Science protests held across Canada

Our reporters
24 April 2017

Demonstrations took place in 18 towns and cities across Canada on Saturday in conjunction with the global March for Science, including Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and many regional and university towns.

Around 4,000 people turned out to Toronto City Hall and marched to the provincial parliament buildings at Queen's Park. Speakers at the demonstration included scientists and science students along with local representatives from the Native and environmental communities.

Among the stated objectives of the march organizers in Toronto was to advocate for scientific integrity so that, "the process of scientific research should be free from politically-motivated vetting/filtering." While advocating for evidence-based policymaking, the organizers also stated that they want to promote "more inclusive science" and to celebrate Canadian scientists.

Canadian scientists engaged in repeated protests against the former Harper Conservative government, which imposed devastating budget cuts, redirected government-funded science away from basic scientific investigations to projects aimed at immediate commercial success, and muzzled government scientists by preventing them from speaking out. While the Liberals, elected to power in 2015, have loosened some of the restrictions on scientists expressing themselves, they have done nothing to reverse any of the budget cuts imposed by successive federal governments over recent decades, preferring instead to focus on deepening their strategic partnership with US imperialism in its military interventions around the world.

Tyler, a student engineer, and Alexis, who works in IT, were in Toronto from Florida for the march because they believed that people need to wake up to all the things that science brings us.

Alexis told the WSWS, "I think the profit's getting to everyone, it's snowing everybody. Being able to make money seems like it's more important than the environment. Of all the things that are happening in the US right now, the one thing we're never going to be able to reverse is all the environmental damage that's occurring. It's very scary."

In the capital, Ottawa, several hundred demonstrated outside parliament. The event was jointly organized by Evidence for Democracy, a group set up in 2012 by scientists during the protests against the Harper government.

Around 300 demonstrators gathered in Edmonton, Alberta's provincial capital. Several scientists spoke, including a member of the University of Alberta and a science teacher. Speakers called for science-based policymaking by governments and for more to be done to involve communities, such as First Nations, who have traditionally been excluded from science. A member of the crowd told a WSWS reporter that others had requested to speak but had been prevented from doing so.

Political parties were conspicuous by their absence. There was no presence of the New Democratic Party, which since taking over the provincial government in May 2015 has sought to pose as a determined advocate of action to combat climate change, while at the same time working systematically to uphold the interests of the province's big oil concerns by urging the construction of new pipelines.

In Vancouver, some 1,000 turned out for a rally outside Science World, while on the other side of the country, protesters in Halifax carried signs reading "Defiance for science" and "Without science, it's just fiction."

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