

# MONITOR

Progressive news, views and ideas



CCPA  
CANADIAN CENTRE  
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES  
CENTRE CANADIEN  
de POLITIQUES ALTERNATIVES

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**CCPA**  
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## MONITOR

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*Founded in 1980, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) is a registered charitable research institute and Canada's leading source of progressive policy ideas, with offices in Ottawa, Vancouver, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto and Halifax. The CCPA founded the Monitor magazine in 1994 to share and promote its progressive research and ideas, as well as those of like-minded Canadian and international voices. The Monitor is mailed to all CCPA supporters who give a minimum of \$35 a year to the Centre. Write us at monitor@policyalternatives.ca if you would like to receive the Monitor.*

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RÓISÍN WEST

# All's fare?

**W**E NEED TO break up with our current fare-based transit model and the pandemic has made this abundantly clear.

Farebox recovery revenues, also called cost recovery revenues, represent the amount of a transit system's operating costs that are downloaded to the rider through the fares they pay. As government funding for transit systems is clawed back, the reliance on farebox recovery revenues increases.

However, this reliance is itself not without impacts. The oft cited Simpson-Curtin rule provides the rough guideline that for every 3% increase in fares, ridership drops 1%. Critics of this rule argue that it is too imprecise to capture the myriad factors that influence ridership. When the Toronto Transit

Commission (TTC) increased cash fares by 54% in a single year in 1992,<sup>1</sup> this move contributed to the loss of 15 million riders.<sup>2</sup> However, it wasn't the only factor influencing the decline. The TTC's attempt to close their fiscal gap by putting increased financial pressure on its ridership exacerbated financial pressure that their riders were already experiencing due to the recession and made taking transit less accessible.

While this massive loss in ridership ought to have served as a warning to other municipalities about the pitfalls of relying on farebox recovery revenues, rider fares remain a central funding stream for Canadian transit systems. The average farebox recovery ratio for Canadian transit systems in 2019 was 51%,<sup>3</sup> meaning that right before the pandemic hit, the majority of public transit

operating costs were being covered by rider fares. This level of reliance on farebox revenues was rated by Moody's as creating significant financial risk for transit systems.<sup>4</sup> We don't have to imagine what that significant financial risk looks like; we've seen its effects unfold in real time across Canada over the course of the pandemic.

Perhaps the most notable example of this risk is the Go Transit bus and rail system, operated by Metrolinx, which serves the Greater Golden Horseshoe region of Ontario. In the 2019–20 fiscal year, Metrolinx reported a cost recovery ratio of 64.3%. After the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the ratio fell to 10.1%.<sup>5</sup> Go Transit lost 90.2% of its fare revenue in 2020–21, totalling a drop of \$517.9 million from the previous year. While not all systems were hit as hard as

Total revenue, excluding subsidies for urban transit systems in Canada 2018–21 (in millions)



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA (2021). ANNUAL PASSENGER BUS AND URBAN TRANSIT SURVEY AND MONTHLY PASSENGER BUS AND URBAN TRANSIT SURVEY



<b>Farebox Recovery Ratio</b>	<b>Transit System</b>	<b>Fare Rate</b>	<b>Year</b>
22.00%	Lethbridge Transit	\$3.00	2018
29.00%	Metrobus (St. John's)	\$2.50	2019
32.00%	Red Deer Transit	\$2.50	2018
33.00%	Société de transport de Laval	\$3.25	2019
34.00%	Saskatoon Transit, Fixed-route transit	\$3.00	2018
34.00%	Kingston Transit	\$3.00*	2018
35.00%	Halifax Transit	\$2.75	2019
35.00%	Thunder Bay Transit	\$3.00	2018
36.00%	Regina Transit	\$3.25	2018
38.00%	Codiac Transpo	\$2.50	2019
39.00%	Réseau de transport de la Capitale (Quebec City)	\$3.00	2011
39.00%	Fredericton Transit	\$2.75	2019
40.00%	York Region Transit	\$3.88	2019
43.00%	Société de transport de l'Outaouais (Gatineau)	\$4.00	2019
45.00%	Guelph Transit	\$3.00	2018
45.00%	Edmonton Transit System	\$3.50	2019
45.00%	OC Transpo (Ottawa)	\$3.55	2019
46.00%	Brampton Transit	\$3.00	2019
46.00%	Victoria Regional Transit System	\$2.50	2019
47.00%	Saint John Transit	\$2.75	2019
48.00%	MiWay (Mississauga)	\$3.25	2019
48.00%	Transit Windsor	\$3.00	2018
50.00%	Calgary Transit	\$3.00	2014
50.00%	Hamilton Street Railway	\$3.00	2019
52.00%	London Transit Commission	\$2.75	2019
54.00%	TransLink (Metro Vancouver)	\$2.40	2019
58.00%	Société de transport de Montréal	\$3.25	2019
60.00%	Winnipeg Transit	\$2.50	2011
64.30%	GO Transit (Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area)	\$3.70	2019
66.00%	Toronto Transit Commission	\$3.25	2019

\*CHILDREN AGES 0-14 RIDE FREE

Metrolinx, many faced significant ridership drop offs following the start of Canada's pandemic experience. And though there have been some improvements in ridership numbers, they have not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

At the same time, Canada needs to be expanding its public transit systems to transition commuters out of their cars and into sustainable modes of travel. Improving transit is not possible when systems rely on fares to operate. Because of their pandemic-related declines in ridership, by 2024 the public transit agencies that serve the greater Montreal area estimate that they will have accumulated a deficit of anywhere from \$716 million to \$936 million. In order to address this debt,

they intend to cut service by 2% each year while raising fares 4% each year, meaning that the systems could end up with a greater farebox revenue ratio than before.<sup>6</sup>

This doesn't even take into account the amount of money that we spend collecting fares and policing our transit systems to make sure that people have paid to be there. The privately owned Presto fare card system has cost an estimated \$1.2 billion to operate.<sup>7</sup> The TTC alone reportedly spends about \$10 million annually on 110 fare inspectors, and about \$15 million on 120 special constables. Is this an efficient or effective use of public dollars? If we understand our transit systems as existing to help move people through cities, to help reduce the greenhouse

gas emissions from personal vehicles, to close equity gaps, we can see the people using transit as deserving of service, regardless of ability to pay. If the goal is transit, let's fund transit.

But to achieve that goal we need a different funding model. Without permanent operational funding support, transit systems remain locked in a funding ratio that leaves their budgets open to significant risk and unable to provide the low- to no-barrier access to public transit that allows Canada to reach its climate targets. It's time for Canadian municipalities to rethink their transit funding models, but they can't do it without the support of all levels of government. **M**



# OH SHIP!

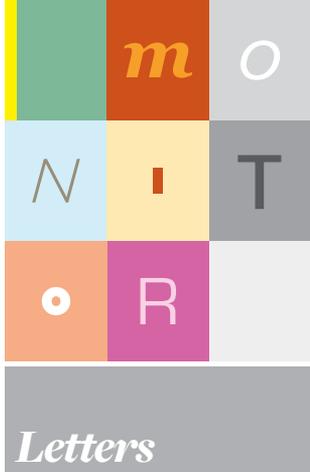
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## Protecting the oases that remain

The phrase “Agricultural Desert” describes a landscape that has been stripped of all its natural habitats. The process of land clearing, wetlands drainage, shelter belt removal and the dislocation of farm families that once occupied the land has been completed. The commercial crops that have replaced the wetlands and uplands are products that have a commercial value. They can be bought and sold and traded. Those natural lifeforms, displaced by the Agricultural Desert are without value in the economic system. Therefore, they do not have a right to exist. The Agricultural Desert has an insatiable need to expand and consume all that lies before it. This is not a natural force; it is a creation of man.

The Agricultural Desert draws its ever increasing energy from the continuing industrialization of the agriculture production system. Fertilizer and herbicides designed to work in harmony with the crops emerging from patented seeds. The desert demands larger farms, using rented or purchased technology,

priced to extract most, and occasionally all of the value of the crop produced. Greater volumes of production at smaller margins, reduces rural population and disposable incomes until the Agricultural Desert evicts occupants from the land, silencing the voices defending the few oases that may remain.

The oases that remain are not products of the marketplace. They are the products of persons who recognize a lifetime of observation, the value and beauty of natural life. A value that cannot be described or even recognized by the marketplace. The two oases I have occupy 110 acres. I have signed agreements with the understanding these oases will exist in perpetuity. The existence of these agreements angers the Desert. Its voice has demanded that the government limit the protection of my oasis to a term of not more than 20 years.

It is not a long physical distance from my home to a favourite oasis of my youth but involves a long journey in time, back to 1955. I made the journey last fall, a beautiful warm October day. There was a light smell of smoke in the air and a blue haze along the line of hills on the horizon. It’s best to go alone to visit the past. You can speak freely to the departed. I could see the landscape as it had been. The natural hay meadows, designed by nature, skirted by clumps of diamond willow. The strides of youth, in pursuit of sharp tailed grouse. The place where I found my first

duck nest and checked on it until it hatched. A small flight of mallards circle and drop into the slough. The voices of the past speak and I answer them. The Desert had taken it all. Nothing from the past had survived. The bounty of the Desert had been harvested. The fall tillage had been completed. The tractor pulling the cultivator had been steered by a satellite, the tillage marks, perfectly straight for a mile. There was not a sign of a human hand being present. This land would be empty until next spring. The big machines would return for three or four days to mate with the Agricultural Desert. The voice of the Desert assures me, it must be so to feed a starving world. I fear that left to apply its own values, the Desert will surely create a starving world.

**Fred Tait**  
Rossendale, MB

## Curbing Big Oil’s influence

The Corporate Mapping Project has done an excellent job in highlighting the extent to which the oil industry has held unreasonable control over Canadian society with its tentacles and toxins seeping into all aspects of our lives.

Even reverent organizations like the Royal Canadian Geographic Society with its popular magazine are poster boys for the oil industry. With the Society’s support, many thousands of Canadian children are taught to idolize Shell Oil, the funder

of classroom programs on energy.

As Josh Axelrod from the Natural Resources Defense Council states, the only way for oil companies “to deal with their emissions is to stop.” There are enough wells now to take the planet to dangerous levels for humans and the web of life that we are part of.

For decades the oil industry has been actively denying the science and evidence of climate change and promoting a car-dependent lifestyle while expanding the production of plastics, fully aware of the damage for us and future generations.

Will we wise up and stand up to the oil industry’s control of our governments, our institutions and the life on our planet?

**Melanie Milanich**  
Toronto, ON

## Correction

In the January/February 2022 issue, on Page 40, we reference the book *Maker*, but misattribute it to Jim Sinclair. The book’s author is Jim Upton. Special thanks to Alan Lennon for the correction.

*Letters have been edited for clarity and length. Send your letters to [monitor@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:monitor@policyalternatives.ca).*



## New from the CCPA

### Finding hope in time of crisis

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the CCPA-BC Office. The office kicked off the year with a free online event featuring Dr. Cornel West in February. The event, titled “Being a Hope Amid Crises” was co-hosted by the BC Office with the BC Black History Awareness Society. A prominent American philosopher, political activist and public intellectual, Dr. West calls on us all to understand hope not as wishful thinking or blind optimism—but as something we embody through action and struggle—a powerful theme to explore at a time of escalating environmental and social crises. The BC Office is looking forward to more opportunities for marking its 25th year. You can watch a recording of the event at [www.policyalternatives.ca/cornel-west](http://www.policyalternatives.ca/cornel-west)

### Shaking Big Oil’s influence

CCPA-SK’s latest report, ***Big Oil in City Hall: Climate Politics in the Queen City***, written by Simon Enoch and Roxanne Korpan, received national media attention due to its

exposure of oil industry lobbying and advocacy at the municipal level. As the authors warn, these types of industry-backed lobbying campaigns will only become more prevalent in western Canada as local governments that seek to enact more ambitious climate change run headlong into the economic, political and cultural power of the oil industry. By identifying the tactics, strategies and talking points that industry regularly uses in these campaigns, ***Big Oil in City Hall*** can help us better anticipate and prepare for local climate struggles in the future.

### Reimagining public services

New research from the Manitoba team finds that the province’s adult education programs are struggling to meet demand. The study lays out a roadmap for a re-imagined and revitalized adult education strategy in full. ***Unearth this Buried Treasure: Adult Education in Manitoba*** received sweeping media coverage including an editorial from the *Winnipeg Free Press* and stories on CTV, CBC and Global News.

The tragic death of an MLA this winter raised alarms about privatized snow removal service and reignited interest in CCPA Manitoba’s 2021 report, ***Hard Infrastructure, Hard Times: Worker Perspectives on Privatization and Contracting out of Manitoba Infrastructure***. This research highlights the startling

reduction in Manitoba infrastructure and VEMA staff since 2016.

### Lead up to the election

Ontario’s next provincial budget will be out in late March—just ahead of a June election—and CCPA-ON is looking forward to a busy spring. We’ll be analyzing the budget and the party platforms as they arrive. Ontario is a “have” province, but you’d never know it from our public services: Queen’s Park spends \$2,000 less per person per year on programs compared to the average of the other provinces—which may explain why we have the fewest hospital beds and nurses per capita, our community colleges receive more money from international students than they do from government, and our provincial climate plan takes us only 19% of the way towards meeting our emission reduction targets. For sharp critiques and hopeful plans, keep an eye on @CCPA\_Ont in the weeks ahead.

### Pushing back against privatization

The National research team has partnered with CCPA-SK and Vivac Research to push back against Newfoundland and Labrador’s austerity agenda and Labrador’s austerity agenda. Our quantitative analysis provides a detailed rebuttal to the Province’s proposed measures including public asset sales that would put the province’s future revenue-generating capacity at risk. Using

Saskatchewan’s experience with privatization as a cautionary tale, our research team has provided clear and compelling evidence against a privatization agenda.

Later this month, Senior Economist David Macdonald will release new analysis demonstrating that the provincial fiscal situation is much more positive than leaders are making it out to be. This timely research will help counter government messaging that is using the guise of financial responsibility as justification for austerity measures.

### Standing up for workers

This past month, the CCPA-Nova Scotia Office released ***Putting Continuity in Care, Reimagining the Role of Immigration in the Recruitment and Retention of Healthcare Workers in Nova Scotia***. The report critically examined Nova Scotia’s Continuing Care Assistant (CCA) recruitment plans and the increased reliance on newcomers to address chronic staffing shortages. The report highlighted how current immigration policies keep newcomer workers in limbo through precarious work permits and complex pathways to becoming a Permanent Resident (PR). The report called for well-paid, well-supported CCA positions and for PR status to be a component of the province’s recruitment and retention plan for workers. **M**

# Catching up together

## A plan for Ontario's schools

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS HAS always affected educational outcomes, but the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated education inequities between lower- and higher-income students in Ontario. Unless the provincial government immediately invests in a plan to help all students catch up from the disruptions the pandemic has imposed on their educational experience, a generation of students will be left behind.

Many interrelated factors affect the academic performance and overall development of students throughout their school career. These factors include teaching practices, school resources, the overall organization of educational systems, the geographical location of schools, parent involvement, trauma, and the socio-economic status of students' families. Our report, *Catching up Together: A Plan for Ontario's Schools*, focuses on socio-economic status (SES).

Before COVID-19 struck, the achievement gap between high-socio-economic-status and low-socio-economic-status students was already a cause for concern. Economically secure families have more financial resources to invest in educational resources such as books, private tutors, technology, and extracurricular activities. These resources are positively correlated with higher parent expectations, higher student motivation and higher achievement.<sup>1</sup>

In the two years since the pandemic hit Ontario, academic and development gaps have grown by the day. While it will take years to fully assess the impact of COVID-19 on children's academic performance,

two Canadian-focused analyses have begun to document this impact. The picture they paint is already disconcerting.

The authors of *COVID-19 School Closures and Educational Achievement Gaps in Canada* extrapolated the findings from their analysis of the Ontario summer learning program, predicting "learning losses of 3.5 and 6.5 months among typically-performing and lower performing students respectively, and achievement gaps that grow up to 1.5 years among same grade peers."<sup>2</sup> Another recent study estimated that the socio-economic status-related skills gap of 15-year-olds in Canada could increase by more than 30% as a result of the pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

The other half of the story is that low- and moderate-income households were significantly more likely to have been affected by the virus itself during the pandemic. Low-socio-economic-status students not only had fewer resources at their disposal when they were first sent home; the ground kept shifting for them as their families were more exposed to the virus and more susceptible to the economic impact of the measures put in place to contain it.

In Ontario, public policies are going in the opposite direction of what's needed to address the inequity gaps that the pandemic has exacerbated. Funding decisions made in the years preceding the pandemic weakened the province's schools. The amounts made available during the pandemic were not sufficient to address the enormous needs on the ground. And even as the pandemic continues, the provincial government has already

announced planned funding cuts for the years ahead.

Ontario has been underfunding public education for far too long. There is a \$16.8 billion school repair backlog, and more needs to be done to address ventilation issues in the era of an airborne virus pandemic. Even during the pandemic, the provincial government increased classroom sizes, cut teaching staff and cut back funding to the school system. In November 2021, the government announced a further \$500 million cut to Ministry of Education funding for the 2021–22 school year.

Ontarians have a choice to make. In the years ahead, the province can use its education system to support all children in overcoming the negative impacts of the pandemic and put them back on a healthy path to growth, development and learning. Alternatively, the province can sit on the sidelines and watch as schools struggle to provide the programs children need while parents with resources abandon the public system to find costly alternatives in the private market.

But we think that the first option—investing in our education system to close equity gaps—is an investment that benefits all of us. And it is an option that is within reach. We have 13 recommendations to help students catch up during, and after, the COVID-19 pandemic:

- 1.** Increase teaching staff for Grades 9 to 12 to allow smaller class sizes with a 22:1 student/teacher ratio and more educational supports for those students
- 2.** Increase teaching staff for Grades 4–8 to allow smaller class sizes (24:1) and more educational supports for those students
- 3.** Increase teaching staff for Grades 1–3 to increase educational supports for those students

4. Increase teaching staff for kindergarten
5. Give early childhood educators a pay raise to recognize their essential and challenging work and ensure that they're no longer working poor
6. Deploy mental health and well-being teams in all schools
7. Eliminate mandatory e-learning
8. Terminate hybrid learning and mandatory full-time synchronous remote learning
9. Return to a decentralized approach to technology application
10. Increase the Learning Opportunities Grant Demographic Allocation to \$630 million, index it to inflation, and then revamp the funding calculation
11. Increase school maintenance spending to \$2 billion a year
12. Address the \$16.8 billion repair backlog within the next 10 years
13. Create transparent state-of-good-repair criteria for assessing schools, and make the information publicly available on an ongoing basis

### Investing in education

The total annual cost of the 13 measures is \$4.3 billion, representing a 13% increase in total education spending over the amount budgeted in the province's November 2021 fall economic statement. We recommend that the province review and undo some, or all, of the government's recent tax changes to free up hundreds of millions of dollars for other priorities, including public education. Not proceeding with cuts to personal income taxes and corporate income taxes that were promised in the 2018 election campaign would keep at least \$3.8 billion available for public services.

When it comes to raising revenue to fund public services, the Ontario government has many options, but one very straightforward option is to increase the Personal Income Tax rate in a way that makes the overall system more progressive and

increases taxes only for those who are most able to pay. In 2019 dollars, the after-tax income gap between economic families in Ontario in the top 10% of the economic distribution and those in the bottom 30% remained relatively stable from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, but it has shot up since then. The gap was \$136,733 in 1976; it had grown to \$203,733 in 2019—a 49% increase in real terms.

In recognition of this, we propose a modest increase in income taxes for top income earners. Annual income taxes paid by those in the fourth, fifth, and sixth income deciles would increase by an average of \$20, \$50, and \$110 respectively. Above that income level, the proposed personal income tax increases would reach an average of \$1,300 in the ninth decile before rising substantially to an average of \$6,500 to those in the top 1% of the income distribution—those earning \$435,294 yearly and above. With these changes, two-thirds of the overall increase in taxes would be paid by those in the highest-earning 10% of Ontarians. One-sixth of the overall increase would be paid by those in the top 1%.

Taken together, these changes would raise an estimated \$2.6 billion per year to fund improvements to education for all. To complete funding for the plan will require an additional \$1.7 billion in annual funding. Some of that funding could come from a review of recent tax reductions and tax credits; the remainder could come from re-allocating dollars within the existing provincial infrastructure budget (for example by cancelling the proposed Highway 413, which the *Globe and Mail* has called “a \$6 billion sprawl accelerator”).

As the pandemic winds on, there are certainly reasons to worry about Ontario students. But there are also reasons to be hopeful. The province's education system is built on a strong foundation. When it comes to public education, we can afford to care: Ontario is a rich province

in a rich country. The provincial government has the authority and the mechanisms to raise revenues to pay for the policies and programs proposed here, and more, if it so desires. Ontario spends less per capita on public programs than any other province in Canada. There's room for improvement, for all of the right reasons: the students of today are the workers and leaders of tomorrow. The time to invest resources to help them catch up is now. **M**

*Catching up Together: A Plan for Ontario's Schools* was published by the CCPA-Ontario office and is available for download from [policyalternatives.ca/catchinguptogether](http://policyalternatives.ca/catchinguptogether)

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# COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need for a living wage

WITH THE SPREAD of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, news stories sounding the alarm over worker shortages are once again on the rise. And, like previous waves, these news stories are focused almost exclusively on workers in low-wage, precarious jobs. These jobs service large parts of the Canadian economy that are now being recognized as “essential” in a post-pandemic society; jobs in the food supply and distribution chain, especially.

Precarious jobs tend to be characterized by part-time or casual labour, low wages with few benefits or job protections. This includes many jobs in service sectors like retail, restaurant and food services, among others.

The first year and a half of the pandemic, in recognition of the essential nature of many precarious jobs, saw advancements for these workers in relation to job protection and sick leave. Many provinces amended employment statutes to ensure that all workers could take some form of unpaid sick leave and protected them against termination for doing so. Some, such as BC, have gone further to extend at least some entitlement to paid sick leave for these workers, as well.

The past two years of the pandemic have also highlighted numerous other issues and concerns for precarious workers, and the resulting labour shortages that have plagued service and food supply employers have not only been limited to periods of high COVID-19 caseloads. More workers have left these industries and fewer workers have entered them. The reasons

The pandemic has both illustrated and spurred on a demonstrated need for a living wage.

for this are well-rehearsed: lack of stability and job security, few benefits and most often at the top of the list: insufficient wages.

For example, an individual working as a grocery store clerk in Vancouver and making minimum wage would gross just over \$600 per week, or \$2400 per month, working 40 hours per week. In light of the cost of rent, food and other essentials in Vancouver, this is not enough to make ends meet each month. Staying home from work while sick would be a difficult choice to make if the illness extended beyond BC’s now-mandatory five days employer-paid sick leave (or if they get sick more than once in a year). And, the ability to cope with a gap in pay if the workplace was shut down would likely be insurmountable.

The pandemic has both illustrated and spurred on a demonstrated need for a living wage. A living wage is one that allows a household to “meet its basic needs.” It is more than minimum wage. In Metro Vancouver, the calculated living wage for 2021 is \$20.52 while the minimum wage is \$15.20. And the cost of many essential goods has continued to rise since the calculation was done last year, due in part to the pandemic and its associated consequences. In 2022, for example, the cost of gas and

basic groceries like milk is predicted to rise well above historical averages of inflation.

Many precarious jobs have typically paid at or near the minimum wage, with no attending benefits. However, for employers facing serious labour shortages, a living wage may be an attractive enticement for workers to enter and stay in these industries.

Since the onset of the pandemic, some employers in food services, especially, have taken a step in this direction, offering higher than minimum wages and other benefits. Others long ago took an even greater step by becoming a “living wage employer” in BC. And in unionized workplaces, achieving decent pay and working conditions, beyond the legislated minimum, is a matter of collective action and rights. In fact, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, more people in precarious jobs and under-represented industries in BC, like retail, cafes and food services, have started to unionize as a means to increase their wages and improve working conditions.

The recognition that many precarious jobs—especially those in the food supply and distribution chains—are essential to the functioning of our economy and society should also be a top priority for employers and policy makers alike. Movement from a minimum wage to a living wage by individual employers is a good start and may help stave off the prospect of business closure amidst growing labour shortages. Legislated changes to move from a minimum wage to living-wage model under employment law would help ensure that all workers can have a measure of economic security in the long run. **M**

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This article was originally published on the CCPA-BC’s Policy Note blog. For more timely, progressive commentary, visit [policynote.ca](http://policynote.ca).



## Inside Trade

STUART TREW

# Canada's rhetoric on vaccine equity far surpasses its record

**C**ANADIAN OFFICIALS OFTEN claim that they are doing all they can to close the huge gap in vaccine access between rich and poor countries. They did so again in their January 31 response to a petition from the Council of Canadians demanding that the government start issuing compulsory licenses for COVID-19 vaccines and treatments and support the popular, if languishing, proposal at the World Trade Organization (WTO) to suspend intellectual property rights on these products until the pandemic is under control.

According to Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne and Trade Minister Mary Ng, who both responded to the petition, Canada “has significantly invested in helping procure vaccines for low- and middle-income countries [and has] committed to sharing Canada’s own supply of vaccines.” This is both besides the point and simply not true.

First, the ministers ignore the petition’s main demand, which is that we should be encouraging domestic pharmaceutical firms to use Canada’s Access to Medicines Regime (CAMR) to secure compulsory licences to produce and export cheaper generic versions of patented life-saving drugs.

Almost a year ago, the St. Catharines, Ontario-based Biolyse requested a compulsory licence for the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, and then found a secure buyer in the Bolivian government. But Health Canada has been stonewalling them both for months.

It seems clear the government is not interested in using the CAMR to help end the pandemic sooner for everyone. It is very likely the government is worried about upsetting the brand-name pharmaceutical lobby group, Innovative Medicines Canada, whose pressure has now twice delayed the introduction of reforms, unrelated to COVID-19, that would lower the price of patented medicines in this country.

Second, what can be said of Canada’s commitment to sharing our own surplus supply of vaccines? Nothing good. As Adam Houston of Doctors Without Borders noted in January, “Canada can only demonstrate the

delivery of 11,897,420 doses towards its donation pledge of 200 million doses to COVAX by the end of 2022. If Canada wants to credibly claim it has delivered more, it needs to show the receipts.”

Houston commended Canada for being one of the most generous financial contributors to COVAX, But, he points out, the World Health Organization initiative has to haggle with vaccine makers on pricing for whatever supply is there, just like any other country.

Amazingly, given our relatively high vaccination and booster rates, Canada has secured another 105 million doses of Moderna’s mRNA shot and 185 million doses of Pfizer-BioNTech’s vaccine for 2022, 2023 and 2024 (see chart). We’ve potentially locked up nearly 300 million doses that could and should go into arms in low-income countries where vaccination rates are very low.

Do we need all these doses? Some of them, yes. But to avoid an endless procession of immunity-busting variants like Delta and Omicron, the better strategy is to rapidly close the gap in rich-to-poor country vaccination rates, as the World Health Organization continually warns.

Do we have enough doses to achieve this? No. Even if Canada and all highly vaccinated G7 countries donated every mRNA dose they’ve ordered it would be a drop in the bucket of the estimated 22 billion doses needed to bring COVID-19 under control, according to a new report from Partners in Health and PrEP4All involving scientists from four U.S. and Canadian universities.

“Building this manufacturing capacity would be fast and affordable,” said Partners in Health in a press release. “It would cost the U.S. less than \$12 billion in capital expenses and could be accomplished in less than four to six months.” Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna expect to make a combined seven billion doses in 2022—a lot, but still only a fraction of what’s needed.

This production wouldn’t all need to take place in the U.S. and Europe, contrary to the dire (and, let’s be honest, racist) warnings of patent-holding vaccine makers that Global South lab workers just aren’t smart enough.

In December, Human Rights Watch published a list of more than 100 firms in Latin America, Africa and Asia that could be producing mRNA vaccines in a few months if patent owners only shared their recipes and know-how. This widespread access to promising mRNA technology will be fundamental to true vaccine equity as current vaccines show waning effectiveness at blocking infection from new variants, even as they reduce serious illness and hospitalization.

In some good news this February, Afrigen Biologics announced it had successfully used Moderna’s mRNA sequence to develop an mRNA vaccine that could be tested on humans by the end of the year. Moderna refused to help them in this remarkable feat. Afrigen have shared the technology with a state-owned South

African vaccine producer and have agreed to help train companies in Argentina and Brazil.

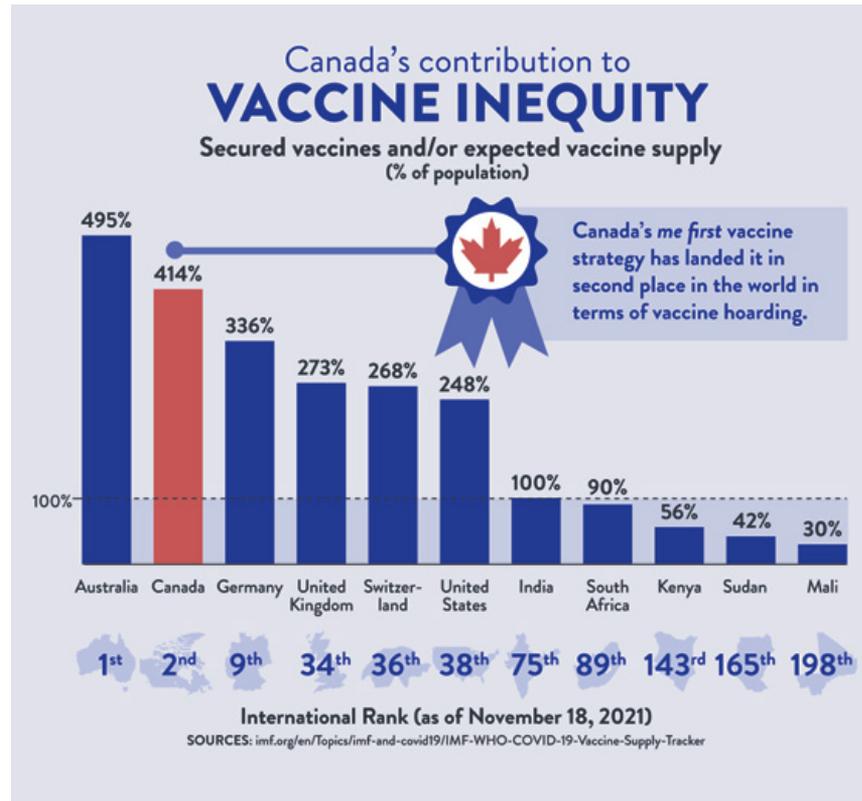
The unwillingness of the major mRNA vaccine makers to share their proprietary information on a scale necessary to end the pandemic will go down in history as the sheer bloody greed that it is. Pfizer and Moderna have been earning profits at a rate of US\$1,000 a second, according to a Peoples Vaccine Alliance report late last year.

It's not surprising that 130 countries support an intellectual property rights vacation (the TRIPS waiver) at the WTO, since it would at least give countries leverage over these flush, self-serving patent-holders. The case for a waiver is even stronger as a new batch of effective COVID-19 therapeutics comes onto the scene.

In 2022, Pfizer expects to sell a combined US\$54 billion worth of its vaccine and Paxlovid, an antiviral treatment that shows promising signs of reducing the severity of infection in patients who contract COVID-19. While the company has agreed to give the UN Medicines Patent Pool a voluntary licence for this combination therapy, major generics-producing countries who could make lots of it now (Argentina, Brazil, China, Thailand and Malaysia) are excluded.

A broad waiver on COVID-19 vaccines and treatments would enable governments to collaborate on expanding their manufacture in many parts of the world without attracting—or worrying about triggering—trade-based retaliation. It is by far the fastest way out of the pandemic and the only one that prepares the world to face future health challenges of this scale.

In his response to the Council of Canadians' petition on CAMR and the TRIPS waiver, Minister Champagne says Canada "is ready to discuss proposals for an IP waiver... and remains committed to...reaching an agreement that accelerates global vaccine production and does not



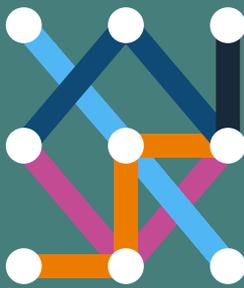
negatively impact public health.” If only that were true.

In fact, Canadian officials have said little to nothing about the waiver at TRIPS Council and WTO General Council discussions in Geneva over the past half-year. Instead, Canada has backed an EU-favoured counterproposal that downplays intellectual property-related barriers to vaccine equity and may very well be dead (“strategic pause,” was how the Honduran chair of the dialogue put it in early February). As I wrote this, the WTO was still struggling to reschedule a late-2021 ministerial conference that was cancelled last year due to Omicron.

Nearly one and a half years since a waiver was first proposed, the EU, U.S., India and a few other countries are reportedly haggling over a geographic limitation that would exclude China and India, among other countries with strong generic manufacturing capacity. According to Priti Patnaik, who runs the excellent Geneva Health Files blog, this outcome is unlikely to be acceptable to most WTO members.

Rather than address the petitioners on these questions, Champagne emphasizes a recently announced Biomanufacturing and Life Sciences Strategy aimed at skills training and attracting domestic and foreign investment in *new* mRNA and *commercializable* therapeutics. The strategy was developed in close coordination with the brand-name pharma lobby and one day it may indeed enhance Canada's capacity to respond to health emergencies.

That will be of little help to the 90% of people in low-income countries who have yet to be vaccinated for this current emergency. If Canada were serious about ending the pandemic sooner, we would cancel or divert the bulk of our incoming mRNA doses to COVAX, allow generic firms to produce and export vaccines under compulsory licences, and fight for a broad, universal TRIPS waiver, as initially proposed by South Africa and India in October 2020. Until then, don't believe the hype. **M**



Index

# COMMUTING by the numbers



**11,666,840**

Number of workers who commuted in Canada's 35 Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) in 2016. Of that number, **8,839,205 (76%)** commuted by car. The average one-way commuting time for a long commute by car was **74 minutes**.<sup>1</sup>



**78%**

Percentage of Canadian commuters in 2016 who travelled by car as either a driver or passenger. Commuters who worked further away from the city centre were more likely to use a car to go to work than those who worked closer.<sup>2</sup>



**1.5 million**

Number of Canadian workers in 2016 who spent at least **60 minutes** travelling to work each day.<sup>3</sup> Together, these workers made up **8.7%** of the 2016 workforce.



Increasingly, commuters are coming from farther away. The 2016 census reveals that urban spread across Canada continues with peripheral municipalities of CMAs experiencing higher population growth. Population growth between 2011 and 2016 was higher among peripheral municipalities (+6.9%) of CMAs, compared with central municipalities (+5.8%). This confirms the popular belief that the urban spread phenomenon is occurring and/or is continuing in many of the CMAs in the country. Milton, Ontario, for example, which is located west of Toronto, saw a 30.5% increase in its population between 2011 and 2016.<sup>4</sup>

## AVERAGE LENGTH OF COMMUTE BY CITY AND MODE OF TRANSPORTATION, 2016<sup>5</sup>

	Toronto	Montreal	Vancouver	Calgary	Ottawa-Gatineau	Edmonton	Quebec	Winnipeg
<b>Public Transit</b>	50 min	44 min	44 min	42 min	42 min	40 min	35 min	36 min
<b>Car</b>	30 min	27 min	27 min	24 min	25 min	24 min	21 min	23 min

<sup>1</sup> Yaropud, T. Gilmore, J. & LaRochelle-Côté, S. (2019, February 25). Results from the 2016 Census: Long commutes to work by car. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00002-eng.htm> <sup>2</sup> Savage, K. (2019, May 29). Results from the 2016 Census: Commuting within Canada's largest cities. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00008-eng.htm> <sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada. (2019, December 2). Commuting in Canada's three largest cities. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2019086-eng.htm>. <sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada (2017, February 8). Census in Brief, Municipalities in Canada with the largest and fastest-growing populations between 2011 and 2016. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016001/98-200-x2016001-eng.cfm> <sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada (2017, November 29). Journey to work, 2016 Census of Population. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2017038-eng.htm> <sup>6</sup> Savage, K. (2019, May 29). Results from the 2016 Census: Commuting within Canada's largest cities. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00008-eng.htm> <sup>7</sup> Savage, K. (2019, May 29). Results from the 2016 Census: Commuting within Canada's largest cities. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00008-eng.htm> <sup>8</sup> Savage, K. (2019, May 29). Results from the 2016 Census: Commuting within Canada's largest cities. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00008-eng.htm> <sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada. (2017, November 29). Commuters using sustainable transportation in census metropolitan areas. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016029/98-200-x2016029-eng.cfm> <sup>10</sup> Savage, K. (2019, May 29). Results from the 2016 Census: Commuting within Canada's largest cities. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00008-eng.htm> <sup>11</sup> Savage, K.

# How we commute is changing

In most CMAs, the proportion of people working in the city core has declined while the proportion of people working outside the city core has increased. Calgary saw the largest proportional decline in workers whose job was located within 5 km of the city centre, decreasing 11 percentage points (from 49% to 38%) since 1996. The second largest decrease in workers who worked within 5 km of the city centre (a decline of 8 percentage points, to 30%) was seen in Edmonton. **In the eight largest CMAs, a majority of workers were located outside the city core in 2016.**<sup>6</sup>

**28%** Percent decline in Montreal workers between 1996 and 2016 who relied on cars to commute to work. In all eight of Canada's largest CMAs, the number of people going to work by car dropped during this time frame, with Montreal seeing the biggest drop, equivalent to **58,100** additional workers taking public transit to their jobs in Montreal.<sup>7</sup>

## PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN TYPE OF COMMUTER BETWEEN 1996 AND 2016<sup>8</sup>

City	Within city-core commute	Traditional commute (outside-to-inside city core)	Reverse commute (inside-to-outside city core)
Toronto	-16.2%	+48.2%	+62.4%
Montreal	-47.4%	+47.3%	+48.8%
Vancouver	-26.7%	+61.5%	+54.6%

## Sustainable transportation

Among the three largest CMAs—Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver—commuters from Toronto were most likely to use sustainable transportation (**42.5%**), mainly as a result of slightly higher public transit use compared with Montreal and Vancouver.<sup>9</sup>

**40%** Percentage of commuters in Ottawa-Gatineau who use sustainable transportation, the highest proportion among large CMAs (excluding the three largest). Edmonton had the lowest proportion at **27.1%**.<sup>10</sup>

Within southern Ontario's Greater Golden Horseshoe, Hamilton had the highest proportion of commuters using sustainable transportation at **27.8%**, while St. Catharines-Niagara had the lowest, **20.8%**.<sup>11</sup>



## In focus: TORONTO

**17%** Percentage of Toronto workers who spend over **60 minutes** each day commuting to work. Toronto has the highest proportion of workers that spend over an hour commuting each day, followed by Montreal (12%) and Vancouver (11%).<sup>12</sup>

Toronto commuters also had the longest median distance commute in 2016, at **10.5 km**. The next longest median commutes were those of workers in Ottawa-Gatineau at **9.2 km** and Calgary at **9.0 km**.<sup>13</sup>

**17.8km** The average distance from place of work to city centre in Toronto. In 2016, Toronto had the greatest average distance, followed by Vancouver, with **13.5 km**. Both CMAs had an increase of **1.4 km** from 1996 to 2016, speaking to the decentralization of employment from metropolitan cores.<sup>14</sup>

**26%** Percentage of workplaces located more than **25 km** from Toronto's city centre, up from **20%** in 1996. This increase reflects a trend across large metropolitan areas in Canada, which have seen employment moving away from city centres.<sup>15</sup>

**58.1%** Percentage of Toronto workers with a commute of less than five kilometres who used public transit as their main mode of commuting in 2016. When the commute length increased to 10 kilometres, the number who relied on public transit dropped to **26.1%**.<sup>16</sup>

**54.6%** Percentage of Toronto workers that are between-suburban commuters, travelling from their home in one suburb to work in a suburb more than five kilometres away. This percentage has remained essentially unchanged over the past two decades (54.5% in 1996).<sup>17</sup>

**12.5%** Percentage of between-suburban commuters in Toronto (with a commute of more than 5 km) who used public transit in 2016. This is a decline from 1996, when 13.1% of between suburb commuters in Toronto used transit.<sup>18</sup>

(2019, May 29). Results from the 2016 Census: Commuting within Canada's largest cities. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00008-eng.htm> Statistics Canada. (2019, December 2). **12** Commuting in Canada's three largest cities. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00008-eng.htm> **13** Savage, K. (2019, May 29). Results from the 2016 Census: Commuting within Canada's largest cities. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00008-eng.htm> **14** Savage, K. (2019, May 29). Results from the 2016 Census: Commuting within Canada's largest cities. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00008-eng.htm> **15** Savage, K. (2019, May 29). Results from the 2016 Census: Commuting within Canada's largest cities. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00008-eng.htm> **16** Savage, K. (2019, May 29). Results from the 2016 Census: Commuting within Canada's largest cities. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00008-eng.htm> **17** Savage, K. (2019, May 29). Results from the 2016 Census: Commuting within Canada's largest cities. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00008-eng.htm> **18** Statistics Canada (2017, February 8). Census in Brief, Municipalities in Canada with the largest and fastest-growing populations between 2011 and 2016. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as/as98-200-x/2016001/98-200-x2016001-eng.cfm>



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ARI VANGEST

# FREE TO ROAM

Fare-free  
public transportation  
arrives in Alberta?

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THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has demonstrated the volatility of funding public transit through farebox revenues. If transit commissions believe that their operating budgets must be funded through fares, their transit services will be dependent on ridership. The public transit death spiral is the inevitable result of transit systems based on fares. A death spiral is a feedback loop that occurs when a public transit system—whose operating budget relies on farebox revenue recovery to balance—experiences a decline in ridership that results in cuts to service and increases to fares to recover lost revenue. The reductions in service and increased cost to ride result in a further decline in ridership and the cycle repeats.

One solution to the transit death spiral is to make transit free for riders and find alternative funding. If a consistent alternative method of funding can be found, transit services can be maintained regardless of ridership numbers. In the past decade, at least six towns in Canada have made public transit free on local routes.<sup>1</sup> Three are situated in Quebec and the other three are in Alberta. For this article, I decided to focus on Canmore and Banff, two neighbouring towns in the Alberta Rockies, to highlight that free public transit can be accomplished, even in what is considered one of Canada's most conservative provincial landscapes.

Canmore and Banff are serviced by the Bow Valley Regional Transit Services Commission, more commonly referred to as ROAM by locals. Alongside Canmore and Banff, ROAM services Improvement District #9 and connects to local National Parks such as Banff National Park. While not a voting member, Parks Canada has representatives on ROAM's board and contributes significant financial support to ROAM. Prior to 2012, there were private contracts for transit in Banff that were operational during tourist seasons. Since its inception in 2012, ROAM has expanded from the two original routes to 10. There are five year-round routes, two of which are local routes in Banff, one local route in Canmore, a regional route between Canmore and Banff, and an express route between Banff and Lake Louise. There are five seasonal routes which connect Banff to local tourist attractions and campgrounds.

ROAM's regional transit model has made public transit a success in the Bow Valley. The regional model allows each community to implement and fund their own local transit routes and allows for easier collaboration and cost sharing on regional routes. It lowers administrative costs to have the entire region under ROAM as opposed to having multiple commissions overseeing each town's local and regional routes. For example, Canmore is responsible for the funding and operation of its local route and the route that it shares with Banff, but is not responsible for routes that do not enter its jurisdiction.

Like all communities across Canada, affordability is a top concern for this community. Public transit,

and by extension free public transit, has been used by ROAM on multiple occasions to address affordability, as well as climate change and congestion. In its research, Canmore's living wage index has tracked a dramatic rise in the cost of a living wage from \$23.40 in 2015 to \$37.40 in 2021. The only area that has seen a decrease is transportation.<sup>2</sup> The introduction of the local bus route in 2016 coincided with a decrease in the living wage index from 2015 to 2017, meaning that life had become more affordable over that time. Due to the pandemic, they have been unable to track the true impact of free public transit on the cost of living.

Addressing climate change and congestion go hand in hand. If the Bow Valley can increase public transit use, it will improve the area's air quality, protect the environment and have fewer people driving around, creating congestion. The region's economy is predicated on the natural environment and protecting National Parks and Forests. People travel from all over to see the pristine ecology, and residents have a strong desire to protect it. Likewise, congestion can be a deterrent for tourists visiting downtown Banff and Canmore. While Canmore and Banff have populations of less than 15,000 and 8,000, respectively, on a yearly basis the region plays host to over four million visitors. During peak tourist season, the region can see an influx of 50,000 visitors in a single day, more than tripling its permanent population. It is difficult for this influx in visitors to be accommodated by downtown cores that were built in the 19th and early 20th century for much smaller populations. Here, free transit plays a vital role in crowd control.

Both communities have used free public transit to encourage visitors and residents to get out of their cars. In 2017, ROAM introduced Route 6, a seasonal route between Banff and Lake Minnewanka. To promote the new transit route, ROAM made the entire route free for the summer. In 2018, they introduced three free transit promotions. Routes 2 and 6 provided free one-way trips into town for guests at Tunnel Mountain and Two Jack Campgrounds. Route 8X, the express bus from Banff to Lake Louise, was free with the inauguration of its route in October and November. Lastly, Canmore made local Route 5 free in July and August and saw ridership increase a staggering 102.8% in July and 123.9% in August. The latter free transit promotion was by far the biggest and most impactful, as it opened the possibility for permanent free public transit in Canmore the following year.

Leading up to 2018, Canmore had organized many studies examining the town's development. One of the key goals that they wanted to achieve was "emphasize placemaking, which puts a high value on creating places where people want to be." When looking for solutions in the past, Canmore would have likely sought to build more parking. However, over the past 10 years, there has been a major shift towards diversifying transportation and creating more inclusive streets. These changes

have been spurred by progressive councillors being elected to Town Council, but also out of necessity.

In 2018, Canmore Town Council was presented with the integrated parking management plan. The study found that parking was under-utilized, except for during tourist seasons and special events where parking became heavily congested. If Council wanted to build more parking, they would have to find space. Already, 85% of open space in the downtown is devoted to roads and parking. Land is expensive in the town centre and it would cost \$5,000–\$15,000 for each surface parking spot and \$50,000–\$75,000 for each structured parking space. Meanwhile, making public transit free costs \$140,000 per year. The city could decide whether they wanted to build a 30-car parking structure that would likely be under-utilized, or provide free public transit for 10 years. With this perspective, free

public transit became a low-cost alternative to building more parking.

But Canmore did not want the cost of free public transit to rest with residents. The plan was to implement free public transit in May 2019, followed by paid public parking in 2020. Reports showed that paid public parking would target visitors to the town as residents would get discounted or free parking. When COVID-19 hit, Canmore's plans were required to adapt a scenario with far fewer visitors. They canceled the paid parking plan, but continued to pay for free public transit through reserve funds. While this has cost the town a lot of money upfront, Canmore's Council believed keeping transit free was a necessity. First, they wanted to continue to provide transit, as it was an essential service for many front-line workers; and second, they believed that if they reimplemented fares, it would be much more difficult to revert to a

free system following the pandemic. For two years, Canmore paid for free public transit out of reserve funds until paid parking could be implemented in 2022 to cover the cost.

The implementation of free public transit in Canmore gave Banff a local case study to learn from and gain inspiration. In January 2022, City Council gave the green light to make Banff's two local routes free for residents. Following Canmore's plan, Banff decided to use parking revenues to pay for free public transit. Unlike Canmore, Banff decided to start with only residents for two reasons: Banff has more buses and routes than Canmore with half of the population and Banff also has the Hotel Partnership Program. All hotels in Banff are eligible to participate in the partnership program. Participating hotels pay a set fee every month to ROAM, and all of their guests receive complementary bus passes. In 2019, the hotel partnership program paid for about 30% of Banff's local transit. Banff's councillors wanted to ensure that free public transit could be paid for without increasing taxes. If transit was made free for visitors, Banff would have to find a way to cover the lost revenue from the hotel partnership program. If another alternative method of funding were to be discovered, free public transit may be expanded, but for now Banff is taking it one step at a time.

The Bow Valley should be heralded as a leader in free public transit. It has been an overwhelming success and in the 2021 Rock Mountain Outlook's Best of the Bow contest, free ROAM in Canmore was voted the best use of tax dollars. Even within a historically conservative landscape, towns have the power to implement free public transit if they are willing to take the chance. Everyone in Canmore and Banff can breathe easier because their municipal leaders took that chance. **M**

1. ALBERTA LIVING WAGE NETWORK AND PUZZLE ROCK CODING INC. 2021. CANMORE'S 2021 LIVING WAGE REPORT. CANMORE, ALBERTA.

2. VANGHEEST, ARI. 2020. "FREE PUBLIC TRANSIT AND THE RIGHT TO THE CITY." UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO, LONDON, ONTARIO.

## DID YOU KNOW?

## DID YOU KNOW?

In 2019, CCPA BC Senior Economist Marc Lee published analysis, inspired by the #AllonBoard campaign, which advocated for free transit for riders under age 18 and a sliding scale pass for lower-income adults. Lee's work detailed how much it would cost for Metro Vancouver's transit system, TransLink, to implement these changes and identified multiple options for financing the project. Lee's analysis concluded "The cost of providing free transit for youth under 18 and a sliding scale pass for lower-income adults is both good social policy and fiscally very achievable."

Vancouver City Council approved The Reduced Fare Transit Pilot in September 2020. This pilot project including 50-100 people was implemented with the purpose of implementing the recommendations of the #AllonBoard campaign to increase access to transit for low-income residents, through initiatives including a sliding scale pass.

In the 2021 provincial budget, the B.C. finance minister announced new transit funding to eliminate fares for children aged 12 and younger in the province. This announcement is estimated to save families in Metro Vancouver up to \$672 per child.

ASAD ISMI

# China's transport project meets stiff resistance in Balochistan

IF THE BELT and Road Initiative [BRI] is like a symphony involving and benefiting every country, then construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor [CPEC] is the sweet melody of the symphony's first movement," said China's foreign minister Wang Yi in 2015. China's BRI is the largest infrastructure project in the world consisting of economic corridors—roads, pipelines and maritime links—connecting Asia with the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. Chinese spending on BRI infrastructure projects, including mines, ports and other mega-projects at home and in countries along each corridor, could reach \$8 trillion over the next 20 years.

China has Belt and Road cooperation agreements with 80 countries and organizations, and has built 75 overseas economic and trade cooperation zones in 24 countries. BRI has however, hit a significant roadblock in Pakistan. There is major opposition to the initiative in Pakistan's Balochistan province, where ethnic Baloch are fighting a separatist insurgency against a Pakistani army accused of massive human rights violations. Balochistan is crucial to the creation of the CPEC, which in turn is a major part of the BRI.

Gwadar port in Balochistan, a BRI-funded project, will give China an important alternate route for oil imports from the Middle East. Pakistan and China are also building road and rail networks between Gwadar and Xinjiang, China's largest province bordering Pakistan. China plans to invest \$62 billion in CPEC.

Balochistan comprises 43% of Pakistan's land area and holds most of its natural resources, including a rich supply of oil, natural gas, coal, copper, gold, silver, platinum, aluminum and uranium. Yet the Baloch, who represent 3.38% of Pakistan's population (about seven million people), have long been oppressed by the country's army, and 63% live below the poverty line. Natural gas from Balochistan produces 40% of the country's primary energy, but only 6% of the Baloch receive it and the province only gets 12.4% of gas royalties.

Given such deprivation, it is not surprising there have been five Baloch insurgencies against the central government since 1948, the latest one starting in 2003. Baloch insurgents and nationalists have called on China to stop the construction of the CPEC until the province becomes independent.

Up to 100,000 Baloch have been murdered and forcibly disappeared by the Pakistan army since 2005, Naela Quadri Baloch told me, adding "CPEC is a death sentence for the Baloch people." She is president of the World Baloch Women's Forum and accuses the army of having "rape cells" in Balochistan and "using rape [of both women and young boys] as a tool of oppression."

Quadri Baloch blames the military's increased violence on Beijing's interference. "China is looting the resources of our province, including the gold reserves, and turning a blind eye to the genocide of the Baloch by the Pakistan army," she told *The Indian Express* in April 2016. According to Quadri Baloch, many new roads for the CPEC were

being destroyed by Baloch insurgents. Bridges and electric power sources for the Chinese working in Balochistan were also being attacked by insurgents, she told me.

Desmond Fernandes agrees with Quadri Baloch that the genocide description is "relevant" to Balochistan. Fernandes is a former senior lecturer in human geography at De Montfort University in Britain who specializes in genocide studies and human rights. He has both authored and co-authored books on genocide and Pakistan, including *The Targeting of Minority 'Others' in Pakistan*.

As Fernandes puts it "the ongoing process of destruction, military operations in Balochistan...abductions of Baloch activists, women, children and students, and 'kill and dump' targeting of the Baloch fits the pattern of colonial genocide identified by Raphael Lemkin (who coined the term genocide) and other scholars, human rights activists and political commentators."

The Baloch people consider CPEC to be part of a Chinese-Pakistani occupation of their land that contravenes the United Nations Charter and international human rights law" Quadri Baloch emphasizes. "We Baloch are a nation and a country occupied by Pakistan which has no right to make any contract about Balochistan with any country. The Pakistan army is a bunch of gangsters and mercenaries who are taking money from China to kill the Baloch people in order to facilitate their mutual occupation of our land."

Aside from China's support for the Pakistan army's massive killing of the Baloch people, Quadri Baloch

sees China facilitating the genocide of the Baloch another way: by bringing a large number of its own workers into Balochistan, a staple of Chinese construction projects around the world. “China is making Balochistan Baloch-free,” she warns. “Beijing plans to settle millions of Chinese people in Balochistan to take over our land, economy and administration. Gwadar has become a militarized zone controlled by China and the Pakistan army where the Baloch themselves, the people who belong to the area, are not wanted and are being forced out. This is what China means by infrastructure development.”

The most recent Baloch guerrilla insurgency, which began in 2003 has lasted 19 years—almost four times more than the longest one before it which endured for five years. And it is intensifying. This staying power is particularly impressive given that no foreign country is aiding the guerrillas in any significant way. Even Pakistan’s arch-rival, India, has given rhetorical support to the rebels. One reason for the resilience of Baloch resistance is the unification of different guerrilla groups into one organization known as Baloch People Liberation Coalition (Baloch Raji Ajoi Sangar—BRAS) in November 2018. BRAS includes the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) and the Baloch Republican Army (BRA).

Since this unification, Baloch actions against Pakistani and Chinese targets have been increasing including a daring attack on the Chinese consulate in Karachi (Pakistan’s largest commercial city) on November 23, 2018 and an even more spectacular assault on the Karachi Stock Exchange on June 29,

2020. In November 2021 alone, Baloch insurgents attacked Pakistani forces 16 times killing 19 soldiers and injuring dozens.

A second cause of the Baloch insurgency’s longevity is that “it is not just an insurgency anymore, it has become a national movement” explains Quadri Baloch. “The previous rebellions were led by tribal chieftains [the Baloch social structure is tribal] but the current leadership is drawn from the working class for the first time. The guerrilla struggle has the support of the Baloch masses which is the key to its success. Social movements of all kinds including women’s groups, students, human rights organizations, intellectuals and religious leaders back the call for an independent Balochistan.”

Social movements have been prominent in the Baloch struggle organizing large demonstrations against CPEC recently in July, August and December 2021 in Gwadar. Called by the Baloch Students Organization and attended by tens of thousands of Baloch people, these demonstrations demanded an end to Chinese trawlers that sweep up large quantities of fish around Gwadar, thus denying two million Baloch fisherfolk their livelihood. Other demands included ending the growing drug trade and provision of health and education facilities.

The Baloch protestors staged a month-long sit-in in December and made clear that CPEC had done little for them while the Chinese presence had increased their problems by taking not only their fish but also water resources. The demonstrators also wanted removal of Pakistani military checkpoints that made it impossible for them to move about freely “in their own hometown.”

A third factor behind the insurgency’s continuation which helps cement mass Baloch support for it, is the highly repressive policy of the Pakistan military in Balochistan amid the absence of any political or economic measures that redistribute wealth or power to the Baloch populace. Repression is the only Pakistani response to Baloch grievances. The army’s “kill and dump” policy is aimed at abducting, torturing and murdering anyone suspected of supporting Balochi independence. Most of the victims are civilians including human rights activists, journalists, students, women and even children. “It’s a continuous state of fear under which Baloch people are living,” Quadri Baloch explains. “Even after 19 years, the army has failed to defeat the guerrillas so their repression of civilians has become increasingly vicious. Any family with a son is afraid that he will be picked up by the army and turn up dead. The army has already killed an entire generation of educated Baloch people, doctors and engineers and wiped out many villages. In the village of Keel Kaur, soldiers raped 33 women in one night.”

This repression is not restricted to Pakistan but has become international, affecting the Baloch and supporters of their cause living in Canada, Sweden and the

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project route



Netherlands. In December 2020, Karima Baloch, a woman Baloch political activist studying in Toronto died under suspicious circumstances according to other Baloch activists who believe that she was murdered by Pakistan's spy agency known as Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Karima Baloch's body was found in Lake Ontario. Toronto police ruled the death a suicide but without doing a post-mortem. This followed another suspicious death in Uppsala, Sweden, of Sajid Hussain, a Baloch journalist and founder and editor of the Balochistan Times, an online journal. Similar to Karima Baloch, Hussain's body was found in a river.

Quadri Baloch believes that both activists were killed by the ISI. "It's out of the question that Karima could have committed suicide," she says. "She was full of energy and passion to become a voice for her people and was enthusiastically doing so, especially on social media."

Quadri Baloch points to the third case of Ahmad Waqqas Goraya, a Pakistani journalist living in Rotterdam in the Netherlands, who is not Baloch and not part of the Baloch resistance but has criticized the Pakistan army's conduct in Balochistan. Goraya was the target of an assassination attempt in June 2021 by Gohir Khan, a British-Pakistani living in London. Khan was arrested by British police and is being tried by a British court presently. The prosecution alleges that Khan was hired by individuals in Pakistan to kill Goraya and offered a payment of 85,000 pounds (about \$146,000 Canadian). Khan has not denied this.

Quadri Baloch believes that the attempt on Goraya's life was a third ISI hit and says "It shows that the Pakistani government is not able to suppress the Baloch resistance movement inside the country and has now taken its criminal activity against our struggle to the international level. So it is imperative that Canada, Sweden and Britain protect their residents and along with the United Nations take steps to stop Pakistan's killing spree inside its borders and abroad." **M**



TTC riders struggle to maintain 6 feet of distance between one another on a bus in April 2021. Despite an overall drop in ridership during the pandemic, riders on high traffic routes have faced crowding and unsafe conditions throughout the pandemic.

SHELAGH PIZEY-ALLEN

## Out of service

### Creating accessible transit is a win for everyone

HAVE YOU TAKEN the bus recently? Your answer says a lot about where you live, your income, and more.

People who have continued to use public transit during the pandemic in Canadian cities are more likely to be racialized, earn lower incomes and have a disability.

Live in Western Canada? You had an early preview of being stranded by Greyhound in 2018, which stopped operating all bus service in Canada in May 2021. Despite the call by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls for governments to invest in safe inter-city public transit, people living in rural areas and on reserve have been especially impacted by this service loss.

Even if you don't take the bus personally, all of us have been depending on public transit during the pandemic because it keeps essential workers moving. More than two million people rely on public transit every day during the pandemic to get to school, work, groceries and health care.

We should all care about public transit becoming more popular, too. A recent report by global climate organization C40 Cities says that public transit use in cities must double by 2030 to meet 1.5° C emissions targets.

Doubling transit use in the next eight years is a tall order, with pandemic ridership still clocking in below 50% across many Canadian cities. But experts fear that the opposite is on the horizon: a transit “death spiral” and a car-led recovery resulting in increased greenhouse gas emissions and gridlock. Because public transit systems depend largely on rider fares for their operating budgets, fewer riders during the pandemic has wreaked havoc on transit agency and municipal budgets. Yet service cutbacks and fare increases will only drive more would-be riders away, and increase crowding on heavily-used routes.

Whether previous transit users return in the immediate term depends partially on government lockdown measures, and to what extent major employers that have switched to remote work arrangements will require employees to return in-person. The typical rush hour on transit has changed as fewer people commute to downtown offices.

These changing travel patterns present an opportunity to shift who we design transit service for, which will have spillover benefits that contribute to racial, gender and disability justice. Reducing crowding standards and running more service during off-peak, daytime hours can mean more space for strollers, grocery carts and mobility devices, especially benefitting women who are more likely to “trip chain,” or run multiple errands on transit. Adding nighttime service improves the lives of shiftworkers and after-dark trips for women, trans and gender-non-conforming people who report that long waits at isolated bus stops don’t feel safe.

The consensus on how to encourage more people to choose transit can have some elitist assumptions that deserve reexamining. Transit planner Jarrett Walker argues that the tendency in transit planning to focus on attracting new, “choice” riders—those who have other travel options such as driving or walking—means new investments tend to benefit wealthier areas. The assumption is that riders without other transportation choices will continue to take transit regardless of how infrequent or crowded the service is. That this latter group of transit users are often termed “dependent” or “captive” riders reflects not just condescension but the fact that professional-managerial class transit planners can afford to live in walkable neighbourhoods or drive cars.

New research has called this premise into question. A group of Toronto-based transit researchers found that low-income households with one or more cars are likely to use transit if it improves, and they argue that investing in low-income areas can help meet mode-shift and social equity goals.

Adding service is the key to increasing transit use. A McGill University analysis of 14 years of ridership data from 25 North American cities found that a 10% increase in bus service was associated with an 8.27% increase in ridership. As Jarrett Walker explains, “frequency is freedom.” People will choose transit if it takes them where they need to go, when they want to get there.

The cost of fares matters to riders, too. The same McGill study notes that a 10% increase in fare cost is linked with a 2.19% decrease in ridership. In survey after survey, people experiencing poverty report skipping meals to pay for the cost of transit. More Canadian cities are offering fare discounts for people receiving social assistance, but many are not affordable enough and aren’t available to the working poor, who spend a significant portion of their income on transit costs.

If cost was not a barrier, would more people take transit? A unique program in Kingston, Ontario suggests that high school students could become transit users for life. Since the program began in 2021, combining no-cost bus passes with an orientation program for high school students, overall ridership growth in the city by 73%.

Cities around the world are experimenting with fare reductions and service improvements to win people back to transit systems and address inequality. Los Angeles will soon pilot fare-free transit for youth up to 18 years old, college students, and low-income riders. Paris introduced free travel for youth up to 18 years of age in 2020. Boston and New York installed miles of bus

As a result of underfunding, the TTC has reduced service on 57 bus routes, on the Line 2 Bloor-Danforth subway, and the St. Clair streetcar.



lanes to improve commute times for essential workers.

The call for governments to fully subsidize public transit like health care and libraries has gained traction in recent years. Positive spillover effects include the elimination of racist fare policing and the potential to curb transit worker assaults, which occur most often when there are disputes over fares. Fare reductions can effectively be a form of income support that redistributes wealth, if funded through progressive measures.

Despite transit's clear importance to climate action, party platforms in the most recent federal election disappointed on public transit recovery, focusing mostly on capital investment in electric buses and new infrastructure rather than operations.

The Greens were the only party that scored higher than a "C minus" on the Canadian Urban Transit Association's report card on the question of ongoing operating support. The NDP's pledge to support municipalities who want to move towards free transit was not paired with a sufficient commitment of operating dollars. The Conservative platform was more blunt: "Public transit is important, but let's be realistic: Canada is a big, northern country, where for many people the idea of giving up a car and taking transit is simply impossible."

Until the pandemic, funding for transit operations varied by province, but the federal government had steered clear of providing any operating support. That's typical in the Global North, according to a recent policy review by the Our Public Transport Campaign, although Italy is an exception. Critically, the campaign argues for international solidarity with debt cancellation demands in order to sustain local public transit in Global South countries.

Emergency relief to local transit agencies from both levels of government has been transferred in



Commuters wait outdoors in inclement weather for a Toronto bus in January 2022.

fits and starts, much of it through the Safe Restart Agreement which expired in late 2021. Provinces were meant to match Safe Restart funding to unlock it for municipalities, though Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba used a loophole to sidestep the requirement. Meanwhile, Ontario sought to attach strings to the funding and require local transit agencies to evaluate their least-busy routes and consider "microtransit."

Keeping transit running, winning back riders and then doubling ridership will require unprecedented investment and federal support for transit operations. An estimated \$400 million per month was required to keep the lights on across Canadian transit systems during the periods of low pandemic ridership; that's just a fraction of what would be required to double service levels, build new transit infrastructure, and make fares free. The good news is that the federal government can raise the revenues needed to rebuild thriving public transit systems that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and unlock everyone's ability to move freely.

Canadians for Tax Fairness estimates that Canada could

generate \$90 billion in annual revenue with policies like closing tax loopholes, taxing the rich, and making polluters and corporations pay their fair share. Redirecting capital funding for highway expansion could be another important source. It's worth remembering that in the first year of the pandemic alone, Canada's federal government diverted \$18 billion in funding to assist the country's oil and gas sector. Typically, the government subsidizes the industry to the tune of \$3.3 billion annually. The American #TransformTransit campaign has measured the over-investment in highways in the US over decades, finding an unfair 80/20 split between federal highway and transit funding. Curtailing highway expansion has the added bonus of preventing the continuous outwards sprawl of cities, which stretches the capacity of already-underfunded public transit services and entrenches reliance on cars.

Creating accessible transit systems across Canada is not only possible, it is critical for achieving climate goals and creating an equitable society. But we can't get there if we don't fund systems as if they—and their riders—matter. **M**

# SETTLER WORK:

On May 12, 2021, the federal government announced a new funding initiative aimed at a more equitable pandemic recovery.<sup>1</sup> Explaining that “Public transit is at the heart of an inclusive recovery,” Infrastructure Canada announced their commissioning of a fleet of 60 new zero-emission streetcars, built in Thunder Bay, to be added to the Toronto Transit Commission’s system. This was framed as a win-win: transit for Toronto and jobs for Thunder Bay.<sup>2</sup> However, when it came to investments in Thunder Bay’s transit system, the city didn’t receive similar funding to help them achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.<sup>3</sup>

Understanding how this relates to First Nations, Inuit and Métis (FNIM) Peoples’ access to public transit across Canada is the first step to creating accessible transit systems that serve all communities across the country.

Barriers to accessing public transit can be broken into three broad categories: structural, organizational and systemic. Structural barriers include loss of service, high ticket prices and inadequate scheduling. Organizational barriers include how transit organizations and related institutions interact with FNIM riders and communities. These can include disproportionate carding and the creation of cumbersome bureaucratic processes that prevent FNIM riders from accessing supports. Finally, the larger, overarching systemic barriers relate to the embedded racism, white supremacy and neocolonialism that inform practices and justify underfunding services for FNIM communities.

For a full list of references used in this edition of “Settler Work”, please refer to the online version at [MonitorMag.ca](https://www.monitor-mag.ca).



## WHERE WE ARE NOW

### IN FOCUS: Thunder Bay

In 2015, 10.9% of Thunder Bay households had an after-tax income of less than \$20,000 per year.<sup>4</sup> The median household income for Thunder Bay in 2015 was \$61,887, compared with the provincial median household income of \$74,287.<sup>5</sup> But there is another story within this economic picture, one of even greater disparity.

Fort William, one of 14 urban reserves in Ontario, is part of the Thunder Bay community and is included in the Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) by Statistics Canada. Urban reserves are First Nations land either within the boundaries of a municipality or adjacent to an urban area.<sup>6</sup> When Fort William data is separated out from the rest of the community, it reveals stark economic inequality within Thunder Bay. In 2015, residents of the Fort William Census subdivision had a median household income of \$41,728.<sup>7</sup>

Thunder Bay is also recognized as the urban centre with the eleventh largest FNIM population and the highest proportion of Indigenous people in the country—12.7%<sup>8</sup>, a significant number of whom live outside of Fort William. A recent community-based study, developed by Well Living House, revealed that the Indigenous population in Thunder Bay is likely two to four times larger than census data suggests.<sup>9</sup> The study also found significant health disparities between Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay and Ontario adults: 23% of Indigenous adults in Thunder Bay reported having unmet health needs in the 12 months preceding the study, compared with 10% of Ontario adults.<sup>10</sup> When asked about the barriers to accessing care, a lack of transportation was one of the most common answers.

Thunder Bay also serves as an educational hub for many children from remote northern First Nations communities who travel hundreds of kilometres to Thunder Bay in order to attend grade 9. In late 2015, coroner David Eden launched an inquest into

the deaths of seven First Nations youth who had made this journey.<sup>11</sup> Known as the Seven Youth Inquest, it examined the deaths of 15-year-old Jethro Anderson (2000), 18-year-old Curran Strang (2005), 17-year-old Paul Panacheese (2006), 18-year-old Robyn Harper (2007), 15-year-old Reggie Bushie (2007), 17-year-old Kyle Morrisseau (2009) and 15-year-old Jordan Wabasse (2011).<sup>12</sup> All seven children died while attending school in Thunder Bay, far from their families and First Nation communities.<sup>13</sup> The inquest gathered testimonies from nearly 200 witnesses who detailed experiences of isolation, loneliness, racism and systemic failures that students arriving in Thunder Bay face.<sup>14</sup> The Inquest's primary purpose was to prevent future deaths of First Nations youth who leave their home communities to attend high school in Thunder Bay. Upon conclusion on June 28, 2016, the inquest's Jury issued 145 recommendations including 31 directed to the City.<sup>15</sup>

"Have things changed? My response to that question is usually this: Our people are still dying in the waters and on the streets of Thunder Bay." - Tanya Talaga<sup>16</sup>

### Public Transit in Thunder Bay

In a 2010 interview with Eric Andrew-Gee for the *Globe and Mail*, the city's transit manager acknowledged that taking transit in Thunder Bay was not done by choice but out of need: "People in need here are disproportionately Indigenous, and the bus reflects that."<sup>17</sup> Still, riding the bus is not cheap for a community where many household incomes are below \$40,000. An adult pass in Thunder Bay costs \$930 annually, \$660 for a senior or youth.<sup>18</sup> Between the cost and the sparse service, only 3.9% of Thunder Bay residents rely on transit as their primary mode of transportation.<sup>19</sup>

**"Have things changed? My response to that question is usually this: Our people are still dying in the waters and on the streets of Thunder Bay."**

**—Tanya Talaga<sup>16</sup>**

# “I haven’t had to worry about if I need to give up food or a bill to get my husband and myself monthly passes.”

—PFTB survey respondent

Beyond municipal transit, Thunder Bay residents are further limited by intercity transit options. Via Rail shuttered their service to Thunder Bay in 1990.<sup>20</sup> Greyhound Canada ended their services in 2018, leaving Ontario Northland as the sole service provider for the region. While Ontario Northland does provide frequent transit options out of Thunder Bay—which is more than other cities can say after the departure of Greyhound—the ticket to ride is prohibitively expensive. A one way ticket from Thunder Bay to Sudbury is more than \$150; to Toronto it’s more than \$200.<sup>21</sup>

Leading up to and throughout the pandemic, Thunder Bay’s city council has been exploring a reduced service model for the city’s bus system. This new on-demand service has already been introduced for one route<sup>22</sup> and is being considered for others including the #6 Mission route which services the Fort William First Nation. Already, the Nation’s bus service is limited to weekdays between 7:30 am and 6:30 pm.<sup>23</sup> As the CCPA Ontario’s recently released study, *Disproportionate Burden*, emphasized, Indigenous women’s employment is heavily concentrated in the health care and social services; accommodation and food services; and retail trade industries. Indigenous men’s employment is concentrated in construction; manufacturing; and transportation and warehousing industries.<sup>24</sup> These industries require workers to accommodate flexible schedules. As such, a bus service whose last run leaves for Fort William at 5:55 pm does not provide adequate coverage to ensure that workers can get to and from work.

Changes to the system extend beyond service. Andrew-Gee noted in his feature on the system that, in 2010, the City opted to tear down the bus terminal, where Indigenous youth would congregate.<sup>25</sup> The building was replaced with a series of outdoor shelters where waiting riders are exposed to the elements—an inhospitable choice in a city where the average temperature in January is -20.

During the pandemic, Thunder Bay took an important—albeit temporary—step to improve access to transit. Between March 21 and July 20, 2020, Thunder Bay Transit waived bus fares for all riders.<sup>26</sup> Following the fare-free phase, Poverty Free Thunder Bay (PFTB) conducted a survey of transit users to see how the program had impacted them.

“I haven’t had to worry about if I need to give up food or a bill to get my husband and myself monthly passes.” PFTB survey respondent.

Based on the responses, PFTB recommended a gradual fare decrease starting in 2021 that would lead to the phasing out of

fares by January 1, 2023. This recommendation was supported by the Thunder Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group, the Kinna-Aweya Legal Clinic, the Ontario Native Women’s Association, the Humanities 101 Program at Lakehead University and many more organizations throughout the region.<sup>27</sup>

## WHERE CAN WE GO FROM HERE?

The possibility of free transit has the potential to address recommendations from several key reports.

### Seven Youth Inquest:

**Recommendation 70.** *To Canada: “In order to provide all First Nations students living in Thunder Bay with reasonable travel time and safe transportation to school and access to all extracurricular activities, in consultation with [partners] conduct an assessment of funding required to ensure that [students] have access to reasonable transportation while attending school or extracurricular activities.”<sup>28</sup>*

While this recommendation proposed a fleet of school buses, providing access to fare-free public buses would ensure broader service for First Nations students to access safe transit before, during and after school hours.

**Recommendation 102.** *To The City of Thunder Bay: “The City of Thunder Bay should consult and liaise with [partners] in order to develop a plan for assisting those students who would like to attend City programs or have questions with respect to any City programs but may have some issue to overcome such as transportation issues to and from the venue.”<sup>29</sup>*

Again, this could be addressed by providing fare-free service.

The connection between transportation and wellbeing is not limited to Indigenous youth. When interviewing participants, the **National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls** heard about barriers to transit for Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people as barriers to leaving abuse, and finding safety and community.<sup>30</sup> “A lack of safe and affordable transportation can mean that people may be forced to rely on other transportation methods, such as walking or hitchhiking, not only to escape dangerous situations but simply to travel for education or employment.”<sup>31</sup>

When it comes to addressing public transportation gaps and improving service, **interjurisdictional cooperation** is vital to achieving these aims. As Andrew-Gee’s reporting acknowledged, addressing the shortfalls of Thunder Bay’s public transportation system exceeds the reach of the city’s municipal budget.<sup>32</sup> That is why **Poverty Free Thunder Bay** encouraged the City to lobby the federal government for funding to create a net-zero emissions-capable system that offers fare-free service.<sup>33</sup>

In their final report, the **National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls** emphasized, “The need for greater interjurisdictional cooperation is a crucial recommendation in existing reports concerning violence against Indigenous women and girls. In these reports, important areas highlighted for cooperation include... better public transportation services.”<sup>34</sup>

## The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Article 21.2:

*“States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of Indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.”<sup>35</sup>*

The importance of reliable public transportation has been identified by myriad inquests and research initiatives including the Seven Youth Inquest; the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; and Our Health Counts Thunder Bay. The UNDRIP Article 21.2 is included in the City of Thunder Bay’s Indigenous Relations and Inclusion Strategy: 2021-2027, above their “Declaration of Commitment – Strengthening Relationships between the City of Thunder Bay and Urban [Indigenous] People: Work with [Indigenous] Peoples to identify and assist with the removal of barriers that hinder their full participation in community life.”<sup>36</sup>

## UNDRIP Article 22

- 1. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of Indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities in the implementation of this Declaration.*
- 2. States shall take measures, in conjunction with Indigenous peoples, to ensure that Indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.<sup>37</sup>*

Statistics show that women are more likely to rely on public transit for transportation. As the National Inquiry identified, reliable transportation is a critical factor for ensuring the safety of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Canada.

## Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action

*89. We call upon the federal government to amend the Physical Activity and Sport Act to support reconciliation by ensuring that policies to promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being, reduce barriers to sports participation, increase the pursuit of excellence in sport, and build capacity in the Canadian sport system, are inclusive of [Indigenous] peoples.*

The **Seven Youth Inquest** recognized that lack of reliable transportation was a barrier to sports participation.

*92. ii. Ensure that [Indigenous] peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that [Indigenous] communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.*

Transit fares and limited service present barriers to both employment and education opportunities for Indigenous people. The limited fare-free program in Thunder Bay helped all of the city’s low-income residents travel more easily for a period in 2020. Given that Thunder Bay’s FNIM community is disproportionately low income, access to continued fare-free transit would improve their ability to get to work and school.

There is further opportunity still, in expanding public transit in Thunder Bay. As the Northern Policy Institute<sup>38</sup> identifies, urban reserves have the potential for economic development that strengthens relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents of the community while also providing economic opportunities for the First Nation. However, as it stands, Fort William is underserved by public transit and the City is currently considering a further reduction of that service.

The issues described in this article are not unique to Thunder Bay. Currently, communities across Canada are struggling with pandemic-fuelled cuts to municipal service and a patchwork of transportation systems in the aftermath of Greyhound Canada’s shuttering.<sup>39</sup> An independent review of the Toronto Transit Commission’s enforcement patterns in 2021 revealed that Indigenous passengers were 3.1 times more likely to be stopped by TTC fare inspectors than white passengers.<sup>40</sup> In British Columbia, the provincial government has funded new transit lines along Highway 16, also known as the Highway of Tears. While the Highway of Tears Symposium recommended adding public transportation to the highway to improve safety for Indigenous women traveling in the corridor,<sup>41</sup> the Symposium also recommended that the transit be provided free of charge to remove barriers to access.<sup>42</sup> Contrary to this second suggestion, the routes range in cost with the most notable being \$40 one way for passengers travelling from Prince George to Takla Landing<sup>43</sup>—a First Nation where the median income in 2015 was \$17,100.<sup>44</sup>

Thunder Bay is used to demonstrate these challenges in real time, but the structural, organizational and systemic barriers that filter into and affect the accessibility of public transit need to be considered for each CMA and the communities they serve across Canada.

Written by **Róisín West**  
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EMMA BAINBRIDGE

# The future of Ottawa's transit after the light rail debacle

**REMEMBER** the excitement I felt when Ottawa's long-awaited light rail train finally opened to the public. This new train promised to shorten my long daily commute and—when it worked—it was wonderful. But soon my commute, like those of many Ottawa residents, suffered from frequent delays and overcrowding, even during a pandemic. Why did this happen, and what does it mean for the future of Ottawa's transit?

## A brief history

In 2012, the City of Ottawa awarded Rideau Transit Group (RTG) a \$2.1 billion contract to build a new light rail transit (LRT) system in the capital as a public-private partnership (P3) project. Unfortunately, although it was scheduled to be completed in 2017, the train system wouldn't open to the public until September 2019. The construction process faced many obstacles, including a sinkhole and trains unable to withstand the city's harsh winters. Despite these shortfalls, in 2019, the City awarded RTG a second contract, worth \$4.66 billion, to extend the light rail system.

This was only the beginning of the turmoil that would plague this project. Shortly after the LRT opened to the public, it frequently became delayed, generally due to maintenance issues. Unfortunately, things continued to get worse, and in September 2021, the line was shut down for 54 days after two derailments within a six-week period. This led to outrage from many riders demanding an explanation for both the unsafe conditions of the derailments and the extended service disruptions that followed.

## The politics behind it

In November 2021, the Transportation Safety Board of Canada determined that one of the derailments was caused by poor maintenance of the trains. Following this report, the ATU 279, Ottawa's transit union, issued a statement blaming, "the city's continued use of public-private partnerships that place profit ahead of safety." Sam Hersh, a Board Member at Horizon Ottawa, also believes that the P3 model is at the core of the LRT's issues. "The City tried to get the cheapest deal that they could and rush it as fast as they could for political expediency, and private partners want to cut corners [by] doing the cheapest way that they were able to. They don't really have the public interest in mind," he explains.

Additionally, there is controversy concerning the organization selected to undertake the LRT project. Rideau Transit Group is a consortium of companies that includes SNC Lavalin, the Montreal-based engineering firm that became a household name after its involvement in an infamous bribery scandal involving the federal government. Previously classified documents released by the City revealed that SNC Lavalin's component of the second stage bid failed to meet the required technical score evaluated by experts *twice*. However, city executives were advised not to disqualify the firm from the bidding process by their lawyers from Norton Rose Fulbright, a firm that has previously represented SNC Lavalin. Despite failing to meet the technical threshold, SNC Lavalin's bid had an advantage over its

competitors as it was significantly cheaper, leading it to be chosen. Mayor Jim Watson and city manager Steve Kanellakos have defended this choice, claiming that it to be "good value for taxpayers." And so, TransitNEXT, a wholly owned subsidiary of SNC-Lavalin, was awarded the \$1.6 billion contract to extend Ottawa's north-south Trillium Line.

Finally, one of the most concerning aspects of this debacle is the lack of transparency on the part of the mayor and the city executives. Watson resisted a judicial inquiry proposed by councillor Catherine McKenney, and instead supported a municipal audit proposed by another councillor. Unlike the judicial inquiry, an audit would have no public hearings and the auditor general wouldn't be able to investigate the mayor or council members. During one heated debate, Watson muted fellow councillor Diane Deans when she challenged him over the audit. Nevertheless, the province decided to launch a public inquiry into September's derailment in November 2021. The province's inquiry has more power than the investigation conducted by the city, but does not have the scope of a judicial inquiry. Depending on the results of the investigation, Premier Doug Ford has said he may withhold funding for the LRT's Stage 2 construction. The province has already withheld \$60 million of Stage 1 funding.

## Building a better future

There are many lessons that can be learned from this debacle. According to Hersh, this should be an indictment of P3s for maintaining

city infrastructure. He says that, “ideally, what we want to see is more public ownership of our municipal infrastructure.” In the ATU 279’s statement, president Clint Crabtree shared this sentiment, saying, “there is no reason why any of this work could not have been done in-house where we have actual trained, unionized maintenance workers. Not doing so is putting people’s lives at risk.” The union calls the lack of transparency surrounding this project “typical of P3 projects.”

A better transit system would require more transparency towards the public and City Council when it comes to its infrastructure projects. Taxpayers deserve to know where their money is going, and Ottawa residents deserve to know why their transit system has struggled (and failed) to provide reliable service. When voting on expansions, investments and improvements, city councillors should have access to all of this historical information.

One of the key components of a better transit system is accessibility, starting with universally free transit. Hersh says that instead of relying on farebox revenue, transport should rely solely on public funding. “There’s going to be people who are taking transit regardless of if there’s high ridership, because it’s a public asset.” He adds that going fare-free would, “make it safer for transit workers, too, because the vast majority of assaults that happen to drivers in the transit system are because of fare disputes.” Kari Elliott, Board Member of Ottawa Transit Riders, agrees that, “it’s completely and utterly ridiculous to keep raising the transit fares on our transit system that is in decline. It really hurts low-income people... and it hurts people who rely on transit.” Raising fares as a means of solving a transit funding crisis is a solution that is as myopic as it is inequitable.

Elliott also emphasizes the importance of making transit accessible to disabled people, the subject of Ottawa Transit Riders’ ParaParity campaign. Although the buses and the LRT are designed to be fairly accessible to wheelchair users, getting to the system is more challenging. “A lot of the members of our group say they can ride regular transit during the summer, but in the winter, when the snow comes, they’re having to go to Para-Transpo.” Para-Transpo, a city service for people unable to take conventional transit, has limited resources and capacity which makes it difficult to meet the needs of their riders. Users need to book the service in advance, which isn’t helpful if they want to take spontaneous trips, and the bookings must be done by phone—and it can take hours to get through. Simple changes such as better snow clearing and an online booking system could make a world of difference.

Disabled people should have the opportunity to communicate their needs and be listened to, but Elliott says that Para-Transpo is often left off the agenda of the Transit Commission’s monthly meetings, which prevents the issue from being discussed.

## A better transit system would require more transparency towards the public and City Council when it comes to its infrastructure projects.

Good transit also needs to be reliable, which is difficult when the city doesn’t have enough buses to cover all its routes—especially when the train breaks down. This results in cuts, primarily to neighbourhood routes. Elliott says that there’s a lack of communication from OC Transpo about buses being delayed or cancelled, and wants to see more accurate messaging. “They have to stop pretending that if they don’t tell us it doesn’t actually happen.”

Finally, a good transit system should be in touch with its riders. Much of the transit in Ottawa is currently designed around commuters from the suburbs who work downtown, even though many of those people now work remotely and the most recent Census data shows that Ottawa workers commute journeys are changing, with more workers commuting between suburbs, and doing “reverse commutes” from the downtown core to the outer city. “These are people who are working and commuting, but they may not be [travelling from] suburban to downtown.” says Elliott. “So we really need to have a complete look at which routes are really important to the people who are right now using them.”

After years of delays and derailments, it’s important not to forget the vital role that quality transit can play in people’s lives and communities at large. “A lot of people argue that we have to choose between being free and being reliable, but we know we don’t have to,” says Hersh. “We can have a free and reliable system.” Having a free, reliable transit system designed based on its riders’ needs would improve the quality of life in the city by saving people money, reducing cars on the road, connecting communities and making travel within the city more accessible.

“Public transit [is] opening the door to making the city really accessible to low-income people,” says Elliott.

The LRT scandal has shown us what we don’t want in a public transit system. With the first major change in leadership in over 10 years, the time is ripe for Ottawans to demand the transit system we deserve. **M**

MARCO D'ANGELO

# Preventing a downward spiral for transit isn't complicated

**W**E'VE SEEN what a downward spiral looks like for public transit. The recession of the early 1990s, coupled with cuts in government funding, reduced service levels in Toronto. Even as the population grew, service fell by 16% between 1990 and 1996. It took 18 years for ridership to recover. Montreal experienced something similar.

Now, revenue is down again. Although this time, it's not falling because governments are making cuts. It's falling because of a COVID-induced drop in ridership.

How can we prevent another downward spiral? A vicious cycle of reduced service resulting in fewer people wanting to take transit, in turn further reducing ridership—and revenue. If that happens, our cities will become more congested. Climate targets will become much harder to meet. And for people who can't afford to travel by car, access to employment and education will be further barriered and, in some cases, altogether inaccessible.

Almost two years into the pandemic, we've managed to avoid entering a downward spiral despite the largest, most sustained drop in ridership in Canada's transit history. The reason is simple. In 2020, the federal and provincial governments provided unprecedented support to keep systems running. But their \$4.6 billion in funding is running out. At some point, service will be reduced, likely significantly, and we know from the 1990s that it will take years, perhaps decades, for ridership to return.

Why transit needed support as COVID-19 began was simple. Before the pandemic, 51% of the costs of

running public transit was covered by farebox recovery revenue (the share of costs covered by fares). Ridership fell by 85% in the pandemic's early months (it's now back to about half pre-pandemic levels). For every 10% drop in ridership, transit systems lose \$470 million in revenue countrywide.

Cities can't plug this hole alone. The Toronto Transit Commission is forecasting a transit shortfall of \$561 million for 2022. In Montreal, where support from the federal and Quebec governments lasts longer than elsewhere, it's \$43 million. In Metro Vancouver, \$70 million. And Calgary, up to \$89 million. The

story's the same for cities of all sizes across the country. Winnipeg is keeping transit and other municipal services running by raiding reserves. Municipalities, however, control only a tenth of the tax base. Their borrowing is also generally restricted to capital investments, not rescuing operating budgets.

So it's going to be up to the federal and provincial governments to extend the operating support they've already provided. When operating support first arrived in the summer of 2020, nobody could have foreseen that we'd still be working and learning from home into 2022. As a result, transit systems are facing a multi-year decline in ridership, and need a multi-year support program to keep running.

Transit systems have calibrated service levels so they're more in line with demand. Routes serving airports and campuses were significantly reduced when people weren't flying and post-secondary students were learning from home. Equally, on many routes serving lower-income neighbourhoods whose residents couldn't work from home, service remained high. The most recent figures show an overall service reduction of almost 10%. But left unaddressed, future service cuts will be far more severe.

For all the data on lost revenue and fewer riders, it's easy to forget that more than two million people rely on transit every day. Many of them are lower-income workers, disproportionately women and racialized people. Riders have intersecting identities and are also often students or seniors, and people with disabilities. Convenient, accessible

## Safe Restart Agreement prevents significant decline in transit service levels in 2020

Relative to 2019 calendar year

**-54%**  
Change in ridership

**-57%**  
Change in passenger revenue

**-8%**  
Change in vehicle service hours

public transit isn't a nice-to-have for cities. It's an essential part of urban life and can't be left to wither.

But if transit is left to languish, we know that those who can afford to drive probably will. In the darkest days of lockdown in 2020, 75% of people who left transit but still commuted travelled by car. The only way to make transit the mode of choice is if service remains high. Conversely, the fastest way to increase emissions, make our cities sprawl worse and more congested is through steep service cuts. Public transit's contribution to climate action is significant—as large as taking three million cars off the road—but it can only cut carbon if people take it. Which they will only do if it's convenient.

The irony of the situation transit faces is that the federal government and many provinces are building more new transit now than they ever have before. Many governments are helping systems electrify their fleets. It doesn't make sense to build lines or buy electric buses for transit systems if cities can't afford to run them.

Longer-term, we will likely need to look at a new funding model for transit. And though there are likely long-term, perhaps permanent, changes to how we work, transit systems can adjust. Service doesn't have to be geared around the morning and evening rush. It can change to allow for more non-work travel, with just as many climate benefits.

For all the exciting advances in electric cars, they alone can't and won't get us to net-zero by 2050. A recent University of Toronto study found that unless growing electric car use is coupled with growing transit use, climate goals won't be met. The C40, a group of almost 100 cities committed to climate action, believes

Convenient, accessible public transit isn't a nice-to-have for cities. It's an essential part of urban life and can't be left to wither.

transit use will have to double over the next decade if we're to limit temperature increases to 1.5°C.

Yet the single biggest reason for Ottawa and the provinces to keep transit running isn't emissions or traffic. It's the people who depend on the service to get to work, to school or for daily life. Before COVID-19, Canadian transit systems had some of the highest rates of farebox recovery in the world. This model leaves their revenue streams more vulnerable to the financial fluctuations caused by changes in ridership.

Public transit that works for the people who need it and the cities where they live is in the national interest. As they did when the pandemic began, Ottawa and the provinces should work together to provide operating support. Because if they don't, we know what a downward spiral looks like—and how long it takes to recover. **M**



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LAURA SHANTZ AND SALLY THOMAS

# An equitable recovery for Para Transpo

2020 BEGAN like every other year for Para Transpo riders in Ottawa: waiting. Waiting for online booking, waiting for same-day booking and waiting to be treated with the respect and dignity afforded to riders of conventional transit. Ridership plunged across all transit services at the start of the pandemic: 10,677 Para Transpo trips were logged in April 2020 compared to 76,946 in April 2019, an 86% year-over-year drop that mirrors statistics for conventional transit. Pre-pandemic ridership is still far away, but para transit is regularly 5% to 10% closer to “normal” levels. With para transit, the post-COVID question is not just how to win back riders—since fewer para transit riders have access to private vehicles, rideshares or other mobility options. Rather, the question becomes how to *improve* the rider experience and end the paternalism and ableism that are entrenched in para transit services.

Thinking about current para transit service, the adage of Hanlon’s razor comes to mind, “never attribute to malice that which is adequately explained by stupidity.” That adage, which itself includes an ableist slur, can be applied to many city policies, but not where paternalism and ableism underpin transit operations. Para Transpo assumes that para riders’ time is not valuable, that they have few important obligations and that their lives should be limited due to mobility and accessibility needs.

For example, until December 2021, the number of daily Para Transpo trips per rider was capped at four. While four trips might

seem sufficient, a round trip to a destination and back represents two trips. So, a para transit rider could only take two round trips in a day. The fact that many people with accessibility needs have jobs, social engagements and family responsibilities is completely overlooked: the underlying assumption is that para transit should be a “less than” service option that only ferries disabled people to and from doctors’ appointments, pharmacies and grocery stores. If someone who happens to use a wheelchair needed to stop on their way home from work to run errands, they would not be able to go out with friends in the evening as this would exceed the four rides per day maximum.

Riders have long complained about limited hours: Para Transpo service stops at midnight, impacting those who work late nights or want to go out with friends. For shift workers, this means missing out on work opportunities. For those who enjoy movies, concerts or nights out with friends, this means carefully scheduling to ensure that a ride is available and often having to leave early or miss out on fun. There is also no accommodation for late-night medical transport, meaning that para riders must call an ambulance (or stay in hospital overnight), which is far more costly and less convenient since ambulances are not designed to accommodate a rider and their mobility device.

Looking at OC Transpo’s on-time performance standards, it is clear that para riders’ time is considered less valuable than that of other transit riders. Conventional bus and train service standards measure fractions of a minute that a transit

vehicle is late or early; para transit performance measures the number of trips that arrive within a 30 minute window, leaving riders waiting for far longer periods of time, ones which would be considered unacceptable by conventional transit customers. In addition, riders who use telephone booking usually wait on hold for 30 minutes or more for a para transit operator to take a booking, with the call-back option often taking hours.

While the problems are legion, many would be easy and quick to solve with political will and a recognition of para riders as important citizens who deserve quality service that treats them as equals. Fixing para transit means putting equity first!

With that in mind, what should the future of para transit look like? Sally Thomas, one of the authors and an equitable transit champion, sees potential to make the system more efficient by improving logistics. If she wants to go see a movie with another para rider, Para Transpo will often deploy two buses, even when they are starting from the same origin and heading to the same destination at the same time. Better coordination for these sorts of trips would be a far more efficient use of vehicles and would also offer the riders the dignity and basic decency of riding together like conventional transit riders. Finding the most efficient routes between destinations would improve transit speeds, saving fuel and time and minimizing riders’ frustrations.

According to Kyle Humphrey, an Ottawa-based accessibility advocate, equity would be the freedom to say “yes.” Humphrey is tired of

being treated as a second-class citizen and wants to see a future where he and other para riders can have an active social life, say yes to last minute invitations to events and gatherings, plan to stay out past midnight and have the same quality experience as conventional transit riders. He also wants to ensure that Para Transpo offers reasonable options that other transit agencies have offered for years, including the ability to book based on either a pick-up time or a drop-off time instead of using pick-up times as the only option. These simple changes would offer riders enormous time savings and improve their quality of life.

Richard Frederick is a retired school bus driver who was accustomed to traveling on his own schedule. A senior with mobility challenges, he prefers para transit service over taxis or relying on rides from friends, but he still sees room for improvement. He needs better integration with Gatineau's para transit service for easier access to his medical appointments and to visit family and friends. Frederick does not use a computer and finds that the long waits he endures when he calls the booking line make him anxious: he worries that his phone battery might die while he waits on hold, or if he requests a call-back, that the call will come too late to accommodate his booking. He wants a system that respects his time and one that offers the basic dignity of a call or text if his bus is running late.

Making improvements in some of these areas is easy; in others, costly. A long-standing option for para riders has been to use conventional transit, especially in months without snow cover. For riders who use mobility devices, the para transit network should include the entire regular service network, plus the additional mobility offered by para transit. However, this speed and convenience is seasonal due to Ottawa's climate; riders need better solutions for winter service challenges and snow clearing.

Para transit offers a door-to-door solution, but to truly advance equity a city's entire transit network—including all para and conventional transit vehicles and stops—should be fully accessible for individuals who use wheelchairs, walkers and other mobility devices, or who have other accessibility needs. Making this happen means centring, listening to and learning from para riders' experiences and taking action to advance equity. In Ottawa, creating a barrier-free transit network requires addressing long-standing built infrastructure gaps, including its many inaccessible bus stops. These include stops located on narrow sidewalks without space to deploy a bus's ramp and allow a wheelchair user to roll off; roadside stops without platforms; stops without sidewalks, ramps or crosswalks; and stops without seating for riders who need to sit while waiting for their bus. Some of these problems can be easily fixed; others, however, require full street redesigns that would improve safety and accessibility for all users.

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## Fighting the fire sale

Seven reasons why  
privatization  
of public services  
is the wrong answer

By Saamia Ahmad,  
Simon Enoch, and Inez Hillel

The City constantly espouses equity; but their actions rarely match their words! A big improvement to not only transit; but all aspects would be to *drastically* improve how the City communicates with its residents. This includes overhauling the user experience of their website. We are a growing city, with a growing disabled population. Why not use users' lived experiences to gain insight on improving the experiences of end users? Consultations must be better advertised in both conventional and social media. They must be communicated in a variety of modalities like large print for people with visual disabilities and closed-captioned, for deaf and hard of hearing residents. So many decisions at Council are made ahead of these consultations. Opening up opportunities for people to actively engage will ensure the continuation of innovative ideas and help Ottawa become the leader it strives to be!

Being equitable and caring is a choice, and one that our civic leaders should dare to make. **M**

# YOUR CCPA

## Get to know Lauren Matheson

OFFICE: **NOVA SCOTIA**

POSITION: **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
AND OUTREACH OFFICER**

YEARS WITH THE CCPA: **ONE**

**What are you most excited to be working on with the CCPA Nova Scotia team this year?** As we potentially transition to in-person events, I am excited to maintain an online component in tandem. This would allow for supporters to continue to join us in events regardless of where they are located in Nova Scotia. Hopefully this will continue the sense of community connection I described earlier, as we enter yet another version of pandemic life. I am excited to continue to meet our supporters, and grow our basis of support. We just submitted a large letter of intent for a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grant that would allow us to build on the work including to support and train hundreds of students to do progressive policy research in partnership with the community.

**Outside of the CCPA, what progressive policy issues are you following?** I am particularly interested in Canadian drug decriminalization and the movement toward harm-reduction support services as the norm. By meeting individuals where they are at, without the agenda of coercion, the threat of state punishment, Harm Reduction is founded on a non-judgemental supportive approach centring human rights and the inherent dignity of all members of our communities. It is a principle that should underpin how we build



public policy broadly. Imagine if we built all public policy from the standpoint of minimizing harm, on an ongoing basis? The practice of harm reduction must extend into how we build public policy, to ensure we are not further creating conditions of exclusion, punishment, and conditional social support for traditionally excluded members of our communities.

**When you aren't at work, how do you fill your time?** I have two senior dogs and we spend a lot of time hiking trails or walking along one of the nearby beaches. My love of and access to the outdoors has been especially helpful during the past two years when social restrictions have impacted our ability to gather together or play group sports. I also love playing ultimate frisbee and volunteer as a birth doula, something I am extremely passionate about.

**What are some challenges that are prominent in the region where you live?** A lack of safe affordable

accessible housing is a challenge I worry about daily. Despite provincial plans to increase affordable housing across Nova Scotia, currently thousands do not have a place to live, affordable rentals are limited and all levels of governments' perspective on what is considered affordable is missing the mark. Despite the worry related to these challenges, I also find hope in the many people and organizations (CCPA-NS included) working to change the reality of affordable housing in NS for the better. I worry about the toll the pandemic has taken on everyone and that our systems are unable to meet the needs, which has only worsened.

**What gives you the most hope right now?** I have hope because of the continued motivation from progressive activists and advocates in NS. There are many groups who show up day after day to fight for fair wages, access to paid sick leave and affordable housing, and work toward ending discrimination. For example, a small group of people, just produced a 218 page report on what defunding the police would mean for Halifax, and how we can envision communities that move more toward being caring, and away from our carceral approach. We are thrilled to see that the report incorporates the vision from our Housing for All report released in 2021, detailing 95 recommendations to ensure meaningful access to safe, permanently affordable, secure, supported and adequate housing for all in Nova Scotia. There is hope in presenting alternative visions and a path forward, something we at CCPA-NS are keen to continue to do.

JOHN DININO

# Pandemic, privatization and people power

## A brief history on the attack of Canada's public transit system and how we're trying to defend it

THE SIGNIFICANT EROSION of Canada's public transit systems by Liberal and Conservative governments intent on slashing public services in the name of fiscal prudence is not new nor simply a feature of the COVID-19 pandemic. This process has been ongoing for decades and can be summed up in a single phrase: "first they cut it, then they criticize it, then they privatize it."

### First they cut it, then they criticize it

The pandemic has served as a useful tool for the first two phases of the phrase, providing a convenient cover for transit agencies and local and provincial governments who have always looked for excuses to "find efficiencies" and cut "unnecessary" neighbourhood routes that may have otherwise seen more significant community protest.

It is not untrue that the pandemic has led to a significant downturn in transit ridership. According to Statistics Canada, from April 2020 to May 2021, ridership across the country fell to around 40% of pre-pandemic levels. Quebec, Ontario and Alberta were particularly hard hit, as more workers in these provinces transitioned to remote work during this period (29.5%, 36.0% and 26.7% respectively). As a result, all three provinces experienced lower ridership levels during this period, closer to 30% of pre-pandemic levels.

In response to this drop, many transit agencies and local governments have decided almost unilaterally to cut services and

slash routes. As they see it, a bus with one or two people on it does not necessitate a practical use of resources. From a profit motive this can be true. If we treat public transit in practical terms, however, as the public service that it is, this makes little sense. People will always need public transit, regardless of how high ridership is. If fewer people are calling the fire department in any given month, cities do not shutter the fire house. Similarly, we do not charge people for entry to public parks if there are fewer visits or put quarters in our street lights to keep them on. The same should be true of public transit, an equally vital public service.

Governments and transit agencies have argued that their "cost-cutting" measures are only temporary and that they will have little long-term effect on the country's transit systems. Historic data paints a different picture.

When ridership began to fall in Ontario in 1990 as a result of an economic recession, the provincial government, under Mike Harris in concert with the Toronto city government, decided to slash operating funding. The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) responded by cutting its service, taking more than 230 buses and 60 streetcars off the road. Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) research shows that, by 1996, transit ridership was 19% lower than what it was in 1990 and would take another eighteen years to fully recover.

In the current context, we are already seeing the results of cuts

to service in the form of unsafe, overcrowded buses that make it even easier for a highly transmissible and deadly virus to spread, while essential workers who rely on transit are being left behind as their neighbourhood routes continue to be cut in the name of "efficiencies."

### Then they privatize it

While governments continue to "cut and criticize" their way through the pandemic, the third part of this process, "privatize it" is already well underway.

Governments have been trying to prove their commitment to the principles of frugality and austerity for decades—often at great risk to marginalized communities and workers—inching closer to privatization of our transit systems, year after year. One of the primary ways they have been achieving this is through the use of public-private partnerships (P3s).

P3s emerged from the neoliberal turn towards market-based solutions, which began in the 1970s but took hold in Canadian political thought and policies beginning in the 1990s and 2000s. Governments touted P3 projects as a way to build infrastructure without increasing public debt, as the private sector partner would bear the risk and deliver better results. The argument for P3 projects, sometimes referred to as Alternate Funding Procurement (AFP), is that they deliver projects "on time and on budget." This has made a compelling case for austere governments, particularly in Canada's largest province. Since

Governments have been trying to prove their commitment to the principles of frugality and austerity for decades...inching closer to privatization of our transit systems, year after year.

1991, 50% of all P3 projects in Canada have been in Ontario. Despite what it has promised time and again, the P3 model has ultimately ended up increasing fees for service and accelerating the privatization of public services.

Nowhere is the use, and failure, of the P3 model more apparent than in Canada's public transit system. Ottawa's Light Rail Transit system, Vancouver Translink's Canada Line, the Union-Pearson Express Line, and the Eglinton Crosstown LRT (still under construction) are all P3 projects. Despite the assertion that P3s deliver on time and on budget, all of the projects listed here experienced significant cost overruns. With the exception of the Canada Line, they all also missed deadlines repeatedly. While the Canada Line did not overrun its timeline, its P3 structure limited public input into its construction plan. As a result, many residents and businesses in the Cambie Street corridor experienced a multi-year disruption when the winning bid opted to use cut-and-cover construction, rather than a bored tunnel to build the tunnel from 2nd Avenue to 64th Avenue. The Eglinton LRT is currently a full year behind schedule, after falling behind on their construction schedule in 2017. In addition to not meeting the agreed upon schedule, the Ontario Auditor General reported that the P3 contract for the project did not fully transfer the responsibility for risk to the contracted parties and as such, "In August 2018, Metrolinx settled the AFP consortium's claim against it, paying the AFP consortium \$237 million."

Building transit infrastructure is not the only way the P3 projects are introducing creeping privatization into our public transit systems. Presto, is the P3 fare collection system that riders in 11 transit systems

throughout Ontario interact with. Initially, the TTC attempted to adopt an open-source fare system that was more cost effective. In response, the Province threatened to withdraw gas tax revenues, and funding for new streetcars and the Eglinton Crosstown LRT if the TTC didn't implement the privately owned Presto system.

A 2019 Toronto Auditor General's report concluded that the TTC's estimates of lost revenues due to faulty Presto devices, which amounted to \$3.4 million in losses in 2018, were not overstated and "may even be understated." Despite the relationship with Accenture, the private company that oversees Presto, being flagged as problematic by multiple government watchdogs and the transit agency board, the company's original 10-year, \$232 million contract that began in 2006 was extended again in December 2021. The extension was not because the service that Accenture provides is exceptional or even adequate, but because Metrolinx acknowledged that at this juncture, removing Presto would be too risky. Since its inception, the contract has ballooned in value to more than \$1.7 billion, and has now been extended to 2025.

But there's hope on the horizon. As the cracks in P3s continually reveal themselves, communities and municipalities across the country are waking up to the risks associated with this model and pushing back. Recently, the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 569 in Edmonton organized to lobby the City of Edmonton to reverse their July 2021 decision to privatize 100 transit cleaner jobs. The local collected more than 1,500 member signatures (approximately 70% of the bargaining unit) and ran a social media campaign to raise awareness about the planned privatization and build support for the call for cancellation. This is an important win for transit workers in Edmonton, where service for 37 neighbourhoods has been contracted out to a privatized bus service, Pacific Western.

Ahead of Hamilton committing to its LRT plan, in 2017 then-city councillor Matthew Green advocated for Hamilton Street Railway operating and maintaining the system. Green's proposal was met with a groundswell of support that included a "Keep Transit Public," rallies, and a petition that collected over 5,000 signatures in support of an HSR-run LRT. This past September, the City opted to sign a deal with Metrolinx, which will result in an AFP project.

Transit systems will play a vital role in Canada's fight against climate change. While ground has been ceded to private interests through P3 projects, we can work to ensure that green infrastructure built over the coming years is not co-opted by private interests in the name of profit. These are our systems, for the good of the public. It's time to demand the transit systems that we deserve, that invest in our community by providing safe, reliable service, good jobs and sustainable transportation options. **M**

# Meet Muriel Smith, CCPA donor

**Muriel Smith has been with the CCPA since the very beginning, joining in 1980.** Her contributions included writing the international affairs section for Manitoba's Choices Annual Budget. In addition to her work with the CCPA, she served as president of the United Nations Association in Canada and helped lead the National Council of Women, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and many other organizations. In 2007, Muriel was one of the recipients of the Governor-General's Award in commemoration of the Persons Case. She is also a recipient of the Order of Canada and the Order of Manitoba.

## Can you share a bit about your history with the CCPA?

I am a long-time supporter of CCPA. I think I have been a supporter from its inception. I learned about it through my friend Steven Langdon, a former MP, when I was attending the NDP's National Councils. He was a development economist with particular interest in more equitable North-South Trade, which matched my great discomfort with the current North-South relations. I later became a monthly donor to make sure I wouldn't forget CCPA's ongoing work.

## Can you give us one example of how COVID-19 has forced you to think outside the box?

COVID-19 has reinforced my desire to assert the basic principles of what I call the Left—peace, greater equity in income and opportunity. I grew up in a Conservative family, and married into a Liberal one. Still, I found my thinking increasingly influenced by both the Social Gospel here in Canada, and by the Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal, whose view was that the results of research into social issues was determined by the assumptions one made and the values one held, so different from research in the physical sciences.



The CCPA's work starts with the assumption that everybody's voice matters, as do democratic and inclusive decision-making processes, and the quality of community.

## What have you read or watched to keep your mind busy and your soul fed during these strange days?

During the pandemic, I have found my desire to deepen my understanding of what the economy could do and what it alone would not do in creating a healthy society. I have enjoyed Thomas Piketty's *Capital* and Radhika Desai's *Geopolitical Economy: After US Hegemony*,

*Globalization and Empire*. I also like political biographies, Canadian and American, Jagmeet Singh's *Love and Courage: My Story of Family, Resilience and Overcoming the Unexpected*, and Mark Carney's *Values*. As for magazines, I never miss a CCPA publication, particularly those emanating from Manitoba. As Deputy Premier of Howard Pawley's NDP Government in the 1980s, and stints as Minister in both economic and social portfolios, I am most familiar with their topics. As an early convert to environmentalism, I have been delighted to see more attempts to integrate social, economic and environmental issues, so essential in the world of today.

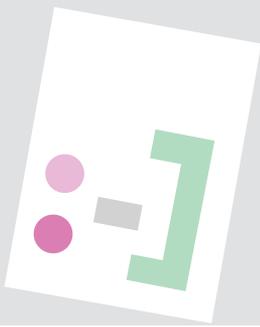
## In your opinion, what makes the CCPA special?

I have benefited from following CCPA's inclusion of labour perspectives which are not readily found elsewhere. Provincially, I also find their analyses of provincial budgets reassuring as they demonstrate how grounded and realistic the values can be. In contrast to what is generally reflected in mainstream media, I have found the CCPA perspectives of particular value, especially when I was serving in Howard Pawley's NDP Government.

A legacy gift is a charitable donation that you arrange now that will benefit the CCPA in the future. Making a gift to the CCPA in your will is not just for the wealthy or the elderly. And a legacy gift makes a special impact—it is often the largest gift that anyone can give. To ask about how you can leave a legacy gift to the CCPA, or to let us know you have already arranged it, please call or write Katie Loftus, Development Officer (National Office), at 613-563-1341 ext. 318 (toll free: 1-844-563-1341) or [katie@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:katie@policyalternatives.ca).



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## The good news page

COMPILED  
BY ELAINE HUGHES

### Professor Veena Sahajwalla NSW State Recipient of Australian of the Year 2022

Professor Veena Sahajwalla, the Founding Director of the Centre for Sustainable Materials Research and Technology at the University of New South Wales was awarded the NSW Australian of the Year award for her work in “micro-recycling.” Sahajwalla’s work turns waste into a new generation of green materials and products. The award recognizes Dr. Sahajwalla’s groundbreaking research in recycling, as the leader of two national research and industrial transformation hubs, the ARC Microrecycling Research Hub and the National Environmental Science Program Sustainable Communities and Waste Hub. / [Australian Circular Economy Hub](#)

### Solar power projects see the light on former Appalachian coal land

Among the first such projects in the U.S., six new solar plants are being

developed on former Virginia coal mines. In addition to producing enough energy to power 30,000 homes, these solar projects help make waste land productive, help fossil-fuel communities shift to a greener economy, and prevent the use of forest or farmland for new solar projects. The U.S. government researched installing renewable energy projects on disturbed land including mines and landfills in 2008. Since then, RE-Powering America has identified over 100,000 potential sites covering more than 44 million acres. / [Thomson Reuters](#)

### Coal-dependent Indonesia starts tapping huge solar power potential

Coal currently provides electricity for 60% of Indonesia’s energy needs. However, the recent uptick in rooftop solar panels could soon reduce the nation’s reliance on this fossil fuel. Between 2018 and 2021, the number of private rooftop solar panel users has increased more than sevenfold. This popularity has been driven by policy changes, increased affordability of Chinese-made photovoltaic cells (PV) and increased demand from environmentally conscious Indonesian middle-class consumers. The country’s energy minister estimates Indonesia has the potential to generate 400,000 MW of solar power. Previously, Indonesia ranked last among G20 nations for solar power capacity. / [Thomson Reuters](#)

### New study maps the cultural flight of the bee

While conversations about saving bees and the importance of pollinators may be new, a new study has recorded the importance of bees and their representation throughout different epochs, cultures and media. The researchers report depictions of bees “in the earliest records of human representations in cave art over 8,000 years old through to ancient Egyptian carvings of bees and hieroglyphics.” They suggest that due to the bees’ functional role in crop growth and honey production, humans developed an aesthetic appreciation for representing bees that has carried through history. / [The Conversation, Brill](#)

### Bee bricks are now a requirement for new builds in Brighton

To protect and encourage solitary bee species to nest, the U.K. city of

Brighton is establishing mandates to incorporate “bee bricks” in construction of all buildings over 5 metres in height. Most solitary nesting bee species typically nest in small cavities found in old brick buildings. Bee bricks are bricks with circular holes through them that allow species like mason bees to make homes in areas where the conditions would be otherwise inhospitable. / [Good News Network](#)

### California redwood forest returned to native tribes

Earlier this year, Save the Redwoods League announced that it is transferring more than 500 acres of redwood forest land to the Inter-Tribal Sinkyone Wilderness Council. The Council comprises 10 tribes that have inhabited the area for thousands of years will be responsible for protecting the land, known as Tc’ih-Léh-Dûñ, or “Fish Run Place,” in the Sinkyone language. / [Associated Press](#)



# Building cities for everyone

**Leslie Kern, PhD, is an author who writes about gender and cities, including in her 2019 book, *Feminist City: Claiming Space in a Man-Made World* and the forthcoming *Gentrification is Inevitable and Other Lies*. She is also the director of Women's and Gender Studies at Mount Allison University. Kern sat down with the *Monitor* and CCPA National Office Senior Researcher, Katherine Scott to talk about her research and building more equitable, accessible cities.**

**Monitor:** One of the reasons I wanted to speak to you for this issue of the *Monitor* was because your anecdote in *Feminist City* about trying to navigate the TTC's many staircases with a stroller has always stuck with me. And I'd like to start our conversation by posing the question from architect and mother Christine Murray that you included in your book: What would cities look like if they were designed by mothers?

**Leslie Kern:** Thanks for starting with that. In a broad, general sense, those would be cities where care labour is at the top of the priority list. I think whether we're talking about transportation, clearing snow, home child care policies: all of these things are very low on the agenda of most planners. If you try to look through a city's official plan for terms like "care", they're nowhere. They're very much an afterthought.

The TTC example illustrates one of the top priorities for a city designed by mothers—or anyone, who's a primary caregiver, whether that's to children, to elderly folks, to people with illness or limited mobility. Accessibility is incredibly high on their list, both the physical accessibility of the environment and also the cost accessibility. So transit systems like the TTC, and so

many others, inadvertently penalize women and mothers through their fares. Women make less money than men and are more likely to be traveling with other people. They tend to, then, incur a kind of a pink tax on transportation costs.

A city designed by mothers, I think, would also inevitably be a child-friendly city. And it would consider the needs and experiences of children, which again are very kind of low down on most planning agendas. Think about school mobility, for example; just getting kids to and from school and all of the safety issues with traffic and the intense efforts that go into just getting drivers to slow down a little bit in a school zone. I think there's gotta be a better way to design this, right? So that we're not just relying on individual drivers behaving well, but instead we create really well-protected and accessible ways for children to move through the city with safe places to play.

Those are some of the first things that come to mind about a city designed by mothers.

**Katherine Scott:** I'm struck with the current moment and would like to get some of your thoughts on how the pandemic has revealed the gendered dimensions of the city,

with an emphasis on the impacts on marginalized women's lives. How does the idea of a feminist city or a forward-thinking city align with our current moment and the ongoing management of the COVID-19 crisis?

**LK:** Since the pandemic—the vast majority of the conversations I've had about the book have been since the pandemic [began]—those questions have really crystallized, I think because so much of this crisis is really a care crisis at so many levels. Whether we're talking about the health care system, the education system, or—and perhaps the most salient lead for our conversation here—the care system that relies on the unpaid and underpaid labour of women, of racialized minorities, of recent immigrants, of refugees and asylum seekers working in long-term care homes. [These are] people whose labour is very undervalued and often made invisible.

The pandemic has been a moment where some of that has become more visible. And it has engendered some attempted policy responses, like the final push needed to move towards a federal child care program. Conversations about what it means if, around the world millions, and locally, thousands of women have been pushed out of the paid workforce.

So how do we create both societies and cities that make it possible for people to work? Because for the economy to function, it requires a robust care infrastructure.

**KS:** It's certainly a huge focus of what I've been doing for the last two years, looking at how this has played out for different marginalized communities. Can you speak a bit more about the role of urban environments during the pandemic?

How have they worked with or against marginalized communities that have carried the burden of this pandemic?

**LK:** Access to public space and green space is one example. We know that there are inequalities in terms of race and income that predate the pandemic. But in the context of a situation where people were increasingly confined to their homes, that [scenario] is maybe not so bad if your home has a backyard and a front yard—just put in a patio—or is a few blocks away from High Park or some other beautiful environment.

But thousands, if not millions, of people around the country live in high-rise environments, deeply urbanized environments and spaces that have been very disinvested in over decades. The impetus to go out and enjoy public space has been kind of pointless if there really aren't safe, accessible kinds of humane spaces that aren't overly patrolled or surveilled, that aren't hardened environments designed to prevent people from actually spending time in them.

[These spaces] have no bathrooms, no water fountains, no shelter. It's all about defending public space from the public, it seems, in many cases. So the pandemic, I think, highlighted some of those inequalities.

**KS:** Do you have a list of priorities that you think should drive a progressive recovery to build a safer, more inclusive city of the future?

**LK:** As someone who studies gentrification, and has written my next book about gentrification, housing is always on my mind. Housing is key. Without a solid

basis of adequate, affordable, accessible and good quality housing for everybody, some of the other things that we dream about will not be built upon a [solid] foundation. So I think reinvestment in public housing. And the anti-gentrification and anti-eviction movements that are happening are also really important here.

The state reaching into its dusty old toolbox of regulatory strategies that they've resisted for so many decades now and thinking, okay, maybe we don't have to do it exactly the same as we did in the seventies and eighties, but there might be a place for things like rent control and greater funding of housing alternatives like cooperative housing.

We've talked a little bit about transportation, but I think that's a huge piece of the puzzle in terms of people's mobility and ability to access work and services. We need to move away from our car-centered reality for a wide range of reasons, which I'm sure are obvious to you and your readers. But from a feminist city perspective, it's important because women are, in most places, the majority of transit users and are more likely to take pedestrian journeys.

I was just reading about how, in Los Angeles during the pandemic, they made LA Metro free [and allowed rear door boarding]. Now they're gathering data on this fare-free experiment. Some of the responses from women have been that it was great to just be able to get on the bus at the back without having to struggle with trying to pay the fare at the front of the bus. These are things that are simple, but that make people's everyday lives way easier.

**M:** I want to go back to a piece that you wrote in 2016 where you talked about the gentrification of Toronto's Junction neighbourhood and how the changing landscape there became an access barrier for long-time residents. Can you talk through how gentrification creates those barriers?

**LK:** When we talk about gentrification, we often focus, and for good reasons, on the physical displacement of people from the communities and this assumption that as wealthier people move in, other people get pushed out. And that's part of the picture, but there's this in-between period and the reality that many people stay in a neighbourhood while the neighbourhood fundamentally changes.

And the things that they once had access to—that might be as simple as a diner with an inexpensive cup of coffee, social services, public benches where people might smoke or play a game of chess, or just gather with others—those things start to disappear or get upscaled as different kinds of businesses come in. People often express that they start to feel like strangers in their own neighbourhoods. They're looked at though they don't belong, especially if they are a different race than the newcomers coming into that space, or they

The impetus to go out and enjoy public space has been kind of pointless if there really aren't safe, accessible, humane spaces that aren't overly patrolled or surveilled, that aren't hardened environments designed to prevent people from actually spending time in them.

speak a different language. And so it's a question of not just the rent rising and people might not be able to afford living there, but that for many people, many of the everyday activities that define what life in a neighbourhood is like begin to shift.

In [*Gentrification is Inevitable and Other Lies*], I try to go beyond the class-focused story of gentrification—which is of course always important—to take a feminist lens and anti-racist lens, and even an anti-colonial lens to try to explore the ways that gentrification is not just a force that has extra bad effects on women, but that also draws on pre-existing hierarchies, around gender, race, sexuality, ability and age and so on to actually propel itself forward. So gender and equality are not incidental to gentrification, but things that gentrification takes advantage of. A recent U.S. study was talking about how single mothers with children are targeted for evictions by landlords. They're seen as easy targets, and you can make up all sorts of excuses about disturbances caused by children and so on. And of course, evicting people is often a precursor to raising the rent and an accelerator of the gentrification process.

Another example is the privatization of public housing. The majority of public housing tenants are women and women-headed households in most places. So when you privatize public housing, it's again not just a class-based process, but it's a process of vast displacement of women.

The fact that so many women, especially low income women, rely on informal networks of care and babysitting and carpooling and walks to school and picking up groceries and checking on mom; when those are disrupted by being dislocated to other places, it's not just that you've moved. It's like your whole support network crumbles. And what was maybe just manageable before becomes completely untenable.

**KS:** Could you speak more about those different perspectives? I'd be interested in how gentrification has mobilized or is fueled by underlying disparity.

**LK:** Let's start with the race picture. It has long been recognized that gentrification has different impacts on racialized communities. But again, a lot of the literature has focused on outcomes and impacts without really looking at the fact that historically, even going back a century or longer, practices such as red-lining and residential segregation really set the stage for those great disparities and the great disparity in home ownership rates between those who are white versus those who are not white. And gentrification is a continuation of that racialized capital accumulation process for some over others. Even though, technically speaking, red-lining doesn't officially happen anymore, and we don't have official practices of racial segregation, their effects linger to this day.

As gentrification happens, the people who are most likely to be negatively affected are those with the fewest assets and the least wealth. And there still remains a very large wealth gap and asset gap between white folks, especially here in North America, and others.

So gentrification itself is a kind of process of re-inscribing racial hierarchies in urban space.

**KS:** I was struck by how with *Feminist City* you ended on a positive note. You envisioned something different: with the spread of kinship and people organizing. Where do you see hope in the current moment?

**LK:** I am encouraged by the fact that folks that I've had the chance to speak to in professions like planning and architecture and urban design were interested in some of these ideas.

Sometimes I'm frustrated because there's nothing new in this book. These ideas have been around for a long time, but [people say], oh,

if only I'd had this to read in my architecture degree, if only I had read this in my planning degree. I'm heartened to hear that because I think it does indicate interest. But it's also frustrating because people have been writing about this for many, many decades. So it's very slow, incremental change in those professional spaces.

I guess the hopeful signs might be the re-recognition that public space is valuable. Not to over-valorize a middle-class awakening, but now we observe life in urban public space, [realizing] there's nowhere to sit and everything is hostile and hard and it's very unpleasant. Many people have known these things for a long time: that in the name of security, some notion of safety and aesthetic principles, we've made it impossible for people to enjoy being in public.

In some cases, I've taken that to heart; in Montreal, for example, which maybe has been better at public space. When I went to visit my daughter this past summer, there were so many streets—major streets—totally closed to cars, and they had all of these tables and benches and movable furniture, which you just never see in urban space. And there were little parkettes taking up space on the road. All of these sites have actually remained in place over this period of the pandemic. There's hope that they will continue to remain in place.

So I think that is kind of hopeful, right? If we can take more space away from cars, if we can reinvigorate the public sphere in ways that make it hospitable for a wide variety of people, I think that's a really important shift. **M**

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Leslie Kern's new book, *Gentrification is Inevitable and Other Lies*, will be released on September 6, 2022. It is available for pre-order through its publisher, Penguin Random House.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity. To read the full length interview, please visit [MonitorMag.ca/Current](https://www.monitormag.ca/Current).

# Five resources to understand the future of transportation

ELECTRIC VEHICLES have emerged as the poster child of the zero-carbon economy. If we could only manage to replace all our internal combustion engines with batteries, it seems, we'd be well on our way to a greener world. But is achieving net-zero emissions really that straightforward? And is a society and economy dependent on personal vehicles—zero-emission though they may be—actually the future we aspire to?

Maybe not. Here are five resources to help make sense of the future of transportation beyond the electric car.

## “EP. 15: DECARBONIZING TRANSPORTATION”

Energy vs. Climate (2021)

The three co-hosts of *Energy vs. Climate*—David Keith, Sara Hastings-Simon and Ed Whittingham—are all well-respected experts working at the forefront of Canadian climate policy. In their monthly podcast they tackle energy policy issues with a depth and nuance that is often missing from policy debates today. Episode 15, which first aired in April 2021, unpacks the numerous challenges to decarbonizing the transportation system. The conversation with guest Amy Myers Jaffe can be dense and technical at times, but you'll learn more in an hour here than anywhere else.

## 1.5-DEGREE LIFESTYLES: TOWARDS A FAIR CONSUMPTION SPACE FOR ALL

Hot or Cool Institute (2021)

The average Canadian emits three times more greenhouse gas emissions than the average person in China and five times more than

the average person in India. Our per capita emissions are nearly 50% higher than even Finland, which has a similar climate and comparable income levels. Before we can even begin to discuss the technical and political dimensions of transportation we need to establish context, and this thorough report from the Germany-based Hot or Cool Institute lays out in no uncertain terms the extravagance of Canadian energy consumption relative to the rest of the world. To do our part in the global fight against climate change we don't just need to switch to electric vehicles; we need to rethink how we live.

## HEALTH RECOVERY PLAN: FOR A SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (2020)

Many organizations, including the CCPA, presented plans for Canada to bounce back from the ravages of COVID-19. The *Health Recovery Plan* from the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) is especially noteworthy for how effectively it ties together the economic and health benefits of moving away from fossil fuels. According to CAPE, cleaner air from the shift away from conventional vehicles and power plants will prevent 5,000–10,000 premature deaths per year in Canada. Their plan shows how this can be achieved, including through aggressive investment in active transportation infrastructure.

## REBEL CITIES: FROM THE RIGHT TO THE CITY TO THE URBAN REVOLUTION

David Harvey (2012)

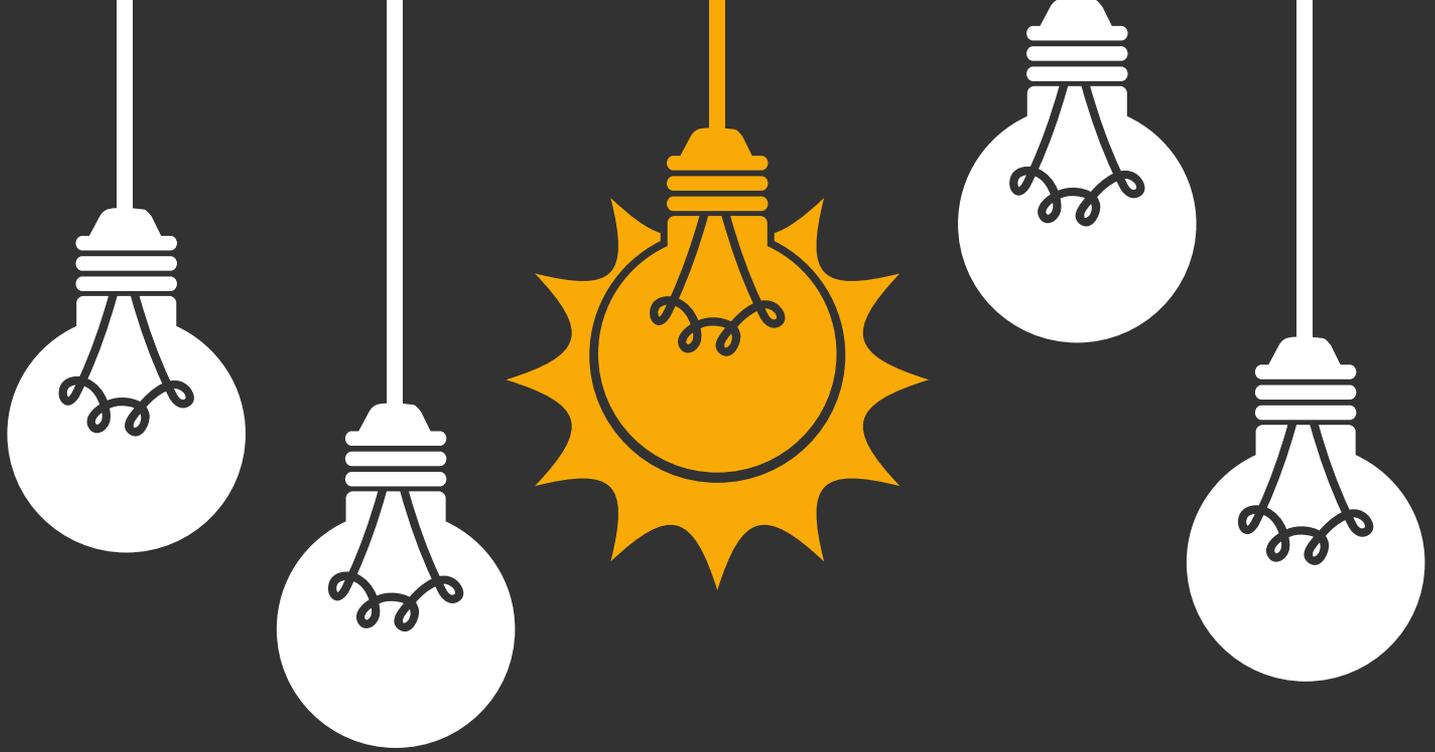
Marxist geographer David Harvey is best known for his unsparing

critiques of capitalism, including *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (2005), but he has also written extensively about cities as a place of revolutionary opportunity. In *Rebel Cities*, Harvey offers a powerful call-to-arms for urban anti-capitalist struggle to transform cities from centres of capitalist accumulation into communities that serve their people first. Although his take on Occupy Wall Street hasn't aged particularly well, the book's first five chapters remain incisive and inspiring. *Rebel Cities* invites us to think beyond the technical details of transportation, housing and other urban policy issues to instead consider the radical potential our cities hold for a better future.

## SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS: PROSPECTS FOR A JUST TRANSITION IN CALGARY, CANADA'S PETRO-CITY

Noel Keough & Geoff Ghitter (2021)

On its face, the future of transportation seems fairly straightforward: more bikes, more buses and fewer internal combustion engines. But what does that actually mean in practice? In *Sustainability Matters*, academics Noel Keough and Geoff Ghitter provide an invaluable deep dive into the potential for just such a transportation revolution in one Canadian city, Calgary—a city that also happens to be Canada's oil and gas capital. In chapters 6 and 7, Keough and Ghitter tackle the issue from both directions: how to get conventional cars off the road and how to move people around in more sustainable ways, such as trams and trains. You don't need to be a Calgarian to benefit from this practical and hopeful case study. **M**



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