

Governments across Canada massively undercount COVID-19 deaths

Dylan Lubao
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As governments of all political stripes across Canada double down on their lying claim that the pandemic is all but over, new data shows that during the first two years of the pandemic thousands of COVID-19 deaths went unrecorded.

According to official federal government figures, as of June 10, COVID-19 had killed 41,470 people in Canada, a horrific loss of life. However, data compiled by infectious disease researcher Dr. Tara Moriarty of the University of Toronto shows that from February 2020 to April 2022 Canada's total excess deaths—that is the number of fatalities above the historic norm—reached 48,463 or some 15 percent higher than the current official pandemic death count.

Some of these excess deaths can be attributed to other factors, such as the spate of deaths due to last summer's heat dome in BC or the resurgence of the opioid epidemic. But even once these disasters are factored in, thousands of deaths are left unaccounted for.

Dr. Moriarty stresses that her figures for excess deaths are likely an underestimate, and that in many jurisdictions it will take upwards of two years for the true extent of death to be revealed.

Every province except for Quebec—which perhaps not coincidentally has far and away the highest per capita number of COVID deaths—has posted widely inaccurate COVID-19 death counts. This is due to a combination of delays in reporting deaths and their causes and deliberate undercounting, with people who had an underlying condition or died of a heart attack not being tested for COVID.

For several provinces the difference between the number of excess deaths and the number of official COVID-19 deaths is several orders of magnitude.

British Columbia, for example, reported 9,913 excess deaths to the Public Health Agency of Canada during the Feb. 2020-April 2022 period, but tallied only 3,004 deaths due to COVID-19, a 60 percent discrepancy. New Brunswick had 807 excess deaths but recorded just 358 COVID deaths, a discrepancy of 55 percent. In Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta, and Saskatchewan total excess deaths were more than double official COVID deaths.

Dr. Moriarty's excess death figures provide yet further evidence of the ruinous outcome of the ruling elite's "profits-before-life" policy. Last June, a Royal Society of Canada study in which Dr. Moriarty was involved revealed that the true number of COVID-19 deaths between February 1 and November 28, 2020 was underreported by a staggering two-thirds.

The reality is that governments across the country—whether headed by the supposedly "progressive" federal Liberals in Ottawa and the New Democratic Party in BC, or the hard-right Progressive Conservatives in Ontario, the UCP in Alberta and the Coalition Avenir Quebec—have done everything they could to conceal and downplay the severity of the pandemic.

They have done this in order to create the best conditions for implementing their homicidal "herd immunity" policies, designed to infect the entire population and guarantee that workers remain on the job to generate profits for Canada's banks and corporations.

When the Omicron variant supplanted the Delta variant last December, these capitalist governments, with the corporate media in tow, declared it to be "mild" without a shred of evidence. A faction of the ruling elite, led by the Conservative Party, then incited and built up the far-right Freedom Convoy so as to intimidate the population into accepting the dismantling of the remaining mitigation measures. The Liberals and NDP, after invoking the never-before-used Emergencies Act to clear the far-right Convoy from Ottawa, proceeded to oversee the implementation of its far-right pandemic program in the weeks that followed.

On Tuesday, the federal Liberal government scrapped almost all remaining vaccine mandates, including for all federal employees, and air and rail travellers.

While COVID-19 has ravaged workplaces and working class communities across the country, it has been a financial bonanza for the wealthy. Fifteen new billionaires have been minted since March 2020. The country's 59 billionaires have increased their wealth by \$111 billion over the same period, as tens of thousands died, hundreds of thousands fell ill, and millions continue to suffer from runaway inflation caused in no small part by the pandemic.

The almost 50,000 deaths directly or indirectly caused by COVID-19 are only the tip of the iceberg. With over 3 million Canadians having contracted COVID-19 according to official figures, the emerging long-term impact of Long Covid is beginning to make itself known.

Long Covid, which encompasses many different symptoms and can affect any organ of the body for months or years after initial COVID-19 infection, is estimated to affect 10 to 30 percent of all those who contract the disease. This translates into at least 300,000 Canadians living with a potentially debilitating health condition, but in all likelihood hundreds of thousands more. It is becoming

increasingly common for people to know someone who displays post-infection effects of COVID-19.

According to Dr. Moriarty's estimates, 57 percent of all Canadians were infected with Omicron beginning in the winter of 2021, equaling 21.6 million people. Using the most conservative estimate, this means 2.1 million people will develop Long Covid in the months and years to come.

Common symptoms include brain fog, decreased lung function, fatigue, and digestive problems, though this is far from an exhaustive list and there may be potentially dozens of unexplained symptoms. A recent study of 94 working adults conducted at the University of Waterloo found that those who had contracted COVID-19 exhibited "significantly more" cognitive failures at work following infection.

At a recent webinar organized by COVID-19 Resources Canada, presenters spoke about the debilitating burden of Long Covid and the substantial impact it will have on the population for years to come.

Carrie Ann McGinn, a health researcher, was struck with Long Covid in December 2020. She was subsequently diagnosed with myalgic encephalomyelitis and postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome, two increasingly common byproducts of COVID-19 infection. These had a devastating effect on her professional and personal life, leaving her with a lifelong disability.

McGinn related that simple acts of daily living now use up all her energy, to the point that she is often "so exhausted [she] can only shower once a week." She described herself as a professional and world traveler who formerly had "wind in my sails and a life full of promise," before becoming bound to a wheelchair and her bed.

She further commented that the community of Long Covid sufferers has heard nothing but "crickets" from governments. McGinn described the failure of all levels of government to take action to warn the public about Long Covid and provide medical care to those stricken by it as "nothing short of an ignored public health crisis."

Far from addressing this pandemic within a pandemic, not a single government in the country has dedicated adequate funding to even doing basic research on a condition whose ever growing prevalence they are responsible for via their policies of mass infection.

Rather, they are focused on imposing ruthless austerity on workers to pay for the \$650 billion in public funds funnelled to the banks and big business at the start of the pandemic, and the hundreds of millions of dollars in weaponry they are now sending to the far-right Ukrainian military. No government at any level has even attempted to provide workers with protection against the new SARS-CoV-2 variants and pandemic surges just over the horizon.

The Tory government in Ontario has just removed mask mandates on public transport and in hospitals under conditions where they know that even more transmissible Omicron variants are now circulating. This all but guarantees that in the coming months there will be a resurgence of the pandemic, including within the very hospitals that are supposed to be the first line of defence against serious disease and death.

During the recent Ontario election campaign none of the parties

even bothered to address the pandemic, the single greatest health crisis in over a century.

Opposition to these herd immunity policies is strong among broad sections of the working population. However, the trade unions' systematic suppression of all workers' struggles aimed at securing improved protections against infection and better working conditions has left opponents of the ruling elite's policy of mass infection increasingly isolated.

Legal challenges to the dropping of all public health measures have been filed by individuals across the country. In New Brunswick, concerned parent and disability advocate Jessica Bleasdale has filed legal complaints against the province's Progressive Conservative government, arguing that their herd immunity policies discriminate against her immunocompromised child, who cannot learn safely at school without mask mandates and other protections in place. Although her challenges were endorsed by the province's Child and Youth Advocate, the provincial government has dismissed them out of hand.

In British Columbia, Lena Patsa, an engineer and university instructor, has filed a class action complaint with the province's Human Rights Tribunal over Fraser Health's refusal to allow hospital patients and visitors to use N95 respirators. In response, the health authority, taking its cue from the NDP government, resorted to the threadbare argument that "poorly-fitted" respirators would be a medical and legal liability.

An ongoing case in Alberta filed by the Alberta Federation of Labour and the parents of five immunocompromised children to overturn the dismantling of public health measures has forced the province's United Conservative Party government to disclose data showing that school boards without mask mandates at the start of the 2021 school year suffered on average three times more outbreaks than those with mandates.

The Cross-Canada Educators Rank and Safety Committee is holding a meeting this Sunday, June 19, at 1 p.m. Eastern to take forward the struggle for a science-based Zero COVID in opposition to the ruling class' profits-before-lives policy. To register to attend email the CERSC at cersc.csppb@gmail.com or visit its Twitter or Facebook accounts: https://twitter.com/cersc_csppb and <https://www.facebook.com/cersc.csppb>.



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