

Pre-election polls predict halving of vote for Canada's social democrats

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Opinion polls suggest that the trade-union backed New Democratic Party (NDP) will suffer an historic debacle in Canada's federal election, which is to be held next Monday, April 28. Overshadowed by US President Donald Trump's threats to annex the country and an ongoing trade war, the election campaign has seen Canada's social democrats consistently polling in the single figures.

For the first time in nearly 70 years, at least 80 percent of the country's vote will likely be cast for the ruling class's traditional parties of government, the Liberals and Conservatives—a result not seen since 1958. Far from reflecting popular enthusiasm for these two right-wing parties of big business, the drop in support for third parties is explicable above all by the fact that workers do not see the NDP as offering any serious alternative.

Support for the NDP, which is fraudulently presented in the mainstream media as a party of the "left," has plunged to below 10 percent—its lowest share in a quarter century. At the last election in 2021, the party polled just over 3 million votes, some 17.8 percent of the total. The collapse in support for Canada's social democrats has prompted speculation that the party will lose more than half of the 24 seats it won in the last election, stripping it of official party status in parliament. Among the NDP seats said to be in jeopardy are that of party leader Jagmeet Singh, who is standing in the traditional NDP stronghold of Burnaby, a working class Vancouver suburb.

The declining support for Canada's social democratic party, founded as a successor to the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in 1961, reveals the growing recognition among broad sections of workers of the utterly fraudulent character of the NDP's claims to represent working people, and that it can advance their interests by pressuring the big business Liberal Party to the "left."

The Canadian election campaign has unfolded amid an unprecedented global capitalist crisis accelerated by the upheavals caused by Trump's global trade war and his drive to establish a fascist presidential dictatorship. Trump's tariff war and threats to annex Canada have severely disrupted the decades-long military-strategic partnership between Ottawa and Washington. The Canadian ruling class has responded by systematically whipping up Canadian nationalism to mobilize workers behind their own trade war measures, while at the same time presenting through their Liberal and Tory mouthpieces plans for a massive post-election onslaught on the democratic and social rights of the working class.

The NDP's rotten record

The collapse in popular support for the NDP is the bitter fruit of its decades-long tripartite alliance with the pro-war and austerity Liberals and

the corporatist trade union apparatus. For the past six years, the NDP has propped up a minority Liberal government, lending its support to every anti-worker policy of the Trudeau government. It backed the profits-before-lives policy from the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, including a \$650 billion bailout for Bay Street and big business. The NDP supported the government as it criminalized strikes and eviscerated democratic rights. In response to the outbreak of the NATO-instigated war with Russia in Ukraine, the NDP entered into a "confidence and supply" agreement with Justin Trudeau's crisis-riddled minority Liberal government to ensure "political stability," as Singh put it. This enabled the Liberal government to continue its massive military spending increases and prominent participation in the war on Russia, and impose inflation-driven real wage cuts on the working class.

The NDP and unions were instrumental in suppressing widespread opposition to Israel's genocidal assault on the Palestinians, which the NDP-backed Liberal government fully endorsed. The unions sabotaged the historic strike wave by teachers, rail workers, dock workers, and postal workers, among others, that has swept the country since late 2021, clearing the way for the Liberals to press forward with "post-pandemic" austerity.

The NDP's unstinting support for the Liberals' wars and austerity measures has driven millions of workers to turn their backs on the social democrats. Beginning with the so-called "Orange wave" in 2011, when the party emerged as the official opposition amid the devastating impact of the 2008 economic crisis, the party's vote has collapsed, falling from 4.5 million to just 3 million in 2021. It will be much lower this time around, if the polls prove correct.

According to the latest tracking by Innovative Research Group, 14 percent of NDP voters have swung behind the Conservatives. A major factor in this is the lining up of a section of the union bureaucracy behind Poilievre, who shares their vicious nationalism and reactionary economic protectionist program, and whose far-right, demagogic social appeal they have legitimized.

Throughout the election campaign, Singh has boasted that he would never support a Poilievre government, while trumpeting all the supposed "gains" the NDP won for working people by propping up the Trudeau government. On day one of the election campaign, Singh accused the former central banker and current Liberal Prime Minister Mark Carney of working for wealthy investors and corporations, instead of "regular Canadians," and declared that he was running for prime minister.

This absurd claim did not even survive the five-week election campaign. An opinion piece in Bloomberg by former NDP leader Thomas Mulcair urged New Democrats to back Carney and not split the "progressive" vote. "If you can't seriously say you're going to form a government that can take on Trump, then get out of the way and let the only real contenders have at it," wrote Mulcair.

Singh subsequently abandoned his bid for prime minister and doubled down on his party's role as a supposed vehicle for pressuring the Liberals

to the “left,” all but pleading for voters to give Canada’s social democrats the power to prop up a Carney-led Liberal government. During the April 18 English-language leaders’ debate, the NDP leader chided Carney for acting more like a Conservative than a Liberal prime minister. On Tuesday, while campaigning in the final leg of the election campaign in the western province of British Columbia, he directed his party’s supporters to “hold the line,” and appealed to voters who want to prevent a Liberal “super majority” to support New Democrats.

A right-wing platform for war and attacks on workers

The NDP’s thoroughly right-wing platform, released on Saturday, cloaks pro-corporate policies in meager and insincere promises of increased social spending paid for through increased taxes on big business and the “super-rich.” It continues the party’s promotion of the “Canadian values” fraud that serves to corral working people behind the ruling class’s “Canada Strong” national-protectionist program to combat Trump’s tariffs and keep the North American working class divided along national lines. This includes promises to ban American companies from bidding on federal contracts and to develop deeper trade relations with “countries that share values with us,” most notably the imperialist powers of Europe and the Indo-Pacific.

The NDP has been running its election campaign on a program of rearmament that would commit billions of dollars to ready Ottawa for world war. Some of the headline commitments are “Made in Canada” fighter jets, the militarization of the Arctic and meeting NATO’s spending target of 2 percent of GDP by 2032. In February, the NDP reaffirmed its support for the US-NATO war against Russia and pushed for “enforcement” of sanctions and the seizure of Russian assets.

The NDP’s “Build Canadian Buy Canadian plan” includes pledges to bring back “Canada Victory Bonds”—a reference to the funds raised from the public during World War II—that would be used to “rebuild critical infrastructure” in order to shore up Canada’s military-industrial base and role in the supply chains of its NATO allies.

The NDP is also pledging to further strengthen the national-security apparatus in preparation for class war at home and imperialist war abroad. If elected, Singh has pledged to implement the recommendations of the Hogue Commission, a public inquiry set up last year to investigate lurid, baseless allegations of Chinese “foreign interference” in previous Canadian elections. This flows directly from the unanimous support the NDP gave in June 2024 to a vast expansion of government spying power in the name of fighting Chinese “electoral interference,” amid a ruling-class campaign to whip up anti-China hysteria as part of Ottawa’s ever-deeper integration into the US military-strategic offensive against Beijing.

The platform also commits to hiring thousands of new border officers to escalate the ruling class’s anti-immigrant witch-hunt and promises to tackle “misinformation and disinformation,” which translates into plans for increased censorship and the brutal suppression of developing opposition in the working class.

The NDP’s election platform claims to be fighting big business and defending working people are bombast and hot air. Its declamations that Israel is perpetrating a genocide in Gaza are especially hypocritical and cynical. This is a party that propped up the Liberal government as it funnelled tens of millions of dollars in military weapons to Israel for its slaughter of women and children in the US-backed genocide in Gaza, and stoked the antisemitic smear campaign against protesters opposed to genocide and war.

Workers must adopt a socialist and internationalist program to fight austerity and war

The NDP’s rotten record in propping up the big-business Liberals has created the best conditions for either current Liberal Prime Minister Mark Carney or Conservative leader and far-right demagogue Poilievre to come to power and take forward the war on the working class. Both parties serve the predatory interests of a Canadian ruling class intent on making the working class pay for the economic crisis through austerity and war.

The coming onslaught on the working class will intensify the social crisis and drive ever greater numbers of workers into struggles in which they will come up against the necessity of mounting a political challenge to Canadian capitalism and all its political representatives. It is therefore imperative that workers make a political break with the Liberal-NDP alliance and its union accomplices. Rejecting the NDP’s bogus “progressive” appeals is only an initial stage in this process. Workers must recognize that the bankruptcy of this party is not primarily rooted in those who lead it, like Singh, but in its program and perspective, which rests upon the defence of capitalist profit and the imperialist interests of Canada’s ruling class.

This fact can be seen by the similar role of social democratic parties around the world. From Germany’s Social Democrats to Britain’s Labour Party, the NDP’s social-democratic sister parties serve as the chief enforcers of pro-war, anti-worker policies around the world, while their trade union sponsors take the lead in crippling all efforts by the working class to fight back.

As the Socialist Equality Party (Canada) wrote in its election statement,

The pivotal question is the development of revolutionary leadership. The working class needs its own mass socialist party, independent from and opposed to all of the capitalist parties, and oriented to the fight for a socialist North America. That is the party the SEP is fighting to build. We wage this struggle in opposition to all attempts to divide the working class on nationalist, regional or ethnic grounds, including through the promotion of identity politics.

Trump is a menace to the workers of Canada and the world. But workers can’t fight him and all he represents—oligarchy, dictatorship and imperialist war—by lining up with the Canadian bourgeoisie, any of its rival factions or political representatives.

Rather, they must assert their independent class interests by forging a movement for workers’ power and fighting to fuse their struggles with the mass opposition to Trump now emerging within the American working class. Canadian workers must assist their American colleagues in breaking free of the Democratic Party, which no less than Trump’s fascist Republicans is a party of Wall Street and the CIA, and its trade union allies.



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