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END THE WAR ON GAZA

ABOUT SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE

What We Stand For

The Whole System is Rotten

We oppose capitalism's focus on profit before people and the 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 sectors of the economy** including banking, the internet, the energy industry, transportation and privately-owned utilities.

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



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Youth Get Active

Ray Goerke

Socialist Alternative Youth (SAY) had a successful fall, with more members active in more communities than ever before. In September, we organized at universities and colleges across Canada, including in Victoria, Vancouver, New Westminster, Surrey, Saskatoon, and Toronto. Our national public meeting, *Fight Climate Change: Fight Capitalism*, showed there is incredible enthusiasm among young students and workers for strategies to fight the climate disasters and for a socialist future.

Following our solidarity on this summer's picket line, SAY was invited to attend the International Longshore and Warehouse Union's Young Workers' Conference in Vancouver. It was an excellent experience for our members, and our socialist ideas received a warm reception.

We've joined many picket lines, from the Teaching and Support Staff Union at Simon Fraser University, to Unifor grocery workers and TVO media workers in Toronto.

While young people are turning to socialism, it is unfortunate that misogynistic, anti-trans and reactionary ideas are also gaining an echo in a vocal minority. SAY members attended counter-protests to defend trans youth across Canada, arguing for workers' unity and the need for the labour and socialist movement to put forward a bold program of social and economic demands to counter the rise of the right.

Now we are attending solidarity with Gaza rallies, calling for a mass anti-war movement to end the war and for working-class solidarity.

In SAY, young people can learn and discuss socialist ideas while also getting actively involved in the struggles and movements of the working class today. Reach out to join an SAY group in your area! ★



University of Toronto students were eager to join SAY this fall

Class Struggle is How We Win

Grace Bodie

Young people are becoming bolder as they face and fight back against today's multiple overlapping crises. Youth are hit hardest by the rising cost of living, including rent and groceries. Wages stagnate, forcing people to work multiple jobs and pushing more and more into poverty and mental health crises. Student debt is piling up and new graduates' degrees are no longer a guarantee of a good job that can pay off debt and secure a stable life. The rise of anti-LGBTQ2+ hatred and legislation, and racism are also acutely affecting youth. Wars and climate change continue to threaten the future of youth with extinction.

In the face of these challenges, young people are organizing to stand up for themselves and their future. Youth are often the majority of protesters and strikers across the country in workplaces, on university campuses and on the streets. They are increasingly aware of the government's veil of politeness and empty promises and are looking for alternative means to fight for a better life for themselves and their communities.

The Liberal government continues to lie and set inadequate goals for climate that are scrapped as soon as a big business wants to build a pipeline, or if the Liberals might lose seats in Atlantic Canada. They have proven their willingness to support big business at the expense of workers and students, migrant labourers, Indigenous people and land, the environment, and the future of our world. Trudeau has been Prime Minister for eight years, during which regular people have been struggling to make ends meet. Homelessness is rising while big businesses are reporting record profits. The NDP refuses to distinguish itself, instead supporting the Liberal government, so that many young people are turning to Poilievre's Conservatives, a worrying trend.

The government relies on big business to stay in power, and big business uses the government to maintain the current capitalist system that allows them to hoard their wealth. This wealth is generated by the workers who only get a fraction of the value they produce back in wages. Capitalism will always put profit before people. This understanding of reality explains how today's crises are all connected and how the united working class, by withholding its labour and therefore stopping all profits, holds the key to fighting against all forms of oppression and for a better society.

Many strikes have pushed back against stagnant wages and demanded better workplace rights. Many young workers are on the picket lines. More and more working-class students are also workers as they struggle to make a living.



Teaching assistants on strike at Simon Fraser University

With the rise in anti-LGBTQ2+ legislation and hate, young people are pushing back, organizing counter-protests and occupying parliamentary buildings and university campuses.

By going on strike and mobilizing around concrete demands, young people disrupt the flow of profits, hitting the ruling class where it hurts. Capitalists need to exploit workers and students to increase their wealth; they need scapegoats like immigrants and LGBTQ2+ people to blame for the economic crises they've created, and they need Indigenous people's land to exploit for profit. Our most fundamental interests for freedom align in our fight against capitalism and for a socialist future. A united movement including youth, students, Indigenous people and migrant workers, by leveraging their power as workers, across workplaces, campuses and in the streets, can transform society.

Socialist Alternative calls for a true living wage, Indigenous treaty rights to be respected, increased funds for public services, and green, reliable jobs for everyone. Historically, class struggle is how people have won every right under capitalism, from the 8-hour workday to social housing to accessible medical care, and youth have always been at the forefront of these movements.

Solidarity with those fighting for their lives under capitalism! Join Socialist Alternative to help build a mass movement and a clear path forward towards a socialist future. ★

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Québec's Common Front Could Make History

Martin LeBrun

On November 6, 420,000 public sector workers in Québec's Common Front held a one-day strike as they campaign for a new contract. The strike builds on a march of over 100,000 people in Montreal on September 26 for quality public services and a good deal for workers. The members then voted 95 percent to strike, up to and including a possible indefinite general strike, the strongest strike mandate since 1983!

The Common Front unites workers in the CSN-CSQ-FTQ-APTS unions and is demanding improved conditions to attract and retain workers in education, health care, social services and post-secondary education. It also calls for cost-of-living adjustments (COLA). The struggle has been joined by 120,000 teachers and nurses, with multiple strikes planned throughout November.

The public strongly supports the workers in their struggle with Québec's CAQ government. A poll this summer shows that 87 percent of Quebecers agree that the government needs to improve public-sector working conditions, 86 percent that public-sector salaries should at least be indexed to the cost of living, and 75 percent that improved conditions will result in improved public services. This strong support will be a problem for CAQ Premier François Legault.

The National Assembly passed the CAQ's bill to give MNAs a *minimum of \$30,000-a-year pay increase*. Yet its



Public sector workers rally in Québec's Common Front

pay offer to workers would *cut* real wages by 6.1 percent by 2027. After a year of negotiations, the CAQ only conceded a 1.3 percent increase.

Common Front workers are full of confidence. They will need to pressure their union leaders to stand their ground and to continue escalating actions until the unions win their claims — unlike the leaders of Ontario's CUPE and BC's GEU who settled for weak deals. COLA for over 500,000 workers and a rebuilding of public services would be a huge victory and show all Canada's working class what a determined struggle of unionized workers can win.

The momentum behind the Common Front is a historic opportunity for the Canadian labour movement! It is a chance to start reversing the decades-long erosion of public services, and to end teacher shortages and endless wait times in emergency wards. ★

For more on Québec: alternativesocialiste.org

NDP Wins in Manitoba

Sean Rohne

Manitoba's NDP won the 2023 election, jumping from 18 seats and 32 percent of the vote in 2019 to 34 seats and 46 percent. The Conservatives won 22 seats, down 14 seats from four years ago. The NDP avoided the failure in Alberta where it squandered a similar lead of 10 percent in the opinion polls months before the election.

The NDP's victory was driven by its strong performance in Winnipeg, winning 28 of the 31 seats. The NDP also gained a couple of seats outside Winnipeg. The Conservatives held on to their southern rural stronghold, but lost ground everywhere else.

The NDP campaigned on restoring and improving health care, education, and social services, all of which the Tories had cut and restructured. The NDP also promised to balance the budget by 2026, launch a public inquiry into the COVID response, and freeze fuel tax and hydroelectric rates.

The Conservatives faced a voters' backlash over their handling of COVID, with Manitoba having Canada's second

highest per capita death rate. Heather Stefanson, elected leader of the Conservatives in 2021, failed to distance the party from the unpopular former premier Brian Pallister, who resigned amid controversy over his remarks on reconciliation.

The NDP's leader Wab Kinew is the first Indigenous premier of a province, and has raised hopes of change from the Conservative's racist policies. He promised to look for the remains of murdered Indigenous women in the Prairie Green landfill. The Tories made a big deal of pledging not to look, as part of their late and desperate attack ads, which largely failed.

The Liberal party was virtually wiped out, reduced to one seat. This is a pattern across western Canadian provinces where the Liberals have only this one seat.

There are high hopes for the NDP, but given its moderate platform and the pattern of government in other provinces, they are unlikely to deliver radical change such as ending Manitoba's long-held position of having the worst child poverty rate of any province. Indigenous people and workers will need to push the NDP to be bolder. ★

Ford Still Standing After Two Defeats

Alex Aiello

The Ford government was forced to reverse its plans to give property developers a chunk of the greenbelt and to legislate the end of a school workers' strike. Yet still Ford moves his agenda forward. From expanding rare earth mining and fossil fuel energy production, to subsidizing corporate profits in electric vehicle manufacturing with no guarantee of long-term secure jobs, the Ford government is transforming Ontario's economy and environment for the benefit of big businesses, at the expense of Indigenous people and the working class.

The federal Liberal and Ontario Conservative governments have announced three electric vehicle battery plants, claiming thousands of new jobs will be provided. However, there is no guarantee those jobs will last with increasing automation, and the numbers are often inflated (including temporary jobs associated with plant construction). The federal and provincial governments have contributed over \$30 billion to subsidize Volkswagen, Stellantis and Umicore — all highly profitable corporations. Trudeau stated that the Windsor plant would make back the federal government's money in less than 5 years, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer has said it will likely take upwards of 20 years to break even. EVs won't improve overall climate emissions; the bosses are using them as an excuse to cut jobs in the long run. Public money should be spent on needed expansions of mass transit, and those are the jobs that unions should be demanding for their members.

EV battery production relies on the extraction of rare earth minerals, which is why the Ford government supports the opening of the Ring of Fire in the James Bay Lowlands, located within the boundaries of Treaty 9 territories. Wyloo is an Australian mining company with a history of destroying the land and livelihood of Indigenous communities. It is



pushing for the construction of infrastructure to access the Ring of Fire, a 5,000 square kilometre region with deposits of nickel, cobalt and chromite. In response, several First Nations, such as Grassy Narrows, Wapekeka, Neskantaga, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, and Muskrat Dam, have formed the Land Defence Alliance, in a collective effort to protect their territories. Premier Doug Ford refuses these communities' demands for an audience. Socialist Alternative stands in solidarity with Indigenous people defending their territories from capitalist exploitation.

Significantly, Ford was forced to cancel the removal of land from Ontario's Greenbelt, 810,000 hectares of protected and environmentally-sensitive farm, forests, and wetlands that stretch from Niagara Falls to Peterborough. Four high-profile members of Ford's government were forced to resign, including two cabinet ministers and two senior civil servants. Two reports, from the Auditor General and the Ethics Commissioner, concluded that the process "was biased in favour of certain developers and landowners who had timely access to the housing minister's chief of staff." In other words, Ford's friends stood to make \$8.3 billion from the land swap. After weeks of widespread public outcry and protests, Ford backed down. This is a huge win that shows how movements can force even a stubborn Conservative majority government to back down.

As Ontario's energy demand increases with new housing and industrial developments, its already strained system needs expanding. Instead of embracing renewable energy sources like solar and wind, Ford is doubling down on fossil fuels, with the percentage of oil and gas in Ontario's power grid increasing from 4.0 percent in 2017 to 10.4 percent in 2022. The government cynically puts forward nuclear energy as a clean alternative, but nuclear energy is not renewable, produces highly toxic waste and won't come online fast enough, as reactors take up to 15 years to construct. It's the Ford government's own fault that Ontario is in this situation after they threw away \$231 million to cancel renewable energy projects that were already underway.

Ontarians need a real working-class alternative to Doug Ford and his Conservative circus who represent the interests of the CEOs and the bosses at the expense of everyone else. ★



Protestors in Toronto oppose mining expansion in Indigenous territories

Workers Are Striking Back

Tim Heffernan and Bill Hopwood



As the soaring cost of living bites and the pain of the Bank of Canada's high interest rates hits workers' incomes, the Canadian economy has flatlined for the last six months. Unemployment is creeping up as the risk of recession increases. This is what the Bank of Canada is aiming for by pushing up interest rates. On top of that, the COVID payments to workers and businesses have come to an end and people are getting squeezed on all fronts.

Workers are not taking this lying down. 2022 had the most days lost in strikes in over a decade. 2023 had smashed last year's record by the end of October, and is on course to have the most days lost in strikes in over 20 years.

Rising Militancy

Alongside the soaring cost of living, workers feel undervalued by the bosses; during COVID they were "heroes," now they are treated as "zeroes." Workers have had enough of the corporations raking in record profits and CEOs getting ever richer. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives reported that the top CEOs' pay has doubled from 2008 to 2023. The 100 richest CEOs were paid "243 times more than the average worker — an all-time high."

Workers are pushing their union leaders to stand up, with a growing pattern of the members rejecting poor Tentative Agreements (TA). BC's longshore workers rejected the first two TAs and Metro Toronto grocery workers and Windsor Salt workers voted down their first TAs. Often, poor contracts, if accepted, are only agreed on by small majorities, with widespread dissatisfaction. Unifor's agreement with Ford, while making major monetary gains, only passed by 54 percent, with the skilled trades rejecting the contract. In 2022, BC's General Employees Union members only voted Yes by 53.4 percent, a difference between the yes and no votes of around 1,500 members.

St Lawrence Seaway workers, after an eight-day strike, won a pay raise of over 13 percent over 3 years, plus a \$2,000 signing bonus. The Teaching Support Staff Union at Simon Fraser University won their long dispute, even though the university hired a private investigation company to spy on and try to intimidate the pickets.

The biggest battle now is Québec's public sector workers with 420,000 workers in the Common Front joining a one-day strike on November 6 and at least 120,000 other public sector workers taking actions. The workers have widespread public support, but that alone will not be enough to move the government (see page 5). The union leadership will need to show determination to win a better deal than was won by the public sector in BC and Ontario.

Union Leadership Needs More Backbone

As well as bringing forward weak TAs, some union leaders support dangerous strategies. The leadership of the union for Ontario's high school teachers and educators, OSSTF, has accepted the government's proposal for binding arbitration. The union is placing all its eggs in the basket of an arbitrator with no possible recourse to any workplace actions. This also divides Ontario's teachers as the other three education unions in Ontario have not taken the government's poisoned offer and have gone ahead with strike votes.

Too many union leaders are out of touch with the lives of their members, as they have incomes of around \$200,000 and spend too much time hobnobbing with politicians and the bosses. Union leaders should live the same lifestyle and experience the same cost-of-living squeeze as their members do.

Socialist Alternative supports:

- Fighting, democratic unions run by and for the membership, to campaign for better pay (including cost-of-living adjustments) and working conditions.
- Full-time union officials and representatives to be elected regularly from the membership, subject to recall and to receive the same wages as those they represent.
- Unions to play a leading role in building broader movements for social change.
- Unions to organize the unorganized with bold campaigns and solidarity in struggles.

An injury to one is an injury to all! Solidarity with strikers! Respect all picket lines! ★

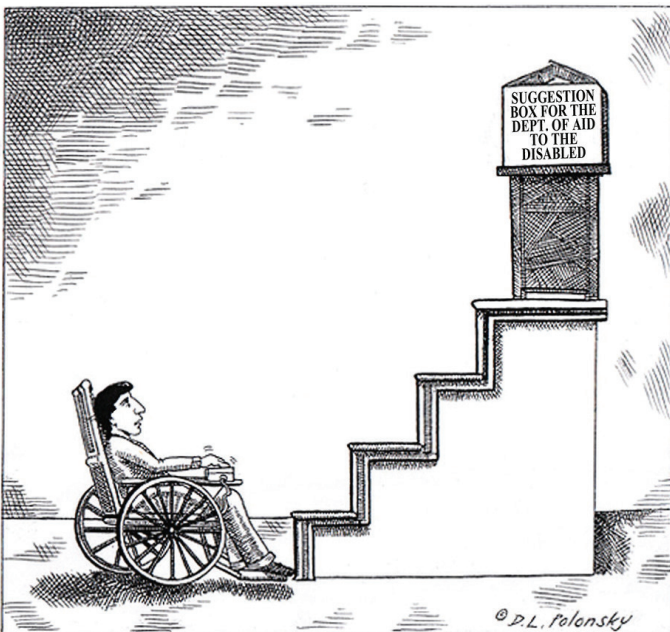
Life on Disability

Anonymous

Diversity and Inclusion: two words that sound wonderful on paper, especially in the workplace. However, when they are tested, they quickly crumble into dust.

In 2016 I was diagnosed with Systemic Lupus Erythematosus. This gradually made my muscles painful and weak so I could not work full time. I had to walk a tightrope of allotted hours so I could receive benefits. I decided that I should go to college to get my diploma in supporting teaching in the classroom. On my first day with my visible walking stick I realized that there was a good five-minute walk to the escalator. When it was out of order, which happened a lot, I had to lump it up three floors to my class. Our first subjects were “Disability and Inclusion.” There was more than a slight giggle when I asked if this building was inclusive.

I now work as an Educational Assistant for Saskatoon Public Schools as a CUPE member. I managed to work fine with the younger years and had a six-month contract with Pre-K. Even though I was looking for just part-time hours, I had to have my doctor fill out forms for accommodation. I was told I could not work due my disability, which hurt, and I couldn't get benefits because of my wife's income. You see in the media that those on benefits are lazy when the system simply does not allow them to work. Under capitalism, inclusion really means that the bosses assume that if a person is motivated (or fortunate) enough, they would rise above their problems. Capitalist institutions are full of contradictions: my favourite absurdity being steps inside and outside the special school so students can't get in or out without assistance. ★



Cartoon by D.L. Polonsky

What Makes Me Angry: Alberta's Pension Con Job

Larry Hyink

“What's in it for You” is the title of Alberta's UCP government's web page pushing their province's exit from the Canada Pension Plan (CPP).

It claims that Albertans “could” pay *less* and get *more* if only they back the plan. The list of benefits that “could” happen is extensive (I kept expecting to read that it would cure warts), but there are no money-back guarantees for the people of Alberta. There never are in this sort of con job.

Reality checks are provided by *The Tyee* and *Investment Executive*. They point out the \$344 billion that Premier Danielle Smith's so-called plan claims it would get is based on 53 percent of the total funds managed by the CPP. This sum would be a sound basis on which to begin an Alberta plan, *if* the rest of Canada agreed to let half the money in its pension plan be siphoned off for the exclusive benefit of about 15 percent of the country's population.

Dream on, Danielle.

Even Alberta's most popular political figure, Pierre Poilievre, came out against the UCP's bizarre scheme. Understandable: any federal leader advocating looting the Canadians' pensions in favour of a single province, pretty much guarantees he'll only have MPs from one province after the next federal election.

Despite pouring cold water on Danielle Smith's fever dream, Poilievre made sure to put the blame on Justin Trudeau, along with the blame for global inflation, dieting failures and sunspots. Thanks, Pierre, for that single, all-purpose answer to every problem.

The UCP government is moving forward with “consultation” leading to a “referendum.” Oddly enough, as polls show most Albertans want to keep the CPP, the “referendum” doesn't allow this as an option, it only allows voters to choose which flavor of snake oil they'd prefer.

Why bother?

A socialist might suspect the whole business has just the tiniest bit to do with investment dollars.

The latest International Energy Agency report notes investment capital is migrating from oil and gas to renewables.

Premier Smith shut down renewables in Alberta and tried to con taxpayers into paying for energy industry messes. Where would the “former” oil and gas lobbyist look to “invest” Albertans' pension cash but in a boom-and-bust industry that global investors increasingly avoid? ★

End the War on Gaza

Socialist Alternative Canada

The Israeli regime's murderous assault on Gaza has provoked horror and mass protests around the world. Bombs rain down hitting innocent civilians, hospitals and schools. The death toll keeps mounting, over 40 percent of them children. One and a half million people are homeless. The Israeli regime is inflicting collective punishment and mass murder with a complete siege cutting off water, food, electricity, fuel. Hospitals are short on fuel and medicines. Many more are dying from unclean water, disease, and a lack of food and medical supplies.

Israel's defence minister said: "We are fighting human animals and we are acting accordingly." Prime Minister Netanyahu stated that Israel would "crush and destroy" Hamas. This could only be achieved by destroying large parts of Gaza and killing a huge number of civilians, who are already living in the world's "largest open-air prison." Hamas's destruction would only be temporary; the rage and anguish would fuel a new version.

Israel's huge onslaught was triggered by Hamas's bloody assault on October 7. They attacked both military posts and civilians, killing 1,200 and taking at least 220 hostages. Among the dead were peace activists, children and people at the Supernova festival. It is the deadliest attack in Israel's history, leaving shock, anger, grief and trauma.

US imperialism, backed by its allies including Canada, quickly declared support for the Israeli government, while speaking empty words about human rights. Biden has promised Israel US\$14 billion on top of the "normal" US\$3.8 billion paid annually. Western imperialism, in a false attempt to show compassion, calls for humanitarian pauses, which may happen, but they do not call for the assault and slaughter to end.

Divisions in Israel

Netanyahu utterly failed to protect Israelis. He supported Hamas for years, encouraging Qatari funding, and relied on technology to cage Hamas. Yet Hamas breached the US\$1 billion "smart fence," completely surprising the Israelis. Just after the attack, 86 percent of Israelis said it was a failure of the country's leadership.

Netanyahu's government is the most right-wing in Israel's history and includes convicted supporters of terrorist groups. For months Israel was rocked by huge mass protests against Netanyahu's assault on democracy. Now that movement has disappeared and some opposition politicians have joined the government, but the distrust of the regime remains.

The families of the hostages are demanding a ceasefire, as Israel's assault endangers the hostages' lives. As more Israeli soldiers die, as is inevitable in a bloody urban battle, questions will grow about the war and the course of Israeli society.

Wider Conflict

There is seething anger in the West Bank at the one-sided war on Gaza and the increased killings of West Bank Palestinians by settlers and the Israeli army.

There have been huge demos in Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and more; often solidarity with Gaza merges with opposition to their own countries' dictators. The region's reactionary regimes face enormous pressure to express solidarity with the Palestinians. They also fear new waves of struggle at home over food, inflation, and human rights.

Imperialism and Israel are worried that the conflict spreads. Hezbollah and Israel have fired rockets into Israel and Lebanon. So far both sides have avoided a major escalation, but the region is a tinder box that could explode.

Imperialism's Hypocrisy and Bloody Role

US, British and French imperialism have the major responsibility for the conflict's roots. For centuries the land of Israel-Palestine was home to Arabs, Jews, Bedouins, Christians, Muslims, Druze, and other peoples. Imperialism carved up the region's lands and peoples, including by creating the state of Israel in 1948. This resulted in the Nakba, the expulsion of 700,000 Palestinians. Palestinian and Israeli national identities are 20th century creations.

Israel has been the biggest recipient of US military support, worth over US\$225 billion and the US produces 80 percent of Israel's weapon imports.

The US government's staunch support of Israel allows Russian and Chinese imperialism to pretend to be the Palestinians' friends. They will use this to boost their influence in the neocolonial world, especially in Africa and the Middle East, claiming to be anti-imperialist. They will hide their own imperialist aims for these regions and their oppression at home.

The Palestinian people have been betrayed many times by capitalist governments. Jordan massacred them in 1970. Egypt ignored them in its 1979 deal with Israel. The US has never forced Israel to stop the settlements. China is now Israel's second largest trading partner.

Western imperialism claims to defend democracy, yet Germany banned rallies supporting Gaza. Britain's Prime Minister, Sunak, tried to ban a rally on November 11, supposedly the day to remember the victims of war! Four Moxies' workers in Toronto were fired for showing support for Palestinians.

The Cycle of Bloodshed

The current invasion of Gaza and Hamas's attack on Israel are the bloodiest in the long cycle of bloodshed. The slaughter may drastically reduce Hamas's military capacity, alongside a



Smoke from Israeli airstrikes on Gaza. Image: Amir Farshad Ebrahimi

huge loss of civilians' lives. But the seething anger will burn even stronger, and Israelis will face future attacks. The invasion will not bring peace.

As long as two national groups fight for the same land there cannot be peace. The current policies ensure that the cycle of death and destruction will continue and most likely get worse.

Hamas cannot defeat Israel, which has jets, the Iron dome, tanks and artillery. The Israelis cannot be driven into the sea; the regime would use nuclear weapons in a fight for survival. Hamas's strategy, if it has one, is to push international forces to intervene on behalf of the Palestinians. This was the failed strategy of the Palestine Liberation Organization when led by Yassar Arafat. Imperialism has always failed the Palestinians.

Some Israeli politicians want to ethnically cleanse Palestine, taking its land and water. Any attempt to remove 5.5 million people would produce an unimaginable nightmare of genocide and produce a conflagration in the Middle East. Palestinians would inflict bloody revenge. Israel would be a pariah state. Most of the ruling class, senior military and the Israeli population recognize that such a policy is impossible, as does US imperialism.

A Way Forward

Most people in the region want peace and security, and a good quality of life to raise their children. A way is needed that unites people. Most people in Palestine and Israel are workers. Most of the rest of the population are poor farmers or have casual work in the informal economy.

Their common economic interests as workers and poor could be a unifying force. While it is true that Jewish workers in Israel, on average, are better off, Israel is as highly unequal a society as the US. Eighteen percent of Jews live in poverty. Many more are just getting by with the high cost of living. In contrast, Israel has more billionaires per capita than the US or Canada.

Both Israelis and Palestinians are members of unions. In May 2021, Palestinians held a "dignity strike" across Palestine and

Israel, which included acts of solidarity from Israeli workers. Up to 150,000 Palestinians worked in Israel just a couple of months ago; construction has almost ceased in Israel due to the lack of workers from Palestine.

The idea of workers' solidarity across the communities may seem far-fetched at present but, after this bloodshed, the working class will continue to pay with higher prices and taxes. Profound questions, asking how to end this cycle of death and destruction, will grow.

Our sister organization in Israel-Palestine, Socialist Struggle, is attending the rallies to stop the war. They campaign for a socialist Palestine alongside a socialist Israel, with the wealth of society used to raise living standards, rebuild destruction, provide housing and services, and guarantee equal rights to existence, to self-determination and to a life of dignity and well-being.

International Workers' Solidarity

The worldwide rallies calling for an end to the war on Gaza will grow larger. Canadian rallies must demand ending arms sales to Israel, worth over \$21 million in 2022, and for the government to call for the war to stop. Canadian governments, whether Liberal or Conservative, are tied at the hip to US imperialism: only a mass movement and independent working-class organizations will force their hand.

Inspiring examples of solidarity include the Barcelona dockers and Belgian dock and airport workers refusing to load shipments of arms to Israel. Similar actions are likely in other countries, as many union locals around the world have called for peace and a just solution to the conflict. The spread of actions like these will increase pressure on governments and, more importantly, point a way to end the cycle of bloodshed. Such workers' action can send a message to workers in Palestine-Israel that there is an international movement that offers a better world. ★

For more on Israel-Palestine and *Socialist Struggle*:
<https://socialism.org.il/>

Stop the Right Wing with Mass Workers' Action

Chris Fofonoff and Violet Forrie

In January 2022, the convoy movement saw the Canadian right wing break out from the fringe into mainstream political discussion and worldwide news, ushering in a significant new polarization in Canadian politics.

At the same time, the federal Conservative Party was beginning its embrace of a new star. Running for the vacant leadership of the party, Ottawa-area MP Pierre Poilievre took populist aim at "big-city gatekeepers" and "elites," promising to cut government spending, end the carbon tax, lower interest rates, increase defence spending, privatize the CBC, and increase private housing supply. Since his landslide leadership victory, he has de-emphasized some further-right former priorities like attacking the World Economic Forum and promoting cryptocurrencies.

These two forces have mingled with and reinforced one another, with right-wingers and newly politicized layers flooding into the Conservative Party during Poilievre's campaign — over 300,000 Canadians joined to vote for him. It is the largest party in Canadian history, with a membership of over 675,000. They're clearly leading the Liberals and New Democrats in opinion polls and are most likely to win the next federal election, due in 2025.

The far right continues to mobilize since the convoy. Many of its organizers are involved in the recent campaign against trans rights, disguised as "parents' rights." Although theirs is a minority view, they held rallies across Canada in September, gaining support among some recent immigrants. In most cases the rallies in support of trans rights have been bigger. The governments of New Brunswick and Saskatchewan have passed "parental rights" laws targeting trans youth.

With rising food, fuel, and housing costs, the status quo of the Liberal government is unacceptable for working-class people. But many don't think the NDP will be any different, as they have propped up the Liberal government and refused to take a stand for the working class and youth. Polls show the Conservatives



Rally to defend trans rights



Solidarity rally for migrant workers

leading the NDP amongst youth (40 vs 23 percent) and private-sector union workers, with public-sector union workers about evenly split, as many don't see any left-wing alternative.

In Alberta, the NDP ran a low-stakes campaign in May's high-stakes election, presenting themselves as simply a responsible capitalist alternative to the destabilizing right-wingers in power. Their defeat has granted the United Conservative Party under Danielle Smith another four years to cut taxes for the rich, privatize more health care services, expand fossil-fuel production and use, and scam workers through a provincial pension plan.

A similar campaign by the Manitoba NDP gave them a victory by only 3.4 percent against the most unpopular premier in the country, who ran a campaign centred on anti-Indigenous racism. New NDP premier Wab Kinew is not eager to make any significant changes to the province and will set the table for a future right-wing resurgence unless he is forced from below to introduce radical policies.

Conservatives coming to power will pursue attacks on workers with ferocity and more brazenness than Liberals or the NDP — trans, Indigenous and immigrant workers will be especially vulnerable as the Conservatives will use far-right protestors as a base of support.

Independent working-class organization and action are needed to cut across the growth of the far right. Despite being "essential" early in the pandemic, workers are being squeezed by the ballooning cost of living, driving many to embrace a fighting approach. In 2022, there were the most person-days not worked due to strike or lockout since 2009. And this year will surpass the last — there was a further 25 percent increase in January to July of 2023 above the same period in 2022 (see page 6).

This increased desire to fight has not been restricted to workplaces. Unions were vital to mobilizing against the nationwide queerphobic protests in September, and several locals have spoken out in solidarity against war and terror in Gaza. Unions can be an important part of mobilizing both for better contracts and for a better society. ★

Women, Life, Freedom: A Socialist Feminist Perspective

Allie Pev and Leslie Kemp

Women can never be free until the threat of violence is lifted from their lives. Whether violence stems from the brutality of war, from persecution for political activism or from their everyday lives — at work, in schools, on the streets or at home — violence is pervasive in the lives of many women.

The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on November 25 was established in 1981 to honour the Mirabal sisters, three feminist political activists from the Dominican Republic who were brutally murdered in 1960 by order of the country's dictator, Rafael Trujillo. The scourge of gender violence is systemic and built into the institutions of capitalist societies.

There is increasing attention to violence against women. This past year has seen right-wing attacks on reproductive rights and on trans women. There was an explosion of domestic violence during the pandemic and a rise in online, misogynistic characters influencing young men. Rape has been used a weapon of war for millennia.

Although these issues are pervasive in society, that does not mean they are natural or unavoidable. Women's oppression is part and parcel of class society. A major shift in women's roles took place during the transition from subsistence to agricultural-based economies — the beginnings of class society. Previously women held respected and equal status in their communities. The accumulation of surpluses that agricultural production made possible led to the desire of the rich to pass on property to the next generation and thus the need to identify their progeny, to inherit this property. Women and children increasingly were seen as property, and the roles of women and men were structured to serve this purpose. In addition to fulfilling their reproductive capacity, women raised children and maintained the household.

As agriculture expanded, the demand for more land grew and class society took on imperialist and colonial features. Wars and invasions acquired more land and resources and pushed existing peoples off their land. The industrial revolution and capitalism accelerated this process. Capitalism also spurred progress in material well-being for many people, and scientific and technical leaps. Today, most women have access to education, employment and a degree of financial freedom. But one thing remains the same: women's oppression.

Women have fought against oppression and violence and have played a critical role in movements for peace and justice. When the leaders of the international working class



Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg

voted for the slaughter of WWI, socialist feminist Clara Zetkin organized a women's peace conference. At it, she stated, "The workers have nothing to gain from this war, but they stand to lose everything that is dear to them."

The same is true of war today. In 2002 a United Nations' report said that women and girls were particularly vulnerable as "contemporary armed conflict exploits, maims and kills civilians more callously and systematically than ever before." Women and girls account for 80 percent of internally displaced people and refugees worldwide.

The interconnection of capitalism, colonialism and imperialism underlies much of oppression in today's world. As long as capitalism remains, women, girls and trans women will continue to exist under the thumb of class and sexist exploitation.

Women's movements have struggled for and won reproductive rights, maternity leave, the right to divorce, and fair labour laws. Under capitalism, the ruling class tries to push back these rights and women must resist. Women's movements for peace and political freedom are even tougher to achieve, if not impossible, under capitalism. That is why winning a different kind of system — socialism — is the only way to win peace. As Clara Zetkin said in 1914: "And our women must moreover seek to awaken the Socialist spirit, the proletarian class solidarity, in those they are helping; for let it be remembered that all the loving help and relief are in themselves incapable of shaking the foundations of capitalist society." ★

Attend our national public meeting, **Women, Life, Freedom: A Socialist Feminist Perspective**, on Saturday November 25. Scan for details and registration:



US-China Cold War Dominates the World

Maurice Li

The Cold War between the US and China dominates the world and has far-reaching impacts including on the global economy and on international relations. The mounting assault on Gaza adds to the Age of Disorder. Around the world arms spending is soaring and the merchants of death are making record profits.

The war in Ukraine is a bloody slaughter and a "war of attrition" for both sides. US imperialism utilized the war to consolidate its bloc and strengthen its position against Russian and Chinese imperialism. Sweden and Finland have abandoned neutrality, joining NATO, and Germany and Japan plan to double arms spending.

The US-China conflict is global. Russia and China are working to build an anti-Western imperialist bloc, especially in the "Global South." Coups in west Africa have kicked out the French, and Russia has been quick to move in.

With Russia tied up in Ukraine, Azerbaijan, backed by Turkey, seized the Nagorno-Karabakh region, and drove out the Armenian population.

The bloodshed in Gaza has the US and its allies backing Israel, while Russia, China, Turkey and Iran cynically claim to support the Palestinians. None of them support human rights or minority peoples at home.

The various capitalist powers increasingly compete for



markets and domination. During the slaughter of World War I, Lenin wrote, "an essential feature of imperialism is the rivalry between several great powers in the striving for hegemony." This rings true today.

At present, Chinese imperialism faces mounting woes with a deep economic crisis and growing doubts that it could win a conflict with US imperialism, a view intensified by Russia's lack of success in Ukraine. However, the US is also vulnerable to economic woes and the risk of a return of Trump to the White House.

US imperialism's backing of Ukraine is a warning to China over Taiwan, a crucial geostrategic stronghold of US.

International Socialist Alternative has stressed that the Cold War will intensify, although not in a straight line, with new events and crises influencing the tempo of developments. The fundamental conflict will continue until capitalism and imperialism are overthrown. ★

Argentina and the Pendulum of Discontent

Harland Bird

After finishing first in the August primary, the far-right Javier Melei finished behind the mainstream Sergio Massa in the first round of Argentina's presidential election in October. Melei and Massa will now face off in the November 19th final vote. However, regardless of which candidate ultimately wins, the people of Argentina will lose.

Massa continues the corporatist, centre-left, Peronist status quo that has left Argentina's economy in tatters. The numbers are staggering: 140 percent inflation, a crippling \$400 billion debt, and 40 percent of the population in poverty. Meanwhile, the rich continue dining in fancy restaurants.

Melei is Argentina's Trump or Bolsanaro — only more extreme. Exploiting people's anger, and claiming that "social justice is theft," he has vowed to end severance pay and sick leave; privatize pensions; slash social spending (he wields a chainsaw at rallies); end free university (saying "pay for university, you lazy bum"); outlaw abortion; eliminate the

Ministry of Women, Genders and Diversity; and allow men to renounce their paternity of unwanted children.

Massa will portray himself as the only sane candidate (not hard!), but Argentinians are desperate for change that they know he won't deliver. Many voters are willing to take a chance on right-wing crazy rather than stay the disastrous centrist course. This discontent fuels the far right, not only in Argentina, but also in Brazil, Ecuador, and Chile, where the moderate left has likewise failed to deliver. Wild political swings show that people are caught between hunger for change and fear of the far right, who are the only ones talking about change. Of course, this talk is cynical, as all the far right will deliver is austerity for the masses and more riches for the elites.

Argentina's working class has another option, as shown by the heroic struggles of 2001-02, when eight general strikes brought down five presidents in a month and 100,000 workers took over closed factories. This potential to break the failing electoral cycle still exists if the left disavows capitalism, and mobilizes on a genuine socialist platform to return to the people the vast wealth that corporations and the rich have stolen. ★

Socialism Needed for the Climate

Simon Schweitzer and Bill Hopwood

“Oil and gas will continue to play a crucial role in the energy system for a long time,” Shell’s CEO stated. The company recently announced it will lay off 15 percent of its Low Carbon Solutions workforce.

This summer broke multiple temperature records, including for the hottest month. A climate scientist described the temperatures as “absolutely gobsmackingly bananas.” While the world suffers climate disasters, *the* priority of the fossil fuel industry is making profits. Total world CO₂ emissions in 2022 were the highest ever and 2023 will be worse. The world’s oil and gas companies’ profits soared to US\$4 trillion in 2022, more than double 2021. The banks also fuelled the drive to climate hell. The Royal Bank of Canada put \$41 billion into fossil fuels in 2022.

In November, Dubai will host the next climate conference, COP28, and it will be chaired by its oil company boss. Neither the world’s dominant politicians nor big business will tackle the climate disaster.

Governments, including Canada’s, are hypocrites, talking about climate change while boosting oil production. The Liberals’ carbon tax hits people’s pockets but is ineffective. Canada’s oil production will *increase by 10 percent* in 2024!

A Different Road Needed

The technology, knowledge, and ability exist to rapidly move to clean energy, but the drive for profits and the competition between companies and governments is the fundamental barrier to real action.

There is much a government could do to tackle climate change. The funds exist to make the change. Stopping all investment and subsidies in fossil fuel production and infrastructure would release billions of dollars. The \$28 billion to subsidize electric car batteries should be directly publicly invested. Taking the banks and oil companies into public ownership would release billions more to invest in a transition program.

Conversion to wind, solar, geothermal and other clean energy sources is urgently needed. The current waste of energy and resources must end. Buildings could be upgraded to be energy efficient with passive heating and cooling; heat pumps can provide winter warmth and summer cooling at a fraction of the cost and energy use of furnaces and air conditioning.

The transport system could be transformed. Cities could have high quality, free public transit, including rapid rail in larger towns and cities. Most long-distance passenger



and freight could be shifted onto a high-speed rail network serving almost all of Canada’s population.

Cities could be filled with green spaces, which are cooler and better for health. Some of the land given over to cars — wide highways and carparks — could become parks, urban farms and provide more housing. Neighbourhoods could be complete with a full range of services, employment opportunities and leisure and culture centres.

A Good Jobs Program

Alberta’s fossil-fuel sector has shed 50,000 jobs since 2014. A program of green energy and quality living would provide many good jobs. It is more rewarding working to help people than to poison the planet. A program of re-training, with full pay, into union jobs would provide full employment. A program to build good-quality housing, affordable to all, would end the housing crisis.

Workers, who are the real experts, could develop production plans to end the huge waste, planned obsolescence and duplication of capitalism. Indigenous communities could have real controls over developments, a meaningful step to reconciliation, rather than the current empty gestures.

How to Win

The world’s capitalist class and their politicians are the roadblock to change. Making the life-saving changes will take a mass movement, which goes beyond 2019’s mass protests. This movement will need the organized working class’s power; rejecting the “environment or jobs” lie is a vital step to unity. The movement will need democratic structures to make coherent decisions about strategy and demands.

This may seem a tall order, but the alternative is an ecological hell. Building this movement needs determination, clarity of program and a struggle within the unions so that they will take a leading role. Humanity needs a new economic and political system based on a sustainable stewardship of the environment, and production for the benefit of the people and the planet. ★

Food Banks: The Temporary Fix that Became an Institution

Leslie Kemp

Forty years ago, the concept of a food bank was foreign to most Canadians. While poverty existed, almost everyone was able to buy food for themselves and their families with their wages or social assistance. This was before governments imposed neoliberal policies of cutting social programs and welfare, undermining the social safety net.

In the early 1980s, recession hit — caused by record high interest rates. Canada’s first food bank opened in Edmonton in 1981 and by early 1983, Vancouver saw its first food bank. At the time, food banks were considered a temporary measure for people who had fallen on hard times. Yet by late 1986, BC had 50 food banks, more than any other province.

Now, this so-called “temporary” fix has turned into a permanent institution that capitalist governments rely on to shirk their own responsibility. With the current cost-of-living crisis, driven by the rising cost of rents, food and fuel, the numbers of those using food banks are growing every day. Food banks can no longer keep up with the demand. Two million people in Canada used a food bank in March 2023, the highest number of people ever. One-third of the total were children. The numbers keep climbing; in a few months, the Surrey Food Bank jumped from serving 40 families to 150 families in one day.

While food banks fill a gap created by governments, they are not the answer to hunger. UBC Professor Graham Riches concluded 20 years ago that food banks are “an inadequate response to food poverty while allowing governments to look the other way and neglect hunger and nutritional health.” It is time to end the need for food banks and the charity model of providing food. Instead, Canada needs a living wage for all, with adequate income support for those unable to work. All people in Canada deserve to live in dignity with access to nutritious food. ★

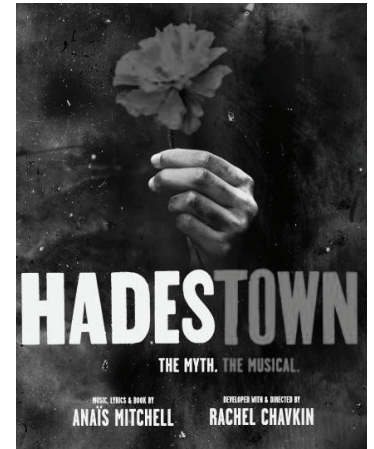


Foodbank volunteer. Image: Noemie Slavien

Review: Not just a *Political* Musical – a Socialist One: *Hadestown!*

Ang Berlinic

For decades, folk music has echoed the struggles of the labour movement. Within the whistles of workers and the clang of their machinery lives the heartbeat of our livelihood. *Hadestown*, a folk musical that targets the grief that capitalism instills in our lives, aims to enliven the harmonious nature that music brings to workers’ solidarity.



The storyline follows the Greek tragic myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, who live in a world of atrocities: famine, harsh weather patterns and despair, a striking familiarity to the world today. The newlyweds are fighting to keep the fire of their love alive, but when faced with aching stomachs, they make choices we make everyday, in order to survive. Orpheus, the son of a muse, parallels a young Marxist, who desires to “bring the world back into tune” by sharing a song he is struggling to write. Eurydice, however, struggles to see how this tune will ever “fill her cup.” When offered a “soft place to land” by Hades, the exploitative god of oil and coal, she signs her life away to the assembly line of workers, in Hadestown.

Orpheus follows Eurydice into Hadestown, where he encounters many people who, like Eurydice, have made the only choice available to them, selling their souls to Hades in order to meet their basic needs. He laments “what’s the purpose of the man?,” as the chorus lifts their eyes from their labour and begin to recognize the state of bereft they are in. Orpheus sings: “I believe we’re stronger than they know, I believe that we are many, I believe that they are few,” and the chorus echoes, “We’re standing. We understand.” A sudden peek at musical organizing.

The show’s final lines recognize this struggle as ongoing, but chimes that we must not let doubt sink in. Even in moments where we feel alone, we must recognize the power in our fellow workers. We must stand strong together, to fight to live in the world we dream about! No time to look back. ★

BC Government's Two Faces on Indigenous Rights

Ethan Joseph

In September, the BC Supreme Court ruled that the province's mining permit system violates its duty to consult Indigenous people. Under the current system mining companies can obtain permits online automatically, without any review or duty to consult with Indigenous nations. For Indigenous peoples who have fought the mining industry to protect their territories, and for those who have dealt with the consequences of mining catastrophes, this decision is something to celebrate.

The Mount Polley mine disaster released 24 million cubic metres of metals-laden fine sand and water into Polley Lake, destroying the surrounding water systems, forests, and salmon habitats. The Xat'sull First Nation relied on these systems for economic prosperity, and on the salmon that provided much of their sustenance. Their connection to their culture was also completely disconnected as the land and water was no longer safe to carry out cultural practices.

While a victory, this case also exposed the hypocrisy of the BC NDP government. After passing the *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA) in 2019, they bragged that BC was the first Canadian jurisdiction to adopt the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP). Article 19 of UNDRIP requires Indigenous



Mount Polley disaster contaminated river system

people's "free, prior, and informed consent" on any measures that affect them. Yet when Gitxaala and Ehattesaht First Nations explained that the province's mining permit system did not meet this standard, the BC Government argued that DRIPA was not legally enforceable!

Justice Alan Ross supported this point, saying he "did not agree" that UNDRIP was enshrined into BC law. Ross gave the government 18 months to propose a new permit system, exempting any currently approved mines, something that was hailed by The Association for Mineral Exploration.

This case has exposed DRIPA as an empty gesture. Federal and provincial governments are unwilling to enshrine UNDRIP into law because recognition of the rights and title of Indigenous people threatens the very heart of capitalism — the private ownership and exploitation of land that should be stewarded in common. To build on today's victories, Indigenous people will need to be vigilant and prepared to fight to defend their rights. ★

Build Homes for People, not Profit *(continued from back page)*

The political establishment today has no interest in returning to the policies of the post-war era. This was a very special period for global capitalism: the economy was booming, there was a strong labour movement demanding social safety net programs, and the Cold War was raging. The Soviet Union, despite its repressive political system, provided housing for workers for no more than 5 percent of their income. Pressure from organized labour and the need to prove the superiority of capitalism encouraged capitalist countries to provide affordable housing, while the economic boom gave them the means to do so.

Today the global economy is in crisis. Inter-imperialist tensions and wars determine the bulk of government spending. The ruling class has no interest in social housing, and the labour movement has not yet recovered its previous strength.

The solution to the housing crisis is not complicated. Governments need to build hundreds of thousands of non-market housing units each year and train all the necessary trades people. With public ownership, rents can be capped at a percentage of a tenant's income.

A massive public housing program will be fiercely resisted by the political establishment. It will require huge pressure from working-class movements to force their hand. In several cities, tenants are organizing tenants' unions to struggle collectively against rent increases and demand needed maintenance. These organizations could link up with labour and social movements to fight for publicly-owned housing by all levels of government. Housing crises are inherent to capitalism, but affordable housing can be won as part of the wider class struggle against the whole capitalist system. ★



BUILD HOMES FOR PEOPLE NOT PROFIT

Ray Goerke and Uros Novakovic

A home is a foundation for living a good life. People need a home to survive, but they also need homes to hold down a job, to start a family, and to do things that make life worth living.

Canada has a housing crisis. Rents increased by \$100 each month between May and September this year. An average two-bedroom apartment in Toronto cost \$3,400 in September. In Vancouver, 4,821 people were officially homeless (a gross underestimate) in 2023, up 32 percent since 2020.

The costs of home ownership are increasing with high interest rates. According to RBC, historically, an average of 41 percent of homeowners' household income went to housing costs. This year that rose to 59.5 percent across Canada, 79.6 percent in Toronto!

This is not Canada's first housing crisis. In the 1940s, hundreds of thousands of people lived in poor-quality housing or "slums." Families were forced to share homes in major cities. Canada wasn't building homes fast enough to replace shoddy housing and keep up with increasing demand.

After WWII, the Canadian government invested massively in public and social housing, building over a million publicly-owned houses and renting them out at below-market rates. In the 1970s and 80s, Canada subsidized public, non-profit and co-op housing, adding 16,000 affordable units each year.

In the 1990s, the federal Liberals cut all spending on new social housing and turned back to the free market. Housing costs have risen steadily since then, leading to the current crisis. If Canada had kept up previous rates, there would be at least 600,000 more social housing units today.

New affordable housing is desperately needed. But the housing industry and its supporters double down on the failed free-market system. New homes and towers are being built, but it's obvious to many renters that they won't be able to afford to live in them. Pro-market advocates say that if market supply keeps increasing, they will eventually become affordable. Even if that were true, it's an extremely wasteful and inefficient system; meanwhile, people need affordable housing now!

In the post-war era, public ownership and non-profit housing subsidies kept housing relatively affordable. Both before and after this time, Canada relied on the free market and, in both cases, it led to a housing crisis. Housing has only been affordable in Canada when the government invests in publicly-owned and social housing.

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