

SOCIALIST **ALTERNATIVE**

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SOCIALISM *for a green future*

ABOUT SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

What We Stand For

The Whole System is Rotten

We oppose capitalism's focus on profit before people and environment. Capitalism does not serve the interests of the vast majority of humanity.

- **Ensure jobs and a living wage for all.**
- **Put planet before profit:** fight climate change with a green jobs program.
- **Take the market out of housing:** for a mass program to build and renovate decent, safe and affordable public housing run by tenants' democracy.
- **Fight for health, education and services:** seize tax havens and drastically increase taxes on the rich and big corporations, to fully fund public services.
- **For fighting, democratic unions** run by and for the members to campaign for better pay and working conditions.
- **Respect and enforce existing Indigenous treaty and resource rights.**
- **Take into public ownership key sections of the economy** including banking, the internet, the energy industry, transportation and privately-owned utilities.

Join Socialist Alternative to help create a future free of exploitation and oppression, where people and the planet flourish. ★



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Tenant's Union in PEI

Corey Snoek



Housing activists take to the streets in PEI

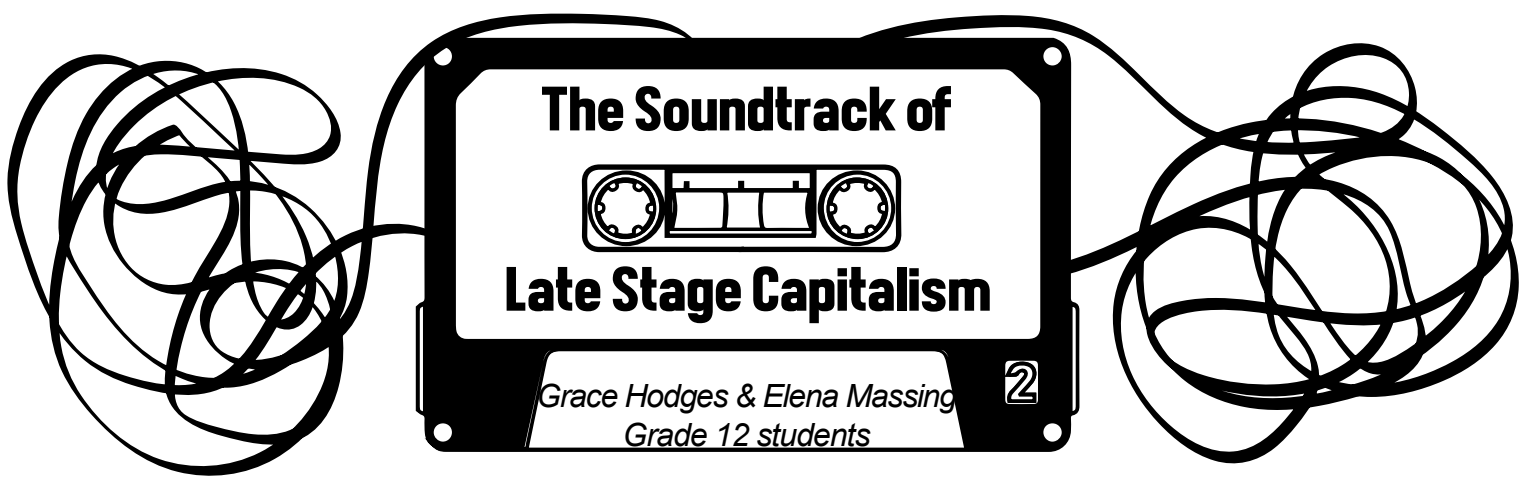
Prince Edward Island's housing crisis formed through a perfect storm of scams and swindles: renovictions that sidestepped rent control, politicians redefining affordability and backing overpriced developments, and unregulated AirBnBs that caused rents to spike. Tenants are constantly fearing evictions.

To break the storm, housing activists in *PEI Fight for Affordable Housing* (in which Socialist Alternative is active) have started to build the island's first tenant union. It's early days, but there have been some wins.

We've contacted over a thousand tenants through campaigns and tabling, and nearly 100 tenants directly through apartment organizing. To date, we've organized 7 buildings to help tenants unite to stop evictions and cut rent increases. Other campaigns include the broad mobilizing of tenants to call for a public rental registry to end illegal rent increases, and to pressure Charlottetown's city council to reverse their support for AirBnB and consider limiting their use to principal residences only.

Building a campaign from scratch can feel like an uphill battle, but there are plenty of resources to help you start. We started by contacting other groups that organize tenants: Parkdale: Organize!, Nova Scotia ACORN, and the Vancouver Tenants Union. Some members also attended Jane McAlevey's *Organizing for Power* program. Socialists can pick different sources to learn from if they keep in mind that ordinary people themselves, not the organizers, have the real power at the end of the day.

COVID-19 has spread Canada's vast housing crisis from major cities to the most remote parts of the country. The recovery from the pandemic will favour the rich in every province. Anyone reading this from a small town take note: you can build a campaign in your community from scratch. Workers need to rebuild their own sense of solidarity now more than ever! ★



“Heaven Knows I’m Miserable Now,” by The Smiths (Grace)

As a teen working three jobs (one of which is in the hyper-exploitative fast-food industry), nothing speaks to me as much as the Smiths when they say, “I was looking for a job and then I found a job / And heaven knows I’m miserable now.” With the closing deadline of graduation and the lurking fear of paying for ever-increasing tuition and skyrocketing living costs, getting a job under the exploitation of capitalism before I am a legal adult is practically a prerequisite to graduation. With the combined social pressures of our friends getting jobs while our parents encourage us to find work to offset the looming burdens of post-secondary student debt, our only option is to throw ourselves into the capitalist machine and do our best to balance the full-time commitments of school, extracurriculars and outside volunteering. We are working ourselves to the bone to keep up with the capitalist rhetoric of go, go, go and speeding towards a terrifying future.

“The It Girl,” by Raye Zaragoza (Lena)

Growing up, I always felt like I needed to be white to be beautiful. Before I had even learned how to read, I had already asked my mother if I could bleach my skin. From the very start of our lives, BIPOC are overwhelmed with unbelievable pressure from the corporate media, our families, and our communities – from all sides, we are told that being a person of colour and being attractive are mutually exclusive. Raye Zaragoza, like countless other young girls, realizes early on that she’s “living in a world that wasn’t made for brown-skinned girls.” As a child wandering through grocery store aisles in my mother’s home country, I saw shelf after shelf of skin-lightening products, powders and creams preying on toxic insecurities. Corporations reinforce the dehumanizing belief (and make billions of dollars at the same time) by telling us that we will never be light enough, worthy enough, or beautiful enough because we exist outside of what the institutions of white supremacist capitalism tell us is desirable.

“The Kids Don’t Wanna Come Home,” by Declan McKenna (Lena)

Grace and I are growing up in a generation where the ruling class does its best to completely desensitize us to the world’s flaws. With each tragedy, we are told to accept ongoing unspeakable violence, ecological destruction, institutionalized oppression, and exploitation as the status-quo. Politicians and corporations feed us (particularly young people) lies, tell us that we will “live long forever” as they continue to make poor decisions that jeopardize our future. And even when we stand up and fight, youth movements pushing for worldwide justice and equality are dismissed as cute or insignificant. According to those in power, youth radicalism is only fueled by our desire for social capital. They ignore our genuine concern for the issues we believe in. This dismissal of youth activism has led to further frustrations, forcing more and more of us to the natural conclusion of revolutionary politics in the face of a state more concerned with profit than our lives.

“Love in the Time of Socialism,” by Yellow Houses (Grace)

Despite the crushing weight of capitalism, young people are finding hope and comfort in collective struggle. All around us, people of all ages are uniting and fighting back against the oppressions of capitalism. Like in the Yellow Houses’ song, where the narrator goes from one revolutionary movement to another, finding solace in the people they’re fighting with as collective struggles pick up in urgency, there are beautiful moments of kinship and mutual understanding of the need to fight for a future without exploitation and oppression – a future without capitalism. More than ever, youth are realizing that community and support are prerequisites to struggle against oppression in all its forms. Activism has become a defining feature of our generation as we fight for a just, equitable and green future. ★

For more information about Socialist Alternative Youth, check us out on Instagram: @socialistalternativeyouth and Facebook: Socialist Alternative Youth

Ontario: Good for Ford, Not for Workers and Youth

Roseanna Perchard and Tim Heffernan



Doug Ford became Ontario's Premier in 2018 with a net worth of \$3 million, derived from ownership of a family business making adhesive labels. Naturally, making pandemic related signs was deemed an essential business and also,

naturally, his business did well in this period. His current net worth is estimated by some at \$50 million. Yet Ford has always portrayed himself as the folksy man of the people, a defender of the little guy.

That image didn't last for long. Early on, he stopped a planned increase in the minimum wage and rolled back protected, paid sick days. He cut funding to public health, libraries, the arts, Indigenous culture, First Nations fishery programs and legal aid. This hit cities that had already set their budgets and resulted in last minute cuts. He froze public sector pay at one percent for three years. Yet he couldn't even figure out how to produce license plates that worked.

Ford started off well in terms of public opinion in the first few months of COVID. The Toronto Star opined, in the early days, that he had "demonstrated a remarkably sure hand throughout this crisis." However, that support quickly dissipated as the pandemic continued through multiple waves. The crisis in long-term care homes was a major factor in Ford's popularity decline. In April 2020, the Canadian military were summoned to help in the worst affected homes. The conditions were so bad that the military publicly reported on their "heartbreaking" and "horrifying" findings. The care home horror was a result of the Ford government slashing inspections; only 9 of 626 facilities were inspected in 2019 compared to a majority previously. Residents of the for-profit homes suffered the greatest number of fatalities. Yet Ford went out of his way to defend the owners of these homes, even passing legislation to make it virtually impossible for citizens to sue the owners for neglect.

Ford's pandemic response has been marked by hesitant and half-hearted measures, accompanied by backlash, and then backtracking. Ford cracked down on outdoor gatherings (which tend to be far safer than the indoor variety) while permitting factories, food-processing plants and warehouses to operate, suggesting that a kid's slide is a greater threat than an Amazon centre. After an outcry from parents who needed somewhere to take their children, Ford backtracked on playgrounds. He then announced that

his government was empowering police to arbitrarily stop anyone who was outside their residence during the lockdown. Within hours of the announcement, several police departments indicated they would not be conducting "random" checks. Again, Ford backtracked on this measure. Ford was also resolute in his opposition to paid sick days, despite consistent support for that measure from the health care community. Then, after public pressure had built up, Ford again backed down and introduced three paid sick days – a paltry number, which was timed to finish on September 25 but has now been extended to December.

The unpopular decisions spoiled Ford's popularity uptick, as well as leaving working-class people bracing themselves more for the latest measure, unsure if it will stick. That latest measure turned out to be the issue of vaccine passports. While other provincial governments and institutions were embracing this, Ford and his government remained steadfast in opposing it – until an about turn at the beginning of September. The reasoning for his original position? Respect for constitutional rights and the fact that it might lead to "a split society." This is ironic since Ford has never before worried about a split society arising from his right-wing austerity policies.

Ford's flip flops, his incompetence, combined with public pressure to reverse his most unpopular decisions, show that he is vulnerable. There's a provincial election coming next year but we don't necessarily have to wait a year before he gets turfed. ★

Québec Health Workers

Bruno Guillette, health worker and Alternative

Three Québec healthcare unions (the CSN, FTQ and FIQ) have accepted the CAQ government's latest contract, which includes a two percent annual raise for three years, with an additional increase in the third year for lower-paid workers. Thus, cleaners are getting a 9.6 percent raise over three years, more than double the raise in the previous contract. Additionally, a negotiated settlement under a pay equity law, passed ten years ago but not applied, grants 10 years of retroactive pay increases with interest, for several positions. A hospital orderly could receive \$7,600!

The health sector's low-paid workers, in the CSN and FTQ, voted 90 percent and 95 percent in favour of the CAQ proposal. This is the biggest pay increase in decades, while it does not compensate for the past decline in real income.

The CAQ's offer does not solve the sector's pre-pandemic problems, exacerbated by COVID. The nurses' union (FIQ) only narrowly voted in favour (54 percent), with big majorities rejecting the contract

Alberta: Drive Kenney Out!

Bill Hopwood and Davis Hay

Jason Kenney is driving Alberta over the cliff. Canada's most right-wing premier, wedded to his ideology, continually inflicts new woes on Albertans. The COVID misery is out of control, with ever-changing rules always announced too late. The latest, long overdue, about face on September 15, is a humiliation for Kenney, as hospitals are facing rationing of care. But still, he doesn't "apologize for the decision to relax public health restrictions in the summer."

In spring 2021 Alberta had the highest rate of cases in Canada. Now, in the fully expected fourth wave, Alberta is back there again, with the health system at collapse. Health workers are desperate and exhausted, and have been warning for weeks of the looming disaster. In July, the government ended almost all COVID restrictions, announcing the "Best Summer Ever."

Until the September round of restrictions, Alberta had no requirement for masks in schools and schools would only be informed if 10 percent of students had COVID. Some school boards had some sanity and required masks indoors, but still COVID is racing through classrooms.

To rub in Kenney's contempt for Albertans, he took most of August off, saying he had to avoid burnout. Yet many health and other workers are far past burnout.

Mirroring the COVID disaster is economic mismanagement. Alberta's economy, jobs and provincial revenue have been hit by the drop in oil prices since 2014. Kenney's answer was to give big business over a billion dollars a year in tax cuts and waste \$1.3 billion on the Keystone pipeline that was never built.

Win Big Pay Rise

Socialiste (ISA in Québec)

in some locals. Nurses at CHUM, Québec's biggest hospital, voted 73 percent against. The main issues of nurses, professionals and technicians were unaddressed: chronic staff shortages that damage work-life balance, compulsory overtime, excessive workloads, and physical and psychological violence.

The 60,000-strong technicians' and professionals' union (APTS) will vote by October. A massive "no" vote from APTS members could encourage workers in the other unions to restart the fight now for better conditions.

Alternative Socialiste members in the health sector have been organizing from the ground up, building solidarity with all healthcare workers. The fight continues to protect working conditions and to defend workers' right to good public services! ★

For more information on Québec and Alternative Socialiste: www.alternativesocialiste.org

The province's debt has ballooned from nothing in 2017 to over \$100 billion. Oil prices have climbed recently but nowhere near enough to bring back the lost jobs or tackle the debt.

Rural municipalities are owed \$245 million in unpaid taxes by oil companies, yet such is Kenney's love of the oil industry he does nothing to help the rural people he claims to care about.

While giving big handouts to corporations, Kenney has attacked vital public services. At the start of COVID he picked a fight with the doctors. Health workers are stressed to the breaking point, and nurses are leaving their jobs and the province. The government's answer was to cut nurses' pay by three percent (since withdrawn: another Kenney flip-flop) and impose compulsory overtime. Cuts in jobs and wages are planned across all vital public services.

Kenney's party is called the United Conservative Party (UCP); this, like many of the party's statements (Jobs Now Program, *Restoring Balance in Alberta's Workplaces Act*, etc.), is the opposite of the truth. Two MLAs were expelled from the caucus, 18 voted against the government in April, and there are constant rumblings of discontent. Mostly this is driven by the far right who want fewer COVID restrictions. Kenney continually appeases this wing of the party. However, the light-minded, even criminal, approach to COVID and jobs is completely out of touch with most Albertans, especially in the cities.

There have been regular rallies organized by unions, health workers and the public defending the health system and calling for better COVID protection. *The Globe and Mail* commented that these "are not part of Alberta's political culture. The daily rallies mark a new level of frustration with Mr. Kenney's government." Ken Boessenkool writes of Kenney's unpopularity, as "a Conservative, I find all this deeply depressing. All I see are bricks being laid for a very strong foundation on which the NDP could rule Alberta for a very long time."

However, it is not enough for the NDP and Alberta Federation of Labour to wait for the 2023 elections. By then Kenney will certainly have inflicted more misery and suffering, and maybe have pulled a rabbit out of the hat to avoid defeat. Now is the time for a bold program of taxing the corporations to fund public services that will provide good jobs, and transition to clean energy, which will further provide jobs. This program is the basis for a campaign to drive Kenney and UCP from office – the sooner the better. ★



Shorter Work Week Needed

Tim Heffernan



Workers marching for 30 hours in 1936

It comes as no surprise that long work hours are not good for your health. In fact, they can be deadly, killing hundreds of thousands of people a year, according to the World Health Organization. So it was welcome news when reports came out regarding the benefits of a shorter work week.

Iceland's experiment, conducted between 2015 and 2019, was declared "an overwhelming success." The trial showed improved quality of working life. There was no reduction in pay with the shorter work week of 35 or 36 hours, and employers saw either an increase or no change in productivity. Since this successful trial, unions won a shorter work week for 90 percent of the workforce.

In the last 50 years, work has taken up a larger portion of our lives: in 2013, 40 percent of working Americans worked more than 40 hours per week. In the 1950s, two adult households worked a combined total of five to six days a week, now it's closer to seven or eight. That's a far cry from what experts in the 1960s predicted when a US senate committee projected the American work week would be down to 14 hours by the year 2000.

The pandemic has been instrumental in enabling many workers to work from home and, one might imagine, would also make a shorter working week possible. Yet evidence shows the opposite: according to Statistics Canada, working hours have been on an "upward trend since the beginning of 2021."

The report from Iceland is welcome: even a reduction of one or two hours would be better than nothing. We can come up with realistic demands, starting with a 4-day week of 30 hours, and add a guaranteed 6 weeks paid holiday (already the norm in many European countries). Capitalism has stolen the hours of leisure that technology had enabled fifty or more years ago. Marx had an answer to this: "If the labourer consumes his disposable time for himself, he robs the capitalist." Let's have some more robbery of that kind! ★

A Starbucks Unionizes

Grace Brodie and Brendan Smith

With the COVID misery, poor working conditions, and low pay, workers at Victoria's Douglas Street Starbucks decided that enough was enough. In August 2020, baristas joined the United Steel Workers, and became one of a handful of unionized Starbucks on the continent. In June 2021, they ratified their first collective agreement and employees are more secure in their jobs, better paid, and more aware of their rights.

Socialist Alternative spoke to one worker, who we will call Alex. He expressed grievances common to many in the fast-food industry: "We care about respect for service workers on a broader social level [...] we're told we're low skill – that we're not valuable." He says that unionization improved their situation.

"We all got raises; we got more breaks; we got a shop steward position, which was honestly something we were all excited for. There's even more protocols and language about what constitutes something that's going to endanger our psychological safety in the workplace. So far the experience has been quite positive...people have come by and shown their support."

"Unionizing is easier than people think it is. It began

with one person reaching out to the union. We got union cards and soon we were legally entitled to have a vote. It wasn't until the voting stage that our boss became aware of what we were doing." The upper management sent out notices discouraging unionization, but ultimately, the vote was nearly unanimous.

Victoria Buzz reported that, before unionization, another worker felt "destroyed mentally and physically" by understaffing and a sense of "hopelessness." These are feelings familiar to many workers, and undoubtedly made worse by the pandemic.

Alex expressed hope that the choice to unionize would encourage workers in other sectors of the service industry to fight for representation: "It would be great to [not only] see labour laws improve conditions tangibly on the ground, but also see a cultural shift."

Unionization is an important step in winning change. Socialist Alternative applauds these workers unionizing and encourages other service workers to organize for dignified working conditions and a better quality standard of living. ★

Life of a Working Mother

Laura Blustein



The “second shift,” a harsh reality for caregivers

A Mother’s Dilemmas

Before writing this article, I had to make a choice. Nap time ends in 30 minutes. Do I clean up the monstrous mess from breakfast? Prepare lunch? Answer work emails? Use the toilet without someone staring at me? Or do my taxes (yes, I know it’s September)? These are the choices I make every day. The list is endless, and I’ve yet to catch up.

This experience is universal. Mothers and caregivers, whether working outside of the home or within, are labourers. We are creating and shaping the next generation. Our labour produces the future workforce and aids the social collective as a whole. Yet, despite this, and the years spent working prior to becoming a mom, maternity insurance is not an independent branch of social insurance. Under the current policy, motherhood is a pathology, the equivalent of “sick leave.” New parents are unable to use the same work weeks to qualify for both maternity leave and EI.

This is a terrifying reality, given the employment precarity that COVID has created, but more importantly, it is the precarity faced by working mothers everywhere. How do I take care of my child and continue to survive? What do I do when maternity payments run out? How can I pay for childcare when my wage barely covers the cost? If I’m forced to return to the workforce, who raises my kids? A stranger? And what are the impacts on family cohesion and childhood development when the primary caregiver is forced to be absent for 8-10 hours a day, under penalty of homelessness, starvation and ultimately death? Suddenly my morning choices are looking a lot easier.

Even worse, I live in Alberta. The government has rejected Ottawa’s \$10/day childcare, arguing that Albertans aren’t interested in a one-size-fits-all program. The real reason is that Kenney is only interested in privatization, corporate profit and neoliberal ideologies, not childcare that meets the needs of working-class Albertans. If he has his way, working mothers will be subjected to a life of the dual demands of capital and domestic duties, and the working class will precariously teeter on the edge of poverty. ★

What Makes Me Angry: This Is As Good As It Gets



Larry Hyink

Recently a friend lamented that climate change means our children and grandchildren will inherit a world far more hostile than the one we grew up in. The conversation followed the heat dome massacring hundreds in BC and during wildfires surrounding our neck of the woods that briefly gave it the coveted WORLD’S WORST AIR QUALITY PRIZE.

Science and my senses confirm this lament is true as long as the world’s economic system is geared to reward maximum individual profit regardless of ecological (and human) degradation and destruction. Still, I pointed out, kids today should savour this time in their lives. For all of us, this is as good as it gets. The world of heat domes, mega-droughts, mega-storms, polar vortexes, mega-fires, sea rise, etc. is a world that today’s children will nostalgically tell their grandchildren about as a vision of the idyllic past. ‘Cause, from here on in, it gets a lot worse.

Even if greenhouse gas emissions stopped today, tipping points and feedback loops already triggered means our future holds lots more mega disasters. Even for the 1%. Elites who profit from eco-destruction are busy buying and building luxury underground bunkers, believing that they can be safe from the coming climate holocaust. They are wrong. As a sheet metal guy who worked on a bunker told me: “These people are depending for survival on technology they don’t understand and can’t fix in a future where there are no spare parts. Just shows again being rich and being smart ain’t the same thing.”

Humanity’s survival requires a global, co-ordinated, socially conscious and compassionate plan minimizing damage to ecosystems and people. We need an economy that serves everyone equally and repairs the damages done by an economic system that defines greed as the driver of all human actions. As a greedy toddler is to a mature adult, so capitalism is to the society we require to survive. “It’s all about me,” as humanity’s life plan, is driving us towards extinction.

Socialists recognize that we arose from and are embedded in the natural world and that destroying it will destroy us. There is still time to save our species, and maybe, in a few generations, restore some of what has been and will be destroyed. I’m not sure there is any more important or compelling duty to ourselves and our posterity. ★





Climate change is real, and its impacts are clear. Increasingly the climate disaster feels apocalyptic. The real issue is not: is there climate change? *What is to be done?* – that is the question.

Some, especially young people, feel despair worrying about the future state of the world. If the governments and corporations that dominate the world continue on their present path, everyone has reasons to despair. However, there are answers and ways to avoid the looming disaster. But we need to recognize what the problem is, and who is to blame.

Capitalism, Not Humanity to Blame

Oil companies knew about climate change decades ago. A 1968 report to the American Petroleum Institute warned that a significant rise in CO₂ would melt icecaps and raise sea levels. Exxon's 1970s research found that increased CO₂ would have serious consequences. Yet for decades after, big oil spent billions of dollars to avoid any actions to reduce CO₂ releases or tackle climate change.

The International Energy Agency (IEA), formerly a pro-oil body, stated in 2021 that there can be "no new investments in oil, gas and coal, from now." Yet investment continues to produce and use more fossil fuels. Since the 2015 Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gases, Canada's big five banks – Royal, TD, Scotia, BMO and CIBC – have provided over \$700 billion to fossil fuel companies as part of the \$5 trillion the world's 60 biggest banks have pumped into escalating climate change.

In the election campaign, the parties talked about climate change, but as with COVID, their actions have been too little and too late. Worse, their actions don't match their inadequate words.

The Liberal government claims it understands climate science and declared a "climate emergency." Yet the Liberals continue to subsidize fossil fuels, including spending over \$16 billion to build a pipeline to increase CO₂ releases for the next 40 years. BC's NDP government also claims to get the science, but it

gives billions of dollars in subsidies to LNG projects, which will exacerbate climate change.

Conservatives are worse. Alberta's Tories spend public money on pro-oil propaganda, while cutting health workers' jobs. The federal Conservative conference refused to agree that "climate change is real," and O'Toole wanted to cut the current climate targets.

Clearly, current politicians and big business cannot be relied on for solutions. Why are they so wedded to fossil fuels, even if they know the science?

Capitalism's purpose is to generate profits for the owners. Each corporation seeks to off-load costs to boost profits, so the costs of pollution, poor health and damage to the environment, now and into the future, will be paid by someone else. Capitalism wants the profits now, so continues to use fossil fuels. Since the Industrial Revolution, capitalism has relied on fossil fuels to drive machinery, provide transport and enhance food production. All to produce profits.

Individuals are urged to take action, and this is important. However, individual actions can't substitute for the failure of public policy. The major decisions about energy use are not made by ordinary people; they are made by businesses and governments: deciding to buy a pipeline, subsidize fossil fuels or lend money to big polluters. If public transit is infrequent or non-existent, it is not an option. Upgrading buildings is vital but expensive up front – to achieve the level of improvements needed, government actions and support are required.

Politics is the Barrier to Change

Individual corporations will resist major change. They have large investments in the production and use of fossil fuels. Present governments are also unwilling to act, fearful of big business's power.

The world's politicians will gather in Glasgow in November to discuss climate. They will not agree to reduce CO₂ fast enough or big enough to avert disaster. Each will try to blame the other. They will protect



ot Climate Change!

ewood



the profits and investments of the big companies in their country that rely on fossil fuels: auto, steel, airlines, tourism, electricity supply, construction, agribusiness, oil, logistics, coal, gas – the list goes on. The military of each nation relies heavily on fossil fuels. The US military, excluding weapons manufacturing, emits as much greenhouse gases as Portugal.

The former Conservative Prime Minister Kim Campbell wrote in 2019 “the oil companies have committed CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY ! Nuremburg worthy!” At a very minimum, the oil and other fossil fuel companies must be taken into public ownership. Public ownership alone is not the answer, as many large oil producers are state-owned and Canada owns a pipeline. Democratic control and planning are necessary to ensure accountability, and to plan the transition to clean energy. But criminals should not be compensated for their crimes. These companies should be expropriated for the good of humanity.

How to Win?

Demonstrations and lobbying can slow down projects and build public awareness. Sometimes they can stop an individual project, such as the Northern Gateway in BC. In these cases, the company simply finds another way to produce and transport the fossil fuels.

Blockades are an effective way to slow a project, gain publicity and build a movement. However, the state – the courts and police – can and usually will use enough force to remove the blockade, as happened in Wet’suwet’en, on the Trans Mountain Pipeline, or even in high profile cases such as Standing Rock.

Tackling climate change is about resisting every fossil fuel project, but more than that, it’s about system change. The capitalist system is fused to fossil fuels.

Mass movements have always been the way to make substantial change – building unions, ending apartheid, winning civil rights and more. The working class is the largest, most powerful force in society, both in numbers and also in the operation of every sector of the economy. It takes workers to grow food, bake bread, run hospitals, make and ship goods and staff the stores. Essential workers are essential – bosses are not.

Workers have the power to hit the capitalists where it hurts – in their profits. A major oil spill in Vancouver harbour would be ecologically and economically devastating: the City of Vancouver estimated the cost at \$1.2 billion. To protect jobs, health and the environment, a general strike of workers and students is entirely justified and would have a huge impact on



the bosses’ profits. This is the power needed to tackle climate change.

A Jobs and Climate Plan Needed

The bosses peddle the lie that jobs and the environment are in conflict. There are no jobs on a devastated planet. But it is capitalism that destroys jobs, not environmentalists. Bosses halved forestry jobs in BC over 30 years. The TMX pipeline will provide 90 full-time jobs when completed – the same money could provide 100,000 job/years in renewable energy.

Crucial to winning mass support, especially of workers, for ending fossil fuels is guaranteeing good, well-paid, secure jobs. That requires the public ownership of the wealth of society with democratic planning. Many, especially young people, do not have good jobs now; instead they work in the gig economy, in McJobs, in dead-end, soul-destroying occupations.

There are more jobs in renewable energy than in carbon. There is plenty of work to re-build the environment, build good urban public transit and efficient long-distance freight and passenger rail, re-fit buildings, and convert to renewable energies of wind, water, solar and geo-thermal. All these jobs – in design, manufacture, installation and maintenance – are skilled and rewarding. Society also needs more carers – teachers, nurses, support workers, etc. – and they need to be well paid and treated with respect.

A socialist society might not have 57 varieties of ketchup or so many assorted gizmos. But products would be made to last and to be repaired, instead of breaking after a few short years and being thrown in the dump. People would have security of their home, their health care, their children’s future and their old age. The work week would be shorter, and work would be much more enjoyable, rewarding and healthy.

That vision of a better world in work and leisure with a healthy planet is the vision of socialism. It is much more attractive than capitalism’s climate hell and poverty wages. That is the program that can win the struggle to stop climate disaster. That is the program of Socialist Alternative. If you agree, join us. ★

We Must Protect Indigenous Land

Allie Pev, Métis Cree



Indigenous resistance on Wet'suwet'en territory

Many dismiss whatever they consider to be an “Indigenous issue.” It’s easy to ignore the violent realities of Indigenous life when the government does too. Treaties and Aboriginal Title could easily be misunderstood when the education system flouts history. The consequences of such negligence and harm can no longer be ignored. We are in a race against the tide – literally. The 2021 International Panel on Climate Change report says, “extreme sea level events that previously occurred once in 100 years could happen every year by the end of this century.” To summarize the report: capitalism has driven us into the current climate crisis we live and breathe. Blaring warnings in the numerous facts, figures and narrow timelines of the report, plus the more horrifying lived experiences of floods, heat waves, fires and hurricanes in the past summer alone aren’t even enough to make the ruling class change course; nothing will ever be dire enough. No reforms or protection agreements (especially with Indigenous peoples) will ever withstand the will of capitalism.

From Canada

Mi’kmaw fishers have the right to fish for a moderate livelihood under the Peace and Friendship Treaties signed between 1725 and 1779 and a 1999 Supreme Court decision, but still have been the target of threats and property damage since launching their treaty fishery. Most recently, in early August, their boats had their lines cut and set adrift overnight and Mi’kmaw lobster harvesters including a 14-year-old were arrested by Department of Fisheries officers.

The BC NDP, both 30 years ago during the Clayoquot protests and today during the Fairy Creek blockades, have made pledges to protect old growth forests and both times have failed miserably to do so as they attempt to balance profits with campaign promises. The arrests at Fairy Creek (over 1000) have surpassed

those at Clayoquot (856), and the violence of the RCMP has certainly intensified. Those present shared videos of the RCMP pepper spraying people at point-blank range, and reported peaceful land defenders being assaulted by RCMP, some having their ribs broken.

To Brazil

One hundred and twenty Indigenous nations have united for the second time this year, in the heart of Brazil’s capital, calling it the *Struggle for Life Camp*. This mobilization is fighting for Indigenous land rights that are being threatened in Congress and by the legal system of Bolsonaro’s reactionary government and the agribusinesses, mining and timber sectors, who are unambiguously governing alongside him. The judiciary is currently attempting to introduce a “time frame” clause stating that the Indigenous right to lands that were not physically occupied in 1988 (when the latest Brazilian Constitution was adopted) will only be recognized if Indigenous groups can prove they were continuously resisting the theft of their land. This completely ignores the violent displacement of Indigenous communities and targeting of Indigenous land defenders by the state.

So as distant as some Indigenous land struggles may seem, they are wholly interconnected through the global capitalist, imperialist, colonial system. The repression of Indigenous land rights anywhere sets a precedent everywhere. So too do the impacts of Indigenous land destruction: parts of the Amazon now emit more carbon than they absorb. As old growth forests are destroyed by fire and logging, the chances of mitigating climate change globally are curtailed.

Around the World

Humanity faces deeply-rooted historical and systemic issues that require solidarity and a fighting socialist program, to be taken up by the working class to carry forward and fight climate change. Risking arrest is but one tactic to fight environmental destruction. What is needed are mass movements that have a comprehensive program to address all aspects of society: Indigenous rights, climate, green unionized jobs, public housing, health care and education. Sites may be momentarily saved from bulldozers, but they will never be safe for long, because capitalism equals exploitation. Under capitalism, there is no protection of Indigenous rights and no climate solution – only true Indigenous self-determination and a socialist transformation of society will save our planet. ★

For more information on Brazil and socialists there: <https://lsr-asi.org>

COVID Vaccine Nationalism = More Misery

Martin LeBrun



Image credit: Global Justice Now

Over 5.56 billion vaccines have been administered globally, but extremely unequally. Wealthy countries have vaccinated over half of their populations, but only 1.9 percent in low-income countries have received at least one dose. Canada, the worst vaccine hoarder, bought enough shots to vaccinate its population 5.2 times over! This vaccine nationalism may boost national confidence after governments' sluggish and deadly COVID responses. However, it is catastrophic for global pandemic control, and risks spreading even more infectious and deadly new variants.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is condemning wealthy nations' vaccine hoarding. Many rich nations are blocking low/middle-income countries from making their own doses, by upholding vaccine patents or holding up key supply exports. Thus, global vaccine distribution is relying on a catastrophic "trickle down" charity model called COVAX.

COVID has killed 4.6 million people worldwide and has widened inequality to a chasm. In India, over 400,000 died this spring and 75 percent of school children, without internet access, missed an entire school year.

The WHO has begged wealthy nations to stop giving booster shots until October, to redistribute vaccine surpluses to immunize 10 percent of every country's population by then. This call largely falls on deaf ears. For instance, Joe Biden has delivered (mainly through COVAX) just 110 million of the 500 million doses he pledged in June. Meanwhile 80 percent of African nations will not meet the 10 percent target by October.

Big Pharma – Big Winners

Between January and June 2021, Pfizer netted US\$11.3 billion (up 62 percent over 2020), and Moderna US\$4 billion (after receiving \$2.5 billion in US taxpayer support). Moderna has \$20 billion in contracts, while Pfizer raised its 2021 sales forecast to \$33.5 billion. Some other multi-billion dollar pharmaceutical companies

(including AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson) have pledged to provide their less popular non-mRNA technology doses, at cost until the pandemic ends.

Public Health Policies Still Needed

Vaccines protect against COVID, with unvaccinated patients the vast majority of hospitalizations and intensive care patients. However, on their own they are not enough. Myopically relying on vaccines, wealthier nations largely ditched public health measures to restore business as usual, only to get hit by a new wave of the delta variant.

Israel provides a cautionary tale. In spring it had the world's highest vaccination rate and, in the summer, ended gathering limits and masking protocols. On September 1 it had the world's highest 7-day rolling average of new daily cases per million people. Mandatory masks and vaccine passports have been reintroduced, but infections are rising, including among the fully vaccinated. Israel still has a million unvaccinated citizens and has largely refused to vaccinate 4.6 million Palestinians living under its occupation. Vaccines must be paired with masking, distancing and ventilation policies.

Vaccinating the wealthiest nations' populations, with endless economy-pumping policy zigzags, is the best capitalism can offer. It is a dead end.

Socialist Alternative demands:

- Abolish vaccine patents and export hoarded doses
- Bring the pharmaceutical giants into public ownership, so their billions can provide vaccines and quality public health care worldwide
- We need a true international approach to fight COVID.

Only socialism can deliver this. ★



South Africa: fighting vaccine profiteering

Kshama Sawant, Socialist Alternative Councillor Speaks



Socialist Alternative's Seattle Councillor Kshama Sawant shares how her office was key in winning the first \$15 minimum wage and the Amazon Tax.

How did you win elections against the Democratic establishment and big money?

The basis of Socialist Alternative's success is bold demands for what workers need, and energetic campaigns that don't shy away from class conflict. In the 2013 election, our number one demand was for a \$15 minimum wage, which no major US city had. After the election victory, we launched the 15 Now grassroots movement and six months later won \$15.

The elections in 2015 and 2019 were won because our socialist council office had delivered real improvements for working people. In 2018 we campaigned to Tax Amazon and other big corporations that pay no corporate taxes in Washington state. The city passed an Amazon Tax, but they repealed it weeks later. So, in 2019 we built an even stronger movement and won it in 2020 – four times larger than the repealed tax.

Energetic campaigning is key to success. Workers and young people enthusiastically respond to our ideas. We have hundreds of canvassers going door to door, phoning, and tabling on the streets. We base our campaigns on organizing and talking with working-class voters. We raise money based on our socialist politics, while refusing all corporate money.

I promised to live on a worker's wage. Seattle councillors get \$120,000 a year. I live on \$40,000 and donate the rest, after tax, to workers' campaigns and struggles. This is a real strength in our elections.

What are some victories the movements have won in Seattle and the methods for success?

To win \$15 we launched 11 neighbourhood action groups and held multiple conferences, marches, rallies and mass petitioning. After Seattle's win, it spread everywhere including in Canada. It is an honour to have helped make a difference in many workers' lives.

The Amazon Tax is another huge win, now spreading to other cities. It will raise \$2 billion over ten years to build affordable social housing.

We have won renters' rights, such as banning school-year evictions of children, families, and educators; limiting the Move-In-Fees landlords can charge; banning rent increases in substandard rental units; and banning winter evictions. There is far more to do, as Seattle's rents are exploding without rent control.

We have made gains against police brutality and racism, and for Indigenous people's rights.

Every time, we start with building our movement's strength. As every good union organizer knows, you need to build workers' power and only then negotiate.

We take bold slogans to people. Every week Socialist Alternative is out talking with people. I'm only one of nine councillors; the rest are Democrats. Often, we start with little or no support on council. But through movements, petitions, town halls and democratic assemblies we build support and pressure to win again and again. We work with unions, community groups, and rental, Indigenous and environmental activists. Trying to gain reforms through back-door deals is a failed strategy.

Explain the recall effort against you?

Our socialist office has defeated big business on many issues and in three elections, including Bezos's \$1 million attempt to buy the 2019 election. Now they are trying to overturn democracy with a right-wing recall. They filed a petition with false charges, mainly attacking our support of Black Lives Matter.

The recall is funded by billionaires, Trump supporters, anti-union capitalists, and big developers. They have manipulated the process, going all out for voter suppression, as Republicans are doing in many US states. They deliberately delayed filing to avoid a normal November vote alongside other city elections. They prefer a special, mid-winter election with up to 50% lower turnout when far fewer renters, young people and people of colour usually vote.

With support for socialism growing, they do not want the example of a socialist winning victories. It is no surprise they are on the attack: it's because Socialist Alternative and our movements have set such powerful examples of working-class victories.

Anything you would like to add?

We can only withstand the constant attacks by big business and the right wing because of strong support of Socialist Alternative and the working-class people in Seattle.

Greetings to Socialist Alternative in Canada. Our struggle against capitalism and for a healthy planet is international. Solidarity! ★

For more information on Socialist Alternative in the US: www.socialistalternative.org

Canadian Government's Role in Haiti's Misery

Ray Goerke

Within a few weeks, Haiti's president was assassinated and the country was hit by a 7.2-magnitude earthquake that killed over 2,000 people, followed two days later by Hurricane Grace. These came after years of popular protest over economic conditions, exacerbated by the pandemic, with 7 million Haitians, 60 percent of the population, living below the poverty line. At the same time, government corruption led to the loss of \$2 billion of public money.

The condition of the Haitian people is the result of French, US, and Canadian imperialism. The Haitian revolution of 1804 kicked out the French colonizers and ended slavery. However, they achieved peace by agreeing to take on a debt, worth \$21 billion in today's money, to "compensate" the slave owners for the loss of property (human beings), which was not paid off until 1947. The US could not allow a country of rebellious slaves to be successful, and replaced France as an imperial power. The US preferred to rule indirectly, by backing compliant military dictators, to ensure that Haiti was profitable for foreign investors, and therefore ensuring that most Haitians remained poor.

In Haiti's first democratic elections in 1990 the left-wing and anti-colonial Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected president. The US successfully backed a coup to oust Aristide, but by 2000 he had returned and was re-elected. The US claimed "irregularities" and imposed sanctions, while Aristide raised taxes on the rich, expanded public services and raised the minimum wage. This spooked Canadian capital with investments in Haiti, and the Canadian government immediately began plotting Aristide's overthrow.

In 2003, Canada hosted the "Ottawa initiative on Haiti" with leaders from Canada, the US, and France. Canada funded opposition and paramilitary groups

who waged a violent civil war against the Aristide government. The Canadian military occupied the airport in Port-au-Prince for the removal of Aristide. The colonial powers then appointed their preferred Prime Minister, the neoliberal economist Gérard Latortue.

Canada sent troops to crush protests demanding the restoration of democracy and RCMP officers trained the Haitian National Police (HNP) who proceeded to round up and execute Aristide supporters. In the 2006 elections the Canadian government spent \$35 million supporting their preferred candidate while the leader of Aristide's party was thrown in jail to prevent him from running.

This imposed neoliberal regime has remained to this day, ensuring the majority stay poor, while enriching a small ruling elite and international capitalists. But the Haitian people have a history of resistance. Protests started in 2018 over fuel prices and corruption, demanding the resignation of President Moïse and continued until his assassination. Now the country is reeling from the second major earthquake in a little over a decade with no functioning state support.

The Canadian working class should recognize the role of Canadian governments and big business in creating Haiti's misery and be highly suspicious of foreign aid mediated by the government and NGOs. Haitian activists, union members, workers and the poor need a mass political party to directly struggle against the political elite, imperialism, and the bosses in Haiti. The fight for democracy and economic security will be won through international working-class solidarity. ★

For more international news and analysis, visit the ISA website at internationalsocialist.net



Political unrest in Haiti

A Page From History 1981 CUPW Strike

Leslie Kemp

Most parents today take for granted benefits such as paid maternity and parental leave. But, like many of the benefits we enjoy today, paid maternity leave was won only through struggle.

In August 1981, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) won paid maternity leave after a 42-day strike. CUPW was the first national union to take the issue on in the workplace. This was a hard-fought battle, particularly for the women workers, who made up 43 percent of the union. While there was opposition in some union locals, from both male and female workers, 23,000 Canada Post workers walked out in June 1981 with an 84 percent strike vote. The existing policy was six months unpaid leave, the norm among most work places.

The union was pitted against a federal Liberal government that was determined not to allow paid maternity leave to set a precedent for the 300,000 other public servants. It wasn't only the cost that was a key issue for the Liberal government. Only one percent of the workforce would take it each year. They were worried that other government departments and the private sector would be forced to follow suit.

Despite the counterattacks from the media, government and business, with the union's demand for paid maternity leave being called "selfish," the strength of the campaign came from the union's work to establish ties with the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and about 500 women's groups across Canada. One of the women strikers said, "We did whatever the hell we needed to, and the union supported us."

In the end, the Canadian government was no match for the militancy of CUPW and their allies in the women's movement. CUPW won full wages for the first two weeks of leave and a top up of unemployment benefits for the next 15 weeks, giving employees 93 percent of their salary. The New York Times said then, "Canadian unions have a reputation for militancy." Sadly, it is doubtful that word would be used today to describe most unions. However, to win and keep real gains for the working class, this is exactly what is needed. ★

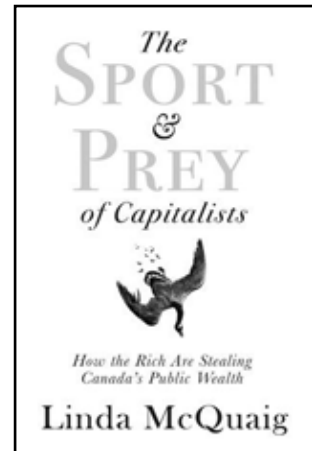


The win for the postal workers was a win for all

The Sport and Prey of Capitalists

by Linda McQuaig

reviewed by Tim Heffernan



The full title is: *The Sport and Prey of Capitalists – How the Rich are Stealing Canada's Public Wealth*. It comes from a 1905 quote by the Conservative (!!) premier of Ontario, James P Whitney. "I say on behalf of the Government, that the water power all over the country should not in the future be made the sport and prey of capitalists and shall not be treated as anything else but

a valuable asset of the people of Ontario."

The book recounts the creation of public electricity in Ontario in the early 20th century; the development of insulin, vaccines and other life-saving medicines in publicly owned labs; the building of the Canadian National Railway, which in turn spurred the rise of public broadcasting; and the remarkable success and popularity of public banking in the post-Confederation period.

McQuaig convincingly argues that public enterprise, which has been disparaged and dismantled over the last half century, is the best option to rebuild Canada's decaying infrastructure, meet social needs such as those of the unbanked, confront the impending climate emergency, and more.

McQuaig stresses that the creation of public enterprise involved political struggle. From publicly owned hydroelectricity to medicare, public enterprise has been fiercely resisted by entrenched commercial interests. She also debunks the myths that under free-market capitalism the state simply sits on the sidelines as a neutral arbiter. The liberal state is interventionist, but typically to support its friends in the corporate sector.

The book is not without its weaknesses. For example, in dealing with Alberta's oil sands in the 1970s-80s, McQuaig gives the province's premier, Peter Lougheed, an easy ride simply because he was prepared to stand up to Big Oil to get a greater share of oil profits for the public revenue. Rather than advocating for full scale nationalization under workers' control, she shows a tentativeness by using phrases like "there is a strong case for," "we might also consider establishing," and "we should consider creating a facility."

Despite that reservation, McQuaig's book is an excellent resource that will rearm socialists and help them defend the ideas of public ownership. ★

Socialism Needed (continued from back page)

Addiction and mental health issues, that currently plague society, would be much reduced because of a true and collective sense of care, compassion and mutual support, rather than alienation.

In a socialist world, resources would be shared, both locally and globally. Elders would be valued. Indigenous peoples and their languages, history and knowledge systems would be respected and valued. No one would be without land because the land would be shared by all of us.

It is workers that create wealth and a socialist society would recognize the value of workers and create an economy based on public ownership and democratic workers' control.

Climate change, racial and gender discrimination, wars of conquest, despair for the very future of our species—all are crises, all have varied roots, and no two ruin lives in quite the same way. Socialism will not automatically end any of these or society's countless other problems all at once, nor will it do so by decrees from above. It will do so precisely because socialism must be won and built by the multi-racial, multi-gendered working class *ourselves*, in Canada and abroad. No one will do it for us, but once we have attained the victory, working and struggling together, we will have no need for the prejudices and disasters of the past.

This world is imaginable. It is possible to create a world that is centred on the inherent value of people and of nature. A socialist world is possible and it is a world



Thought on election failure, "Maybe I should cry less and act more."

worth fighting for. The impending climate disaster, soaring inequality and a raging pandemic are causing massive instability throughout the globe. Never before has the imperative of defeating capitalism and replacing it with socialism been more urgent. ★

Green Party Failings

Leslie Kemp

Climate change is the defining issue for humanity. In the election, the Greens could have made it and a "just transition" for workers a central issue. Instead, they went from their first time getting over a million votes and three seats in 2019, to two seats and one third of that vote in 2021. How did this happen?

In the 2020 leadership campaign, Dimitri Lascaris, an eco-socialist, had momentum, generating enthusiasm and recruiting energetic campaigning members. The Green Party leadership, opposed to his politics, worked to stop him (and Meryam Haddad, also a left-winger). They picked Annamie Paul as their candidate, with Elizabeth May fundraising for her. Paul ticked identity politics boxes – a woman, a Black person, a Jew. However, they ignored her politics, to the right of most Greens, including supporting Zionism and the Bolivian coup against Morales. Paul narrowly defeated Lascaris.

Paul's politics were revealed in May 2021 when her advisor Zatzman tweeted against Green MP Manly and then-Green MP Atwin, "we will work to defeat you and bring in progressive climate champions ... and Zionists!!!!!" Paul has refused to condemn this attack

on fellow Greens. Atwin joined the Liberals. All this resulted in calls for Paul to resign and discussion of a non-confidence vote, which her lawyer blocked.

While the federal election campaign has brought the dispute to a simmer, there is evidence of turmoil below the surface that is likely to boil over after the election. Paul campaigned exclusively in her own riding, in a failed attempt to win.

The Green Party attracts people who care about the environment. Yet on many other issues such as the economy, social justice, and workers' rights, Greens range from "Tories on bikes" to social democratic or even socialist. The dominant wing of the Greens has no idea of challenging capitalism. In BC the Greens, both in support of the NDP minority government and on Vancouver City Council, have made little impact. Internationally, Greens who are part of a government have supported war, racist policies and brutal austerity.

Canadian workers will have to look elsewhere for a party and a program that provides good jobs now to feed their children, and ensures their children have an environment they can live in. ★



Chris Fofonoff, Leslie Kemp and Simon Schweitzer

The election has changed very little – Canada still has a minority Liberal government. Though the federal election is over, and some of the promises sounded large, the ideas behind them were still cryingly small.

We are left with the realities of living under capitalism: a fourth COVID wave is still raging, there's an ongoing housing crisis and a deepening climate disaster. The capitalist system we live under can and will do nothing about these ills – we have borne witness to this truth for years, even decades. Socialist Alternative maintains that *we can and must defeat this system* in order for humanity to thrive, or even to meaningfully survive.

In a socialist future, children would receive high quality, publicly paid for child care and public education from early school to post-secondary. Youth and adults would have work that is rewarding and pays a livable wage. People would grow old in their communities, receiving quality care either in their communities or in publicly-owned long-term care homes.

The housing crisis, which has now truly spread across

the country, even to small towns, would be a puzzling memory in a socialist future. Ending this crisis means taking immediate and drastic measures, such as building 100,000 units a year of publicly owned social housing in communities across the country. This housing should be built by well-paid union labour, according to sustainable energy standards. Renters must have the protection they need; ending renovations and putting in place rent controls on the housing units would keep rents from continuing to escalate.

In a socialist world, everyone would have a home, access to good, nutritious food or plentiful green space to grow food. There would be affordable communication networks that serve entire countries, in both urban and rural areas and accessible transportation systems within cities and communities and between centres of population.

We would have public health systems that are focused on prevention, education, and rely on the best evidence available to support public health measures to prevent and limit the spread of disease.