

MONITOR

Progressive news, views and ideas



CCPA
CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
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MARCH/APRIL 2023

Canada's inequality problem

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Cover illustration: Tim Zeltner lives in the countryside north of Grafton, Ontario. He utilizes a unique combination of layering paint, glazes and stains in his artwork and derives his award-winning folk style from personal experiences, visions, and primitive art from sources throughout the world.

Centrespread design and illustrations: Joss MacLennan is the creative director of Joss MacLennan Design. She combines a passion for clear, simple language with a strong visual sense. Her background is mainly in design, but includes painting, drawing and illustration as well. Decades of experience help her find the central message and the way to convey it. Jamileh Salek is an Iranian-Canadian artist, writer and illustrator. Pattern, colour and art making was part of her childhood and life in Tabriz and Tehran. This rich Persian heritage shows in all her work. Themes of migration, culture, and the shape of women's lives are woven into her painting, textile art and books.

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MONITOR

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 published six times a year by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and is mailed to all supporters who give more than \$35 a year to the Centre. Write us at monitor@policyalternatives.ca with feedback or if you would like to receive the *Monitor*.

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JON MILTON

Inequality makes crises worse—and there are many crises coming

“WE’RE ALL IN this together.” For a while, that was what we told ourselves about the crisis we were living through. In early 2020, as an unknown virus broke down health care systems across the world, we told ourselves that, even though it was scary, at least we were all in the same boat.

Then reality set in. The pandemic didn’t affect everyone equally—rather, the people who were most vulnerable before the pandemic were more vulnerable to the virus. Urban areas, typically more poor than the suburbs, saw higher mortality rates—with the rate of deaths increasing in poorer neighborhoods of cities. Racialized and immigrant communities were hit harder than white and Canadian-born communities.

With some exceptions—like those who could work from home and those who couldn’t—the pandemic didn’t create new inequalities, it amplified existing ones to previously unknown levels.

That inequality extends internationally, as the rich countries of the Global North hoard life-saving medicines, preventing the global poor majority from accessing them. Rich countries fight hard to ensure that pharmaceutical formulas remain protected by intellectual property law, preventing the scaling up of production required to quickly respond to countries that want access.

Inequality worsens crises—and we’re living in an era of crises. From the pandemic to the rise of a resurgent global fascist movement

and global ecosystems collapse, younger generations are likely to experience crises on an unimaginable scale. Worsening inequality will exacerbate them.

When the “heat dome” struck British Columbia in the summer of 2021, nearly 600 people died; the deadliest extreme weather event in Canadian history. Those deaths were concentrated among vulnerable populations, such as low-income seniors and people experiencing homelessness.

As climate change worsens, such disasters will become more frequent. To prevent leaving behind our most vulnerable neighbours, we need to build systems of resiliency that are inclusive.

It also means addressing the historic crimes that have led to inequality in the first place.

Indigenous Peoples in the territory we call Canada have been dispossessed of their land and subjected to centuries of attempted genocide—it’s no wonder that Indigenous communities struggle today.

Canada’s immigration system is designed to produce a hyper-exploitable class of workers—it’s no wonder that immigrant communities are more at risk on a wide range of factors.

Women’s fields of work have long been devalued and underfunded—it’s no wonder that working women have it harder than their male counterparts.

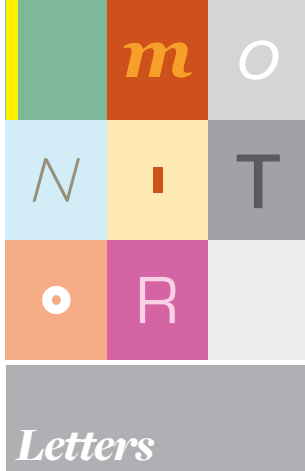
Such inequality isn’t the unfortunate byproduct of an otherwise well-functioning machine, it is a core feature of our economic and social

system. That system has produced tremendous wealth for the few and misery for the many. It has also driven us, at full speed, into the howling void of crisis.

It doesn’t need to be this way. It is possible for us to build a social system that is more fair and based on more equal access to resources and dignity. Governments and leaders can choose to mobilize resources to reduce inequality and ensure that regular working people and vulnerable communities have access to resources and dignity. Not doing so is a political choice—one that leaders have become too comfortable making.

When we start to prioritize providing resources to vulnerable communities, when we start to right the historic wrongs, whose legacy continues today, when we work to ensure dignity, safety, and access to resources for all—maybe then we can finally say that we’re all in this together. **M**

Jon Milton is a senior communications specialist with the CCPA National Office.



Dear Monitor readers,
You are a vital part of the *Monitor* community—we welcome your feedback and insights! Please keep letters to the editor to 250 words or less, please add your full name and the name of the community that you live in, and please send to: monitor@policyalternatives.ca.



January/February 2023 *Mis/disinformation*

I want to congratulate Jon Milton on his superb article on disinformation, “New Tools Same Poison,” in latest issue of the *Monitor*. In this era of misinformation, disinformation, spin-doctoring, and fake news, it is essential to have Milton’s clear-eyed analysis of the main sources of disinformation. In fact, the *Monitor* editors deserve congratulations for the entire issue. Reading timely and important articles like Mr. Milton’s “New Tools,

Same Poison”—and the entire issue on disinformation—made me proud to be a CCPA supporter. And, yes, I will be assigning this to my students at St. Jerome’s University in the University of Waterloo! Congratulations!
David Seljak
Waterloo, ON

I have already received this issue of the *Monitor* in hard copy and have read it with interest. I must say, however, that the solutions it proposes strike me as approaching the problem from the wrong end. I put it to you that the problem with lies, because that’s what disinformation really consists of, isn’t that they’re told but that they’re believed. If the common reaction to being told, for example, that the Pope had endorsed Donald Trump was skeptical disbelief, then disinformation wouldn’t be much of a problem. How we might get to that happy situation I’m afraid I can’t say. Censorship of right-wingers couldn’t happen to a nicer bunch of guys but it’s no answer to our current dilemma.

Jim Lane
Toronto, ON

I wonder whether disinformation is a vice not only of the political right but also of the political left? Not all ‘progressives’, I conjecture, are strictly scrupulous in their use of information. And not all conservative writers are witting liars.

But for partisans of any political cause in our free society, the temptation to

economize with the truth may be great.
Anthony Waterman
Winnipeg, MB



November/ December 2022 *Trade*

Thank you for this latest issue with its emphasis on trade. When they were first proposed, the FTA and NAFTA were highly controversial and much discussed. Now that such trade deals are entrenched (and all the negative predictions about them have come true) they are hardly ever mentioned. The trade deals were what allowed neoliberalism’s attack on democracy and we should never have stopped talking about what to do about them!

Anne Miles
Gibsons, B.C.

High praise for the November/December 2022 issue of the *Monitor*. All the articles are informative, well researched and helpful for social justice activists. In particular, I want to compliment Clare Mian on her well-articulated and important article “75 years later.” She has provided us with a vivid lens on the hypocrisy of our government in dealing with the Palestine/Israel issue.

Her revelations about how the Canadian government’s violation of its own international commitments regarding rights for the Palestinian people belie the government’s persistent voting record—always with Israel and the U.S., no matter how egregious the Israeli regime has been and continues to be. Now that Israel has installed a vicious, xenophobic, racist, and violent government led by a criminal, it is time for progressives to spotlight a gross injustice of colonialism and call for our government to act as a real defender of human rights.

Gord Doctorow
Toronto, ON



July/August 2022 *Degrowth*

Degrowth is a horrid word. The authors of “Barriers and Opportunities” (July/August *Monitor*) repeated it 30 times. Reading the article was like driving too closely behind a leaking truck marked “Yesterday’s Meals on Wheels.”

Degrowth’s sins? For one thing, it highlights the very word it wants to replace; every politician knows that it is better to be derided than ignored. And it is purely negative, easily leading folks to destructive acts against the

opposition. Think Monkey Wrench Gang times 10. Think Internet chaos from thousands of clever hackers.

Critics should offer something better. “Sustainability” is a candidate, except that nothing stands still no matter what you do—and people need to put their energy into something that moves. How about “vitality”? It’s energetic. It encourages life and liveliness. It conjures up thousands of challenging projects that repair the wounds of centuries of industrial expansion and adapt to the turmoil and destruction of changing climates.

If the choice is between cancerous growth and vitality, I’ve made mine.

Bob Weeden

Salt Spring Island, BC



New from the CCPA

CCPA Manitoba

How do Boards of Directors of nonprofits meaningfully include the people they serve in the governance of the organization?

In partnership with Immigration Partnership Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba, this past November the Manitoba office released *Building Stronger Boards: A Study on the Diversity of Settlement Organizations in Winnipeg* by Marleny M. Bonnycastle, Jessica Praznik, Kathleen Vyrauen and Robert Daudet.

This research with settlement organizations in Winnipeg considers how to diversify boards of organizations that serve newcomers. To sustain that diversity, organizations must be creative and think outside the box in finding new ways of recruiting and retaining board members.

In light of provincial inaction on climate, a coalition of local climate and policy experts have drafted *The Road to Resilience*, a community-based Climate Action Plan for Manitoba. The plan shows how actions to decrease emissions have the potential to bring many benefits to Manitobans by saving households money

and creating thousands of new jobs. While evidence-based action is available, we still depend on the provincial government to take them up.

The Manitoba office continues to do commentary related to the *Road to Resilience*, including an op ed in the Winnipeg Free Press late in 2022, “Climate Action Requires Provincial Leadership,” and a forthcoming report on energy policies needed to sustain a just transition in Manitoba.

CCPA National Office

At the CCPA, the entire team works hard to make sure our work has an impact—especially when major threats to Canadians’ well-being are unfolding.

When it became clear that inflation was going to soar to historically unusual highs, CCPA National Office Senior Economist David Macdonald weighed in with a series of analyses countering the myth that, somehow, workers were to blame for inflation.

That, actually, some major corporations are profiting off of inflation.

It’s not easy countering myths with facts when you’re up against right-wing think tanks, but Macdonald held his own—and proved Canadians are hungry for truth telling.

Macdonald’s analysis showing workers, on average, have been taking an inflation-related pay cut was our most popular Twitter and Facebook post in 2022.

But the debate over inflation—and, later, over

the Bank of Canada’s decision to raise interest rates in an attempt to reduce inflation—really happened in the mainstream media.

Macdonald’s reports on who’s driving inflation and his analysis of how every time the Bank of Canada tries to kill inflation through interest rates, a recession tends to follow, put him up against right-wing think tanks and big bank economists.

That, combined with the work of all CCPA experts, contributed to this influence measure: the CCPA earned 16,000 media hits in newspapers, radio and TV in 2022.

In fact, the CCPA earned more media hits than the right-wing Fraser Institute, the Conference Board of Canada, the Macdonald-Laurier Institute and the C.D. Howe Institute. In his own interviews, Macdonald even beat Canada’s big banks in terms of media interviews on inflation and interest rates.

CCPA Nova Scotia

In January, Nova Scotia office Director Christine Saulnier presented to the Standing Committee on Community Services on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on vulnerable Nova Scotians.

The CCPA-NS submission detailed that those struggling with cost increases are made vulnerable by our public systems and public policy, particularly by gaps in the safety net. We called for an intersectional approach to understanding the crisis and addressing it.



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the *Monitor*,
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A sample of our recommendations included an increase to the minimum wage, for the government to provide additional income support for income assistance, and increases to the NS Affordable Living Tax Credit or the NS Child Benefit (indexing all to inflation).

In addition, we underlined the importance of the government bolstering universal public services, such as pharmacare, by ensuring people pay less out of pocket for essentials.

We also published a press release urging the government to accept the recent recommendation of the Nova Scotia Minimum Wage Review Committee to update the timeline for a minimum wage increase

to \$15 an hour by October 2023 instead of April next year.

It is government budget season: before Nova Scotia tables its budget (usually mid- to late-March), we will outline our expectations for what should be in the Nova Scotia 2023-24 budget and then analyze it once it's tabled. As the director said to the standing committee, Nova Scotia has the fiscal capacity to help people deal with the multiple crises before them, and the government must act urgently before anyone else dies in the street.

CCPA Ontario

Health care is a hot topic in Ontario these days, and

for good reason: among its many problems, the province faces a pandemic backlog of one million surgeries, according to doctors.

It's a systemwide crisis that Queen's Park has been slow to address. But in January, Premier Doug Ford conceded, finally, that his government would accept conditions on hoped-for new health funding from the federal government.

It's not clear what conditions Ford might agree to—he is still eager to spend public dollars in for-profit clinics—but there is one thing new federal money won't change: when it comes to funding health care and other public services, no province does a worse job than Ontario.

Recent research by CCPA Ontario Senior Economist Sheila Block shows that in terms of raising revenue, Ontario is simply not trying. Separate and apart from federal funding, if Ontario raised revenues (as a percentage of GDP) at the same rate as the average of the other provinces, total revenues would be 20% higher. If the province funded public programs the way other provinces do, spending would be 21% higher.

Sadly, it's not. As a result, when it comes to health spending per person, Ontario is dead last among provinces. Raising it to the Canadian average would increase the health budget by 9.3%, or \$7.2 billion, Block found. But instead of doing so, the government remains fixated on reducing its own

revenues through cuts to various taxes and fees.

That's the root of the problem. Federal funding is fine, but it won't fix Ford's fiscal failure.

CCPA Saskatchewan

Proponents of Public Private Partnerships (P3s) like to paint a very rosy picture of what the P3 model can deliver.

It's a way for cash-strapped governments to deliver public infrastructure it otherwise couldn't afford; it delivers projects on time and on budget; it harnesses private innovation to deliver cost effective and efficient building methods.

And yet, those governments that relied the most on the P3 model to build their public infrastructure are now awash in debt, often presiding over crumbling P3 schools and hospitals.

How can a procurement model promise so much and deliver so little?

Watch CCPA SK Director Simon Enoch break down the P3 model, demonstrating how in many respects, it is a rigged game, designed to benefit big corporations and politicians, while leaving the public holding the bag. Available on the CCPA Manitoba Youtube channel: www.youtube.com/@CCPAManitoba. **M**

Ricardo Tranjan
Ontario Office

Predatory lending and housing insecurity: they're connected

Income insecurity, housing insecurity, and food insecurity are closely correlated and have common causes, including suppressed wages, unregulated markets, and profiteering.

Social policies in these areas are more effective when coupled with regulation to rein in economic inequality. This should go without saying. But in these times of free market consensus, governments tiptoe around regulation. Free markets run wild and social policy tries picking up the pieces.

Examples abound.

In response to high inflation rates, the federal government recently announced a one-time GST credit top-up and a one-time \$500 housing allowance to low-income tenants. Money put in the right hands, no doubt. But in the absence of strong anti-price gouging legislation and a national rent freeze, much of this money will flow to the corporations and landlords that have been pushing up profit margins.

There are also concerted efforts to channel funds from the federal \$10-a-day child care program to for-profit providers. Experts argue that allowing profit making will serve to maintain the broken, unaffordable system the new plan is trying to fix. Decades in the making, Canada's

national child care program may fail because some provincial governments won't tell private providers to keep their hands out of the cookie jar.

Then there is predatory lending.

We examined payday loans in detail in a 2020 report. Here's the gist of it: the federal government sets the criminal rate of interest at 60%; anyone who charges more than that is committing a crime. But the federal government allows provinces to exempt payday loans, so the interest charged on short-term loans is four to six times higher than the criminal rate.

Nonsense? Quebecers thought so. They imposed a 35% maximum interest rate, squashing the payday loans business in the province. End of story.

Elsewhere, the issue persists. The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC) recently concluded a consultation on whether the federal government should lower the criminal rate of interest. Doing so would immediately reduce the cost of installment loans, defaulted payday loans, title loans, and other loans products. It would make credit cheaper for people without savings who are faced with a crisis situation.

My original submission to the FCAC consultation read, "See Quebec." Colleagues convinced me to do more, so I pulled data from three recent Statistics Canada surveys that collect information on housing and financial insecurity. All three datasets show that people faced with high housing costs are more likely to use payday and other forms of loans—an obvious link but one worth stressing.

Here's the data:

Statistics Canada's Survey of Financial Security (SFS) asked respondents whether they borrowed money through payday loans within the past 12 months. In 2019, tenant households were 10 times more likely to have used payday loans than homeowners without a mortgage, and three times more likely than homeowners with a mortgage.

The reason behind this discrepancy is that homeowners have access to cheaper credit options because they can borrow against their assets. In turn, a share of tenants, especially those living on low income, have to use these expensive loans, which further limits their ability to achieve economic security.

The Canadian Housing Survey (CHS) asks respondents if they experienced economic hardship that led them to take out loans or sell assets. In 2018, 19% of all tenant households and 11% of all homeowner households answered Yes. The percentage was higher for households in core housing need, and the higher the share of income spent on shelter costs, the more likely the household was to take out loans or sell assets. An astonishing 40% of tenant households that reported experiencing economic hardship due to rent increases reported taking on debt or selling assets.

Renters at the mercy of payday loans

Payday loan use by housing tenure, by region, 2019

Canada



Atlantic



Quebec



Ontario



Prairies



British Columbia



In 2020, City of Toronto staff identified and mapped 14 payday loan cluster areas across the city. The study defined clusters as areas with three or more payday loan establishments within 500 meters of each other.¹ Upon our request, city staff provided a list of the 36 census tracts comprising these clusters.² We bundled tracts into one group and calculated key housing indicators for it using 2021 census data.³

Here's what we found: payday loan cluster areas have a higher share of households spending 30% or more of their income on shelter costs, a higher share of households in core housing need, and a higher share of households in subsidized housing. Overall, a household located in Toronto's payday loan cluster areas is 2.4 times more likely to be in core housing need than the average Canadian household.

It is clear that payday lenders target areas with high rates of housing insecurity, and their activity in these areas is likely to aggravate the problem.

There is so much talk about housing insecurity in this country. So many housing strategies, housing reports, housing-related promises and announcements. Yet governments allow payday lenders to set up shop in neighbourhoods where high rents perpetuate financial insecurity. Why are we shooting ourselves in the foot?

A much lower rate of interest would be a start. The next step—which doesn't require consultation—would be to revoke the payday loans exemption.

Ricardo Tranjan is a senior researcher at the CCPA Ontario.

1. City of Toronto, "Supplementary Report on Payday Loan Establishments," 2022.

2. The City of Toronto's Social Policy, Analysis and Research Unit kindly shared the census tract locations for all payday loan clusters; all calculations and interpretations thereafter are the responsibility of the author. A map of the clusters is available online.

3. Note on methods: We used census tract combined counts to calculate housing indicators for this new group.

Simon Enoch
Saskatchewan Office

Trying to find meaning in Saskatchewan

In his famous essay, *Politics and the English Language*, George Orwell lamented politicians' embrace of what he called, "meaningless words."

These are words that are bereft of any single, agreed upon definition, but are politically useful due to the very fact that they conjure up different meanings to different people.

As Orwell states, "Words of this kind are often used in a consciously dishonest way. That is the person who uses them has their own private definition, but allows their hearer to think they mean something quite different."

While Orwell's observations were written close to 80 years ago, they remain remarkably relevant today. Indeed, this winter produced two rather impressive examples of "words that part company with meaning" by politicians in Saskatchewan.

The first comes courtesy of the City of Regina, which recently promoted the idea of reverting the downtown's single pedestrian-only street back to car traffic as "revitalization."



Now, *revitalization* is certainly one of those slippery words that can have multiple meanings yet sounds good to most people's ears. Who could be against the revitalization of anything?

Perhaps the more pertinent question would be revitalization of *what* and for *whom*?

According to the city's own news release, the purpose of revitalization is to "attract more people downtown and to the Scarth Street Mall, with changes to the pedestrian walkway being considered as part of a larger plan to create "a vibrant community, economic prosperity and community safety and wellbeing."

Even the most cursory research on urban renewal will demonstrate that maintaining and expanding pedestrian-exclusive zones within downtown cores is the most documented means to accomplish these goals. Pedestrian zones increase the attractiveness of areas, resulting in more frequent and longer visits while also reducing air pollution, enhancing pedestrian safety and promoting more active modes of transportation.

Yet both Mayor Sandra Masters and local business leaders who support scrapping the pedestrian zone seem to have a very different meaning of revitalization in mind. For them, revitalization is purely about "revitalizing" retail spending in the downtown.

They appear to believe that the only amenity that will attract consumers to the downtown is convenience for drivers. That, somehow, the gutting of one single pedestrian-zone will somehow unleash a torrent of retail spending as cars that were previously shut out of the 160 metres of pedestrian-only space come rushing to the rescue.

But as University of Regina Geography Professor Vanessa Matthews keenly observes, "cars don't make purchases, people do."

Ironically, despite the knee jerk reaction of business owners who often view pedestrian-only zones as an obstacle to customers, the evidence clearly shows that such

spaces are a boon to local business, generating higher sales volumes than for business outside the zone.

As one of the most car-centric cities in the country, with over 50% of its downtown devoted to parking lots, it's not surprising that the city feels almost hostile to pedestrians and cyclists. So, it strains the imagination to see how further entrenching the primacy of the automobile will somehow revitalize Regina's downtown.

But maybe that depends on what your definition of revitalization is.

Our second case of "meaningless words" comes directly from our premier. In December, Scott Moe proudly announced the launch of "Sustainable Saskatchewan," a rather clunky marketing attempt to greenwash Saskatchewan's otherwise dismal environmental record.

Now, despite that record, Scott Moe *loves* the word "sustainable." In fact, to hear him tell it, there's not much of anything in the province that isn't "sustainable." Coal is sustainable, potash is sustainable, uranium is sustainable, oil and gas are sustainable.

What does Premier Moe mean when he touts virtually the entirety of Saskatchewan resources as "sustainable?" While notoriously slippery, "sustainability" usually encompasses one of a few broad definitions.

The first definition is rather simple. Something is sustainable if it is "able to continue," meaning it can be maintained indefinitely without depleting the energy or material resources on which it depends.

You will notice right away that finite, non-renewable resources like oil, natural gas, coal, potash or uranium would not fit this description. Even if managed conservatively and frugally, there is only so much oil, potash, coal or uranium in Saskatchewan that can be drilled or mined.

The second definition is probably closer to what we think of as sustainability and its association with the environment: "The quality of causing little or no damage to the environment and therefore able to continue for a long time."

This certainly seems to be what Mr. Moe would like people to conjure in their minds when he speaks about Saskatchewan's resource industries as "sustainable."

Of course, given what we know about climate science, there is no way we could characterize the continued burning of fossil fuels at the scale we are now as causing "little or no damage to the environment and therefore able to continue."

So, on both counts, Premier Moe's claims of sustainability are spurious. But, once again, the goal of meaningless words like "sustainability" and "revitalization" is not to be accurate. Quite the opposite. The goal is to let people project their preferred definition onto it, comforted by the belief that their government is following their wishes—even if the truth might be quite different.

Simon Enoch is director of the CCPA Saskatchewan office.



David Macdonald
National Office

CEO pay is out of control in Canada

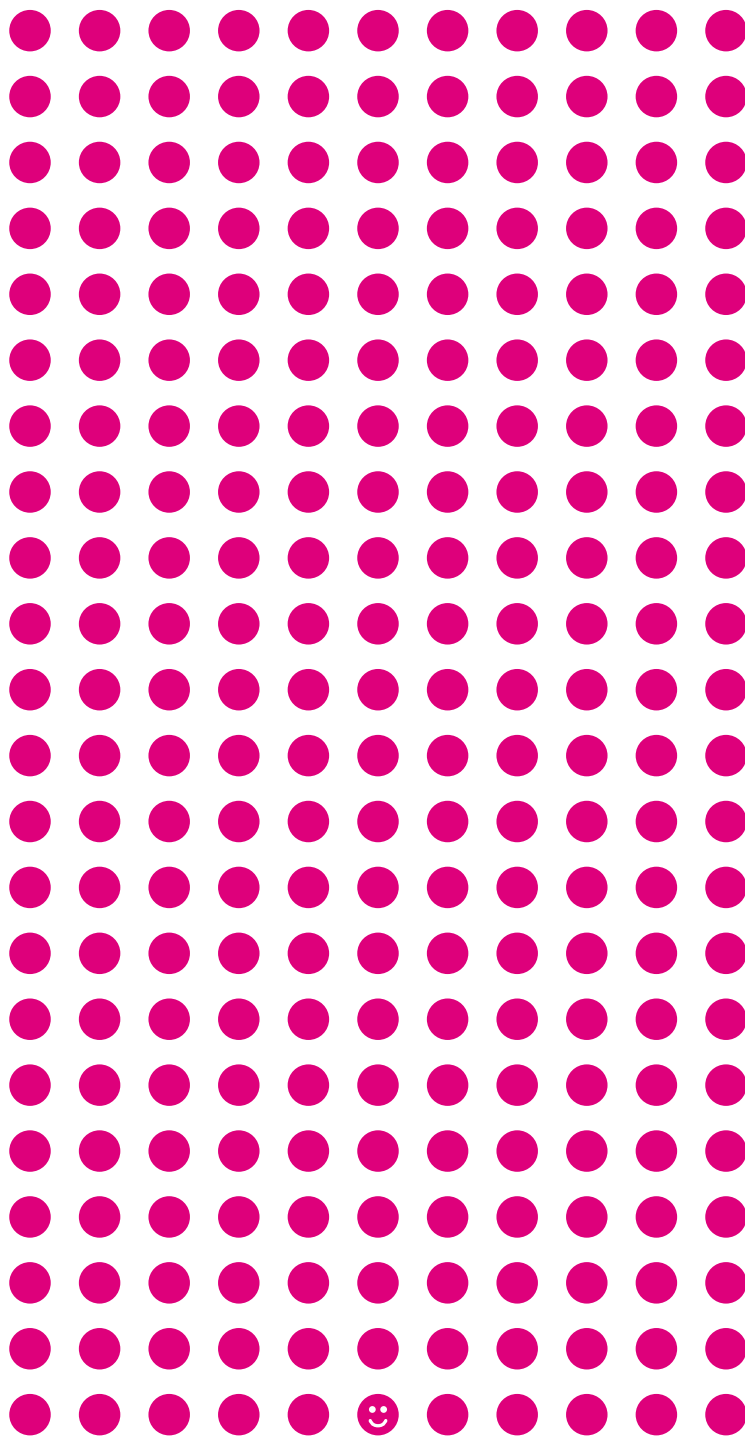
You could call it the breakfast of champions: by 9:43 a.m. on January 3, the average best-paid 100 Canadian CEOs already made \$58,800—that's what the average Canadian worker will toil to earn in an entire year.

High-rolling CEOs' pay packages come from their ability to maintain a market lock on a Canadian economy that is increasingly defined by monopolies and lack of competition. From grocery stores to gas prices, the Canadian economy is full of concentrated power. And the people at the top of that food chain—CEOs—are reaping the rewards.

The latest data shows that CEOs broke every single compensation record in the book in 2021: the 100 richest of company bosses took home an average of \$14.1 million each. That shatters the previous all-time record of \$11.8 million in 2018.

CEOs make most of their money from bonuses, not salaries, which are linked to things like company revenue or profits. This year corporate profits are at a historic high—and so are CEO bonuses.

It would be one thing if workers were receiving equally generous pay increases as the country's highest-paid CEOs are enjoying, but that's nowhere near the case:



↑
In 2021
the 100 best-paid CEOs
in Canada made
243 times
what the average worker
earned
↓


the CEO-to-worker pay gap is now 243 times more than average workers' pay, smashing 2018's previous record of 227 times.

The hard reality is that workers' wages are being eaten up by inflation while major corporations and their CEOs are profiting from it. When profits go through the roof, CEO bonuses go through the roof. As a result, inflation has been an important driver of CEO pay.

In contrast, inflation has been bad for workers: the average private sector worker saw their pay fall by 1.8 per cent once you include inflation.

So what can we do about it? In an economy that is decidedly rigged in favour of the CEO class, the federal government has a lot of room to restore fairness to Canada's tax system.

In practice, that means bringing in measures like closing the capital gains tax loophole, which currently allows CEOs to pay half the taxes when they sell their company shares.

Secondly, the top tax bracket on wages in Canada is low, historically speaking: it's between 20 and 30 per cent lower than in the 1950s and '60s. It's time to raise marginal taxes on Canada's richest.

That additional revenue could be pressed into service: it could be used to fix Canada's health care system, which is tearing apart at the seams under the pressure of the pandemic; it could be used to create more publicly available affordable housing units; it could invest in future generations

Think of inflation as bad for everyone else and not bad for CEOs.

by making postsecondary education more affordable.

Beyond income taxes, it's time to talk about implementing a wealth tax. Massive pay packages year after year build up into an even bigger gap in net worth. Even a modest wealth tax of one or two per cent on the wealthiest Canadians could raise tens of billions of dollars to reinvest in more adequate income supports for the poor and better social and public services for everyone.

To do anything less is to simply close our eyes to worsening income inequality, which is feeding growing discontent among many Canadians. Fixing our gaze on the rising fortunes of the richest CEOs in Canada isn't just about restoring tax fairness—it's about ensuring a stable democracy where the system works in favour of the majority; not the privileged few.

David Macdonald is a senior economist at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Marc Lee
and Ben Parfitt
BC Office

Severe climate events cost billions

Caroline and Paul Mosterman have seen their share of unusual weather in four-plus decades of farming. But nothing comes remotely close to what they experienced in November 2021 when their Sumas Prairie farm was inundated by floodwater.

Because the couple farmed on a floodplain, they had no flood insurance. So, when their farm buildings, blueberry plants, nursery, farm machinery and much more were overwhelmed by the rising waters, they took a huge hit.

“It’s going to be years before we recover financially. This has been taxing mentally, emotionally and physically,” Caroline said in an interview nine months after the historic floods.

The shock visited on the Mostermans is part of a much larger story involving the triple assault on British Columbia’s environment and economy from the unprecedented heat dome of June and July 2021, the horrific wildfires that followed and the floods.

The cumulative economic impact of those events has not been properly considered, but it should be given that more frequent and extreme weather events will certainly come our way as a result of climate change.

Not only might we experience multiple climate assaults in a single year as we did in 2021, but each might amplify the other. Last year’s extreme heat, for example, set the stage for more intense wildfires, which burned so intensely in some watersheds that they altered water

flows, thus making the November floods worse.

Estimating the full cost of a climate catastrophe, let alone multiple catastrophes, is not easy. In the immediate aftermath, the first and often only estimates are of insured damages to property. But insured damages are only the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

Our research shows that when the broad sweep of non-insured losses is considered along with a number of other factors, the estimated economic hit associated with the 2021 extreme weather events is in the range of \$10.6 billion to \$17.1 billion.

This gives B.C. the dubious distinction of having endured the worst climate disaster in Canadian history.

Our estimate is that the Mostermans were part of a large and unfortunate group whose total non-insured losses from last year’s flooding and landslides ranged from a “low” of \$1.6 billion to a high of nearly \$5 billion.

We also looked at lost income for workers due to various factors including business closures or curtailments. Some of those losses were due to damaged or destroyed highways or rail lines that severely disrupted supply and distribution networks. Others involved destruction of core assets, for example cherry crops that literally cooked on the trees, and the ripple effect

on migrant workers who lost their ability to pick.

Our estimate is that the heat dome took \$205 million to \$328 million out of peoples’ pockets.

We also considered the heightened costs associated with fighting wildfires, disaster response and the clean up and rebuilding of critical infrastructure.

And we looked at impacts on vulnerable or marginalized communities, including First Nations, that were either evacuated because of fires or floods and in some cases were evacuated twice to deal with back-to-back disasters.

All told, the combined cost of 2021’s extreme weather was equivalent to roughly three to five per cent of the province’s economy (GDP), a finding that underscores the need for senior levels of government to vastly increase funding of critical infrastructure to safeguard households, businesses and communities.

In Merritt, the destruction of insufficient dikes along the Coldwater River led to extensive damage. The upper estimated cost for new dikes in Merritt is \$169 million, a cost that the city’s annual tax base of \$9 million cannot conceivably meet.

It is only a matter of when—not if—other climate catastrophes await us.

The \$17-billion question now is whether we will be prepared for it.

Marc Lee is a senior economist and Ben Parfitt is a resource policy analyst at the CCPA BC.

Worth repeating

The global financial system is broken. It favours wealthy nations & penalizes low- and middle-income countries. I urge leaders & international financial institutions to develop creative ways to ensure that developing countries can access financial help when they need it most.

—*António Guterres, secretary general, United Nations, January 15, 2023 tweet from his Twitter account*



BRUCE CAMPBELL
**HOW THE CCPA
SPARKED A
CONVERSATION ABOUT
INCOME INEQUALITY**





THE CCPA GREW OUT OF A FIGHT FOR GREATER EQUALITY AND PROTECTION OF CANADA'S DEMOCRACY.

It was established in 1980 by academics and labour activists as a progressive counterweight to the economic upheaval of the late 1970s, which gave way to a corporate-dominated neoliberal policy paradigm. The Keynesian-inspired postwar reconstruction era of full employment, rising wages, building a social safety net, and reducing inequality were supplanted by a preoccupation with inflation and deregulating the market from government interference.

The corporate sector was ramping up funding to think tanks and lobby organizations: the Business Council on National Issues, the Conference Board of Canada, the Fraser Institute, CD Howe Institute, Canada West Foundation, and more. After several near-death experiences in its first decade, the CCPA became a prominent progressive voice in public policy debates.

The CCPA's founders understood that ideas matter in shaping the direction of our country. From the beginning, CCPA research reports exposed the negative consequences of neoliberal policies of privatization, deregulation, austerity, shredding the safety net, free trade agreements that were accelerating corporate concentration and driving up unemployment, income and wealth inequality.

CCPA research reports have documented both the aerial view of spiralling income and wealth inequality, and crucially, what it has meant for peoples' lives on the ground. They have provided an authoritative portrayal of an unprecedented pyramid of privilege and wealth in Canada.

Let's take a brief survey of the current landscape: For the top 1%, average market income doubled between 1982 and 2018. For the top 0.01%, it soared by 189% during this period. And this understates the increase, given their ability to engage in tax avoidance and evasion. The average real income for those in the bottom half of the income distribution declined over four decades.

Born To Win: Wealth concentration in Canada since 1999, compares the net worth of Canada's 87 wealthiest resident families to the wealth of average families over the previous 17 years. The wealthy 87 now own 4,448 times as much wealth as the Canadian average and have as much wealth as 12 million Canadians combined.

Over half of this wealthy elite inherit their wealth—including leading corporate CEOs. During the worst six months of the Covid pandemic, while millions of Canadians lost their jobs, the country's top 20 billionaires amassed a combined total of \$33 billion due to the lack of a wealth tax.

The Monitor's commitment to closing the gap

Although the CCPA was strongly supported by unions, there were limits to their capacity to grow their funding, in part because of the havoc neoliberal policies were wreaking on their membership. We needed to expand our individual supporter base, which was less than 100 in 1994. To help accomplish this goal, we created a user-friendly magazine to reach Canadians more broadly, supplying them with information

and thought leadership that wasn't available in the mainstream media.

We were fortunate to have accomplished editor Ed Finn take charge in running what we named the *Monitor*. The front-page story on the first issue of the *Monitor* in May 1994 was "Annual Cost of Unemployment to the Economy: \$109 billion." In that first issue, there were articles comparing CEO salaries with those of workers, the exodus of jobs under free trade, and much more.

The *Monitor* has been a public square for progressive policy research and analysis for almost 30 years. Given its history, it's no accident that this issue of the *Monitor* is focused on income inequality.

The Alternative Federal Budget as an agent of change

The Alternative Federal Budget (AFB) is the CCPA's inequality solutions vehicle. It came out on the eve of the infamous 1995 Paul Martin budget. It was a joint project of the CCPA and the Winnipeg-based coalition, *Choices*—the brainchild of John Loxley—which brought together labour, environment, and social groups. Together, AFB participants crafted a counterweight to the deficit-reducing social cuts mantra of the economic establishment reflected in the 1995 budget. It provided a credible plan to get the country out of deficit, through stimulus measures and taxes on the wealthy, which would not require massive social cuts.

Paul Martin was aware that there was resistance within his own government to what was being planned. He agreed to meet with AFB representatives in advance of

his budget. He was impressed by the rigour of the AFB's fiscal framework. However, locked to the austerity priority of the policy establishment, Martin went ahead with his original budget. The consequence was devastating for inequality and poverty. However, with the AFB in the public domain, he could no longer pretend "there was no alternative."

Another critical moment in AFB history coincided with the 2008 global financial crisis and the implosion of the neoliberal paradigm. An AFB stimulus package was crafted while parliament was prorogued in the fall of 2008. It framed the debate for the media and politicians, supported by the opposition. Part of that AFB was even adopted by the Conservative Harper government—contrary to its ideology but necessary for its political survival.

The AFB continues to this day, with remedies to income and wealth inequality as its very heart and soul.

The Growing Gap Project

Beland Honderich, the former publisher of the *Toronto Star*, approached the CCPA in 2004 with the idea of a \$300,000-a-year grant to conduct research and engage with the public on issues of income inequality and poverty in Canada. The goal was to help increase Canadians' awareness of poverty and inequality, as well as to entrench their support for government policies to reduce poverty and inequality. He passed away before the project was launched, but his daughter Mary Honderich understood her father's intentions and ensured the project's success.

The *Growing Gap* team was assembled in spring of 2006, composed of director and communications guru Trish Hennessy and economists Hugh Mackenzie and Armine Yalnizyan.

The project launched in November 2006 with the release of a commissioned poll by Environics Research that found the vast majority of Canadians were concerned about the decades-long widening gap between the rich and the poor. They wanted governments to take decisive action to reduce the gap, including making postsecondary education more affordable, increasing the minimum wage, making housing and child care more affordable, increasing taxes on the wealthy and closing tax loopholes.

Collective responsibility
and mutual aid was
part of the post-war
social contract.
It unravelled after 1980.

The project framed inequality as the rich and the rest of us. Canadians envisaged a society where the majority of workers contribute to growing the economy and benefit from that growth—not just a privileged few. This Canadian value of collective responsibility and mutual aid was part of the social contract that emerged from post-World War II reconstruction, which had come undone after 1980. It was the foundational framing that would underpin the Growing Gap project.

Armine Yalnizyan's *The Rich and the Rest of Us: The Changing Face of Canada's Growing Gap*, released several months later, received saturation coverage in the mainstream media, clearly having the kind of influence on the public discourse envisaged by Beland Honderich.

Hugh Mackenzie kicked off the CEO pay project in January 2007 with a video explaining his just-released report. In it, Mackenzie is sitting with a coffee at work at 9:04 a.m., the same time that the 100 best-paid CEOs in Canada had already earned, on average, what the average worker would earn in the entire year.

Mackenzie then went outside and stood on a milk carton right under the CN Tower. His height standing on the milk carton compared to the height of the CN Tower reflected the relationship between the pay of the average worker and that of the top CEOs. It was hard to imagine a starker image of inequality and its impact on our country.

By 2011, tens of thousands of the centre's publications were being viewed every month. Its YouTube channel was the most popular of any NGO in Canada. Its individual membership had grown to 12,000; its organizational support reached 400. Inequality was proving to be a galvanizing force for the CCPA.

Mackenzie authored the CEO report until 2017, when he passed the torch to Senior Economist David Macdonald, whose latest report showed Canada's 100 highest-paid CEOs made a record 243 times more than the average worker made in 2021. Plus ça change!

Trish Hennessy compiled a monthly compilation of soundbites, *Hennessy's Index*, about Canada and its place in the world. It served as the model for the current *Index* featured in today's *Monitor*.

As part of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' *Growing Gap* project, *The Income Gap between Aboriginal Peoples and the Rest of Canada*, by Senior Economist David Macdonald and Daniel Wilson, formerly with the Assembly of First Nations, focused on groups whose earnings are so far behind that just catching up to the inequality faced by the general population would be a significant step forward for First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. This groundbreaking research was funded through a generous donation from the Norus family.

A compilation of essays, *Speaking Truth to Power: A reader on Canadian women's inequality*, edited by Trish Hennessy and Ed Finn, was published in 2010.

Following that, Senior Researcher Kate McInturff was brought on board to lead the centre's women's equality research, including her *Making Women Count* project and the game-changing report, *Best and Worst Places to be a Woman in Canada*, which broke the internet each year and went on to inspire policies in various municipalities, and even a documentary.

Upstream:

Social determinants of health

Upstream, a non-profit focused on the social determinants of health, was founded in 2013 by physician Ryan Meili, which he eloquently described in the following parable. "Imagine you're standing on the edge of a river. Suddenly a flailing, drowning child comes floating by. Without thinking, you dive in, grab the child, and swim to shore. Before you can recover another child comes floating by. You dive in and rescue her as well. Then another child drifts into sight...and another...and another. You call for help and people take turns fishing out child after child. Hopefully, before too long, some wise person will ask: Who keeps chucking these kids in the river? And they'll head upstream to find out." That project was initially an independent organization under CCPA sponsorship but became a project of the CCPA in 2020 under the leadership of Trish Hennessy.

Inequality and democracy

In 2008, the CCPA published a series of essays in *Why Inequality Matters in 1000 Words or Less*, with a variety of contributors. Former University of Toronto professor and CCPA research associate John Myles wrote about the threat that growing inequality can have on democracy itself: "If I were observing trends in Inequality Land, I would suspect I was observing a failed democracy. And I place a high value on democratic political institutions." [Markets] "need democracy to make market economies viable for people. Quite reasonably, more economic

growth isn't of much interest to the bottom half of the electorate if all the gains are going to the top half."

Former University of Toronto professor Frank Cunningham's essay explored a myriad of ways in which inequality can undermine democracy and public spirit, including: "The creation of two publics, one mainly concerned with making ends meet, the other with keeping and enhancing its wealth. Inequalities foster elitism and resentment."

Their commentaries anticipated Frank Graves and Michael Valpy's analysis of the forces behind the 2021 "Freedom Convoy," which identified a growing concentration of wealth that has triggered anxiety amongst a large segment of the population—disproportionately among youth in those who identify as working class—about their ability to earn a living and their resentment of government policy. Unprecedented inequality undermines democracy, breeding anger and resentment against corporate and government elites. It also breeds openness to authoritarian solutions.

Climate and inequality

Canada is the worst historic contributor to carbon emissions on a per capita basis. According to the World Inequality Report 2022, the national annual per capita average of emissions was 19.4 tonnes. The top 10% of Canadians emitted 60.3 tonnes of CO2 per capita per year; the top 1% emitted 190 tonnes per capita. The poorest 50% of Canadians emitted an average of 10 tonnes per capita annually.

Canada provides more public finance to the fossil fuel sector, per capita, than any other G20 country. Canadian financial institutions continue to lend massive amounts of money to the fossil fuel sector.

According to a 2019 Abacus Data survey, commissioned by former CCPA BC Director Seth Klein for his book *A Good War*, when ambitious climate action is linked to tackling inequality, support dramatically goes up.

CCPA has been a pioneer in its work on inequality and climate change. In 2002, Dale Marshall, then with CCPA BC, produced a landmark report on a just transition strategy that would meet Canada's Kyoto protocol commitments and provide fair, equitable and revenue neutral transition support for any energy workers.

More recently, Senior Researcher Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood and co-author Zae Desphande authored *Who is included in a Just Transition? Considering social equity in Canada's shift to a zero-carbon economy*. The report is a critique of existing federal and provincial policies. It calls for just transition policies to be expanded so they apply to all workers in affected communities (rather than just to industry-specific workers) and for more direct funding to programs and institutions that recruit and train women, Indigenous and racialized individuals, as well as immigrants in the skilled trades.

Inequality is the river that runs through it

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has documented four decades of rising income and wealth inequality, its consequences for our society, and how to fix it. An unprecedented pyramid of profit, power, and wealth now threatens our existence as a stable and healthy democracy. Our corporate and political elites, bound by a status quo mindset, are largely inured to the danger.

The CCPA's pessimistic analysis of the present is interlaced with its positive role as a standard bearer of transformative change informed by values of economic, social, and environmental justice.

Leonard Cohen wrote, "There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in." The CCPA lets in the light of hope for a better future. **M**

Bruce Campbell is the former executive director of the CCPA.

NATALIE COPPS AND ANDRÉE FOREST

Indigenous Peoples continue to face deep structural inequality in Canada

INEQUALITY IS MEASURED at many angles: income, opportunity, life expectancy, ability to access one's own history or traditional territory. Inequality is built into the very foundation of Canada.

For Indigenous Peoples, this plays out over centuries, at various scales and with cumulative consequences. Decrees forbidding free trade of hides. Cutting off access to ways of life via reserves and residential schools. The swindle of Métis scrip. Barring First Nations people from hiring lawyers.

There is no shortage of examples of structural inequality created at the hands of the powerful on these lands.

Treaties, negotiated between European nations and First Nations, were intended to outline the rights, responsibilities, and relationships necessary to share the land peacefully. The text of treaties omitted notions central to Indigenous Peoples and quickly led to paternalistic laws and policies that created a separation and a sequestration of First Nations people onto reserves.

These concerted efforts led to land theft while systematically cutting off Indigenous Peoples from the lands they depended on for survival—physically, culturally and spiritually.

Indigenous Peoples have an inherent right to land that is based on foundational concepts of relationship, responsibility, and reciprocity.

The mass displacement of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, in

different and painful ways, was a foundational blow to the equality promised in treaty making. Indigenous Peoples have lived on, and in relation to, land on Turtle Island since time immemorial, managing territories, water and resources in accordance with their own laws and governance systems.

Dispossession from our land and related law-making left us subject to colonial laws that perpetuate and promote inequality, historically and at present.

From 1927 to 1951, the *Indian Act* made it illegal for status Indians to hire lawyers or seek legal advice, fundraise for land claims, or meet in groups. If a First Nation person wanted to become a lawyer, they were forced to renounce their status.

Until 2008, section 67 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* prevented anyone from filing a complaint

about anything related to the *Indian Act*. Since the *Indian Act* was not subject to the oversight by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, First Nations people were banned from challenging discriminatory provisions, policies, practices or procedures that governed their everyday lives.

Inequality is embedded in the law and is often the result of avoidance, ignorance or jurisdictional buck-passing.

Until 2016, provincial and federal governments played hot potato with Métis and non-status Indians. For over a century, the federal government refused to recognize that section 91(24) of *The Constitution Act, 1867* included Métis and non-status Indians.

Effectively, Canada's refusal to recognize its constitutional obligations to Métis and non-status Indians meant these Indigenous communities were stuck "in a jurisdictional wasteland with significant and obvious disadvantageous consequences," according to the Supreme Court of Canada's judgment in the Daniels case. This ruling confirmed that Métis and non-status peoples are considered Indians under section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, meaning the federal government, rather than provincial governments, bears responsibility. The result of this jurisdictional hole was decades of lost funding, support, and government partnerships.

Another galling example of legal neglect of Indigenous Peoples involves the care for First Nations

Inequality is embedded in the law and is often the result of avoidance, ignorance or jurisdictional buck-passing.

children with disabilities. Because of overlapping jurisdictions for health care services on reserve, federal and provincial governments would refuse to provide services to children with disabilities until ‘appropriate’ funding was determined. This meant First Nations children missed out on life saving care, facing lifelong disabilities for lack of early intervention.

Landmark human rights cases led by Cindy Blackstock and the Child and Family Caring Society resulted in major changes to how governments approach funding and support for Indigenous children with disabilities. Now, Jordan’s Principle requires governments to provide services before worrying about funding. However, this principle does not apply to Indigenous Peoples with disabilities over the age of 18; they are left to fight for services in that jurisdictional wasteland.

Finally, even when jurisdiction is not an issue and Indigenous Peoples are represented by counsel, seeing success in courts is never guaranteed. While there continues to be big legal wins for Indigenous Peoples in Canadian courts, major legal hurdles still exist. They are perpetuated by unequal application of the law.

One particularly striking example involves the Canadian courts’ application of injunctions. A study from the Yellowhead Institute in 2019 revealed that only 18.5% of injunctions brought by First Nations people to protect their constitutional rights succeeded.

The institute determined that not only do courts heavily favour protecting private, business interests above constitutionally protected Indigenous rights, this extremely low success rate “calls into question fairness and equity in the use of this remedy within the Canadian legal system.”

For courts and other legal institutions to continue to function with integrity, the public must see that justice is being dispensed fairly and in the public interest. The court’s tools must be reconsidered when they infringe on the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Colonial law was never designed to protect us, our lands, or our ways of being. It remains a sharp axe to hack away at our inherent rights, while favouring private development over the constitutionally protected right to our lands.

Colonial law is also used as a shield to avoid scrutiny, accountability and constitutional obligations, often leaving Indigenous Peoples without the same supports and access to health, education, clean water as well as livelihoods that other Canadians take for granted.

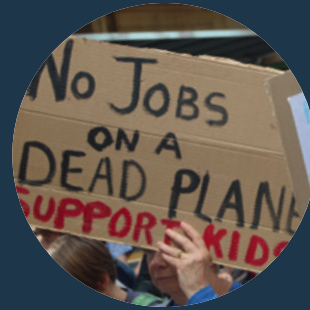
This is in addition to reclaiming and relearning the spiritual and cultural elements that were forbidden under the *Indian Act* in a world that is still racist and oppressive today.

Governments can, and should, address these entrenched forms of inequality. Instead, they often try to shield themselves under the guise of jurisdiction, eschewing responsibility for righting basic wrongs.

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What is a just transition, and why does it matter?

By Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood

By relying on jurisdiction, governments try their best to avoid their constitutional and treaty obligations to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Indigenous Peoples are forced to take their cases to human rights tribunals or courts simply to have their basic needs met.

The cumulative impact of these structural inequalities reach every sphere and the very basis of a good life: access to land, housing, education, culture, health care and a fair justice system.

It should be a communal project to address the ways in which our institutions and landscapes are made unequal, especially for those who’ve stewarded this land for time immemorial.

Indigenous ways of being are balanced by design and the reclamation and resurgence of Indigenous Peoples will push society in that direction. It’s time for governments and institutions to meaningfully remove barriers and address inequalities to ease the way.

This work isn’t metaphorical, it’s structural. **M**

Natalie Copps is a Métis lawyer who specializes in public interest advocacy and systemic law reform. She is the co-chair and founder of LEAF Winnipeg, and a proud member of Red River Echoes. Outside of work, you can find her beading, baking, boxing and being on the pottery wheel. Andrée Forest (elle/she/her) is francophone Métis from Red River and is engaging in her history through beading, writing, hide work and building community. She is the former project coordinator for the Manitoba Research Alliance at CCPA MB.

KATHERINE SCOTT

Closing the electoral gap

Canada's glacial march towards gender equality

AT THE END of November, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern hosted Prime Minister Sanna Marin and a trade delegation from Finland, the first-ever visit from a Finnish prime minister. At their news conference, Prime Minister Ardern wasn't asked about her deft handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, the trade relationship between the two countries, or the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Finland's bid to join NATO.

No. Right off the top a reporter asked whether the leaders were meeting “just because you're similar in age and, you know, got a lot of common stuff? Or can Kiwis actually expect to see more deals down the line between the two countries?”

Ardern, looking incredulous, batted off the question: “We of course have a higher proportion of men in politics, it's reality. Because two women meet, it's not simply because of their gender.”

This is par for the course for female leaders. It's a pretty rare sight—just 28 countries of 193 are represented by elected female leaders, according to UN Women figures. And only 32 countries have 40 per cent or more of women in parliament in single or lower houses.

Both Ardern and Marin deal constantly with questions about their gender and their age, their competency to serve as leaders, their roles as mothers, and their private lives. The challenges facing female leaders and politicians in Canada are no different.

Women are stepping forward to put their name on the ballot at all levels of government. In 2021, 762 women ran for office federally, enough to fill the House

of Commons twice over. But our system throws up lots of barriers—not just gender stereotypes about women's capabilities and proper roles but other structural factors, such as party gatekeeping, our “first past the post” electoral system, and lack of access to the resources necessary to support a successful bid.

The increase and intensity of online hate and harassment targeting women, 2SLGBTQ+ people, as well as Indigenous, Black and other racialized candidates is yet another obstacle to women's political equality—one that's gotten appreciably worse in the last two years. It's not surprising that the march toward gender parity has been so achingly slow.

Canada's record

Gender parity took centre stage back in 2015 when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced Canada's first-ever gender-equal federal cabinet, a move that pushed up Canada's ranking on the Global Gender Gap Index from 35th to 16th place in 2017. Since that time, our

ranking has fallen to 25th place in 2022 as other countries stepped up.

Only 30.5% of the seats in the federal parliament are occupied by women—placing Canada 60th in the international rankings, down from 27th at the turn of the century. Female representation in provincial and territorial legislatures is slightly higher, on average—at 35.8% in 2022—but it ranges considerably, from a high of 52.6% in Northwest Territories (2019) to a low of 22.5% in Newfoundland and Labrador (2021). Heather Stefanson (Manitoba), Caroline Cochrane (NWT) and Danielle Smith (Alberta) are the only female premiers in office.

Political participation is the one area in which rapid change is possible (all it takes is an election). Yet there is a considerable distance to go to close this gap.

Between the 2019 and 2021 elections, the number of women serving in the House of Commons increased by three, while eight more women joined the ranks of those serving in provincial and territorial legislatures up to, and including, the recent Quebec election. At this rate, we'll be lucky to reach parity by mid century.

Municipal rankings

The argument goes that it is easier for women to succeed at the local level. As Erin Tolley and Mireille Paquet note in their study of Valérie Plante's mayoralty win in Montreal, “municipal politics is often viewed as more compatible with women's interests, less competitive, less expensive, and more part-time.” But the reality is that only about 20% of Canada's mayors and about 33% of all municipal councillors are women.



Women's political representation does tend to be higher, however, in larger communities. Our own review of recent elections in 26 large urban regions found women, on average, represented 43% of the councillors in large cities. Indeed, there was an increase in women's representation between 2019 and 2022. But again, there was huge variation between top-ranking Waterloo and Sherbrooke, with representation over 70% and bottom-ranking Windsor and Oshawa, both at 9%.

After municipal elections in 2022, just five out of 30 cities had achieved gender parity or more. In particular, there were notable increases in female representation in Edmonton, Halifax and Sherbrooke. Edmonton and Halifax both rocketed from the bottom of the 2019 league table (at 28th and 29th) to the top in 2022, reaching 3rd and 6th place, respectively, with both cities electing eight female councillors in their most recent elections.

Sherbrooke increased its complement of female councillors by five, achieving gender parity and electing its first female mayor.

At the same time, Vancouver and Victoria fell out of the top five this past fall. Women's representation fell below 50% in Vancouver and below 40% in Victoria.

Other cities with the lowest levels of representation in 2019, such as Mission, Kingston and Windsor, made no headway in their recent elections. Windsor was ranked 30th in 2019 and 30th in 2022. Kelowna, Winnipeg and Oshawa all had levels of women's representation below the benchmark for core cities in 2019 and fell further down the ranks in 2022.

As noted, political participation is the one area in which rapid change is possible. Achieving lasting change, though, is a challenge of a different magnitude.

Gender parity on the agenda

Countries such as Mexico, Argentina, France, Spain and Belgium are showing the world how it's done,

Gender in government in Canada

Female share of provincial, territorial, and municipal elected bodies in most recent election, ranked from larger to smaller share of women.

• Orange dot represents a female premier or mayor. ■ Shaded jurisdictions have a share over 50%.

Provinces and territories are in **bold**.

	Female share	Change last 2 elections
1. • Waterloo, ON (2022)	75.0%	0%
2. • Sherbrooke, QC (2021)	70.6%	+29.4%
3. Edmonton, AB (2021)	61.5%	+46.2%
4. • Montréal, QC (2021)	60.2%	+8.7%
5. • Northwest Territories (2019)	52.6%	
6. Québec, QC (2021)	52.4%	+4.8%
7. Halifax, NS (2020)	47.1%	+35.3%
8. Quebec (2022)	46.4%	
9. St. John's, NL (2021)	45.5%	0%
10. Saskatoon, SK (2020)	45.5%	-9.1%
11. Vancouver, BC (2022)	45.5%	-27.3%
12. • Gatineau, QC (2021)	45.0%	+2.9%
13. • Cambridge, ON (2022)	44.4%	+11.1%
14. • Hamilton, ON (2022)	43.8%	0%
15. British Columbia (2022)	42.5%	
16. Yukon (2021)	42.1%	
17. Niagara Falls, ON (2022)	41.7%	+16.7%
18. London, ON (2022)	40.0%	+13.3%
19. Ontario (2022)	38.7%	
20. Ottawa, ON (2022)	37.5%	+8.3%
21. Kitchener, ON (2022)	36.4%	-9.1%
22. Regina, SK (2020)	36.4%	+9.1%
23. Nova Scotia (2021)	36.4%	
24. Toronto, ON (2022)	34.6%	+3.8%
25. Calgary, AB (2021)	33.3%	+13.3%
26. Abbotsford, BC (2022)	33.3%	-11.1%
27. • Victoria, BC (2022)	33.3%	-22.2%
28. St. Catharines, ON (2022)	31.6%	+5.3%
29. Greater Sudbury, ON (2022)	30.8%	+7.7%
30. • Alberta (2019)	29.9%	
31. Saskatchewan (2020)	29.5%	
32. Mission, BC (2022)	28.6%	0%
33. New Brunswick (2020)	28.6%	
34. Barrie, ON (2022)	27.3%	+9.1%
35. Nunavut (2021)	27.3%	
36. • Manitoba (2019)	26.3%	
37. Prince Edward Island (2019)	25.9%	
38. Winnipeg, MB (2022)	25.0%	-6.3%
39. Kingston, ON (2022)	23.1%	0%
40. Newfoundland and Labrador (2021)	22.5%	
41. Kelowna, BC (2022)	22.2%	-11.1%
42. Oshawa, ON (2022)	9.1%	-9.1%
43. Windsor, ON (2022)	9.1%	0%

leading the way towards greater gender parity through changes to the laws governing candidate selection and elections.

More than 80 countries now have statutory gender quotas setting a minimum quota for women candidates; 18 in Europe and the Americas have set a 50% benchmark, four of which have enshrined gender parity in their constitutions.

By contrast, political parties in Canada have actively resisted even voluntary quotas for the percentage of female candidates they field in elections and have been reluctant to publicly report on their nomination and recruitment efforts.

Parties talk a good game, but electoral studies reveal, time and again, that women and candidates from other marginalized groups end up being nominated in ridings where the odds of success are slim. For every 100 women who ran in the 2019 federal election, only 16 won a seat in the House of Commons. For every 100 men running, 29 took the prize.

Not surprisingly, “hard” rules, such as statutory quotas and greater transparency, and accountability on the part of political parties are much better strategies for overcoming systemic barriers to political participation—compared to voluntary or “soft” measures, such as campaign boot camps and networking events.

In Mexico, for example, the 300 federal single-member districts of the Chamber of Deputies are divided for each party into three groups: winning, competitive and losing. The party must achieve gender balance within each grouping—ensuring broad representation of candidates across all districts. This approach has been remarkably successful in advancing gender parity.

Time for Canada to step up

Last year, as Canada’s federal parties were hosting nomination meetings in advance of the 2021 election, Senator Donna Dasko proposed that parties be required to disclose the sex/gender of proposed

candidates on their nomination papers and to report on electoral results by sex/gender in stronghold ridings, as Mexico does. She also suggested that we change our political financing rules “to incentivize or sanction the parties to achieve gender equity.”

There is certainly no shortage of ideas and strategies for overcoming the obstacles preventing women and other under-represented groups from fully participating in Canadian politics, from individual level interventions (e.g., encouraging mentorship, creating pipelines of candidates and leaders and improving access to knowledge and resources) to structural reforms and accountability measures of the type Senator Dasko is calling for.

Advocacy groups have taken up this cause. Vancouver-based Women Transforming Cities and ParityYEG (in Edmonton) are just two of the local groups identifying and mentoring potential candidates. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has created a Toward Parity Framework and provided project funding to local groups to help women run for office—with a particular focus on Indigenous, Black, racialized, youth and 2SLGBTQ+ community members. Groupe Femmes, Politique et Démocratie, works in Quebec to advance the greater participation of women in political life. Equal Voice pursues similar work at the national level, hosting campaign schools, tracking election results, and engaging young women through events like Daughters of the Vote.

The research suggests that all of this work is necessary to break down structural and attitudinal barriers. Erin Tolley and Mireille Paquet, for example, in their analysis of Valérie Plante’s win, note that the Projet Montréal’s institutional commitment to developing women leaders from the ground up played a key role in facilitating Plante’s success.

Yet, they conclude, it was the party’s decentralized leadership

model, strong grassroots engagement and clear policy platform that gave Plante the edge over the leader-centric campaign of Denis Coderre, as it helped to dampen the effects of stereotypes about women leaders. Indeed, Projet Montréal worked successfully to depersonalize Plante’s candidacy—to de-emphasize her gender—and sustain the focus on the party and the issues.

All of which to say, it was a particular confluence of factors that helped Valérie Plante surmount the considerable gendered obstacles in her path.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern’s surprise resignation on January 19th is a stark reminder, if needed, of the scale of the challenge. Recognized globally for her exemplary leadership, subject to rising levels of hatred and vitriol, Ardern said at her news conference that she had nothing left “in the tank” to give to the job. “Politicians are human... We give all that we can, for as long as we can, and then it’s time. And for me, it’s time.”

Ardern’s extraordinary accomplishments only heighten our collective sense of loss as she takes her future into her own hands.

Anti-feminist sentiment remains a powerful force in politics. Successful women leaders represent a potent threat to established male elites. The electoral losses in Vancouver and Victoria in October 2022 highlight how fleeting women’s political gains can be. Ardern’s decision confirms, again, how significant the personal toll is—even for those who have attained the highest offices.

Canada has a playbook for improving the diversity and inclusion of our political institutions and advancing the political rights of the most marginalized. Given the polarizing character of modern-day politics and the spectre of authoritarianism in many countries across the globe, it’s crucial that Canadians get democracy right. **M**

Katherine Scott is a senior researcher with the CCPA National Office.

TRISH HENNESSY

What will it take to tackle income inequality?

IT WAS THE LATE 1990S. Neoliberal policies were taking firm root in Canada, especially in then-Premier Ralph Klein's Alberta. It was heresy to think about going to that province's capital, Edmonton, walking into a meeting of the Rotary Club, and telling the story of how worsening income inequality was bad for business.

That is the kind of moxy that former CCPA Senior Economist and now Atkinson Fellow on the Future of Workers Armine Yalnizyan possesses.

The audience was receptive. Yalnizyan was telling them facts and figures that they instinctively understood. They knew the deal.

The next day's Edmonton Journal reported on Yalnizyan's talk, featuring new data on rising income inequality in Alberta.

She'd done so in provinces across the country that year, breaking new ground on a conversation that Canadians really weren't having: the gap between the rich and poor was reversing the "social bargain" that previous generations had built to reduce poverty and grow the middle class.

Premier Klein was not amused. He called on Yalnizyan to get out of Alberta and go back to Toronto. He also tried to get the organization that hosted Yalnizyan kicked out of the University of Alberta, creating a media frenzy that resulted in the unintended consequence of shining an even brighter light on income inequality in that province. Premier Klein had turned a one-day story into a multi-day story. Yalnizyan couldn't have paid for such publicity. And, thankfully, the Parkland Institute remains

ensconced in the University of Alberta to this day.

It's never easy speaking truth to power, but Yalnizyan can be fully credited with sparking that hard conversation in Canada. The CCPA carries on the tradition, including Senior Economist David Macdonald's latest CEO pay report that shows Canada's highest-paid 100 CEOs have broken new pay records (see his article, "CEO pay is out of control in Canada").

The gap between the rich and the rest of us won't just magically disappear. The system is hardwired to reward those at the top of the income spectrum.

Since this is a systemic problem, rampant income inequality reinforces other systemic problems, such as racism, sexism, xenophobia, and colonialism.

The CCPA's Katherine Scott (see Katherine's article "Closing the electoral gap") and Sheila Block, along with her long-time co-author Grace-Edward Galabuzi and others, have furthered this hard conversation by shining a light on the intersectional nature of income inequality.

For instance, at all times during the pandemic, a larger share of Indigenous and racialized households have faced economic hardship compared to white households. On average, between July 2020 to June 2021, 28% of Indigenous Peoples and 31% of racialized households lived with economic insecurity compared to 16% of white households.

The impact of poverty shadows people throughout their lives—even in old age.

Block's research finds that senior white Canadians enjoy the greatest

income security and they also have the most diverse sources of income. Their average income is \$42,800—25% higher than Indigenous seniors' average income and 32% higher than racialized Canadian seniors' average income.

Racialized seniors have a poverty rate of 19.8%, which is slightly lower than Indigenous seniors' poverty rate of 21.5% and much higher than white seniors' 13.7% poverty rate.

This is but a snapshot of the inequities that arise out of sexism, racism and colonialism in Canada, which harms Indigenous Peoples, racialized Canadians, immigrants, and women. Persistent inequality punishes people for generations.

There are solutions. Block and Galabuzi's research showed that increasing the minimum wage in Ontario reduced the wage gap between racialized and non-racialized workers—in particular, Black women. Governments need to take action to implement such solutions.

Of course, there are even more alternatives to the status quo. Canada was never an equal society, but our tolerance of income inequality today is, to say the least, unbecoming of a wealthy country such as ours.

When will we have reached our limits of tolerating income inequality in Canada? And who do we have to incense to gain more traction in 2023? **M**

Trish Hennessy is a senior strategist with the CCPA National Office. She was the communications coordinator for Yalnizyan's late 1990s tour.

TALES OF THE RICH AND THE REST OF US

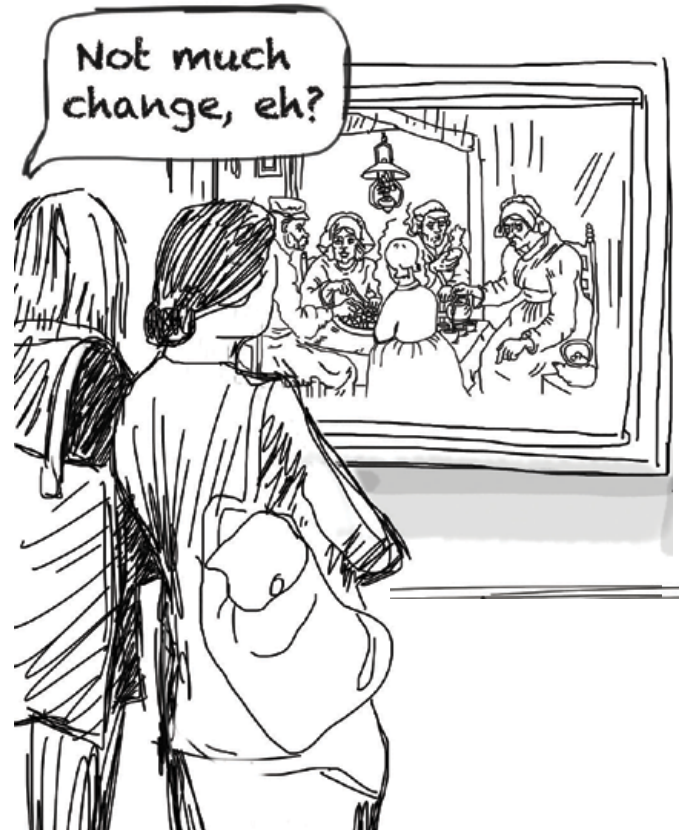
Income inequality in Canada



ANOTHER REASON TO HATE THE 1980S

Between 1982 and 2018, the average income of the richest 1% of Canadian tax filers doubled.

And we thought big hair was the problem in the 80s.



THIS ISN'T THE 1950S -- IT'S WORSE

The poorest 20% in Canada had 4.4% of the total income pie in 1951.



By 2018, it fell to 3.9%

The richest 20% took a far bigger share of the income pie in 1951: 42.8%.



2018

But by 2018, their share had grown to 47.1%.

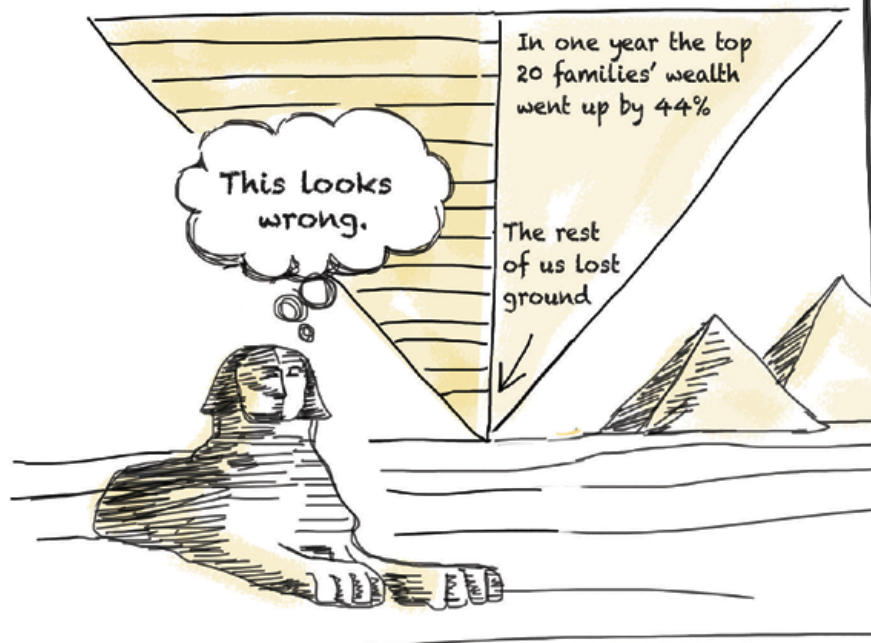
WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF US?

The bottom half of Canadian tax filers lost 14% of average total income between 2019 and 2020.



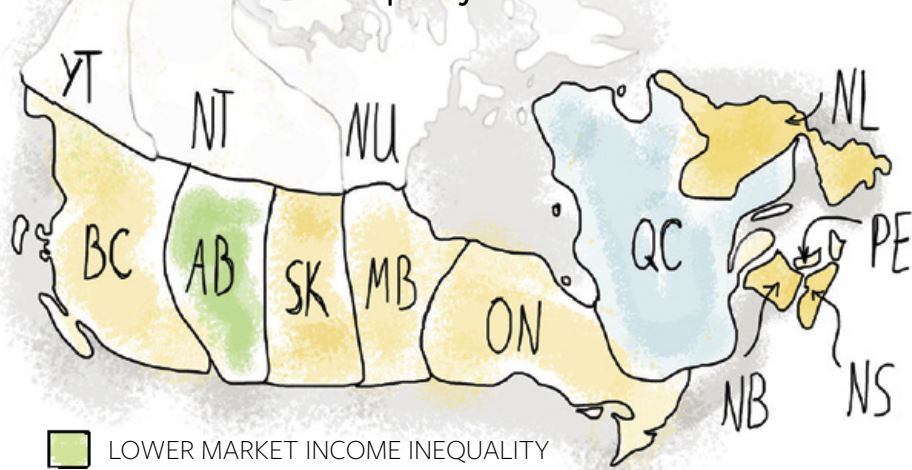
LOOK UP—WAY UP

Between 2020 and 2021, Canada's top 20 billionaire families saw their wealth increase by 44%, increasing to \$181.7 billion.



THE LABOUR MARKET IS PART OF THE PROBLEM

Canada's labour market keeps reproducing income inequality, even now. Between 2015 and 2020, only one province had lower market income inequality: Alberta. Quebec stayed the same. Every other province saw a rise in market income inequality.



- LOWER MARKET INCOME INEQUALITY
- NO CHANGE
- HIGHER MARKET INCOME INEQUALITY



LARS OSBERG

75 years of income inequality in Canada... and then COVID-19 happened

THE STORY ABOUT income inequality in Canada before COVID-19 can really be divided in two eras.

The post-World-War-II Keynesian consensus saw full employment as a macro-economic priority—from 1952 to 1972, the national unemployment rate averaged 5%.

Poverty among the elderly fell dramatically with the introduction of the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement system for seniors.

Unemployment benefits and social assistance programs built a social safety net for working families.

Minimum wages and other government interventions in the labour market helped to maintain the quantity and quality of jobs.

After-tax income inequality was not eliminated but it did decline slightly as incomes grew at roughly the same rate for rich and poor alike.

However, in the Neoliberal era after 1980, full employment was discarded as an objective of macro-economic policy—the national unemployment rate averaged 9.5% between 1980 and 2000.

Inflation control, privatization, deregulation, lower taxes and eliminating public sector deficits became the priorities and Canada's social safety net was shredded.

Unbalanced growth became the norm as middle-class incomes stagnated and top-end income growth accelerated.

The result? A rise in market income inequality with fewer government efforts to redistribute income and lower inequality.

Canada's story became one of the rich and the rest of us.

Between 1951 and 1981, the income share of the bottom 20% rose by 1.2 percentage points and the share of the top 20% fell by a similar amount. However, between 1981 and 2018, the income share of the top 20% rose by 5.5 percentage points, at the expense of everyone else.

Market income inequality soared between 1981 and the late 1990s. Although the Gini index of inequality has decreased a bit since 1998, that index does not pick up continuing increases in the income share of the top 1% and top 0.1%. Changes in inequality before 1981 were small compared to what's happened

since, and most of that change has happened at the very top.

Between 1982 and 2018, the average income of the richest 1% of Canadian tax filers doubled—but the higher the income within the top 1%, the bigger the increase.

Average income for the richest 1% rose from \$308,911 to \$615,670 between 1982 and 2018—a gain of \$306,759—but the average income gains of the richest 0.01% made that increase look puny. Their incomes went up by \$5,187,956—a 189% increase. Other Canadians were not so lucky.

Keynesianism vs. Neoliberalism

In the Keynesian consensus era, policy-makers saw it as the responsibility of governments to offset recessions and reduce market income inequality by taxes and transfers and the maintenance of low unemployment. They were skeptical that unregulated markets could produce a fair distribution of income or a socially acceptable level of unemployment.

Underlying that perspective was their experience of the political instability and growth of fascism and Nazism, which the mass unemployment of the Great Depression had produced, and their revulsion at the totalitarian loss of freedoms and the wars which ensued.

Neoliberal policy-makers put their faith in markets. Social stability and balanced growth were, for them, something that could be taken for granted—assumptions, not objectives.

Neoliberalism redefined the policy agenda of Canadian governments after the early 1980s and

The neoliberal era should probably be divided into its Triumphalist (1981–2008) and Zombie phases since the Financial Crisis and ensuing Great Recession of 2009–10 shattered faith in unregulated markets and the virtues of fiscal austerity.

produced low and stable inflation, as well as rapidly rising incomes for the economic elite, income stagnation for the middle class and deeper deprivation for the poor.

Neoliberal structural reforms—such as deregulating markets, privatizing Crown corporations and signing trade agreements that prioritized business interests—and cuts to public spending and taxes—have since dominated policy decisions.

Canada's GDP has continued to grow (albeit more slowly than before 1980) but most Canadians did not share much in the gains from that growth and Canada's social safety net atrophied.

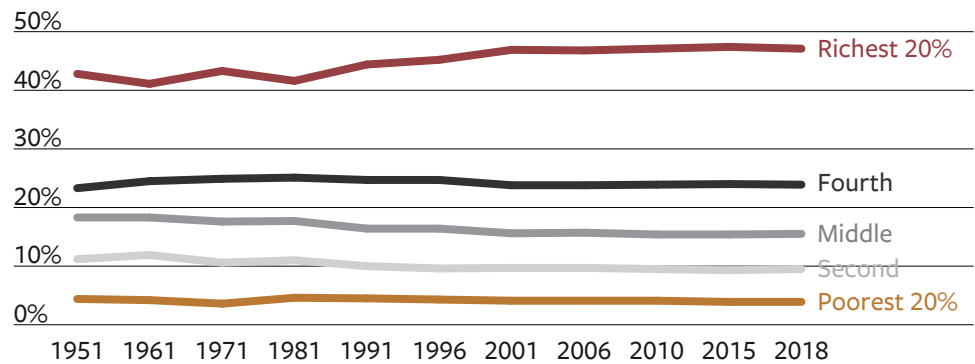
The neoliberal era should probably be divided into its Triumphalist (1981–2008) and Zombie phases since the Financial Crisis and ensuing Great Recession of 2009–2010 shattered faith in unregulated markets and the virtues of fiscal austerity. Nonetheless, Zombie neoliberalism staggered on from 2009 to 2019.

Then, in early 2020, COVID-19 crashed the world economy. Low-wage jobs took the biggest hit but the rapid introduction of CERB and other transfer programs demonstrated the potential power of governments to prevent recessions and to make major social changes quickly. Poverty and inequality actually fell in 2020 and 2021 and employment bounced back—Build Back Better was the motto.

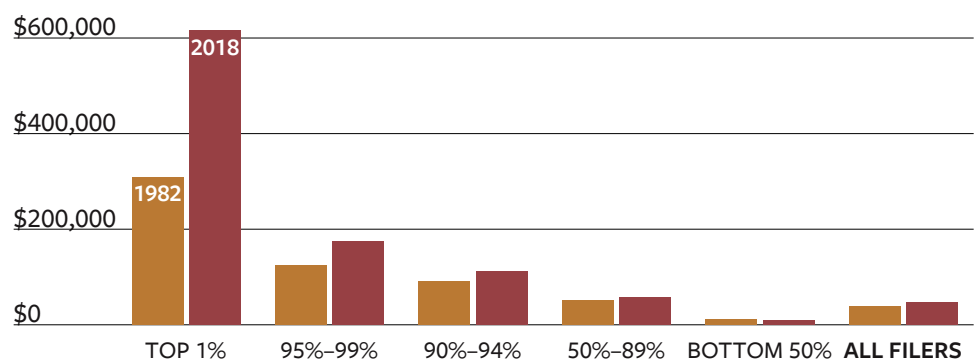
In 2022, however, COVID transfers disappeared and recession loomed as rapidly rising interest rates slowed economic growth. The question for 2023 therefore is: what sort of post-COVID Canada do we want—Zombie Liberalism or a Green New Deal? **M**

Lars Osberg is a professor at the Department of Economics at Dalhousie University and author of *75 Years of Income Inequality in Canada*, published by the CCPA in March 2021.

Families and unattached individuals, income shares from 1951–2018

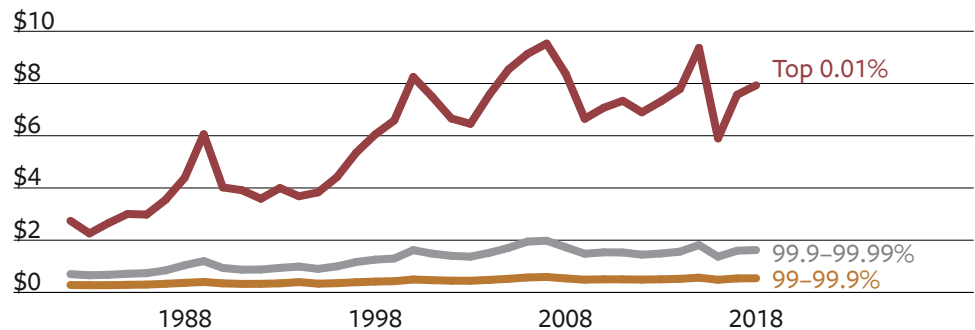


Market income and capital gains, Canadian tax filers, 1982 and 2018



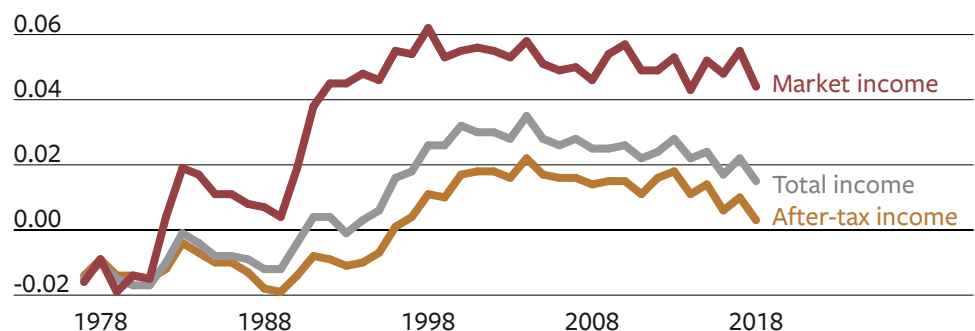
Average incomes within the top 1%

1982–2018, market income and capital gains, millions of 2019 dollars



Gini index of equivalent income inequality

Canada, 1976–2018, current year change since 1976



GUILLAUME TREMBLAY-BOILY

Is Quebec a distinct society when it comes to inequality?

Affordable child care and higher unionization rates make a difference

QUEBEC HAS LONG been perceived as a progressive province, but is that reputation deserved? The province does have a number of generous social programs, the fruit of historically strong social movements. However, like the rest of Canada, Quebec remains a profoundly unequal society.

To measure income gaps, IRIS developed the Basket Index, which is the number of baskets, as per the Market Basket Measure (MBM), that households can afford with their income. By calculating the Basket Index for households in Quebec and the rest of Canada based on their after-tax income decile, we find that Quebec is more egalitarian than the rest of Canada in that respect. On average, those in the richest decile in Quebec make 8.7 times more than they need to cover their basic needs, whereas that ratio is at 11.3 for the rest of Canada. In addition, the two poorest deciles in Quebec have access to some additional resources compared to their counterparts elsewhere in Canada. The share of the population that doesn't manage to cover their basic needs is also smaller in Quebec.

Other indicators suggest that wealth inequality has been less pronounced in Quebec than in the rest of Canada for the past several decades. Take, for example, the Gini coefficient, another measure of inequality. A 2010 study published jointly by IRIS and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) established that between 1988 and 2006 the Gini coefficient

was systematically lower (meaning less inequality) for families of two or more people in Quebec versus the rest of Canada. This is also true for the period between 1977 and 2006, when you use after-tax income to calculate the Gini coefficient.

This shows that since the late 1970s, tax measures taken by the Quebec government seem to be more effective in reducing income inequality than those taken by other provincial governments. However, that impact could be even more pronounced if Quebec had not followed

the trend of industrialized countries in reducing income tax, which is one of the best tools at governments' disposal to ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth.

Unionization is another factor that explains, at least in part, the lower inequality in Quebec than in the rest of Canada. Unionization not only helps unionized workers increase their salaries, it also drives salaries up for non-unionized workers. In Quebec, the unionization rate is considerably higher than in the rest of Canada (39.9% versus 28.7% in 2020). It is lower than in 1997, when it sat at 41.4%, but the decrease was less significant than in the rest of Canada, where it was 31.4% in 1997.

Unionization also has a positive effect on gender inequality. In 2020, women in Quebec earned 91.9% as much per week as men. This gap is found systematically even when you control for variables, such as age range, level of education, length of employment, industry, etc. One of the only variables that has a considerable impact is the unionization rate: for unionized workers, the salary gap between men and women was almost non-existent. Quebec's high unionization rate probably helps explain why the gender income gap is smaller in Quebec than elsewhere in Canada (8.11% in Quebec and 11.27% for Canada as a whole). Other factors that have improved the situation of women in Quebec include the *Pay Equity Act*, which has been in force in Quebec since 1996 but was only enacted in 2018 in the rest of Canada, and the 2006 introduction of the Québec

Quebec's high unionization rate probably helps explain why the gender income gap is smaller in Quebec than elsewhere in Canada (8.11% in Quebec and 11.27% for Canada as a whole).

Parental Insurance Plan, the most generous of its kind in North America.

Child care centres are a system of public daycares introduced in Quebec in 1997, and they also play a role in reducing inequality. They help ease domestic duties, make it possible for women to access the labour market, and reduce the cost of living for disadvantaged households. For instance, in 2015, the hourly living wage in Toronto was \$18.52, while in Montréal it was \$14.25, a difference that is largely attributable to the availability and affordability of public child care centres in Quebec.

We should not let these findings about wealth and gender inequality distract us from the much less enviable situation in Quebec when it comes to other matters, such as income inequality for immigrants. In 2014, a study by the Institut de la statistique du Québec (ISQ) concluded that Quebec had the highest rate of low-income workers among immigrants (11%, compared to 9% in British Columbia and 8% in Ontario). The author of the ISQ study added in an interview that there was nothing surprising about these results, considering that other indicators (unemployment rate, employment rate, job quality and compensation) were generally less favourable for immigrants in Quebec than elsewhere in the country.

Although wealth inequality is less pronounced in Quebec than in the rest of Canada, it remains significant. The poorest decile only has half of what they need to cover their basic needs, whereas the second poorest decile has only just the bare minimum. At the other end of the income scale, Quebec is in line with the rest of Canada and the rest of the world, in that the super rich are sitting on a colossal portion of our collective wealth.

From 1982 to 2017 in Quebec, the income of the richest 1% has grown by 116%, whereas the income of

The poorest decile only has half of what they need to cover basic needs

the remaining 99% has gone up by a meager 29%. The skyrocketing income of the 1% is largely due to the outsized growth of salaries and bonuses for directors of companies and public institutions. The practice of recruiting potential directors by offering them compensation above the average of comparable positions has led to a constant increase in salaries. Originating in the private sector, this practice has gradually expanded to Crown corporations, universities and the senior public service. Growth in income for the 1% is also explained by the excessive growth in compensation for doctors. Between 2007 and 2016, Quebec doctors got a 63% increase, compared to a 27% increase in average salaries.

To some degree, Quebec is distinct from the rest of Canada when it comes to inequality. It does a little better in terms of gender inequality and wealth inequality when considering the population as a whole, but it's a little worse on inequality between immigrants and people born in Canada. In the areas where it does perform better, Quebec has shown that transformative measures really can be impactful in reducing inequality. **M**

Guillaume Tremblay-Boily is an associate researcher at the Institut de recherche et d'informations socioéconomiques (IRIS). He holds a PhD in Social and Cultural Analysis from Concordia University.



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DAVID MACDONALD

Income inequality

A tale of two pandemics

THE LATEST INCOME inequality data from Statistics Canada confirms that Canada's richest experienced the first year of the pandemic (2020) very differently than the bottom 50% of Canadians.

The official Statistics Canada write-up is misleading in that it reports that the top 1% of Canadians did worse in 2020 than in 2019—their total average market income declined slightly, by 0.4%. You can only come to this conclusion if you completely ignore one of the more important sources of income for the top 1%: capital gains.

Most Canadians wouldn't know what capital gains are because they don't make their income that way. Most Canadians make their money from wages and salaries—which

make up most of what Statistics Canada refers to as "market income" (which also includes dividend income, commissions and bonuses). Capital gains are the profits that you make when you sell an asset like stocks, bonds or real estate.

The top 1% had lower market income in 2020 compared to 2019, but only if you exclude capital gains. Once you include capital gains, it's clear that Canada's richest 1% had an increase in market income in the first year of the pandemic.

What this means is that while the top 1% saw a decrease in their market income, this was completely offset—and then some—by how much they made in the stock market and the real estate markets, which soared in 2020 and they were uniquely positioned to make money off of that.

In 2019, almost a quarter of the top 1%'s income came from the capital gains on the sale of stocks, bonds and real estate. That huge contribution to their income wasn't included in the Statistics Canada analysis. The contribution of capital gains to the richest 1%'s income grew to 27% in 2020, up from 22% in 2019—growth that more than compensated for their relatively small loss in market income.

Anyone following the impact of the pandemic knows that 2020 was a terrible year for workers at the bottom of the income spectrum. The bottom 50% of tax filers saw their market income drop by 14% due to substantial job losses, which were felt most heavily by minimum wage workers. The impact is much less dramatic as you move from the

At the start of the pandemic federal income supports were the hero

	2019	2020	% change 2019 to 2020	\$ change 2019 to 2020
<i>Average total income, including capital gains and income transfer</i>				
Top 1 per cent income group	\$627,400	\$652,000	3.90%	\$24,600
Bottom 90 per cent income group	\$37,900	\$41,300	9.00%	\$3,400
Bottom 50 per cent income group	\$18,700	\$22,400	19.80%	\$3,700
<i>Bottom average market income, including capital gains</i>				
Bottom 90 per cent income group	\$30,000	\$29,400	-2%	
Bottom 50 per cent income group	\$9,500	\$8,200	-14%	
<i>Top 1 per cent average income</i>				
Market income	\$510,700	\$508,600	-0.40%	
Market income with capital gains	\$623,700	\$647,700	3.80%	
% of income that was capital gains	22	27		

bottom 50% to the bottom 90%. The 40% in the middle, which get included as you move from the bottom 50% to the bottom 90%, did well: their income went up by 0.4% over this time period.

The real hero during the start of the pandemic was Canada's federal income supports, such as the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). If we take a look at total income including capital gains and government transfers (like CERB), Canadians, no matter their income, were better off in 2020, which is incredible given the scale of the job losses in that year.

The bottom 50% of tax filers saw a 20% increase in their total income in the middle of a global pandemic, which is pretty impressive. The bottom 90% of tax filers—the vast majority of Canadians—saw an increase of 9%. And even the top 1% benefited from federal income supports, insofar as their income also rose by 3.9%.

If we look at raises in raw dollars, the top 1% had a raise of \$24,600 between 2019 and 2020—10% more than the total income of the bottom 50% in 2020, which was \$22,400.

Looking at this data by city generally shows a similar trend: the majority of the top 1% of a city's population got a raise (although not always) in 2020. The bottom 50% saw their market income decline in all of Canada's biggest cities.

Even when the top 1% of a city didn't see a raise in 2020, the bottom 50% saw a much larger drop in market income (including capital gains).

Canada's richest 1% has proven to be resilient through all manner of economic jolts in the 2000s—the latest income data shows the story is no different during this pandemic. The richest Canadians have typically emerged from economic crises stronger than before, and the 2020 economic crisis was no exception to that rule.

One of the important ways that this crisis was different, however, was the level of income supports for average workers. There was no equivalent to CERB in the aftermath of the Great Recession in 2008, no student debt repayment freezes after the dot-com crash in 2000. Those supports allowed the 2020 economic crash to turn around very quickly compared to previous crises.

But despite early pandemic rhetoric around how “we're all in this together,” the data from 2020 shows that the pandemic's economic crisis affected Canadians very differently depending on their income level. The lower the income, the harder the hit—and conversely, the higher the income, the softer the landing.

As a new recession looms, it's time for policy-makers to ask themselves whether the lowest-income earners in Canada should continue to bear the brunt of economic downturns. **M**

David Macdonald is a senior economist with the CCPA National Office.

HADRIAN MERTINS-KIRKWOOD

Climate inequality defines the present; don't let it define the future

ONE OF THE gravest injustices of the climate crisis is the large and growing gap between those who are most responsible for global heating and those who are most vulnerable to its consequences.

The richest 1% of humanity produces more greenhouse gas emissions than the bottom 50% combined. Yet it is the poorest parts of the world that are suffering the most deadly and destructive climate-induced extreme weather events, such as the unprecedented monsoon floods in Pakistan last year, which displaced more than 30 million people.

Canadians are among the worst offenders. We produce more greenhouse gas emissions, per person, than people in any other country outside of the oil-rich Middle East. But the average numbers are misleading. Here, too, there is dramatic inequality between the richest Canadians and the most marginalized.

Many Indigenous communities, for example, are on the front lines of Canada's changing climate, which is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world. Traditional lifestyles are at risk from collapsing ecosystems. Longstanding issues of inequality, such as food and housing insecurity, are only made worse by a changing climate—in spite of these communities' enduring stewardship of the land, water and air.

In cities, one of the greatest impacts of climate change is extreme heat, which disproportionately affects lower-income residents. Of the 619 heat-related deaths

during B.C.'s 2021 heat dome event, for example, the majority were found by the chief coroner to be in "socially or materially deprived" neighbourhoods.

Addressing these impacts should be a high priority, especially where the risks are rising and the solutions are well understood. Increasing access to air conditioning would substantially reduce deaths during heat waves, for example. Many residents in Indigenous communities are already owed better infrastructure, so doubling down on climate-resilient green infrastructure is a smart thing to do.

Instead, Canadian governments at all levels have prioritized subsidies and incentives for things like electric vehicles and home energy efficiency retrofits, which disproportionately benefit the already well-to-do.

Ironically, since these kinds of investments reduce total energy use, they also save higher-income households money in the long term. Lower-income households and remote communities that can't afford the up front cost of fuel switching, in contrast, keep paying higher bills. And as the cost of fossil fuel energy rises, those bills only get higher.

In sum, not only are the lowest-income and most marginalized people—both between and within countries—the least historically responsible for climate change, and not only are they the most vulnerable to the impacts of a changing climate, but they are also largely being left out of efforts to transition to a cleaner economy.

It's an ugly recipe for a greener future—one that's destined to reproduce the fossil-based inequality of the past. So what should marginalized communities do to take control of their own future?

In a forthcoming CCPA report, co-authors Max Cohen, Isabella Pojuner, Avi Lewis and myself tackle this question. We find that while there is no substitute for the power of government leadership and spending—indeed, governments at all levels can and should be doing more to address climate injustice—grassroots climate organizing has an important role to play.

We propose a "five D" strategy for organizers: define the community in question, design inclusive organizing processes, dream of a greener future, determine constraints and barriers, and deliver alternatives. By uniting communities around a shared vision grounded in local knowledge, grassroots organizing can focus advocacy efforts and kick-start new economic opportunities.

The income inequality we face today is the product of historical injustices and ongoing exploitation. Climate inequality is no different. But the coming transition to a cleaner economy offers a tremendous opportunity to correct that path. Where governments fail to lead, it falls to communities to take up the mantle and push for a more inclusive and sustainable economy for all. **M**

Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood is a senior researcher with the CCPA National Office and a co-author of the forthcoming CCPA report, *Don't Wait for the State: A blueprint for grassroots climate transitions in Canada*.

CATHERINE BRYAN AND TEMITOPE ABIAGOM

“Canadian Experience” and labour market exclusion in Nova Scotia

INTERNATIONALLY, governments and private sector actors look to Canada for insight into how to effectively manage migration in response to aging population and growing labour market vacancies within local labour markets. Primarily geared toward these objectives, Canadian immigration policy has developed over the last several decades at both the national and sub-national levels of government.

Despite the complexity of this system, across programs, immigrant-hopefuls encounter a calculated prioritization of skill as a criterion for eligibility. Reified by the National Occupation Classification (NOC) system, the appraisal of skilled and unskilled labour maps onto gendered, and often racialized, divisions of labour.

As result, migrants with work experience in service, care, and hospitality tend to be relegated to temporary streams, with professionals and those in trades able to arrive as permanent residents.

With over 900,000 residents, Nova Scotia is the most populated province in Atlantic Canada. Still, with a rapidly aging population and a history of out-of-province migration, it faces significant demographic challenges. Mirroring similar efforts across the country, the province has an increasingly comprehensive set of immigration policies intended to support new, permanent forms of migration.

Selected for their training and expertise, “skilled” immigrants arrive in Nova Scotia anticipating employment comparable to

their previous experience. Yet, regardless of program of entry, NOC designation, and residency status, newcomers are consistently consigned to “low-skilled” work.

Hiring practices that rely on normative understandings of what constitutes valuable experience reinforces the exclusion of immigrants from secure, “skilled” labour markets. Revealed in research now decades deep is the tendency among Canadian employers to under-value work and training experience acquired outside of Canada and to assume lower levels of expertise among immigrants, particularly racialized immigrants.

In turn, immigrants are encouraged, tacitly through their efforts to secure employment and more directly through the efforts of employment-focused settlement services, to acquire “Canadian experience.”

Drawing on two cohorts of newcomers to Nova Scotia, recruited for their high level of skill and professional expertise (the first between 2005 and 2007, the second between 2018 and 2022), what emerges from our research with these immigrants is the paradox of “Canadian experience” and its implication for income disparities.

Despite their education and training, those in both samples were encouraged to seek employment in the lower ranks of service, hospitality, and retail to gain insight into Canadian workplace norms and practices, new skills, cultural competencies, and networks intended to support eventual integration into higher status work.

What newcomers encounter, however, is part-time work, mandatory overtime and wage theft, violations of the work contract, a lack of training and opportunity for skills development, low wages, racism, other forms of exclusion, as well as the challenge of navigating unstated social and cultural norms while serving customers and clients.

These dynamics determine the substance of their “Canadian experience” and they do not translate easily into upward mobility. As a result, many immigrants struggle to exit precarious work and remain involuntarily in part-time, low-waged, precarious sectors.

“Canadian experience”, in other words, emerges as a structure of exclusion for many newcomers. Given increases low-waged, precarious jobs, coupled with the growing emphasis on migrants as units of labour, running in tandem with work-oriented settlement services, it pushes newcomers into low-waged, precarious jobs and routinizes their presence in those sectors. Set against a backdrop of racial capitalism, this is normalized as the only viable option for survival for newcomers and is reinforced by employers who rely on “Canadian experience” to exclude newcomers from more lucrative forms of employment. **M**

Temitope Abiagom is a social worker and researcher whose work focuses on migration, social inclusion, and the empowerment of women, girls, and gender diverse folks. Catherine Bryan is an anthropologist and professor of Social Work at Dalhousie, focused on labour and migration. She is a research associate and the chair of the research advisory committee for CCPA NS Office.

ERIKA SHAKER

Education: Inequality's solution or great reinforcer?

FIVE YEARS AGO, after the OECD released international PISA rankings, the BBC dubbed Canada an “education superpower”. According to the OECD’s education director, in spite of provincial and territorial variation, there was a commitment in Canada to “an equal chance in school” that overcame socioeconomic differences.

The aspirational claims of equity within the Canadian system, even in reference to the apparently high-water mark of 2017, will understandably strike many as wildly overstated.

Fundraising for basic classroom supplies. Shockingly high deferred maintenance costs in school boards across the country. Inadequate supports for vulnerable students. A shortage of school librarians. Long commutes for students in rural communities. Crowded classrooms. And the continued “school choice” narrative.

In spite of this backdrop—and vocal opposition to austerity regimes that continued to prioritize tax cuts over social program enhancement—the BBC article was shared and referenced widely, and there was much back patting (with perhaps a smidge of cognitive dissonance).

Ironically, the fallout from the underfunding of what should be a robust, high quality and accessible public system has become a rallying point for those promoting more defunding, and more support for privatized options like vouchers and charter schools. Schools are failing in their responsibility (to the economy they mean, but to children they claim), so let the market decide.

Cuts to public education—and to social infrastructure more generally—hurt us all, especially the most vulnerable. But markets have a propensity to favour those who already know their way around Bay Street without a map.

It is absolutely true that well-funded, accessible, high-quality public education is a key platform from which to fight systemic inequality. And when we commit to programs that decrease inequality, while providing people with the tools to be critical of policy and political decisions, and the space to develop empathy, we work towards a more just, compassionate, enriched—in every sense of the word—society for everyone.

But underfunded, multi-tiered public education reinforces precisely the opposite. And what makes it worse is the betrayal. The public institutions that our political and policy leaders proudly fete on the international stage are, at home, simultaneously labeled as overfunded and substandard while being told they must do better for more with less.

Some provinces even make the case, implicitly or explicitly, that it’s worth tempting (maybe bribing) parents with public money so their children can “escape” to greener private pastures.

As the market mindset has taken hold, public schools have internalized a more ‘entrepreneurial’ mindset to attract the ‘right kind’ of students who ‘appreciate’ selective boutique programs and whose parents can navigate application processes and afford the additional fees that may be incurred. A private school-lite experience within the public system.

This is the point at which, as our friends at IRIS have demonstrated, an inadequately supported public education system reinforces socioeconomic disparities rather than providing a basis from which to address and overcome inequality.

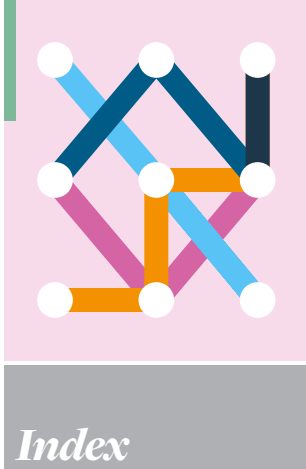
There’s a tremendous danger in the implication that it’s public education’s responsibility to eradicate inequality—or, conversely, that the very existence of inequality is evidence that public schools have failed.

There’s also a danger, exacerbated by the “choice” mantra, in the implication that education is an individualized responsibility. That those who bear the burden of systemic inequality are to blame because they didn’t pursue an education. Or enough education. Or the ‘right kind of’ education. Or that certain parents don’t ‘value’ or ‘take an interest in’ or ‘encourage’ their child’s education (with not so subtle classist and racist implications). This has particular relevance as multi-tiered approaches and boutique-ified public schools become even more commonplace.

When it comes to our apparent inability to address systemic inequality, it’s not schools that are letting us down. And it’s not about ‘some people’ making better choices about which boutique program to send their child to.

It’s the decision-makers who have deliberately chosen to neglect those public programs that are key to making communities more compassionate, equitable and sustainable places to live. **M**

Erika Shaker is director of the CCPA National Office.



That's rich

51%

That's how much Canada's billionaires have seen their wealth grow since the pandemic began, according to a new Oxfam Canada report.

7x

Canada's richest 1 per cent have gained nearly seven times more wealth than the bottom 50 per cent in the last 10 years, says Oxfam Canada.

Doubled

Average market income doubled for the richest 1% in Canada between 1982 and 2018.

189%

That's how much average market income for the top 0.01% soared between 1982 and 2019. In the wake of the 2008–09 recession, from 2010 to 2019, *only the top 1% increased their share of total wealth*, while it fell for everyone else.

More than doubled

The number of Canadian billionaires and their

wealth *more than doubled*. Canada's club of 100 billionaires now has as much wealth as the 12 million poorest Canadians. The Parliamentary Budget Office projects that, in the second quarter of 2021, there were approximately 161,700 families in the top 1% and they each had a net wealth of at least \$7.3 million.

\$3 billion

That was the average net worth of Canada's 87 wealthiest resident families in 2016—a 37% increase since 2012, when the average net worth was \$2.2 billion. In contrast, the average net worth of middle class families in Canada increased by 16%, or \$41,000, over the same period (from \$264,000 to \$305,000).

4,448

That's how many times more wealth that Canada's 87 richest families each held than the typical family, on average, in 2016. They held more wealth than the bottom 12 million Canadians.

26%

How much of Canada's wealth that the richest 1% controlled in 2016, according to the Parliamentary Budget Office.

\$363 billion

That's how much CCPA BC Senior Economist and Public Policy Finance Analyst Alex Hemingway

estimates Canada could raise by implementing a moderate wealth tax: 1% over \$10 million; 2% over \$50 million; 3% over \$100 million.

82%

The percentage of Canadians polled by Abacus Data who believe now is the time to tackle wealth and income inequality by increasing taxes on wealthy Canadians and large, profitable corporations.

87%

The percentage of Canadians polled by Abacus Data who support (43% strongly support) an excessive corporate profit tax paid by businesses whose profits are extraordinarily high during the pandemic.

92%

The percentage of Canadians polled by Abacus Data who support making it harder for corporations to strategically book profits in tax havens when no economic activity happens.

89%

The percentage of Canadians polled by Abacus Data who support (50% strongly support) a wealth tax paid by the richest Canadians every year.

89%

The percentage of Canadians polled by Abacus Data who support (44% strongly support) increasing the income tax rate for those who earn \$750,000 or more to 37%.

89%

Almost all Canadians (89%) say they would definitely or probably consider voting for a party that promised to “take real and concrete action in making sure everyone pays their fair share and increasing taxes paid by the wealthiest Canadians and large, profitable corporations.” This view was shared by 97%, 92%, and 84% of NDP, Liberal and Conservative supporters respectively.

“Taxing the super-rich and big corporations is the door out of today’s overlapping crises.”

—Lauren Ravon, Oxfam Canada executive director

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Inside Trade

STUART TREW

Canada and the U.S. should cut Mexico some slack

NAFTA's critics have long pointed to Mexico's persistent high poverty levels, stagnant real income growth, and a surge in outward migration—a direct result of subsidized U.S. agricultural exports putting farmers out of work—as obvious failures of the free trade agreement. The shift of manufacturing to low-wage Mexican maquiladoras and “right to work” U.S. states further blights triumphalist accounts of this period.

So, it was refreshing to hear North American leaders committing to “more equitable outcomes responsive to the needs and aspirations of our citizens” during January's “Three Amigos” summit in Mexico City. If our three countries are to mutually benefit from decarbonizing and localizing supply chains, a considerable share of new wealth needs to go to Mexican workers and others left high and dry by NAFTA.

The summit's final declaration leads with promises to correct economic inequalities experienced by racialized and Indigenous Peoples and to address violence against Indigenous women and girls. A separate Canada-Mexico Action Plan barely mentions trade, focusing instead on reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, women's empowerment, intercultural exchange, and anti-racism as areas for fruitful bilateral coordination.

These are all positive developments, on paper at least. But high-profile trade disputes, short-sighted pandering to corporate interests, and an aggressively neoliberal and anti-China trade agenda, could easily stunt momentum toward more thoughtful, progressive cooperation in North America.

In a recent Monitor Online article, Karen Hansen-Kuhn, director of policy with the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Manuel Pérez-Rocha, research fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, and I argue that a better North American partnership should start by cutting Mexico some slack. Though Canada and the U.S. continue to feud over dairy supply management, softwood

lumber tariffs, and how to calculate North American content in automotive products, Mexico is by far the most targeted country under the revised trade rules of the 2018 Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA).

On energy, for example, the Trudeau government and Biden administration have sided with private power companies in a dispute with the Mexican government over reforms that give public oil and electricity utilities a greater role in the domestic energy market. Energy sovereignty is so important to Mexico that the government excluded the oil and gas sector from CUSMA, but still Canada and the U.S. are using the agreement to try to force Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) to reverse course.

Mexican food sovereignty is also in the crosshairs of corporate agricultural interests and government officials in Canada and the U.S. In 2020, the AMLO government decided to ban the cultivation and importation of genetically modified yellow corn, a major U.S. cash crop, beginning January 2024. Though non-GMO corn growers in the U.S. could benefit, the Biden administration has sided with transnational agribusiness and is threatening another CUSMA dispute.

In early January, more than 100 North American civil society groups sent a letter to Mexican senators urging them to resist this corporate pressure. The letter pointed out that all three North American countries agreed in December to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which includes a commitment to halving the overall risk to wildlife from pesticides and supporting other biodiversity-enhancing agricultural practices.

The third area of intense trade-related pressure on Mexico is the use of NAFTA's expiring investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) process to challenge Mexican tax and environmental measures related to mining and energy. Until recently, Canada was the most-sued NAFTA country under the agreement's ISDS system, but Mexico is now in the lead. A new trilateral report on these and other NAFTA “legacy” ISDS cases, which should fuel international calls to exit harmful investment treaties, has just been posted to the CCPA website.

CUSMA mainly locked in, and sometimes expanded, outdated corporate trade rules from NAFTA, but we needn't let that hamper efforts to equalize economic opportunity across the continent. Instead of siding with private mining and energy firms in Mexico, the Trudeau government should build on the positive sounding Canada-Mexico Action Plan to ensure the social, economic, and environmental benefits that could come from regionalizing supply chains are truly regionally shared. **M**

Stuart Trew is director of the CCPA's Trade and Investment Research Project at the National Office.

Africa's food crisis caused by the West

WHILE THE COP 27 environmental summit ended without significant achievements, Africa is in the grip of its worst food crisis ever, driven by a perfect storm of climate crisis conditions—drought and floods—along with raging armed conflicts and spiraling grain import prices.

A record 278 million Africans—one in five—are facing hunger. The number of East Africans in this predicament has gone up by 60% in 2021 alone and it has gone up by 40% in West Africa.

Countries in Africa make up only 3% of the emissions responsible for the climate crisis “but suffer more than any other region from its impact,” according to Joe Bavier, Abdi Sheikh, Michael Ovaska and Aditi Bhandari in *Reuters*.

Western countries are the biggest polluters, on a per capita basis—especially the U.S. and Canada—yet they have externalized the effects of their environmental destruction on people who are amongst the poorest in the world.

Sixteen of the 20 countries that are most vulnerable to the climate crisis are in Africa. Western intervention is also behind many of the armed conflicts in Africa.

As Abayomi Azikiwe, editor of Pan-African News Wire, told me, “the failure of the Western capitalist states to take responsibility for the current disproportionate impact of climate change is another form of rationalizing the continuation of the neo-colonial arrangements [for Africa], which have been in existence since the 1960s.”

In short, the climate crisis is another form of neo-colonialism.

Particularly disgraceful is the fact that rich Western countries promised \$100 billion per year to

developing countries in climate damage funds in 2009 and have failed to deliver.

As Omolade Adunbi, a professor of Afroamerican and African Studies at the University of Michigan and expert on environmental politics puts it: “The effect of climate change on many communities in Africa cannot be overemphasized. Times without number, we have seen how the major polluters, who are mainly countries of the Global North—such as the United States and Canada—and corporations based in these countries continue to treat the issue of climate change with kid gloves.”

COP conferences are more performative than anything.

“The annual COPs have literally become a jamboree where promises that are never kept are made,” says Adunbi. “If you check the agreements reached every year at these COP meetings, there is a

form of similitude in them, which is an indication that there is no movement towards rectifying the damage done to the environment by these corporate polluters and the countries that enable them. The consequences of inaction have been increasing weather patterns that cause drought and flood in many African countries.”

According to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and its Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), “Violent conflict remains the primary driver of acute hunger [in Africa and other areas].”

Since the 1980s the United States has fueled 12 wars on the continent through arms transfers and military training, as well as proxy invasions and direct invasions.

These wars include the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Libya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Angola, Ethiopia, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, Congo-Brazzaville and Nigeria. The U.S. has given military assistance to 51 out of 54 African countries.

“When there is conflict, it becomes practically impossible for farmers to produce food needed to sustain the population. There is a clear correlation between the many conflicts ongoing in Africa, food scarcity, drought and climate change,” explains Adunbi.

According to William Hartung, director of the Arms and Security Program at the Center for International Policy in Washington D.C. and co-author of the 2000 report *Deadly Legacy: U.S. Arms to Africa and the Congo War*, the U.S. sent \$1.5 billion dollars in arms and training to Africa during the Cold War years (1950–89) and this “set the stage for the current round [post-2000] of conflicts in the region.

“When there is conflict, it becomes practically impossible for farmers to produce food.”
—Omolade Adunbi

“The military skills and equipment supplied by the U.S. are still being used by combatants in these wars,” Hartung says.

As *Deadly Legacy* notes, “many of the top U.S. clients of the Cold War—Liberia, Somalia, Sudan and DRC” became riven by violence, instability and economic collapse during the 1990s—and still are. Post-2000, U.S. arms transfers to Africa and training programs for its armies have increased, along with invasions.

The DRC and Libya have been the countries most destabilized by U.S. military intervention in Africa. The U.S. instigated the invasion of the DRC by its proxies Rwanda and Uganda in 1996 and 1998, and the subsequent slaughter of more than seven million Congolese has devastated the country.

Washington’s goal was to plunder the mineral riches of the Congo through the proxy use of Rwanda’s and Uganda’s troops. These two states withdrew their forces from the Congo in 2003, but continued looting its minerals through their puppet militias.

“The U.S. has financed and given overall direction to the worst genocide since World War II,” says Glen Ford, editor of the Black Agenda Report, the leading website on U.S. policy towards Africa.

“Since 1996, Washington has drenched Congo’s eastern provinces in the blood of over six million people. The governments of Rwanda and Uganda, the direct perpetrators of this holocaust, are in every sense of the word agents of U.S. foreign policy, who operate with impunity under the imperial umbrella.”

It is no surprise that, according to the WFP, “DRC is one of the largest hunger crises in the world. Hunger and conflict fuel one another, with armed conflict and widespread displacement prevailing for the past 25 years.” Between January and June 2023, 26.4 million people could become acutely food insecure.

In Libya, the U.S. attacked the country, in collaboration with Canada and other NATO members in 2011. The invasion destroyed Libya, which was the richest country in Africa, and spread wars and insurgencies to several African states.

In Mali, Islamic fundamentalists—armed with weapons from Muammar Gaddafi’s (Libya’s leader whom NATO overthrew) looted arsenal and from NATO’s own extensive distribution of weaponry to Gaddafi’s opponents—attacked the government in 2012, starting a civil war that continues today.

According to the Food Security Cluster (a project of the WFP and FAO), “Mali is facing an unprecedented food crisis, exceeding the last peak in 2013/2014 at the beginning of the crisis. From October to December 2021, nearly 1.2 million people were known to be in need of emergency food assistance, almost three times higher than the year before.”

“The result of the invasion [of Libya] has been a disaster,” Conn Hallinan told me. He has been a columnist with *Foreign Policy in Focus*, a project of the

Washington D.C.-based Institute for Policy Studies. Hallinan has written on foreign affairs for 50 years and retired in September 2021.

“The massive weapon caches of Gaddafi fuel insurgents and terrorists throughout Africa. And insurgents in the trans-Sahel [an area comprising nine African countries] are using those weapons to overthrow governments or ignite civil wars,” says Hallinan.

The government of Chad, one of the Sahel countries embroiled in a civil war, declared a food emergency in June 2022. The majority of its population suffers from malnutrition.

The steep 23.9% increase in African food prices in 2022 is usually attributed to the Russia-Ukraine War by the mainstream press, but the question that should be asked is: why do African countries need to import grain from Russia, Ukraine and other countries?

This is due to the debilitation of African agriculture, mainly caused by structural adjustment programs imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund on most African countries that cut official subsidies to farmers and enforce the import of grains and the export of cash crops.

These three policies—cutting official subsidies to farmers, enforcing the import of grains and the export of cash crops—have been undermining food security in Africa since the 1980s.

The global food system, dominated by Western multinational corporations, has “squeezed out small farm holders in many countries of the Global South. Nowhere is this more applicable than African countries,” according to Adunbi.

“The neoliberal practices of asking African countries to discontinue subsidy regimes have a more devastating impact on farmers who are not able to access credits to support their farming business. The irony of it all is that multinationals enjoy huge subsidies from countries of the Global North, whereas small farm holdings in Africa do not enjoy the same benefits.

“Where credit facilities are made available to farmers in Africa, stringent conditions impair their ability to access such facilities. This amounts to a double standard, whereby Africans are constantly being blamed for problems that are not of their own creation.

“The second thing to note is that the current food insecurity is, most times, blamed on the Africans, whereas the real issue is the lack of a level playing field for the farmers who had to endure a form of double jeopardy—squeezed by their government and multinational corporations.” **M**

Asad Ismi is a columnist for the *Monitor* specializing in international politics. For his publications, visit www.asadismi.info.

YOUR CCPA

Get to know **Amanda Klang**

OFFICE: **NATIONAL**

POSITION: **SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST (MEDIA AND PR)**

YEARS WITH THE CCPA:
LESS THAN A YEAR

You're new to the CCPA. What drew you to us? I've followed the CCPA's work for more than two decades and contributed to the B.C. office when I lived in Vancouver, following my mum as a decades-long CCPA supporter. I was drawn to the CCPA because it countered the then-deafening voices of neoliberal ideologues (many of whom were frequently invited on CBC Radio) by offering an alternative, and compassionate, vision of how the wealth of a society can be shared. When I saw the opening for my current job at the CCPA, I was ready to make a career change and immediately applied.

You've spent a long time as a journalist. Any career highlights that stick with you most? I started my career in journalism with a short research contract at Radio-Canada in Vancouver. I'm a French immersion kid, but I never expected that they'd hire me to produce shows or deliver on-air columns in French, which I did for five years.

A related highlight came after I moved to Montreal and started working for CBC. I joined the team of the national show, *C'est La Vie*, and got to explore Francophone culture and communities across the country and tell stories to listeners from coast to coast (to coast) with veteran journalist and host, Bernard Saint-Laurent.



What's the most unusual story you worked on as a journalist? I did a radio piece about the healing claims attributed to Ayahuasca, which was, and is, an illegal substance outlawed by Health Canada. A Vancouver physician had just been ordered to stop giving it to his patients who were suffering with addictions. At the time, ayahuasca was an uncommon topic of discussion and I was fascinated by the conversations I had with people who'd (secretly) used it.

You're from Vancouver but now live in Montreal. Both beautiful cities. What led you there? I came to Montreal because I wanted to live abroad without actually living abroad! For an Anglo Canadian, Montreal is the perfect place to be at home while also living life, at times, as a foreigner. It's also a wonderfully liveable city and an easy place to create new friendships and community connections.

Tell us about the podcast that you host and where we can listen to it. It's called *Late Bloomin Love* and it's about the search for love later in life—which by my calculations means any age north of 30! I started it last year (on Valentine's Day) to inspire my own (reluctant) re-entry into the dating pool. On the podcast I speak to guests who share their expertise about love, dating and relationships or stories from their own life. I pick guests who will make me—and I hope listeners—feel encouraged about the often difficult search for a compatible partner. One woman I spoke to fell in love in front of the cameras on a Quebec TV reality dating show. Another met her partner after going on 50 online dates. The message I hear most often from my guests is “don't give up!” *Late Bloomin Love* is available on Apple Podcasts and other podcast apps.

When you're not at work, what are some ways that you decompress? I am lucky to live near Montreal's big urban park, Mont Royal. It's a great space for walking all year round, and I'll often take a break there with a friend in the afternoon to stretch my legs and chat.

What gives you hope right now? Two things: The basic instinct to kindness that most humans possess on an individual level. And our capacity to organize into groups and work collectively toward positive change—be that to enact better climate policies or diminish income inequality through how we structure our tax system.

Meet Ronald Kinley, CCPA donor

**Ronald Kinley of Aldergrove, B.C.,
was introduced to the *Monitor* by a friend.**

Tell us about someone you find particularly inspiring right now.

There are many inspiring people in this world that I'm grateful for. I'm most inspired by those who dedicate their lives to the betterment of others, to alleviate the suffering and lack of the necessities of life. An early archetype for me was Tommy Douglas. Also, there are those who try to help free our minds from beliefs and convictions that lead to suffering and deprivation—this group would include the CCPA.

Tell us about someone who was a big influence on you early in life and how you became a CCPA supporter (how your ideals and those of the CCPA became aligned).

If one traces our own intellectual evolution, we recognize many contributors to whom we owe our appreciation. First, to our parents, who transmitted the culture into which we were born, followed by teachers and political and religious leaders. One might call this foundational or original understanding.

What has the CCPA done lately that's made you feel proud to be a supporter/work for the CCPA? In your opinion, what makes the CCPA special?

Taking to heart what Socrates said that the unexamined life is not worth living, I've always been interested in wanting to know or understand what is true, good, and right. The CCPA is a source of facts and reasoned opinions that challenge one's thinking and, consequently, one's actions. It enriches anyone who reads the articles. Moreover, as the CCPA has expanded and increased its voice in the larger public discourse, others, too, have found it an invaluable source. I was really impressed by a recent article in the *Monitor* that noted the increased



times CCPA articles have been cited and staff have been interviewed.

I appreciate that the CCPA presents information in a way that makes it easy to share. For instance, at a family gathering, a nephew was struggling with some Canadian social/political concerns, so I promised to send him the *Monitor* based on an article that came to mind. We gave him a subscription for Christmas. An unusual, but refreshing, feature of the *Monitor* is the Good News section: a listing of discoveries, findings or actions that could be classified as positive.

Could you tell us what prompted you to become a monthly giving five years ago?

An elderly Scottish fellow introduced me to the CCPA. We'd become friends through discussions of politics and policy. Often, he would cite an article he's recently read, which often turned out to be from the *Monitor*. He asked if I'd like to read the issues after he finished



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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.

them. I read them cover-to-cover and was happy to see that many of the articles related to Canadian concerns. I found the articles enlightening, challenging, and encouraging. After he passed away, I ordered the *Monitor* for myself.

So, it follows that I then chose to become a monthly donor. If someone finds the CCPA's work to be of value as I do, then we should do our part to support it. Think of it as a social contract. We need to support those whose work and passion enable us to see what, perhaps, we hadn't considered before: to broaden our perspective, to gain a greater understanding and build a better world for us all.

What is your hope for the future? Name one policy the government should adopt today that would make people's lives better.

One policy would be to reduce spending on military and NATO commitments. I feel that \$70 billion over 25 years for new fighter jets will not benefit anyone except the plane manufacturers and those holding their stocks. Since it's Canadians' money, why not spend it on social needs instead?

What have you read or watched to keep your mind busy, and your soul fed lately?

I've just finished a short book titled, *20 Dictators Currently Supported by the U.S.*, by David Swansen. He is the executive director of *World Beyond War*. It's a short, humorously written description of the facts of the title. I've just watched a new video about the policy of discrimination against Palestinians in Israel. It interviews several Palestinians who describe their experience in ways that have been called Apartheid by several human rights groups.



In memory of Teresa Healy

WE LOST our dear friend and colleague, Teresa Healy (1962–2022), this past December, much too soon. Teresa passed away in her home in Brattleboro, Vermont, working up until the last few weeks on her upcoming book, *Bounded Solidarity*, making sure that her vast garden was put bed for the winter, continuing to share her ideas about music, social justice and prayer with her family and broad circle of friends.

We will all miss Teresa tremendously—her joyous spirit, her extraordinary kindness and generosity, her brilliance, grace and commitment.

At the CCPA, Teresa spearheaded two projects for us—*The Harper Record: 2006–2008* and, with co-editor Stuart Trew, *The Harper Record: 2008–2015*—and lent her considerable insight on economic policy as a member of the Trade and Investment Research Project and Alternative Federal Budget working group.

A political scientist by training, with a doctoral degree from Carleton University, Teresa taught comparative political economy at several universities in Canada and the United States. Her book, *Gendered Struggles Against Globalisation in Mexico*, looked at gendered struggles against restructuring and repression in the Mexican auto industry. Teresa also worked in the Canadian labour movement for many years—with the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Canadian

Labour Congress—advancing the cause of justice and solidarity through her writing, teaching, activism and music.

She was a well-known singer-songwriter, steeped in the Irish tradition. She recorded *She Pushed from Behind: Emily Murphy in Story and Song* and *Tangled in Our Dreams* with her partner, Tom Juravich, with whom she performed. Her *Song for Peace* has been taken up by activist networks and peace movements across the world.

Teresa had the extraordinary gift of connecting with people in the moment. She was always bringing people together, over food, over music, over a picket line, over the next horizon. She could still a room with her beautiful voice. She saw and celebrated beauty and possibility in the world every day.

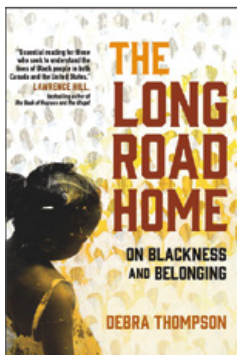
Our deepest condolences to Tom and to her mother Kay, sister Anne, and brother Chris and their families. Teresa inspired us over the years. We'll now carry on the struggles that she supported so passionately.

A song for peace

*We're singing for peace
We're singing solidarity
Singing for courage
Singing down walls
We'll sing without fear
And before all authority
Singing as darkness falls*
—Teresa Healy, 2006

RICARDO TRANJAN

A book that teaches the reality of racism with passion and purpose



THE LONG ROAD HOME: ON BLACKNESS AND BELONGING DEBRA THOMPSON

Scriber Canada, 2022

WHEN ASKED TO write a book review for this volume of the *Monitor*, Debra Thompson's *The Long Road Home: on Blackness and belonging* seemed an obvious choice. Racism is the most prevailing and consequential form of inequality in history, but that was not the only or even the main reason this book came to mind. It was because I enjoyed the read.

How does anyone enjoy reading about deep-rooted anti-Black racism in Canada and the United States? About Black people perpetually struggling to feel at home in places they belong to at least as much as the people repeatedly asking them where they are *really* from. About how we have convinced ourselves that Canada is less racist than America while putting so little effort into learning how racism has and continues to shape our society, not in the same way as in the United States, but not in entirely unrelated ways either.

How can anyone avidly flip through pages where the author connects recent tragic events with historical patterns, showing continuity where the media chose to communicate astonishment, leading the reader—at least this reader—to examine their original reactions to those events?

The book also describes a Black woman being discriminated against in many subtle and not-so-subtle ways, including in academia, where some self-declared progressives serve as the hidden pillars of reactionary culture. How is reading that not upsetting to the point of wanting to drop the book and walk away?

It has to do with how and why Thompson writes. She seamlessly weaves in historical and current

events, theoretical and empirical debates, sociological and individual accounts. This makes for an engaging book that reads less as a lecture by Dr. Thompson and more as story time with Debra-who-knows-her-stuff. Her courage is also gripping. Anyone who has ever told or written a story will be stunned by Thompson's fearlessness in sharing her own very personal stories.

Then there is the why. The impetus behind the book seems to be to teach a broad audience about racism in Canada, the United States, and anywhere it occurs. Not the disinterested teaching often found in post-secondary institutions, but the on-the-ground teaching of popular education and social movements. Teaching with purpose. Teaching not constrained by the boundaries of academic disciplines, the fallacy of objectivity, or the pressure to provide clear answers to questions that elude them. Teaching that seeks to understand in order to transform the world.

Don't let me fool you: *The Long Road Home* delves into sorrowful and infuriating issues. Some readers may not choose it as a bedtime companion. The part I truly enjoyed was learning from a passionate and knowledgeable teacher who went all in to show me that which she had no choice but to see. **M**

Ricardo Tranjan is a senior researcher with the CCPA Ontario office.

The author seamlessly weaves in historical and current events, theoretical and empirical debates, sociological and individual accounts.

A warning call from a former nurse



DYING TO BE SEEN: THE RACE TO SAVE MEDICARE IN CANADA

CATHERINE MACNEIL

Friesen Press, Manitoba, 2022

This man called Douglas—well, how'll I put it? He's a good deed in a naughty world..... He was motivated by an ideal..... To call him a politician, as you'd call Bennett or Diefenbaker a politician, is to insult him. He was and is a dreamer and a humanitarian, incorruptible, genuine and intellectually honest.

—Jack Scott, *Vancouver Sun*, 1960

TIME IS MUSCLE. This was a phrase written on an algorithm poster in an emergency room where I worked years ago. This algorithm outlined the necessary steps required to get a heart attack victim from triage to the cardiac catheterization lab for treatment. The expression implied if the team wasted any valuable seconds heart muscle could languish. The urgency between time and health has not diminished. Whether its initial seconds of CPR lost, a decision to avoid the emergency department, or leaving a persistent ache go unattended for one more day—time affects outcome.

We, as health care providers, have always battled that inextricable

link between time and outcome. Nowhere is that connection more pronounced than the time remaining to save our public health care system. If swift and strategic action is not taken, Medicare will soon be on irretrievable life support. In this sense, time has become unusually critical.

Thunderheads are circling the Canadian health care system. While pro-business forces of privatization have hounded to commodify the most granular aspects of health, the spirit of Canadian collectivism has managed to out-pace the hounds. The chase is closing in. Over time, government at both the federal and provincial levels has made Medicare less and less of a priority. It continues to voluntarily defund the system and Canadian taxpayers continue to be defrauded by all political parties. In its American-like obsession to shift our public health care service to the vagaries of market forces, government has left the system unprotected and vulnerable. This

If we cannot reverse the tide of privatization of health services, we stand to undo the greatest policy initiative in Canadian history—Medicare.

has subjected hundreds of Canadians to harm, unnecessary suffering, and premature death. The conscious defunding that has created chaos across all Canadian emergency rooms has set the stage for the final coup-de-grace—privatization. The plan of making the system as inaccessible and as onerous as possible is almost complete. The terminal blow—conceding that the system is too expensive for us to sustain publicly—is but a step away.

Patients are not the only victims. This defunding and defrauding has created workplaces that are short staffed, disorganized, and frenetic. It has created a workforce that is frustrated, exhausted, and often feels abandoned. It's a workforce struggling to hold together a chaotic *non-system*. In addition to defunding and defrauding, deregulation has also crept through the public system making it an easy mark for private conglomerates that are circling it.

Canadians need to take action now before our time runs out. We need to ascend to the levels of humanitarianism and collectivism of the people who came before us, and espouse the tenacity of predecessors like Douglas, Woodsworth, and Coldwell. A legacy bereft of affordable health care is a frightening inheritance for all our grandchildren. After four decades, at hundreds of bedsides, I can attest to the vitalness of having a robust public health care system. If we cannot reverse the tide of privatization of health services, we stand to undo the greatest policy initiative in Canadian history—Medicare. If we fail, future Canadians may find themselves like our American neighbours, selling their blood to buy food. **M**

Catherine MacNeil is a former registered nurse. Her new book can be purchased via several outlets. Please see <https://linktr.ee/cathymacneil>.



The good news page

ELAINE HUGHES

New York City buying more than 900 EVs for government fleets

After recently receiving a \$10.1 million U.S. Transportation Department grant, New York indicated that it will replace more than 900 city-owned fossil-fuel powered vehicles with electric models and install 315 additional EV charging ports. The announcement is the latest by a U.S. government agency to speed the shift away from gas-powered vehicles to EVs. / [Reuters](#), January 8, 2023.

Alpacas and llamas in Cornwall enjoy festive feast

Following a recycling appeal on social media, Mary Harvey, who runs CHAT (Chy Lowen Alpacas Tregaswith) in Cornwall, England, revealed that their farm recently received a glut of donated Christmas trees, a great source of vitamin C and antioxidants. Noting that llamas and alpacas (camelids) love to munch on Christmas trees, she believes they now have enough to last the herd a whole three months. CHAT

is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to helping children and young adults with a variety of issues using animal-assisted intervention. / [Good News Network](#), January 6, 2023.

First recorded Pink Iguana hatchlings found

With seven expeditions over the past 10 months, scientists in the Galapagos Islands have been studying the last surviving population of critically endangered pink iguanas. Made up of an estimated 200 to 300 adults, the population has been declining and aging over the last decade, leading to concern about the species going extinct. Now scientists have made a major discovery: they've revealed the first-ever documented nesting sites of the reptile and the first recorded pink iguana hatchlings. / [The Smithsonian Magazine](#), December 31, 2022.

Four friends rescue a moose from icy lake in northeastern Ontario

Upon learning that a moose was trapped in a lake near their camp, four friends from the West Nipissing region of northeastern Ontario—Shawn Duquette, André Roberge, Scotty Simmons and Jean-Yves Paquette—rushed to the location on their snowmobiles and, using chainsaws, cut a trench in the ice toward the shore so the moose could climb out from a more shallow part of the lake. / [CBC](#), January 3, 2023.

Top 15 species discoveries from 2022

A resplendent rainbow fish, a frog that looks like chocolate, a Thai tarantula, an anemone that rides on the back of a hermit crab, and the world's largest water lily are among the new species named by science in 2022. In this well-trodden world, finding a new species is a glimpse of the uncharted riches of biodiversity still hidden around the globe. / [Mongabay](#), January 1, 2023.

Israel and Jordan agree to team up to save Jordan River

At the recent UN Climate Conference, Israel and Jordan signed a declaration of intent to conserve and protect their shared Jordan River—a sacred waterway nearly running dry because of climate change, pollution, and other threats. The agreement, struck at COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, marks an important, albeit initial, step in cooperation. / [The Associated Press](#), November 17, 2022.

Call to phase out 'forever chemicals' gains investor momentum

Investors managing \$8 trillion in assets have written to the world's biggest chemicals companies, urging them to phase out the use of so-called forever chemicals that can accumulate in the environment and remain hazardous for generations. Known as PFAS, which stands

for Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances, the chemicals are used in everything from cosmetics to furniture and have been linked to illnesses. Support for the campaign has doubled since its launch last year, when 23 investors with \$4.4 trillion backed a similar call. / [Reuters](#), November 30, 2022.

Three things people in Finland never do—and they're happy

Frank Martela, PhD, a Finnish philosopher and psychology researcher who studies the fundamentals of happiness, sets out three things Finns never do to maintain a high quality of life: they do not compare themselves to others, they never ignore the benefits of nature, and they do not break the "community of trust." / [CNBC](#), January 5, 2023.

Tractor powered by cow dung

Allowing farmers to decrease their emissions and save money on expensive diesel, New Holland's brand new tractor runs on liquid methane, which can easily be produced from cow pies. The pioneering 270 hp tractor is claimed to be a match for the performance of standard diesel-powered versions. The groundbreaking machine was developed by British company, Bennamann, which has been researching and developing biomethane production for over a decade. / [Good News Network](#), January 6, 2023.



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(we've got some bright ideas)

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