

RAW NEWS



COMMERCIAL-FREE NEWS FROM THE ONTARIO INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTRE
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Ontario protests Citizens of province march for peace

On February 15, tens of thousands of protestors in Ontario joined millions more around the world in a network of marches for peace. In at least 26 communities across the province, creative and spirited gatherings were held in opposition to war. Read on for local reports gathered so far!

Guelph

An estimated 500 people marched through the streets, organized by Snow People for Peace, a coalition of social justice groups.

The demonstration started with a rally at the university, then headed towards downtown. Passing motorists honked their support, and many pedestrians joined the march.

The march ended at St. George's Square, the centre of downtown Guelph. Demonstrators took over the busy intersection for about 10 minutes before listening to several speeches and music in the square.

This was one of Guelph's largest protests in years. The numbers were particularly encouraging for such a bitterly cold day.



—Toronto—

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Waterloo

Around 600 people joined in a Walk for Peace through Waterloo Park. Speakers included organizer Louissette Lanteigne, Pam Wolf (NDP rep for Cambridge and recipient of the Oktoberfest Woman of the Year award) and Christopher Ross, Professor of Religion and Culture from Wilfrid Laurier University.

Sudbury

Over 250 people braved a wind chill of more than -35°C in an inspiring anti-war demonstration. The day began with an outdoor rally where speakers from unions and anti-war/ anti-racist groups spoke, highlighted by the energy of radical cheerleaders and raging grannies. After the rally, everyone took to the streets in a demonstration of protest against impending war. The streets were filled with chants, songs, music, flags, and signs. The march concluded at a downtown high school, where an indoor community forum was held.

The message of this event was clear: Sudbury is uniting in a voice opposing war, opposing racism, opposing imperialism, and saying loud and clear to our government: 'NOT IN OUR NAME!'

Toronto

March organizers estimated 80,000 people were in Toronto on February 15, with speakers like Jack Layton, the new Federal NDP Leader, and Judy Rebick of Rabble.ca, to voice a singular message with the world community: Stop the war before it starts. Conservative estimates put the numbers at 50,000, some corporate press reported 10,000.

This was a lot livelier demonstration than the demo on January 18, with wave after wave of people. Cold... brrrrr. Drumming, chanting, dancing warmed my soul. And forget the signs and banners... there was everything you could imagine. Creative people were here today. The whole world is creative!



—Ottawa—

Thunder Bay

Around 300 people rallied inside Lakehead University to voice their opposition to the impending U.S. led war on Iraq. The rally featured speakers, music, poetry, dance, food and community dialogue.

Thornbury

Between 100 and 150 people of all ages participated in a Peace Vigil and March. Led by an Amnesty International banner, we marched up one side of Bruce Street, down the other side, to the new post office, the only federal building in town, and then repeated the circuit.

<www.torontosocialforum.ca>

That evening at the World Social Forum report back, we heard of a transformative, 120,000-person event held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, with the spirit of a political film festival, and a youth camp similar to Woodstock, except Woodstock had less music and less drugs.

Central to the WSF are the basis of unity — an opposition to neoliberalism — and a way of organizing that is participatory, decentralized, and (most importantly) fun. We learned how the WSF movement is a key part of this global mass movement of people for peace, justice, freedom and the reclaiming of our world. We learned not only is such a mass movement possible, it's happening — NOW!

Valentine for War Department

Ottawa demonstrators sit in silence

In Ottawa Friday morning, 150 people braved -26°C cold in a long march to the MacKenzie King Bridge. To oppose the war in Iraq, they held a mass sit-in outside the Department of War (officially the Department of National Defence). Participants blocked the bridge and two entrances to the building. Homes not Bombs was the main organizer for the event.

Before the sit-in started, members of the Iraq Peace Team spoke about the human emotions and medical shortages they witnessed during visits to Iraq.

The demonstrators sat in silence. Signs and chalk messages expressed many sentiments, including, "I am silent today because of the unspeakable atrocity".

After four hours, 70 activists remained in the area, showing determination in the face of extremely cold weather. Along with the warmth provided by a local health collective helping activists to warm up, one could see warmth and love between people.

For the full article by Julien Lamarche, visit the ontario.indymedia.org Peace Page

Weapons inspectors to the USA

Rooting Out Evil will be sending a team of volunteer weapons inspectors into the greatest of rogue nations, the U.S.A.

Inspectors include members of parliament from Canada, the U.K., Italy and Denmark, as well as representatives of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, the Canadian Islamic Congress, and people from the Polaris Institute and the Council for Responsible Genetics.

Rooting Out Evil is demanding that the Bush administration allow immediate and unfettered access to international weapons inspectors to search out their caches of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons.

On the weekend of February 22/23, the team will attempt to cross into the United States on a mission of peace, and will be greeted on the U.S. side by Americans who favour true global cooperation, an end to weapons of mass destruction, and a regime change in the U.S. at the next election. The team will then attempt to inspect a U.S. site suspected of housing weapons of mass destruction.

Find out more, or sign on as an honorary weapons inspector, at rootingoutevil.org

Feed, don't fight

Put a small amount of Canadian wheat (or rice) in a plastic bag. Write to Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. Tell him that you want Canada to feed, not kill, the people of Iraq. Ask him to end sanctions and resume wheat sales to Iraq, where wheat was first cultivated.

Put the wheat and letter in an envelope and send it (*no postage required*):

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien,
House of Commons, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6

"Bread, Peace and Freedom grow on the same stalk." — *Theresa Wolfwood*

Bush to visit Ottawa

"Welcoming committee" plans?

The Prime Minister's office has confirmed U.S. President George Bush Jr. is coming to Ottawa on May 5 for his first official state visit to Canada.

He will make an address to a joint session of Parliament, with expected main themes of trade and border security.

Indymedia posts are already suggesting the formation of a "welcoming committee" in the nation's capital, similar to last year's "Take the Capital" protests; one suggestion was to "march on wherever he's staying and place him under citizen's arrest for crimes against humanity and violations of the UN charter."



Get Connected <ontario.indymedia.org/peace>

Use the IMC Ontario Peace Page to keep up-to-date with local, provincial, national and global movements for peace. Featuring event coverage and listings, as well as links, print materials, and further peace activist resources. Get informed, get active, and get connected *with Indymedia*.

— also check out —

Toronto Committee Against Sanctions and War on Iraq <www.tcaswi.org>
Toronto Coalition to Stop the War <feb15.webhop.org> — Canadian
Brampton Resistance <bramptonresistance.com> — Peace Alliance
Ottawa NOWAR/PAIX <www.nowar-paix.ca> — <www.acp-cpa.ca>

Coming up ...

Get ready for March 8, International Women's Day — the next big rally against war. In Toronto, there's a rally beginning at 11 am at OISE (252 Bloor St. W); the march starts at 1.

In the meantime, on March 5, students across Canada will walk out of their classes at 9:30 to show they do not support military action against the men, women and children of Iraq.

And on March 1, an anti-war rally is being held at Kitchener City Hall, at 2 pm.

More reports from local peace actions

(continued from page 1)

London

A peace march Saturday afternoon drew close to 3000 people. There was a lot of enthusiasm and chanting on the part of the marchers, as well as support from pedestrians and drivers. The police quickly intervened when a small contingent from the sidewalk march tried to coax the protest into the street. The momentum for peace continues to build around the world, including here at home. This weekend held the proof.

Cobourg

Hundreds of citizens converged to rally and march against the imperialist war, braving both the frigid weather and the political inertia of small town Ontario. Cobourg has not seen a social movement in many years that cuts across boundaries the way this peace movement does. It was probably the first march of any size in Cobourg for a very long time. Cobourg is a town of only 15,000 people, and to see 500 or so crowding in front of the Town Hall was positively inspiring.

We are still waiting for reports from Barrie, Cornwall, Hamilton, Huntsville, Kingston, Midland, North Bay, Orangeville, Orillia, Ottawa, Pembroke, Peterborough, Parry Sound, Port Perry, St. Catherines, Sault Ste. Marie, Uxbridge, and Windsor. Feel free to post these to the Indymedia site, and also help spread the word!