

# SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

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# FIGHT FOR



# HIGHER PAY



# 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.**
- **Defend wages:** Unions should demand Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) clauses in all new and existing contracts.
- **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. ★



**Socialist Alternative Canada is part of International Socialist Alternative, active on all six continents.**

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**If you agree with the ideas in this magazine, join Socialist Alternative!**

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## A Summer of Politics

*Grace Bodie*

This summer, Socialist Alternative Canada joined hundreds of International Socialist Alternative members in Belgium for our international school. We later held our own school in Canada with members also from Québec, Mexico, Hong Kong and the US. In-person schools are an exciting opportunity for members from all over the world to come together as well as an essential part of our organizing. They allow us to critically examine the rising issues of our disordered age including increasing climate disasters, inflation, and war, and develop exponentially our strategy to fight back. As capitalism flows across borders and oppresses people everywhere, internationalism (as in the "International" within our name) is a foundational working principle that comes alive when we meet in person.

Our membership has grown in quantity and quality in the past years, which was reflected by the increased number of members confidently speaking and contributing to the schools. This included many of our young members who have joined recently, drawn to our organization at climate protests and at protests pushing back on gendered oppression. We gleaned valuable lessons in our discussions including work on the rise in unionization, housing rights and women's rights. In late July, Seattle City Council passed unanimously legislation introduced by our party's city councillor Kshama Sawant for Seattle to be the first sanctuary city for abortion rights.

We become empowered in our work and are convinced of our methods as we discuss numerous successful gains.

As capitalist governments continue to fail to address, or often make worse, the issues of today, it is more important than ever that we organize globally and develop our methods and strategy, to fight back and establish working-class parties that truly reflect the interests of everyday people. ★



*SA Canada members attended ISA's school in Belgium*

# Realities of Student Life

Jackson Douglas and Ray Goerke

As post-secondary students begin a new semester, many will be thinking about what they expect to get out of their education. Some students are driven by curiosity and a genuine desire to gain knowledge, or by the desire to make a positive difference in the world.

However, most students are there because they've been told they need a degree to get a "good job." But is this even true anymore? Post-secondary education is getting more expensive, and employers are getting more demanding. Simply having a degree is often not enough. Students are graduating, saddled with thousands of dollars in debt and struggling to find a decent job.

Education today is bought and sold as a commodity and "marketed" as an "investment." Students pay thousands of dollars in tuition fees, hundreds of dollars on books and have to pay for rent and food. They spend years doing coursework for a piece of paper they hope will get them that good job. Students are slammed with piles of homework that many struggle to manage, especially if they have to work part-time to pay rent. There are many opportunities for extracurricular activities, but is there time to fit them in with everything else, including the pressure to do "volunteer work" to attract future employers?

Most institutions offer mental health services to students. This can be valuable and make a big difference in students' lives. But a lot of mental stress is due to heavy workloads and financial worries. Institutions could go a long way towards improving students' mental health by limiting coursework and lowering tuition, but that never seems to be on the table. Many universities also have a terrible reputation for sexual abuse and harassment that the authorities often ignore or try to sweep under the carpet.

## What Does All That Tuition Money Pay For?

Students are expected to learn in massive lecture halls from professors who usually have no formal training in education. Many professors are more interested in their own research and grant applications, seeing teaching as a chore. Increasingly, students don't see professors; they are taught by young sessional lecturers living on low pay without job security. So where is all the tuition money going?

The money goes to the bloated university bureaucracy, where executives are routinely paid over \$300,000 a year. These executives rarely interact with students. Instead they spend their time hobnobbing with rich benefactors and CEOs who make donations to get their name on new buildings. They are concerned with gaining research funding to enhance the university's prestige, and attracting ever more international students who are exploited with exorbitant international tuition fees.



*Socialist students demanding free education*

Increasingly, corporations dominate universities, naming buildings and shaping courses and research. So-called "public" universities in Canada are funded less by governments and more by students, especially international students. From 2008 to 2019, university funding from governments declined from 67 percent to 54.7 percent, while funding from tuition increased from 19.6 percent to 34.1 percent.

Post-secondary education should be free, paid for by raising taxes on the rich. Students and staff should have democratic control over curricula and course offerings, and the level of instruction should be of high quality. The main deciding factor should be the educational needs of the students, not what courses can attract the most tuition dollars.

## Students Can Fight for Better Education

Student protest can help create social change. During Québec's 2012 Maple Spring, hundreds of thousands of students and supporters marched in the streets for weeks, forcing the government to abandon their planned massive increase in tuition fees. In Chile in 2019, student protests against transit fares kicked off the mass movement against neoliberalism and led to the defeat of the government.

Socialist Alternative Youth is building clubs in colleges and universities to bring together students who want to fight for better conditions on and off campus. We need a socialist transformation of society to end all forms of oppression, fight climate change, and fight for a better future. Join Socialist Alternative Youth! ★

**For more information about Socialist Alternative Youth, check us out on:**

**Facebook: /SocialistAlternativeYouth**

**Instagram: @socialistalternativeyouth**



# Alberta's "United" Conservative Party in Crisis

Davis Hay

Alberta's misnamed United Conservative Party is in crisis, caught between the right populism of front-runner Danielle Smith and the sour milk of Travis Toews, the more establishment candidate. Smith is campaigning on the Alberta Sovereignty Act, which would authorize the province "to refuse to enforce any federal law or policy that attacks Alberta's interests or provincial rights." This could be useful for a government that has relentlessly attacked health care, education, social supports, unions, and workers' rights. This campaign promise could propel Smith to the helm of the UCP in October; it could also lead to an expensive new bureaucracy if federal agencies become duplicated at the provincial level — but it won't make the economy work for workers. However, a new leader may not unite the party, as the election has revealed deep divisions that will not be easily papered over.

Since the UCP's so-called "Job Creation Tax Cut" in June 2019, part-time jobs are growing three times faster than full-time jobs. Over the last seven years, average household income has decreased by \$6,000; additionally, prices have increased twice as fast as wages, exposing the lie that demanding higher wages will make life more expensive. Only Ontario has worse income inequality. The median rent for a 1-bedroom apartment in Edmonton is \$999, and \$1,464 in Calgary.

With a fresh face, and a treasury full of oil revenues, the UCP may promise new policies and spend big to defeat the NDP in 2023. Over the last two years, when Premier Kenney has been deeply unpopular, the NDP should have mounted a campaign to drive the UCP from office. Having squandered that opportunity, the NDP must campaign on bold promises to win the next election.

The best way for workers to fight against UCP policies is to organize. Some workers are doing the smart thing, unionizing. The Alberta Labour Relations Board is receiving applications for union certification every month, including at five Starbucks in Lethbridge and one

in Calgary. Alberta's union density rate has increased from 20.4 percent in 2014 to 24.1 percent in 2021. Unions need to fight for Cost-of-Living Adjustments to protect against inflation. Powerful unions and independent working-class politics are required to defeat the right. ★



Starbucks workers in Lethbridge joined the United Steelworkers Local 1-207



Alberta healthcare workers went on a wildcat strike in 2020 to protest UCP cuts

## Saskatchewan's

Lev Lynds

The drive for the profitable gentrification of Saskatoon's downtown core continues. There are plans for a new housing district for the well-off. Now property developer, Ken Achs, wants to push out the poor and working class from the neighbourhood, calling for the removal of the bus depot, the library, the provincial benefit office and "The Lighthouse" homeless shelter. These facilities are in the downtown, so they are accessible to people who do not own cars.

Like libraries in cities everywhere, the Frances Morrison Library provides a wide range of services for all walks of people — the young and elderly, homeless and housed. But in general, the rich do not use libraries, which is why Achs wants it gone.

As the housing crisis worsens, homelessness in Saskatoon is on the rise and shows deep racism as 82 percent of the homeless are of Indigenous background.

Saskatoon advocates for the homeless and landlords say the recent changes to the province's social security, pushed into law by Scott Moe's reactionary Saskatchewan Party, have pushed the homelessness crisis into overdrive. The Saskatchewan Income Support (SIS) program, introduced in July 2019, cut funding previously provided by the old Transitional Employment Allowance and Saskatchewan Assistance



# Ontario — the Ford Nightmare Continues

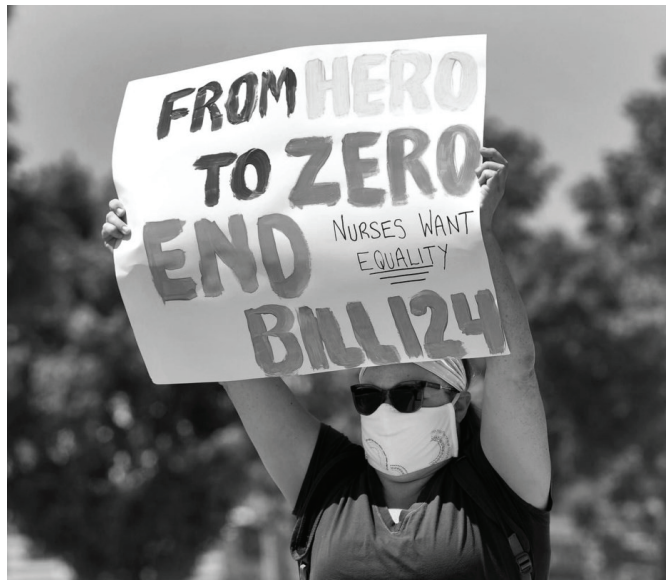
Jackson Douglas and Tim Heffernan

Doug Ford won re-election due to the weak campaign of the NDP. Now his government, long known for its close ties to the wealthy, is carrying on from where it left off, supporting big business, and attacking the working class. This is most clear in the moves to privatize parts of health care.

“All options are on the table,” says the Minister of Health in response to questions about privatization. The planned expansion of Independent Health Facilities, the vast majority of which are for-profit companies, is a major part of the privatization. The government also plans to push seniors into for-profit care homes, which had high COVID death rates, even against the person’s opposition.

The shortage of nurses, which is a national problem, is acute in Ontario with the lowest nurse-per-capita ratio in Canada, with 665 registered nurses for every 100,000 people compared to the Canadian average of 814. Ontario needs 22,000 additional nurses just to reach the national average.

Ford’s response to shortages was to offer a \$5,000 retention bonus. However, the nurses’ unions correctly maintain that the key to solving the crisis is to improve pay and working conditions. This would require repealing Bill 124 that caps annual public sector wage increases at one percent.



Nurse protesting Ford’s Bill 124, capping pay increases

Bill 124 results in private, for-profit agencies paying nurses higher wages. Hospitals hire from private temp agencies at a much higher cost than if they directly employed nurses paid at higher wages. This is a scam to enrich private business at the cost of public health. “Spending on temp agency nurses up more than 550% since pre-pandemic at one Toronto hospital network,” was a recent *Toronto Star* headline.

## Paid Sick Days

Instead of listening to the working-class organizations mobilizing on the street for 10 permanent paid sick days, the Conservative government is extending the measly 3 days, which can only be used for COVID, to March 2023.

This will force workers, who already had to stretch the paltry 3 allotted sick days across a full year, to now budget the same number of days over a doubled length of time. Only 42 percent of workers have sick days’ provisions through their employer, leaving 58 percent of workers reliant on this government policy. The 70 percent of workers who make less than \$25,000 per year must rely on the so-called “workers’ income protection” and it is obvious that low-paid, often “essential,” workers will be hit hardest. The poverty wages and lack of proper sick pay will force workers to go to work sick and contribute to the ongoing spread of COVID.

The low-paid workers and health workers reeling under the effects of the pandemic share a common struggle. The defence of public health care is at stake. The Ontario unions need to come together, alongside worker advocacy groups like Justice4Workers and Decent Work and Health Network, to launch a militant fight for workers’ rights and public services. The capitalist tree cannot be judged by its leafy-green intentions, but by its bitter, corrupt fruit. Only by building a class-conscious, mass working-class movement can the people of Ontario push back. ★

## War on the Poor

Program (SAP). Increasingly, charities must fill the gaps.

Justine Yantz, a single mother of a 10-year-old daughter with multiple health challenges, is one of many suffering. SIS doesn’t pay all the expenses of the old program, such as her daughter’s special diapers that are \$100 per box. The extra \$50 for her daughter’s dietary needs also stopped. “It’s like do you get diapers, or do you buy food?”

Social Services Minister Carr claimed that SIS would help “clients become more independent by having them pay their own bills.” This is code for “we are not going to give anything but the minimum. If clients need more than that, they will have to sacrifice something else.” Yantz said this is unfair, especially since her daughter is hospitalized almost every month due to health complications. The government has no interest in people with chronic conditions, as they do not produce profits.

A socialist government would end homelessness by first vastly increasing the provision of homes, then looking into contributing problems such as mental health issues, drug and alcohol dependence and lack of employment. Homelessness is a continual blight in capitalist society, where the ruling classes look through homeless people. Join Socialist Alternative to build a better world! ★

# Health Emergency

Leslie Kemp

Canada's long-brewing health care crisis has reached boiling point. Across the country emergency departments have long wait times and some have closed due to staff shortages, ambulances take hours to arrive, people wait months for surgery and there is a growing shortage of health care workers. One in eight Canadians, 4.6 million people, do not have a regular health-care provider according to Statistics Canada in 2019. The lack of family doctors has only got worse since then.

While COVID was an accelerant, it was not the cause. It exposed the cracks in the system, opening them wide for all to see. Before the pandemic, the health care system was overstretched with no spare capacity or staff. Early in COVID, governments were concerned about the possible collapse of the health care system as had happened in other countries. But as time wore on, governments become more complacent, worrying more about "the economy" — in other words the health of corporations — and less about the health care system, not to mention workers.

There are dire warnings from many on the front lines. Dr. Katherine Smart, then-president of the Canadian Medical Association said in June 2022, "What's clearly coming is the collapse of the current health care system."

In early 2020, health care workers were lauded by people banging pots and pans, and singing their praises. At the same time, health care workers made incredible sacrifices, putting in long hours of overtime, working under enormous stress. For many, it was too much: the stress and unending workload was damaging their physical and mental health, forcing them to resign.

## Privatization NOT the Answer

A growing chorus of politicians and commentators argue that the private sector should be used to ease the burdens on the health system. Their claim is that it doesn't matter to patients whether their care is provided by the public or private sector. What matters is that patients are treated, and it is paid for by the public health system.



HEU members celebrate reversal of privatization.



The brutal reality was demonstrated during COVID in Canada's long-term care system. The death rates of elderly were much higher in private corporate facilities than in publicly operated ones. The stark truth is that the private sector failed because of the relentless and murderous profit imperative.

*The Concerning Rise of Corporate Medicine*, produced by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in August 2022, sheds light on how creeping privatization costs more and takes staff and resources away from the public system. Private delivery of health "contributes to workforce shortages ... and also comes at a steeper price [as] a profit margin, capital costs and often higher labour costs (to attract staff from the public sector)" are paid for by governments. Knee surgeries in BC "cost nearly four times more in a private clinic compared with in a public hospital and with worse outcomes."

A 2017 survey by the Ontario and Canadian Health Coalitions found 136 private surgical, MRI, cataract and boutique physician clinics across the country that governments often "outsource" to. BC alone awarded them \$393 million in six years. These clinics get away with unlawful billing practices prohibited under the *Canada Health Act*. The report states that, "user charges are overt, with clinic staff in Nova Scotia, Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Quebec stating outright that they are private clinics and patients are required to pay."

The outcome of this growing outsourcing is a public health system reduced to a hollow shell of a contracting agency, only buying services. Once, it was thought using leeches to draw blood would cure illnesses. Now the profit sector leeches off the body of public health.

On top of these urgent crises are the lack of public provision of prescriptions, eye and dental care. Canada has a health emergency. Unions, patients and health workers need to fight to save it. This requires ending the private sector in health, funding a major increase in training of health care workers and improving pay and conditions. A socialist society would ensure a health care system that is publicly owned and democratically run, focusing on people's needs. ★



## Life of a Working Student

"You have to think of school as your full-time job." I've been hearing this glib piece of advice since the first year of study, usually from academic advisors. When I hear it from my own peers, it's always those whose living costs are covered by their families. As a full-time student, working part-time at a nursing home, and part-time doing deliveries, I can't help but roll my eyes. Unlike these students, the money for my expenses needs to be made in real time. There is no *Registered Education Savings Plan* in my name, nor does my family have the means to top up my bank account as needed. My struggles clearly stem from a lack of money. The idea that all could be remedied by changing the way I "think" about life is just absurd.

Working to make ends meet as a full-time student is best summed up by this constant feeling that your life is being held together by duct tape. It's walking out of a lecture and realizing I didn't retain a single teaching point. Instead of listening, I was accounting: adding up my medication refill, plus that parking ticket from way back, plus the upcoming tuition deadline which I might not make as my latest paycheque was swallowed up by rent. The uncertainty of it all is impossible to ignore. It's getting home from a nightshift to sleep a few precious hours before getting back to studying. I may have a paper due at midnight, or a group project meeting that day. By now I'm pretty good at keeping myself from nodding off during group work. My favourite trick is biting a knuckle when I start to fade out.

I wish I was making this up. Indeed, it would be ideal for school to be my one full-time job, where I could concentrate my full attention. I would get so much more out of my education that way. And really, work is work, whether in school or at a job. It's a shameful fact that only one is paid, when both (with some exceptions) benefit society. ★

## What Makes Me Angry: Police Indifference to Violence Against Women



Leslie Kemp

If there was ever any idea that police take violence against women seriously, let go of that notion right this minute. Police are responsible for women's murders because of their incompetence, careless investigation of allegations, ignorance and just plain indifference.

Take the Nova Scotia inquiry into the 2020 mass shooting where 22 people were killed by a lone gunman posing as an RCMP officer. The Mass Casualty Commission (MCC) inquiry has revealed multiple RCMP failures. An officer visited the Portapique shooter for tips on local crime!

The inquiry revealed further multiple failings in the 2017 murder of Susie Butlin. She had reported her neighbour, Ernie Duggan, in Tatamagouche, to the RCMP for sexually assaulting and harassing her. After filing a peace bond against him, Butlin was subjected to non-stop threatening phone calls and vandalizing of her property. She reported these and her concerns about his guns to police. Not only did the police do *nothing*, Butlin told her friend, Suzanne Davis, that the RCMP warned her *she* was becoming a "menace to society!" Even after a judge suggested Duggan's possible criminal behaviour, the police still decided not to charge him. Susie told Davis that she won't make the next court date as "he's going to kill me before then." And he did.

The MCC Inquiry has revealed that at least three people reported that the Portapique shooter had made threats and had guns. His uncle reported death threats made to the shooter's parents. All appear to have not been taken seriously. An RCMP officer involved in the Butlin case visited the Nova Scotia gunman 16 times, saw no evidence of guns, developed "a rapport" with him and asked his advice about "anyone that should be on our radar."

Vancouver police waited years, in which time dozens of women were murdered, before investigating Robert Pickton. There is growing concern about a series of recent deaths and disappearances of young Indigenous women in Vancouver, and how police handle missing person's cases.

Police misogyny reveals itself in incidents like these, incidents that are all too common. It is women who pay the price, often with their lives. Both misogyny and policing are built into the DNA of capitalism: until capitalism is overthrown and replaced with a system that values all people, we will have to keep on struggling! ★



Amnesty International photo

# Make the Bosses Not Work

Tim Heffernan and

It's been a crazy two years — with COVID and millions laid off work, the Ottawa convoy, climate disasters, the economic repercussions of the Russo-Ukrainian war and levels of inflation not seen in Canada since the early 1980s. There is now a growing threat of recession, made worse by the Bank of Canada's jacking up of interest rates.

Economists are debating the causes of inflation — supply chain disruptions, the war in Ukraine, the trillions of dollars in government bailouts to big business, speculative bubbles, or profit-gouging corporations. It is most likely a mix of all of these.

## Wages Do NOT Cause Inflation

Despite the claims of some right-wing economists, wages are lagging behind prices and do not cause inflation. Heather Schofield, economics correspondent for the *Toronto Star*, wrote "Let's get one thing clear about inflation these days. It's not caused by wage hikes for workers."

If wage increases were responsible for inflation, then increasing the minimum wage would result in higher prices. Not so. In 2016, researchers examined the effect on prices of minimum wage increases in various states in the US. They found that prices rose by just 0.36 percent for every 10 percent increase in the minimum wage. They also observed that small minimum wage increases may actually reduce prices.



Carpenters in Ontario won 10-12% wage increases in May

In the year to July 2022 average wages in Canada rose 5.2 percent. Over the same time, prices were up 8.1 percent. Rather than cause inflation, workers' wages are not keeping up with inflation. Over the same time, unionized workers' wages rose only 3.9 percent, while non-unionized employees had a 6.1 percent increase. Wages for public-sector workers were particularly flat, governed by long-standing collective agreements.

Food banks' use jumped 20.3 percent between 2019 to 2021, demonstrating a cruel reality for many; food prices have increased even more than average inflation. As many as 80 percent of Canadians are cutting spending because of inflation. There is no evidence of a so-called wage-price spiral. Any increases in wages are in response to inflation as workers try to catch up.

Corporate profits, in some sectors, are booming. Loblaws reported that its first-quarter earnings rose

almost 40 percent compared to last year. The price of oil has soared, yet the cost of producing oil in Canada has not gone up. Oil companies are awash in profits, paid for by the misery of car drivers, truckers and farmers. Telecoms and banks are also rolling in cash. In the first quarter of 2022, workers' pay and benefits were only 50.2 percent of total output (GDP), down from 51.2 percent before the pandemic. In contrast, profits reached their highest ever share of output.

## Interest Rate Hike Adds to Pain

The Canadian government falsely claims it can do nothing about inflation, leaving it to the Bank of Canada (BoC), which is pushing up interest rates, saying that will slow inflation. In June, the BoC raised interest rates a full one percent, up 66 percent. More increases are coming soon. These hikes increase the cost of mortgages, rent and many other purchases.

The BoC claims it is aiming for a soft landing, which brings to mind the economy gently relaxing on a comfortable bed. The BoC has never delivered a soft landing. The phrase is a disguise for the actual results of higher interest rates: cutting demand for goods, further cutting real wages and provoking a recession.

The real motive to cut workers' living standards is clear: the head of the BoC, Macklem, urged companies to hold wages below inflation. The BoC is on the side of Bay Street.

Jacking up interest rates to cause a recession was how capitalism dealt with inflation in the late 1970s. The US Federal Reserve bank pushed the main lending rate to 21.5 percent in 1981. Official unemployment in the US soared to over 10 percent, with many more workers without a job, but not officially unemployed. A similar pattern was repeated in Canada and many other countries. In the neocolonial world debt repayments became unaffordable. Sixteen Latin American countries had to reschedule their debts, making the 1980s a "lost decade."

Increasing interest rates will not fix supply chains or labour shortages. As the governor of the Bank of England said, "Monetary policy will not increase the supply of semiconductor chips, nor will it produce more HGV [truck] drivers." Neither depressing wages nor causing a recession will deal with these issues.

## Housing and Interest Rates

Interest rates have a direct effect on housing. While house prices have dipped slightly, the cost of housing, whether it is paying a mortgage or rent, has gone up due to the interest rate increases. Housing affordability has been terrible for years; now it is even worse. Recent data from Ratehub.ca shows that an income of more than \$220,000 a year is needed to buy a house in Toronto and Vancouver, even with a 20 percent down payment. The increase in mortgage rates means the annual



# Workers Pay for Inflation

and Bill Hopwood

income needed to buy an average house in Canadian cities jumped by \$18,000 in just the last four months.

Rents are also climbing up as landlords take advantage of the housing shortages and the lack of meaningful rent control.

## Government Can Act

Contrary to the claims of politicians, there are many things governments could do to reduce inflation, rather than leaving it to the BoC to jack up interest rates and cause a recession. The federal and provincial governments could suspend sales taxes and compensate for the revenue losses by boosting taxes on the profit-gouging corporations.

They could order oil companies to reduce prices as there has been no increase in production costs. One factor adding to inflation is supply difficulties. Canada has a shortage of 23,000 truck drivers. The government could enforce higher wages, tackle widespread wage theft, step up road safety inspections, provide more rest places on the road and boost driver training. However, all these would hit the profits of big business and neither the Liberals nor Tories would ever dream of doing that.

## COLA

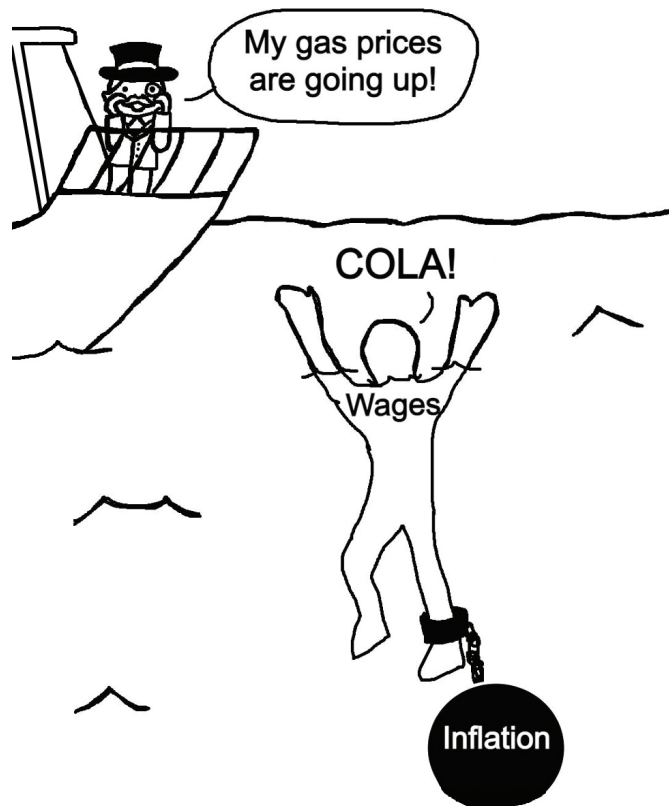
Working people cannot rely on or wait for governments to act. Unions should fight for Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA), which increases wages automatically in line with the cost of living. In all new contracts this needs to be a central issue to protect workers from the ravages of inflation. Unions should push to re-open existing contracts to add COLA.

An early COLA was Italy's *La Scala Mobile* ("moving staircase") introduced in 1945 by the government, which included Communists, at a time of mass class movements. The Italian capitalists hated *La Scala*, but the workers loved it. By the early 1980s it was estimated that *La Scala* accounted for over 60 percent of annual wage increases.

A key area of struggle will be the public sector, with contracts up for negotiation in BC, Ontario and Québec this year. These workers were "essential" during



BC public sector workers fighting for a COLA



COVID, but governments want them to take a cut in real pay, with raises below the rate of inflation. Rather than unions and groups of workers fighting separate battles, all workers should mobilize together in a united struggle of all vital public servants.

To win COLA, workers will need a return to the militant traditions of Canadian labour, such as the Québec Common Front strike of 1972. Over 200,000 public workers walked off the job in a province-wide general strike demanding an 8 percent raise to match inflation, a \$100-per-week minimum wage, better job security and working conditions, and equal pay for equal work. The workers stayed united in spite of government repression and won most of their demands.

## Recession and Worse Looming

Around the world the economy is heading towards recession, driven by war, soaring inflation, rising interest rates, a deep crisis in China and other factors. The US economy has shrunk over the last six months, the definition of a recession. The head of the Bank of England has stated that, at the very least, Britain faces inflation of 13 percent and a 15-month recession. No soft landing! The world faces the third recession in 15 years.

Capitalism is a system of deep crises, staggering from one to another. It failed to safely deal with COVID, it ignores climate change, leads to bloody wars, and only delivers economic instability and mounting inequality. The lust for profits is pushing the world to multiple disasters. It is time to end this sick system with a socialist transformation. ★

# Climate Change: Imperialism and Hypocrisy

Ray Goerke

It seems that no matter the scale of the social crisis, there is always money for war. Less than a year after COP26, the Trudeau government is boosting military spending, including \$19 billion on new fighter jets. These 88 F-35 jets operating together would burn 5,600 litres of fuel per hour, about 10 percent of the rate of gasoline burned by every vehicle in Canada. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Sweden and Finland are joining NATO, while the US and China are sabre-rattling over Taiwan. The whole world is preparing for war while the world burns.

Droughts are destroying food crops. In July, 43 percent of the United States was experiencing drought. The Horn of Africa is facing the worst drought in 40 years. Over 800 million people globally are experiencing extreme hunger. New studies show that glaciers are melting faster than expected, with sea levels on track to rise one foot by the end of the century. These glaciers feed rivers that much of the world's agricultural land depends on.

An estimated 600 people died as a result of the BC heatwave in 2021. In Europe, over 10,000 excess non-COVID deaths have been recorded in the ongoing heatwave. Many of the people who died in BC lived in apartments that didn't have air conditioning, because they couldn't afford it or weren't allowed by their landlords. Safe housing is unaffordable for many Canadians, yet in 2021 there were 1.3 million empty homes across Canada, including many empty luxury condos.

Over three million private jet flights were reported in 2021, the highest year on record. Many of these were short trips — the rapper Drake is known to fly his jet between Toronto and Hamilton. Working people are expected to pay more at the pump for a carbon tax, while major industrial emitters are exempt. The richest one percent of humanity produces twice as much carbon as the poorest half, yet working people are shamed for not wanting to pay more taxes that don't really tackle climate change.



ISA at COP26: Climate Struggle is Class Struggle



Drought in Manitoba is leaving grazing fields barren

## Liberals Are Expanding Fossil Fuel Production

The Liberal government boasts about mitigating climate change, but they're doing everything they can to ensure Canada continues to produce fossil fuels forever. They claim Canada can achieve emissions reductions by making the oil and gas sector "greener." But their "net zero" is based on carbon capture and offsetting the emissions of fossil fuel *production*, not measuring the emissions from *burning them* — since they are shipped to other countries first. But the atmosphere has no borders. To really reduce global emissions fossil fuel production has to decline.

The government promotes unproven carbon-capture technology. If carbon capture is going to help the world stay under the 1.5 degree warming limit, it would need to remove 17 billion tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere each year. Not even the most strident proponents of the technology claim that this will be possible soon enough to avoid catastrophic tipping points.

The 2021 floods in BC destroyed sections of several major highways. Floods in the Maritimes threaten to cut off the only major road and rail link between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, requiring an estimated \$200 to \$300 million to be spent on dike upgrades. And yet, the Canadian government gives \$18 billion dollars a year to the fossil fuel industry to keep it afloat! Despite its rhetoric, the government's actions show it's mainly concerned with two things: defending the profits of the oil companies and expanding the military to defend the interests of US imperialism.

## Working Class Movements Needed for Change

Climate change is not a problem that can be solved by individual action, and it won't be solved by Liberal or Conservative governments, who are both in the pockets of the fossil capitalists. The environment cannot win unless the fossil capitalists lose. Workers need to build mass movements, to organize in their unions to strike for climate demands, and to build an independent political party that will fight the rule of fossil capitalists head-on. ★



# Conservatives Heading Further Right

Chris Fofonoff

As capitalism's decay accelerates, the world is becoming more politically polarized. This is true for Canada as well, and unfortunately the right has a significant head start.

The fringes of the conservative movement boosted the far-right People's Party of Canada to 4.9 percent in the 2021 federal election. At the start of 2022, the convoy protests, centred in Ottawa and blocking border crossings to the US, was led by far-right figures ostensibly against COVID vaccine mandates. This gained significant public sympathy (some opinion polls had support at over 30 percent), dominated conversation across the country and boosted the right wing of the Conservative party, who dumped Erin O'Toole as leader.

Pierre Poilievre has ridden the surge in right populism to win the leadership of the Conservative Party. The pugnacious Ottawa-area MP began the leadership race by supporting the convoy protestors. His more moderate challengers, Jean Charest and Patrick Brown, were unable to lay a glove on him. Poilievre held large rallies and claimed to have recruited 312,000 new members to the Conservatives. Overall, the party's membership has exploded to over 679,000 members, the most in any Canadian party's history.

## Canadians Battered by Events

Inflation, COVID, inequality, economic insecurity — all these are altering or sharpening people's existing political views, including against establishment figures who seem (and are) out of touch with most people's reality. Pressure is building everywhere, with the barometer highest in rural and Western Canada. Poilievre gives vent to this justified anger, though as a fanatical defender of capitalism he has no real solution for it.

Those who try to comfort themselves that Poilievre is too right wing to win the next federal election could be in for a very rude awakening if he succeeds in keeping active a large number of his new recruits. The Liberals, in power since 2015, have failed to deliver on the 2015 promise of "sunny ways," instead are seen as the establishment defending the status quo. They've disappointed people who thought they were "progressive," while their "woke" words infuriate the right. They may try to boost support with a new leader, probably Chrystia Freeland, and they'll whip up fears of Poilievre's extremism. The struggle for the next government will be fought in Metro Toronto and Montreal.

Poilievre will likely attempt to appropriate some of the tactics used with success by Ontario premier Doug Ford. Both are stalwart defenders of big business interests while making populist noise against "elites" and "gatekeepers." Both also recognize that those big business interests are not static, especially since the pandemic began. The now-closing neoliberal era was a time when deregulation, wanton tax cuts for the rich, and bulldozing of unions and public services was the near-unanimous order of the day. But Poilievre, Ford, and Québec's Legault have been and will be more varied in their policies.

The zigzag course to the right of Canada's conservative movement will incorporate both cuts and higher spending, both economic privatization and state intervention. It will marry increased xenophobia around rising Chinese imperialism with increased immigration to address labour shortages; it will try to harness the energy of the far-right elements of the convoy protests while also reinforcing big business domination of the economy, including through more aggressive policies in favour of big polluters and real estate developers.

All but Canada's most eastern and western provinces are led by some form of conservative government. Ford, after his recent electoral victory, met with the conservative premiers of the Maritimes to discuss privatization of health care, which all the right-of-centre parties desire to differing degrees.

Polarization to the right has been dominant, so far. A major reason for that is the lack of any leadership by the NDP, who tag along behind the Liberals instead of giving an alternative. A bold pro-worker and pro-environment left-wing party could gain significant support. Workers, Indigenous people, youth, and environmentalists desperately need what the right has: a party that fights for them. ★



Pierre Poilievre marching with James Topp, convoy protest leader

# War, Climate, Famine, and Capitalism

Daniel Petrovic

World hunger is at the highest levels in the last five years. *The Global Report on Food Crises* states that 193 million people worldwide are experiencing “Emergency” level of hunger (high acute malnutrition). Of these, 39.2 million are at “Crisis” level (“acute high insecurity and excess mortality”) and 600,000 are at “Catastrophe/Famine” levels, experiencing “starvation, death, destitution, and acute critical malnutrition levels.”

The countries most affected by hunger are those involved in current and former civil wars or imperialist military interventions stretching back to the Cold War. The worst affected countries in “Catastrophe/Famine” are Ethiopia, with three-quarters in Tigray (401,000 people), South Sudan (100,000), Yemen (47,000), and Madagascar (14,000). Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen, Ethiopia including Tigray, Sudan, South Sudan, Haiti, and Pakistan all have over one million people in “Emergency” hunger.

The war in Ukraine disrupted food exports, with over 20 million tonnes of Ukrainian grain stuck in silos. Only now is the supply beginning to move. Ukraine is one of the world’s largest exporters of grain and sunflower products and is a crucial supplier for countries including Egypt and Tunisia.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed in the conflict. Over 7 million Ukrainian refugees have fled and 8 million are internally displaced. The war has sharpened the inter-imperialist antagonisms between NATO, led by the US, and Russia, backed by China. NATO is expanding and military spending has increased by hundreds of billions of dollars — while millions go hungry! In Russia, ordinary people are suffering, and brutal repression has forced all opposition to the war underground, into exile, or in prison. The war looks set to continue for months or longer.

While war and internal conflicts are the primary drivers of food insecurity, extreme weather and drought due to climate crisis is an increasing cause. Severe droughts in the US, Canada, Europe, southern China and eastern Africa have affected food crops.

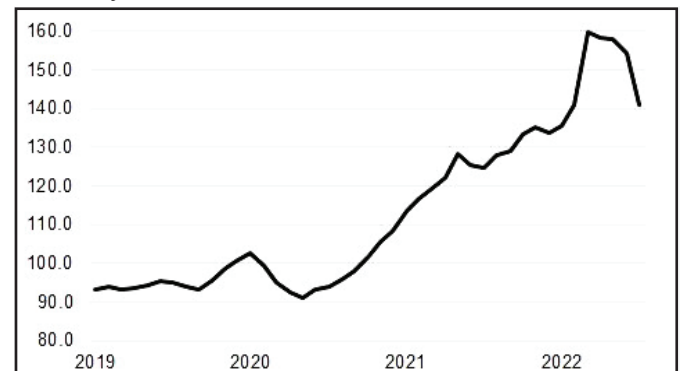
Despite these disruptions, global food stocks have remained stable over the last two years and are higher than 2015/16 according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. While crops were reduced in some areas,



Europe is facing its worst drought in 500 years

production elsewhere was up. Food prices climbed throughout 2021, then spiked in the first months of 2022, but then dropped to the level before the spike.

It is a damning indictment of capitalism that there is widespread famine in the midst of plenty. Hunger and famine are due to a lack of money more than a lack of food. Even in rich countries people go hungry and use food banks. It is time to replace capitalism with a system that meets human needs. ★



UN Food and Agriculture Organization Food Price Index over the last four years. (2014-2016 = 100). The index tracks prices of a basket of food commodities.

## Québec Election:

Martin LeBrun

Québec’s Premier Legault oversaw the highest COVID death rate in Canada. Seventy-five percent of Quebecers disapprove of pandemic handling that required military intervention after decades of cuts and privatizations to elder care.

On top of this are a growing housing crisis, declining working conditions and public services, and little action on climate change. Yet Legault’s Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) is heading to a resounding victory in this October’s election. How is this possible?

The Quiet Revolution, starting in the 1960s, fused powerful class and national struggles that moved Québec from the most right-wing and priest-ridden province to the most progressive. Over the decades, workers’ struggles won higher wages, the highest union density in Canada, paid maternity leave and universal childcare. The Parti Québécois (PQ), founded in 1968 as a left nationalist party, was associated with many of these gains. Up to the 2010s, Québec was noted for powerful movements such as the mass student upheaval of the 2012 Maple Spring or the half-million strong 2019 climate demo.

However, over the last 30 years the PQ has moved towards austerity and neoliberalism, attacking its own base of Francophone workers. The PQ’s shift and the resulting disappointments opened the space for the right-wing CAQ. Now the PQ is circling the toilet bowl of history. The CAQ bases itself on Québec identity nationalism, defending traditional French Québec values



# US: Why are the Democrats so Useless?

Greyson Van Arsdale

When the US Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, a tsunami of emotions swept the country. However, as the decision had been leaked six weeks earlier, no one was surprised.

Except the White House. Unlike thousands of women and men protesting immediately, President Biden and the Democrats reacted as though swimming through molasses. For six days, Biden didn't release any plan to address the destruction of millions of women's and queer people's rights. The plan — the daring plan — was to order the administration to do more research!

This is not the first failure from the Democrats. In the last election they made many promises, including a \$15 federal minimum wage, paid family leave, rules to help unions organize and gun control. There's been little or no action on all of these. Why do the Democrats seem so determined to act against the interests of their voters?

Their failure on abortion rights demonstrates the causes. The mass demos immediately after Roe's overturn showed what was possible. If the Democrats had helped to mobilize these demos and used all the available powers the Democrats have at federal, state

and city levels, it could swing many elections in their favour. Instead, the Democrats, and Democrat-led NGOs like Planned Parenthood, National Organization for Women and NARAL Pro-Choice America, have all but waved goodbye to abortion rights with a white handkerchief.

However, if they were to fully mobilize the anger of working people and youth to legalize abortion, there's no telling how much further that movement might have gone. Abortion can't be a right for all until it's accessible, which raises the need to fight for Medicare for All. A living wage would be great so that every person who does want to raise a family has the resources to do so!

A strong movement with bold leadership that is determined to win, will inevitably start to fight for things that the Democrats' corporate owners won't stand for. The "incompetence" of the Democrats is not really incompetence — it's purposeful obstruction.

The movement to win abortion rights for all needs to have independent leadership with a fighting approach. In Seattle, a movement of working people, youth, and socialists won the country's first "abortion sanctuary" legislation. This legislation was introduced by Socialist Alternative councilmember, Kshama Sawant. Socialist Alternative gathered thousands of petition signatures during Pride events.

This legislation prohibits Seattle police from arresting people based on outstanding warrants related to anti-abortion laws around the country. One socialist councillor in one city has done more than the entire Democratic establishment in Washington DC.

This victory is a first step to win secure, free, safe, legal abortion for all working people. Part of a successful struggle is to escape the grip of the Democratic Party, replacing it with working-class politics. ★

**For more information on Socialist Alternative in the US: [socialistalternative.org](http://socialistalternative.org).**



*Legislation introduced by Socialist Alternative councilmember Kshama Sawant made Seattle the first city in the United States to become a sanctuary city*

## Why will CAQ win?

against immigrants and minorities.

The libertarian Conservative Party of Québec has emerged as a far-right anti-CAQ protest, promising "freedom from taxes" and "private healthcare and childcare options."

The left-wing Québec Solidaire (QS), founded in 2006, could have filled the vacuum of PQ's decline. In the 2018 election, when the CAQ crushed the Liberals, QS leapt to third place, campaigning energetically on a bold platform. We wrote then that QS "must use [its] positions in parliament to mobilize in the streets and to build mass movements." Instead, it has turned towards the middle-class, watering down policies in the hope of attracting disaffected Liberals. QS even approved the CAQ's disastrous COVID response and laws attacking Indigenous language rights and immigrants.

Our sister organization, Alternative Socialiste (AS), worked with others in QS to push its leaders to oppose the religious symbols ban. In Montreal's 2021 elections, AS gained 12 percent of the vote in Verdun, coming a solid third and building support for affordable housing, transit and living wages.

Elections do not decide history. Québec's public sector unions are preparing for negotiations this autumn, which are an opportunity to build a fighting left and win inflation-proof wages. ★

**For more information on Québec and Alternative Socialiste: [alternativesocialiste.org](http://alternativesocialiste.org)**

# A Page from History: Idle No More 10 Years Later

Allie Pev



INM protest in Ontario, 2013

This November marks 10 years since the Indigenous-led Idle No More (INM) movement emerged. Started by Treaty People in Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, it

forged links among First Nations, urban and rural, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Stephen Harper's Conservative government's consistent goal was to increase Canada's extraction, processing and export of natural resources. These projects faced delays because of the federal government's duty to consult with First Nations on matters of land use. In response the Tories introduced the innocuously sounding Bill C-45, *Jobs and Growth Act*, which aimed to bypass environmental assessments and responsibilities to First Nations.

In the following weeks, INM took to the streets and hosted teach-ins, rallies and round dances. INM brought Indigenous issues to light nationally and internationally, in a way never seen before. Matters of environmental protection, living conditions on reserves and the government's blatant disregard of Aboriginal Title were thrust into public consciousness.

Much is owed to INM for highlighting various Indigenous nations' ongoing struggles, and for their solidarity that supported coordinated actions across the continent, bringing about real wins for communities. In October 2013, actions organized by Elsipogtog First Nation, in New Brunswick, against fracking in their territory ended with the courts lifting an injunction filed by Southwestern Energy Company (SWE) against the Nation. A provincial moratorium on shale gas was announced in 2014 and is still in place today.

Idle No More Gulf Coast delivered a message to SWE headquarters in Houston demanding "all projects... and permits come to a halt until all Mi'kmaq-L'nu and Wabanaki communities, as sovereign individuals are meaningfully consulted and able to come to an informed decision." This type of cross-border organizing is key to building broader and stronger movements. INM currently supports Mi'kmaq Treaty Rights and Livelihoods and calls for #DefundthePolice. The rapidly changing climate is bringing forth deadly seasons of fire, drought and flood that Indigenous, working-class and poor people are suffering the most from. At the same time, living conditions, wages and the housing crisis worsen. We are in dire need of an organized international movement of Indigenous people and workers to protect the planet. ★

# The Abortion Caravan

by Karin Wells

reviewed by Leslie Kemp



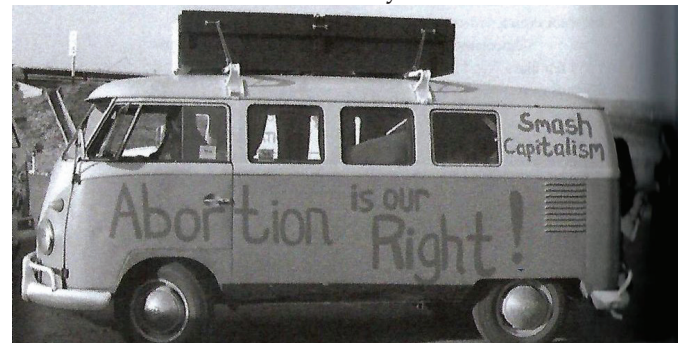
The obstacles to getting an abortion in Canada in 1970 were significant. Many women paid the price of backstreet abortions with their lives. Every year an estimated 2,000 women died and 20,000 women were hospitalized because of illegal abortions. The Criminal Code required that a Therapeutic Abortion Committee (comprised of doctors) decide if a woman would get an abortion based solely on their judgment of whether the pregnancy endangered the woman's life or health. Many women were denied abortions. The Supreme Court of Canada threw out the abortion law in 1988 (in *R v Morgentaler*), finally paving the way for women to access legal and safe abortions.

*The Abortion Caravan* is an inspiring and engaging story of women's struggle to control their own bodies. It chronicles the journey of 17 bold and audacious women who travelled from Vancouver in the spring of 1970 to Ottawa, stopping in communities en route to speak at gatherings and engage in public theatre. Inspired by the On to Ottawa Trek of the 1930s, their convoy was a big yellow convertible, a pickup truck, and a Volkswagen van painted with the words "abortion is our right" and "smash capitalism" with a coffin on top.

They were determined to challenge the hypocrisy of politicians. Justice Minister Pierre Trudeau proclaimed in 1967, "there's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation," yet refused to deal with the abortion laws, which gave doctors control over women's bodies.

As the convoy moved eastward, more women and vehicles joined them. They held a rally of 500 on Parliament Hill and marched to the Prime Minister's residence, where they placed the coffin at his front door. Two days later, they chained themselves to seats in the House of Commons visitors' galleries, rising to speak, before they were carted away by security. They succeeded in shutting down the House of Commons — the first and only time this has ever happened.

The US Supreme Court has attacked abortion rights there. In Canada, the availability of abortion services is uneven across the country. The Abortion Caravan succeeded in bringing public and media attention to abortion rights, but not in convincing government to take them or this issue seriously. ★





## Vote COPE on October 15

In Vancouver's city election, COPE is campaigning for: real rent control, a Mansion Tax to raise the funds to build social housing, a living wage, better and more affordable public transit, strong action on climate change and much more. ★

# COPE

### City Council Candidates: Park Board Candidates

- Jean Swanson
- Breen Ouellette
- Nancy Trigueros
- Tanya Webking
- Gwen Giesbrecht
- Chris Livingstone
- Maira Hassan
- Suzie Mah
- Rocco Trigueros

For more information or to volunteer and donate: <https://www.copevancouver.ca/>

## Chris Livingstone for Parks Board

*Interviewed by Allie Pev*

"This is a really important election; I think getting Indigenous people and Downtown Eastside (DTES) residents to vote is really going to make or break the city. If Jean's not elected or we don't get our COPE people elected, then who's going to be looking out for people?"

Chris Livingstone, member of the Nisga'a Nation, is a COPE candidate in Vancouver's election. Having been a social justice activist since childhood and a resident of the DTES for almost two decades, Chris has many ideas to support the urban Indigenous community, spanning housing, harm reduction, safe supply, and access to land.

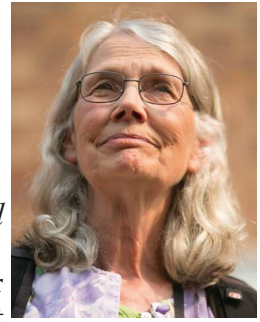
Working with the Parks Board to implement adequate sanitation systems and harm reduction for current tent encampments, and looking at currently empty spaces to allow for safe tent encampments would be the first steps in addressing the housing crisis. Planting food-bearing trees in parks allowing everyone access, would also help to cool neighbourhoods severely affected by extreme heat caused by climate change. Working alongside the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh host nations to restore traditional place names, as well as healing and wellness projects, would support all Indigenous community members in the city. ★



## Jean Swanson for City Council

*Interviewed by Leslie Kemp*

*A fighter for tenants' rights, and against homelessness and poverty.*



Jean Swanson says Vancouver desperately needs a plan to protect existing affordable housing. This, along with a safe supply of drugs for users, is a key issue in the coming election.

Jean's actions in her four years on Council have been aimed at addressing the housing affordability crisis. Jean's long history as an anti-poverty campaigner has infused her city hall politics. She worked closely with the SRO Collaborative to develop an innovative proposal and motion for "vacancy control" for people living in SROs (Single Room Occupancy hotels), which City Council approved by a 10-1 vote in November 2021, only to be quashed by one BC Supreme Court judge in August 2022. However, this battle is not over, as the City is likely to appeal the decision. Jean is more determined than ever to work for vacancy control for all tenants in Vancouver. This means that when an existing tenant moves out, the rent cannot be raised (beyond the agreed limit) for the next tenant. This measure, along with preserving existing affordable housing from being demolished by developers, is a critical step.

Jean hopes that more COPE councillors will be elected but knows that this in itself will not be enough to counter the trajectory of rising rents. It has always been social movements that win victories, and one will be needed to turn the tide from favouring greedy developers to addressing community needs.

Working with those on the ground is how Jean won other important victories, such as her motion to decriminalize poverty and provide community-led safety services (rather than funding the police) for homeless people, sex workers, drug users, and people with mental health issues. Almost 400 people signed up to speak in favour of this motion, which Council passed unanimously.

A mansion tax on multi-million-dollar homes is crucial to support the building of non-profit and co-op housing, as well as to address the need for community facilities and sewer replacement. Although Jean's motion aimed at the city winning the power to impose a mansion tax was defeated, this won't stop Jean from working on this.

Jean has shown that she will do what it takes to improve the lives of ordinary people. Whether it is serving prison time for standing up to Kinder Morgan against its polluting pipeline or engaging in civil disobedience to support drug users, Jean is one politician who puts her money where her mouth is. ★



*Simon Schweitzer*

In the dark alleys of business sections of newspapers, spoken in hushed tones, there are rumours of a “historic correction” in Canada’s housing market and musings asking: “Is the bubble finally bursting?” It is expected that house prices will fall by 12 percent in the next year. Yet house prices would still be higher than two years ago. And with soaring interest rates the cost of housing, including the mortgage, is up.

The cost of buying a home is the worst in 41 years. Where mortgage rates rise, rents soon follow, and in Toronto rents in July for a one-bedroom apartment rose 4 percent, and for a two-bedroom 7.8 percent. Rents in Calgary are up 27 percent year over year for a one-bedroom apartment.

This situation is ripe for private investment firms to buy up single family homes as rental properties. While data in Canada is scarce, since 2008 investment firms have been the largest buyers of new homes in the US, on track to control 40 percent of the rental market by 2030. Unlike working people, these firms do not fear mortgages as they have enough money to buy houses

outright. These firms know that the Canadian economy is increasingly dependent on housing speculation, and despite the current “correction” they will view these assets as stable. Most of Canada lacks strong rent control, providing ideal situations for these parasites.

Across Canada speculators have also been buying up older rental blocks and jacking up rents, in some provinces by 40, 50 and 60 percent, forcing people onto the streets. Everywhere, as rents soar and renovictions increase, homelessness is rising and there are virtually no empty places with affordable rents to house people.

“Favourable conditions” for speculators are favourable conditions for rent increases and eviction notices. No matter how the housing market leaps or dives, it can never produce stable and low rents with plentiful affordable housing. This must be imposed through rent controls that tie rents to the unit, not the tenant, and through a massive program to build social housing. ★

