



**Michael Moore
takes on Trump
review page 7**

**Keep fighting for \$15
and Fairness
pages 5,6**



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Québec Election:

BREAKTHROUGH FOR QUEBEC SOLIDAIRE



Co-spokespeople Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois and Mannon Massé at the QS party in Montreal. The party took 10 seats in the election.

Photo twitter - Québec Solidaire

The two parties that have traded power in Quebec for generations, the Liberals and the Parti Québécois, were both kicked to the kerb in the October 1st election.

The Liberals crashed from a 70 seat majority to 32 seats (the worst showing since 1975). Their share of the vote fell from 41.5% to about 25%, a catastrophic collapse. Never since Confederation have the Liberals taken less than 30% of the vote. They ran on their economic record – which proved to be a mistake. Their neo-liberal economic policies of austerity certainly didn't appeal to working Quebecois.

And the Parti Québécois collapsed from 30 seats to 9, with a fall from 25.4 % of the vote to about 17 %. That means a loss of official party

status. To make matters worse for the PQ their leader Jean-Francois Lisée lost his own seat in Rosemont to Québec Solidaire candidate Vincent Marissal.

Quebec voted overwhelmingly for change. It is unfortunate that most of that sentiment went to the conservative Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ), but it would be a mistake to underestimate the breakthrough of Québec Solidaire, from 3 seats all on Montreal Island, to 10. This includes two seats in Québec City, one in Sherbrooke and one in Rouyn-Noranda-Témiscamingue.

As Manon Massé, co-leader of QS stated in her victory speech, "Québec solidaire is not just a party of the Plateau of Montreal."

QS managed to get almost 650,000 votes

and increased their vote percentage from 7 to 16%. In some places, the QS victory was not even close. Catherine Dorion, won the riding of Taschereau in Québec city by more than 8,500 votes over her nearest rival from the CAQ.

This is a dramatic change for QS and for the left in Québec. An explicitly and unapologetically left platform has yielded significant results. They were mercilessly attacked over the last weeks of the race. There was both a campaign of red-baiting and a full court press by many big name PQ luminaries and former sovereigntist leaders to denounce the party. The English media painted QS as a dangerous party and almost exclusively focused on the question of sovereignty rather than discuss the rest of their platform.

How did they do it? According to Benoit Renaud, candidate for QS in Hull, "By putting forward proposals that were concrete and specific that resonated with ordinary people, we managed to reach people who want real change."

The CAQ victory will, no doubt, result in more austerity and a further emboldening of the far right. But having a mass organized fighting left force to challenge them puts the situation in Quebec far ahead of where the left is in most parts of the country.

Monique Moisan, who participated in the founding of QS, said "It is a good thing we began building 15 years ago. We knew a rightward wind was blowing across the country."

article continues on page 2

Next steps for the left in Québec

...continued from page 1

QS has always been a different type of party, explicitly campaigning not just during elections but in the years between. It is a party of both the ballot box and the street. How will they respond to the CAQ challenge? Benoit Renaud went on to say that for the next steps, QS will, “organize people in the workplace and in the street, because it’s great to elect people to the National Assembly, but we need to continue between elections.” As Catherine Dorion told supporters on election night, “Stay mobilized!”

Over the course of the campaign QS was able to shift the entire discussion to the left and forced the other parties to retreat from some of their more hard right policies. On the question of climate change for example, the QS platform was clear from the beginning.

At mid-campaign QS unveiled its detailed green transition plan, towards a complete break with fossil fuels and electrification of both public and private transit. Highway development would be ended, 38 new subway stations in the Montreal region would be initiated, and 300,000 green jobs would be created by investment in public transit and by nationalizing lithium mines to develop battery production, reuse and recycling.

The goal is to diminish carbon emissions by 48% from 1990 levels by 2030, and by 95% by 2050. In order to achieve this, QS would put in place \$19.4 billion in a first mandate and 73 billion between now and 2030.

This forced the other parties to respond to the QS platform. In the immediate aftermath of the tornados in Ottawa and Gatineau, all the party leaders went to the storm ravaged region to look at the damage. The storm had put the question of climate

change front and centre and the other three parties had to try and match the ambitious program that QS put forward. The CAQ, which had been talking about support for fracking suddenly stopped mentioning that and tried to put their own energy policy on the back burner.



QS candidates celebrate in Gatineau

On other economic issues QS also shifted the debate. They put out an online financial tool to calculate how much better off the average person would be under QS policies—which include public dental insurance, free education through to doctorate, half-price public transit, and an immediate raise of the minimum wage from \$12 to \$15, and 4 weeks of vacation to all workers employed after 2 years. All of this is costed and paid for by a QS proposal to tax corporations and high-income earners, and to find savings in areas that currently favour the economic elite.

Nora Loreto, a QS activist in Quebec City, told Socialist Worker the election was an, “Historic breakthrough... Quebec solidaire didn’t just go from 3 to 10 [seats], though it did, but we proved that

an audacious campaign can also be popular. We lead in the polls among one-third of voters: 18-34 and the win of five women and five men [MLAs] is just an electoral start. We can defeat the CAQ in the streets and our show of force outside of Montreal will be what tones down and ultimately

defeats Legault.”

The youth vote was crucial for QS. This is the generation of the Maple Spring, who fought and won against rising tuition and in the process unleashed a movement that touched every part of Quebec society. As co-leader Manon Massé said in her speech, “A new generation is starting to find its place, a generation that is tired of having its future mortgaged. It has not known the cynicism of bitter defeats, it is prepared to pick up the torch. It is time to make room for them.”

With a CAQ majority, the October 7 antiracism demo takes on a new urgency. François Legault tried to fuel anti-immigrant sentiment in the campaign. The movement on the ground will be critical to fighting back as the CAQ pushes divide and conquer policies.

Saron Gebresellassi for Mayor of Toronto



Unique among Toronto mayoralty candidates with a platform, Saron Gebresellassi has proven credentials supporting ordinary workers, including workers of colour. A vote for her sends a signal of support for Toronto’s diverse working class. An outspoken supporter of the \$15 and Fairness Campaign, Gebresellassi is a successful labour and human rights lawyer. She is the go-to solicitor for Black Lives Matter Toronto and has won cases for Gilary Massa (fired while on maternity leave from Ryerson University) and workers of colour in the Ontario public service. The latter case resulted in a moratorium on suspensions for such workers given the proven discrimination in their cases.

Her “Six for the 6ix” platform calls for 20,000 units of affordable housing over the next four years, free public transit, fairer spending to generate 1,000 new jobs for youth in low-income neighbourhoods (“as opposed to hiring 200

new police officers”), employment outside the city’s core, mental health and accessibility services, and the right to diversity in city politics and hiring.

But it is not her specific platform that earns her our endorsement so much as her track record in support of the working class, especially among those who are racialized or otherwise marginalized. While her candidacy did not arise as obviously from the movements as, for example, Jean Swanson in Vancouver, her appeal lies in her identification with workers and people of colour. Ideally her campaign would flow from and help build a larger progressive movement, which, unfortunately, is not happening at this time.

Despite this limitation, the International Socialists group is happy to endorse her candidacy. Vote for Saron Gebresellassi on October 22.

For more information visit saron-formayor.ca

Support free and accessible transit in Ottawa and across Canada

by **Thomas Pierlot**

At \$3.50, fares for Ottawa’s public transit service OC Transpo are the most expensive of any major city in Canada. The annual cost of a transit pass in Ottawa is \$1,400 per person, and even the Equipass (intended to make transit more affordable for low-income residents), costs almost \$700 a year. For all this expense, Ottawa residents put up with buses that are frequently late, early, or canceled, and endure wait times of up to half an hour. Large areas of the city are so underserved that car ownership is almost a necessity for many. As if these issues weren’t bad enough, the city of Ottawa plans to raise fares by 2.5% per year in order to pay for the costs of its new light rail system.

The city of Ottawa, in raising the prices for public transit, laying off bus drivers in anticipation of light rail, and leaving significant portions of the city underserved, is pursuing a shortsighted set of poli-

cies that fail to address the dangers posed by climate change. The Campaign for Free and Accessible Transit is organizing to counter this. Started as an initiative of Solidarity Ottawa, the campaign joined the Healthy Transit Coalition in early 2018, and has grown to include activists from a variety of backgrounds. The campaign advocates for universal, fare-free public transit in Ottawa, in order to improve mobility and quality of life for low-income and vulnerable people, and as part of broader strategy to fight climate change.

Strategy

Multiple studies have demonstrated that removing the fare box on its own will not be enough to get people out of their cars and into public transit. At an individual level, the use of an automobile seems to provide the commuter with a fast and convenient way to get around. But as automobile usage increases, the overall effect for the population as a whole is in-

creased pollution, frustration, and wasted time—as commuters spend an average of close to 80 hours per year sitting in traffic delays.

Compared to most alternative transit options, automobiles are significantly more toxic for the environment, put a larger strain on social infrastructure, and put commuters and pedestrians at greater risk of injury or death from road accidents. And yet, automobile use is effectively subsidized as a result of economic policy and the inability of the capitalist system to account for the wider social effects of individual choices and economic transactions. So it is not surprising that more than simply removing the fare box is required. For this reason, the campaign is arguing for significant improvements in service that will make public transit a more viable alternative to car ownership.

At the same time, the campaign recognizes that to fully realize the potential of free public transit, the policies that subsidize automobile

use will need to be phased out. Free transit thus has to be seen as part of a larger project to reconstruct how people get around, both in Ottawa and across the country.

In order to build an activist base the campaign is hosting a series of rider’s forums in selected neighborhoods, aiming to found an independent and democratically-run city-wide rider’s association that can fight for the interest of transit users across Ottawa. In addition, the campaign is reaching out to the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU), which represents Ottawa bus drivers, with the aim to form a rider-driver alliance to fight driver layoffs and improve service.

Perhaps the most significant objection to fare-free public transit is cost. In Ottawa the elimination of transit fares would require the city to generate roughly \$180 million per year to cover the budget shortfall. That comes out to approximately \$200 per person per year for every Ottawa resident. To cover this cost, the campaign has

suggested increasing parking fees, imposing charges on developers for the costs of investments in city infrastructure required by their projects, shifting some of the money spent on roads to public transit, and finally, some increases in property taxes. In order to achieve the improvements in public transit required to make the transition away from a car-based transportation system, the campaign rightly argues that provincial and federal governments will need to provide additional funding.

The project to replace a profit-driven, systemically irrational, expensive, dangerous and ecologically unsustainable car-centered transportation system with a public transit system that is efficient, accessible to all, safe, and ecologically sustainable is something all socialists should be able to support.

For more information visit the Campaign for Free/Accessible Public Transit at: facebook.com/freetransitottawa/

Swedish election

The rise of the far right

by Åsa Hjalpers and Patrik Vulkan

The results of the Swedish elections are very worrying but not surprising. They follow the European trend with a growing far right and a downward spiralling social democracy. Yet it is worth taking a closer look to try to find a way out of the current impasse.

The centre cannot hold

The politics of the centre has come to an end. The last decades have been dominated by Third way politics where every party clamors for the centre. In this election both of the two main parties, the conservative Moderates and the Social Democrats, lost votes, leading to a situation where neither block can proclaim themselves the winner. Both blocks are wedded to the neo-liberal economic consensus which has meant privatizations, deregulation, no budget deficit and a more insecure labour market. Sweden has the fastest growing income gap of all the OECD-countries and is now a haven for the rich. Many voters clearly don't want more of the same.

The problem is the alternative. At the moment the racist Sweden Democrats are managing to control the debate, as illustrated in the voters' list of the key issues. The economy and employment have been

in the top five in the three previous elections. This year the economy dropped down from third to seventh place, and refugees and immigration



appeared for the first time in the top ten. Crime has also moved up the list even though reported crime is actually going down. If there are no real economic alternatives the SD narrative about immigration being the root to all problems can gain a hearing.

The biggest winner in the election was thus the racist Sweden Democrats, even though they had expected an even higher result (up 4.6 % to 17.5%). SD is still a pariah among the other political parties, but not for long. Journalists constantly discuss how SD will get the influence they crave, without realizing they already have a tight grip of the political agenda. In just

two years Sweden went from having the most open borders to the most closed ones. The right wing press in particular are going all out to claim that SD is no more extreme than the left party, and should be a support party to the Moderates. The right wing strategy for dealing with racists is essentially to be better racists themselves.

Under no circumstances should the left underestimate the serious and fascist nature of SD, yet keep a level head. There have been attempts to downplay the racism and see them as a party of discontent, and that we have to listen to their voters' 'concerns' about migration. But SD is of course not really interested in migration, it is only interested in creating a more racist society and over time to build a fascist movement. With the growth of SD comes also the rise of more open nazi organisations (Alternative for Sweden, National Democrats etc.) who strive to push the political agenda even further to the right.

There is little evidence to suggest that SD's vote actually went up as a result of immigration in itself, but rather a feeling that things are not going in the right direction (a concern they share with Left Party voters) and blaming it on immigrants/refugees/Muslims/Roma

and so on. There are probably also economic factors at play. Over 100 000 industrial jobs disappeared in the last economic crisis, something rarely talked about. A typical voter is rural, male and working class. In this election SD gained votes across class barriers; from the Moderates in rich areas and from the Social Democrats in more working class ones. This mixed class basis in SD is reflected in that 58% of those who voted for the party consider themselves rightwing, 8% leftwing and the rest neither.

When it comes to local politics their voters are likely concerned about welfare issues but the answer to every question is immigration. This is how they hold together despite their class basis. SD will pull in two directions as soon as class politics take centre stage.

At the moment SD's strategy is to get power locally and show themselves to be "fit to rule" and to replicate strategies from the labour movement with stalls, leafleting, meetings and having their own press (something the Social Democrats are lacking). They are very confident at present feeling no need to hide behind a veneer of respectability, ensuring they have both representatives that have a softer approach and those that every now and then make

openly racist statements, or make fascist associations to keep their extremist supporters on board.

What about the left? The Left party gained votes, going up from 5.7 to 8%, and are increasing their membership rapidly. They now have 25 000 members, 5000 that have joined since June this year. The Green party and the Feminist Initiative together lost 5.1% of votes but the Left party did not manage to take up that slack, so the red block lost votes overall. The problem for the left party is that they have also been wedded to the neoliberal economic model, and not really seen as a radical alternative. The Left Party would do well to campaign on the feeling that things are not going in the right direction but that the working class should kick up and not down. The clearest winners in this election have been the parties that represent the clearest ideological alternatives to the neoliberal middle of the road. It is also noteworthy that the Social Democrats only managed to recover some of their losses when they late in the election campaign shifted to promote welfare improvements rather than law and order. Too little and too late to change the current balance of power, but an indication of what class based politics could achieve.

Debate exposes "free speech" farce

LEFT JAB

by John Bell

Almost 100 years ago WB Yeats wrote a poem called The Second Coming that seems to capture the essence of the world around us today. It spoke of a world where "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world" and where "The best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity."

Now, as then, capitalism is in crisis. Global warming is grim reality. Economies falter as the richest horde their wealth rather than invest – they have no faith in the future of their system. The rest work longer and harder but cannot make a gain. Our young have no expectations of a better future. Our elderly are robbed of their pensions, the promise made to them by the system they toiled to build.

In 1919 Yeats described a world where the centre could not hold. Crisis bred a polarization: which class solution would prevail? Working class revolution was in the wind, but organization was fragile. Capitalism turned to fascism to defeat it. Unchecked, it will do so again.

Rise of the right

"The centre cannot hold" because it has come to mean only increasing austerity, with attacks on the lives and welfare of the most vulnerable,

and gross benefits for the rich. In 1978 the average American CEO took home about 30 times what the average worker earned. Today that gap has risen to over 271 times. Working people see that obscene gap; our instinct is to blame the bosses, but the far-right intercedes with convincing fictions to make us doubt our own experience.

Fascism and the far-right offer easy but false answers: the problem is immigrants/Jews/Blacks/Muslims/women/LGBTQ people – anybody but the bosses. Capitalism is a system that has always fostered divide and conquer as the secret to its success. Small wonder that the far-right amplifies these ready-made divisions to a fever pitch.

And small wonder that mainstream media and politicians award fascists a platform to preach hate, and public space and police protection to organize on the street and act out its violence.

Free speech or hate speech

There are those who believe the centre can be rebuilt and defended by their reasonableness and wit; they invite the far right to speak under the illusion that fascism can be defeated by exposing its "bad" ideas. But Yeats put his finger on this error: the worst advance because of their passionate intensity. Is there a better description of Donald Trump's appeal, or of Doug Ford's?

Enter Steve Bannon – the founder of Breitbart news, former Trump

advisor, and self-identified racist. A dedicated white-supremacist and master manipulator like Bannon knows that any media exposure advances his cause. It doesn't matter whether what he says is true, as long as his "passionate intensity" is given sway.



Although plenty of liberals and mainstream conservatives support the abstract idea of "free speech", that Bannon somehow deserves a platform because their "good" ideas would defeat his "bad" ones, more people not only disagree, they act. Recently, when the New Yorker magazine offered Bannon top billing at its speakers' festival, other participants refused to share the platform with him. Readers rushed to cancel their subs. New Yorker writers and staff expressed their outrage. Management was forced to dump Bannon – a clear victory.

The fact is, when coherent arguments are made to pose a left alternative that doesn't pretend to prop up a discredited centre – a Jeremy Corbyn, a Bernie Sanders, or closer

to home a "party of the ballot box and the street" like Quebec Solidaire – people can be won to it. In the Quebec election the clear anti-poverty and pro-environment politics of QS moved the whole debate to the left, eroded support for the anti-migrant CAQ, and put capitalism itself on trial.

If the Ontario NDP had run such a campaign, instead of hedging its bets and trying to drag us all back to a non-existent centre, we might not be dealing with a Doug Ford government, flirting with the far-right, refusing to denounce a Nazi mayoral candidate, and moving to impose a blitz of austerity cuts and privatization of public assets.

False debate

This is the background for November's upcoming Munk Debate featuring Bannon vs conservative pundit and former George W Bush speechwriter, David Frum. On one side the man who coined the phrase "axis of evil" and shaped a propaganda campaign of lies that dragged the world into war. On the other the man who addressed the French neo-Nazi National Front, saying: "Let them call you racists. Let them call you xenophobes... Wear it as a badge of honor. Because every day, we get stronger and they get weaker."

As the satire website, the Beaverton observed: "Munk Debates: Steve Bannon and David Frum to debate whether hate crimes are better than war crimes."

Granting a platform for unrepentant white-supremacist hate speech is unconscionable. The money and ideology behind the Munk debates is unswervingly pro-corporate and doesn't care who "wins" such a debate, as long as the outcome weakens any real alternative based in workers' empowerment.

A successful Bannon appearance will strengthen the far-right in this country. It is designed to give them confidence and legitimize recruitment. That is not an abstract danger: it will result in vandalized synagogues, increased gay-bashing, physical and verbal assaults on Muslims, domestic abuse and more.

Worst, it normalized the ideology of racism and fascism behind banal words like "populism". In the process the terrain of public debate – the centre populated by media pundits and politicians – shifts inexorably to the right. The centre cannot hold.

There is an alternative. There are electoral alternatives, like QS, that can slow the rightward tilt and win workers to a position that challenges the essence of capitalism.

And there needs to be a grassroots democratic activist alternative on the street, organized to shut down events like the Bannon event. We must rob our enemies of their passionate intensity, and reclaim it for ourselves. That starts with shutting down the Munk debate farce, and running Steve Bannon out of town. That will be a setback for the far right, for Doug Ford and a real victory for freedom of speech and protest.

Fighting the Ford agenda

Ford’s campus speech crusade is an attack on education and community freedoms

by Kevin Taghabon

Ontario Premier Doug Ford is demanding that universities and colleges across the province adopt so-called “free speech” policies, or risk losing funding. The province has put forward the University of Chicago Statement on Principles of Free Expression as the exemplar of strong speech policies. The Ford government, which only occasionally brought this issue during the campaign, introduced the policy in a response to what they say is a chilling of expression on campus.

Manufactured crisis

In reality, the University Chicago Principles of Free Expression are a deeply ideological tool of the right wing. Two of the points cited on the province’s website are, “the university/college should not attempt to shield students from ideas or opinions that they disagree with or find offensive,” and, “while members of the university/college are free to criticize and contest views expressed on campus, they may not obstruct or interfere with the freedom of others to express their views.” One could make the disingenuous argument under this directive that trans or Black-only spaces on campus violate the first point, despite their obvious merit in the campus community.

Further, the second point is a fundamental misunderstanding of the role of protest. Political protests are by their nature meant to be disruptive. The freely expressed message by the attendees is usually “we oppose this”—like protests that drove white supremacist Faith Goldy off campus. Ford is attempting to hamstring the ability of politically organized students to push against what they find unacceptable on campus. Compliance with this will turn opposition meek, and allow fringe ideologies which would have never flourished on campus to find a stable home. Ford’s “free speech” dog whistling to the alt-right is transparent enough, hav-



No platform for nazis even if Ford likes what they say

ing been photographed with white nationalist mayoral candidate and DailyStormer guest Faith Goldy recently.

Campus opposition

Despite the PC government’s protests to the contrary, universities are sometimes the only places where status quo concepts that are taken for granted are challenged. Ryerson’s Center for Free Expression, for example, regularly puts on events countering mainstream narratives

on art, surveillance, and Canadian history. CFE director James Turk wrote a scathing rejection of the province’s bully policy titled, “No Thank You, Premier Ford”. EyeOpener editor Jacob Dubé sharply rebuked the rightwing-manufactured free speech issue, saying “free speech...doesn’t mean the woman standing in line behind you at Metro has to gleefully listen to your theories about how the arts department is run by lizard people.”

Not all universities have stood up

similarly to Ford, perhaps exposing a lack of cross-campus student and academic solidarity. University of Toronto president Meric Gertler welcomed Ford’s move, arguing that U of T’s policies already reflect Ford’s wishes. Meanwhile, the Council of Ontario Universities released a statement praising Ford’s free speech inquisition and promising to “work closely with government.” Of course, the apparent conservative principles of “small government” and non-interference fall by the wayside when the opportunity is presented to strike powerfully against their political opponents.

Accelerating privatization

The government of Ontario still spends significantly on universities, but the percentage of funds coming from the government, i.e. the public, versus students, i.e. private, has shifted dramatically. Neoliberal schemes coated in a veneer of progress, like the 30% tuition rebate program introduced by Wynne, have been uncritically passed on as beneficial.

During the tenure of Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne’s Liberals, Ontario’s public universities became de-facto private institutions. Ontario now ranks dead last in per-student funding from the province’s grants, receiving 60-70% of the funding levels of other provinces. Perhaps the most obnoxious lie to students on this issue was the Ontario Liberal Party falsely saying time and again that tuition fees had been eliminated for a segment of students. Tuition is absolutely not free.

Any rational student would take the rebate. System-wide, however, the effect has been to shift where universities get the majority of their money from - private individuals. These piecemeal centrist solutions are also notoriously easy to undermine. Ford’s government, or any successor could easily repeal the rebate program on familiar reactionary “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” arguments. An equiva-

lent increase to the 30% rebate in public investment in universities - perhaps to lower tuition fees - would have been much harder to dismantle.

Ford’s austerity-championing government may use “free speech” as a smokescreen for public cuts. Post-secondary institutions that do not comply with Ford’s dictate have been threatened as such. The actual mechanism by which the defunding would take place is unclear. This authoritarian tactic of suppression has been employed by Trump and other faux “free speech” warriors to bully universities. During Ford’s premiership campaign he did not articulate what he thought free speech violations would be.

Community opposition

But Ford’s policy could backfire. Ford’s anti-educator snitch line for public school teachers has been the target of organizing campaigns by pro-educator, pro-sex ed activists. Institutions that are truly interested in the well being of their students will instead dedicate themselves to ensuring that hateful and violent figures are not used as lightning rods for organizing bigotry, and that there is no interference with an organized response from the community.

Beyond the defiance of certain professors institutions, one can imagine the law being futile under community action. What does the province propose will be done when, for example, an oil executive is denied a pulpit at a college known for environmental education? Will the cavalry come with riot gear to force the speech to happen, against the wishes of the students at that very campus? If a public figure is known by the community to be so heinous as to inspire mass organization to keep them away, what right does the province have to tell that community, “shut up and put up with it?” Like the mass high school student walkouts against Ford’s attacks on sex ed, campus organizing can expose Ford’s faux free speech crusade and push back against austerity.

by Jesse McLaren

The situation looks dire. On Sept 7 the Chamber of Commerce called the immediate repeal of all of 148. On Sept 14 the Labour Minister promised to stop \$15/hr min wage. Any day the government will move to revoke Bill 148, and with a majority government who can stop them?

But the experience of the past year—from the passing of Bill 148, to the backlash against \$15, and the election—shows that gains can be won or ripped away, and what matters is not the composition inside the legislature but the movements outside.

Legislation: Bill 148

That we even have \$15 and Fairness demands to defend is a victory for movement. As the Ontario Restaurant, Hotel and Motel Association, the industry group lobbying to keep hotel workers in poverty, explained “On May 30, 2017, Ontario’s hospitality industry was in disbelief when the provincial government announced the proposed legislation of Bill 148, which included a raise in minimum wage to \$14/hr come January 1, 2018 and \$15/hr on January 1, 2019...The minimum wage was not reviewed in the changing workplaces review and took many industries and businesses by surprise.”

Big businesses felt betrayed. The Liberals were the party of Bay Street, and had increased tuition, closed hospitals, ignored climate crisis and repeatedly frozen the minimum wage. When it came to the Changing Workplaces Review they repeatedly said that raising the minimum wage was “out of scope”.

One reaction was to accept their terms and not fight to raise minimum wage. Another reaction was to hope that the NDP would save the day. But they have opposed the prior call for the \$14/hr minimum wage, repeating the line that it harms small business. Instead there was a broad fight for \$15 and fairness—including York food service workers whose strike won \$15/hr and fought back against Islamophobia and anti-Black racism at work.

It was the movement that put \$15 on the agenda and fought for fairness and that pushed the Liberals to introduce Bill 148 in May. This provoked another series of reactions. The backlash could make some assume we couldn’t win or to place hopes in the NDP. But they dismissed Bill 148 as a Liberal election ploy rather than leading a fight to support and extend the gains.

So the movement continued mobilizing to pass Bill 148 and to support the broader movement, like striking college faculty. Bill 148 was a huge victory for the movement. Not only a major minimum wage increase the 1% had fought against—and the Liberals had said was out of scope—but also PEL days, equal pay, fairer scheduling, and easier unionization.

Despite six months of media backlash against the higher minimum wage, Angus Reid poll in December found 60% people across Ontario support \$15/hr—including two thirds of women (who are disproportionately paid minimum wage), and even 40% of Conservative voters.

Economic backlash

On January 1, the minimum wage increased, and on January 3 news broke that Tim Hortons franchises were cutting paid breaks and benefits. This was not just a random mom and pop independent business but the billionaire heirs to Tim Hortons fortune, who sent the memo of the clawbacks from their winter resort in Florida—not only reversed the wage increase but lowered overall pay lower than before. So the figurehead of one of Canada’s most iconic business chains was punishing their low wage workers—predominantly people of colour—for a pay raise to undermine workers confidence to fight for more and encourage other employers to do the same

This seemed like unbeatable odds but there was an explosion of opposition against Tim Hortons—which the 15 and fairness campaign organized into a series of actions, including occupations of Tim Hortons stores to show support for Tim Hortons workers.

Election

To win the Tory nomination Doug Ford spoke to their base—railing against sex ed, abortion, refugees, the climate and promising the stop the \$15/hr minimum wage. But if he campaigned on stopping the \$15/hr minimum wage he would alienate the 40% of tory voters who support it. So instead he campaigned on populist slogans about being “premier for the people” supporting the little guy against the elites at Queen’s Park.

Despite new claims that the Tories are fulfilling their promise to freeze the wage, they never campaigned on this and voters never voted for this.

Ford’s fake populism would have disintegrated had he been confronted on \$15 minimum wage. But neither the Liberals nor the NDP did so. Three times the leaders debated and three times there was silence on the most significant minimum wage increase across North America.



For the NDP they had opposed the \$14/hr minimum wage last election, were late to supporting \$15 and fairness and were worried that any support would build the liberals instead. NDP governments in power also tend to conform to the status quo like BC NDP who were elected to raise the wage to \$15 but instead delayed it.

So the campaign pushed all parties to support \$15 and Fairness, exposed Ford’s opposition to it, and organized a rally the week following the election—to push whoever was elected to support \$15 and fairness. Like the contradictions of Trump’s election, Ford was elected while at the same time support for \$15/hr has increased

to two thirds of people and 42% of Conservative voters.

Ford government

But the 1% is wasting no time asking for swift action against low wage workers. Ford was elected evening of June 7. At 7:20am on June 8, Financial Post published the article “Now let’s undo the damage of Wynne’s cruel and unfair minimum-wage crusade” claiming poverty wages are a form of social justice.

This shows how conscious the 1% is about using oppression to sharpen exploitation—to drive down the wages of disabled, migrant and older workers and to divide and conquer the working class as a whole. Now Ford wants to move against \$15 minimum wage and all the other gains of Bill 148, and the Tories have a majority inside the legislature. But they don’t have a majority outside, and they don’t have a mandate for

in the legislature.

Ford will move against Bill 148 any day now, provoking another series of reactions. Some thought we would never have to defend \$15 and fairness because Ford never campaigned against these issues. This includes the 42% of Tory voters, many of them workers angry at years of Liberal austerity who support \$15/hr and took Ford at his word that he would support people. These people can be mobilized to defend \$15/hr—not if we dismiss them as stupid Ford voters but if we mobilize on class lines.

Some say we can’t fight because Ford is all powerful, judging by the composition of the legislature. This ignores every victory the campaign has achieved—from putting \$15 on the agenda when the Liberals didn’t want it, to winning Bill 148 amidst a media backlash, to defending workers from the Tim Hortons billionaires, to widespread mobilizing after the election—including 20 actions last weekend asking to Ford to fulfill the only promise he made during the campaign and what people actually voted for: stand up to corporate elites, which means protecting the \$15 minimum wage and new workplace rights of Bill 148.

Some say we have to put our faith in change from above—from proportional representation, to legal challenges, to next election. But it wasn’t PR that won Bill 148, it wasn’t a legal challenge that defended Tim Hortons workers or won for York food service workers, the recent election didn’t challenge Ford on the minimum wage, and we can’t wait another four years.

Every gain the movement has won has been from below through organizing, petitions, demonstrations, strikes, occupations—uniting non-unionized/unionized workers, students, community members and trying to push the NDP to be a megaphone for the movement. The same strategy that won partial victory on \$15 and Fairness is being magnified in the coming days and weeks to defend and extend these gains.

Where we stand

The dead-end of capitalism

The capitalist system is based on violence, oppression and brutal exploitation. It creates hunger beside plenty, it threatens our sustenance through unsafe and unsustainable farming, and kills the earth itself with pollution and unsustainable extraction of oil, minerals, animals, trees, and water. Capitalism leads to imperialism and war. Saving ourselves and the planet depends on finding an alternative.

A system that is killing the planet

Capitalist profits depend on extracting the world's blood and bone. The devastating impact of capital's assault on the planet affect the world's most vulnerable populations and threaten the long-term meaningful existence of humanity. Capitalism cannot regulate the catastrophic effects of climate change. We stand for climate justice, including the concept of "just transition" for affected workers.

Socialism and workers' power

Any alternative to capitalism must involve replacing the system from the bottom up through radical collective action. Central to that struggle is the workplace, where capitalism reaps its profits off our backs. Capitalist monopolies control the earth's resources, but workers everywhere actually create the wealth. A new socialist society can only be constructed when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution to satisfy human needs, not corporate profits—to respect the environment, not pollute and destroy it.

Oppression

Within capitalist society different groups suffer from specific forms of oppression. Attacks on oppressed groups are used to divide workers and weaken solidarity. We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support the right of people of colour and other oppressed groups to organize in their own defence. We are for real, social, economic and political equality for women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination and homophobia against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people. We oppose environmental racism. We oppose discrimination on the basis of religion, ability and age.

Canada, Quebec, Indigenous Peoples

Canada is not a "colony" of the United States, but an imperialist country in its own right that participates in the exploitation of much of the world. The Canadian state was founded through the repression of Indigenous peoples and the people of Quebec. We support the struggles for self-determination of Quebec and Indigenous peoples up to and including the right to independence. In particular, we recognize Indigenous peoples' original and primary right to decide their fate and that of their lands, heritage, and traditions. Socialists in Quebec, and in all oppressed nations, work to give the struggle against national oppression an internationalist and working class content.

Internationalism

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything that turns workers from one country against those from other countries. We support all genuine national liberation movements. The 1917 revolution in Russia was an inspiration for the oppressed everywhere. But it was defeated when workers' revolutions elsewhere were defeated. A Stalinist counter-revolution, which killed millions, created a new form of capitalist exploitation based on state ownership and control. In Eastern Europe, China and other countries, a similar system was later established by Stalinist, not socialist, parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

Elections and democracy

Elections can be an opportunity to give voice to the struggle for social change. But under capitalism, they can't change the system. The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary protect the ruling class against the workers. These structures cannot be simply taken over and used by the working class. The working class needs real democracy, and that requires an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates.

Reform and revolution

Every day, there are battles between exploiter and exploited, oppressor and oppressed, to reform the system—to improve living conditions. These struggles are crucial in the fight for a new world. To further these struggles, we work within the trade unions and orient to building a rank and file movement that strengthens workers' unity and solidarity. But the fight for reforms will not, in itself, bring about fundamental social change. The present system cannot be fixed or reformed as the NDP and many trade union leaders say. Nor can the system regulate itself to prevent environmental destruction and climate injustice. It has to be overthrown. That will require the mass action of workers themselves.

The revolutionary party

To achieve socialism the leading activists in the working class have to be organized into a revolutionary socialist party. The party must be a party of action, and it must be democratic. We are an organization of activists committed to helping in the construction of such a party through ongoing activity in the mass organizations of the working class and in the daily struggles of workers and the oppressed. If these ideas make sense to you, help us in this project, and join the International Socialists.

Resistance to Ford is growing

by Carolyn Egan

Over 40,000 students with the support of teachers walked out of their schools across Ontario demanding that the provincial government stop its attack on the sex education curriculum. Young organizers took matters into their own hands and connected with their fellow students who left their classrooms chanting as they showed their anger. They fully understand what is at risk with the high rates of suicide among young LGBTQ students and the assaults and harassment that so many are facing. Trans, queer, women and students of colour were often in the lead. This was one of the largest demonstrations that we have had in this province for quite a while showing that young people are not going to wait for others to lead a fight back against the policies of the Tory government. They carried on the spirit of the American students who walked out of classrooms across the US against gun violence.

Spontaneous demonstrations occurred at Queens Park when the government was cutting the number of seats at Toronto City council from forty seven to twenty five. Five hundred people lined up at midnight to get into the chambers when Doug Ford insisted that the legislature meet during the night. Residents were led out in handcuffs as they disrupted the proceedings. As Desmond Cole was quoted in the National Observer, "If Torontonians are waiting for some higher power to stop this attack on our city, we'll wait in vain: we have to stand up for ourselves, because no one else is coming to save us."



Campaigners take the fight to the Tories photo: Michael yc Tseng

Public meetings were held in wards across the city. Over 500 crowded into The 519 in the heart of the LGBTQ community and the Metropolitan United Church downtown was packed with speakers from labour, the FF\$15 and Firness Campaign and Acorn among others. A majority government had its way hoping that right wing councillors will win the municipal election and allow developers to make their billions driving poor and working class people out of the downtown core, privatizing services and laying off workers. The Fight for Fifteen and Fairness is the broadest and most active campaign and has been mobilizing in every area of the province. It is fighting to maintain the legislated increase of the minimum wage to \$15 scheduled for January 1, 2019 and other victories that were won in Bill 148 including paid emergency leave, equal pay and successor rights. This fight is far from over and even though the Chamber of Commerce and other business lobbys are urging the government to roll these gains back, grass roots power is there to stop it. The community campaign is going all out with actions taking place in cities

and towns across Ontario. It is women and people of colour who are most at risk if we loose this battle, and it is also they who are actively involved in the campaign. The community is working hard and the trade unions must do all they can to use their collective power to put pressure on the Tory government to cease and desist in its attacks on working people and the poor in all our diversity. Organized and non-organized members must work together in solidarity. A victory here could give confidence to all who are struggling. Some unions have seconded members to hold lunch time gatherings, plant gating and pop up meetings to get signatures on petitions and rally members to fight back. Others are going door to door in their communities and tabling on campuses where they work. October 15th is being designated as a day of labour action and every union should go all out to mobilize rank and file members to show Doug Ford that we will not accept this attempt to worsened the lives of working people and the poor in the interest of corporate profits.

Disability pride 2018

by Michael yc Tseng

On September 22, a diverse contingent of disability activists of all ages marched in pride from Queen's Park to Ryerson School of Disability Studies, in a celebration of those who are disabled both physically and mentally. The Toronto Disability Pride March 2018 highlighted the struggles and value of disabled and mad people and ableism as a sustained form of oppression. One of the many pow-

erful speakers exhorted that 70% of the workers with disabilities have faced systemic discrimination at work, and that the process to prove such workplace discriminations can be demeaning, and therefore a call for a good foundation of workers' right and a robust system of social support is especially critical in the current political climate. The TDPM 2018 saw a significant increase in participation from different labour unions, social justice, and disability groups, joining the march.



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Solidarity with Serena Williams

by **Alex Kerner**

As a life-long tennis fan, I've seen Serena Williams dominate the sport for the last twenty years. Unfortunately, I've also seen her treated like no other champion.

Off the court, Williams has faced incomparable scrutiny. Recent reports have noted that few athletes get drug testing as often as Williams, being tested twice as many times in 2018 as any other American female player.

Racist and sexist double standards

Williams has also faced criticisms for the clothing she wears at tournaments. At this year at the French Open, Williams competed in her first Grand Slam since having a child and, because of complications she had with blood clotting, she wore a black body suit. French Open president Bernard Giudicelli later decided to ban the outfit's use in the future, stating "...Serena's outfit this year, for example, would no longer be accepted." Although women players regularly wear very short skirts, which often reveal their undergarments, it was Williams' outfit that was deemed untoward.

On the court, Williams also appears to receive warnings and unfavourable penalties that are rarely handed out to other players. This year during the US Open final, the umpire handed Williams a warning for coaching, again another penalty that is almost never called de-



spite the act of coaching being rampant and informally allowed for.

In a sports world where the top players routinely get the benefit of the doubt and are given leeway, Williams correctly notes that she gets none of this treatment despite being the greatest player of all time.

In the aftermath, Williams has faced a barrage of criticism, with the umpires threatening to boycott her matches and an Australian newspaper publishing a vile and racist cartoon depicting Williams.

Solidarity

You cannot separate the treatment Williams faces from racism and sexism in sports. Her success has never been accepted or embraced in the way it has been for Roger Federer or Rafael Nadal. That is the price she has paid for her unprecedented success as a black woman in an ostensibly white sport.

So for socialists, there is absolutely no debate. We must be tribunes of the oppressed and when we know someone faces any kind of attack because of their race or gender, we support them unconditionally. Solidarity with Serena.

This article has been edited for space. Red the full article at socialist.ca

REVIEWS

Michael Moore exposes the roots of Trumpism

by **Faline Bobier**

Michael Moore's new documentary "Fahrenheit 11/9" asks: "How the fuck did this happen?" By "this", of course, he means the election of Donald J. Trump as President of the United States.

The answer is anything but simple. Surprisingly he doesn't focus a lot on Trump himself. This is not a movie about Putin and conspiracy theories. It's also not a movie that sees Hillary Clinton or the Democrats as the answer to what ails America.

Moore insists that the roots of Trump's victory go back decades to some of the very Democratic politicians whom liberals see as the only way out. It was Bill Clinton, after all, who ended welfare for the poorest Americans, something even Ronald Reagan did not accomplish.

He also claims – against much of the received wisdom about the 2016 election – that in its majority the American people are on the left: they support a woman's right to choose, want universal healthcare, free college tuition and a reduction in military spending.

How different from many pundits who argued that American workers were and are stupid, voting against their own best interests because of their venality, their racism or worse.

The best parts of Moore's film aren't his usual stunts or the pot shots he takes at Trump.

Where 9/11 truly shines is in showing the destruction of ordinary working class lives by the venality and greed of American capitalists and the politicians who aid and abet them. The section on Flint, Michigan and the poisoning of primarily Black families' drinking water is a brutal takedown of the profit motive in action.

Rick Snyder, a business executive with no history of public service, became Governor of Michigan in 2011. The Flint drinking water contamination began in April 2014 when Flint changed its water source from treated Detroit Water and Sewerage Department water to the Flint River.

Moore exposes the reasons behind this



totally unnecessary and dangerous change. Snyder's business cronies wanted the lucrative contracts to build a pipeline to the new water supply, causing lead poisoning for thousands of Flint inhabitants, particularly children, with long-term serious health effects.

Only the efforts of Black and other community activists over several years exposed this crime and there is still no safe drinking water in Flint. The federal government eventually declared a State of Emergency but in a telling video sequence we see then President Barack Obama visiting Flint.

You see the hope in people's faces when Obama arrives. Then he pulls a stunt similar to one performed earlier by Governor Snyder. He takes a drink from a glass of water in an effort to reassure community members that the water is now safe.

The sense of betrayal is etched on people's faces. Obama is helping to perpetrate the lies spread by Snyder and his business cronies. As one of the Black community activists says, "When Obama arrived he was my president, when he left he was no longer my president."

Moore shows us raw working class anger but he also shows us hope – not the false hope of re-electing the Democratic Party to begin

Kesha's new anthem cries for equality

by **D'arcy Briggs**

Kesha's newest single, "Here Comes the Change," is a powerful ballad focused squarely on equality and social justice. The song will be featured in the upcoming film "On the Basis of Sex," following the political life of Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The song lyrically focuses on equality and justice for all, with a lyric video that pays tribute to the strong political heritage of activism in America that continues to this day.

Kesha gained popularity in 2010 with some chart-topping singles, but became more of a public figure for her lawsuit against Lukasz Sebastian Gottwald (Dr. Luke) for sexual assault, emotional abuse, and more in 2014. The New York Supreme Court dropped the case in 2016, reasoning that the two most specific incidents of assault mentioned in her suit had overreached the statute of limitations. While the court ultimately sided with Sony and Dr. Luke, an outpouring of support from other celebrities and from the #metoo movement helped give a stronger voice to her struggle and she has become a strong voice for those who continue to face discrimination.

The pop-infused country song starts

"One day I'll be gone/ The world will keep turning/ I hope I leave this place/ better than I found it," and only gets more powerful and poignant. The anthemic chorus of "Oh, here comes the change/ Oh, we're comin' of age/ This is not a phase / Here comes,



here comes the change." starts with only the lead vocal track, and builds throughout the song, echoing the song's thesis that we must all work together to build a brighter future. While the song itself might be a far cry from the dance-pop style that Kesha's early work follows, fans of 2017's Rainbow should find this song more than welcoming.

"Together we can prove to our leaders and the rest of the world that we will not

another cycle of betrayals – but the hope of united action that can bring down the system responsible for crimes like Flint.

Moore sees this hope in the teachers of West Virginia who go out on strike without the support of their union leadership and who inspire teachers in other states to take similar action against the poverty wages and crumbling public education system that serves neither teachers nor their students.

He also sees this hope in organizations like the Democratic Socialists of America and candidates like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. In June Ocasio-Cortez won the Democratic primary in New York's 14th congressional district, in a huge upset victory over the Democratic Party.

She won because of grass-roots organizing and because she represented a turn away from the status quo and a turn towards a socialist vision of what life could be like. When asked what socialism means to her she replied, "[N]o person in America should be too poor to live. What that means to me is health care as a human right, it means that every child, no matter where you are born, should have access to a college or trade school education, no person should be homeless, we should have structures and public policy to allow for people to have homes and food and lead a dignified life in the United States."

Ocasio-Cortez and others like her, who are running for various levels of public office in the US are reflected outside the borders of their own country, in movements like the one around leftist Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn in the UK, or the growing excitement about Québec Solidaire in the lead-up to elections in Quebec.

Moore shows the real bedrock underlying change for the better lies with ordinary Americans. Trump falsely claims to represent them, while he continues to champion the interests of the wealthy few at the expense of the many, like Democrats and Republicans before him. It is possible to organize a fightback which takes place outside the corridors of power and which sees the need to replace a rotten system with something entirely new – socialism from below.

tolerate challenges to equality and freedom in our country," Kesha wrote in a blog post for Refinery29. This mantra is centrale to the song's lyric video, featuring archival footage of protests, rallies, and a narrative of contemporary struggles. The video ends with a focus on the non-profit NGO HeadCount. "The message is that the long, proud tradition of American social activism is alive and well. It's being passed on to the next generation," writes Kesha. "It will continue to evolve one success at a time, and is as important as ever. At the end of the video we brought in volunteers from HeadCount, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping people to register to vote and we set up a URL to guide people how to register."

While, as revolutionary socialists, it can seem easy to point out the contradictions between electoral reform and the social changed featured in the video, artists and pop icons like Kesha should be supported when they are able to use their platform to question the status quo, be it sexism, right-wing populism, or other bigoted movements. "Here Comes the Change" will serve as an anthem for many and can serve as a sign of a future worth fighting for, a future that is coming.

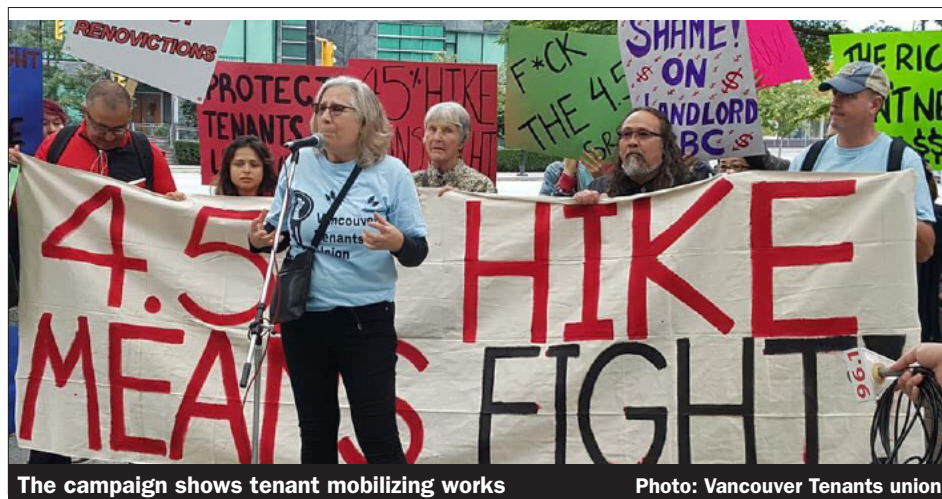
Vancouver tenants rally to reduce rent hikes

by Ryan Schebek

September 24, 2018 marks a small but important victory for renters throughout British Columbia. Despite this partial victory, battle for an affordable city is far from over.

Earlier this year the Residential Tenancy Branch announced that the legal limit allowable for rental increases will jump from 4% to 4.5%. In Vancouver the median rent for a one-bedroom apartment is now more than \$2000. The proposed increase would have been over a \$1000 a year. It is decisions like this from the provincial and municipal governments that have created the housing crisis. Homelessness is rising to new levels. Many are finding Vancouver so unaffordable they are moving to distant cities or, those without this luxury, are sticking around to live pay cheque to pay cheque (By now one in five renters in Vancouver spends at least half of their income on rent)

The victory for renters arrived when, two and a half weeks after the announcement to raise rents by 4.5%, the provincial government backed down and reduced that number by 2%. They now propose, after pressure from below, that the most a landlord can raise rents is 2.5%. Derrick O'Keefe, one of the COPE candidates for Vancouver City Council explained that "It's good that the province is reducing the annual allowable increase and it shows that tenant power works, this change is a result of pressure



The campaign shows tenant mobilizing works

Photo: Vancouver Tenants union

from COPE's campaign for a Rent Freeze and the work of others, like the Vancouver Tenants Union and BCGEU, pushing for tenants' rights and protections."

COPE, the Coalition of Progressive Electors, is a long time municipal party currently running three candidates for the October 20th municipal election. They are Jean Swanson, Anne Roberts and Derrick O'Keefe. For roughly one year COPE has been campaigning on a platform that is demanding a rent freeze to help cool the market and protect renters immediately. They describe their platform as movement building. Slogans like "rent freeze"

and "mansion tax" are slowly becoming something people can rally behind and help reaffirm their ability to intervene in political issues. These slogans are becoming common place demands that make any change to rental rates, that isn't 0%, look like half-baked concession to landlords.

The pressure they have put on the provincial government has worked and to summarize Anne Roberts states: "This is a good first step, but it's just the beginning, COPE will keep fighting for a 0% rent increase for four years in Vancouver. If the province won't act, COPE will direct city staff to make a four year rent

freeze a requirement of landlords' business licenses. After four years we can reassess and see if it's still needed, but for now protecting tenants should be our first priority."

The decrease to 2.5% is also only a partial victory because loopholes like "reno-viction" where landlords can evict tenants to make renovations and then raise rents as much as the market will bear. As well wages have stayed the same despite rising rents. Poverty activist Jean Swanson, responds:

"It's still a huge problem that the province is allowing landlords to raise rents as much as they like when tenants leave or are evicted. By refusing to plug this loophole the province is not only contributing to higher rents, but also ensuring that evictions can be profitable. It means that long term tenants have no tenant security because landlords can raise rents if they get rid of tenants. If necessary, COPE will use the city's business licensing powers to plug that loophole as well."

Without a movement against rent increases, the 4.5% increase would have gone unchallenged. In the upcoming Vancouver election, only COPE is running to implement a rent freeze. Their strategy of allying themselves with the Vancouver Tenants Union and using the election campaign to build a movement means that we have a change of winning a rent freeze.

You can help, go to www.votecope2018.ca to get involved.

Student walkouts show the way

On September 21, 40,000 students at 75 high schools in Ontario walked out to protest Doug Ford's decision to scrap the new 2015 sex ed curriculum. They were also protesting the government's decision to cancel curriculum consultations which were to be held in July to come up with a new Indigenous history program.

The protest idea spread quickly and the response showed the Ford government that they will have a major fight on their hands if they continue with plans to go back to the 1998 curriculum.

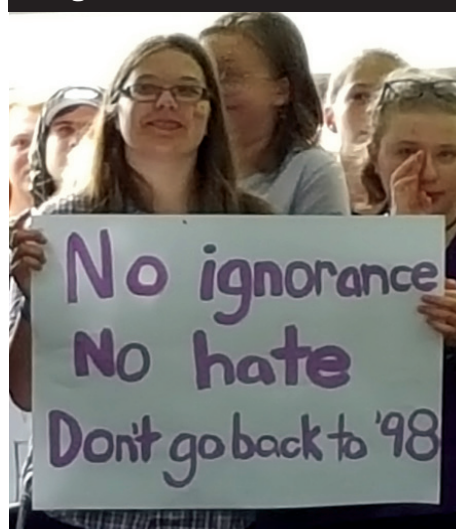
Student organizers sent a media release before the event: "We the students will show our government that we do not consent to their actions. The impacts of these changes have been repeated by hundreds of experts: they will not keep our students, our women, our LGBTQ+ community, or our Indigenous population safe. It's time for all students to stand up for our right to education."

"This curriculum was made before I was even born." 17-year-old Rayne Fisher-Quann, a student at William Lyon Mackenzie Institute in Toronto, one of the walkout's main organizers. "Everybody I know right now is so angry, and so disappointed...and even so scared about the future that could come from this regressive curriculum."

The Ford government is using this cancellation to appeal to far right, bigoted voters who object to frank discussions about gender identity and same sex relationships. This evangelical base was central to Ford's election victory and to his leadership bid for the Conservative party.



Hundreds joined the protest at Northern Collegiate in Toronto



Students in Nepean chant "De-colonize our schools, White supremacy isn't cool!"



NDP MPP Marit Stiles joined students at Bloorcourt Collegiate



Some students marched to Queens Park to join the rally at the legislature

Toronto

Hundreds of students walked out from schools all over the city. Western Tech students filled the soccer fields. Many students marched to join a rally at Queens park to bring the message to Ford's doorstep where they chanted, "we do not consent, reconciliation not ford nation, sex ed saves lives."

Toronto Northern Secondary School student Alexi: "I don't think every student understands fully yet that this curriculum change impacts all of us, no matter who we are. So many students still haven't been taught that consent is necessary, or about online safety, or gender identities. We can't let that happen."

Ottawa

The chants and cheers could be heard from blocks away as more than 300 students from Nepean High School left their classes to protest the Ontario government's changes to the sex-ed and health curriculum. Students chanted De-colonize our schools, White supremacy isn't cool! and heard from a range of their classmates speaking about the importance of education on gender identity, consent, LGBTQ and Indigenous rights. It wasn't just high schools. One Ottawa mother tweeted: "So proud of my daughter and her grade 7 classmates" at Hopewell Ave PS.

These walkouts are showing all of us how to take on the Tory agenda. It will require strikes, protests and school shutdowns to halt the devastating changes Ford and his ilk are pushing at queens park