

British Columbia voters go to the polls amid deep disaffection with the political establishment

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Voters in British Columbia go to the polls Saturday to vote in a snap election called by the province's New Democratic Party (NDP) premier, David Eby, two years ahead of schedule. Eby's aim in calling the early vote was to strengthen his government's hand to impose austerity and push through big business development projects. Many of the latter are bound up with implementing the federal Liberal and BC NDP government's plans to make Canada's West Coast province a centre of critical minerals and armaments production.

Eby called a "snap" election hoping, on the one hand, to exploit popular opposition to Trump—he is appealing for a "mandate" to fight the US president's tariffs and threats to annex Canada—and, on the other, the bitter divisions within the far right-led Conservative official opposition.

The Conservatives fell just 3 seats short of winning a parliamentary majority in the October 2024 BC election, but were subsequently wracked by divisions, splits and expulsions. By late September, the party was imploding, with MLAs defecting to either the makeshift CentreBC or the even more virulently far-right OneBC Party.

However, the threat of an election debacle triggered a lightning flash realignment. With the backing of powerful sections of big business that want a far more aggressive attack on working people's democratic and social rights, most of the rebel and defrocked Conservatives rejoined the party under a newly-chosen interim leader, Lorne Doerksen.

With opinion polls now showing the Conservatives poised to win office, Eby is cynically casting his trade union-supported NDP government as a shield against austerity and the hard-right. This, when his government is a pillar of support for the Mark Carney-led federal Liberal government, which is ruthlessly implementing corporate Canada's class-war agenda. And, far from opposing austerity, Eby called the election with the aim of securing an enhanced parliamentary majority and extended mandate before implementing the major cuts to health care, education and other public services demanded by the corporate elite to which the NDP is beholden and that are made necessary by the "fiscal guardrails" outlined in the government's last budget.

On the campaign trail, Eby has posed as the scourge of corporate greed, promising to cap grocery prices and floating a "millionaire tax" on the top 4 percent of earners. But the claim that the NDP represents working people is a fraud belied by its entire record.

The NDP took power in 2017 after 15 years of Liberal Party rule, during which the Liberals slashed public spending, and oversaw a vast transfer of wealth to the rich and big business through sweeping tax cuts. Then NDP leader John Horgan insisted his party would stick to the fiscal framework imposed by the pro-austerity Liberals prior to the 2017 election, a pledge the NDP government scrupulously followed during Horgan's five years in office.

It was an entirely different story when it came to the party's main

election pledges, which were promptly junked. The NDP abandoned the \$15 minimum wage, the promise of 114,000 social housing units, and its pledges to raise taxes on the wealthiest and increase the corporate tax rate.

Under NDP leadership, the social crisis has accelerated. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the Horgan government imposed the ruling class' profits-over-lives policy—refusing lockdowns, denying airborne transmission, forcing children into unventilated schools, and concealing the true death toll.

Decades of healthcare underfunding amid an aging and growing population has left one in five British Columbians without a family doctor. Over the past four years, almost 17,000 patients have died waiting for surgery or a diagnostic scan. The province is ranked as the most expensive to live in Canada, and records the country's highest poverty rate.

The NDP's 2026 budget will further intensify the social crisis. It pledged to slash 15,000 full-time public-sector jobs by 2028–29, withdrew \$1.4 billion from social housing by delaying more than 5,000 affordable rental homes, and paused the construction of seven long-term care projects indefinitely—projects the Eby government has now cynically promised to resume if re-elected.

The NDP has carried out its class-war agenda with the full backing of the corporatist trade union bureaucracies. When agreements covering nearly 400,000 public-sector workers expired in 2022, the unions conspired with their NDP allies to impose real-wage-cutting sellouts—three-year deals offering raises far below inflation. The BCGEU leadership, despite a 95 percent strike mandate, struck only four locations for two weeks before ramming through a rotten contract that passed with just 52 percent support. In 2025, Eby formalized the collusion in his Balanced Measures Mandate, locking more than 450,000 public employees into a flat 3 percent annual increase—a real-wage cut under spiralling inflation.

The unions have operated for decades as an industrial police force, suppressing the class struggle and providing "left" cover for the NDP and federal Liberal governments alike. Recently, the BC Federation of Labour welcomed Canada-British Columbia Cooperative Prosperity Agreement as "a major investment in good union jobs."

Eby has framed the early election call almost entirely around the US-Canada trade war, declaring that the province was facing an "existential moment," and comparing Trump's economic attack to a spreading wildfire that requires a "firebreak." This fraudulent "Team Canada" nationalism is a cover for the austerity agenda of the ruling class. In February 2025 his government scrapped a promised \$1,000 grocery rebate for workers, declaring it necessary to "find dollars" to defend big business in the trade war.

Close allies of the federal Liberal government

The BC NDP has been a critical pillar of successive federal Liberal governments as they moved sharply rightward. Even before the federal NDP began propping up the minority Trudeau Liberal government in 2019, Horgan was one of Trudeau's closest provincial allies. In 2022, the federal NDP struck a three-year "confidence and supply" agreement with Trudeau's Liberals, allowing the federal government to massively hike military spending, aggressively wage the NATO war on Russia in Ukraine, criminalize strikes by port, rail and dock workers, and impose austerity.

After the former central banker Carney took over in 2025, the NDP voted for his "Canada strong" class-war budget, which eliminated 40,000 federal public service jobs to help pay for an \$84 billion increase in military spending over five years. Just last month, Eby lauded Carney's Canada Investment Summit, where the Liberal government offered up much of the country's public infrastructure to the vultures of international finance capital.

Canadian capital's quarrel with Trump is not over his authoritarian policies, which it is busily replicating at home. Carney's government has continued to use the "reinterpretation" of the Canada Labour Code to illegalise strikes by rail, port and postal workers, and its border authorities are handing asylum seekers over to Trump's ICE. The dispute is an inter-imperialist conflict over the division of the spoils of exploitation. Trump's "America First" program refuses to recognize Canadian capital's prerogatives as a junior partner of American imperialism and "right" to first claim on the profits generated from exploiting Canada's workers and abundant resources.

The trade unions have been integral to this fraud, aligning themselves with the "Team Canada" campaign and demanding that workers subordinate their interests to the competitiveness and geopolitical ambitions of Canadian imperialism.

The NDP has worked to reorganize British Columbia's economy around Canadian imperialism's drive to expand Pacific trade routes, and boost the exploitation of natural gas and critical minerals to fuel the waging of global war. Liberal Prime Minister Mark Carney's Defence Industrial Strategy commits Canada to raising military spending to 5 percent of GDP by 2035, and the federal budget has allocated \$6.6 billion to the building of Canada's military-industrial base. Alongside it, Carney is rolling out a sweeping program of "nation-building projects" — fast-tracked energy, resource and transportation megaprojects — which he has explicitly framed as a drive to make Canada an "energy superpower" and "the reliable supplier of critical minerals" to the world.

Eby has made this war economy a key element of his campaign. His "Look West" strategy targets \$200 billion in major project investment by 2035, 18 fast-tracked projects worth \$20 billion, and 35 percent of federal defence vessel contracts. Eby has pledged to ensure the province gets its "fair share" of federal military-industrial spending program, and promised to double the province's critical mineral exports within five years and cut approval timelines by more than 60 percent.

The Canada-British Columbia Cooperative Prosperity Agreement, signed by the Eby and Carney governments on July 2, is the financial framework for these goals. A main element is the Northwest Critical Mineral and Conservation Corridor, which directs \$500 million to expand the Red Chris copper mine and commits \$3.5 billion to the North Coast Transmission Line, described as "foundational infrastructure" for Canada's critical mineral ambitions. These are the raw materials that feed semiconductors, precision-guided munitions and other weapons systems. The agreement also fast-tracks the second phase of the LNG Canada facility at Kitimat, the largest private investment in Canadian history, to secure Canada's position as a major natural-gas exporter.

Right-wing opposition parties offer no alternative

A Conservative victory would mark a sharp shift to the political right. The Conservatives would accelerate the onslaught on workers' living standards, attack democratic rights, and integrate the province's economy still more deeply into the imperialist war machine.

The Conservatives are running on a platform that combines fraudulent populism and far-right incitement with corporate handouts. Its tax-cut pitch—tripling the basic personal exemption to \$32,000—is regressive, handing the largest benefit to the highest earners, while the pledge to "never raise taxes" guarantees deeper cuts to social services. This is paired with dog-whistle attacks on the indigenous and LBTQ+ people, and a promise of a law-and-order crackdown to be enforced by the hiring of more police officers. Its "Energy Superpower Plan" promises to double natural gas production by 2032 and triple it by 2035, supplying "reliable Canadian energy to our allies."

The BC Green Party is making a fraudulent left appeal to those disaffected with the NDP. The fact that leader Emily Lowan is campaigning to "hold the balance of power" underscores that the Greens' strategy is propping up the NDP and its austerity program.

In 2017, then Green Party leader Andrew Weaver—who had voted for two Liberal austerity budgets and attacked the NDP's spending promises from the right as "irresponsible"—installed the NDP in power through a "confidence and supply" agreement. At the federal level, the Greens voted for Carney's "Canada strong" class-war budget in November 2025. In Germany, they have emerged as one of the leading proponents of rearmament and war.

Whatever the outcome on October 24, the working class cannot defend its interests by lining up behind any of the established parties. They are all parties of war and austerity, committed to making workers pay for rearmament and war.

To fight for their interests, workers must break politically and organizationally from all the parties of the ruling class and the union bureaucracies that serve them. They should build rank-and-file committees, independent of the corporatist union apparatuses, repudiate "Team Canada" and make socialist-internationalism—the unity of Canadian, American, and Mexican workers in the fight for workers' power across North America—the axis of their struggles.



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