More details emerge on how Canadian governments covered up aerosol transmission of COVID-19

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In a November 12 tweet, Canada's chief public health officer Dr. Theresa Tam publicly acknowledged for the first time that aerosols—infinitesimally small airborne viral particles—play a major role in the spread of COVID-19. In the three weeks since this admission, the *World Socialist Web Site* has received further information demonstrating how the federal government covered up the threat of airborne transmission by continuing to insist, even when its own briefing documents said otherwise, that the main source of infection was respiratory droplets that fall rapidly to the ground.

"Since the outset of the pandemic, we've learned a lot about the SARS2 virus that causes COVID-19," Tam's November 12 tweet read. "Importantly, we've learned how the virus can linger in fine aerosols and remain suspended in the air we breathe. Much like expelled smoke lingers in poorly ventilated spaces, the SARS2 virus can remain suspended in the air, with those in close proximity to the infected person inhaling more aerosols, especially in indoor and poorly ventilated spaces."

Despite the wide-ranging implications of this acknowledgement, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has not followed up with any change in its recommendations. Governments at the federal and provincial levels continue to advise the public simply to wear "well-fitted" masks, without specifying their quality—a measure that is effective only against large respiratory droplets that fall quickly to the ground. Yet scientists have long understood that to protect oneself against an airborne pathogen, masks with the N95 designation at a minimum are necessary. Only such high-quality masks can protect against aerosols, which, in contrast to droplets, are minute viral particles that can float in the air for extended periods of time.

The refusal of all governments to provide science-based public health advice is inseparable from their support for a "profits before life" pandemic policy, which has prioritized the protection of corporate fortunes and investor wealth over the health and wellbeing of the population. From the Trudeau government on down, Canadian authorities have been focused in recent months on removing almost all public health restrictions to mitigate the spread of the virus. Financial support for workers has been all but scrapped in order to force everyone back into dangerous workplaces, even as a winter surge begins to take hold. The criminality of these policies is made even clearer with the emergence of the new Omicron variant, which appears to be more transmissible and may partially evade the immunity provided by vaccines.

Under these conditions, the WSWS ' exposure of the Canadian government's concealment for almost two years of the threat posed by airborne transmission provoked widespread anger. Our initial article gained a read ership of thousands across Canada , and many educators and a scientist spoke to us about their concerns.

One WSWS reader provided further damning information based on her own research that demonstrates just how conscious the government was about concealing key public health advice from the population. According to the Internet Archive, which documents the history of webpages and changes made to their content, the PHAC's webpage on "modes of transmission" for COVID-19 stated on June 28, 2021: "Reports of outbreaks in settings with poor ventilation suggest that infectious aerosols were suspended in the air and that people inhaled the virus. These settings have included a choir practice, fitness classes, and restaurants. Transmission in these settings may have been facilitated by certain environmental conditions, such as re-circulated air. There is no evidence

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at this time that the virus is able to transmit over long distances through the air."

The Internet Archive entry for the same page from July 1, 2021, contained the following altered passage, "Reports of outbreaks in settings with poor ventilation suggest that infectious aerosols were suspended in the air and that people inhaled the virus at distances beyond 2 metres. Such settings have included choir practice, fitness classes, and restaurants, as well as other settings. Transmission in these settings may have been facilitated by certain environmental conditions, such as re-circulated air. Activities that increase generation of respiratory droplets and aerosols may increase risk in these settings (such as singing, shouting, or exercising)."

If one visits the current version of the webpage, it states that the last update was undertaken on June 29, 2021.

The timeline of events is of great significance, since it was precisely during this period that the ruling class doubled down on its "learn to live with the virus" strategy. On July 1, 2021, Alberta's United Conservative Party (UCP) Premier Jason Kenney effectively declared the pandemic over, saying that his province was "open for summer." All public health measures were scrapped, with catastrophic results. Alberta subsequently suffered a devastating fourth wave that led to the overwhelming of its hospital system. Triage, the process of rationing care to those most likely to survive while others are left to die, was adopted in several regions. Similarly criminal policies were implemented in other provinces, including Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, and NDP-governed British Columbia.

The federal Trudeau government initially responded to the UCP government's reckless decision by saying nothing. The Prime Minister finally found time more than two months later to criticize Kenney, but that was only because he was embroiled in a tightly fought federal election campaign in which his main rival, Tory leader Erin O'Toole, was a close Kenney ally. Trudeau's criticism of Kenney in September, coming as Alberta's ICUs were overflowing, was not accompanied by any practical measures to combat the pandemic.

Likewise, Tam's November 12 announcement has brought with it no practical consequences. Just three weeks earlier, Ontario premier Doug Ford announced a proposal to end all public health measures, including mask-wearing, by March 2022. Two weeks after Tam's announcement, as news of the Omicron variant emerged, the Trudeau government underscored its firm support for Ford's murderous policy by refusing to adopt any effective measures to hinder Omicron's spread.

The callous indifference shown by the entire Canadian ruling elite to the health and very lives of the population is producing widespread anger and outrage. The WSWS reader who uncovered the surreptitious change to the PHAC's webpage told us, "Why did they wait till November 12, wasting so many months to put emphasis on this? Why did we have federal elections where we were told safety measures such as plexiglas barriers were in place? …This is extremely frustrating to me. Additionally, why are they recommending cloth and medical masks when we know very well, and they admit to it too, that they are only designed for droplets?"

She concluded, "I'll be honest, they have lost my trust. These two years have been very telling."

These latest revelations underscore the critical importance of the Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 pandemic initiated by the *World Socialist Web Site*. The purpose of the Inquest is to uncover the political, social, and economic forces that permitted the deadly virus to spread around the world, resulting in mass infection and death. The Inquest is documenting the criminal refusal of capitalist governments around the world to adopt the most basic public health protections against COVID-19, and gathering reports from workers, students, and medical professionals on their experiences during the pandemic. This work is critical to educate working people about the nature of the pandemic, which is a precondition for the development of a mass movement led by the working class to fight for the global elimination of COVID-19.

We strongly encourage all medical professionals, scientists, workers, and young people who wish to assist the work of the Inquest to contact us using the form below. The Cross-Canada Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee, an organization set up by education workers and their supporters to fight for the shutdown of in-person learning and nonessential production, with full wages paid to all workers impacted, to bring the pandemic under control, will discuss the work of the Inquest **at its next meeting this Sunday, December 5, at 1 p.m. eastern time**. Anyone wishing to attend should email cersc.csppb@gmail.com .

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