

LABOUR'S RESPONSE TO TRUMP'S TARIFFS

March 6, 2025



Working people across Canada, and around the world grow increasingly restless and disturbed by news coming from the United States. Now in his second term, Donald Trump, and his billionaire-backers like Elon Musk, are engaged in a vicious attack on working people to further enrich billionaires and wealthy corporations. This includes \$4,5 trillion in tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations, and a \$2 trillion cut in spending.

In his attack on working people, Trump has turned to tactics of economic warfare which America has long used against working people in the Global South and elsewhere in the world. Their current weapon is tariffs, pointed at Canada, Mexico, Europe, China, and elsewhere, that have the explicit purpose of inflicting maximum economic pain on working people - to beat us into submission.

In the long term, the economic hardships Trump is causing is intended to pressure the Canadian people to accept the plans of big business here and south of the border: austerity, privatization, increases to our military spending, and poverty wages. Plans like these have long been the shared goal of big business in Canada and the United States. Now Trump, and their representatives here, like Pierre Poilievre, are eager to do big business' dirty work.

Economic attacks are not the only way Trump and his Canadian counterparts will inflict pain on working people. To distract us from massive corporate profits and the dire situation in our public sector, especially in healthcare and education, they will attempt to break solidarity to prevent a unified fightback. This attack is already underway, with the scapegoating of: immigrants, refugees, temporary foreign workers, the LGBTQ community, people of colour, women, and other marginalized groups.

These attacks from Trump and his Canadian counterparts threaten the rights of self-determination of all peoples and nations in Canada: our right to determine our own political, economic, social, and cultural destinies.

It must be made perfectly clear: if Trump's attacks are not repelled, working people will suffer. Factories will close and unemployment will skyrocket. Wages will be decimated as big business' intensifies its race to the bottom. Pensions will be eroded. Workers will lose their homes. We cannot afford to sit idly by and wait to see what happens.

Working people in Canada must band together to fight back against these attack on our rights right now. We must stand unified in our rejection of Trump's big business politics, and chart a path for a future which is entirely our own. We must build a coalition which puts Canadian workers and the Canadian economy first.

While there will be a wide array of political, social, national, and cultural differences in this workers-first coalition, to ensure we can defend Canada together, we must adhere to 3 key principles in our response:

1. A commitment to justice, dignity, and good jobs for all

- A firm rejection of hate and scapegoating
- The right for every worker to earn a living wage
- The right for every worker to have full-time, stable employment
- The right to a collective voice through unionization
- The equal enforcement of civil, democratic, and labour rights
- The right to protection from the effects of unemployment through massive expansion of our social security net
- The ability to retire with dignity

2. A commitment to move quickly to invest in public infrastructure and public services

- To create work in construction as our infrastructure grows
- To create work in education, healthcare, and the rest of the care economy
- To stimulate domestic manufacturing and service work

- To construct and conduct repair of needed public infrastructure, including housing, transportation, and healthcare and education infrastructure
- To stimulate the overall Canadian economy and prevent recession
- To protect and improve the lives of all Canadians

3. A recommitment that “Made In Canada” matters

- By reviewing domestic supply chain opportunities and prioritizing “Made In Canada” over the lowest international bidder
- By retaining employment lands for future industrial needs
- By adopt procurement policies to support Canadian-made products and services
- By developing national strategies in key industries to protect Canadian workers and businesses, including expanding our publicly owned sectors
- By defending sources of reliable news and information, including the CBC
- By imposing targeted export taxes to create bargaining leverage against unfair tariffs, and to help fund the safety net for impacted workers and communities

In addition to these guiding principles, we must look to strengthening our political and economic ties with other countries around the world, and adopt an independent foreign policy that prioritizes diplomacy, international cooperation, and peace.

Right now, forces around the world conspire to fracture international solidarity, to attack working people, and massively grow the profits of big business. If we remain apart, there is no doubt that working people will suffer, and big business will rake in immense profits.

But, if we stand together, we will be able to both beat back the Trump-led attack on Canadian workers and take steps toward building a more prosperous, equitable, and sustainable Canada.

Therefore, the Labour Council resolves to:

1. Support the Labour Council’s contributions to the Mayor’s Economic Action Team in Toronto, and urge Council to apply these 3 principles in any response to Trump’s attack on Canadian workers
2. Call on all affiliates to mobilize their membership for the coming IWD Toronto rally and march under the banner “Fighting for our lives! Growing our resistance!”;
3. Participate in the Labour Council’s ongoing Fight for a Better Future Campaign, including by sending members to the Labour Council’s Activists Assembly

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