

# Lower Island NEWS

An independent democratic socialist newspaper serving the Lower Vancouver Island area for 32 years  
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Victoria, BC

## Voters say yes to BC NDP in two by-elections



Melanie Mark (left) handily won in Vancouver-Mount Pleasant; Jodie Wickens took the Liberal stronghold of Coquitlam-Burke Mountain by 600 votes.

### “They are going to turn the place upside down” - Horgan

In by-elections held February 2, voters in Coquitlam - Burke Mountain elected BC New Democratic Party candidate Jodie Wickens by 600 votes, and in Vancouver-Mt. Pleasant they handily elected BC NDP candidate Melanie Mark.

“Jodie Wickens is the first-ever NDP MLA to represent Burke Mountain and Melanie Mark is the first-ever First Nations woman elected to the BC Legislature,” said NDP Leader John Horgan.

“It’s hard to believe that I’m saying this in 2016. It should have happened years ago, but it’s happened now, and Melanie is an excellent representative in every way. It will be an honour to stand with this accomplished woman as she brings her voice to the Legislative Assembly.

“I am very excited about going into

the Legislature with these two stellar campaigners who are our newest BC New Democratic MLAs. I expect that Christy Clark and her gang will sit up and take notice that people in BC are saying yes to the NDP.”

“Both of these remarkable women deserve the highest praise for their achievements. I could not be happier or prouder to be a BC New Democrat than I am today,” Horgan said.

In Coquitlam-Burke Mountain, Wickens beat candidates from the BC Liberals, Greens and Libertarians. Wickens, who is executive director of the Autism Support Network, is a long-time Coquitlam resident and is married with two children.

“Burke Mountain was a BC Liberal stronghold, but voters said no more,” Wickens said. “I told families that I would fight for them and that is exactly

what I’ll do. Christy Clark won’t be able to ignore us anymore.”

Mark is Nisga’a, Gitksan, Cree and Ojibway. The mother of two has a background in child protection and law enforcement having worked with children and youth watchdog, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, and co-created the Vancouver Police Aboriginal liaison office.

As Horgan pointed out, “Both women have fought hard for those who don’t have a voice. Melanie Mark worked with the children and youth watchdog, Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, and we know she will help us as we continue to fight for the young people in government care who have been forgotten by Christy Clark. Jodie Wickens has been a leading voice for young people with autism, and has held the premier to account for the schools that

she had promised, but never delivered, in Coquitlam-Burke Mountain. That fight will continue in Victoria.

Former BC NDP MLA Jenny Kwan held the Vancouver-Mt. Pleasant seat until July 2015 when she resigned to run successfully as a Member of Parliament in the recent federal election.

Coquitlam-Burke Mountain was held by former BC Liberal MLA Doug Horne who was unsuccessful in the federal election as a Harper Conservative.

Horgan added, “I want to thank these two extraordinary women for two outstanding campaigns. I also want to thank the thousands of British Columbians who voted to send a message to Christy Clark by sending Melanie Mark and Jodie Wickens to the BC Legislature. They are going to turn the place upside down.”

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Alicia Cormier Holman

# A woman whose voice and message are worthy of our listening

By Starla Anderson

Alicia Cormier was well known in Central Saanich long before she was nominated to be the 2015 New Democratic Party candidate for the riding of Saanich-Gulf Islands(SGI).

Alicia—now Holman since her December, 2015 marriage to Saanich North and the Islands MLA Gary Holman—raised two daughters, and was an active volunteer in the Saanich peninsula for many years. Alicia (pronounced as in Patricia) volunteered as a Board member with Farmlands Trust, Kingswood Camp (Girl Guides), and Independent Living Housing Society. She also coached girls’ softball when her daughters Valerie and Amber were school age.

At the same time, Alicia had a 20-year career as a Human Resources manager—working for Island Medical Labs, BC Systems Corporation, Camosun College, and Juan de Fuca Hospitals. Alicia also worked for Habitat for Humanity as the manager of ReStore, and as the manager of the Salvation Army store in Brentwood Bay.

Previously, Alicia owned and managed a driving range and a golf Pro shop, and had part ownership in Toy Traders that was located on Herald Street in Victoria. She also worked for seven years in a sales role in publishing (local magazines and newspapers).

A personal life decision made it possible for Alicia to be a candidate for Member of Parliament: “Four or five years ago, I moved away from financially rewarding work to more personally rewarding community work, and since 2013 I was twice elected to be a Central Saanich councillor. My work as a councillor has helped me understand how local governments were impacted by Conservative policies that did not adequately address climate change, local food production, housing, and First Nations issues.”

Alicia feels particularly passionate about climate change and its effect on food security: “While farmland protection is a provincial and local issue under Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) regulations, it was the NDP food strategy that provided leadership in supporting farmers and communities with added funding for value added processing and infrastructure.”

The need to increase federal support for First Nations communities feels close to Alicia as her daughter, Valerie Samuel, teaches at the ŁÁU, WELNEW Tribal School on the Tsartlip Reserve. (The school serves the Saanich people on four reserves and surrounding communities: Tsartlip, Pauquachin, Tseycum, and Tsawout.) Alicia has also learned about First Nations issues from her son-in-law, Mike Samuel, who is First Nations from Ahousaht. And she

has learned about First Nations issues from her work as a Central Saanich councillor.

Alicia went on to say that “The NDP movement on Vancouver Island and nationally made it seem hopeful that the NDP would form government and bring the change that was looked for across Canada. It was exhilarating being the NDP candidate—the campaign team, the regional support team, and the volunteers were all working collectively to promote our shared social democratic values. The pace was hectic but I was fueled by those who came out to debates and other events; the NDP is a very supportive family and I didn’t feel alone. We felt we were serving our community whatever the outcome of the vote in our Saanich-Gulf Islands riding.»

Alicia recalled an especially inspiring conversation she had when she was first out canvassing. An elderly gentleman (in his 90s) told her that his



On October 10 at the lower islands’ last rally with NDP Leader Tom Mulcair, just 9 days before the federal election, Alicia Cormier encourages supporters to donate to the federal campaign -- “Show Me the Money”. At this rally, Alicia and Tom were presented with eagle feathers by Vern Jacks, former chief of Tseycum Band.

wife had worked with Tommy Douglas and had helped write up early resolutions “n a boxcar” where a CCF meeting was being held. He said that he was grateful now for the quality of life that he and his wife had at this stage of their lives and that it was because of the historical influence of the CCF/NDP, that they were able to live in “affordable housing” and had medicare that had provided cancer treatment. Alicia reflected: “This showed the depth and breadth of how NDP values continue to impact the lives of individual Canadians.”

During the campaign, Alicia twice debated one-on-one with the Green candidate, Elizabeth May. Alicia remembered having to correct Elizabeth when she made claims that the Greens were the only party who were against transporting bitumen through pipelines to tankers on the Coast:

“The NDP plans for reducing emissions are very real and this gave me confidence when debating with Elizabeth. I pointed out that the NDP said no new pipelines could be approved under the current and flawed National Energy Board process. I was proud to stand behind the NDP’s policies and platforms on these issues.”

During the CFA radio debate, Alicia also confronted Elizabeth about the Greens’ strategic attempts to create doubt about the NDP—the Greens were arguing that the Conservatives had no chance to win a seat on the island and so there was no risk to vote Green. Alicia argued that this was also no reason to vote Green when the New Democratic Party had a real chance of forming government and passing policies that are more progressive and more ambitious than any other party’s.”

The CFA moderator gave Alicia high marks for her performance in this debate and it is quite possible that she helped incumbent NDP candidates on the lower island keep their seats.

It was the longest campaign in Canadian history (11 weeks) but Alicia held her own for the NDP in Saanich and the Gulf Islands from start to finish. “When the going got tough, I thought of the elderly man whose wife had worked with Tommy Douglas and was inspired to carry on—I was honored to carry the torch for the NDP and those who had done the work before.” Alicia said that she felt this most when in humble, quiet situations like after a debate at St. Margaret’s School when a 10-year-old girl came up to her and showed her pages of notes that she had taken during the debate; the young girl wanted clarification about what Alicia and the NDP thought about “fairness, equality, and human rights”.

Alicia did not “win” the vote in Saanich-Gulf Islands on October 19, 2015 but there is no doubt that during her campaign, she did give powerful service to her Saanich and the Gulf Islands community.

When NDP leader Tom Mulcair was in Victoria for his last rally on the lower island before the election, both Tom and Alicia were acknowledged for their commitments to improving relations between First Nations and the Canadian government. Vern Jacks, former chief of Tseycum Band, presented eagle feathers to both Tom and Alicia, the highest honor for speaking your truth: an honor that helps to further your voice and your message.

Alicia Holman is a woman whose voice and message are worthy of our listening.



Alicia takes part in one of several lively debates with other candidates during the lengthy federal campaign.



After her acclamation and official launch of her election campaign, Alicia was joined by NDP MLA Gary Holman (Saanich North and the Islands) for a photo op. They later married in December.

ROB FLEMING INVITES YOU TO HIS

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# Remembering Norm Levi

By John Bell

Norm Levi, who died on December 25, 2015, was born into a working class Jewish family in Birmingham, England in 1927. His father was an orthodox (Leninist) communist but Norm became a democratic socialist early on and remained so throughout his life though it was obvious that he had not missed his Marx—whether Karl or Groucho.

He joined the British army in 1943 at the age of 16 and ended up in the thick of the action and at the controls of a tank. He was with the British forces that liberated Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1945, and was subsequently posted to India during the period of the partition and the winning of that nation’s independence.

Norm then travelled to the Middle East where he fought in the Arab-Israeli war of 1948-9. He always described himself as a Zionist but that did not mean that he doubted or was not deeply disturbed by the kinds of things that Ilan Pappe exposes in *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*.

In 1950 Norm met his wife Gloria in Israel and together they raised five children. Norm also spent time on a kibbutz, which must have reinforced his belief that, although warring humans can behave with great cruelty, socialism, direct democracy and an ethic of care can thrive in a suitable social environment.

Fortunately for Canada, Norm learned that emigrating here was a lot easier to arrange than gaining entry to the US during the anti-communist McCarthy era. He found work as a social worker and parole officer and was employed by The John Howard Society. It was during that period that he became a friend of a fellow social worker, Dave Barrett, who convinced him that he too should run for political office under the banner of the NDP. He was elected as an MLA and served briefly in 1968-9 and was successful in subsequent elections between 1972-83 in several Vancouver area ridings.

During the short three-year period that the Barrett government held power it accomplished a truly impressive amount. Norm served as Minister of Human Resources and Minister of Rehabilitation and Social Improvement, while at the same time being responsible for Indian Affairs. While holding these positions, Norm decentralized power through the creation of Community Resource Boards, brought in Pharmacare, Mincome supplements for the elderly and people with disabilities, increased welfare rates, expanded community based juvenile and day care services and managed to be the first BC politician to reach a settlement and provide restitution for cut-off Indian lands.

Needless to say the right leaning corporate media were looking for any opportunity to embarrass or entirely undermine the new NDP government. They thought that they had found such an issue when a large



Norm Levi, 1927-2015

sum of money temporarily seemed to have disappeared under Norm’s watch. Sure enough, the money soon turned out not to be missing but not before Norm had explained to hyper- excited reporters in dead pan fashion that he had placed the money in a Swiss bank account for safe keeping but in all the excitement he had forgotten the account number. There was a long silence and then the assembled reporters realized that they would have to approach Norm with a certain caution in future.

After leaving political office, Norm “semi-retired” to Victoria with his partner, Beth Macdonald where he busied himself with a variety of research and writing projects while keeping a weather eye on the turbulent political climate in the province and meeting regularly with fellow NDPers and other progressives of every political stripe. He lived in a rambling old house that seemed to be filled with more books than your local library though he claimed not to have gone beyond primary school.

It was Fred Jackson, a former NDP MLA who introduced me to Norm in the late 90s. Fred told me that I was fortunate to have met him because Norm had very serious heart problems and might not survive

Please turn to Norm Levi, page 6

## Salt Spring Island’s Irene Wright receives Honorary Life Membership



Irene Wright from Saanich North and the Islands Constituency Association is congratulated by BC NDP Leader John Horgan after he presented her with an Honorary Life Membership in the NDP at the November Provincial Convention. As delegates learned, Irene Wright personifies NDP values--social and environmental justice, equity and fairness. She is revered on the Gulf Islands as a tireless, loyal and steadfast organizer and campaigner. For over 50 years, she has been a recruiter, mentor and trainer of activists, an organizer of events, a stalwart contributor to federal and provincial executives, a campaigner at the door and an excellent fundraiser. She has helped elect Lynn Hunter and Tommy Douglas as MPs for Cowichan and the Islands, and Gary Holman as MLA for Saanich North and the Islands. She continues to be the heart, soul and hands of the NDP on Salt Spring Island.

## Wondering what to do on May Day?

Saanich-Gulf Islands NDP Constituency Association has the answer, an appropriate way to enjoy a special day.

Join SGI members for an afternoon with recently retired MP Jean Crowder. They will meet at 2 p.m., May 1, in the auditorium at Tsawout (7728 Tetayut in Central Saanich) for Crowder’s presentation that will link together her commitment to First Nations and awareness of the need for economic opportunities that provide a decent income for everyone.

First Nations members will be welcomed to participate and to take part in the questions, answers and comments part of the event. Light refreshments will be offered.

Jean Crowder was the NDP MP for the Nanaimo-Cowichan riding from 2004 – 2015, and she was the Aboriginal Affairs critic during that time. She had two of her motions passed unanimously in the House. The first is known as “Jordan’s Principle”, named after a Manitoba boy who died in hospital in 2005 as governments argued over who should pay for home-care services. The principle states that first we care for the child, and then we worry about the money after. The second motion declares June to be designated National Aboriginal History Month.

The story of Crowder’s introduction to politics is legendary. She was one of a group of working women who met regularly for coffee in Duncan. From their discussions they determined that they wanted a woman to represent them in Ottawa. They looked at each other, and the idea that



Jean Crowder

Crowder was that person came from this coffee group. And they made sure that she was nominated and won. We were all winners. Crowder won her last election — in 2011 with 49% of the vote.

One of Crowder’s last motions in Parliament was to introduce Bill C-694, *An Act to amend the Navigation Protection Act (Nanaimo River and Koksilah River)*. This was to protect the ecosystem and aquifers from the dangers of drought, overfishing, and the impacts from logging and other human activities. And there is so much more....

Crowder certainly set a high standard for our great new and returning MPs on Vancouver Island. Please join the presentation May 1.

--Irene Wright

JEAN CROWDER

(THE NDP’S FORMER ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS CRITIC)

will discuss

“FIRST NATIONS AND THE WORLD of Work”

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-- Ed Murrow, American broadcaster and journalist, 1908-65

Our opinion

# The challenge for Canada

## How the NDP’s “sleek new boat” ran aground

As we all know by now, since the pollsters and pundits so tirelessly drilled it into our poor, aching heads, voter support shifted rapidly from the NDP to the Liberals in the final week of last fall’s federal election campaign. This shift signified two things: first, many citizens chose to vote “strategically” in order to put an end to Tory rule; second, these citizens saw the two main opposition parties as essentially interchangeable instruments with which to accomplish that goal.

There was more than a little truth in that perception. With the Liberals tacking left and the NDP tacking right during the unusually long campaign, the political daylight separating the two parties had all but disappeared by voting day. Tom Mulcair admitted as much to a CBC interviewer when the new parliament convened in December: “Mr. Trudeau did promise a lot of things. In fact, he promised most of the things that we had promised.” The NDP’s role in the current parliament, Mulcair went on to explain, was therefore not so much to propose alternatives to the Liberal program as simply to insist that the Liberals implement that program.

From a democratic-socialist perspective, the NDP’s drift toward the centre of the political spectrum is even more depressing than the party’s decimation at the polls or the loss of its official opposition status, especially since this drift is indicative of a long-term trend in the party’s evolution. In common with left-leaning, labour-based parties in the majority of Western countries, the NDP from the outset adopted a gradualist approach in its project of empowering the working class. The party would try, in other words, to reconstitute society by constitutional means; or, in still other words, to beat the pro-capitalist parties at their own game.

The predictable result was not that the workers gradually became empowered but that the socialists gradually became domesticated. Today’s New Democrats no longer breathe the fire of revolution but merely the hot air of state regulation and the social safety net. As it happens, this is the same hot air the electorate has on offer from better-funded, more experienced parties, such as the Liberal Party.

One of the surest signs of the NDP’s political domestication is its abandonment of the language of class analysis and class struggle. Think of Tommy Douglas’s parable of the cats and the mice, and compare it to Mr. Mulcair’s assiduous courting of the “middle class”—the very same “middle class,” one can’t help but notice, that Liberals and Conservatives also claim to champion.

The great attraction of the term *middle class* for mealy-mouthed politicians of all stripes is that it is so wonderfully elastic and equivocal. When pollsters ask people whether they belong to the lower, middle, or upper class, more than 90 percent say the middle class. Stretch a category this far and its analytical value pretty much goes snap. A leader who promises to help the middle class is taking a strong stance in favour of motherhood and apple pie.

Nothing illustrates the political utility of fuzzy thinking about class better than Justin Trudeau’s most publicized fiscal measure, the so-called “middle-class tax cut”, which amounts to a relatively modest reduction in the federal tax rate on income between \$45,000 and \$89,000 per annum. This means that the cut will not save you a lousy dime if you are among the large majority of Canadians who earn less than \$45,000. Worse, it means you have to earn \$89,000 or more to reap the maximum benefit. Thus, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives calculates that “the largest gains will go to families in the top 20%. This could better be described as Canada’s upper class, not its middle class.”

For the most part, the mainstream media gave the deceptive phrase “middle-class tax cut” a free pass, clearly testifying to the vapidness of political discourse in Canada today. Once upon a time, the principled rhetoric of democratic-socialist leaders provided a useful corrective to this kind of self-serving flimflam.

Sadly, that time was already a distant memory when the delegates to the 2011 NDP convention debated a motion to drop all talk of socialism from the party’s constitution. Pat Martin, who was then the MP for Winnipeg Centre, rose to speak in its favour. Buoyed by the NDP’s unprecedentedly strong showing in the election that spring, Martin waxed enthusiastic, not to say triumphalist: “We have the wind in our sails! We have a sleek new boat! We only have one problem—our anchor is dragging.”

What was this unfortunate “anchor,” which impeded the party’s progress toward its goal of forming government? It was the New Democrats’ historic commitment to socialism, which Martin likened, mixing his metaphors a little, to the rusted-out hull of a ship “that sank in the last century”. Simply jettison the dead weight of this outmoded ideology, Martin urged, and the party would encounter smooth sailing on its voyage “to the New Jerusalem”.

Well, Mr. Martin, you got your wish. The new constitution, adopted in 2013, goes no further than to affirm “a role for government” in managing the economy. Far from finding safe harbour in the New Jerusalem, though, your sleek new boat would appear to have run aground somewhere in the Bermuda Triangle (while, we note with only the merest hint of *schadenfreude*, the Liberal in your own riding managed to boot you out by a two-to-one margin).

You see, Mr. Martin, the problem wasn’t the anchor after all, it was the tiller. Or, more precisely, the absence of a firm hand thereupon. -- **PB**

**The Lower Island NEWS**

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**Editorial Committee Chair:** Sharon Hazelwood  
**Editor:** Dale Young  
**Guest Editorial Writer:** Peter G. Brunette  
**Distribution:** Staff  
**Advertising:** Dale Young

Contributors to this issue: Marianne Alto, Starla Anderson, Jeremy Arney, John Bell, Ron Duffy, Veronica Fagan, Bo Filter, Randall Garrison, Trish Garner, Jim Hackler, Ryan Heighton, Bill Hopwood, Carole James, Alistair MacGregor, Trish Garner, Paula Gunn, Gerry Masuda, Molly McCracken, David Olsen, Tim Pheotist, Dale Perkins, Geraldine Thomas-Flurer, Bill Tieleman, Heather Tufts, Diane Walsh, John Watson, Barry Weisleder, Terry Wolfwood, and others.

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As others see it

# Charity is the community response to poverty but where is the government response?

By Trish Garner and Bill Hopwood

CBC’s Food Bank Day here in BC on Friday, December 4 raised the grand total of \$630, 314. For the 100,086 users of food banks, which includes those on income assistance and people with disabilities, as well as seniors and low wage workers, that amounts to only \$6.30 per person for the whole year. Clearly, that’s no cause for celebration!

We’re reminded of the question that Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, BC’s Representative for Children and Youth, encourages us to ask during the giving season: “We need to actually not only feed our neighbour’s children, but really understand why is it that their parents are not able to feed them. What is causing the degree of poverty that we’re experiencing?”

Charity is the community response to poverty but where is the government response? BC is actually one of the most generous provinces in Canada in terms of how much we give to charity as a share of our income but we have had one of the highest poverty rates for the last 13 years. We cannot fill the gap left by policies that put welfare, disability and the minimum wage far below the poverty line and do very little to ease the increasing cost of living, in particular, housing and childcare. We desperately need the government to step up and share the weight with us.

The fundamental problem with charity is that nothing changes. We have to continue to donate year after year while more and more people continue to use the food banks because the systemic issues that keep people in poverty remain absolutely unchanged, and perhaps even get more and more ignored as we cover over them with feeling good about dropping our cans off. If we don’t make change, CBC’s 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their food bank day next year will be the first of many big milestones, and we will see you at the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and years to come beyond that.

One strong way to change the system is to adopt a human rights perspective to poverty. The existence of poverty in British Columbia is a violation of human rights. There is in fact not only a moral duty to eradicate poverty but also a legal obligation under international human rights law. December 10 was International Human Rights Day but we have little to celebrate here in BC.

A human rights approach to poverty is based on a fundamental respect for human dignity as opposed to a charitable approach, which, let’s be honest, situates poor people as pitiful. Why not instead give

people a level of income that provides for them and their families? A human rights framework recognizes people in poverty as rights-bearers entitled to assert legal claims rather than being passive recipients of charitable aid.

In 1976, almost 40 years ago, Canada ratified the United Nations *International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, which recognizes “the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.”

The government of British Columbia is clearly failing to meet its human rights obligations. One in 10 British Columbians live in poverty and BC is now the last province left without a poverty reduction plan.

Don’t get us wrong; giving to charity is necessary in this time of great need in order to address the immediate needs of people living in poverty. However, charities can only provide short-term relief that addresses the “downstream” symptoms and we need long-term solutions that go “upstream” to fix the root causes.

So, we encourage you to rethink giving. At the heart of giving is caring for each other and charity even at its highest level is not the best avenue for taking care of each other: what can \$6.30 really contribute to a family’s struggle to make ends meet? It is only at the level of government that we can have the greatest impact and truly make a difference.

So let’s match our donations with an action. Here’s an idea to take to our provincial government. Most other places in Canada have a poverty reduction plan and they are already saving lives and money. BC needs a comprehensive poverty reduction plan with legislated targets and timelines to really make a difference for families, communities and our province.

It’s time for the BC government to comply with its obligations under international law and stop relying on our generosity to tackle the crisis of poverty, a generosity that can never fill the hole left by government inaction.

Trish Garner is the Community Organizer of the **BC Poverty Reduction Coalition**, a broad-based network of over 400 organizations throughout BC that are calling on the provincial government to commit to a comprehensive poverty reduction plan with legislated targets and timelines.

Bill Hopwood is the Organizer for **Raise the Rates**



## “701 for Syria” – Local BGEU/NDP refugee support group seeks your help

We are a group of BCGEU members and NDP caucus/constituency staff and friends who have been moved by the on-going refugee crisis to come together and sponsor a Syrian refugee family in Victoria.

We are working with the Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA) which has a sponsorship agreement with the Government of Canada and which provides ongoing support to groups like ours as well as issuing tax receipts to donors.

We recently met with the ICA and there is a Syrian family of five that is needing sponsoring in Victoria that we may be able to help.

The BCGEU has so far started us off with a donation of \$5,000 and, since starting our fundraising, we have raised just over \$15,000 -- but we need to raise close to \$50,000 to support a family of this size for a year -- and we very much hope you can help us meet our goal!

This Syrian family -- a couple with two little girls, aged 3 and 5, as well as the girls' grandmother -- is currently living in very poor conditions in Turkey and we have this

chance to bring them to Canada as their sponsorship group. We have an energetic, committed team with lots of skills and resources to offer -- but we need to raise the funds quickly!

To donate, you can either:

- Send a cheque to the Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria at 930 Balmoral Road, Victoria, BC V8T 1A8 - **making sure to write on the “memo” line the number for our group which is CG-01915.**

- OR you can go to our Chimp fundraising page at <https://chimp.net/groups/victoria-refugee-sponsorship-bcgeu-701-for-syria/dashboard/about>

We will be happy to keep you updated on the progress as we learn more about the family and get closer to their arrival time in Victoria. We are looking forward to hearing from *Lower Island News* readers!

PS We can also be reached for more information through our Facebook page, at <https://www.facebook.com/701forSyria>

**Paula Gunn**  
for Local 701

## Yinka Dene thank BCGEU for support

I wanted to give you an update that, on February 4, the BC Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU) [signed a Solidarity Accord](#) affirming its support for the Save the Fraser Declaration, an Indigenous law signed by representatives of well over 100 First Nations banning tar sands transport through our territories.

The BCGEU joins other labour unions such as Unifor and the BC Teachers' Federation, as well as business, environmental and community groups, and people like you, that have already given their support to the Declaration.

This comes at a bad time for Enbridge Northern Gateway. If the ongoing legal chal-

lenges, failure to obtain supply contracts, and a promised Pacific [north coast tanker ban](#) were not enough, just last month, the BC Supreme Court ruled that the Province did not meet its [duty to consult First Nations](#) on Northern Gateway.

The addition of the 65,000 member BCGEU to a growing alliance of tar sands pipeline opponents sends an important message.

Thank you BCGEU for standing in solidarity with the Yinka Dene Alliance and many others to finally put an end to the risky Enbridge Northern Gateway project.

**Geraldine Thomas-Flurer**  
Yinka Dene Alliance Coordinator

## Government of Canada withdraws the appeal launched by the previous Harper Conservative Government against the Alberta court decision to grant Omar Khadr bail while he awaits the appeal against his US military conviction for “war crimes”

What kind of people inhabit the murky corridors of the US military/political establishment, and the Conservative Party of Canada that they eagerly and cruelly cast a 15-year-old boy (abandoned by his father and brainwashed by the people his father turned him over to) in the same light as the ogres who sat in the dock at Nuremberg or who like Radovan Karadic and others

have faced the ICC in the Hague accused of the war crimes including genocide.

That any person in Canada would colude with the shadowy US military tribunals at Guantanamo in such a manner brings shame on us as a nation.

**David Olsen**  
Sidney

### Friends of the Lower Island News

Judging by the number of stimulating and thought-provoking articles submitted for this first issue of 2016, it's clear this going to be another amazing year for *Lower Island News*, especially with things heating up before next year's provincial election.

Keeping this paper financed is an on-going challenge, and we are always on the lookout for potential new advertisers. So if you know of a business--small or large--that might like to get its name in front of our readers, please contact me at [dale\\_young@telus.net](mailto:dale_young@telus.net).

And speakingof financing this paper,, I cannot say enough good things about all our wolnderful and loyal donors who each year usually give enough to finnce at least one issue of the paper. Please keep it up!

If you like this issue of the LIN, want it to continue to be published and can afford to give something, please consider becoming a supporting donor and send us a cheque, whatever amount you can afford. All donations, large and small, will be much appreciated..

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**Dale Young, Editor, for the Editorial Board**

## Income support assistance in BC

Who among us is capable of living on our own with just \$610. a month as our total income? That's what the provincial government of BC expects of people living on Income Assistance.

Of course, should we have children -- one, two or three (up to five) -- we would receive \$946. per month, or \$1,036. per month, or \$1,076. per month (maximum of \$1,161 per month) to cover all expenses -- this includes housing expenses for a single-parent family.

For the Corporate Managers running our Province, that seems generous, but who among us could do it?

Those rates were last raised April 1, 2007, and haven't been adjusted upwards since then. Such is the absurd situation people living on Income Assistance face in BC, and most of us could care less.

Set that beside the current generous support coming from thousands of wonderful people responding to requests to financially support refugees entering Canada these past several months. The basic expectation the federal government has for willing private sponsors of refugees is for them to come up with \$40,000. per year to welcome the desperate people fleeing certain death and mayhem back in their homeland.

And quite amazingly lots of us are prepared to raise funds to greet them into our communities. However, when it comes to Income Assistance for the thousands of people living with those dreadfully small allowances provided by our provincial government, we seem indifferent.

Some of us cannot tolerate such an example of public neglect and we are demanding that our provincial government stop being so meagrely in providing our desperate neighbours already among us with basic sustenance. So we are organizing coalitions to press our government to

adjust income assistance to address poverty here and now. So far this provincial overnment remains totally unmoved and refuses to respond.

In January a coalition was formed representing a number of agencies and churches serving Vancouver Island in the Greater Victoria region: Our Place (with Don Evans signing), The Dandelion Society (with Al Tysick at the helm), Kelly Newhook (executive director of Together Against Poverty -- TAPS), Peggy Wilmot of Faith in Action, Allan Lingwood of Mustard Seed Church, and with full support coming from Bishop Logan McMenamie (Anglican Diocese of BC).

They have coalesced around pressuring the provincial government to “get real” about Income Assistance available to the poor living in this region.

So far the response from our elected officials has been remarkably non-existent. The joint letters signed by the above mentioned coalition were delivered to Ministry Stilwell and Premier Clark on January 14, 2016. To date they have not responded. Currently the Victoria City Council is adding its voice to the coalition, supporting the same demands. However, several years ago the City Council did the same action, but to no avail.

One wonders what it will take to get Premier Clark and her ministers to respond with even a modicum of compassion to the real needs of the poor living among us.

If you agree with the position taken by the Coalition let your local MLA know and urge her/him to take on this vitally important issue facing all of us. We must not allow this tragedy to go on much longer.

**Dale Perkins**

on behalf of Income Assistance Coalitions

[Ed note: To see the Clark Liberal government's response to the pleadings of the Income Assistance Coalition and many other citizens see the column by Bill Tieleman on page 6.]

## Stop the creation of refugees

I am now numb from the news and pictures about the overwhelming number of refugees in Europe. What is creating these refugees?

These refugees were forced to leave their homes which took years of hard work to establish and to face a life of uncertainty, hunger and suffering, fleeing to save their lives.

It was a surprise to me when I realized that these refugees were fleeing from civil wars started by foreign interests which encouraged and supplied opposition parties in these countries with money, iphones and weapons. I find it astonishing to realize that the modern weapons used by these freedom-fighters were provided by foreign interests which wanted to create another failed state as in Iraq, Libya and now Syria.

I find it interesting that Iraq, Libya, and now Syria were governed by dictators. However, unlike dictators in many other countries, these dictators were improving the lives of their peoples -- a dangerous example for others.

I believe that these refugees would pre-

fer to live under their dictators rather than be forced to give up all their possessions and flee their home as refugees facing dangers, hunger, cold, death, and a sense of hopelessness and loss.

What can We, the 99%ers, do to prevent creating more civil wars to force Democracy on these targeted victim countries?

We the Peoples of the world, We the 99%ers, must oppose, not passively support these Wars of the US Empire in its vain hope for world dominance in the current uni-polar world.

We the People need to exercise the power of our numbers to become a political force. We need to look after our interests rather than apathetically accepting private profit driven corporate influence/control over our governments.

We need to organize to influence politics at the municipal, regional, provincial and federal levels of government.

How do we start?

**Gerry Masuda**  
Duncan

## Open letter to the Right Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Trade

Dear Ms. Freeland,

Welcome back from New Zealand, where I trust you briefly enjoyed their summer.

You signed the TPP agreement there on the basis that you needed to do that in order to discuss it with Canadians, consult and present it to parliament and committees for further examination for eventually ratification or not. At least that is your rationale.

I have expressed before to you that the previous PM signed this in principle last year, without advising Canadians of any of the provisions, conditions or content of this investment agreement, which should have been a sign to you all in the Liberal Party that this was an agreement designed to harm Canada, not to be of any benefit to us, because that is his legacy.

*Contrary to your claims that there has not been enough time to fully examine this agreement, and that you needed to sign it in New Zealand in order to take it to the parliament and various stake holders, one only needs to examine Chapter 28 “Dispute settlement” to know that this is not a trade agreement at all. It is an investment and profit protection agreement secretly fermented in corporate boardrooms around the Pacific Rim as a precursor to a global agreement by corporations around the world. Surrounding this Chapter 28 is the smoke screen of a trade agreement which is far from free, being full of exceptions and inter-country sub agreements.*

Perhaps it would be worth listening again to what most of those ministers who

**See Open letter to Minister - page 6**



## Open letter to Minister of Trade, from page 5

responded to the post signing press conference question about their ratification process had to say, including the Australian minister. They all said basically the same thing, “We will need to change some of our laws before ratification”.

Now the only reason for that, Ms. Freeland, is that they know that some of their laws will lead to Chapter 28 being invoked against them, and to me this is a clear acknowledgement that they are surrendering, or indeed have already surrendered, their sovereignty without a fight simply to be part of the TPP. That may not be a high price to pay for some countries which have no aspirations to sovereignty, but I was surprised that Australia would be one of them, until I remembered that their PM and Harper walked in lock step in their desires to destroy their countries.

Are you falling into that lock step too Ms. Freeland? Will you throw our sovereignty under the TPP bus?

Will the discussions you will have actually involve Canadians, Ms. Freeland, or will they simply be with the corporate sector? Will ordinary Canadians have a forum to express their feelings about their country’s sovereignty? Who will listen, tabulate and report?

Contrary to political rhetoric, ordinary Canadians are very much stake holders in this TPP, Ms. Freeland, so how will you ac-

commodate their declarations for freedom and love of a sovereign Canada?

Will the Canadian people be told this is not an agreement to which any changes can be made, it is now a take it or leave it deal? Or did you do as I requested and sign it with a “provided that”, or “subject to”? I watched you sign and it seemed that you ignored that, because there will be no changes to be made, will there? The only “subject to” now allowed by the corporate sponsors of this investment agreement will be «ratification as is or not”.

Finally, you can throw away this investment agreement without losing face re Liberals being for trade agreements, because again this is not about trade. Even those portions which are about tariffs and special agreements are an attack of one sort or another on each country’s ability to be protective of their citizens. For example we will be flooded with unregulated, perhaps even toxic, milk and stripped of our water. As with every “trade” agreement since FTA it is not about trade at all, it is about investments and protection against perceived lost corporate profit.

I await with great curiosity to hear how ordinary Canadians can have their say on this agreement which will fundamentally alter their lives.

Jeremy Arney  
Victoria BC

## Remembering Norm Levi, from page 3

the major operation that he was scheduled to undergo imminently. However, Norm explained to me, as he subsequently repeated to various genuinely concerned people, that yes, he was dealing with heart failure but that was not nearly as bad as it sounded.

Since he survived for close to 20 years with ongoing heart problems that only slowed him down in the last year of his life, his diagnosis was the correct one. Over the years, Norm made increasingly frequent emergency trips to hospital, his hearing grew progressively worse until only the most powerful of hearing aids would allow him to hear what the person next to him was saying and his vision continued to deteriorate until laser vision and the abandonment of his coke bottle thick glasses belatedly gave him the appearance of a retired matinee idol. Not once did I ever hear him complain about the state of his health.

Norm was quietly incredibly generous with his time and resources. He helped a large number of people over the years but

I never found out about it from him. I saw it or I heard about it from the people whose lives he touched.

I must be a terrible person because I can’t recall offhand ever telling anyone that I respected them but I told Norm that a number of times and he never gave the slightest indication that he knew I was sincere. Perhaps you can understand then why I would be so upset when a group of Jewish young people shouted him down in a public forum when he tried to raise the issue of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza during one of Israel’s incursions into the area.

Once again Norm seemed entirely unfazed. He just looked for other opportunities and venues to make his case.

He was an amazing guy and the four of us who spent so much time chatting with him in cafes during the last years of his life know that we are far from alone in feeling disoriented and at a loss because we will no longer hear his voice in the midst of our friendly but raucous discussions.

We welcome your letters to the editor, as well as articles and reviews, photos, and anything else you think would be of interest to our progressive readers.

Please mail them to the Editor, at Box 311-2750 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC, V8T 4E8, email them to dale\_young@telus.net, or phone 250-384-7621.

The next issue of the *Lower Island News* will be in early June. The deadline for submitting advertising and articles will be Friday, May 13.

For further information and to submit articles and ads, email dale\_young@telus.net.

### Victoria Labour Council

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The VLC, representing affiliated unions in the Greater Victoria area, holds its regular monthly meetings the third Wednesday of each month at 7 pm, at the BCGEU Auditoriam, 2994 Douglas Street.

All delegates are invited to come out and meet the Executive:  
Mike Eso, President; Stan Dzbik, Treasurer; Robin Toscza, Secretary

# BC Liberals ruin disability rates increase with insulting transit clawback

Long overdue rate bump comes with a catch. And another. And another.

By Bill Tieleman

In raising disability assistance rates but changing the bus pass program, the BC government played a cruel trick.

Last week’s BC budget briefly raised the hopes of people with disabilities who had suffered nine years without an increase in benefits -- and then crushed them when the truth came out.

This is an ugly story of what first seemed like slightly good intentions turning into an attack on people who most need our help.

BC Liberal Finance Minister Mike de Jong announced February 16 a \$77 increase in disability benefits -- the first since 2007 -- but the hike from \$906.42 per month for a single person won’t take effect until September 2016.

But there was also a catch. Then another. And another.

First, when I questioned de Jong and finance ministry officials at the budget media lockup on February 16, they admitted that the \$66 per month Special Transportation Subsidy about 20,000 disability benefits recipients now receive will be subtracted from their \$77 increase, leaving them with just an \$11 a month improvement.

That’s only a 1.2 percent benefits increase -- and when you average that over the nine years without any hike, the annual increase is infinitesimal, just 0.13 percent.

When I asked de Jong if the tiny amount wasn’t unfair, he responded: “For that group, the impact is very modest.”

No kidding. But it gets worse.

Roughly another 35,000 British Columbians with disabilities get a transit pass, and they will now have to start paying \$52 a month for that pass for the first time. Subtracting \$52 from the \$77 a month increase leaves just \$25 more a month -- a 2.75 per cent increase over nine years, not even close to inflation that has gone up over 10 per cent.

But then it gets worse again. The government has confirmed that in addition to being charged a new \$52 a month bus pass fee, people with disabilities will also still pay a previous \$45 annual “administration fee” for passes.

So the measly \$25 disability benefits monthly increase is even further cut by \$3.75 -- the cost of the \$45 a year administration fee -- meaning their hike is just \$21.25 a month.

So for those 35,000 people, that’s a rate increase of only 2.3 percent over nine long years. Thanks, Liberals!

Either way, the \$11 or \$21.25 a month increase for those affected might leave them enough to buy a few extra cauliflowers, but not much more.

Chris Halarewich, who has cerebral palsy and lives in Castlegar, contacted me to say that because he receives the Special Transportation Subsidy and is worried his \$11 net increase might “balance out to nothing.”

“I would say get rid of the \$77 top up and put back the \$66 Special Transportation Subsidy and free bus passes -- we’d be better off,” Halarewich said.

### Calls to reverse cruel changes

The BC Liberal government has overall played an astonishingly cruel trick on peo-

ple with disabilities.

Everyone should be outraged about this, if only because all of us are just one accident or illness away from permanent disability.

The Disability Alliance of BC is calling on the government to reconsider the bus pass change.

“Since the announcement of the elimination of the \$45 annual bus pass program for [disability assistance] recipients, there’s been a groundswell of concern from across the disability community: organizations, representing families, poverty, and advocacy groups are speaking out about the negative impact they believe this change will have,” Alliance executive director Jane Dyson said in an email interview.

Dyson said the controversy is unfortunate given that “over the last 18 months the province has implemented several positive changes as part of its Accessibility 2024 Initiative to make BC the most progressive province in Canada for people with disabilities.”

The Alliance “respectfully urges the minister to get back on track with this positive direction and rescind the plan to eliminate the \$45 annual bus pass,” Dyson said.

There’s also a fast-growing petition from advocacy group Inclusion BC demanding the government reverse its clawback of transit funding.

### “Get out there and protest”

In introducing the disability benefits increase, de Jong downplayed its size without disclosing all the catches. “I don’t think this makes life easier for people with disabilities -- hopefully it makes it a little less hard,” he said.

“Seventy-seven dollars in today’s world is a pretty modest amount of money, which is why I’m not trying to overestimate it,” de Jong added, presumably referring to the amount of rate increase that the roughly 47,000 people with disabilities who don’t have transit or transportation assistance will receive.

Halarewich said “modest” is an understatement: “They haven’t even come close to the rate of inflation... The BC Liberals keep saying there’s no money, there’s no money, but they keep spending it elsewhere.”

The only slight, dim ray of hope remaining for people with disabilities is that the BC Liberals might examine disability benefit rates “further in the fiscal year,” de Jong told me.

But Halarewich has another suggestion rather than waiting.

“I would say everybody get out there and protest in Christy Clark’s riding -- people in wheelchairs, everyone,” he said.

This column first appeared in *24 Hours Vancouver* and *The Tyee*, and is reprinted with permission of the author.

Read more: [Transportation](#), [BC Politics](#),

Bill Tieleman is a former NDP strategist whose clients include unions and businesses in the resource and public sector. Tieleman is a regular Tyee contributor who writes a column on BC politics every Tuesday in *24 Hours* newspaper. E-mail him at [weststar@telus.net](mailto:weststar@telus.net) or visit his [blog](#).

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# Balancing rights: The Ghomeshi trial as an example of media distortion of the public's confidence in the criminal justice system

**By Ryan Heighton**

In our modern society, very few people would openly admit to being opposed to basic human rights. This is a broad declaration that makes us feel as though we are progressive and enlightened. Unfortunately, the concept of “human rights” is broad, and widely interpreted.

This is incredibly unscientific, but in 2016 Canada, I'd hazard a guess that most would cringe at the notion of segregation based on race or gender. We are even making significant progress in attitudes toward the LGBTQ community. We have come a long way just in the past half-century. Unfortunately, we have a long way to go, and we may never be in a place where "human rights" are ubiquitously acknowledged and protected.

Why then is the concept of due process and legal rights in the concept of the criminal justice process so elusive? Naturally, I'm extremely biased, as a criminal defence lawyer. I've written here before about the competition of rights that the criminal justice system presents. Victims' rights vs. the rights of the accused person. Public interest vs. the rights of the individual. Protecting the public vs. avoiding an unfettered police state. It is a constant struggle, and there is not always a clear delineation. There is constant overlap, and the biggest challenge that the courts face is establishing the right balance. We have a wonderful Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which made substantive legal rights part of the Canadian Constitution, and yet more than 30 years after its enactment, the courts still have to conduct a balancing act of competing rights on a case-by-case basis.

With respect to public perception of this balancing act, for the vast majority of the public without formal legal training, the media is the primary source of information. This places a great responsibility on the media to report accurately and fairly. While we haven't hit the lows of the Nancy Grace-exploitative-tabloid-style of court reporting

in Canada, many cases can be extremely polarizing in nature, particularly sexual offences, and can lead to irresponsible reporting.

I have avoided public comment on the now-notorious Jian Ghomeshi sexual assault trial, because it seems as though everyone with a pulse has felt the need to spout their take on the trial, the complaints, his character, the character of the complainants, the criminal trial process, feminism, equality, and anything even tangentially related to the matter.

Now that the trial has completed, and the judgment has been reserved, I feel the need to vent my frustrations with the media coverage of the trial. Living in the Greater Toronto area, the story has been front and centre, but Ghomeshi's celebrity status has spiralled a very sensitive case into a national spectacle.

Much of the reporting has been even-handed and factually based. This responsible style of reporting allows the reader to form their own opinions based on the facts and evidence reported. There is still the issue that the nuances of the trial are lost in the bite-sized tweets, news reports, and articles that are consumed en masse in our digital age. However, at least this style of reporting does not skew the evidence or tell the reader what to think of it.

Many of us are highly reactive and will respond accordingly to sexual assaults and allegations of crimes involving vulnerable victims. Courts are public, and with the exception of certain sensitive information protected by publication bans, journalists have a responsibility to keep the public informed about the legal process. The United States take transparency one step further, with cameras in state-level courts to live broadcast cases of enhanced public interest. There are arguments to be made for both regimes, but needless to say, media reporting of criminal cases is a necessary evil.

The problem is when the reporting of criminal cases becomes skewed, and jour-

nalists use their platform to enforce biases and stereotypes, misrepresenting the criminal justice system in the process. As mentioned, these cases are often polarizing competitions of rights. The system needs to be sensitive to complainants in a way that does not re-victimize or discourage disclosure of honest complaints, while also ensuring that the accused person is afforded due process, including the right to make full answer and defence.

Entire books have been published about the history of sexual offences in the criminal courts, and in limited space here, can barely scratch the surface, but suffice it to say, the system has evolved incredibly, even in the past 25 years. Corroborating evidence, while helpful, is no longer required for a sexual assault complaint to be considered credible. Evidence of prior sexual history of complainants is no longer admissible, but for extenuating circumstances, and only where the defence has had a pre-trial application granted to lead such evidence.

Despite the statutory protections in place for sexual assault complainants, the Ghomeshi case has led to a certain sect of journalists launching a full offensive against the cross-examination of complainants in sexual assault trials. Cross-examination is an essential component of the criminal process, and is necessary to be able to test the Crown's case, and make full answer and defence. Without cross-examination of Crown witnesses, the system would be rife with false complaints, and untested allegations would universally result in convictions. Effectively, the police would become dystopian, Judge Dredd-type characters, who would make arrests and be able to convict on a presumptive case.

Similarly, though the defence is not required to call evidence to defend a case, when we do, the Crown is entitled to cross-examine our witnesses. It is the only real way to explore inconsistencies and help the court get to the truth. Ultimately, it is the unenviable task of the judge to best discern truth from fact, and if the defence has established that the Crown has not proven its case beyond a reasonable doubt, then the only equitable result is an acquittal. It is not a perfect system, but it has evolved over hundreds of years to be the system that best balances the interests of the public at-large and the participants in the criminal justice system.

When the defence cross-examination of the complainants in the Ghomeshi trial explored potential inconsistencies in their evidence, a (relatively, thankfully small) number of self-branded feminist journalists in Ontario branded Marie Henein as

using “the same old defence tactics” and effectively dismissed her as anti-feminist for simply doing her job. Ms. Henein has a reputation for being an aggressive cross-examiner, and indeed it is her calling card for success. She is universally regarded as one of the best at what she does, and there is a time and place for being delicate. When a judge perceives a defence lawyer as crossing a line and being inappropriate with a witness, then it is their job to protect the administration of justice by reining them in. Beyond this, without being in the courtroom ourselves as a public, we are forced to rely on the accounts of journalists.

So, when biased, opinion-based reporting takes the forefront, the administration of justice is being undermined. As defence lawyers, we have a job that is essential -- to protect the rights of the accused, guilty or innocent, to ensure that they are afforded due process. Sometimes that means cross-examining a victim of a heinous crime. Few of us take enjoyment in the cross-examination of such a witness, but it is necessary to avoid our devolution to a Draconian police state. And just sometimes, that purported victim is not being forthright with the court. In that case, we are a necessary component of the justice system, to avoid wrongful convictions.

How is it that Marie Henein can be branded as anti-feminist for doing her job, and doing it well, yet “Making a Murderer” can become a widespread success, with so many of the same people claiming to be concerned with wrongful convictions? Perhaps we are all hypocrites. Or perhaps we are all vexed by the balancing of rights between accusers and accused in the criminal justice system.

The system can be dehumanizing both for victims of crime and for the accused person. This is an unfortunate reality that cannot really be remedied. Much like my job, it is really a case of damage control. Parliament has ensured that a number of statutory protections are in place to protect the dignity of complainants and to prevent revictimization which could otherwise deter the reporting of crime. Similarly, the Charter has afforded a comprehensive set of legal rights for accused persons. But, in the absence of responsible journalism, the public will always have a distorted perspective of the rights on both sides.

Regardless, I'm fully prepared to continue to answer the question: "How can you defend *those* people," cognizant of the polarizing profession that I entered.

Ryan Heighton is a partner at Cox, Heighton LLP, a law firm in Southwestern Ontario, practising exclusively in criminal defence law.

# Supervised consumption on the radar in Victoria

**By Marianne Alto**

The City of Victoria thinks that it's time supervised consumption services are available in the City.

Victoria City Council identified supervised consumption services as a priority in the City's 2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan, under its *Objective 7 – Facilitate Social Inclusion and Community Wellness*. Originally set as a goal for 2017, that goal was recently revised to 2016, reflecting Council's concern about the recent spate of overdose deaths across the community.

While the City isn't responsible for delivering health care, it takes seriously its responsibility to work towards creating better quality of life for all its residents. Evidence from other communities where supervised consumption is available confirms that such services save lives – as locally shown by the numbers of overdose deaths prevented by the use of naloxone (a drug that can block and reverse the effects of opioids like heroine or fentanyl) under supervision of health and crisis care workers.

To sort out how supervised consumption could work locally, the City is collaborating with its partners Island Health, the Victoria Police Department and the broad-based community coalition Yes2SCS. That work includes a complex consideration of how supervised consumption can be safely provided within a comprehensive package of complementary health services.

In 2015, the former Conservative federal government adopted Bill C-2, the Orwellian entitled “Respect for Communities Act”, which impeded any new supervised consumption services. This was the Conservatives’ response to a 2011 Supreme Court of Canada ruling to uphold an exemption granted to Insite, a safe-injection site in Vancouver. The top court ruled

against the federal government in that case, and in its decision found that Insite saved lives and provided health benefits without increasing drug use and crime in local neighbourhoods. The court added that the government should “generally grant an exemption” if evidence indicates that a safe-injection site will decrease the risk of death and disease in the area, and if it will have few negative public impacts.

The current federal government seems more pre-disposed to respecting the Supreme Court's direction (although the Liberals have not yet indicated if they are inclined to repeal Bill C-2) and has shown interest in taking a new approach to supervised consumption services. Liberal Federal Health Minister Jane Philpott's recent visit to, and subsequent positive comments about, Insite and the Dr. Peter Centre in Vancouver, lead to the federal government's recent granting of an exemption to the Dr. Peter Centre for its long established in-house supervised consumption services.

Locally, Victoria City Councillor Marianne Alto recently asked city council to seek direction from the federal Minister on what it would take for Philpott to approve local supervised consumption services. As a result, Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps has written to Minister Philpott, asking her to clearly set out what evidence, actions and/or materials she requires to enable her positive consideration of an application to establish supervised consumption services in Victoria.

Meanwhile, work continues, and the City hopes the result of this collaboration among community, policing and health authority partners will see concrete results this year.

Marianne Alto is a Victoria City Councillor.

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# New Democrats will uphold progressive values in Parliament

By Alistair MacGregor

It's been four months since voters in Cowichan-Malahat-Langford elected me as their Member of Parliament, and things are finally getting into full swing in Ottawa. Every day I am on Parliament Hill I am humbled by the tremendous trust that people back home have placed in me, and I am determined to stand and fight to create a Canada that people in our community can be proud of. After a decade of Stephen Harper's Conservatives, that's no easy feat, but with a new government in power I'm cautiously optimistic about the prospect of bringing truly meaningful, progressive change to this country.

In the election campaign, the NDP put forward truly progressive policy proposals that would have combatted the staggering inequality facing our society and transformed our country for the better. Policies like a universal childcare program that would cost parents no more than \$15 per day per child. There is a huge shortage of childcare spaces in Canada. When parents are lucky enough to find one, they can cost as much as a mortgage payment. Oftentimes, parents decide that it's cheaper to forego two incomes in favour of staying home with the kids. Universal childcare would allow both parents to return to work, particularly women, who most often bear the burden of childcare duties at the expense of their careers.

Canada needs programs like this, as well as a \$15 minimum wage and massively increased investments in affordable housing to combat the growing inequality in Canada.

We proposed a universal pharmacare program that would cover the skyrocketing costs of prescription medication. Too often I've heard stories from seniors or people with disabilities who live on a fixed income who cannot afford the medications they need to live full and rewarding lives. The NDP plan would have made these drugs affordable for everyone.

The NDP promised reforms to our voting system to bring in proportional representation, so that every single vote counts and no party can wield all the power while not having secured a majority of the votes. While the Liberals have embarked on a process to reform the voting process, we still have no idea what form that will take or if it will be in the best interests of the electorate instead of just the governing party.

We promised to take firm action on climate change, hold the big polluters accountable for the damage they cause and introduce a national action plan to reduce emissions instead of allowing the provinces to go it alone independently with no national leadership or coordination.

Our party pledged to raise the tax rate on the wealthiest corporations so that they pay their fair share instead of placing the tax burden on working people, and invest that money into programs that served to reduce inequality.

We are the only party that committed to reject the Trans-Pacific Partnership deal that was negotiated in the dying days of the campaign. Our community has seen the devastating impacts of other trade deals that have led to the closure of mills and factories, and this deal will only serve to exacerbate these impacts and open the doors to lawsuits from foreign corporations against our municipalities and governments acting in the best interests of their citizens.

I'm proud of the commitments we made during the campaign and I plan to continue fighting for those programs going forward. Even though Stephen Harper is gone, there is much work to do to ensure that the lives of the most vulnerable in our society are improved, that our environment is protected, and that government is truly working to help average Canadians.

Already in this young Parliament, I have had the opportunity to speak in the House of Commons on a number of issues of importance to our community. I've spoken out against the contaminated soil dumping facility in Shawnigan Lake and called for federal action in the wake of provincial ambivalence. I've questioned the Minister of Canadian Heritage on the government's backing away from its promise to reverse

the Conservative cuts to the CBC.

I've highlighted the shortcomings of the Liberal tax cut plan which gives the maximum benefit to the highest income earners while giving no relief to the 17 million Canadian workers that make less than \$45,000 per year. This only serves to contribute to rising income inequality and does nothing to help those that need it most.

Most recently, I've spoken in favour of legislation that would repeal Conservative attacks on our labour movement: Bill C-377 that put in place arduous and unnecessary reporting and public disclosure of union finances, and Bill C-525 that made it more difficult for public sector employees to unionize.

The new Liberal government made a number of lofty promises during the election campaign, and New Democrats will be there to make sure they are held to account. I'm disappointed to see that they've already started to back away from a few of them, like raising the CPP to keep our seniors out of poverty (the Finance Minister caved during discussions on it with his provincial counterparts), cancelling the \$35 billion Conservative cuts to our health care

system, creating a federally-led action plan to tackle climate change and greenhouse gas emissions, winding down Canada's military role in the Middle East, and repealing the draconian anti-terror legislation Bill C-51.

The Liberals made specific promises toward a new nation-to-nation relationship and substantial investment in First Nations' education and child and family services. Repairing our relationship with Canada's indigenous peoples and working towards true reconciliation must be a priority for the government, and it is something that we in the NDP will be pushing for in the coming months.

Voters on the Island elected a New Democrat in every riding except one. As I sit in my seat in the House of Commons with my five amazingly talented NDP colleagues I know that the progressive values that Islanders hold will be proudly represented.

Alistair MacGregor is the MP for Cowichan-Malahat-Langford. You can reach his office at 1-866-609-9998 or online at [alistairmacgregor.ca](http://alistairmacgregor.ca).

## MP Alistair MacGregor officially opens Duncan constituency office

**DUNCAN** — Cowichan-Malahat-Langford MP Alistair MacGregor officially opened the doors to his Duncan constituency office on December 12.

Located at 101-126 Ingram Street, the same space previous MP Jean Crowder occupied and where MacGregor worked for 8 years, the Duncan constituency office will be open Tuesday - Friday from 10:00 am - 3:00 pm. An office in Langford is expected to open in early 2016.

MacGregor and staff have already been busy assisting constituents remotely since his October 19 victory, but he is very pleased to now have his new office up and running so he can focus on the important work at hand.

"I am truly humbled by the trust the voters of Cowichan-Malahat-Langford have placed in me, and I intend to work hard in the months and years ahead to keep earning this trust by effectively representing our riding in Ottawa," MacGregor said.

MacGregor had just returned to the riding after the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament's Speech from the Throne and its first sittings. On December 9 MacGregor asked his first question in the House of Commons as the NDP's Seniors Critic. He questioned the Liberal government on their promise to immediately boost the guaranteed income supplement by 10% to help low income seniors struggling on fixed incomes. "Immediate needs require immediate attention," said MacGregor, who remains hopeful that the new government will place a high priority on this vulnerable sector of the population.

As a member of Canada's Progressive Opposition, MacGregor remains optimistic about working with the new Liberal government to create positive change for Canada and the constituents of Cowichan-Malahat-Langford, but he has also vowed to hold the new Liberal government to account on their many campaign promises.





**Murray Rankin**  
Member of Parliament  
Victoria

Constituency office:  
1057 Fort Street  
Victoria, BC V8V 3K5  
250-363-3600  
[Murray.Rankin@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Murray.Rankin@parl.gc.ca)

Office hours:  
Tuesday to Friday  
10am to 4pm

## Trans-Pacific Partnership hides significant health costs, according to two new studies

**OTTAWA** – As Canada signed the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in New Zealand earlier this year, two new studies from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) reveal significant risks and high public costs to the Canadian health care system within the text of the agreement.

The TPP would require Canada to extend patent terms to compensate brand-name pharmaceutical firms for regulatory delays in approving drugs. This policy change could add \$636 million annually to the cost of drugs in Canada, according to Joel Lexchin in his study, *Involuntary Medication: The Possible Effects of the Trans-Pacific Partnership on the Cost and Regulation of Medicine in Canada*.

"Higher drug costs would make pharmacare more costly, and lawsuits from adversely affected drug companies are more likely under TPP's investor-state dispute settlement mechanism," says Lexchin, a professor in the School of Health Policy and Management at York University.

The second study, *Major Complications: The TPP and Canadian Health Care*, by CCPA trade expert Scott Sinclair, finds that the TPP investor protections would make it more difficult and costly for Canadian governments to establish new public health programs, including pharmacare, which is on the agenda of ongoing federal-provincial health talks.

Key findings from both studies include:

- The TPP includes many new rights for US and Japanese drug companies to comment on, review and appeal Canadian regulatory decisions, which could adversely affect drug approvals and safety.
- Faster regulatory approvals of medicines, which might result from the TPP, have been shown to lead to a higher incidence of safety problems, including warnings and withdrawals.
- The TPP's carve-out for tobacco control measures will not provide meaningful protection for future Canadian plain-packaging rules, since US-based tobacco companies will continue to have access to NAFTA's investor-state protections.
- Other forms of public health regulation, from controls on trans-fats to regulating legalized marijuana, are fully exposed to lawsuits from disgruntled foreign investors. The TPP expands these rights to cover investors from Japan, Malaysia, Australia and other countries.
- The TPP financial services chapter actually makes it easier for foreign insurers to challenge the expansion of public health insurance into new areas by allowing investor-state disputes involving a much-abused "minimum standards of treatment" rule.

"While a strong and balanced international trade regime is critical to Canada's economic success it should not, and need not, come at the expense of our public health system," says Sinclair.

These two reports are the first in a series of detailed analyses of various aspects of the TPP to be released by CCPA in the coming months as the debate over whether Canada should ratify the deal continues.

*Involuntary Medication: The Possible Effects of the Trans-Pacific Partnership on the Cost and Regulation of Medicine in Canada* and *Major Complications: The TPP and Canadian Health Care* are available on the CCPA website: <http://policyalternatives.ca>

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**Alistair MacGregor**  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
COWICHAN-MALAHAT-LANGFORD

Duncan Office: 101-126 Ingram St  
Langford Office: Coming Soon!

Phone: 1-866-609-9998  
Email: [alistair.macgregor@parl.gc.ca](mailto:alistair.macgregor@parl.gc.ca)

[alistairmacgregor.ca](http://alistairmacgregor.ca)



## NDP tables real protections for public

**OTTAWA** – February 4, NDP Science Critic Kennedy Stewart introduced legislation to defend evidence-based policy making and enshrine scientific freedom into law.

“After years of muzzling, mismanagement, and misuse of research by the Conservatives, our scientists need lasting protections in order to finally turn the page on the lost Harper decade,” said Stewart.

“Canada needs a new science advisor that is independent of the government and reports directly to Parliament. Its mandate needs to be comprehensive and protected by law – like the NDP’s proposal for a Parliamentary Science Officer.”

**MP Stewart tabled two key science proposals in Parliament:**  
The Parliamentary Science Officer Act

– which aims to create an independent science watchdog for Parliament.

Motion 36 on Scientific Integrity – which requires all federal departments and agencies to implement pro-science communication policies.

“The new Minister for Science should get to work drafting ethics legislation that unequivocally ensures the open communication of scientific research throughout government,” continued Dr. Stewart, an associate professor on leave from Simon Fraser University’s School of Public Policy. “In order to get this right, the government’s approach should be modelled off the scientific integrity directives implemented by President Obama following years of muzzling by the Bush Administration.”

## Malcolmson calls for action to end systematic discrimination

**NANAIMO** — Sheila Malcolmson, the Member of Parliament for Nanaimo-Ladysmith, is calling for concrete action by the Liberal government in the wake of a decision by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal regarding First Nations child welfare.

In her first full speech in the House of Commons January 27, **Malcolmson** recognized the honour of living on the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw, Stz’uminus and Nanoose First Nations along with the riding’s many Metis and Indigenous community members.

“From them I am learning the importance of healing the damaged relationship with Indigenous peoples,” Malcolmson said, citing the importance of implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations and the inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. “These commitments were common-cause for the NDP and Liberals in the election campaign, but with no timelines or details in the Liberal Throne Speech, it’s hard to

pin good intentions down.”

The January historic Human Rights Tribunal decision recognizes a wrong that has been perpetuated for decades due to underfunding and neglect throughout Canada: discrimination against First Nations children exists and it is systemic. There are now more First Nations children in care than there were at the height of the residential schools.

“New Democrats believe the Liberal government must act immediately by instructing its lawyers not to appeal the Tribunal’s decision and by delivering the money needed to equitably fund these important services in the upcoming budget,” says Malcolmson, the Progressive Opposition’s critic for the Status of Women.

Malcolmson also addressed a series of local issues in her speech, including inter-regional public transportation between Ladysmith and Nanaimo, ferry infrastructure, gender-based violence, climate change, and health care.

## Break through the paper ceiling

**OTTAWA** – Prominent Canadian women should be featured on Canada’s banknotes, the NDP urged January 12.

“It’s time to break through the paper ceiling and feature prominent Canadian women on Canada’s money bills,” said NDP status of women critic Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo-Ladysmith). “As we reach Canada’s 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Queen shouldn’t be the only woman who is celebrated on our money.”

The only images of Canadian women to appear on our currency were removed by the Conservative government when they replaced the Famous Five and Thérèse Casgrain, who advocated women’s voting rights, with an icebreaker on the polymer notes.

Over 64,000 Canadians have signed a petition requesting that women from Canadian history be honoured on our currency. In a letter to Finance Minister Bill Morneau, Malcolmson called on the Minister to reverse the Conservative decision and ensure that prominent Canadian women are duly recognized on our polymer banknotes.

“We must take every opportunity to celebrate the work, sacrifices and courage that women throughout Canadian history have displayed to build this country,” said Malcolmson. “Our banknotes should be prominent everyday reminders of those efforts and indeed of the contributions to that shared history made by people of all genders, ages, and ethnicities.”

## Sheila Malcolmson tables abandoned vessels bill

**NANAIMO** — Sheila Malcolmson, the NDP Member of Parliament for Nanaimo-Ladysmith, tabled a Private Member’s Bill February 4 that will reduce the environmental, economic and navigational hazards to Canadian waterways and coastlines posed by abandoned vessels.

“For too long, responsibility for abandoned vessels and the risks they represent has been shuffled from one government department to the next, with no senior government taking responsibility,” Malcolmson said. “This bill continues the work done by former MP Jean Crowder so we can finally get to work dealing with these vessels and protecting our harbours and waterways from contamination and debris.”

The bill, seconded by Anne Minh-Thu Quach, the NDP MP for Salaberry-Suroît, will designate the Coast Guard as the receiver of wreck for the purposes of the

*Canada Shipping Act*, allowing them to take action without being directed to by a Ministry. It will also compel the government to create regulations for the removal, disposition or destruction of abandoned vessels or wrecks.

“Our waterways, coasts and harbours are economic drivers and part of the fabric of our country and yet it can currently take years to remove or destroy an abandoned vessel,” Malcolmson said. “It is time for the government to listen to people throughout Canada and take immediate action to protect waterways from environmental and safety concerns, and to tackle related issues such as Canada’s aging fleet and the lack of recycling facilities for fibreglass.”

## As opposition, New Democrat MPs will be pushing the government to take concrete actions to tackle important challenges

By Randall Garrison

Saying thank you to all my supporters and campaign workers is the first order of business here. Through lots of hard work we were able to increase our margin of victory to over 5,000 votes. I will work hard alongside my staff to provide the same level of representation and of service to constituents in the new riding of Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke as before. You can find us at our new office at 2904 Tillicum Road, near Tillicum and Gorge.

In the new parliament I will be serving as the NDP spokesperson on National Defence and continue my work as LBGTQ spokesperson.

So far I can report a refreshing tone in Parliament, and in particular from the new Liberal government. This is a parliament that so far is much more open and cooperative. I have already had three times as many meetings with Ministers in the first 100 days as in the entire previous parliament.

I sincerely hope that this more positive and cooperative tone leads to more than just talk and soon begins to bring about better results for all Canadians when it comes to federal government programs and services.

The Liberals made many promises during the election campaign in an effort to appear to be the party of change. As the progressive opposition New Democrat MPs will be pushing the government to take concrete actions to tackle important challenges like inequality, pay equity, electoral reform, climate change, and establishing a new nation-to-nation relationship with First Nations.

As the NDP Defence critic I will be working to make sure that Canada clarifies what role we plan to play in contributing to peace and security around the world. And once we have clarified the role we expect the Canadian Forces to play, then we will need to make sure they have the resources and equipment they need to get the job done.

So far I am left feeling uncertain about the Liberals’ intentions in the realm of defence. I only hope that red doesn’t turn out to be the new blue when it comes to under resourcing the Canadian Forces. And I hope to see a return to Canada’s traditional emphasis on international efforts at peace-keeping, rather than ad hoc war fighting.

The shipbuilding program remains a

high personal priority for me, not just as essential for a viable navy but also as an asset to our local economy in terms of good, high skilled, family supporting jobs at Esquimalt Naval Base and the Dockyards. Those shipbuilding jobs are already overdue and overall strategy seems at risk due to underfunding as well as underestimating construction costs. I will be making sure that the Liberals understand that taking on a larger mission in Iraq can’t come at the expense of properly resourcing the National Shipbuilding Procurement program.

Once again I have introduced my private member’s bill to ensure transgendered Canadians have the same rights as all other Canadians. The government has been supportive of this goal and is promising they will introduce a government bill to replace my private member’s bill. I hope to see them do so soon as a government bill will have a much better chance of getting through the Senate where my own bill died last time.

The local community response to the Syrian refugee crisis has been inspiring. I applaud all those groups for their hard work and pledge to continue offering my and my staff’s support so that Syrian refugees can be settled quickly and effectively.

Funding is in place and planning work is proceeding on the new McKenzie Interchange project. While I still don’t believe projects like this will solve our local transportation problems, I am now an advocate for making the interchange as people and environment friendly as possible. This means building an interchange with good pedestrian and cycling facilities along with including room for future rapid transit and absolutely limiting to the minimum any impact on Cuthbert Holmes Park.

Over the next year provincial politics will have to take an increasing amount of all our volunteer time and resources if we are going to make sure that British Columbians elect an NDP government in 2017. It is way past time for change in BC and way past time to defeat Christy Clark and her divisive and confrontational approach to governing in British Columbia.

I look forward to continuing to work with progressive British Columbians to bring that about.

Randall Garrison is Member of Parliament for Esquimalt-Saanich-S++ooke.

### NDP to hold biennial policy convention in Edmonton

**OTTAWA** – NDP Leader Tom Mulcair will join New Democrats from across Canada in Edmonton, Alberta, for the biennial Federal NDP convention next month .

The convention, which will take place in the Shaw Conference Centre, 9797 Jasper Avenue NW, in Edmonton will run from approximately 12 pm Friday April 8 —12 pm Sunday April 10.

A NDP youth convention will take place Thursday, April 7.

The New Democratic Party of Canada strives to makes every convention as accessible as possible. They hope Edmonton 2016 will be the most accessible convention to date. Working with their Persons Living with DisAbilities Committee, as well as the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities, they are looking forward to providing delegates with a variety of services to assist those with accessibility needs.:





**Our constituency office has a new location at 2904 Tillicum Road, corner of Tillicum and Gorge.**

**We look forward to continuing to help constituents with federal government departments, programs and services.**

**Randall Garrison, MP** ESQUIMALT–SAANICH–SOOKE  
2904 Tillicum Road, Victoria, BC V9A 2A5 / M–Th, 10–4 or by appointment  
250-405-6550 / [Randall.Garrison@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Randall.Garrison@parl.gc.ca) / [www.randallgarrison.ndp.ca](http://www.randallgarrison.ndp.ca)



# Government must fix system so it works for everybody

By Carole James

Contrary to what the BC government seems to think, one size doesn't fit all. But that seems to be the direction this government is taking with a number of services and supports in our communities. The latest example is the rigid new service model in the area of employment skills. Moves by the government to force social service agencies into this new system is causing all sorts of problems. It's easy to see that the entire approach needs to be revisited.

The province is creating turmoil for organizations like PEERS, which has now had to close a drop-in centre and pre-employment program for sex workers in Victoria.

I've been raising concerns about the government's approach for more than a year. When I asked the minister about it in the spring of 2012, she said that it would all work out. Well, it certainly has not.

Here is the situation on the ground in our community:

Until last year, PEERS, like many other helping organizations on the South Island, received its core funding from the BC Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation. But when the government moved the contract to a fee-for-service billing model under its Employment Program of BC, that's when trouble really started.

The situation being faced by PEERS is troubling for a number of reasons, but most especially considering the government's assurance that it would follow the recommendations contained in the 2012 *Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry*. The report makes clear the importance of emergency services to women engaged in the sex trade provided by centres like PEERS.

Mr. Wally Oppal recommended that funding be made available urgently so that these centres could stay open 24 hours a day. Instead, because of funding decisions by the provincial government, PEERS has been forced to discontinue its vital services

that help women leave sex work for more stable and secure employment.

The employment programs offered by non-profit organizations in our community serve a unique population with complex needs. Not all employment programs fit neatly into the government's fee-for-service model.

I have heard concerns expressed by employment contractors, large and small, that the current model is too complex, and fails to recognize that individuals are unique and may need a range of services to support them in their goal of employment. It is also complicated by an unmanageable computer system that takes away from valuable and much needed time with clients.

We must be addressing the challenges in a comprehensive way that includes supports for addictions, mental health, and poverty reduction. I'm hearing it over and over again from social service providers: this new approach isn't working, and citizens are suffering.

Government must listen to the professionals in the field and fix this system so that it works for everybody, and most especially for those in need in our community.

I am proposing some solutions to the minister, and will continue to work closely with our social service organizations to highlight the deficiencies in the province's payment structure and referrals systems.

My community office is open regular hours through the autumn, and my staff is available to help residents of Victoria-Beacon Hill with issues and concerns. Please don't hesitate to contact us if we can assist you with access to government services or any questions about provincial programs.

Carole James is MLA for Victoria-Beacon Hill, and her office is located at 1084 Fort Street in Victoria. She can also be reached by phone at 250 952-4211 or email at [Carole.James.MLA@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Carole.James.MLA@leg.bc.ca)



Esquimalt-Royal Roads MLA Maurine Karagianis (left) and Victoria-Beacon Hill MLA Carole James distribute Lunar New Year posters in China Town during the Lunar New Year.

## Payday loan spikes are a result of Christy Clark's failure on wages and affordability

**VICTORIA** — Stagnant wage growth under the Christy Clark government and her constant fee increases have contributed to the growing reliance by working British Columbians on payday loans.

"Payday loans are a symptom of the way that the Christy Clark government has made life less affordable," said Carole James, New Democrat finance spokesperson. "While families have to pay more for everything under Christy Clark's government, wage growth has been the slowest in the country."

Vancity Credit Union reported at the end of January that the number of payday loans in BC increased by 58 percent between 2012 and 2014, with many working British Columbians left poor and relying on this expensive form of lending just to meet their necessities.

James cited the fact that British Columbia has seen the lowest wage growth in the country since Premier Clark launched The BC Jobs Plan, and that BC has consistently had one of the highest rates of poverty.

Christy Clark's government imposes in-

creases to taxes and fees year after year. Her government more than doubled the unfair medical services tax since 2001, increasing it every year since Christy Clark became premier. Meanwhile, they've increased the average hydro bill by over \$520 and the average ICBC premium by \$270.

James said that fee increases under Premier Clark haven't ended there, "Ferry fares, park fees, tuition, tolls, transit, pharmacare and much more have all spiked upwards under the Christy Clark government."

James said that the only people who have seen relief from Christy Clark's government are the wealthiest two percent who received a \$270 million tax break they didn't even ask for.

"The Christy Clark government has made it expensive just to live," said James. "Relying on payday loans makes it too expensive to be poor."

NDP leader John Horgan and the New Democrats are calling on Christy Clark to follow the lead of every other province and develop a comprehensive poverty reduction plan.



MLAs David Eby (left) and Carole James listen to comments at a public meeting on "renovations" and housing affordability January 21 at James Bay New Horizons.

Carole James, MLA VICTORIA-BEACON HILL



Honoured to serve you in our community

1084 Fort Street, Victoria, BC V8V 3K4  
250-952-4211 / [Carole.James.MLA@leg.bc.ca](mailto:Carole.James.MLA@leg.bc.ca)  
[www.CaroleJamesMLA.ca](http://www.CaroleJamesMLA.ca)



MLA Rob Fleming

Victoria-Swan Lake

Proud to be your MLA

1020 Hillside Ave.  
250-356-5013  
[rob.fleming.mla@leg.bc.ca](mailto:rob.fleming.mla@leg.bc.ca)  
[robflemingmla.ca](http://robflemingmla.ca)





## NDP leader introduces new colleagues and Oficial Opposition shadow cabinet

**VICTORIA** - BC New Democrat leader John Horgan welcomed two new members who will bring further energy to the Official Opposition shadow cabinet.

“Jodie Wickens and Melanie Mark represent a renewed energy and diversity to the BC New Democrat caucus, and they will be powerful voices for their communities and for all British Columbians,” said Horgan.

Horgan appointed Jodie Wickens, MLA for Coquitlam-Burke Mountain, to the role of deputy spokesperson for education and Melanie Mark, MLA for Vancouver-Mount Pleasant, to the role of deputy spokesperson for housing.

“These two women are extraordinary community leaders, but also mothers, daughters, colleagues and neighbours. They represent the best of so many British Columbians, bringing their passion for education, family, children, and our province’s most vulnerable to the legislature,” said Horgan, “Like all British Columbians, they want an economy what works for everyone, not just the few or fortunate.”

Horgan also announced some other changes to his shadow cabinet. Most notably George Heyman will become the spokesperson on the environment, Spencer Chandra Herbert will take on responsibility for Arts, Culture and Tourism, and David Eby will be responsible for Translink.

**OFFICIAL OPPOSITION SHADOW CABINET**

Leader, Official Opposition; Intergovernmental Relations, John Horgan  
Assistant Deputy Speaker, Raj Chouhan

**ECONOMIC SECTORS TEAM**  
Advanced Education, Kathy Corrigan  
Agriculture & Food, Lana Popham  
BC Hydro; ICBC Adrian Dix  
Coastal Economic Development; CLB, Nicholas Simons  
Economic Development; Jobs, Labour & Skills; WorkSafeBC, Shane Simpson  
Energy & Mines, Norm Macdonald  
Finance, Carole James  
Forests, Lands & Natural Resource Operations, Harry Bains  
Deputy Forests (Coastal), Bill Routley  
Deputy Forests (Forest Futures); Citizen Services, Doug Routley  
Environment; Green Economy; Technology, George Heyman  
Housing; Liquor; Gaming; Translink, David Eby  
Deputy Housing, Melanie Mark  
Immigration; Temporary Foreign Workers; Deputy Finance, Mable Elmore  
Interior Economic Development; Columbia Power; Columbia Basin Trust; Columbia River Treaty, Katrine Conroy  
Natural Gas Development; Trade; Multiculturalism; Softwood Lumber Agreement; Manufacturing; Oil & Gas Commission, Bruce Ralston  
Northern Economic Development, Robin Austin  
Small Business; Deputy Multiculturalism; Deputy Trade, Jane Shin  
Transportation; Ferries; Transit, Claire Trevena

**STRONGER COMMUNITIES TEAM**  
Aboriginal Relations & Reconciliation, Scott Fraser  
Arts, Tourism & Culture, Film and TV, Spencer Chandra Herbert  
Children & Family Development; Deputy Mines, Doug Donaldson  
Democratic Reform; Deputy Environment (Fisheries); Deputy BC Ferries, Gary Holman  
Education, Rob Fleming  
Deputy Education, Jodie Wickens  
Health, Judy Darcy  
Attorney General, Leonard Krog  
Public Safety & Solicitor General, Mike Farnworth  
Seniors; Local Government & Sport, Selina Robinson  
Mental Health, Sue Hammell  
Northern & Rural Health; Deputy Children & Family Development, Jennifer Rice  
Social Development,Michelle Mungall  
Women; Early Childhood Development, Maurine Karagianis

## Reality check BC Liberals are the only ones who think Christy Clark’s bus pass clawback isn’t a clawback

**VICTORIA—** In this year’s BC Budget, Christy Clark increased disability rates for the first time in nine years, then clawed back most of the increase by cancelling free bus passes for people with disabilities. Christy Clark is simply giving with one hand, and taking with the other.

Christy Clark and her supporters are the only ones who seem to think they didn’t cancel the free bus pass program.

She praises herself by calling it “a rate increase that will benefit everyone, including people who will continue to use a bus pass and people who never had a bus pass. All of those individuals are going to benefit from this.”

And despite the fact that her government kept rates flat for nine years, Premier Clark boasted: “Every year since I’ve become premier life has gotten a little bit easier for people who are living with disabilities in British Columbia.”

**You don’t have to look far to find the real story:**

- “What they gave on the one hand, they took almost all of it back with the other... It’s callous and it’s mean-spirited – and if you’re going to give an increase, give an increase.” – Faith Bodnar, Inclusion BC (*Globe and Mail*, Feb. 19, 2016):
- “It’s a mean-spirited move. The

province should acknowledge its error and restore the bus-pass program.” – Editorial (*Times Colonist*, Feb. 23, 2016)

- “A government with compassion would have given disabled people the increased benefits they deserve and left their bus passes alone.” – Michael Smyth (*The Province*, Feb. 23, 2016)
- “This clawback of the bus pass, people are uniformly seeing it a mean-spirited and very unkind measure.” – Jane Dyson, Disability Alliance BC (*Vancouver Sun*, Feb. 19, 2016)
- “Give them back the damn bus pass ... it looks mean.” – Vaughn Palmer (Inside the Ledge, *VancouverSun.com*), Feb. 19, 2016)



**Worksite in Walbran Valley  
No further comment needed!**

## Premier downgrades promise of LNG jobs and offers no help for BC families

**VICTORIA** – Premier Christy Clark failed to offer help for hard-working BC families who are concerned about rising costs, says New Democrat leader [John Horgan](#).

“I think everyone wants to see a prosperous British Columbia. The premier talks a lot in the throne speech about it, and that might be true from where she sits. But I’m hearing from hard-working British Columbians that the economy is not working for them,” said Horgan.

The Speech from the Throne was read to mark the start of the spring legislative session on Tuesday, February 9. Horgan said it offered no real action for people struggling to get by.

“We just had two by-elections where we heard over and over that people are struggling with rising hydro bills, unfair MSP tax hikes and unaffordable housing. What we heard in Vancouver and Coquitlam are the same things people are saying across the province,” said Horgan.

“Once again the premier wants British Columbians to trust her, but that hasn’t worked out very well so far. After promising 100,000 jobs from building an LNG industry, now she has downgraded and says we need LNG to keep us from losing 13,000 jobs,” said Horgan.

“There was very little hope offered in this throne speech at a time when families need it most,” concluded Horgan.

## Clark’s latest hydro rate shock will hurt BC families

**VANCOUVER** — Premier Christy Clark’s latest hydro hike will add to the rate shock felt by families across BC, says New Democrat spokesperson on BC Hydro [Adrian Dix](#).

“Premier Christy Clark’s latest hydro rate hike will hurt families and is the result of her government’s bad decisions,” said Dix. “Their abuse of deferral accounts, hiding debt, and pushing ahead with Site C free of scrutiny or a demand for the power is the reason that families will suffer a 28 percent hike over five years.”

Before the last election, the Christy Clark government said that there may not even be a rate hike, but as soon as the election was over, voters learned the truth.

“Now, Christy Clark is misleading British Columbians again by exaggerating future energy demand in order to justify her exemption of Site C from BCUC approval. The result inevitably will be more rate shocks like the ones that BC families are facing now.”

New Democrat Leader, John Horgan, has presented Power BC – a progressive energy plan that will create good paying jobs in every community in BC, launch careers in the clean energy and tech sector, and protect BC Hydro customers from runaway bills.

**Bill Routley, MLA  
Cowichan Valley**



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# Province and non-profit housing operators co-operate to house homeless campers in Victoria

**VICTORIA** – The Province of British Columbia is providing an additional 88 units of transitional housing and shelter, as well as 40 rent supplements for campers that were residing at the Victoria courthouse lawns.

Thirty-eight transitional housing units will be offered at the Mount Edwards Court Care Home at 1002 Vancouver Street, Victoria, which will be operated by the Victoria Cool Aid Society. The province has purchased the building from the Baptist Housing Society for \$3.65 million. The housing units were scheduled to open in late February for approximately 12 months, and units will be rented for \$375 per month. Island Health will also provide clinical support services at the site.

An additional 50 shelter units will be available at the former Victoria Youth Custody Centre building at 94 Talcott Rd. in View Royal, and operated by Our Place Society. Campers will be provided with three meals per day and have the option of camping in the courtyard, which can accommodate at least 20 tents. The View Royal shelter will be open for approximately six months.

These facilities will also provide a range of support services to provide the campers with access to more stable, long-term housing, including rent supplements that will be administered by Pacifica Housing. These units are in addition to the 40 spaces at the former Boys and Girls Club that were made available in December.

Both facilities were expected to be operational by Feb. 23, 2016.

These 88 units of transitional housing

and shelter are in addition to the 147 year-round homeless shelter spaces, 125 extreme weather shelter spaces and 145 temporary shelter spaces available in Victoria.

Both non-profit housing operators have held public information sessions for each location, where community members were invited to voice their concerns.

Provincial representatives delivered a notice to each of the campers February 5 to advise them that they must vacate the courthouse property by February 25 due to safety concerns and to advise them of the additional housing options.

Rich Coleman, Minister of Natural Gas Development and Minister Responsible for Housing said, “We have created these additional living spaces and are providing support services to help homeless individuals take an important step to find permanent, stable housing. I hope that people take this opportunity to make meaningful changes in their lives.”

Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps, added, “We’re happy to see this much-needed investment in affordable housing in Victoria. We look forward to working with the Province and the neighbourhood to determine the best long-term use for the facility.”

Mayor David Screech, View Royal commented, “The homeless issue is truly a regional problem, and we believe that all jurisdictions must be part of the solution. With that philosophy, we are prepared to support Victoria and BC Housing’s initiative to use the youth custody centre as a facility for the homeless on a temporary basis. Victoria and BC Housing have shown great leadership in bringing forward these solutions.”

Don McTavish, senior manager, Victoria Cool Aid Society, said, “Cool Aid is excited to have this opportunity to house and support 40 people who are today homeless. We appreciate the support of the Province and look forward to working with the new residents, Cathedral School and neighbours to ensure this housing program integrates successfully into the neighbourhood.”

Don Evans, executive director, Our Place Society, concluded, “We are excited to offer people an opportunity to focus on their health needs. This state-of-the-art facility can deliver secure and stable shelter with access to food, hot showers, laundry and programs. The members of tent city have been asking for a place where they can still camp outdoors, but with access to the necessities they need. This facility delivers that and more.”

**Quick Facts:**

- The Province has invested more than \$176 million over the past five years toward approximately 5,000 units of subsidized housing and rent supplements in Victoria.
- In 2014-15, the BC government invested more than \$19 million to provide subsidized housing and rent supplements for more than 5,100 households in Victoria. This includes providing support for more than 2,200 senior households and more than 1,300 family households.
- There are nearly 150 year-round homeless shelter spaces available in Victoria.
- Last winter, more than 145 additional shelter spaces were available across

Greater Victoria to increase emergency shelter space when extreme weather conditions threatened the safety and health of individuals.

- The daytime drop-in centre at Our Place operates with \$500,000 in funding from the BC government. In addition, the Province provided \$125,000 in one time funding to help Our Place stay open longer.
- Since 2001, the BC government has invested \$4.4 billion to provide affordable housing for low income individuals, seniors and families.
- This year, more than 102,500 B.C. households will benefit from provincial social housing programs and services.
- The Province provided approximately \$213 million last year to support more than 13,200 emergency shelter spaces, subsidized housing units and rent supplements for those who were homeless throughout British Columbia.
- Last year, the Province invested over \$19.7 million to provide subsidized housing and rent supplements for more than 5,100 Victoria households, including more than 970 of those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

To learn more about provincial programs and services to address homelessness in Victoria, please visit: [www.bchousing.org](http://www.bchousing.org) and [www.housingmattersbc.ca/docs/fs\\_Homeless%20Supports\\_Victoria.pdf](http://www.housingmattersbc.ca/docs/fs_Homeless%20Supports_Victoria.pdf)

To see a map of permanent and temporary shelters in BC, please visit: [http://www.bchousing.org/Options/Emergency\\_Housing/Map](http://www.bchousing.org/Options/Emergency_Housing/Map)

## After 9 years, it is time to raise welfare payments

VANCOUVER, Unceded Coast Salish Territory -- Raising social assistance rates would help nearly 180,000 British Columbians as well as thousands of new refugees.

Raise the Rates has called once again on the BC government to raise welfare rates substantially in the budget that was to be presented February 16.

“Rates have been frozen at \$610 a month for basic welfare and \$906 for disability since 2007,” said Fraser Stuart. “After nearly 9 years of no increase, it gets harder to survive every year.”

A single person on either disability or the

basic income assistance has only \$375 a month for rent. “Where can we find a place to rent for \$375?” asked Fraser Doke, living on disability. “Thousands of people are on the BC Housing wait list. I challenge Christy Clark to find me a place to rent for \$375 a month.”

As the amount of support that refugees receive when they first arrive in Canada is tied to welfare rates, raising rates would also help refugees get a better start in Canada. “Refugees wouldn’t have to go to food lines and scrimp on their children’s school needs if welfare rates went up,”

said Bill Hopwood, Raise the Rates organizer. Welfare provides only \$700 a month for a family of 4 people for shelter.

“The vast majority of people on welfare find it very difficult to work because of their disabilities or other issues. Of those who are expected to work, we have to remember that our economy is not creating enough jobs for all who need them. There are over 160,000 people unemployed in BC – this is nearly as many as all the people on welfare. There is a lack of good jobs in province,” said Terry Hunter, a Raise the Rates’ member.

The Dietitians of BC say that a single man needs about \$250 a month for nutritious food. However, people on welfare in BC have only about \$21 a week left for food after paying for other necessities, according to calculations by Raise the Rates.

“How can the government of a wealthy province deny human beings in need their basic requirements,” asked Diane Wood, a Raise the Rates’ member. We can only speculate that it is because of discrimination and poor bashing against people who are most vulnerable.

See more at <http://raisetherates.org>.

## Budget 2016: A few small drops in the bucket

**VICTORIA** -- Finance Minister Mike de Jong said February 16, while presenting the 2016-2017 BC Budget, that the true measure of a society is its willingness to “truly make a difference” in the lives of the most vulnerable.

“If you accept the Finance Minister’s measure of a society, BC is failing miserably,” says Iglia Ivanova, Senior Economist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives’ BC Office. “What this budget offers to BC’s most vulnerable is a drop in the bucket. For example, \$77 a month for people on disability benefits after a nine year freeze; this doesn’t even cover cost of living increases. And at the same time, there is no big-picture plan to address poverty and hunger.”

Ivanova highlights some significant areas of concern in Budget 2016, where any positive support for families and vulnerable people amounts to a drop in the bucket:

- MSP premiums for children have been eliminated, but couples without children will pay higher rates, with the end result that government revenue from MSP will actually increase.
- There is no mention of action on childcare, aside from \$11 million dollars for child care centres.
- The government has announced

a tax competitiveness commission, as opposed to the tax *fairness* commission that is sorely needed.

- The budget is silent on climate change, a remarkable omission at this point in time.
- The government promises to create 2,000 units of affordable housing over five years; this is certainly a step forward, but hardly historic, compared to much higher annual increases in the stock of affordable housing in the past.
- Property tax measures are aimed at buyers of some new homes, and there is no help for renters struggling with housing affordability.

Ivanova remarks, “The Minister notes that BC is the only province in Canada with a triple-A credit rating. We are also the only province without a poverty reduction plan, even though one in five children lives in poverty. This says at least as much, if not more, about our success as a province.”

“Our economy is growing,” she adds. “Surely we can offer British Columbians much more than a drop in the bucket.”

See more at: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/newsroom/news-releases/budget-2016-few-small-drops-bucket#sthash.WyvpULpP.IJuvlxFNF.dpuf>

## Budget 2016 grows greenhouse gas emissions and BC Hydro’s debt

**VICTORIA** -- The 2016 British Columbia Budget contained little good news for British Columbians hoping for meaningful action on the environment and climate change.

“I was hoping for a budget that would real show climate and environmental leadership, instead we have a government trying to move ahead with highway expansion, LNG and the \$8.8 billion Site C vanity project,” said Gwen Barlee, national policy director with the Wilderness Committee.

Some of the budget lowlights include:

- \$3.4 billion in new public and private sector monies slated for highway expansion and transportation initiatives,
- BC Hydro’s debt ballooning to \$19.5 billion in 2016/17 up from \$10.8 billion in 2009/10 due to the projected construction of the highly contentious Site C mega-dam proposal, and
- The carbon tax mired at \$30 a tonne.

“Budget 2016 grows greenhouse gas emissions and puts off to tomorrow what should be done today to tackle climate change,” said Barlee. “If the BC government was serious about climate change they would meaningfully invest in public transportation and increase the carbon tax.”

“Not tackling climate change is costly –

just look at hundreds of millions we spent on fighting forest fires last summer. This government needs to stop resting on its laurels and start being a leader on the climate change file,” Barlee added.

The budgeted \$8.8 billion debt for Site C has been hotly contested in BC. Electricity consumption has flatlined in the province and the projected \$100+ cost per megawatt hour of Site C power eclipses the projected \$25 (USD) per MWh cost of electricity at the Mid-C market.

The BC government has also been heavily criticized for exempting Site C from the oversight of the BC Utilities Commission and not looking at other viable energy alternatives.

“Site C is a very, very expensive vanity project. It is a slap in the face to First Nations, a disaster from an environmental perspective and an utter boondoggle financially. In addition to the \$8.8 billion construction price tag, Site C is forecast to lose \$800 million in its first four years of operation,” said Barlee.

“Ratepayers can expect to see a massive increase in their electricity bills if this poorly thought-out multi-billion dollar project goes ahead.”



# Heroes & villains – fiction & reality

By Tim Pheotist

**Pacific Opera Victoria** is a Victoria institution that seems to exist on a special planet of its own, largely unnoticed by a majority of Victorians. That is not to diminish its value and importance, of course, to the many diehard supporters and “opera buffs” who fill the auditorium throughout the opera season.

So many Victoria familiarities, today, seem to be toppling, crunched by developer’s wrecking balls or erased by modern cultural re-segregation. In these times of rapid change, driven, almost exclusively by commercial interests, it is more important than ever to encourage the qualities, thoughts and reflections that all artforms can bring to society.

Classical opera is perhaps the most spectacular form of theatre art known to us. It combines the power of the orchestra, with the drama of morality plays. It presents images of heroic and flawed humans in stories voiced with a magical energy that is unique to the trained operatic artist.

Operatic theatre and tradition is alive and well throughout the world. Its stars and stories have reflected society’s cultures long before the Beatles and the Rolling Stones.

While access to the sweet and shiny highlights of classical opera has been enabled by the commercial entertainment industry, via recorded media, the opportunity for a new generation of opera lovers to experience the energy of live performance is limited by stretched personal budgets. So the unique experience and energy of live classical opera becomes, mostly, the privilege of those with the healthiest bank balances.

Toward the end of 2015 I had the opportunity to squeeze into a packed house to watch Pacific Opera’s production of Verdi’s *Otello*. It’s an opera based on the story of Shakespeare’s *Othello*, and follows the threads and tragedies of that play.

As a lifelong opera lover and voiceless musician I’ve always been an easy mark for the drama and theatrical manipulation of the opera house. Victoria’s production of *Otello* was everything that Verdi might have imagined, and watching and listening to the singers, magically creating chills down my spine as ever, got me to thinking about how performers, projecting such outsize, ego-driven characters, with voices and acting that fill the largest of theatres, combine the fiction of their parts with the facts of their art-form.

I found myself imagining what it would be like to fill the stage and project a character simply through voice and presence. How does one come down from projecting a snake of a character like Iago? I was reminded of the talent, skill and professionalism that it must take to credibly present this

character, and endless others, in ways that create an alternative reality for the evening.

And then a chance to glimpse behind the curtain.

The part of Iago was performed, in Pacific Opera’s production, by **Todd Thomas**. In 2014 Thomas had again appeared in Victoria, singing the part of Alberich in Wagner’s *Das Rheingold*. So Thomas is no lightweight performer. These are heavy duty parts. More can be read of Thomas’ brilliant and unusual career at <http://tod-dthomasbaritone.com>.

I asked Thomas whether he would agree to describe, for *Lower Island News* readers, something of the realities of life as a professional, touring, international opera singer. Kindly, he agreed. What follows are some of his thoughts.

*In many ways I feel am maintaining a certain level of success in my career path as an operatic artist. At 54 years, I have, for the majority of my adult life, been able to sustain a living and provide a life for my four children, along with the assistance of my wife and their mother. The calendar books have been filled in quite completely with travel dates, opera titles performance dates, companies, rehearsal schedules, fee structures, etc. I have not seen an empty month in my calendar book, fortunately, for quite some time.*

*Somewhere along this road my quest for reaching international super star ranks has been quietly replaced with a quest for greater longevity. I am not planning to retire, and would like to sing forever.*

*Of course I would like to be a regular at the The Metropolitan Opera, alternating appearances between Los Angeles, Berlin, and Milan. I remember in my student days as the idealistic dreamer I would profess, “My career’s goal is to be an INTERNATIONAL BARITONE.” I would declare this at any point when the conversation prompted a chat about dreams and career goals. It wasn’t really that long into my professional years when I reflected on that statement, and I realized that I had indeed already been singing internationally! But a year with a single opera engagement in Giessen, Germany followed by another date in Harrisburg PA was not exactly the credit I was searching for. And yet, my goal and career prayers and wishes were indeed answered.*

*Even in the midst of the years, I still maintained the positive thought that indeed I was sustaining an international career. I was determined never to be bitter or dissatisfied. I was always particularly good at blooming wherever I was planted.*

*The career of a professional opera singer is expensive, young singers are reminded continually. Somehow as a young 20 something, while one imagines oneself as a singer or as an artist, it is difficult*



Opera singer Todd Thomas

*to imagine leaving home while a child is sick or going through a routine childhood ailment. Or that you will need to decide between paying rent or filling the gas tank before your performances begin, and your fee won’t be paid for another two weeks..*

*The spending for this career simply never stops. In the beginning, while learning roles, there is the need to pay coaches, voice teachers, language experts, and a myriad of professionals, in order to be ready. However, even after one is established in the field, the coachings and the review does not stop costing money. In addition, now one must pay the agent who hopefully worked very hard convincing the company you are still singing, and well worth the exorbitant fee that they propose -- from which they will be taking 10%. The money train does not stop as one progresses through the career.*

*As a career progresses, the costs become more personal in many ways.*

*For me what has always been the most difficult are the transition times. A few days prior to my leaving home, my mind is already on the music of the impending project. I will have begun packing, and perhaps subconsciously already detaching myself from the four kids, who by definition all have very special needs.*

*This is the dearest price I believe I pay in terms of my career. I mean I am the absent father for most of each year. The single parenting which my wife does on a daily basis has formed and moved my children. I hope and believe that even in my absence I am their present father, but perhaps, while*

*plagued with great guilt, I understand that is not the case.*

*I am in contact, daily, with all of my children who now range in age from 8-24. But checking in once a day does not fulfill the quality of residing in the house and being always available when they have the urge or candor to speak. Each one of my children is always going through something and all I can do for the most part is to comment or act as spectator. I do my best to make myself available, but there is no substitute for the eye to eye contact.*

*Unlike many of their friends, our family is intact, but I wonder whether I should have been there each school morning to review their spelling words. Would they have developed a greater satisfaction for science, had I been available to prepare them for an annual science fair? Would Lydia have excelled on classical guitar or ballet had I been able to assist in getting her to her lessons?*

*I have much to be thankful in my wife. While I continue to feel somewhat guilty about how my chosen career has combined with my goal being a better father, I am reminded of what my adult girls told me recently. They explained that they really have not known or experienced me in any other way. The dedication, fortitude, perseverance and devotion they see in my quest, not only for my career, but also for my family, is the quality which has been imprinted upon them.*

*In the meantime, while I try to justify the balance between being true to my calling and being true to my responsibilities, I develop another list of criteria to accept the engagements which draw me away from my home. So I always now seek situations where I feel my soul is being fed, and my fee justifies my absence and the intensity of separation from my family.*

Todd Thomas’ very personal thoughts reveal something of the sacrifices that artists must make, at the highest professional levels, to continue the uniquely valuable contributions that high art makes to our societies.

Thomas’ experiences are not unique. They apply to actors and musicians, whether classical or popular. From the Covent Garden Opera House to the country band gigging from pub to pub.

What we can say is that there is always something of the real life hero in those appearing on stage for us. Behind the scenes there is always the real artistic sacrifice that provides us with the momentary thrill of the unreal.

Thanks to Thomas, who clearly, in reality, is not Iago. Hopefully he will soon return to Victoria, again to rave reviews.

## “Irreversible” damage to climate means Pacific NorthWest LNG must be stopped

VANCOUVER – An environmental assessment report released February 10 by the federal government shows that the Pacific NorthWest LNG terminal must be rejected due to its climate impact, says the Wilderness Committee.

The [draft report](#) from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA), which includes the Agency’s conclusions and recommendations regarding potential environmental effects, says the proposed project on Lelu Island near Prince Rupert, BC would have “significant adverse environmental effects” due to its associated greenhouse gas emissions. It states that the associated emissions are “high in magnitude, continuous, irreversible and global in extent.”

Pacific NorthWest LNG would generate at least 11 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e) annually, which could increase BC’s provincial emissions by 18 percent or more – making it “amongst the largest single point sources of greenhouse gas emissions in the country.”

“This colossal increase in greenhouse gas emissions would undermine the work

that Canadians are doing to reduce our climate impact,” said Peter McCartney, Climate Campaigner at the Wilderness Committee. “It would be completely out of line with the goals set out in the Paris climate agreement late last year.”

While the climate impacts of Pacific NorthWest LNG alone should be enough to reject the project, the extent of its devastating impact on salmon in the Skeena River was overlooked in the CEAA report. Biologists say 88 percent of juvenile salmon in the Skeena rely on the eelgrass beds at the site of the terminal.

“This place is Grand Central Station for salmon,” said McCartney. “The Skeena is one of the most important refuges for this keystone species in British Columbia.”

Several First Nations leaders have signed a declaration calling for the permanent protection of the Lelu Island site from the proposed LNG terminal.

“Given all of the risks that this project poses – not just to the climate but to salmon and the communities who rely on them – the federal government must reject this Pacific terminal immediately,” McCartney said.

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Photo by Tony Sprackett

Indigenous women and supporters march down Government Street to the legislature grounds Sunday, February 14, to honour the hundreds of missing and murdered aboriginal women known as the Stolen Sisters. Organizers of the march say they continue to reiterate the call for a public inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. - The first such march was held in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside in 1984. The march was first held in Victoria in 2009 -

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**So now what?**

By David Olsen

The argument about six Canadian Air Force aircraft went on and on without anyone really getting to grips with the big picture. The utter shambles of the Middle East, Afghanistan, Pakistan, much of north and Sahelian Africa beggars belief yet Canadian politicians, and if the CBC is to be believed, a majority of the Canadian population was transfixed by six aging CF-18 aircraft.

While we argue about bombing, Syria, one of the oldest cultures in the region is being systematically destroyed and its population scattered across the world in a scenario reminiscent of the final Jewish diaspora executed by the Roman Emperor Hadrian in 135 AD.

Cities and towns across Syria are being subjected to sieges like those of the middle ages and the 100 Year's War – the latest being Aleppo, thanks to some heavy handed work by Russia in support of Bashar-al-Assad. But while children starve to death in besieged towns across Syria, we are obsessed with bombing, bombing, bombing. With dozens of aircraft deployed bombing ISIL, and the bombing campaign having lasted for the better part of a year, with thousands of sorties flown and weapons fired – at a mind-stunning cost – it seems incredible that ISIL is still financing itself by producing and selling “black market” oil. There has been enough aerial firepower deployed to leave not a single ISIL oilfield in production, or an ISIL fuel tanker on the road. But it still goes on, creating a situation where, just as in the First World War, the war is about the war -- we are in it, so we can't stop. There is still no end game or achievable goal in sight.

This is why the end of the Canadian bombing contribution to the air war on February 15 was a good thing, despite all the gung-ho rhetoric by the Conservatives. Because now Canada can apply its efforts to breaking the international diplomatic log-jam, which is the only way this appalling war is going to end and some new structures put in place, including bringing some measure of safety and security to the millions of displaced, ruined and desperate people in Syria and other parts of the Middle East.

As Lloyd Axworthy pointed out in mid-February, as long as we are a belligerent and perceived to be supporting one side, no one is going to listen to us or take us seriously (i.e. if we are *against* Sunni Muslim ISIL, who are we *for*? Kurds, Shias, Alawites, Christians?). Endless calls by the US for people to “step up to the plate” and do more bombing are completely counter-productive. At a Brussels NATO meeting on February 11, US defence secretary (or

is that bombing secretary?) Ashton Carter had the effrontery to state, “We'll all look back after victory and remember who participated in the fight” – a blatant attempt to try and make those who disagree with him feel badly. Precisely what “victory” was he talking about? Was it the same sort of “victory” that the US achieved in Iraq and which gave rise to much of the current disaster in the Middle East?

On the recent one-on-one CBC TV program with the Prime Minister, which gave rise to plenty of pro-bombing rhetoric, Peter Mansbridge asked the Prime Minister “are you morally opposed to bombing”? Any thoughtful person would surely say, “Yes – most bombing probably is morally wrong -- even though nations do it and find ways to justify their actions.” Ask the few old people left who can remember London, Warsaw, Rotterdam and Dresden; or today's young people from Aleppo, or recipients of Bashar-al Assad's barrel bombs.

Newspapers are full of words by academics from their safe ivory towers telling us that we should keep on bombing as “the least worst option”. Tell that to all the people killed in the bombing raid on the MSF hospital in Syria just a couple of weeks ago, or those killed and wounded in the systematic US bombing attack on the MSF hospital in Afghanistan just a couple of months ago.

If you want to tell people what a good idea bombing is, then first try being on the receiving end -- I have been and it isn't any fun at all. It doesn't matter whether the aircraft is Russian, Canadian, American or French; the fragmentation bomb it drops still tears your arms or legs off or disembowels you.

Meanwhile the big Saudi arms sale grinds on and while the Canadian government prepares for a free trade deal with China, Xi Jinping is busy “disappearing” more people than ever and arresting anyone who displays the slightest desire to ask questions or think for themselves. Is this the partnership we want?

We have got to stop compromising our principles and do a bit of standing up for what Canada is supposed to mean and the values it stands for. It's time to remember who we are and quit bending the knee for economic gain – whether it be to corrupt States or multinational corporate giants.

In Lester Pearson's day, people around the world knew who we were and what we stood for (warts and all). That's not just misty eyed nostalgia – it's a definition of our history and the values that define us, the tradition that made the Canadian soldier in Bosnia or the Canadian MSF nurse in the Congo stand between frightened children and those who would do them harm.



# The dark side of carbon trading

By Heather Tufts

During the 2010 climate talks in Cancun a new fund was launched by the World Bank to address greenhouse gas emissions. The Partnership for Market Readiness Fund (PMR) has evolved as the strategy for strong arming middle-income countries to use market mechanisms as a means for creating carbon offset programs.

The PMR has mobilized carbon trading by specifically targeting developing nations like Brazil, Chile, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Morocco, Peru, Thailand and Vietnam. The new business partnership model has resulted in carbon markets as an emissions saving device through offsets but in too many cases the projects result in devastating social and environmental consequences.

Hundreds of hydroelectric dams in Panama, incinerators burning garbage in India, bio-gas extracted from palm oil in Honduras and eucalyptus forests harvested for charcoal in Brazil are examples of carbon-offset projects which often create more problems than they solve.

There is little opportunity for Indigenous communities to engage in the new land usage projects determined by the PMR and the spirit of “free, informed and prior consent” has been sacrificed in the process of carbon trading. Not only are the Indigenous rain forest dwellers having their way of life threatened, but some projects are accompanied by militarized security to quell local opposition.

In Brazil the planting of eucalyptus trees has become a very popular carbon offset program initiated by the World Bank and British Petroleum (BP) who were attempting to green their image. Ironically these trees are charcoal-producing and soak up vast amounts of water in their enormous root systems. This has resulted in several community-based negative impacts.

Villagers are displaced to find their increasingly disappearing water sources while charcoal is burned as fuel creating more emissions! While the local farmers see crops destroyed by plantation pesticides and their streams poisoned, BP has been able to claim Brazilian offsets as

emission reductions.

A report by the Sustainable Energy and Economy Network notes, “Perhaps more seriously, groups allege that Plantar pressured local residents to sign letters of support for the project or forfeit employment at the plantations.” Those who did publicly oppose Plantar claim that they and their family members were either threatened, or coerced into working for the plantation.

A partnership that was created between the Netherlands and Uganda illustrates how goals of offsetting carbon as outlined in the Kyoto Treaty, went awry. The Dutch non-profit *Forests Absorbing Carbon Dioxide Emissions* (FACE) Foundation financed the planting of 25,000 hectares of trees inside Mount Elgon National Park. In exchange for financing the planting of the trees, FACE received the rights to the carbon sequestered by those trees.

Evicted villagers, who were left homeless and without access to land to graze their cattle or grow subsistence crops, attempted to continue using park land, prompting rangers to respond with violence. The villagers since reported that they were subject to rape, arson, shootings and other violent acts. Villagers retaliated by throwing stones, burning trees, and sabotaging rangers’ vehicles.

In addition, villagers complain that the forest project has not lived up to its commitment to sustainable development. Initially, project leaders promised to employ local people to work in the national park and tree nurseries. However, local council officials contend that the project employs very few people and most of the jobs are only available during the planting period. The ambiguous promise of local employment is the bargaining chip of many industrial and/or carbon offset programs.

Bolivia and Indigenous Peoples climate action groups have proposed a more holistic, rights-based forest conservation for climate-change mitigation. This approach emphasizes local self-determination that would trump contentious market-driven systems such as those proposed by many governments, corporations, the World Bank and even some non-profits. This proposal also includes the requirements in the United

Nations document on the *Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

The climate crisis has become a business opportunity for polluters and it is often claimed that we need to simply cover the earth with plantations that absorb carbon dioxide. Meanwhile the natural carbon cycle between plants, animals, the air, the oceans and the earth maintains a delicate balance which business plantations do not necessarily consider. Frequent pesticide use can inhibit carbon absorption while monocultures take large amounts of lands for private profit devastating biodiversity, water sources, soil health and changing micro-climates.

These plantations and land-related credits are being sold already in voluntary carbon-offset markets. Continuing to increase industrial plantations to “offset” pollution in the North, without assessing the impacts, is not a solution to climate change.

Global grassroots and Indigenous movements are fighting against the loss of their lands, water, forests and livelihoods as a result of the spread of industrial monoculture models such as eucalyptus, pine, oil palm, rubber trees, and soy. They are challenging the carbon-credit business model which has profound impacts on food sovereignty, sustainable agriculture, access to land and water, biodiversity, climate stability, local plant knowledge including medicinal plants as well as Indigenous and local communities’ rights.

Small farmers in Honduras are under siege as a result of carbon trading. The freshly devised *Clean Development Mechanism* (CDM) could be contributing to further aggressions in an already repressive society. Essentially it enables a project in the global South that ostensibly reduces carbon emissions to generate carbon credits. These credits can then be bought and sold by companies in the global North. They can then use them to meet government requirements for pollution reduction without actually reducing emissions in their factories or power plants.

A lucrative palm oil industry is a good

example of one of these duplicitous projects. In the past, the company’s palm oil mill pumped its waste into large open pits, a process that produces large quantities of methane. This newer system involves capturing this greenhouse gas and using it to power the mill. The project claims to reduce pollution in two ways: first, by not letting the methane from open pits escape straight into the atmosphere, and second, by preventing pollution from burning the fossil fuels that were formerly used to power the mill.

It is clear however, that the expanding palm oil industry for bio-fuels is contributing to massive deforestation in sensitive tropical regions. It’s ironic that that the company won an award for environmentally sound practices in the face of vehement local opposition. Moreover, its CDM approval essentially endorses a business model for producing palm oil for export, instead of food for local consumption. This is unacceptable in a country where one in four children suffers chronic malnutrition.

Many Hondurans are very clear: “We don’t need palm oil here. We need what we can eat,” and some have been killed by hired security personnel for their blunt and courageous opposition. This has become a life and death issue in more ways than one.

While understanding some of negative impacts of carbon trading, the Suzuki Foundation has developed a list of guidelines for Canadians. They believe that the entire concept of offsetting to purchase greenhouse gas reduction credits from a project elsewhere, needs to be based on the premise that those reductions wouldn’t have happened otherwise. “Only by buying offsets that have met additionality criteria can you be assured that your purchase is resulting in a net benefit for the climate,” they state.

Within our commitment to climate justice, it is essential to ensure a visionary recognition that the carbon market can not depend on the displacement of Indigenous communities. Our carbon credits will be meaningless if they are merely business opportunities that ignore human rights. This is indeed a case of “buyer beware!”

## Environmental groups demand BC mining industry clean up its act

**VANCOUVER** – Environmental groups are calling on the BC government and mining companies to commit to better practices and stronger regulations to protect the environment and communities from industrial pollution.

Just as Premier Christy Clark announced more subsidies for the mining industry, the Wilderness Committee unveiled a new publication February 4 – produced with support from MiningWatch Canada and Clayoquot Action – demanding that BC’s mining industry be constrained by tougher environmental laws governing the creation, storage and disposal of mine waste.

Last month, the environmental organization released a [short video](#) calling for mine tailings “ponds” to be banned, in order to avoid disasters such as the Mount Polley tailings dam failure in August 2014.

“We believe that BC’s outdated mining regulations are in fact downright dangerous to human health, the economy and the environment – including water quality and the province’s world famous wild salmon runs,” said Wilderness Committee National Campaign Director Joe Foy. “That’s why we are teaming up with likeminded organizations to demand that the BC government clean up the province’s mining industry,” he said.

The groups are also calling for communities to be able to set “no-go zones” forbidding mining in certain areas, and for stronger financial assurance for site clean-up and potential spills.

“We are pleased to work with the Wilderness Committee and other BC organizations to make the case that stronger mining regulations can not only help protect the environment, but also shelter taxpayers from billions of dollars in mine clean-up and

public health costs down the road,” said Ugo LaPointe of MiningWatch Canada.

In addition to the risks British Columbians face as a result of mine pollution, taxpayers in the province are also helping to foot the bill for rising power costs at BC mines. BC Premier Christy Clark recently pledged to allow mining companies to defer their electricity bills, and Mines Minister Bill Bennett has said companies may also avoid hydro rate hikes to help mine operators dealing with financial difficulties.

“It simply makes no sense to subsidize mining companies with low electricity rates, while British Columbians are faced with rising Hydro bills, clean-up costs and toxins in their waterways,” said Ana Simeon of Sierra Club BC. “It’s time for the provincial government to send a strong signal to the mining industry that they can’t get away with practices that endanger the health of our rivers and the livelihoods that depend on it.”

“This is not just a British Columbia issue,” said Will Patric, executive director of Rivers Without Borders. “In southeast Alaska, where wild salmon fishing is a way of life and the biggest driver of the economy, there is tremendous concern about an under-regulated BC mining industry putting the headwaters of rivers that flow into Alaska at risk. It’s time to bring BC mining law in to the 21st century.”

The Wilderness Committee publication, entitled *Cleaning up BC’s Dirty Mining Industry*, is being distributed throughout BC and into Alaska. The publication can be found online at: [https://www.wildernesscommittee.org/publication/cleaning\\_bcs\\_dirty\\_mining\\_industry](https://www.wildernesscommittee.org/publication/cleaning_bcs_dirty_mining_industry)



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# Corbyn consolidates his position in the UK

By Veronica Fagan

Since day one he has been under relentless attacks from Blairites and others on the right wing of the British Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) who wanted to destroy him before he had been able to establish his position as Leader of the PLP.

The media have denounced him for everything he has done – or not done – from day one; not singing the national anthem, not being prepared to press the nuclear button, not bending his head low enough at the Cenotaph [1], being a “supporter of terrorism” and having dinner with the Stop the War Coalition.

The Labour right followed in their wake, trumpeting the same causes. This is the same right wing that shaped the Tory-light and cuts-light policies that lost Labour the last election, whose reaction to that defeat was to declare that campaign had been too far to the left and to win in 2020 the party had to move further to the right—even more Tory-light. The acting leader at the time, Harriet Harman, proposed accepting the Tory budget and cuts agenda.

The right has problems, however.

Corbyn has consolidated his position and is stronger now than when he was first elected. He has broken the cross party consensus on some of the key issues in British politics, raised the level of the political discourse in the process. This has pushed the political situation in the Labour Party to the left and repopularized radical ideas.

He has openly welcomed migrants and asylum seekers to this country— speaking at the welcome refugees’ demonstration on the very same day (September 12, 2015) as his election triumph.

He has given full support to the junior doctors [2] and he has taken up the issue of low wages; saying that he would ban the big corporations from paying dividends to their shareholders unless they could show that they are paying a proper living wage to their workforce—both their direct workers and their contracted workers.

On the Andrew Marr television talk show on Sunday, January 17, as well as backing the junior doctors in their defence of the NHS, he called for the repeal of the anti-union laws, and said that he would reverse the law against secondary picketing. He also said, at the international level, that he would negotiate with Argentina over the Falklands (Malvinas) islands.

He has set his face against the renewal of the Trident nuclear weapons system – the holy grail of the British establishment. He also held the line against war – and taken two thirds of Labour MPs and a slender majority of his then shadow cabinet in the vote against military intervention in Syria despite the huge attacks on him for doing so

The membership of the Labour Party has grown dramatically from around 201,293 before the last election to 388,407 on January 10, 2016, not far behind the existing, very short lived peak of membership of 407,000 after Blair was elected as Prime Minister in 1997. [3]

Given that those numbers also conceal some resignations from a section of the right who couldn’t stomach him at all, it’s also a party which is significantly further to the left than it was. Corbyn is reshaping the Labour Party towards his own political positions—though there remains a fair way to go.

Even if the right wing was able to force a fresh leadership election, (and it is not clear that any significant number of them now see this as being in their immediate sights) Corbyn would only increase his majority. If they tried to exclude him from the ballot paper they would split the party.

Perhaps this, as well as their own internal divisions, is why there is no obvious candidate around whom the right can rally – instead desperate cries that it must be that person every time yet another malcontent grumbles at Corbyn.

### Oldham West success

The right has another problem.

They were desperate for Labour to lose the Oldham West and Royton by-election (on December 3, 2015, just three months after Corbyn’s election) but it did not happen. Contrary to their expectations, Corbyn has had a positive response from the electorate as well

Labour won the seat with a majority of 10,722 and a 62% share of the vote—higher than at the general election. Predictions of a dramatic UKIP victory were dashed as its vote declined from the general election rather than increasing.

When Jeremy Corbyn said Labour’s win in Oldham demonstrated the strength and appeal of its anti-austerity message he was absolutely right. Oldham reflected the changes Corbyn has made since he became leader. Labour is now an anti-austerity party, despite the squeals of pain and anger from many of its MPs.

Corbynism was also behind the defeats the Tories have suffered in Parliament in recent months – the U-turn over tax credits and the cuts to police numbers. The £5.7 m contract to train the staff to work in Saudi Arabia’s brutal justice system was scrapped after Corbyn intervened.

This is in sharp contrast to Labour’s performance under Miliband – not to mention Brown and Blair – where it was often hard to tell the difference between them and the Tories. It is precisely by showing that austerity is not inevitable – and neither is war – that Labour can win at the polls, convincing people that there is a point in turning out.

The May elections [4] are big challenge for Corbyn but the signs are that Labour will do well, including in London despite the fact that the mayoral candidate Sadiq Khan is not a Corbynite. In any case even a poor result in May would not necessarily be terminal to the project since he appears to be looking to build support over the next two to three years,

Scotland remains a major problem for Corbyn, and that is not going to change whilst he sticks to a unionist position. Corbyn is well to the left of the SNP but whilst he sticks to a unionist agenda he will make no progress north of the border.

Of course the place where things are most difficult for Corbyn is in the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP).

His shadow cabinet reshuffle, despite its mauling by the media for taking too long, as if there was a limit for such reshuffles, has strengthened his position by removing some of those who were openly defying his leadership. [5] It included the removal of Trident supporter Maria Eagle from the defence brief and her replacement with Emily Thornbury who opposes it – and who was very sharp in her backing for Corbyn in the media during the debate on Syria.

### Trident critical

The fight over Trident is absolutely critical. Although there are some dissenters, for the majority of the Tories and the Labour right, defending Trident is a central issue. It’s about revelling in Britain’s imperial past and her status in the future.

So preventing Trident replacement would be a massive blow for the British ruling class, as well as a huge victory for Corbyn who has championed this cause all his life.

The majority of the population is opposed to Trident renewal – for example on Question Time on Friday, January 15 the studio audience was strongly with Livingstone on the issue. Meetings up and down the country, building for the demonstration to build for the February 27 demonstration, have been well attended.

Scrapping it will be overwhelmingly popular amongst individual Labour Party members but voices from the top of some unions—Unite’s Len McCluskey and GMB’s Paul Kenny for example—have been raised in opposition.

In Unite’s case, McCluskey’s comments – unless he is being misquoted – would seem an extremely skewed interpretation of the union’s policy – which while it rightly talks about the need to maintain jobs and skills, is absolutely against Trident renewal . [6] Unite’s Scottish Secretary Pat Rafferty for example spoke in favour of the resolution against Trident which was adopted by Labour Scotland’s conference last year.

Corbyn is rightly countering their arguments by saying that Trident jobs should be switched to renewable energy production. This is a much stronger argument than the idea of submarines without nuclear weapons – an idea which doesn’t draw on the strength of the work that has been done over defence diversification over decades.

In this the 40th anniversary year of the Lucas Aerospace plan, when shop stewards in the plant which was largely making products for the defence industry, came together with radical scientists and produced detailed blue prints for 150 alternative products that the plant and its workers could be converted to produce, the time to build on and popularize such ideas has never been more urgent.

But what horrifies the right even more is the way Corbyn is proposing taking the decision on Trident. He has said that it will be the membership, either at conference or a membership vote, that will decide the issue —sidelining the Parliamentary LP and the policy forums.

In taking such a position, Corbyn is not only seeking to reach out to those more likely to support his convictions on this vital issue but to strengthen both the level of democracy and of political debate in the party in a more fundamental way. This is obviously a threat to the PLP and to the right not only on one vital issue of opposition to weapons of mass destruction, but on a broader and more long term basis.

### Momentum – a challenging project

Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell were right to launch Momentum as a social movement both inside and outside of the LP. It is an ambitious project for which there are no blueprints.

Corbyn’s election campaign went way beyond the existing Labour left; when Momentum was launched there was a leadership waiting in the wings that would be seen as legitimate by the movement as a whole. So it seemed fair enough at the beginning that there was a Launch Reference Group composed of four of the new Corbyn supporters in the PLP and two others. [7]

Membership remains a loose concept. Everyone who signed up for Corbyn’s campaign was asked to get involved and huge numbers did – somewhere between 30,000 and 40,000. There are around 50 local groups (there is no list) which vary in how they organize – some meet regularly, others don’t. Some are open to all Corbyn supporters, others are LP members only.

Momentum has been active on a range of issues from voter registration – where government changes could see over 2 million losing the right to vote, to opposition to Osborne’s planned tax credits cuts. They mobilized for the Oldham by-election and were visible on the climate change and student protests.

In the run up to the Syria vote, Momentum made a huge effort to support Corbyn both by on line and in person lobbying. East London Momentum organizer Imad Ahmed spoke at the December 12 demonstration Since the beginning of 2016, Momentum mobilized against the Rail Fare Rip-Off and to support the junior doctor’s action.

This is very positive – organizing people to defend the key aspects of Corbyn’s policies both by public campaigning and putting pressure on the PLP with the weight of so many new activists.

### What future for Momentum?

There are questions some questions about campaigning – the fact that Momentum nationally has not been involved in the campaign against Trident for example is definitely a weakness.

Please turn to Corbyn consolidates his position, page 18

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Corbyn consolidates his position, from page 17

But it's on the questions of structures and democracy that the greatest problems lie. The future of Momentum as an organisation is more problematic than the Corbyn project itself. The presence of non-members of the LP—which has been endorsed by both Corbyn and McDonnell—is opposed not only by the Labour right but also by some on the Labour left.

Some seem to have the mistaken view that the best way to deal with the idea that Momentum is dominated by the “hard left” is to concede ground – as if when you give someone an inch they will go away quietly. Momentum is under attack for its political principles – who is involved is a secondary question for the media and the right.

One question is whether Momentum should affiliate to the Labour Party as a socialist society. Many arguing this position suggest that this means that only members of the Labour Party can be members of Momentum. This is not true. Currently Labour has almost 20 affiliated socialist societies, each with their own rules. The Socialist Health Association for example has long been an affiliated socialist society but its members and office holders don't have to be members and of the Labour Party – and indeed neither do its office holders [8]. It set out a structure in which regional representatives and others would initially not be elected, though elections were promised –within six months:

Attempts to hold a National Committee meeting in January had to be abandoned following a protest letter from more than a dozen Momentum organizers from London [9]

A further letter from “Team Momentum” responded [10] that there would be regional (and national) meetings to elect delegates to the national committee which would meet on February 6. That is not far away and I have yet to hear of any regional gatherings yet though some local groups have elected their delegations.

Momentum will only succeed in its political aims if it sticks to a democratic road. This means all the structures should be open to everyone who supports the project. It's important that this is argued within Momentum groups – nothing is yet a done deal.

The need for an alliance to defend Corbyn's policies remains necessary – which means that other ways of bringing together his supporters will develop, if Momentum fails to meet the challenge.

Corbyn's popularity is based on his policies and principals. People are fed up with empty spin and they want some policy substance and he is providing that. It is crucial, therefore, that he sticks to the left-wing agenda on which he was elected—and at the moment he is doing just that.

The best way of defending the Corbyn project, which is stronger today than when he was elected, is to mobilize in defence of those ideas and to debate as widely as possible how to take forward the dynamism and enthusiasm which led to his election in the first place.

**Footnotes**

[1] At the official commemoration of the dead of the two world and other wars in November 2015.

[2] See “Junior doctors – fighting to defend our NHS”, “Junior doctors' strike: What the dispute is about”, the movement is continuing with all-out strike action called for 10 February.

[3] The number of actual resignations since Corbyn's election is less than 4,000 – as distinct from the numbers who stopped paying which has brought the total leavers to 8,500. For the period between the general election and Corbyn's election the figures were 1,300 resignations and a total of 5,500 leavers. So there is a clear increase in right wingers leaving but way below the 30,000 claimed by Mandelson.

[4] Local elections renewing sections of local authorities will be held on 5 May 2016, and will include the crucial election of London's directly-elected mayor, a post currently held by leading Tory Boris Johnson.

[5] The reshuffle of the shadow cabinet named in September 2015 took place over 2 days in early January, see *The Guardian* “Corbyn's more unified shadow cabinet ... after a 34 hour-long reshuffle” and “Jeremy Corbyn's shadow cabinet reshuffle: who's in and who's out”.

[6] See Unite Trident policy: peace and disarmament.

[7] Clive Lewis MP, Rebecca Long-Bailey MP, Richard Burgon MP, Kate Osamor MP together with Councillor Sam Tarry and Jon Lansman (prominent member of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and author of the Left Futures blog).

[8] See SOCIALIST HEALTH ASSOCIATION

The current position with Momentum structures is confused and problematic. The obvious place to decide how the organisation should be structured is a meeting of all Momentum supporters rather than structures created and imposed from the top.

Just before Christmas, members received an email summing up the organizations work together with information about the formation of a national committee. [“In order to reflect the diversity of the movement and its grassroots nature, the National Committee will be made up of two representatives from Scotland, Wales and each of the nine English regions, two from each national trade union and representatives of established Labour left organisations. The committee will be gender balanced and will include BAME and disability representation. Initial representation from regions and nations and equalities groups will be based on consultation as prescribed by the reference group, but will be elected within six months.”

[9] Key parts of the letter include: “We believe that the decision making processes for Momentum at a national level must be made absolutely transparent. If decisions are made about who can attend Momentum meetings, whether Momentum will become a membership organization, or how the national organization will be structured, it has to be clear who is making these decisions” and:“Principally, we hope that local groups will be able to have real input in deciding what national structure Momentum should adopt, and that any eventual structure will include significant representation from local groups, allowing local activists real democratic influence over the organisation's national direction”. and “In the context of the above concerns we have no confidence in the national committee meeting being organized for the 16th January.” . Even the protest letter accepted that only LP members can be involved in decision making. [[We agree that Momentum decision making meetings should exclude members of other parties. We would like to note that this isn't because we have anything against members of other parties, but rather that if members of other parties are allowed to have influence over the decision making processes in local groups it may inhibit our ability to build positive links with Constituency Labour Parties, and ultimately to fight for Labour election victories.

[10] ....Over the next month, we will build towards the first meeting of our National Committee on Saturday, February 6, with gatherings of delegates from verified local Momentum groups in all nine English regions, Scotland and Wales.

Momentum staff members will be in touch in the coming week, to organize the regional meetings with group organizers, trade unions and other relevant stakeholders. These regional (national in the case of Wales and Scotland) meetings will elect delegates to the National Committee. In the instances of Scotland and Wales, staff members will be a point of contact as you organize your meetings and selection process independently. Each region or nation will elect two delegates, at least one of whom must be a woman. The North West and the South East will have three delegates due to their size, at least two of whom must be women. London will have four delegates, at least two of whom must be women. All delegates will be Labour Party members.

As well as elect their delegates, these regional gatherings may debate all issues on the forthcoming agenda and present their own comments, proposals or amendments. These papers will be presented to all members of the Committee....

Veronica Fagan is a staff writer for Socialist Resistance, Britain.

This article first appeared in the February, 2016, issue of *International Viewpoint*, the monthly English-language magazine of the Fourth International, which is a window to radical alternatives worldwide, carrying reports, analysis and debates from all corners of the globe.

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Environmentalists bring crisis in the Walbran Valley to BC Legislature

Wilderness Committee callis on BC government to rescind logging permits

**VICTORIA** – Representatives from the Wilderness Committee and other concerned citizens held a creative demonstration at the BC Legislature February 10, to draw attention to the situation in the endangered Walbran Valley.

Using art displays on the lawn of the Legislature, activists simulated the controversial old-growth logging that is currently underway in the Walbran.

“BC’s Premier and Minister of Forests aren’t taking the crisis in the Walbran Valley seriously,” said Torrance Coste, Vancouver Island Campaigner for the Wilderness Committee. “So today, we’ve brought this issue to their doorstep to demand that they listen to the thousands of citizens who have called on them to act on this.”

Despite receiving over 7,000 messages from members of the public, the Minister approved logging permits in the Walbran last fall. Logging company Teal Jones began cutting in late October, and is moving closer every day to the Central Walbran Valley, an intact 486-hectare stand north of the Walbran River.

Teal Jones has obtained injunctions to keep protesters out of the area, and a blockader was arrested in the Valley a few weeks ago – the first arrest in the Walbran in more than two decades.

The City of Victoria, the District of Tofino, the District of Metchosin and the Chambers of Commerce of both Port Renfrew and Sooke have all passed motions calling on the provincial government to protect the Central Walbran.

“The groundswell of opposition to logging in the Walbran is unprecedented, and it's time for the BC government to take responsibility,” Coste said. “There is no ethical rationale for cutting down thousand-year-old trees. Our government has to find a solution.”

After the art demonstration, environmentalists delivered letters to the Premier, Minister of Forests and other key BC decision-makers, restating their request to protect the Central Walbran Valley.

The Walbran Valley is in the unceded territory of the Pacheedaht First Nation.

Photos by Torrance Coste



Above, old growth trees in Black Diamond Grove, part of recently approved cutblock in Central Walbran Valley.



The Sierra Club's Mark Worthing sits on a giant stump in Teal Jones' Clearcut 2.

Cowichan Valley  
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# US initiates nuclear war against Syria

By Bo Filter

U.S. Airforce A-10 Warthogs struck Aleppo on February 9 when Russian planes were out of the area. Instantly, western propaganda went to work framing Russia, both for the wanton aerial bombing of civilians and for destroying two hospitals. Blaming a third party to avert responsibility for clearly criminal behaviour is not just psychological warfare but standard psychopathic behaviour.

Worse, the prostitute media neglected to warn the world that Warthogs shoot nuclear-tipped bullets that poison the environment for millions of years. Grossly deformed babies are being born across the Middle East in the wake of using these extremely poisonous uranium shells, starting with the Yom Kipper War, then escalated dramatically by the U.S. in *Desert Storm*. Now, a dozen countries have been devastated by these U.S. weapons of interminable destruction.

By shelling Aleppo with A-10s, the U.S. has begun a nuclear war against Syria. Like the victim countries before, Syria will be most likely abandoned by the international community. Meanwhile, a psychopathic cult of Neoconservatives are free to strike whatever countries they choose next. Some of the public watches in horror, while most live in the tulips, acting as gullible parrots for *Fox News* and the other militarized media cartels.

Even the so-called public broadcasters sing the songs of western war propaganda. For instance, the CBC immediately claimed that Russia denies bombing Aleppo in spite of “overwhelming evidence”. No actual evidence is presented because the war of propaganda is a war of words, not evidence. It’s up to the public to solve the problems created by its own credulity and blind following.

We don’t have classes or programs that teach people how to watch out for deception or how to test one’s own inclinations for being duped. With such classes we could

address sticky issues like Mark Twain’s observation, “It’s easier to convince people of a lie than it is to convince them that they’ve been lied to.”

Why? Once we fall prey to a lie, our ego will defend it so not to lose face. It’s better to live in a Disneyland-like headspace than to accept fallibility, the idea that we could be wrong. Thusly, war propagandists jump on this weakness, which enables them to enlist an entire army of public supporters for war by simply convincing them to believe the “latest breaking news”.

According to polls, 40-year CBS News anchorman Walter Cronkite was considered the most trusted man in America. Just before Cronkite died, a journalist asked him why he thought he was so trusted. Cronkite

poor vision and confusion that lends itself to inciting endless wars. The endless cycle of wars seems hopeless. People often say that they want to crawl into a hole and pull the lid over.

Yet, as soon as we clearly identify a critical problem like credulity, we can start to move to correct it. Firstly, we need to come up with some creative ideas. To start, why don’t we petition the United Nations General Assembly to declare war on gullibility, a psychological weakness that leads generation after generation towards war? High schools around the world need to tackle the problem. The United Nations might serve as a coordinating body for a world wide effort.

More immediately, we need to address



A US Airforce A-D Warthog in flight

reflected for a moment then offered that it was because of his “ability to tell lies convincingly”. Cronkite held America in the grip of a fictional reality, a world where warmongers could “pied piper” America into invading country after country across the globe.

Endless credulity is fertile soil to endless lying. Endless lying is essential to creating the fog of war, an atmosphere of

the critical issue of the U.S. terrain-poisoning nuclear weapons. Understand that poisoning the land indefinitely creates permanent refugees in Syria. Emptying a country of people serves the military objective of destroying a nation state while creating a geographical void in which wealthy global corporations can raid the natural resources without resistance.

This may seem utterly sinister. Yet, wars of aggression such as this are soaked in depravity. The United Nations has recognized this and has aptly named this conduct “wars of aggression”.

For the decency of humanity, you can fight back. The more people that are aware of the depravity of the situation, the more difficult it is for warmongers to advance their agenda. The Neoconservative agenda is nothing less than global slavery, a planet where the poor have no place to run and escape.

Expose their plan in the *Wolfowitz Doctrine*. Expose their goal of world domination in the *Project for a New American Century*. Expose their machinations emanating from the *Council of Foreign Relations* and their flagship newspeak magazine, *Foreign Affairs*.

Read the declassified 1950 *National Security Council Memorandum - 68*, which calls for extending the gap between the world’s rich and the world’s poor and calls for creating the Cold War as pretext to hide upcoming U.S. *wars of aggression*. Spread the word on websites like Global Research and Information Clearing House. Go to Paul Craig Robert’s website. He worked in the Reagan administration. Even Vladimir Putin appreciates his insights.

This is going to take up much of your time. The only thing left you need is a 48-hour day, so you can attend marches against nuclear war and other group endeavors that address other misadventures by malignant personalities. In the end, if you can only manage to do a little, it is much better than doing nothing.

**Bo Filter** is a veteran social scientist, geopolitical analyst, and author of *The Cause of Wars and Aggression*. He worked in a U.S. Top Secret war room and witnessed firsthand the machinations of global domination. To get his book directly, email [bfilter@gmail.com](mailto:bfilter@gmail.com) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HW\\_iSU-jGRQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HW_iSU-jGRQ)

## 2016 – World threatens to break free from US protection racket?

By Bo Filter

A US national security Christian cult of Neo-conservatives claims through its documents at the *Project for a New American Century* that it has a God-given right to impose itself on the world, to police the entire world, and provide protection for all people. Naturally, other countries shun this preposterous provocation.

But the Neo-cons won’t take no for an answer, so they force themselves down the throat of other countries with all the fervour and determination that attended the original crusades back in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This new 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian crusade, however, is much more media savvy. It tries, for instance, to appeal to all Americans by draping itself under the American flag, using the stars and stripes as its war standard instead of the Christian cross.

Using a national security stratagem of humanitarian concern for all people like their much acclaimed *responsibility to protect*, Neo-cons effectively hide their ultimate missionary goal of converting the world to Christianity. Neo-cons believe that they can succeed, because they have wrested the most powerful military in the world away from the US secular Constitutional government and turned it into a Christian mercenary army.

Neo-cons do not call for sharing power. They want it all, as is common among fanatics. Zealots see that conversion must be attained at any cost, which is why we see that every country around the world is under attack.

*Coup d’états* are ongoing around the world, but the military is not the only means of attack. You can subdue a country using economic means. Read John Perkin’s book, *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*. Ultimately, countries are brought down to economic peonage, and puppets are put in power to do the bidding for the Neo-cons. It’s a war against the world.

### WARMONGERING

Brethren among the Neo-cons are warmongers. It takes a lot of money to run a world war, and warmongering just so happens to be the most profitable business of all times. The Neo-cons have declared “war without end”. Never-ending wars wholeheartedly implies never-ending profits for the suppliers of eternal war. A never-ending market is the perfect atmosphere and climate for the business of warmongering. Can you imagine owning a business that will never end? Your posterity will live forever drowning in money, power and prestige. Call it the Garden of Eden of Mammon.

Remember, the devil doesn’t care who dies or how many die or under what circumstances they die. Death, misery, and the four horsemen of the apocalypse are mere collateral damage to the greater good of insatiable greed.

Drumming up business has been rather easy to do. First, find religious sects that hate each other. Then create a fight. Kill someone on each side, and blame each side for the deaths on the other side. This lights the match that ignites a war

Weapons manufacturers are standing by ready to sell both sides all the latest weapons of mass destruction. This business has been going on for some time now. In fact, the first mention of warmongering goes back in history to its first mention around 1000 BCE.

Warmongering has become a science in the last century—a seedy science of cleverly fabricated fear and forever a criminal enterprise. “War is a Racket” declared US Marine Major Brigadier General Smedley Butler in his short book with this title back in 1933. Butler understood that a 1% dominant force of warmongers backed by private bankers who made the loans for wars with huge interest profits had already taken over much of the world. How did he know? He was their enforcer for what World War II general and subsequent US Presi-

dent Dwight D. Eisenhower would dub the Military Industrial Complex.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with Smedley Butler, he was the general who testified before the US Congress that he had been approached by the 1% power brokers to overthrow the Presidency of Franklin Roosevelt and establish a military state to end Constitutional government. The coup attempt collapsed because of his testimony before Congress, but not a single warmonger or banker was indicted for insurrection and treason.

At the same time of Butler’s book, the 1% were busy funding the rise of Adolf Hitler who created a fascist state in Germany in their image of an ideal world drenched in war and eternal profiteering. Perhaps if a General Butler equivalent had emerged in Germany, World War II might have been averted.

Over the centuries, as the warmongering baton was passed from generation to generation, today we find its public-facing leadership entrenched in the Neo-conservative movement. One of their spokesmen, former US Vice-President Dick Cheney, fervently warns us that wars will not end in our life time.

Assuredly, from the first organized marauders, dating back to 4400 BCE, to modern day “wars of aggression,” as defined by the United Nations, progressively: the taking of cattle; then women and children; then metal ores for armaments; then nations to form the first imperial colonies that extend to today’s *globalization* or *New World Order*, aggression has been the most profitable enterprise on spaceship earth.

The science of war and the attendant never-ending need to fabricate enemies and stampede public psychological support into fighting the next war reveals how readily irrational fear can be exploited. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century mind control experts like Edward Bernays hid their work under the euphemistic title called *public relations*. They dis-

covered that lies become *truth* if repeated often enough.

Turning lies into *truth* is important to warmongers. Exploiting fear to tar and feather newly deemed enemies with constant repetition is foundational to western warmongered media. Western countries are soaked in *let’s go to war* propaganda, while reality has been shrunk to a one-dimensional militarized theme.

The currently unipolar world is based on a unitary perspective: evil east—angelic west. Americans love to hear that they are the indispensable chosen people granted by god to rule the world. This delusion blinds them to the profits of war. The first cold war against the evil east, conjured up by the 1%, was memorialized in a Top Secret document called *National Security Council Memorandum – 68*. The *Cold War* cost Americans \$21 trillion!

To end the war, Russia tried to starve the US of its enemy. President Mikhail Gorbachev did this by dismantling the USSR. Undeterred, the Neo-cons took a new tack.

US State Department propagandists connived to get elected a western puppet leader, Boris Yeltsin. Russia was now open for the taking. Western *banksters* and corporations rushed in for the spoils: privatizing resources, economic infrastructure, and successful enterprises, jacking up their value with stock market schemes and selling them off at ransom prices. Looting went on for the full eight years of the Yeltsin reign.

All across the nation Russians were thrown into abject poverty, which the western media cynically blamed on Communism. Russians had seen enough of western capitalism. Vladimir Putin was elected president in 2000 and has now managed to stop much of the bloodletting.

Western hegemonies are furious. In retribution, the 1% has conjured another war against Russia. Some analysts call it Cold War II. All across western media we’re told



## Kennedy Stewart puts forward made-for-BC affordable housing strategy

Motion includes call for federal study of investor speculation, housing vacancies

OTTAWA – MP Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South) tabled legislation in Parliament December 11 to tackle BC’s urgent housing crisis.

“Housing prices have skyrocketed in the Lower Mainland and we are facing a serious shortage of affordable housing,” said Stewart. “British Columbians need answers as to why it is so hard for families to afford homes. We need to understand the extent that high prices are being driven by investor speculation and what the government can do to increase the supply of affordable housing.”

Motion 20 calls on the new Liberal government to implement a BC-specific Affordable Housing Strategy that examines and addresses the potential impact of investor

speculation and housing vacancies on the high price of real estate in urban markets, among other initiatives.

“Municipalities are doing what they can, but the federal government has a massive responsibility here – starting with providing the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Statistics Canada the means to carry out an in-depth and rigorous investigation of this problem,” continued Dr. Stewart, an associate professor on leave from Simon Fraser University’s School of Public Policy. “Once we have the facts, then we can start looking at policy measures to make sure we put local families first.”

Stewart’s motion is below:

M-20 — That, in the opinion of the House, the government should work in collaboration with the provinces, territories, municipalities, Aboriginal communities, and housing providers to establish, develop, and implement an affordable housing strategy that: (a) affirms that access to adequate housing is a fundamental right of all Canadians, as guaranteed by the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights; (b) provides financial assistance, without discrimination, to those who are otherwise unable to afford adequate and secure housing; (c) ensures that the cost of housing does not compromise an individual’s ability to meet other basic needs, including food, clothing, healthcare, and education; (d) maintains and expands direct federal investments in social housing, including not-for-profit cooperatives, in order to increase the supply of low-income housing, preserve rent subsidies, and provide funds for renovations and maintenance; (e) sets targets and objectives to prevent, reduce, and end homelessness, particularly among vulnerable populations, with clear timelines and accountability measures; (f) examines and addresses the potential impact of investor speculation and housing vacancies on the high price of real estate in urban markets; and (g) takes into account the unique needs and housing priorities of different regions, including British Columbia.

## World threatens to break free, from page 19

about evil Putin this, evil Putin that. In a blind rage, Putin is blamed for all sorts of war crimes, when, in fact, he represents one of the few foreign governments legally operating in Syria.

Putin’s success against ISIS has the Pentagon tied in knots, even though they claim to be fighting ISIS. Putin embarrassed Washington by showing them how to do it. Of course, the Pentagon knows how to do it. They had no intention of harming ISIS, which has been tearing apart Syria in line with Washington’s long-range strategic goal of a one-world dictatorial order, their *New World Order*, a planet unable to escape the protection racket of permanent warmongering.

Although many people around the world have been blinded by the propaganda that has hidden this racket, others see it for what it is and are fed up. Now we see coalitions of the willing springing up to confront the US war racket. Russia, Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon have come to the aid of Syria. They are winning. The world is breaking free from the US protection racket. Few people realize that the racket lavishly funds the global Christian crusade.

Convert or be destroyed. The Neo-cons are quite willing to leave Syria in the state of a bombed out moonscape like they did to Libya. Having recently attacked Aleppo with tactical nuclear weapons, the US presses Russia toward a nuclear war. Unelected by the world citizenry, Neo-cons are voting for Armageddon. In their vision, a world that refuses to convert must be destroyed. Meanwhile, they project their racial extremism onto Islam.

People around the world need to contact the Whitehouse and demand a cessation to the Neo-con march to nuclear war. More long range, people must use social media to expose the war racket. Reminding people that the US Constitution has a clear restriction on war spending would do much to set our collective global future in the right direction.

The US Constitution states that no war shall be funded for more than two years. Congress is empowered in Article 1, Section 8, Clause 12: “To raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer Term than two Years.”<sup>1</sup>

The Neo-cons never-ending war clearly does not fit the Constitutional limit of two years. Indictments are in order. Treason is the felony in process.

**Bo Filter** is a veteran social scientist, geo-political analyst, and author of *The Cause of Wars and Aggression*. Contact him at [bofilter@gmail.com](mailto:bofilter@gmail.com)

### Endnotes

1 The Founding Fathers were really worried about the danger of standing armies, the kind of permanent professional armed forces that had, they felt, been used by the British monarchy to oppress them before the Revolution. So they carefully divided the power to control the military between the executive and legislative branches; the president is Commander-in-Chief but only Congress has the authority to pay (or not pay) for military actions. Further, Congress cannot fund military operations more than two years in the future.

## Trans-Pacific Partnership hides significant health costs, according to two new studies

OTTAWA – As Canada prepared to sign the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in New Zealand, two new studies from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) revealed significant risks and high public costs to the Canadian health care system within the text of the agreement.

The TPP would require Canada to extend patent terms to compensate brand-name pharmaceutical firms for regulatory delays in approving drugs. This policy change could add \$636 million annually to the price of drugs in Canada, according to Joel Lexchin in his study, *Involuntary Medication: The Possible Effects of the Trans-Pacific Partnership on the Cost and Regulation of Medicine in Canada*.

“Higher drug costs would make pharmacare more costly, and lawsuits from adversely affected drug companies are more likely under TPP’s investor-state dispute settlement mechanism,” says Lexchin, a professor in the School of Health Policy and Management at York University.

The second study, *Major Complications: The TPP and Canadian Health Care*, by CCPA trade expert Scott Sinclair, finds that the TPP investor protections would make it more difficult and costly for Canadian governments to establish new public health programs, including pharmacare, which is on the agenda of ongoing federal-provincial health talks.

Key findings from both studies include:

- The TPP includes many new rights for US and Japanese drug companies to comment on, review and appeal Canadian regulatory decisions, which could adversely affect drug approvals and safety.
- Faster regulatory approvals of medicines, which might result from the TPP, have been shown to lead to a higher

incidence of safety problems, including warnings and withdrawals.

- The TPP’s carve-out for tobacco control measures will not provide meaningful protection for future Canadian plain-packaging rules, since US-based tobacco companies will continue to have access to NAFTA’s investor-state protections.
- Other forms of public health regulation, from controls on trans-fats to regulating legalized marijuana, are fully exposed to lawsuits from disgruntled foreign investors. The TPP expands these rights to cover investors from Japan, Malaysia, Australia and other countries.
- The TPP financial services chapter actually makes it easier for foreign insurers to challenge the expansion of public health insurance into new areas by allowing investor-state disputes involving a much-abused “minimum standards of treatment” rule.

“While a strong and balanced international trade regime is critical to Canada’s economic success it should not, and need not, come at the expense of our public health system,” says Sinclair.

These two reports are the first in a series of detailed analyses of various aspects of the TPP to be released by CCPA in the coming months as the debate over whether Canada should ratify the deal continues.

*Involuntary Medication: The Possible Effects of the Trans-Pacific Partnership on the Cost and Regulation of Medicine in Canada* and *Major Complications: The TPP and Canadian Health Care* are available on the CCPA website: <http://policyalternatives.ca>

- See more at: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/newsroom/news-releases/trans-pacific-partnership-hides-significant-health-costs-according-to-two-new-studies>

## UN expert urges Pacific Rim countries not to sign the TPP without committing to human rights and development

GENEVA – United Nations human rights expert Alfred de Zayas called on governments not to sign the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) without reaffirming their human rights treaty obligations and their recent pledges to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

“The TPP is fundamentally flawed and should not be signed or ratified unless provision is made to guarantee the regulatory space of States,” said the UN Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order in a statement\* made public February 2.

de Zayas called for a new generation of trade agreements for the 21st century, which would incorporate human rights and development into their provisions, stressing that “the TPP is based on an old model of trade agreements that is out of step with today’s international human rights regime.”

The expert’s appeal came on the eve of the gathering of the trade ministers in Auckland, New Zealand, on February 4, to sign the TPP, a trade agreement among 12 Pacific Rim countries that will strengthen the position of investors, transnational corporations and monopolies at the expense of the public, and will impact negatively on labour standards, food security, health and environmental protection.

de Zayas reiterated his call on the UN system and governments across the world “to put an end to free trade and investment agreements that conflict with human rights treaty obligations,” made last year during the presentation of a report on free trade and investment agreements to the UN Human Rights Council.

“Trade is not an end in itself, but must be seen in the context of the international human rights regime, which imposes binding legal obligations on States, including

the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,” he said.

“Trade agreements are not ‘stand-alone’ legal regimes, but must conform with fundamental principles of international law, including transparency and accountability,” de Zayas stressed. “They must not delay, circumvent, undermine or make impossible the fulfilment of human rights treaty obligations.”

In his statement, the Independent Expert expressed concern that, despite “enormous opposition by civil society worldwide, 12 countries were about to sign an agreement, which is the product of secret negotiations without multi-stakeholder democratic consultation.”

“The options are not to sign the TPP as it stands, as civil society demands, or not to ratify it, which is the responsibility of democratically elected parliaments,” the expert noted. “Should the TPP ever enter into force, its compatibility with international law should be challenged before the International Court of Justice (ICJ).”

“If a public referendum were held in all 12 countries concerned, it will be solidly rejected,” Mr. de Zayas stated.

(\*) Check the Independent Expert’s public statement: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17005&LangID=E>

**Alfred de Zayas** (United States of America) was appointed as the first Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order by the Human Rights Council, effective May 2012. He is currently professor of international law at the Geneva School of Diplomacy. Learn more, log on to: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IntOrder/Pages/IEInternationalOrderIndex.aspx>

Read the Independent Expert’s 2015 report to the UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/30/44): <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session30/Pages/ListReports.aspx>

Read the Independent Expert’s 2015 report to the UN General Assembly on the incompatibility of ISDS with human rights norms (A/70/285): [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/285](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/285)

The Independent Experts are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council’s independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures’ experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

For more information, contact Karin Hechenleitner (+41 22 917 9636 / [khechenleitner@ohchr.org](mailto:khechenleitner@ohchr.org) ) or write to [ie-international-order@ohchr.org](mailto:ie-international-order@ohchr.org)



# The Beluga’s culture shock

## Seeing the world through the “Bubble” -- musings from East Scotland

By Diane Walsh

Culture shock is something usually associated with a human being feeling a sense of alienation or confusion when arriving in a place that is strange and new. It would be no surprise then, if difficulty in adapting cropped up as a culture-shock after-effect.

But what if the concept of culture-shock was applied to, say, placing the Beluga white-whale in a “Bubble such as an aquarium setting — whose ancestors had lived in the Ocean Wide for thousands of years?

Without falling into a debate about anthropomorphism, I would like to us to “problematize” the idea of the “strangeness” of having a huge *Whitewhale* in, arguably, a fishbowl.

An Arctic and sub-Arctic cetacean, this Whitefish is also occasionally referred to as the melonhead or sea canary.

I do not wish to be delving too deep into a discussion of anthropology. If you would like to read more on the topic, in *Beyond the Human*, Samantha Hurn (2012) researches the idea of animal exploitation, animal-rights theory and the anthropological implications of the evolving cultural ideas and concepts about animal personhood. She asks us to think



A Beluga white whale in the wild.

can never get into a cetacean’s mind, per se, but we can entertain the idea of “seeing the world from the perspective of the Beluga”.

Here is an analogy. We’ve all likely observed the poverty and resignation of people who are on the wrong side of the “economic divide”. At times I have been there myself. What if this conceptualization of reality was applied to thinking about the Beluga? “Seeing” the Beluga as being on the wrong side of the “divide”— whose fate is unlucky enough to have been captured — whose awesome and glorious natural-habitat nature subjectivity modified into a mere object of money-making and gawk? Might I be able to force an argument that the Beluga is “ecologically impoverished” i.e. trapped in a container?

Is this the Beluga’s “Bubble” reality? It would be no surprise to see the “resignation” of the Beluga in this scenario. I argue that there doesn’t seem to be a concerted effort to connect the “poverty” of the Beluga in the Aquarium setting. I mean the poverty of the identity of the Beluga in the Aquarium setting. Is the Beluga not powerless over its fate, resigned to its working conditions?

Applying social theory to an understanding of the captive Beluga might actually prove useful. I could even push for a focus on the idea of “discrimination” against Belugas. Why not? The fate of the Beluga has been shown to be “poor”. We need to consider Maris’ recent death in Atlanta.

Keeping Belugas in captivity is really more about controlling the population in order to allow money to be made. It is about the circuits of capitalism reaching the Beluga as an object of profit. We don’t hear much of this phenomena at the moment but it underlies much of what is happening. If a Beluga dies, it is always “a complete mystery”. Whether it’s Vancouver or Atlanta.

On October 24, 2015, I read, while in Scotland, that “Maris the beluga whale *dies suddenly* at Georgia Aquarium [emphasis mine] (Source: Faith Karimi, CNN).

We are told that Maris, who was born in the New York Aquarium, in 1994 lived for 10 years at the site in Atlanta and died on October 22, 2015.

It’s well known that Maris had given birth to two babies, both of whom died. The first baby died in 2012 only days after birth, and the second, after less than a month. There are two Belugas left at the Georgia Aquarium - Grayson and Qinu.

Karimi, the reporter from CNN, obtained this quote from PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). “Maris was denied her freedom her entire life. She was transferred from one facility to another, and her babies died, one after the other. Whether or not she had a physical ailment that went unnoticed, she was killed by captivity, plain and simple.”— PETA senior vice president Lisa Lange.

Okay, we know the drill. Aquariums argue that belugas in captivity (modified, with the phrase “belugas in human care”) enable scientists to better comprehend them in the

about our own attitudes towards “other” animals on earth (i.e. other-than-human) and relate this to what it might mean to be human. *Per-spectivism* (e.g. Kohn; Descola; De Castro) asks us to take up seeing the world from the point of view of the “other” in the natural world, while at the same acknowledging our thoughts as being, from a human standpoint (key words: post-humanist, human exceptionalism).

With this all in mind, try and understand the example I have suggested, of “the foreignness” of the fishbowl (Aquarium) *from the perspective of the Beluga*.

Granted we



In the wild, Belugas swim thousands of miles a year.

wild. Latest “ethical” research, needless to say, focuses on how “underwater sounds” affect belugas — including the human-created noise-pollution created by industrial or military activity? The aquarium is a lab, effectively. Biologists from respected universities are involved in this project and do not have to wrestle with any sort of conundrum relating to ethics. It is taken as a given that this is “good” research -- no questions asked.

Karimi continues to explain that, “The data can be combined and applied to help conserve and protect wild belugas from threats in their natural habitats,” according to the Georgia Aquarium website.

It’s clear that the Georgia Aquarium has been very careful to maintain the position that Maris, 21, “showed no signs of illness before her death. She ate and interacted normally with Grayson and Qinu, the other two beluga whales at the aquarium. This is a case of sudden, acute animal death. Our animals receive exceptional care, and our dedicated team of experts responded to her within minutes to render aid.”— Dr. Gregory Bossart, Chief Veterinarian at the Georgia Aquarium.

All the public is told is: “An autopsy is underway.”

End of discussion.



A Beluga in an aquarium “Bubble”.

different facilities under breeding and loan agreements. Unfortunately for those supporting the effort, in September a federal judge shut down the effort.” We’re told there’s pressure on “the National Marine Fisheries Service to declare the population of belugas, suffering from captures in Russia, as depleted, under the *Marine Mammal Protection Act*”.

In the context of another published CNN news article, “SeaWorld can expand its tank but not breed whales, board rules”, all eyes are likely now focused on the Georgia Aquarium’s desire to “grow” belugas.

I have reflected briefly on “animal/human” interaction and the assumptions humans make when beginning to use models of observation. I have asked that readers reconsider the idea of Belugas in labs. I suggest here, that there may be a benefit in actually applying human social theory to the fate of the captive Beluga.

I will leave you with this final thought. The light/colour/frequency spectrum experienced by humans, compared with the receptors that cetaceans/animals/birds experience, confines us to a uniquely human world. We can never enter the complete experiential world that enables the “others” in the animal kingdoms and the seas, to exist on the same planet. Technology will never enable us to “see” the colours/frequencies that non-humans experience -- not even with Hubble style magnification. To that extent we should understand

an inherent disability — so is this the anthropological blind leading the blind?

If we see that our ways of seeing are blind to the ways that the Beluga sees — just one “animal” example — we might be able to better understand their deaths in the aquarium setting. To understand if the Beluga and the baby beluga experiences culture shock in the aquarium fishbowl, the “Bubble” must first be burst.



Maris lived in the Atlanta Aquarium for 10 of her 11 years of life.



# The Art of the Impossible, by Geoff Meggs and Rod Mickleburgh, Madeira Park, BC, Harbour Publishing, 2012

Book review by Jim Hackler

In 1972 Dave Barrett became BC’s first NDP premier winning the election with 39% of the vote. Social Credit, the Conservatives, and Liberals divided the rest. During three years in office the NDP government passed 367 pieces of legislation—two per week.

No other BC government has passed so much legislation in such a short period. Every British Columbian who has ever bought auto insurance, attended community college, ridden in an ambulance, taken the SeaBus, tangled with a boss about wages, or vacationed in a wilderness park has benefited from the Barrett legacy.

A new generation shaped the province’s future and democratized a government held for nearly 20 years by W.A.C. Bennett’s one-man rule.

While this book clearly favors the NDP and its views, it appears to be well researched. Conservative readers will probably be critical. The authors also describe weaknesses and mistakes made by this left-leaning government. Since I share the

biases of the NDP, and have little first-hand knowledge, I cannot verify the accuracy of the claims. But the interviews and other work seem to be extensive and thoroughly done.

Others recall this government as a period of anarchy, with a colourful but erratic premier. Barrett’s influence stimulated corporate leaders to create the Fraser Institute, a neo-conservative think tank that works hard to generate policies that would counter progressive thinking.

When first elected Barrett did not have a clear transition plan or an overall strategy. His three years in office were chaotic, but he received a similar proportion of the popular vote in 1975. By then, however, the conservatives united with the Socreds under Bill Bennett, son of W.A.C. Bennett, who led the Social Credit Party to victory.

Chapters of the book deal with different themes, but a recurring argument is that corporations were reaping large profits from BC resources while paying minimal taxes. In addition, resources were being sold to the United States at lower prices than to Canadians. Thus, companies were

profiting more from sales to Canadians than from sales outside of Canada. In this review, I will focus only on the changes made in social services.

Social service went through a tremendous transition during this period. Minister Norm Levi had an interesting background. Driving tanks, first for England and then for Israel, he was a hard worker, had a good sense of humour, and was determined to improve social services. Unsophisticated in dress, he sometimes rode his bicycle to the legislative buildings, hoping that “one day it might be possible to walk into this House without a tie and not get thrown out”. Levi was a bright and well-read person, as those of us who met in his book-filled house for long discussions soon learned.

During one of his passages to Israel he met his future wife, Gloria, who became a major figure in the BC NDP. After immigrating to Vancouver in the 1950s, Levi became a staff member of the John Howard Society.

Levi decentralized authority to scores of locally elected community resources boards. Levi and other ministers illustrated the quite different strategy used by Barrett

compared to Bennett—cabinet ministers had different styles and strategies of working. For example, Levi wanted his staff to use their own judgement and was supportive even when they made mistakes.

In general, it seems that individual ministers and other senior officials in the Barrett government could operate with different styles and follow their own ideas about change. One can see how this could easily unleash talent and stimulate change. It could also create confusion and inconsistency. My bias is that the dynamic aspects of such a government probably produces more improvements than a more centralized one.

The book may have more detail than necessary for the average reader, but for a well organized description of an important part of BC history, it makes a significant contribution.

[Editor’ note: Regrettably, Norm Levi died at the end of December, 2015, and Dave Barrett is reported to be in a care home]

# Soviet Princeton: Slim Evans and the 1932–33 Miners’ Strike, by Jon Bartlett and Rika Ruebsaat, New Star Books, 2015

Book review by Theresa Wolfwood

“*This is the story of a heated confrontation that took place in Princeton during the depths of the Great Depression -- a struggle over coal mine owners’ attempt to roll back miners’ wages and features mounted police charging picket lines; searches of workers’ homes for subversive literature, physical assaults; the creation of a Citizens’ League to oppose the miners; union; a kidnapping; crosses burning in hills above the town...*”

This is a fascinating, little-known vignette of Canadian history, the story of workers resisting repression in a small community in BC. The authors are musicians (who organize the Princeton Traditional Music Festival in August) and cultural historians who researched for this book in the archives of the Princeton Museum. But before they delve into the local history they provide an excellent political and international context and an analysis of media

coverage for the labour strife in Princeton.

Slim Evans was an experienced labour organizer, a veteran of jail sentences, beatings and fierce labour battles when he was dispatched to Princeton by the Workers’ Unity League to organize miners who wanted their cut wages restored, That was September, 1932 and workers began to organize and form a union. In December that year the miners were out on strike; the mine owners refused to negotiate with

them. Workers were jailed, threatened and Evans was kidnapped by the local KKK.

It is a fascinating story of collusion and collaboration of the political and economic powers intent on breaking workers’ resistance. As the authors note in the conclusion, the memory of this chapter of Princeton’s history is fading and disappearing. This book will keep the story alive.

# The Danish Girl

Movie review by John Wilson

*The Danish Girl* (2015, 1 hr. 59 min., directed by Tom Hooper) is a mesmerizing, moving account of how transgender pioneer Lili Elbe (originally Einar Wegener) came to be one of the first persons known to have gender reassignment surgery.

Adapted from David Ebershoff’s 2000 fictionalized novel, it features Eddie Redmayne’s amazing performance as Einar. He discovers who he really is, and transitions into Lili. Alicia Vikander, as Einar/Lili’s wife, is brilliant in her almost equally demanding role, at times becoming the central focus.

The film is mainly situated in a lush, 1920’s middle class Copenhagen where Einar is a celebrated landscape artist. Wife Gerda is also an artist. She fights for recognition -- *until* she starts painting the emerging Lili as a femme fatale, which started with a whimsical, half-joking sitting by Einar for her as a female model.

But for him this is the start of his self-realization as Lili.

Lili endures horrific experiences consulting with “experts” in the biased and prejudiced medical system who are determined to “cure” her, or banish her to a psychiatric

facility. Then she meets Dr. Warnekros (Sebastian Koch) who proposes what he candidly described as experimental and risky gender reassignment surgery.

Of all the doctors, only he seems to have a sympathetic understanding of what she is going through. (Since Lili, who was raised in a context of relative class privilege, suffered such difficulty, can we imagine how truly impossible would be the situation of a transgender person born to a working class family?)

Gerda is steadfast in her love and support for Lili -- despite being very conflicted

and confused by a process she knows will lead to her losing her husband.

In short, this film is well worth seeing. It comes at a time when transgender issues are finally gaining prominence – thanks to decades of LGBTQ activism. Despite ongoing challenges of medical access, the cost of surgery, and persisting prejudice, in Canada and elsewhere real gains are being made. In revolutionary Cuba, the treatment is free.

We should note, though, that with all the attention that this film is deservedly getting, other pioneering films, such as *Transamerica*, are being overlooked.

# Site C: Too risky to rely on one river system for BC’s hydro needs

By Ben Parfitt

In the face of a prolonged drought, water levels at Lake Mead, the giant hydroelectric reservoir that straddles the Nevada and Arizona borders, are lower than at any point since the iconic Hoover Dam was built in the 1930s.

For residents in California, Nevada, Arizona and northern Mexico a crisis looms. What alternative drinking water sources are there for millions of people? How many farms may fail? What will replace the “reliable” hydroelectric power that the Hoover and other dams once produced?

You might not expect it, but even here in rainy BC we may soon face similar questions.

As BC Hydro continues preparations for Site C — a third major dam on the Peace River and the single most expensive megaproject in BC’s history — there are cautionary lessons for us in events south of the border.

The idea that we would put all our eggs in one renewable energy basket at a time when climate change is upon us is, to put it mildly, troubling.

Recently, in the journal *Nature Climate Change*, scientists warned that up to three quarters of the world’s hydroelectric plants could be vulnerable to reduced water supplies and therefore less power output.

That’s what droughts do.

In June, the Hoover Dam’s power generators were, in industry parlance, “derated.” There simply wasn’t the water to spin the dam’s turbines full out, so their rated output dropped by nearly one quarter. It could fall further still.

To suggest that couldn’t happen here is hubris.

Should we bet the farm not once but three times on one river system to supply us with the bulk of our projected electricity needs, when at least some of the power supply from those dams could be threatened by future climatic events?

Recently, BC’s Minister of Energy and Mines Bill Bennett said Site C “is the best way to acquire new electricity at the lowest price,” that construction delays will cost ratepayers, and that civil disobedience or not, the project must proceed.

These are curious claims, considering that all hydro customers are on the hook for construction costs, costs that could easily go well beyond the currently estimated and astronomical price tag, given overruns at other major hydroelectric projects around the world.

Not only that, but by BC Hydro’s own admission, we don’t currently need Site C’s power and won’t for decades. Only in the increasingly unlikely event that a liquefied natural gas industry emerges does the sce-

nario change.

Even more troubling than all of the above, Site C’s cheerleaders may be seriously overstating the economic rationale for the project.

In May, highly respected US energy economist Robert McCullough released a report commissioned by the Peace Valley Landowners Association that raised numerous questions about the economic case for Site C.

“Using industry standard assumptions, Site C is more than three times as costly as the least expensive option,” McCullough said. “Site C fares poorly when compared to cogeneration, wind, landfill and coal gasification.”

The Peace River region has great wind power and geothermal potential. Across North America in recent years, wind power projects backed up with firm power supplies have come in at an average of half the cost of the power that would be provided by Site C, McCullough said.

Another disquieting conclusion gleaned from McCullough’s work is that because power from a completed Site C dam wouldn’t be needed for some time, BC Hydro would likely have to sell significant power at a loss. Simply delaying dam construction by two years could save hydro ratepayers \$200 million.

Such analysis strongly suggests that at

the very least we ought to subject the Site C project to a proper independent review.

Bill Bennett and the BC government, however, refuse to do so. They have declined to refer it to the province’s independent watchdog, the BC Utilities Commission, as recommended by a federal-provincial panel that reviewed the Site C project. They also plan to exclude two transmission line extensions close to Site C from BCUC review, even though those projects will add hundreds of millions of dollars to the debt that all hydro users must repay.

In the face of clear evidence that hydroelectric dams are vulnerable to climate change and with all the economic risks that such vulnerabilities imply, why are we triple betting our renewable energy future on a third dam on the Peace River?

It’s time for a reputable, independent body to address the question; if not an inquiry by the BCUC in a quasi-judicial capacity, then BC’s Auditor General. The public deserves answers – well before dam construction begins.

Ben Parfitt is a resource policy analyst with the CCPA-BC.

- See more at: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/commentary/site-c-too-risky-rely-one-river-system-bc%E2%80%99s-hydro-needs-0#sthash.wBwltlQZ.dpuf>



# Calendar of coming events

**CENTRAL SAANICH RESIDENTS ARE** invited to attend regular neighbourhood gatherings, held every Friday night at 7 pm at Spelt’s Coffee Shop, 7586 East Saanich Road, in Saanichton. Share stories, books, talk politics and enjoy hot coffee. Nothing is taboo. No pretentiousness, no meeting agenda...just a chance to chat with neighbours and build community. Call 250-652-8228 for further information.

**THE VICTORIA LABOUR COUNCIL** representing affiliated unions in the Greater Victoria area, holds its regular monthly meetings at 7 pm on the 3rd Wednesday each month at the BCGEU Auditoriam, 2994 Douglas Street, Victoria. All delgates are welcome to come to meet their executive, president Mike Eso, treasurer, Stan Dzbik, and secretary Michael Maloney.

**WOMEN IN BLACK** invite you to join them in their monthly vigil to remember Hiroshina

and Nagasaki and call on all Canadians and people globally to work for peace and disarmament. All those who support our goals are welcome. For further informa-tion, contact bbcf@bbcf.ca.

**SAANICH NORTH AND THE ISLANDS** New Democrats will hold their Annual General Meeting on Saturday, March 19 from 1:00-4:00 pm (registration 12:30-1:00 pm) at St. Andrew’s Church Hall, 9691 Fourth Street, Sidney. Special Presentation Care of the Land Reflects Care of Community by special guest, Lana Popham, MLA for Saa-nich South and Opposition spokesperson for Agriculture and Food. Refreshments.

**5th ANNUAL EARTH DAY LOCAL FOOD** Dinner will be held on Sunday, April 24, at the beautiful Horticulture Centre of the Pa-cific, 505 Quayle Road (off Beaver Lake Road). Sponsored by the Esquimalt-Saan-

ich-Sooke Federal NDP, the dinner will fea-ture a local food buffet and dessert auction. Entry to the Gardens (included in tickert) from 5-6 pm; doors open and reception at 6 pm, buffet dinner at 7 pm. Featuring MPs Randall garrison and Ruth Ellen Brosseau. Tickets general \$100, unwaged/students \$50. For tickets and inforMation, call 778-676-4033 or email homes#hiigli.com. Pay-ment by credit card or cheque only.

**MLA ROB FLEMING INVITES YOU** to his Annual Spring Fundraiser on Wednesday, March 16, from 7-9 pm, at Phillips’ Brew-ery, 2010 Government Street. Join Rob and special guests, Malanie Mark and Jodie Wickens, BC’s newest NDP MLAs, for a fun-filled evening! Enjoy local craft bever-ages and delicious appetizers in Phillips’ tasting room. Tickets \$100 per person. For tickets and information call 250-889-6997 or email victoriaswanlakendp@gmail.com.

**NDP LEADER TOM MULCAIR** will join New Democrats from across Canada in Edmonton, Alberta, for the biennial Federal NDP convention from approximately 12 noon, Friday, April 8 to 12 noon, Sunday, April 10. A youth convention will take place Thursday, April 7. The New Democratic Party of Canada strives to makes every convention as accessible as possible. They hope Edmonton 2016 will be the most ac-cessible convention to date. Working with their Persons Living with DisAbilities Com-mittee, as well as the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities, they are looking forward to providing delegates with a vari-ety of services to assist those with acces-sibility needs.:

## CCPA report:

# Fast Facts: Fight food insecurity with income

By Molly McCracken

The rise in food costs disproportion-ately affects the poor as food makes up a larger portion of their spending. In-creased income, educational programs and northern food subsidies need to work hand in hand if the food security crisis in Manitoba is to be overcome. Canadians can expect an increase in food costs of 4.5 percent in 2016, putting a squeeze on those who struggle to get by on low incomes and increasing peoples’ reli-ance on already over-burdened food banks. Food bank use has been on a steady rise over the past decade across Canada. Man-itoba has the highest per capita use in the country; 4.93 percent of Manitobans make use of food banks compared to 2.83 per-cent for the Canadian average.

The largest percentage of food bank users is those on Employment and Income Assistance (EIA). The 2015 Canadian Hun-ger Count finds that 54.5 percent of Manito-bans who use food banks are on EIA, just over 30,000 people. There were 63,000 people in EIA in 2014, the last year data is available. Food banks are subsidizing al-most half of those on welfare.

Why is this the case? The income peo-ple on EIA receive to cover basic needs has not kept pace with actual costs. The EIA basic needs budget is intended for use on food, clothing, personal and household supplies. Currently, single people’s basic needs budget is \$117/month which covers 40 percent of the actual cost of buying food – estimated at \$295/month. Single parents

receive 61 percent of the estimated cost of food for this family type. This works out to \$4 per day per person and is not indexed to inflation so rising food costs shrink the meager buying power of the welfare bud-get.

Food is already expensive in northern and remote communities struggling with high and rising rates of chronic diseases, like diabetes. Diabetes costs the Manitoba health system half a billion dollars per year, so investment in preventing diabetes only makes good public policy sense. Ensuring that people have access to a healthy diet could lower incidence of diabetes dramati-cally.

The federal government subsidizes food to some northern remote First Nations, but not all. Recently the Manitoba govern-ment stepped in and is funding subsidies in remote communities with high food costs not eligible for the federal subsidy. The new federal government should make food se-curity in remote First Nations communities a major priority to make up for many years of under-funding. Partnerships amongst all levels of government are needed to reverse concerning negative trends.

Food Matters Manitoba and many other community organizations are dedicated to food security: ensuring citizens have ac-cess to healthy, affordable and culturally-appropriate food. Food insecurity is part of the complex problem of poverty, and re-quires a comprehensive response. As Food Matters Manitoba explains, “People won’t eat foods if they can’t afford them, find a store that sells them, or know what to do with them.”

Manitoba is home to a variety of innova-tive food security programs funded all or in part by the provincial government: school and maternal nutrition programs in low so-cio-economic neighbourhoods, Indigenous traditional food programs, and community, gardens, greenhouses and farms. But edu-cational programs can only go so far in the face of stagnant incomes and rising food prices. Researchers Joyce Slater and Mihi-ri Witharana found children’s food security programs are worthwhile but have limited impact because families with low incomes simply can’t afford healthy food.

In response to this, some are calling for a Basic Income (BI), or a guaranteed income for all. The View from Here 2015: Manitobans Call for a Renewed Poverty Reduction Plan agrees that BI is the goal, but such an approach would need strong financial support from the federal govern-ment. If Manitoba were to go it alone with-out the federal government on BI, tough decisions would need to be made. A future provincial government may choose to cut programs people rely on to pay for BI.

But the need for these programs will not disappear just because people have more income. Furthermore, the increased fund-ing for a BI would need to be substantial to improve the incomes of those on EIA, and without public education and community supports, more income will not necessar-ily lead to healthier eating. Rather than a simple reliance on BI, a comprehensive re-sponse is needed, which includes nutrition education, local food initiatives like commu-nity gardens, northern food subsidies and increased incomes.

Rising food costs make the stagnant EIA food budget of critical importance. Make Poverty History Manitoba’s provincial election campaign calls for doubling the ba-sic needs budget immediately for those on EIA. The province could choose to respond to this call like they did with Rent Assist.

After several years of lobbying from the community about the rising costs of rent and the low shelter allowance for those on assistance, the province created Rent Assist. Rent Assist is a rent subsidy set at 75 percent of median market rent, so that if rents go up, shelter benefits go up. Rent Assist is available to those on EIA and to the working poor.

A similar approach could be taken to address food insecurity: increase and in-dex the food budget to meet actual costs adjusted by household and region. Con-sideration should be given to the working poor and other food insecure groups like low-income seniors. Combined with Rent Assist, a food benefit would cover the ma-jority of household expenses for those who struggle with poverty and create a solid foundation for a BI.

Savings would be returned to the health care system from reduced rates of diabetes and other diet-related illnesses. Increased incomes would enable more local purchas-ing and economic development. Most im-portantly ensuring all Manitobans can eat and share good, healthy food with others is priceless.

Molly McCracken is the director of the Canadian Cen-tre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba

# Sustainable BC

Sustainable BC is a vision for our province dedicated to the principles of sustainability which secures for present and future generations the benefits of a healthy environment and a decent, just and sustainable society.

## 12 Principles of Sustainable BC

1. Social equity - Every British Co-lumbian has a right to clean air and water, healthful food, adequate shelter, quality education and health care, safe surround-ings, a sustainable livelihood and active participation in the economy.
2. Democracy and due process - All citizens have a right to access to full and accurate information concerning all elements of public policy, meaning- full op-portunities to participate in decisions that affect them and entitlement to fair treat-ment by the judicial system.
3. Protection for the “commons” - The “commons” must be held and man-aged in the public interest. The shared public trusts are water, air, fish and wildlife, our parks and protected areas, cultural and intellectual assets and amenities such as health care, education, public utilities and infrastructure.
4. Resilience - Diversity needs to be

fostered in communities and in economic, social and infrastructure systems in order to lessen vulnerability to risk, uncertainty and surprise, to maintain flexibility, to aid adaptation in the face of adversity and to facilitate future innovation and infrastruc-ture.

5. Ecosystem protection - The environment must be protected from pol-lution or other degradation of air, water or soil exceeding that which can be safely absorbed or renewed by nature.
6. Biodiversity - Protection of diversity of plant and animal species is essential if ecosystems are to thrive and maintain the resilience necessary for ad-aptation and survival.
7. Food security - Increased local and provincial food self-sufficiency is essential. We must protect the agricul-tural land base, promote environmentally sustainable farm practices and support – economic viability for food producers.
8. Resource conservation - The principles of “reduce, reuse, and recycle” must govern the use of all materials and energy. Renewable resource use should be less than the rate of replenishment, while non-renewable re-source use must be decreased in order to conserve and share equitably with future

generations.

9. Precautionary principle - Given the best available information, where there is no scientific consensus on risks that specific actions or policies might pose to human health or the environment, deci-sions must err on the side of caution. Lack of scientific certainty should not be used as a reason to delay action to prevent harm, where a threat to health or the envi-ronment exists.
10. Full cost economics - The true cost of environmental, social and econom-ic impacts must be fully reflected in the price of all goods and services in order to discourage pollution and resource waste, encourage innovation, encourage socially and environmentally responsible behaviour and true progress toward sustainability.
11. Adaptive management - In order to achieve sustainable objectives, the use of best available practices and technolo-gies needs to occur within a culture of continuous learning, adequate monitor-ing and a commitment to modify strategic directions.
12. Just transition - Mechanisms must be in place to manage the transition toward Sustainable BC so that everyone takes responsibility and no one bears an unfair share of the burden of change.

## Characteristics of Sustainable BC

Environmental stewardship through public, corporate and personal actions to restore and maintain ecosystem health, reduce human impact on our planet’s life support systems and preserve the diversity of plant and animal species.

A diversified economy that operates within the environmental carrying capac-ity, that serves the needs and aspirations of people and local communities and that contributes to genuine socio-economic progress for the province as a whole.

Equity in sharing the wealth of the Province fairly amongst all British Colum-bians through principles of justice and compassion and the recognition that what we leave to future generations is a sacred trust and the best measure of who we are.

Individual and community well-being that results from all of the above and that is built on mutual respect and co-opera-tion, economic, social and political democ-racy and shared enjoyment of natural, con-structed, creative and spiritual elements of



# Directory of locations, organizations, publications of interest

## MLA COMMUNITY OFFICES

**Cowichan Valley Community Office,** Bill Routley: MLA, 273 Trunk Road, Duncan, BC, or PO Box 599, Duncan, BC, V9L 3X9, phone 250-715-0127, toll free 1-877-715-0127, fax 250-715-0139, email bill.routley.mla@leg.bc.ca.

**Esquimalt-Royal Roads Community Office,** Maurine Karagianis, MLA: A5-100 Aldersmith Place, View Royal, BC, V9A 7M8, phone 250-479-8326, email maurine.karagianis.mla@leg.bc.ca or visit her website at www.maurinek-aragianis.ca.

**Juan de Fuca Community Office,** John Horgan, MLA, 122-2806 Jacklin Road, Victoria, BC V9B 5A4, phone 250-391-2801, fax 250-391-2804, email john.horgan.mla@leg.bc.ca.

**Saanich South Community Office,** Lana Popham, MLA: 4085 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC, v8 1K5, email lana.popham.mla@leg.bc.ca, or visit website at www.saanichsouth.ca.

**Saanich North and the Islands Community Office,** Gary Holman, MLA., 2393 Beacon Avenue, Sidney, BC , phone: 250 655-5711, toll-free: 1-855 955-5711, fax: 250 655-7398, email gary.holman.mla.leg.bc.ca.

**Victoria-Beacon Hill Community Office,** Carole James, MLA: 1084 Forst Street, Victoria,BC, V8V 3K4, phone 250-952-4211, fax 250-952-4586, email carole.james.mla@leg.bc.ca.

**Victoria-Swan Lake Community Office,** Rob Fleming, MLA: 1020 Hillside Avenue, Victoria, BC, V8T 2A2, email rob.fleming.mla@leg.bc.ca.

## MPs and COMMUNITY OFFICES

**Randall Garrison, MP,** House of Commons, Confederation Building, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6, email randall.garrison@parl.gc.ca.

**Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke Community Office,** Randall Garrison, MP, 2904 Tillicum Road (the corner of Gorge and Tillicum, Victoria, BC, V9A 4A5, open 10 am-4 pm, Monday-Thursday or by appointment. Phone 250-405-4550; fax 250-405-4568.

**Alistair MacGregor, MP,** House of Commons, Confederation Building, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6., email crowder1A@parl.gc.ca.

**Cowichan-Malahat-Langford Community Office,** Alistair MacGregor, MP, 101-128 Ingram Street., Duncan, BC, V9L 1P1, email

**Murray Rankin, MP,** House of Commons, Confederation Building, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6. email murray.rankin@parl.gc.ca, or visit his website at www.murrayrankin.ca/

**Victoria Community Office,** Murray Rankin, MP, 1057 Fort Street, Victoria, V8V 3K5, phone 250-363-3600, fax 250-363-8422, email him at murray.rankin@parl.gc.ca

## PROVINCIAL NDP CONSTITUENCY ASSOCIATIONS

**Cowichan Valley New Democrats:** Write PO Box 102, Duncan, BC, V9L 1P0, or contact president Deb Foster, at 250-510-0544 or by email at deb.foster21@gmail.com, or email cowichanvalley.NDP@shaw.ca.

**Esquimalt-Royal Roads New Democrats:** Write Box 231, 110-174 Wilson Street, Victoria, BC, V9A 7N7 or email esquimaltroyalroads@gmail.com.

**Juan de Fuca New Democrats:** Phone president Sharon Wilkinsn at 250-478-5907 or email her at sawilkinson@shaw.ca.

**Oak Bay-Gordon Head New Democrats:** Write PO Box 5539, LCD 9, Victoria, BC, V8R 6S4 or contact president Keith Todd at 250-598-8039 or by email at keith.todd@shaw.bc.ca.

**Saanich North and the Islands New Democrats:** Email president Allan Collier at silcol@telus.net.

**Saanich South New Democrats:** Write PO Box 30041, Saanich Centre Postal Outlet, Victoria, BC, V8X 5E1, phone 250-479-1100, or email emrogers@uvic.ca

**Victoria-Beacon Hill New Democrats:** Write PO Box 8523, Victoria, BC, V8W 3S1 attention President Marilyn Callahan.

**Victoria-Swan Lake New Democrats:** Contact President Trish Richards at victoriaswanlakendp@gmail.com or write PO Box 282, 1681 Hillside Avenue, Victoria, BC, V8T 2C1.

## FEDERAL NDP RIDING ASSOCIATIONS

**Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke New Democrats:** Contact President Grant McLachlan at 778-676-4033; email him at esquimaltsaanichsookendp@gmail.com, or write to PO Box 622, 105-1497 Admirals Road, Victoria, BC, V9A 2P8.

**Cowichan -Malahat-Langford New Democrats (formerly Nanaimo-Cowichan):** Contact president Anne Balding at 250-710-0351 or email her at a.balding@hotmail.com.

**Saanich-Gulf Islands New Democrats:** Contact co-president Nox Gyes Edith Loring-Kuhanga, at 4169 Quadra Street, Victoria, BC V8X 1L3, or by phone at 250-881-1212, or by email at loringkuhanga@gmail.com, or by email to ndpsaanichgulfislands@gmail.com or Irene Wright (Gulf Islands) by phone/fax at 250-537-5347, or email to aiwright@telus.net.. See also Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/SaanichGulfIslands or website: http://alturl.com/ofyb8.

**Victoria New Democrats:** Contact president James Coccola, by phone at 250-514-5518, or by email to president@victoriandp.ca, or visit their website at www.victoriandp.ca.

## PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL NDP OFFICES

**BC New Democrats:** 5367 Kingsway, Burnaby, BC, V5H 2G1, phone 604-430-8600, fax 604-432-9517, toll free 1-888-868-3637.

**Canada's New Democrats:** 300-279 Laurie West, Ottawa, ON, K1P 5J9, phone 613-236-3613, toll free, 1-866-525-2555, fax 613-230-9950, TTY: 1-866-776-7742.

## OTHER GROUPS YOU MAY WANT TO REACH

**Amnesty International--Canadian Section:** www.amnesty.org

**BC Council of Senior Citizens Organizations:** phone 604-438-3221.

**BC Latin American Congress:** 4184 Brant Street, Vancouver, BC, V5N 5B4, phone 604-879-3246, fax 604-872-6776, email bclac@vcn.bc.ca.

**Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives:** 410-75 Albert Street, Ottawa ON, K1P 5E7, phone 613-563-1341, fax 613-233-1458, email ccpa@policyalternatives.ca, website www.policyalternatives.ca.

**Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives--BC Office,** 1400-207 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC, V6B 1H7, phone 604-801-5121, fax 604-801-5122, website: ww.policcyalternatives.ca.

**Canadian Health Coalition:** phone 613-233-1018.

**Canadian Labour Congress (Pacific Region):** 201-5118 Joyce Street, Vancouver, BC, V5R 4H1; Regional Representative Iris Taylor, phone 604-430-6766, ext 267, fax 604-430-6762.

**Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East,** Victoria Chapter: Victoria, BC, phone 778-679-2943 or email frances.everett@cjpme.org. Enquiries, new members, guests welcome. CJPME's website can be found at www.cjpme.org.

**Council of Canadians, Victoria Chapter:** 203-391 Tyee Road, Victoria, BC V9A 0A9. Info@victoriacouncilofcanadians.ca and www.victoriacouncilofcanadians.ca.

**Canadian Wildlife Federation:** 350 Michael Cowpland Drive, Kanata, ON, K2M 2W1, phone 1-800-563-9453, or visit www.cwf-fcf.org.

**Cool Aid Society:** www.CoolAid.org; phone 250-383-1977: Building homes, lives and community. Cool Aid creates opportunities for people who are homeless or living in poverty. We make a difference through housing, health care, support and emergency shelters. Founded in 1968, Cool Aid helps over 9,000 people in the Capital Region every year, at 14 locations in Langford, Victoria and Saanich. The Society's major new campaign is "Help End Homelessness", to build an additional 360 apartments for people in the community who have no home.

**Ecojustice:** 214-131 Water Street, Vancouver, BC, V6B 4M3, phone 1-800-926-7444.

**Human Rights Internet:** www.hri.ca.

**Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria:** phone 250-388-4728, fax 250-386-4395.

**Mining Justice Action Committee (MJAC):** contact Heather Tufts at htufts@shaw.ca or

Sharlene Patterson at daveandshar@shaw.ca.

**NAPO (National Anti-Poverty Organization) News:** advocates for the poor in communities, courts and political arenas, www.napo-onap.ca.

**NDP Socialist Caucus:** www.ndpsocialists.ca. "Our aim and ongoing struggle as New Democrats must be to establish a Socialist Canada."

**Parliamentary website** lists all federal cabinet ministers, parliamentary scretaries and opposition spokeseprrsons. Visit www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/people/key/critic.asp?language=E

**Seniors' Advocacy Services** (Seniors Entitlement Service), sponsored by the Greater Victoria Seniors (OAPO) organization and located at the Blanshard Community Centre, 901 Kings Rd, (Kings and Dowler Streets), close to the #4 and #6 buses on Quadra St. Service is free to seniors 55+ in Greater Victoria. Normally open on Mondays & Thursdays from 9-3 pm and Wednesdays from 9-12 noon. We will be closed for summer break from July 15 to August 19. For more information please phone 250-388-7696.

**Seniors Serving Seniors:** 109-1022 Pandora Avenue, Victoria, BC, V8V 3P5, phone 250-382-4331.

**South Island Health Coalition,** an affiliate of the BC Health Coalition. If you are concerned about access affordability and quality of health care in our community, get involved by calling co-chairs Dale Perkins at 250-592-5487 or Wendy Strong at 250-592-1222.

**Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS):** 302-895 Fort Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 1H7, phone 250-361-3521; fax 250-361-3541.

**Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society:** Third floor, 535 Yates Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 2Z6 phone 250-361-9433, fax 250-361-1914 or see website www.virca.bc.ca.

**Victoria Labour Council:** 219-2750 Quadra street, Victoria, BC, V8T 4E8, phone 250-384-8331, fax 250-384-8381, email vlcbc@telsu.net.; Mike Eso, president, Stan Dzibik, treasurer, Kim Manotn, secretary Michael Maloney...

**World Wildlife Federation:** 410-245 Eglington Avenue East, Toronto, ON, M4P 3J1, phone 1-800-26-PANDA, fax 416-489-8055, website www.wwf.ca.

**United Nations Association of Canada (UNAC)--Victoria Branch:** 202-3293 Douglas Street, Victoria, BC, V8Z 3K9, phone 250-475-2868, fax 250-475-5898, email unavic@coast-net.com or website www.unac.org.

## ALTERNATIVE PUBLICATIONS

**Canadian Dimension Magazine:** An independent forum for Left-wing political thought and discussion — including just about the entire range of what passes for the Left in Canada. A few years ago we adopted the banner "a magazine for people who want to change the world". That's still a good summary of who we are. Subscriptions from \$29.99. See http://canadiandimension.com for more information.Or contact them by mail at Canadian Dimension, 2E-91 Albert Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 1G5, or by phone at 204-957-1519 or oll-ree: 1-800-737-7051.

**CCPA Monitor:** a monthly journal sent free to all members, and published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Canada's leading organization for articulating progressive, positive social policy reform. Ever constructive and independent. Contact them at CCPA National Office, Suite 500, 251 Bank Street, Ottawa ON, K2P 1X3; tel: 613-563-1341; fax: 613-233-1458; email: ccpa@policyalternatives.ca.

**Our Times:** Canada's independent labour magazine and read by most labour organizations and other supporters of working people. Check its website at www.ourtimes.ca.

**The Dominion:** a monthly paper published by an incipient network of independent journalists in Canada. It aims to provide accurate, critical coverage that is accountable to its readers and the subjects it tackles. Taking its name from Canada's official status as both a colony and a colonial force, the Dominion examines politics, culture and daily life with a view to understanding the exercise of power. It can be purchased at Bolen Books, Victoria, Camas Books & Infoshop, Victoria, Dark Horse Books, Victoria, and Munro's Bookstore Ltd, Victoria.Or suscribe and Receive an email notice when a new issue is online: Visit http://www.dominionpaper.ca/ to view the paper and to subscribe.

**Turn Left:** Official magazine of the NDP socialist caucus, is published for each federal and Ontario provincial convention. It is written and edited and by SC supporters but also includes articles by and interviews with progressive activists from

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outside the NDP as well. Download the paper at www.ndpsocialists.ca/issues.html

## ALTERNATIVE WEBSITES

**www.alternet.org--**A US website featuring alternative articles on US and world politics, an online magazine and information source.

**www.avaaz.org/en/global--**By confronting such threats as global warming together, Avaaz hopes to build a more just, tolelrant and vibrant world.

**www.counterpunch.org--**An American website with a left-wing viewpoint.

**http://dominionpaper.ca--**A Canadian ezine covering national and international stories that mainstream sources maynot cover.

**www.globalproblematique.net--**is an invitation to participate in a carefully conceived sustainability-oriented process. The story is organized as a linear flow. First it explains why and how we address the World Problematique in this fashion. Then, it branches out into four distinct, interactive threads. For more information go to the website.

**www.lowerislandnews.com** is a democratic socialist tabloid newspaper published in Victoria, BC, four or five times a year.

**http://newsdaily.ca--CanadaNewsdaily.ca** is a good (and bad) news service with a refreshingly non-corporate view of the news, from local to global stories, with features, opinion, analysis--all for free, including classified ads. Newsdaily covers Canadian and world news, plus a focused look at British Columbia, Victoria, and the Islands.

**www.ndpsocialists.ca/issues.html**

**mai-not@globalproblematique.net--**Originally set up to discuss the implications the Multilateral Agreement on on Investments, this website and related email list now discuss world-wide developments of concern to left wing readers.

**http://pacificfreepress.com**

**www.pejnews.com--**Peace, Earth & Justice News, a free email and web service, provides news, opinion and analysis of peace, environment (earth) and justice issues. Stay informed with postings often days, weeks and months ahead of the mainstream media, and often never covered in the mass market. PEJ News is produced entirely by volunteers, and is a project of the non-profit Prometheus Institute based in Victoria, Canada.

**www.policyalternatives.ca--**The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' webpage offers research reports, books amd opinion pieces on issues of social and economic justice.

**www.rabble.ca--**A cheeky site offering original stories, feature articles and columns from some of the progressive voices in Canada.

**http://socialcoast.org**

**http://socialenvironmentalliance.word-press.com**

**www.straightgoods.ca--**A watchdog working for Canadian consumers and citizens.

**www.thetyee.ca--**BC news and views from a non-corporate perspective.

**www.truthout.org--**US website with Real news.

**www.victoriacarshare.ca--**If you don't want to own a car, but still need to drive one sometimes, then this website may be for you.

**www.vivelecanada.ca--**The mission of Vive le Canada is to protect and improve Canadian sovereignties and democracy through education, dialogue, and advocacy, especially using existing and emerging communications tools. We believe that the direction of this country should be set by its citizens, rather than by corporations or corporate trade bodies/trade agreements, the United States, or a small number of Canadian corporate elites.

**www.wsws.org--**The World Socialist Web Site is the Internet centre of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). It provides analysis of major world events, comments on political, cultural, historical and philosophical issues, and valuable documents and studies from the heritage of the socialist movement.