

Canadian educators declare support for Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic

Cross-Canada Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee
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Education workers from British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec met Sunday at the latest meeting of the Cross-Canada Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee (CERSC) to discuss the urgency of intensifying the struggle to close schools for in-person learning amid a renewed surge of COVID-19. The meeting declared its support for the Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic initiated by the *World Socialist Web Site*, and adopted a resolution in solidarity with British mother Lisa Diaz, who is being targeted by the UK government for refusing to send her daughter into COVID-infested schools and her courageous fight to prevent the mass infection of children.

Opening the meeting, WSWS writer Roger Jordan stressed that the emergence of the Omicron variant was the direct product of the ruling elite's criminal response to the pandemic. By opening schools and the economy, dismantling public health measures, and relying exclusively on vaccines to end the pandemic, governments in every country allowed the virus to spread, creating the perfect conditions for it to mutate. Mass vaccination is essential, Jordan explained, but this can only be effective as part of a comprehensive strategy to eliminate COVID-19 that includes the closure of all nonessential production and schools to in-person learning, with full financial compensation to all workers affected.

Jordan stressed that the ruling elite's policy was

determined by class interests. "We have described it as "profits before life." They cannot tolerate even for a moment an interruption in their accumulation of wealth, which is why they reject lockdowns," he explained. Jordan insisted that working people required their own class-based response to the pandemic to protect the health and lives of millions internationally. This is the significance of the Global Workers' Inquest, he concluded, which seeks to expose before a global audience the social and economic forces behind the criminal response to the pandemic and mobilize a mass worker-led movement to stop it.

A lively discussion ensued, with participants addressing the state of the pandemic in Canada, a strike by daycare workers in Quebec, and the absence of COVID-19 protections in workplaces.

Laurent Lafrance, an educator from Quebec, reported on the indefinite strike launched last week by around 11,000 daycare workers across the province. Around 400 daycare centres have been closed by the job action, he reported, which was called to demand across-the-board wage increases. The hard-right government of Premier Francois Legault offered less than half the pay increase to support workers, including maintenance and kitchen staff, that was offered to daycare educators, he explained.

Noting that daycare workers have been on the frontline throughout the pandemic and work under difficult conditions, Lafrance concluded, "This committee should make clear its solidarity with the strikers."

Dylan Lubao, a writer for the WSWS, provided details on the resurgence of COVID-19 across Canada. "The warnings of scientists and health care

professionals that failing to implement stricter public health measures would lead to a winter surge of the pandemic are beginning to materialize,” said Lubao. “We are now approaching the grim milestone of 30,000 deaths in Canada, the vast majority of which were among the elderly as well as workers toiling amid extremely dangerous pandemic conditions.”

He explained that infections are increasing across all of Canada’s most populous provinces, and that, as of the time of the meeting, Omicron cases have already been detected in Ontario (11), Quebec (1), British Columbia (1), and Alberta (4). “Schools remain important drivers of community transmission,” he continued. “In Ontario, for example, at least one third of new cases are among young people under 20 years old. Similar figures exist for BC and Alberta. In Quebec, the hardest hit segment of the population in terms of new cases is the 12-17-year-old segment. This is particularly worrying in light of reports coming out of South Africa that young people are being disproportionately infected by Omicron.”

Dan, a worker from Ontario currently employed in snow removal, described how he and his colleagues were exposed to the risk of infection by his employer. “There were five of us in a van all day, travelling from site to site,” he commented, “and nobody was wearing a mask. The employer provided nothing. The only time COVID-19 was mentioned was during the job interview, but since then nothing has been done.”

Marie, an educator from Ontario, spoke passionately about the devastating impact the pandemic has had on her family. She stated that because she refused to teach in-person courses during the pandemic, she has been left to live on a monthly income of just \$800. Her husband, who works in construction, has also struggled to find work. She bitterly denounced the political establishment for doing nothing to help working people and allowing the virus to infect children en masse, which she labelled a “humanitarian crime.”

There was unanimous support for the Global Workers’ Inquest, and attendees were encouraged to contact the WSWS to contribute. Participants pointed to the exposure of the Canadian government’s refusal to acknowledge how COVID-19 is spread by aerosols as an example of the disastrous policies that must be brought to light by the inquest.

The meeting also discussed the persecution of Lisa

Diaz, who is being targeted for prosecution by the British government because she has led protests against its homicidal policy of reopening schools. Lisa led calls for the global school strikes, which have taken place every Friday since October 1. Parents in dozens of countries have kept their kids home to protest the lack of pandemic safety measures and draw attention to the devastating consequences of Long COVID among children. CERSC members unanimously adopted the following resolution to underscore their solidarity with Lisa:

The CERSC declares its full solidarity with Lisa Diaz, who is being persecuted by the UK government for her struggle against the mass infection of students with COVID-19. The authorities are threatening to prosecute Lisa because she refuses to risk the lives of her children by sending them into COVID-infested schools. Lisa’s call for a global school strike was supported by educators and workers in Canada, underscoring that we face the same struggle. We strongly denounce the UK government’s stepped-up intimidation of parents who refuse to send their kids into dangerous schools, and pledge to do all in our power to build support for Lisa among educators and students in Canada.



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