

MONITOR

Progressive news, views and ideas



CCPA
CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
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SPRING 2024

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Cover illustration by Katy Dockrill

Award-winning Canadian illustrator Katy Dockrill has worked alongside art directors and creatives for over 20 years. She's inspired by her city within a city (Leslieville), her friends and her small family, walks everywhere, swims with her east end pals, reads voraciously and teaches part time at Sheridan.

Centrespread design and illustration

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. Illustrations by Katy Dockrill.



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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 four 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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Erika Shaker

Please consider a springtime donation to the CCPA

Increasingly, I'm hearing people like you are worried about loved ones falling for misinformation campaigns, right here in Canada, as lines are blurred between fact and fiction.

They're concerned about what this means for their friends and family—and for the future. They want to know what they can do, in a supportive way.

I've seen and felt the creep of misinformation in my own life. But I'm lucky; I work with a range of experts whose mission is to educate the public about the key issues of our time.

That's what think tanks are about. Did you know that after Hitler's reign of terror, Germany's path to healing included funding think tanks—the full range, along the entire ideological spectrum—to ensure robust debate, vigorous research and educational tools to fuel a strong democracy?

No country is immune to fascist and far-right tactics. We see politicians in Canada playing culture wars with immigrants, trans kids in schools, and the Canada Pension Plan while they distract us from the lack of provincial investments in public health care, long-term care, child care, education, affordable housing and income supports for the most vulnerable.

CCPA experts are speaking truth to power on TV, the radio, and newspapers, including community papers. We're also active on social media channels, sharing myth-busting facts to inform Canadians—and to provide them with fodder as they confront misinformation in their own communities.

Our counterparts on the right, such as the Fraser Institute, are

funded by deep-pocketed corporate interests. The CCPA doesn't accept corporate donations. We pride ourselves on our ability to reveal the excesses of corporate executives and their shareholders.

They don't like it when we publish our annual CEO pay report because it exposes outrageous greed. They don't like it when we publish research showing many corporations have been reaping excess profits during this high-inflation period. It shines a light on rampant income inequality and unchecked corporate power.

When we do this, we're helping Canadians voice their own frustrations about a system that needs an overhaul so it works for everyone. Because if that frustration is left unaddressed, it can devolve into disillusionment, and leave some family and friends susceptible to the outright disinformation that certain

The work of the CCPA is more important than ever. That's why I'm asking all *Monitor* readers to consider ways of helping to sustain our work. We are an independent research institute that relies on individual donors just like you to help keep our voice independent.

elected officials, keen to capitalize on that disillusionment, are spewing.

There are many elected officials who are doing their best to uphold the truth, to act in the interests of the greater good. But look at what's happening south of the border, with a Trumpian party working to demolish democracy...and we see how vulnerable we can be here.

Democracies aren't a given—they're sustained only with a well-informed, active citizenry that places checks and balances on wayward players. A citizenry that engages in healthy discussions with the people in their lives, to try to find a path toward greater equality, fairness and justice, social responsibility and collective action.

We do this as voters during election periods, but we must also stay engaged in between elections. At the CCPA, we are non-partisan. We'll never tell you how to vote. But we're here for you with facts and arguments for a more compassionate, fairer Canada.

I hear from many of you and I know that you share my pride in the work that the CCPA does. We appreciate you so much. Our donors are the most engaged, well-read, and well-meaning people. You're our kind of people.

Thank you for being our greatest advocates, for cheering us on, and for working with us to help make the world a better place. We couldn't do this without you!

If you are able to do so, please consider a springtime donation to the CCPA:

policyalternatives.ca/donate

Erika Shaker,
Director, CCPA National Office



Jon Milton

Taking back our cities

We can shape the future of urban life

When I was living in Edmonton, I managed to snag one of the (relatively) rare apartments in that city where you could walk to the grocery store within a few minutes.

It wasn't a particularly pleasant walk—it meant trudging through an enormous, desolate parking lot after crossing a high-speed, six-lane collector road. I was, generally, one of only a small handful of pedestrians—in the city's densest neighborhood, only a few blocks from downtown.

The few other pedestrians, often, were drawn from the city's rapidly growing unhoused population. These folks—my neighbors—lived with constant police harassment, often in encampments that are subject to periodic demolition by municipal authorities.

One day, I returned home and found a note slipped unceremoniously under my door. My rent was going up by \$300 per month. On the government of Alberta's website, it makes sure to specify that "there is no limit on the amount by which the landlord may raise the rent."

None of these issues are unique to Edmonton. They exist, to varying degrees, in every city in North America. In fact, Edmonton has taken some important strides in the past decade to improve its urbanism—removing legal requirements to build massive amounts of parking, legalizing denser housing options across the city, building new rapid transit. But it does raise the question: why do our cities look and behave the way they do—and how do the way our cities are designed influence our relationship

to the place that we live, and each other?

Despite its mythos as a frontier settlement, Canada is a deeply urbanized country. Over 80 per cent of the population lives in cities. While that statistic is somewhat misleading—municipalities that we would call suburbs are technically cities—it reflects a profound reality of a move away from rural life. New arrivals to Canada, the uncontested driver of population growth, are concentrated almost exclusively in urban areas with over 100,000 people—which means that the rate of urbanization is only increasing.

City dwellers' relationship to the place that they live is profoundly shaped by public policy. Will a resident spend nearly \$13,000 per year (the Canadian average) on car ownership or be able to use public and active transportation to get around? Can a landlord evict a tenant to turn their apartment into a permanent unregulated hotel on a short-term rental platform? Does a tenant have the legal ability to fight a rent increase? Does the police

force eat up the majority of the city's budget? What happens to a person who falls on hard times and finds themselves living in the street? How far away is the nearest park or green space? How safe is it for children to walk to school? Can an elderly person have autonomy after they lose their ability to drive? Will the high-polluting factory cause children in the poor neighborhood nearby to have higher rates of asthma?

All of these questions are the direct result of public policy. From the width of the lanes on the road, to the amount of cops on the street, to the cost of rent, policy makes and remakes cities. That process is long, but it is also deeply and intimately felt by residents.

What, then, might a truly democratic city look like? What might it look like for the cities we live in to respond to the crises of the 21st century—a burning climate, runaway inequality, rising fascism?

We don't need to start from scratch in imagining the answer to that question. Across Canada—and beyond—social movements are organizing at the city-level to win real, material change to the places that they live.

As cities continue to rapidly expand, the way that they will look in a few decades will likely be unrecognizable to us today. And the seeds of those changes are being planted now. In the lines of legislation at different levels of government, in handshakes with lobbyists, in pressure campaigns by organized neighbors—we are, right now, planning the cities of the coming decades. Let's take our task seriously. **M**

City
building
is deeply
political



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.

November/December 2023 Monitor

The social solution to Canada's health care problem

Poor people die young. They lack money, not doctors.

Ted Hayes
Granite Bay, B.C.

I have been reading the Ontario Medical Association's (OMA) agreement with the Ontario government, April 1, 2021 to March 24, 2024. It deals with numerous issues. In addition, every day I read the daily OMA physicians' comments on the delivery of health care. Much of the complaints focus on how patients use the health care system. When patients register with Family Health Teams, the doctors are paid an annual sum (paid

monthly) for each patient (i.e. teenagers and young adults a low-dollar figure and significantly more for patients with multiple health issues and seniors in their 80s and 90s).

Not all GP/FPs accept this payment system as they don't have sufficient patients to achieve a desired income. Traditionally, family physicians in large centres (i.e. Toronto & boroughs) are examples and many continue with fee-for-service plans. A survey in the 1990s indicated that Toronto GPs/FPs billed fees that were 30 per cent higher per patient than rural Ontario GP/FPs.

Some of the major issues that family physicians focus on in my daily e-mails from the OMA are the abuse by patients. With presently apparently one million people without a family physician in Ontario and frequently unacceptable wait times for care, perhaps it is time to have a multi-billion dollar study on how to improve Ontario's health care system. Undoubtedly, some patients abuse the system, but so do a significant number of physicians, as observed in a "Fee Code Creep," *CMAJ*, 158 1998 749-54.

The Ontario government's desire to improve service by creating out-of-hospital surgical clinics is a good idea, but to privatize these clinics, as Premier Doug Ford plans, "is simply dumb," says Dr. Bob Bell, a former surgeon and Ontario government employee.

To improve the general health of the population, wages have to be

increased, as does the number of health care workers. Promoting a healthy lifestyle is essential. Only state-owned seniors' homes should be greatly increased, to leave more active beds in our hospitals. Privatization of health care is not a solution. To achieve these goals, taxes will have to be increased, as will wages.

Ross McElroy
Tavistock, ON

September/October 2023 Monitor

Grassroots climate organizing

I have some problems with Alex Hemingway's comments in the September/October *Monitor* article, "New B.C. law could break housing gridlock." Using the cost of housing as an excuse does not make a realistic argument since, in recent years, we have seen incredible zoning increases and the result has been out-of-sight housing increases and costs.

I read, with concern, the recent report on upzoning law and the strain on liveability on our cities and rural areas (*Sun*, November 3, 2023).

I have to ask, are our MLAs so out of touch with the communities they represent to have the arrogance to invoke top-down orders on our communities even if there is a modicum of communication at the community level?

The community in which I live goes through a public planning process every few years, with

many days of meetings with citizens, planning and other department professionals to recommend where and how increases to zoning could or should happen. If the provincial government, through its independent advisor, does not agree with the municipality, then the provincial government can impose projects and zoning bylaws.

I have to agree with Langley Mayor Eric Woodward's comment expressing concern about it being unrealistic "...without creating significant challenges on sewer, water, school sites, parks, public safety capacity and parking requirements"—not to mention social, environmental and liveability problems.

There will be no solution unless the federal government comes up with money and low-cost loans for housing and with regulations to stop corporate speculators. This needs to be done with cooperation from municipalities, as in the past, i.e., the 1960s with, for example, MURBS (multi-unit residential buildings) and also low-interest loans for co-ops and not-for-profit development.

Just ramming through zoning and bylaw increases, in my opinion, is not the answer.

Bill Zander
New Westminster, B.C.



New from the CCPA

CCPA BC

As we announce Shannon Daub's departure from the CCPA-BC, we reflect on her immense impact on the organization. Beginning her journey over 25 years ago alongside founding Director Seth Klein, Shannon's leadership and unwavering commitment have been pivotal in building CCPA-BC into a dynamic and influential research institute.

In the CCPA-BC's early days, Shannon provided strategic direction, building the organization's communications systems and growing its public profile. Serving as Director since late 2018, her career reflects her dedication to transformative public policy and social justice.

Shannon has long been a key relationship-builder with progressive movements and intellectuals in the province, working closely with partner organizations and research associates on various major initiatives over the years. From 2015-22, she and Bill Carroll co-directed the Corporate Mapping Project, which investigated the role and power of the fossil fuel industry. That project saw

CCPA-BC team up with the University of Victoria, the Alberta-based Parkland Institute, the CCPA's Saskatchewan Office, and academic researchers and journalists from across the country. Shannon has also been closely involved in the B.C. Poverty Reduction Coalition and the Living Wage for Families Campaign, among others.

In her five years as Director, Shannon kept CCPA-BC on an even keel through the global pandemic, created a new research position with a focus on racial and socio-economic justice, helped to develop a new national structure for CCPA, and helped form a pay equity coalition whose efforts led the B.C. government to commit to enacting pay equity legislation.

Shannon's strategic vision and collaborative spirit have not only propelled CCPA-BC forward but also significantly shaped social and economic justice discourse in British Columbia.

As Shannon embarks on new ventures, we celebrate her legacy, which continues to inspire CCPA-BC's work. We are profoundly thankful for Shannon's 25+ years of service and leadership, wishing her the very best in her future endeavours. Her departure marks both an end of an era and a testament to the enduring values and vision she instilled in CCPA-BC.

CCPA Manitoba

The new Manitoba government was elected on a

platform to fix the health care system, solve chronic homelessness, and many more important priorities. But due to regressive tax cuts between 2016 and 2023, Manitoba's treasury is short \$1.6 billion dollars.

CCPA Manitoba is leading the charge, along with labour and community partners to draw attention to the challenges to this problem, and the solutions.

As it happens, the 2023-24 provincial deficit has ballooned to \$1.6 billion dollars.

This new financial reality will make it difficult for the provincial government to meet their election commitments to fix health care, invest in education, child care, housing, climate action and public infrastructure. Borrowing money to fund tax cuts is unsustainable, and pressure to balance the budget could force deep cuts to services and programming.

The tax cuts in Budget 2023/24 are extremely regressive. Research from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Manitoba office shows that the more money people make, the more money they get back on their taxes. The education property tax cuts are only available for those who own properties and hugely benefit wealthy Manitobans with large properties. The same goes for the income tax changes—the wealthiest get \$1,300 back on their taxes and the lowest income people get \$37. Manitoba's pre-existing tax regime is competitive and we are middle of the

pack of provinces in terms of taxes collected relative to the size of the economy.

On top of this, the Manitoba government cut the provincial gas tax, at a cost of \$340 million per year. The Kinew government has stated this will be in place as long as the cost of living is high. But Manitoba inflation rates have come down to 1.7 per cent as per December, before the gas tax cut was even introduced.

Working and middle-class Manitobans are facing an affordability crisis. However, tax cuts disproportionately benefit well-off Manitobans and provide little to no relief for those struggling most with the rising cost of living. Research shows that the best way for a provincial government to help with the affordability crisis is through redistributive means, such as boosting income transfers and quality public services.

CCPA Manitoba is leading public education and actions to draw attention to these challenges, and the policy alternatives available to the Manitoba government in Budget 2024/25.

CCPA National

At the CCPA, we start every new year with a bang. Our annual CEO pay report, released on January 2 this year, shows that Canada's top CEOs are making more than ever before. The 100 highest-paid CEOs broke every compensation record on the books in 2022, receiving, on

average, a whopping \$14.9 million.

Those CEOs made 246 times more than the average worker wage in Canada, besting their previous high of 243 times the average worker's earnings in 2021. That's so outrageous, even the Toronto Star editorial team wrote about it: "We need to keep the topic of executive compensation on the front burner. We need to keep the issue of worker pay on the front burner."

You can count on the CCPA to do everything that we can to keep these issues front and centre.

We're also holding the federal government to account on its new national dental care plan. In principle we're fans of it—but it leaves out far too many Canadian households.

Our latest report, *Missing Teeth*, shows that up to 4.4 million people might not be eligible for the dental care plan because their household income is over \$90,000.

As CCPA Senior Economist David Macdonald writes: "A family income of \$90,000 annually for families with children isn't unusual in Canada: 59 per cent of families with children made over \$90,000 in 2019, amounting to 2.2 million families. Earning \$45,000 for each parent isn't a tremendous salary in Canada. But making more than that precludes those families from receiving federal dental care coverage."

CCPA Nova Scotia

In January, we released the 2023 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia.

The report card recorded a rate increase in 2021 from 18.4 per cent to 20.5 per cent—this 11.4 per cent increase was the highest single-year increase since 1989, when the promise was made to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000.

A poverty rate of 20.5 per cent represents 35,330 children in Nova Scotia.

Co-author Dr. Lesley Frank relayed the take-away from this report, "We didn't learn from the historic reduction in child poverty that we saw in 2020. We didn't persist in providing the income support that brought many children out of poverty"

We also submitted our priorities for the 2024-2025 Nova Scotia budget. Our submission drew from our comprehensive NS Alternative Budget released in 2023 and outlined recommendations in five areas: housing, health care, fiscal policy, cost of living, and poverty. The recommendations presented options that would go a long way to fixing some of the rips in Nova Scotia's social fabric.

CCPA Ontario

CCPA Ontario Senior Economist Sheila Block has retired.

As a teenage waitress in Winnipeg, Sheila may not have imagined the outsized role she would

play in the world of progressive economics in Canada. But armed with a Master's degree in economics, Sheila soon plunged into research and activism. She worked as a public servant and political advisor in the Ontario government before moving on to a varied career with the United Steelworkers, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Labour, and the Wellesley Institute, finally landing at CCPA Ontario in 2014.

It would take many pages to do justice to Sheila's careers. A few highlights stand out:

- With co-author Grace-Edward Galabuzi, Sheila created the ground-breaking "colour-coded" series of reports on the employment and incomes of racialized workers in Canada. Their first paper, *Canada's Colour-Coded Labour Market*, has been cited more than 330 times in academic studies.
- When the Ontario government made plans to change workplace laws in Ontario, Sheila's research put forward worker-friendly analysis and solutions that helped produce once-in-a-generation progressive changes to the *Employment Standards Act* and the *Labour Relations Act* in 2017.
- As an expert witness on economic and fiscal matters for the recent Charter challenge against Bill 124, the Ontario government's public sector wage-suppression

bill, Sheila's research and arguments contributed to the bill being struck down. Since then, public employees have recouped billions of dollars in lost wages.

Sheila has been a sought-after interview subject for journalists working on a wide range of economic and fiscal issues and has been featured in hundreds of new stories every year since joining CCPA Ontario. She will be missed!

CCPA Saskatchewan

With the Saskatchewan government stubbornly refusing to address teachers' concerns with classroom size and complexity, the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation has opted for job action to bring the government back to the bargaining table. CCPA Saskatchewan Director Simon Enoch and University of Saskatchewan political science professor Charles Smith published editorials in the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* and in *The Conversation* demonstrating that the government's insistence that classroom issues cannot be a part of collective bargaining flies in the face of the experience of teachers in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec, that have all successfully argued that classroom size is directly related to workload, which has always been a collective bargaining matter. **M**



Canadian Press

Ricardo Tranjan
Ontario Office

Time for a shift in affordable housing advocacy

In the weeks leading up to the release of the federal government's 2023 fall fiscal update, there was talk about possible breakthroughs in housing policy. But when the update came out, it delivered a set of measures that have been repackaged several times since 2017: incentives to private developers, piecemeal funding for non-market housing, feeble regulations, symbolic gestures to homeowners, and nothing to protect tenants.

Housing advocates will be tempted to see the announcements

as half measures on housing affordability. But there is another way to see the fiscal update: as a clear commitment to profit in housing and a reaffirmation of the federal government's insistence on market-based policies.

This distinction matters.

The half-measures perspective will lead to another round of pleading for a little more funding for a little more non-market housing.

Alternatively, housing advocates can go on the offensive and directly challenge market-based policies, including costly incentives for

for-profit housing, empty claims against rent regulation, and the incoherence of government policies that protect investors instead of tenants.

It's about time for that shift. Current policies aren't working. But neither is the advocacy. What will it take?

There was no shortage of justifications for decisive action on housing in the lead-up to the fiscal update. Encampments are growing in number across the country—in cities of all sizes. Landlords increased rents by 11 per cent, on average, over 2022. Toronto's large rent strikes are growing stronger. More homeowners are stressing about mortgage payments.

None of this was enough to force a change, of course. The update's headline housing investment of \$15 billion is loans that won't start to roll out until 2025, which will help

fund market units that, in the latest iteration of the same program, were too expensive to most low- and moderate-income tenants.

The update also included details on the removal of the GST on purpose-built rental housing. This is a dicey road to lower rents, as there are no guarantees that the rebate will create affordable housing—or any additional housing at all.

The GST measure has been tweaked to include co-operative housing, originally not included in the policy. That's good news, but that it was an afterthought should be cause for concern. Non-market housing already under construction remains ineligible.

While the GST rebate will cost \$4.6 billion over six years, the fiscal update committed just \$1 billion to non-market housing over three years, not starting until 2025.

The \$4-billion Housing Accelerator Fund featured prominently in the fiscal update document. This is not a new program, merely the government's first chance to brag about it.

The fund incentivizes municipalities to revamp development processes, including revising archaic zoning bylaws that prevent much-needed densification. This is a good program, but, several times, elected officials have pointed to local red tape as the cause of soaring housing prices, omitting the role of federal policies that inflate demand, like mortgage market deregulations that have injected a colossal amount of credit into the housing market.

As my third-grade teacher used to say, when you point one finger, three fingers are pointing back at you.

On the regulatory front, the fiscal update targeted short-term rentals. The federal government plans to use tax disincentives to bolster municipal and provincial regulations where they exist. It also promises \$50 million over three years to help municipal governments enforce restrictions.

The goal here is to push short-term rentals back into the rental market, which is a desirable goal.

But, much like the government's anti-flipping rules and its temporary ban on foreign buyers, these measures lack teeth. The Government of Canada could have gone after short-term rental platforms and dealt with the issue resolutely; instead, it chose to aid the enforcement of a patchwork of municipal rules.

Regulatory changes also included the unveiling of a Canadian mortgage charter, which provides some protections to at-risk mortgage holders, such as temporary extensions of amortization periods.

There was no word on regulation of financialized landlords, promised in the 2021 election and included in the 2022 budget. The government is still consulting on a plan to plan.

Various analysts have expressed disappointment with these lukewarm announcements.

For the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, "on housing, the fall fiscal update is more spin than substance."

The Institute for Research in Public Policy's Rachel Samson

found that "housing investments are positive, but they are a drop in the bucket of what is needed to restore affordability."

For the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, despite some steps in the right direction, "bold action is still needed."

For the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the fiscal update "does not reflect the scale of infrastructure investment required to meet the national housing supply gap."

The Canadian Centre for Housing Rights welcomed new rules protecting homeowners from unnecessary foreclosures but stressed that most people facing housing insecurity in Canada are renters.

Beyond plenty of justification for bold actions, lack of evidence is not a problem either.

We know that the gap between wages and rents is growing, and affordable units are disappearing because of predatory practices by both financial and small landlords.

We know the people in core housing need, the type of housing they require, and how to finance it.

We know that non-market housing pays for itself and remains affordable in the long run; that's documented, too.

We have seen the study commissioned by the National Housing Council showing that loans to private developers don't deliver affordable housing.

We have seen the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) analysis of almost 50 years' worth of data on rent controls, which found "no significant evidence that rental starts were lower in rent-control markets than in no-rent-control markets."

We remember that in the 1970s, it was the federal government that prompted provinces to enact rent control as a sensible anti-inflation measure.

The federal government has consistently ignored evidence about the benefits of non-market solutions, favouring incentives to

We can keep pleading for more non-market housing crumbs or challenge the market mentality

private developers and staying clear of regulating the market. The writing has been on the wall for quite some time.

Housing advocates now have a choice to make: we can continue to plead for more crumbs for non-market housing, more meagre regulations, more plans to plan. Or we can fiercely challenge the market “solutions” that so clearly don’t work.

- We can challenge the wilful ignorance about rent controls.
- Challenge the role of the CMHC in de-risking mortgages for private banks while doing so little to support non-market housing providers.
- Challenge recurring claims that it is red tape, not speculative development, that prevents more housing from being built.
- Challenge the fact that the federal government’s own pension fund is trying to evict low-income tenants for refusing to pay above-guideline rent increases.
- Challenge the idea that governments need to incentivize profit in housing and protect investors.

The federal government has reiterated its unshakable support for private housing markets. Those who disagree with this approach should take an equally clear stance. ●

Ricardo Tranjan is a senior researcher with the CCPA Ontario office. This article was originally published in *Policy Options*.

Niall Harney
Manitoba Office

The case for rebalancing Manitoba’s labour relations

In November 2023, the federal government placed anti-scab legislation back in the public spotlight when it introduced a replacement worker ban for federally regulated industries.

This legislation is the culmination of decades-long advocacy and organizing by the Canadian labour movement and was a core component of the NDP’s confidence and supply agreement with the federal Liberals.

In Manitoba, Wab Kinew’s new government has indicated their intention to move forward on anti-scab legislation this spring, alongside the re-introduction of single-step union certification in the province.

Discussion around anti-scab legislation has been animated by the use of replacement workers during a series of strikes over the summer and fall of 2023.

This includes two long, bitter strikes at provincial crown corporations (Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries and Manitoba Public Insurance) during which workers spent weeks on picket lines, pushing back against a four-year wage freeze implemented by the previous government.

Intention to move forward on anti-scab legislation marks a historic opportunity to re-balance labour relations in Manitoba.

As labour scholar Larry Savage wrote on X, it has been 30 years since any Canadian provincial government adopted anti-scab legislation, despite consistent advocacy from the labour movement.

The absence of single-step certification in Manitoba drew attention in 2021 during the union certification drive at Canada Goose, one

of Manitoba’s largest recent union drives. At the time, organizers noted delays created by the cumbersome two-step union certification process introduced in 2016.

Research from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives–Manitoba office outlines why anti-scab legislation and single-step certification are so important to workers in Manitoba and for the broader Canadian labour movement.

Through interviews with unionized workers, union organizers, and union officials who have been involved in union organizing drives or strikes in Manitoba, the report documents ways in which the absence of a single-step union certification process and a ban on replacements leaves workers exposed to harassment from anti-union employers and extended, bitter strikes.

In practice, single-step certification and a replacement worker ban are critical to ensuring access to unions and fair collective bargaining.

As the name suggests, under single-step (card-check) union certification, workers who want to form a union can do so by organizing with their co-workers through a single process—signing union cards. Once a certain percentage of workers at the workplace have signed union cards (typically 50 to 65 per cent) and those cards have been verified by the provincial labour board, the union is automatically certified.

Prior to the 1970s, single-step certification was used in every jurisdiction in Canada and was recognized as a way of mitigating the power imbalance between workers and employers.

When Manitoba's single-step certification process was eliminated in 2016, it was replaced by a two-step process for union certification. Under the new rules, workers forming a union must first collect signed union cards from 40 per cent of their coworkers. Once those union cards have been verified by the labour board, a second step must occur—a secret ballot vote over whether to form the union.

In Manitoba, this two-step process was advanced as a more 'democratic' process for union certification. However, the disproportionate power employers hold over employees at work mean that it is anything but.

Union members, organizers, and officials consistently discussed intimidation, anti-union messaging, and reprimand from employers for union organizing activity. In some cases, workers were fired for being part of a union drive while others were intimidated by talk of job loss, wage cuts, and benefit termination.

The chilling effect these experiences have on union drives were, in some cases, augmented by racial and immigration based precarity.

Interviewees were clear that the two-step process for union certification increased the capacity of employers to influence workers. The time delay between signing union cards (which is typically done away from the job site and employers) and the secret ballot vote gives employers a window of opportunity to influence employees.

Often, this window of opportunity is extended by procedural delays prior to a vote. The organizing drive at Winnipeg's Canada Goose factory took three years due to delays.

Research from across Canada has repeatedly found that a lag between signing union cards and a secret ballot vote reduces the chances a union will be certified, with longer delays further diminishing chances.

The dampening effect that eliminating single-step certification

in exchange for a more cumbersome two-step process is visible in union certification statistics across the country.

In Manitoba, introduction of two-step union certification in 2016 caused the five-year average for union certification applications to drop from 38 per year (2010-11 to 2015-16) to 28 per year (2016-17 to 2022-23). Success rates over the same period dropped from 63 per cent to 58 per cent.

When discussing strike experiences where replacement workers were used, the union members, organizers, and officials we interviewed noted issues around workplace safety and long-term damage to working relationships.

Safety issues included confrontations between strikers and replacements and, in rare cases, violence on picket lines due to the tense environment created when replacement workers were hired. In other instances, workers noted workplace safety issues created by untrained replacements doing work without the correct training.

Others noted the deep sense of frustration that emerges when replacement workers are brought in during a strike. Child care workers striking to maintain sick leave and personal leave benefits discussed the injustice felt when untrained replacement workers passed them on the picket line. In another instance, garment workers striking for a raise 45 cents above the minimum wage

were deflated watching their boss hire replacements for a wage far beyond the rate for which strikers were bargaining.

Fair collective bargaining is central to the issue of replacement workers. Previous research on the subject has found that strikes where replacement workers were used tended to last longer than strikes without replacements.

Strikes in Manitoba between 2016 and 2023 that featured hiring replacements lasted twice as long, on average, as those that did not. This delay in bargaining gives an upper hand to employers, who can afford to wait out striking workers.

Manitoba has a law to force arbitration after 60 days on strike, but arbitration is not an adequate replacement for a bargained agreement.

Single-step union certification and anti-scab legislation are often discussed separately, but there is a tie between these two pieces of labour legislation.

The post-Second World War legislative compromise at the foundation of existing Canadian labour legislation provided access to union membership and union security in exchange for a limited right to strike.

Decades of anti-unionism in Canada have eroded this compromise, undermining union access and placing further limits on strikes.

In this context, single-step union certification and a replacement worker ban play an important role in upholding the right to join a union and to free collective bargaining.

These two pieces of legislation are entirely reasonable, given the extensive restraints on striking in Canada. In an era of wage stagnation, increasing rates of in-work poverty, and rising income inequality, it is heartening to see that promoting union membership and fair collective bargaining are on the public policy agenda in Manitoba. ●

Niall Harney is a senior researcher at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Manitoba.

The use of replacement workers prolongs strikes and undermines collective bargaining

Jon Milton

Canadian policy innovations



British Columbia is restricting short-term rentals

As of May 2024, B.C. residents trying to rent out property on short-term rental platforms like Airbnb or VRBO will only be able to do so for their primary residence or one secondary residence.

By enacting this rule, the provincial government hopes to clamp down on the phenomenon of investors buying up housing to convert it into permanent unregulated hotels, thereby removing that housing from the market.



B.C. is legalizing missing-middle housing across the province

In most North American cities and towns, zoning codes ban the construction of any type of housing other than detached single-family homes—a phenomenon that contributes to car dependency and urban sprawl, and limits the construction of new infill housing in already built areas.

The province passed a series of new laws in fall 2023 to legalize the construction of denser housing across the province.

Once these changes come into effect, all lots currently zoned for exclusively single-family homes will be allowed to build up to six units on the lot, as well as laneway homes. Another law simplifies the approval process for building tall towers near rapid transit.



Edmonton is rezoning the entire city

As of January 1, 2024, the City of Edmonton has enacted a complete restructuring of its zoning code.

Like nearly all North American cities, Edmonton's urban design is starkly divided between commercial and residential zones, with residential zones mostly being mandated exclusively for single-family homes.

The new zoning code creates mixed-use zoning in certain areas—think a shopping street with ground floor storefronts and apartments upstairs—and legalizes densification across the entire city. All residential lots are now allowed to build up to three-story apartment buildings or row-houses.

Such measures are essential for reducing car dependency, urban sprawl, and carbon emissions in cities—and Edmonton has enacted one of the more ambitious zoning reform programs in the country.



Montreal is tearing down another urban highway

The City of Montreal has reached a deal with the federal government to demolish a significant section of the Bonaventure Expressway, a waterfront urban highway that connects the city's downtown with a bridge to the suburbs south of the island.

It will be replacing the highway with an urban boulevard slightly inland and transforming the waterfront into a linear park with a pedestrian/bicycle corridor.

The city had already torn down another section of the expressway in 2016, which it replaced with a boulevard and park.



Montreal is pedestrianizing the entire Old Montreal neighbourhood

As of 2024, the City of Montreal is planning on converting the entire Old Montreal neighbourhood into a pedestrian-first zone, similar to comparable old cities in European cities.

While car traffic will still be allowed in the neighborhood, the space for cars will be severely curtailed in order to open the streets in the busy tourist zone to foot traffic.

The city is framing the move, like other pedestrianization initiatives, as part of a broad emissions reduction strategy that focuses on reducing car use in favour of walking and cycling, as well as public transportation.



Hamilton is seriously curtailing renovictions

The historically working class “Steel City” is set to enact a new type of regulation around “renovictions”—that is, the common landlord tactic of using major renovations as a pretext to evict long-term tenants and dramatically raise the rent.

If enacted, Hamilton’s law would require landlords to apply for a permit to “renovict” tenants, and a board would decide whether or not eviction is a justifiable course of action.

The policy would be the first of its kind in Ontario and it would represent the most serious attempt yet at protecting tenants from predatory evictions. Similar legislation in New Westminster, B.C., completely eliminated the practice of renovictions in that city.



Kingston has boldly transformed... the parking code

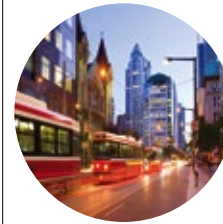
In most North American cities, zoning codes require any new construction to incorporate minimum amounts of parking.

These parking minimums might mean a certain number of spots per square metre of a grocery store, or per bedroom in an apartment, and so on. These requirements are explicitly designed to build *too much* parking—because over-building parking means it’s easier to find spots.

The effect is an endless construction of strip-mall suburbia, where massive parking lots increase the distance between places and make cars the only convenient way of getting around, at the expense of active and public transportation.

Kingston has abolished all parking minimums for non-residential land uses and replaced them with parking *maximums* for both residential and commercial buildings in an explicit attempt to waste less land on parking lots.

It also enacted minimum bicycle parking requirements for new apartments and secure bicycle parking—including for cargo bikes—in areas around the city.



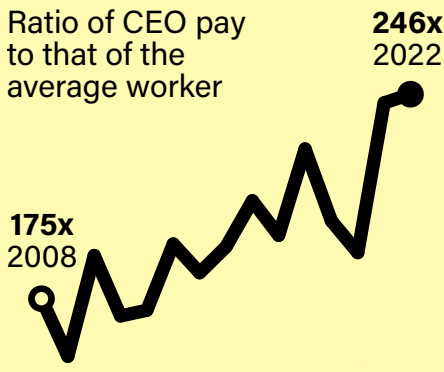
Toronto is reversing transit cuts

Newly elected Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow has reversed previous service cuts to the Toronto Transit Authority, which will allow the transit agency to maintain service levels.

When transit agencies cut service, it can result in what urban planners call a “death spiral.” Infrequent buses or less routes mean more people decide to drive (or bike, or walk), which reduces revenue for the transit agency, which leads to further service cuts, which leads to less people riding, and so on. ●

AVERAGE VS AVARICE

THE RICHEST CEOS IN 2022 WERE PAID 246 TIMES MORE THAN THE AVERAGE WORKER, UP FROM 175 IN 2008



A WHOPPING \$14.9 MILLION

WHAT THE 100 HIGHEST-PAID CEOS RECEIVED ON AVERAGE

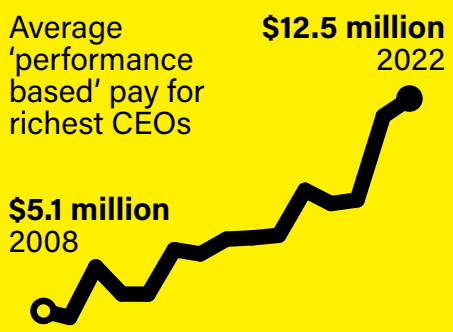


AT 9:27 AM ON TUESDAY JANUARY 2,

CANADA'S TOP CEOS HAD ALREADY RAKED IN WHAT THE AVERAGE WORKER WILL MAKE ALL YEAR

NO DOWNSIDE?

BONUS PAY KEEPS RISING WITHOUT SUBSTANTIAL DECLINES. IF THIS PAY WERE TRULY PERFORMANCE-BASED, SHOULDN'T THERE BE BAD YEARS, TOO?



David Macdonald
National Office

CEO pay in Canada continues to soar unrestrained

As Canadians struggle with a cost-of-living crisis, Canada's top CEOs are making more than ever before. The 100 highest-paid CEOs broke every compensation record on the books in 2022, receiving on average a whopping \$14.9 million.

Those CEOs made 246 times more than the average worker wage in Canada, besting their previous high of 243 times the average worker's earnings in 2021.

Broken down another way, those top CEOs get \$7,162 per hour: This means it takes them just over eight hours to pocket the \$60,000 an average worker toils all year to earn. In other words, at 9:27 am on Tuesday Jan 2nd, Canada's top CEOs had already raked in what the average worker will make all year.

To make matters worse for workers, inflation is pushing up costs and salaries are not keeping up. In 2022, the average worker in Canada got an average pay raise of \$1,800, or three per cent. But prices went up by 6.8 per cent in 2022, meaning workers took a real pay cut of almost four per cent compared to 2021.

The top 100 CEOs, on the other hand, saw an average pay raise of \$623,000 in 2022. The CEO raise was also less than inflation, but CEOs do not struggle to cover basic costs as many workers do.

In fact, the entire economic system is designed to privilege high-earning CEOs. They even benefited from inflation. The corporate line was that they couldn't help but increase their prices because their costs were going up.

Turns out their profits weren't squeezed in 2021 and 2022, they soared. CEOs are mostly paid in bonuses, which are linked to profits. Inflation drives profits, profits drive bonuses and CEOs laugh all the way to the bank.

Overall in Canada, we're overvaluing CEO pay and undervaluing worker pay—and that's got to change!

Governments must address the rampant income inequality between the rich and the rest of us, and there are four taxation measures that can help by both disincentivizing extreme CEO compensation and redistributing

CEOs' extreme income to Canadians on the lower end of the income spectrum.

First, we should create new top income tax brackets that only apply to income levels where CEOs are. Current top marginal income tax brackets in Canada are just over 50 per cent in the large provinces, which is much less than the 70-80 per cent tax range that was standard practice in the post-war years. We should return to that.

Secondly, we should remove the corporate tax deductibility of pay packages over a million dollars. In that way, if a company wants to pay its CEO more than that, it wouldn't receive a tax break on it. Instead, companies would have to pay corporate income taxes on it.

Third, we should introduce a wealth tax, starting with those who have over \$10 million in wealth. Most Canadians would consider receiving \$14.9 million akin to winning the lottery, not a single year's pay. However, the CEOs on the top 100 list are getting that amount year after year—and that builds up over time into wealth inequality. A wealth tax would help right this imbalance.

Finally, we should increase the capital gains inclusion rate. Capital gains tax breaks are an important way in which CEOs avoid paying their fair share. Income made when a stock is sold at a profit is called a capital gain and only half of capital gains income counts as income for tax purposes. But a buck is a buck and whether you make it in the stock market or by working a minimum wage job, both should count evenly as income.

CEO pay continues to skyrocket without restraints. We don't have to like it, but that doesn't mean we can't tax it. ●

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

Halifax needs a living wage

The Halifax Regional Council must continue to include paying a living wage as part of its procurement policy, address the gaps created by exemptions to this policy, and pay all its employees a living wage. Halifax Regional Council should lead the way, with other municipalities and public and private employers following suit.

It has been four years since the Halifax Regional Council passed a social procurement policy that included paying a living wage as part of the evaluation criteria for bids. This was a crucial step forward for low-wage contract workers in the municipality.

Staff reported at the time that wages paid to contractors in 2019 were as low as \$12.69 per hour for custodians, \$17.44 for snow clearing, and \$14.37 for waste removal. Councillor Lindell Smith shared at that council meeting that he has personally encountered custodial staff working a second job.

We know this about low-wage workers—they work multiple jobs, often sacrificing family time, to make ends meet. Working a full-time job no longer means you will have enough to cover even your basic needs, especially if your wage is at or near the minimum wage of \$15 or significantly less than the living wage (\$26.50 for Halifax).

At the time, the Halifax regional staff estimated that making this change would cost the municipality roughly \$8 million, equivalent to less than \$20 per year per resident.

The living wage has increased by 21.5 per cent since this policy was passed, mainly due to inflationary pressures on the budget, particularly for food and rent, which are used to calculate the wage. All workers not paid a living wage that has kept up with inflation are struggling.

The social procurement policy adopted in 2020 required some private contractors to pay a living wage. However, there were many gaps because of exemptions around student workers, low-hour contracts, construction work, and a few others. The municipality should remove these exemptions to ensure all contractors pay a living wage.

The municipality itself should pay a living wage for all workers who are directly employed by the municipality, including part-time, casual, seasonal, students and those employed at multi-district facilities.

The **Nova Scotia Construction Labour Relations Association (NSCLRA)** spoke to council and urged it not to exempt construction from the living wage requirements in order to level the playing field and ensure that companies are not just bidding based on who can pay the lowest.

“Now, contractors must compete on safety, quality and the ability to deliver the project on time and on budget,” an NSCLRA spokesperson told council. This is what the evidence on paying a living wage has shown.

The municipality must acknowledge its responsibility for employing Haligonians at wages that do not allow them to make ends meet, including some of its employees and contractors.

Ensuring public dollars are used to provide stable jobs at a living wage should be part of the anti-poverty strategy that council committed to in 2017—and part of ensuring that its own employees can afford stable housing.

While paying a living wage is not the only tool to end poverty and homelessness, it is an essential contributing factor. It is recognized as part of the social

value framework adopted by the municipality.

At the end of November, a staff report was tabled at Halifax Regional Council that outlined the financial impact of addressing some of the current policy’s exemptions, by “ensuring a living wage for all employees of Halifax Regional Municipality, Halifax Public Libraries, as well as employees of the Multi-District Facilities, regardless of employment status.” The estimate was that it would cost \$7.53 million to do so.

The direct financial implications are important, but a cost analysis should also weigh the indirect costs of low-waged work and the social implications. It takes a tremendous toll on workers’ health when they cannot afford nutritious food and quality housing and are constantly stressed about bills, which, in turn, can impact their productivity.

The additional health expenditures, income supports, and other social programs to bridge the gaps for low-wage workers also have a societal cost. There is mounting international evidence of the benefits to employers, e.g., higher retention rates, fewer sick days, better work quality, and increased productivity.

Working people deserve to work for a fair wage that allows them to have some work-life balance, not spend all their waking hours working and struggling to make ends meet. The living wage is calculated to ensure that workers share in the prosperity of our province and are supported to live a quality of life.

With municipal elections in October of this year in Nova Scotia, it is timely to consider whether candidates support a municipal living wage policy. Paying a living wage is the right thing to do and would show tremendous leadership. ●

Christine Saulnier is director of the CCPA Nova Scotia office.

CAPIT

CITIES

ITALISM

Cities: Contested terrain

Jon Milton

Cities are central
to capitalism—
and could be
central to its
undoing →

The decades after the French Revolution were tumultuous in Paris. Every few years, it seemed, the popular classes, made up of the poor and oppressed people, were rising up and overthrowing whatever the latest iteration of the French government was. Through the fall of the monarchy, the reign of terror, the rise of Napoleon, the restoration of the monarchy, and three revolutions, there was one constant—Paris was ungovernable.

For revolutionaries in Paris, there was no more iconic symbol of resistance than the barricade. The city—like most European cities—was a winding maze of narrow streets and alleys, built up over centuries of slow and organic urbanization. For the revolutionaries, who knew the terrain well, it was simple to outmaneuver the authorities in such an environment—sequestering troops into small zones using barricaded streets while revolutionaries took key infrastructure.

Today, Paris looks very different. While many of the continent's cities retain their narrow, winding, medieval streets, Paris today has long, wide, and straight boulevards that crisscross the central city, including through its oldest areas. Such boulevards are iconic—they are, for many people, the defining feature of Paris' urban landscape. They can be traced back to the work of one man—Georges-Eugène Haussmann.

Over two decades, Haussmann—who governed the Seine administrative region, which encompassed Paris and its immediate suburbs—knocked down over 12,000 “slum” buildings in the central city. He designed and oversaw the construction of iconic buildings, such as the national opera house, major parks across the city, and a modern sewage system. His imprint rests on boulevards like Sebastopol—whose width and long sight lines facilitated troop movements when the *quartiers populaires* got restless.

It was, in Haussmann's own words, the “gutting of old Paris, of the quarter of riots and barricades.” The army brutally crushed the next uprising in Paris—the 1871 Paris Commune—killing thousands after taking the city via Haussmann's boulevards.

Cities on FIRE

The “renovation” of Paris is an extreme and early example of a persistent phenomenon: cities are always changing, and those changes are a reflection of—and a contributor to—the balance of power among contending social forces.

Today, in Global North countries like Canada, “global cities” are some of the most important nodes in the global network of capital circulation and accumulation—and the undisputed king of capital in cities is real estate.

A 2017 UN report pegged global real estate value as being worth \$217 trillion USD—that is 36 times the value of all the gold ever mined. Three quarters

of that is in housing, the majority of which is in cities. That number has almost certainly ballooned in the post-COVID real estate boom. Land, especially city land, is one of the most important asset classes in a world where everything is an asset.

In *Urban Warfare*, former national secretary of urban programs at the Brazilian Ministry of Cities, Raquel Rolnik, describes the shift towards financialization of home ownership as being “asset-based welfare” and “privatized Keynesianism” that emerged alongside 1980s and 1990s neoliberal restructuring.

In the context of aging populations, assaults on public services, and the retreat of the welfare state, Rolnik writes, “the use of homeownership as a wealth stock, its valorisation over time and possible monetization worked, in practical terms, as potential substitutes for public pension and retirement systems.”

If home ownership was going to become the ticket to retirement, then the value of homes—like all financial assets—needed to constantly grow. Governments across the Global North, including in Canada, began to scrap programs that exerted a downward pressure on the cost of homes.

In its heyday in the mid-late 1960s, nearly 10 per cent of all new housing construction in Canada was low-income public housing constructed by the federal government. From the 1970s to the mid-1980s, the feds pivoted to a model based on coops and non-profit housing, financing a similarly high level of construction. Brian Mulroney's Conservatives slashed that budget—leaving the question of social housing to the provinces—and then Jean Chretien's Liberals destroyed it. By the mid-1990s, new social housing was mostly gone, with some variation between provinces.

But the shift towards financialization of housing took place in the context of another shift that radically restructured cities in the Global North in the late 20th century: deindustrialization.

The explosive growth of cities in the 19th and 20th centuries is deeply and inextricably linked to industrialization. Industrial capital—factories, warehouses, plants—was a core element of modern city-making. When it left in search of cheaper labour overseas, or cheaper land in the exurban periphery, it fundamentally altered the cities it left behind.

Geographer Samuel Stein, in *Capital City*, describes how industrial capital and real estate capital have different relationships to land. While industrial capital views land as an expense, real estate capital views it as an asset. Industrial capital, then, aims to reduce the cost of land, while real estate capital aims to increase it.

This type of conflict between different capitalist factions meant that during the era of industrial cities, there was another source of downward pressure on real estate values—one coming from within capital itself. Major industrialists in cities had direct, material

interest in keeping land cheap—both because it would directly bring down their operating costs, and also because access to cheaper housing meant less pressure from organized workers for wage increases.

When heavy industry migrated from central cities, that pressure evaporated. Suddenly, the only real game in town was **FIRE—finance, insurance, real estate**—as well as low-wage service sectors.

FIRE sector dominance has far-reaching implications for the organization of cities today. Not all of it is negative—stricter environmental rules, in addition to being hard-fought and won by local organizing, are also well within the agenda of real estate capital, since pollution tends to bring down property values.

It has also created a set of perverse incentives around positive planning developments inside cities. Real neighbourhood improvements—such as safer streets, improved air quality, better schools, and so on—mean increased property values, which mean increased displacement for the people lower on the ladder.

“As some places endure land market inflation, others fall prey to disinvestment,” Stein writes, “their land loses its exchange value, their residents are shut out of credit markets, and their buildings fall into dangerous disrepair... Gentrification cannot be a universal phenomenon; money tends to come from one place and go to another, creating chaos on both ends.”

The right to the city

Of course, capital is not the only social force at work in cities. Cities are also home to dynamic and popular social movements that confront the different segments of capital in a constant push and pull over who gets to decide who the city serves.

Revolutionary theorists have long viewed cities as the birthplace

of socialist movements. Friedrich Engels, in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, wrote that urbanization was equally important to industrialization in the formation of the working class.

“If the centralization of population stimulates and develops the property-holding class, it forces the development of the workers yet more rapidly... The great cities are the birthplace of labour movements, in them, the workers first begin to reflect upon their own condition, and to struggle against it; in them, the opposition between proletariat and bourgeoisie first made itself manifest... without the great cities and their forcing influence upon popular intelligence, the working class would be far less advanced than it is.”

Cities were, during the industrial era, central nodes of working-class power. In North American industrial cities like Milwaukee, socialists in local government dramatically improved public infrastructure in working-class communities. North American “sewer socialism,” as it came to be known, was an important force in the Great Lakes region until the era of deindustrialization.

The most ambitious experiments happened in Europe. In European cities like Vienna, socialist city governments embarked on massive construction of social housing. In “Red Vienna,” the socialist municipal government constructed a massive amount of public housing in a short period of time. Today, nearly a quarter of all the housing in Vienna is publicly owned, and nearly another quarter is cooperative or privately managed low-income housing. Vienna is one of the most affordable major cities in the world.

Industrial cities also were sites of some of the most important labour organizing experiments during the early years of the workers’ movement. Before the widespread adoption of industrial unionism in the 1930s, city-level labour federations acted as

coordinating bodies during major strikes, such as the Seattle general strike in 1919, which saw workers take over the administration of key public services—as well as the Winnipeg general strike in 1919, a watershed moment in Canadian labour history.

Deindustrialization proved to be its own battleground for urban social movements. In cities, social conflict is often a literal question of space—when a former factory or warehouse shuts down, what will happen to that land? Will it become social housing, a park, a luxury condo tower, or a contaminated, dilapidated mess?

In Montreal, the decommissioned railcar factory in the Angus Yards was the subject of a long fight in the 1980s. Organized tenants managed to win a significant percentage of social housing. The area remains relatively affordable.

The Lachine Canal zone, on the other hand, was a loss—developers gained the upper hand and converted the buildings along the canal into expensive condos, in a reflection of the growing power of FIRE capital. A similar battle might be brewing over downtown skyscrapers, as post-COVID remote work entrenches and commercial real estate deals with persistently high vacancy rates.

Tenant organizing, in particular, has grown rapidly in the post-industrial city and serves as an important counterweight to FIRE capital. Much as labour unions fought—and continue to fight—for workers against their bosses, tenants’ organizations fight against landlords and developers. The past years in Canada have seen an important revival of the tactic of rent strikes—tenants withholding their rent from landlords in an effort to negotiate on specific issues, such as repairs or rent increases.

Migrants are fighting to access city services, disabled people are trying to make accessible infrastructure, racialized communities

are fighting against police violence, women are fighting against street harassment.

Together, these movements are all advocating for a common cause: “the right to the city,” a concept coined by French urban theorist Henri Lefebvre—a right that “can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed right to urban life,” he wrote.

“The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources,” writes geographer David Harvey. “It is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right, since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization.”

The balance of power

Cities are a material consequence of policy—their form is the concrete manifestation of the words that politicians write into legislation. In their current form, cities are monuments to the deeply unequal political and economic system under which we live.

“Urban segregation is not a frozen status quo, but rather a ceaseless social war in which the state intervenes regularly in the name of ‘progress,’ ‘beautification,’ and even ‘social justice for the poor’ to redraw spatial boundaries to the advantage of landowners, foreign investors, elite homeowners, and middle-class commuters,” urban historian Mike Davis writes in *Planet of Slums*.

“As in 1860s Paris under the fanatical reign of Baron Haussman, urban redevelopment still strives to simultaneously maximize private profit and social control.”

The World Bank estimates that, by 2050, over 70 per cent of the global population will live in cities. Whether or not those cities are inclusive, democratic, and accessible will be a defining question for a future that will already be wracked by climate change.

Cities both reflect and reify the balance of power. The actions we take inside our cities today will—literally—set the terrain for the struggles in the decades to come. Will our cities become police-patrolled walled gardens for the rich ringed by slums for the poor, or will they be spaces of equality and participation? Who does the city belong to?

“The cornerstone of the low-carbon city, far more than any particular green design or technology, is the priority given to public affluence over private wealth,” Mike Davis writes in *Who Will Build the Ark?* “The ecological genius of the city remains a vast, largely hidden power. There is no shortage of planetary “carrying capacity” if we are willing to make democratic public space, rather than modular, private consumption, the engine of sustainable equality.”

The fight over the city is already on—it’s up to all of us to choose which side we’re on. **M**

Jon Milton is a senior communications specialist at the CCPA National Office and associate editor of the *Monitor*.

Catherine McKenney
and Neil Saravanamuttoo

Cities are central to resolving the challenges of our time

Cities are a constant work in progress. Great cities attract great talent. They are where we find the most specialized health care. They provide for the broadest set of social, recreational and cultural experiences that enrich our lives.

But cities are also on the frontlines of the homelessness and affordable housing emergency, the raging poison drug crisis, growing food insecurity, persistent traffic congestion and the consequences of climate change.

While these urgent issues require action from all levels of government, it is cities and their local partners that are the first and last point of contact with affected communities, and the level of government best placed to understand and deliver the solutions required.

Consider the role of cities in achieving Canada’s climate targets. Seventy per cent of emissions come from cities, primarily through transportation and heating. Reducing these emissions will require that we transition to better ways of moving around our cities, in particular by making greater use of transit and active transportation.

Meeting the goals of Canada’s Green Building Strategy to reduce emissions by 37 per cent from 2005 to 2030 and create a net-zero building sector by 2050 can only be accomplished with leadership from cities.

Municipalities own and operate thousands of existing buildings, including public libraries, recreational and cultural facilities, and community centres. Improving the energy efficiency of these buildings is low-hanging fruit and critical to meeting Canada’s climate commitments.

We can also have a much greater impact when we design cities to be more walkable. Making streets safer to navigate and interesting to walk on results in more people opting to walk over driving for shorter distances. We can do this by designing streets that encourage traffic to move slower. And also by paying attention to what makes a walk through a neighbourhood or down a mainstreet interesting.

And, of course, investment in transit means that people can move around their cities efficiently and affordably without the need of vehicles. Smart cities today must reduce the cost to ride transit—eventually leading to free transit as a public service—and design transit routes that move people around their neighbourhoods to get to work, to shop, to school, to groceries and everywhere they choose as their destination.

This is not the time to divest in transit. This is when cities that are determined to lead and attract great talent and revitalize their downtowns invest in transit.

It's a similar story with homelessness and housing. Cities and their local partners are the largest providers of community and supportive housing in Canada. Ending chronic homelessness will not happen without the strong leadership of municipal councils and their partners. And it is city zoning rules that dictate density, green building standards, the pace of housing development and the stock of affordable options.

When we talk about the housing crisis, we are often talking about the difficulties in buying a home. But we need to increasingly look at housing as a system that runs from ownership to rentals to community housing. When this system fails, individuals and families are left with no choice other than homeless shelters or the growing number of encampments. Changes in one area affect the entire system, through their impact on supply and demand.

Unaffordable home ownership pushes can keep more people in the rental market. Higher rents cause more people to fall into core housing need (i.e. spending more than 30 per cent of their income for housing that is adequate and suitable for their situation), driving up the demand for community housing. Higher rents incentivize more people to buy, which, in turn, pushes up home ownership prices.

The federal government aims to cut chronic homelessness by 50 per cent within a decade. Yet any steps are outweighed by the growing number of homeless encampments in our cities and a lack of data to gauge whether programs to reduce and prevent homelessness are working. To accelerate progress, the federal government must do better to support municipalities, which are best placed to greatly reduce and even end chronic homelessness in their communities—in a few short years.

The imbalance between supply and demand for housing flows back and forth between ownership, rentals, community housing and homelessness. We cannot solve one segment of the housing system without addressing the others.

We see three key takeaways from this analysis.

First, for local climate action, housing affordability and sustainable transportation, higher levels of government need to start thinking less in terms of funding programs and more in terms of funding local plans. Funding envelopes are important, but let's make sure they are aligned with the unique circumstances of each city and town that is closest to the problem and best able to achieve concrete progress.

Second, higher levels of government can achieve stronger results with cities through the carrot of cash transfers rather than the stick of rules and legislation. The federal Housing Accelerator Fund is an example of how the carrot approach could help reform local zoning. We need to allow cities to be innovative in how they approach the crises that directly affect them, not burden them with onerous terms and conditions that impede timely progress.

Third, currently, we are asking cities to do their part in addressing these national priorities while failing to provide them with the financial resources to do so. As difficult budget deliberations in cities across Canada illustrate, it

is impossible for municipalities to allocate the funding required to rapidly reduce carbon emissions and build adequate affordable housing stock when their limited resources barely cover the cost of providing basic services such as sidewalk maintenance, snow clearing, garbage removal and recycling, responding to emergencies, and providing clean water.

Most cities have few options for raising revenue other than property taxes. And, often, they cannot depend on predictable funding from higher levels of government. A serious discussion is long overdue on what we are asking of each level of government and the tools they have to finance the work they are best placed to do.

Municipalities collect 11 per cent of all tax revenue and deliver 15 per cent of all government services. That means that municipalities across Canada spent \$65 billion more than they collected in taxes (out of a total of approximately \$200 billion in combined municipal budgets)—and they rely on this additional spending from federal and provincial transfers that are often unpredictable. City finances are simply not sustainable.

While cities have long been seen as engines that drive prosperity, municipalities are also essential partners to achieve Canada's climate commitments and solve the housing crisis but they cannot do it without adequate funding. Cities need a new fiscal arrangement that allows them to tackle the serious issues of our time. **M**

Catherine McKenney and Neil Saravanamuttoo are with CitySHAPES, a national nonprofit dedicated to building better cities. (X: @City_SHAPES)



Downtown Toronto / iStock

Eric Shragge and Jason Prince

Cities should be the engines of change

Cities are the locus of social, environmental, and economic struggles. There are three fundamental conflicts and challenges that are playing out in cities: inequality, climate change, and the international crisis of human displacement.

Wealth and income inequality continues to grow rapidly. Affluence and poverty exist in close proximity in urban areas.

Pressure on housing and employment are two consequences of inequality. The crisis of housing is played out daily with rising rents, renovations, land speculation, and homelessness. People with moderate income are shut out of the housing market. Commodification and profit motivate developers and investors to control more urban land and the housing market, at the expense of the majority.

Cities have become the locus of low-wage labour. We see a segmentation of the labour market with intellectual labour (research, IT, design, etc.) as one pole of growth and huge numbers associated with the growth of the low-wage service sector, tourism and logistics/distribution and warehousing. The latter absorbs much of Canada's immigrant and migrant arrivals.

Climate change and the environmental crisis play out daily in urban areas. The consequences of rising temperatures and weather-related crises create challenges that force city administrations to react. The long-term solutions (recasting our transportation system, removing/reducing cars, protecting and expanding green spaces and biodiversity) are climate issues. All shape local politics, all demand immediate action, and all provoke

complex legal and political reactions.

Cities are on the front line of the international crisis of human displacement—internal and transnational migration because of wars, climate change, repression, and forms of economic development, such as mining. Cities play a key role in settlement, and housing. Groups that arrive in Canada are a source of low-wage and precarious labour and they face threats of deportation.

Immigration and migration have always transformed cities. This wave of global human displacement is large and it's happening amid the growth of anti-immigration governments and the rise of nationalism.

Cities in Canada have neither the resources nor the constitutional power to resolve these challenges by themselves, but they have a responsibility and a role to play.

The basic questions for us are: Can cities play a role in advocating for, mobilizing and educating their citizens to find local solutions while also challenging higher levels of government and the economic forces that benefit from the issues presented above? Can progressive city administrations be a force to challenge the power of higher levels of state and the interests of private capital?

We have seen examples in recent years when elected municipal officials challenged higher levels of government and, in their own practices, surpassed them in their innovation. In Europe, cities like Barcelona, Berlin, and Paris have confronted the power of capital in housing; during the Trump administration, U.S. cities played an oppositional role in protecting migrants against deportation and the long arm of the U.S. immigration police (ICE).

Cities have also introduced climate measures, such as expanding green space, expanding green energy, limiting car traffic, and increasing public transit.

There are often tensions between cities with progressive administrations and state/provincial powers. Sometimes cities ally with central governments (with highly visible international commitments and cash). Protection of private capital's interests and power always plays a central role in the fight for social, economic and climate justice.

Even with the best intentions, progressive city administrations face an uphill battle. Cities are the weakest level of government in Canada. As creatures of the provinces, their jurisdiction and taxing power is defined by the province. Operating revenue is derived mainly from property taxes. Other city revenues are a burden on lower-income residents, such as user fees and fines of various kinds.

Are city administrators in a conflict of interest with their voters when increases in property values and high-density construction bring more revenue to cities but also encourage land speculation and expensive housing?

This dynamic, particularly in an era in which finance capital sees housing as an extractive industry, limits the role cities can play in investing in different forms of social and non-profit housing and green space. That results in cities going hat-in-hand to higher levels of government to move forward on agendas like housing. In many parts of the world, we see a marked ideological tension between cities and higher levels of government.

The relationship between Montreal and Quebec's CAQ government provides an example.

The CAQ holds a majority of seats across the province but just two in Montreal. Its policies on immigration, climate change, and inequality are weak. In contrast, Mayor Valerie Plante's administration has taken relatively progressive positions on social housing, green space, public transit and welcoming

and supporting immigration. We have not nuanced these differences; in practice these positions are more complicated. However, this tension between province and city positions on these issues is central.

In the Greek myth, as retold by Hawthorne, the mighty Antaeus—drawing great strength from Mother Earth to protect the little pygmies—is helpless when Hercules lifts him from his mother and his strengths ebbs away. With the provinces holding all the strings, can cities really hope to win any real gains?

The following are some implications for policy and practice.

First, we need a deep constitutional and policy change. Cities need much more power to tax and shape policy. This transformation would reflect the shifts in population and properly recognize the centres of economic and social development in Canada.

Second, Canada's cities reflect a continuum of municipal administrations, ranging from those supporting the conventional growth "trickle-down" model (Denis Coderre in Montreal and John Tory in Toronto), to those with a more progressive environmental and social justice agenda (Valerie Plante and Olivia Chow). They are confined by the narrow definitions of the role of cities and are forced to balance the interests of traditional urban growth led by private development with other priorities, such as the housing and climate crises.

It is time for more cities to bring forward policies and practices for economic, social and climate justice as their primary goal. These kinds of cities would require brave and strong leadership, with a clear alternative vision.

Some European cities have stood up—Paris, Barcelona and Berlin and others—and, in the early 20th century, cities in the UK and the U.S., led by socialist mayors and parties, provide stirring examples (Stromquist, Verso Books, 2023). In these cases, their election grew out of local organizing, movement building, and a party to contest city hall.

Cities are the site of important contestations on issues that are both the traditional boundaries of city administrations—urban transit, police budgets and green spaces—and are outside of their formal jurisdiction—worker strikes and migrant protections.

To build toward an activist city hall, groups and organizations engaged in campaigns have to see the city as a target and demand agendas for climate, social and economic justice.

Without pressure from the bottom up, most city administrations will stay within their narrow confines. **M**

Eric Shragge is a retired principal of the School of Community and Public Affairs Concordia University. He was a co-founder of the Immigrant Workers Centre in Montreal. He, Jason Prince and Mostafa Henaway co-edited *Montréal—A Citizen's Guide to City Politics*.

Véronique Sioufi

The intersectional city

Cities reflect the avoidable—yet escalating—inequality that stems from prioritizing financial profits over the well-being of people and our environment.

You see it in the affordability crisis, the housing crisis, and environmental destruction spread unevenly across social and geographic divisions in the city.

Cities are a crucial arena for confronting global crises. Our power as community members can have a significant impact locally and beyond.

But deeply rooted structural inequities unevenly restrict the power of city residents. Gentrification, environmental racism, racialized income disparity, gendered care burdens, obstacles to economic participation for people with disabilities, the legislated precarity of immigration are modes of inequality in urban life that are interrelated and, for many, compounded.

Applying an intersectional lens to these multi-layered challenges can lead the way to greater empowerment of community members in cities.

Intersectionality is a framework developed by legal scholar Kiberlé Crenshaw for understanding how multiple aspects of a person's social identity—such as gender, race, class, sexuality, or ability—might combine to create unique modes of oppression. Crenshaw found that addressing class, gender, or racial inequity in isolation failed to account for how the discrimination faced by Black women in the workforce operates differently from either the discrimination faced by white women or Black men.

Through an intersectional lens, we can examine how various forms

of systemic injustice and social inequality operate together and exacerbate each other.

“The way we imagine discrimination or disempowerment often is more complicated for people who are subjected to multiple forms of exclusion. The good news is that intersectionality provides us a way to see it.” —Kiberlé Crenshaw

Rather than tackling social issues individually through piecemeal policy, an intersectional lens can help shift our focus to understanding how class, racism, misogyny, heteronormativity, ableism, and environmental destruction are interdependent systems of oppression built into our cities.

Traditional urban planning often reinforces a gendered division of labour, designing cities around the ‘public sphere’ of work predominantly occupied by men, and the ‘private sphere’ of domestic life and care work, associated with women. This division affects the availability and accessibility of services like public transportation, which may cater more to men's schedules and activities. Racialized women experience this more acutely: they often face the double burden of gendered and racial segregation, leading to their double displacement.

Intersectional urban planning requires that we identify and examine the common roots of these ways of oppression in order to have a better chance of tackling their multi-faceted expressions of inequality.

Inclusive approaches to urban planning call for reclaiming the city from a design that's driven by consumption and profit. Capitalism treats space as a commodity and the crises stemming from this extractive, exploitative, and self-destructive process are

reflected in the spatial inequalities within and between cities.

An intersectional lens can help us account for the uneven distribution of power between the richest one per cent and the rest of the city, and within the 99 per cent.

An intersectional approach must account for who has been dispossessed and who has been exploited in the development of the city. That can tell us a lot about the distribution of power and wealth.

Tracing the common roots of oppression built into cities requires us to examine how injustice is reproduced in settler colonial contexts.

On whose lands and by whose labour were our cities built?

European colonial powers amassed wealth through the extraction of resources from colonized territories and the forced labour of enslaved peoples, which was justified through racialized ideologies that deemed non-European peoples as inferior and exploitable.

This white supremacy is embedded in capitalism, which continues to see racialized bodies and lands as commodities. Racism is not a defect of capitalism but a characteristic feature of it, as Cedric J. Robinson argued: “it could be expected that racialism would inevitably permeate the social structures emergent from capitalism.”

The social structures that have emerged from capitalism reinforce European notions of race, gender and sexuality. This is especially the case in the context of the settler-colonial capitalist city, where white supremacy and heteropatriarchy are constantly reasserted through violence.

“What makes settler societies unique,” says geographer Laura

Pulido, “is their desire to replace indigenous peoples in order to take their land, rather than simply control resources and labor.”

This has involved the violent erasure of Indigenous ways of life and forms of governance that have targeted women, in part because many Indigenous societies are female-led and are at odds with the structure of the colonial city.

As colonialism underpins capitalism, and racial capitalism has been the structuring logic of our urban planning, they’re reflected in how we organize our cities.

The focus on areas with potential for capitalist investment overlooks communities that don’t promise immediate economic returns. Cities often neglect or gentrify neighborhoods predominantly inhabited by racialized or Indigenous communities, which further marginalizes already segregated groups, impacting their access to essential services and employment as they navigate exclusion or displacement.

Planning the intersectional city requires resisting injustice that is specific to settler-colonial contexts. For cities on stolen land, built by racialized labour, sustained by gendered and racialized domestic care, we need to decolonize.

Decolonization is a process of undoing the legacy of colonialism and its pervasive impacts on Indigenous Peoples and their lands. It involves the dismantling of the political, cultural and economic structures of colonialism that continue to dispossess and disempower Indigenous Peoples.

Settlers tend to think about decolonization on an exclusively national scale but the marked erasure of Indigeneity in cities ignores municipal institutions’ part in upholding the settler-colonial project.

Settlers, including those of us in racialized and diasporic communities, should put the full weight of our struggles for justice in solidarity with returning stewardship of the land, including the organization



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of space, society and infrastructure, to the Indigenous communities to which they belong.

As Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes in *Until We Are Free*, “When I write about Michi Saagiig nationhood, I’m not talking about any Indigenous desire to be a nation state. I’m talking about dismantling the nation state. I’m thinking about how I can share space and land in deeply reciprocal and relation ways with freedom fighters and diasporic communities in a way that supports each of our sovereignties and self-determinations, and I’m thinking about what relational solidarity might be like within Nishnaabeg thought.”

The linkages between colonialism and racial capitalism create a natural basis for solidarity between Indigenous and racialized and diasporic communities’ struggles for justice. While decolonization and abolition are very different

projects, their solidarities can be grounded in shared struggles against systemic oppression, dispossession, and the historical and ongoing impacts of colonial and capitalist structures.

Abolitionism is historically associated with the movement to end slavery, but it also accounts for the ways in which racism is perpetuated through the very same institutions and systems that are foundational to settler-colonial violence: schooling, child welfare, policing and prisons.

The intersectional city is one that is already being built through the co-resistance (Betasamosake Simpson’s term) of Indigenous and racial liberation movements. Together, they are disrupting colonial frameworks and enabling sustainable, just urban futures. **M**

Véronique Sioufi is a researcher and policy analyst specializing in racial and socio-economic equity at the CCPA BC office.

“Your goal **SHOULDN’T** be to replace a million fossil fuel vehicles with a million electric vehicles. It should be to replace a million fossil fuel vehicles with 250K electric vehicles. The main answer **HAS** to be **FEWER** cars.”

— Brent Toderian, X/Twitter,
Nov. 25, 2023



INSTEAD OF TRAFFIC JAMS: THE 15-MINUTE CITY

Fewer traffic jams!

It's good for our well-being and it can help us address climate change.

"Making streets safer to navigate and interesting to walk on results in more people opting to walk over driving for shorter distances. We can do this by designing streets that encourage traffic to move slower. And also by paying attention to what makes a walk through a neighbourhood or down a mainstreet interesting."

—Catherine McKenney and Neil Saravanamuttoo

Paris is doing it.

The city plans to get gas-powered cars off the road by 2030. Car traffic has been declining as biking and public transit takes its place.

What if everyone living in a city had access to essential services within 15-minutes of where they live? That's the idea behind the 15-minute city.

THINK:

- ✓ Widened sidewalks.
- ✓ Safe bike lanes and expanded bike networks.
- ✓ Community-based education and health care.
- ✓ Local grocery stores, retail shops, working spaces.
- ✓ Recreational spaces for picnics, appreciating nature, and having fun.

All within a 15-minute walk or bike ride.

I'm in! How do we get there?

What is needed is a policy shift that promotes walking, cycling and slowing traffic

"To build toward an activist city hall, groups and organizations engaged in campaigns have to see the city as a target and demand agendas for climate, social and economic justice."

—Eric Shragge, Jason Prince



Thorben Wieditz

#Blocksidewalk, the last progressive NIMBY effort?

Blocksidewalk was a grassroots campaign that formed in 2019 after a *Toronto Star* article reported that Google subsidiary Sidewalk Labs was after hundreds of acres of publicly owned land along Toronto's eastern waterfront.

Their goal? To build a “smart city”—a sensor-laden test bed to extract behavioural data from Torontonians.

Sidewalk Labs' initial proposal was to collect data and leverage that data to build a 12-acre, near carbon-neutral neighbourhood called Quayside, using technology in ways that addressed pressing urban issues, like climate change, lack of affordable housing and traffic.

What possibly was not to like about this?

Being an Alphabet-owned Google subsidiary, Sidewalk Labs also came with lots of money—a potential antidote to the city's lack of resources and lack of provincial financial support for housing and transit.

Welcoming a vendor that has innovative ideas to build affordable, sustainable and equitable neighbourhoods seemed like something no one should say no to.

Initially, not many people did. While there were some critics from the start, it took the *Toronto Star* piece to galvanize opposition.

From today's vantage point, it seems that a campaign that calls itself #Blocksomething would immediately be labelled NIMBY (not in my backyard).

Current debates on housing, for instance, are dominated by market urbanists, pop economists, tech

bro, and libertarians busy developing a critique of planning that focuses on removing “red tape” so that the development industry, its financiers and downstream speculators can build housing, unencumbered.

The YIMBY (yes in my backyard) movement is backed by the development industry, conservative lobbyists, newspaper columnists, right-wing strategists and politicians.

In Ontario, this nexus is perhaps best exemplified by now disgraced former Minister of Housing Steve Clark, who called Ontario's housing crisis BANANAS (build absolutely nothing anywhere near anything), as part of the provincial government's rationale to open up Ontario's Greenbelt—using the housing crisis as cover.

Opposing a development project that promises to bring U.S. dollars and would build affordable housing and improve traffic would almost be unthinkable today. Calling it #Blocksomething head-on is probably not advisable.

However, #Blocksidewalk was successful because Sidewalk Labs made several serious mistakes that would cost them dearly.

First, they came to Toronto by winning a request for proposals (RFP) that was rigged by Waterfront Toronto to get the inside track. That move didn't sit well, and even Ontario's auditor general wasn't shy to say that what Waterfront Toronto did was highly unusual and that the agency should slow down its project with the Google-affiliate.

Second, the way Waterfront Toronto awarded Sidewalk Labs

the eventual deal led to the highly publicized resignation of a Waterfront Toronto board member, a well-respected developer who alleged that Waterfront Toronto rushed the process without due diligence to meet a deadline for a pre-arranged press conference announcing the deal with the prime minister, Ontario's premier and Toronto's mayor.

Third, when news broke that Sidewalk Labs was using its fudged 12-acre Quayside deal as a launching pad to dispossess Toronto of hundreds of acres of waterfront land, it galvanized a range of oppositional forces under the #Blocksidewalk banner.

Trust in the company either didn't exist or was waning quickly.

The fact that we were dealing with Google didn't help build trust, even when Sidewalk Labs tried to distance itself from its relationship with the internet search engine that tracks our every online movement, mines our data, and sells it to advertisers.

The timely publication of Shoshana Zuboff's book *Surveillance Capitalism* and the general tech backlash following the Cambridge Analytica scandal (where the company took personal data from millions of unsuspecting Facebook users) added to the mistrust.

Realizing that several companies Sidewalk Labs created in Canada were headquartered, like Google, in Mountainview, California and that Sidewalk Labs' CEO Dan Doctoroff took his marching orders directly from there didn't help Sidewalk Labs' proclamation of independence from Google.

By 2019, big tech’s shiny veneer had worn off.

The central idea behind Sidewalk Labs’ project in Toronto was to collect data from people’s movements and behaviour, and, the company claimed, to leverage that data to create better neighbourhoods and cities.

In many ways, this data-driven approach would de-politize the planning and regulatory process by privatizing governance functions and replacing democratic oversight with “consumer signals” that would be collected day in and day out.

That data would be used to change the functions of streets and public spaces and to optimize indoor spaces in real time—innovations that could be implemented and experimented on in Toronto and be exported to other cities.

Anyone who would live, work, or visit Sidewalk Labs’ neighbourhood would have their data collected, stored and monetized downstream.

As opposition built, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association sued Waterfront Toronto and all three levels of government for failing to protect our privacy.

Meanwhile, Sidewalk Labs also asked all levels of government to grant the company special powers over the waterfront through a “public administrator” that would have authority over housing and transit—taking control out of the hands of government.

That this neoliberal techno-utopia could quickly dissolve into a dystopian future was clear to critics, but Sidewalk Labs had a lot of fans, on and off their payroll, in Toronto.

It required #Blocksidewalk members to organize around even progressive organizations that usually would have been critical of privatization schemes.

That this techno-utopia could quickly become a nightmare became clear when the *Globe and Mail* reported on the infamous “yellow book.”

There had been rumours that Sidewalk Labs created a playbook of how they would want to operate a city if someone would give them one and put them in charge.

The yellow book imagined areas that the company could control, like a Disney Land.

It aimed for exceptions to government regulations, such as procurement and density rules.

It wanted to grant the company taxation powers, including property taxes, diverting it from municipal to private sector coffers.

It would control schools, transit, private road infrastructure, public safety, criminal justice, etc.

There were musings about how data collection could be used by law enforcement.

Sidewalk Labs tried to distance itself from the revelations of the yellow book, saying that this had nothing to do with what they had in mind for Toronto’s test bed. But trust eroded even further.

Between the land grab revelations reported by the *Toronto Star* and the yellow book discoveries reported by *The Globe and Mail*, Sidewalk Labs’ dystopian vision



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of the future could no longer be hidden behind claims of carbon-neutral timber buildings, waste robots, heated sidewalks, affordable housing micro units, dynamic curbs, a nearly fully automated factory for cross-laminated timber, etc.

Still, it wasn’t easy to convince decision-makers of the dangers of allowing a company access to our data, public land and public subsidies. But, in the end, #Blocksidewalk and its allies were successful. Sidewalk Labs used the COVID-19 pandemic as a face-saving cover to leave Toronto.

In today’s context, with a nascent right-wing YIMBY movement, opposing a large private sector infrastructure company that comes with the promise of delivering affordable housing, transit, and all sorts of urban innovations seems even more challenging—but not impossible. **M**

Thorben Wieditz is co-founder of MetStrat, a research and campaign firm that specializes in public interest campaigns.



Downtown Regina / iStock

Simon Enoch

Regina's road rage

If the supposed global “War on Cars” was true, then there is probably no city in North America where the automobile has won a more astounding and total victory than in Regina, Saskatchewan.

The hostility towards cyclists and pedestrians in the Queen City is the stuff of legend.

Beer cans launched from trucks at unsuspecting cyclists.

Catcalls and insults fired at pedestrians from speeding vehicles for having the temerity to walk the city's streets.

Indeed, while the rest of the world seeks to make cities more pedestrian friendly, Regina is looking to eliminate its sole pedestrian-only street in the entire city.

While the rest of the world is eliminating parking

minimums—the requirement for a certain amount of mandatory parking spaces tied to certain developments—a faction of city council in Regina tried to increase the number of parking spots tied to buildings.

This is in a city that has a downtown which already is home to half of the city's parking lots.

Advocates of transportation modes other than the automobile often face an uphill battle in Regina.

While there have been encouraging improvements to cycling infrastructure, traffic calming measures and transit in the past few years, there is little doubt that city infrastructure is dominated by the automobile. Just as other cities are expanding bike lanes, introducing publicly funded bike share and e-scooter programs, and improving

the experience for people who do the simple act of walking.

Some European cities—Paris, Barcelona—are actually restricting car usage in favour of pedestrian-friendly zones, parks, and patios. Copenhagen is renowned for its bike-friendly streets. Other cities in Canada are investing in public transit, to try to get people out of their cars and into more sustainable modes of transit.

None of this is landing in Regina. Our built environment is hostile to anyone who isn't in an individually owned motorized vehicle.

The question is why? Why does Regina sometimes appear to be so hostile to non-motorized transportation that people feel compelled to yell out their car and truck windows at you?

Part of the explanation may be just sheer inertia. Regina—just

like so many other cities in North America—has been designed around the needs of the automobile for more than 100 years.

As technology historian Peter Norton writes, the car-dependent city becomes “self-perpetuating,” as the demands of drivers, as a constituency, far outweighs the demands of bus riders or cyclists or pedestrians.

Financially strapped city governments are incentivized to deliver more infrastructure to cars than other modes of transportation that are less utilized.

But that doesn’t explain why Regina seems more hostile than other cities that are designed around the automobile.

Maybe it has to do with the very curious notion of freedom that is tied to fossil fuel use in Western Canada. Just as the automobile is embedded in our very material environment—through roads, traffic signs, parking garages, gas stations, etc.—so is it also deeply embedded in our culture and psyche. Perhaps nowhere more so than in Saskatchewan.

In a sparsely populated province the size of one-and-a-half Californias, Saskatchewan has the largest road network in the country.

With train travel a distant memory and our inter-city public bus company sold for spare parts, there is literally no other way to get around the province than by car.

The only way to liberate oneself from the yawning vastness of the prairies is to drive oneself.

If the day you earned your driver’s license felt liberating, it would be even more so in a place like Saskatchewan. And maybe the obverse is also true: those who are unwilling to ‘liberate’ themselves by driving the car are deserving of ridicule and contempt. Even though there is nothing more liberating than to use the two legs we were given to just get out there and go for a walk—studies correlate walking with good mental and physical health.

Political theorist Sudhir Chella Rajan argues that driving is so intertwined with supposed independence and the ability to participate in our society that “anyone incapable of owning and driving a car in present day North America has to be seen as lacking all the capacities and capabilities of citizenship.”

Maybe those insults and jeers leveled at those of us walking or biking are just meant to be motivations to embrace the freedom of automobility?

But as others have observed, if the automobile gives us freedom, it is a profoundly individual and privatized freedom.

While the car gives us, as individual drivers, substantial flexibility, privacy and control, it is often bought at the expense of the collective.

Accidents, sprawl, congestion—and, of course, rising carbon emissions—are the price we all pay for prioritizing the automobile.

There is literally no other way to get around the province than by car

It is, as political theorist John Meyer describes, a “classic conflict between private desires and public goods.”

But if there are only a paucity of public goods on offer, such as underfunded and irregular public transit, non-contiguous and unprotected bike lanes, or lack of sidewalks or traffic calming measures for pedestrians, then most will be forced to opt for the privatized version of freedom rather than no freedom at all.

And maybe it is within this context that we can better understand the mind of the pedestrian or cycling-hostile driver.

Left with only this privatized form of “freedom”—which has the peculiar quality of also sometimes being coercive (stuck in traffic, cost of maintaining a vehicle, no other travel options, chauffeuring children and the elderly)—any further constraint can be quite quickly viewed as an affront to that freedom.

Any curtailment of automobility, whether through increased gasoline or carbon taxes, reduced road space, protected lanes for transit, congestion pricing, or even “sharing the road” with others is viewed as a loss of freedom by drivers.

In effect, the roads have become a zero-sum game between drivers and everyone else: any win for pedestrians or cyclists or transit users is viewed as a loss for drivers.

Until we in North America have public goods that can rival the private freedoms of automobility, we will probably have to live with certain drivers believing that they are under siege and acting accordingly, consequences be damned.

But if public transportation options can deliver the reliability, comfort and convenience that are delivered daily in other countries, perhaps drivers will welcome their liberation from the automobile and all it entails. **M**

Simon Enoch is Director of the Saskatchewan Office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Craig Pickthorne

Watch your step, buster!

Guess who first normalized pedestrian shaming

My hometown of Ottawa boasts a pair of scenic and winding roadways on both sides of the Rideau Canal. One of them is the Queen Elizabeth Parkway, on which you can drive six kilometres from Old Ottawa South to the downtown core and only hit two lights.

Until 2020, that is. With COVID-19 came a promising zeal for “Active Use” programs in cities across the world. In Ottawa, our Queen Elizabeth Parkway was closed to vehicle traffic in the daylight hours of the summer months.

Road users of all types emerged from lockdown, and the parkway was popular with cyclists, joggers, skateboarders, and dog walkers. Picnics and neighborhood get-togethers started to pop up alongside the roadway that would otherwise be inches from speeding cars.

The program was ultimately reduced from its initial scope to

weekends only. Motorists cited negative traffic impacts. Opeds were written, nightly news stories were filed, politicians and citizens lobbed videos at each other on social media, but the reduction ultimately stood.

There was a common reasoning that wound its way through most objections to the re-purposing of the parkway: “roads are for cars.”

Roads weren’t always for cars of course, but when the automobile did show up, people started getting killed in the streets. A lot. By 1952, over 8,000 pedestrians were dying in accidents annually in Canada, according to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics.

Peter Norton, author of *Street Rivals: Jaywalking and the invention of the motor age street*, writes on the dawn of the automobile in America and the demotion of the pedestrian in the streetscape.

People in cities were used to having access to roadways and there were strong reactions to the ever-increasing speed and size of cars—backlash, even. As cars got faster, states were slow to increase speed limits and even considered mandatory throttle limiters.

This terrified automotive manufacturers and local car clubs. Pedestrian injury and death were not going down and they wanted to remove themselves from the circle of blame. So, instead of advocating for anything that might mitigate the problem, an effort was mounted to shift the blame to the most vulnerable road user.

The term “jaywalking” first appeared in the American Midwest. By 1913, it had made its way into the *Ottawa Citizen*. A “jay” is an insulting prefix that means foolish, loud, or gullible.

Starting in the 1920s, there were jaywalking awareness campaigns, newspaper ads, posters, parade follies in which hapless clowns would get slow hit by Model Ts, mock trials of offenders, and more.

In 1921, the president of the Ontario Motor League pressed for the adoption of jaywalking laws: “The pedestrian must be made amenable to traffic regulations, must cross the street only at intersections, keep to the pedestrian right-of-way and obey the signals of traffic officers.”

And so, the shift was set in motion: the root of the problem was not infrastructure that prioritizes cars above all other users and lax enforcement of traffic laws, it was the reckless pedestrian. We can hear and feel the echoes of these early campaigns today when pedestrian safety is discussed.

Health departments and police chiefs of large urban cities urge people to “wear bright colours and reflective armbands,” but rarely call upon drivers to use more caution at night. Pedestrians are told to “hold out their arms outstretched” and only cross at “corners and crosswalks, preferably at intersections with traffic lights.”

Even when they enter the roadway at a controlled intersection, pedestrians must be aware of impatient drivers waiting to make a turn, slowly creeping in on their crosswalk.

In true irony, “jaywalking”, or crossing mid-block, isn’t even illegal in Canada. You are permitted to cross a roadway as long as it’s safe and you are not going against nearby signals. **M**

Craig Pickthorne is a lifelong pedestrian who keeps his head on a swivel.





Toronto's Chinatown / iStock

E.R. Zarevich

The case for preserving the historical stories of our cities

Harley Karulis is a tour guide based in Toronto. Formerly a personal trainer, since 2019 he has successfully made a name for himself as the sought-after storyteller behind Toronto History Walks, a series of historical walking tours around Ontario's thriving and colourful capital. His tours' rising popularity can be mainly attributed to two factors: the effective utilization of social media platforms, such as Meetup and Patreon, and shifting public interest towards outdoor

activities during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown period.

The *Monitor* has had the privilege of interviewing him, to obtain his expert perspectives on the city of Toronto's illustrious past and uncertain future. There are lessons here for other cities too.

E.R.: "Toronto History Walks" takes people through neighbourhoods and brings history back to life. Can you give our readers a sense of what the walks are about?

Harley: "They are definitely themed walks like the Underground Railroad or the saga of the Irish. I got into real depth with regard to the walks. Now, some of them are fun walks, like the Halloween walk, but most of the walks that I do for Toronto history walks are walks that have to do with the theme. Like the Black community in Toronto, the Underground Railroad, or how the Irish were treated. Or the dark history of Toronto; things that a lot of people don't understand about Toronto.

If you compare Toronto History Walks to a regular tour guide company, it's not like 'On the left is the CN Tower and it was put up in 1976.' Or 'On the right is Eaton Centre.' I go into more depth. I go into facts that maybe a lot of people don't realize, like the American Civil War in Toronto, or Fort York, or the War of 1812 and how that brought Toronto and...Canada together. I talk about a lot of in-depth history, not just superficial history. I go into much more deeper issues of how people were treated."

E.R: What are examples of neighbourhoods with a history that's been formative to the city but gets overlooked?

Harley: "I think that if you look at this, the central part of Toronto really was established around Church and King. So that was the original core of the church, the St. Lawrence ward. Areas like Etobicoke, you know, we don't get a lot of information about Etobicoke. I do a couple of tours there. I don't want to say they're overlooked. I just think that there is not a lot of information that's outwardly there for you to kind of look into. I mean, every part of Toronto has a lot of history. It just takes a little bit of time to kind of uncover that history."

If you look at the older neighborhoods, like Parkdale, St. Lawrence, Riverdale, Yorkville, those are areas that are rich in history and rich in historical detail. The areas that are kind of on the periphery would be Seaton Village. The Annex, for example. It's more about architecture than real in-depth history."

E.R: When I followed two of your walks, I noticed that there is a lot of focus on political injustice, such as economic inequality. Tell us about that.

Harley: "Well, you look at, for example, the Irish Potato Famine, you see there were two main sides. You had the Catholic and you had the Protestant. And that really seems to be sort of a main thread through Toronto history. If you were Catholic, you were seen as sort of an underdog. If you were Catholic Irish, you were seen as hated and you wouldn't get the best jobs. You would get what's left over. Toronto was an Anglican city. It was an English city, and the people at the top called the family compact when Toronto was starting to come together. They didn't want to share. They didn't want to allow other people in."

"So, when the Irish came over by the thousands in 1847, during the Irish Potato Famine, that was when Toronto started to change, and we became something known as the Belfast of Canada. So, the Orange Order started to develop then and then you had this hatred towards anybody who was not Anglican and British. The Greek riots, for example. People saw the Greeks as slackers. That's what people thought, because

Greece was neutral during the war. In August of 1918, riots started, which pretty much destroyed all the Greek restaurants in Toronto simply because they were seen as they did not want to carry their weight."

E.R: You're a keen observer of Toronto, the city. Some people say it's going downhill. What's your take?

Harley: "I think that if you look at cities in general, it's not just Toronto. I think the pandemic definitely had a part in that. I think it definitely did. I think we could do a lot better. I don't see it sliding. I think we could jump in there before it gets too far gone. I think that Toronto has a lot of potential. I don't think that we're necessarily using that potential. I think, you know, as you go into The Path, you know it's almost deserted most of the time. The Harbourfront is not used like it should be."

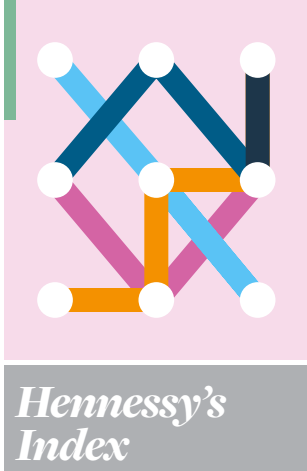
"You look at Chinatown. You have two malls in Chinatown. It should be a fantastic tourist area. But it doesn't seem like there's any life. You go into the malls, there are no shops open. You go in, you wander from one store to another. There's hardly any people there. You go to the Dragon City mall, same thing. It's all over. And I think that we need to talk about, as a community, how we bring people in, and we teach a very important story of the Chinese in Toronto. Or of the Greek Danforth. I mean, they're struggling. Every community can be enlivened. And I think that history is the way to enliven it, bring people in and show them this is the community."

E.R: What are some things the city council could do to improve the city?

Harley: "We need a stronger heritage lobby. We need more plaques to tell the story of Toronto. We definitely need more plaques. We can't just tear down our buildings and then we lose the story from those buildings. We can build, we can build a building, a tall 90-story building with the facade of the old building. But we need to tell...that particular story from that building. I think that city council needs to really get behind history. We need to take care of our history. We need to foster our history. We can't let that history go. We can't basically say well, you know what? Canada doesn't really have much history. So, we'll just let it go. And that's the conversation that I'm hearing."

*Interested individuals can sign up for one of Harley Karulis's Toronto History Walks on Meetup. He's also in the process of constructing a website. **M***

E.R. Zarevich is a writer from Burlington, Ontario, Canada. Her literary criticism can be found in *Shrapnel Magazine*, *Atlantic Books*, *Hamilton Review of Books*, *Mangoprism*, and *Herizons*, among others.



Could the 15-minute city become our future?

Trish Hennessy

82

Percentage of people who live in Canadian cities, making Canada one of the most urbanized countries in the world, according to the Canadian Urban Institute.

15

That's how many minutes Carlos Moreno, the force behind Paris' 15-minute plan, thinks it should take city dwellers to get to the essential things in life, like work, groceries, health care.

3.5 km

The stretch of a downtown road that Paris converted into a promenade in 2016.

150+

That's how many miles of bike lanes there are in Paris. There used to be only three.

400,000+

That's the number of daily bike trips estimated in Paris in October 2020, which amounts to one in five people. Traffic in the city's busiest bike lanes has since grown by 20 per cent.

60%

Car trips in Paris declined by almost 60 per cent between 2001 and 2018, according to the city's planning arm, Atelier Parisien D'Urbanisme. Car crashes have declined by 30 per cent.

18 euros

That's how much Parisians just voted to charge drivers of S.U.Vs and other large personal vehicles for hourly parking in the city, or about \$26 Canadian. This is triple the rate for a small car. After the first hour, prices rise sharply, with a six-hour stay costing \$327, instead of around \$110 for regular cars.

300

On average, more than 300 pedestrian fatalities occurred in Canada every year from 2018 to 2020. Twenty one per cent of those fatalities occurred at intersections.

2020

That's the year in which the City of Edmonton began planning its own version of the 15-minute city, which includes "employment, entertainment, recreation and retail amenities, within 15 minutes of your front door," says City Councillor Tim Cartmell.

2009

That's the year when the City of Portland, Oregon set a goal for 90 per cent of its residents to live 20 minutes away from grocery stores, convenience stores, parks, elementary schools, frequent transit stops, retail stores, sidewalks, and street connectivity. The goal was part of the city's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

5,366

That's how many sidewalk segments there were in Portland in 2020—a 23 per cent increase since 2010.

602

That's how many more transit stops with access to frequent services there were in Portland in 2020—a 30 per cent increase since 2010.

0

Carlos Moreno says there is nothing in the 15-minute concept that would restrict people's movement in and out of neighbourhoods, addressing the conspiracy theory that started in Europe and has spilled over into Canada. "It is not about preventing movement, but about giving everyone the choice to move," Moreno wrote to *The Washington Post*.

"My fight is not against the car. My fight is how could we improve the quality of life—and to improve the quality of life we need a city without zonification with a lot of local services, with more natural ecology for reducing our CO₂ emissions, to have more economical activities, and to develop more social inclusion, culture, education and public space" —Carlos Moreno

Sources: *At the Crossroads, Maximizing Possibilities* <https://canurb.org/publications/the-state-of-canadas-cities-report/> https://www.c40knowledgehub.org/s/article/Carlos-Moreno-The-15-minute-city?language=en_US <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/paris-gasoline-car-ban-1.4351377> <https://slate.com/business/2023/03/paris-car-ban-bikes-cycling-history-france.html> <https://slate.com/business/2023/03/paris-car-ban-bikes-cycling-history-france.html> <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/02/05/world/europe/paris-vote-subs-parking.html> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2023/03/03/15-minute-cities-faq/> <https://www.dezeen.com/2023/03/14/carlos-moreno-interview-15-minute-city-creator/> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231030/dq231030a-eng.htm> <https://edmonton.citynews.ca/2023/01/31/15-minute-city-conspiracy-theories/> [Portland's 20-Minute Neighborhoods after Ten Years, C. Simon, 2022](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2023/03/03/15-minute-cities-faq/) <https://www.dezeen.com/2023/03/14/carlos-moreno-interview-15-minute-city-creator/> [and](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2023/03/03/15-minute-cities-faq/) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2023/03/03/15-minute-cities-faq/> <https://www.dezeen.com/2023/03/14/carlos-moreno-interview-15-minute-city-creator/>



Inside Trade

Stuart Trew

Trump, trade and EVs: known unknowns

U.S. elections terrify Canadian policy-makers due to their potential to create uncertainty about the Canada-U.S. economic relationship. These fears, while not entirely unfounded, are usually overblown.

For now, let's assume Trump will be the Republican presidential nominee (almost certain as I write this in February) and that he has a 50/50 chance of winning in November. The Trudeau government has no choice but to prepare, as Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne and Trade Minister Mary Ng are doing with help from a "Team Canada" made up of business, labour, and government leaders.

I think this team should focus on where a MAGA presidency and Congress would differ from Biden's Democrats on industrial strategy, specifically electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing, rather than trade. Trump's trade policy is a "known known," to quote the late, not-so-great Donald Rumsfeld. A shift in EV strategy—the known unknown here—would be highly disruptive for workers on both sides of the border.

Trade is always high on the political agenda in U.S. elections and probably even more so with Trump in the running. This is the guy who disrupted the free trade narrative by pulling the U.S. out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and threatening to rip up NAFTA. Trump in office imposed high tariffs on most imports from China and on steel and aluminum products from Canada, Mexico, Europe, and other stalwarts of American hegemony.

Trump's policies chafed the neoliberal deep state but there appears to be no going back. A significant bipartisan consensus now exists that trade policy and agreements should be "worker-centred," make outsourcing good jobs difficult, and exclude one-sided corporate justice systems like investor-state dispute settlement. Democrats and Republicans agree that China's competitive advantage in the manufacture of basically everything is destabilizing to the point of creating a national security risk.

We don't have to like Trump, or Biden for that matter, to admit this trade policy shift is refreshing after years

of being told governments should let "the market" (aka multinational capital) decide what gets made where, how, and under what conditions or public interest rules. Global market efficiency is out. Productivism and supply chain resilience are, at least in the imperial heartland but also, increasingly, in staunchly neoliberal Europe.

A much bigger question mark for Canada under a pitiable Trump 2.0 scenario will be the fate of the green economic transition initiated under Biden.

Biden's green industrial strategy is not everything the Green New Deal U.S. progressives wanted, nor the much richer *Build Back Better* package that would have substantially expanded America's public services and infrastructure and social safety net. But by all accounts, Biden's *Inflation Reduction Act* subsidies are attracting new domestic and international investments in manufacturing in the U.S.

The Trudeau government was forced to respond with significant investments of its own in EV supply chains to ensure the viability of Canada's auto sector in this new American future. Canada-U.S. coordination on supply chains for "critical" minerals, batteries, and post-consumer recycling, while controversial for social and environmental reasons, could at least try to ensure benefits and/or risks from electrification are shared equitably.

But Trump and congressional Republicans are falsely blaming government climate action for the post-pandemic inflationary shock and opportunistic price hikes on food and housing by profiteering retailers, landlords and asset managers. In office, Trump—like Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre—may roll back environmental standards and subsidies to benefit powerful and newly belligerent fossil fuel companies.

"We sit on liquid gold and we're getting rid of combustion engines," quipped Trump in January.

Team Canada has a warm and fuzzy ring to it. How could it not consider everyone's interests as it mulls a second Trump presidency?

We should remember that for all the Trudeau government's talk about defending the liberal rules-based order, when push came to shove it was all about maintaining U.S. market access. Canada welcomed Trump's deregulation and fossil fuel boosterism while cooperating on immigration, cybersecurity and foreign policy. Kneejerk Canada-U.S. cooperation on China under Trump severed Canada's political relationship with its second largest trading partner.

The Trump trade threat is probably overblown next to his challenge to the EV and renewable energy transition. Canada's management of this transition, whoever is president, needs to be handled carefully but without caving to harmful demands from Washington or corporate Canada. **M**

Stuart Trew directs the CCPA's Trade and Investment Research Project.



Colour-coded Justice

Anthony N. Morgan

We didn't start the fire...

Allow me to share an old story that is familiar in many circles of Black activists, academics and students of the Civil Rights Movement. It's a story that is relevant to considerations of the Black presence on the contested terrain of the city.

The story comes from the late actor and activist Harry Belafonte sharing details about one of his last interactions with his friend, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., before Dr. King was assassinated in 1968.

Belafonte recounted this interaction saying, "I remember the last time we were together, at my home, shortly before he was murdered. He seemed quite agitated and preoccupied, and I asked him what the problem was?"

Belafonte shared that Dr. King responded by saying, "I've come upon something that disturbs me deeply. We have fought hard and long for integration, as I believe we should have, and I know we will win, but I have come to believe that we are integrating into a burning house..."

These are poignant words coming from Dr. King, who is widely considered to have made racial integration the focus of his life and the reason why he's so greatly celebrated. We see in this account by Belafonte that even Dr. King had reservations about the project of racial integration, worrying that the mainstream places, spaces, businesses, programs, services, communities, cities and states that he was ardently campaigning to have Black people gain access to were actually threatening spaces of harm, not just for Black people, but for everyone engaging with them—hence the burning house analogy.

I read this story about Dr. King's reservations about racial integration as being not about racial integration itself, but about the perils of racial integration without it being accompanied by social transformation.

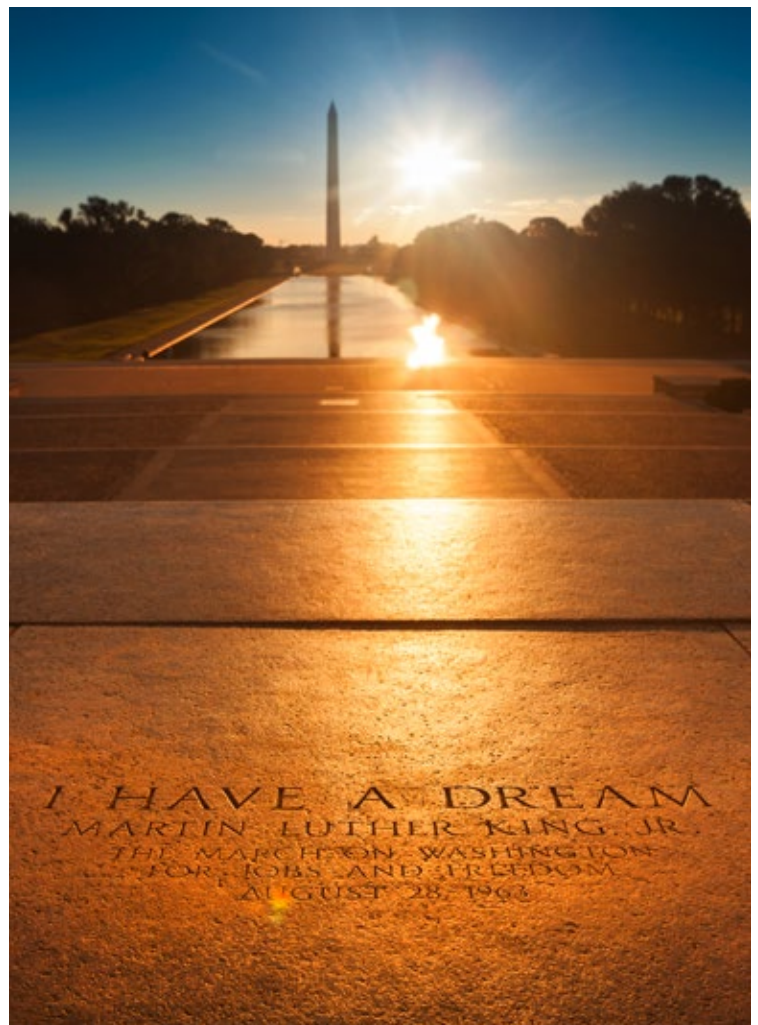
It's not enough to simply remove the "Whites Only" signs from public amenities, and the "No Negroes" bans and barriers on admitting, servicing and accepting Black people within certain jobs, businesses, schools, neighbourhoods, public buildings and other spaces and places they've been historically barred from.

There must also (and simultaneously) be serious and sustainable change in policy—as well as normalized practices, attitudes and behaviors—in order to ensure that when Black people are admitted, they can be secure in knowing they will not be allowed to be harmed or threatened with impunity.

Said another way, racial integration must also include the protection and security from being injured or violated because of the fears, ignorance, misinterpretations of others about Black people.

The battle for racial integration might strike some as a fact of history and a long-settled question. Others may see it as only relevant to the American context. But I am revisiting the issue of racial integration in this column because it is not a closed chapter of history and is very relevant to Canadian city-building today.

Going back to the 17th century, the migration and presence of Black people into towns and cities of what is now Canada has always been contested. Rising out of the institution and persistent legacy of slavery is the stubborn fallacy that Black people are violent, lazy and have little to contribute to Canada except their cheap labour. Though now it is mostly unspoken, this attitude



In every city where data has been collected, Black people are significantly over-represented in instances of police stops, arrests, searches and uses of lethal force

remains pervasive in the processes, institutions, policies and practices that are involved in the maintaining, building and developing of modern Canadian cities.

How else can we explain the consistency with which Black people in Canadian cities are generally found relegated to substandard and under-performing schools, dangerous and/or precarious subservient jobs, under-resourced neighbourhoods and neglected social housing developments, unreliable and/or inaccessible public transit?

How they are generally alienated from needed and valuable places and spaces in cities, such as hospitals, major theatres, art galleries, well-curated public parks and other spaces that make cities most attractive

places to live. Black people are most often regarded as an unwanted or tolerated element within cities.

The general aversion and malaise that tends to exist about the presence and place of Black people in cities is most obviously expressed through the organizing of municipal policing resources. This is why, in every city where data has been collected, Black people are significantly over-represented in instances of police stops, arrests, searches and uses of lethal force.

We cannot have an inclusive or transformative discussion about cities as contested terrain without explicitly grappling with how to address the fact that policing in cities is organized through policy, politics and public opinion to surveil, monitor, contain and control undesirable population groups.

While Black people are often the most targeted by these practices, Indigenous Peoples, folks living with mental health and addictions challenges, sex workers, refugees and other socially undesired folks are similarly victimized.

For these population groups, living in cities can be likened to living in a burning house.

So how do we stop the burning? Aggressive re-investment in upstream measures—affordable housing, public schools, health care and hospitals and transit, and truly redistributive and progressive tax policies for cities—are all great starts.

But for cities to truly emerge as places where all people can experience belonging, well-being, security and success, public policy-makers and politicians must realize that not only are our cities on fire, but that it's the darker peoples of our municipalities who are consistently getting burned the most. **M**

Anthony N. Morgan is a Toronto-based human rights lawyer, policy consultant and community educator.



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Chuka Ejeckam

Policing is an armed and dangerous opponent to justice

On September 22, 2023, the Toronto Police Service held a memorial for a dog, Bingo, that had died in a police operation roughly two months prior.

Bingo's death was commemorated with remarks from the Toronto Police Service Chief Myron Demkiw, a bagpiper-led public procession and motorcade, and a 70-minute long ceremony at the Woodbine Banquet Hall.

The event even featured Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow speaking about the “special” connection between a dog used in police operations and the cop handling it, calling it “a connection few of us will ever know.” Chow appeared and spoke at the event despite the Toronto Police Association having publicly and repeatedly criticized her for not visibly performing grief to their satisfaction.

To be clear, the Toronto Police Service killed Bingo. As far as I am aware, dogs do not typically perform wage labour, and I'm unaware of any findings that they even recognize such a notion. The dogs frequently called “canine officers” would more accurately be described as dogs placed into dangerous circumstances they do not understand, in service of enforcing laws they are not aware of.

It is peculiar, to my mind, to describe that as a caring relationship.

The Toronto Police Service and Toronto Police Association regularly behave with belligerence and impunity in public. Not only did Toronto police spend an undisclosed amount of its more than \$1 billion annual budget on an extravagant memorial service

for a dog that would still be alive if the police had left it alone to be a dog instead of turning it into a weapon, they demanded that the mayor attend, and show deference. Absurdly, they were granted this.

Police are given an enormous amount of public resources. Despite significant and sustained support for reducing police expenditures in favour of social programs and provision, city police budgets across Canada have continued rising since the mass international protests against police brutality and carcerality in 2020. These increases persist despite rising incidences of fatal police shootings in Canada. Even further, recent findings demonstrate that increasing police budgets does not reliably correlate with reducing crime or increasing safety.

Police do, however, reliably enact more violence, and more frequently, against racialized people.

The notion that the institution of policing is humane in the slightest, or that it values life in any meaningful way, is an affront to the conscience. Rather, Canadian police are both tight-lipped about and unaccountable for the violence and racial inequity they perpetrate.

With temperatures plunging across the country through winter, police forces tore down and destroyed the shamefully insufficient shelter and protections homeless people had been able to gather for themselves. (To be clear, the shame is ours.) RCMP officers in B.C. were recorded sickeningly referring to Indigenous Peoples bravely opposing continued colonial land theft and for-profit ecocide as “orcs” and “ogres.”

And, with the world screaming outrage over Israel's campaign of genocide in Gaza—recognized as such by the International Court of Justice—aided and armed by the U.S. and its predictably dutiful allies, including this one, Canadian police were carrying out violent home invasions and charging protesters with hate crimes for vocally and publicly opposing that genocide.

Whatever law enforcement officials claim their values or intentions are, in practice, policing is a profanity.

Change will not come from electoral politics. At this point, it is inescapable that policy-makers either already know this—and the oppression is the point—or they are, conveniently, incapable of understanding it. In either case, we're forced to confront that the institution of policing is an armed and dangerous opponent of justice, equity, and collective well-being.

In short; yes, literally abolish the police. The world we seek has neither need nor place for them, and cannot be achieved without their defeat. **M**

Chuka Ejeckam is a political researcher and writer living in Toronto.

David Este, Christopher Walmsley and Wanda Thomas Bernard

It's time to make reparations for the transatlantic slave trade

Today, there is an international conversation in former slave-trading nations about the intergenerational economic, social and cultural effects of the transatlantic slave trade.

This conversation includes colonial governments, descendants of slave owners, universities, newspapers, municipalities, professional organizations, community activists and religious institutions.

There are now calls for reparations to the descendants of enslaved peoples.

In 2021, the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) and the Nova Scotia Association of Black Social Workers (ABSW) began a project to examine CASW's and social work's relationship (or lack thereof) with Black Canadians. Both associations recognized "the systemic racism in our country and the need for our joint forces to rectify the wrong and strengthen the lives of people of African descent."

It resulted in a 50-page report that provides recommendations for reparations. Here's why.

In Canada, from the 17th to the mid-19th century, African slaves and slave trading were common with British and French settlers. When New France became part of the British domain in 1759, 1,509 slave owners and 1,132 slaves of African descent were documented.

During the U.S. War of Independence (1775-83), United Empire Loyalists settled in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, where most settlements had African slaves. During this era, most prominent political and religious figures in Ontario were slave

owners (Winks, 1997). The British government outlawed slavery in its colonies in 1833, but many slaves continued to serve as indentured servants to their former slave masters for the remainder of their lives.

Migration of African-descent peoples to Canada continued from the mid-19th century onward. Migrants from the United States settled in Windsor, Chatham, Buxton and Toronto, Ontario (Hill, 1981).

Montreal became a temporary home to many African-descent peoples in the 1880s while working as porters on Canada's two transcontinental railways. In the early 20th century, some decided to make Montreal their home, creating the city's English Black community (Este, 2004).

In Western Canada, African Americans migrated to the Victoria area in the 1860s and to northern Alberta and Saskatchewan in the early 20th century.

Starting in the 1960s, extensive Caribbean migration began, primarily from Jamaica and Haiti to Toronto and Montreal. In the 21st century, these countries continued to be a major source of immigrants,

along with Nigeria, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As of the 2021 census, Black people comprise 4.3 per cent of Canada's population. Most are descendants of former slaves from the Americas. Most are descendants of former slaves from the Americas.

Professional social work began in Canada in 1914, but it was only in the late 1950s that persons of African descent began to enter the profession through university degree programs.

We reviewed the websites and annual reports of the CASW, ABSW, Canadian provincial associations, and those of the British and American associations. We found that social work websites contained little or no information about African Canadians.

The CASW hadn't commented on the major events of the 20th century regarding peoples of African descent, such as the demolition of Africville, the assassination of Martin Luther King, the formation of the Black United Front, and the imprisonment/release of Nelson Mandela.

Introductory social work and social policy texts had little to no content on African-descent peoples until 2017.

Anti-racism, anti-Black racism and Africentric social work webinars, presentations and workshops only became visible in the Canadian social work profession after 2018. The murder of George Floyd in the United States is believed to be a major catalyst.

The transatlantic slave trade involved an estimated 12 million people (Jones, McElderry, Connor,

African
Canadians
continue to
experience
racism and
discrimination

2021), with an estimated \$3 billion value assigned to the bodies and labour of enslaved Black Americans' free labour and production at the start of the U.S. Civil War.

Today, white families in the U.S. have a median financial wealth of \$171,000 compared to \$17,600 for Black families. White college graduates have seven times the wealth of Black college graduates (Ray & Perry, 2020).

To date, Black Americans have not been compensated for their enslavement. They have been denied education and housing opportunities. The moral wrong of slavery, its lost economic opportunities and its multi-generational harms are three major reasons to seek reparations today.

Several organizations investigating their connections to the slave trade have begun to voluntarily make reparations. Georgetown University and Princeton Theological Seminary built endowments and became elite institutions through the sale of slaves. These universities are now entitling the descendants of slaves sold by them "to full rights and benefits bestowed by those universities to obtain degrees across the higher education pipeline" (Ray & Perry, 2020).

On March 23, 2021, Evanston, Illinois became the first municipality in the United States to pay reparations to Black families or their descendants who have been a victim of discrimination in housing policies and practices between 1919 and 1969. Council voted to distribute \$25,000 to each of 16 eligible Black households for home repairs or down payments, as well as a total of \$10 million over the next 10 years (BBC News, March 23, 2021).

The State of California; Iowa City, Iowa; Amherst, Massachusetts; Providence, Rhode Island; and Asheville, North Carolina are also considering reparations.

On April 21, 2021, the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee voted to approve a legislative proposal that would create a commission to "examine slavery and discrimination in the United States from 1619 to the present." Its name, HR 40, refers to the 40 acres of land and a mule that President Abraham Lincoln promised African Americans as reparations for slavery at the end of the United States Civil War (1861-65). These reparations were never received and this proposal is unlikely to pass due to a divided Congress.

When they hear the term reparations, most Canadians believe that African Canadians are seeking fiscal compensation for enslaved descendants. While African Canadians did experience over 200 years of enslavement, they continue to experience racism and discrimination. Reparations need to be understood as the act of "repairing or restoring" and an acknowledgment that the injury continues in the present (McKinley, 2020).

Reparations can take many forms: scholarships, tuition remission, business grants, housing down payments, land titles and political and academic representation.

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Electoral reform could be key to solving the housing affordability crisis—and more

By Gisela Ruckert and Anita Nickerson

Our report recommended that the CASW and its provincial associations continue to provide ongoing education opportunities on emerging issues impacting African Canadians, such as systemic anti-Black racism, reparations, and employment issues; Africentric social work practice; and the Canadian history of people of African descent.

It recommended creating two annual scholarships to African descent social work students and an annual award to an African Canadian social work practitioner to recognize outstanding contributions to the social work profession in Canada.

And it recommended creating an African-Canadian social work practitioner position at the CASW.

CASW's decision to incorporate these recommendations into their strategic plan is positive recognition of slavery's legacy and its multi-generational harms and the need for reparations. As the first national professional organization to do so, it provides a path forward for other professions, trade unions and civil society organizations to recognize slavery's harms and address them within their organization today. **M**

Dr. Este is professor emeritus, University of Calgary. Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard is professor emerita, Dalhousie University. Dr. Walmsley is professor emeritus, Thompson Rivers University.

YOUR CCPA

Get to know Lisa Akinyi May

OFFICE: **B.C.**
POSITION: **ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR**
YEARS WITH THE CCPA: <1

Your career in communications and research spans continents. Tell us about your journey.

My early career focused on telling the stories of the most vulnerable in society at the United Nations in my native Kenya and at one of Belgium's leading broadcasters, VRT News. Prior to moving to Canada, I managed communications and grants at Journalismfund Europe, a Brussels-based foundation that supports a global network of investigative journalists exposing money laundering, corruption and human rights abuses.

Returning to academia, I pursued a Master's degree in Political Science at the University of British Columbia, specializing in international migration policy—a topic that deeply resonates with my personal history as an African migrant. This academic and professional path has imbued me with a nuanced understanding of the power of storytelling and research in fostering societal understanding and transformation.

What drew you to the CCPA?

The CCPA's unwavering commitment to social, economic and environmental justice struck a chord with me. Even before I moved to Canada, I was captivated by the institute's dedication to independent research that delves into critical societal issues. A pivotal conversation with the then CCPA-BC Director Shannon Daub in 2020, after my initial outreach in 2019, solidified my determination to contribute to the CCPA's mission.



My diverse experiences across three continents, coupled with my academic focus on migration policy, have equipped me with a unique perspective on the complexities of global and local dynamics, which I am eager to explore further at the CCPA.

How did your family's history inform your choice to work on progressive policies?

The resilience my family displayed in the face of economic hardship and the loss of my parents taught me the critical importance of community support and the stark realities of life's challenges. My upbringing in Kenya, where my mother was a seamstress and my stepfather was an accountant who faced unemployment, and my subsequent move to Belgium highlighted the disparities and systemic inequities present in society. These personal experiences have deeply influenced my commitment

to contributing to research that illuminates these issues and informs policies that can lead to a more equitable society.

What makes you proud of working at the CCPA?

Working at the CCPA fills me with pride due to our research's pivotal role in informing public discourse and empowering communities. Leading the communications team and our public engagement work, I see first hand how our work supports informed advocacy and decision-making. It's gratifying to know that the insights we provide are used by organizations to advocate for meaningful change.

When you're not at work, what do you do to decompress?

Vancouver, with its mountains and proximity to water, evokes memories of Homa Bay, my grandmother's hometown in Kenya. The city's natural beauty offers a serene backdrop for relaxation and reflection. Although I'm not inherently outdoorsy, I occasionally venture out to explore, driven by my partner's enthusiasm for camping. However, my true solace lies in reading, diving into books that offer both escape and insight.

What are you reading these days?

Yellowface by R.F. Kuang provided a humorous yet profound look into identity and the intricacies of social justice within the publishing world. Additionally, Thomas Piketty's *Capital and Ideology* has been a compelling read, offering deep dives into economic disparities and the historical underpinnings of today's societal structures. **M**

The CCPA's work is powered by people like you

Meet Judith Weiss

New life insurance policy donor, long-time monthly donor

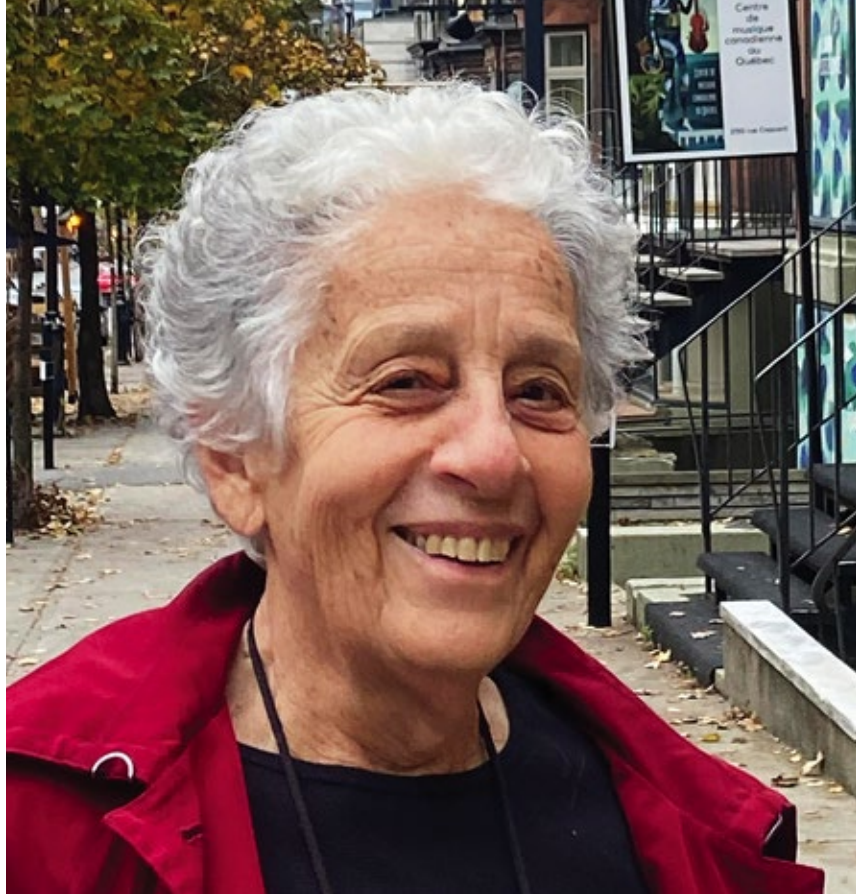
Judith lives in beautiful Sackville, N.B. and has been a CCPA donor for a whopping 19 years. As a monthly donor, Judith belongs to the group of people who provide a stable financial foundation that enables us to plan ahead. In addition to being a monthly donor, Judith has designated the CCPA as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy. This thoughtful future donation will be a lovely complement to her annual investment in CCPA.

You've recently shared with us that you've designated the CCPA as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy, which will result in an incredibly generous future donation. How long have you been considering this? How does it feel to have moved forward with turning this idea into action?

The life insurance policy was suggested to me by my financial advisor, out of the various options I had heard about from charitable organizations over the years. I chose this as guarantee of future income for the CCPA.

In terms of the actual process, could you share your experience with us? Was it complicated or straightforward? The process was relatively straightforward. The one caveat is the insurance company's assessment process to determine whether one qualifies for the policy and to determine the premiums, based on one's age and medical status. There is a rigorous review of one's health records, including testing by an independent agency hired by the insurance company.

What galvanized you to take the additional step of setting up this



additional donation to help the CCPA of the future continue its work? The CCPA has definitely proven itself as the most competent and reliable counterbalance to the conservative and neoliberal think tanks at a time when the gains of the far right and the neoliberals are growing in frightening ways.

What was it about life insurance as a donation option that appealed to you? I'm at an age when I need to plan some useful legacy that can—symbolically, at least—distribute some of the benefits I've enjoyed, living and working in a country whose sources of wealth

are increasingly open to question. The life insurance donation offers a practical way of doing it outside of the possible constraints and delays in executing a will that will contain quite a number of other beneficiaries.

What has the CCPA done lately that's made you feel proud to be a donor? In your opinion, what makes the CCPA special? The CCPA has steadily been emerging in the public eye as a trustworthy resource for mainstream news media like the CBC and CTV. It's been so heartening to see CCPA experts interviewed on national

networks and not treated as marginal thinkers, or as an after-thought. I'm also optimistic that the tired and empty defense of the status quo offered by certain think tanks is no longer credible to the public, whereas the CCPA has emerged as a fresh voice with sensible solutions that speak to the needs of more and more Canadians.

And the *Monitor* has found its stride and its identity, with its two distinguishing features: in-depth and multi-faceted compilations of articles on specific issues of national urgency (health care, housing, education, etc.) and a style of writing within each issue of the newsletter that makes socioeconomic analysis clear and accessible to the general public without over-simplification or condescension, yet providing links to more in-depth studies and analysis.

I think that these two accomplishments have catapulted the CCPA to an optimal position, and it's up to its supporters to help the CCPA solidify and broaden its presence, so that it becomes the trusted resource of choice for most Canadians.

What were your early influences? I think it might be a long story because I can't pinpoint one event or one period of my life or a single person who influenced me.

From my earliest childhood in a Jewish family in Malta (where I first picked up on notions of social responsibility and the role of the state rather than private charity), to my years in Argentina during Perón's presidency (with its motto of social justice, economic independence and political sovereignty, and a balance between capital and labour) and, after Perón, then to my life in Canada since 1959, where I witnessed the rise of the NDP, the strength of labour unions, and some semblance of social democracy—and its undoing under neoliberalism.

At every stage I recall absorbing from the adults around me a clear sense that socioeconomic problems were caused by structural defects or imbalance and that the only hope for correcting our problems lay in some form of social democracy that could only be achieved through a humanistic approach.

What is your hope for the future? Name one policy the government should adopt today that would make people's lives better. We obviously will have to urgently deal with the climate crisis and the crises

in employment, health care, and housing, which are all huge and complex, and most threatening to our collective future.

I strongly believe, however, that it's now clearer than ever that solutions to two simpler structural problems are already within reach, and that campaigns enabled by the CCPA and other progressive national organizations are already snowballing.

Electoral reform can bring more voters out of their current fatalism (and reduce the appeal of demagoguery) and it is likely to include more citizens in actively working toward solutions for the most intractable problems.

A universal basic income or a basic living wage (modelled on our Old Age Security program, but with more safeguards) would free individuals to look beyond precarious work or unemployment, toward healthier and more engaged lives.

I imagine that both structural reforms can re-energize society, encourage creativity and cooperation, and open more avenues for solving the larger systemic problems (employment, housing, health care, etc.)

In terms of your connection to the CCPA, who or what drew you to our work? The fact that you work with experts and activists from a variety of sectors of the economy and society that are usually underrepresented or simply ignored. And that the discourse is inclusionary rather than doctrinaire.

How do you think we can try to connect with folks of different political alignment and convince them of the value of social justice? Extend the reach of the CCPA: By continuing to expand the educational reach of the *Monitor* through community organizations, public libraries, gift subscriptions. By maintaining a strong presence in the mainstream media and expanding that presence online.

Reminding members and subscribers of the importance of combatting alienation and fatalism through dialogue, of finding commonalities with neighbours, fellow employees, and other acquaintances on issues that the neoliberals and the right-wing media and politicians are hijacking through irrational arguments and by offering solutions that will only benefit the economic and political elites and continue to polarize society and alienate individuals. **M**



CCPA

CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
CENTRE CANADIEN
de POLITIQUES ALTERNATIVES

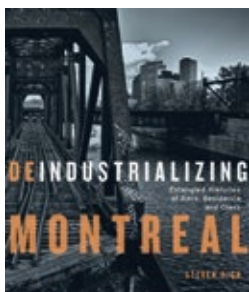
A life insurance gift is a charitable donation that you can arrange now to help the CCPA in the future. Making a life insurance gift is not just for the wealthy or the elderly. It's a legacy gift that makes a special impact. To ask about how you can leave a gift of life insurance to the CCPA, or to let 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.



Black history mural in Montreal's Little Burgundy / Canadian Press

Savannah Stewart

How post-industrial redevelopment efforts eclipse Montreal's working-class history



DEINDUSTRIALIZING MONTREAL: ENTANGLED HISTORIES OF RACE, RESIDENCE AND CLASS
STEVEN HIGH

McGill-Queen's University Press, June 2022

There was a time when Montreal was the heart of Canada's industry.

After the opening of the Lachine Canal in 1825—constructed as a shortcut to avoid the Lachine Rapids of the St. Lawrence River—hundreds of companies opened factories along its shores. Workers unloaded lumber and steel from the city's sprawling railways and shipped them to the Great Lakes region or the Atlantic Ocean. Working-class neighbourhoods developed around the canal, housing factory and rail workers.

But in the 1970s, following trade liberalization and the evolution of the manufacturing sector,

factories along the canal began to shut down. Over the 30 years that followed, the area progressively, and painfully, deindustrialized.

Concordia University History Professor Dr. Steven High documents this process of deindustrialization in his book *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence and Class*, focusing on two neighbourhoods that face each other along the canal in Montreal's Southwest.

Pointe-Saint-Charles, on the southern shore of the canal, is a historically working-class area whose population was predominantly Irish and Québécois workers at the canal's factories

and CN trainyards in the southernmost corner of the neighbourhood.

Little Burgundy, to the north, is a multiracial neighbourhood where many in Montreal's Black community settled. It was close to the passenger train stations where sleeping car porters, one of the few jobs available to Black men at the time, would board their trains.

A massive work of oral history, *Deindustrializing Montreal* weaves its analysis with the voices of current and former residents of these two neighbourhoods, bringing to life these quartiers as they were through this period of major change. Starting in their industrial heyday, with stories told through the eyes of children watching their fathers leave to work long days in the factories and on the railways, the book provides a detailed account of the political and corporate decisions that ushered in the decline of manufacturing in the area—as factories, and the jobs that come with them, moved to more economically beneficial areas: the suburbs, Ontario, the United States and overseas.

For High, the demographics of these two neighbourhoods were the reason for the drastically different ways that they experienced deindustrialization.

Pointe-Saint-Charles languished after its residents were laid off *en masse* as factory after factory shut down, resulting in an exodus of half its population in 30 years.

Little Burgundy was quickly swept up in community housing redevelopment and auto transportation projects soon after its perception as a Black neighbourhood was solidified. But few inhabitants managed to remain in the area.

As he writes in the book's introduction, "Point Saint-Charles was mainly left to rot by suburbanization and deindustrialization, until it was revalorized by gentrification, whereas Little Burgundy was torn apart by urban renewal and highway construction as well. This historical divergence had profound consequences in how urban change was experienced, understood, and now remembered."

Displacement of racialized communities due to urban renewal projects, and particularly highway construction, was a well-established strategy in the United States by the time Montreal's Ville-Marie Expressway project came around. The project *Segregation by Design* documents this phenomenon in multiple American cities from New York to Los Angeles. High notes: "It was no coincidence that the highway passed through poor and multiracial neighbourhoods, including Montreal's Chinatown and Little Burgundy, rather than through more posh white neighbourhoods."

High's analysis is firmly rooted in the concept of racial capitalism, which, he explains, citing Jodi Melamed's article "Racial Capitalism," as recognizing "the extent to which racial differentiation and

hierarchy are integral to class structures. If capitalism is a system based on the accumulation of capital and the exploitation of waged labour, racial capitalism acknowledges that capital 'can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups.'"

Race and racism, High demonstrates, pervaded and determined every aspect of working peoples' professional and personal lives, just as much as class status: where they settled, the jobs they worked, officials' reactions to their economic difficulties, and so on.

It pervaded the workers' movement, too. This area along the Lachine Canal was a frontline in the fight for better working conditions in Canada. Factories increasingly unionized, providing upward social mobility out of poverty—and, increasingly, out of the neighbourhood and into the suburbs. But this was denied to the racialized communities in Little Burgundy.

Factory work, as one interviewee in *Deindustrializing Montreal* puts it, "was just for white people." The theme of being left out recurs throughout the book, recalled in numerous ways: left out of the union, left out of the political considerations, left out of history.

In Pointe-Saint-Charles, many of the buildings that housed the factories discussed in *Deindustrializing Montreal* are still standing today, often renovated into luxury condos as the area continues to undergo aggressive gentrification.

Little Burgundy, however, leaves an impact through absence. The majority of its former cultural institutions have been erased from physical space—music venues, cultural centres, and churches were demolished to make way for social housing and the Ville-Marie Expressway. Despite the on-the-surface positive of community housing being built, the redevelopment was a massive blow to the social fabric of the neighbourhood, as governments made no effort to prioritize the former residents in the new housing.

Pointe-Saint-Charles quickly developed and continues to maintain a strong neighbourhood identity as a working-class area with a prominent Irish presence. Little Burgundy's identity really only cemented once the landscape was irrevocably changed.

Although Pointe-Saint-Charles' historical identity endures, it has not shielded the area from intensive redevelopment and real estate speculation, which is inconsistent with the neighbourhood's mythology.

After deindustrialization came the valorization of trendy industrial aesthetics for the privileged class. Parks Canada's reopening of the Lachine Canal as a linear park and recreation zone provided "vital green infrastructure for the gentrification of this part of the city," as was feared by locals at the time. Parks Canada's efforts to interpret the industrial heritage of the site through panels and banners in front of the prominent factories along its shores, themselves

renovated by the private sector into often luxury condos, were conducive to gentrification.

This interpretative effort, presenting history from 1845 to 1945, details what was manufactured and the manufacturing process. “Visitors hear nothing about working people, their struggles, or the years of decline and hardship. And what of the neighbourhoods that lay beyond? Hardly a word,” High writes. Workers have conveniently disappeared from the narrative.

Today, Pointe-Saint-Charles’ urban renewal is in an advanced stage, but not complete. A 500-acre piece of industrial land awaiting redevelopment sits where the Lachine Canal meets the St. Lawrence near Montreal’s Old Port: the Bridge-Bonaventure sector. The City of Montreal is making its way through an extensive consultation process to determine how it should be redeveloped as private developers are expanding their foothold in the sector, waiting to cash in with big construction projects.

While the city’s vision states its intent to respect the spirit of the area and protect its industrial heritage, High’s work is a caution about the sometimes insidious consequences of such efforts.

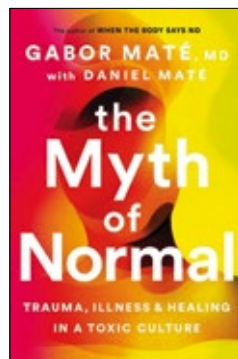
With the coming construction of housing in the area—coupled with a housing crisis and working-class displacement—many are hoping to see big gains for non-market housing. But whether the neighbourhood’s historic residents will truly benefit from the urban renewal project remains to be seen.

Clearly, the themes High explores in *Deindustrializing Montreal* remain relevant today and will retain their relevance as the Montreal of tomorrow continues to be built out of the framework of yesterday. **M**

Savannah Stewart is a Montreal-based journalist and the managing editor of the independent journalism project *The Rover*. She is particularly interested in community reporting, housing, justice, and the environment.

Peter G. Prontzos

What is normal?



THE MYTH OF NORMAL: TRAUMA, ILLNESS & HEALING IN A TOXIC CULTURE DR. GABOR MATÉ

The Greek philosopher Thales stressed the necessity to “know thyself,” and in the years since, philosophers, psychologists and other scientists have discovered myriad ways in which the human brain, unconsciously and automatically, shapes our view of both the external world and of our own “selves.”

One factor that is a serious obstacle to truth is that at least 98 per cent of our brain processes are unconscious. As Cordelia Fine writes in *A Mind of Its Own*: “Your unconscious is smarter than you, faster than you, and more powerful than you. You will never know all of its secrets.”

Our sense of what is real—and what is “normal”—is constructed by our brains from our perceptions of both the outside world and from our bodies (“interoception”). Your mind, your very sense of self, is an ongoing process that is constantly changing—not a static “thing.”

Another issue that affects our perceptions is the natural tendency of the human brain to see patterns in the world even when they don’t exist. Of course, our experiences also help construct our worldview. Charles Lamb was only slightly

exaggerating when he said, “We see the world not as it is, but as we are.”

Albert Einstein was the most famous physicist in the 20th century and an astute observer of human nature. In 1949, he wrote:

“...the personality that finally emerges is largely formed by the environment in which a man happens to find himself during his development, by the structure of the society in which he grows up, by the tradition of that society, and by its appraisal of particular types of behavior. The abstract concept ‘society’ means to the individual human being the sum total of his direct and indirect relations to his contemporaries and to all the people of earlier generations. The individual...depends so much upon society—in his physical, intellectual, and emotional existence—that it is impossible to think of him, or to understand him, outside the framework of society. It is ‘society’ which provides man with food, clothing, a home, the tools of work, language, the forms of thought, and most of the content of thought...” (“Why Socialism” in *Monthly Review*).

Most of what we think of as “normal” may differ depending on the society in which we are raised, as well as our individual experiences. A child raised in Japan 400 years ago would have a different idea of what is “normal” than a child raised at the same time in England. Of course, there would be a lot in common, such as the importance of family, but there would also be a host of differences.

Importantly, we are rarely aware that these fundamental values and behaviours are socially constructed. They are usually just taken for granted.

Overall, it was evolutionarily advantageous for children to automatically accept the views and practices of their society.

The result of all these factors means that, as cultural anthropologist Marvin Harris wrote in *Cows, Pigs, Wars and Witches*: “...our ordinary state of mind is already a profoundly mystified consciousness...”

While there are many positive—and necessary—reasons for these human tendencies, they have negative outcomes as well. Perhaps the most important problem is that the lack of conscious and rational thought is a fundamental roadblock in the effort to create a more just, peaceful, and ecological society.

These problems are profoundly illuminated in Dr. Gabor Maté’s new book, *The Myth of Normal: Trauma, Illness & Healing in a Toxic Culture*.

Dr. Maté is a physician who, among other endeavours, spent years in the downtown east side of Vancouver working with people addicted to drugs. This experience was chronicled in his, *In The Realm of Hungry Ghosts*. His new book takes a broader social perspective and shows how so much of what is generally considered “normal,” and even healthy, in modern society is both unconscious and harmful.

Maté defines “culture” as: “the entire context of social structures, belief systems, assumptions, and values that surround us and necessarily pervade every aspect of our lives.”

He adds that the global health problems that we face, such as, “burgeoning stress, inequality, and climate catastrophe,” have been created by a “globalized capitalism” that condemns countless human beings “to suffer illness born of stress, ignorance, inequality, environmental degradation, climate change, poverty, and social isolation.”

Much of the damage that we suffer occurs in childhood, especially infancy and even in the womb

(e.g. see *Life Before Birth* by Arthur Janov). We are all born innocent, but it is in our early years that we are most vulnerable to trauma, when we have little or no way to cope with stress and the mental and emotional damage that happens to us.

As Louis Cozolino, a psychotherapist and professor of psychology, explains, we are usually unaware of how profoundly we are molded by our childhood experiences:

“Although most of our important social and emotional lessons occur during our early years, we have little or no conscious memory of learning them... Despite our lack of explicit memory for these experiences, they form the infrastructure of our lives. We experience these early lessons as the “givens” of our life... We seldom realize that they are influencing and guiding our moment-to-moment experiences.”

One of the worst feelings that can result from infant and childhood trauma is the bogus notion of “guilt.” We can certainly feel remorse for past mistakes and try to rectify them as much as possible, but personal guilt is unjustified and unfair. Everybody is doing the best that they can, and Maté emphasizes that it is “necessary to leave blame and guilt behind on the road to healing...”

One of the most important psychological insights about trauma is that one’s feelings are not just emotions: our experiences become “biologically embedded” in our bodies, including our brain and nervous system.

Of course, it’s not just about ourselves. Maté stresses that we must work to create a society which, among other needs, prioritizes the health of infants and children, e.g. one that outlaws spanking and makes sure that no child goes hungry or lacks medical care, that their feelings are treated with respect, and so on. As important as these practices are in themselves, Maté emphasizes that they have profound social and political consequences as well: “...the harsher the parenting people were exposed to as young children, the more prone they become to support authoritarian or aggressive policies, such as foreign wars, punitive laws, and the death penalty.”

Ultimately, Maté is optimistic. One reason is that “most people, despite all the trauma and stress that’s around, not only are good, they want to be good. They want to be decent. They want to be kind.”

He adds: “Both on a personal level and on a social level. I fully believe that transformation is not only possible, but it’s more than possible. It’s almost inevitable.”

These valuable insights and practices can help us to know ourselves better, to see through the social myths that pass for “normal”, and to heal—both ourselves and our toxic societies. **M**

Peter G. Prontzos is professor emeritus of Political Science and Interdisciplinary Studies/Continuing Studies at Langara College, Vancouver.

Gabor Maté / Canadian Press



Leaving Wisdom brims with Canadian sensitivity and imperative conversations

LEAVING WISDOM

SHARON BUTALA

ThistleDown Press, May 30, 2023

Well-established, Saskatchewan-based author Sharon Butala, through her novel *Leaving Wisdom*, published in the spring of the astoundingly eventful and tragedy-ridden year of 2023, has dared to directly ask her readership two very uncomfortable questions that are currently lingering at the back of many people's minds. Can one escape from intergenerational trauma, and do they even have the right to try to?

Butala's protagonist, Judith, is a typical modern-day, one-woman powerhouse. She's built herself a successful career. She's raised four daughters—with whom she maintains steady but complicated relationships—and she has strived and survived until retirement, which promises her rest at last. But cruel fate intervenes, and she is struck down hard by a near-fatal concussion that sends her to the hospital. After her discharge, depression and dissatisfaction with life in general sends her back to her family community in Wisdom, Saskatchewan. There, she grapples with her unhappy past, which involves a mentally unstable father suffering from extreme PTSD from his WWII experiences, and an uncertain future, in a small-knit town rife with petty gossip, distrust, and scheming.

Butala's style of writing is smooth, conversational, unpretentious, and a tad on the cheeky side. She writes without restraint as a seasoned author who is in full possession of her own voice and is able to lend to her main character the

well-tuned reconciliation between the present and past that only comes with age and experience. This, combined with a troubled love-hate relationship between her Judith, a highly sensitive and intelligent individual, and a barren, stagnant, yet promising countryside reminds one of the works of classic American author Willa Cather. Or, if one wants to remain more loyal to Canada, Alice Munro.

Judith is well aware of her status as a legacy settler in an imperfect landscape, the setting of many a spiritual collapse and aspiration crushed, such as what happened to her father, and even herself, as she comes to acknowledge. Butala as the all-seeing and all-knowing narrator doesn't hesitate to make it the source of some brazen commentary:

"Only a few days after Judith had arrived, spring finally began to show a flicker of interest in the village of Wisdom, named, she had been told, after a pioneer whose full name nobody seemed to know, nor where he had come from, nor what had happened to him, and not referring to the quality of astuteness or perceptiveness. (Considering what happened to most settlers, maybe it had been a macabre joke.) Already the dust was rising, and the remnants of banks of snow, blackened and crystalline from thawing and then freezing again, sprawled exhausted in patches of shade along the north foundations of the settlers' houses or under leafless caragana hedges and against fences. She could never see those fences, paint long gone, pickets missing, without thinking, *Somebody else's dream gone to shit.*"

However, the town of Wisdom, uninspiring and ambiguously

named as it is, turns out to be for Judith healing long after it was debilitating. Returning to the home frontier allows Judith the opportunity to confront her demons directly rather than her lifelong tactic of systematically avoiding them (which, as she discovers, has done nothing but prolong a necessary pain). Every character she encounters and interacts with—long-lost family members and townsfolk with their own dark pasts—represents for Judith another step in the treacherous journey of overcoming upset, which isn't linear, nor is it simple. The storyline may not appeal to a reader who is in the middle of a similar process, being so intimate, raw, detailed, and true to real life. The issues *Leaving Wisdom* addresses are sensitive and should be approached cautiously. This book is a choice.

This is a novel that speaks to all adult generations, but most especially this one, caught as it is in the spiralling midst of ongoing post-COVID recovery, international warfare, political and social unrest, and little to no sense of reprieve. Judith, as a protagonist and active participant in her own story, is every grown Canadian who is living, who is struggling and recovering, who is paying attention, and who is trying to break a vicious cycle. The book may be titled *Leaving Wisdom*, but it doesn't leave the reader once they've reached the end of it. Like a painful memory, preserved for the sake of self-reflection, it remains. **M**

E.R. Zarevich is a writer from Burlington, Ontario, Canada. Her literary criticism can be found in *Shrapnel Magazine*, *Atlantic Books*, *Hamilton Review of Books*, *Mangoprism*, and *Herizons*, among others.



The good news page

Elaine Hughes

London, Ontario mouth painter defies stereotypes

Mouth painter Susie Matthias, 61, of London, Ontario, is one of 67 people featured in a Museum London exhibit, Resilient London, highlighting resilience in the community. Her creations have taken her around the world; they've been in several galleries, on greeting cards and are a Canada Post stamp. Matthias, a thalidomide survivor, was born with shortened arms and legs. / *CBC News*, January 3, 2024

Donors help a small Labrador school get needed textiles

In central Labrador, North West River Physical Education Teacher Heidi Jackson restarted the school's textile and clothing class to help her students find a new hobby or passion while learning some life skills. Needing fabric to do it, she put out a call for donations, which came flooding in from across Newfoundland and Labrador, as far west as B.C. and even from

New Zealand. Jackson said there's more fabric than they'll be able to use this year alone. The class of 19 is learning how to make drawstring bags, embroidery pieces, hats, traditional Inuit items and more. / *CBC News*, January 4, 2024

Coal-producing West Virginia converting school system to solar power

Representing what a developer and U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin's office touted as the biggest-ever single demonstration of sun-powered renewable electricity in Appalachian public schools, an entire county school system in coal-producing West Virginia is going solar. In a written statement, he said, "Let's be clear—this investment in Wayne County is a direct result of the *Inflation Reduction Act* (IRA). This type of investment in rural America to create jobs, make our country more energy secure and lower electric costs is exactly what the IRA was designed to do." / *The Associated Press*, November 30, 2023

Indigenous Surui turn invaders' crop into Amazonian coffee

In the process of opening up a new source of livelihood and strengthening community bonds, the Indigenous Paiter Surui people of Brazil have reclaimed the coffee farms established by invaders on their land. Through ethno-tourism and the training of Indigenous

baristas, growing coffee has also become an opportunity for the Surui to tell their own story. / *Mongabay.com*, October 24, 2023

Barber gives free haircuts in downtown Hamilton to those in need

As part of his community outreach organization, Beating the Stereotypes, Collin Alfred has spent numerous Saturdays at Hamilton's Gore Park offering his barber skills for free to those who are low-income or unhoused. He estimates he's cut the hair of more than 50 people in the park and hopes to expand his services across the Greater Toronto Area. / *CBC News*, December 24, 2023

Sault Ste. Marie ski patrol recognized for live-saving actions

Four ski patrol members at the Searchmont Resort in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, were awarded the John D. Harper Lifesaving Award for saving a person's life last season. Leader of the team, Nancy Askin, said they get extensive training on first aid and CPR, and are extremely happy to know that there's a positive outcome in this event and that the patient can get back to the pretty normal life that they had before. The award is given out by the Canadian Ski Patrol to recognize a first-aid performance by patrollers whose application of first aid and rescue skills are

deemed to be extraordinary. / *CBC News*, January 13, 2024

Nipissing First Nation is healing environmental damage

On a sunny day in early October, three members of Nipissing First Nation paddled their way through stalks of manoomin, or wild rice, growing seven feet above the Veuve River off Lake Nipissing in Northeastern Ontario. The group has been encouraging the aquatic native grass to spread as a way to tackle invasive plants and re-populate the land with a traditional source of food for birds, small mammals, and humans. / *Nation Talk*, November 9, 2023

Positive news headlines to be broadcast on outdoor screens

A trailblazing content partnership between Positive.News and outdoor advertising company Clear Channel UK, will result in uplifting headlines on thousands of screens in public spaces in the UK. The posts will highlight constructive UK stories that people might have not seen in traditional news outlets or on social media—connecting the dots between how people, communities and organizations are changing the world for the better. / *Positive.News*, January 18, 2024



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providing something for everybody,
only because, and only when, they
are created by everybody.

—*Jane Jacobs*

