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GENOCIDE JUSTIN

STOP ARMS SALES TO ISRAEL



Blood on his hands: Trudeau has admitted that Canada sold new weapons to Israel since the genocide on Gaza began. The Liberals have also lined up with the US and others to cut UNRWA funding which will kill innocent people in Gaza. Read more about the fight for a free Palestine on pages 4,5,6

Service Ontario sell-out: Privatization 101

Doug Ford's obsession with destroying Ontario's good-paying union jobs, and rewarding his corporate friends and donors with public service privatization has a new target.

At least 11 Service Ontario (SO) locations, including some in Mississauga, Toronto, Hamilton, Newmarket and London, will be closed and replaced by "kiosks" located in Staples retail outlets.

They call it a "pilot project." I call it the thin edge of the privatization wedge.

SO is the public service that helps you renew your OHIP card, driver's license, license plate, car registration, photo ID, and many other forms of documentation needed to live and work in Ontario.

I recently had to go to a SO office in downtown Toronto to renew my OHIP card and update my expired photo ID with my new address. Some services are offered online, but those, like simply renewing a health card, require a valid driver's license and I don't drive. I'm not alone. As of 2018, more than 4.5 million Ontarians were without driver's licenses. That means taking time and effort to go to a SO location.

The office I went to, the closest to my home, had several hundred seats, every one occupied. There was a line-up out the door to check in at reception. There were dozens more standing or leaning against walls. There were perhaps 40 SO rep desks, but not every one staffed. SO allows you to make an online "appointment" to speed things up, but I still had a wait of almost an hour. Many of the people there had been waiting hours. I spoke to a

young Franco-Ontarian who had waited over 3 hours – granted he had a complicated request and needed service in his language, which SO does offer. Just not enough.

Many were new Canadians, often whole families. There were older people with their children to translate for them. In a diverse city language is an issue, but SO does offer some translation services. New Canadians, after all, require a lot of new documentation.

The idea that these diverse and complicated service can be met in a

well-trained union workers. They get decent pay and benefits. Will those staffing "kiosks" have the same level of training and compensation? It isn't clear, but I have my suspicions. What is certain, good jobs will be lost.

Corporate greed

What is also clear is that this move is not intended to improve services for us or working conditions for workers. It is intended solely to enrich and empower Doug Ford's corporate friends and donors to his

market competition."

And the big winner is Staples Chairman, John Lederer. Let's get to know a bit about him.

Lederer was recently hired as Staples' interim CEO, in charge of re-inventing a fading retail chain. Staples is owned by a US-based holding company called Sycamore Partners that specializes in gobbling up retail outlets and rebranding them. Doug Ford just made Lederer's job a lot easier, directing tens of thousands of new "customers" into his stores.

Lederer is already a winner in the Ontario privatization derby, as he sits on the board of Wallgreen and Boots drug stores, and stands to benefit from the Tory healthcare cuts. These seem like small potatoes next to the Shoppers Drug Mart behemoth, but are international brands that may have growth potential, especially if they get a good dose of public funding.

He has held a variety of executive positions in food services and distribution. Lederer served for 30 years learning from the master,

serving as an exec and board member at Loblaw's, helping Galen Weston transform his chain of dowdy grocery stores into the "world class", billion-dollar shopping experience we know and love today. Lederer is a proud member of the Grocery Business Hall of Fame. Seriously. Records show his "net worth" at a paltry \$350 million (as

of 2021), but who knows how much he has tucked away today.

He is also a long-time and generous supporter of the Ontario Conservative Party, and more to the point, Doug Ford. Records show he donated \$1,600 to Ford's Tory leadership campaign in 2018. And if there is one thing we now know about Doug, he takes special care of his friends.

So Staples will acquire a huge new amount of walk-in traffic that may have long waits to be served – a ready-made captive audience. And best of all, it won't cost them a dime. The Tories have also announced the construction and conversion of the stores will be paid for by the very generous people of Ontario. No cost amounts have been mentioned. Remember, when you are standing (no chairs for you!) in a long line to get your health card, to appreciate where your tax dollars are being spent.

Staples is wasting no time looking for ways to cash in on inclusion of SO kiosks. It is already advertising for a new executive position of "Regional Services Manager – Service Ontario". The position is charged with "the monetization of Service Ontario traffic" and "driving profitable sales growth through traffic conversion and building a consistent world class experience."

Of course all this reeks of world class corruption, what we have come to expect from the Ford Mafia at Queen's Park.

Thanks to Doug Ford's generosity with your money, Ontario will lose good jobs, you will suffer longer waits for essential services, and John Lederer gets to "monetize" you while you suffer: Privatization 101.



store "kiosk" is not only ridiculous, it carries a load of racist assumptions and will inevitably exclude people.

What I witnessed was an essential public service that requires more diversity support, staffing and resources just to meet current demand. How can this be replaced by a "kiosk" in a Staples store?

The people working at SO are

Tory party.

The main beneficiary is Staples, trying to "diversify" beyond its office supplies/pen and paper past, in the same way Loblaw's has diversified into healthcare. Ford granted them the concession without making the decision public, or tendering public bids. It was strictly quid pro quo. So much for "free

Carlson's Edmonton fail

by: John Bell

I guess it seemed like a good idea at the time: rent Edmonton's (capacity approximately 25,000) hockey arena for the evening.

Invite right-wing icons Tucker Carlson, Rex Murphy and Conrad Black to pontificate. Yokels from all over the province will be hanging from the rafters, right?

It would happen on the heels of another Carlson show, in a smaller Calgary venue, where Alberta Premier Danielle Smith would join the far-right "pundit" in "conversation". Smith's office insists her presence does not mean agreement with Carlson's views, and any way is purely a matter of free speech.

It is worth noting that Smith never exercises her right to free speech by sharing the stage with a left of centre speaker

Organizers said the Calgary show was "sold out" but plenty of tickets are available on-line at deep discounts. Then organizers decide

to go for broke and take the show on the road. The Edmonton event, sponsored by the far-right Take Back Alberta group, is ominously called "The Coming Storm."

Stormy, maybe. Coming, not so much.

Maybe it was the initial \$400/

ticket price tag. Maybe it was the fact that adding the Edmonton show after a noon-time meeting at Calgary's convention centre on the same date was a bridge too far. Maybe it was the always daunting prospect of driving from Brooks, or Grand Prairie, or Red Deer in late January.

Or maybe it was the fact that all these "icons" are already yesterday's men.

Whatever the reason, tickets are not exactly flying out the door. Prices are being reduced, some offered at "pay what you can". One wealthy supporter bought 3,000 tickets to give away specifically to Edmonton fans, to entice them to come.

A message from the group Citizens for Brooks/Medicine Hat practically begs supporters to come the Calgary event, offering free buses and discounted seats: "Please do this for me! We have buses going to Calgary so you can get a ride there and back! Seeing Tucker Carlson, Rex Murphy and Conrad Black all in one room is a once in a life time opportunity."

According to The Coming Storm facebook Edmonton event page, 92 people are grabbing that

opportunity.

In the end these events will probably boast a "respectable" turnout, based on free tickets handed out by wealthy supporters and organizers who know they can't afford a high profile failure. It is getting harder to provide a focus for right-wing groups, as enthusiasm of the truckers movement recedes in the rear view mirror, and the divisions among the right re-emerge. Is simple hatred of Ottawa and Trudeau enough to hold them together?

It is a pleasure to see this Edmonton dinosaur-palooza cause sleepless nights, a spike in blood pressure, and financial panic in the Take Back Alberta war-room.

But make no mistake, the far-right organizing in the prairies, as elsewhere, is no laughing matter. Hate crimes and Islamophobic and anti-Semitic attacks are on the rise across the province. And despite attacks on workers, like her recent pledge to lay off 10% of Alberta's nursing staff, Smith remains disturbingly popular.



Brandi Morin: drop the charges

Brandi Morin is an internationally recognized prize-winning journalist and author. She is also an outspoken Indigenous woman, a chronicler of the hypocrisy of governments on the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Like most Canadian cities, Edmonton is “home” to tent encampments of the marginalized and unhoused. On January 10, Morin was filming an interview with one of the leaders of a group of mostly Indigenous tent dwellers. Edmonton police arrived to evict the occupants and destroy their few belongings. Morin identified herself as press, and was ordered to move to an “exclusion zone” out of sight of the police action.

For the sake of her story, and to resist the ongoing trend of the criminalization of press witness of police attacks on Indigenous protests, Morin refused to leave.

She was forcibly removed and criminally charged with obstruction of a police officer, a vague and highly subjective charge she carries the

possibility of 2 years in jail.

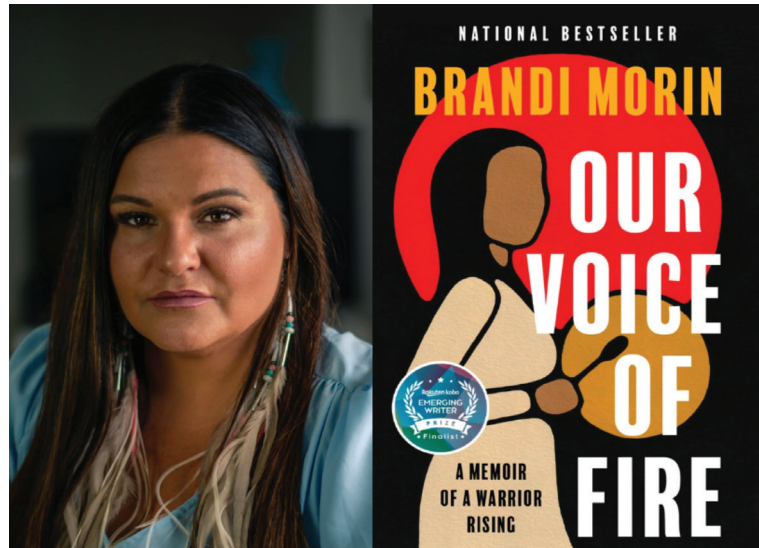
From the RCMP attacks on Wet’suwet’en land rights, to opposition to energy megaprojects in Labrador, to OPP attempts to control Ontario’s 1492 Landback protests, police have used bogus charges of things like obstruction and mischief against journalists who are sympathetic with Indigenous struggles.

“I don’t really think the public really understands the implications of violations of press freedom. It coincides with everyone’s freedoms and the erosions of democracies,” Morin warned.

This goes hand in hand with calls from right-wing politicians like Pierre Poilievre, Doug Ford and others for greater police powers and resources.

Intimidating, censoring and silencing the press prepares the ground for more police violence, and violations of rights. Whether the targets are Indigenous struggles or Palestinian solidarity actions, we need to oppose the erosion of democracy.

Drop the charges against Brandi Morin!



RCMP racism exposed at Wet’suwet’en Land Defenders trial

by: **Brian Champ**

It’s no secret that the RCMP is a racist institution, instrumental in the genocidal policies towards Indigenous peoples that laid the foundations of settler colonial Canada.

True to form, audio recordings played in court on Wednesday, January 17th heard RCMP officers use racial slurs and derogatory language as they ridiculed Indigenous Land Defenders during a violent raid on Gidimt’en land in November 2021 on behalf of Coastal Gas Link (CGL).

This was the third RCMP invasion of Wet’suwet’en land since 2019 to remove land defenders who oppose the building of the CGL fracked gas pipeline over their own unceded territory. Opposition to the pipeline is led by the Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs who were recognized as sovereign by the Supreme Court in 1997. But CGL sought an injunction from the BC Courts to allow the pipeline to be built - an injunction that ignores the Supreme Court ruling and instead relies on consultations with band councils on Indian Act reserves far from the pipeline route.

In early 2020 during the second RCMP invasion, the Indigenous led #ShutDownCanada blocked roads, rails and ports in solidarity with Wet’suwet’en drawing mass support from settlers including workers. Only the Covid-19 pandemic saved Trudeau from a major crisis.

In November, 2021 land defenders occupied the drill site as construction was poised to go under the pristine Wedzin Kwa (Morrice) River. More than 30 people were arrested in the violent RCMP raid. They hailed

from Wet’suwet’en, Haudenosaunee and other Indigenous communities along with other supporters. Criminal charges were laid against a number of the land defenders, leading to the court proceedings happening now.

Last week three land defenders were found guilty of criminal contempt, including Gidimt’en spokesperson Sleydo’, Shaylynn Sampson from nearby Gitksan territory and Corey Jocko, who is Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk) from Akwesasne. The hearings this week are to consider an application to stay the verdicts be-



cause of RCMP abuse of process for the use of excessive force during the arrests and for the unfair treatment of Indigenous people while under arrest.

During the hearing, an audio clip made during the raid heard officers referring to Shaylynn and Sleydo’ as ‘orcs’. Both wore red dresses and had red hand prints on their faces at the time.

“It is especially offensive when that red handprint refers to the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls movement, to compare that to monsters from a fantasy series,” said defense lawyer Frances Mahon.

Another clip heard officers ridiculing one of the men arrested, referring to him as “that big f--king ogre looking dude” and suggesting that

he is “autistic”. Then they described the arrest where officers “just beat the shit out of him” and “grabbed his balls and twisted”.

In the next few weeks we will find out whether these verdicts will be stayed, or the sentences reduced. Whatever the result, socialists must stand with the Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chief’s struggle - and all other struggles for Land Back against the ongoing settler colonialism of Canada.

Furthermore, the disgusting and dehumanizing attitudes of the RCMP, and their violent behaviour towards Indigenous people must be denounced. We should all hold the CGL injunction in contempt for using the settler colonial band council system to undermine Wet’suwet’en sovereignty against the spirit of the 1997 Delgamuukw-Gisday’wa Supreme Court decision.

This decision, along with others that recognize Indigenous sovereignty over unceded lands,

demonstrates the fragile claims of the Canadian state to sovereignty based on the doctrine of discovery, proclaimed by Popes in the 15th century. This held that “Christian” nations had the right to claim land from Indigenous peoples, who were described as “savages” to be removed from the lands they had stewarded for millennia.

The reliance on this dubious, religious based claim is similar to the claims of Israel for sovereignty based on ancient religious texts to override the rights of the Palestinians to the land their ancestors had cultivated for many generations.

Support the Wet’suwet’en legal defence fund and take action in solidarity at www.yintahaccess.com

PSAC workers keep fighting as bases strike continues

Workers employed by Canadian Forces Moral and Welfare Services (CFMWS), unionized through PSAC-UNDE, have been on strike at 6 different military bases, since January 15th. This strike, a

services, from bar-tending at the messes, retail and stock management at grocery stores, to accounts and clerical work, and recreational programming at the bases. However, despite their work being similar to the operational support provided

by the Federal Public Service workers at the very same bases, these workers are excluded from the core Federal Public Service, and their employer CFMWS is a Non-Public Funds Employer.

This exclusion from FPS, and the creation of this third-party employer, CFMWS who separately provides Personnel Support Programs (PSP), has resulted in the workers

making well below living wages, many below poverty line, for decades. A large majority of these workers make only \$16.65/hr and have little in terms of benefits. The wages are incomparable to that of the core Federal Public Service workers.

For example, shipping and receiving clerks at Garrison

Petawawa make 52% less when compared to those within the FPS performing the exact same work. The wages across the different bases under the same employer (CFMWS) are also wildly inconsistent. For example, a Sales Associate could be making wither \$17 or \$21 just based on which base they work at, even when the employer remains the same.

It is a direct result of these extreme disparities and poverty wages, that 600 workers at 6 different bases walked off the job on January 15th. They had voted with a resounding 94% positive at their strike vote. Now, they remain resolved to continue the strike until their demands of a living, thriving wage and a consistent national wage grid, are met.

The mandate of CFMWS as an employer is to provide “morale and welfare” services to the Canadian Armed Forces, their families, and the communities around bases. This winter, the workers are pointing out the stark hypocrisy in that mandate: that CFMWS cares about the ‘morale and welfare’ of everyone except their own workers, the ones who deliver those very services and

bring in the revenue.

What is CFMWS?

To understand how workers are systematically impoverished at CFMWS, one needs to look no further than the history of this organization and the obsolete notion of ‘Non-Public Property’. The Non-Public Property (NPP) was created through the National Defence Act as a unique kind of Crown Property, the governance of which remains with the Chief of Defense Staff, who receives direction regarding the administration and audit of the funds from the Ministry of Defense. The funds themselves are to be managed and administered through the Canadian Forces Morale & Welfare Services (CFMWS).

The overall unspoken argument behind this convoluted public/non-public structure, is to be able create a ‘self-sustaining’ system where the only revenue from the services are put back in to fund the services, thereby attempting to decrease or eliminate the onus on the Federal Government over time. This recipe for worker exploitation has led to growing resentment by the workers themselves. As services offered

by CFMWS expand, the wages of workers have absolutely stagnated over decades and the employer claims they have ‘no funds’

This, however, is far from the truth. A Public Interest Commission Inquiry has found that 40% of the funding for these workers come directly from the Ministry of Defense. Even beyond that, the top board members of CFMWS make 6-digit salaries, with the CEO Ian Poulter making \$250,000 a year, while his workers are forced to miss meals and default on mortgage payments.

The class divide here is stark, brutal, and runs right through the heart of Canada’s military establishment and is beginning to show itself. The workers have had enough as they embark on their historic strike.

Increased strikes at bases

In the last few years, military bases across Canada have witnessed significant class dissent and working-class action. From cleaners, to federal public services, to NPF workers, we are witnessing that the contradictions of class are laid bare more than ever at these worksites.



historic first for these workers, is growing stronger and has exposed the longstanding exploitation of low-income workers by CFMWS and the Department of National Defense.

The workers on strike

Across the military bases, these workers perform a wide range of

End Israeli terror

Call it genocide!

by: **Bradley Hughes**

Across Turtle Island and in other western states the repression against solidarity with Palestine is growing. In the streets, police are criminalizing protest. On campuses, students and workers are being punished for expressing support for Palestine and opposition to Israel's genocide. That's why it is important that we are clear that the current bombing campaign is a clear-cut and simple case of genocide. As the media, politicians, university managers, and so on increase their efforts to marginalize and punish dissent, we can't give any ground to their arguments. Israel is committing genocide.

At the end of December South Africa submitted an application to the International Court of Justice to ask it to rule on Israel's acts of genocide in Gaza. In Canada the mainstream media refused to cover any of the details of South Africa's case. Most mainstream media coverage did not go beyond repeating the details in the court's media release. (You can find the media release and South Africa's submission on the International Court of Justice website.) They did, however show the entirety of the Israeli rebuttal to the accusations - a pretty clear double standard.

Genocide Convention

The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948 and came into force in 1951. It is a clear and concise document. The definition of genocide and the responsibility of states to act to prevent it is detailed in less than 200 words. (At this point, you have already read over 200 words in this article.) The rest of the document covers how to join or leave the convention, amending the convention and how the crime should be tried. There are 152 states who have ratified the convention. Canada and Israel signed the convention in 1949 and South Africa joined in 1998.

Article I of the convention reads, "The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish."

Article II defines a list of acts committed, "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group," In addition to killing members of the group, genocide also includes:

- serious mental or bodily harm
- inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction, and
- Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.

Article III reads, "The following acts shall be punishable:

- (a) Genocide;
- (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
- (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
- (d) Attempt to commit genocide;
- (e) Complicity in genocide."

You don't need to look too deeply into the horrors committed in Gaza by Israel, or listen to very many sound bites from Israel's President or Prime Minister to see that genocide is being committed, and incited, by representatives of the Israeli government.

84 pages of evidence

South Africa's 84 page submission points out that genocide is separate from all of the other war crimes committed by Israel, "including intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population, civilian objects and buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science, historic monuments, hospitals, and places where the sick and wounded are collected; torture; the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare; and other war crimes and crimes against humanity"

They also point out that all states that are party to the Genocide Convention have an obligation to try to prevent genocide. Canada and Israel's other allies are ignoring this obligation.

South Africa's submission contains the facts that establish, "against a background of apartheid, expulsion, ethnic cleansing, annexation, occupation, discrimination, and the ongoing denial of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination — Israel, since 7 October 2023 in particular, has failed to prevent genocide and has failed to prosecute the direct and public incitement to genocide." In addition to being in the process of engaging in genocidal acts in Gaza, both the nature of Israel's actions in Gaza and its leaders' statements show that genocide is their intention.

The submission lists the death and destruction inflicted by Israel as of the time of writing. In the intervening few weeks those numbers have grown. Nearly 30,000 Palestinians have been murdered including over 11,000 children, and over 66,000 have been wounded. In comparison the Ukraine government reports 520 children killed by the Russian invasion in nearly two years.

The destruction also includes damage or destruction of "in excess of 355,000 Palestinian homes, alongside extensive tracts of agricultural land, bakeries, schools, universities, businesses, places of worship, cemeteries, cultural and archaeological sites, municipal and court buildings, and critical infrastructure, including

water and sanitation facilities and electricity networks, while pursuing a relentless assault on the Palestinian medical and healthcare system."

Those murdered by Israel include, "over 311 doctors, nurses and other health workers, including doctors and ambulance drivers killed on duty; 103 journalists, amounting to over one per day, and more than 73 per cent of the total number of journalists and media workers killed globally in 2023; 40 civil defence workers — responsible for helping to dig victims out of the rubble — killed while on duty; and over 209 teachers and educational staff. 144 United Nations employees have also been killed, the "highest number of aid workers killed in UN history in such a short time."

The submission also contains a list of the eight countries whose Presidents have condemned Israel's actions as genocide as well as a further eleven countries whose other state officials have made the same claim. When you call out Israeli genocide, know that you are not alone.

South Africa compares Israel's bombing campaign with other horrific examples, "By 29 October 2023 alone, it was estimated that 6,000 bombs per week had been dropped on the tiny enclave. In just over two months, Israel's military attacks had "wreaked more de-

exerts control over land, air and water to prevent humanitarian aid from reaching Gaza.

Decades of evidence

The submission also details the intentional shooting of children during the "Great March of Return" in 2018. During this series of peaceful protests at the Gaza border Israeli snipers shot children, journalists, medics and others who were "neither participating directly in hostilities nor posing an imminent threat to life." Over all 214 Palestinians, including 46, children were killed.

The submission also reviews war crimes committed by Israeli soldiers during the invasions of Gaza in 2008, 2012 and 2014. Including using white phosphorous, using Palestinian prisoners as human shields, intentional destruction of civilian homes and infrastructure, and on and on.

Condemned by their own words

In addition to Israel's actions, South Africa also submits their leaders' words.

In October, Israel's Prime Minister Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that Israeli soldiers "understand the scope of the mission" and stand ready "to defeat the bloodthirsty monsters who have risen against [Israel] to destroy us". Later in the Israeli

out there that is responsible. It's not true this rhetoric about civilians not aware not involved. It's absolutely not true. ... and we will fight until we break their backbone."

The Minister of Defence said that Israel was "imposing a complete siege on Gaza. No electricity, no food, no water, no fuel. Everything is closed. We are fighting human animals and we are acting accordingly." He also informed troops on the Gaza border that he had "released all the restraints", stating that: "Gaza won't return to what it was before. We will eliminate everything. If it doesn't take one day, it will take a week. It will take weeks or even months, we will reach all places."

The Israeli Minister of Heritage, Amichai Eliyahu posted on Facebook: "The north of the Gaza Strip, more beautiful than ever. Everything is blown up and flattened, simply a pleasure for the eyes ... We must talk about the day after. In my mind, we will hand over lots to all those who fought for Gaza over the years and to those evicted from Gush Katif" [a former Israeli settlement]. He later argued against humanitarian aid as we "wouldn't hand the Nazis humanitarian aid", and said, "there is no such thing as uninvolved civilians in Gaza"

In an Israeli news interview, one former MK called for all Palestinians in Gaza to be killed saying "I tell you, in Gaza without exception, they are all terrorists, sons of dogs. They must be exterminated, all of them killed. We will flatten Gaza, turn them to dust, and the army will cleanse the area. Then we will start building new areas, for us, above all, for our security."

This is just a small selection of facts and quotes from the 84 page submission.

The Arab league, The Organization of Islamic countries, and six individual countries support South Africa's submission. Canada's Prime Minister Trudeau says that Canada does not.

Global Intifada

All countries that signed the convention are obligated to "prevent and punish" genocide. However, there is no enforcement mechanism at the International Court of Justice. The global movement in solidarity with Palestine is the only enforcement mechanism. We need a global movement that moves to strikes and walk-outs and targets the only thing that our rulers hold dear: profits. Only when our rulers are more afraid of losing control in their own countries than they are afraid of losing control in the Middle East will we see an end to this genocide. It's only when we finally overthrow capitalism that we will be able to end the wars, violence, and genocide that it creates.



Millions have marched across the globe to end the killing

struction than the razing of Syria's Aleppo between 2012 and 2016, Ukraine's Mariupol, or proportionally, the Allied bombing of Germany in World War II."

And the evidence continues: Mass displacement; destruction of infrastructure leading to disease malnutrition and the threat of starvation; less than half the hospitals are even partially functional; Israel

Knesset, he described situation as "a struggle between the children of light and the children of darkness, between humanity and the law of the jungle." In December he described it as "a battle not only of Israel against these barbarians, it's a battle of civilization against barbarism."

The President of Israel Isaac Herzog said, "It's an entire nation

Israel's allies take revenge for ICJ ruling

The International Court of Justice ruled overwhelmingly in favour of South Africa's charge that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. Among its recommendations was an immediate end to obstructions of medical, food and water aid to Palestine.

In response the US, Canada, Australia, the UK and Italy all stopped funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. This is the main organization tasked with bringing aid to Palestinians. These allies of Israel, all of whom supply it with arms, justify the mass punishment of suffering Gazans because of accusations, as yet unproven, that as many as 12 UNRWA employees had involvement in the October 7 raid on Israel. The information implicating the workers comes from Israeli intelligence, some of it obtained under torture.

A few days later most of the countries in the European Union followed suit. Spain, Ireland and Belgium earn honourable mention for refusing to follow suit. Spain doubled its UNRWA support.

The UNRWA employs some 13,000 workers – 12 comprises .04% of its workforce. To date 153 of its staff have been killed by Israeli attacks. Workers range from diplomats and lawyers to people who load and drive aid trucks locally. Reports have not specified what roles the accused workers filled. Nor have they said what form their "involvement" took.

The rapid move by Israel's backers can only be seen as a slap at the ICJ ruling, revenge against the court for having the nerve to expose Israel's genocidal war. That same ruling lays bare the complicity of the very imperialist and sub-imperialist powers that have now doubled down on their support for the genocidal ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.

In the past Canada has supported the ICJ, in cases involving Rwanda and sanctioning Russia, but when it delivers a ruling that Ottawa doesn't like, it gives the court the stiff middle finger. The responses from Trudeau and his ministers reek of hypocrisy. International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen says aid will be channeled through other agencies. But in November Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly was praising the UNRWA and its work getting aid to the victims, calling it "the only organization able to concretely do this."

The attack against the UNRWA is not just against this specific agency. It is intended to discredit any international organizations – from the ICJ to the UN itself – that oppose the will of the imperial powers. Anything that exposes the criminality of their unswerving support for Israel, their military bastion in the heart of the Arab region, must be undermined.

The timing of the defunding of

the UNRWA, coming just hours after the ICJ ruling, exposes the cynical hypocrites in Washington, London, Ottawa and elsewhere for what they are: abettors of war crimes and knowing participants in genocide.

But evidence emerges that the aid agency's destruction was part of Israel's genocidal game plan all along. UNRWA is the main agency bringing relief to Palestine, for decades helping people get on their feet after every brutal attack. UNRWA workers have also been witnesses to war crimes committed by the IDF.

Witness this rant by a former Israeli State Department official named Noga Arbell, testifying before the Knesset: "Our goal in the war is to eliminate the threat and not to neutralize it." She continues: "And it will be impossible to win the war if we do not destroy UNRWA. And this destruction must begin immediately." She goes on to say that the first way to "destroy" UNRWA is to break Israel's allies from contributing to it.

It must be noted that she made these statements, on camera, 3 days before the October 7 attack.

Obstructing or withdrawing aid from a population facing genocidal attack shows contempt for any idea of international law and justice, and the height of moral depravity. We expect nothing better from these imperialist vultures, but it is unusual for them to admit it so publicly.

The ICJ ruling is a major victory for Palestinians and their millions of supporters around the



University of Toronto students walk out to protest Genocide Justin and UofT complicity

world. Our job now is to lay these crimes at our own government's doorstep. Even as the genocide is more and more revealed to the world, the Trudeau Liberals increase their support for the ethnic cleansing. They are supported by the Tories. As for the NDP, they are guilty by their silence and by continuing to prop up the government.

Our demands: complete embargo on sale of arms to and from the state of Israel. Full ceasefire now.

From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.

Langara college and BCNDP are stifling free speech on Palestine

The same day that the International Court of Justice ruled that Israel is committing genocide in Palestine, the President and CEO of snəwəyəl leləm - Langara College, Dr. Burns, fired English Instructor Dr. Natalie Knight for participating in a rally against that same genocide.

It looks like Dr. Burns is trying to remove all opposition to genocide in Palestine from campus.

Her campaign started last fall after English instructor Dr. Natalie Knight spoke at a rally for Palestine at the end of October. Dr. Knight expressed her support for the Palestine resistance to the Israeli occupation. Zionist politicians, organizations and media pundits all demanded that Dr. Knight be fired.

The college put Dr. Knight on paid leave and Dr. Burns issued an ominous email to all workers and students on campus stating that "an employee shared their personal views during a public event in Vancouver. These views do not represent those of the College and while the matter is under investigation, the employee is currently on leave." A nearly identical message was sent out a few days later. Dr. Burn's message was clear: if you say something the president disagrees with, you risk punishment.

Free speech policy

The President's email seemed to directly contradict the college's free speech policy, which reads, "Colleges and universities operate on the principle that academic freedom and freedom of expression are core components of intellectual enquiry and are central to the pursuit of knowledge. The value colleges and universities place on these principles does not imply their endorsement of views that are expressed."

Later on, the policy expresses the commonly held view, "academic freedom and freedom of expression are intended to protect expression of ideas that are not popular."

The president refused to meet with concerned faculty and left Dr. Knight on leave for nearly three months, with no idea when or if she would be able to return to work.

On Tuesday, January 26 students and workers gathered on campus for a rally in support of Palestine and

calling for Dr. Knight's reinstatement. All of the organizing paid off and Dr. Knight announced at the rally that she had just got her job back.

Students and workers were kept out of their own college buildings during the rally by a large police presence. The police also tried to get student reporters from the college journalism department to leave.

Cabinet minister intervenes

The response to the rally from the BCNDP government and the college was swift. Selina Robinson, the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills tweeted on Thursday afternoon that she was "disappointed that this instructor continues to have a public post secondary platform... I have met with the @Langaracollege leadership to express my concerns..." Last year Minister Robinson tweeted that people attending a rally in solidarity with Palestine, "have no humanity."

Twenty minutes after the Minister's tweet, Dr. Burns sent out an email to all workers and students: "The College takes seriously its responsibility to create a safe and respectful environment, free from discrimination. This is why we are very concerned about the events that unfolded at a rally at Langara this week which have impacted our community."

The email contained no details of the rally, or the demands to stop the genocide. Most people on campus would only have heard about the rally by way of the president's ominous words that imply something terrible happened. The same tactic was repeated a second time in the brief email, "Our aim is to provide an environment where differing views can be held and expressed in a way that promotes human dignity for all and protects the safety of our students and staff."

A college president and a cabinet minister who go to such lengths to defame opposition to genocide harm human dignity. Why is the BCNDP government trying to suppress opposition to genocide?

Then on Friday we found out the results of the minister's meeting with the president. Dr. Burns fired Dr. Knight. The same smear tactics were used again in a campus

wide email. Bizarrely it started by announcing that there were no grounds for Dr. Knight's original punishment and that she had been reinstated. But now she has been fired.

"The College made the determination that the employee would return to work with the expectation they would comply with the College's policies and initiatives which support a safe, respectful, and inclusive learning and working environment. Further, they were expected to take care to ensure any future remarks could not reasonably be interpreted as celebrating violence against civilians."

The employee proceeded to engage in activities contrary to the expectations laid out by the College and as a result this employee is no longer an employee of Langara College."

Clearly the goal of the college President is not a campus where it is safe for differing views to be expressed, but one where only the views of the President may be championed. Those who are opposed to genocide, ethnic cleansing, Apartheid, starvation, wanton bombing of families in their homes, and all the other horrors by Israel that Canada supports, must fear for their jobs.

Now is not the time to back down. College and university campuses have always been places where progressive students battle the defenders of reaction in the admin offices. And the students and workers on campus can win. Right now, on campus solidarity with Palestine is very popular. In just a few weeks last fall, over 700 students and workers signed a petition to the federal government calling for Canada to call for a ceasefire, an end to the siege, and an end to arms and aid to Israel. We can build on this movement on campus as part of the wider movement to force the Canadian government to take action against the genocide. It's time for a cross campus walkout to confront the college admin and the provincial and federal governments who support genocide.

Bring back Dr. Knight!

Fire Dr. Burns!

Check out socialist.ca/resource on our website for union statements in support of Dr. Knight and updated coverage.



Students and faculty join a protest for Palestine at Langara College

Pinkwashing Israeli genocide

by: **Morgan Oddie**

In the midst of the Israeli onslaught, with tens of thousands dead in Palestine, the State of Israel took to their official X (Twitter) account to showcase a member of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) raising “the first pride flag in Gaza as a call for peace and freedom.” In the literal ruins of Gaza, Israel claims to be liberating people from Hamas brutality. Although LGBTQ+ political propaganda has been de facto state media strategy for years, this example is an abhorrent showcase that must be resisted. This type of pinkwashing is the deliberate strategy to obfuscate Israeli human rights violations.

The ethical reasoning of pinkwashing (less commonly referred to as rainbow washing) aims to rally support for occupation around a new logic of homonationalism. The myth of Israel being the only bastion of democracy in the Middle East aligns with a convenient narrative of LGBTQ+ inclusion which is counterposed to the homophobia of some predominantly Muslim states. The homonationalist logic thereby requires queer and trans folks in the West to support the Israeli regime in the vision of queer futures in the Middle East.

As atrocities of the Israeli genocide have been witnessed by the international community at an

increasing rate since October 7, the neoliberal rights paradigm of divide and conquer has never been more salient.

Pinkwashing is a term often associated with Jewish queer writer Sarah Schulman’s widely read 2011 New York Times article, which called out the Israeli exploitation of LGBTQ+ rights to promote racism and xenophobia. But homonationalism is a larger part of imperialist agendas, by which foreign intervention can be justified through yet another avenue. LGBTQ+ rights – often disregarded by imperialist powers within their own borders – get utilized as a marker of cultural progress and in defense of occupation under the guise of democracy.

As Jasbir Puar’s 2007 Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times articulates, queer tolerance and acceptance has become a barometer for evaluating rights to and capacities for national sovereignty. The international transplantation of LGBTQ+ rights is informed by the intentional omission of class struggles that contextualize them. It’s no accident that Western imperialists often shorthand their drives to homonationalism as “gay rights” because it is precisely the white cis gay man as a perfect neoliberal subject that has hijacked queer liberation movements in the West. This is the vision of export most convenient to state capitalist interests.

Critics of the term “pinkwashing” point to the etymological implications of false advertising, because in fact, Israel’s legal protections for LGBTQ+ rights are relatively progressive. But this misses the point entirely by removing these rights from other structural oppressions. It also silences queer Palestinian voices and flattens multi-issue struggles. Given the violent apartheid regime that had turned Gaza into an open-air prison, indiscriminately killed Palestinian civilians in “mowing the grass” practices, and specifically targeted journalists, aid workers, and healthcare workers for death, there is a hardly a moral high ground from which to throw rainbow confetti. Lauding Tel Aviv as a safe ha-



ven for queers and a site of gay tourism ignores that Palestinians who go there are without the same working and living rights as Israelis be-

cause of racist state policies. As Ghadir Shafie, Palestinian queer activist writes, “It is therefore the moral duty of Palestinian activists speaking in international platforms to understand the dynamics behind Palestinian queer visibilities in our local contexts, and recognize pinkwashing as both an international strategy which concerns Israel’s global brand, and an internal agenda that aims to divide and rule.”

It is a fallacy to extract queer liberation from the struggles of other oppressed peoples and an erasure to assume that there are not queer Muslims fighting for justice and queer Palestinians fighting for the right to self-determination. The monolithic counterpoint to Israeli pinkwashing is the homophobic Arab – a figure ripe for condemnation by Islamophobic and racist sentiments.

The homonationalism enacted through Israeli pinkwashing propaganda has encouraged endorsement of occupation. It is imperative that queers on Turtle Island act in solidarity with resistance in Palestine, knowing that international struggles for liberation are inextricable. Ghaith Hilal, from AlQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society, states “You cannot have queer liberation while apartheid, patriarchy, capitalism, and other oppressions exist. It’s important to target the connections of these oppressive forces.”

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Recent reports reveal that private clinics are being paid more than double what public hospitals get for the same surgeries, and that former Health Minister Christine Elliott presided over a 278% funding increase to Don Mills Surgical while she was minister, before

becoming a lobbyist for its parent company Clearpoint. As the stench of corruption and unfettered profiteering off public healthcare grows, so is the anger at Ford.

The scope and breathtaking speed at which the privatization of hospital services is now unfolding is extraordinary. But it is important to remember that the Ford government has

had to proceed by lies, deception and stealth – for a very simple reason: the majority of people strongly support a public system and know the catastrophic consequences of allowing the dismantling of what has taken generations to build.

And pressure from below means they have been pushed back from their originally

planned roll-out of private clinics in September 2023, to April 1st.

Ford has no mandate from the last election to carry out the massive destruction they are undertaking. It is vital that we seize the moment to create an indivisible fight, in the community and in the workplace, to stop Ford.

Support the Socialist Worker and socialist.ca fund drive

Please consider making a donation to the 2023 Socialist Worker Fighting Fund.

Socialist Worker and socialist.ca don’t have rich backers. They are funded through sales, subscriptions and donations from supporters. Each year, we rely on a fund drive to help sustain an independent revolutionary socialist voice in the media.

You can help us reach our target. We want to raise \$10,000 to ensure the printed newspaper – and an expanding website and social media – continue to be the voice of people fighting back.

Why does Socialist Worker matter today?

Amidst the horror of the Israeli genocide of Palestinians, it is obvious that the mainstream media serves the interests of the rich and will never tell the truth about the apartheid state.

Likewise, the multiple crises of capitalism from the pandemic to climate change to the cost of living crisis, are also bringing about a growing wave of workers fighting for better conditions through strikes and organizing in unions.

Socialist Worker and socialist.ca consistently report on these struggles.

We also agitate for action in support of Indigenous sovereignty, against imperialism and war, and to end oppression in all its forms.

Thanks to all those who donated to past fund drives, we are sustaining a monthly printed publication and expanding our social media presence giving socialist ideas a much wider reach. With your help, we can continue this process ensuring socialist ideas will find a new audience in an era of crisis and radicalisation.

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Israelism – A much-needed look at the collective trauma at the heart of Jewish America

by: **B. Millar**

When I walked into the sold-out screening of *Israelism* at the Rio Theatre in so called Vancouver on Tuesday night, feelings of shared joy and excitement were met by the same feelings of collective grief that one might encounter at a celebration of life for a beloved member of their community.

This was a group of people with one common goal: to witness.

We were there to watch *Israelism* and attend a Q & A afterwards in-house with director Sam Eilertsen and the protagonist of the film, Simone Zimmerman. On the panel were two of Vancouver's most renowned and respected Jewish voices: Canadian author and filmmaker, Dr. Naomi Klein, and physician and trauma expert Dr. Gabor Maté.

The film is directed by two Jewish Americans, Erin Axelman and Sam Eilertsen, whose own stories served as inspiration for their compelling documentary. Since its release in February of last year (preceding the events of October 7), *Israelism* has had many screenings around North America, but for obvious reasons, the film has found itself in higher demand in recent months and is currently touring across North America and Europe.

Skillfully weaving multiple narratives and perspectives from those on both sides of the dividing wall between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, the film centers American Jewish perspectives into an expansive portrayal of the talking points that often emerge when people speak about Israel and Palestine.

Throughout this work, Axelman and Eilertsen also draw attention to the alarming degree to which pro-Israel policy relies on advocacy from Jewish youth to uphold its governing power within the United States through mass mobilization and funding campaigns.

L.A.-born Jewish American Simone Zimmerman (co-founder of IfNotNow) and a former Israeli soldier and Jewish American known only as "Eitan" remain central characters throughout the film, reflecting on their individual upbringings within their own communities in America and the deep connections to Israel that were cultivated and celebrated within every aspect of their lives from an early age.

From early memories of Jewish summer camp and her first high school exchange program in Israel, to advocacy with American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)

"Israel was just treated like a core part of being a Jew, so you did prayers, and you did Israel," says Zimmerman in the film.

actual antisemitism, *Israelism* vividly portrays the myriad of ways with which pro-Israel legislation and mass mobilization around the world to suppress Palestinian freedom does not defend the Jewish community, and actually comes at the cost of Jewish safety worldwide.

Eitan and Zimmerman reveal details of their time in Jewish summer camps, where running military drills dressed in army uniforms and learning to shoot a gun for the first time were commonly accepted as standard childhood activities.

"It's just a normal part of how our childhood

see for anyone and everyone who has the desire for liberation and peace in this world.

By bringing Jewish Americans to the center of this conversation, Axelman and Eilertsen highlight the vast capacity that Jewish Americans possess to affect change for Palestinian liberation while compassionately addressing the cycle of collective trauma that has been wielded against the Jewish population worldwide.

In lieu of relying solely on Palestinians to prove their reality to the outside world, this film offers a glimpse into a growing movement of Jewish Americans that are acting as leaders in their own communities, to reinvigorate an authentic Jewish identity that works towards the liberation of everyone.

Rabbi Miriam Grossman provides a beautiful encapsulation of Jewish identity in the film that is independent from the violent restraints of Zionist ideology. She describes Jewish tradition as "a chain of people, of ancestors, of texts, and traditions that are about justice and fighting for it."

The panel that followed the film underlined the global Jewish community's need to unpack their collective grief in order to truly address the real risks of antisemitism that exist worldwide today. The misleading philosophy that Israel will keep Jewish people safe only endangers us all by misdirecting our attention away from the true perpetrators of antisemitic violence.

This event further imbued the necessity of allowing space to process our grief without shame, while ensuring accountability is kept on our way towards collective liberation. Freedom can only be achieved when we can mobilize collectively from a place of compassion and truth.

"Jewish tradition tells us to envision a world where all people are safe and free, to never stop fighting for that world," continues Grossman in the film to a support group of fellow Jewish Americans. "May you all feel blessed in a tradition of liberation, may you be blessed to know you're not alone. Let's get to work."



Jewish American protest the AIPAC meetings

events, Zimmerman describes defending Israel as something that was deeply instilled into her identity as a Jewish American.

"AIPAC is just a thing that you do," said Zimmerman. Adding that going to the AIPAC conference is seen as "just another community event."

In the wake of rising white nationalism and

looked like," said Zimmerman.

At a time when politics feel deeply polarizing and rife with misinformation, this film offers an informed perspective while simultaneously offering a safe space for the Jewish community to unpack a complex and multilayered grief.

Regardless of your background, Jewish, Israeli, Palestinian, this documentary is a must-

Poor Things – directed by Yorgos Lanthimos

by: **Faline Bobier**

Greek director Yorgos Lanthimos is not afraid of the weird or quirky as his previous films attest: the absurdist black comedy *The Lobster* [2015], a film which follows a newly single bachelor who moves into a hotel with other singletons, who are all obliged to find a romantic partner in 45 days, or else be transformed into animals, or the psychological horror film *The Killing of a Sacred Deer* [2017].

In some ways his work could be compared to that of Ari Aster, the young American filmmaker, whose output sits somewhere between horror and black comedy, and one of whose aims is surely to unsettle and disturb audiences.

Poor Things, however, in spite or because of the quirky and weird, is a pure delight. It is a distinctly feminist fable that takes place in some weird steam-punk Victorian age and has definite links to Mary Shelley's Victorian masterpiece *Frankenstein*.

Emma Stone plays the main character Bella Baxter, whose adoptive father Godwin Baxter (played to creepy perfection by Willem Dafoe), or God as she calls him, dabbles in surgery on both live and dead subjects. Bella herself is an experiment where Baxter implants a baby's brain in her body.

This sets up the conceit of the film, which posits Bella as a clean slate, a woman who will learn about societal norms and strictures for women as she develops and for whom these norms and strictures seem nonsensical.

Stone does an amazing job at playing the stages of development that Bella goes through in the way she moves haltingly and jerkily and gradually develops vocabulary and the ability to string more than two or three words together, often in striking new ways.

Stone has described the process of rehearsal where she worked with Lanthimos to develop five different stages of development for Bella and she is also an executive producer on the movie.

The sets help to create the other-worldly environment since there is almost no 'outside'. We are thrust into the weird and wonderful world of *Poor Things* as the scene changes from London to Lisbon to Paris with technology that definitely was not part of the Victorian era, such as the carriages with horse heads but that run on steam, or the bizarre trolley cars



that fly above the Lisbon skyline.

But the real revelation of the film is the way Bella reacts to the attempts to make her behave like a 'proper' lady. The odyssey she embarks upon when she leaves God's house to explore the world, along with the caddish Duncan Wedderburn (played to hilarious and sleazy perfection by Mark Ruffalo), sees her bumping up against society's expectations and at every turn refusing to comply with these strictures.

When she and Duncan end up penniless in Paris she goes to work in a brothel but turns the whole expected behaviour of the women who work there on its head. She suggests to the Madame who runs the place that rather than having the prostitutes line up to be chosen or not by the customers, the prostitutes should choose the customers since it will make the whole experience more pleasurable.

She meets a young Black prostitute at the brothel, Toinette, who tells her she is a socialist. Bella asks what this is and when Toinette replies it's about making the world a better place for the poor & oppressed Bella immediately replies, "Then I am that too."

The parallels with Shelley's *Frankenstein* are there but in this case, rather than the 'monster' being destroyed by society, Bella refuses to conform to the sexist norms of her world and manages to turn on its head the whole patriarchal structure.

Health care workers unite to fight Ford

by: Michelle Robidoux

In a strong show of unity, three major healthcare unions – OCHU/CUPE, SEIU Healthcare and Unifor – filled the street outside the Sheraton Centre in Toronto on February 6th, vowing to step up the fight against Ford’s assault on healthcare. The three unions, representing 70,000 hospital workers in Ontario, are entering bargaining with the province amidst an unprecedented crisis in the healthcare system.

The protest drew busloads of people from across southern Ontario, including members of ONA, Steelworkers and OPSEU, as well as activists from community health coalitions.

By deliberately underfunding and understaffing hospitals, Ford is creating the conditions to carry out wholesale privatization of surgeries and diagnostics – a process which the government has vowed to accelerate in the coming months.

In this context workers face a tough round of bargaining with the Ontario Hospital Association, which is pushing austerity and concessions. In a joint media release, the union coalition demanded that the Ontario government and OHA find the desperately needed funding to save hospitals and improve patient care, including embedding staffing ratios in the contract. Working conditions in the sector are so bad that exhaustion and burnout have led to a 300 per cent increase in job vacancies since 2015. Yet the government is sitting on \$1.5 billion of unspent healthcare funding.

Union leaders vowed to escalate the fight to save our hospitals and improve working con-

ditions and patient care. Speaking at the rally, Michael Hurley, president of OCHU, said that members were asked for “a mandate for action to defend healthcare, to defend the people on the stretchers... We are going to be their defenders because if we the people who work in the hospitals will not stand up for them, who will? We will fight for them.”

As Sarah Correia of SEIU Healthcare stated in a press release, “Hospital staff are coming together to defend access to patient care, yet hospital executives are going to implement Doug Ford’s austerity agenda that defunds our hospitals so wealthy investors can open for-profit

clinics. Our three unions are drawing a line in the sand and showing solidarity to each other and to the people on the frontline of care. People deserve better, so together we’re going to fight for better.”

Healthcare worker bargaining comes at a time when a major mobilization is being prepared by the Ontario Health Coalition, to stop Ford’s privatization of hospital surgeries and diagnostics. The Coalition is planning a major mobilization at Queen’s Park in May and will deploy a mass door-to-door effort to deepen and widen the reach of the campaign.

This builds on the successful citizens refer-

endum last May, where 400,000 people voted in person and online, and last September’s mass demonstration at Queen’s Park which drew close to 10,000 people including buses from cities and towns across Ontario. Crucially, the protest drew large contingents from the major unions.

The community campaign and the healthcare workers’ fight need each other – and need to work in lockstep. As Michael Hurley told the Ontario Health Coalition Action Assembly in January, “the union can’t on its own fight this privatization.” Similarly, the community-led campaigns need the power of organized workers who are the frontline defenders of these services.

Instead of multiplying healthcare campaigns for each separate union, there needs to be a synergy between existing mobilizations rooted in the workplace and backed by the broader labour movement – like the February 6 rally – and the OHC call for a mass show of force uniting workers and communities in May at Queen’s Park.

The conditions are ripe to escalate the fight. Ontarians have seen how 3/4 of Covid deaths in long-term care were in private establishments, showing the criminal neglect of Ford’s policies of privatization and the consequence of sucking money out of the public system and diverting it to windfall profits for stakeholders. It was such an unmitigated disaster that they brought the army in. Now Ford is extending these private LTC homes’ licenses for 30 more years.

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Workers mobilize to save public healthcare in Toronto

Shut down anti-trans hate

by: Alex Adams

Alberta premier Danielle Smith has announced new policies for the province around trans youth and their ability to consent for their own medical treatment, as well as their choices around how they wish to be addressed in the classroom. The announcement represents a bow to the pressure of the far right and other “anti-woke” forces—pressure that has been growing since the far right convoy in Ottawa in 2021.

Smith has put trans youth in the cross-hairs of the UCP for the usual cynical reasons: pander to the demands of a vocal minority, while sacrificing a marginalized group in the process. Her proposal is to ban any hormonal or surgical options for gender reassignment for anyone under 18, including both hormones and puberty blockers. It also would require parental consent for anyone under 15 wishing to change their pronouns or preferred name within the school system, and the parents of 16 and 17 year olds would be notified of such changes although their consent would not be required.

These policies put the lives of some trans and non-binary young people at risk, a group that has higher rates of suicide and suffers from more violence and harassment from all directions. When the state passes policies or laws that dictate control of personal autonomy over one’s own body, it is a manifestation of oppression that reinforces sexism and

transphobia. In an Orwellian attempt at spin doctoring, Smith claims to be protecting children from making decisions they may regret later.

This claim is as invalid as the protective claims made by anti-choicers against women’s right to control their bodies. For anyone under 18, there is already an extensive vetting process to gain access to any medical treatment

if they wish to transition. If trans youth want to have hormone therapy, puberty blockers are used to delay changes that would otherwise happen, while the process of counseling, continues. If they decide not to proceed, puberty will happen once the medications are stopped.

Similarly, access to gender reassignment surgeries also requires an approval process. It’s

worth noting that health care in general now requires providers to get informed consent for any treatment from the patient (or a substitute decision maker if the patient is unable to consent). At the moment in Alberta, genital reconstruction surgery is only available to persons over 18, and chest masculinization surgery is available to anyone 16 and over. Most surgeons also require a letter from a mental health professional to access these procedures.

Smith did not stop there with her transphobic and homophobic attacks, also requiring parental consent for children to receive education about sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity in the schools, and banning transgender female athletes from competing in women’s and girl’s sports. These two issues have long been a key focus for the far right and religious right, in Canada and around the world.

There has been a response to these attacks, with sizable demonstrations happening across the province after the announcement. LGBTQ advocacy groups are preparing legal challenges to the new rules. Even mainstream politicians like Justin Trudeau have denounced the move, but Smith has not ruled out using the ‘notwithstanding clause’ in the Charter of Rights to escape any legal challenges to her bigotry. The only way forward is to continue to build the movement to defend trans rights in Alberta, and everywhere else that trans rights are under attack.



Ottawa rally against Alberta Premier and bigot Danielle Smith