his opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 on March 13, the WHO Director-General said: "Our message to countries continues to be: you must take a comprehensive approach. Not testing alone. Not contact tracing alone. Not quarantine alone. Not social distancing alone. Do it all.

"Any country that looks at the experience of other countries with large epidemics and thinks 'that won't happen to us' is making a deadly mistake. It can happen to any country.

"The experience of China, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and others clearly demonstrates that aggressive testing and contact tracing, combined with social distancing measures and community mobilization, can prevent infections and save lives."

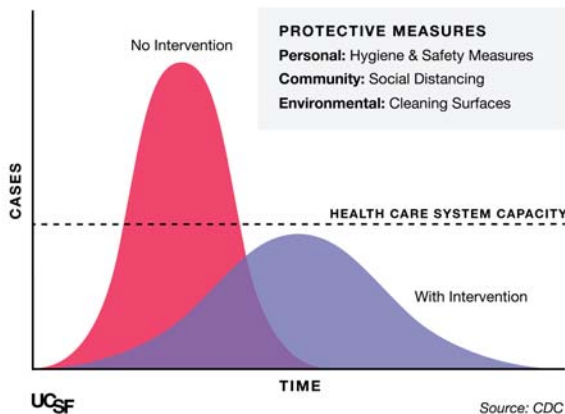
The WHO report also pointed out that: "Achieving China's exceptional coverage with and adherence to these containment measures has only been possible due to the deep commitment of the Chinese people to collective action in the face of this common threat. At a community level this is reflected in the remarkable solidarity of provinces and cities in support of the most vulnerable populations and communities. Despite ongoing outbreaks in their own areas, Governors and Mayors have continued to send thousands of health care workers and tons of vital [Personal Protective Equipment] supplies into Hubei province and Wuhan city."

Another interesting piece of information in the report says: "The implementation of these containment measures has been supported and enabled by the innovative and aggressive use of cutting edge technologies, from shifting to online medical platforms for routine care and schooling, to the use of 5G platforms to support rural response operations."

Based on the measures it has taken, China became the first country to successfully contain COVID-19, the WHO reports. On March 12 only 24 new cases were reported, of which ten were travellers returning to China, infected abroad. Elsewhere in the region, reports indicate that currently containment has also been successful in Singapore and Hong Kong, which both applied strict quarantine measures.

## Flatten the Curve

Collective action can limit the rise of new COVID-19 infections and help hospitals manage increased demand for care.



On March 11, the WHO assessed that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic. A pandemic is when a new disease for which people do not have immunity spreads around the world beyond expectations. One distinction is that the spread of the disease in various regions is no longer attributed to travellers only. It is the first time that a pandemic is caused by a coronavirus. The WHO also says that it is the first pandemic "that can be controlled."

The WHO estimates the current mortality rate to be about 3.4 per cent. In the U.S. it is estimated to be about five per cent. Even if the mortality rate were one per cent, it would still be ten times higher than that of the normal seasonal

influenza.[2] Reports also indicate a marked discrepancy between officially diagnosed cases and actual cases. The time it takes for patients to get tested and other factors, including the extremely low rate of testing in the U.S., result in a gap between the reported number of cases and the real number. One can expect 10 to 100 times the reported number. This means there are already tens of thousands of cases in North America, if not more.[3]

## Strict, Socially Responsible Measures Needed

Reports indicate that several EU countries have brought themselves to implement quarantine measures, including Italy, Greece, Romania, Austria, Denmark and just lately after initially resisting, Germany, as well as at least 19 other countries around the world, including Canada.[4] For their part and to their shame, the U.S. and Britain are among those countries which lag far behind in following the WHO recommendations.[5]

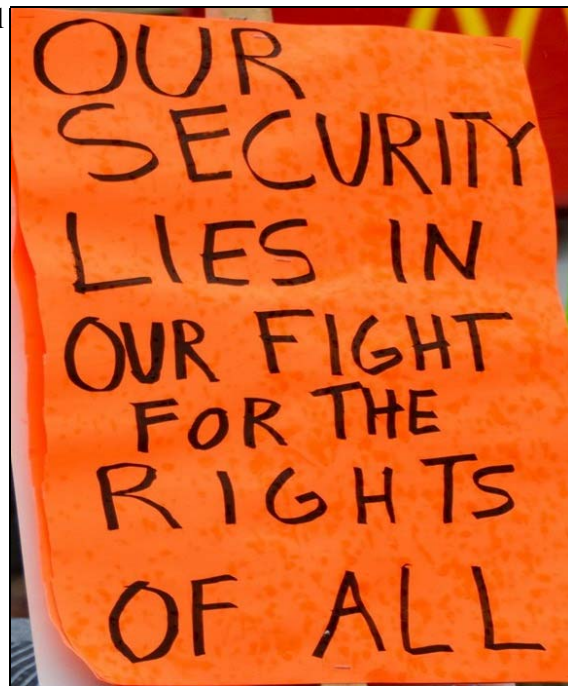
Globalization, including just-in-time delivery of goods, services and even human beings, has brought the world together in an unprecedented socialized way. Even though some countries have yet to see any cases of the disease, we are all in this together as one humanity with a common interest to contain the coronavirus and protect the population. The governments at every level must take full responsibility for implementing the WHO's recommendations responsibly. All those who are working at home must continue to be paid in a normal manner. All those laid off as a result of the shutdown of workplaces must be compensated. Governments have been encouraging privatization, and contracting out and casualization of most work, especially in the service sector, and now they must guarantee that all contract workers and the self-employed receive remuneration during this special period. The workers who work in the so-called gig economy, including where private interests use software apps to favour their narrow interests and workers are expected to be available on demand to do one gig at a time, must also receive compensation during this special period if they too must stay in quarantine or be subjected to more restrictive conditions of isolation.

The modern reality and condition of a socialized economy and life demand that national governments must fulfill their social responsibility to contain this virus using the public health measures recommended by the WHO, given the lack of medical countermeasures at this time. They must put the full weight of the economy and all public and private institutions behind the successful implementation and protection of the population, making sure all those who need help receive it.

### **Where There Is a Will There's a Way!**

The adage "Where there is a will there's a way" applies under the circumstances. Despite the decrepit state of many health care facilities and dearth of beds and nursing and other personnel due to the vicious anti-social offensive governments have been imposing on our society to favour the rich, as in any crisis, facilities can be commandeered and equipped and qualified personnel can be hired and trained to deal with the matter at hand, taking every precaution required to protect everyone involved. It can be done and must be done!

Working people must unite in action at every level and determine how they can contribute to making quarantine, isolation and the other strict measures required effective and to asserting the claims they are entitled to make on governments at every level. Quarantining is a very important first measure and people can inform themselves of the guidelines they must follow. If they require assistance, they must call the public health care numbers they are provided with and describe their symptoms and follow the instructions. Full testing and treatment must be provided to everyone who needs it. By closing everything down for the two-week incubation period and then assessing whether the virus has been contained on the basis of verifiable results, and pursuing the instructions of the WHO meticulously, Canada can do its part to contain and mitigate this global pandemic.



As for the working people, they can play their role by speaking out to lay the claims on society and the governments in charge that everyone is entitled to make. This includes compensation for



the period they are off work because of closures and measures to protect those public service workers who do essential work in the health care and education sectors and in all aspects of social services, including home care, long-term care and care for the youth, elderly and others in distress. For those engaged in retail work related to the sale of essential items such as food, medicines and necessary hygiene products, in transportation or any other essential service, arrangements must be made to replace those workers who must quarantine themselves for whatever reason, undergo isolation at home or be hospitalized, and to protect those still on the job.

Nobody should be put in a situation of fending for themselves to find a direction and the means to cope as families and individuals during this pandemic. All social organizations -- especially unions, social clubs and associations of all kinds -- should go into action to make sure their members are informed and looked after.

The Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) has called on its organizations across the country to inform themselves of the situation of their members and supporters to make sure everyone is taken care of and is informed, and to organize for the implementation of prescribed protective measures where needed not only in the homes and neighbourhoods but also workplaces and educational institutions.

All individuals and collectives are called upon to unite in action to play their part and act responsibly under all conditions and circumstances to humanize the social and natural environment, and to give meaning and substance to the necessity of activating the human factor/social consciousness and putting human beings in command of their condition. By taking conscious measures to make sure nobody is put in a situation of having to fend for themselves, working Canadians will proudly proclaim that this humanity is able to bring the problems facing humankind under control and that they have played their part.

***All Out to Adopt the Measures Necessary to Contain COVID-19  
and Protect the Population!  
Hold Governments at Every Level Responsible to Implement the  
Recommended Public Health Measures Fully and Responsibly!  
One Humanity, One Struggle!  
All Out to Defend the Rights of All!***

## **Notes**

1. Report of the WHO-China Joint Mission on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). 16-24 February 2020.
2. "COVID-19 Educational Disruption and Response," UNESCO, March 11, 2020
3. "Coronavirus: Why You Must Act Now," Tomas Pueyo, Medium, March 10, 2020.
4. "Die Entdeckung der Langsamkeit," Heike Schmoll, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 10, 2020.
5. According to the WHO quarantine refers to "the restriction of activities or separation of persons who are not ill, but who may have been exposed to an infectious agent or disease, with the objective of monitoring symptoms and early detection of cases." It can be voluntary, which some refer to as self-quarantine, or mandatory, depending on the circumstances. Quarantine is different from isolation, which is "the separation of ill or infected persons from others, so as to prevent the spread of infection or contamination." Isolation means staying indoors and completely avoiding

contact with other people to the greatest extent possible for those who have tested positive for COVID-19, are waiting to be tested or awaiting the results of their test. It is sometimes referred to as self-isolation when individuals act to implement the necessary measures on their own in their home or another place such as a hotel room when traveling.

The National Health Authority of Canada indicates that when quarantine and isolation/self-isolation are undertaken at an individual level, they are considered social distancing approaches, along with such measures as avoiding crowding, school and workplace measures and closures, public/mass gathering cancellations, etc. For further details, [click here](#).

For interim WHO guidelines for quarantining in the context of the containment of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), [click here](#).



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## Oppose Attempts to Render the Population Passive in the Face of Pandemic

A lot of media coverage and official statements in the U.S., as well as from certain quarters in Canada, are focused on bad-mouthing China as a dictatorship which violates human rights. This is intended to divert from the fundamental point that China is defending every life -- the most essential human right. The relentless campaign against China in relation to the outbreak of the virus goes so far as to say that 5G platforms and cell phone systems are used "to spy" on people.

The U.S. magazine *Science* published a series of articles to say that although the way in which China handled the epidemic was laudable, "it was done at the expense of human rights." The article says, "How feasible these kinds of stringent measures are in other countries is debatable." It quotes Lawrence Gostin, a global health law scholar at Georgetown University as saying, "China is unique in that it has a political system that can gain public compliance with extreme measures. But its use of social control and intrusive surveillance are not a good model for other countries." In this way, the need to protect the population is reduced to an anti-communist rendering of what might constitute social control. "The country also has an extraordinary ability to do labour-intensive, large-scale projects quickly," says Jeremy Konyndyk, a senior policy fellow at the Center for Global Development: "No one else in the world really can do what China just did."

Nor should they, says lawyer Alexandra Phelan, a China specialist at Georgetown's Center for Global Health Science and Security. "Whether it works is not the only measure of whether something is a good public health control measure," Phelan says. "There are plenty of things that would work to stop an outbreak that we would consider abhorrent in a just and free society."

All of it illustrates the mindset of opposing the mobilization of the human factor. The aim is to disinform the population at home so that nobody develops their own reference points to decide what their society needs to do to contain the coronavirus.

A starting point is to demand the implementation of the recommendations of the World Health Organization that only all-out quarantine will contain the virus and protect the population and see how that can be applied in a living effective way.



# World Health Organization Advice to Public for COVID-19 Containment

The World Health Organization has issued the following advice to the general public on basic protective measures against the new Coronavirus COVID-19:

## 1) Wash your hands frequently

Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.

Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.

## 2) Maintain social distancing

Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.

Why? When someone coughs or sneezes they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.

## 3) Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth

Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.

## 4) Practice respiratory hygiene

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

Why? Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

## 5) If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early

Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.

Why? National and local authorities will have the most up-to-date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.

## 6) Stay informed and follow advice given by your healthcare provider

Stay informed on the latest developments about COVID-19. Follow advice given by your healthcare provider, your national and local public health authority or your employer on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

Why? National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on whether

COVID-19 is spreading in your area. They are best placed to advise on what people in your area should be doing to protect themselves.

**Protection measures for persons who are in or have recently visited (past 14 days) areas where COVID-19 is spreading**

Follow the guidance outlined above.

Stay at home if you begin to feel unwell, even with mild symptoms such as headache and slight runny nose, until you recover.











Why? Avoiding contact with others and visits to medical facilities will allow these facilities to operate more effectively and help protect you and others from possible COVID-19 and other viruses.

If you develop fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical advice promptly as this may be due to a respiratory infection or other serious condition. Call in advance and tell your provider of any recent travel or contact with travellers.

Why? Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also help to prevent possible spread of COVID-19 and other viruses.

(Source: [www.who.int](http://www.who.int))

## Symptoms of Coronavirus Disease 2019

Symptoms	Coronavirus <small>Symptoms range from mild to severe</small>	Cold <small>Gradual onset of symptoms</small>	Flu <small>Abrupt onset of symptoms</small>
 Fever	Common	Rare	Common
 Fatigue	Sometimes	Sometimes	Common
 Cough	Common* (usually dry)	Mild	Common* (usually dry)
 Sneezing	No	Common	No
 Aches and pains	Sometimes	Common	Common
 Runny or stuffy nose	Rare	Common	Sometimes
 Sore throat	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
 Diarrhea	Rare	No	Sometimes for children
 Headaches	Sometimes	Rare	Common
 Shortness of breath	Sometimes	No	No

Sources: World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



# Measures in Canada



Drive-through COVID-19 test centre in Ottawa, March 12, 2020. (G. Rose)

## Federal Government

At this time, the Public Health Agency of Canada has assessed the public health risk associated with COVID-19 as low for the general population in Canada but says this could change rapidly. There is an increased risk of more severe outcomes for Canadians:

- aged 65 and over
- with compromised immune systems
- with underlying medical conditions

Nationally, as of March 14, there were 252 confirmed cases and one presumptive case, with 11 of the confirmed cases reported as recovered.

Regarding border measures, the federal government says: "Travellers arriving at all major Canadian airports receive information and, if coming from high-risk areas, are screened to determine steps needed to protect their health and that of others. Similar information is available at Canada's land border crossings. All travellers are advised to monitor themselves for symptoms and to contact the local public health authority in their province or territory if they feel sick."

Regarding preventative measures, the federal government has advised avoiding all non-essential travel outside of Canada and all cruise ship travel. It calls on those who have "travelled to Hubei province, China, Iran or Italy in the last 14 days" to "limit your contact with others for 14 days, starting the day you began your journey to Canada. This means self-isolate and stay at home. Contact the public health authority in your province or territory within 24 hours of arriving in Canada for advice." On March 13 the government stepped up its advisory to say that everyone arriving in Canada from another country should self-isolate and monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days. In a March 15 interview with CTV the Prime Minister said stricter border and international travel measures were still being considered.

For more information on the coronavirus and how to limit its spread, the federal government has created this website, [canada.ca/coronavirus](https://canada.ca/coronavirus), with resources that can be downloaded. It has also set up an information line (1-833-784-4397), which is available from 7:00 am to midnight (EDT) seven days a week.

The Government of Canada says it has committed \$1.1 billion in public health measures in response to the coronavirus outbreak. These measures include:

- Repatriation of Canadians: \$7 million,
- Initial support to the World Health Organization: \$2 million,
- Sustained communications and public education: \$50 million,
- Investing in research: \$275 million,
- Support for provinces and territories: \$500 million,
- Personal protective equipment: \$50 million,
- International assistance: \$50 million,
- Employment Insurance Sickness Benefits: \$5 million,
- Work Sharing Program: \$12 million, and
- Additional public health response, including funding for Indigenous Services Canada: \$100 million.

### **Measures to Combat COVID-19 in Education**

One of the features of this novel coronavirus is that it can spread undetected amongst young people, meaning that young people can often be carriers of the virus, whether they are infected or not. Thus how to preventing the spread of coronavirus in the education system is an important matter.

Public Health Canada issued guidelines to schools and daycare facilities for responding to COVID19. Their guidelines for schools indicate:

"Public health measures implemented in schools and daycare settings are intended to provide a safer school environment by encouraging personal protective measures, communication to teachers and parents, and environmental cleaning. Public Health Guidance for Schools (K-12) and Childcare Programs (COVID-19) is available. Given the current epidemiology of the virus, it is unknown what role children play in community transmission of COVID-19, therefore the impact of school mitigation measures on community transmission of COVID-19 is uncertain, though strategies such as more frequent hand washing, respiratory etiquette and separation of ill students from healthy students is always prudent.

"School/daycare measures can vary in scope from very simple measures (e.g. increasing distancing between desks) through to more extensive measures, such as closures. Widespread school closures as a control measure have the potential of coming at a high economic and social cost since school closures would impact the many families that have one or both parents working outside of the home. School closures can reduce virus transmission, but the timing and duration of the closure is critical (before the peak of the epidemic), and later closures could be ineffective and be socially disruptive. Consideration also needs to be given to the likeliness that students will congregate elsewhere in less controlled environments, thus reducing the intended benefits of school closures and potentially shifting the transmission of the virus to other community settings."

Another aspect raised by Health Canada is the importance of the role of public schools as places to disseminate information to the youth and their families quickly and as a source of food for students such as breakfast or lunch programs, which they may otherwise not get at home, and the need to maintain these supports in any event.

They define a number of types of measures to prevent the spread of the virus, which include:

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
School mitigation measures	School remains open and alternative measures are implemented to promote social distancing and decrease density among students and staff.
Class dismissal	School remains open with core staff, but most children stay home (similar to a "snow day").
School closure	School is closed to all children and staff.
Reactive closure or dismissal	School is closed after a substantial incidence of illness is reported among children or staff (or both) in that school.
Proactive closure or dismissal	School is closed before a substantial transmission among children and staff. Is only helpful before the peak of an outbreak in the community.

They provide specific details when considering these measures.[1]

Of note is that school mitigation emphasizes social distancing which in this case means finding ways to reduce the proximity of students to one another. This means changing school schedules to mitigate proximity in public transit getting to school such as staggering school starts, increasing desk distances between students and dividing classes into smaller groups. Thus it requires reduction of class sizes in most cases and keeping students from congregating. It is important to note in this respect that smaller class sizes are in fact related to preventing the spread of infectious diseases in schools and should also be considered a general preventive measure at all times.

Another important matter is the recommendation that school closures must be considered against the general disruption on the lives of families who may then be adversely affected in being unable to work and also that while home students may also then congregate in other areas defeating the purpose of the closure. In terms of interrupting transmission of the virus proactive closures should be more than 2 weeks and should be carried out before a peak in the epidemic.

## **Post-Secondary**

Across Canada, universities and colleges are moving towards online delivery of classes which were previously live, especially in the case where classes are more than 250 students to avoid spreading the virus. A number of institutions are taking a period of days to transition courses online and will re-start following this.

## **K-12 Education**

### **British Columbia**

On March 12, the BC government announced that anyone who chooses to travel outside of Canada will be asked to voluntarily stay away from work or school for 14 days upon their return. They announced that over spring break (March 16-27) the BC government will also work with school districts to develop procedures to be implemented with students and staff when classes resume. They indicate that some post-secondary institutions have classes with more than 250 students, and they are working with them to take measures to address this situation.

BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) President Teri Mooring issued a statement on March 14 which stated: "This is a particularly scary time for those who are health compromised or have loved ones who are. This is a time to show we care. We can find safe ways to do just that. Especially understanding that everyone reacts to stress and anxiety differently.

"Upon returning from Spring Break we will need to be prepared to face some challenges. It's difficult to precisely define them all at this point, due to fast moving events.

"Please know a lot of planning and work is happening now. The BCTF is working with government to ensure the return from the break is as smooth and safe as possible. We will continue to provide information and updates during the next couple of weeks."

## **Alberta**

On March 13, the Alberta government recommended that schools remain open at this time. However it recommended that schools eliminate large gatherings of students such as assemblies and consider cancelling extracurricular activities that involve physical contact. The government of Alberta has also stated "effective March 12, all travellers returning from outside Canada must self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms." Spring break in Alberta is from March 20 to March 27.

On March 14, Alberta Teachers' Association President Jason Schilling issued a statement that approves of the decision to keep schools open, but raising concerns about the lack of funding for cleaning staff, who are necessary now more than ever.

"If schools are going to remain open, then they must be safe and healthy places for everyone in or in transit to them -- I am very concerned that very many schools do not have sufficient funding to hire light-duty custodians to undertake the ongoing daytime cleaning needed to meet the standards that must be in place to protect the health of students, staff, teachers and visitors in our schools," said Schilling. "The government may need to assist school boards to ensure they can hire staff and provide them with the cleaning supplies they need to meet the standards for sanitation set out by the Chief Medical Officer of Health."

The Alberta government announced it will be making changes to the Employment Standards Code to "allow employees who are required to self-isolate or are caring for a loved one with COVID-19 to take 14 days of paid job-protected leave to cover the self-isolation period being recommended by Alberta's chief medical officer of health."

"There will be no requirement to have a medical note for such leave or to have worked for an employer for 90 days to qualify for such leave."

In addition to the measures requested by Alberta Health, different school boards are taking various other measures. In Calgary public schools, parent-teacher interviews were cancelled along with other events open to parents and community members. Public rentals of facilities, such as gyms, have been cancelled, as well as events where student populations from different schools have contact with each other.

## **Saskatchewan**

According to the CBC, "The Saskatoon Public School Division, the province's largest, has taken steps including cancelling all large gatherings, field trips, guest speakers, external presentations and tours."

The division has also cancelled all professional development, large gatherings, meetings for staff and upcoming open houses for unique programs. All cultural activities and events, like pipe ceremonies, feasts and round dances, have also been cancelled. Saskatchewan's spring break is April 10-17.

## **Manitoba**

A letter to school board superintendents from the Minister of Education encouraged schools to "continue to take measures to help prevent the spread of viruses. Best practices for the prevention of viral illness include regular and thorough handwashing with warm water and soap, coughing and sneezing into an arm or tissue, encouraging people to stay home from school or work when they are sick, and ensuring that surfaces and objects are wiped with disinfectant regularly." Manitoba's spring break is March 30 to April 3.

## **Ontario**

On March 12, the Ontario government issued a Ministerial Order to close all publicly funded K-12 schools for two weeks after the spring break which began on March 14. The closure also affects school-based child care programs housed in publicly funded schools, which will also close if the school board so decides. The government cited a recommendation from Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health in making the decision. In an earlier press conference Dr. David Williams, the Chief Medical Officer of Health had recommended that parents travelling with children during spring break should stay away from school upon return. Schools are scheduled to re-open April 5. It is of note that neither school boards nor education unions were part of the decision-making process to close the schools and were thrown into chaos on the Friday before the March break to deal with the many questions and concerns of teachers and support staff as to whether they would be on forced layoff and receive pay. The Minister indicated that this would be left up to school boards to decide and implement.

The closure of schools comes right in the midst of negotiations between the Ontario government and teachers' and education workers' unions. On March 12 prior to the government's announcement, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario suspended rotating strike action that was scheduled to begin on March 23. Both the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) announced that they would be postponing their annual meetings in response to the pandemic. OSSTF President Harvey Bischof issued a statement indicating "OSSTF will welcome any opportunity to work with the Ministry of Education and Ontario's school boards to ensure that our schools are safe places for our students, and for the educators who work with them.

"To that end, we are writing to the Minister of Education, the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, and the Council of Trustees' Associations to offer our cooperation and support in any efforts that will help to combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus."

At the same time that the government announced the closure of schools, it also announced that it had a tentative agreement with OECTA.

## **Quebec**

On March 13 the government of Quebec announced that all daycares, schools, CEGEPS and universities in the province will be closed for at least two weeks starting March 14. Premier Legault said special daycares will be set up for parents of health professionals and other essential service workers to allow them to continue to offer those services. Spring break in Quebec was March 2-9.

## **New Brunswick**

The government of New Brunswick has announced that all public schools will be closed in New



Brunswick for two weeks. The closure will not affect daycares, since they are considered an essential service. The decision was made by a committee of the parties in the legislature, made up of cabinet ministers and the four party leaders.

### **Nova Scotia**

In an interview with the *Chronicle Herald* the president of the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union Paul Wozney said all provincial public schools should remain closed after the March break.

"I think it's imperative at this point," Paul Wozney said of extended school closures to help mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus. It's not a matter of if COVID-19 lands here, it's a matter of when. "We know that limiting social contact is a key factor in mitigating the spread," Wozney said. "We know that schools are a major transmission hub for traditional flu. We have schools in Nova Scotia today that barely have 50 per cent attendance for either staff or students. There is no question that schools are a hot spot for the transmission of communicable disease." "Because we have the highest population of seniors in the country, we cannot afford not to be a leader on COVID-19 prevention," Wozney said. "That's the population that stands to be most dramatically impacted by COVID-19. We also have one of the weakest and least healthy emergency medical systems in the country. Especially in rural Nova Scotia, we have emergency room closures in record numbers.

"This is not about students, it's not about learning, it's about public health," Wozney said. "It's about the safety of the entire province and it's a chance to mitigate or head off a potential disaster. I've already conveyed to Minister [Zach] Churchill that closing schools for any period, that the teachers of Nova Scotia would be partners when the schools reopened to address concerns around learning. Those are fixable things, those are not impossible problems to resolve. It's more possible to fix catching up on learning than it is to fix a death toll that could have been prevented."

### **Newfoundland and Labrador**

Newfoundland students returned from spring break on March 9. Dr. Robert Strang, the province's Chief Medical Officer of Health, said anyone travelling outside of Canada may have come in contact with COVID-19 and should monitor their health and minimize contact with others for 14 days after returning. The province had cancelled all school-organized trips to international destinations scheduled for March break. The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District and Conseil scolaire francophone have suspended all extracurricular activities involving interaction between different school populations until further notice. This includes regional and provincial sports tournaments, heritage fairs, science fairs, drama festivals, or any activity that sees multiple school populations gathered for showcase events or competition.

### **Nunavut**

In Nunavut, schools have been directed on enhanced cleaning protocols, hygiene and disinfecting measures and implementing non-sharing protocols.

### **Northwest Territories**

The government of the Northwest Territories states that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has met with education bodies who are prepared to put their contingency plans in place for school closures should the Chief Public Health Officer direct this action. Northwest Territories spring break is from March 15-28, two full weeks.

## **Yukon**

The Yukon spring break is from March 15-28. The Chief Medical Officer of the Yukon, in responding to concerns from many Yukoners who may have attended the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada conference in Toronto, where a confirmed case of COVID-19 was established, stated, "Yukoners who attended the conference may have been exposed to COVID-19. Symptoms of COVID-19 include a cough, fever or shortness of breath. If you don't have these symptoms, then you can go about your regular day-to-day activities. This includes attending work, classes, events and other activities. However, if you develop any of the symptoms listed above, then please stay home and contact Yukon Communicable Disease Control at 1-867-667-8323 to arrange for testing." The government of the Yukon has also taken the decision to cancel the Arctic Winter Games which were to take place in Whitehorse from March 15-21.

## **Note**

### 1. Measures for Educational Facilities

School mitigation measures are implemented to reduce the unintended consequences of school closures or dismissal. The following strategies can be considered:

- Strict exclusion policies for students exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19,
- Increasing desk distance between students,
- Cancelling or postponing after-school events,
- Restricting access to common areas,
- Staggering the school schedule to limit the numbers of students/children in attendance at one time (e.g. staggered lunch breaks, recesses),
- Reducing mixing students during transport to and from school (separation of children on school buses by 2 metres where possible),
- dividing classes into smaller groups, and
- cancelling classes that bring students together from multiple classrooms.

These measures are intended to serve the purpose of mitigating some of the unintended consequences of school closures (e.g. parents/caregivers who miss work to take care of children can have negative financial implications and students/children who access free school meals could be negatively impacted if those meals are not otherwise available.) Additionally, keeping facilities open will allow teachers to consider delivering lessons and material remotely, maintaining continuity with teaching and learning.

School closure decisions should be made in consultation with local public health authorities and based on a risk assessment. Closure considerations should include:

- The priority goal of minimizing social disruption and child safety
- Epidemiology and transmissibility of the disease
- Contact patterns in the school/childcare program
- Amount of contact between individuals within the environment
- Size of classrooms
- Interaction of students between classes
- The impact of certain programs (e.g., school meal programs) on families who access them.
- Innate protective factors built into schools and childcare settings including:
  - A forum to educate, inform and communicate with students/ children and their families in an efficient and timely manner.
  - A defined structure to support the economic and social elements of the community by allowing parents to continue to work and volunteer.

Reactive school closures are in response to virus activity (i.e. a consequence of disease activity)

impacting the safe functioning of the school due to increased staff absenteeism and co-infection potential among students. Considerations should include:

- The number of ill students/children and staff.
- The impact of school absenteeism and/or staff shortages on schools/childcare operations.

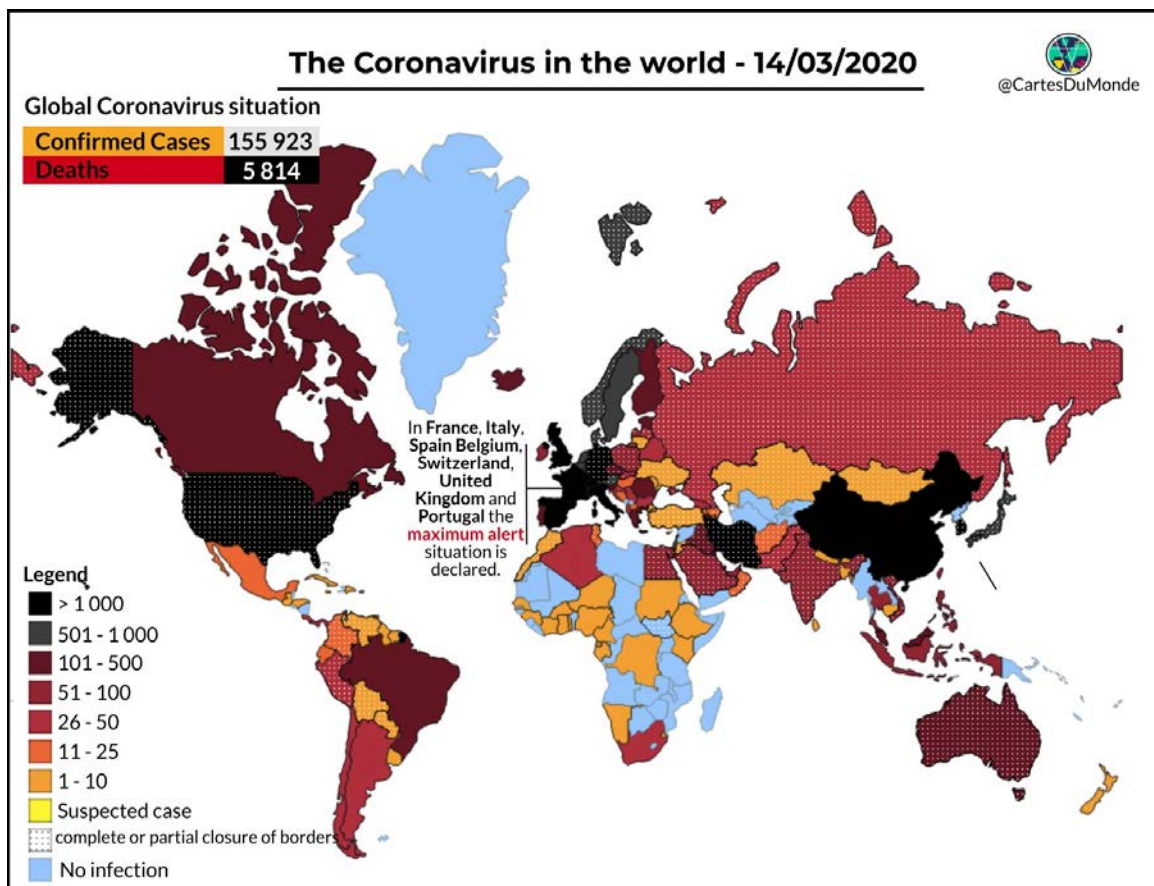
Proactive school closures may be considered to interrupt the transmission amongst children and indirectly protect other age groups who may be vulnerable to COVID-19. The decision about the school closure at local/regional/national level will largely depend on the timing and epidemiological situation. Considerations should include:

- The timing of school/daycare closures in relation to the epidemic peak is an important consideration.
- School closures of less than 2 weeks have been shown to have minimal impact on disruption of virus transmission in communities.
- Holiday schedules should also be considered as opportunistic (i.e. early closures).

Source: [Health Canada](#)

(With files from [canada.ca](#), [Quebec news agencies](#), [CTV](#), [Ontario Ministry of Health](#).)

## One-Day Snapshot of the COVID-19 Pandemic



[Click to enlarge](#)

On Friday, March 13 World Health Organization Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Europe had become the epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic "with more reported cases and deaths than the rest of the world combined, apart from China." He added that more cases are now being reported every day than were reported in China at the height of its epidemic. He also emphasized that all countries with active cases have unaffected areas, meaning that robust surveillance is needed to find, isolate, test and treat every case, to break the chains of transmission. Even if transmission cannot be stopped, he said, it can be slowed down, and you can protect health facilities, old age homes and other vital areas -- but only if you test all suspected cases.

### **Snapshot of the Situation on March 13**

Italy has the highest number of reported active cases anywhere at the present time. On Friday, March 13 it registered by far the most new cases (2,547) and new deaths (250) anywhere. That day, exactly three weeks after Italy identified its first coronavirus cluster in its northern Lombardy region, saw the biggest single day increase in deaths due to the virus. Spain followed Italy with 2,086 new cases, while Germany and France also registered several hundred new cases.

The continuously updating website Worldometers indicates:

"There have so far been 145,634 COVID-19 cases reported worldwide in 138 countries. The report for March 13 includes the 696 affected passengers aboard the Diamond Princess Liner cruise ship harboured in Yokohama, Japan, of whom 364 are active cases, 7 have died and 32 remain in serious or critical condition."

Some other totals reported on March 13 included:

Deaths: 5,436

Recovered: 70,931

Active cases: 67,669 with 6,082 (9 per cent) of these in serious or critical condition

Closed cases: 77,965 (93 percent recovered; 7 per cent have died)

New cases: 11,058 (over the previous day)

The number of people affected to date per one million population in countries with the highest number of reported cases:

**China:** (80,815 cases): 56.1 infected per one million

**Italy:** (17,660 cases): 292.1 infected per one million

**Iran:** (11,364 cases): 135.3 infected per one million

**South Korea:** (7,979 cases): 157.7 infected per one million

### **Numbers for Selected Countries in Different Parts of the World**

Figures from Europe as of March 13:

**Italy:** (17,660 cases, 14,955 active; 1,266 deaths) with 2,547 new cases, 250 new deaths

**Spain:** (5,232 cases, 4,906 active; 133 deaths) with 2,086 new cases and 47 new deaths.

**Germany:** (3,675 cases, 3,621 active; 8 deaths) with 930 new cases, 2 new deaths

**France:** (3,661 cases, 3,570 active; 79 deaths) with 785 new cases, 18 new deaths

**Britain:** (798 cases, 769 active; 11 deaths) with 208 new cases, 1 new death

By comparison, China reported just 11 new cases on March 13, all but four of them travellers who arrived in China from other countries.

In Eurasia:

**Russia:** (45 cases, 37 active; no deaths) with 11 new cases

In West Asia:

**Iran:** (11,364 cases, 7,331 active; 514 deaths) with 1,289 new cases and 85 new deaths

**Qatar:** (350 cases, all active; no deaths) with 58 new cases

**Bahrain:** (201 cases, 166 active; no deaths) with 13 new cases

**Israel:** (126 cases, 122 active; no deaths) with 17 new cases

**Iraq:** (101 cases, 68 active, 9 deaths) with 18 new cases

**Palestine:** (35 cases, all active; no deaths) with 4 new cases

**Jordan:** (1 case, none active; no deaths)

In Southeast and South Asia:

**South Korea:** (7,979 cases, 7,398 active; 71 deaths) with 110 new cases, 5 new deaths

**Vietnam:** (44 cases, 28 active; no deaths) with no new cases

**Indonesia:** (69 cases, 60 active; 4 deaths) with 35 new cases, 3 new deaths

**India:** (82 cases, 70 active; 2 deaths) with 8 new cases, 1 new death

**Pakistan:** (28 cases, 26 active; no deaths) with 7 new cases

In North America:

**USA:** (2,291 cases, 2,200 active; 50 deaths) with 594 new cases, 9 new deaths

**Canada:** (198 total cases, 186 active; 1 death) with 56 new cases

**Mexico:** (12 cases, 8 active; no deaths) with no new cases

In Central America and the Caribbean:

**Panama:** (27 cases, all active; 1 death) with 13 new cases

**Costa Rica:** (23 cases, all active; no deaths) with no new cases

**Jamaica:** (8 cases, all active; no deaths) with 6 new cases

**Dominican Republic:** (5 cases, all active, no deaths) with no new cases

**Cuba:** (4 cases, all active; no deaths) with 1 new case

There are a very small number of cases in other Caribbean islands, most reporting one confirmed case only.

In South America:

**Brazil:** (151 cases, all active; no deaths ) with 74 new cases

**Chile:** (43 cases, all active; no deaths) with 10 new cases

**Argentina:** (31 cases, 29 active; 2 deaths) with no new cases, 1 new death

**Peru:** (29 cases, all active; no deaths) with 6 new cases

**Venezuela:** (2 cases, both new and active; no deaths)

In Africa:

**Egypt:** (80 cases, 51 active; 2 deaths) with no new cases

**South Africa:** (24 cases, all active; no deaths) with 8 new cases



Oceania:

**Australia:** (199 cases, 179 active; 3 deaths) with 43 new cases

**New Zealand:** (5 cases, all active; no deaths) with no new cases

## **Control and Mitigation of COVID-19**

Various measures to contain or mitigate the spread of COVID-19 have been adopted or advised by different countries as well as by different jurisdictions within countries.

Some of the measures adopted include travel bans from certain countries and areas, social distancing, cancelling, banning or encouraging the cancellation of large events and gatherings, closure of schools, childcare centres and other facilities and businesses, having people work from home, implementation of special controls and testing at border crossings and airports, closing of borders (with the number of countries doing this expanding daily), requests or orders for people to go into quarantine or self-isolate for 14 days upon arriving from other countries.

## **Measures Taken and Recommended by Canada**

On March 13, Prime Minister Trudeau announced that Parliament would shut down for five weeks until April 20, two more weeks than MPs had been scheduled not to sit during that period. People have been advised to refrain from all international travel and to voluntarily self-isolate for 14 days upon returning to Canada from outside the country. Flights returning to Canada will be restricted to a small number of airports. Cruise ships with more than 500 people will not be able to dock in Canada until July 1. Cancellation of all large events has been advised, and is occurring. A number of provinces have announced school closings after the March break week. The one-week waiting period to claim Employment Insurance sickness benefits is being waived for those who go into quarantine and are eligible to collect benefits. The government is reportedly "exploring additional measures" to provide some kind of income support for Canadians not eligible for EI sickness benefits.

## **Measures Taken by United States**

U.S. President Donald Trump announced on March 13 that he was declaring the COVID-19 pandemic a national emergency, saying that would "open up" \$50 billion for state and local governments to respond to the outbreak. He further announced March 14 that travel from Europe was being suspended for 30 days, first excluding the UK and Ireland, but later including them. In Texas, the governor has declared a state of disaster, which makes him commander-in-chief with broad powers to rule by decree. Governors of several other states have called in the National Guard. Washington State is reported to be where the virus is spreading the fastest.

## **Countries Subject to U.S. Blockade**

In Iran, where as of March 13 there were more than 11,000 cases and over 500 deaths, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif denounced the U.S. "economic terrorism" against his country in a letter to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres regarding the U.S. unilateral sanctions which are seriously obstructing Iran's access to essential medical equipment, such as masks, respirators, viral testing kits and protective gear for health care workers. The illegal U.S. sanctions against Iran, which have caused financial institutions around the world to be reluctant to have any dealings with Iran or Iranian entities for fear of being penalized by the U.S., are serving their intended criminal purpose of making the Iranian people suffer. Zarif wrote that "it is imperative that the United Nations and its member states join the Iranian people in demanding that the government of the United States abandon its malign and fruitless approach against Iran."<sup>[1]</sup>

China has stepped in, providing assistance by sending teams of experts, test kits and medical equipment to the government of Iran. France, Germany, and Britain have reportedly offered a few million dollars in aid as well.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has been stepping up its economic warfare, threatening anyone that stores Iranian oil or petrochemicals, no matter who or where they are, with retaliatory action, and allegedly paying those who will provide it with photographs of ship-to-ship transfers in international waters by countries acting to get around its unilateral coercive measures against Iran.

Measures in Cuba include epidemiological surveillance organized with active monitoring of travellers and patients with respiratory symptoms. It has 1,322 beds available in 11 hospitals and 824 in 10 quarantine centers. Treatment protocols have been established, including the use of 22 medications manufactured in Cuba that will be used to treat patients, following guidelines established based on China's experience with the virus. The four active cases Cuba currently has all recently arrived from Italy.

Venezuela, which on March 13 reported its first two cases of COVID-19 in people who returned from travels in the U.S. and Europe, has also called for an immediate end to the U.S. economic, commercial and financial blockade against it. In a press conference on March 12, President Nicolás Maduro described a type of naval blockade the U.S. has now mounted, sending ships to follow and threaten commercial vessels leaving Venezuela in an all-out effort to impede its ability to export its oil. He also said U.S. sanctions obstructed Venezuela's ability to obtain kits for testing for the coronavirus and forced it to pay three times the cost of medications it had to import. Because of this situation, he said Venezuela had been provided with test kits by the WHO and had ten thousand treatments of the Cuban-manufactured drug Interferon Alpha 2b at the ready. The drug is not a cure but boosts the body's immune system response so it is better able to fight the disease. China has also provided thousands of test kits and other equipment and has been asked to send a team of experts to assist Venezuela in dealing with a possible outbreak in the country.

At the press conference, President Maduro also announced measures are being put in place to protect the health of the population, emphasizing that, with a spirit of solidarity and cooperation, the crisis would be resolved. "We don't complain, we work to solve problems." he said, pointing out that Venezuela is used to dealing with the brutal effects of the U.S. blockade. Teams will be put into action, he said, to ensure the people get their deliveries of food staples, and workers will not be abandoned to fend for themselves if they are forced to be off the job. He announced that flights from Europe and Colombia are being suspended, big gatherings will not be allowed and that public places like the national museum will be closed temporarily.

## Note

1. For the full text of the letter, [click here](#).

*(With files from CBC, National Post, Guardian, IRNA, Press TV, Granma, Cubadebate.)*



## Affirm Indigenous Rights -- Stand with Wet'suwet'en

# Governments Cannot Hide from Their Responsibility to Abandon Colonial Relations and Act with Respect for Indigenous Rights

- Barbara Biley -



Since the talks between the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and others with Federal and Provincial Ministers concluded on March 1, discussions have been taking place within the Wet'suwet'en nation on the tentative agreement. The agreement does not address the presence of Coastal GasLink on the traditional territory, which does not have the consent of the hereditary chiefs, nor the continued presence and unlawful actions of the RCMP. The RCMP has repeatedly threatened, harassed and intimidated Wet'suwet'en land defenders, legal observers, press and supporters of the land defenders, with two major assaults, in January 2019 and February 6-10, when at least 20 people were arrested.

BC Premier Horgan and other BC government spokespersons have repeatedly disclaimed any responsibility for the actions of the RCMP, implying that since the RCMP is the provincial police force, their presence and activities on Wet'suwet'en territory are somehow "routine" and "normal," have nothing to do with the political stand of the Horgan government that "that pipeline is being built," and that no direction was given to the police by the government.

This claim that there was no political direction to the RCMP was exposed as a blatant lie on March 6 when the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs, the BC Civil Liberties Association and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs made public a letter sent on January 27 from BC Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General Mike Farnworth to RCMP Deputy Commissioner Jennifer Strachan. In their press release the three organizations state "In the letter, Farnworth declared a "provincial emergency" under the Provincial Police Service Agreement and explicitly authorized the "internal redeployment of resources within the Provincial Police Service." Article 9 of the Provincial Police Service Agreement stipulates that, if in the opinion of the Provincial Minister an Emergency in an



area of provincial responsibility exists, then the Provincial Police Service will be redeployed at the written request of the Provincial Minister and the Province will pay the costs of the redeployment."

The hypocrisy of the governments of Canada and British Columbia seems to be boundless. There was much talk of 'respect' during the talks held between February 27 and March 1 that gave rise to the tentative agreement, but actions speak louder than words. What is going on over the period of time during which discussions are taking place within the Wet'suwet'en nation shows the character of the respect shown by representatives of Canada and British Columbia towards the Wet'suwet'en and the talks. Efforts are continuing to discredit the hereditary leaders and to present the issue as one of an internal dispute. Much media coverage has been given to Wet'suwet'en supporters of the Coastal GasLink Pipeline, particularly Teresa Tait-Day who speaks on behalf of the Wet'suwet'en Matrilineal Coalition (WMC). On March 10, at the invitation of one of the parties which presented her as an "Indigenous expert," Tait-Day addressed the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs in Ottawa where she said that "As female Wet'suwet'en members and community leaders, we want to be heard." Tait-Day said, "Many of the male hereditary chiefs are acting out of internalized historical oppression. We face patriarchal domination."

On March 11, the *Martlet*, the student newspaper at the University of Victoria, published an article entitled "Wet'suwet'en Matriarchal Coalition funded by B.C., Coastal GasLink to 'divide and conquer'." The *Martlet* reports "The WMC is not, and was not ever, an independent Indigenous body or governance structure but rather a group founded with the BC government and CGL to sway Wet'suwet'en public opinion in favour of the pipeline, according to documents obtained in a 2017 Freedom of Information request.

In 2015, the WMC was incorporated as a corporation, without consultation with the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs. Documents obtained from the BC government show the WMC was a joint project between CGL, the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, and the three founding members -- Gloria George, Darlene Glaim, and Tait-Day.

In a resignation letter from Glaim, she says the group was "formed with the intent to negotiate a benefit agreement for Clan/House members with [CGL]," and that in 2017 the hereditary chiefs explicitly called the WMC a strategy used by the government and CGL to disunite their people.



The article further reveals that the BC government and Coastal GasLink each donated \$60,000 to WMC to carry out workshops to present the economic benefits of LNG, and that besides promoting the pipeline there is "an agreement between the government and WMC, stating their goal to bring Wet'suwet'en people together to 'discuss decision-making processes for economic development opportunities, specifically natural gas development as that was identified as a gap in the decision-making

process.'" In other words, to undermine the authority of the hereditary chiefs which has been an obstacle to the smooth progress of the CGL pipeline.

The more the treachery of those in power is revealed the more it is clear that the problem is not one of supporting or opposing this or that project, or confusion over who has authority over what, but a matter of bringing into being new arrangements in which Indigenous hereditary rights are enshrined in a modern Constitution, a matter of concern to all Canadians.

(Photos: TML, C. Hunt)



# Letter Revealing BC Solicitor General Authorization of RCMP Deployment Released

- Joint Press Release -



**RCMP vehicle photographed on Wet'suwet'en lands on February 27, 2020, in contravention of agreement that they would halt patrols during government negotiations with Hereditary chiefs.**

Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs, the BC Civil Liberties Association and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs are releasing a letter dated January 27, 2020 from BC Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General Mike Farnworth to RCMP Deputy Commissioner Jennifer Strachan.

In the letter, Farnworth declared a "provincial emergency" under the Provincial Police Service Agreement and explicitly authorized the "internal redeployment of resources within the Provincial Police Service." Article 9 of the Provincial Police Service Agreement stipulates that, if in the opinion of the Provincial Minister an Emergency in an area of provincial responsibility exists, then the Provincial Police Service will be redeployed at the written request of the Provincial Minister and the province will pay the costs of the redeployment.

This explosive revelation of the BC Solicitor General authorizing additional RCMP resources and redeployment comes on the heels of repeated statements by the provincial government that they lacked jurisdiction or authority over RCMP actions in Wet'suwet'en territories. On January 20, Premier John Horgan was reported as saying "Our government has no authority to vary that injunction, nor to direct the RCMP in the fulfillment of its responsibilities." On February 10, Horgan again stated, "Governments do not direct the courts, nor do we direct the RCMP."

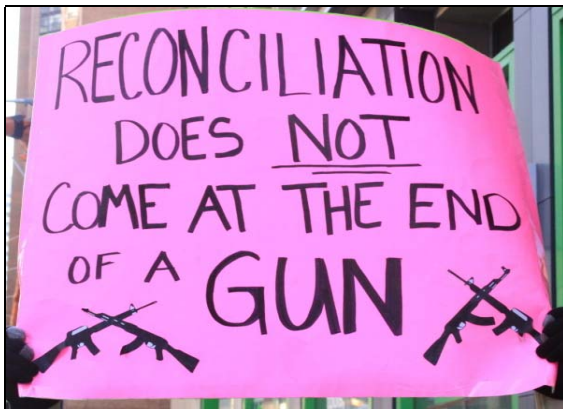
According to Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chief Na'Moks, "The province bears responsibility for the heavy RCMP deployment and for the policing of our people on our own territories. In many of our discussions, the province was passing the buck for RCMP operations but this letter spells it out in black and white. The provincial government can no longer deny responsibility for the Indigenous rights and human rights violations happening on our territories. We have come to the table with respect and truth but the province is not demonstrating respectful or truthful conduct. We have always asserted our laws and presence peacefully, yet the province authorized the extra deployment of RCMP against us. Canada and BC





must answer to this mistruth and absolutely must change its ways."

"It is incredibly troubling and shocking that the provincial government would declare the peaceful assertion of Wet'suwet'en law and jurisdiction as a provincial policing emergency. The Wet'suwet'en people and the people of British Columbia have a right to know on what basis this unprecedented authorization was made. It is inconsistent for the provincial government to, on the one hand, legislate the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as state non-interference in policing operations and, on the other hand, authorize a RCMP deployment aimed at over-policing and criminalizing Indigenous peoples on their own territories," says Harsha Walia, Executive Director of the BC Civil Liberties Association.



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs stated, "This letter by Mike Farnworth reveals the blatant hypocrisy and lies of the provincial NDP government on the Wet'suwet'en crisis. Farnworth sat silently while Premier Horgan unabashedly lied that the Province did not direct RCMP actions. This is an act of government deceit not only against the Wet'suwet'en but of the public at-large. The province's rhetoric about reconciliation rings even hollower. We call for the immediate resignation of Mike Farnworth for dishonourable

conduct and for declaring the Wet'suwet'en people a policing emergency and a threat on their own territories."

*(March 6, 2020. Photos: TLW, Unistoten Camp, C. Hunt)*

## 75th Anniversary of Canada-Cuba Diplomatic Relations

### First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba Addresses Bilateral Relations

More than 200 guests from the diplomatic corps in Ottawa, government officials and representatives of several Canadian companies, Cubans resident in Canada and friendship and solidarity organizations from Ottawa and Montreal attended a reception on March 4 at the Cuban Embassy to welcome the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Marcelino Medina González on his visit to Canada. Also in attendance was David Morrison, Foreign and Defence Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister of Canada, who spoke fondly about the good bilateral relations, the rich historical exchanges and the common interests between Cuba and Canada that bode well for the future of the ties between the two countries.



**First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Marcelino Medina González addresses reception at Cuban Embassy, March 4, 2020.**

His Excellency Marcelino Medina led the Cuban delegation for the Fifth Bilateral Consultations

between Cuba and Canada at Global Affairs Canada on March 5. His visit underscored the importance of the historic 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and Canada.

First Deputy Minister Medina's agenda also included a visit to Quebec City where he met with Sylvie Barcelo, Deputy Minister of International Relations, La Francophonie and the Québec-Cuba working group on March 2.



**First Deputy Minister Medina (fifth from left) is received at Global Affairs Canada, March 5, 2020.**



**First Deputy Minister Medina (centre), Cuban Ambassador to Canada Josefina Vidal (fourth from right), Cuban Consul in Montreal Mara Bilbao (second from right) and others visit Quebec's National Assembly, March 2, 2020.**

## Remarks of First Deputy Foreign Minister at Ottawa Reception

Dear Mr. David Morrison, Foreign and Defence Policy Advisor to the Prime Minister,

Dear guests,

It is an honour to be here with you on this night of celebration of the 75th anniversary of uninterrupted bilateral relations between Canada and Cuba.

We are pleased to have built strong and fruitful exchanges over these years in several sectors, in particular, in the economic-commercial area, culture and tourism.

There is a long-standing tradition of people-to-people contacts between our two countries. Canada has established itself as Cuba's main source market for tourists. For nine consecutive years, more than one million Canadian tourists have come to our country every year.

Canada is one of our main business partners in the world and is one of the largest investors in our country. Official cooperation remains active with projects in priority sectors for the country's economic and social development. Investments by major Canadian companies are found in the sectors of mining, energy, oil and gas, agri-food industry and tourism.

The good state of our bilateral relations is based on mutual respect and sovereign equality. The political dialogue at different levels and the broad exchange of visits that have taken place in the last few years have allowed us to work together and to continue developing our relations for mutual benefit and to keep a constructive understanding, even when we have different points of view on some issues of the international agenda.

Dear friends:

Cubans shall not forget that Canada was among the few countries that didn't break diplomatic relations with Cuba in the 1960s, we won't forget that Canada has been there for us promoting relations with our country, even in difficult circumstances.

We appreciate Canada's strong position regarding the blockade by the United States and the implementation of extraterritorial measures; and against the implementation of Title III of the *Helms-Burton Act*, which has damaged our people so much.

We deeply appreciate the solidarity of the Canadian people towards our country in defence of our sovereignty. Many of the successes that our country has achieved in all these long years, would have not been possible without the support of solidarity organizations from around the globe, including the Canadian solidarity [organizations], a number of whose representatives are here.

In the context of this celebration, we reiterate our willingness to keep on working to further expand, strengthen and diversify the political dialogue and bilateral ties with the Canadian government so that we can capitalize on all the potential both our countries have.

We are certain that the Canadian government and the business community will continue to play a critical role in our country's plans for economic development.

In honour to the historic ties between our peoples and governments, I invite you to celebrate together the 75th anniversary of our relations.

Thank you very much.



## Latvian Exhibit in Ottawa

# Canadian War Museum Should Be Condemned for Falsifying What Canadians Stand For



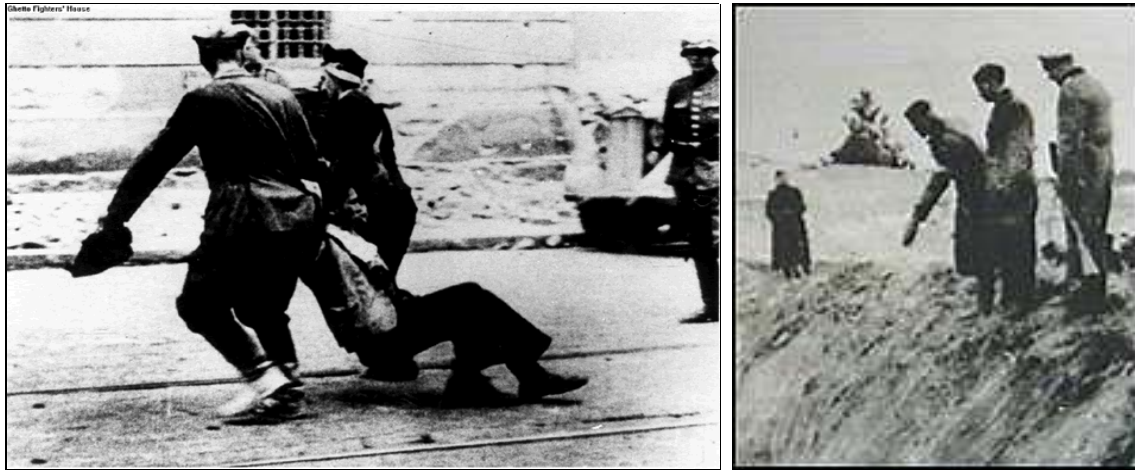
Exhibition at Canadian War Museum (*Embassy of Latvia*)

The Canadian War Museum in Ottawa is featuring a special exhibit titled "The Latvian Tragedy -- 1941." The exhibit coincides with Latvia's use of March 16, to hail Nazi collaborators in that country as freedom fighters and to declare that in 1941 the Soviet Union, which was the first country to seriously prepare to counter the Nazi assault on itself and all of Europe, was the invader, not Hitler's Germany. The exhibit runs from March 3-22, 2020.[1]

The exhibit, presented by the Embassy of Latvia, is a joint venture of Latvia's Museum of the Occupation and the Museum of Jews in Latvia. In the promotional flyer, the Latvian historians who authored the exhibit claim that the main motivation for the exhibit is to declare that the "Republic of Latvia, restored in 1991, condemns all perpetrators of crimes against humanity in the tragic year 1941." In fact, the exhibit is full of gross distortions and falsifications of the history of Latvia and the battles waged by the Soviet Union and the peoples of Eastern Europe against the German fascist aggressors. The dishonesty can be seen in the opportunistic use of the vicious persecution of Latvian Jews. More than 80 per cent of Latvian Jews were brutally murdered during this period but the exhibit purposely forgets to mention that as the German Nazis swept into Latvia in June 1941 they found willing accomplices in the rounding up and murdering of Jews by a Latvian organization called Arajs Kommando. This organization was led by Victor Arajs, a rabid anti-communist and anti-Semite who not only assisted the German fascists in the extermination of Jews, but was also responsible for the most brutal crimes against the Roma and mentally ill people.

A panel in the exhibit depicts the story of Frida Michelson, one of the a few survivors of the infamous Rumbula massacre. The exhibit bemoans the fact that more than 28,000 Jews were killed in the Rumbula Forest near Riga from November 30 to December 8, 1941, but it fails to explain that this mass extermination of Jews from Riga was carried out by members of the Arajs Kommando, in collaboration with the German Nazis. In her testimony as a witness in the trial of Karlis Detlays in New York City in 1979, Mrs. Michelson identified him as the Latvian and Nazi collaborator who ordered her to remove her clothes and valuables before she was driven to the ditch where the mass executions took place. In addition to the massacre at Rumbula Forest, the Arajs Kommando were responsible for mass killings in Jelgava, Daugavpils, Liepaja, and Riga. None of this is brought out in the exhibit, which portrays Nazi collaborators as national heroes

fighting for Latvian freedom against alleged Soviet aggression. Official Canadian liberal ideology is anti-communist and also spreads the misconception that Russia was an aggressor and collaborated with Hitler based on the non-aggression pact it signed with Germany in 1939, while remaining silent about the Anglo-French collaboration at Munich which betrayed the peoples of Europe and permitted the Nazi aggressions, occupations and murders to take place.



**Latvian collaborators with the Nazis detain the Jewish population of Riga, before taking them to be executed and buried *en masse*, 1941.**

In 1943, Arajs Kommando was incorporated into the Latvian Legion, which became known as the Latvian Waffen SS Legion. In July 1943 the Latvian Legion, in its mission "Winterzauber" (Wintercharm) together with seven Latvian police battalions were involved in destroying a swathe of countryside some 40 kilometres wide alongside the Latvian frontier. Several hundred villages were destroyed with tens of thousands of inhabitants killed. This was a crime of the Latvian Legion itself. For his many war crimes Arajs was captured, tried and sentenced to life imprisonment.[2] The exhibit at the Canadian war museum fails to explain that this is the same Latvian Waffen SS Legion which is honoured every year on March 16 with a parade through the streets of Riga. Last year, Latvia's Foreign Minister Artis Pabriks drew international scorn when he proclaimed the Latvian SS Legion to be heroes. Dr. Efraim Zuroff, Head of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Jerusalem, spoke out against the March 16 events in Riga. He said, "In reality the ceremony was in certain respects only the tip of a very dangerous iceberg that is attempting to rewrite the history books and create a false symmetry or equalization of communist and Nazi crimes. While the march was not organized by the government, it is obvious that there is a strong support for its message among Latvian leaders."

Far from condemning these perpetrators of murderous crimes, the Canadian War Museum, in collaboration with the Latvian government, is participating in the falsification of history to cover up the crimes of Nazi collaborators, thus preparing for new crimes under the guise of defending the "independence of Latvia."

Attempts to equate German fascism with the Soviet Union by accusing the Soviet Union of aggression and occupation of Latvia or anywhere else during World War II is to turn truth on its head. It was German fascism's unbridled imperialism with the aim of world domination which posed the greatest threat to the peoples of Eastern Europe and it was the actions taken by the Soviet Union at that time which laid the foundation for defeating the Nazi invaders. Far from being an aggressor, as the exhibit falsely claims, the Soviet Union during the period of the non-aggression pact with Germany on September 3, 1939, moved Red Army troops into Poland, Western Byelorussia and Western Ukraine and established defences along this line. The Soviet Union also signed pacts of mutual assistance with the Baltic states and Soviet army garrisons were established on the territory of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

A pamphlet issued by the Soviet Information Bureau in February 1948 called *Falsifiers of History* explained the importance of establishing the "Eastern front:" "it was not hard to see that the creation of an 'Eastern' front was an important contribution not only to the organization of the security of the USSR but to the common cause of the peace-loving states that were fighting against Hitler's aggression. Nevertheless, the answer of Anglo-Franco-American circles in their overwhelming majority was to remain silent about their appeasement of Hitler in Munich and start a malicious anti-Soviet campaign describing the Soviet action as aggression." [3]

Anyone who visits the exhibition in the war museum will see that the content is just the continuation of this malicious anti-Soviet campaign. In fact, the measures taken by the Soviet Union under the leadership of J.V. Stalin and the enormous sacrifices made by the Soviet Red Army -- at all times facing 85 per cent of the elite German Wehrmacht -- led to victory in liberating all of Eastern Europe and changed the course of world history. By hosting this exhibit and promoting the lies of the Latvian government, the government of Canada and the War Museum are openly promoting Nazism in the name of defending freedom and human rights. They condemn themselves as extremists and hate-mongers despite claims that they oppose all extremes. Theirs is a betrayal of all Canadians, especially Canada's World War II anti-fascist veterans, along with all the Allied Armed Forces and resistance fighters who fought and died in the battle to defeat fascism. Most importantly, this is not about the past but the present. Today, Canada has about 540 Canadian Army members in Latvia as part of a NATO deployment who are made to participate in ceremonies honouring Nazi collaborators, with the claim that they were freedom fighters or that these are official duties. It must not pass!

The War Museum deserves to be condemned for this exhibit, which falsifies what Canadians stand for.

## Notes

1. The War Museum has announced via its website, "Due to the COVID-19 virus, the national museums have made the decision to close the museums across Canada to visitors and all other groups, effective Saturday, March 14 and until further notice. [...]"
2. "Riga, Viktor Arajs, March 16, the Latvian Legion and the Holocaust" by Clemens Heni, *Wissenschaft und Publizistik als Kritik*, March 22, 2010.
3. *Falsifiers of History* -- text of a communique issued by the Soviet Information Bureau, Moscow, February, 1948.

## Supplement

### Important Anniversaries

- **137th Anniversary of the Death of Karl Marx**
- **149th Anniversary of the Paris Commune**