

COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose major challenge for healthcare system across Canada

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Over four years after the first recorded case of COVID-19 in Canada, the disease remains a major fixture in the social and political life of the country and the world. Although infection, hospitalization, and death rates have declined since the recent winter wave, very little stands in the way of a major resurgence of the pandemic.

The federal and provincial governments have dismantled all COVID-19 public health measures as part of their “profits before life” policy of protecting the economic interests of the corporations and the wealthy. As a result, the SARS-COV-2 virus continues to infect tens of thousands of Canadians every week, killing dozens and afflicting hundreds with the debilitating effects of Long COVID.

Because of the governments’ information blackout on the pandemic, the task of informing the public of the continued threat of COVID-19 has fallen to civil society groups like COVID-19 Resources Canada, which publishes weekly data sets and risk assessments.

According to the group’s most recent figures, around 32,600 Canadians were infected with COVID-19 on March 16, the latest date for which they had access to official data. The group estimates the true number to be closer to 42,600 based on wastewater data, which itself only covers half of the population. Roughly 2.28 percent of the population, or more than one in 50 people, is currently infected with the virus, predominantly the JN.1 variant.

From March 3 to March 9, there were 54 official deaths from COVID-19 in Canada. However, the group estimates that the government only reports 61 percent of COVID-19 deaths. This would put the actual number at 90 deaths in just under one week. By comparison, federal government data shows influenza deaths at roughly five per week.

The discrepancy between the sanitized official

pandemic death toll and that compiled by COVID-19 Resources Canada illustrates the immense cover-up conducted by every level of government in Canada.

Officially, 51,710 Canadians have died of COVID-19 since January 2020. Taking into account the government’s reporting rate of 61 percent, the true number of people killed by the capitalist “profits before life” policy is 84,389, a number roughly equivalent to the population of the city of Peterborough, Ontario.

In effect, over 32,000 COVID-19 dead have simply been “disappeared,” their families told a mixture of official lies and half-truths to conceal the fact that their deaths were entirely preventable.

In the initial phase of the pandemic, the federal Liberal government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pursued a mitigation policy of letting the virus spread while disbursing vaccines and providing some meagre financial benefits to the working population. Following the first lockdown in the spring of 2020, the trade unions joined the Liberal government in enforcing a vicious back-to-work campaign, which led to hundreds of thousands of infections and thousands of deaths. This policy was designed to allow workers to continue to work, churning out profits for the banks and corporations.

While several smaller Atlantic provinces temporarily implemented an elimination policy that dropped infection rates to near zero and initially saved countless lives, the most populous provinces, like Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, and Alberta allowed the virus to run rampant. Every political party, from the supposedly progressive New Democratic Party (NDP) and Quebec Solidaire (QS) to the arch-reactionary Conservative Party and Bloc Quebecois, fundamentally support these policies and have implemented them where they hold office.

This turned nursing homes and hospitals into killing

fields. COVID-19 became the third-leading cause of death in 2022 after heart disease and cancer. With the emergence of the highly transmissible and virulent Omicron variant at the end of 2021, this policy also ensured that the vast majority of the Canadian population contracted the disease.

Life expectancy declined for the third straight year in 2022, a byproduct of the capitalist response to the pandemic. Statistics Canada's analysis showed a staggering decline of one year between 2019 and 2022, from 82.3 to 81.3 years. Some provinces like Saskatchewan saw even larger declines of two years during the same period, from 80.5 to 78.5.

After the far-right "Freedom" Convoy provided the federal and provincial governments with the pretext to dismantle what little remained of COVID-19 safety precautions and testing capacity in early 2022, absolutely nothing has stood in the way of the spread of the disease.

COVID-19 Resources Canada notes that their pandemic forecast is the lowest it's been since the emergence of the Omicron variant. However, the risk level remains "High" for the country as a whole, and some provinces like Saskatchewan have risk levels of "Very High." At the time of publication, infections were up 3 percent nationwide compared to the previous report. The effects of spring break travel will likely drive up these numbers in the weeks to come.

The mass murderers on Parliament Hill and in the provincial capitals, and their media accomplices, remain tight-lipped about the ongoing impact of Long COVID, widely recognized by principled epidemiologists as a "pandemic within a pandemic."

About 1,977 people developed Long COVID on March 15, according to the COVID-19 Resources Canada report. This is down from 4,152 on the first day of the year, but still over ten times higher than the lowest point of the pandemic. To date, an estimated 3.5 million Canadians have experienced long-term symptoms following a bout of COVID-19.

Long COVID, otherwise known as Post COVID-19 Condition, covers a multitude of symptoms, including fatigue, shortness of breath, and cognitive dysfunction. The exact nature of this lingering malaise is still being researched but is often characterized as symptoms that persist or re-emerge twelve weeks after the initial infection phase. Some estimates put the Long COVID affliction rate at between 4 and 10 percent of all those who contract COVID-19.

Government support for those suffering from Long

COVID is sparse and inconsistent. The indifference shown by governments at all levels towards a debilitating illness that has affected upwards of 10 percent of the population is no less criminal than the murderous policy of allowing COVID-19 to spread in the first place.

To date, the federal government has pledged a measly \$29 million over five years to fund research into Long COVID and support those suffering from it. Meanwhile, an estimated 40 percent of those with Long COVID symptoms have reported difficulties with accessing relevant healthcare, according to a December 2023 Statistics Canada report. They have desperately resorted to informal sources like social media for assistance in diagnosing and treating their symptoms.

In contrast, the NDP-backed Liberal Trudeau government has allocated billions of dollars for war, including over \$13 billion in economic and military aid for the far-right Ukrainian regime in the US-NATO war on Russia. This is on top of the \$36.3 billion that Canada spent on defence in the 2022/2023 fiscal year.

The knock-on effects of the government's "profits before life" pandemic policy are felt across society. Thousands of nurses and other healthcare workers have left their professions, citing burnout and dangerous working conditions. The shortage of family doctors, exacerbated by the pandemic, affects millions of Canadian households and has led to inundated hospital emergency rooms, which were already reeling due to the stresses caused by the pandemic. Measles, long considered an eliminated disease, is surging, with 31 infections so far this year as of March 16, the largest annual total since 2019 and more than double the total number of cases reported in 2022.



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