

Trump threatens to block opening of Gordie Howe International Bridge as part of escalating economic war on Canada

Pierre Lajeunesse, Roger Jordan
11 February 2026

US President Donald Trump openly threatened this week to block the opening of the Gordie Howe International Bridge, linking Windsor, Ontario to Detroit, Michigan. Built at a cost of Canadian \$6 billion, the bridge is set to be the largest border crossing between Canada and the United States by trade volume.

Trump's threat is part of a widening campaign of economic coercion directed against Ottawa.

In a Monday night post on his Truth Social platform, Trump declared, "I will not allow this bridge to open until the United States is fully compensated for everything we have given them, and also, importantly, Canada treats the United States with the Fairness and Respect that we deserve. We will start negotiations, IMMEDIATELY. With all that we have given them, we should own, perhaps, at least one half of this asset. The revenues generated because of the US Market will be astronomical."

The threat was reinforced Tuesday by the White House. Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters that "the fact that Canada will control what crosses the Gordie Howe bridge, and owns the land on both sides, is unacceptable to the president," adding that it was also "unacceptable that more of this bridge isn't being built with more American-made materials."

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney confirmed Tuesday that he spoke with Trump earlier that morning and sought to downplay the latest threats, above all to reassure financial markets. Carney said he told Trump that Canadians paid for the bridge in full, that the United States already has an ownership stake, and that the project was built by workers and with materials from both sides of the border.

"This is a great example of co-operation between our countries," Carney said, adding that the bridge's importance lay in facilitating "commerce and the tourism and the voyages of Canadians and Americans."

Ontario Premier Doug Ford likewise dismissed the threat, insisting the bridge would open because it was "in the best interest of the American economy." Ford noted that Trump himself fast-tracked elements of the project during his first term, before abruptly reversing course.

Trump's threat constitutes a naked act of economic blackmail. Since returning to the White House, Trump has repeatedly vowed to use economic force to crash the Canadian economy and turn the country into America's 51st state. He has also taken steps to realize his threats by imposing tariffs on key sectors of the economy including steel, aluminum, lumber and automobiles.

Trump has laid out his quest to secure unchallenged US hegemony

over the Western hemisphere in the so-called "Donroe Doctrine." It declares Washington's right to seize strategic assets, dictate government policy, and even topple governments from Greenland to the southern tip of Latin America. His deadly seriousness in pursuing this agenda was shown with the invasion of Venezuela and abduction of President Nicolas Maduro in early January.

For Trump, dominance of the Western hemisphere, including Canada, Greenland, and the Panama Canal, is seen as an essential preparatory step for world war against the US's main rivals, China, Russia and the European powers. The financial oligarchy for which Trump speaks increasingly views this as the only way out of American imperialism's mounting crisis as it seeks to offset its weakening economic position through the deployment of ever more aggressive imperialist violence.

Trump's sudden outburst over the Gordie Howe Bridge also underscores the extent to which his administration is a tool of the handful of multi-billionaire financial oligarchs that dominate social and economic life in the US. According to the *New York Times*, billionaire trucking magnate Matthew Moroun met Monday with US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick in Washington. Moroun's family owns the privately controlled Ambassador Bridge, which has connected Ontario to Michigan since 1929 and carries a quarter of the annual merchandise trade between the US and Canada.

Shortly after that meeting, Lutnick reportedly spoke with Trump by phone. Hours later, Trump issued his Truth Social post threatening to block the opening of the competing public bridge, a move that would protect the Moroun family's revenues.

For decades, the Morouns have mounted a legal and political campaign against the construction of a second crossing outside their control. They have filed lawsuits up to the Supreme Court of Canada and lobbied aggressively in both countries. Trump's action marks the direct government intervention to advance the interests of a billionaire family defending its private monopoly over a strategic international chokepoint.

The Morouns are estimated to earn tens of millions of dollars annually from toll and fuel operations linked to the Ambassador Bridge. The opening of the Gordie Howe Bridge would significantly erode those profits as truck and auto traffic is diverted to the new crossing, which directly links Highway 401 and Interstate 75, critical economic arteries for Ontario and the US Midwest.

According to the *Detroit Free Press*, the Moroun family donated more than \$605,000 to Trump's re-election campaign and the GOP's Trump Victory fundraising committee between 2019 and 2020.

Crain's Detroit Business reports the company spent \$250,000 on lobbying in Washington D.C. in the second half of 2025 over "Issues related to construction and operation of international bridges."

A review of the background of the Gordie Howe Bridge further exposes the lawless character of Trump's threat. Major construction was completed in late 2025 and the project now faces only final administrative steps before opening. Trump's assertion that the United States "owns nothing" is false, as is his claim that Canada exercises unilateral control.

The bridge spans the Detroit River between Windsor, Ontario, and Detroit, Michigan. It forms a fourth transit crossing in the busiest trade corridor between the two countries, alongside the Windsor-Detroit Tunnel, the privately owned Ambassador Bridge and the Michigan Central Railway Tunnel. Construction proceeded under the Canada-Michigan Crossing Agreement, signed in 2012, which guarantees joint binational ownership even though Canada assumed the upfront construction costs.

Canada financed the project on the basis that toll revenues would repay the investment over time. Ownership and oversight are shared with the state of Michigan through an International Authority composed of equal Canadian and Michigan representation. Day-to-day operations will be handled by the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority, a Canadian Crown corporation operating within the binational framework.

Trump's denunciation of the Gordie Howe Bridge coincides with growing tensions between Washington and Ottawa as Carney seeks to reposition Canadian imperialism through closer ties with Europe and limited trade engagement with China. At the same time, negotiations over the renewal or restructuring of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) have stalled, despite having been scheduled to begin last month. *Bloomberg* reported Wednesday that Trump has privately considered withdrawing from the trade pact he renegotiated during his first term, a move that would terminate a three-decade framework governing trade between the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Within Trump's trade war against Canada, the Gordie Howe Bridge represents a particularly potent pressure point. The Windsor-Detroit corridor functions as the central artery of North American auto production, with components crossing the border multiple times during the manufacturing process. Any disruption would carry immediate consequences for supply chains, employment and investment decisions on both sides of the border.

Trump has incessantly targeted Canada's auto industry, declaring that the United States has no need for vehicles produced north of the border. Under his tariff regime and amid weakening demand for electric vehicles, the operations of the US-based Big Three in Canada are being steadily wound down. Over the past year, thousands of jobs have been eliminated or left in limbo through layoffs at GM's Oshawa and Ingersoll plants, the prolonged idling of Ford's Oakville facility, and Stellantis' consolidation of production in Windsor, which has left its Brampton assembly plant shuttered. These measures serve to force concessions from workers in Canada while whipsawing them against their brothers and sisters south of the border.

Trump's criticism notwithstanding, significant business interests still favour the bridge being opened. Democratic Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer emphasized that the bridge was built with "union labor on both sides" and described it as "a really important part of our economy." Her remarks echoed those of Canadian officials and business leaders who stress its importance for trade.

Carney's response offers no progressive alternative. The Liberal government's maneuvers are directed toward strengthening Canadian imperialism and preserving the privileged access enjoyed by Canadian capital to the US market. Domestically, his administration is intensifying attacks on the working class through austerity, job destruction, militarization and the erosion of democratic rights, including the effective dismantling of the right to strike. Appeals to "co-operation" and "shared prosperity" function as a cover for class war, just as Trump's rhetoric about "fairness" and "Buy American" conceals trade war and his far-advanced plan to erect a fascist dictatorship.

The Ontario New Democratic Party limited its response to criticizing Trump for sowing "chaos" and promoting factual distortions. Party leader Marit Stiles called the threat "irresponsible," while Windsor West MPP Lisa Gretzky noted Trump's earlier support for the bridge and warned that blocking it would harm workers and businesses.

This is rich coming from the NDP, which has been one of the leading champions of "Team Canada" nationalism in response to Trump's trade war. This policy has subordinated Canadian workers to the interests of Canadian capital, which only "opposes" Trump to the extent that he intends to rob Canadian capitalists of their "right" to ruthlessly exploit Canadian workers and the country abundant resources. The nationalist counter-tariffs proposed by the NDP and unions have cost thousands of workers their jobs and hindered their unification with their class brothers and sisters in the US against the financial oligarchies who dominate both countries.

Opposing Trump's threats requires an independent political mobilization of the working class on both sides of the border.

The way forward lies in uniting Canadian workers with the developing movement of workers and youth against Trump in the United States. This requires the construction of rank-and-file committees in workplaces and communities, independent of the union apparatus, to organize a cross-border struggle against job destruction, trade war and militarism. Defending workers' interests demands an internationalist and socialist program aimed at ending the capitalist system that produces trade war, dictatorship and imperialist barbarism, and placing production and infrastructure under democratic workers' control in the interests of society as a whole.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact