MONITOR

Progressive news, views and ideas

CCPA
CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
CENTRE CANADIEN
de POLITIQUES ALTERNATIVES

WINTER 2025

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Belleville-based illustrator Carl Wiens has enjoyed a successful career spanning more than 30 years, producing conceptual illustration for books, newspapers and magazines. He has been published in *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Barron's Weekly* and *Esquire*. Carl has explored works in different mediums including screen printing, painting and woodworking and has exhibited in galleries.

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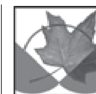
Joss Maclennan is the creative director of Joss Maclennan Design. She combines a passion for clear, simple language with a strong visual sense. Her background is mainly in design, but includes painting, drawing and illustration as well. Decades of experience help her find the central message and the way to convey it. / Corey Hardeman is a Vancouver-based oil painter.



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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 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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Trish Hennessy

External shocks will change the future of food—are you ready for it?

This edition of the *Monitor* is focused on one of my favourite topics, FOOD!

We look at the factors that go into getting food on the table. And how those factors will change how we eat in the future.

Food is so central to our lives, it impacts our identity: we're foodies, we're dieting, we're vegans, vegetarians, pescetarians, omnivores, gluten-free, keto... We are what we eat (or don't eat).

Food is indeed personal, but, like everything, it's also political. There are broader, structural factors that influence what we eat—and our access, or lack of, to healthy foods.

External shocks, for instance. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic shocked us out of restaurants as we retreated to our homes, with many embracing cooking and sourdough bread baking while the economy shut down.

Food systems can, and will, change—sometimes they're forced to. Remember when we were shocked by the idea of a $25 hamburger? Now it's the norm in many restaurants, and not just the high-end ones.

The future of food will not be cheap.

Wars, geopolitical instability, and the climate crisis will impact our supply chains—affecting how and where we'll source our food, and what kind of food we'll be eating.

"Climate change could devastate Canadian agriculture and food production in coming decades; a multi-decade drought could unfold and sear our food-producing areas, wither our crops, and parch and damage our soils," Darrin Qualman writes in his searing essay in this issue, "Breadbasket no more?"

Change is inevitable. Change will either happen to us or be created by us. In a food system dominated by corporate giants, Wade Thorhaug writes that there's a role for public markets: "Having a means to directly support small-scale farmers is also a way to support sustainable agroecological approaches that work within environments rather than against them."

But mega corporations will also continue to try to maintain their dominant grip on food markets. They will try to use changes in food technology to their advantage, for profit, of course.

We're already seeing it in emerging alternative "fake meat" markets. In this issue, Elisabeth Abergel says: "I don't think growing meat in bioreactors will rectify the structural inequalities that exist in the global food system. If anything, it might reinforce them.

"It's easy to lose sight of the fact that lab-grown meat is just another technologically intensive, market-driven solution that aims to maintain the status quo."

If you're curious about what lab-grown meat is, check out the *Monitor*'s interview with Abergel.

As with most things, our history can inform our future—including learning from and respecting Indigenous relationships with food and the land.

As Mair Greenfield writes in this issue, Indigenous foodways is an approach that "creates food systems rooted in sustainability, reciprocity, and respect for the land, water, and its stewards."

A better system is possible.

"To resist the forces of neoliberalism, we must envision a more expansive, inclusive approach to farming and food," writes James Hannay. "This alternative approach begins with food sovereignty, empowering people—farmers and eaters—to make important decisions about food and agriculture."

Hannay references the CCPA's Alternative Federal Budget, which lays out a plan for a national foodsheds program.

"A foodshed is an area that produces food that flows towards a centre—urban areas, in this case—analogous to how watersheds feed rivers and lakes," Hannay writes. "These lands would be administered through a Foodshed Lands Trust.

"It would aim to provide land access to people with high barriers to land acquisition, including new, young, and BIPOC Canadian farmers. It would acquire lands in urban areas to provide long-term, affordable leases to farmers and farming communities."

Dianne Oickle and Bernice Yanful offer even more hope, and a progressive vision:

"We can build a food system that is different. One where equity and human rights are considered at all levels; where production processes don't hurt the earth; where workers are treated fairly; where traditional knowledge and customs are respected; and where nourishing foods are available to all." M

Erika Shaker

Together, we're fighting for a better future

On the CCPA's 45th anniversary, we're asking you to be a part of our legacy

Since becoming National Office director in 2019, I've had the joyful privilege of speaking with many of you, expressing my appreciation for your longtime investment in our work and our people.

I've been truly overwhelmed to hear about what the work of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives means to you. I've loved hearing about how much you enjoy the *Monitor*—and how you've shared copies with family and friends or even gifted the *Monitor* so that they can have a subscription of their own. (See our back page ad to learn how to gift the *Monitor*).

I've had the pleasure of welcoming new donors who have heard about one of our reports in the media or discovered one of our op-eds in their community newspaper, and have taken the transformative step to be a part of our work by investing in it.

I've also thanked a growing number of you who have reached out to tell us that your belief in our work is so strong, you have chosen to arrange a very special and transformative gift—a legacy gift, often in the form of a gift in your will.

This year marks the 45th anniversary of the CCPA!

And it's because of the foresight and generosity of donors like yourself that, not only are we still here—we're more committed than ever to working for a better world we can be proud to bequeath to future generations.

As part of our celebration, we've set a goal for ourselves to create a strong financial future and to build on our successes of the past 45 years. We would love to confirm 45 new donors who have or will include the CCPA in their will.

If you have already done so and have chosen to keep this decision to yourself, please consider letting us know, to help us reach our goal. If you have thought about including the CCPA in your will, but have yet to move forward with putting pen to paper, so to speak, our 45th anniversary year might be the catalyst you need.

New year, new opportunities

As we ring in this new year, I'm taking stock of what we've accomplished at the CCPA—some key policy wins, like $10 a day child care and forward movement on pharmacare and dental care.

As we look ahead to Canada's 45th election, I remember writing about when my eldest was six—I was talking with her about voting, and how we all have to be mindful of the public consequences of our personal choices at the ballot box. Time certainly does fly: She is now in second year of university and 2025 will be her first opportunity to vote in a federal election, which is very exciting. And my youngest is now well into high school, just a few years from being able to vote too.

I'm watching them learn in real time, make new connections, engage with the issues of our time, and develop their own paths forward. As I observe their deep commitment to their communities, and their compassion and empathy, I am so proud and so grateful to know that the next generation is also dedicated to making the world a better place.

After all, they're inheriting many of the social, economic, and climate problems that threaten to make their lives more challenging than ever. I have faith in the upcoming generations to do what's right.

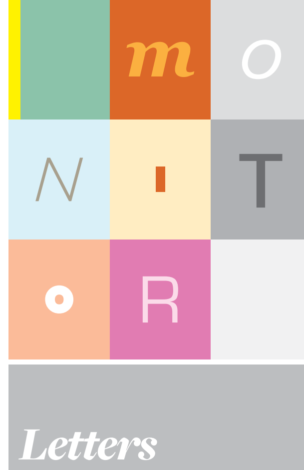
There are a growing number of you who have future generations in mind and have included the CCPA in your will—it's a humbling experience to be able to express my thanks to you directly, but also to let you know how this remarkable gift will help the CCPA continue to keep its independent voice, to unabashedly press for a better world.

Your investment in the CCPA is a major reason behind our level of public recognition and the growing impact of our policy solutions. That so many of you—this year, and in previous years—have taken the significant step of arranging a gift in your will, or in another form, underscores your confidence in our work today and our shared understanding that a more just, equitable and sustainable world is possible.

I am also so grateful for donors like you who continue to invest in the CCPA so that we can keep making a positive difference; those of you who share that commitment to a better, brighter world of our own making. Our future will be the next generation's present.

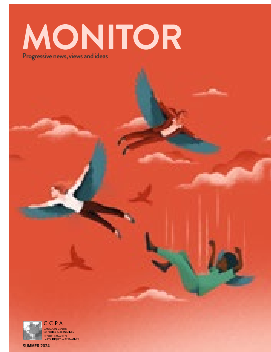
If you have made the decision to leave us a legacy gift in your will, please do think about reaching out to my colleague Katie Loftus at katie@policyalternatives.ca or 613-563-1341 ext. 318—we really would love to thank you! M

Erika Shaker,
Director, CCPA National Office



Letters

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.



Summer 2024 *Monitor*

Beyond Recovery

Congrats to all for the terrific research and excellent analysis.

The summer version of the *Monitor*, with the deep analysis and factual account of the effects of COVID-19 on women, is superb. The erosion of the progress made by women over three decades has been carefully described and the altered situation is very disturbing for all who support the struggle for real equality and opportunity.

To all at CCPA, many thanks and continued good luck in your dedicated, essential work.

Joe Grogan
Bolton, ON

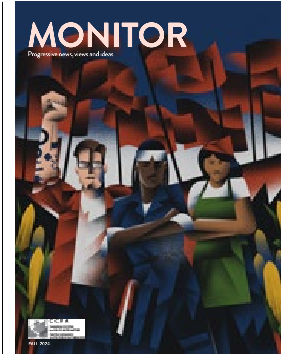
Canada's dental care plan

It shouldn't be any surprise that many Canadian dentists oppose the new federal dental program. These same health care providers opposed dentistry being in the original Medicare package in the 1960s. As a former dental laboratory technician and dental laboratory owner, I was faced with price wars on the products we make to support the dentists—such as dentures, crowns and bridges and implant dentistry, plus many more. Dentists were always looking for cheaper lab prices. In many cases, dental laboratory staff didn't make high enough wages to support their own dental health. We have a battle on our hands and we need to put in place government-owned dental clinics to offset the damage private health care is trying to do to the federal program.

Barry Morley
Burnaby, B.C.

Fall 2024 *Monitor*

Re: Scott Burbidge letter



The impact that military action has on the accelerating climate change creates the 'increasingly dangerous world' that supposedly necessitates a ballooning defence budget to meet Canada's NATO commitments. Hence, human security is sacrificed to the perceived national security, as Bill Zander says in the same issue of the *Monitor*.

Maybe future *Monitor*s and the 2025 *Alternative Federal Budget* could provide alternative use of those 'defence budgets' and suggest policies to ensure that the hundreds of thousands who depend on fossil fuels and military industries for their livelihood are not left in a lurch.

Opposition to a just transition from national defence to human security will probably be stronger than the one away from fossil fuels, but it is even more essential given the causal loop existing between the two.

Bruna Nota
Toronto, ON

In the spotlight

The latest research from the CCPA

CCPA-BC and allies recommend stronger protections for migrant care workers

A Decade of Migrant Care Worker Programs: Addressing racism and precarity in Canada evaluated Canada's 2014 Caregiver Pilots and the 2019 Home Child Care Provider and Home Support Worker Pilots that replaced the Live-in Caregiver Program and found that they largely failed to deliver on their promises:

- Migrant care workers remain vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace, with little recourse.
- Successive pilots created a labyrinth of changes to permanent residency requirements, which were unnecessarily difficult to navigate.
- There remains a lack of transparency and oversight around the pilots' delivery.
- Care workers have become increasingly precarious, losing sight of the promise of permanency in Canada.

The research team makes nine recommendations for change:

1. Implement the promise of permanent residency upon arrival for all migrant care workers entering the country, in a one-step application process.
2. Develop a permanent immigration program for care workers.
3. Assure regularization for undocumented care workers.
4. Eliminate the current backlog of migrant care worker permanent residency applications.
5. Create wider and more dispersed windows of time to apply beyond January 1.
6. Implement more robust worker protections for care workers.
7. Track and publish foundational labour market data, including hours worked, wages, and number of actively working individuals for those who enter Canada under a migrant care worker program.
8. Ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on Domestic Workers (C-189) and ensure decent working conditions of migrant care workers in Canada.
9. Build the capacity of community-based organizations that assist migrant care workers to navigate Canada's complex immigration and employment rights system.

This report is part of Understanding Precarity in BC, a multi-year research and public engagement initiative jointly led by CCPA-BC and SFU.

CCPA-National shows the power of pensions in our local economy

In 2023, 6.9 million working Canadians—34 per cent of all employed people—were covered by a registered pension plan. The retirement income those plans contribute to national and local economies, to government budgets and to equalizing retirement security for equity-seeking groups is underappreciated. *The Power of Pensions* report puts that value in context.

Among the report's findings by author David Macdonald:

- Workplace pension plan payments are major forms of income in Canada: In 2021, workplace pension plans paid out $84 billion in pension payments, accounting for five per cent of all income received by Canadians in that year.
- The private sector is bailing on pension plans: In the 1970s, 90 per cent of private sector workers with a workplace pension plan in Canada had a Defined Benefit plan, similar to the public sector. Today, only 40 per cent of private sector workers with a workplace pension plan have a Defined Benefit plan.
- Governments benefit from retirees' pension income: Across all levels of government, a one-dollar increase in pension income results in governments recouping 41 cents in tax revenue and saved seniors' supports.
- Government contributions to their own workers' plans provide major returns: In 2023-24, every dollar that governments contributed to their own workers' pension plans returned $2.38 in higher tax revenue.
- Federal coffers benefit from pension income: In total, the federal coffers will be $24.5 billion better off in 2025 due to workplace pension income supporting seniors across the country. This is due to $16.9 billion in additional income tax revenue and $2.3 billion in commodity tax revenue. Pension plan income will also save $1.2 billion in Old Age Security (OAS) payments and $3.2 billion in Guaranteed Income Support (GIS) payments.
- Provincial coffers benefit from pension income: In 2025, provincial governments will see budget balances improved by $16.8 billion due to pension income. The larger provinces of Quebec and Ontario will see $6 billion apiece in improved balances.
- Local communities benefit from pension income: Pension income often substitutes for employment income in communities where work is harder to come by.
- Public pensions are a great equalizer: While 90 per cent of women in the public sector have a workplace retirement plan, almost all of which are pension plans, only 44

per cent do in the private sector. For Indigenous workers, 86 per cent have a retirement plan in the public sector, likely a pension, but only 46 per cent do in the private sector and it's not likely to be a pension. It is a similar story for new Canadians, with 79 per cent having a workplace retirement plan in the public sector but only 45 per cent on the private sector side.

CCPA-Manitoba finds one in four workers earn less than a living wage

A quarter (24.6 per cent) of Manitoba workers earned less than $19.21 per hour in 2023, the wage required for a family to meet their basic needs and not live in poverty.

The report, authored by Callum Goulet-Kilgour and Niall Harney, found:

- Manitoba workers earning less than a living wage are disproportionately women (57.8 per cent) and are more likely to be recent immigrants to Canada (16.1 per cent).
- A majority of workers (43.9 per cent) earning less than a living wage are in the prime of their working years (aged 25-54) and hold some form of post-secondary education (61.3 per cent).
- And 36.4 per cent of workers earning less than a living wage have a child at home who is below 18 years of age.

By raising the minimum wage to a living wage, the Government of Manitoba would provide significant economic relief to one in four workers in Manitoba, while also reducing the gender pay gap, promoting equity for newcomers, and reducing rates of child poverty.

CCPA-Nova Scotia report outlines a framework for transformative climate action

Challenging Nova Scotia's Climate Change Plan to Do Better by Jara de Hoog, Alice Cohen, and Andrew Biro, analyzes Nova Scotia's approach to climate action as set out in the province's *2022 Climate Change Plan*.

The 2022 Climate Change Plan outlines 68 policy actions to meet legally binding emissions targets—but the CCPA-Nova Scotia report demonstrates how the plan prioritizes economic growth through technology rather than addressing the root issues of economic growth and profit-based production. The plan falls short of the transformative action necessary to combat climate change.

The CCPA-Nova Scotia report recommends, among other things:

Commit to the plan's four principles: Sustainable development, equity, a circular economy, and Netukulimk (take only what one needs and no more).

Scale up successes: For example, the province's $7.5 million investment in the Halifax Climate Investment, Innovation and Impact Fund, which includes funding the Ecology Action Centre's Pop-up Bike Hub, a trailer that travels around Halifax to provide free bike repairs and education.

Involve all levels and sectors of government: A climate plan cannot be put in a separate box while economic development, legislation, regulation, and other government initiatives continue as though the climate crisis doesn't exist.

CCPA-Ontario finds there's a lot of love for Toronto's public libraries

CCPA-Ontario research looked at who goes to the Toronto Public Library's 100 branches and found it is a beloved and popular institution, receiving more in-person visitors annually than the city's top tourist attractions. More than the CN Tower, the Royal Ontario Museum, the Art Gallery of Ontario, Casa Loma and the Hockey Hall of Fame!

The report, authored by Carolina Aragão, shows that in 2023:

- Toronto's libraries lend more materials overall and have a higher per capita circulation rate than those in cities like New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago.
- Library branches had over 12 million in-person visits and almost 1.2 million registered cardholders.
- 75 per cent of users accessed its collections, while 50 per cent used branches for reading, studying, or access to technology.
- Over 740,000 participants attended more than 34,000 in-person and virtual programs and events.

While the City of Toronto has long been the primary funder of the Toronto Public Library, the importance of the library to the city, and indeed the country, calls for support from higher levels of government.

CCPA-Saskathewan shines light on unacceptable health care wait times

No Time to Wait: Private, for-profit health care and wait times in Saskatchewan, authored by Simon Enoch, examines the effect that government policies have had on wait times for various surgeries and diagnostic services in Saskatchewan over the past 14 years.

It explores the available wait-time data for knee replacement, hip replacement, cataract and hip fracture repair surgeries from 2010 to 2023. It also examines wait-time data for MRI and CT diagnostic scans from 2015 to 2023 to assess the impact of the government's one-for-one MRI and CT scan initiative instituted in 2016.

Despite the provincial government's preference for private-sector solutions to the wait-time problem, the research shows that the only significant reduction in wait times came through concerted public investment in the capacity of the public system. M

Randy Robinson
Ontario Office

Canada is designed to move wealth upwards

Statistics Canada data tells us what many Canadians already guessed: the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.

The latest report on income and wealth shows that the average household has a net worth of just over $1 million. That sounds pretty good—like Canadians are doing just fine.

But when you see how that wealth is distributed, it's a different story.

StatsCan tells that story by dividing the population into five slices, from richest to poorest. As of the second quarter of 2024, the richest 20 per cent had a net worth, per household, of more than $3.4 million. Those households own 67.7 per cent of all the wealth in the country.

That's not bad if you're in that group. But things are different at the other end of the spectrum.

The bottom 20 per cent of the wealth distribution have no wealth at all. In fact, they have negative wealth.

All they own is their debts.

The wealth gap between the top 20 per cent and the bottom 40 per cent is now the highest it has been since StatsCan started tracking it.

When looking at disposable income, not total wealth, we also see big differences from top to bottom. While many wealthy households have high incomes from working; in 2024, it was not just their wages that made them richer—their investments helped too. The richest 20 per cent saw their disposable income grow by 7.6 per cent from mid-2023 to mid-2024.

The lowest-earning households don't usually set aside much money for investments. That's because they're trying to put food on the table.

Still, those low-income households saw strong wage growth, averaging 14.3 per cent, year over year. This was partly due to increases in the minimum wage in all provinces and territories except Alberta. Despite better wages, the least wealthy still saw their net worth fall, thanks to higher costs for mortgage debt. (Few low-income Canadians have mortgages, but those who do are hit hardest by high interest rates.)

The 60 per cent of Canadians whose wealth and income are higher than the bottom group but lower than the top are not faring well either: those folks saw their share of the country's disposable income fall. The return on their investments, such as it was, could not keep up to higher costs for interest on their mortgages, credit cards, and car loans.

And it wasn't just homeowners who fell behind; renters took a hit when landlords passed higher interest costs on to tenants in the form of higher rents.

One bright spot in the financial picture was the average household debt-to-income ratio, which fell slightly in the second quarter of 2024. Still, those in their prime earning years carried a heavy burden of debt, thanks to their mortgages. Those aged 35 to 44 owed a soul-crushing 260 per cent of their incomes to creditors.

In the years ahead, some of those burdens may grow lighter as interest rates fall. That's a good thing. But lower interest rates won't solve Canadians' financial woes. Here's why: Our problems are caused, to a large degree, by the way Canada is designed: it's designed to move wealth upwards.

These days, politicians go out of their way to recognize that "people are hurting." That's why, for example, many provinces have cut gasoline taxes.

Here's the problem and here's the truth: Not everyone is hurting. The pizza delivery driver in the 15-year-old Corolla needs all the help we can give; the rich realtor in the $150,000 Lincoln does not.

Until we make tackling income and wealth inequality part of all our policy discussions, things will stay the way they are.

The rich will get richer. And you know what will happen to everyone else.

Randy Robinson is a former director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' Ontario office.

iStock

Reuters

Jon Milton
National Office

American fascism triumphant

The American project has always contained fascism. The chickens are coming home to roost.

On October 27, 2024, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump—now president-elect—stood on a podium in Madison Square Garden, surrounded by thousands of fans.

"On day one, I will launch the largest deportation program in American history," the candidate says. "And I am calling for the death penalty for any migrant who kills an American citizen."

The crowd went wild. Trump told them that from the moment he returns to power, he will begin targeting his political opposition, including journalists and critical academics. He continued calling his opponents the "enemy within."

"U-S-A! U-S-A! U-S-A!" the crowd chanted.

The reaction was swift from the liberal class. Trump, they said, is a fascist—an authoritarian thug who plans to dismantle the longstanding institutions of American democracy. The Democrats' presidential campaign, particularly in the home stretch of the election, really stressed this. The Democratic Party, with Kamala Harris as its presidential candidate, represented a continuation of American liberal democracy, while Trump represented an external—and existential— threat, backed by a growing coalition of global anti-democratic forces. Democracy, they said repeatedly, was on the ballot.

Harris tried to tap into Americans' positive vision of their role in the world—the deeply American myth of the country as a shining city on a hill, a beacon of democracy and freedom that guides the rest of the world towards liberty. It's a deeply rooted piece of the American psyche, one that is more or less accepted as gospel across the mainstream political spectrum in the country. America, they say, is a force for good in the world.

Trump, in the narrative of American liberals, represents a break with that history—with his disrespect for democratic institutions, his open racism and sexism, his desire

to target political opponents and wide swaths of the population with violence. This, we heard repeatedly, isn't America.

On November 5, Americans went to the polls. In a landslide, they chose to reject the notion that "this" is not America. That choice is as American as apple pie.

1934

A group of lawyers, jurists, and officials sat in a room in Germany on June 5, 1934. It was a year and a half into the rule of Adolf Hitler. The group had been given an urgent task by leadership—to write laws creating a racial definition of citizenship in the Reich.

While all participants agreed that excluding Jews and non-Aryans from citizenship rights and preserving the "Aryan" and "Nordic" character of the German "race" were laudable goals, the "moderates" at the meeting pointed out that defining Jewishness—and racial identity more broadly—was fraught with problems. How could judges be expected to convict people for the "crime" of racial intermarriage, for example, when race is impossible to scientifically define?

On the other side, fascist hardliners argued that race should not be defined scientifically, but politically, according to the principles of Nazi ideology. There were many examples that the Nazi state could follow, the hardliners argued, pointing to white South Africa and other ethno-states. Among them, one stood out as the country with the most highly developed race laws in the world—the United States of America.

In the U.S., the hardliners argued—an argument outlined in stenographic detail by the historian James Whitman in *Hitler's American Model*—the Aryan state could find a clear example of racial hierarchy codified into law, defined on political terms. Such laws ran through every facet of American jurisprudence, from immigration law to property law to laws governing private sexual activity between consenting adults.

Hitler himself agreed. In *Mein Kampf*, the future architect of the Holocaust lauded the USA for "excluding certain races from naturalization" and suggested that American laws point towards the types of racial conceptions of citizenship that he envisioned for Germany.

"The racially pure and still unmixed German has risen to become master of the American continent," he wrote, "and he will remain master as long as he does not fall victim to racial pollution."

The Nazis' interest was not just in American race law inside territories it governed, but in the formation of the United States. Hitler, a man who loved American cowboy films and wild west mythology, viewed the U.S.' westward expansion—and its contingent genocide of the territory's Indigenous Peoples—as the core inspiration for Germany's *lebensraum*, the Nazi program of eastward territorial expansion into the lands of the Soviet Union.

"Our Mississippi must be the Volga, not the Niger," Hitler once said, contrasting the American model of a continental, land-based empire with overseas European colonies held by countries like England and France—a parallel explored in greater detail in *The American West and the Nazi East* by Caroll P. Kakel. In order to reach the Volga, the Nazi state would need to pass through the territories of Slavic and Jewish *untermenschen*—or "under-men," a term originally coined by an American Ku Klux Klanner.

"I don't see why a German who eats a piece of bread should torment himself with the idea that the soil that produces this bread has been won by the sword," Hitler remarked. "When we eat wheat from Canada, we don't think about the despoiled Indians."

The American-inspired hardliners won the day at the 1934 meeting. The resulting document provided the foundation for the Nuremberg Race Laws, which stripped German Jews of citizenship in the "Aryan" nation.

1970

It had been 11 days since Chile's 1970 presidential election, in which the candidate for the left-wing coalition, Salvador Allende, won a plurality of votes on a platform of nationalizing key resources, redistributing wealth, and building economic democracy. American president Richard Nixon, on advice from a council of American businessmen, authorized an operation to overthrow the Chilean government, which had not yet assumed office.

Three years later, the operation was successful. On September 11, 1973, an army officer named Augusto Pinochet, with the backing of the United States, led troops to the country's presidential palace, dropping bombs from the sky on the besieged building. Allende's final speech before his death, broadcast over the radio from inside the palace, denounced the "fascism" that "has been already present for many hours" in the country.

The Pinochet dictatorship, which held power for nearly two decades, worked in close collaboration with its main sponsor in Washington, DC. It rounded up political opposition, including artists and academics, and sent thousands of them to their deaths in concentration camps. With training from the United States, the Chilean state began an international campaign of terrorism called Operation Condor, in which South America's U.S.-sponsored right-wing dictatorships engaged in a cross-border program of assassinations against leftists, journalists, trade unionists, and dissidents.

The United States backed Condor, just like it backed similar programs elsewhere in the world—such as the mass killings in Indonesia in 1965, in which U.S.-backed death squads murdered up to three million people and installed a military dictatorship that would last three decades.

The United States has, for many in the world, been a harbinger of fascism and dictatorship. From the first successful U.S.-led overthrows of democratically elected governments in the 1950s, in Iran and in Guatemala, the United States has been the world's greatest champion of anti-democratic regimes and organizations. It sponsored right-wing extremist terrorist groups in Western Europe, under the banner of Operation Gladio, to prevent leftist political parties from winning elections. It provided weapons and diplomatic cover to apartheid regimes like white South Africa and Israel. It provided support to death squads in Central America as they exterminated Indigenous populations in the 1980s and 1990s. This has, in many ways, always been the face of Uncle Sam in the world.

The Martinique-born poet, author and politician Aimé Césaire, in his seminal 1950 work Discourse on Colonialism, wrote that fascism should be understood as colonialism turned inward. Among the ruins of the Holocaust, Césaire wrote that fascism represents a continuation of the European colonial project—not an outgrowth of unexplained and exceptional violence, but, rather, the violence that European empires commit elsewhere in the world, coming home.

This explanation came in direct opposition to another, still-common explanation of the Holocaust—as a freak event, an exceptional deviation from the tradition of European liberalism, a type of collective insanity that descended on the German people as a result of their specific circumstances. A form of pure evil that exists outside of history or context.

Like the liberal view of Trump, this perspective prevents us from placing fascism in its historic context and learning the lessons of it.

Colonization, Césaire wrote, "works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism." Hitler, Césaire wrote, "applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India, and the blacks of Africa."

Other scholars have come to term this phenomenon the "imperial boomerang," a process by which the techniques of repression that empires—like the United States—develop in conquered territories eventually come home to the imperial metropole.

2024

"The thing that I kept thinking about liberalism in 2019 and 2020 is that these guys have all read Carl Schmitt—there's no law, there's just power," then-vice presidential candidate JD Vance told columnist Ross Douthat during the 2024 campaign. "And the goal here is to get back in power."

Donald Trump has probably not read Carl Schmitt, but JD Vance, who went to law school at Yale, certainly has—and his reference here might provide insights into what's to come. Arguably the single most influential jurist associated with the German Nazi regime, Carl Schmitt was a proponent of using the power of individual rulers—kings, dictators, and so on—to act as sovereigns. His early work, written during the Weimar era as critiques of liberal democracy, provided much of the legal justification for Hitler's dictatorship. He spent his time as a faithful lapdog to the Nazis during their time in power.

What Vance summed up as "there's no law, just power" was a bastardization of a classic Schmitt phrase—"sovereign is he who decides the exception," from the text *Political Theology*. The rule of law, Schmitt argued, is never fixed, and always subject to being broken in "exceptional" circumstances. To wield power is to decide when those circumstances are.

Donald Trump, who has openly expressed his intentions to be a "dictator on day one," spent much of his first term governing through executive order and presidential power. Trump's executive was a muscular one—and his second term is likely to be even more so.

Trump was not the first president to embrace a quasi-Schmittian view of executive power. Every modern U.S. president, particularly since 9/11, has done so. One of George W. Bush's chief legal advisors, John Yoo, was a proponent of the "unitary executive theory," which argues that U.S. presidents have sole jurisdictional authority over the entire executive branch of the government.

Yoo also could have been pulling directly from Schmitt when he helped to draw up the U.S. justification for its global network of torture black sites and concentration camps during the War on Terror. Barack Obama, for his part, was the first U.S. president to personally sign off on the targeted assassination of a U.S. citizen—Anwar al-Awlaki—without a trial, a decision which his judicial advisors justified using language around exceptional circumstances. If Schmitt were still alive, he might say that such is the nature of sovereignty.

Trump, then, should be viewed not as some historic aberration, but as a particularly extreme manifestation of a phenomenon that has always been present in the American project. Now, though, the chickens are coming home to roost.

Articulating a vision that challenges Trumpism means grappling with this reality. Trump, the man, will eventually disappear. But without changing the dynamics that produce American fascism—that is, white supremacy and empire—there will be more Trumps to come in the future.

Jon Milton is a senior communications specialist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

CP image

Niall Harney
Manitoba Office

Health support workers deserve a raise

Health support workers dealt with some of the worst effects of government penny-pinching during the COVID-19 pandemic, with disastrous effects for staff, residents, patients and clients.

Details of a fall 2024 deal between 25,000 Manitoba health support workers and provincial health authorities show promising signs that this deal lays the foundation for staffing up our health care system, particularly in home care and long-term care.

Initial contract highlights include an average 27 per cent increase over four years, improvements to starting wages, leave benefits, critical upgrades to mileage rates, and additional pay for long-serving employees.

To understand the significance of the deal, we need to look back at health support worker bargaining over the last few years.

Apart from a brief wage top-up, health support workers effectively worked through the pandemic without a raise. A selection of health support workers making less than $25 per hour received a $5 per hour pay top-up in November 2020, thanks to federal support for essential workers. However these top-ups only lasted two months.

The previous provincial government's legislated wage freeze—which was only abandoned after prolonged legal battles with Manitoba unions—left health support workers without a contract for five years prior to signing a seven-year deal in August 2022, retroactive to 2017.

The last contract included a 9.6 per cent pay increase over seven years—modest increases that were more than eaten up by 25.2 per cent inflation over the same time period. In real terms, health care workers took a 16 per cent pay cut under the Pallister Conservatives.

A recent survey of health support workers represented by CUPE 204 found that 29 per cent of workers were working a second job to make ends meet while 40 per cent were working more than 40 hours per week. Further, 37 per cent of respondents reported being forced to drain their savings while around half reportedly cut back on household necessities like food and clothing.

Entering the latest round of negotiations, top wages for health care aides were the lowest in the country, according to data from the Government of Canada Job Bank. Starting wages for laundry aides, dietary aides, and other support workers were also lowest in the country, with some starting as low as $17.05 per hour.

As a result, health support workers' wages were not competitive with other positions that require less training, particularly in retail and food service. Difficult working conditions and low wages are creating a staffing crisis across these support positions.

Short staffing has been an issue within Manitoba's care sector for years due to population aging, rising client/resident needs, and a lack of government investment. The pandemic turbocharged these underlying trends.

The result of short staffing has been growing wait lists and delays for clients/residents, staff departures, and a growing workload for remaining staff. This has created a vicious cycle of burnout.

A survey of long-term care and home care workers in 2022 found that over one in three workers in long-term care and home care were very likely to leave the profession in the next five years, with most workers citing understaffing and low wages as reasons for departure.

A survey of health support workers represented by CUPE 204 found nearly half are actively searching for a new job, many outside of health care.

The fact is that a raise for health support workers is long overdue and a necessity to turn the staffing crisis across health support professions around.

Workers need full-time hours and a family-supporting wage to ensure they can build a career in health care and stay in their home community.

These workers were deemed essential during the pandemic. They remain essential.

Niall Harney holds the Errol Black Chair in Labour Issues at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives–Manitoba.

Ricardo Tranjan
Ontario Office

Minimum wage hikes fall behind rent increases

On October 1, 2024, the minimum wage increased in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Prince Edward Island. All other provinces except Alberta brought in increases in 2024. That means most minimum-wage workers are doing better, right?

Right?

Not necessarily.

Minimum-wage workers living on their own are most likely to rent. In recent years, rent increases have outpaced minimum wage increases, eating away at workers' additional income. This is happening almost everywhere in Canada.

The "rental wage" is the hourly wage required to pay rent while working a 40-hour week, 52 weeks a year, and spending no more than 30 per cent of one's income on housing. Put simply, the rental wage is how much people need to earn in order to pay their rent without sacrificing other basic needs.

Unfortunately, the rental wage is considerably higher than the minimum wage in every province.

The gap between the minimum wage and the rental wage for one-bedroom apartments varies from $1.79 per hour in Newfoundland and Labrador ($15 vs. $16.79) to $13.21 per hour in B.C ($16.75 vs. $29.96).

The gap for two-bedroom units is even higher.

In B.C. and Nova Scotia, the two-bedroom rental wage is more than double the minimum wage. That's nearly the case in Ontario, too. Quebec has the smallest gap, but even there, workers need to earn $4.79 more per hour ($15.25 vs. $20.04) to afford two bedrooms without spending too much on rent.

Out of 62 urban areas in Canada, minimum-wage workers can afford a one-bedroom apartment in only nine of them.

From October 2022 to October 2023, minimum wage increases fell behind rental wage increases almost everywhere.

Alberta is the starkest case. The minimum wage in the province didn't budge, while the rental wage for two-bedroom units rose by more than 10 per cent. In B.C., the rental wage increased by 8.5 per cent in this period, beating an otherwise significant seven per cent minimum wage increase. Ditto for Newfoundland and Labrador, where a notable 9.5 per cent boost in the income of minimum wage earners paled in comparison to a 16.2 per cent rental wage increase. In Ontario and Saskatchewan, the rental wage outpaced the minimum wage by 2.5 percentage points.

The story is different in only two provinces.

Manitobans saw a 13.3 per cent minimum wage increase and a 5.1 per cent rental wage increase. Prince Edward Islanders saw a 9.5 per cent minimum wage increase and an 8.5 per cent rental wage increase. These two provinces have the country's most robust, if not flawless, rent control policies.

There is no sign this trend will be reversed any time soon.

Between October 2022 and October 2023, 12.5 per cent of rental units in Canada saw a change of tenant. At the turnover from the old to the new tenant, landlords increased rents by an average of 24 per cent. In Vancouver, the average increase was 34 per cent, and in Toronto, 40 per cent.

Provincial governments are refusing to act on rent regulation to improve this situation.

Wage increases should benefit workers whose financial pressures ease, employers whose workers are more satisfied and productive, and shop owners whose customers have more to spend.

Until governments bring rents under control, the lion's share of minimum wage increases will just keep going where they're going now—into landlords' pockets.

Ricardo Tranjan, PhD, is a political economist with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and author of *The Tenant Class.*

Rental wage by province

Two-bedroom apartment, 2023

Province	Rental wage
British Columbia	$35.90
Ontario	$32.63
Nova Scotia	$29.29
Alberta	$27.98
Manitoba	$26.31
Saskatchewan	$24.54
New Brunswick	$22.50
Prince Edward Island	$21.73
Newfoundland and Labrador	$21.00
Quebec	$20.04

Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood
National Office

Pity the carbon tax

Beloved by its parents, the economists, the carbon tax—this humble environmental policy—has always faced an uphill battle for acceptance from a skeptical public.

In all their various federal and provincial guises, carbon pricing schemes have never been popular in Canada. At best, as in B.C. and Quebec, where carbon pricing has been in place since 2008 and 2013, respectively, the system is accepted for what it is—an annoying but practical approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Elsewhere, voters have been more hostile. Some governments, as in Alberta and Ontario, brought in carbon pricing systems only to be swept from power at the next opportunity by "axe the tax" opposition parties.

At the federal level, former Liberal leader Stéphane Dion's 2008 election promise to introduce national carbon pricing was resoundingly rejected. Only in 2017, after an acrimonious and drawn-out process, did Justin Trudeau's Liberals pull the current federal system into place.

Economists like carbon pricing because it is a simple, low-cost option for reducing emissions. If fossil fuels cost a bit more, the theory goes, then people will burn a bit less. That's good for the planet and it doesn't require expensive subsidies or spending programs.

Yet the carbon pricing system never managed to shake its detractors. Calls to abandon the system are now coming not only from the right but from the left. The federal NDP and even the B.C. NDP are distancing themselves from the policy, which they have identified as a political liability.

The truth is that both the economists and the skeptics—to the extent that their criticisms are made in good faith—have a point.

Carbon pricing is indeed economically efficient, but it is also inherently politically toxic. Not only are the costs highly visible—as consumers, we stomach the carbon tax every time we fill up our car or pay the gas bill—but the benefits are hard to see.

To be clear, the benefits of the carbon tax are absolutely real. Because of carbon pricing systems, fewer fossil fuels are being burned across the country. It's just that those reductions are the accumulation of thousands of individual choices made by households and businesses that are invisible to the rest of us.

Ironically, most households are also richer because of carbon taxes. In provinces covered by the federal system, the quarterly carbon pricing rebate more than offsets what most people pay up front. But a rebate in your bank account does not register as strongly as a surcharge at the pump. It's just not a popular equation, even if it works on paper.

In contrast, consider the shut down of a coal plant. It is more costly to the economy than a broad-based carbon tax—and no one gets a rebate—but the vast majority of people don't experience those costs directly. Meanwhile, the benefits in terms of reduced pollution are obvious for all to see. That makes for popular environmental policy.

There's an important lesson here for politicians and governments concerned about climate change. At the end of the day, what matters more than efficiency is effectiveness.

We need to prioritize policies with big, visible benefits. Policies like investing in public transit systems and green manufacturing infrastructure, which creates good jobs. Policies like an emissions cap on the oil and gas extraction industry, which shifts the costs of transition onto the biggest polluters. Policies like skilled trades training programs, which prepare workers for opportunities in a cleaner economy.

The poor carbon tax did its best, but too much pressure was piled on its shaky shoulders. There are more popular and resilient options on the table for driving down emissions, building up a clean economy and winning over a skeptical public. That is where we need to focus now.

Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood is a senior researcher with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Worth repeating

"Collective action is also vitally important for demanding a say in the production of our food. Without food autonomy, creating change will be difficult. This does not mean we all need to grow our own food, but we do need to engage with our food supply and support those who do the growing." —***Kristin Lawless**, UTNE Reader*

iStock

Erika Shaker
National Office

Another year of rising tuition fees

It's January and the start of a new academic semester. Snow may be falling—but tuition fees are not.

Fees charged to students continue to increase across the country—by an average of about three per cent since last year. But the price tag varies from province to province as a direct result of how much individual governments have chosen to download the costs onto students and their families.

According to Statistics Canada, undergraduates can pay from $3,594 in Quebec to $9,762 in Nova Scotia. And with an average of $1,000 in additional compulsory fees thrown in, students in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan have pushed through the $10,000 mark, with Ontario and Alberta not far behind.

But in this race to the top, the losers are students and their families.

Tuition fee increases accelerated after 1995 when the federal government changed the funding mechanism and how much post-secondary funding it was providing to the provinces. Depending on how provincial governments responded, students in some provinces were charged significantly more than those in others, in an increasingly entrenched "user-fee" system.

This transferring of the burden of costs onto students and their families became even more onerous as more tiers of payment were introduced: deregulation of fees for international students; higher costs for some "specialized" programs; additional compulsory fees; and more recently, significantly higher fees for out-of-province students—particularly in Quebec and Nova Scotia, but also in Newfoundland, which in 2022 reversed its transformative early 2000s policy of reducing fees by 25 per cent and freezing them for all students.

This means that what students pay looks different depending on where they're from, where their school of choice is located, and what they plan to study.

However, these costs pale in comparison to the extreme fees charged to international students, the original canaries in the fee deregulation coal mine. They range from $18,000 in Newfoundland and Labrador to over $48,000 in Ontario, with a national average of $40,000.

International students have been a major revenue stream for Canadian universities to compensate for insufficient public funding. And with plummeting international student enrolment, according to Universities Canada, due to political uncertainty and policy changes, there are significant economic implications for post-secondary institutions.

In this "pay to play" system, cost pressures on students don't just stop with program fees. Everything else costs more too, from soaring rents to high grocery prices. And food banks, now a fixture on campuses, are not a solution. Adding to this is the increase in youth unemployment, up to 14.2 per cent—the highest rate since September 2012 outside the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021.

All of these economic pressures are exponentially worse for racialized students, Indigenous youth and recent immigrants, as well as for many of those international students who are being blamed for a housing crisis not of their making.

These threats to the economic survival of students are a direct result of insufficient levels of public support for post-secondary education. And the progressive downloading of costs onto students and their families has huge implications for intergenerational equity as individual student debt grows.

There is an individual and societal cost to debt. Without sufficient disposable income, young people can't buy a car or a home. Debt results in "income scarring" and the postponement of major decisions like starting a family. The whole economy is weakened. That's why governments must reinvest in funding post-secondary education, and provide adequate supports to students and their families.

There are profound social and economic benefits to a well-educated population—benefits that are undermined when a generation is forced to take on tremendous debt in the process. It's not only unjust, it's short-sighted policy-making.

Erika Shaker is the national office director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

BY TRISH HENNESSY

THE FUTURE OF FOOD

Eat the rich?

My mother was born in 1935, in the middle of the Great Depression, on the drought-ravaged Prairies.

Like most families in rural Saskatchewan at the time, my mother's family lived off the land, whatever it would yield. Other than the crabapples, saskatoon berries and gooseberries that grew on trees and bushes, there was little fruit to be harvested. If it was picked, it was preserved to help get the family through the harsh Prairie winter.

By the time my mother was raising a family of her own, drought was long behind her and there was greater abundance at the Lucky Dollar grocery store. But, for the most part, we lived off the land.

Our garden was the size of a football field. In it, the tomatoes that ripened on the vine were destined for a laborious canning process, with dozens of steaming, sterilized jars waiting to be filled. The peas and beans found their way into one of two deep freezes. The potatoes, carrots, beets and other root vegetables ended up in the root cellar.

The cows that grazed among the hills of our ranch would end up on the market, with one divided among family members. The rainbow trout swimming in our dam would end up in the fish fry.

We knew where our food came from. And the women of the household were tasked with the job of keeping a family of 11—and more at harvest time—fed daily. I've been peeling potatoes since I was five years old. I've always loved being in the kitchen. It is the heart and soul of the household.

Over time, of course, packaged foods found their way onto our pantry shelves (it was the 1970s, after all) and technology (dishwashers, the microwave!) evolved to make our lives in the kitchen easier.

This story is about food. It's also a story about history. About agriculture and aquaculture. About the changing nature of food and how we process it. About the changing technologies that allow us to manipulate our food. About the gendered nature of food preparation.

And it's a story about income inequality and food insecurity. Because we were a farming family, we were lucky to have an abundance of fresh, quality food. Its presence helped us forget that we struggled to make ends meet.

When we try to imagine the future of food, all of these factors must go into the mix. Including how our governments organize our food and water supply systems.

Food exposes the complex dynamics between the social, socio-economics, the environment, the nature of work, and politics. And because food is what each and every one of us needs in order to survive, the future of food is something we share in common.

Food is about systems

Think about how central food is to communal gatherings, and what that reveals about our food systems.

Mom (typically) goes to the grocery store to purchase the fixings and cooks the Thanksgiving turkey, the mashed potatoes, the gravy and stuffing.

Aunt Karen makes the orange-cranberry sauce—and it's always better than the canned version.

Aunt Shirley has the family recipe for turnip puff, which, it turns out, traces back to the original Betty Crocker recipe of the 1950s. That's right: there's only one turnip puff recipe!

The gathering is focused on a meal, but the action, and the social value, is what happens in the kitchen. It's a collective effort, with (mostly) women bustling in and out of the kitchen all afternoon, carrying out

tasks that are steeped in tradition. We say food brings us together, but it's really the people who made the food who should get the credit.

The makers of the food are part of the system. As is the market that we turn to in order to get the food on the table.

Since most Canadians live in cities now, relying on the family farm for provisions isn't an option. It's off to the supermarket, owned by mega-corporations like Loblaws, where the primary goal is to squeeze enough profits to please the shareholders.

That impacts the quality of our food, the price, and food insecurity. There's a reason why food banks do a hamper drive at Thanksgiving—many people can't afford the turkey dinner.

In March 2023, there were more than 1.9 million trips to food banks in Canada. Food bank usage increased by 78.5 per cent between March 2019 and March 2023. Canada is one of the wealthiest countries on the planet, but food insecurity is baked into our food system.

Food banks were created in the 1980s as a stop-gap measure. They were never supposed to be permanent. But Canadians have grown complacent; it feels like they are here to stay.

For those who are fortunate enough to host the Thanksgiving feast, the time-worn traditions have become a part of the settler value system, but those traditions—and those values—can also change over time.

The turkey might still be the star on many Canadians' dinner tables, but the vegans amongst us are growing in number and influence. Our tables are making room for tofurky, vegan shepherd's pie, a dairy-free green bean casserole, gluten-free stuffing.

Twenty years ago, it was much harder, and rarer, to be a vegan. But the market has responded to the growing call for a vegan lifestyle, and the aisles in our grocery stores reflect a greater diversity of foods—including international cuisines that reflect the increasing diversity of our population.

Food is social, but food systems are economic in nature, which makes them dynamic, responsive to supply and demand. As consumers, we have the power to shape and reshape the system.

According to Statistics Canada, 7.6 per cent of Canadians were vegetarian and 4.6 per cent were vegan in 2020. Younger Canadians, those aged 18-29, are most likely to be vegetarian or vegan, followed by those who are 30-39. They're driving market and menu changes.

Between 2017 and 2021, plant-based, ready-made meal sales in Canada grew by 441.8 per cent, on a compound annual basis.

There were 2,233 vegan and vegetarian restaurants in Ontario in 2020—more than any other province, though Victoria had the most vegan restaurants per population.

Since 2016, internet searches for vegan and plant-based options have grown by 113 per cent. This isn't my mother's food system. We've changed. And we'll continue to change.

That's the thing about food: it's adaptable—and capable of surprise. I mean, who ever thought avocado toast would have its moment? Or cauliflower?

Monster meat?

Food is a basic necessity, but through the years, it's also been subject to fads.

With the advent of refrigeration, dishes like jello salad with pineapples and maraschino cherries suspended within it became a good hostess staple.

In the 1950s, the backyard barbecue became the star dinner party. During the week, housewives made good use of the new invention of canned creamed soups in their casserole recipes.

In the 1960s, Julia Child brought the concept of french cooking into American households, thanks to the invention of the TV. That expanded our horizons and elevated home cooks' expectations.

In the 1970s, dinner parties went glamorous, with flambees and fondues.

In the 1980s, everyone gathered around the microwave to 'nuke' dinner in minutes, creating a market for ready-made meals that saved "nine-to-five" working women time in the kitchen. At the same time, there was a wholesome food movement. Think: granola, whole wheat bread instead of white, margarine instead of butter ("I can't believe it's not butter").

In the 1990s, magazines like *Gourmet* and *Bon Appetit* encouraged home cooks to create restaurant-worthy creations for their dinner parties. Guests expected elevated dishes and the pressure for home cooks was on—it's not a coincidence that food processors were a hot commodity in the 1990s. Suddenly home cooks could puree a spanish gazpacho within seconds.

With each new technological innovation came a new ease of cooking coupled with heightened expectations of the quality of food on the dining table. Food had to be delicious, nutritious, and so appealing that every guest would want the recipe.

The 2000s have ushered in smoothies for breakfast, largely thanks to the popularity of the Vitamix. YouTube videos readily show you how to make pizza from scratch, homemade bread, Indian food. There's the 100-mile diet and the farm-to-fork movement.

Fast forward to 2025, and we're not exactly living the Jetsons lifestyle, but food is starting to feel futuristic. Enter a new menu item: "cultivated" meats produced from animal cells.

The Good Food Institute describes cultivated meats as meat that is "made of the same cell types that can be arranged in the same or similar structure as animal tissues,

thus replicating the sensory and nutritional profiles of conventional meat.

"The manufacturing process begins with acquiring and banking stem cells from an animal. These cells are then grown in bioreactors (known colloquially as cultivators) at high densities and volumes. Similar to what happens inside an animal's body, the cells are fed an oxygen-rich cell culture medium made up of basic nutrients such as amino acids, glucose, vitamins, and inorganic salts, and supplemented with growth factors and other proteins."

The hope is that widespread use of cultivated meat will help limit greenhouse gas emissions and land use for meat production. The promise is that resolute meat eaters who eschew tofu burgers will be more likely to shift their diet if the fake meat looks and tastes like real meat.

In essence, science has facilitated new technology that is being touted as one of the tools in the climate change adaptation toolkit. Whether there's a market for it remains to be seen, but other questions remain, among them: how will governments regulate this new food industry, will it alleviate animal suffering and exploitation, and will the market be financially accessible or simply the domain of the rich while the rest of us eat beans (which are delicious, by the way)?

Food is about systems, and how we structure the system of the future matters.

From agrarian society to...?

Canada—Saskatchewan, in particular—was once considered the "breadbasket to the world". The province's grain production fed the global market in the age of imperialism and rising capitalism. Globalization and deregulation helped to mute that dominance.

The 1980s drought didn't help. Many family farms, including my own, buckled under the pressure. I was a young reporter at the now-defunct *Moose Jaw Times Herald* in the late 1980s, reporting on the impact that the drought had on farming, on farmers' family life, and on the communities that depended on that market.

The drought was so bad that alkaline salt from dried-up lake beds caused fires along power lines and children suffered terrible nose bleeds and allergic reactions due to the mix of salt and dust.

It feels like a lifetime ago, but the memory of those parched fields—which a colleague at the *Times Herald* once described as "like living on the surface of the moon"—remains imprinted in my mind; especially as I read *The Tyee*'s important essay, "Alberta's brutal water reckoning", which reminds readers that two scientists, in particular, warned 20 years ago that the region would suffer from 20- to 30-year droughts due to its limited water reservoirs.

Imagine that: 20- to 30-year droughts.

As Andrew Nikiforuk wrote in *The Tyee* in February 2024: "Alberta's water reckoning has begun in earnest. Snowpack accumulations in the Oldman River basin, the Bow River basin and the North Saskatchewan River basin range from 33 to 62 per cent below normal. A reduced snowpack means less summer water for the fish and all water drinkers."

Water is something we take for granted, to our detriment. By now we know the short-term drill. Massive wildfires, air thick with smoke, communities displaced and ravaged by fire. This likely isn't temporary.

As Nikiforuk writes, Alberta's St. Mary Reservoir is usually 40-70 per cent full but is only at 11 per cent capacity; the Spray Lakes Reservoir is only at 34 per cent capacity; Lake Diefenbaker received only 28 per cent normal inflow in 2022. That's the lake that provides 60 per cent of Saskatchewan with drinking water.

The future of food depends on reliable water sources. Climate change reckoning is real, and it will impact our food supply. Climate change is not only about the survival of the planet and every living being that inhabits it. It's economic—with scarcity, food won't be cheap. And it's political—a hungry populace is an angry electorate.

The politics of food

In Canada, we remain in political denial about the impact of climate change on our future. Even the most benign policy intervention—the carbon tax—has become a political hot potato. (Benign because we get most of it back in tax credits).

We also stick our heads in the sand about the exploitation of the migrant workers we bring into Canada to pick produce, to package meat, to work at food processing plants. They say the past predicts the future. If the future food system replicates the exploitative conditions of work for food workers, we will have learned nothing.

Hopefully, Canadians just won't tolerate such exploitative systems anymore. There is still time for humility, fairness, and ethical approaches. Time for equality.

The clock on climate catastrophe, however, is winding down faster than the most optimistic scientists feared. Coral reefs are disappearing. In 2023, officials declared 21 species extinct.

Yet in Canada, we have right-wing politicians railing against climate change mitigations. Even left-leaning governments' actions have been tepid. When it comes to food, there will always be innovations and scientific advances—but without water, the future of food is not only bleak, it could fuel social unrest. Eat the rich, anyone? M

Trish Hennessy is the editor of the *Monitor* and a senior strategist with the CCPA National Office.

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Darrin Qualman

Breadbasket no more?

The future of food could be grim

I grew up farming in Saskatchewan, in the heart of Canada's Prairie grainland area—one of the world's great "breadbaskets." My family and I grew canola, barley, oats, peas, lentils, wheat, and a variety of other crops. More often than not, the weather was favourable and the crops abundant.

Unfortunately, the world has come to take the Prairies and other breadbaskets for granted and to unthinkingly demand more and more of them—to feed growing populations and supply unwise biofuel schemes. But limits on fossil fuel and fertilizer inputs, the growing need to reduce **greenhouse gases (GHGs)** emissions, and, most of all, impending climate impacts mean that we must not be blasé about continued profusions of cheap and plentiful farm products. Unless we take wise, ambitious, and rapid steps, in coming decades many parts of the world may be breadbaskets no more.

Crop production tonnage continues to rise in Canada, so much of what follows is prospective—it describes certain negative scenarios possible in the future. These negative scenarios become more likely as we continue to emit GHGs and further destabilize the global climate. What follows outlines some of those negative scenarios.

Simply stated, climate change could devastate Canadian agriculture and food production in coming decades; a multi-decade drought could unfold and sear our food-producing areas, wither our crops, and parch and damage our

soils. The Prairies, which host 84 per cent of Canadian farmland, could be the hardest hit, potentially getting much hotter and probably also drier.

It is increasingly likely that Earth will warm by a global average of nearly three degrees Celsius this century. Recently, the UK's *Guardian* newspaper polled 400 UN IPCC climate scientists and most predicted temperature increases of 2.5 or three degrees Celsius this century. Similarly, the UN's annual Emissions Gap Report tells us we are on track for 2.5 to 2.9 degrees of warming, even taking into account the already announced programs and actions to limit emissions. Forget 1.5 degrees; we're on track for nearly double that.

The preceding is bad news for everyone on Earth, but the news for most Canadian farmers is worse. The Canadian Prairies lie in the centre of a continent, at a relatively northerly latitude. Continental interiors are warming much faster than the global average; the same is true for northern areas. We are seeing the Prairies warm twice as fast as the global average rate and projections are that this will continue. So, this huge food-producing area is on track for five or six degrees of warming this century. Climate change may also bring more rain (or not), but if temperatures rise faster than rainfall, evaporation will overwhelm precipitation and soils will get drier, even if average precipitation rises.

Moreover, averages don't matter. A destabilized climate will bring more volatility—more protracted and intense extremes, including intense heatwaves and droughts alternating with damaging precipitation events. Even if multi-year "average" rainfall is near normal or increases, farmers might lose one year's crop to drought and see the next year's heavily damaged by relentless fall rains. Worse, a Prairie region five or six degrees hotter could become home to multi-year droughts.

These potential future climate impacts come atop massive risks *already* part of our long-term Prairie climate. University of Regina scientist Dr. Dave Sauchyn has demonstrated that the wettest, most benign period on the Prairies in the past 500+ years was the period after settlement, and that long multi-year droughts were more common before the 1900s (Sauchyn et al., 2002). That pre-1900 drought pattern could return. If it does, it will be made much worse by an additional five or six degrees of heat. Imagine the 1930s drought, but longer and hotter. Sauchyn and his co-authors note that "the immediate impacts of future global warming may be to return the prairie environment to past conditions in which persistent aridity was recorded for intervals of decades or longer." He is talking about multi-year or multi-decade droughts.

With five or six degrees of warming, some parts of the Prairies may become non-viable for crop production. There may be farmland abandonment or a forced return to grass.

But potentially devastating climate impacts are just one of several converging risks, dysfunctions, and vulnerabilities that may be forming an agricultural polycrisis. Here is a tour of some of the others:

Canadian farm debt is high and rapidly rising. Indebtedness has risen for 31 years straight—in bad times and good. In just the past 11 years, debt has *doubled*—to $146 billion. That's an average of $1,000 per acre of Canadian farmland. And since some farms carry relatively little debt, the $1,000-per-acre average implies that many farms are carrying double or triple that amount. With debt doubling and redoubling, interest payments are also rising. In 2023, farmers paid just under $7 billion in interest—triple the amount in 2010.

In addition to being increasingly dependent on debt, farmers also depend upon taxpayer-funded support programs. Over the past three years, net transfers to farmers via cost-shared programs such as crop insurance have averaged $5 billion per year. To put it another way: since 2008, when the "good times" returned for farmers, tax-funded transfers have made up 36 per cent of realized net farm income. Without those billions in taxpayer transfers, farming would look very different—many farmers would be hard pressed to make their interest payments or pay other expenses.

Canadian agriculture is a paradox—seemingly prosperous yet financially vulnerable at the same time. On the one hand, we must acknowledge the huge profits being captured by farms with large land bases. For example, grain farms with perhaps 7,000, 10,000, or 20,000+ acres are reaping large surpluses—hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars per year. On top of these annual cash surpluses from operations, these farms are piling up, at least on paper, significant wealth as a result of galloping land-price increases. On very large farms, asset appreciation can add millions of dollars in wealth in just a few years.

But the preceding is occurring even as per-acre margins continue to erode. Very large farms are not making large profits per acre: they are making relatively small profits per acre, *but on a huge number of acres*. Per-acre margins today and in recent years are near historic lows. *Peaks* in per-acre margins in recent years (struggling to reach $100 per acre) are below the inflation-adjusted *troughs* of the 1940s, '50s, '60s, '70s, and early '80s.

Agriculture is supporting a number of farms in seeming prosperity, but it is supporting a *much smaller number* of farms. Compared to previous "good times"—say, the 1970s and early '80s—the number of farms supported in relative prosperity today is perhaps 20 or 30 per cent as large. Big farms are reaping big profits because they are profiting from the

land that previously supported four or six families. Overall profitability is not high: aggregate profits are low. Net income in Canadian agriculture is far below its 1940s to 1980s levels, *but it is divided among fewer hands*.

So, from one perspective, large farms seem prosperous. But from another perspective, a confluence of low per-acre margins, high and rising debt, chronic dependence on taxpayer-funded transfers, and the need to cover ground that should be supporting several farm families instead of just one gives a different perspective on the current "boom."

Prairie agriculture is vulnerable and faces very high risks from looming climate impacts. But before we return to those potential impacts, let's look at other aspects of our potential agricultural polycrisis.

Looking objectively at most sectors of national and global economies, most are far outside the bounds of sustainability. Mining, industry, forestry, fishing, etc. are all unsustainable at current levels, yet all continue to expand. Virtually all human systems are now unsustainable, and moving away from, not toward, sustainability. It is worth considering that the same is true for agriculture. A few facts: Canadian agriculture doubled its fuel use over the past 31 years, doubled its fertilizer use over the past 18 years, and doubled its use of chemical herbicides and insecticides over the past 13. Like all parts of national and global economies, agriculture is less sustainable.

The preceding is not, however, a criticism of farmers, but rather a way to illuminate the driving forces within agriculture. Farmers are on a treadmill, spurred by agribusiness corporations to run ever faster—squeezed to produce ever-higher yields and outputs, usually via the use of ever-larger quantities of inputs. Farmer profits depend not only on producing, but on producing more and more each year. And this maximum-output, maximum-input system is pushing farmers farther away from sustainability and toward a more violent collision with emissions limits and planetary boundaries.

Focusing on one aspect of the sustainability problem, agricultural GHG emissions, we see that those are rising, despite a global framework wherein emissions must fall and all sectors must approach net zero by 2050—just 25 years from now. How will a highly indebted agricultural system seemingly addicted to ever-increasing output (and hence increasing input use) maintain itself when emissions limits press downward with intensifying force on emissions and input use? On one side loom climate impacts and on the other loom roadblocks to business as usual, imposed by the need to do agriculture differently in a world constrained by energy, emissions, and biospheric limits.

The 1970s and early-'80s boom gave way to a two-decade farm crisis period wherein farmers were plagued by high interest rates, frequent droughts, poor prices, and negative margins. Over that period, nearly 100 per cent of net income came from taxpayer-funded programs and farm families were forced to augment their income through off-farm work. It is hard to know what the future holds for grain prices or farm prosperity, but there are clear risks. And if economic bad times return amid record-high debt and intensifying climate impacts, the results could be disastrous. It is hard to overstate the risks of climate impacts upon an already vulnerable agricultural sector.

So what should we do? Though there are no "solutions" per se, there are many positive responses we could make now to minimize the risks to our Prairie breadbasket. Many readers will expect just such a list of positive changes here. But let's omit that list. Why? Because, too often, such lists of "solutions" serve merely to dispel anxiety—to defuse concerns, to give the impression that remedies are at hand and, surely, someone will ensure we do the right thing.

Let us be clear: though solutions exist, we are not pursuing them. Rather, we are moving away from them. Farm debt is not falling, it is rapidly rising. Overdependence on taxpayer dollars is not abating—it is a chronic feature of farm finance. Agricultural GHG emissions and input use are not falling; we are not moving in directions that align with emission-reduction commitments or planetary boundaries, but instead away. We continue to expel farmers and super-size our farms, with the largest now above 100,000 acres. We continue to dismantle policies, programs, and institutions that previously gave farmers power in the marketplace and we continue to turn the system over to increasing corporate control, with the result being farmers forced to run ever faster on the input-use and output treadmill. Yes, we could list here the positive changes that must be made to begin to safeguard our Prairie breadbasket, but much more important than any such list is the clear-eyed acknowledgement that we are moving away from solutions, not toward them.

There is much we can do to make our farms and food systems less dependent on petroleum-derived inputs and debt. There is much we can do to make our farms and food systems less vulnerable to inevitable climate shocks, but at this moment, overall, we are doing the opposite—we are going the wrong way. Key to preserving our Prairie breadbasket is having the courage to fundamentally change direction. M

Darrin Qualman is author of *Civilization Critical: Energy, food, nature, and the future*.

Trish Hennessy and Elisabeth Abergel

The future of "fake meat"

An interview with Elisabeth Abergel, an environmental studies scholar at Université du Québec a Montréal.

TH: Demand for the alternative proteins market has been on the rise. What are they?

EA: The four types of alt-proteins are plant-based proteins such as soy, peas, lentils and other legumes. These are found in traditional meat analogues as well as newer ones. The traditional plant-based proteins are tofu and tempeh. Companies like Beyond Meat or Impossible Foods make soy and pea protein meat analogues that mimic animal meat using newer processing techniques. For instance, the Impossible Burger is mostly soy concentrate but it contains coconut oil and other oils, potato protein and what is known as soy heme or leghemoglobin, a molecule produced via genetically engineered yeast to make it look like the burger is bleeding.

The second category is fermentation-derived proteins using microorganisms like yeast, fungi and bacteria using fermentation processes. For example, Qorn uses fungal biomass to make its high protein product. Other products, like Perfect Day's dairy products, make milk without cows by isolating the genes for whey protein or casein and inserting them into yeast or fungi which are then grown in large fermentation tanks using precision fermentation.

The third type is cell-based or cultivated meat proteins. These use animal cells from a live animal, which are then grown into a bioreactor where cells are allowed to proliferate, and eventually differentiate into muscle cells. As the muscle cells multiply, they form a bigger piece of muscle or muscle tissue, which are then shaped into burgers or nuggets. They are processed for flavour and texture, etc. Companies, like Eat Just, are selling cultivated chicken in Singapore through its GOOD Meat division. These products are not available in Canada yet.

Finally, the fourth type is insect-based proteins, which are sourced from insects like crickets, grasshoppers or mealworms. These are processed into powder form and used like flours.

TH: How big a market might this become?

EA: It's not clear how the market will go. The pandemic played a key role in boosting the sale of plant-based meats because there were supply chain disruptions with conventional meat. In addition, there was a swine flu and an avian flu epidemic just before 2019, and there were fears of animal-borne diseases. That's when sales of Beyond Meat and Impossible Foods surged, as consumers started including plant-based meats in their diet. However, since then, sales of plant-based meats have dropped or have plateaued in some regions. Post-pandemic consumption of plant-based meats hasn't translated in people switching completely from traditional meat.

However, the market is expected to grow. Market growth predictions include that the global market for alt-protein was worth approximately $15 billion USD in 2023 and is expected to continue growing at about a rate of eight per cent a year until 2030. This is mostly driven by plant-based meats and beverages (soy milk, almond milk, etc.).

The numbers will depend on the industry's ability to make products that are affordable and tasty. There are also questions about the fact that plant-based meats are ultra-processed and may not be healthy choices: high salt and fat contents plus all kinds of unknown products—such as genetically engineered soy, industrially grown crops, and molecules like leghemoglobin, which haven't been extensively studies in terms of long-term health impacts.

However, the demand for conventional meat is also increasing and remains high. Countries in the global south, like China and India, are where demand is the highest, due to rising incomes and changing diets. Highest demand is for pork and chicken, then beef. I've seen predictions of a 50 per cent increase in the global demand for meat by 2050. It's usually tied to population growth, which is expected to reach 9.7 billion.

TH: A lot of this new market focuses on reducing agriculture's environmental impacts. But it's also highly contentious. Tell us why?

EA: Conventional or industrial agriculture is a major contributor to greenhouse gases—it's estimated between 20-30 per cent. Of that share, livestock production is the highest source of greenhouse gas emissions, mostly through the production of methane.

However, the production of plant-based protein requires intensive agricultural practices that have a substantial environmental footprint. This means growing large-scale monoculture crops using chemical inputs (fertilizers and pesticides), which may include genetically modified varieties of

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soy or corn as well as new gene edited crops. This might offset any environmental benefit.

The process of producing lab-grown meat is energy intensive in terms of electricity, water, etc. For instance, the growth medium used to cultivate the cells into muscle tissue requires a lot of ingredients sourced from conventional or industrial agriculture: either plant derived or even animal derived. For companies who claim to be using animal-free serum, the alternatives come from plants like soy or corn.

The fact that major meat producers and agri-business companies are investing in the alt-protein business is not simply the result of their concern for environmental sustainability and for animal ethics. It is based on a desire to integrate alt-protein into their existing industrial supply chains and it is seen as an opportunity to capture market-segment. They have invested in alt-protein companies or have created their own alt-protein companies (like Tyson, JBS, Cargill and ADM -Archer Daniels Midland). These companies control the plant supply chain for soy and corn. They also operate large-scale processing plants that supply the alt-protein industry. Cargill and ADM control the soybean market as a major source for the alt-protein market. So, essentially, they control a significant share of the key crops used in alt-proteins and stand to profit from this industry.

TH: Cellular agriculture—lab meat—is the latest addition to the future of food production. Can you tell us about this new form of alternative proteins, "fake meat"? How do they produce it?

EA: Stem cells from the muscle of a live animal are biopsied or in some cases cell lines from animals are used to grow muscle cells in a bioreactor. As the cells grow and divide, a scaffold or support matrix is used to provide a three-dimensional structure that reproduces the natural environment inside the body of the animal for muscle tissue development. The cells are allowed to differentiate into muscle cells and other cell types necessary for recreating the texture of meat. Once the cells have grown and matured into muscle cells, they are harvested from the bioreactor and processed or assembled into 'meat' to mimic the taste and feel of traditional meat.

Harvesting may involve removing the scaffolding material if it is not made from food-grade edible material. Lab-grown or cell-based meat has been produced from beef, chicken, pork, duck etc. as well as seafood and fish. Most of the meat produced is either in the form of beef burgers, animal sausages or chicken nuggets although one company, Aleph Meats, is working to produce what it calls steak, which involves shaping the final product to replicate the characteristics of a steak. The U.S.-based company Wildtype produces sushi-grade cultivated salmon.

TH: What technical hurdles need to be overcome before this form of "meat" will hit Canadian markets?

EA: There are several hurdles: one is linked to the production cost, a second to the technical difficulties of scaling up production to produce industrial quantities of meat, a third is linked to regulatory and safety issues.

One, the cost of production boils down to bringing down the cost of the culture or growth medium. As it stands, culture medium is the most expensive aspect of the process, as it contains nutrient-rich ingredients such as cell growth factors, amino acids, vitamins and mineral, sugars, fats, etc. to optimize cell growth and enable their differentiation into different cell types. While some of these ingredients can be cheaply sourced, the need for large quantities of high-purity ingredients drives the cost. Growth factors tend to be derived from animal sources and are very costly to produce, as they are made using genetic engineering. This makes the cost of cell-based meat prohibitively high compared to conventional meat. To be affordable and cost effective, huge quantities of meat would have to be sold. Just to put things into perspective, it's

estimated that in 2024, a pound of cultivated burger meat costs around $23 Cdn a pound while conventional beef is currently priced between $3.50 to $6 Cdn per pound.

Two, scaling up production of growth media to meet market demand is expensive and technically difficult. Large-scale bioreactors that can range from 1,000 to 10,000 litres or more will be used for commercial manufacture. Some mention sizes of 200,000 litres in volume to feed people in an affordable way. Ensuring reliable and consistent batches of product is another problem. Research is underway to study how to maintain optimal conditions for cell growth from laboratory to pilot stage, to commercial-scale levels. This includes optimizing the formulation of the cell growth medium. Some companies are investigating continuous cultivation, which means that instead of starting over with new cells for each production run, they keep the cells growing and keep adding fresh nutrients and removing waste without having to start a new batch every time.

Three, other technical hurdles involve regulatory and safety challenges. Several cell-based meat manufacturing facilities have been built in the U.S. (Upside Foods), in Europe (Mosa Meats), in Singapore (Eat Just) and in Israel (Future Meat, SuperMeat and Aleph). Although some countries like the U.S., Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Singapore and the UK (not for human consumption only for pets) have approved cultivated meat, one company has applied for regulatory clearance in the European Union. There have been no pre-market approvals in Canada, as regulatory frameworks and clear guidelines have not yet been established.
This means that the future of cultivated meat is likely in the form of blended meats: i.e. plant-based mixed with cell-based.

TH: In terms of animal welfare, is it ethical?

EA: Because this meat is not a reality, it's hard to say if fewer animals will suffer or be harmed when this product reaches the market. There are many animal ingredients that go into its production. Some companies still rely on fetal bovine serum for growing cells. It is drawn from the fetuses of pregnant cows in the slaughterhouse. It is the most popular product for growing cells in vitro, as it provides a rich culture environment for cell development. Other companies have developed animal-free growth medium. However, many animal-derived components—like collagen, trypsin, albumin—are still used. Cellular growth factors and enzymes originating from animals are produced and scaled up using recombinant DNA technology. So, it's not completely slaughter-free or ethical meat.

If animal welfare is a primary concern, we could ask ourselves why producing synthetic meat might be an answer to the animal ethics problem. Such technologically intensive and extremely expensive ways of producing animal products without animals might divert attention from efforts and resources to actually end animal agriculture, if that is the desired outcome. It also fails to encourage shifts towards plant-based diets, food sovereignty and sustainable farming practices. It's easy to lose sight of the fact that lab-grown meat is just another technologically intensive, market-driven solution that aims to maintain the status quo. It allows meat eaters to continue eating meat without making fundamental changes to their habits or diets, reinforcing the meat paradigm and avoiding engagement with the deeper moral implications of killing animals for food.

TH: What are the regulatory implications to ensure public safety and well-being?

EA: Product testing first and foremost: we have never eaten lab-grown meat before, it is new to the human diet. Although industry promoters like to say that this meat is real meat or that it is the same or better than conventional meat, it is not produced the same way. In my view it is not the same and should not be considered as such. Conventional meat shouldn't be used as a basis to assess the safety of cultivated meat.

TH: Do you think lab meat will become a mainstay on Canadian tables?

EA: It's unlikely that it will become a mainstay of Canadian diets. Beyond the lack of supply and uncertainty regarding the commercial future of this product, there are many cultural reasons why some meat eaters will not switch to this product and will continue to eat animals. Some people might perceive the product as unnatural or synthetic, the opposite of a food deeply anchored in local or traditional cultural and culinary practices. Cell-based meat is the antithesis of a vision of agriculture that links people, farmers and animals in local foodways. Consumer acceptance is a challenge for this industry. The industry has to convince people their product is edible and that it is meat.

If people want to get away from eating animals or meat, they don't need to wait for cell-based meat to arrive on supermarket shelves. They can adapt their diet to veganism or vegetarianism tomorrow. If it becomes the future, its lack of affordability and its highly technologized process will not make it universally accessible. I don't think growing meat in bioreactors will rectify the structural inequalities that exist in the global food system. If anything, it might reinforce them. **M**

Wade Thorhaug

Public markets are a means to future food security

I come from a farming family in Saskatchewan, but like many across the country, we are no longer in the business. My grandparents were post-war farmers, succeeded by my father and his siblings, and while my generation of genXers and millennials will gather at family reunions and share fond childhood memories of farm chores and being chased by cattle (after provoking them, of course), none of us ever had the intention to make this our livelihood.

Who could blame us? Aside from all the charms of country living, we knew that it was a life of long working hours and not much pay—my father's personal record of spending 40 consecutive hours haying is both impressive and horrifying. To make matters worse, the dominant agricultural model in the country today is one of massively expensive inputs of fertilizer, pesticides and machinery, a huge financial risk with a very small expected rate of return.

Added to this is the challenge of producing food in a global market. Our agricultural system is geared for exports, and we send 50 per cent of the food we produce to other countries. As one of the world's most important breadbaskets, you would think we are nearly self-sufficient in food production, but that is not the case at all: we are at once the fifth largest food exporter and the sixth largest food importer.

Obviously, we can't produce everything (try starting a coffee farm in the lush Niagara region), but the way that we produce too much of some things and too little of others has consequences for our farmers and consumers.

For one, aside from a few supply management regulated commodities like milk and eggs, we are at the mercy of the whims of the global market. Canada's pork industry is in freefall due to a decision made in China—formerly our largest export market for pork—to massively ramp up local production (seemingly in retaliation to the 2018 extradition of Meng Wanzhou). This situation threatens to repeat itself with the canola industry, as China mulls retaliatory action to counter Canada's tariffs on Chinese-made electric vehicles.

For consumers, the risks associated with this model are not nearly as dire as they are for producers. Few of us are going to lose our job if the value of canola plummets. Indeed, corporations are only doing what most consumers expect of them: provide cheap food.

It can seem like we are in an era of unprecedented abundance, especially when we compare it to the experience of previous generations. Today the average Canadian spends about 11 per cent of their income on food—a far cry from when my father was a child and food was the largest single household expense (at 19 per cent), itself a period of opulence compared to what my grandmother endured as a child during the Great Depression.

However, those supermarket cornucopias of fresh produce hailing from places like California carry risks, which tend to show themselves during moments of crisis.

Take the pandemic. As borders closed, people panicked at the thought of where their food would come from, food bank use skyrocketed and grocery shelves were cleared. While the situation was quickly resolved, it led to conversations about the fragility of our global supply chains and whether we can rely on them for something as important as food.

A more tangible shock came after the pandemic, when inflation sent food prices skyrocketing. Somehow Canadians were spending significantly more to feed themselves for a plethora of reasons—energy prices, Russia's war of aggression, labour shortages, climate change.

What's the solution? Our food system is the result of decades of decisions made mostly in favour of corporations. Even the most benevolent remedies will take decades to implement. Given the respective challenges faced by Canada's food producers and consumers, perhaps some solutions can be reached by having these two groups interact more, without a byzantine global market standing between them.

Public and farmers' markets are one way to accomplish this and could be a key component in the diversification of our food systems. By and large, Canadians *want* to eat locally produced food, but many are at a loss as to *how*. Farmers want to support their communities and would rather negotiate prices with a neighbour than a savvy multinational agribusiness. For some, they serve as the *only* way to get their foods to market. A large grocer is not going to go out of their way to stock local produce when they can get it shipped year-round from two countries over.

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Public markets also serve more diverse communities and can be a pillar in communities that are inadequately served by dominant retailers. For example, a majority Black community (which, along with Indigenous communities, faces the highest rates of food insecurity in Canada) might have limited access to affordable options or foods common in Caribbean and African diets. Public markets can provide this while also providing an outlet for Black farmers. Access to markets for Indigenous farmers, hunters and harvesters is a step towards revitalizing Indigenous food systems and strengthening Indigenous food sovereignty.

Having a means to directly support small-scale farmers is also a way to support sustainable agroecological approaches that work within environments rather than against them. In the global south, despite pressures to move towards a high-input model of farming—often promoted by Canadian corporations looking to expand their markets for patented seeds and pesticides—small-scale farmers are still a significant component of local food systems, and the land under their tenure is a haven of biodiversity.

In Canada, many of these approaches (often referred to as permaculture or regenerative agriculture) are being re-introduced by enterprising young farmers who often face steep barriers to entry.

Public markets build community ties, enhance trust, and increase transparency about where food is coming from; indeed, many farmers periodically invite their customers to visit their farms. This helps consumers understand the *true cost* of farming, free of negative externalities, and gives the consumer reassurance that their dollars are not paying corporate shareholders. What this means is that often prices are not competitive with those of large retailers, and these markets can sometimes be seen as exclusionary. However, local governments can both support local food systems *and* those facing food insecurity through the provision of nutrition coupons that are tied to public markets.

In addition to unforeseen shocks like pandemics and war, the greatest threat to our food systems comes from climate change. Our current agricultural model is a major greenhouse gas emitter, works within narrow local climate conditions, and leaves land and waters more prone to the effects of droughts, floods, and infestation. The way we farm needs to change in order to adapt.

Young farmers are leading the way. With 40 per cent of farmers set to retire over the next decade, a new model that ties local farms to the local food system and environment is one way we can hope to replenish our depleted farming communities.

Maybe the next generation won't be as quick to dismiss farm life as I was. M

Wade Thorhaugh is co-executive director of Food Secure Canada.

Our challenges:

The climate crisis, pressure points in the global supply chain, ongoing food insecurity and potential future food shortages in a planet with a growing population.

Water: liquid gold

Extreme weather, caused by the climate crisis, will disrupt our food systems. Water scarcity alone will change how we farm.

Hunger games

The UN predicts the world's population will mushroom to 9.7 billion by 2050. Food insecurity will be a recurring theme in the future.

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Protect the pollinators

Pollinators, such as bees and butterflies, are central to our biodiversity. They'll need to be protected from environmental threats.

Sustainable, ethical

Think: regional supply chains, vertical farming, food cooperatives, community gardens, a plant-based diet, decent wages and living conditions for all food production and processing workers.

Government leadership

The future of food can't be left in the hands of profit-motivated corporations. We'll need government regulations to ensure public health and safety over corporate giants' insatiable appetite for profits.

Dianne Oickle and Bernice Yanful

Building a just food system in Canada

The need for a more just food system that nourishes both people and planet has never been more evident.

Most of us get our food from the fossil fuel-dependent industrial food system, controlled at every step by large corporations. It produces unfair and unjust differences in health between groups of people depending on who has (or does not have) power, influence, and resources. And it is failing us on multiple fronts.

For example, there are millions of people who don't have enough food to eat. People working within the food system are often exploited and mistreated. And food system activities contribute significantly to the climate crisis as well as water and soil pollution.

A healthier, more sustainable, fairer food system is needed. But how do we get there?

Everyone who wants to help build a better food system for the future needs first to understand the current one—how it's organized, who is involved, and how and why it produces the unfair outcomes it does.

We can think of the food system as consisting of three major components: (1) food supply chains; (2) people and institutions; (3) and drivers and outcomes.

Food supply chains are the stages food goes through from where it is produced to where it is consumed and wasted. This includes production, processing, distribution, retail, consumption, and waste.

People and institutions are involved at all stages. These include suppliers, farmers and other growers, food processors, distributors, food services, supermarkets and waste management companies. Ultimately, because we all eat food, we're all part of the food system.

Food supply chains are shaped by drivers, including food policies enacted at all levels of government, physical environments, the climate crisis, and wider processes like globalization.

These drivers interact with the activities and people involved in the food supply chain to result in physical, mental, and environmental health outcomes for both food system workers and consumers.

Consider migrant farm workers who come from countries like Mexico and Jamaica through the federal Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program to work in fields, orchards and more. They're essential to feeding the population, yet they're denied the health and safety protections they need.

For example, many migrant farm workers have expressed concerns about substandard housing (i.e., crowded, unsanitary conditions), a lack of safety equipment, and being discriminated against by their employers. They've also reported being denied medical care, just as their wages are very low and unreflective of the back-breaking work they do to keep the food system going.

Underlying the poor treatment of migrant farm workers is a profit motive—a desire to keep costs of food production low to maximize profits—and, critically, an insidious belief that migrant farm workers are undeserving of fair wages and decent work conditions.

How we treat migrant farm workers in this country is a prime example of how food systems produce inequitable health outcomes. Another is the immense influence the corporate food industry has in creating food environments lacking in nutrients but abundant in nutrient-poor ultra-processed foods.

Corporations—think big food and drink companies like Coca-Cola, Nestle and Kraft Heinz—engage in tactics to make sure food policies benefit their for-profit interests and allow for continual growth and dominance. This 'playbook' includes direct government lobbying, financial incentives for policy-makers, and pushing for voluntary self-regulation as a substitute for government intervention (Moodie, 2021).

Ultimately, these tactics don't affect all population groups equally. Black and other racialized youth, for example, are inundated with advertisements for ultra-processed foods, like salty snacks, sugary drinks and cereals, at higher rates than other groups of young people.

None of this is good. But what will it take to shift these inequities?

With a better understanding of the current food system, we can then dream of alternatives as proponents of food justice have done: imagine what a healthier, more sustainable, and just food system could look like.

Let's think about the transformative power of food justice

Food justice recognizes food as a human right, not a commodity. Food justice is holistic, centering the people who are most impacted by food system inequities and focused

on dismantling the forces that put people at risk of poor health at all points in the food supply chain. It centres racial equity and stands in solidarity with justice in other areas, including workers' rights, climate justice, housing, income, and protection of natural resources.

We need to envision and create a food system that is 'just'. Where people are prioritized over profits, natural and physical environments are cared for, and everyone can live healthy and dignified lives according to their needs.

Who gets what?

In a just food system, everyone has equitable access to nourishing, affordable food and the resources needed to produce food. Food is culturally relevant, access is dignified and self-determined. Workers receive fair and livable wages, labour practices ensure benefits and protect against discrimination. This is distributive justice.

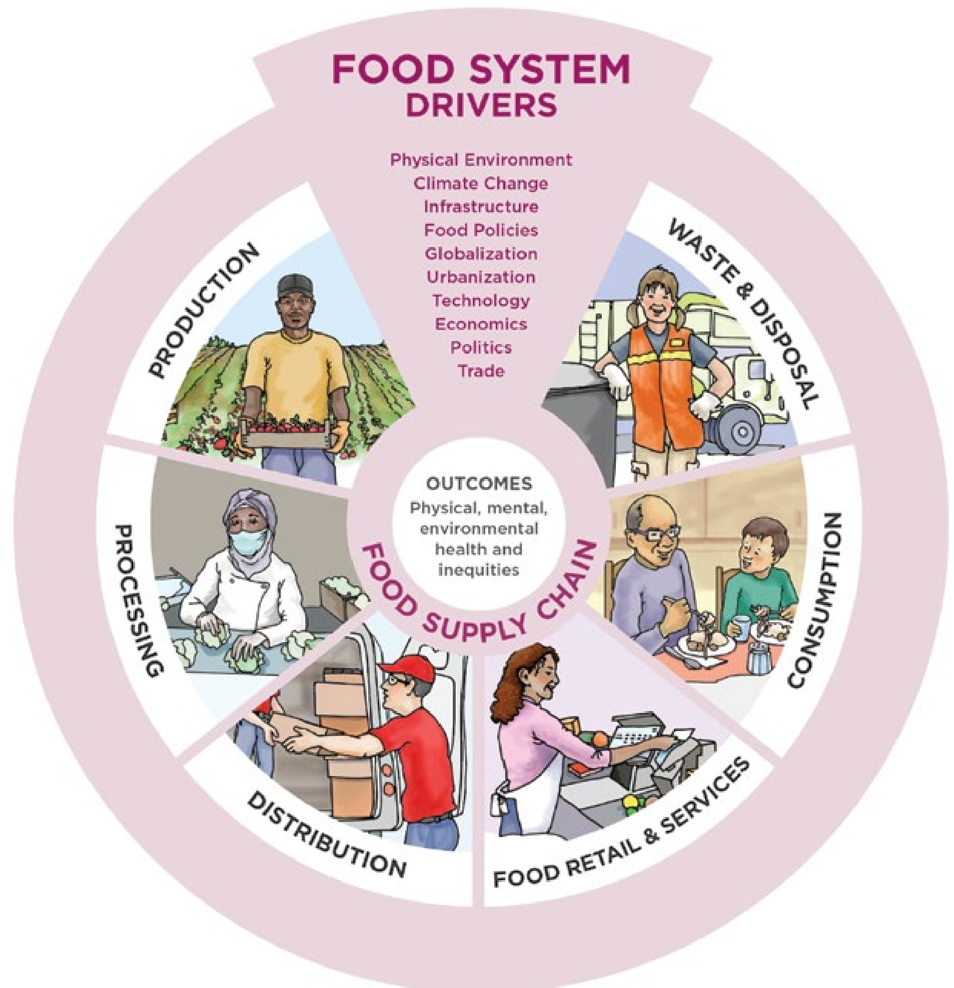
How are decisions made?

In a just food system, power is redistributed from corporations to communities, who then make decisions about the design and functioning of their food systems, identifying opportunities for transformative change based on their knowledge and experiences. Community members contribute meaningfully to decision making about where they get food and how food is produced. This is procedural justice.

Who counts?

In a just food system, diverse food knowledges of communities are central to food system planning. The traditional ways people produce and consume food are respected, as are their collective ideas and needs. Actions are taken to correct historical and current harms that contribute to food inequities. This is recognitional justice.

So how do we make distributive, procedural and recognitional justice a reality for everyone?



National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health, https://nccdh.ca/resources/entry/determining-health-food-systems-issue-brief.

We might work with municipalities to ensure principles of justice and equity are embedded in the bylaws that support local food production and food purchasing contracts.

We can also work with others to link food-growing efforts to affordable housing development.

What's more, we can develop meaningful relationships with grassroots organizations and support them in their efforts to influence policy through financial support and other resources.

We can also promote the rights of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples to make decisions about their own food systems.

Food justice is more than the outcome—it is also about the process.

We can build a food system that is different. One where equity and human rights are considered at all levels; where production processes don't hurt the earth; where workers are treated fairly; where traditional knowledge and customs are respected; and where nourishing foods are available to all. M

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This article is based on the following products from the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health (NCCDH): National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health. (2024). Determining Health: Food systems issue brief. Antigonish (NS): NCCDH, St. Francis Xavier University. National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health. (2024). Determining Health: Food justice practice brief. Antigonish (NS): NCCDH, St. Francis Xavier University.

Mair Greenfield

Indigenous foodways

To truly grasp the concept of food as medicine and the future of food, it's important to explore and weave the past, present, and future of Indigenous foodways through Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives.

Through my work with Nourish, a national health care leadership program that believes food is medicine, I learned this concept can be called Two-Eyed Seeing, or "Etuaptmumk," a concept shared by Elder Albert Marshall, a respected Mi'kmaq Elder from Eskasoni First Nation in Nova Scotia. Etuaptmumk should be applied across all the essential areas of healing. This way of being, thinking, and doing is crucial not only in health care, but also in education, the justice system, economics, technology, etc. It is imperative for the sustainability of our planet, Mother Earth.

In Indigenous ways of doing, we encompass the body, mind, and spirit as interconnected. Imagine a braid of sweetgrass, where each strand represents a different aspect of well-being. Weaving the strands together strengthens the braid, just as combining traditional healing practices with Western medical treatments creates a holistic, whole-person approach to health care.

You might be thinking that this approach is quite logical and wonder why it isn't regularly applied. The answers are layered in the complex and deeply rooted impacts of colonization.

Indigenous food systems were, and still are, severely disrupted by colonization. Food sources were decimated, land was stolen, and entire communities were forcibly relocated to unfamiliar and often unresourceful areas, creating a system where the transmission of essential knowledge and skills became impossible.

Colonization deliberately aimed to make Indigenous communities feel ashamed of who we were, affecting not just our foodways but our entire way of life. Our spirituality, family structures, and cultural practices were systematically and intentionally dismantled.

Recent events have brought renewed attention to our food systems, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Daily, I see complaints about rising food prices—$8 for a dozen eggs, $10 for a block of cheese, and let's not talk about the price of romaine lettuce again. The practice of corporate grocer profiteering off of hunger has been ongoing for Indigenous communities for decades. The disparity in food prices and quality has long been a stark reality for remote Indigenous communities, often experiencing even higher costs and less access to fresh food compared to those in urban areas.

I won't mention who is profiting from this situation, but I challenge you to test your Google skills to find out. Start with "Which grocery store serves Indigenous communities in Canada."

While I have painted a rather dark picture, I'm happy to share that many Indigenous communities and allied organizations across this country are actively collaborating to restore Indigenous foodways. From coast to coast to coast, we are celebrating and sharing stories of how we are weaving traditional and modern methods of growing, sharing, and preparing traditional and country food as medicine. These collective efforts highlight a vibrant and hopeful movement toward revitalizing and expanding sustainable food practices and Indigenous foodways.

Through my work with Rumie, Nourish, and Canadore College, I've had the gift of travelling and enjoying delicious foods from coast to coast to coast. At my home in Northern Ontario, I enjoy wild foods like moose, blueberries, and strawberries. In Quebec, I indulged in farm-fresh eggs. In Saskatchewan, I tasted Saskatoon berries for the first time. I've also prepared fresh salmon from Elders and Knowledge Keepers from British Columbia and farm-raised beef from Alberta, while virtually connecting with communities in Yukon, Newfoundland and Labrador. It's been a true gift to taste these foods while experiencing the love that goes into each dish. Across all these regions, I've learned about a wealth of creative and inspiring programs.

It is hard to choose which stories to share, but as a Nishnawbe Que from Northern Ontario, I need to boast about our communities! Through my work with Nourish and the relationships built through the Innovator cohort, I would often visit Thunder Bay. This city has a thriving food scene, and the Indigenous community works alongside non-Indigenous led organizations and allies, such as Roots Community Food Centre, Pioneer Ridge Long Term Care, Lakehead University, and the City of Thunder Bay.

Together, they create distinctive and local approaches to food sovereignty. I learned about the importance of growing and sourcing food locally and from First Nations, creating a model of community-driven food resilience.

Sioux Lookout's Meno Ya Win Health Centre hosts an Indigenous foodways program called Miichim, which serves locally

donated traditional Indigenous foods such as rabbit, moose, and fish. The centre embodies Indigenous ways of doing, from the moment you enter and are welcomed by the smells of traditional medicines, to the visible elements of water, wind, fire, and land integrated into the environment. You can hear Indigenous navigators speaking their traditional language.

To enhance Northern Ontario's food scene, many nearby First Nations host weekend markets where fresh food is brought in by community members and allied organizations. Many First Nation communities are exploring hydroponic growing, like Mnogin Greenhouse in my community area, of Nipissing First Nation.

Moving over to Newfoundland and Labrador, Elders and Knowledge Keepers host community freezers for community members to share and access wild game. Though there are many dated policies and laws around wild game and hunting in Canada, fortunately there are many community members working to dismantle these racist policies and find solutions to sharing and honouring traditional foodways.

At Canadore College, we embrace walking in two worlds, and recently built a large grow pod that will test hydroponic growing. We will be building frameworks for water treatment and growing to support community-voiced needs for training in these areas. We have a Harvest Room with a pulley system and plan to harvest a deer or moose. These investments create opportunities for sharing knowledge, time, and food within community, uplifting the values of collectivism and resilience.

About five years ago, I sat in a sharing circle with first-year students from the Northern Ontario School of Medicine to explore the concept of food as medicine. I said: "When you become doctors, you'll be prescribing medicine." They agreed that this was accurate. Then I asked, "What if you could prescribe a basket of fresh blueberries as medicine?" You know that "aha" moment when everything just starts to make sense? I could see that moment and the concept of Two-Eyed Seeing and walking in two worlds coming to life in that circle.

We need to broaden our understanding and reimagine (or reimage) what medicine should be. It's not just about medications. It includes nourishing foods like Saskatoon berries, wild strawberries, freshly picked blueberries, fiddleheads, root vegetables, fresh eggs, moose, rabbit, venison and so much more. Medicines that nourish the body, mind and spirit.

In understanding Indigenous foodways as a reflection of the past, but as an integral part of our present and shared future, we open pathways to reshaping the very foundations of how we grow, source, and connect. In turn, this approach creates food systems rooted in sustainability, reciprocity, and respect for the land, water, and its stewards. M

Mair Greenfield is a member of Kebaowek First Nation.

From top: Métis Red Seal Chef, Moe Mathieu, preparing lake trout with Saskatoon berry sauce / Winnowing wild rice at a Gaagige Zaagibigaa land camp / Indigenous foodways prepared with wild rice, wild mushrooms, fresh pickerel, local carrots, hominy beans and fresh green beans / Traditional Haida Knowledge Keeper, Jenny Cross, preparing salmon to be baked with a modern twist of Teriyaki sauce

iStock

Hayley Lapalme

Revolutionizing hospital food

For Canadian hospitals, food is an untapped opportunity to advance patient and planetary health. Despite how we relish food as a centerpiece of holiday gatherings and connection in our personal lives, food is often relegated to the literal and figurative basement of the hospital.

The dominant paradigm pits food budgets against medicine rather than contending with its therapeutic role in recovery, reducing length of stay or hospital readmissions; its importance to disease prevention and management; and its value in offering comfort to patients and staff alike, who are otherwise left hungry and hunting for something nourishing.

Ironically, the dominant food system also misunderstands food. Reducing it to a mere commodity—packaged, processed, and divorced from the soil that once nourished it and fed its cultural, ecological, and health-giving dimensions.

These fundamental disconnects have contributed to two intersecting crises: an overburdened health system and a food system that makes us sick.

The intersection of these crises is the niche of Nourish, a Canadian organization transforming health care food systems through multi-sectoral leadership development across institutional, community, and policy scales.

Nourish is showing how hospital meals, menu design, procurement, and food environments can improve patient and staff well-being, invest in regenerative agriculture and inclusive local economies, and reduce environmental impacts.

Costing roughly eight dollars a day to feed one patient, hospital food has long been a target of criticism.

The criticism is embodied by the roughly 50 per cent of food that goes wasted on the tray.

In Canada, where health care systems are strained by aging populations and chronic disease, research shows that nutritious and delicious meals can support faster recovery, reduce complications, and improve quality of life.

Despite these benefits, Canadian hospitals often serve meals lacking in fresh, sustainable, and delicious ingredients due to perceived and real budgetary and procurement constraints.

Nourish is dedicated to reframing food as a vital component of patient care and to fostering a new culture of leadership from hospitals across Canada. It positions food as a pathway to enact anchor leadership that harnesses the place-based mission, budgets, reputation, and influence of hospitals. Anchor leadership builds health and wealth within and beyond hospital walls.

At a planetary level, food is a powerful intervention point in the fight against climate change, notably through shifts to plant-based diets and food waste reduction, as well as shifts to more regenerative agricultural practices. The EAT-Lancet Commission states that “Food is the single strongest lever to optimize human health and environmental sustainability on Earth.”

Research published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*

in July 2024 found that following a Planetary Health Diet, one that is plant-forward, is associated with reduced mortality risks from cardiovascular disease, cancer, respiratory disease, and neurodegenerative conditions.

Feasting on plant-rich foods supports individual health and significantly lowers greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts.

It's a poetic reminder that we can't separate human health from planetary health. As Thomas Berry puts it, "We cannot have well humans on a sick planet."

Fortunately for Canadians, the new food guide released in 2019 tracks closely to a planetary health diet.

But no matter the diet, food is only helpful if it's eaten. Until it's accessible, affordable, and culturally appropriate, it's not doing much good.

Central to Nourish's approach is the belief that the hospital tray is a platform for creating just, inclusive, and regenerative food and health systems.

Going well beyond food charity, Nourish sets the table for experiments around more fundamental transformations in the way we think about and work with food.

What if health care institutions acted as investors in regional economies, building partnerships with local farmers, Indigenous food producers, or women-owned businesses, through shifts in patterns of sourcing and purchasing foods?

With an annual food service spend of four billion dollars, hospitals have the potential to deploy millions of dollars of public funds into local economies, fostering meaningful job creation, food sector innovation, economic reconciliation, biodiversity preservation, and contributing to regional food sovereignty.

This orientation intentionally extends the duty of care beyond the immediate needs of the patient out to the community, and ultimately, to a planetary scale. But until executive leadership teams are codifying these strategies into corporate plans, as Nourish alumni Vancouver Coastal Health did with their Planetary Health Strategy, these efforts can be exercises in burnout for passionate food service managers working off the side of their desk by the dying light of the basement window.

The Food System Economics Commission's 2024 Global Policy Report found that a shift from our current food systems to ones that are inclusive, health-enhancing, and sustainable "is not only possible, but could generate net economic benefits worth $5 to $10 trillion USD annually.

Across its leadership programs, health care facilities engaged with Nourish serve roughly 20 million meals annually, representing approximately 20 per cent of all hospital food served across Canada.

These facilities are engaged in projects that take a systemic approach to planetary health, marrying efforts toward values-based procurement with sustainable menu redesign and engagement with Indigenous communities.

An early majority of hospitals have signed on to the Coolfood Pledge, which pursues science-based targets to reduce the climate impact of meals served. Even more have taken Nourish's self-directed Food is Our Medicine learning journey, exploring pathways to reconciliation that include challenging colonial biases and understanding the important connections between land, culture, and well-being that have long been practiced by Indigenous communities.

Cohort members in Nourish's flagship two-year leadership programs are generating evidence around the cost effectiveness of bringing food to a more central place in health and healing—through savings from waste reduction, seasonal local purchasing, or shifts from animal to plant proteins.

From Labrador to Haida Gwaii and the metropolises in between, past and current Nourish cohort members are also revealing the upper limits of what is possible in the absence of deeper paradigmatic shifts.

Policies are urgently needed to protect health care food budgets, as they currently do in Ontario's long-term care sector. Food in health care should be recognized as a critical therapeutic intervention, a catalyst for regenerative supply chains, and a longer-term strategy for preventative health. Another Nourish alumni, the Saskatchewan Health Authority, recently reorganized food services from the ancillary services arm of the organization, where it lived with laundry and parking, to the clinical support services arm, where it lives with pharmacy and diagnostic imaging. What if all hospitals made this shift to harness the full power of food in healing?

More enabling conditions are also needed to deploy food procurement for long-term value creation, through policies that enable hospitals—and other public sector buyers, like universities and municipalities—to use their purchasing as an investment tool.

As many Indigenous health leaders have repeatedly reminded Canadians, the enactment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* will address fundamental social and environmental parameters that are essential to achieving well-being for all.

Activating health care anchor leadership in food systems has the potential to close health disparities, relieve pressure on our overburdened health system, and position Canada as a global leader in regenerative food and health systems. M

Hayley Lapalme is co-executive director of Nourish.

James Hannay

An inclusive farm economy is the antidote to corporate concentration

The effect of corporate power in our food system is corrosive; there is another way

Corporate concentration and the exercise of corporate power in the Canadian food system materially limits how farmers, food service workers, and consumers can participate in the food system, or even imagine and create alternatives.

Continuous mergers and acquisitions have created a highly concentrated, corporatized food system in Canada. Two companies, JBS and Cargill, control 95 per cent of Canada's federally inspected beef processing. Four corporations control 68 per cent of Canada's grocery sales. Other aspects of the food sector are also consolidated.

Under neoliberal policy, corporations can extract more money from all parts of the food system. This means higher input prices for farmers, lower prices received by farmers for their products, low wages for food sector labour, and high prices for consumers.

For instance, the European Union has approved the merger of agribusiness giants Bunge and Viterra. A report by Gray, Nolan, and Slade showed that farmers stand to lose hundreds of millions of dollars each year due to that monopoly power. This is a deepening of wealth extraction from farmers. Corporate concentration is pervasive throughout the food system, creating expensive input prices for farmers, suppressing prices for producers, and inflating prices for consumers.

The effects of corporate concentration are corrosive. It translates into the ejection of the smaller farmers from the agricultural economy. Monopolies gain enough power to set the terms of engagement, whether that is rail freight rates, contracts on seed usage, or the ability to repair a tractor. Without policy intervention, monopoly power will continue to intensify.

That intensification has crept into Canada's agricultural system. In Canada, the average size of farms increased between 2001 to 2021; the number of farms has decreased by 23 per cent, from 246,923 to under 190,000 individual farms.

This move to larger farms is intimately linked to Canada's export-oriented approach, which includes policies that encourage a form of agriculture that prioritizes the high-volume, low-price commodities.

Cathy Holtslander, director of Policy and Research at the National Farmers' Union, argues that "when selling bulk commodities, there is little to compete on except for price. The lower your price, the more competitive you are." Only farms that can cope with low prices can survive, usually because they have large acreages to make up for low prices in volume produced. These prices are certainly affected by the oligopoly power of the processors and product handlers the farmers must sell to.

On a more fundamental, relational level, the extension of private property rights to nearly all facets of our food system—including land and genetic material in seeds—requires that they are viewed only in terms of "monetary value" defined by the market.

This is inherently anti-democratic and pacifies the agency of people within the food system, which is everyone. We all need to eat.

High-yield farming extracts surplus value from the land and deems other forms of farming inefficient. On the consumer end, we are limited in our choices. Meanwhile, Canada imports a substantial amount of food.

To resist the forces of neoliberalism, we must envision a more expansive, inclusive approach to farming and food. This alternative approach begins with food sovereignty, empowering people—farmers and eaters—to make important decisions about food and agriculture.

Great examples of food sovereignty in the face of larger market forces in Canada include the former Canadian Wheat Board and our supply management system. Both systems were enabled by government legislation.

Food sovereignty empowers people to define their own food and agriculture systems to produce healthy and culturally appropriate food for people through ecologically sound and sustainable methods. It's a holistic approach to food production that uses—and creates—social, cultural, economic and environmental knowledge that promotes food sovereignty, social justice, economic sustainability, and healthy agricultural ecosystems.

Food sovereignty moves us away from the promotion of higher exports at the expense of domestic production. Farmers are valued and economically encouraged to diversify farming practices. In this type of system, more farmers can make a livelihood on smaller land bases, with better prices and lower costs.

An inclusive farming and food economy is premised on viewing our food supply chain as a whole, including processors, retailers, and consumers. It creates supply chains that provide good, affordable food choices. It would welcome more people into the farming economy, making land more available and more affordable for young farmers, and Black, Indigenous, and racialized farmers.

Through the CCPA's Alternative Federal Budget, the National Farmers' Union has advocated for a foodsheds program, which could be part of an inclusive food system. A foodshed is an area that produces food that flows towards a centre—urban areas, in this case—analogous to how watersheds feed rivers and lakes.

These lands would be administered through a Foodshed Lands Trust. It would aim to provide land access to people with high barriers to land acquisition, including new, young, and BIPOC Canadian farmers. It would acquire lands in urban areas to provide long-term, affordable leases to farmers and farming communities.

Farmers agreeing to these leases would be encouraged to use low-emission farming practices, with the goal of protecting water quality and sustaining biodiversity. The trust would encourage the development of new local food cultures based on what grows well in the area while supporting communities to grow the foods they need to maintain their food traditions.

For this vision of an inclusive farm system to become reality, our government must confront corporate power through regulation. There are many ways to approach this. The first is to strengthen the *Competition Act* to outlaw mergers of companies that would result in a market share greater than 20 per cent.

Revisions to the *Competition Act* should also strengthen the enforcement capacity of the Competition Bureau, including the resources it has to publish data and report on the harmful effects of corporate concentration.

An empowered Competition Bureau and Tribunal would be better able to ensure public interest goals of economic fairness and inclusion in the Canadian economy.

The second mechanism to achieve an inclusive farm system would be to institute a windfall profits tax on large corporations in the food and agriculture sectors, which would help Canadians recapture the value that was extracted through exercise of market power by the big players in the food system.

Corporate concentration impacts our food system / iStock

The third mechanism would be to cap the size of land holdings owned by corporations and large farms in each province, similar to Prince Edward Island's *Lands Protection Act*, which prevents farmland from being monopolized.

By creating an inclusive farming system, we can imagine a flourishing of the world we all want: one that supports farmers' livelihood, diversified farms, and local markets; healthy waterways, soils, and farmers; biodiversity in hedgerows and shelterbelts; real, not fake climate solutions.

An inclusive farming economy model would benefit all Canadians by supporting the lives and livelihoods of farmers, farm workers, food sector workers, and consumers alike. M

James Hannay is the policy assistant at the National Farmers' Union.

Jasper, Alberta after wildfires in summer 2024 / CP image

Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood

A trying year for climate action

Amidst a heated political environment and rising economic concerns, ambitious climate action fell by the wayside in 2024. Across Canada and beyond, governments paused or dialed back efforts to address rising greenhouse gas pollution. Global fossil fuel production and consumption reached all-time highs.

The planet took little notice of our disinterest, of course, governed as it is by physical reality. Climate change continued apace in 2024, with global average temperatures exceeding 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels for the first time. In terms of climate-related disasters, Canada had its costliest summer ever, headlined by the tragic destruction of Jasper, Alberta, due to wildfires.

The growing disconnect between climate change and climate action was a recurring theme over the past year in *Shift Storm*, the CCPA's climate and work newsletter. Each month, we break down the latest research and developments connecting the economy and the environment in Canada and around the world.

Over the past two years, *Shift Storm* has profiled more than 300 publications. And while this work touches on every aspect of the transition to a cleaner economy, there are common throughlines worth highlighting. As we head into an even more tumultuous 2025, here are some of the key lessons to take away from 2024.

Elections highlight vulnerability of climate action to shifting political winds

Climate need not be a partisan issue. Everyone has a vested interest in a liveable planet even if they disagree on the appropriate policy response. A healthy climate debate, for example, would pit market-based measures, such as carbon pricing and tax incentives, against state-led measures, such as regulation and public investment. Which is the better approach for reducing emissions?

Unfortunately, climate action has fallen victim to extreme political polarization in much of the world, including Canada. Right-wing politicians and governments promise not only to undo climate policies, but to actively work against them by doubling down on fossil fuel infrastructure. Climate-minded governments, on the other hand, are lauded for taking even basic measures to reduce emissions, whether or not they go far enough.

In *Shift Storm* last year, we profiled elections in France, the UK, the U.S. and elsewhere. A recurring pattern was hostility to climate action on the right and a half-hearted defense of it on the left. In the absence of a durable political consensus on the fundamental imperative of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, even the best climate policy is highly vulnerable to changes in government.

With more elections on the horizon, including in Canada, climate action will continue to be up for debate in 2025.

Future-proofing climate policies requires on-the-ground benefits

How can climate-minded governments lock in their climate policies for the long term? The same way governments captured by the fossil fuel industry do—by building infrastructure.

A key theme in *Shift Storm* last year was the distinction between ephemeral policies that reduce emissions on paper and tangible policies that build a cleaner economy on the ground. The former, such as carbon pricing, environmental regulations and tax incentives—regardless of how effective they may be—can be undone by a new government with the stroke of a pen. The latter, such as investments in public transit, renewable energy and green manufacturing, create real assets that will persist for decades to come, regardless of the government of the day.

Regulations are still vital for climate success. Infrastructure alone won't get us to net-zero emissions by 2050. But infrastructure is both physically and politically durable because it creates constituencies that will fight for it.

This is a lesson the Doug Fords of the world understand well. Building new highways entrenches dependency on personal vehicles. Building new homes with conventional furnaces entrenches dependency on natural gas supply. Building new pipelines entrenches dependency on oil jobs. No one is fighting for carbon pricing the same way they're fighting for their cars, homes and jobs.

Whether or not progressive Canadian governments figure it out in 2025 remains to be seen.

Greenwashing is a major barrier to climate action, but governments are wising up

The Canadian oil industry's latest climate denial strategy is a big greenwashing push. Rather than object to climate action in principle, the sector has attempted to rebrand itself as a climate leader. Groups like the Pathways Alliance, a collection of oil sands companies, would have us believe that achieving a net-zero emission economy will only be possible with their industry at the helm.

New research featured in *Shift Storm* over the past year found precisely the opposite. The fossil fuel industry is not only failing to take the climate action it promised, but it is also actively working to expand and entrench oil and gas production. Nevertheless, the industry's strategy has proven effective. It has won significant concessions from governments in the form of weak and delayed climate regulations. It has also won generous subsidies for overhyped carbon capture and storage projects and other fossil fuel lifelines.

Those lifelines include liquified natural gas (LNG), which is often touted as a lower-emission substitute for coal. Yet, again and again, research covered in *Shift Storm* found that LNG is neither an environmental nor economic panacea. Lifecycle emissions from LNG can be even higher than coal in some cases, and global demand for the fuel is expected to fall just as Canada's nascent LNG industry comes online.

On a more hopeful note, there is a growing recognition that the unchecked political influence of the fossil fuel industry is a barrier to necessary climate action. The federal government enacted changes to the *Competition Act* that prohibit misleading environmental claims. A private member's bill to ban fossil fuel advertising, as in France, is attracting support within Canada and internationally.

The fight to control the climate action narrative is a theme *Shift Storm* will be keeping a close eye on in 2025.

The financial system has its priorities backwards

Governments are not the only ones to blame for kowtowing to the fossil fuel industry. Global financial systems, especially here in Canada, are among the greatest enablers of continued coal, oil and gas extraction.

A major theme in *Shift Storm* last year was the extent of the financial sector's support for fossil fuels. Every one of Canada's big five banks is a major backer of the industry, and they are indirectly responsible for a large proportion of national greenhouse gas emissions.

In contrast, Canada is falling well behind its fair share of global climate finance, which is money distributed to developing countries to help them mitigate and adapt to climate change. Despite our sizeable contributions to the climate problem—at present and historically—Canada is simply not doing enough to pay for solutions.

Expecting the private sector to do so on its own is precisely how we ended up in this situation. Despite some activism from within the financial sector, solving these related problems ultimately falls to governments. And, as we discussed in Shift Storm last year, there are plenty of tools states could use to shift capital away from fossil fuels and into a clean and just global economy.

This fight will continue to simmer in 2025 as financial systems around the world do their best to stave off necessary regulatory intervention.

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If you'd like to learn more about including the CCPA in your will, call Katie Loftus at 1-844-563-1341 or 613-563-1341 extension 318, or send an email to katie@policyalternatives.ca.

Workers are at the heart of climate solutions

Shift Storm has always had one foot in the world of work, and the continued centrality of workers and labour unions to climate action was evident throughout 2024.

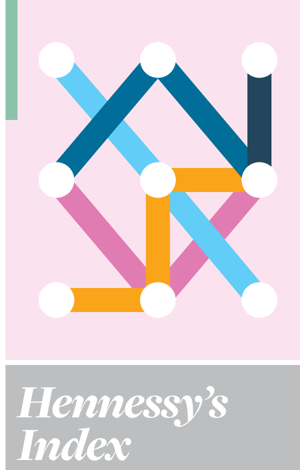
Case studies in Australia, Norway, Scotland and various parts of Canada showed us how workers can be both the greatest champions and the greatest obstacles to climate action. The difference maker is the presence or absence of a just transition, which means practical plans developed in partnership with those workers and their communities to shift to cleaner industries.

In the absence of meaningful just transition policies, workers are understandably reluctant to support policies perceived as a threat to their livelihood. Strong policies that create new jobs in green industries and retrain workers into those careers, on the other hand, can unlock labour's support.

A just transition is more than an ethical imperative. The research we reviewed last year also highlighted how essential it is in practice. Through a just transition, those same workers who oppose climate action today can be the very workers who build a cleaner economy tomorrow. Given skill shortages in many key industries, workforce development is a crucial prerequisite for climate action.

In a year characterized by middling progress on climate, the positive role played by workers was a bright spot and it's a theme *Shift Storm* will continue to dive into in 2025. We hope you'll join us on the journey. Get the latest issue of the monthly *Shift Storm* newsletter in your inbox for free by subscribing at: policyalternatives.ca/shiftstorm.ca M

Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood is a senior researcher with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' National Office. His work focuses on the social and economic dimensions of Canada's shift to a zero-carbon economy. He is the editor of *Shift Storm*.



Hennessy's Index

Dying to eat

Trish Hennessy

100 billion

More than 100 billion animals are killed around the world for meat and other animal products each year. That's hundreds of millions of animals every single day.

75.2 billion

Yearly number of chickens slaughtered for meat around the world in 2022. It was 6.58 billion in 1961. Chickens are, by far, the most slaughtered animals for meat.

3.7 million

Yearly number of cattle slaughtered for meat in Canada in 2021. That's three per cent more than in 1961.

770 million

Yearly number of chickens slaughtered for meat in Canada in 2021. That's 483 per cent more than in 1961.

18.58 million

Yearly number of turkeys slaughtered for meat in Canada in 2021. That's 44 per cent more than in 1961.

21.9 million

Yearly number of pigs slaughtered for meat in Canada in 2021. That's 190 per cent more than in 1961.

4.46 million

Yearly number of ducks slaughtered for meat in Canada in 2021. That's 392 per cent higher than in 1961.

723,600

Yearly number of sheep slaughtered for meat in Canada in 2021. That's 10 per cent less than in 1961.

326

That's how many pounds of meat are consumed, per capita, a year in Tonga in 2022—the world's most meat-eating population.

200.5

That's how many pounds of meat consumed, per capita, a year in Canada.

"Modern agriculture is now the number one contributor to a variety of factors that impose hazards to the environment, including and not limited to, an increase in rates of methane and CO_2, overconsumption of water, overuse of land resources, waste production, water and air quality degradation, deforestation, and species extinction."

—University of British Columbia

Sources: Our World in Data World Population Review

Stuart Trew

Trump 2.0 will test us

A few weeks from Trump's inauguration as president of the United States, it still feels premature to be writing about the new Republican administration's trade agenda. There has been no end to the hot takes, of course. But until Trump takes control of the machinery of state, we simply won't know the extent of the collateral damage for Canada.

Still, given the consequences of Trump's insinuated economic and trade agenda, we have no choice but to prepare. In no universe will Canada (or anyone else) be "absolutely fine," as Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland said last year. In all of them, Canada is better off adopting a position of strategic differentiation rather than knee-jerk alignment with MAGA Act 2.

Differentiation is a business term I would normally avoid but that felt right under the circumstances, what with a real estate tycoon in the White House, a tech bro CEO charged with dismantling what's left of the American welfare state, etc. In management textbooks, differentiation is an effort to capitalize on the uniqueness of your product or brand against competition in a saturated market.

Early in Trump's first term as president, Freeland, then foreign affairs minister, clumsily attempted to differentiate Canada from the U.S. on the global stage as a promoter of "an international order based on rules…in which might is not always right." While it sounded noble, the government couldn't fathom an order not centred on anglosphere priorities and, indeed, U.S. power. The world scoffed; the rebranding failed.

Instead, as Richard Nimijean writes in his chapter for the CCPA book, *The Trudeau Record: Promise versus Performance*, Canada succumbed to economic pressure from Trump and domestic business lobbies. The Trudeau government "made peace with both the Republican and, later, Democratic variations on 'America First'," fundamentally compromising Canada's influence with emerging regional powers and leaving us more vulnerable to Washington's political whims.

Not long after renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement—on Trump's terms—the Trudeau government found itself competing for investment with the Biden administration's trillion-dollar tax incentives for green infrastructure and manufacturing. Canada's copycat strategy paid off for Canada's important automotive sector, but in a limited way and at great cost.

Now Trump is back with an economic plan that may compromise even these positive investments in Canada's electric vehicle supply chain. That "giant sucking sound," to quote Ross Perot from the 1990s NAFTA debates, will not be manufacturing jobs heading to Mexico but Canadian investment pouring into the United States. The draw of low corporate taxes and weak environmental and health regulations, along with the threat of potentially broad-based tariffs, will be too great to resist.

At least this is the nightmare scenario promulgated by Canada's business class. They want Trudeau to match Trump's tax cuts, deregulation and austerity. The Business Council of Canada has also called on the government to pre-empt potential trade disputes with Trump by killing the digital services tax on tax-dodging internet giants and dismantling Canada's supply management systems for certain agricultural products.

While the threat of U.S. tax cuts and tariffs to Canadian jobs is real enough, Canada cannot possibly compete in another race to the bottom. This creates a difficult dilemma for policy-makers.

Trump's steel and aluminum tariffs on Canadian imports in 2018-19—a NAFTA renegotiation pressure tactic—were manageable, but only just. Exports to the U.S. took a hit and production dropped across both sectors. A low Canadian dollar mitigated the impact of the tariffs and may do so again. But that won't be true in the case of permanent universal tariffs on all U.S. imports, as proposed by Trump during the election.

What's the solution? A policy of strategic differentiation would acknowledge Canada's present economic dependency on the U.S. while taking gradual steps to lessen it and the threat of unilateral U.S. trade actions.

As Trump moves to defund green infrastructure projects, we double down on them, adding Buy Canadian preferences to things like public high-speed rail and EV charging stations. Where Trump and Elon Musk hollow out health care and education, we expand both, creating thousands of jobs in the process.

Canada could be one more sycophant in Trump's MAGA entourage. Or we could chart an independent, forward-looking, internationalist alternative that can both work with and withstand any U.S. administration. M

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

Nir Hagigi

Double standard

Canada's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was an incredible show of compassion towards a nation facing an extraordinary threat to its livelihood and safety. Less than a month after the invasion, parliament approved a recommendation by the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration and launched the **Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET)**.

It allowed any Ukrainian national, regardless of ties to Canada, to enter the country for up to three years as a temporary resident, providing financial support, health care, and job opportunities to Ukrainians seeking refuge. On May 11, the government announced that it would provide three charter flights, free of charge, for holders of the CUAET visa.

The Canada-Ukraine Transitional Assistance Initiative further supported Ukrainian refugees by providing each adult $3,000 and each child $1,500. Provinces such as British Columbia and Ontario waived health insurance plan requirements, and Manitoba covered the cost of medical examinations upon arrival.

Between March 2022 and April 2024, 962,612 applications were approved, with a total of 298,128 Ukrainians arriving in Canada. This swift action is commendable and speaks to Canada's potential to act decisively when faced with humanitarian crises.

My mom, who was raised in Odesa, Ukraine, personally knows people who have greatly benefited from Canada's humanitarian assistance. When it comes to Palestinian refugees fleeing the Israeli genocide in Gaza, this sense of urgency and compassion has been visibly absent.

I grew up in Nazareth. Khirbet Tana in the Nablus governorate is around an hour-and-a-half drive from where I used to live. On November 9, 2023, at around midnight, 15 cars filled with Israeli settlers arrived at the village with a bulldozer. According to B'Tselem, the settlers assaulted the residents, tied their hands, beat and humiliated them. The following day, the Israeli military blocked access to the village, trapping the already devastated community.

This kind of violence is not an isolated incident—it is a part of the daily reality for many Palestinians. Canada could have responded swiftly. It could have offered the residents of Khirbet Tana a chartered flight and emergency assistance. Yet, unlike the swift and welcoming response extended to Ukrainians, Palestinians must navigate a complex and restrictive system when seeking safety in Canada.

For those escaping Gaza, the situation is even more dire. Even when necessities like water, electricity, and medical care are impossible to find due to ongoing blockades and air strikes, the chance of finding refuge in Canada is far from guaranteed.

The differences are genuinely striking. Unlike Ukrainians, who were granted unconditional access to Canada, Palestinians must demonstrate a clear connection to the country before they are even considered for entry.

Unlike its treatment of Ukrainians, Canada initially capped Palestinian refugee admissions at just 1,000 people, which was later increased to 5,000. Most striking is the approval rate: 81 per cent of Ukrainian applications were accepted, but only 16 per cent of Palestinian applicants have been approved. By October 5, 2024, only 300 Palestinians had found refuge in Canada.

The conditions Palestinians face in Gaza are nothing short of catastrophic. Yet Canada's response has been slow, limited, and bureaucratic.

Even the differences in the application processes are telling. Ukrainian applicants are not asked detailed security questions and have a swift experience. But for Palestinians, the process takes an average of six hours. Palestinians must provide a full employment history since the age of 16, indicate their social media accounts, and are even obligated to identify and explain any scars or injuries that required medical attention.

How can a country that acted so swiftly to help one group of people fleeing violence be so hesitant when it comes to another?

The answer lies in anti-Palestinian racism, which the Arab Canadian Lawyers Association has defined as a form of racism that "silences, excludes, erases, stereotypes, defames or dehumanizes Palestinians or their narratives." This deeply entrenched bias impacts how Canada responds to refugees and how Palestinian suffering is viewed globally.

For Canada to uphold its values of justice and equality, it must confront this racism and extend the same compassion to Palestinians that it has to others in need. The contrast between the two responses reflects not only a failure of policy but a failure of moral courage. M

Nir Hagigi is the president of the Carleton University chapter of Independent Jewish Voices and an elected member of the Carleton University Senate.

Get to know **Carolina Aragão**

OFFICE: **ONTARIO**
POSITION: **SENIOR RESEARCHER**
YEARS WITH THE CCPA: **<1**

What drew you to the CCPA Ontario? The possibility to keep working with applied research in an independent, fact-driven organization committed to values I support.

Tell us about the work you did in the U.S., before moving to Toronto. I did a PhD in demography at the University of Texas at Austin and after my graduation I started working as a researcher for the social and demographic trends team of the Pew Research Center. There, I did a lot of research on gender, children, and families, and learned a lot about how to communicate research findings to a broad, non-academic audience.

Toronto vs. Washington, DC: you've lived in both cities—thoughts? Both are great but pretty different places. DC is much smaller, very walkable and has all these beautiful monuments. In addition, almost all the museums in DC are free, which is pretty cool.

Toronto is probably the most diverse city I have ever been in and which comes with great benefits, including the food. As a person who is always thinking about their next meal, I love to live in a city with restaurants from so many different places. During the summer, I also watched some movie screenings during TIFF and I had a blast.

How many languages do you speak? Three and a half—my French has seen better days.

What was your PhD dissertation on and how does it influence your work today? My dissertation was on interracial families in Brazil. While that seems widely specific, I used this framework to study how gender and race inequality are reproduced within different intimate ties, including families. I learned a lot about gender and race theories and the current literature while writing my dissertation and I try to apply this knowledge to all the work I do.

Also, as a result of this project, I spend a lot of time nowadays thinking about structural racism, intersectionality, and how power hierarchies manifest themselves in various aspects of social life.

What are you reading these days? After many years of only reading academic articles, I'm now back at literature. I'm now reading *The Prophet Song*, which is set in a dystopian Ireland that slipped into totalitarianism. It follows a scientist and mother of four as she tries to save her family after her trade unionist husband is taken by the secret police. The book has a suffocating atmosphere and it can feel a bit distressing since that can happen anytime and anywhere.

A less stressful book I finished recently is *Good Material*. It's written from the perspective of a London comedian following a break-up with his long-term girlfriend. It's a witty, fun book, packed with good dialogues and relatable dramas.

When you're not at work, how do you decompress? My husband and I recently adopted a puppy called Goiaba (Guava in Portuguese) and he is the apple of our eyes. He forces me to go outside no matter the weather forecast and reminds me to take breaks for playtime and cuddles.

Since the pandemic, I also enjoy cooking more and more. Being a researcher, I spend a lot of time on my own head, so making something with my own hands is a welcome change. This winter, I'm also planning to enrol in pottery classes, so hopefully my scope of manual activities will increase.

What gives you hope? Many things, but I must say that I have been very lucky to have had awesome women around me throughout my life. As family members, friends, colleagues and bosses, they have taught me to face things head on and that change takes time and hard work.

I'm also a follower and supporter of a few organizations, but I want to highlight the UN World Food Programme. Their work is life saving and I'm a great admirer. M

Meet Don Peters and Tina Hopkins

Long-time monthly donors

Why do you support the CCPA with a monthly donation? Because it keeps our commitment consistent and provides a dependable, albeit small, stream of support for the CCPA's month to month, year to year efforts. With many other monthly supporters, we can help sustain the organization in its efforts to raise awareness of progressive, realistic alternatives to mainstream political and corporate agendas.

Who was an early big influence on you and how did that align with your interest in supporting the CCPA? David Suzuki. *The Sacred Balance* helped reform my understanding of how to be a good human by asking the right questions: What and who is an economy for? How much is enough? How to promote a world in which all people's most basic needs for meaningful employment, justice and security can be met? These, I believe, align with the progressive vision and commitment of the CCPA.

What have you read or watched to keep your mind busy and your soul fed lately? For Tina, a recent read that fed both mind and soul would be *The Women of Brewster Place* by Gloria Naylor, published in 1982. Brutally honest interlinked stories of seven women bound together by poverty, racism, and love.

For Don, it is *How to Know a Person* by David Brooks, a guide for building connection with others in a time of deep divisiveness and hostility.

What has the CCPA done lately that's made you feel proud to be a supporter? In your opinion, what makes the CCPA special? For one, the annual Alternative Federal Budget, which year after year so clearly demonstrates how our federal government could prioritize the actual needs of most Canadians with genuine paths toward, for example, prescription coverage, public daycare, and poverty reduction. And articulating exactly how revenues for these programs can be achieved through such initiatives as ending subsidies to oil producing companies and through a far more equitable tax system.

Could you tell us what it is about the CCPA that galvanizes you to continue to support the CCPA? We are inspired by the expertise and commitment of the CCPA's staff: Iglika Ivanova, Alex Hemingway, Marc Lee, Stuart Trew, and colleagues. And excited to see more and more CCPA exposure by these researchers/writers in B.C. media. If we are ever going to undermine the neoliberal, (increasingly authoritarian) agenda in Canada, the CCPA will be our voice.

Name one policy the government should adopt today that would make people's lives better. On a provincial level, if the B.C. government accelerates and expands its B.C. Builds program to allow/encourage more public sector housing providers to participate. We need fewer incentives for private developers to squeeze a miniscule percentage of "below-market" units for rent (a term almost meaningless when the "market" is already unhinged from local wages) in their multi-family projects. We need more public rental housing truly linked to low-income earners—in perpetuity. M

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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.

CP image

Amanda Klang

Overpromise and underdeliver

New book assesses the Justin Trudeau government

THE TRUDEAU RECORD: PROMISE V. PERFORMANCE
EDITED BY KATHERINE SCOTT, LAURA MACDONALD, AND STUART TREW
Lorimer, September 2024

A new book edited by Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) researchers provides the first authoritative review of Justin Trudeau's years in power. In *The Trudeau Record: Promise v. Performance*, 25 independent experts assess key issues, from housing to health care, and focus on six policy areas: Indigenous rights; the environment and energy; taxes and spending; health care and social benefits; foreign policy; and social policy.

The book's three co-editors are Stuart Trew, senior researcher and director of the CCPA's Trade and Investment Research Project; Laura Macdonald, CCPA research associate and Chancellor's Professor of Political Science and Political Economy at Carleton University; and Katherine Scott, senior researcher who serves as the director of the CCPA's gender equality and public policy work.

They spoke with CCPA Senior Communications Specialist Amanda Klang to give an overview of the project. Here's a condensed version of their conversation.

AK: Stuart Trew, what was the impetus to write this book?

ST: The CCPA has a long tradition of critically evaluating the record of former prime ministers and their governments, from Brian Mulroney to Jean Chrétien to Paul Martin and Stephen Harper. In fact, CCPA published two previous books about Stephen Harper, so we're not picking on Trudeau with this new one! But after almost 10 years of Justin Trudeau in power, it was clearly time to evaluate the Trudeau government and its policy-making. But for the CCPA, this is an important piece of policy analysis that is ours to do. The book was also written to honour Teresa Healy, the late editor of the two CCPA books on Stephen Harper.

AK: Stuart Trew, why was doing this book important to the CCPA?

ST: CCPA researchers spend our time discussing and encouraging policies we like and critiquing policies we don't. A lot of the CCPA's policy priorities were reflected in Trudeau's first election promises in 2015, including reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, racial and gender equality, child care and the reform of long-term care, affordable housing, and climate action.

Our policy recommendations were taken seriously by the Trudeau government, whereas they'd been entirely ignored under the Harper government. So, it felt like it was our job to explore how much those policies met their stated objectives or not. And when we asked the experts in this book to weigh in on the Trudeau government's actual record, we saw that in many places, the implementation of our policy recommendations by the Trudeau government fell short.

AK: Laura Macdonald, what jumps out at you as the main achievements of the Trudeau government?

LM: The Trudeau government's daycare agreement was a historic achievement that has been long awaited by the women's movement in Canada. For decades, women's organizations have been pushing to establish a relatively affordable daycare system across the country, and Trudeau has delivered on this.

The Canada-US-Mexico agreement was not something the Trudeau government set out to achieve, but the fact that they were able to work with Mexico and with states and municipalities in the U.S. to avoid Trump's desire to cancel the NAFTA agreement was a major achievement that avoided possibly disastrous consequences for the Canadian economy.

Finally, getting Canada through the pandemic and creating the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) was a major achievement. It was a system that addressed the income support requirements of individuals and businesses who would have otherwise suffered devastating consequences.

AK: Katherine Scott, how well did the Trudeau government navigate the challenges it encountered?

KS: Every government also faces specific challenges, but the Trudeau government had some doozies:

Who could have foreseen the election of Donald Trump in 2016 with his determination to tear up NAFTA and put the Canadian economy at risk? Or the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which posed a similar threat for totally different reasons?

In both of those cases, the Trudeau government pulled off policy successes that kept the worst outcomes at bay.

AK: Katherine Scott, how well do the Trudeau government's policy outcomes measure up against its three terms worth of platforms and promises?

KS: The Trudeau government tried to differentiate itself from its predecessor through its embrace of social justice and its commitment to gender equality, for example, by prioritizing child care and work-life balance. It also put a focus on Indigenous reconciliation front and centre. However, there was a shortfall between policy promises and the money put up to make them a reality, so any evaluation of the Trudeau government has a mixed result.

The three biggest successes included the introduction of a historic first universal, affordable, high-quality system of child care system across country; pandemic income supports, which bolstered a speedy economic recovery; and significant efforts to reframe the Crown's relationships with Inuit, Métis, and First Nations peoples, which was a distinctive achievement of the Trudeau era that did distinguish it from years past and, particularly, the Harper period. The government deserves kudos for those advances.

However, the three biggest failures were significant as well. They included a refusal to change the electoral system in Canada despite promising that 2015 would be the last time a "first-past-the-post" system would be used in Canada to elect a national government. They have mixed record on climate, which included a climate plan but also the purchase of a pipeline, resulting in rising greenhouse gas emissions and aggravated relations with Indigenous nations. And they have a housing crisis, aggravated by historic levels of immigration, that was not relieved, despite the Trudeau government's welcome return to federal housing policy with its 2017 National Housing Strategy.

That housing strategy promised substantial new investments to halve chronic homelessness and build or repair 160,000 units of housing over 10 years. However, as on other files, the funding lagged behind the vision on housing, and the modesty of the federal funding compared to the scale of the task leaves too many of the new housing programs dependent on provincial governments for matching payments and too few Canadians precariously housed.

AK: Katherine Scott, based on the chapters in this book, how would you characterize the Trudeau government overall?

KS: I'd have to say that "overpromise and underdeliver" is the theme of the Trudeau government's near decade in power. Too many of its policy prescriptions were incremental, meaning too little real progress was made. M

E.R. Zarevich

Intimacy in colonialism's aftermath

COEXISTENCE
BILLY-RAY BELCOURT
W. W. Norton & Company, 2024

"Throughout the twentieth century, Canadian poets were writing pastoral poems that celebrated country life and the glory of nature. The ability to aestheticize the pasture is presupposed by dispossession, by colonization. One could argue, then, that Indigenous life fell out of these poets' frames of ethical consideration."

The creative writing instructor from the story "Poetry Class" renders his classroom silent with these words. He doesn't hold back the opinions he has spent a lifetime honing. It's his turn to speak, not theirs. If they're not ready to accept hard truths, they have the choice to unenroll from the class and continue to live in a state of ignorance, until they're ready.

Such is the nature of Cree author Billy-Ray Belcourt's collection of short stories, *Coexistence*. It's an eye-opening experience that is very much a choice. Readers, as they make their way from the beginning to the end, must decide, whatever their origins, if they're prepared to coexist with the knowledge that every aspect of their lives on Canadian soil is very much a product of past and present colonialism.

Even the previously detached humanities. Art and literature are especially not exempt. Belcourt's stories follow the lives of modern-day Indigenous Peoples as they traverse the complications of both their domestic and public lives in an era that's only recently given them more opportunities for the latter. They are working people, writers and teachers and artists, and they're not invisible anymore.

Belcourt, throughout the collection, develops something of a relationship between two distinct styles in the book. The first style is smoothly poetic and investigative, challenging readers with eloquently crafted questions about the existential conflicts presented in each narrative. Belcourt makes frequent inquires about his own characters and his characters make inquires about themselves. "One Woman's Memories" has a lonely aging mother reflect on her life choices and work up the courage to call her distant adult son. *"Does she wish she'd had more children? Sometimes. Mostly, though, she wants to undo time or live the same life over again. To make small adjustments that would, of course, change everything."*

The second style is blunt, uninhibited, and as intimate if as it were phone messages sent back and forth between lovers or close friends. Readers must be prepared for explicit expressions of queer sexuality that aren't in any way sanitized or downgraded to appeal to certain conservative tastes. The language can, at times, be considered graphic. The tales concern characters who take a physically active as well as an emotional role in their long-term relationships or affairs. It's doubtlessly intended for a discretionary adult audience. The language blends seamlessly with the first style, as it depicts actual human interactions. In reality, people periodically shift between their intellectual and erotic sides.

Using his characters as his mouthpieces, Belcourt also confronts readers with his outrage at the shortfalls of Canada's current Truth and Reconciliation campaign.

Like the teacher in "Poetry Class," the characters—each one, in their own way, a bold creative—take advantage of any possible platform to make their voices heard. The characters are wounded and they are not satisfied with the balms being applied. The small gestures made by those outside of the community appear shallow and meaningless when held up against the lingering bruises of generational trauma.

Belcourt, through his stories, advocates for (and almost demands) a sharper level of self-awareness for those unaffected by colonial systematic violence. Consider this exchange in "Lived Experience," which takes place at a student art show, and how often instances like this occur in real life.

"Welcome everyone!" he says. "It's our pleasure to host the graduating class's annual thesis exhibition. This year it's called Asymmetries, an examination of how we're sometimes at odds with the world. I'd like to begin by acknowledging we're on the traditional territories of many Indigenous nations who have stewarded the land for centuries, and we thank them."

I glance over at Will and roll my eyes. He smirks.

The entire book can be interpreted as a candid exploration of all the conversations about the queer and Indigenous communities that often don't get woven into the mainstream. That is the point. Billy-Ray Belcourt is a gay Indigenous writer and his stories are specifically about gay Indigenous Peoples. Through his characters, he presents himself, openly and proudly. M

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

Jon Milton

Neoliberalism has gutted Canada's social services

THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET
NORA LORETO
Dundurn Press, 2024

The *Monitor* caught up with Nora Loreto, author of *The Social Safety Net*, the first of a series of books on neoliberalism.

JM: What is neoliberalism? And where do we find its origin point in Canada?

NL: Around World War Two, neoliberalism emerges as an idea, a potential economic order, in the mind of some economists. It would take another 40 years for it to become the status quo.

Neoliberalism is the process of giving control of everything over to markets, and in doing so, deregulating and shrinking the size of the state. This shifts how people understand their relationship to democracy at a fundamental level. Now, because it was not popular, it had to be introduced into Canada very, very slowly, by stealth, over the course of the 1980s and into the 1990s.

The impact of all of this today is a reality in which we have no real control over our politics, where politicians are at the complete whim of the market, and everything has been financialized, right down to basic necessities like housing.

JM: How broad of a hegemony has neoliberalism had in Canada?

NL: It's our status quo, it touches literally everything. It replaced the post-war Keynesian order, which built the state that Canadians would look at and say, "that's Canada, that's public health care, that's a public education system, that's social services, that's giving people what they need to survive, and not leaving them at the whims of the market." Neoliberalism supplanted that entirely.

When neoliberalism was implemented, we lost the democratic control over institutions that we once had. Corporate logic has been imposed on things that it absolutely has no business being imposed on, like the health system or the education system—and because it's hegemonic, because it's so all encompassing, it's very hard for Canadians to see past it, to see alternatives and to actually resist this logic.

JM: It can feel abstract to talk about neoliberalism. For a regular, working Canadian, what is their daily interaction with neoliberalism?

NL: Neoliberalism touches you at every single moment of the day....

I think the best example is when you look at the housing crisis. The housing crisis is not going to be solved by more housing supply or reducing housing demand. It's a manufactured crisis, because land—and building structures on top of land—has been incredibly financialized, so every step of the process, someone's making a ton of money....

And if you're a renter, the odds are very high—almost half—that you have a corporate landlord. That corporate landlord's primary job is to not house you, it's to take your rent and give it to shareholders. And if they take 90 per cent of their rent or more and give it all to shareholders, they're rewarded by paying no tax!

JM: Over the past couple of years, we've seen some genuine expansions of public services at the federal level—things like dental care, pharmacare, and $10 a day child care. How do you understand these developments in the context of neoliberalism?

NL: Neoliberalism is bad politics. It's really, really hard to sell the effect of neoliberalism to average people, and politicians know that reining in neoliberalism is very popular, and so some of the expansions in the state that we've seen have all been done out of political necessity.

These politicians are in the service of neoliberalism, and so that means we get half measures like the national pharmacare program that is not a pharmacare program at all, that covers two drugs out of thousands. It's a dental care program that's opt in, that's not automatic, that's not pay with your health card. It's expanded health coverage that doesn't include all of the other things that we need, like physiotherapy, vision care, or mental health care. It's half measures, quarter measures, fifth measures.

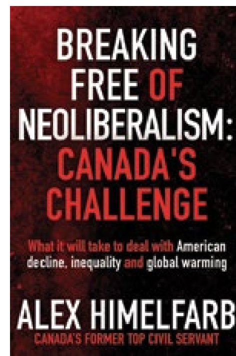
JM: What does challenging neoliberalism look like?

NL: It's a rebalancing of forces. It's economic planning in the economy that includes things like price controls. In 2022, Canadian corporations made record profits. It's expropriating properties and making more public housing. It's taxing profits, forcing those profits to be put back into the communities in which they were made through workers' salaries and other kinds of investments. It's de-financializing the pension system and the insurance system. It's putting a cap on user fees for things that we need for daily life, like the internet or transit or food. M

Jon Milton is a senior communications specialist with the CCPA.

Bruce Campbell

A formidable exercise in truth telling



BREAKING FREE OF NEOLIBERALISM: CANADA'S CHALLENGE
ALEX HIMELFARB
Lorimer, 2024

Alex Himelfarb's newest book, *Breaking Free of Neoliberalism: Canada's Challenge*, is a compelling read.

Breaking Free takes the reader through neoliberalism's origins during World War II; its philosophical originators—Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek, and other advocates, notably Milton Friedman; its ascendence during the economic turmoil of the late 1970s, and its hold on governments of various stripes up to the present day.

Corporate and billionaire-funded think tanks in the U.S. and Canada—notably the Fraser Institute and the CD Howe Institute—were essential for moving the agenda to prominence. A corporate-owned media ecosystem has worked for decades to shape our culture and beliefs.

At the core of neoliberalism, in its various mutations, is that the paramount freedom is economic freedom. Therefore, the state's first obligation is to protect "the right to profit."

It was originally ideology, an elite consensus that became a political project and, eventually, a political order that shaped public policy, public attitudes, and beliefs. The key feature of an "order" is that its core tenets define what is desirable and what is possible across political parties, within government, and for the public at large.

Under neoliberalism, governments are part of the problem, not part of the solution. Taxes are a "burden". Regulations that protect labour rights, health, safety, and the environment are "red tape" that inhibits competition and wealth creation.

Himelfarb captures neoliberalism's essential recipe: rein in public spending, cut taxes, raise interest rates as the automatic response to inflation, reduce demand; with, as a result, less investment, higher unemployment, lower wages, pressure on small businesses, renters and mortgage holders, less help to those in need—and lower expectations.

Himelfarb takes us through the various manifestations of neoliberalism in the 1980s and '90s under classic right-wing governments in the anglosphere [Thatcher, Reagan, Mulroney] and reformist or so-called third way governments [Blair, Clinton, Chrétien], which have operated inside its guard rails. More recently, the Obama, Biden, and Trudeau governments. It is the story of how neoliberalism had severely narrowed the window of possible change and convinced many to believe that there is no alternative.

Neoliberalism came to Canada with the government of Brian Mulroney in 1984. Mulroney initiated

the privatization of Canada's publicly owned corporations (crown corporations). They included Air Canada, Petro-Canada, and Connaught Laboratories, one of the top vaccine companies in the world. Mulroney's decision to enter into a free trade deal with the U.S. was a key moment in Canada's neoliberal transition.

It was extended to Mexico under NAFTA and ratified by the Chrétien-Martin government. The Liberal government's neoliberal architecture was cemented in the iconic 1995 budget (which was the subject of the book I co-authored with Maude Barlow, *Straight Through the Heart*). It delivered massive cuts: from transfers to provinces for health care, education, and welfare; cuts across almost all departments and agencies, social housing, and international assistance. It was followed by the privatization of the Canadian National Railway.

Then came fossil fuel-funded Harper's neoliberal government, which entrenched austerity, focused on making Canada an energy superpower, and was a strong climate denialist, removing Canada from the *Kyoto Environment Accord*.

Federal Conservative opposition Leader Pierre Poilievre is a protégé of Stephen Harper. Riffing off public anger and alienation about affordability and the elites, he promises a return to the classic neoliberal playbook: axe the carbon tax, lower taxes, less government spending, less regulation, and lower public debt.

A central consequence of decades of neoliberalism has been the rise of the oligarchs and the unprecedented increase in income and wealth inequality, including within Canada. As Pickett and Wilkinson observe in *The Spirit Level*, greater inequality results in symptoms of social decay and disruption, as well as lower trust in one another and less hope for the future.

Himelfarb's book traces neoliberalism's ebbs and flows and, most importantly, its devastating impact on democracy, and social and environmental well-being.

Himelfarb shows how neoliberalism has weathered every crisis and every new pronouncement of its death. It seems to contain within it the seeds of its own perpetuation as it undermines the collective tools for fighting back.

He does not hold back, nor diminish what our country has experienced, and why. It is a formidable exercise in truth telling.

No illusions, yet there's still hope

Under no illusions about the challenges ahead, *Breaking Free* offers hope in transcending neoliberalism.

It involves community activism coming together to overcome neoliberalism and build a more equitable, inclusive society and a zero-carbon planet.

Unions have historically been a major countervailing power to neoliberalism. Himelfarb is optimistic about the returning strength of the union movement after decades of decline.

Breaking Free involves breaking free of neoliberal "common sense". Neoliberalism breeds cynicism. Cynicism undermines our will to cooperate or engage in collective action even when we know that's precisely what's needed.

According to Himelfarb, we can do more than just vote. There are many ways to act, to participate in our self-government, to make things better: join a party, run for office, join the public service, volunteer for a cause you believe in, write a song, paint a picture, write a poem.

Breaking Free provides concrete examples of acting together and fighting for each other. It allows us to practice solidarity and find common ground.

One example is the 1970s collective of black feminists and lesbians, the Combahee River Collective, which built on their experience to work in coalition with other progressive organizations and movements to fight "against racial, sexual, heterosexual and class oppression." They understood that the systems of oppression are "interlocking".

Another is Astra Taylor's Debt Collective, a debtors' union that brings diverse communities together to fight for relief from unjust or oppressive debt, their debt and the debt of others. Its struggles have evolved to include Medicare for all, free tuition and the right to housing.

"I don't know how we make sustainable progress on any front if we don't tackle the issues of power, of class, of democracy," writes Himelfarb. This is coming from someone who once was at the pinnacle of Canadian public service.

The central role played by the government during the pandemic provided a brief glimpse of what we were capable of together.

"Given the stakes," Himelfarb concludes, "we need to find the will, the courage and the humility to join the fight, to join our particular fights to the fights of others, to practice solidarity and to rediscover our shared humanity and the common good.

It is required reading for understanding how to turn the tide going forward. Himelfarb writes, we will know when neoliberalism is dead and buried when human rights and democracy take precedence over economic freedom and profit.

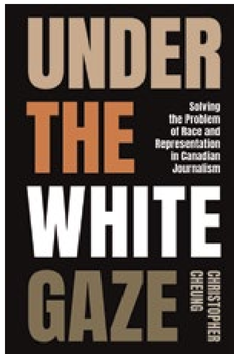
Breaking Free is a stunning accomplishment. I have been immersed in the analysis of neoliberalism for most of my career. And yet *Breaking Free* has provided me with new insights. It is unsurpassed.

Full disclosure: I (along with Alex's wife Frum) persuaded him to write this book. Second, I helped the publisher shepherd it through to completion. Finally, I am proud of my modest role. M

Bruce Campbell is the former executive director of the CCPA.

Christopher Cheung

Newsrooms need to confront the dominance of whiteness



UNDER THE WHITE GAZE: SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF RACE AND REPRESENTATION IN CANADIAN JOURNALISM
CHRISTOPHER CHEUNG
UBC Press, Purich Books, 2024

I have a hard time finding the Canada that I know in the news.

Growing up, my teachers taught us that we lived in a multicultural country, but they really didn't need to because I could see that for myself. Every class I attended from kindergarten on was a miniature United Nations. Our daily attendance was an international roll call: Alam, Cheung, Nardi, Pabla, Raeisi, Tabora, Zhang.

All of Vancouver is diverse, but my neighbourhood of Oakridge was at a special crossroads of class and culture, straddling the posh west side and the blue-collar east side. I was born to a family from Hong Kong, and my classmates had roots from all over: China, India, Iran, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam. We might've been considered "minorities," but we were the majority.

Differences were everywhere. At recess, we shared a global selection of snacks from tangy fruit leather to paper-thin roasted seaweed. When the school bell rang, parents and grandparents showed up to tell my friends to put on their coats in languages from Punjabi to Tagalog. The Cantonese church my family attended, in a building purchased from Mennonites, was just up the hill from a Sikh gurdwara, where the city's Vaisakhi parade starts every year. On the walls of living rooms in nearby homes were crosses and crocheted Bible verses, but also shrines and portraits of ancestors. Under these same roofs were families of every size and class. I'd visit friends who lived in mansions with their melancholy mothers, supported by fathers who did business overseas, and those who lived humbler lives, spending their evenings at the family restaurant serving hot bowls of phó.

My sense of a shared community only grew as I got older. Every time I walked the streets, took the bus, or visited another neighbourhood, I came to understand more and more how the city I lived in was made up of people of different identities—which is why the local news frustrated me when people of colour were too often missing, misrepresented, and marginalized.

Their lives revealed insights about society, everything from the cultural transformation of communities to the strength of our social safety nets. But were these stories being told?

Nope.

Was it because journalists were unfamiliar with the places in which we lived? Was it because they didn't speak our many languages? Was it because their lives were so very different from our own?

In time, I began to wonder which was worse: turning on the news and finding people of colour and their experiences absent from the places in which they live, or seeing that journalists were recycling the same stories about people of colour over and over again.

For all Canada's boasting about multiculturalism, its journalism was suffering from obvious omissions and problematic portrayals of people of colour.

If you're white, the news is giving you a redacted portrait of who you share your community with.

If you're a person of colour like me, this mismatch between what you experience as reality and what you see on the news feels extra personal when the people you're familiar with, the places you frequent, the cultures you belong to, and the issues you care about are represented inaccurately. That is, if they're in the news at all.

Typically, the target audience is imagined as the average Canadian. I wrote many stories before I realized that this so-called average Canadian that I was writing to, this so-called mainstream audience, had a clear racial and ethnocultural identity, and that identity...

...was white.

Other journalists were doing this targeting, and somehow, I picked it up too. It didn't matter that I strived to get more people of

colour represented in media coverage. I had thought that simply making us visible was a win, but I hadn't thought about *how* we were being portrayed.

I began to notice patterns in my stories. Cheer on this [insert identity here] person who did this remarkable thing! Cry about this migrant's trials and tribulations! Celebrate this ancient cultural practice, which comes with a lot of symbolism and cool costumes! Aside from these narratives, there were also patterns in the way that I overemphasized identity and difference. These realizations led me to a problem that was hard to understand, hard to confront, and hard to fix.

Behind the stories that I wrote to help with representation, I noticed a white gaze.

I took on the white gaze in everything from my language choices to my story frames. I treated white Canadians of European descent as the default viewpoint. They were the baseline. They were the "us" and everyone else was the "other." When writing about non-Western cultures, I'd go to great lengths to explain them to a white audience, reporting on them with an air of discovery and distance, padding my stories with little encyclopaedia entries.

When we hear reports about how Canadian journalism is "overwhelmingly white," what exactly does that mean? In 2023, the Canadian Association of Journalists' newsroom diversity survey found that 75.5 percent of journalists in the country are white. That might sound pretty close to the percentage of white people in the country, but the survey notes that journalists of colour are clustered in a handful of large, national newsrooms. There are, however, two depressing categories where there is a high degree of racial representation: part-time work and internship roles.

As for who's in charge, white journalists make up an even higher percentage of newsroom leaders. They are the ones who decide who gets hired, which stories about people of colour are important, and how such stories get packaged for audiences.

Lived experience matters when it comes to identifying, researching, and producing stories. Newsrooms will continue to overlook, or struggle to report on, stories that represent to a growing share of their prospective audience if they do not have journalists from different backgrounds in decision-making roles who can bring these stories forward.

I happened to enter the industry around a time of increasing conversations about race and representation in media. I saw news outlets respond to these movements with pledges to diversify their staff and their coverage.

While I have no doubt such commitments were written with good intentions, I couldn't help but look at this another way: diversity was hot! You could call it a diversity reckoning, but it was also a diversity rush,

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with white editors on the hunt for journalists to help diversify their newsrooms and coverage.

You can see the danger in newsrooms treating diversity like a missing ingredient, making hires or commissioning pieces from journalists of colour, because this puts such work into a silo. I've seen newsrooms rely on journalists of colour for the "diversity beat," sparing white journalists from having to think about diversity, let alone focus on it as if their very jobs depended on their coverage of it.

But we need to include *all* journalists in the work of diversifying journalism, because there is room for diversity in all areas of reporting.

Representation in journalism is about more than just journalists covering under-represented groups and going, "Look, they exist!" It's important to ask what kinds of stories are being told about people of colour. How are they portrayed? Whose voices and perspectives are privileged? Whose are left out? Who decides which stories deserve coverage? Is the story of interest to the people of colour being written about?

It's easy for newsrooms to talk about a happy-sounding thing like diversity, but it's harder for them to swallow the existence of a negative-sounding thing like racial inequality. Any newsroom that wants to diversify but refuses to confront the dominance of whiteness in the workplace and in their reporting will fail.

Just as we can't talk about reconciliation without talking about colonization, we can't talk about diversity in journalism without talking about whiteness. It's easy for newsrooms to say that they want to diversify, but what exactly are they diversifying from? If diversity is one side of the coin, whiteness is the other. If coverage or a particular perspective is lacking, newsrooms need to admit whose perspectives they have too much of. If journalists of colour are marginalized, newsrooms need to admit who holds the power. M

Christopher Cheung is author of *Under the White Gaze* and a staff reporter at *The Tyee*.

The good news page

Elaine Hughes

Marmoset monkeys call each other by name

Scientists from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem recorded conversations between pairs of marmoset monkeys and believe that they call one another by name. The monkeys were found to use 'phee calls,' which were different for each marmoset. Researchers found the monkeys could recognize when the calls were directed at them and that they were more likely to respond when they were called by their name. Apart from humans, only dolphins and elephants have been found to use vocal communication to talk to members of their own species. ***/ BBC,* September 16, 2024.**

Women involved in space race finally get recognition

Women, the hidden figures of the space race, were recently recognized at a medal ceremony where the Congressional Gold Medal was presented at the U.S. capital to the families of Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, and Christine Darden. A medal was also given to all the women who worked as mathematicians, engineers, and 'human computers' in the U.S. space program from the 1930s to 1970s. ***/ The Associated Press,* September 20, 2024.**

New Zealand reclaims record for world's largest Haka

New Zealand reclaimed the world record (previously held by France) for the largest mass Haka, a ceremonial Maori war dance used to challenge opponents, celebrate Maori identity and culture, and a way of unifying people in times of grief. The sights and sounds of the Haka—feet stomping, fists pumping, vocal cords straining—are deeply entrenched in New Zealand culture and have been famously adopted by the country's rugby teams as a pre-match ritual. ***/ CNN,* September 30, 2024.**

Massive solar project on roof of new JFK Airport terminal

Construction has begun on a new terminal at John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) that will host a 13,000-panel solar array on its roof. The Terminal One solar array will be the largest in New York City and likely the largest at any airport terminal in the country. Separately, the Port Authority is also constructing a 12-MW solar canopy at JFK's long-term parking lot 9, which will also have a 7.5-MW battery and 6 MW of community solar. ***/ Solar Power World,* September 25, 2024.**

Australia, a biodiversity hotspot, recognizes 750 new species

In Australia, the western laughing frog and a spider named for Tom Hardy are among the 750 new species recognized on the continent. Melbourne-based wildlife ecologist, Euan Ritchie, says 750 new species may sound like a lot, but that number is just the tip of the iceberg, adding that they think that 70 per cent of the country's native species remain "to be described." Ritchie says the work of research and conservation is particularly important as climate change and habitat destruction threaten Australia's biodiversity. ***/ National Public Radio,* September 13, 2024.**

Test using origami paper sensors can detect infectious diseases like COVID

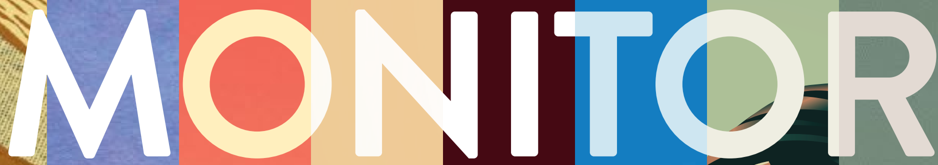
Working with scientists from the University of Glasgow and Zhejiang University in China since 2020, Professor Zhugen Yang led the development of cheap, new origami paper sentinel sensors that can help detect infectious diseases such as SARS-CoV-2 virus, Influenza A, and Influenza B. Within 90 minutes, the innovative method identifies biomarkers in wastewater, enabling rapid tracking and sharing of diseases using the camera in a mobile phone. It costs only a buck for each use. ***/ Good News Network,* September 21, 2024.**

New law to protect children from social media addiction

Under a new law signed by Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom, California will make it illegal for social media platforms to knowingly provide addictive feeds to children without parental consent. Part of a growing push in states across the country to try to address the impacts of social media on the well-being of children, the new law will take effect in 2027 in a state that is home to some of the largest technology companies in the world. ***/ The Associated Press,* September 21, 2024.**

Smoky Mountains' highest peak reverting Cherokee name Kuwohi

After more than 150 years since a surveyor named the Smoky Mountains' highest peak Clingmans Dome, the U.S. Board of Geographic Names changed the name to Kuwohi, the Cherokee name for mulberry place. Long before the land became a national park, the Cherokee People had strong connections to Kuwohi and the surrounding area. ***/ The Associated Press,* September 19, 2024.**



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“Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers and users. Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal—fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability.”

—**Nyéléni Declaration,** *www.nfu.ca/learn/food-sovereignty*