

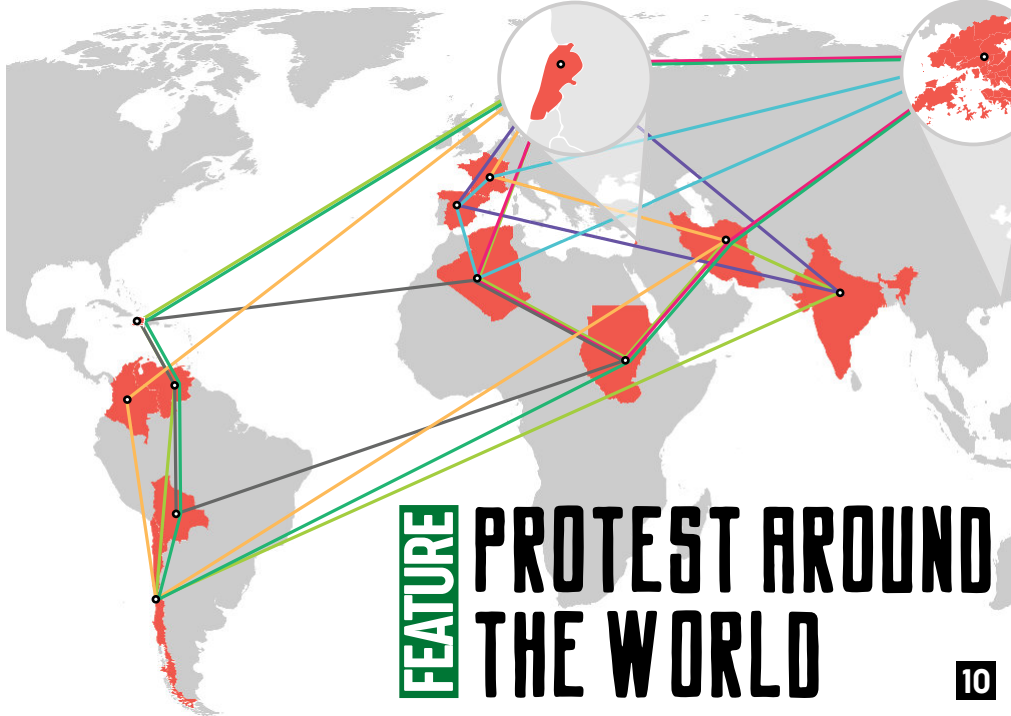


Andy Crosby

Two hundred people took to the streets of Ottawa's downtown on Jan. 10 in a display of solidarity with the Wet'suwet'en Nation who are protecting their traditional territories from pipeline expansion. The demonstration was organized in response to a call-out from the Wet'suwet'en for a week of international solidarity actions after the B.C. Supreme Court granted an injunction to Coastal GasLink Pipeline Ltd. (a B.C. subsidiary of TC Energy Corporation, formerly TransCanada) with an enforcement provision for

the RCMP to forcibly remove the Wet'suwet'en from their territories. The Ottawa march commenced on Parliament Hill, with stops at the World Exchange Plaza and Royal Bank, before it arrived at the Extinction Rebellion encampment across the street from the Prime Minister's Office on Elgin Street, where traffic on Wellington Street was blocked. Amber Dyck, a graduate student studying biology at the University of Ottawa, helped organize the march with Climate Justice Ottawa. "I came to the work of climate justice a few years ago,

from a previously environment-first perspective, when I started learning about intersectionality of colonial oppressions and earth-life-spirit destruction," Dyck told *The Leveller*. "The Wet'suwet'en Nation never gave up their land, title, sovereignty, or laws and they are expressing them now by protecting their land, water, culture and life for future generations, and refusing to let a pipeline through." Hannah Morikawa, a University of Ottawa student and co-founder of the Indigenous Ally Network expressed the importance of settler solidarity work with Indigenous land defenders. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 3**



## ODSP RECIPIENTS READY TO FIGHT

### Social assistance cuts loom as provincial budget approaches

Kieran Delamont

ACORN members across the province are gathering on the second Thursday of every month to protest and demand the government increase social assistance rates and abandon plans to adopt stricter federal definitions of disability. Last year the Ontario government announced, but eventually had to walk back from, a proposal to cut more than \$1 billion worth of benefits to Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program. Per the government's report, this would have been achieved by "simplifying the rate structure, reducing administration, cutting unnecessary rules, and providing greater opportunities to achieve better employment

outcomes for social assistance recipients, resulting in estimated annual savings of over \$1 billion at maturity." The government was forced to walk back their proposed changes in the fall, after documents leaked to *The Toronto Star* showed civil servants warning the government that people would probably start dying if all these changes were pushed through. More alarming might be the anxiety of those working on the frontlines of poverty, who warn (without a hint of hyperbole in their voices) that going through with changes as substantive as last year's proposal would lead to an uptick in suicides, drug overdoses, and general hopelessness. There's a general sense of

anxiety among those who depend on the system that the Ford government will try to introduce these, or similar, cuts to ODSP again in the upcoming budget. "Social assistance is already at poverty levels, and the bureaucracy creates a disincentive for people to work — who are able to work — keeping us in poverty," said ACORN's Blaine Cameron, an ODSP recipient. As it stands now, the system is woefully and chronically underfunded, leaving many recipients unable to cover their bills. A single person is given a basic payment of \$497 for shelter, but because that can't really rent anyone anything in Ottawa (or anywhere, really), many people have to dip into the money they get for what the

bureaucracy calls "basic needs" — another mostly ungenerous payout of between six and thirteen hundred dollars). For most, that means dipping into the food budget, or the car payments, or the bus pass, cell phone, internet and so on, just to make rent. Sometimes (actually a lot of times) rent takes up basically all that money, too. Meanwhile, if someone tries to work a little bit to cover the costs, they're free to keep the first \$200, and everything after that is taxed at 50 per cent — nearly four times the provincial tax rate on Ontario's highest earners. The government will then give \$100 of that back as a reward for working that month (a thank you to someone who just forked over around half their income?). The proposed changes would have seen recipients able to keep up to \$6,000 annually, but anything further would be taxed at 75 per cent. So, to summarize, Ontario will tax impoverished people with disabilities at rates it wouldn't dream of for the obscenely wealthy.

"Cutting ODSP and pensioners, the poorest people in our society, it's almost like population control, that agenda," says Kelly Florence, a harm reduction worker here in Ottawa. "ODSP cuts when [Ford] is making so much money a year, living lavish while people, who are out there trying to help other people, can't get by." So you can understand why

those who rely on this system to not die get very, very worried about the giant austerity hammer hanging over it. It's true that the planned cuts, first proposed in June and later cancelled in October, are officially off the table (for now). Yet a scathing auditor general's report released in December — which highlighted ballooning costs, 50 per cent increase in the number of recipients and poor oversight within Ontario's disability support programs — has led to a concern among recipients that the Ford government now has all the evidence it needs to justify the cuts this time. The protests come as the government is holding consultations on how to reform its anti-poverty strategy, as well as pre-budget consultations ahead of the budget in March. There is a sense of anxiety among recipients that social assistance programs are once again in the government's crosshairs and could be subject to deep cuts. After all, in November 2018, then-social services minister Lisa MacLeod announced the Conservative's desire to see ODSP definitions brought in line with federal pension definitions. These definitions set a higher threshold for receiving disability than the ones currently used by ODSP. This could make it more difficult for people with episodic disabilities and mental illnesses to get financial support.



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# The *Font Purges* of 2019

- A FEVER DREAM -

At our last Production Weekend, Leveller editors denounced each other for preferring Comic Sans to Garamond and vice-versa.

It turns out that there is no left and right wing in the editorial board of the Leveller – there is only serif and sans serif.

Next time we figure we should do a mock radical trial. Can you imagine? "You stand accused of a heinous betrayal of the revolution. Our finest spies have gathered authoritative rumours that you ... ACTUALLY LIKE COMIC SANS"

## FONT WARS A PARABLE IN DIALECTIC

"No! That's not true! My finger slipped when I was trying to change the default font to Avenir Next Demi Bold!"

"Avenir ... Next ... Demi Bold?! Surely you mean Avenir Medium Oblique!"

"No! Avenir Medium Oblique? The most reactionary of all the Avenirs?"

"Reactionary? What nonsense!"

"But it's true! Medium Oblique is so ... obliquely middle-of-the road, so subtly middle-class, so ... *liberal*. Why it's right in the font's name."

"Well, make up your mind, is it reactionary or is it liberal? Your analysis lacks political rigour!"

"It's both! Avenir Medium Oblique is ... the ultimate bourgeois font!"

[Collective gasps]

"Why I bet if we opened your laptop, we would find that you had even reduced its size from 12 to 11 points! You are using a

smaller version of this font!"

"But ... I ..."

"You, my dead comrade – well, you're no comrade at all. YOU are a PETIT BOURGEOIS!"

"..."

"I rest my case. Guards, take him away – to the guillotine!"

## RAPTUROUS ACCLAIM THE REVOLUTIONARY AFTERMATH

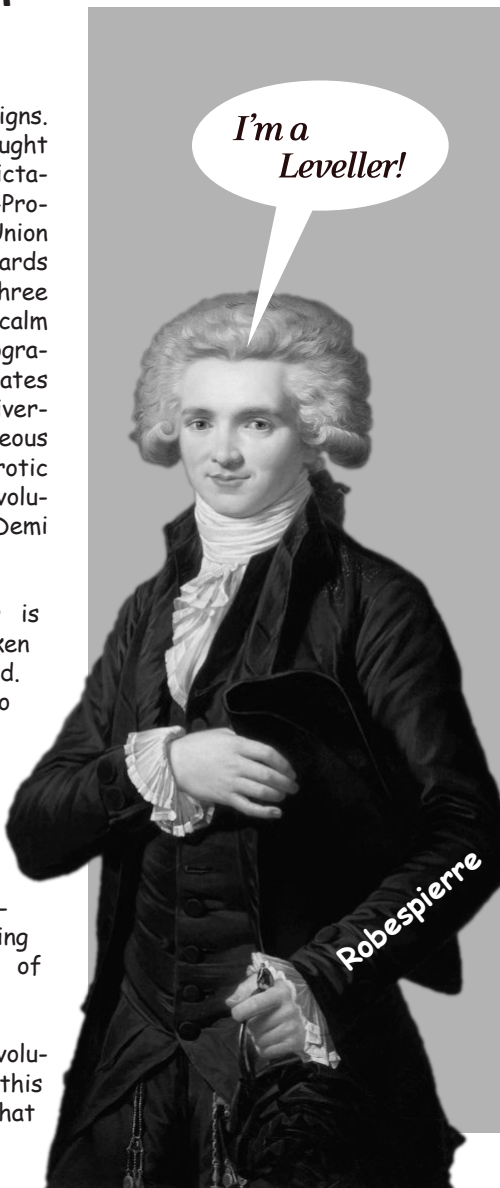
A fervent pandemonium reigns. Even after a full contingent is brought in of the People's Democratic Dictatorship Post-Revolutionary Ultra-Proletariat Advance Faction Union Peasant's Protection Unit Guards (PDDPRUPAFUPPUG for short) three hours later to restore order and calm the delegates, the court stenographer cannot keep up as delegates literally fall over each other delivering paeons, tributes, extemporaneous manifestos, and allegorical erotic poems celebrating that most revolutionary of all fonts, Avenir Next Demi Bold.

Eventually the stenographer is denounced for not having taken notes in Avenir Next Demi Bold. The stenographer is forced to admit to not even knowing how to draw the letters of Avenir Next Demi Bold by hand! It is believed that they were spontaneously torn to pieces on the spot. (For this righteous act, the delegates presumably piously pardoned themselves before voting themselves each a chestful of medals.)

Sadly, all records of the revolutionary process are lost from this point on, but we must assume that

they are still pursuing the cause of the fontal ultra-revolution with the highest and most puritanical rigour and zeal. (By the time this reaches you, dear reader, they have probably encoded their DNA in Avenir Next Demi Bold through sheer force of revolutionary will.)

**Note:** *The Leveller* (mostly) follows *Canadian Press Stylebook*, which advises that "The newsroom can be a very stressful place" and "Avoid... an excessive intake of caffeine and alcohol."



## GET INVOLVED!

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Whether you're looking to add your accent to our voice of dissent or if you're interested in learning what it takes to get a grassroots media project up off the ground, contact [editors.the.leveller@gmail.com](mailto:editors.the.leveller@gmail.com) to find out how you can get involved.

The Leveller is experimenting with paying our contributors, recognizing that your time is valuable and without you, the Leveller would cease to print.

- \$100 - Investigative pieces
- \$50 - Feature spread
- \$25 - Most others – campus, news, magazine, culture, comics
- \$15 - Columns
- \$10 - Comment/Opinion

To facilitate paying our contributors, the Leveller has created an Investigative Journalism Fund, so that we can sustain this payment model as well as fund larger investigative research projects, or perhaps even add a journalist to the payroll someday.

Contact [operations.the.leveller@gmail.com](mailto:operations.the.leveller@gmail.com) to contribute any amount.

## Lev·el·ler noun

1 Historical: During the English Civil War (c. 1649), one who favoured the abolition of all rank and privilege. Originally an insult, but later embraced by radical anti-Royalists.

2 One who tells the truth, as in "I'm going to level with you."

3 An instrument that knocks down things that are standing up or digs up things that are buried or hidden.

*The Leveller* is a publication covering news, current events, and culture at Carleton University, the University of Ottawa, the Ottawa/Gatineau region and, to a lesser extent, the wider world. It is intended to provide readers with a lively portrait of their campuses and communities and of the events that give them meaning. It is also intended to be a forum for provocative editorializing and lively debate on issues of concern to students, staff, and faculty as well as Ottawa residents.

*The Leveller* leans left, meaning it challenges power and privilege and sides with people over private property. It is also democratic, meaning that it favours open discussion over silencing and secrecy. Within these very general boundaries, the *Leveller* is primarily interested in being interesting, in saying something worth saying and worth reading about.

*The Leveller* needs you. It needs you to read it, talk about it, discuss it with your friends, agree with it, disagree with it, write a letter, write a story (or send in a story idea), join in the producing of it, or just denounce it. It needs you—or someone like you—to edit it, to guide it towards maturity, to give it financial security and someplace warm and safe to live. Ultimately it needs you to become a more truly democratic and representative paper.

*The Leveller* is an ambitious little rag. It wants to be simultaneously irreverent and important, to demand responsibility from others while it shakes it off itself, to be a fun-house mirror we can laugh at ourselves in and a map we can use to find ourselves and our city in. It wants to be your coolest, most in-the-know friend and your social conscience at the same time. It continues to have its work cut out for it.

*The Leveller* is published every month during the school year. It is free.

*The Leveller* and its editors have no phone or office, but can be contacted with letters of love or hate at: [editors.the.leveller@gmail.com](mailto:editors.the.leveller@gmail.com)

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# ALL EYES ON WET'SUWET'EN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"As a non-Indigenous person, I feel it's important to not only be an online presence sharing posts about advocacy, but also a physical presence to show solidarity," Morikawa told *The Leveller*.

Over 40 separate rallies were organized in response to the Wet'suwet'en call-out, including a rolling blockade of Highway 401 on Jan. 10. Two separate convoys of vehicles — one emanating from Akwasasne with support from Kahnawake, and the other near London with members from the Chippewas of the Thames and the Oneida of the Thames First Nations — slowed morning rush hour traffic in eastern and southwestern Ontario.

At presstime, some local activists are quietly preparing for action if the RCMP raids Wet'suwet'en territory again, *The Leveller* learned, after the RCMP set up an exclusion zone on Jan. 13. In the meantime, Indigenous Solidarity Ottawa have started an online campaign to put pressure on the Canadian government to respect Wet'suwet'en sovereignty.

## Injunctive Relief: A Colonial Remedy

Fears have heightened surrounding the possibility of an RCMP raid after the B.C. Supreme Court granted an injunction on Dec. 31. Injunctive relief was sought by Coastal GasLink to remove the Wet'suwet'en and their supporters, who have been impeding access to work crews at multiple blockade camps in their traditional territories on and around the Morice West Forest Service Road in central B.C.

Justice Church wrote in her decision that refusing to grant the injunction would cause the plaintiff "serious and irreparable harm" in its ambitions to construct the \$6.6 billion, 670-kilometre pipeline to carry fracked natural gas from Dawson Creek to Kitimat on the coast.

In response, the hereditary chiefs issued a press release charging that the decision criminalized Wet'suwet'en law.

"Coastal GasLink (CGL) has never obtained consent from the Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs to enter or work on our territories," it read.

"Ultimately, we are our own government, and we decide who comes on our territory," said hereditary chief Dini'ze Na'moks (John Ridsdale) in the press release. "We are the hereditary chiefs. British Columbia and Canada only have assumed and presumed authority on our lands."

The court's ruling that the Wet'suwet'en blockades have caused "serious and irreparable harm" to a pipeline company is a stark reminder of whose interests are protected and served by the Canadian justice system. This ruling demonstrates that the court is a colonial mechanism that serves to further the aims of resource extractive industries, criminalize Indigenous peoples who are living on and defending their land, and grant license to the RCMP to use lethal violence (if necessary) to remove Indigenous peoples from their unceded and unsundered territories.

In the ruling, the judge repeatedly refers to this ongoing strug-

gle in terms of dollars and cents, that Indigenous peoples stand to economically benefit from the project, and that those preventing construction have perpetrated a loss of \$5 million, with tens of millions more expected in the event of further delays. For the Wet'suwet'en, a price cannot be placed on their land. The intrusion of industry, the loss of access to portions of the land, and the risk of a spill far outweigh any monetary value the justice system and industry present.

"Since obtaining the initial interim injunction order, CGL has bulldozed through our territories and destroyed our archaeological sites, while private security firms and RCMP have interfered with the constitutionally protected rights of

Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). The committee issued a report in December 2019 calling for the immediate suspension of work on the Coastal GasLink pipeline, the Trans Mountain pipeline and the Site C dam until free, prior and informed consent is obtained from all affected Indigenous peoples.

The committee noted being "disturbed by forced removal, disproportionate use of force, harassment and intimidation by law enforcement officials against Indigenous peoples who peacefully oppose large-scale development projects on their traditional territories" and "alarmed by escalating threat of violence against Indigenous peoples."



Photo: Canute Planthara

*The court's ruling that the Wet'suwet'en blockades have caused "serious and irreparable harm" to a pipeline company is a stark reminder of whose interests are protected and served by the Canadian justice system.*



Photo: Canute Planthara

Wet'suwet'en people to access our lands for hunting, trapping, and ceremony," the press release continued.

On the one year anniversary of an RCMP raid on the Gidimt'en checkpoint, which saw 14 land defenders arrested, the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs issued a media advisory announcing the successful peaceful eviction of Coastal GasLink work crews from their territory.

"There is no access to Wet'suwet'en territory without our consent," according to the advisory. "We are the title holders, and the Province must address the issue of our title if they want to gain access to our lands."

Their list of demands included the suspension of all pipeline construction and the withdrawal of the police and security forces from the territory.

## Canada Condemned at the UN

The demands were in line with and cited those produced by the UN Committee on the

Canadian law."

Despite these interpretations, the committee is responsible for holding signatories such as Canada accountable to international human rights law, in this case to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination.

## "Lethal Overwatch": Targeting the "Radicalized"

Concerns about police using lethal force stem from documents *The Guardian* obtained containing notes from an RCMP strategy session before the January 2019 Gidimt'en checkpoint raid.

The RCMP anticipated making arrests deemed necessary for "sterilizing [the] site," according to *The Guardian*. Further, an RCMP commander argued that "lethal overwatch is req'd" and instructed officers to "use as much violence toward the gate as you want."

According to the RCMP, "Lethal overwatch" is a term given to a second person who is providing back-up to the primary person. In situations where the threat level is high and lethal force may have to be used, this second person is prepared to use lethal force because the first person is not in a position to exercise lethal force."

Further RCMP documents paint a picture of how the RCMP interprets and frames those at the blockade site, as criminals and extremists as opposed to sovereign land defenders and their supporters. As reported in *The Globe and Mail*, those whom the RCMP deemed could be shot during the raid were "radicalized," according to court documents surrounding the January 2019 raid.

"I am aware that critical infrastructure can be targeted by persons with radicalized ideology," wrote Sergeant John Uzelac in an affidavit signed one day after the raid. These documents were revealed during court proceedings against two blockade arrestees facing criminal charges in a Houston, B.C. court.

These documents further reveal the involvement of the RCMP Integrated National Security Enforcement Team (INSET), the Emergency Response Team (ERT), and tactical troops as part of a multi-pronged raid strategy that included a five-step process for arrests.

The designation of "critical infrastructure" is a strategy increasingly used to deploy substantial national security policing resources against Indigenous and environmental activists who oppose energy projects. In this case, the "critical infrastructure" referenced by Uzelac is non-existent. There is no pipeline, only a proposal and permits. What is critical here, however, is the issue of jurisdiction and consent. The Wet'suwet'en have never surrendered their land to British Columbia nor Canada.

"Wet'suwet'en people have been the rightful title holders, stewards, and protectors of their traditional territories for thousands of years," said Sophia Sidarous, an Indigenous activist and co-organizer of the Ottawa solidarity mobilization. "Now, the Canadian and B.C. governments are disrespecting Anuk'nu'at'en (Wet'suwet'en law) to push through another extractive project that threatens their people, culture, and land."

# ODSP CUTS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

More specifically, federal definitions of disability within the Canada Pension Plan limit eligibility those who both can't work now, and will likely never be able to. (In 2018, MacLeod stated that there would be grandfathering clauses, meaning the changes would primarily affect those who are not yet receiving ODSP.)

No timeline was ever laid out for the changes being proposed to limit ODSP eligibility, and it was not clear whether those changes were also cancelled when the Ford government walked back the cuts. Both the City of Ottawa and the City of Toronto passed resolutions last month urging the government not to follow through with these changes. In the absence of clarity, recipients are operating as if the definitions are still set to change.

The provincial government is still hedging. "We are listening and exploring the best ways to bring about positive outcomes for Ontarians in need, so we are taking the time to get this right," social services minister Todd Smith wrote in a November 2019 letter to the coalition Defend Disability, who were calling on the government to maintain existing eligibility. "Details are still to be determined and we will provide more information as decisions are made."

The government has justified their austerity with platitudes about focusing on "ability, not disability" and defining poverty largely as merely a lack of employment opportunities. Officially, the government has not given any concrete indication of what it plans to do with social assistance, saying only that they have received and are considering the auditor general's report.

If the government still believes this interpretation of poverty and disability and how best to provide support (and there's no reason to believe this has changed), the upcoming budget and a highly critical auditor general's report have given them an opportunity, and plenty of ammunition, to enact drastic social assistance reform.

"They talked about changing the definition of disability, but they haven't done anything yet," says Ottawa Centre MPP Joel Harden, the NDP's critic for accessibility and persons with disabilities. "But here's the thing, when these guys talk about everything it sends a chill through the entire province. They talked about interfering in Toronto's election,

they did it. They talked about buck a beer and changing alcohol laws, they do it."

"People have reason to believe that these guys are real ideologues, and they will do these things," Harden concluded.

For those who depend on that system to survive, it's a scary prospect. That the government walked many of them up to the brink last year, only to pull back, was bad enough. Many of them feel they're being walked back that way now, totally in the dark.

Right now, it's a bit of a guessing game for ODSP recipients. This year's budget lines up with a scheduled review of anti-poverty programs (the government undertakes these every five years). This is a pretty good indicator that they are intending to introduce some kinds of change to social assistance. What that something is, however, is still up in the air.

Advocates are calling on the government to maintain the current definition of disability, at very least, in order to avoid erecting more barriers to accessing ODSP. They'd also like to see rates rise. Curiously, they look to Alberta for inspiration — social assistance rates were raised there under Premier Rachel Notley. A single person there is eligible for nearly \$1,700 every month.

"What we should be putting on the table is a universal basic income that eliminates poverty in this country," says Harden. "We're rich enough. We have more than enough money. We don't have a wealth problem in Ontario, we have a wealth distribution problem."

Other changes, too, have chipped away at people on the margins. The government reversed a planned minimum wage hike and replaced it with a tax credit, which on balance resulted in less money. "That [hike] would've cost the government nothing," Harden says. "Nothing!"

Politically, Harden is urging people to get involved in pre-budget consultations the government is conducting. The NDP are bracing for cuts in the upcoming budget in March, particularly around changing definitions. The hope, for the opposition at least, is to see more sustained pressure and outcry from the public — something that Harden points out has worked in the past with this government.

"We've got two by-elections going on in this city, one in Vanier and one in Orleans," says Harden, going into NDP campaign mode. "Don't vote for these people!"



Photo: Kieran Delamont





Photos: Tony Dib

# SQUEEZING PROFITS

## Timbercreek tenants resist skyrocketing rent increases

Andy Crosby

Residents of the apartment towers at 2880 and 2900 Carling Avenue rallied in frigid temperatures and blustery winds on Jan. 18 to protest deteriorating conditions and unprecedented increases to monthly rent in their buildings.

Landlord Timbercreek Asset Management is under scrutiny for implementing above-guideline increases to rent (commonly referred to as an AGI) while the Carling towers fall into disrepair.

"Rent is not affordable for lots of people, not everyone who lives in Ottawa is rich," ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) member Raghad Otibashy told the crowd. "They give the right to the landlord to increase the rent when our income does not increase."

Numerous cars honked their horns in support of the brave group assembled on the sidewalk on Carling Avenue. A guide dog of a rally participant shivered uncontrollably in the biting cold, before her owner decided to depart for shelter.

"Tenants are fed up and uniting together to demand immediate repairs to apartment units and buildings owned by Timbercreek," Penelope Xidous told *The Leveller*. "Landlords like Timbercreek shouldn't be allowed to charge tenants with above-guideline rental increases when many of their building tenants are suffering through mold, ignored maintenance repairs, pest infestations, problems with hot water, heat and safety issues."

Xidous is a tenant at 2880 Carling Avenue and a member of ACORN, which organized the protest.

"Given [the City of Ottawa's] major housing crisis with historically low vacancy rates and many tenants paying more than half their income on housing and utilities," wrote ACORN in a press release, "governments should be concerned about negligent landlords passing down costs to tenants through unjust AGIs."

Residents have been

smacked with continuous AGIs. *The Leveller* obtained a copy of a December 13 letter to tenants notifying of a proposed rent increase of 5.2 percent. This includes a three percent increase above the provincially mandated maximum of 2.2 percent for 2020, and represents a \$60 per month increase.

The proposed rent increase would come into effect on April 1, 2020, subject to approval by the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) at an upcoming hearing, which has not yet been scheduled.

In the letter, Timbercreek justified the increase to "reflect significant investments made to improve the structure, systems or common areas of the building."

Despite these claims, tenants feel that aesthetic improvements are taking precedence over structural issues.

Only one month prior, on Nov. 13, the Landlord and Tenant Board granted an AGI of 5.4 percent above the provincially mandated 1.8 percent maximum for 2019, despite public outcry from tenants who rallied outside the hearing.

Xidous spoke to the crowd gathered in front of the building on Albert Street.

"We don't feel that it's fair that we have to pay the full amount of this increase when apartment units are crumbling," she said. "We are sick and tired of all the maintenance issues being ignored."

"We're tired of all the power, the water, the elevator shutdowns, the heating problems, the major structural damages in the building," continued Xidous. "We have found possible health violations, fire and safety violations."

Tenants at both rallies held signs and spoke of a building – their home – experiencing systematic neglect.

"In 2016, Keller Engineering did a report on the structure of the building and found major issues and concluded that those structural repairs needed to be done immediately because they put people's safety at risk," Xidous said at the earlier rally, on

Nov. 13.

Despite the cold, rally participants were enthusiastic chanting "fight, fight, fight – housing is a right," and "hey hey, ho ho – this rent increase has got to go."

"Those structural damages have not been repaired yet," said Xidous. "But they have taken the time to do renovations to the common areas and lobby, things that beautify the building cosmetically so that they can attract new tenants so they can make more money, while at the same time ignoring all the major issues in the building."

### INSIDE THE LANDLORD AND TENANT BOARD – UNPACKING THE AGI

According to the Notice of Hearing prepared by the LTB and obtained by *The Leveller*, Timbercreek applied for an above guideline increase to offset costs associated with "extraordinary" increases in municipal taxes and charges as well as "capital expenditure work."

Timbercreek claimed municipal tax amounts of \$187,080 in 2016 and \$201,902 in 2017 to pass on to tenants. According to Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO), AGI maximums are set at three percent for capital expenditure work but municipal tax claims carry no maximum. From the LTB application it is unclear where the "extraordinary" increase took place, but what is clear is that Timbercreek – a multinational corporation that manages over \$10 billion in assets – intends to offset obligations to pay taxes by shifting the burden to already-strapped tenants.

The AGI is part of a larger trend of neoliberal deregulation of the rental housing sector, initiated in Ontario by the Mike Harris Progressive Conservatives with the 1997 TPA (Tenant Protection Act, an Orwellian name if there ever was one). In addition to the AGI, the TPA implemented vacancy decontrol which enabled landlords to increase the rent of a vacant unit by an unlimited amount.

Xidous, who has been a

tenant at 2880 Carling Avenue since 2009, noted that new tenants pay higher utility costs, referred to by landlords as "sub-metering utilities," one of many tactics to squeeze more profits.

Timbercreek also claimed \$656,821 in capital expenditure work according to the LTB form, including garage repairs, exterior wall repair and caulking, handicap door operations, relining of hot water tanks, temperature monitoring and control system, common area renovations, and garbage chute repairs. According to CLEO, capital expenses are major repairs, renovations, replacements, or additions that are not part of normal ongoing maintenance.

For Xidous and the tenants opposing the AGI, most of the claimed capital expenditures fall under general maintenance, and the structural issues and systems-related problems remain. Tenants say hot water is still difficult to obtain and that the "handicap door operators" don't work properly, for example, despite Timbercreek's expense claims. With Timbercreek's focus on cosmetic patches at the expense of major issues, the tenants charge that the landlord's goal is to attract new tenants and earn greater profits.

In addition to ongoing battles with the landlord, the tenants feel that their dealings with provincial and municipal bodies over these matters have been lopsided and unfair, including with the Landlord and Tenant Board and City of Ottawa.

Xidous claims that numerous calls to the City's Bylaw department regarding maintenance issues went unanswered. They therefore had no official evidence (the LTB dismissed tenant photos and videos) of ongoing maintenance issues and Xidous feels that this really hurt their case.

"I just kinda wish that things were a little bit fairer for everyone," she said. "Even though they're a big corporate company with lots of money and lots of power, the law should technically be the same for everyone, whether you're rich or poor."

Further, Timbercreek's lawyer is a regular at AGI hearings with the Landlord and Tenant Board.

"He knows the system and he knows how to manipulate it in their favor," said Xidous. "Even though we had good points [they were] thrown out, like they didn't matter."

### THE AFFORDABILITY CRISIS AND THE AGI

Ultimately, the LTB granted Timbercreek the 5.4 percent rent increase. With the going rate for a one bedroom apartment in the building, starting from \$1,109, the total 7.2 percent increase would raise the rent by almost \$80 per month. Adding insult to injury is the almost immediate application for another AGI, which would further increase rent by \$60 per month.

The seeming increasing trend of AGI applications, brought by landlords such as Timbercreek, will continue to impact the affordability crisis plaguing the city.

"With these rental increases, many people are worried how they're going to afford it," said Xidous. "There are many others in the building who are going to have issues, because some people are on disability. And disability only provides so much money and now with [Ford's] cutbacks, they're not getting as much as they were before. So of course when the rent goes up and their disability doesn't, it makes it difficult to afford to live here and now they're worried because nobody knows where they can afford to go."

### THE HERONGATE CONNECTION

ACORN member Mavis Finnermore spoke at both rallies, where she likened the fight against AGI increases at 2880 Carling Avenue to the ongoing struggle in the Herongate neighbourhood in Ottawa South. Self-describing as a "former victim of Timbercreek," Finnermore lived in Herongate for 30 years before being forced out of her home in the first wave of demolition-driven evictions (or demovictions) in 2016.

Owner and property manager Timbercreek has become increasingly active in Ottawa's rental market in recent years, having purchased a 21-hectare plot of Herongate (which they rebranded Heron Gate) as well as the towers at 2880 and 2900 Carling, among others.

Finnermore described how Timbercreek allowed townhomes to fall into disrepair to justify two rounds of demovictions. The current plot where Finnermore once lived is now home to three six-storey towers offering "resort-style living."

"When Timbercreek buys a property they fix up the outside," said Finnermore on Jan. 18. "Then they cut back

on tenant maintenance so they can have bigger profits for their investors."

Finnermore described this as a strategy, a regular pattern of behaviour. "As in Herongate, their neglect is causing safety issues," she said.

Finnermore wants the AGI portion of the law repealed, which risks exacerbating the homelessness crisis in the city.

"By giving landlords such high rent increases without making sure basic maintenance is done, the Landlord and Tenant Board is not protecting the tenants," she said. "And it's also contributing to rent increases being higher than inflation and wage increases [which] are making life miserable for low-income people."

Xidous also links the struggle at Herongate with opposition to the AGI at the Carling towers.

"They're allowing the buildings to deteriorate to squeeze the profits out of tenants and then what they plan on doing is evicting everyone," said Xidous.

### TARGETING TIMBERCREEK

Tenants' experiences with Timbercreek's building manager at the Carling towers are testament to the looming possibility of eviction.

Xidous describes threats of eviction directed at tenants who complain or speak out.

"So I don't know what's going to happen to me," she said. "I've been a tenant here for 10 years. I've been a good tenant. I've always paid my rent on time, my bills on time. I've never caused any issues or problems. But now I don't know if Timbercreek is going to consider me an issue or a problem because I wanted to defend myself and others, and we technically have a legal right to do that."

At the Jan. 18 rally, tenants and their supporters dropped a banner on the wall overlooking Carling Avenue at the foot of 2880 and entered the lobby at 2900 to deliver a list of demands to the building manager.

After the building manager refused to open the door to the office, a tenant read aloud a list of demands, including immediate repairs, a meeting with tenants, and to cease all further AGI applications.

After the crowd dispersed, CBC News reported that in response to the protest, Timbercreek announced an Open House event to discuss tenant concerns on Jan. 29.





# ROCHESTER HEIGHTS REDEVELOPMENT AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN OTTAWA

Adam Ashby Gibbard

Amidst Ottawa's affordable housing crisis, there's a beacon of hope sprouting up at 811 Gladstone. As rents throughout Ottawa continue to outpace income levels for many renters, there's good news on the horizon for affordable housing projects. Ottawa Community Housing (OCH) has a number of projects planned for the Chinatown/Little Italy area and, with the LeBreton Flats redevelopment still in process, further affordable units may come — even if the NCC has made no promises on that front).

Along with these developments, it's still important to understand affordable housing issues in Ottawa and work towards *actually* fixing them.

## The State of Housing in Ottawa

The City of Ottawa's has 269,536 renters (as of 2016) and 42% of those spend over 30% of their income on housing. In 1986 only 29% of renters had to do this.

Of these renters, an average of 10,500 households are on the Centralized Wait List for social housing. The rental market in Ottawa is strained, with a vacancy rate at 1.8% and the average rent for a 2-bedroom unit at \$1,440.

Ottawa is not unique, either: rental markets across Canada are in a similar state, with Toronto and Vancouver being especially hard-hit.

Compounding this issue, Ottawa has no replacement laws (which would require redevelopments to replace any demolished affordable units), no inclusionary zoning, no foreign ownership tax, and no vacancy tax. Ottawa is a Wild West of housing

development, even compared to cut-throat housing markets like Toronto.

Ottawa also recently witnessed the largest mass eviction in Canadian history at Herongate. Those affordable homes are soon to be replaced by luxury apartments where a bachelor will go for \$1,300 and a 2-bedroom for \$2,325.

Ottawa's shelters and newcomer housing are full, leaving many without housing options. The city spent \$16 million on motels in 2019 so 330 families could share a room for months with just a microwave to feed themselves. Ottawa has pushed people onto the street, then when they band together to meet their needs, bulldozed their tent city.

The crisis has gotten so bad that Ottawa Councillor Catherine McKenney has tabled a motion to declare affordable housing and homelessness an emergency in Ottawa.

This is the city we live in, and *much* more needs to be done. Even more staggering is that in the past 13 years nothing seems to have changed.

In 2007 Ottawa's Official Plan stated, "The shortage of affordable rental housing is one of the most compelling problems today in Ottawa. People now on long waiting lists for subsidized housing are being squeezed by low vacancy rates and rental costs that are steadily rising further beyond their means."

That could have been written yesterday.

Like many issues, the solution rests on every level of government working together, but much can be said about the City of Ottawa's shortcomings when it comes to ensuring people have a roof over their head — one that they can afford.

## Rochester Heights

In May 2021 a new project at 881 Gladstone should be finished. Phase one of OCH's Rochester Heights redevelopment will bring 140 affordable homes to Ottawa, of which 32 are in townhouses and the remaining 108 will be in the largest residential passive building in Canada. Passive buildings meet a standard for energy efficiency which reduces the building's ecological footprint. The architects of this building specifically stated that it was designed with climate change in mind.

The units are part of OCH's push to bring more affordable housing to Ottawa, with some rent geared to income (RGI) continuing where it already exists. The RGI ensures rents don't go above the threshold of 30% of tenants' income. The remaining rents will be closer to 80% of the average market rent in Ottawa.

Utility costs will be substantially lower than average, with annual heating costs per tenant under \$100 thanks to a heating and insulation system that can recycle 85% of the heat from exiting air.

The site will also include green space, mixed-use amenity space, and a number of townhouses for sale as part of an aim to make an active and mixed community. The project is one of three in the neighbourhood aimed at replacing ageing units and building new ones, including a much larger project called Gladstone Village.

But is it possible to build affordable housing that meets the 30% of income target? OCH's Chief Development Officer, Cliff Youdale, said that "without additional subsidy, no. If we receive additional funding support then obviously

we could do a lot more, but based on the programs right now we couldn't get to that depth of affordability."

## Historical Context

Issues of housing affordability, availability, and quality stem from a historic lack of new builds over the past 40 years. Up until the mid-1990s, 20,000 non-profit and co-op housing units were built each year in Canada. The federal and provincial governments used to happily fund large community housing projects through CMHC. Since then new rental units dropped, partly due to the growth of condo development, partly due to the government's abandonment of investment in social housing. In Ottawa, only around 20,000 units have been built in the past 20 years.

What this has left us with is low vacancy, old rental stock and, subsequently, poor quality units often owned and run by large companies who do everything they can to increase their profits [See *Squeezing Profits* - Page 4].

Income stagnation is another major issue affecting affordability that often is excluded. We live in a very wealthy country, yet the average hourly wage in Canada has remained roughly unchanged since the 1970s. All this while living costs, especially housing, have almost always increased. In Ottawa alone, inflation-adjusted rents have increased by 16% since 1990.

The redevelopment of Rochester Heights offers a replicable model, by which the average person could find an affordable — and even eco-friendly — home in Ottawa's harsh housing market.

## GUIDE TO EVICTION NOTICES

Do not be fooled by your landlord's eviction notice!  
- Collective Justice Centre -

**Just because your landlord has given you an eviction notice doesn't mean you have to leave your home. Learn more, with this levelling guide to eviction notices.**

### INFORMAL NOTICE

The first kind of eviction notice you might receive is an informal one. Informal notices could be in the form of an email, letter, text, call or voicemail.

You might get any of these kinds of notices from your landlord telling you to move by a certain date.

**You do not have to move. You can choose to ignore this date.**

An informal notice is not the same as a legal eviction order. Your landlord cannot do anything to you if you ignore this notice. Use this as an opportunity to learn about your landlord's intentions, learn about your rights as a tenant, seek advice, and organize with your neighbours.

### N 4-N8, N12, N13 FORMS

Notice to End your Tenancy  
Because the Landlord Wants to Demolish the Rental Unit, Repair it or Convert it to Another Use  
N13  
(Disponible en français)

Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) forms N4, N5, N6, N7, N8, N12, and N13 are notices your landlord might send you to tell you they want to end your tenancy by a certain date. These forms are not legal eviction orders, they are simply notices that your landlord intends to evict you.

**You do not have to move. They cannot kick you out just because they gave you this notice.**

If the eviction notice indicates a problem you can address, such as non-payment of rent, correct the problem. If the issue has nothing to do with your actions, you do not have to respond to your landlord. You should still make note of your landlord's intentions. Either way, talk to your neighbours and get their support.

### L1-L4 FORMS

Application to End a Tenancy and Evict a Tenant  
FORM L2  
(Disponible en français)

Your landlord might file an application with the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB). This form will be called L1, L2, L3, or L4. This form will be accompanied by a Notice of Hearing with a date and time at the LTB. Seek advice from the Collective Justice Centre.

**You have to attend this hearing date or else your landlord can get an order to evict you.**

### N11 FORM

Agreement to End the Tenancy  
N11

Your landlord might tell you to sign a form called N11: Agreement to End the Tenancy. They are trying to get you to move without having a hearing at the LTB. If you sign this form, you will end your tenancy voluntarily.

**Do not sign this form or you will give your landlord permission to evict you.**

### HOW TO DEAL WITH YOUR LANDLORD

1. Make sure all correspondence with your landlord is over email or in writing. If they try to meet with you or call you, tell them you are too busy to talk. Tell them to send all correspondence in writing.
2. Do not sign anything your landlord gives you before consulting with the Collective Justice Centre.
3. Always have witnesses, like friends and neighbours, present when you are meeting with your landlord.

### WHERE CAN YOU FIND HELP?

If you are facing a landlord-tenant problem or have a concern about local mass evictions, you can contact the Collective Justice Centre for support and law help. They hold open hours for tenants in partnership with the law school of the University of Ottawa every Friday from 6-8 pm at the Albion-Heatherington Community Centre (1560 Heatherington Rd).

**COLLECTIVEJUSTICE.CA**



The Ontario Government's OSAP cuts are putting post-secondary education further out of reach.

**Tell the Ontario Government to STOP playing games with post-secondary education.**

CFSONTARIO.CA #WeTheStudents

cfsfcée



*Note: This article was originally published on leveller.ca on Nov. 25. To catch up with the latest developments in Ford's attempts to dismember student groups, just wander your eyes down to the bottom of this article.*

The "crazy Marxists" have won! On Nov. 22, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice unanimously overruled the Ford government's Student Choice Initiative (SCI), which made fees that support student groups on campus optional. The ruling has been hailed as a huge win for the autonomy of student unions and associated groups – *The Leveller* included.

The court granted the application by two student associations, the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario (CFS-O) and the York Federation of Students, to quash the Cabinet directives of the SCI, ruling that “there is no lawful authority for the directives.”

### Introducing the Student Choice Initiative

On Dec. 12, 2018, Ford's Conservative Cabinet directed the Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities to initiate the SCI by instructing universities and colleges to categorize post-secondary school ancillary fees as either “essential” or “non-essential” – and then give students the choice to opt-out of any non-essential ones.

The initiative was then announced in January of last year and took effect in June, when Fall term registration opened. Students could either opt-in or opt-out of what were then deemed as “non-essential” student services or groups. Originally touted as a way to save students money, the SCI policy was clearly aimed at targeting progressive voices and student-led organizations.

The Ontario government's Student Choice Initiative was also packaged with a host of other post-secondary reforms impacting the province's 45 colleges and universities. These included reconfiguring the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) as well as cuts to university funding and tying that funding to performance. Changes in OSAP have adversely impacted large numbers of Ontario students.

In return for a small tuition decrease, students would pay more in the long run through OSAP and lose student unions and organizations that fought for their interests through the SCI. It was a short-term bribe for long-term exploitation.

The SCI caused considerable budget cuts to student groups across Ontario. Organizations saw between a 17 to 95 percent opt-out rate that caused student layoffs, the cancellation and reduction of services, and reduced student newspaper coverage. It also caused budgeting chaos, as no group could know the percentage of

students who opted out until well into the school semester.

We here at *The Leveller* have been a bit foul-mouthed about the whole thing, clearly feeling no need to restrain ourselves when we declared in March, “Fuck you Doug Ford — and your little minions too. Get your grubby fingers off of our student organizations!” We still stand by those fine words.

From where we stood, Ford's Student Choice Initiative looked like an ideologically motivated attack on student groups. Ford's Cabinet felt free to overrule the student referendums that instituted many of the fees – like the modest \$1.50 that Carleton grad students voted to assign *The Leveller* in a 2010 referendum. For Ford's Conservative cabinet, replacing students' democratic choice and solidarity with a model of consumerist choice and charity was just the right thing to do – and whether or not this was even in their legal authority didn't matter to these petty tyrants.

Fortunately, the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario (CFS-O) and the York Federation of Students challenged the Conservatives' presumption. They brought the case against the Ontario government forward in May, with the court hearing in October.

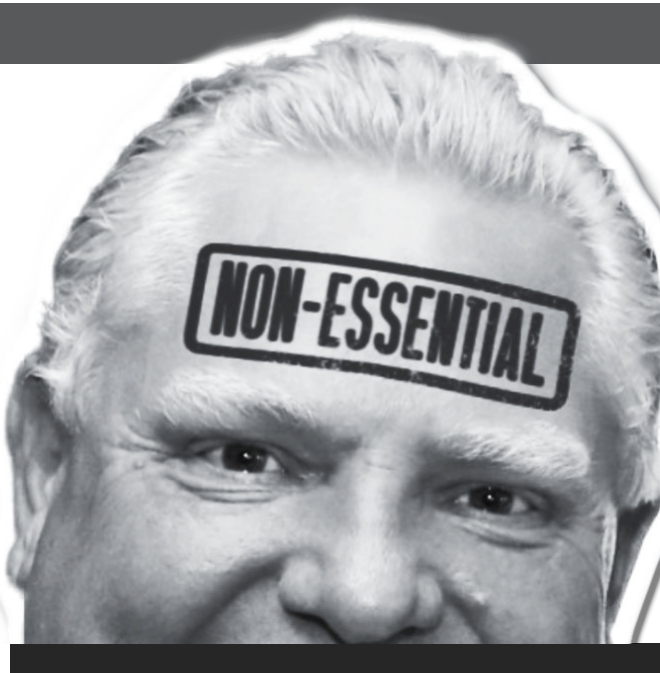
### Rejecting the SCI's Executive Overstep

As expressed in its ruling, the court felt that the case turned on whether the cabinet's SCI directives were consistent with its legislated power over colleges and universities. It stated that this question “lies at the very core of the court's role in a constitutional democracy characterized by the Rule of Law: executive action may be reviewed judicially for legality, and that is what this application is about.”

The government argued that the SCI was a policy choice not subject to the courts, and that it followed from cabinet's authority over spending. The court found that this contradicts the laws governing universities, colleges, and student associations. Granting the Ford government the right to ignore this “would undercut the supremacy of the legislature and open the door for government by executive decree, a proposition repugnant to the core principles of parliamentary democracy,” the court ruled.

Specifically, the court explained that:

- Student organizations are not funded or controlled, directly or indirectly, by the government. There is no authority to interfere in their operation on any grounds.
- Universities are private, autonomous and self-governed. While they are publicly assisted, they are not owned or operated by the government, and there is no authority for the government to interfere in their internal operation.



# “NO LAWFUL AUTHORITY”

## Court Quashes Ford's Student Choice Initiative

*In return for a small tuition decrease, students would pay more in the long run through OSAP and lose student unions and organizations that fought for their interests through the SCI. It was a short-term bribe for long-term exploitation.*

This means that, overall, the government is not allowed to:

- override the mandatory membership of student organizations;
- override the democratic process under which student fees were created;
- interfere in university-to-student association agreements;
- interfere in the academic freedom of universities, of which students, and student governments, are a part.

### Just What is Non-Essential?

Both *The Leveller* and the Ontario court took issue with what constituted “non-essential.” *The Leveller* outlined all of the “non-essential” ancillary fees that Carleton students pay on an annual basis, which totaled \$126.54 for 19 undergraduate groups or services, and \$237.02 for nine graduate groups or services. While these amounts were relatively small compared to the average cost of tuition (\$6,500-\$7,000), by pooling financial resources across the student body they enabled a myriad of student services.

With no prior warning that their funding might be cut off, organizations scrambled as they came to grips with what this could possibly mean in terms of funding losses for the 2019-2020 school year. Many groups

post-secondary education, and that institutional fees such as those for athletics cost significantly more than those funding non-academic groups and services.

The court put it this way:

“One of the obvious flaws in this argument (that allowing students to opt out of student association fees potentially lowers the cost of their education) is that, based on the evidence before us, the amounts at issue for each student are very small relative to the overall cost of an education. In addition, the distinction between essential and non-essential fees seems arbitrary if the actual objective behind the SCI and directives is to lower the financial burden on students: athletic fees, which are roughly ten times greater than student association fees, are deemed “essential” but student association fees are not: no principled basis for this distinction was offered in the record before us or in argument.”

In the wake of SCI implementation, universities had to fill the loss in a number of instances by implementing alternative services that likely came with administrative costs considerably higher than what student groups were providing. (University administrators tend to get paid a lot more than student workers, for example.)

Despite the divisional court decision signaling the death of the SCI, considerable damage has been done. Dozens of workers have been laid off from their jobs at numerous campus groups and student associations over the course of this past year. Some groups have ceased to function.

The Conservative government of Ontario has not made any comment, but the window for an appeal is still open. (The government could appeal to the Ontario Court of Appeal and from there to the Supreme Court, hypothetically.) Yet with such a unanimous decision, including strikes against them on a number of fundamental issues, the government may simply choose to concede.

Also, the court ruling specifically suggests that even if the SCI directives were directly authorized by legislation, they would then be open to “a serious Charter challenge,” in that the SCI can be “seen as a conflict over fundamental governance issues and the right to take collective action.”

The decision is clearly important for returning student funding to where it was, but the ruling could also set an important precedent for any future government intervention in student affairs.

The court has also reined in the power of the executive, signalling that the Ford government cannot simply act like an elected dictatorship during its time in office.

With the SCI quashed, it's still unclear where things will go from here. What process do universities have to go

through to undo the SCI? How long would that take? Will the SCI still be in place come January? What will happen to lost income for the Fall 2019 semester? NDP post-secondary education critic Chris Glover has called on the government to compensate all student groups for their losses.

Well, we here at *The Leveller* say that the only thing that's truly non-essential is Doug Ford himself.

### UPDATE: Ford's frolics through the fields of executive overreach look ready to continue

Since this article was initially published in November, the Ford government has announced its intention to appeal the decision, leaving the funding of student groups in jeopardy for the foreseeable future. However, the decision of the Divisional Court is still legally binding in the meantime, as CFS-O noted in a statement calling on universities to restore the fee collections suspended by the SCI.

At least some universities have begun doing so, including Carleton University, home of *The Leveller*. In an email sent to students on December 18, 2019, Carleton University announced that they “will be closing [their] opt-out system effective immediately.”

The Court of Appeal for Ontario will now have to decide whether or not to grant leave to appeal, then, if leave is granted, decide on the appeal itself. Since the Ford government has not revealed the legal basis for its appeal, it is impossible to predict what the court's decision will be. However, the unanimous nature of the Divisional Court's decision leaves little room for maneuver for the Ontario government's legal team.

If the decision is upheld on appeal, another possible avenue remains for the Conservatives, namely to pass legislation implementing the SCI in some form. Although the court argued that any such legislation would be open to a Charter challenge, the Ford government has already shown itself willing to invoke the Notwithstanding Clause to overrule Charter rights. There would in that case be no legal avenues to overturn the renewed SCI.

It behooves student groups, then, to build their organizing power, cultivate public support, and connect in solidarity with other groups threatened by Ford's austerity.

As always, if you want to get involved with *The Leveller's* work, we invite you to reach out to the editors at editors@leveller.ca. If you'd like to support our financial independence, contact operations@leveller.ca. (And if you can't stand our eco-feminist/anti-authoritarian/socialist guts, we also welcome sincere criticisms and hate letters in all the usual places.)





# OPIRG CARLETON

## WHO ARE WE?

OPIRG CARLETON (ONTARIO PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP) IS A STUDENT-LED, STUDENT-FUNDED NON-PROFIT BASED AT CARLETON UNIVERSITY. WE AIM TO **RESEARCH, EDUCATE AND PROVIDE ACTION ON SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE** USING A NON-HIERARCHICAL AND CONSENSUS-BASED SPACE FOR STUDENTS TO ORGANIZE.

## CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

WE ARE SEARCHING FOR LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE WHO ARE INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING WITH OPIRG CARLETON. THERE ARE DIFFERENT POSITIONS AVAILABLE, SUCH AS EVENT SUPPORT ASSISTANT, RESOURCE CENTER ASSISTANT, HARM REDUCTION PROJECT ORGANIZER, ETC.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND/OR TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION PLEASE VISIT [OPIRGCARLETON.ORG/VOLUNTEER-POSTINGS](http://OPIRGCARLETON.ORG/VOLUNTEER-POSTINGS)

## Trying to find us?

Go to Stairwell D on the 2nd or 4th Floor UC  
- On 2nd Floor: In front of the Multifaith Centre  
- On 4th Floor: In front of the CUSA Offices  
Walk up/down the stairs to the hallway on the platform to reach Unicentre 326





# UN MOUVEMENT SOCIAL DOIT-IL PLAIRE AU PUBLIC ?

Réflexion sur les mouvements sociaux suite à une action de perturbation menée par un mouvement antispéciste.

Francis Dupuis-Déri

Cet article est paru sur [ricochet.media](http://ricochet.media) le 17 janvier 2020.

*Des chroniqueurs s'insurgent contre l'organisation Direct Action Everywhere (« Action directe partout ») qui a mené une action de perturbation dans le restaurant Joe Beef, à Montréal, après s'être invité dans une porcherie de Saint-Hyacinthe, en décembre. L'Association des éleveurs de porcs du Québec a demandé que le montant des amendes soit plus élevé pour l'entrée par infraction dans les porcheries, alors qu'un des propriétaires de Joe Beef a suggéré aux antispécistes de cibler plutôt des McDonald's.*

On reproche aussi aux antispécistes de mener des actions que n'approuverait par l'opinion publique, leur suggérant d'« entrer manière civilisée dans la conversation démocratique ». Sans présumer de la nature des discussions à

ce sujet au sein de Direct Action Everywhere, on peut se demander si un mouvement social devrait réellement se préoccuper de l'opinion publique.

Évidemment, un mouvement social peut vouloir plaire à l'opinion publique. Il planifiera ses actions en conséquence, en portant attention à ce que disent les journalistes, aux « likes » dans les médias sociaux, aux sondages d'opinion et même aux intentions de votes. Cette approche est d'ailleurs préconisée par celles et ceux qui militent à la fois dans un mouvement social et dans un parti politique et qui calculent l'intérêt de toute action militante en fonction d'hypothétiques gains électoraux.

Pour éviter de déplaire à quiconque, cette approche encourage des actions légales, calmes et bienveillantes et justifie l'exclusion de camarades qui soutiennent qu'un peu de turbulence ne peut nuire à la cause. Or, plaire à l'opinion publique et aux

médias ne sert pas nécessairement la cause. L'opinion publique peut être convaincue qu'il est urgent de protéger l'environnement, par exemple, mais voter néanmoins pour des partis dont ce n'est pas la priorité et les gouvernements peuvent prendre des décisions en sachant qu'elles vont à l'encontre de l'opinion de la majorité de la population.

### Média et opinion publique

Il faut aussi se demander si les médias et l'« opinion publique » sont une seule et même chose et si l'« opinion publique » existe réellement (comme se le demandait le sociologue Pierre Bourdieu). L'« opinion publique » est en réalité une notion vague qui englobe des majorités et des minorités aux contours fluctuants.

Or est-il réellement utile? Du point de vue de la cause défendue, qu'un mouvement social cherche l'approbation tout à la fois des fédéralistes et des souverainistes, des riches et

des pauvres, des patrons et des syndiqués (et des sans-emploi), des Mohawks et des Wendats, des propriétaires et des locataires (et des sans-abris), de Montréal et de Québec, des baby-boomers et des millénariaux, des racistes et des antiracistes, des féministes et des antiféministes, des néonazis et des anarchistes. Bien des mouvements sociaux qui ont remporté des victoires plus ou moins importantes n'ont d'ailleurs jamais eu l'appui de la majorité de la population.

### Diverses manières d'apprécier l'efficacité

Enfin, un mouvement social peut décider de poursuivre bien d'autres objectifs que celui d'avoir une image positive dans les médias et auprès de l'« opinion publique ». Un mouvement social peut vouloir exprimer sa solidarité, par exemple avec les femmes autochtones disparues et assassinées, avec le peuple palestinien, avec les animaux

*Bien des mouvements sociaux qui ont remporté des victoires plus ou moins importantes n'ont jamais eu l'appui de la majorité de la population.*

entassés et massacrés dans les abattoirs. Le simple fait de passer à l'action permet d'exprimer cette solidarité, sans présumer de ce qu'en pense l'« opinion publique ».

On peut vouloir exprimer bien d'autres émotions et principes politiques, entre autres sa colère, son sentiment d'injustice et sa révolte, par exemple lors de rassemblements contre la police (manifestation annuelle du 15 mars) ou contre le capitalisme (1<sup>er</sup> mai et manifestations contre le G7 et le G20). Selon les talents, les privilèges et les possibilités, d'autres s'expriment par des chansons, des graffitis ou des chroniques dans des médias, mais plusieurs préfèrent s'exprimer collectivement en manifestant dans la rue.

Un mouvement social peut aussi vouloir perturber l'ordre des choses et même embêter les autorités ou une partie de la population, pour exercer une pression et établir un rapport de forces. Les suffragettes anglaises du début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle ont ainsi perturbé des discours de politiciens, sectionné des fils de téléphone et commis environ 340 incendies et attaques à la bombe, en 1913 et 1914. Leur dirigeante, Emmeline Pankhurst, disait alors :

*Nous ne détruisons pas [...] pour nous attirer l'appui des gens que nous attaquons. Si le public en général était heureux de ce que nous faisons, ce serait la preuve que notre guerre est inefficace. Nous n'espérons pas que vous soyez contents. » - Andrew Rosen, Rise Up, Women!*

Par ses actions de désobéissance civile, de blocage, d'occupation et de

sabotage, un mouvement social peut vouloir empêcher la réalisation d'un projet ou l'application d'une politique, ou qu'un territoire soit détruit ou des animaux massacrés. C'est ainsi que se mobilisent les Autochtones qui occupent des terres pour empêcher le passage d'un pipeline ou encore les anarchistes de Notre-Dame-des-Landes, en France, qui ont empêché la construction d'un aéroport.

C'est aussi les choix d'écologistes de réseaux comme Animal Liberation Front et Earth First! qui, depuis des décennies, sabotent de l'équipement forestier, incendient des chantiers immobiliers et des voitures et attaquent des abattoirs et des laboratoires pharmaceutiques qui mènent des tests sur des animaux.

Un mouvement social peut vouloir empêcher une autre force politique de se réunir ou de manifester. C'est ainsi que des antifascistes organisent des contre-manifestations et perturbent des événements de néo-nazis et de racistes.

Ces diverses manières d'apprécier l'efficacité d'un mouvement social ou d'une forme d'action sont l'objet de bien des débats, et même de conflits entre militantes et militants. Mais les gérants d'estrade qui ne militent jamais cherchent surtout à convaincre les mouvements que le plus important serait toujours l'appréciation des médias et de l'opinion publique.

On ne s'étonnera pas de constater que ces donneurs de leçons travaillent justement dans les médias qui calculent la popularité en termes d'audience et de cote d'écoute. Or, un mouvement social n'est pas un spectacle de variétés.

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# HAÏTI : «PETROCHALLENGE»

## Suite des reportages de notre journaliste sur Haïti

Martin Forgues

Cet article est paru sur [ricochet.media](http://ricochet.media) le 11 janvier 2020.

*Un peu plus d'un an après la naissance de ce grand mouvement social qui transcende les frontières de l'île, rien n'est gagné pour le peuple d'un des pays les plus pauvres de la Terre.*

Une année complète s'est donc écoulée depuis le début du Petrochallenge, ce soulèvement populaire survenu suite aux révélations que 3,4 milliards provenant du Fonds Petrocaribe s'étaient volatilisés.

Le sang et les larmes du peuple haïtien aussi.

### Une révolte 2.0

Je me suis rendu dans l'île au printemps dernier.

La scène captée devant l'édifice de la Cour de comptes le 26 avril résonnait de symbolisme alors que policiers armés de pied en cap et agents de sécurité protégeaient la fuite de politiciens, d'administrateurs autres notables face à l'arrivée de dizaines de manifestants qui entonnaient en chœur des chants protestataires.

En ce vendredi, sous un soleil d'un plomb aussi lourd que celui de la chape qui étouffe l'île depuis trop longtemps, les citoyens, hommes et femmes, artistes et sans-dents, venaient une fois de plus réclamer justice et imputabilité depuis qu'ils ont appris, l'an dernier, que les 4,3 milliards de dollars du fonds PetroCaribe s'étaient volatilisés.

Quelques minutes après le début de la manifestation, la fumée noire des feux de pneus allumés pour détourner la circulation nous remplissait les poumons d'effluves de caoutchouc brûlé et de résidus d'essence. Rapidement, trois ou quatre minibus affichant le logo de la police nationale franchissaient les barricades de flammes et débarquaient une autre vingtaine de policiers, ceux-là équipés pour le «contrôle de foule», expression novlinguistique pour désigner la répression de la dissidence.

Une dissidence qui, une fois de plus dans ce pays, se trouve de manière sans équivoque du bon côté de l'Histoire.

Cette scène, elle s'est répétée maintes fois depuis.

«C'est comme si on fait un prêt pour nous et là on est obligés de payer pendant qu'il n'y a rien qui s'est fait». Avec cette petite phrase, le cinéaste haïtien Gilbert Mirambeau, à l'origine du hashtag #KotKobPetrocaribeA («Où est l'argent de Petrocaribe, NDLR) venait de résumer grossièrement, mais efficacement la délicate «affaire PetroCaribe».

C'est Gilbert qui est à l'origine du hashtag, sans s'imaginer qu'il deviendrait si viral. «C'est [du ras-le-bol généralisé dans le pays] que j'ai — si on retourne à la

genèse du mouvement — pris cette photo où j'avais les yeux bandés. Je me suis levé un bon matin et je me suis dit que c'était mon ras-le-bol à moi aussi et puis je me demandais — où est l'argent de Petrocaribe? En créole, kot kob petrocaribe a».

La photo et son message se sont répandus comme une trainée de poudre à travers les méandres du web, interpellant du même coup tant les présidents ancien et actuel Michel Martelly et Jovenel Moïse que la Cour des comptes, jusqu'à en appeler à la communauté internationale pour qu'elle exerce la pression nécessaire afin de faire plier le gouvernement, sans trop de succès.

### Question de culture

Les yeux bandés se voulaient, selon l'intention de Gilbert, un clin d'œil à Thémis, la déesse grecque de la justice.

Mais pour lui, le problème est aussi culturel et il travaille ardemment à changer la donne. Le fait de partager son temps entre Port-au-Prince et Montréal, exemple on ne peut plus éloquent de corruption institutionnelle, ne nuit certainement pas à sa capacité de transmettre cette volonté d'inculquer cette nécessité de rendre les décideurs imputables de leurs actes.

«On a pas ici cette culture de demander des comptes aux autorités. [Pour moi], y'a une route qui est faite devant chez soi, le trottoir est mal fait, on demande des comptes à la ville, tout simplement. Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé, où sont les reçus, etc. Moi, je m'implique, parce que c'est ma responsabilité en tant que citoyen».

### Et aujourd'hui?

La publication du rapport de la Cour des comptes le 31 mai dernier fait état de nombreuses irrégularités et pointe du doigt tant le président Jovenel Moïse que son prédécesseur, Michel Martelly.

En date de la parution de cet article, 25 % du rapport d'analyse de la Cour des comptes visant les projets financés par le fonds Petrocaribe reste à être publié. D'ailleurs, l'organisme citoyen haïtien Nous Pap Domi a commencé à faire circuler le 24 août dernier une lettre ouverte revendiquant non seulement la publication du reste du rapport, mais aussi le transfert de dossiers au parquet judiciaire (l'équivalent de la Direction des poursuites criminelles et pénales) et au Parlement haïtien.

Encore aujourd'hui, la police haïtienne, par ailleurs formée par les Nations-Unies, écrase les soulèvements qui se poursuivent un peu partout dans le pays, surtout dans la région de Port-au-Prince. À Pétionville le 12 octobre dernier, Le Projet d'information Canada-Haïti rapportait que les forces de sécurité ouvraient le feu sur une foule



Photo: Rony D'Haiti

de manifestants. Même scénario à Saint-Marc, au nord-ouest de la capitale et à Kenscoff, à une dizaine de kilomètres au sud. Les écoles sont fermées depuis septembre.

À Montréal, un comité de solidarité Québec-Haïti a occupé le bureau de circonscription du premier ministre Justin Trudeau le 30 septembre dernier pour revendiquer une intervention, du moins une condamnation, concernant les meurtres de dissidents par le gouvernement de Jovenel Moïse. Depuis la réélection du gouvernement (minoritaire) libéral, d'autres actions se sont produites tant à Montréal qu'à Port-au-Prince.

Rappelons que le Canada a activement participé au renversement du président Jean-Bertrand Aristide il y a maintenant quinze ans. (Voir autre texte)

La question n'est donc plus de savoir qui sont les politiciens et hommes d'affaires corrompus, mais de savoir ce que feront le gouvernement et le parquet judiciaire de ce rapport, puisque la Cour des comptes n'a pas de pouvoir d'inculpation.

### Qu'est-ce que le fonds Petrocaribe?

Pour résumer, ce fonds créé par l'ex-président vénézuélien Hugo Chavez permettait aux pays des Caraïbes d'acheter le pétrole du Venezuela à des conditions préférentielles : les états achètent le pétrole vénézuélien et ne déboursent qu'entre 5 % et 50 % de la valeur totale de la livraison au prix du marché, suivi d'une période de grâce pouvant aller jusqu'à deux ans, puis d'un remboursement de la balance s'étalant jusqu'à 25 ans.

Le gouvernement revend ensuite le pétrole aux compagnies pétrolières à pleine valeur, s'assurant de généreux revenus.

L'argent dégagé sur le coup est alors injecté dans des projets de construction et de développement.

*La grogne du peuple se poursuit sans relâche, le pays est paralysé, le pouvoir local poursuit l'œuvre du Diable et les maîtres occidentaux se bouchent les oreilles, trop occupés à saper la démocratie sous d'autres cieux.*

## Les Sans-Culottes

Les Sans-culottes étaient les révolutionnaires radicaux pendant la Révolution française (vers 1789). Leur nom émanait des pantalons qu'ils portaient au lieu de la culotte courte et des bas, portés par les nobles et les bourgeois.

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# A WORLD ALIGHT

## GUIDE TO MASS PROTESTS AND UPRISINGS THROUGH 2019 TO THE PRESENT

BY MARIYA MUBEEN, MIKE HERMIDA, KIERAN DELAMONT, AND TIM KITZ | DESIGN BY CRYSTAL YUNG AND ADAM ASHBY GIBBARD

While a new year comes with new beginnings, it seems like 2020 may already be weighted — check that, energized — by spillovers from 2019 resistance. A recent report by risk assessment company Verisk Maplecroft shows that 47 countries had some form of civil unrest in 2019, and they project that 2020 will see a generous rise in that number. While technocrats, bureaucrats, and plutocrats might frown in dismay at these disturbances, we’re here to celebrate them at *The Leveller*, and to explore how these movements are connected with each other.

### FRANCE



#### THE YELLOW VESTS MOVEMENT

The gilets jaunes, the yellow vests: whatever you’ve heard about it, whatever you think about what they stand for, it is probably the most visible protest movement to hit a G7 nation since Occupy in 2011. Named for the protesters’ yellow traffic vests, which French drivers are required to have in case of emergency, the French-born protest has spilled over to other countries in the West — and given it an enduring and easily recognizable symbol.

We’ve come to associate the yellow vest movement in Canada with kooky far-right conservatives, anti-immigrant conspiracy theorists, and fossil-fuel cheerleaders. But the origins of the movement in France are less partisan, and more economically populist.

It started in 2018 specifically in response to a planned fuel tax hike, then grew over 2019 into a wider class-based protest that pointed the finger squarely at an economic elite and the rigged system from which they benefit. Initiated by an online petition in May 2018 and defined by a viral and eclectic list of 42 demands posted in November 2018, French citizens quickly brought their clicktivism into the real world. Protesters hit the streets demanding lower fuel taxes, a higher minimum wage, the reintroduction of a solidarity tax on the rich, and a constitutional amendment enabling citizen-initiated referendums.

For much of 2019, but especially in the early spring, protesters flooded the streets throughout France every Saturday at sprawling demonstrations that French police often met with heavy force. Protesters were violent too, at times, but as usual state-sponsored and approved violence had the upper hand, with hundred cases of serious injuries among the demonstrators. 24 protesters have lost an eye to rubber bullets meant to be fired at the legs, while an 80-year woman was killed in her home when a tear gas canister struck her in the face.

The movement has existed outside traditional labour structures — and started out rather disdainful of them — giving it a kind of free-form nature. Its political affiliations are diffuse and differ from time

to time. Its supporters think this is great, a sign of a united workers’ movement that bypasses entrenched labour interests; its critics point out that it also attracts Islamophobes and anti-Semites.

Whatever its future, the yellow vests movement has inspired other wildcat strikes among transportation workers, port workers, and oil workers.

#### PENSION PROTEST

Planned pension plan reform in France, announced on December 5, has provoked a wide-reaching strike movement, including rail workers, airline staff, energy workers, and so on. The French pension plan is treasured by many as a cornerstone to the state’s social welfare system and a guarantee of their future financial security, and any attempt to reform it comes with a hefty political price.

The protests began in response to Emmanuel Macron’s plan to seemingly ‘gamify’ the national pension plan into system where you build up points over your working life, which then determines how many pension bucks you get for the rest of your life.

French workers are not necessarily opposed to pension reform or a simple, universal system. The current system can be an administrative nightmare to deal with, especially if you have worked in more than one field during your life. Yet the devil is in the details; Macron’s plan is not designed with the interests of pensioners in mind.

“Indeed, around France, working people have been getting out their calculators to work out how much they’re set to lose,” writes Alexis Moreau, in *Jacobin*. “You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to work out that most wage earners would lose out from this.”

Since the announcements, the strikes have brought Paris’ transportation grid to a standstill and have inspired millions to demonstrate in cities across the country. It’s a more traditionally union-led strike, and has benefitted by inheriting some of the energy from the yellow vest movement as well

### ALGERIA



The Hirak movement or Revolution of Smiles began in February 2019, as a response to President Abdelaziz Bouteflika’s announcement he would

run for president for a fifth term. Bouteflika had been in power for 20 years, but due to a stroke during his last term, he hadn’t been seen in the public eye.

The people of Algeria believe him to be a placeholder for the ruling elite surrounding him. Realizing the full force of the protest, Bouteflika withdrew his candidacy for the election in March.

The protests have been very peaceful, with limited crack-down from government forces. The military has kept themselves restrained to prevent the possibility of another civil war like the one that began in 1991 and persisted well into the decade, racking up a large casualty count.

The protesters have not relented though, as they continue to congregate, calling for deeper changes and using social media to spread the news of protests to remote areas. They have demanded that officials who were a part of the Bouteflika government also resign and refrain from participating in future elections. Apart from a cleansing of the Bouteflika regime, the protesters have demanded a proper transition into a more democratic form of government.

### IRAN



Civil unrest in Iran began in November 2019, as a continuation of general strikes in 2018 related to various price increases and worker’s rights. With surrounding countries like Lebanon and Iraq pushing for changes in their respective governments, Iranian citizens also took to the streets in November in response to an increase in fuel prices.

The unrest was met with brutal crackdowns from the government — Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei gave free reign to his subordinates to “Do whatever it takes to stop them,” as Reuters reported. This led to the military opening fire on protesters in the city of Mahshahr.

Official reports claim the number to be as high as 148 casualties during the five-day protest. There have also been reports of protesters being shot from rooftops and helicopters, their bodies being hidden to conceal true death counts, and families being threatened against talking to media or holding funerals. The protests have also been hit with internet shutdowns to disrupt organiz-

ation of the protests.

The protesters have demanded a complete upheaval of the Islamic Republic, with chants of “Death to Khamenei” and “Death to the dictator.” They also expressed discontent with Iran’s involvement in regional conflicts with Israel, Lebanon, and Egypt. The Iranian government’s deception and then subsequent admission it shot down a Ukrainian passenger plane has only exacerbated the public’s discontent.

### COLOMBIA



Demonstrations in Colombia began in late November 2019 for a multitude of reasons including Indigenous safety, labour rights, and cuts to public education.

A country-wide workers’ strike took place in November 2019 in response to rumours surrounding labour reforms and pension cuts. Meanwhile, university students were protesting government corruption and cuts to public education.

These two factors, coupled with an upward trend of violence toward Indigenous people and social activists led to mass, peaceful protests known as cacerolazos. Other major movements across Latin America, especially those in Bolivia and Chile, also provided inspiration.

The government’s slow implementation of a peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) — proposed by the previous government — has been blamed for recent violence against Indigenous and social leaders.

The three strands of protest made common cause with one another. The demands of the now-amalgamated organizers reflect each original group’s grievances. All together, they call for more investment in public schools, higher wages, and the implementation of the

peace deal. Protesters also call for improvements to the health-care system and the elimination of riot police.

Days after the mass movement began, protesters have been met with tear gas by the Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squadron — a branch of the National Police designed to control unrest and re-establish order.

The national government has also responded by closing borders while the municipality of Bogotá established a curfew. So far, four civilians have been killed by the police, including one Dilan Cruz, after he took a headshot from a ‘non-lethal’ projectile fired by the police. And the unrest continues...

### HAITI



Haitians took to the streets in June 2019, reacting to a report that revealed systemic government corruption. Protesters attacked businesses and government buildings and called for the resignation of President Jovenel Moïse.

The Senate-commissioned report investigated oil alliance PetroCaribe between 2008 and 2016. It concluded that Haiti had been borrowing oil from Venezuela, founding member of the alliance, for decades. But the Caribbean nation deferred payments promising to invest in its economy and social programs. Instead, \$2 billion have gone missing and the government continues to be in debt to Venezuela. (The report also says that Moïse helped embezzle funds for banana plantation Agritrans.)

This caused

hundreds of citizens, fed up with the government, to take to the streets of Port-au-Prince, who are calling for the resignation of the president. Militants have set houses on fire in Delmas, the richest neighbourhood in the island and threw rocks at police officers. Law enforcement responded with tear gas.

Protesters have also repeatedly targeted the Canadian embassy, Yves Engler has noted for *Ricochet*, throwing rocks and trying to burn the embassy down. They are well-aware of Canada’s foreign policy of helping to sideline democratically-elected leaders like Jean-Bertrand Aristide and prop up corrupt, repressive leaders like Moïse. That is to say nothing of the way Canada helped militarize 2010 earthquake aid to

avoid popular unrest — the kind of aid that managed to build six houses with half a billion dollars in donations.

President Moïse has denied any illegal activity on his part, apologized to the Canadian government, and promised to prosecute those responsible.

### SUDAN



The Sudanese revolution is a testament to what can be achieved when people unite under a cause. The increase in the prices of staple goods by the country’s president Omar Al-Bashir instigated protests in the Sudanese capital Khartoum. Not long after, women and youth joined the unrest, bolstering the movement. The civil disobedience began in December 2018 and endured well into 2019.

In April 2019, Al-Bashir was forced out in a coup d’état and a Transitional Military Council (TMC) was put into place to negotiate a handover to the civilian government. Unrest continued with the Khartoum Massacre and the El Obeid massacre, orchestrated by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) who supported the Sudanese government, putting a hitch in the handover process. In July 2019, the TMC and representatives for the civilian government came

to an agreement for a 39-month transition period.

However, protests have continued during the transition period, with ongoing concerns over the toxic effect of mercury and cyanide release during gold mining, as well as the exclusion of women from the transitional government, and demands for a complete cleansing of those affiliated with Al-Bashir’s regime and a thorough investigation into the Khartoum Massacre.

### BOLIVIA



Former union leader and first Indigenous President Evo Morales ran for his fourth re-election in October, 2019 after the Supreme Court of Justice struck down constitutional term limits. As the votes were being counted, it seemed like Morales would be just short of the lead needed to avoid an



election runoff.

However, the electoral organization mysteriously stopped counting votes for 24 hours. When it resumed, it declared victory for Morales’ party, Movement Towards Socialism (MAS). The right-wing opposition party and the Organization of American States (OAS) took this as a sign of fraud.

This election came in the context of Morales’ decision to nationalize the country’s massive lithium reserve. The metal is highly coveted by the United States, who has a strong hold over the OAS, for its use in cell phones and electric cars.

MAS has also been dealing with internal dissent for building a highway that crossed a protected rainforest.

These factors led to mass protests from unsatisfied citizens who marched and blocked roads — a resistance tradition dating back to the pre-colonial Incas people.

The Bolivian military took the opportunity to call for Morales’ resignation. In November, Morales fled the country and his would-be successors resigned.

Shortly after, Senator

ment of their office as declared by the National Assembly” a new popular election must take place to fill the position.

Guaidó’s declaration proved to be one of the most polarizing acts in the country.

At the national level, the country seems to be split by those who recognize him as the legitimate president and those who do not. These lines reveal deep economic and racial tensions, with white business owners in Caracas largely supporting Guaidó while racialized rural folk have kept their allegiance to Maduro.

Lately, however, Maduro has been losing support from those living in slums because of a rise in police brutality.

Each faction has taken to the streets to demonstrate their support for their respective leader.

On the international stage, Russia and China, along with some Latin American countries like Cuba, continue to support Maduro’s government, while the United States and long time Venezuelan rival Colombia have formally recognized Guaidó as president.

However many still support the government even as it curbs unrest by shutting off power and access to the internet in areas of conflict — like the state of Kashmir, which has been in a state of revolt/repression and suffering under a blackout since August 2019. The protests are ongoing with no sign of relent from the government.

## CHILE

Protests in Chile were triggered by a police crackdown on civil disobedience through transit fare evasions.

In October 2019, the Chilean government increased rush hour metro prices, a measure that unduly affected the poorest people of the country. In protest, high school students in Santiago — the capital and largest city — organized a mass evasion of transit prices. The police reacted by attacking students at metro stations, which quickly progressed into mass street protests.

As with the other protests of this article, activists have been faced with police brutality. Cops have attacked citizens with tear gas, rubber bullets, and other weapons, causing the UN High Commission for Human Rights to call for an independent investigation.

Dozens of people have died and hundreds more have been injured.

The protests have now evolved into manifestations of general discontent towards poverty and inequality. “It’s not 30 pesos,” said Chilean union leader Esteban Maturana, referring in an interview with Sputnik to the fare hike. “It’s 30 years of abuse.”

Protesters have called for Piñera to resign, for a new constitution, and for the government to socialize the country’s pension plan. Piñera is of a family with deep ties in the Chilean right-wing political sphere. His brother, José Piñera, was the Labour Minister under the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship who implemented radical neo-liberal reforms — including pension privatization — and created Chile’s current constitution. The president’s cousin, Andrés Chadwick, served as Interior Minister under Piñera was already forced to resign by protests.

Massive protests continue today — as the president is yet to resign — and are considered to be on par with those in Hong Kong.

## SPAIN

In 2017, the Catalan government held a referendum on the region’s independence. 92 per cent of voters voted to leave. However, the conservative Spanish government deemed the referendum unconstitutional and therefore illegitimate. The National Police and Civil Guard (a military law enforcement institution) heavily suppressed voting and only 43

per cent of the population voted.

Last October, the Spanish Supreme Court sentenced separatist organizers to between nine and 13 years in prison for sedition and misuse of public funds, which the defendants deny. As a response, Catalan separatists — notably members of a new youth-led organization called Tsunami Democràtic — organized civil disobedience acts in Barcelona, Girona, Lleida, and Tarragona.

Taking inspiration from non-violent protests in Hong Kong, Tsunami Democràtic blocked roads going to El Prat Airport and other important infrastructure, such as train rails and the highway between Barcelona and Girona. They did this using their own purpose-built encrypted messaging app to organize in anonymous, decentralized ways — mimicking sea waves in their mobilizations.

2019 was also a notable year for the Spanish feminist movement. On International Women’s Day (the 8th of March), approximately 350,000 people in Madrid, 220,000 in Valencia, and 200,000 in Barcelona took to the streets to protest against institutionalized sexism and pervasive gender violence. In June 2019, the Spanish Supreme Court declared 5 men guilty of gang raping an 18-year-old woman, reversing a previous ruling which only convicted them for sexual assault. This was the first time in Spanish history that consent was included in sexual violence legislation.

## LEBANON

Like many revolts in history, the protests in Lebanon began as a response to taxes — in this case, the proposal to tax Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) calls through apps like whatsapp and facebook. This tax was a tipping point for civilian unrest. The protests began in mid-October with people filling key streets in Beirut, blaming the political class for the abysmal economic state of the country.

Lebanon’s political system follows sectarian divides that gives political authority based on the sect of the public servant. This sectarian system, exploited by current politicians, has been blamed for many of Lebanon’s problems. This combined with the lack of governmental assistance in wildfires throughout the region, daily utility issues like power cuts and poor drainage infrastructure, and a debt-ridden economy has pushed the public into the most unified, cross-sectarian civil unrest that the country has seen.

The protests have continued well into 2020, as the Lebanese public demand the resignation of the president Michel Aoun, prime minister Saad Hariri, and Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri, amid calls for new elections and the removal of the sectarian divides within the political system. Protesters are aware of the complacency of the current government and fear that if they leave the streets, none of their demands will come to fruition.

## HONG KONG

The unrest in Hong Kong began as a direct response to the extradition bill, which was proposed by the government in February 2019. The bill’s amendment to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance would allow fugitives to be transferred to another country’s law enforcement, including mainland China.

The people of Hong Kong saw this as a way for the Chinese government to take hold of their legal system and undermine the city’s democratic tendencies. The bill would have also allowed Chinese forces to clamp down on critics of the Chinese government. Misconduct by the Hong Kong Police Force during protests only exacerbated the situation, fueling the protesters’ mistrust in those with power.

The protest was first instigated by Demosistō, a liberal political party. It gained more traction when pro-democratic lawmakers opposed the bill in the legislature with a filibuster campaign. Soon thousands of people join in, with the protests spreading throughout Hong Kong.

The protests in Hong Kong have been hailed as one of the most innovative and technologically-advanced protests of our time. Footage spread worldwide of protesters wearing gas masks, using umbrellas and spray painting security cameras to avoid surveillance, disarming tear gas bombs, using laser pointers to throw off police and cameras, and setting up pop-up shops to provide gadgets and medical supplies to those on the front lines.

The protests were organized through online forums, allowing different groups to coordinate and congregate in flash mobs to evade police. While the protests led to the development of different groups resorting to different tactics, groups avoided denouncing or criticizing others as a mark of respect for different views within the protest and to put up a united front.

An end to the protests does not seem to be in sight, as many of the protesters’ demands are yet to be met, most prominently the resignation of Carrie Lam and an independent inquiry into the behavior of the police during the protests.

## CONCLUSION

The Global Protest Wave of 2019, as pundits have called it, looks to be sweeping inexorably into 2020. The question is whether “the year of the street protester,” as *The Washington Post* called it, will inspire us here at home.

Might imminent ecological collapse, the growing normalization of neo-fascism, and democracy’s capture by corporate interests prompt us to revolt? Or will we sit just at home and chill with Netflix while others around the globe put their lives on the line for freedom, equality, and a livable future?

It’s pretty easy to feel snugly numb and vaguely powerless in comfortably colonial Canada, at least for those of us living in a cocoon of relative privilege. But we Levellers bet taking real action and inciting change will feel better than just watching CGI fairy tales of spandex supergods and space wizards risking everything to save the world.



CUTS TO PUBLIC FUNDING/INCREASES IN PRICES



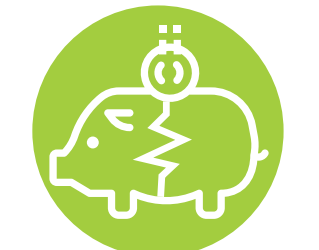
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# TENSIONS RUN HIGH AFTER IRANIAN GENERAL ASSASSINATED

## U.S. and Iran have a long history of antagonism

Josh Lalonde

At approximately 1:45 AM local time on January 3, a US drone fired three missiles at a two-vehicle convoy leaving Baghdad International Airport, killing seven people and wounding several others. Among the dead were Iranian general Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

Four days later, on January 7, Iranian missiles hit the Ain al-Asad military base in western Iraq, which houses US troops stationed in the country as part of the mission to counter ISIS, as well as another base near Erbil in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Later that night, Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752 crashed shortly after taking off from Imam Khomeini International Airport in Tehran, killing all 176 passengers and crew on board. After denying any involvement for several days, the Iranian government eventually admitted that they had shot down the plane, mistaking it for a missile directed at a military facility.

This flurry of events has led to an outpouring of commentary from politicians and pundits — praising or denouncing the assassination of Soleimani, analyzing or questioning the legality of the strike, predicting the potential consequences for the Middle East as a whole, and so on. Many of the questions raised by these commentators cannot be definitively answered as of the time of writing, but others admit of at least a partial response.

### Who was Qassem Soleimani?

Qassem Soleimani was a Major-General in the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), a branch of the Iranian military responsible for defense of the Islamic Revolution against both internal and external enemies. According to *Middle East Eye*, he was “born into an agricultural family in the village of Qanat-e Malek in southeast Iran in 1957” and began working in construction at the age of 13 to help pay his father's debts. This humble background contributed to

making him a popular hero in Iran.

Soleimani joined the IRGC and fought in the Iran-Iraq War during the 1980s. From 1998 until his death, he was the commander of the IRGC's Quds Force, a branch dedicated to unconventional warfare, often through support for non-state armed groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah. According to some analysts, this position made him the second-most powerful person in Iran, after Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

Under his leadership, the Quds Force organized, trained, and armed various Iraqi militia groups that fought against the US occupation of the country after the 2003 invasion. IRGC support for these militias and groups like Hezbollah has led to accusations from the US and other Western governments that Iran is a “state sponsor of terror,” culminating in the US designation of the IRGC as a whole as a terrorist organization.

From the beginning of the Syrian War in 2011, Soleimani became increasingly influential across the Middle East. Iraqi militias under his Quds Force command first crossed into Syria to fight in support of the government of Bashar al-Assad, then later played a key role in the war against the Islamic State organization in Iraq. (The leader of one such militia, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, was killed alongside Soleimani.)

The Quds Force has allegedly also supplied the Houthis in Yemen and has been accused by the US of involvement in a number of attacks on ships and facilities in the Persian Gulf, including a devastating drone attack on Saudi oil fields in September 2019. As a result of his alleged role in these operations, Soleimani was reportedly a target for Israeli, Saudi, and American intelligence agencies and he had been reported killed on several previous occasions.

### What led to the assassination of Soleimani?

The immediate lead-up to the US assassination of Soleimani was an escalating

series of attacks between the US, on the one hand, and Iran and its Iraqi allies, on the other. First, on December 27, 2019, a rocket attack on the K1 military base near Kirkuk, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, killed an American civilian contractor and wounded several US and Iraqi military personnel.

Though no group claimed responsibility for the attack, the US responded two days later by carrying out missile strikes against bases belonging to the Iraqi militia Kata'ib Hezbollah (not to be confused with the Lebanese Hezbollah) on both sides of the Iraq-Syria border. The strikes reportedly killed at least 25 people and wounded at least 50 more, leading Iraq's acting Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi to condemn them as “an unacceptable vicious assault that will have dangerous consequences.”

Two days later (December 31), thousands of protesters converged on the US embassy in Baghdad, using rocks and Molotov cocktails to attack a security kiosk at its entrance. US President Donald Trump posted a tweet the same day claiming that both the rocket attack and the protest at the embassy had been “orchestrated” by Iran, which the Iranian Foreign Ministry denied.

This embassy confrontation seems to have been the last straw from the US perspective, resulting in the decision to kill Soleimani — though the US has repeatedly claimed to have had intelligence indicating that Soleimani was planning attacks on US embassies. Speaking at a private Republican Party fundraising event on January 17, Trump justified the assassination on the grounds that Soleimani was “saying bad things about our country”, but did not mention the alleged imminent threat he is said to have posed to the US.

### A long history of antagonism

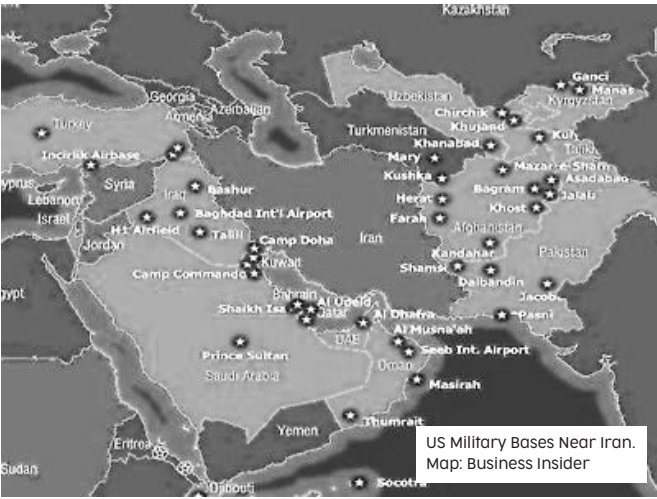
The assassination of Soleimani is only the latest chapter in nearly seventy years of US intervention in Iranian affairs. Hostilities between Iran and the United States can be

traced back as far as US support for the 1953 coup which overthrew democratically-elected Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh. This was motivated by Mossadegh's nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and fears that he would turn towards the Soviet Union.

Following the coup, the Shah Mohammed Reza ruled the country with the help of the secret police force SAVAK, known for torturing and killing opponents of the monarchy, and adhered to a broadly pro-US foreign policy. When the Shah was eventually overthrown by the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the US, seen as having propped up the former monarch's rule, became the new Islamic Republic's chief foreign enemy.

Later that year, a group of student supporters of the Islamic Revolution occupied the US embassy in Tehran to protest the US' refusal to extradite the former Shah to Iran, holding the embassy staff hostage for 444 days. This perceived humiliation of the US on the world stage contributed to President Jimmy Carter's defeat in the 1980 election and has been a lingering wound for the US foreign policy establishment ever since. (On January 4, Trump tweeted a threat to destroy 52 Iranian cultural sites “representing the 52 American hostages taken by Iran many years ago”, in reference to this event.)

US action against Iran continued in the 1980s, when the US provided military support to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran, which launched the devastating Iran-Iraq War that lasted from 1980 to 1988. During the war, which ultimately cost up to a million lives, the US supplied Iraq with technical assistance and intelligence used to carry out chemical weapons attacks against both military and civilian targets. In the later stages of the war, after Iran had extensively deployed mines in the Persian Gulf to prevent arms shipments from reaching Iraq, the US became more directly involved, attacking Iranian oil platforms and warships in Operations Nimble Archer and



Praying Mantis in 1987 and 1988 respectively.

Finally, on July 3, 1988, the USS Vincennes, having entered Iranian territorial waters, shot down Iran Air Flight 655, killing all 290 passengers and crew. The US later claimed that the Vincennes had mistaken the civilian plane for a fighter jet attacking their ship and never apologized for the incident, though it did pay \$131.8 million in compensation.

Moving forward to more recent history, the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003 respectively led to a near-encirclement of Iran by US military bases. US President George W. Bush, in his 2002 State of the Union address, included Iran with Iraq and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in what he called an “axis of evil”, alleging that Iran was “aggressively” pursuing “weapons of mass destruction” and “export[ing] terror.” These were the same charges that would soon be used to justify the invasion of Iraq. Prominent US politicians and officials such as John McCain and John Bolton continued to call for the US to “bomb Iran” throughout the Bush presidency.

### Nuclear Negotiations

In the past decade, hostilities between Iran and the US have centred around Iran's nuclear energy program, and allegations that it was being (or could be) used to illicitly develop nuclear weapons. Under the Shah, the Iranian nuclear energy program was pursued with the assistance of the US and other Western countries, but most of these agreements were suspended following the Islamic Revolution. The US allegedly pressured a number of countries as well as the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) to end their assistance to the Iranian nuclear program, which led the Iranian government to “resort to secrecy in obtaining technology to which they were entitled under the [nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, or NPT],” according to commentator Cyrus Saftari.

This partially-clandestine program was revealed in 2002, leading to a 2006 UN Security Council resolution calling on Iran to suspend uranium enrichment. During a series of tense negotiations, the Iranian government refused to do so, while the US refused to agree to any form of uranium enrichment in Iran. Between 2010 and 2012 a number of Iranian nuclear scientists were assassinated, reportedly by the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad working with Iranian opposition group Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK). During the same pe-

riod, a sophisticated computer virus known as Stuxnet, almost certainly designed by US and/or Israeli intelligence agencies, damaged uranium enrichment centrifuges at the Iranian nuclear facility at Natanz.

In 2015, Iran reached an agreement with the US and other countries on restrictions to its nuclear program in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), widely known as the Iran nuclear deal. This deal allowed Iran to continue research and development on nuclear technology under a strict inspections regime while lifting some of the sanctions previously applied to the country due to its nuclear program, including unfreezing up to \$100 billion in assets.

The JCPOA was widely regarded as one of the Obama administration's most significant foreign policy achievements, but was vociferously criticized by Republicans, leading Trump to officially withdraw the US from the agreement in May 2018 and reapply sanctions on Iran in a campaign of “maximum pressure” on the Islamic Republic.

In response to the US' withdrawal, Iran began uranium enrichment at levels beyond those permitted by the deal, while offering to cease these operations if the remaining signatories to the deal were able to provide sufficient economic incentives to counteract the renewed US sanctions.

### What comes next?

In the first weeks since the assassination there have been massive demonstrations of support for Soleimani, with hundreds of thousands of people attending funeral processions in Iraq and Iran. The parliament of Iraq passed a non-binding resolution calling for US troops to leave the country, which the US has shown no inclination to abide by. The effect of the assassination has so far been largely to consolidate opposition to the US in Iran and Iraq.

It seems that Iran has managed, with its missile strikes of January 7, to retaliate for Soleimani's assassination without provoking further American reprisals, despite Trump's threats. There are also signs of de-escalation from the US, including the State Department's instruction to American diplomatic officials to limit contact with Iranian opposition groups such as the MEK.

For now, the elements within the US and Iranian governments that want to avoid an all-out war seem to have prevailed, but tensions are still high, and the potential for a small incident to escalate into a broader conflict remains.

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# TIES TO THE OTHER SIDE

## The humanistic perspective of an Iranian-Canadian woman

Olivia Hnatyshyn

The conflict between the United States and Iran is anything but new. However, following the assassination of Iran's top military commander, Gen. Qasem Soleimani, tensions between the two countries have been rising. Behind the newspaper headlines rest many worried thoughts, and for an entire community in Canada, this issue hits closer to home. Farnaz Farhang is just one of many Iranian-Canadians worried about the ongoing, and newly escalated Iranian-American conflict.

Born in Tehran, Farhang came to Canada with her family in 2001 at the age of six. Now 25 years old, she is doing her master's degree in criminology at the University of Ottawa. Farhang goes back to her birthplace frequently to visit all of her family still living in Iran.

"All of us have people in Iran and we care about what's going to happen to them," says Farhang, speaking on behalf of the Iranian diaspora.

Farhang says that the newly escalated conflict has brought additional practical issues for the Iranian-Canadian community. Stories about Iranian-Canadians and Americans being held at the U.S. border are becoming more frequent in the news. According to CTV News, Negah Hekmati, an Iranian-born Canadian, was detained at the U.S. border with her family for over five hours. Additional stories are beginning to surface, with families being detained for up to 12 hours.

"You should have the same rights as any other Canadian citizen," explains Farhang. "It's disturbing to know that there still is that difference. It is almost like a second-class citizen."

After the assassination of Gen. Qasem Soleimani made international headlines, many Iranian-Canadians



took to the streets to celebrate the news. Farhang explains that to her knowledge, most people in the Iranian-Canadian community were celebrating the loss of an oppressive leader, rather than the death of a person.

Having family at both ends of the world, Farhang has a unique perspective, making her sympathetic for the people on both sides of this conflict. Although this conflict may feel far from home for other Canadians, Farhang explains that Iranians' suffering "is also connected to people here too. I wish people would care more because we are all part of the same community, even if you're not an Iranian-Canadian."

She explains that it is sometimes frightening to show sympathy towards either side, in fear of inaccurate or stereotypical assumptions

being made in response. Even as someone who regards the conflict in an apolitical manner, Farhang has still experienced hostility on Twitter because of her ability to empathize with both sides.

*"This is a conflict between two governments – it's not the people, but the people are the ones who suffer."*

"Some were saying 'You're a terrorist sympathizer,' which I am absolutely not! On the other end someone said 'You're a CIA robot.' I am absolutely neither one of those things, but sometimes people are so quick to have

dichotomous categories," she explains, frustrated by the misconceptions. "The only stance I actually have on [the conflict] is that I want peace for everyone."

Vigils were held all over the country in January to commemorate the 176 lives lost after a Ukrainian passenger plane was shot down by the Iranian government. People gathered to mourn the innocent victims, many of whom were en route to Canada.

Farhang appreciated the response of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during this tragedy, recognizing his perspective as empathetic. She says, "His stance makes me as an Iranian — I can't speak for everybody — but it makes me feel validated and have a better sense of belonging."

Trudeau not only expressed "the tremendous grief and loss that Canadians are feeling," but also spoke

plainly about the causes of the tragedy, noting that "if there was no escalation recently in the region, those Canadians would be right now home with their families" — comments which had a variety of right-wing pundits jumping down his throat for implicitly criticizing U.S. President Donald Trump.

"This is something that happens when you have conflict and war," Trudeau added. "Innocents bear the brunt of it and it is a reminder why all of us need to work so hard on de-escalation, moving forward to reduce tensions and find a pathway that doesn't involve further conflict and killing."

A set of vigils were held in Toronto on Jan. 16. Toronto is home to the largest community of Iranian-Canadians, with thousands of people joining the commemoration. Conflict arose when the community split, some using the vigil to protest against the Iranian regime, while others wished to keep politics out of the ceremony. Farhang comments on this situation, calling it unsettling.

"In a time of conflict, people should be getting together. There should be more of a social cohesion and solidarity," she explains, saying that this type of international conflict, even when far away, carries over.

"This is a conflict between two governments — it's not the people, but the people are the ones who suffer."

Farhang hopes that through sharing opinions and stories, that people can develop an empathetic stance in the face of conflict. She says that this is an important piece in understanding the communities most directly impacted.

"It's through stories, even just one opinion, that people can break stigmas that they may have attached to certain people, and have a better understanding. At the end of the day we are all human beings."

## REVOLUTION SELFIE

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# GSA ACCOMPLISH-METER

Every year students vote for the executive of the GSA. Executives run on a platform of various initiatives and promises.

This is an update of the status of these projects. For more details, reach out to [gsa@gsacarleton.ca](mailto:gsa@gsacarleton.ca)!



## ASHLEY COURCHENE, PRESIDENT:

COMPLETED GOALS: 3/4 ONGOING GOALS: 1/4

**Develop and strengthen ties with political allies to resist the provincial cuts to post-secondary education**  
Status: Complete

**Work with university admin to preserve essential GSA services:**  
Status: Complete

**Continue lobbying OTranspo for better bus and train routes**  
Status: Complete

**Lobby government and admin for more accessible and affordable education**  
Status: Ongoing



## SHALIMAR WOODS, VP OPERATIONS:

COMPLETED GOALS: 2/3 ONGOING GOALS: 1/3

**Establish cross-organization general meetings to share important information with our membership**  
Status: Complete

**Work closely with peer support, mental health, and sexual assault prevention groups**  
Status: Complete

**Strengthen communication channels between the GSA execs & councillors and their respective faculties.**  
Status: Ongoing



## NAMRATA TILOKANI, VP EXTERNAL:

COMPLETED GOALS: 2/4 ONGOING GOALS: 2/4

**Strengthen relationships between GSA & social advocacy groups in Ottawa**  
Status: Complete

**Lobby university administration to increase funding for Indigenous and International students**  
Status: Ongoing

**Create a fossil fuel divestment campaign**  
Status: Ongoing

**Build safe(r) spaces for racialized students through a BIPOC caucus**  
Status: Complete



## HEMANT GUPTA, VP ACADEMIC:

COMPLETED GOALS: 2/4 ONGOING GOALS: 2/4

**Increase advocacy for international students around student fees and funding**  
Status: In Progress

**Foster open communication between FGPA & students**  
Status: Complete

**Lobby for better co-op programs in all departments & faculties**  
Status: In Progress

**Establish 1-on-1 meetings with departments for new students through council**  
Status: Complete



## JESSE WHATTAM, VP FINANCE:

COMPLETED GOALS: 3/4 ONGOING GOALS: 1/4

**Mitigate the impact of the "Student Choice Initiative"**  
Status: Complete

**Expand outreach to inform students of grant and scholarship opportunities**  
Status: Complete

**Optimize the operations and structure of Mike's Place Pub**  
Status: Complete

**Establish regular student financial life workshops**  
Status: Ongoing



# FORD'S GOVERNMENT PUSHING A BILL TO PUNISH WHISTLEBLOWERS

## Proposed Bill Could Make Exposing Animal Cruelty Illegal



Emma Chamberlain

In December, a bill was introduced by Ford's government that removes the public's ability to know what goes on behind closed doors on animal farms. Bill 156 — formally known as "Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act" — focuses on punishment for whistleblowers and freedom behind closed doors for factory farms and processing facilities.

The bill has passed into the second reading stage, which could be bad news for anyone wanting to know more about where their food comes from.

Ontario's government proposed this bill with the intention to provide privacy to "farmers" — by which they mean the agriculture industry, which increasingly consists of corporate-owned agro-factories staffed by precarious workers.

The legislation, if passed, will result in harsh fines for anyone who trespasses on "animal protection zones" (such as "animal processing facilities" and "other prescribed premises") or exposes cruel or unfair conditions.

The bill prohibits individuals from entering an "animal protection zone" and also from "interfering or interacting" with farm animals without the landowner's consent. (Leveller Editors: Protection of private property is, naturally, where the Ford government becomes obsessed with consent.)

Under these guidelines, if a visitor to a farm witnesses troubling conditions and films them without consent from the landowner, they could be fined up to \$15,000. Saving an animal from death, injury, or abuse would incur the same penalty, naturally.

The transportation of the animals is also subject to secrecy, with the bill stretching to hide the conditions of travelling animals from public view. It is legal in Canada to transport animals for days at a time, in heat and cold, without food, water, or rest.

Undercover exposures have proved beneficial in revealing farms which don't meet legal, humane conditions. The Millbank Fur Farm north of Guelph, for example, is facing charges after a whistleblower found suffer-

*Public access to truth is more important than industries controlling what we see.*

ing minks on their farm in 2018. If this bill "intended to protect farm animals" (in the words of its opening phrase) had been in place at the time, the abuse would have gone uncovered.

By putting up large walls between the industry and the consumers they sell to, we give potential perpetrators a mask to hide behind. We leave the public in the dark about where their food and clothing comes from.

Similar legislation, targeted at prosecuting whistleblowers, has been ruled unconstitutional in several American states. It seems obvious that public access to truth is more important than industries controlling what we see. It's our food, after all.

## Our office is here for you with:

- Monthly town halls and events
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  - Assistance with government services (such as OSAP, ODSP, Service Ontario, etc.)
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**CUPE 4600, the union that represents Contract Instructors and Teaching Assistants at Carleton University, is currently in bargaining. This is what we are fighting for:**



**TEACHING ASSISTANTS**

**Defend health and dental benefits!**

The health and dental benefits for over 2800 TAs, SAs, and RAs at Carleton have been under threat for more than a year due to insufficient funding. But with Doug Ford’s Bill 124 now in effect, there is a very real concern that Carleton management will claim they cannot continue to fund benefits at the current level, and that they may propose cuts to the benefits program.

**Reasonable class size limits!**

Class sizes at Carleton go up every year, and Carleton management has so far refused to discuss placing any reasonable limits on the number of students that can be assigned to a single TA. That means the workload of TAs at Carleton is increasing without any real increase in wages or other benefits. Fighting for reasonable TA to student ratios isn’t just good for union members, it’s good for students, too. Our working conditions are student learning conditions!

**Fight for a fair wage!**

Doug Ford’s Bill 124 limits salary increases for all public sector workers to 1% a year. With annual cost of living/inflation price increases usually falling between 1.5% and 2%, an increase of just 1% is effectively a pay cut. Bill 124 presents a real challenge for unions in bargaining right now but, with member support, our Bargaining Team will be better positioned to find a solution.

**CONTRACT INSTRUCTORS**

**Defend job security**

Contract Instructors are very precarious workers. One of the few ways that CIs get stability in their work at Carleton is through their incumbency rights. Now Carleton is trying to gut these incumbency rights and make it almost impossible for new hires to gain incumbency for courses that they teach. This is a major attack on the working conditions of Contract Instructors, and CUPE 4600 is not interested in throwing away the rights of our members.

**A better teaching evaluation model**

Anonymous online teaching evaluations do not work. The results unfairly discriminate against CIs of colour and women. Contract Instructors know this, and so does Carleton. Yet despite this well know fact, Carleton is refusing to move towards a fairer model of evaluating instructors. We believe discrimination has no place in job evaluations!

**Fight for a fair pay!**

Doug Ford’s Bill 124, which limits salary increases for all public sector workers to 1% a year, applies to CIs as well. In a bargaining year that is already so limited by the meddling from the Conservatives, it is shameful that Carelton would even consider attacking the working conditions of CIs.

**STAY UP TO DATE: [WWW.CUPE4600.CA](http://WWW.CUPE4600.CA)**





# TRUST IN RECONCILIATION

Colonial Cops, Colonial Courts: New documentary follows the aftermath of Colton Boushie's death

Josh Hawley



"Is there a Cree word for 'justice'?" Tasha Hubbard's 10-year-old son asks his grandfather in Hubbard's latest documentary, *nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up*. Eeyou relationships are built around treating each other right, the grandfather says, and this is what the language reflects. There was never a need for Cree people to seek 'justice.' But colonialism changed all that.

The search for justice in a society built on colonial violence, racism, and the privatization of land is at the centre of *We Will Stand Up*, a moving account of the aftermath of the 2016 killing of 22-year-old Colton Boushie. The shooting of Boushie, an Indigenous man from Red Pheasant Cree Na-

tion in Saskatchewan, by white farmer Gerald Stanley dredged up the genocidal substratum of Canadian colonialism, sending waves around the country.

The film was screened at the University of Ottawa on Jan. 13, as part of the Seeing Red Film Series organized by the University of Ottawa Indigenous Legal Traditions Committee and the Indigenous Law Students Association.

Writer and director Tasha Hubbard was in attendance for a discussion after the screening with law professor Tracey Lindberg. Lindberg, a member of the As'in'i'wa'chi Ni'yaw Nation Rocky Mountain Cree whose research involves preserving and translating traditional Indigenous law, also has a close connec-

tion to Saskatchewan. She studied law at the University of Saskatchewan and at one point practiced law with Gerald Stanley's defence lawyer, Scott Spencer.

The documentary skillfully weaves multiple narratives together. Director Tasha Hubbard brings in her own personal story of adoption into a white family and her family connections with Boushie's family. Animated segments relate Boushie's death to the 1885 hanging of eight Indigenous warriors following the North-West Rebellion.

During the post-screening discussion, Lindberg asked Hubbard about her decision to include these oral and visual histories.

"Time is not linear. The

historical moments fold into the now," Hubbard said. This understanding is present throughout *nîpawistamâsowin*. The documentary is a journey for all generations, each one teaching and learning from the others. In many ways, the film acts as a love letter to Hub-

*"Is there  
a Cree  
word for  
'justice'?"*

bard's son, nephew, and all young warriors.

Boushie's killing is profoundly significant, but it is not an isolated case and Hubbard's film puts it in historical context. She puts on the screen what Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt outlined in their 2018 *Globe and Mail* opinion piece "How the death of Colten Boushie became recast as the story of a knight protecting his castle."

As Starblanket and Hunt put it, "Indigenous removal and erasure aren't just historical events; rather, our attempted eradication has to be actively carried out in perpetuity." In line with this, one of the strong points of the film is the way it shows the system was stacked against Boushie and

his family before he was even struck by Stanley's bullet.

After Boushie was killed, the RCMP issued a press release around 20 hours later on Aug. 10, 2016. They buried Boushie's death, rather than leading with it. The release begins with "five individuals entered onto private property." An unnamed person's death is only referenced at the end of the second paragraph.

As Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations Chief Bobby Cameron put it, "The news release the RCMP issued the following day provided just enough prejudicial information for the average reader to draw their own conclusions that the shooting was somehow justified. The messaging in an RCMP news release should not fuel racial tensions."

The film also shows the struggle between an internalized trust of legal and political systems and the awareness that these systems are the operational organs of colonial power. This is most apparent when we see Sheldon Wuttunee, the former elected chief of Boushie's band council Red Pheasant Cree Nation, tout the line — once Stanley was on trial — that trusting in a fair and reasoned legal process is the most responsible way to move forward. Later in the film, Wuttunee's faith in the state wanes and we begin to see him questioning that authority.

*nîpawistamâsowin* is the third of Hubbard's feature documentaries produced by the National Film Board. *Two Worlds Colliding* (2004) exposed the "starlight tours," where Saskatchewan police would abandon arrested Indigenous people in isolated locations in freezing weather.

*Birth of a Family* (2016) documented the reunion of four Dene siblings taken and adopted out during the Sixties Scoop.

*nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up* has been receiving accolades and awards on the festival circuit. Last April, the film opened Hot Docs, the largest documentary festival in so-called North America, and went on to win the festival's Best Canadian Feature Documentary Award. The film also picked up the Colin Low Award for Canadian Documentary at DOXA, the largest doc fest in Western so-called Canada.

In October, the film picked up another handful of awards. At the imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival, the film won both the Sun Jury Award and Audience Choice Award for Best Feature, and the Directors Guild of Canada awarded Hubbard with the Discovery Award.

A 44-minute cut of *nîpawistamâsowin* will air on CBC Docs POV on Feb. 23. This summer, the full-length version will be available on APTN.

The film was screened at the University of Ottawa on Jan. 13, as part of the Seeing Red Film Series organized by the University of Ottawa Indigenous Legal Traditions Committee and the Indigenous Law Students Association. The next and final film in the Seeing Red Film Series is Sheila North's *1200+*, a documentary about missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, on Wednesday, Jan. 22.

Meanwhile, on Feb. 9, there will be a day of action marking the two-year anniversary of the verdict on Colton Boushie's killing.

## WHODUNIT



## MATCH THESE WORDS OF WISDOM TO THE PUBLIC FIGURE!

- "In my view, there is no racism in Canada."
- "Lethal overwatch req'd... Use as much violence toward the [We't'suwei'en's checkpoint] gate as you want."
- "The police are here to support the invasion of Indigenous territories. It is what they've always done."
- "The greatest crimes in the world are not committed by people breaking the rules but by people following the rules. It's people who follow orders that drop bombs and massacre villages."
- "Reconciliation is the assimilation project refurbished through a false facade of peace."
- "In an era where we can see the impacts of climate change so vividly, to see governments doubling down on a fossil fuel-driven infrastructure, it makes no sense."
- "Who has more power – Mark Zukerberg or US Congress?"
- "Canada needs a Canadian version of Donald Trump."
- "I made more movies directed by women and about women than any filmmaker... It all got eviscerated because of what happened. My work has been forgotten."
- "[Trump] doesn't have to say anything particularly Christian to appeal to evangelical Christians, because the evangelical movement has been more about white nativism, nationalism, and traditionalism than it has been about more Christlike beliefs, like care for the poor."

- Karim Amer, co-director of documentary *The Great Hack*
- Diane Francis, *National Post* commentator
- Lynn Beyak, Canadian Senator who has praised the "good deeds" of "residential school workers"
- Anne Spice, Tlingit land defender
- Leon Thomas, of YouTube channel Renegade Cut
- Tamara Starblanket, Cree author and co-chair of the North American Indigenous Peoples' Caucus (NAIPC)
- Harvey Weinstein, serial rapist and disgraced movie mogul
- RCMP Bronze Commander Robert Pikola, as recorded in RCMP strategy meeting notes released by *The Guardian*
- Banksy, anonymous street artist, vandal
- Sonia Furstenuau, deputy leader of the B.C. Green Party



(a) Lynn Beyak; (b) Robert Pikola; (c) Anne Spice; (d) Banksy; (e) Tamara Starblanket; (f) Sonia Furstenuau; (g) Karim Amer; (h) Taylor C. Nokes; (i) Harvey Weinstein; (j) Leon Thomas



# VENUS ENVY / SEXUAL HEALTH & PLEASURE ALERT

## TALKING CONSENT WITH TEENS

Hey Venus Envy,

With Ontario Premier Doug Ford in power, it doesn't seem like we'll get decent sex education in public schools any time soon. Can you share some tips on how to talk to teens about consent?

I only remember being embarrassed when adults talked about sex as a teen (back in the '90s, the last time the sex-ed curriculum was updated), but then all they seemed to discuss was mechanics – anatomy, how to put on a condom, things like that.

Thanks,  
Trying to Educate About Consent and Hookups

Dear TEACH,

A surprising thing I've discovered through my time at Venus Envy is that most people love to talk about their experiences of sex education in high school. Not because they got incredible sex ed, but because their experiences have been outrageously bad.

Personally, I had one teacher talk about his friend's "green, oozing penis" as a lesson on STIs, and another who asked a 13-year-old classmate to explain rimming when she wasn't familiar with the term. And honestly, that's pretty stellar compared to some other horror stories I've heard.

It's also rare that anyone I talk to remembers consent being involved in their sex education – I certainly don't. Yet it's the single most important thing we need to know about sex.

Sometimes we have a tendency to make consent seem like it's the simplest, most obvious practice in the world. And on one level it is – if someone says no, or doesn't say anything, or is pressured into saying yes, then that's not consent. No grey area, no wiggle room, only yes means yes.

The problem is that a lot of sex education stops there, and that leaves a lot missing. Teens (like all of us) already live in a world that is full of consent violations, and likely already feel uneasy or unsure about things they see happening around them.

So start the conversation there, by asking about what they already know: What do they think

they're 'supposed' to do when having sex? How do their friends talk about sex? Who's talked to them about consent up to this point, and what have they thought about it?

As you talk, make sure to really listen to their answers. You might disagree with some things, but try your hardest not to jump in with judgement – shame is rarely a useful teaching tool. Instead, share how human you are, and how you came to understand the importance of consent.

Maybe you used to believe something you no longer do, or there's a time you wish you'd spoken out and didn't. What were the impacts of that on you and the people around you? What do you wish you'd done instead?

Make it clear that just because something's common, it doesn't mean it's consensual. If sex is being used as a weapon or revenge, if pictures or videos are shared without someone's knowledge, if someone is falling down drunk – none of those situations are consensual. Repeat, over and over, that you can always change your mind, that sex you're not enjoying is very rarely worth having, that you never owe sex to anyone and no one ever owes it to you.

Also talk about how to do consent, practically-speaking. Emphasize that it's not one question, but an ongoing process of checking in. Sometimes people hear this and imagine an awkward, robotic series of questions that interrupts the passion – but it doesn't have to be that way! So offer some alternative suggestions about ways to ask for consent, how to say yes and say no, and how to handle rejection without making the other person feel bad.

In my experience, teens also love to hear that good consent practices lead to hotter and more fulfilling sex. This is not the only reason you should care about consent, but it is a valuable message to push back against the idea that consent is boring, unsexy, and incredibly uncool. In fact, consent is anything but that. While it is always, always necessary, it's also the foundation on which pleasure is built.

Sincerely,  
SAM WHITTLE  
Sex Educator and Owner of Venus Envy

SEND QUESTIONS YOU WANT ANSWERED TO EDITORS@LEVELLER.CA OR DIRECT TO SAM AT EDUCATION@VENUSENVY.CA



Art: Crystal Yung

## LISTINGS JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2020

### WED JAN 22

**PANEL:** Sustainable and affordable housing hosted by Ottawa Coalition for a Green New Deal. Dominion Chalmers United Church, 355 Cooper St. 6 PM.

**PANEL:** So you want to get pregnant? Queering pregnancy and conception. 95 Clegg St. 7 PM.

**CAMPAIGN LAUNCH:** Free Transit Ottawa. Avant-Garde Bar, 135 1/2 Besserer St. 7 PM.

### THURS JAN 23

**WORKSHOP:** Resolutions for real reconciliation in the workplace. MediaStyle, 131 Bank St. 5 PM.

### TUES JAN 28

**WORKSHOP:** Healthy Relationships. #201 - 377 Dalhousie St. 6 PM.

### WED JAN 29

**RALLY:** to declare a housing emergency in Ottawa. Marion Dewar Plaza, Ottawa City Hall. 9 AM.

**PROTEST:** #BellLetUsTalk organized by the Criminalization and Punishment Education Project. Bell Place, 160

Elgin St. 12 PM.

**LECTURE:** on Trans cinema. SAW Video, 67 Nicholas Street. 6 PM.

**FILM SCREENING:** Revolution Selfie: the Red Battalion. ByTowne Cinema, 325 Rideau St. 6:30 PM.

### SAT FEB 1

**PROM:** Glitter: A Black Gurl Prom. 67 Nicholas Street. 8 PM.

**SHOW:** Spice! The New Decade. 35 Laurel Street. 7 PM.

**PANEL:** Politics that work: How the Green Party and the NDP can work together to bring about change. Glebe Community Centre, 175 Third Ave. 7 PM.

### FRI FEB 7

**LAUNCH:** LGBT YouthLine launch of the Provincial Youth Ambassador Project needs assessment result. Impact Hub Ottawa, 123 Slater St. 11:30 AM.

### SAT FEB 8

**CLOTHING SWAP:** Capital Pride. Ottawa Art Gallery, 50 Mackenzie King Bridge. 12 PM.

**MARKET:** Really really free market! Winter edition! 95

Clegg St. 1 PM.

**COMEDY:** The Fembassy - Winter. 35 Laurel St. 8 PM.

**WORKSHOP:** Beyond eggplants and peaches: relationship communication IRL. 67 Nicholas St. 10:30 AM.

### TUES FEB 11

**ART SERIES:** Honouring Black History. 57 Lyndale Ave. 7 PM.

### WED FEB 12

**CRAFTS:** Non-hetronormative valentine craft night. 377 Dalhousie St. 6:30 PM.

### SAT FEB 15

**SWIM:** Winter 2020 trans children + youth swim night. Jack Purcell Community Centre, 320 Jack Purcell Lane. 6 PM.

### THURS FEB 20

**SHOW:** Hua Li / Backxwash / + tba. Pressed Cafe, 750 Gladstone Ave. 8 PM.

### FRI FEB 28

**MUSIC:** Celebrate and commemorate Paul Dewar. SAW Gallery, 67 Nicholas St. 5:30 PM.

## Upcoming Workshops at venus envy



### I'm Coming!: A Guide to Women's Orgasm

January 21 6:30pm. \$10 student price

### How to Talk Dirty

January 30 7:30pm. \$10 student price

### Knotty Fun: An Intro to Rope Bondage

Feb 1 7:30pm. \$10 student price

### Next Level Sex: An Out of Box Experience

Feb 4 6:30pm. \$10 student price

### Going Down: A Guide to Fellatio

Feb 6 7:30pm. \$10 student price

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# USING THEATRE TO QUESTION CANADIAN IDENTITY

A review of *Take d Milk, Nah?* by Jiv Parasram

Kristen Darch

The last time I saw a one-person Canadian identity play (not naming any names) I left feeling bored, irritated, chafing under the performative preciousness of the whole thing, and wondering if maybe the strains of adulthood under capitalism had finally caused me to lose all appreciation of art.

*Take d Milk, Nah?* by Jiv Parasram, playing at the NAC, brings a heartening jolt of humour and truth that showed me that this wasn't actually the case. The problem wasn't me — it was the Canadian identity play, and the clichés and colonial ideas that come baked into the very form. A hero's journey, the hero's epic wrestling with the self, the finding of their unique 'voice.'

Jiv succinctly and unpretentiously talks through some of the main features, central assumptions and narrative structure of what we have come to know as 'the Canadian identity play.'

Canadian? Jiv skewers the legitimacy not just of the Canadian nation state and its ongoing impact on Indigenous peoples, but the idea of nation states and property ownership in general.

Identity? Jiv specifically looks at identity as a construct and the process of identity formation through a Hindu lens, from which identity is viewed very differently.

Play? Jiv comically spoofs some of the most painfully cheesy clichés that have emerged from the theatrical form. Flashbacks to conversations between multiple generations of a family, all played by a single actor anyone?

But it's not all analysis. His stories take us through a few time periods, through brilliant impersonations of cows, humans, and Winston Churchill, from Nova Scotia to India to Trinidad and back, and keep us laughing and thinking (and maybe unexpectedly crying) the whole time.

Music is used throughout in a way

that changes pace and keeps the audience alert, ranging from traditional Indian songs and 70s rock to 90s rap and R&B. Jiv's tone shifts from light comedy to frank and hard-hitting firsthand accounts of racism and violence. The more hard-hitting parts, the more emotional parts, are spoken plainly, avoiding the melodrama and sentimentality that tends to undermine other efforts.

The set is vibrant, dynamic and alive with incense and smoke. As he walks us through concepts in Hinduism that take us beyond the material world, the use of enveloping smoke and light invoke a realm of the formless. We enter into Jiv's mind through his words, as he grapples with the idea of the self with boundaries around it — me over here and you over there, clearly divided — a way of thinking with deep origins in empire.

As the smoke clears, this formlessness gives way to reveal a strikingly psychedelic visual transformation of the set in one of the most surprising moments of the performance.

Maybe it is part of Jiv's personal ethical philosophy, as tied to both an anti-colonial analysis and Hinduism, that the audience is spoken to in a way that cultivates a sense of basic respect and equality. We are not expected to 'buy into' anything or to accept any condescending clichés.

In Jiv's performance, there is room for both being moved aesthetically and emotionally, *and* having critical thoughts. In a final surprising interactive move, which needs to be experienced, he opens up the space for a meditation on personal power in the face of marginalization.

At the end I stood up to clap, as I have done at almost every play I have gone to, but this time it felt different. After having just broken down the mental construct of the self that separates, we were in effect clapping for ourselves, for all of us.

## Words of Wisdom from Jiv

*"My concern [was to avoid] simply creating a play for a mainstream audience that was simply 'light and funny' — a nice digestible way to passively take in Indo-Caribbean culture. That really wasn't what I was into. So we broke it open — making it a critique of the notion of identity from a dharmic perspective."*

*"In a way what we try to do here is set up the material reality of division — through systemic oppression in this case — and then subvert it with the monist philosophy that is inherently immaterial."*

*"It's probably my (personally) most complete stab at what decolonization in thought and process transfers into as an artistic offering."*

*"That question — what does decolonization mean through aesthetics; and what does that look like for each individual artist? — has become [our] research question as we try to contextualize our existence as publicly-funded arts organization on occupied territories."*

## HOROSCOPES BY LAUREN SCOTT



**CAPRICORN** (DEC. 22 - JAN. 19)

Happy New Year, Cap! Have you heard the news about Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's new beard? I am tasking you with shaving it, as he will only trust a fellow Capricorn. His sneaky follicles have been shifting mainstream media attention away from important issues. Get your clippers ready.

**AQUARIUS** (JAN. 20 - FEB. 18)

You're an air sign right, Aquarius? Is there any way that you can keep winds low and warm while teachers, educators, and allies take to the picket lines for rotating strikes across the province?

**PISCES** (FEB. 19 - MARCH 20)

They say that you're a dreamer, Pices. So go to bed... early this time.

**ARIES** (MARCH 21 - APRIL 19)

Hey Aries, what do you call a lack-lustre Conservative politician who has finally faded out of federal leadership? Sheer.

**TAURUS** (APRIL 20 - MAY 20)

Have you heard the rumours about you, Taurus? Someone told me that you're stubborn about your (somewhat questionable) choices. But I disagree. I like your new mullet. So no need to change your mind - not that you ever would.

**GEMINI** (MAY 21 - JUNE 20)

Hey fellow Gemini, can I let off some steam about another sign sister? Ontario Transportation Minister Caroline Mulroney was recently in my hometown of Hamilton to announce the cancellation of our much-hyped LRT. Can you send in your Ottawa LRT complaints to help console me?

**CANCER** (JUNE 21 - JULY 22)

Any New Year's resolutions, Cancer? As an empathetic and nurturing sign, I think you should focus on taking care of yourself. But don't let that go to your head and harden you to the needs of others, you crab.

**LEO** (JULY 23 - AUG. 22)

Do you think mullets will ever come back, Leo? Why do I ask? Oh, no reason. There's no business in my front, if that's what you're thinking. Just asking for a friend.

**VIRGO** (AUG. 23 - SEPT. 22)

Kids these days, right Virgo? Ottawa high school students in the Catholic board are going to be swapping Shakespeare in favour of highlighting Indigenous literature, with some schools in the public board having already made the shift. There's lots more work to do Virgo, but it's nice to finally see a good news story amid all this 2020 doom and gloom.

**LIBRA** (SEPT. 23 - OCT. 22)

You're the sign of scales, represented by the Justice tarot card. So do what you can to pursue social and environmental justice, but don't be a pragmatic fuck.

**SCORPIO** (OCT. 23 - NOV. 21)

Your fellow Scorp Doug Ford and his PC cronies have dug themselves into a shithole with their environmental policies ... literally. In December, Extinction Rebellion dumped manure in front of Ford's constituency office. So, Scorpio, want to team up to keep this momentum going? What should we dump next? Compost? Piles of climate science research? The Progressive Conservatives from office? Let's brainstorm.

**SAGITTARIUS** (NOV. 22 - DEC. 21)

It's clear we're living in a historic(ly terrible) time and it's easy to get swept up in a frenzy after reading story after story about wildfires, corrupt politicians, and inequality on so many different fronts. Be conscious and compassionate, Saggi, but set limits if it becomes too overwhelming.

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