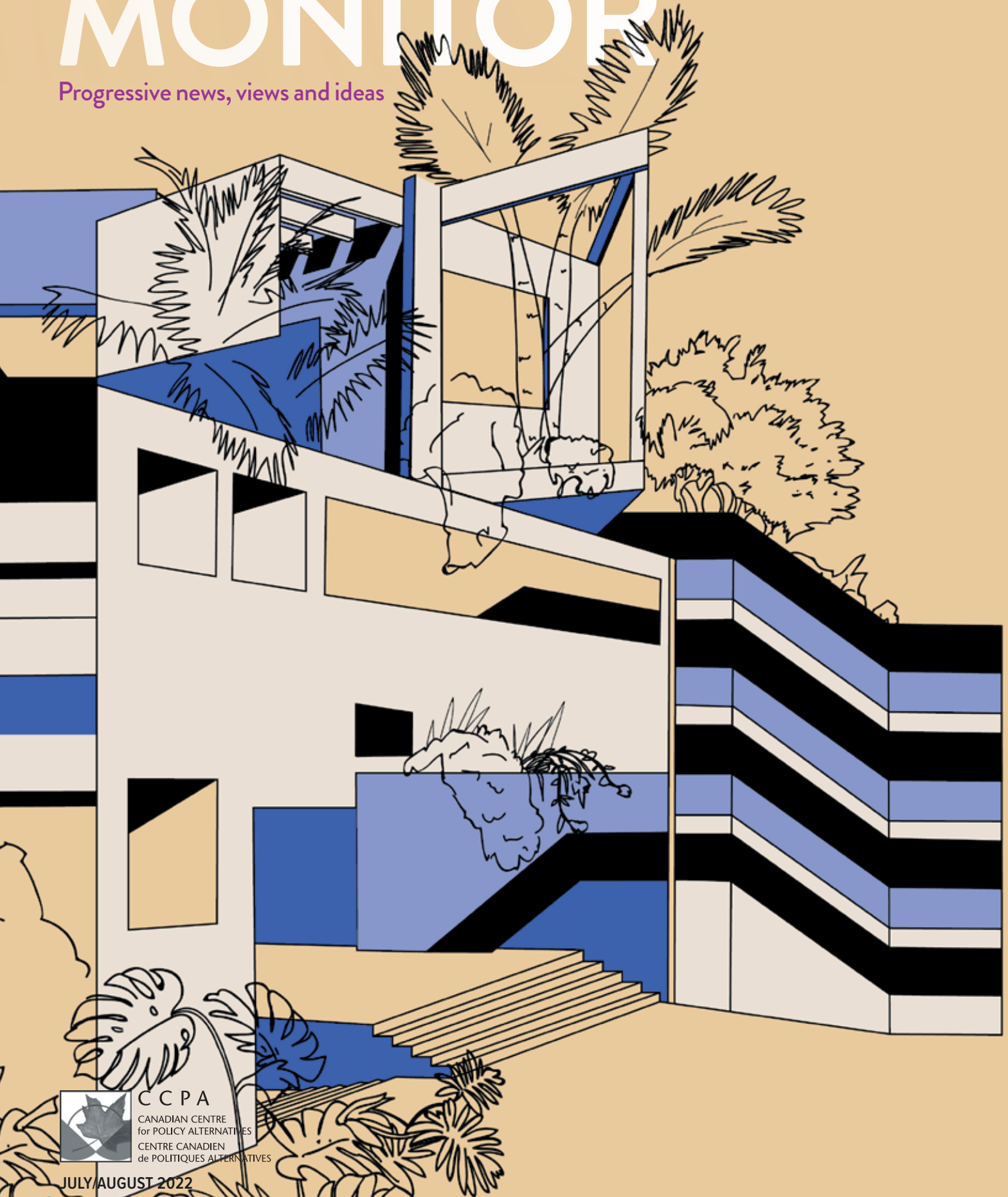
MONITOR

Progressive news, views and ideas



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MONITOR

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

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The future of growth

Up Front

Columns

Books

Staples

GUEST EDITORIAL BY RANDY ROBINSON

What's so bad about growth?

ALL OF US are trained from an early age to be big fans of growth.

We want children to grow. We want flowers to grow. We want gardens and trees and crops to grow. Growth is good, that's the idea.

We're also trained to think of *economic* growth as unfailingly positive. When we hear on the news that the economy is growing, it's hard not to feel that things are getting better, and it's not hard to see why. Economic growth provides things people like. Houses. Indoor plumbing. Refrigerators. Your cell phone. And let's not forget how many pop songs have been written about cars (and trucks, if you like country music).

These things are all products of capitalism, an economic system that is tied up with the idea of growth by its very nature. But growth is not all good. There's trouble in paradise.

Economic growth as we currently practise it is not specifically designed to lift people up. It is invariably uneven, and under capitalism the benefits of growth accrue to the owners of capital first and then, to varying degrees, to those who trade their labour to live. (State-provided public services and meagre income transfers, a.k.a. the "social wage," are part of the negotiation.)

Part of the deal is that wages, or most of them, are spent on the goods and services that fuel growth, keeping the whole machine running. But it's not a virtuous circle by any means. It's more like a spiral. Or maybe a giant screw—a screw drilling its way into the Earth.

Perpetual growth demands perpetually more resources. Under colonial notions of land and who It belongs to—or who belongs to it—the extraction of those resources has come at a high cost to Indigenous Peoples, and the waste from those operations and the products they produce, toxic and less toxic, have been more likely to be dumped in and around racialized communities for a long, long time.

When it comes to resources, no resource drives growth more than energy. "Energy," writes Thomas Homer-Dixon, scholar and former oil patch roughneck, "is our master resource," and right now the energy that underpins life as we know it is fossil fuel energy.

Oil grows our food, it builds our houses, it delivers practically everything we consume. And if we don't get really smart, really fast, it is going to destroy us.

This is not news, of course. We know the climate emergency is now—it's not some future worry. That and rampant inequality, of all kinds, are the twin crises of our time. And they are both bound up with current notions of economic growth. Getting them under control is going to require great policy and brilliant politics to change the way we organize not only our economy, but every aspect of our lives.

It's a big challenge. In Ontario, where I live, we've just gone through a provincial election which was won by the Progressive Conservatives led by Premier Doug Ford. In an interview, Ford's campaign manager was asked, "What did people vote for in this election?" His reply was simple: they voted "for stability and for growth."

A major issue in the election campaign was the government's plan to Build Highway 413, a new superhighway west of Toronto that will take 2,000 acres of farmland out of production, cross 85 waterways, damage 220 wetlands, and threaten the habitats of 10 species at risk.

This is growth as we know it. And it's everywhere.

That's why this issue of *The Monitor* is so important. The problem of growth is a complex one. We need to hold it up to the light and look at it from every possible angle. What is meant by "de-growth?" What new infrastructure does the next economy need? How do we build the care economy? How do we allocate investment and economic benefits? How do we measure progress? What do we mean by "the good life," and who gets to decide? Perhaps most importantly, how do we connect policy work to the organized working class power a real transformation will demand?

We won't answer all these questions with one issue of a magazine. But it's a great place to start. M

Randy Robinson is the Director of CCPA-ON.

Letters

Inclusive organizing: Don't marginalize diverse voices

I found the reporting on the so-called Freedom Convoy in the May/June 2022 *Monitor* to be interesting and insightful until I got to Shane Burley's article "Breaker breaker: Lessons from communities that blocked truck convoys." That article made me sad and mad, and incredibly concerned that the lessons Burley talks about are lessons in keeping the focus on white male organizing.

By focusing on the voices of (primarily white) men, the voices of women, racialized people, LGBTQAA+ persons, Indigenous people, etc. were marginalized. This is not the inclusive type of organizing needed. The organizers in Vancouver (my hometown) included women, queer and non-binary people, and racialized people. Failing to mention or highlight that means that lessons in community organizing are very tepid.

Other than using the skills of anti-racist activists in de-escalation, there was no discussion in the article of how an inclusive, diverse and intersectional framework was used in organizing.

The article talks about the crowd, including workers impacted by the convoy, but fails to provide an intersectional lens as to who those workers were. The article mentions safety but does not speak about how safety is different for racialized people, who are more likely to be harassed on the streets than white men.

Marion Pollack,
Vancouver, BC

Worth Revisiting?

The publication of "Individualism is an enemy to anti-racism" [a quote from Tony Nabors, aka @racialequityinsights on Tiktok, published in the "Worth Repeating" section of the May/June 2022 *Monitor*] disturbs me.

First, on individualism: I contend that independent, critical thinking, as opposed to group thinking, is one characteristic of individualism which is desirable. Thus I fail to see how this aspect of individualism can possibly be "an enemy to anti-racism." (As an aside, my speculation is that the "Freedom Convoy" was driven more by group, rather than independent, thinking.)

Yes, individualism has been used as a political ideology to blame the victims of racism *and other injustices* for their sufferings. And yes, used in this way, individualism might contribute to racism. But a half-true, sloganeering heading is not useful for promoting honest and meaningful discussions.

Second: " ... white folks, you must resist the temptation to *dissociate yourself from whiteness and the harm it causes*" (emphasis mine). I tried very hard to imagine how a white frontline worker, struggling to make ends meet, working under horribly dangerous conditions and with hardly any free time to spare, would react to hearing that message. My guess would be: "What is it that I am supposed to do, or not do?"

Albert Liem,
Vegreville, AB

The value of CCPA's research

I believe the true value of the CCPA lies in its research, especially when it can be extended to the "solutions" part of the mandate.

Making clear how different policy decisions could impact inequality without disrupting everything else we care about is a message that is not often clear.

I'd really welcome more pieces that contrasted different models of policy. Specifically budget decisions about public investment.

Blaize Horner Reich,
Vancouver, BC

Zexi Li: A lesson in courage

I should like to thank Zexi Li ["Standing up to blaring hate," May/June 2022 *Monitor*] for the courage and the clear thinking expressed in her actions and this article. She's very young, and I am very old–old enough to have been a child in the U.K. in World War II and to have experienced decades of disastrous political developments that went unchecked because not enough people had the wit or courage to speak out forcefully and in time.

It's possible that Li herself doesn't yet fully appreciate the value, the vital importance of what she has done and is doing, especially in the example it sets for others. I know from a lifetime's experience that when one person has the courage to speak out, hundreds are emboldened to do likewise.

Margaret Clare Ford,
Orillia, ON

Letters have been edited for clarity and length. Send your letters to monitor@policyalternatives.ca.

New from the CCPA

Fighting for a better, fairer and greener Ontario

CCPA-Ontario was busy in the run-up to the June 2 provincial election. Through published reports, blog posts, newspaper articles, media interviews, and social media commentary, we pushed all parties—and voters—to adopt progressive policies. Our recommendations were part of debates around school funding, online learning, wages for early childhood educators, social assistance rates, the minimum wage, rental housing, health care funding, long-term care, the climate crisis, the cost of living, and more. We also served as a resource to the Equal Pay Coalition, the Ontario Health Coalition, and unions opposing Bill 124, the Ontario law that caps wage increases for provincial public employees at 1% per year.

Centring reproductive health care, effects of low-wage economy

CCPA-Nova Scotia research associate Martha Paynter determined that the Nova Scotia government's health plan lacked a focus on reproductive health and outlined the immediate need for appropriate attention and funding. Her blog concluded: "A plan that fails to address pregnancy, pregnancy prevention and gynecological health is, quite simply, discriminatory."

Appearing before the Nova Scotia Standing Committee on Public Accounts in June, CCPA-Nova Scotia director Christine Saulnier underlined that the scope and impact of the low-wage economy was broad and deep, affecting the security and well-being of individuals and their capacity to cover basic needs, as well as exacerbating inequities.

We're excited to be planning our Fall Fundraiser Gala event this year, set for November 25, with an in-person and online option.

Tracking progress on $10/day child care

As the federal child care plan rolls across the country, CCPA-National Office's work on tracking child care fees over the years has become more important than ever. Our detailed fee data for 37 cities has become the baseline measure by which to track and push for progress on the recent federal funding commitments to support the provinces and territories in moving towards $10/day care.

This year's report, *Game Changer,* co-authored by David Macdonald and Martha Friendly. Our analysis looks at which provinces and territories are and are not hitting the federal government's 50% fee-reduction targets.

An alternative budget for Winnipeg

Winnipeg at a Crossroads: the Alternative Municipal Budget 2022 was launched to more than 100 people outside City Hall. This report, written by 27 authors from 18 different organizations, makes climate action central and articulates how the new mayor and council elected this fall could advance Truth and Reconciliation, social inclusion and more. We will continue to draw from this report with our amazing community partners in the lead-up to the fall civic election.

Manitoba is attempting to tinker with its pathetically low minimum wage by introducing weak legislation to increase minimum wage more than inflation if inflation is above 5%. We'll be speaking out everywhere we can to explain the economic and social benefits of raising the minimum wage. We'll also be releasing our Living Wage 2022 update later this summer.

This year marks our 25th anniversary and we're looking forward to announcing a very special annual fall Errol Black Chair in Labour Issues fundraising brunch to celebrate. More details to come soon.

Pushing for a living wage

The Saskatchewan Office calculates that a family of four would require a living wage of $16.23 per hour for Regina and $16.89 per hour for Saskatoon to maintain a decent standard of living. See the next page for a full article on this new research.

Preventing catastrophic flooding and landslides

An investigative series from CCPA-BC by resource policy analyst Ben Parfitt takes a closer look at the catastrophic floods and landslides that the province experienced in the wake of heavy rains last November (policynote.ca/opening-the-floodgates/). Most of the public focus has been on the role of climate change in creating more extreme weather events, but Ben's investigation finds that some of the worst flooding and landslides were in valleys with land disturbances related to aging logging roads, logging cut-blocks and wildfires. Ben spoke with engineers and geoscientists—including a former head of BC's River Forecast Centre, which assesses and warns the public about flood risks—who say some of the worst impacts of the heavy rains and flooding were preventable, including a deadly landslide that claimed five lives.

Policy recommendations include increasing staffing at the River Forecast Centre; limiting logging and roadbuilding in watersheds—especially near floodplains; increasing inspections of aging and vulnerable infrastructure; and requiring assessments of how logging and logging roads may alter water flows and elevate flood risks before permitting such activities.

Simon Enoch / Saskatchewan Office

Making a living in Saskatchewan

THIS YEAR THE Saskatchewan office released our living wage calculations, hot on the heels of the provincial government's decision to raise what is currently Canada's lowest minimum wage at $11.81 per hour to $15 per hour over the next two years. While the increase demonstrates that the government recognizes the inadequacy of the current minimum wage, it still falls short of what is necessary.

We calculate that a family of four would require a living wage of $16.23 per hour for Regina and $16.89 per hour for Saskatoon to maintain a decent standard of living in those cities. So even with the government increase, working families will continue to be unable to meet many of their basic needs until Saskatchewan's minimum wage approaches relative parity with the living wage.

The need for a higher minimum wage in Saskatchewan is borne out by the numbers. Saskatchewan's poverty rate of 19% remains higher than that of the rest of the country (16.4%), and the province's child poverty rate of 26.1% is greater than in all other provinces and territories except for Manitoba and Nunavut.

The story of child poverty is very much a story of low wages. Indeed, child poverty in Saskatchewan, if based on market income alone (wages and salaries), would be closer to 38%. As University of Regina's Dr. Miguel Sanchez states, "the fact that without social spending the precarious situation of children in Saskatchewan would be much worse is an indication that incomes derived from the labour market are insufficient for many working families."

The living wage can be a powerful tool to address the state of poverty in our province. It gets families out of severe financial stress by lifting them out of poverty and providing a basic level of economic security. But it is certainly not a lavish wage; it is based on a conservative, bare-bones budget that does not include many of the expenditures that most of us take for granted, like home ownership or retirement savings.

Living wage numbers also provide us with a powerful reminder of the importance of social spending in the economic lives of working families. As fate would have it, we last calculated the living wage for Regina in 2016, just as the federal Liberal government came into power. When we compare the 2016 calculation against 2021, we can see how social spending under two different federal governments affected our model living wage family.

In 2016, we calculated the living wage for Regina at $16.95 per hour. And yet five years later the living wage for Regina was actually less, at $16.23 per hour. Given that the cost of living invariably rises, how is a lower living wage possible? It's important to remember that a living wage is determined by a combination of both employment income and government transfers. In 2016, our Regina living wage family earned $61,860 from employment and received $5,750 in government transfers. In 2021, that same family earned $59,239 from employment and received $13,526 in transfers. While the total family income required to meet basic needs increased between 2016 and 2021, a larger share of that family income came from government transfers and reduced taxes in 2021.

The increase in transfer income is primarily due to the introduction of the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) by the federal Liberal government in the 2016 federal budget. With the CCB, Canadian households can receive up to $6,400 per year for each child under the age of six, and $5,400 per year for each child between the ages of 6 and 17. The CCB replaced the much less generous $100-per-month child care benefit introduced by the federal Conservatives in 2006.

This demonstrates the power of government programs to positively redistribute income and protect against the vagaries of the private labour market. All things remaining equal, we should see the institution of $10-per-day universal child care have a powerful effect on the living wage as well. As child care is often the second largest expense after shelter for the model living wage family, any reduction in that expense could have the effect of further reducing what a family needs to earn in the private labour market to meet their expenses.

Of course, given the current rise in inflation, these savings may be tempered by the overall rise in the cost of living. But what this illustrates is that social programs have an essential role to play in ensuring that a family's basic needs are met and in enhancing their quality of life. M

REGINA'S 2016 AND 2021 LIVING WAGE EXPENSES

	2016	2021
Food	$9,852	$11,464
Clothing, footwear	$2,100	$2,275
Shelter	$16,560	$17,464
Transportation	$5,904	$5,946
Household	$9,948	$11,746
Childcare	$12,060	$13,730
Healthcare	$1,572	$2,484
Parent education	$1,404	$1,810
Emergency fund	$2,364	$2,272
Total expenses	**$61,766**	**$69,192**

Colour-coded Justice

ANTHONY N. MORGAN

A fully just transition

BROADCASTER VOICE: *This just in, another neighbourhood is reeling tonight after an overnight double shooting, leaving one dead and another in hospital in critical condition with life-altering wounds. The deceased victim—reported to be known to police—is the city's 56th homicide this year. Witnesses reported hearing a series of gunshots and then seeing two armed suspects flee westbound on foot before entering a waiting vehicle. One suspect is described as 5'10" with a heavyset build, wearing light-coloured clothing and having short dark hair. The other suspect is described as 6' tall with a muscular build, wearing gray sweats and having short dark hair. Anyone with any information about the incident is asked to call police. Back to you in the newsroom.*

Reports like these don't need to say in which city or where in that city the shooting took place. They don't need to mention a specific neighbourhood, or the nearest intersection. The circumstances of the shooting can also go unnamed. And the victims and suspects? These reports don't even need to say anything about their actual or perceived race, colour, ethnicity, nationality, etc.

This is because no matter your walk of life, identities, politics or perspectives, it is highly likely that, in reading this column's opening passage, your personal and social imagination constructed the assailants, victims, and witnesses in this scenario as Black, and more specifically, as Black young men. And the setting of the reported incident that you likely imagined was that of a community with a higher-than-average concentration of Black people; a community that is likely poor and otherwise socially marginalized and neglected.

As Canadians living in North America under the shadows of U.S. hegemony, we are all socially primed by the regularized repetition of this media narrative that associates Black people with serious, violent crime. These narratives, incessantly recast in news media reports, don't always include flashing mug shots of young Black men as victims, suspects or "persons of interest." However, our collective social priming is such that when the broadcast doesn't feature accompanying mugshots, or when we don't see any video surveillance of the incidents, we almost reflexively fill in the gaps, often colouring in the lines with Black faces. This drives the social criminalization of Black people in Canada and is inextricably linked to the overincarceration of Black people in Canada, as well as the overrepresentation of Black people in incidents of racial profiling, police brutality and use of lethal force in this country.

If this column's opening passage ushered into your imagination a picture of "Black crime," you may now be asking yourself, "Does that make me racist?" But I don't think that's the right question. As a national community of people that is overly exposed to this dominant narrative that associates Black people with serious violent crime, the question that we should all ask ourselves instead is: "What impact do these narratives have on our

collective and individual commitments and abilities to advance public policy and economic and social planning in ways that truly and progressively support the needs and interests of Black people in Canada and beyond?"

This question matters because this anti-Black criminalizing narrative is not only etched in the consciousness of the average Canadian but is consciously and unconsciously embedded in the psyches of politicians, policy-makers, non-profit, business and industry leaders, and even educators. In other words, the people with the social, economic and political power to shape individual and collective futures are socialized to associate Black people and places with criminality. This has a dramatic impact on how we collectively envision and plan for the future of growth and Black people's place, or displacement, within/without it.

What I mean to say is that the criminalization of Black people makes it such that where Black individuals, families and communities are imagined at all within the exercise of considering the future(s) of growth, the pivot and preference is perilously towards more police, prisons and punishment. This has been the pattern instead of a progressive push for good housing, health, jobs, schools, and arts and cultural heritage institutions for Black people. In other words, beyond the already unacceptable levels of state control, monitoring, surveillance and punishment, the dominating criminalizing narratives exclude Black communities from having a welcomed and valued presence in conversations and imaginings on the future of growth.

What I have offered should not be read as a desire to replace Black criminalization with Black capitalism. That cannot and will not offer salvation or liberation for Black people. Rather, Black criminalization as the dominant social paradigm for Black life needs to be replaced with one focused on inclusive Black futures. By this I mean a state of collective social well-being and living for Black folks of all intersecting identities. Black futures that are not about expanding the ranks of land, labour and resource exploitation, but, rather, that are sustainable, replenishing and consistent with the stewardship and maintenance of these Indigenous lands that we as Black people have forcibly come to inhabit since at least the 1600s.

Only once we learn to truly challenge and change existing narratives that diminish and distort our imaginations about Black people and their presence in Canada can we realize a future of growth that isn't driven by carceral logics but is truly sustainable, transformative and socially just. M

Katherine Scott / Beyond Recovery project

Tracking women's economic recovery amid the pandemic

A new report launches a two-year research project, called Beyond Recovery, that tracks how women are doing in the workforce following COVID-19 disruptions.

THE ONSLAUGHT OF COVID-19 in March 2020 led to one of the most dramatic economic shutdowns in Canadian history. Millions of people lost their jobs—especially women working in vulnerable sectors, such as food and accommodation.

As governments slowly re-opened their economies, Canadians bounded back to work, but it's been a bumpy ride for many women.

Women's uneven employment recovery

As the Canadian labour market approached the end of 2021, it was in much better shape than it had been at the beginning of the year. Women who experienced the greatest employment declines early in the pandemic had finally recouped these losses. Their total levels of employment edged above February 2020 levels, driven largely by gains in full-time jobs this past fall.

At the same time, women's employment rate has lagged behind men's recovery at each step of the way, while other markers of labour underutilization remain higher than their pre-pandemic benchmarks, including the number of long-term unemployed. By December 2021, about 250,000 people had left the job market—mostly women over age 55.

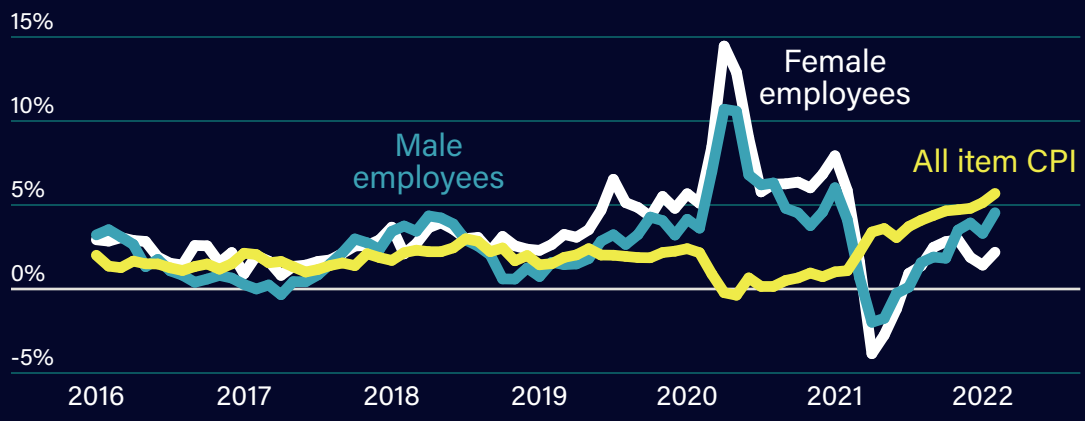
Unpacking this high-level summary reveals greater diversity and challenge. Canada's economic recovery has proven to be as unequal as the initial downturn.

For single mothers, it was a perfect storm. Levels of employment among lone parents with children under age 6 dropped sharply in spring 2020 and have shown little improvement since that time, while mothers with school-aged kids (6–12 years) have had to cope disproportionately with recurring shutdowns and the challenges of homeschooling. Older single women have faced recurring employment losses and heightened financial stress as well.

Immigrant women workers were also hard hit during the initial lockdown—a result of their over-representation in lower-wage jobs and shorter-tenure jobs in pandemic-vulnerable sectors. Others worked throughout the pandemic in high-risk industries with scant employment protections.

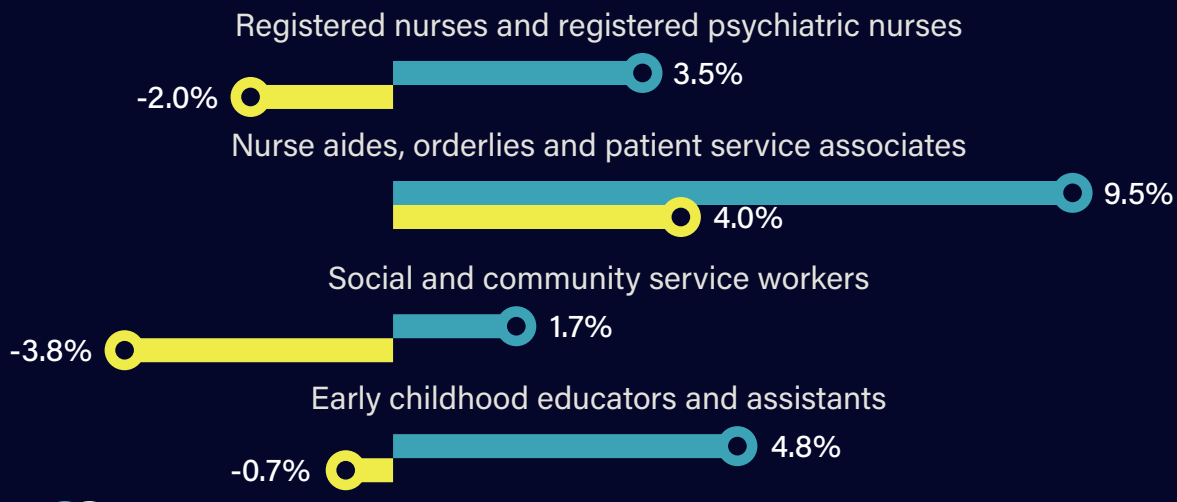
AVERAGE WAGE GROWTH AMONG WOMEN IS **LAGGING INFLATION**

Year over year change in weekly wage growth and Consumer Price Index, January 2016–February 2022



MANY WOMEN WORKING ON THE FRONT LINES HAVE **SEEN THEIR PAY CUT** IN REAL TERMS

Change in average wages since late 2019
Change minus inflation (5.5%)



POLICYALTERNATIVES.CA/BUMPY-RIDE

Heightened financial stress among these households was evident in survey data over the course of the pandemic—and among other marginalized communities as well. Indigenous (28%) and racialized (31%) survey respondents were twice as likely, on average, to report difficulty in meeting their financial obligations compared to white survey respondents (16%).

By spring 2021, the employment situation had started to improve among recent female immigrants (those who came to Canada less than 10 years ago) and racialized female workers, closing the employment gap with non-immigrant and non-racialized women.

Women with disabilities were in a particularly precarious position, challenged to pay for essential needs such as PPE, attendant care and medications, safe transportation, and accessible housing. As the largest group forced to subsist on welfare benefits that fall far below the poverty line, people with disabilities have been largely forgotten and ignored in the pandemic response.

Canada's two-track recovery

Because of the highly gendered character of the labour market, women experienced disproportionate economic losses compared to men. They are, and remain, concentrated in sectors and occupations that have been vulnerable to pandemic restrictions, their low wages and poor working conditions a reflection of deep-seated gender bias.

By the end of 2021, total employment (both men and women) in pandemic-vulnerable sectors, such as food and accommodation and personal services, had still not recovered to pre-pandemic levels, down a total of 11% (288,000 jobs) between December 2019 and December 2021. Women accounted for 60% of these job losses.

In contrast, employment in the rest of the economy surpassed December 2019 levels by 3.5% (572,000 jobs), with women representing just under half of these gains (48%). The largest employment gains were recorded in professional services. Here, male workers accounted for 59% of the gains in areas such as accounting, computer systems design and scientific research.

Gender disparities persist even within the sectors that have done comparatively well in the context of this massive economic shock.

> Profound changes in Canada's labour market are underway. Women risk falling further behind.

Women's earnings have fallen behind rising inflation

The deep divisions in Canada's labour market have taken on heightened urgency in recent months with the growing pressures on family budgets, the winding down of emergency supports and continuing economic uncertainty.

The rising cost of living for shelter, energy and food, in particular, is shining a spotlight on the lack of wage growth in many female-majority sectors of the economy. In February 2022, the annual change in inflation was 5.7%. But women's wages, on average, only grew by only 2.2%.

Indeed, the gap is especially pronounced in several key care occupations. Between the fourth quarter of 2019 and the fourth quarter of 2021, for example, wages rose by 3.5% among registered nurses, by 4.8% among child care workers, and by a meagre 1.7% among social and community service workers. After taking inflation into account, at 5.5% over the two years, these essential occupations all experienced real income losses.

By contrast, the largest pay increases between December 2019 and December 2021 were in high-paying industries, such as information technology, culture and recreation (led by IT professionals at 18%); in real estate and leasing, whose workers have benefitted from the surge in housing prices (12%); and in the management of companies and enterprises (12%). These are all sectors dominated by male workers.

It is clear that there are profound economic and social changes at hand that will most certainly transform Canada over the coming decades. "Where to next?" is the question that we are all grappling with as the fallout from the pandemic begins to take shape. These are the questions that we will be exploring in the CCPA's new *Beyond Recovery* project, highlighting the unique labour market experiences of female workers in hard-hit industrial sectors and the care economy, while examining the intersections of race, disability, low income and immigration status.

What is certain is that, without focusing and sustaining recovery efforts on the needs of those experiencing the greatest barriers, progress toward greater gender equality will be rolled back. And recovery will be prolonged for the most marginalized, who have borne the worst of the pandemic. M

CCPA DONOR PROFILE

Meet Geoff Le Boutillier and Jan Miller, CCPA donors

Meet Geoff Le Boutillier and Jan Miller, donors extraordinaire from New Haven, Nova Scotia, with a wide range of passions and interests. Geoff and Jan have been supporting the CCPA for a whopping 11 years and recently chose to help ensure that we can continue this work well into the future by including the CCPA in their will.

Tell us about someone you find particularly inspiring right now. We raise standard poodles. To keep things straight we theme-name our litters. The last litter, five males, got Ukrainian names, starting with "Volodymyr" (after Zelensky, one of our heroes) plus the four male members of his fictional cabinet in the prescient sitcom he wrote, produced and starred in, *Servant of the People*. (Highly recommended.)

How about someone who was a big influence on you early in life? John Kenneth Galbraith regularly hosted dinners at our university residence. I started looking at the economy in a different way.

In your opinion, what makes the CCPA special? The alternative budgets. And Scott Sinclair's work on NAFTA and the ISDS mechanism is critical to Canada protecting its environmental autonomy. Collectively, as a nation, we do have a conscience and the tools to let our views be known.

Could you tell us why you've decided to include the CCPA in your will, in addition to investing in it now? Too often we just don't have the simple, fact-based economic arguments to make our case.

Polluting industries like fossil fuels or net-cage aquaculture get away with ecocide. They keep compromising our primary institutions, like unions, government, universities and the media. The struggle to achieve this financial uncovering is fundamental to protecting our planet. Jan and I want to help ensure the work continues after we're gone.

Have you read anything interesting lately? For some bizarre reason I read the immense first volume of Robert Caro's biography of Lyndon B. Johnson! But most enjoyable was *Down on the Batture* by Oliver Houck, about New Orleans' lawless flood plain twixt the levee and the mighty Mississippi. I am currently reading an expose of the open-net salmon farm industry called *Salmon Wars* by Doug Frantz and Catherine Collins. The pollution these companies get away with is truly outrageous—like the equivalent of whole cities piping their sewage straight into the sea.

How has COVID-19 forced you to think outside the box? Jan used to spend much of her life at 35,000 feet trotting the globe as a film and TV consultant. She still consults but has become an earthbound Zoomer. Our little hamlet on Nova Scotia's coast has become a nexus for the global screen industry. And I used to burn fossil fuels like there was no tomorrow zipping all over the province on enviro-missions, but now I do it all from Zoom. Home-based business is a welcome change.

Name one policy the government should adopt today that would make people's lives better. It's not really a policy, it's a tenet. The Mi'kmaq word is *netukulimk:* achieving adequate standards of community nutrition and economic wellbeing without jeopardizing the integrity, diversity, or productivity of our environment.

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

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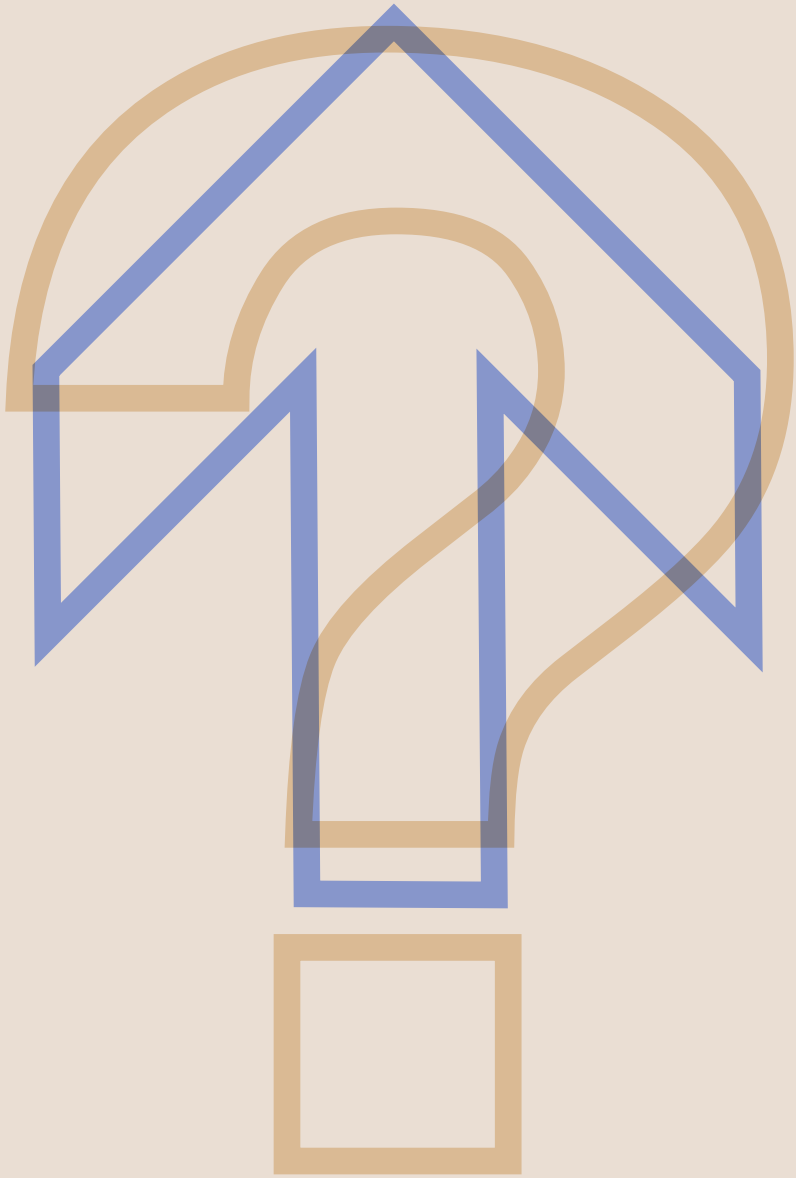


The future of

GROWTH

—Highlights from a

CCPA ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

SIMON ENOCH

"I really think this is where we need to go: **a system of public luxury, where private consumption pales in comparison to consumption of public goods and services.**"

ALEX HEMINGWAY

"As much as I believe in the contribution of policy ideas and cultural shifts, and how they can feed this process, **there's really no way forward that doesn't involve building organized working class power. I think the good news is there's huge latent potential to unite people and build power anchored around genuine common material interests,** in taking on billionaires and building a better life in so many different ways: debt relief, housing, transit, child care, the whole green energy transformation, and the jobs and income that come with building all of these things, and building on those sparks of growing labour organizing that we're seeing right now. And we can show and remind each other that collective action can work, and win better lives in small ways, and in big ways. And I think that process, and that creation of institutions, and that act of working together in common struggle opens up possibilities to go further and ask even more fundamental questions about why we ourselves, rather than unaccountable billionaires and bosses, shouldn't control our working lives and control how resources and investments are allocated in our society."

DAVID MACDONALD

"We should always be skeptical of a single numeric measure as properly representing wellbeing. We should understand that any numeric measure is a reflection of the subjective decisions that went into creating a numeric measure. Composite measures are not factual statements about the world, rather they are lists of subjective decisions about what counts and what doesn't count. **GDP is as subjective as any other measure of wellbeing, even though we don't think of it that way. Instead of trying to find the best single measure that best reflects our values, we should be using various ones that reflect different aspects.** And there are plenty of measures that we should be using, like unemployment and income inequality."

"The goal is not degrowth in and of itself; the goal is an economy that can exist sustainably within our environmental limits in a way that maximizes, or at least ensures, a minimum level of wellbeing for people, and maybe other living things, in that environment. We need a degrowth model in the energy sector, and in some of our consumption sectors. But there are other situations or other sectors, like the care economy and the service economy, where growth is productive, and doesn't come at a great cost to the environmen. However, if fighting climate change is just like a technocratic policy conversation, you'll never get the buy-in we need for the scale of change we need. **We need more positive visions, we need to make the conversation less technical, and also more hopeful. We have a lot more dystopian climate movies; not a lot of utopian ones.** We just keep seeing what happens when we fail."

HADRIAN MERTINS-KIRKWOOD

STUART TREW

"The pandemic didn't threaten the growth model in the same way that the last financial crisis did. Demand for stuff remained high throughout, propped up by government wage subsidies and a drop in consumer spending on many services. Still, for a moment, the Build Back Better narrative seemed to offer a pathway to a low-carbon, more sustainable economic model. The war in Ukraine and threats of a global recession have put transition on the backburner. **Degrowth can be a helpful rallying call even in these times, but there are risks too. It can be polarizing, for example, as we see in spats between clean transition and degrowth advocates.** I remain hopeful that the emphasis on addressing the climate crisis in high- and low-income countries alike will keep transition on the agenda. Our challenge—a big one, and one we're used to—is to ensure we're not reproducing exploitative economic relations and unsustainable growth-based models in this new economy."

KATHERINE SCOTT

"How do we shift our growth? Because we're going to have to. I'm thinking about the drivers of the economy—like the care economy—and yet we're so focused on the energy sector, which is only about 30% of Canada's GDP. To do this **we'll need to get beyond the false debate between green growth and degrowth. Treating them as polar opposites actually is a disservice.** We need to mobilize all ideas to help us reach carbon neutrality as quickly as possible. Doughnut economics offers one framework for moving forward."

CHRISTINE SAULNIER

"It's not so much about GDP, but what it leaves out—what it doesn't count and who's not valued and whose work is not valued. **It's the unpaid household work. It's the volunteerism that happens in communities. Clean environment has no price on it that we can use in terms of GDP.** We need to build up our social safety net, ensure that we're getting at the roots of the real reasons for anxiety and insecurity around what this transition looks like in our society. What saddles people from not being able to think about change in a positive way is liberalism's win every day, where we beat ourselves up because we didn't make the right choice of education program or we didn't do the things that they told us we needed to do in order to succeed."

"Innovation and technology is going to be fundamental going forward for whatever kind of economy we're going to build. **But it needs to be embedded in a vision of the public interest, and what society actually needs. And I think that's going to require a lot more public investment in innovation.** What's exciting about the degrowth conversation—even being skeptical about growth as a concept—is that it's getting at the ecological crisis, economic crisis and social crisis and thinking about how we develop a new system that responds to each of those things in tandem? And, you know, I do think what needs to happen is a reimagining of the economy within a vision of what the good life is."

NIALL HARNEY

CLAIRE O'MANIQUE, JAMES ROWE, AND KARENA SHAW

Barriers and opportunities

How Canadian activists see degrowth

DEGROWTH IS A social movement and field of research founded on the premise that perpetual economic growth is incompatible with the biophysical limits of our planet. To date, most writing about degrowth has focused on building the normative case for the *necessity* of degrowth, especially in the Global North. There is, however, a gap in the degrowth space when it comes to popularizing what remains an ecologically necessary but politically marginal pathway: moving our economies away from a reliance on endless growth. The degrowth movement is marginal across the G-7, the group of national economies primarily responsible for climate change and most needing to reduce their material throughput to address their environmental impact. In Canada, the recent approval of the Bay du Nord offshore oil mega-project just days after the publication of yet another damning report from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is evidence of how deeply entrenched the logics of fossil-fuelled economic growth are.

To understand why degrowth remains so marginal, we interviewed Canadian activists to gain insights on where they see both barriers and openings to degrowth in Canada. We published the results in a longer academic journal article[1] and have condensed them here.

Key barriers

There was general agreement among interview participants that degrowth has had minimal influence, not only on policy and institutions in Canada, but also on environmental organizing. Activists spoke of the difficulties they experience in trying to advance a degrowth perspective, with some deciding not to embrace degrowth because it wasn't considered a politically acceptable position. These respondents expressed concern that the discourse of degrowth would not resonate, and that this might impede meaningful action on the ground.

Their responses suggest that the terms of political debate and public opinion have been too constricted by powerful interests to allow for degrowth's breakthrough into the mainstream. In the Canadian context the embrace of neoliberalism combined with the political dominance of fossil fuel companies, which are the most active lobbyists in the country,[2] presents specific challenges for degrowth. An important take-away from our interviews is the need for greater attention within the degrowth movement to how particular class interests are a massive barrier to realizing degrowth goals. While the degrowth movement has questioned capitalism's growth imperative in the abstract, it has been less successful at naming the specific class interests in various regions that are arrayed against degrowth ideas spilling over into the mainstream.

Key opportunities

Our interviewees identified key priorities and strategies for expanding the political viability of degrowth. These included raising class consciousness and economic literacy; rejecting a politics of purity; and ensuring that degrowth is a decolonial project. Combining these suggestions together, we heard our interviewees advocating for a *class-conscious, anti-purity and decolonial environmentalism*.

The degrowth movement is engaged in a battle of ideas that is happening in a highly uneven political landscape, where the consequences of 40 years of neoliberalization have given rise to massive concentrations of power and wealth that limit the prospects of success for left-wing social movements. These conditions are why our interviewees argue that degrowth should become more explicit about the specific class interests blocking economic transformation, advancing what we are calling a "class-conscious environmentalism."

This strategy has two meanings. One emphasizes the need to heighten awareness of class-based opposition to degrowth and to specifically target that opposition. The second emphasizes the need to craft policies that appeal to the multiracial working class: only with broad working-class support can the concentrated power of economic elites opposed to degrowth be effectively opposed.

To support the emergence of a more class-conscious environmentalism in general, and a degrowth movement in particular, our interviewees recommended an "anti-purity" approach to politics. An anti-purity environmentalism recognizes our complex entanglements with the very systems we are seeking to transform (such as growth-based capitalism) and sees transformative change as a process that moves through these systems rather than trying to escape them with often individualized pursuits of lifestyle purism. An anti-purity environmentalism also recognizes the power of systems to shape

people's consciousness and does not rush to condemn others for holding different views.

Practically, this approach means remaining open to possible allies who do not currently hold one's exact political commitments, such as—and including—the pursuit of degrowth. It also involves acknowledging the complex and contradictory entanglements that we negotiate as subjects of neoliberal capitalism. Rather than rejecting certain actions or actors outright as not being radical enough, the goal should be to find strategies in the present that materially improve people's lives while setting conditions for deeper transformations in the future.

The final major recommendation made by our interviewees emphasized the importance of making degrowth explicitly anti-colonial. Indigenous-led movements bring to the fore the ways that economic growth and capitalist expansion in Canada continue to require the dispossession of land and lifeways of Indigenous communities. With 15.5% of Canada's GDP coming from natural resources in 2020 (representing 47% of the total value of Canada's merchandise exports[3]), the growth imperatives of capitalism in Canada continue to involve the exploitation of Indigenous lands, despite Indigenous and settler resistance.

Degrowth has helped to challenge narratives that associate growth with progress and development. However, there remains a need to foreground the violence that the pursuit of economic growth has had—and continues to have—on Indigenous communities. This attentiveness will transform the objectives and proposals of degrowth to include supporting Indigenous sovereignty, rights and title to land, as fundamental components of degrowth in Canada and beyond. It is not enough to assume that pursuing degrowth alone will lead to Indigenous reconciliation or self-determination, or that it will improve the material conditions of Indigenous communities. Rather, to meet the justice goals underpinning degrowth, any degrowth project in the Canadian context must be informed by and working explicitly towards decolonization.

Green New Deal

The movement for a Green New Deal (GND) in Canada and the United States, also sometimes called a Just Transition, is aligned with the recommendations made by our interviewees. The GND is an umbrella term for a public investment strategy that seeks to mitigate climate change by transitioning economies off fossil fuels and onto renewable energy. Importantly, the GND is not solely an environmental proposal but is also meant to ensure a socially just transition that guarantees good jobs for displaced workers while addressing longstanding colonial and racial injustices. The GND does *not* explicitly seek to upend capitalism or target the dangers of ongoing economic growth, however, and thus remains in some tension with degrowth. Instead, the GND potentially offers a transitional approach that could help set the socio-political conditions for a deeper transformation.

The GND helps to overcome the "jobs versus environment" frame that has been so effectively mobilized by the fossil fuel industry and other elite interests to stall environmental progress. In this way, the GND is emblematic of the class-conscious, anti-purity environmentalism advocated for by our interviewees. The relationship between the GND and decolonization is less clear: there are possible tensions between an environmentalism attuned to working class interests and one that centres decolonization and asks settlers to rescind their privileges, including jurisdiction over stolen land.

In 2018 Indigenous climate activist Clayton Thomas-Muller (Cree) penned an editorial on what a Canadian Green New Deal could look like.[4] For Thomas-Muller, a GND could address many of the most pressing challenges facing the country: it could accelerate decarbonization; it could mitigate resistance to energy transition by guaranteeing good renewable energy jobs to workers in the fossil fuel industry (primarily concentrated in the Western provinces of Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan); and it could accelerate processes of decolonization by ensuring that Indigenous nations are partners in new renewable energy infrastructure.[5]

Ongoing processes of colonization and dispossession have left many Indigenous nations materially impoverished, and while some Indigenous leaders have seen partnerships with oil and gas companies as necessary, Thomas-Muller observes that many First Nations' elected leaders "would not have signed pipeline or oil sands deals if there were federal incentives to support economic pathways into the renewable energy economy." For Thomas-Muller, a GND done right could significantly advance decolonization goals by stopping divisive and destructive fossil fuel infrastructure projects on Indigenous lands, while simultaneously increasing Indigenous wealth and power by making First Nations active partners in renewable energy development.

The future is uncertain and unwritten. Based on the recommendations provided by our interviewees we see the movement for a GND as potentially fertile ground for seeding the deeper challenges to endless capitalist growth—challenges that remain politically marginal even as their ecological necessity becomes clearer by the day. M

1. researchgate.net/publication/355829416_Degrowth_political_acceptability_and_the_Green_New_Deal **2.** policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC%20Office%2C%20Saskatchewan%20Office/2019/11/ccpa-bc_cmp_BigOil_web.pdf **3.** NRCAN. "10 key facts on Canada's Natural resources." (2021). <nrcan.gc.ca/sites/nrcan/files/emmc/pdf/10_key_facts_nrcan_2021_e.pdf > accessed 14 March 2022. **4.** Thomas-Muller, C. (2018, November 29). "Canada needs its own Green New Deal. Here's what it could look like" *Canada's National Observer*. <nationalobserver.com/2018/11/29/opinion/canada-needs-its-own-green-new-deal-heres-what-it-could-look> **5.** Ibid.

Inside Trade

STUART TREW

Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy

More corporate trade deals

AT THE END of May, the Biden administration launched its long-awaited Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF). Well, sort of. It's more a commitment to *begin* talking with 12 Indo- and Asia-Pacific nations about *possibly* negotiating binding rules on regional trade, supply chain stability, clean energy and decarbonization, and tax and anti-corruption policy—the four "pillars" of the plan. In that sense, we know as much about the framework now as we did when it was previewed by the White House earlier this year.

At heart, the IPEF is the Biden administration's updated "pivot to Asia" following Trump's abrupt withdrawal, in 2017, from the now 11-country Trans-Pacific Partnership. Unlike that trade pact, which Canada renamed the *CP*TPP ("Comprehensive and Progressive") and ratified in October 2018, the IPEF won't involve tariff reduction offers from the U.S. But it does seek to produce binding commitments covering cross-border data flows and other contested "digital trade" matters, equally contested agricultural and food policies related to biotechnology, common (i.e., non-Chinese) standards for emerging technologies like 5/6G and artificial intelligence, and labour and environmental standards—all matters covered in one way or another by the CPTPP.

So, is it or isn't it just another regional pact in the region, only this time *with* the United States and a few extra non-CPTPP countries like India, Fiji and Thailand? U.S. business lobbies hate the framework for not being a status-quo trade deal, while Canada's corporate class is clamouring to get in. International civil society groups from several CPTPP countries put out a guarded statement calling for transparency.

There will be more to say about all of this as the IPEF negotiations move forward over the next 18–24 months. For now, I'll just point out two ways I think the Biden administration's Indo-Pacific strategy contrasts, possibly favourably, with that of the Trudeau government.

First, the U.S. wastes no time worrying about the treatment of U.S. investors and investment in the Indo-Pacific region whereas Canada is currently negotiating NAFTA-like investment protections in status-quo trade deals with Indonesia, India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Second, minimum core labour standards appear to be a first principle of the IPEF whereas Canada has already signalled to the Indonesian government that workers' rights are negotiable in its Indo-Pacific trade deals. This might change as the unique Canadian and U.S. talks progress, but for now the contrast on labour is disappointing.

I problematized these differences between the U.S. and Canadian Indo-Pacific strategies in my May 4, 2022, presentation to the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade, which I summarize in what follows. My basic point is that whatever business opportunities exist for Canada in the Indo-Pacific, we don't need investor–state dispute settlement (ISDS) to achieve them. And under no circumstances should Canada cave in on labour standards just to get a deal.

Canada's ISDS hang-up

In mid-2018, the Trudeau government celebrated the removal of NAFTA's corporate court system—the ISDS process—from the renegotiated CUSMA. Doing so "strengthened our government's right to regulate in the public interest, to protect public health and the environment," said then–foreign affairs minister Chrystia Freeland. What's more, we learned this year that Canada and the U.K. will not include ISDS in the deal they're negotiating to replace their 2021 Trade Continuity Agreement.

These were good moves in line with substantial international backlash to ISDS as an unnecessary, unpredictable and costly handout to big business with dubious economic benefits to countries. The climate-related case against ISDS is especially strong since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned earlier this year that trade and investment treaties—and investor–state dispute settlement specifically—could delay or even stop countries from trying to lower emissions.

New research published in the journal *Science* this May finds that as much as US$340 billion in compensation could be claimed by fossil fuel companies in ISDS proceedings as countries begin to phase out oil, gas and coal developments. Which countries can afford to pay this simply to live up to their climate obligations? Which countries should have to pay when fossil fuel companies have known for decades there is no market for their products in a livable future? The study's authors proposed that all countries "should terminate their treaties—even unilaterally—to avoid ISDS cases," noting that "South Africa and others have done so without substantial impact on foreign investment flows."

Canada, on the other hand, is increasing its ISDS exposure and that of its new trading partners in the Indo-Pacific. The risk to this strategy goes two ways.

For example, about 95% of Canadian investment in Indonesia is in the extractives sector where ISDS cases are common. Likewise, there is significant Indonesian investment in Canadian liquefied natural gas, pulp and paper, and forestry—all sectors where future conservation efforts or just transition policies will be vulnerable to huge ISDS lawsuits under the planned Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) now being negotiated with Indonesia.

ISDS may also be politically destabilizing in Indonesia and other ASEAN countries where human rights are frequently an afterthought and there is less public trust in government. The recent loss by Pakistan in an ISDS claim brought by Tethyan Copper, a joint venture part-owned by Canada's Barrick Gold, provides an example. Tethyan sued Pakistan when it was denied a permit to build a mine close to the border with Afghanistan. It did so after the Pakistani Supreme Court ruled the initial exploration agreement Tethyan had signed with the Balochistan government in Pakistan was invalid.

Though the company claims to have invested about US$220 million in exploration and administrative costs, and despite evidence presented by Pakistan of corruption on the part of the company, the ISDS tribunal ordered Pakistan to pay the mining company nearly US$6 billion in compensation. This staggering amount was justified by using the imagined scenario where the mine *had* received a permit to extract and operated normally for its scheduled lifespan.

Pakistan could not have hoped to pay this award, which was equivalent in value to a structural adjustment loan the IMF had just approved for the financially struggling nation. No Pakistani court would ever have awarded the Barrick-owned company that much money, nor would any Canadian court had the mine been cancelled here instead. The award is so large and punitive it will reasonably discourage other governments from saying no to environmentally or socially unsustainable mining and fossil fuel projects. In this case, Pakistan agreed to reverse its earlier decision and approve the mine—a big win for corporate power at the expense of the public trust.

Negotiable labour standards

Where Canada insists on the highest investment protections in the CEPA with Indonesia, and in free trade talks with India and ASEAN nations, the Trudeau government appears ready to water down its stated commitment to high labour standards and other "inclusive trade" elements in new trade deals. According to a civil society briefing from Global Affairs Canada this April, the Indonesian government told Canadian negotiators a labour chapter is a non-starter. Indonesia has not included labour provisions in any of its trade treaties, including a 2020 deal with Australia—a country with which Indonesia does four times as much trade as with Canada.

The obvious question: why would Canada waste any more time negotiating a deal with Indonesia if the labour talks are likely to fail—or fail to produce satisfactory results? The Trudeau government seems to be sleep-walking, or maybe sleep-negotiating, into an outcome that will be negative for workers, women, Indigenous and rural communities, and the environment.

A 2019 sustainability impact assessment of the European Union's planned CEPA with Indonesia states (page 11): "Trade liberalisation could have some potentially negative impacts on working conditions in Indonesia as the prospective FTA is expected to result in increased demand for employment in sectors historically less likely to meet decent working conditions including textile, wearing apparel and leather industry. Concerns also arise that vulnerable groups, including women and children, would bear the brunt of poor working conditions."

That European Commission report also notes that "considering Indonesia's rather weak implementation of laws on indigenous peoples' land rights, increasing trade in sectors where concerns on land rights are relevant, such as forestry and wood products, could run the risk of increased human rights violations." Greenpeace Canada was clear on this point in its presentation to the same trade committee hearings on the Indo-Pacific. The CEPA would be a boon for chemical fertilizer monopolies in Canada and unsustainable palm conglomerates in Indonesia, but with significant negative effects on biodiversity in both countries, said the organization.

Canada's status-quo Indo-Pacific strategy

Without a strong floor for labour and environmental rights, it is unlikely Indonesian workers and communities will see any benefits flowing from a trade deal with Canada. Very likely they will be worse off.

By staying at the negotiating table without a commitment from Indonesia to a high labour standards outcome, Canada is saying it's fine with a status-quo corporate trade deal that guarantees strong rights for corporations and minimal protections or benefits for workers, human rights, gender equality and sustainable development.

There was a period around 2016–17 when Canada appeared to be pioneering a somewhat more progressive and sustainable trade policy. The government has done some interesting things since then with gender chapters in new trade deals and is starting to take more seriously Canada's obligation to include Indigenous Peoples and interests in treaty negotiations and outcomes. Canada appeared to turn the page on ISDS when it agreed to remove it from NAFTA and avoid it in the U.K. bilateral.

It would be a shame to toss this progress aside, to continue signing lopsided trade and investment treaties, just as our biggest trading partner, the United States, starts rolling out more worker-focused partnerships in the Indo-Pacific.

Have something to say about this column or the CCPA's trade work? Write Stuart at stuart@policyalternatives.ca.

TRISH HENNESSY

The benefits of an inclusive economy model

The following four articles examine economic models that are more inclusive and sustainable than our current focus on GDP, with a particular focus on how inclusive economic approaches can inform future infrastructure planning in Canada. They are excerpted from two CCPA Think Upstream reports: Inclusive Infrastructure: Connecting the dots to support well-being of all people and the planet *and* Inclusion by Design: Understanding Inclusive Infrastructure investment in Canada. *Both reports are available at www.thinkupstream.ca.*

INCLUSIVE ECONOMY FRAMEWORKS, also known as community wealth building, are growing in popularity.

Two key models stand out: the Preston Model and the Cleveland Model. Both models were informed by The Democracy Collaborative, based in Cleveland. In their book, *The Making of a Democratic Economy* (Berrett-Koehler, 2019), Marjorie Kelly and Ted Howard discuss both models as a new paradigm for economic transformation.

According to Kelly and Howard, the principles of a democratic economy include:

- The principle of community, where common good is prioritized
- The principle of inclusion, which is premised on creating opportunity for those long excluded
- The principle of place, which focuses on ensuring that building community wealth stays local
- The principle of good work, which puts labour before capital
- The principle of democratized ownership, which emphasizes creating enterprise designs that are community-owned
- The principle of sustainability, to protect the ecosystem as the foundation of life
- The principle of ethical finance, which means investing and lending for people and place

The Cleveland Model was built on the idea that community wealth should stay local.

Cleveland leveraged $13 billion in anchor spending among three institutions: University Hospitals, Cleveland Clinic and Western Reserve University. Spending leakage analysis indicated that most of that anchor spending wasn't staying in the immediate community.

The Democracy Collaborative, the Cleveland Foundation, the Ohio Employee Ownership Center, the City of Cleveland, and the city's major hospitals and universities are partnering to implement a new model of large-scale worker-owned businesses that benefit the community through its Evergreen Cooperative Initiative.

Kelly and Howard document how anchor support for Evergreen Cooperatives helps to create a worker-owned business model to provide services such as painting and LED lighting installations for anchors. It also created the Evergreen Cooperative Laundry to do all the laundry for Cleveland Clinic.

"Overnight, 100 new employees were on a fast track to ownership. Employment at Evergreen Cooperative Laundry tripled," Kelly and Howard write.

Preston, a city in northern England, was inspired by the Cleveland Model. It created the Preston Cooperative Development Network, declared itself a living wage employer, and diverted more of its public spending to local enterprises.

In 2012–13, 5% of Preston Council's spending was spent locally. By 2016–17, 18% was spent locally.

"Across the county of Lancashire, where Preston is located, anchor spending went from 39 to 79 percent, an increase of £200 million. This shift supported 4,500 jobs," Kelly and Howard write.

Unemployment fell, incomes rose, and in 2018 Preston was named the most improved city in the U.K. by PricewaterhouseCoopers and Demos.

In a joint project between the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Atkinson Foundation, and Inclusive Economy London and Region—which was also inspired by Cleveland and Preston—we created four pillars of inclusive economy initiatives:

1. Public anchor collaborative
2. Community ownership collaborative
3. Community benefit agreements
4. A living wage

All four pillars can be seen as mutually reinforcing. If governments leverage their power as public anchor institutions within communities to create social procurement policies aimed at directing public goods and services spending toward local, community-owned enterprises, the community captures more of the benefits of those public investments.

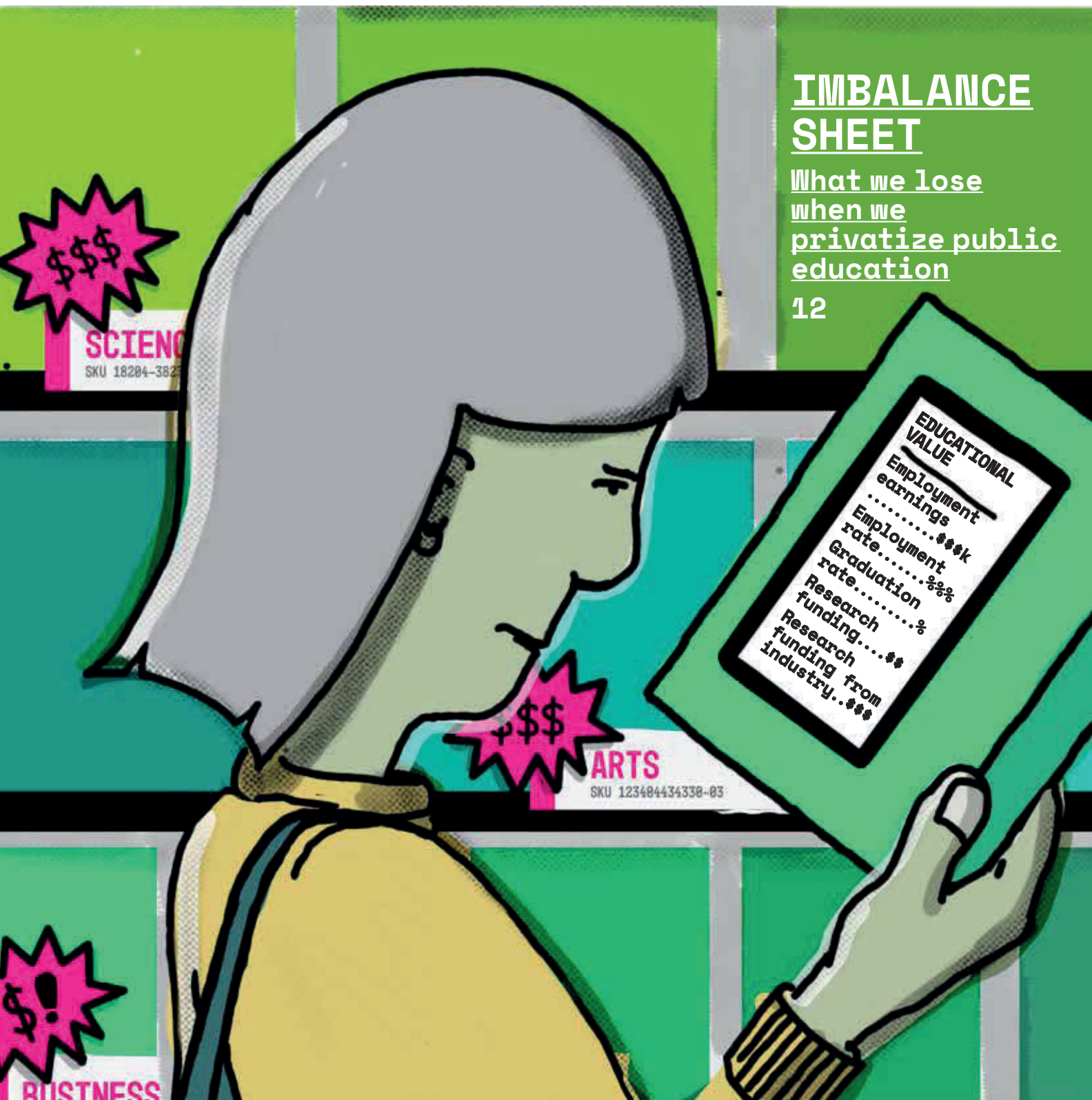
Similarly, governments that attach community benefit agreement criteria to infrastructure procurement foster a culture that rewards companies that hire and train more workers from equity-seeking backgrounds.

These four inclusive economy pillars are an example of how a conceptual framework can centre inclusion without sacrificing growth, sustainability or resilience. M

Our Schools/Our Selves

The Voice Of Progressive Education In Canada
Canadian Centre For Policy Alternatives

Summer/Fall 2022



IMBALANCE SHEET

What we lose when we privatize public education

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Living lessons

Erika Shaker

Some of you may know that my research in education and corporatization began in Washington DC, working for Ralph Nader. After I graduated from McGill in the early 90s, I spent a year at the Center for the Study of Responsive Law, digging into the corporate onslaught on public education, which was at that point significantly more evolved? (advanced? ominous?) than it was in Canada. (I returned to Canada around the time Youth News Network started eyeing the Canadian market, presumably to emulate the profitability of its predecessor: Channel One. The rest is, as they say, history…including the acceleration in the commercial onslaught on Canadian schools.)

At that point, the Center was located in a stately Carnegie Building on the corner of P and 15th in the NW district (fun fact: two key scenes from *The Pelican Brief* were filmed there). The offices were on the ground floor and half of the second floor, but we also had access to a very grand reception space for larger events. And it was here, with four chairs set up in the middle of this very grand room, that for the first time I met Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke, who were there to meet with Ralph about recent NAFTA-related events and actions in Canada.

I had heard of both Maude and Tony, but had never had the pleasure of meeting them. And they were truly lovely. But it wasn't until I returned to Canada a few months later, and heard that Maude and Heather-jane Robertson, who sadly passed away last summer, were co-authoring a book about the commercialization of education that I reached out to send them some of the research I had uncovered while working in the States. It appeared in their book *Class Warfare*. My very first citation.

That afternoon in Washington was my first Maude encounter, but not my last. I traveled to Ottawa for a Council of Canadians AGM the year I returned to Canada. The following year, Maude attended one of the very first talks I gave at a PD event on corporatization of education. She never missed an opportunity to shine a spotlight on the good work of others. She's that sort of activist leader — one who never stops learning, who practices kindness and compassion, and who takes her role as a mentor for the next generation of activists seriously.

We need more of this. For the movement to grow and thrive and diversify across generations we require allies, most definitely. But we also need to lift each other up, even without a guarantee of reciprocity because it's the right thing to do. Because if we spend our time looking for the payback, progress will only ever be fleeting.

It's fitting, I think, to conclude this issue of *Our Schools/Our Selves* with a review of Maude's latest book, *Still Hopeful* — for a number of reasons. There's the matter of content, of course — this issue is, at least in part, about how the privatization of our public schools has become, as we warned, normalized.

But the other side of the discussion is about the power and potential of public investment in our schools and communities. You cannot build social change on a foundation of what effectively amounts to party favours. If we do not lift

each other up without payment or incentive, then it's not progress at all.

The characteristics I associate with Maude—experience, optimism, kindness and self-awareness—are also key to so much of the work we do as progressives: the recognition that we can and must always do better; the understanding that there are things we don't know and experiences we can't claim as our own, but we need to listen to them; that ultimately, the work we do is about other people's children, and that we are better as a result of learning from other people's experiences, not just our own, and not just what seems familiar to us.

These things also fly in the face of the market-based model. People, public education, the progressive movement — these things are not mere cash transactions, and they are worth far more than the sum of their parts.

Of course, there is a "return on investment" in a well-rounded, holistic, flexible approach to public education. But this cannot be its only value — or its main one, or even the one we brandish first in an argument.

As several of the authors in this issue illustrate, the market-based, neoliberal approach to public education, to civic engagement, to progress is pervasive. It circumscribes our understanding of what it means to succeed as a student and an educator and even the system itself. But it's also fundamentally flawed because it's about lowering expectations and reducing the limitless palette of our collective potential to an individualized and standardized multiple choice test taken in isolation.

And as other contributors show us, there is so much to be gained from a system that learns from its history and from others, that centres compassion and empathy, and that strives to do better for itself and each other.

As we move into summer, I hope you are able to take some time to rest, recharge and reconnect. And I hope we can return ready to take on those who champion the marketplace above all else — in Alberta, Ontario and elsewhere — because we know we can and must do better. For our kids, but for each other's kids too.

My best to you and yours.

Populism, polarization and privatization in Alberta education

Heather Ganshorn

Canadians have looked on with a mixture of bemusement, horror, and perhaps a touch of superiority as Republican governments and conservative parents in the United States have attacked public education on several fronts, from book bans, to furious attacks on the supposed teaching of critical race theory (CRT), to Florida's recent so-called "Don't Say Gay" legislation, which forbids instruction on gender identity in kindergarten through grade 3. Such attacks often provide cover for an already well-established privatization agenda. Whereas 20 years ago, "school choice" in the form of education vouchers and charter schools was presented as a solution to the supposed problem of "failing" public schools, now privatization is being presented as a way for parents to preserve their cultural authority over what their children learn about "divisive" topics, in particular racism and gender diversity. Betsy DeVos, who, in her tenure as Donald Trump's Education Secretary, made no secret of her hostility to public education, recently argued that "school choice" is the solution to "race indoctrination" in the public system.[1]

Here in Alberta, it's hard for public education advocates to view these events with typical Canadian detachment. We are fighting our own version of these battles, as the approach of the United Conservative Party (UCP) government under Premier Jason Kenney to public education echoes many of the talking points in the Republican playbook, with similar results — increased polarization and privatization of education.

In my last article for *Our Schools, Our Selves,* I discussed the provincial government's ideological curriculum rewrite and their mischaracterization of the nearly-finished 2018 draft curriculum, which was initiated under a previous Conservative-led government and completed under the previous NDP-led government, as an exercise in left-wing indoctrination. This of course was cover for the intention to engage in a curriculum rewrite that would focus on right-wing staples such as "back-to-basics" literacy and math, along with a social studies curriculum

straight out of the Victorian era. Demonizing the 2018 draft, which was ditched in spite of the years of preparation that went into it, allowed the UCP-led government to present their own rewrite as a reasonable course correction.

Jason Kenney tweeted in 2018 that "If the NDP tried to smuggle more of their politics into the classroom through their [draft] curriculum, we will put that curriculum through the shredder." Since then he has only ramped up the language against supposed "woke" values in schools in response to widespread opposition to the curriculum draft from school boards, teachers and parents. In the face of an April 2022 internal leadership review that could displace him from the helm of the party (as of this writing), Kenney is doubling down. Speaking to party insiders at a general meeting, he stated: "Instead of divisive woke-left ideology like critical race theory, cancel culture, and age inappropriate sex education, we are putting kids and the authority of parents back in charge of our education system."[2] While none of these things was part of any previous curriculum, these are frequent targets of attack by U.S. Republicans, and "parent choice" is often positioned as the solution.

Undermining teachers and public boards is another popular Republican tactic to manufacture consent for ideological curricula and privatization, and we've seen the current government deploy these tactics in Alberta. In 2022, Alberta Education removed disciplinary oversight of teachers from the Alberta Teachers' Association, placing this responsibility with a cabinet-appointed commissioner instead, a decision made without any consultation with the ATA.[3] The Premier often refers to the ATA as "the Alberta Teachers' Union," even though it is a professional association with a mandate that goes beyond collective bargaining; the implication is that the ATA is primarily interested in protecting teacher privileges.

While Minister LaGrange indicated the government was not looking at implementing such a policy, clearly this idea has the support of government backbenchers such as Dan Williams, who has referred to public education as "absolutely backwards," and mused that if the province could privatize liquor stores, then the same could be done for education.

In 2019, Education Minister Adriana LaGrange ordered all Alberta school divisions to remove the word "public" from their names,[4] an early indication of the UCP blurring the lines between public and private education. That same year, the Minister ordered an independent financial review of the Calgary Board of Education, the province's largest public board. In an interview, the Minister implied significant financial mismanagement on the part of CBE, and stated, "My big hammer is to fire the board."[5] The review, while making recommendations for improvement, did not find any indication of financial mismanagement.[6] The big hammer had to go back in the toolbox.

While conservative politicians and pundits are often in conflict with unions and public boards, it's hard not to see these attacks on school boards and the ATA as motivated in part by a desire to delegitimize teacher and board opposition to the draft curriculum, and to tarnish the reputation of public education in support of a privatization agenda.

Privatization of education under the mantra of "school choice" has been a long-standing practice in Alberta, which arguably already offers more privatized options than any other province. Education researcher Curtis Riep distinguishes between "public education" and "provincially funded education" in Alberta.[7] Public education encompasses the regular public, separate (Catholic) and francophone school divisions, which are accessible to all, governed by elected trustees, and entirely publicly funded. The category of "provincially funded education" includes three major types: private schools, home education and charter schools.

Accredited funded private schools in Alberta receive the highest level of public funding in the country, with up to 70% of the funding that would go to those students in the public system "following" them to private providers. Other provinces fund private schools at a lower percentage, with some, notably Ontario, providing no funding to private schools. It should be noted that private schools that choose not to be accredited (willing to use certificated teachers and follow the Alberta curriculum) do not receive provincial funding.

Home education is another area where privatization has taken hold in Alberta; we have the largest number of homeschooled students in the country. Statistics Canada data indicate that in 2019/20, 14,730 Alberta children were homeschooled, compared to only 6,565 in Ontario, the province with the next highest number.[8] The provincial government has made changes to the rules around home education, removing the requirement that such programs be supervised by a school authority.

In his report on home education in Alberta, Dr. Riep raises concerns about the lack of oversight and accountability that this loosening of regulations may bring, as it removes the

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opportunity for home learners to be assessed or supported by teachers. This is concerning because the number of homeschooling families in Alberta is on the rise, and the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this trend. Dr. Riep notes that homeschooling is "intrinsically linked to the 'school choice' movement since they both emphasize, above all else, parental choice and control to decide the education of their children."[9]

Supporting parental choice is also a stated goal of American-style charter schools, which of all the provinces only Alberta has adopted. Charter schools are 100% publicly funded, but essentially function as private schools that receive public funding. They are governed by their own, non-publicly elected boards, and are accountable directly to the Education Minister. They are not required to hire unionized teachers.

The objectives of charter schools are variously described as some combination of: increasing parent choice by offering specialized programming that the regular public system does not offer; acting as laboratories for innovative education practices that can be translated to the larger public system; and forcing public boards to "innovate" in order to compete for students by offering alternative programs of their own.

Charter schools are not allowed to refuse admission to any student "if sufficient space and resources are available," but in practice some schools require applicants to complete an academic assessment, often at their own expense. In Alberta, there are charter schools catering to many niches, including but not limited to gifted education, Suzuki music education, "traditional learning," and youth whose education has been interrupted. Even if a charter school doesn't have an established admission assessment, charter schools' marketing language makes it clear what kind of students would be a "good fit" with the school's philosophy.

Charter schools were established in Alberta in 1994, with an initial cap that constrained their development until the UCP removed it shortly after being elected in 2019. The current government further signal ed its support for charter school growth by introducing the Choice in Education Act, which removed the requirement for interested parties to first approach public boards about developing alternative programs before proceeding with a charter school application.

In the most recent provincial budget, the government provided $72 million in dedicated funding to support charter school expansion, and has indicated that it is interested in the development of "collegiate" or vocational charter schools, an approach that calls to mind the "streaming" practices of earlier decades. This practice is also being revived in the U.S., often under the label of "career and technical education."

As charter schools have positioned themselves as attractive alternatives, public boards have felt compelled to compete with an array of alternative programs, ranging from various language options, gender-specific schools, specialized approaches such as Montessori, and faith-based programming. That last item is of particular interest because charter schools may not be religious in nature. Several faith-based alternative programs operating under public boards in fact began their lives as private schools, and continue to charge fees that can amount to several thousand dollars per year for each student. Though ("technically") boards may not charge tuition for such alternative programs, a number of these schools get around this prohibition by requiring families to pay "society fees" to a nonprofit society affiliated with the school. This is a little-discussed practice, but multiple faith-based alternative programs appear to engage in it, raising the question of how "public" these schools really are.

Despite the array of publicly funded private options described above, the government has demonstrated a clear intention to support more private options in the name of "parent choice." This stance is clearly popular among the UCP base; if anything it does not go far enough for some. At the party's 2019 Annual General Meeting, members voted in favour of a policy resolution that called for a voucher system for education, which would provide equal per-student funding for any educational option chosen by parents.[10] While Minister LaGrange indicated the government was not looking at implementing such a policy, clearly this idea has the support of government backbenchers such as Dan Williams, who has referred to public education as "absolutely backwards," and mused that if the province could privatize liquor stores, then the same could be done for education. He went on to accuse the public education system of "nationalizing the family," a common refrain of many on the far right who appear to

see public education and the things it teaches as a threat to the supremacy of a certain type of family authority in a child's life.

Another feature of the American privatization movement that appears to be making its way north is the establishment of "parent choice" astroturf (phony grassroots) groups. In May, Alberta parents started receiving marketing materials from the curiously named "Alberta Parents' Union," a group that came seemingly out of nowhere, led by Executive Director Jeff Park. Park is a former executive assistant to Jeff Callaway, accused of running a phony campaign to ensure Jason Kenney's leadership victory over Brian Jean. Park was fined $10,500 by Alberta's Election Commissioner for irregular contributions to Callaway's campaign.

Park is taking his newly formed organization on the road to over 20 Alberta communities. While the marketing for these events states that the APU welcomes everyone with an interest in education, the group is already beginning to promote vouchers, using very similar language to the UCP AGM policy resolution.

It is hard not to see a resemblance between this group and U.S. groups like the National Parents' Union, an American "parent organization" that advocates for privatization. The group's status as a grassroots parent organization has been credibly called into question, and its funding appears to come not from ordinary parents, but from funders like the billionaire pro-privatization Walton family. In the case of the Alberta group, it's not clear how they are funded.

It is dismaying as a public education advocate to see the elevation of the rights of parents, no matter how fringe those rights may be considered, over those of children to receive an equitable public education. Such a stance also ignores the long-held social consensus that public education is a societal good from which we all benefit, whether or not we have children in the system.

The fragmentation of school choice in the U.S. has arguably contributed to a breakdown in social cohesion and a political polarization that appears to be self-reinforcing; the more fragmented education becomes, the more extreme are the demands for even more "parent choice" to protect children from ideas that certain parents don't like. If the public system isn't to people's liking, the private sector is there to provide, and governments can be pressured to send public dollars their way, despite a complete lack of evidence that private providers deliver better results.

We must not view America's failed privatization experiment as an aberration that couldn't happen here, but as a cautionary tale. The vast majority of parents in Alberta choose public education; we must be prepared to demand that policy makers support, fund and improve the public system that serves all children, instead of undermining, eroding and privatizing it to serve the interests of a vocal minority.

Heather Ganshorn is the Research Director for Support Our Students Alberta. She is an academic librarian and the mother of two children in the public education system. SOS Alberta (www.supportourstudents.ca/our-philosophy.html) is a non-partisan, non-profit public education advocacy group fighting for the rights of all children to an equitable and accessible public education system.

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Citizenship education

It's about more than the curriculum

Codie Fortin Lalonde

It's been a few months since I defended my dissertation on provincial public education policies in Canada (particularly in relation to students and citizenship) and I've had some time to both (not) think about, and reflect on my research with a little bit of distance.

While we seem to increasingly find ourselves in polarized debates and camps on nearly every topic of conversation, something I'd wager most people agree on is that education is influenced by ideals and values. In other words, education, in the form of "schooling," ultimately involves the socialization of young people — by way of particular knowledges, skills, characteristics and values — into society. Given this, schooling in general as well as particular courses such as civics and social studies might broadly be thought of as a form of citizenship education.

What that citizenship looks like in practice has been a longstanding topic of debate, but it has resurged into academic and public discourses as we begin to acknowledge and consider the many pressing social issues (e.g., climate crises, growing inequity, pandemics, science denial) we must address. Most of these considerations focus on curriculum, and all emphasize the need for critical thinking and literacies.

However, in a society that prioritizes profit, to consider citizenship education solely from a curricular perspective is insufficient if we are to meaningfully engage with and address our current and future social issues.

Curricula and policy

It's simplistic to believe that teaching students 'xyz' will de facto beget some grander outcome such as globally-minded or "collectively responsible citizenship"; that teaching a list of predetermined values will solve half a century's worth of and daily exposure to the hyper-individualism reinforced through our organizing systems and institutions, popular media, and advertising. This lens makes it even easier to blame individuals and groups for their perceived shortcomings, especially when they put themselves or others in danger.

It's perhaps less easy to consider how these shortcomings are a symptom of our broader social systems, not just education systems and their curricula. To be clear, I'm not condoning protests over COVID-19 mandates nor the vitriolic and violent behaviour of those opposed to mandates toward others. I am, however, suggesting we consider some of the underlying and systemic issues that may have led us to this point.

Changing school curriculum could mean better citizenship education, but it is only one link in the chain. Even with the best intentions, it doesn't address the broader issue of neoliberal priorities steering the values that are embedded in public policy and public discourse.

Curriculum holds immense power and, through its implementation by educators, enjoys a huge audience. But while generally pedagogically- and research-informed, curriculum is driven by education policy, which is steered by provincial governments and influenced by a host of stakeholders (e.g., the OECD, big business, etc.), many of whose interests are profit-driven.

These policies often conflate particular skills such as project management and problem solving with entrepreneurial spirit or culture, which has become synonymous with 'success'. They frame creativity and collaboration as beneficial for economic potential rather than for social or community good. Such skills are crucial for collective and community organizing and rich civic engagement but they've been co-opted to extract every last ounce of economic productivity (which has contributed to the burnout epidemic).

Furthermore, these policies (and subsequently curricula) tend to emphasize measurable outcomes — for example, math and literacy scores driven by standardized international testing — which are aggregated as predictive economic potential. These measures do not, of course, consider the realities that influence such outcomes (e.g., poverty, racism, discrimination, dis/ability). In sum, the problem does not lie solely with curriculum and the teaching of skills and values, but within a much broader and more complex systemic phenomenon — capitalism, and more recent iterations including neoliberalism, disaster capitalism, and necrocapitalism.

Changing school curriculum could mean better citizenship education, but it is only one link in the chain. Even with the best intentions, it doesn't address the broader issue of neoliberal priorities steering the values that are embedded in public policy and public discourse.

Government failure and collective citizenship

In the conflict between public interest and accumulation of profit, the not-so-easily digestible truth is that our governments, at all levels, have increasingly left us to fend for ourselves. Notwithstanding significant cash outlays at the federal level in the first year of the pandemic, for the most part, they have been ineffective and apathetic toward the very real struggles people are facing. (The experiences of vulnerable populations and front-line workers throughout the pandemic is case in point.) Rather than cooperating with one another to adequately fund social programs, they've removed eviction and rent increase bans, cut funding to education and healthcare, capped cost-of-living wage increases and instead opted to give handouts to corporations, raise police budgets, and wasted tax dollars brutalizing land-defenders and homeless encampments. They've watched as housing costs skyrocketed, the opioid crisis ballooned, environmental crises intensified, and corporations made record profits.

So while yes, curriculum change is one avenue for better citizenship education, it still doesn't address the broader issue of how we make progress, as a society, together. Without a shift in values held by the governments and the organizations that steer policy and curricula, the issues we collectively face cannot be sufficiently addressed. This shift must involve recognition that education — like people — holds value outside of its profit potential and output.

We cannot just leave the burdens of our current and future crises to the generations of tomorrow and those who teach them. Outside of the classroom, today's citizens must recognize the ways our social systems and governments have failed to be for the people and act collectively for change through *critically-minded* social, civic, and political engagement. There are a number of possible ways to do this: getting informed about pressing issues, communities, and organizations; listening to understand and empathize with the experiences of marginalized and vulnerable groups; critical self reflection; looking for connections between or patterns across issues; joining local and grassroots organizing, donating time, resources and/or money to reputable causes and organizations, and so on.

I emphasize critical-mindedness here because the (alt)right have become skillful organizers that often centre or promote subject/issue-specific pundits that spread mis/dis-information, science/expert skepticism (e.g., climate science denial, antivax), and hyper-individualist rhetoric (e.g., individual autonomy or 'freedom' of choice/speech/action over collective/human rights) and fuel fear of progressive change (e.g., inclusivity, socialist policy and practice, climate/eco justice, reparations). It is thus crucially important that we use our senses, brains, and hearts in this process of engagement; that we bring our whole and critical selves to this work.

When considering what it means to educate for citizenship, more holistic and systemic rather than singularly targeted approaches must be taken if meaningful changes are to be made and sustained within and outside education– and we must work together to make them.

Dr. Codie Fortin Lalonde is a recent graduate of the PhD in Applied Linguistics and Discourse Studies at Carleton University. Her work investigates the discursive construction of and discursive (dis)connections between students and 'ideal' citizenship in public education policy in Canada.

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The fantasy-fication of Canadian higher education

Marc Spooner

I have a confession: I play fantasy football. In this game, participants "draft" players from any NFL team and gain points for their players' individual performances; think 1 point for every 10 yards rushing or receiving, points for sacks, touchdowns, etc.

It's a lot of fun, but it's completely distorted how I watch football because I no longer care if my old favourite teams win or lose. It doesn't matter.

Even with only a modest pool of money on the line, I've adapted so well to the different rules that I'm hoping my selected wide receivers are losing in the actual game, because there will be a greater opportunity for them to gain points as their team passes the ball in big risky plays to try to catch up.

In the end, I don't care so much about the actual game, just my point totals in the fantasy scoring. The bottom line: it's just a game — whether fantasy or the real sport — so it's of no great consequence how much fantasy has warped my sense of performance, objective, or success.

Back to universities

As democracies around the world, including our own, are revealed to be fragile and resting on unstable ground, the timing could not be worse for governments to re-narrativize higher education. The new story is that universities exist as a personal benefit to the student, to be valued solely in instrumental terms for their workskills training and capacity to serve labour market and industry needs.

Performance-based funding is a natural continuation of the neoliberal ethos. As famously modelled by Margaret Thatcher, its overarching goal is to weaken the public sector. Operationalized under New Public Management, its technique is to: a) impose private-sector management practices; b) introduce market-style incentives and disincentives; c) introduce a customer orientation coupled with consumer choice and branding; (d) devolve budget functions while maintaining tight control through auditing and oversight; (e) outsource labour with casual, temporary staff; and (f) emphasise greater output performance measures and controls in the name of efficiency and accountability.

In the Canadian context, performance-based funding serves at least 4 functions:

1. it is a cloaked funding cut — all stick no carrot — (no extra funding, just smaller percentages of a shrinking pie where universities just can't win);
2. universities and faculty blame themselves if they don't measure up, as they compete

with other groups and institutions, rather than working together in collaboration;

3. it re-defines the meaning of "performance" and success;

4. it acts as an end-run subverting the mission of the university through the back-door, while eroding and sidestepping collegial governance and academic freedom;

To better grasp the profound redesign performance-based funding represents, let's take a quick tour of what is occurring (or being proposed) in provinces across the country beginning with Canada's most populous province, Ontario.

Ontario

Under the most recent Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMA3 2020–2025), Ontario is the first province in Canada to implement a performance-based funding model that puts a majority of funding on the line. It is a high stakes redux of the late 1990s–early 2000s trials undertaken by Ontario, Alberta and Quebec which involved a much smaller portion of overall funding (under 2%) and which were promptly abandoned.

In Ontario, by 2024–25, 60% of a university's operating funding will be based on performance as measured against the following 10 metrics: "*Graduate employment earnings*"; "*Experiential learning*"; "*Skills and competencies*"; "*Graduate employment rate in a related field*"; "*Institutional strength/focus*"; "*Graduation rate*"; "*Research funding and capacity for universities*"; "*Research funding from industry sources/funding from industry sources*"; *Community/local impact of student population*"; and "*Economic impact (institution-specific)*".

With metrics such as "Graduate employment earnings," "Graduate employment rate in a related field," and "Research funding from industry sources", Ontario universities are being financially coerced away from their core missions (instilling subject matter knowledge, forming critical and creative habits of mind, and teaching collaborative, communicative, and civic engagement skills, while performing and valuing discovery-driven and public-interest research) and directed towards serving the current labour market and performing industry-sponsored research.

Graduate employment earnings

Governments are clearly devaluing lower paying careers that students may find to be more meaningful and fulfilling; many of which are vitally important to the health of our communities and society. This is not to suggest that students shouldn't be presented with accurate employment and income data for each program so they may make informed choices, but it is misguided to judge or punish them or universities when students follow their passions in a fluctuating job market over which they have little control.

Graduate employment rate in a related field

The rationale for using current labour-market realities to direct future postsecondary funding is dubious at best; the job-market yo-yo for oil industry workers is a case in point. Moreover, as highlighted by the federal government's 2017 Expert Panel on Youth Employment, the nature of work is shifting away from manufacturing and towards service and knowledge economies with a greater emphasis on problem-solving, communication, interpersonal, and critical thinking skills. The report concludes, perhaps obviously, that "the world of work is transforming rapidly" and that the key to navigating such a future is to remain flexible and fluid; it goes on to state, "Some of the next job opportunities may not even exist today."

Consider recent stats on the growth of the gig economy: "...gig workers among all Canadian workers aged 15 and older increased from almost 1 million workers (5.5%) in 2005 to about 1.7 million workers (8.2%) in 2016". In the current context, it is likely that students will engage with several employment fields during and after graduation. This indicator places the blame on the university for whether graduates are working in the fields they studied, discounts whether graduates are successful in fields *beyond* those of their studies, and conveniently ignores the reality that the job market is not in the university's control.

Even more alarming, under the headlong rush to "micro-credentialing" that is already upon us, the cost, risk, and responsibility for workplace training and development is further downloaded onto individuals. Such micro-credentials will, in effect, carve off and privilege a subset of narrow, context-specific skills, away from well-thought out programs of study that feature more global critical, creative skills, and democratic habits of thought typical of degree programs. It also lets industry off the hook for worker development and specialized training.

GUIDING FRAMEWORKS FOR ALBERTA AND MANITOBA

Alberta

Excerpted from ***Alberta 2030: Building Skills for Jobs***

Based on engagement that attracted the input and advice of thousands of Albertans, the *Alberta 2030: Building Skills for Jobs* strategy sets out six goals for post-secondary education, each with clear objectives and initiatives. This strategy will result in a new governance structure that brings our institutions in sync to achieve greater success, and an outcomes framework that aligns performance-based funding and shifts incentives and accountabilities to ensure we are future-focused and achieving improved results. It is imperative that we continue striking the right balance between responsible spending and a well-funded, entrepreneurial post-secondary system that prepares students for jobs today, and well into the future. While these goals may, at first, seem at odds with one another, we believe we can integrate them and advance to meet the challenge. As such, this shared vision for post-secondary education in our province will lead to better outcomes for students, employers, educators, and communities.

Manitoba

Excerpted from ***Manitoba's skills, talent and knowledge strategy*** *(February 2021)*

• Universities and colleges will meet the challenge of becoming more nimble and responsive, and identify ways to shift programming more easily and quickly. The Manitoba government will modify its program approval process. Post-secondary institutions will be tasked to identify and shift programs that oversupply the labour market, as well as program opportunities in high demand areas. They will work in partnership with industry to re-balance programs and resources to align with industry needs.

• Implement an outcomes-based funding model for colleges and universities to promote positive outcomes for students and alignment with industry needs.

• Employers and employment service organizations will expand demand-led training, and customize training opportunities that lead to jobs.

• The expansion and modernization of apprenticeship and trades will enable more skilled journeypersons to meet our skills needs. This will include changes to supervision of apprentices that will enable greater skill development, expanding the number of high school apprentices through the High School Apprenticeship Program, as well as high school technical vocational programs, especially in identified areas of unmet need.

• Engage with institutions to design a new centralized data model to track student success, and create a new post-secondary funding model based on outcomes and performance.

Research funding and capacity for universities (AKA"Research funding from industry sources")

Perversely, this indicator ties public funding to private funding, doubly incentivizing the further commercialization of university research. It ignores important issues such as non-disclosure agreements, potential for delayed dissemination of findings, and questions surrounding who owns the data. It rewards targeted, industry research in the private interest and downgrades research in the public interest.

This emphasis impacts society by devaluing less costly but no less important scholarship, including risky, yet innovative research; community-engaged research; and other valuable research endeavours that cannot easily be measured or reflected by a simple financial calculus. Rather than uncovering ground-breaking new ideas, following uncertain but innovative paths that become potential game-changers, or working in the service of the communities in which they reside, Ontario scholars are now financially coerced to seek out corporate research contracts, and universities are all but compelled to favour inter-institutional competition over collaboration.

Alberta and Manitoba

To date, Alberta has revealed that it will soon make 40% of a university's total funding contingent on three indicators: "domestic enrollment", "% of programs that offer work-integrated learning", and "% of recent graduates employed within two years in fields very or somewhat related to program of study". While Manitoba has officially stated it will implement a performance-based funding, it has not yet announced the details of its model.

Though not as developed as Ontario's in terms of having determined, and made public, the final set of metrics, Alberta and Manitoba's guiding framework documents suggest the direction their performance-based funding models will take, as indicated in the sidebar, which demonstrates a clear focus on labour market, industry, and economic returns.

It is telling that neither document mentions democracy or citizenship, and

the few mentions of critical and creative thinking skills are always in the context of serving the labour market and industry.

Performance-based funding status in other provinces

Not as far along, but on a similar path, New Brunswick and Quebec have both openly mused about implementing performance-based funding, while Newfoundland and Labrador's *The Big Reset: The Report of the Premier's Economic Recovery Team* proposes austerity for public services, and specifically outlines drastic cuts to its post-secondary sector coupled with significant tuition increases and greater university accountability.

Meanwhile, with the passing of Bill 61 Saskatchewan has already roughed in the pipes and conduits for performance-based funding's future implementation further down the road. Sometimes a fad, no matter how damaging and dysfunctional, looks appealing to governments casting about for their own ideas.

Consequences for equity, diversity and inclusion

Research by Ortagus et al. confirms what many of us feared: tying student enrollments and their future employment to specific outcomes skews rewards towards institutions that enrol students with the most social capital and the best chances of being employed at the highest pay immediately after graduating. This comes at the expense of prospective students from marginalised groups, since equally qualified, but racialized Canadians are hired with less frequency and less pay than their non-racialized counterparts. Clearly, this sabotages goals set for equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Growing administrative costs and red tape

Imposing performance-based funding systems is impossible without the addition of another layer of costly bureaucracy at both institution and ministry levels. Universities will need to create new or re-classified management positions whose sole purpose will be to assess, report, target, and, ultimately, game the new metrics. On the government side, bureaucrats will be needed to gather, evaluate, monitor and, in the longer term, respond to the manipulated metrics and their unintended consequences.

Inter-generational theft of opportunity

With the performance-based funding malware introduced into many universities by provincial governments attempting to reprogram them towards a narrow labour-market and industry focus, youth are robbed of radical imagination and possibility; of something greater than getting a high paying job, of being part of something beyond oneself and a market, of being part of a community and a healthy democracy that exists outside a financial calculus.

Under higher education's new mission, there is no need for policy-makers and politicians to fret about the inter-generational theft of opportunity they are creating through rising tuition fees or for them to worry about entire cohorts of students graduating with a mortgage on their house of knowledge. Each student will be encouraged to view themself as an atomized *learner-economicus*, to be upskilled at their own expense and risk. Via narrow career paths and clusters of stacked micro-credentials, they can shadow-box for marketplace success against a gig economy and the caprices of an unpredictable labour market. There is no society here, just a marketplace, where to be a citizen, to be permitted a vote, requires money.

We are now approaching Thatcher country.

As much as I wish all this was just another set of indicators to be gamed for fun, in spite of whether it distorts my sense of performance, objective, or success — unlike fantasy football, this isn't a game at all. The true cost to our communities as well as our democracy is simply too grave.

But university administrations *will* almost certainly try to game the new metrics, though they should instead be fighting their imposition with every weapon they have. That is why it is up to Canadians as a whole to stop the reprogramming.

It is beyond time to call on governments to continue to value and uphold universities for their core missions, which go far beyond serving as entrepreneurial training centres for industry and labour. Rather, universities must continue to be valued for their important vital role in developing critical and creative graduates prepared to take up the challenge of meaningful work and democratic engagement; where they not only have the skills to prosper today, but can imagine and implement a better tomorrow where all can thrive.

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Privatizing Ontario's colleges

Part of the neoliberal agenda

Diane Meaghan

Ontario colleges have been chronically underfunded for decades. Provincial funding declined for operational expenditures from 75% in 1967 to 30% in 2020 (Statistics Canada, 2021), begging the question of whether colleges should be considered part of the public domain. Not only has the community component been substantially removed from the college mandate, but a more accurate description of Ontario colleges might currently classify them as private/public institutions.

Underfunding of Ontario colleges was recently highlighted by the provincial Auditor General, Bonnie Lysyk, in her annual report. She estimated that grant-based funding for 2020 was $1.6 billion while tuition fees, ancillary services and donations accounted for $5.1 billion. Of particular importance was the fact that Ontario colleges rely on international student tuition to support domestic students, administrative costs and capital expenditures. Lysyk noted that in 2020 international students accounted for 30% of enrolment in Ontario colleges, but 68% of tuition fees of $1.7 million (Lysyk, 2021:20). She spoke of the risk of dependency of Ontario colleges on 62% of international students originating from a single country (in this case, India). Should a decrease occur from this single source of funding, Lysyk maintained that it would leave Ontario colleges in a precarious financial position.

The Auditor General's report speaks volumes to the priorities of the current provincial government, making it clear that colleges are not one of them. Large funding cuts are part of the most recent attempts by the province to privatize colleges based on a business model. The corporatization of colleges has shifted the emphasis from intellectual, social and cultural functions to financial imperatives. Decreased funding and an increase in student enrolment created a financial crisis for colleges which were compelled to seek funding from sources other than the provincial government.

Privatization tactics are not limited to post-secondary institutions, nor to COVID-19: prior to the pandemic, neoliberal restructuring resulted in a significant increase in investments of elearning projects in Ontario colleges, in part from the governmental interest in cost reduction. In 2019 NDP Education Critic, Marit Stiles, spoke about the provincial government's fascination with on-line learning, and the plan to make four on-line, secondary, school courses mandatory and to remove 10,000 public school teachers from the classrooms. The then Education Minister, Lisa Thompson, remarked that "Ontario is already leading the way (with) on-line courses...in a need to

Although the current government did not initiate the practice of replacing full-time with contingent faculty, neither has it taken substantial steps to ameliorate the problem.

embrace technology for good." (*Blog Toronto*, March, 2019).

Similarly, the utilization of contingent faculty in Ontario colleges is another example of privatization by stealth during the past few decades. Neoliberalism has resulted in contingent faculty being placed at the bottom of a highly stratified workforce in colleges. Part time, partial load and sessional faculty are the three groups of adjuncts who comprise the faculty teaching in Ontario colleges. Although the current government did not initiate the practice of replacing full-time with contingent faculty, neither has it taken substantial steps to ameliorate the problem. It is estimated that currently the ratio of full-time to contingent faculty is approximately 1:4 in large, urban colleges (Muzzin and Meaghan, 2019).

Representing 15,000 professors at 24 Ontario colleges, together with counselors, librarians and instructors, members of the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union (OPSEU), voted in March 2022 to engage in strike action and then settlement through arbitration in order to draw attention to a number of grievances. Prime among their concerns were issues of unpaid overtime, uncompensated work and job security of partial-load faculty. According to JP Hornick, then the Chair of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAAT) bargaining team, during the past five years the college system has benefited from these trends with profits of $1.65 billion (Akrit and Chong, 2021). Organizational changes have resulted in this precarious segment of the academic workforce being utilized to alleviate declining revenues resulting from government underfunding.

Finally, although Ontario's pre-election budget appears to favour developers, particularly those who build highways, there is the promise of some additional spending for colleges (amount yet unspecified), due to the precarious nature of international students who are able to support themselves in Canada while attending college. There have been a number of reports from Ontario colleges concerning international students being unable to find employment or working at jobs that pay less than minimum wage, leaving them economically stranded and unable to fully turn their attention to their studies.

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Universities and colleges harming vulnerable workers with reliance on contracting-out

Chandra Pasma

What do post-secondary institutions (PSIs) owe to Canadians and to their communities as recipients of public funding? That's a question that needs to be asked after a recent report by the Canadian Union of Public Employees revealed that universities and colleges are harming vulnerable workers by contracting-out services to third-party providers, often large multinational corporations, leaving these workers with poverty-level wages and very low benefits.

Using publicly available information, CUPE mapped contracting-out, unionization, wages and benefits in food and custodial services at publicly-funded Canadian universities and colleges. Our data reveal that the majority of Canadian PSIs engage in contracting-out: 83.7% have contracted-out some or all food services, while 61% have contracted-out some or all custodial services. Half have contracted-out both food and custodial services.

Contracted-out workers receive significantly lower wages than in-house workers, with contracting-out taking more than $1,000 a month out of workers' pockets on average. Food and custodial workers are some of the lowest paid workers on campus, which makes the wage gap even more significant. The majority of in-house workers are receiving a wage at or above the living wage for their region, but most contracted-out employees are earning wages below the living wage.

This remuneration gap continues into retirement. Nearly all in-house workers have access to a pension plan, with many eligible for a defined benefit pension. On the other hand, half of contracted-out food services and one-third of contracted-out custodial services offer no retirement contribution to their workers.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of access to paid sick leave for all workers. However, contracted-out workers are less likely to receive paid sick days than in-house workers and receive considerably fewer days on average.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of access to paid sick leave for all workers. However, contracted-out workers are less likely to receive paid sick days than in-house workers and receive considerably fewer days on average.

This gap extends to other benefits as well. Despite the fact that food and custodial services are female-dominated sectors, only two contract food service providers offer a maternity leave top up, while none of the contract custodial service providers offer any support for maternity or parental leave. Meanwhile, nearly all post-secondary institutions offer a maternity leave top up to their in-house workers.

There is also a significant gap in union representation between in-house and contracted-out workers. Nearly all in-house workers are represented by a labour union, compared to one-third of workplaces with contracted-out services and half of workplaces with contracted-out custodial services. This is due in large part because most provinces and territories lack legislation protecting successor rights in cases of contract flipping. This means that when administrators make the decision to contract-out services or to re-tender a contract, the union certification is lost, along with jobs, wages, benefits, and seniority. In fact, sometimes contracting-out is used as an end-run around collective agreements.

In light of the difference in wages, benefits, and pensions, it is clear that outsourcing is not about cost savings but about cost downloading. Outsourcing shifts costs from PSIs to workers, who must make ends meet on significantly lower wages now and reduced pension benefits in the future, and must also choose between going to work sick or staying home without pay.

It's essential to ask who is paying the costs downloaded by PSIs. Census data shows that workers in food and custodial services are more likely to be women, more likely to be Black or racialized, and more likely to be a newcomer to Canada. These workers are already earning lower wages on average. By outsourcing services, PSIs are undermining their stated commitment to anti-racism and gender equity.

In addition, there are costs borne by our community. When workers are making less than a living wage, this increases demand for social supports such as social housing, rent supplements, child care subsidies, food banks, Employment Insurance, and social assistance. The lack of retirement support also means that more workers will collect the Guaranteed Income Supplement in the future, shifting the costs of retirement from the employer to the public purse.

To end the harmful downloading of costs onto vulnerable workers and our communities, post-secondary institutions must stop the privatization of services and bring workers back in-house.

Chandra Pasma, at the time of writing, was a Senior Researcher with the Canadian Union of Public Employees, focusing on issues relating to post-secondary education, and the author of CUPE's report *Who Pays? The cost of contracting-out at Canadian post-secondary institutions.*

Unearth this buried treasure

Adult education in Manitoba

Jim Silver

When she was 34 years old and a single mother of four living on social assistance in a large public housing complex in Winnipeg's North End, Aja Oliver saw a sign at a community centre for an Adult Learning Centre. She had not finished high school, had struggled, as did everyone in her family, with the many complexities of life in poverty, and was fed up with being on social assistance. She ventured in. Her life has not been the same since.

Less than a decade later, Aja is a highly-skilled counsellor at the North End Women's Centre, and is well on her way to an undergraduate degree at the University of Winnipeg. Her younger sister, inspired by Aja's success, will soon graduate as a health care aide and hopes to go on to the Licensed Practical Nursing program at Red River College. Some of her cousins have returned to high school, her daughter has graduated high school, and Aja says, "in our house it is now an expectation to graduate high school." At least for her family, Aja has broken the cycle of intergenerational trauma and complex poverty that had long been, for them, the norm.

Adult education works. It is a buried treasure. We need more of it.

Poverty and adult education

Manitoba has suffered for decades with a particularly high incidence of poverty. Data from 2018, the most recent available, show that 87,730 children in Manitoba were growing up in families living in poverty (SPCW 2020)—the highest rate of any province. The situation is worse for Indigenous children. Macdonald and Wilson (2016) found that in Manitoba, 76% of First Nations children on reserve and 42% of Indigenous children in Winnipeg were growing up in families living in poverty. In 2019 the northern Manitoba federal riding of Churchill-Keewatinook Aski had the highest rate of child poverty in all of Canada (SPCW 2021: 3).

Poverty is a key factor — perhaps *the* key factor — in producing poor school outcomes for children and youth, because children growing up in poor families are more likely to do poorly in school. This has been documented repeatedly in detailed studies prepared by the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, but studies conducted for decades and in all parts of the world have found the same. Children growing up in poor families are less likely to succeed in school, and are then more likely themselves to experience poverty, creating a vicious cycle that can ripple across generations.

Evidence of this is the astonishing fact that in 2013/14, a Manitoba study found that there were at that time 192,600 people in Manitoba

between the ages of 18 and 65 whose literacy levels were so low that they could not fully function in society.

Part of the solution — admittedly not the whole solution — is adult education. By adult education I mean what is sometimes called adult basic education — educational activities aimed at achieving sufficient levels of literacy, numeracy and other essential skills so that it becomes possible to obtain employment, or to qualify for further education and/or training. In Manitoba this means both the mature high school diploma offered by Adult Learning Centres, which requires that students complete eight high school credits (including grade 12 English and Math), and Adult Literacy Programs, which work to improve literacy and numeracy skills to the level necessary to be able to succeed with high school credits. We need more of this in order to pull more families out of poverty in the way that Aja has managed to do with her family.

Reconciliation and adult education

Adult education is also a crucial part of reconciliation. Justice Murray Sinclair has often said, "Education got us into this mess, and education will get us out of it."

Manitoba has a particularly large Indigenous population; Winnipeg has the largest urban Indigenous population in Canada; and education is a crucially important Indigenous issue. Indigenous youth are doing less well in high school than non-Indigenous youth. Michael Mendelson (2016: 25) found that 71% of Indigenous people aged 20–24 and living on reserve in Manitoba did not have a high school diploma. Provincial data reveal that there is more than a 30 percentage point gap between the percentage of non-Indigenous students who graduate high school on time, and the percentage of Indigenous students who graduate on time. There are reasons for this: the intergenerational damage caused by residential schools and colonialism generally; the higher than average rates of poverty experienced by Indigenous Manitobans; the relentless experience of racism.

Adult education is also a crucial part of reconciliation. Justice Murray Sinclair has often said, "Education got us into this mess, and education will get us out of it."

On the other hand, Indigenous adults participate in *adult* education at a rate approximately two and a half times their proportion of the province's population. Many who have not completed high school return later in life, and it is adult education to which they return.

As an anti-poverty initiative and as a part of reconciliation, adult education really matters.

Abysmally underfunded

Adult education ought to be an important part of the education continuum, funded equitably with K-12 and post-secondary education. And yet it has, for decades, been treated by Manitoba governments as the poor cousin of education, scarcely worthy of consideration; an afterthought, and abysmally underfunded.

Funding has been frozen for years, at a level that does not come remotely close to meeting needs. In 2009/10, combined funding for Adult Learning Centres (ALCs) and Adult Literacy Programs (ALPs) was $19.2 million; in 2019/20, the latest year for which data are available, it was $19.9 million. This was an increase in nominal terms of less than half of one percent over 10 years, which represents a decline in real terms.

ALPs have been particularly hard hit: in 2009/10 there were 42 ALPs in Manitoba; in 2019/20 there were 30. More than a quarter of all ALPs were forced to shut their doors for want of funds. This despite the fact that there were 192,600 adults in Manitoba with literacy levels so low that they could not fully function in society. There is a huge unmet demand.

The number of adults enrolled in ALCs declined from approximately 9700 in 2003/04, to 7200 in 2019/20; the numbers who graduated with the mature grade 12 diploma declined from about 1250 to 920 over the same period. These are declines of just over 25%.

Cost comparisons

In 2021 the total budgeted expenditure for education in Manitoba was approximately $3 billion. The total investment in adult education was under $20 million (Manitoba 2019/20). In other words, Manitoba invests a mere two-thirds of one percent of its total education budget in adult education.

Saving public money by cutting public expenditures on adult education is penny-wise, pound-foolish. A senior economist with the Toronto-Dominion Bank has estimated that for Canada as a whole, high levels of illiteracy were costing Canada "hundreds of billions of dollars in lost opportunity" (Gulati 2013:4). Cost-benefit studies of educational initiatives have found them to be cost effective — as is the case with childcare, the broad economic benefits significantly outweigh the costs over time (Hajer and Loxley 2021: 45–50).

ADULT EDUCATION: *A COST COMPARISON*

$115,000

Federal incarceration (2016) per inmate

$69,000

Provincial incarceration (2016) per inmate

$45,565

Homelessness in Winnipeg (2017) per person

$13,284

K–12 per student (2018/19)

$2,240

Adult education per student (2019/20)

Why then are we investing so little in adult education in Manitoba, when the need is so great and the potential benefits so obvious?

Poverty, power and adult education

Part of the answer is the continued commitment to neoliberal ideas, which have it that the role of government should be reduced, and that of the for-profit market increased. While this works well for the wealthy, as CCPA studies have shown repeatedly, it does not work well for adult education in Manitoba, because there are no profits to be made in educating those who are poor.

Another part of the answer is that such a high proportion of the beneficiaries of adult education, and of those who *could* benefit from adult education, are poor. They are among those in Manitoba with the least power — economic, political and social power. They are the precariously employed, the colonized, the racially targeted and those struggling with life in poverty. We can see this by considering the demographics of those taking adult education programs. In ALCs in 2019/20, for example, 45% of students self-identified as Indigenous, 18% declared that English was their second language, and 19% said they were employed on a part-time basis (Manitoba 2019/20) and thus were almost certainly among the precariously employed. They are, by definition, among the ranks of the marginalized, the poor and the "othered." They are not relatively powerful. They are, in fact, among the relatively powerless. What is worse, those living in poverty and without a high school diploma are typically stigmatized and blamed for their educational "failures."

These are almost certainly major parts of the explanation for the fact that adult education is allocated two-thirds of one percent of the total Manitoba education budget.

And yet, as Aja's story reveals, adult education works. It works well. We have an opportunity to make major gains in fighting poverty and promoting reconciliation by dramatically expanding adult education in Manitoba. Abysmally underfunded, it is a buried treasure.

Jim Silver is Professor Emeritus at the University of Winnipeg. One of three co-founders of the CCPA-Manitoba 25 years ago in 1997, he has written extensively on poverty and poverty-related matters, including housing and education. He was also directly involved in the creation of Merchants Corner, the University of Winnipeg's off-campus site in the city's low-income North End. His report, *Unearth this Buried Treasure: Adult Education in Manitoba,* is available at policyalternatives.ca.

How public funding for private options reinforces school segregation in Quebec

Erika Shaker, in conversation with **Anne Plourde**,
researcher at l'Institut de recherche
et d'informations socioéconomiques (IRIS)

Back in 2006 the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives co-published the report *Who's Calling the Shots?* which assessed the presence of commercialization and private money in public education. It also noted what, if anything, provincial governments had done to either encourage or limit the corporate presence in classrooms. One thing we identified was that there was less marketing to kids in Quebec because of limits placed on direct marketing, and restrictions on incentive-based commercial programs in schools.

But we still identified lots of school fundraising, often to purchase things like desks and school supplies. And certainly no shortage of products that were definitely commercial in nature, though arguably not "actually" targeting kids (the sale of products in school like Coke and Pepsi, for example).

However, in the rest of Canada, there seems to be the lingering sense that, on the whole, there is greater public investment in Quebec, at least in education and child care. I graduated from McGill in the early 90s, when tuition — even for out of province students — was still $19/credit, and international students from French-speaking countries paid the same low domestic fees. Of course, that changed to a two-tier system shortly after I left, and now fees for out of province students hover above the Canadian average, and have been rising for in-province students as well.

It may come as a shock to people that Quebec's level of public support for private schools (elementary and secondary) is second only to Alberta — and not by much. To find out more I spoke with Anne Plourde, author of an upcoming report from l'Institut de recherche et d'informations socioéconomiques (IRIS), which

looks at the current way in which public (and private) education is funded in Quebec, and the impact of this on school segregation in the province.

OS/OS: Can you give us a quick lesson about how education in Quebec is funded?

Anne Plourde: As in the other Canadian provinces, in Quebec there are two parallel education networks at the elementary and secondary levels: a network of public schools and a network of private schools.

In theory, public primary and secondary schools are entirely financed by public funds, and free education is guaranteed by the Public Education Act. Their main sources of funding are public funds paid by the Ministry of Education and school taxes collected by school service centers (former school boards). However, despite the principles of free education, part of the revenue of the public school network comes from certain fees charged to parents (school supplies and materials, supervision of students during lunch hours, daycare services at the elementary level, etc.). In 2021, these fees represented 6.5% of the revenues of the Centre de services scolaire de Montréal, the largest in Quebec. Public schools also fund part of their activities and materials through fundraising campaigns very often involving private companies specializing in philanthropy.

Moreover, one of the peculiarities of Quebec is very high levels of funding for the network of private schools. Two-thirds of these schools are approved to receive public funds from the Ministry of Education. These grants amount to about 60% of those paid to public schools for educational services (they are higher in secondary than in elementary schools). The rest of the income for private schools comes mainly from fees paid by parents, but also from other private sources of funding such as donations or the sale of other goods and services.

School segregation is mainly caused by the competition between public schools and private schools for students ("market share"), competition which is much stronger in Quebec than in the other provinces. This is explained by the significant public subsidies enjoyed by private schools, which makes them accessible to a larger portion of the population.

OS/OS: Can you tell us more about your work in education generally?

AP: Over the years, IRIS has produced many publications on education. We have been very active in the debate on university funding and free education, and we have also been very interested in the commodification of higher education and the influence of neoliberalism in the way universities are managed.

We have also published several research reports on preschool, elementary and secondary education, with a particular interest in the links between social inequalities and educational inequalities, as well as the place of the private sector in education and its consequences.

OS/OS: What trends were identified in 2017 when you did your earlier report?

AP: The 2017 report allowed us to measure the extent of the phenomenon of school segregation in elementary and secondary schools in Quebec, which effectively separates students based on their socioeconomic status and academic performance. This school segregation reproduces social inequalities and causes a homogenization of schools and classes which is particularly harmful for disadvantaged or struggling students.

School segregation is mainly caused by the competition between public schools and private schools for students ("market share"), competition which is much stronger in Quebec than in the other provinces. This is explained by the significant public subsidies enjoyed by private schools, which makes them accessible to a larger portion of the population. Moreover, by attracting the best-performing students from privileged socio-economic backgrounds, private schools encourage public schools to develop specialized or boutique-type programs in an attempt to retain these students. These particular programs accentuate segregation even within public schools since they too are reserved for the most successful students and often involve significant costs for parents.

Our study first showed that the phenomenon of school segregation experienced significant growth between 2001–02 and 2013–14. It also revealed that, while this phenomenon is present at the elementary level, it is particularly marked at the secondary level, which is consistent with the fact that private secondary schools are more subsidized than primary schools.

OS/OS: Did the analysis confirm your suspicions, or were you surprised by what you found?

AP: We knew that school segregation existed and that it was particularly relevant in Quebec because it had recently been denounced in

a report published in 2016 by the Superior Council of Education. We also knew the negative consequences of these trends on student success, on social cohesion and on the reproduction of inequalities.

Nevertheless, the extent of the trend surprised us, particularly with regard to secondary schools. We observed that at the secondary school level, 21% of all students attended a private school in 2013–14, and 18% were enrolled in a particular program (private or public). In total, we estimated that more than 35% of secondary school students are enrolled either in a private school or in a particular public school program. And if we add to this the students enrolled in "special projects", this proportion reaches 40%. Cut off from the best-performing students, public secondary schools and their so-called "ordinary" classes therefore find themselves with an ever-increasing concentration of disadvantaged or struggling students.

OS/OS: Why did you feel you needed to update the report, and what's changed with/in this latest version?

AP: Five years after our 2017 study, we wanted to know if the phenomenon of school segregation had increased or if, on the contrary, it had diminished in Quebec. Our preliminary results demonstrate that it has not improved. In some ways it even got worse. Indeed, the proportion of secondary school students attending a private school remained the same, at 21%, while that of students enrolled in a particular program increased from 18% in 2013–14 to 21% in 2020–21.

We also carried out an analysis of the differences between private and public schools in the care of students with disabilities or with learning or adaptation difficulties. In this regard, our results confirm our hypothesis that private schools choose the "best" students, leaving out students with difficulties, who are thus concentrated in greater proportion in public school classes. While the number of private school students represents 11% of total students (elementary and secondary included), these schools only accommodate 8.5% of students in difficulty or with disabilities. Conversely, public schools accommodate 90% of students in difficulty, while their students (with or without difficulty) account for 79% of the total. The result is that only 17% of students enrolled in the private network are students with disabilities or learning challenges, while they represent a quarter of students in the public system.

OS/OS: In a number of provinces, there's significant concern that COVID-19 has facilitated the rise of privatization in schools. What, if anything, has the pandemic done to these trends in Quebec schools?

AP: The data analyzed does not allow us to know whether the pandemic has reinforced the phenomenon of school segregation in Quebec. However, considering the school closures and the many upheavals it has caused in schools and families, it can be expected that it has worsened educational inequalities.

It would be interesting to see how the success rates of young people have evolved in the private network and in the public network, as well as in specific projects. We already know that they are systematically higher in private schools since they select their students, but we can expect the gap to have widened in 2020 and 2021 compared to previous years.

School Segregation in Quebec: The state of the situation will be published in September 2022, when the province's school year begins.

Anne Plourde is a researcher at IRIS and a postdoctoral fellow at York University. Her areas of research focus on the relationship between capitalism, the State and social policies.

Starting school in the middle of a pandemic

Lauren Jervis

It's a school day, in April 2022, and a work day for my partner and me. Our four-year-old daughter is a junior kindergarten student enrolled at our neighbourhood public school in Toronto. But today, she's at home with us.

The COVID-19 pandemic first shut down her daycare, along with many other parts of society, over two years ago. Back then, it never occurred to me that I'd be keeping her at home, once again, this long after the beginning of the pandemic. And yet, the decisions made by the Ontario government ahead of this sixth wave left her school unsafe, especially for a child who is too young to be eligible for COVID-19 vaccines.[1]

For the last month and at the time of writing (April 2022), masks have not been mandatory in Ontario in most public settings, including schools. Other protections, such as PCR testing, cohorting, and contact tracing are long gone. The list of daily reported COVID-19 cases in schools recently grew alarmingly. We don't yet have the whole picture of how illness from COVID-19 affects children in the long term.[2] And so, because we can, my partner and I keep our daughter home from school until something changes for the better — the case rates, the policies, or hopefully both.

Becoming a parent had already given me new insights into the complexities of having responsibilities for the care and education of children — a topic that figures prominently in my research.[3] Now, I would get first-hand experience being a parent of a public school student.

On the other hand, being immersed in research documenting the many contradictions and failures of public education systems, particularly in the context of privatization and underfunding, made me worry about what kind of experience my daughter would have. My ambivalence was further complicated by the fact my daughter was starting school in the middle of a global health crisis. Like so many parents, I had to put my trust — and my child — in an unfamiliar institution.

How, then, would I handle this transition? The only way I knew how. I got involved. I read a picture book to my daughter's class on Zoom. I joined parent council and attended every meeting. I chatted with staff and family members at pick-up and drop-off times, trying to learn names, make friends, and learn more about this school community housed in a building in which I myself have never set foot.

As someone who has worked from home since the pandemic started, I have benefitted from the opportunity to meet new people and

participate in the life of the school community during an exceptionally isolating time. I am glad that my daughter attends a program open to any child who lives within the geographical catchment area. Neighbourhoods are, undoubtedly, stratified by class,[4] but as someone who rents my home in a region where house prices are astronomical,[5] it's no small thing to have access to a solid education for my daughter, regardless of my household income.

Except when we don't. At the beginning of January, Ontario schools closed for two weeks[6] in response to community rates of COVID-19 so high that the basic functioning of the province's hospitals was threatened.[7] At other times, the schools have been open, but the government has been unwilling to maintain the types of protections that would limit the spread of disease in school buildings.[8] Because of historic and ongoing policies of austerity, Ontario public schools entered this pandemic with large class sizes, overcrowded classrooms,[9] and aging school buildings overdue for repairs[10] — legacies of neglect that now hamper our ability to keep children in school without turning in-person classes into super-spreader events.

While my daughter is being let down by Ontario's education policy for the first time, I recognize that many families with school-aged children know this feeling all too well. While many children, including my own, struggled with virtual classes during school closures,[11] pandemic pivots to online learning have proved to be a silver lining for other children. It has become clear that some students are learning better at home in a space that may be more welcoming than the one provided in their school classroom, where students may experience racism, for instance, or an environment that is unaccommodating of their exceptional learning needs.[12] Even before the pandemic, some Black families in Ontario were turning to homeschooling because their children were experiencing anti-Black racism at school.[13]

Ontario's education system was created to be a force for societal control,[14] and has been complicit in reproducing social inequalities. At the same time, a robust public education system provides vital opportunities for learning, relationship building, and community support. The very idea of quality public schooling pushes back against neoliberal impulses towards the valorizing of individual responsibility,[15] the prioritizing of personal success, and the undervaluing of collective flourishing.[16] In my case, I have been working with other parents on anti-racism organizing and an initiative to redistribute some of our parent council's fundraising monies in resistance to the inequalities perpetuated by our school system's reliance on fundraising[17] in the face of inadequate public investment.

My community school may be part of an under-resourced system, but it is still a place that is, at its best moments, child-centred and striving to support all the students who walk through its doors. Imperfect as it is, I don't want to lose it. Instead, I will keep agitating for sufficient government funding, responsible public health policy, and the kinds of transformational system changes demanded by members of marginalized groups. I do this in the hope that Ontario's public education can better live up to its potential to support all the province's children, their families, and their communities.

Lauren Jervis is a critical educational policy researcher who studies policy controversies and parent advocacy. She is currently a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellow in the Faculty of Education at Western University. She can be reached at ljervis@uwo.ca.

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Lessons on critical thinking

Kicking the tires of the "freedom" convoy

William Paul

One of my favourite teachers was Keith Kenmare who taught grade 7 and 8 and was principal of Laura Secord PS in the heart of downtown Queenston. The village was guarded by a monument of Isaac Brock — hero of the War of 1812 and everything colonialist and British. It was the height of the Cold War, the escalation of the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement in the U.S.

Mr. Kenmare had an engagingly caustic sense of humour, introduced good books, especially science fiction, and liked to spark arguments about "current events" as we called the bewildering mess of information that appeared on our TV sets.

But what stays in my mind, after nearly 60 years, is Mr. Kenmare asking uncomfortable questions like: "Where did you get that information?" "How do you know?" or "How would you like it if someone told you to get out of their store because of the colour of your skin?" And most of all: "Support your ideas." He was the first teacher I ever knew who was truly interested in what we thought and why.

While this role of 'educator as debunker' has always been important, it's arguably even more critical today.

As I read about the self-titled Freedom Convoy that took over downtown Ottawa for three weeks in February, the wasp nest that passes for public discourse was buzzing hard: basic rights trampled under the guise of public safety! As Jordan Peterson fumed about "how rapidly we stampeded to imitate a totalitarian state," politicians like Pierre Poilievre welcomed the Convoy to Ottawa from an overpass, and Conservative leader Erin O'Toole lost his job. Ottawa police chief Peter Sloly quit. Ottawa mayor Jim Watson declared a state of emergency. And all in response to a demand from the convoyers that seemed disarmingly simple: no masks, no vaccine mandates — Freedom!

But this simplistic framing concealed a story that was a lot darker: "F…Trudeau banners targeting the Prime Minister, Confederate flags, swastikas, people in Ottawa being harassed while trying to go about their business, the desecration of national monuments, the demand for an elected government to drop all health mandates or be removed from power, the three-week stand-off with Ottawa police… all to publicize a grievance, the details of which seemed to change based on who was asked.

Shortly after a national emergency to end the occupation was declared, provincial governments started to lift mandates and open up

public spaces just a few weeks after the country had been hit with the virulent Omicron variant of COVID-19. Convoyers were still at it at the end of April when the "Rolling Thunder" biker rally came to Ottawa.

Kids must wonder if the adults in the room have the slightest idea what they're doing or if they're just making things up as they go. Who do governments listen to? Whose views count? Whose safety matters?

As troubling as many of the ideas it transported were, the Convoy offers a terrific learning opportunity to consider fundamental questions about the real meaning of freedom, civil disobedience, power, misrepresentation, language and so much more. The challenge for teachers is to help students understand this and similar events — mired as they are in social media and punditry that often masquerades as news.

Context and a critical eye

It's good to take a few steps back from events and look at what informed them. Sarah Vance, a politics and history teacher, spoke to me about preparing kids with a basic grasp of media literacy: distinguishing between high and low-quality journalism, who gets written about and how they're portrayed. As Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman explain in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy and Mass Media*, critical journalism takes second place to the profit incentives of the corporations that operate media, the advertisers who pay for our attention and the institutions who guide and control access to the stories we read and decide who will be the common enemy. Armed with that basic understanding, teachers can guide their students in asking questions about the reputation (and ownership or consolidation) of sources, the type of reports, who is listened to, what interests the players have, and the commercial value of hyperbole and demonstrable falsehoods.

From vertical to lateral reading

Both Ms. Vance, and her colleague Melanie Willson, use *lateral reading* as a tool to help students get to know the source of the information they read. This comes from the work of the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG), which found that undergrads and professors tended to read a web site *vertically*, as if it was printed text, and were influenced by its appearance — an official looking organization logo, nice layout or the official-looking **".org"** at the end of the **url** — not realizing that anyone can buy a **.org** domain registration.

Fact checkers, on the other hand, spend less time reading an article and more time researching its sources. This is lateral reading — searching elsewhere for information about the site or organization behind it to better understand the background of the source making the claim or being used to validate it. Take the Freedom Convoy Facebook post from March 7, 2022 about one of the organizers: "Tamara Lich, Canada's political prisoner, released from jail: Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms". It links to a piece of the same title on the JCCF webpage. Rather than spending much time studying the content of the page, a lateral reader would look for more information about the JCCF.

Teachers can also use the fact checking website Snopes to help students negotiate the

wildness that is social media. For example, Snopes exposed that the following widely circulated message, supposedly posted by PM Justin Trudeau (cobbled together with his picture) on his Facebook page, was fake news:

> Please help do your part to make [The Ottawa Occupation] stop. If you have family or friends that still haven't been vaccinated, do not allow these to family dinners, do not speak to them on the phone, do not reply to their texts. You need to do everything you can to make life difficult for them until they comply.

Snopes also addressed rumours about the size of the Convoy, a number of miscaptioned videos showing global support for it, and several doctored clips from "The Simpsons" that were used to suggest the show had predicted the Convoy.

Checking claims, deconstructing language

Why do players in a story — in this case, supporters of the Convoy — say what they say and how do they back it up? Here's where teachers can draw from news specifically. In mid-February, a visually appealing site, Common Sense, outlined "What the truckers want". The piece is a lesson in misdirection: extol the courage and fortitude of the protesters, add a quotation from a man who emigrated from Ukraine "…to be free — not slaves," report on unfair treatment of those who refused or feared vaccination. (Nothing explaining that the Canadian Trucking Alliance condemned the actions of the Convoy.) Teachers could use information from the site to ask questions like: Does this story have information that supports what Canadian truckers want? How could vaccine mandates possibly be considered (and by who) equivalent to slavery?

The convoyers' demands, as outlined in a letter posted February 17 on Facebook — to end vaccine passports and masking requirements and "respect freedom of choice without discrimination" — provides teachers with an opportunity to help kids examine that statement critically. Does the statement give any details about what is meant by *freedom* beyond ending mandates? Is this freedom unconditional? What about the consequences to those around you? What about community responsibility not to infect others? When is it right or wrong for governments to restrain freedoms — something they do every day?

How does "freedom" come to be associated with anti-maskers and anti-vaxxers? asks teacher Deborah Buchanan-Walford, a member of Ontario Education Workers United (OEWU) who also correctly points out that there's no way her group or any of the other Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, Muslim or other less privileged groups can expect even a tiny portion of the coverage and money the convoyers and their fellows attracted.

If you're an English teacher and you want kids to consider the manipulation of language you could initiate some discussion on the "freedom" claimed by the convoyers versus the freedom sought by Civil Rights workers in the U.S. or the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa or the freedom sought by Indigeneous people to simply live, to escape the horrors of residential schools — freedom from genocide. What does this say about the sense of entitlement and real

power of those demanding an end to mandates? Ms. Buchanan-Walford asks why media even use the term "freedom convoy" — another good question to help students understand the power of language.

False dichotomy and exaggeration are other rhetorical devices that coverage of the Convoy provided ample opportunity to teach about. In 2020, Vaccine Choice Canada and others sued politicians, public officials and others to get them to overturn mandate provisions like lockdowns, wearing masks and vaccinations. Toronto lawyer (and Executive Director of the Constitutional Rights Centre Inc.) Rocco Galati told CBC news:

> We have the testimonies of 43 Canadian and international experts who maintain that these measures are not corroborated by any scientific fact, that they have not previously been the subject of any clinical trial which could have proven their effectiveness and that 'they are extreme in the circumstances.'

There is a lot to check here: What 43 experts? What are their areas of expertise? What about "not corroborated by any scientific fact?" Kids can pop "*research on use of masks and COVID-19*" into their favourite browser to get plenty of hits, including from the Center for Disease Control.

There is another way in which this suit's rhetorical framing helps to teach healthy skepticism. It rests on false dichotomy, the notion that a situation is either all one condition or all another.[2] Mandates like masking are dichotomized as a necessity for everyone vs. no one; lockdowns as either absolute and indefinite vs open and unlimited. But it's false to say that the *only* recourse is to drop all mandates immediately.

The discussion and research for students here could be: Masks vs. no masks — is it all one way or the other? What steps had to be taken for governments to start lifting restrictions? Did they always do the right thing? It is really important for kids to understand the limitation of options posed by false dichotomy and how misleading they are.

Context

In the *Toronto Star*, Justin Ling examines the background of the Convoy leaders to better understand their roots, connections and affiliations, including with far-right and white supremacist organizations. Convoy organizers downplayed the swastikas and Confederate flags held up by some protestors, but organizer BJ Dichter said he welcomed "unacceptable opinions because I want to challenge them" as though flying symbols of genocide and slavery might spark useful debate. The obvious discussion question of course is: "What's to challenge?" What were Nazi symbols and Confederate flags doing amongst a crowd self-described as being full of joy and support — and what do they have to do with freedom? Why couldn't authorities seem to do much about the occupation of Canada's national capital?

So, a good research question for kids is: Compare and contrast treatment of the largely white convoyers with that of the 890 people — many of whom were Indigenous — protesting old-growth logging in Fairy Creek B.C. who were pepper-sprayed, tackled and arrested by the RCMP in 2021. Consider the arrests of Wet'suet'en people blocking the Coastal Gaslink pipeline project from crossing *their* lands. Look at how decisively Toronto police moved in to clear homeless people from downtown parks like Lamport stadium last summer. Check out the excessive force and detention of 1,000 peaceful protestors, journalists and onlookers at the Toronto G20 summit in 2010. What made the convoyers so special?

The point here for students (of all ages) is that there is so much more to a story like this than slogans about freedom and togetherness. We need to teach them to look behind simple, catchy phrases and claims.

In a time when truly incredible information is being hurled, kids (and adults, for that matter) need help developing research skills, critical lenses and bullshit detectors: dig, practice lateral reading, check facts, debunk. The February Convoy provided an opportunity — and limitless content — to enable students to practice critical thinking and healthy skepticism.

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Mindfulness in schools

A self-reflection on a trending practice

Jasmin Stoffer

In my mid-twenties I joined an international community of mindfulness practitioners out of a desire to lower my stress levels associated with work and life and found some success with the practice for some time.

As a public school educator who wanted what I perceived as a "calm" class, I tried dutifully to help my students come to mindfulness practice as well. But over time, and as I left the mindfulness community, I started to reflect on my reasoning for bringing these practices into my classroom. I wanted students to feel safe, welcome, and successful and, slowly but surely, I began to realize that what I was doing — forcing them to sit quietly and breathe — was not helping them like I thought it would. I would eventually realize how truly ableist and trauma un-informed this was, not to mention, culturally unsafe.

This reflexive inquiry has been at the centre of my teaching and my current PhD research. Early in my profession, I perceived success as the silence of students sitting in chairs, answering questions when prompted, and always remaining calm. I had believed that compliance was the surest sign of academic achievement. I know better now.

Too often, I have witnessed and, in the past, participated in teaching mindfulness as a tool for compliance and obedience that is introduced to staff and students to primarily improve academics. We need to reverse this idea of "math and reading first, wellness second." Well-being and social-emotional learning goes beyond the 10 minute Youtube "brain break" videos and should be understood as the foundation on which academic learning and education can flourish because students with a confident sense of self become strong self-advocates, community advocates, and critical thinkers. Mindful educators, who practice compassion and patience, understand this. Mindful educators understand the importance of culturally responsive and safe pedagogy, are trauma-informed educators and are proactively working to create barrier-free learning communities. Mindful administrators support educators in this endeavour, and understand that academic excellence cannot be cultivated without cultivating a holistic sense of well-being first.

Mindfulness is non-competitive — a lifelong practice that takes grace, patience, and compassion for self, in order to manifest these values for others. We turn inwards in order to eventually turn our good work outwards to the

community. I would add that an attitude of love, of self, others, and community is also central to becoming a mindful educator.

According to John Kabat-Zinn (USC, *Resiliency Project*), there are seven key attitudes of mindfulness:

1. non-judging (yourself or others),
2. patience (inner and outer),
3. beginners' mind (being okay that we can't and don't know everything),
4. trust (it is okay to make mistakes),
5. non-striving (it is not a competition, the goal is to remain in the present moment),
6. acceptance (that we learn and grow at an individual pace, and that should be respected — see things as they are),
7. letting go (be whatever you are right now).

Over the years of practicing mindfulness solo, I have realized it is so much more than simply lowering stress levels, and certainly not about obedience or compliance. It has helped me manifest a desire to help my community, and begin to understand how "community" is not simply the people who share a space together, but the spiritual, emotional and mental desire to create a profound understanding that I am not safe unless you are safe, I am not well unless you are well, and I will not succeed unless you feel you can succeed too. No grit required, just patience and love.

The 'capitalized' version of mindfulness that I willfully presented to my students did not consider their emotional, spiritual, cultural, and physical needs to simply be themselves and feel their feelings. It did not make me an anti-oppressive educator; in fact, it made me more stressed and less self-aware as I focused on compliance rather than compassion. This outward action eventually would turn inward, as I was finally diagnosed with ADHD and suffered from burnout, the latter being a result not of the stress of teaching but the stress of masking my neurodivergence for over 30 years. I had tried my best to comply as a student, and it hurt.

Compliance is not evidence of a successful, loving, and safe learning community. I had to stop being an authoritarian figure in my classroom and start being a guide who not only facilitated the learning of their students but who validated, affirmed, and nurtured their students. That has been how the students I serve, and I have found success in our learning community.

A truly inclusive and equitable classroom *is* a mindful classroom. When teachers centre the well-being of their students, they are practicing mindfulness. It looks like asking about and honouring student identities and intersectionality in the classroom. It starts with setting up the classroom as a transparent, safe and compassionate place to be ourselves giving students the space to share how they're doing if they need to. I share my pronouns first when I introduce myself before asking students to share. I pre-teach about why celebrating our identities is important. We create a mind-map, a word association of what "honouring identity" means as a group. Words like "safety," "love," "kindness," and "joy" are commonplace. I also use a daily exit card system, universally designed so students can draw, write, type, or verbalize what they'd like to share; at the end of each class (before the backpack rush), I give several questions from which they can choose to answer. These questions are like check-ins for me (and them) to better assess their understanding of course content and how they feel about being in class. These exit cards are seen only by the individual student and me; they are a private conversation about their thoughts and feelings in the learning community. Setting up the classroom as a transparent, safe and compassionate place to be ourselves gives students the space to share how they're doing if they need to.

Frequent check-ins mean actively listening to students. I try my best to know at least one personal fact about each student, so when they walk in the door, I can say something like, "how's the Pokemon game going?" or "how's your grandma?" Knowing our students ensures that our pedagogy and practice are founded on compassion and, therefore, mindfulness. Educators should be given the time to learn about their students as humans, and not simply be compelled to "get them through it". As a former principal once told me "we are not making widgets, we are teaching people".

Finally, mindfulness looks like care for the community and family. Connecting with families before you need their help to intervene sets a foundation of mindfulness rooted in compassion. I make introductory phone calls at the start of each semester, send emails with good news updates about students regularly to keep guardians in the loop, and ensure that parents have all the communication they need to understand the process of individualized programming, transitioning to post-secondary programs, and connecting with organizations in and out of the school that will support both them and their child when necessary.

Mindfulness is not a synonym for compliance, as much of the current neoliberal structure would want us to believe. It is about strengthening our ability to be reflexive, compassionate, and patient—with ourselves first.

Human to human connection is mindfulness. If I am supposed to be *in loco parentis*, then I, the students, and their families are a community. It takes a village to raise a child, but it also takes a village to raise a village — every member of the village has to feel like what they can offer matters to the growth and success of every other member. As a teacher, my job is to understand my role as a member of the proverbial village to help affirm every member within it, colleagues, students, and families included. When integrated into the culture of care that teachers centre within the learning communities, these practices can help educators nurture student well-being while respecting and celebrating student achievement based on the understanding that every student can succeed.

Mindfulness is not a synonym for compliance, as much of the current neoliberal structure would want us to believe. It is about strengthening our ability to be reflexive, compassionate, and patient — with ourselves first. It is a pillar of community building; it is a way to connect our body, mind, and spirit and analyze how we are doing, what we are thinking, and why we are thinking those things. Adopting a mindful practice cannot simply end at feeling peaceful; it has to motivate us to go out into our communities and ensure that the peace we think turns into actions that promote equity, justice and accessibility for all. Mindfulness creates room for doubt, fear, and anxiety to be handled with care in a safe and loving space (internally and externally within our communities).

Conclusion

Commodifying the lives of our students devalues and disregards their intersectionality and disregards and devalues the push towards a more inclusive education system. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen how a neoliberal capitalist value of human lives has done serious harm to the dis/ability community and has motivated dis/ability activists and community leaders like Imani Barbarin to create the hashtag: #mydisabledlifeisworthy. The valuing of human life based on the systemically ableist views of productivity not only guarantees that mindfulness will never work in schools, but it also prevents school leaders from becoming truly anti-ableist and anti-racist. We cannot deny the interconnectedness between ableism and racism. Mindfulness can be a tool to dismantle systemic oppression, but like the "anti" in anti-ableism, mindfulness must compel us to act. As philosopher Linda Alcoff has said, "exclusion is a practice, not an absence". As educators we should constantly be self-reflexive in asking who are we including, who are we excluding, why and how can we improve?

A mindful learning community thrives if supported by a school community where all stakeholders (administration, families, department of education, etc.) understand that prioritizing wellness is paramount to creating successful, validating, nurturing and anti-oppressive learning environments for students; that human value has to be more than simply economic contribution. I, for one, support educators practicing mindfulness regularly in and out of their learning communities to foster wellness within themselves and the people they serve.

While I also recognize that academic achievement is essential, I want to, have to, focus my teaching practice on my students' well-being and continue creating a learning community that supports both students and fellow educators to become empowered and liberated human beings. The work, as always, continues.

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A national school food program for all

Towards a social policy legacy for Canada

Amberley T. Ruetz, Alicia Martin and Eric Ng

In the 1930s and 1940s, the United States, the UK, and many other countries developed a National School Lunch Program in response to the Great Depression — the biggest economic crisis of the last century — however, Canada did not choose this path.[1,2] In the spirit of building back better in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have the opportunity to create a social policy legacy for Canada: a world-class, universal, healthy school meal program for all children and youth. We should not let this moment pass us by.

What does school food look like in Canada?
When it comes to national school lunch programs, Canada is an outlier. Internationally, school meals are the norm: 83% of all countries provide free or subsidized school meals, according to the World Food Programme.[3]

While over 35% of Canadian elementary and secondary schools offer one or more school food programs (breakfast, lunch and/or snacks), most are only partially funded by provincial or territorial governments.[4] The lack of coordinated and adequate funding inhibits universal access for all junior kindergarten to grade 12 students.[5] School food programs in Canada are abysmally under-resourced by a patchwork of funders, including governments, and non-profit and for-profit organizations. In 2018/19, most provincial and territorial contributions only accounted for a small portion of resources required to provide meals to children and youth — an average of $0.48 per student per school day.[6] As a result, programs rely heavily on the goodwill of volunteers, who are often already busy teachers and parents from the school community juggling many responsibilities.

The (neoliberal) shifting of responsibilities for food provision and health promotion from governments to communities or individuals/households also means that programs have to apply for funding every year and compete with other schools to support these programs. Program coordinators are not only tasked with preparing and buying food in the most cost-efficient ways possible but are also continuously seeking out charitable sources of funding to

sustain their programs.[7] The reliance on volunteerism has depoliticized the problem of school food and nutrition, leaving the responsibility of such programs to the private realm and reinforcing short-term charitable responses.[8]

Systemic solutions for providing access to food and nutrition for all children and youth are required. In 2017, UNICEF raised the alarm about the state of child nutrition in Canada, ranking us 37 out of the 41 wealthiest nations for children's access to nutritious food; below the United States and just above Bulgaria.[9] We can and we must do better.

School food: A public good with holistic impacts

Along with other important income-based solutions for increasing food security, school food solutions can strengthen our social safety net while also supporting health and well-being in the long term.

Why is it that the school libraries and computers are seen as an essential public good to support students' learning, but food is not?

Food plays an integral role in enhancing people's ability to work productively, which is beneficial for society more broadly.[10] While *what* individuals choose to eat might be viewed as a private matter, food is an integral part of how we relate to each other in society in our social, cultural, economic, and ecological systems. As such, we argue that since education is predominantly seen as a public good and being well nourished is a prerequisite for positive socio-educational outcomes, school meals should also be considered a public good.

School food advocacy organizations and other advocacy groups agree with this position. According to the Coalition for Healthy School Food, Canada's largest school food network, "the COVID-19 crisis has revealed that school food is an essential public good, just like K-12 education and healthcare".[11] The School Meals Coalition — a global coalition advocating for school meals — also highlights the importance of school food for nutrition, health, and educational outcomes. They also go beyond this to say that school meals do more than simply provide food, as they can support local agriculture and can help in improving global food systems.[12]

We argue that since education is predominantly seen as a public good and being well nourished is a prerequisite for positive socio-educational outcomes, school meals should also be considered a public good

The impacts of school food are far-reaching.[13] Much like education, school meals nurture our future generations to become engaged citizens that can drive positive change in our national food system as healthy, food literate leaders.[14] But even beyond our schools, school food programs are integral to our local economies. Through the implementation of a national school food program, the federal government can create jobs[15] that support small food producers and schools through sufficient funding and local procurement policy.[16] Public investment in school food would ensure that essential food sector jobs are integrated into the school's workforce and that this is maintained beyond the pandemic. In addition, schools are food hubs where regional food producers and community stakeholders work together to provide local foods to our children. For example, in Brazil's School Food Program 30% of the food provided comes from small family farms.

Given the multiple positive outcomes of such programs, a holistic, expansive, and food systems approach to school food programming[17] should be considered by the Government of Canada when designing our National School Food Policy and Program.

What could it look like? How could it work?

Here are some examples of what school food programming looks like in other countries. In France, students eat a four-course meal around a group table with their peers and a supervisor who teaches them about nutrition, healthy eating, and table manners.[18] Similarly, in Finland, where school meals are free, approximately 95% of JK-12 students participate. In Scotland, access to universal free school meals was expanded to more students, aligning with their proposed legislation to incorporate the right to food into Scottish law.[19] Scottish schools' adoption of the Food For Life program, furthermore celebrates programs' continuous improvement to implement sustainable food practices, including sourcing from local businesses, among other holistic aspirations.

Within Canada, there are some recent trends in how school food programs are operating that policymakers could consider. One option is a sliding scale or 'pay-what-you-can' school food program model where all students receive the same meal, but parents contribute the amount that best suits their budget. This model has been operating in Canada since the late 1980s in St. John's, Newfoundland, and has been recently adopted by Prince Edward Island during the rollout of their provincial school lunch program. Proponents of pay-what-you-can

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programs claim that it increases students' access to food by reducing student stigma and financial barriers to participating; however, limited research has been conducted to confirm if this is the case.

Another rapidly-growing trend is the 'free for all' model. California and Maine have legislated permanent free school meals for all students regardless of income through additional state investments that top-up national funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. At least seven more states — Massachusetts, Colorado, Minnesota, Vermont, New York, Wisconsin, and Maryland — are now considering similar legislation that would make free school meals universally accessible to all students, moving away from the 3-tier stigmatizing system that has ingrained student school meal debt among other challenges. In response to the pandemic, the U.S. Department of Agriculture granted a series of waivers[20] to increase program flexibility including allowing school food authorities to serve meals to all students at no cost. These waivers helped eliminate the stigma around participation in school meals and meant that school nutrition services could focus on meal quality, knowing that every meal was fully reimbursed.

With the development and implementation of a National School Food Policy and Program on the horizon for Canada, this is an opportune moment for the Government of Canada to carefully consider school food as a public good for all children and youth. Building on the recent federal commitment to child care and early childhood education, this is the opportunity to create another Canadian social policy legacy supporting children and youth for generations to come.

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Eric Ng is a PhD Candidate in Policy Studies at Toronto Metropolitan University. He's also Registered Dietitian and Assistant Professor at Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto.

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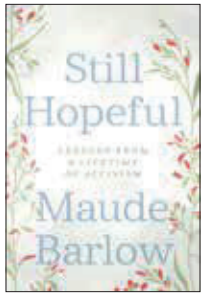
A moral imperative

A review of Maude Barlow's *Still Hopeful: Lessons from a Lifetime of Activism*

Paul Moist



In June 2019 activist and author Maude Barlow was participating in a panel on the Green New Deal in Ottawa with noted climate activists David Suzuki and Avi Lewis.

There was anger and frustration in the air over the worsening climate crisis and the slow pace of meaningful government response. Maude Barlow's message was that citizens should not give up hope, that building a broad-based coalition to advance the Green New Deal *was* possible.

At the end of the event, a high school student approached Barlow in tears and thanked her for her message. The student told Barlow that she and her friends were afraid for what the future held. That conversation was the impetus for this book — Barlow's twentieth.

Over her several decades of activism, Maude Barlow has been the voluntary chairperson of the Council of Canadians and senior water advisor to the United Nations General Assembly, among countless other roles within the national and international global justice movement. *Still Hopeful* outlines the major lessons she has learned from a lifetime of activism, which began in the women's movement.

Barlow outlines the many achievements of women and the challenges that remain for them. She also acknowledges her own white privilege and the whiteness of the movement she became active in more than 50 years ago, saying, "the only way to build a healthy women's movement is to honour the perspectives of diverse women."

The early 1980s saw Barlow on the frontlines of the labour–civil society opposition to free trade. Here she clearly outlines the combined effects of deregulation, privatization and free trade, which she terms "the cornerstones of globalization."

In Canada this agenda led her to high-profile roles in the formation of the Council of Canadians in 1986, and in the 1988 federal election, which was fought over the Canada–U.S. free trade agreement.

Barlow writes in a clear and concise style that makes the often-complicated world of global trade easier to understand. She explains the so-called "Washington consensus," the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the successful pushback against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

Barlow's descriptions of her front-line activism in Seattle in the 1999 WTO protests and in Quebec City at the 2001 Summit of the Americas, and elsewhere around the globe, provide an informative snapshot of the broad-based opposition to globalization.

In September 2003 she attended the WTO ministerial gathering in Cancun, Mexico. South Korean farmers were present in large numbers protesting their way of life being ended by new foreign import trade rights. Barlow witnessed their leader, Lee Kyung-hae, publicly kill himself while surrounded by colleagues wearing signs that read "WTO Kills Farmers." Barlow says it was a scene that "…will haunt me to the end of my days."

A couple of key themes emerge from Barlow's accounts of global activism. One is that building coalitions, bridges between different groups, is hard but necessary work. Another is that success can't be measured by the numbers of campaigns that are waged, or whether they're won or lost. The true test is whether ongoing linkages between civil society groups, labour, faith-based communities and indeed all progressives have been created.

Barlow's work on the water file, in both national and global campaigns, is impressive but also daunting. The scope of the challenge here is staggering. She writes about two billion citizens drinking contaminated water each day, and by 2025 two-thirds of the world's population will live in water-stressed areas. She outlines how even if climate change was somehow solved overnight, these critical water issues would remain.

Fighting the commodification of water has been a lifelong battle for Barlow, and her justified celebration of the UN General Assembly's July 2010 vote to recognize water and sanitation as "essential for the full enjoyment of the right to life" is a moving testament to the global water movement she has been at the centre of.

Still Hopeful does not sugar-coat the magnitude of the challenges that social justice activists face around the globe. But it is a refreshing take on the power of people-based movements and how, as Barlow puts it, "hope, is a moral imperative."

A worthy message from an iconic Canadian social justice activist.

Paul Moist is a retired labour leader.

*Still Hopeful: Lessons from a lifetime of activis*m was published by ECW Press earlier in 2022.

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LINDSAY MCLAREN

A well-being economy

Doughnut economics

ECONOMICS, BROADLY DEFINED as the social science concerned with the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services, as well as wealth, underpins government policies and practices that influence peoples' lives in many ways.

Examples include income transfers, which influence income security and material resources; tax policy, which strongly shapes a population's distribution (level of inequality) of income and wealth; spending decisions, which determine quality and access to public services; and the nature of interaction with private companies (e.g., regulations, subsidies), which can support or harm (e.g., in the case of companies that exploit and thereby exclude workers) well-being and inclusion.

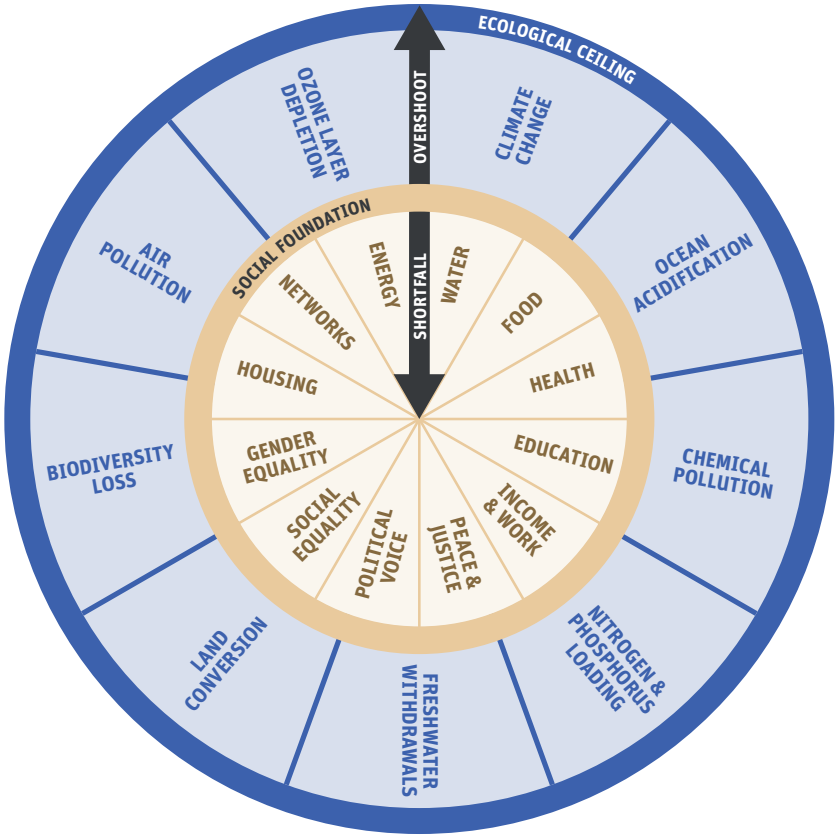
Although "the economy" is often portrayed in public discourse as singular, fixed, neutral and technical, this is not an accurate depiction. All societies have an economy, whose purpose is determined through highly social and political processes. Our current economy of neoliberal capitalism has the purpose of monetary growth: it serves to protect and promote the accumulation of private wealth, and it uses economic policy to do so.

Unfortunately, this economic paradigm is very problematic from the point of view of inclusion. The benefits of economic growth accrue mostly to those who already have high levels of income and wealth, while incomes at and near the bottom have stagnated. Growing levels of inequality directly erode inclusion.

Our narrow focus on economic growth also leads to ecological degradation on a massive scale because, rather than valuing the benefits of nature to society, our economic paradigm permits and even encourages activities that destroy our ecosystems. The local and global implications of this are highly inequitable.

Progressive, or heterodox, economists are a community of economists who question these hegemonic foundations of our society. They advance critiques of dominant economic policies and institutions that are based on their consequences for well-being and inclusion, and they offer alternatives.

Significantly, by placing economics into historical and socio-political contexts, progressive economists make hegemony visible, open to broader understanding and discourse, and thus open to change. Progressive economics embraces a democratic (or inclusive)



Source: https://www.kateraworth.com/doughnut/

economics, which recognizes that everyone is part of, and thus has a voice in, the economy.

An example of an alternative to neoliberal capitalism is a *well-being economy*. Whereas the purpose of our current economy is monetary growth, the purpose of a well-being economy is to improve and support the quality of life of all people and the planet. Its guiding principle is thus community well-being, conceptualized as a resource for everyday living that supports meaningful participation in social and political life for all (i.e., inclusion). It gives primacy to equity (fair distribution of resources and opportunities, so that everyone can participate in society with dignity) and ecological sustainability (reducing impact on the natural environment and preserving biodiversity). This contrasts sharply with neoliberal capitalism, which works directly against these goals.

Doughnut economics, developed by Kate Raworth, provides a conceptual framework for a well-being economy, which can be applied to guide inclusive infrastructure. The framework recognizes that humanity's greatest challenge is to meet the needs of everyone within the means of the planet.

The "doughnut" illustrates the dual imperatives of ensuring that no one is left behind when it comes to the essentials of life (e.g., food, housing, high quality health and social care, political voice; this is the inner ring of the doughnut) while not exceeding the planet's life-supporting systems on which we collectively depend (this is the outer ring of the doughnut).

The framework can be applied to different levels of government. The city of Nanaimo in British Columbia adapted the doughnut model for municipal government, where it now provides "a cohesive vision for all City initiatives and planning processes." Nanaimo created a customized doughnut along with a city portrait (a holistic snapshot of the city through four lenses: social, ecological, local and global) as a way of adapting the framework to its unique environmental, social/cultural, economic, and political contexts. Alignment with *inclusion* is clear from Nanaimo's Strategic Plan Vision, which is "to be a community that is livable, environmentally sustainable and full of opportunity for all generations and walks of life."

The Nanaimo example reveals many implications for inclusive infrastructure that is tailored to the local context. These include land-use decisions, which are focused on increasing walking, biking, and transit; building walkable, dense neighbourhoods and reducing sprawl and transportation-related carbon emissions; and reducing homelessness by increasing rental housing and diverse housing options for different living arrangements and life stages. M

SONJA MACDONALD AND PAUL SHAKER

Inclusion by design

Understanding inclusive infrastructure investment in Canada

THE GOVERNMENT OF Canada's long-term investment plan for infrastructure is an opportunity to reshape the country through many direct and collaborative projects with provinces, territories, municipalities, Indigenous partners and the private sector. The plan identifies regional differences, such as large versus small communities, as well as rural, northern and Indigenous communities that face particular infrastructure challenges. While this focus is not new for the national government, what *is* different in this plan is the expansion of the definition of infrastructure to include "social development" and "inclusive infrastructure."

In this context, inclusive infrastructure is understood as "any infrastructure development that enhances positive outcomes in social inclusivity and ensures no individual, community, or social group is left behind or prevented from benefiting from improved infrastructure."[1]

The sheer scale of public investment in infrastructure demands that we look to leverage this funding to advance public goals such as inclusivity. Through the Investing in Canada Plan that it launched in 2016, the federal government has committed over $180 billion over 12 years for infrastructure that benefits Canadians, including public transit, trading ports, broadband networks, energy systems, community services and natural spaces. To date the plan has invested more than $119 billion in over 77,000 projects.[2]

An inclusive framework

To better understand how an inclusive lens can be employed in infrastructure development, it's useful to view infrastructure as a holistic process. It begins with identifying priorities for investment, followed by the design, procurement and implementation of projects, and ending with short- and long-term outcomes or benefits for communities from the investment.

There are opportunities to apply an inclusive lens throughout the different stages of this process, which ensures that infrastructure investments meet the needs of and benefit the maximum number of people. This view of infrastructure is captured in the Global Infrastructure Hub's (GIH) Framework for Inclusive Infrastructure.[3] The GIH is a not-for-profit organization, formed by the G20, that advances the delivery of sustainable, resilient and inclusive infrastructure. The Framework sets out six actions areas. Each one includes

specific practices that can be employed to ensure inclusivity in infrastructure development.

Adapted from the GIH Inclusive Infrastructure Framework

1. Stakeholder engagement: Groups at risk of being excluded can participate in the priority-setting, planning, design and implementation phases of infrastructure projects. They can also benefit from the assets once they are built/developed. Stakeholder engagement should be part of the entire lifecycle of infrastructure programs.

2. Governance and capacity building: To advance inclusivity, changes must be built into "the structures, processes and systems that define decision-making, economic and social interactions within a community or country."[4] Some key practices that ensure inclusion are transparency (e.g., open data), accountability (e.g. measuring/reporting on outcomes) and capacity-building for both historically underrepresented groups and government staff.

3. Policy, regulation and standards: Inclusive infrastructure will not succeed without clear and enforceable policies, standards and regulations. This is important to ensure a commitment to inclusion is actively undertaken, but also to ensure consistency in expectations for what this inclusion looks like.

4. Project planning, development and delivery: Embedding inclusion into the entire lifecycle of infrastructure projects ensures better participation and ultimately a better outcome for communities. This begins with setting terms for participation of under-represented groups in priority-setting and planning committees, and having a dedicated team that communicates and dialogues with them throughout the project lifecycle. Tools such as community benefit agreements that outline specific deliverables (e.g., training and employment for underrepresented groups and local buying policies) ensure diverse communities benefit not only from the new infrastructure but also from the construction process itself.

5. Private-sector roles and participation: Many large-scale infrastructure projects in Canada are designed to be delivered in whole or in part through partnerships with the private sector. There must be clear parameters for these partners to build inclusion into their processes. This can be done by tying government funding to explicit deliverables related to inclusion (e.g., through employment practices).

6. Affordability and optimizing finance: Affordability refers to two things: whether governments can afford to build and operate infrastructure; and whether end users can afford to access and use it. Means of raising revenue for projects, whatever the mechanisms employed (e.g., tariffs or taxes), must not restrict who can use the infrastructure. Additionally, mechanisms can be put in place to ensure different groups have equitable access to infrastructure (e.g., affordable housing, subsidized transit fees).

Examples from the Canadian context

There are several recent examples of infrastructure investment in Canada that applies elements of an inclusive lens:

Canadian Active Transportation Strategy and Fund
In July 2021 the Government of Canada announced the country's first-ever federal strategy and fund dedicated to building active transportation trails and pathways. As part of developing the strategy, the government sought input from the public and key stakeholders to explore options to deliver more transportation and recreation options such as trails, cycling paths and other forms of active mobility in rural, urban and Indigenous communities. The strategy's vision: "For Canadians of all ages, ethnicities, abilities, genders, and backgrounds to be able to safely and conveniently access active transportation in their communities and to significantly increase the 'modal share' of active transportation"[5] signalled a commitment to inclusion.

First Nation Infrastructure Fund
The fund supports infrastructure projects on reserves, crown land, or land set aside for the use and benefit of First Nations. Each year, First Nations communities are involved in setting priorities in developing infrastructure investment plans that are shared with the Government of Canada. For transparency, the fund publishes data showing ongoing and completed infrastructure projects in First Nations communities across Canada (e.g., feasibility studies, new construction and renovation, and capacity development projects).

Metrolinx
Metrolinx, the Ontario provincial agency that delivers transit infrastructure in the Greater Golden Horseshoe Region, has adopted a policy to include a community benefits program for its rapid transit projects. The program has four principles: inclusivity, accessibility, transparency and collaboration. These principles are achieved through agreements between communities and those building the infrastructure that articulate clear benefits as part of the building process (e.g., employment and training opportunities for traditionally underrepresented groups).

Putman Family YWCA
In January 2019 the Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation announced a $10 million investment to rebuild the Putman Family YWCA in Hamilton to include 50 affordable housing units, 35 of which serve women and women-led families, and 15 of which are reserved for women with disabilities. The funding was part of the National Housing Co-Investment Fund

(NHCF), in partnership with the Province of Ontario and the City of Hamilton. Along with the affordable housing units, a community hub was built on the ground floors of the building offering childcare, services for seniors, and developmental services. The YWCA Hamilton Centre of Innovation, which targets training in non-traditional fields and mentorship services for women, girls and gender-diverse people, is also housed there.

Next steps

The examples above highlight how steps are already being taken to make infrastructure development more inclusive in Canada. However, these approaches are not universal across jurisdictions or types of infrastructure investment. And although some methods currently in use show promise, they could be developed more fully.

The following areas of further research would help make inclusive infrastructure spending in Canada more robust:

1. Community benefits agreements (CBAs): CBAs like those used in the Metrolinx example are a good mechanism to embed commitments to inclusion in the lifecycle of infrastructure projects. However, the approach to CBAs is not consistent across the country. There is little standardization across levels of government as to what areas should be included in CBAs, or who should be involved in their development. There are no set criteria on what metrics should be included, such as employment minimums or averages for particular groups. Finally, there are no standardized methods of evaluation and enforcement to ensure CBAs are being upheld.

2. Inclusive business case analysis: The use of a business case analysis to evaluate infrastructure is already common practice, but factors that help to increase inclusion are not as central to these analyses as they could be. More research should be conducted into better approaches to business case analyses where inclusion is a factor in project cost–benefit analyses.

3. Higher-accessibility design standards: Making infrastructure more accessible, i.e., beyond legislative minimums, is another method for advancing inclusion in infrastructure. One way to achieve this is by incorporating better accessibility design standards into infrastructure project agreements, including CBAs. Although there are currently various standards published, accessibility as a commitment to increase inclusion in infrastructure is a tool not evenly applied.

4. Participatory budgeting for infrastructure: National infrastructure prioritization and spending has been, historically, an inter-governmental process that excludes the broader public. To be more inclusive, the public needs to be more centered in the process. One way to achieve this is through participatory budgeting. This type of budgeting is typically used at community and local levels of government to help determine infrastructure spending priorities through increased participation, transparency and community capacity-building. Using some of the same participatory budgeting techniques at the national level could be a way to inject these same advantages into the federal infrastructure spending process.

5. Measuring inclusion: Affordability of and accessibility to infrastructure are important dimensions of inclusion, but we often lack established methods of measuring them. For example, there are accepted measures of what constitutes affordable housing across communities, but not for what constitutes an affordable fee for broadband access. Further, what constitutes accessibility from an inclusion perspective has not been established. For example, how far does a person have to be from transit service before it is deemed inaccessible?

Efforts are in place now to ensure that inclusion is part of infrastructure planning, as demonstrated by the Government of Canada's current national infrastructure plan, the GIH framework for inclusive infrastructure and the other examples shared here. While this is a good start, more work is needed to continue to develop and embed key principles and practices of inclusion into infrastructure planning. M

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HADRIAN MERTINS-KIRKWOOD

Toward an inclusive just transition

THE MOUNTING CLIMATE crisis is forcing governments to act quickly to put in place new green infrastructure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to ensure existing infrastructure is protected against extreme weather events and other climate-related risks. The scale of new investment is unprecedented. To achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, as the Canadian government has promised, will require on the order of $2 trillion—or $60 billion per year—in new infrastructure.

One of the silver linings of this necessary, expensive action is enormous productive economic activity. Achieving a net-zero carbon economy will create hundreds of thousands of jobs all across the country. However, for Canada's net-zero economy to be a more inclusive economy than it is today will require more than physical infrastructure. Canada also needs adequate social infrastructure to ensure workers and communities aren't left behind in the shift away from fossil fuels. One of the greatest challenges of the clean energy transition is not only that new green infrastructure must be built, but also that old fossil fuel infrastructure must be wound down.

This article takes the preceding discussion on the importance of inclusive social infrastructure and applies it to the specific context of Canada's unfolding energy transition. We introduce the concept of a "just transition" and explore how this framework can help Canada manage an equitable wind down of the fossil fuel industry and an inclusive, productive expansion of an alternative clean economy.

Inclusion risks in a low-carbon transition

There are two main inclusion risks from an energy transition that focuses on physical infrastructure without adequate consideration for supporting social infrastructure.

First, the costs of transitioning out of coal, oil and natural gas may fall disproportionately on already marginalized people. There are between 150,000 and 200,000 people working directly in the fossil fuel industry today. However, closer to a million people depend on the industry indirectly. When a facility such as a coal-fired power plant shuts down, it is not only coal workers who lose their jobs. The effects ripple through an entire community, starting with directly related jobs, such as construction contractors, and then spreading through the rest of the local economy, from food services to recreation to health care. In rural communities in particular, which are often highly or entirely dependent on a single resource project, the closure of that project affects everyone.

Informed by a long history of poorly-managed resource busts, Canadian governments are increasingly stepping in with social policies to support displaced energy workers. However, the design of these programs may, ironically, make inequality worse. For example, the Coal Workforce Transition Program put in place to support Alberta coal workers was restricted to full-time workers at specified facilities, even though those workers, who were more likely to be white, Canadian-born men, were among the most economically secure members of their communities with the greatest mobility and transferable job skills. In contrast, workers displaced from indirectly impacted industries, such as food services and accommodation, who were more likely to be women, immigrants, racialized or otherwise marginalized, received no additional support. The provincial government went so far as to pay high-income coal workers to relocate—through a stipend for moving costs—while leaving lower-income workers in their communities behind.

Second, the benefits of transitioning into lower-carbon alternatives may accrue disproportionately to people who already enjoy significant economic and social privileges. Many of the industries poised for dramatic growth in a clean economy, such as construction, electricity generation, and transportation manufacturing, offer good jobs that are often unionized with high salaries. Unfortunately, these fields largely exclude women, immigrants and racialized workers. Indigenous workers are represented in these industries, but they are disproportionately relegated to lower-income, lower-skill labour roles. As billions in promised public and private investment flows into new physical infrastructure in the coming decades, the employment benefits will largely flow to the same white, Canadian-born men who dominate these industries today.

The lack of diversity in the skilled trades reflects glaring gaps in Canada's social infrastructure. Not only are workers from historically marginalized groups less likely to enroll in the trades, but even if they do they are less likely to complete an apprenticeship and to secure a good job afterward. Governments have failed to make these essential and secure career paths accessible and appealing to people from non-traditional backgrounds. That is a problem from a social equity perspective, but it is also a problem from a purely economic perspective. Employers are already struggling with labour shortages as the largely white, male workforce ages, so a failure to expand the workforce to reflect the diversity of the broader Canadian labour market will make it harder to actually get necessary physical infrastructure built.

In sum, while a focus on physical infrastructure is essential for the transition out of fossil fuels, an

absence of supporting social infrastructure may exacerbate underlying inequities in the labour market and the broader economy, while simultaneously undermining the potential to deliver on an ambitious physical infrastructure agenda.

Advancing inclusion through a just transition

We can address both sets of concerns by employing the concept of a *just transition*, which is a "framework for minimizing the potential harm to workers and communities caused by the shift away from fossil fuels while maximizing the potential benefits that decarbonization entails." The idea of a just transition emerged out of the organized labour movement concerned with the effects of environmental policies on their members' livelihoods. Over time, the term has taken on more diverse and expansive meanings as it has been adopted by states and civil society actors around the world.

These varied definitions of a just transition generally agree on the following high-level principles, ordered here from the most conceptual to the most tangible:

1. Just transitions respect rights, including human rights, labour rights, Indigenous rights and the rights of future generations;

2. Just transitions involve affected workers and communities as partners, not only as stakeholders, in determining their own paths forward;

3. Just transitions expand the social safety net to ensure affected workers and communities don't bear an unfair burden;

4. Just transitions create new economic opportunities for affected workers and communities; and,

5. Just transitions focus on proactive and inclusive workforce development to ensure the economic benefits of transition are widely shared.

The corollary to a just transition is, of course, an *unjust* transition in which jobs disappear "without replacement or support for those displaced." Unjust transitions are the default state for boom-and-bust resource industries in the absence of government intervention, because private actors respond to market signals, such as a commodities price crash, by disinvesting without consideration for the wellbeing of the communities that depend on them.

In contrast, a just transition depends on active democratic management. In the context of Canada's energy transition specifically, a just transition means workers and communities are involved in planning for and executing the wind down of old fossil fuel infrastructure and the corresponding expansion of alternative green infrastructure. In assessing whether these changes in physical infrastructure are inclusive, the five principles of a just transition invite us to ask certain questions, such as:

1. Does this infrastructure respect and advance the rights of people in this community, from traditional Indigenous landholders to the workers involved in its construction and operation to its end users?

2. Was this infrastructure designed in partnership with the communities it is impacting and the communities it is intended to serve?

3. If anyone is displaced by this infrastructure, are they afforded the social and economic support necessary to continue living their lives with dignity and security?

4. Is this infrastructure creating jobs and economic opportunities in the community in which it is being built, especially for workers who are displaced from other industries?

5. Is this infrastructure being leveraged to provide jobs and training opportunities to workers from historically marginalized groups?

All five principles and the questions they require us to consider are grounded in the importance of social inclusion, which is the raison d'être of social infrastructure. To achieve a just transition requires respect for and the participation of all members of affected communities, especially the most marginalized, which cannot happen without deliberate institutional support. Similarly, the costs and benefits of transition cannot be fairly shared without the right social infrastructure in place.

Like the idea of a well-being economy more generally, the idea of a just transition foregrounds community resilience without compromising on the importance of ecological sustainability. A just transition is not an excuse to move slower on climate action. Indeed, a robust just transition strategy enables more rapid action to cut emissions because the social externalities of those policies are proactively accounted for. M

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YOUR CCPA
Get to know **Andrée Forest**

OFFICE: **MANITOBA**
POSITION: **PROJECT COORDINATOR, MANITOBA RESEARCH ALLIANCE**
YEARS WITH THE CCPA: **2**

This issue is all about the future of growth. How is this playing out in your community? What conversations are you hearing about this topic? Reflecting on the future of growth, I'm called to think about progress. For all the growth our economies and societies have experienced, what has improved and what has worsened? Ideas of circular, sustainable economies, or community economic development and creating win-win-win projects is what I'm hearing communities talk about. There is also growth as watching sprouts in the garden, growth as deepening relationships, growth as building networks of support in the face of what is uncertain.

What are you most excited to do with the CCPA–Manitoba team? The team recently had a communications audit (thanks to a Spark: Connections for Community match through CCEDNet Manitoba!) to understand our audiences and how we can better reach those who are interested in our work. I'm looking forward to working on the practical side of this plan and ensuring research and responses to important policy questions reach those who need to hear them.

Tell us a bit about your work with the CCPA–Manitoba office. The Manitoba office is the host for the Manitoba Research Alliance, a group of academic researchers, students and community partners producing community-based research. The

current seven-year, SSHRC-funded partnership grant is on *Community-Based Solutions to Poverty*, which studies and highlights projects and approaches to alleviating poverty in Manitoba, including an eye to the larger systems that challenge this goal. My work consists of coordinating the grant's direction with our research committee and supporting sharing research results in ways that make an impact.

Outside of the CCPA, what progressive policy issues are you following? The issue closest to my heart and community is land back. The dispossession of Indigenous peoples from lands and waters (and thus from communities, languages and wealth in many forms) remains at the root of longstanding inequities in health, education, local economies and more. I was lucky to have my words on the topic published in the *Monitor*'s Big Ideas issue in late 2021, and inspired by writings including the Land Back issue of *briarpatch* magazine in 2020.

What are some prominent challenges in the region where you live? In Winnipeg, the year-after-year growth in the proportion of municipal funds dedicated to the Winnipeg Police Service have effectively decreased funding for other municipal services, especially after inflation is taken into account. This, along with many years of austerity by the provincial government, has left public services and social supports increasingly challenged by communities' growing need for them. Community organizations have stepped up in a big way to fill the gaps, but resources—both financial and human—are strained. Many are thinking about how to address these interrelated issues.

What gives you the most hope right now? Being in relation with those we work with, organize with, the lands and waters that support us and the plants and animals that surround us. Centering ideas original to the lands on Turtle Island: relationship, responsibility and reciprocity. I'm inspired and hopeful to see people and groups trying to understand the concepts and to put them into practice.

FURAHA ASANI

An equitable model of growth is only as equitable as its surrounding narratives

A framework for the future

Imagining a post-capitalist future and a truly equitable and just global society means that our present actions need to already start moving away from the status quo.

We need a defined or desired destination point to move toward. Along this journey, at every single moment, we need to hold three very real phenomena at once: the present, our imagined future and the bridge between the two. This philosophy forms the basis for Bill Sharpe's three horizons model.[1]

In the three horizons model, the third horizon describes an equitable and viable future that we need to envision in the now. The first horizon describes business as usual, and the second horizon describes innovation. The adaptiveness of this model lies in the fact that it holds spaces for us to start "futuring" in the present while making informed choices about what aspects of current society we need in our theorizing and building of an equitable future. The value in the model lies in its emphasis on holding conversations with stakeholders to map out what our future should look like.

This emphasis on communication and amplifying various voices highlights how important it is that different communities operate with autonomy and agency within such conversations. Further, that one aspect of our journey towards an equitable future must include upholding the dignity of those who have been pushed to the margins. And this is where the role of the storyteller comes in.

Within the context of this article, storytellers refer to anyone—individual, subject media expert or media conglomerate—who takes a committed responsibility to reporting narratives that will be consumed by a significant number of people.

History attests to the importance of the storyteller in the documentation and curation of archives, and in the shaping of narratives. Narratives take on a power and influence of their own and can speed or impede our progress towards an equitable future. Thus, any model of equitable growth and/or post-capitalist future will only be as equitable as its surrounding narratives. To this end, it is important that theorists and activists remain intentional about how their work is presented to an audience.

Problematic storytelling practices

Dubious storytelling practices manifest in various ways. There is gatekeeping around: who exactly gets to tell which stories, and which voices are heard or platformed within those stories; which storytellers get to strategically position themselves as "the voice of the voiceless"—often leaving "others" taken advantage of and/or erased; the systemic pipelines designed to platform particular storytellers and ensure career progression; plagiarism and ethics (or the lack thereof) in storytelling, including unethical acquisition of data/anecdata and content, and the perpetuation of problematic narratives within the very stories we tell.

Although harmful and revisionist media narratives are nothing new, focusing on the recent past is enough to provide us with numerous case studies on problematic reporting in mainstream media.

For example, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic there has been a deluge of racist and anti-African storytelling practices, from media headlines and article content to conversations held on social media. The pushback against these narratives has been significant, but it has not stopped the same pattern from playing out in recent reports of Monkeypox cases in Europe. In outlining an outbreak of Monkeypox cases in the Global North, more than one media house chose to use an image of a Black person with the disease. In the case of an outbreak that originated from a sauna in Spain, the image used by SkyNews was a stock photo from WHO/Nigeria Centre for Disease Control. While some social media users argued that it makes sense to use stock photos from trusted sources, together with the voices of other Black people, I argue that this is unfortunately another instance where the comfortable narrative being resorted to is the association of disease with Blackness and Africanness.

It's important to note that problematic narratives can also be peddled by activist groups who otherwise form part of wider social justice movements. To name a few examples, Extinction Rebellion (XR), when they asked British police to focus on "knife crime" instead of arresting climate

activists; the ableism of the plastic straw ban; PETA's equating of speciesism with racism and homophobia; and the cropping out of Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate from widely circulated photos so that it appears that only white activists were present at a few important actions and events.

These examples speak to a phenomenon widely known to already-marginalized scholars, community organizers and activists, whereby some social justice movements themselves amplify marginalization. It is imperative for organizers to hold truth to power, and it is just as important that storytellers (within and outside of these organizations) do the same.

Responsible storytelling

Part of the process of thinking of a more equitable future must include equitable storytelling practices that accompany all our theorizing and actions. Stories become oral histories that form the foundation of legacies. Stories not only reify narratives but can also influence material realities, and it is for this reason that there can be no universal equity if our stories only exemplify prejudice and discrimination. Therefore, equitable storytelling should be considered an invaluable part of futuring (our second horizon).

Best practices for responsible and accountable storytelling cannot come from a one-size-fits-all resource. There are, however, helpful starting points that are applicable and adaptable to different contexts. For example, Sunny Singh, London Metropolitan University–based Professor of Writing and Inclusion in the Arts and founder of the Jhalak Prize, has a list of six questions[2] that all authors can work through to guide their writing practices about marginalized people. For example: "Can someone else tell this story better? Is it someone else's to tell?"

Singh's questions touch on motives and ethics. The Society of Professional Journalists also has a code of ethics[3] that includes such guidelines as avoiding stereotyping, explaining "ethical choices and processes to audiences," and considering "the long-term implications of the extended reach and permanence of publication." The existence of these best-practice guidelines, among many others, points to problematic narratives either being intentional or due to wilful ignorance. This demonstrates that ethical storytelling requires an intentional commitment.

If the process of holding stories—and storytellers—to account and rejecting faulty narratives is part of our second horizon, then the third horizon is about actively maintaining ethical approaches in storytelling and ensuring accountability—and redress where missteps are made.

Equitable futures

When steering ourselves towards this third horizon, many of our conversations tend to use language that strips the future of hope.

We hear a lot of talk about "sustainable" practices. Public scholar and writer Janine Francois argues that the very language of sustainability is underpinned by capitalist logic, and rather than trying to sustain inherently harmful ways we need to prioritize intentional repair and regeneration[4].

When I spoke to Francois for this article, they added that our tendencies toward sustainability expose our preference for quick fixes over long-lasting change: "In white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, talking about sustainability as opposed to regeneration shows us that people are not actually interested in deconstructing capitalism but merely finding ways to hold onto power and sustain privilege."

Francois's mode of thinking aligns with the just transition framework, which the Climate Justice Alliance defines as "a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy... If the process of transition is not just, the outcome will never be. Just Transition describes both where we are going and how we get there."[5]

Like many past and present scholars and organizers committed to social justice, Francois believes it is imperative that any imaginings of an equitable future include decolonization and wealth redistribution, naming the cause of the climate emergency as European Imperialism, and platforming Indigenous cosmologies that always make space for dying and starting anew.

Part of this newness, they add, is intentionality in the language we use in our storytelling about the future: "The current language we're using has no longevity in my mind. A lot of it doesn't have soul or spirit. What we speak over the future needs to be rooted in hope." For that hope to make any impact on the material plane, Francois explains, we need to reconcile with our own impermanence: "Our role in this current epoch of time means accepting that we are merely custodians meant to leave a stronger foundation for the next generation."

A just and truly equitable global society is a worthy imagining to invest our hope in. Holding that image up as one facet of our third horizon requires that we also invest capacity and first-horizon capital to achieve a feasible second-horizon pathway to this goal. It is just as important that the stories we tell, during and after, represent authentic narratives. M

1. h3uni.org/practices/foresight-three-horizons/ **2.** twitter.com/profsunnysingh/status/1423335297245454345?lang=en **3.** spj.org/ethicscode.asp **4.** twitter.com/itsJaninebtw/status/1493880688067715073 **5.** climatejusticealliance.org/just-transition/

ANNA-LIZA BADALOO

Could decolonizing policy redress environmental injustice and racism?

THE CANADIAN Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) is the matriarch of environmental legislation in Canada. But it's been over 20 years since it's been revised. And environmental advocacy groups have a lot to say about what changes could advance environmental justice and equity in Canada via Bill S-5. There's also a new kid on the policy block: Bill C-226, also known as the environmental racism bill.

What would Canada look like if the right to a healthy environment was available to all, including communities that are disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation and climate change? And how could these two policy changes make that happen? To find out, we sat down with some key activists in environmental justice and asked them what they think.

Bill S-5: Strengthening environmental protection for a healthier Canada

Environmental groups across the country are united in their advocacy for two main changes to CEPA: how toxic chemicals are assessed, and the right to a healthy environment.

Stronger assessments for toxic substances

Dr. Jane McArthur, toxic campaigns director at Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, is pushing for stronger measures for toxic substances. "Bill S-5 five prioritizes prohibiting substances that pose the highest risk, but the terminology 'highest risk' is undefined," explains McArthur. "Chemicals that are not the *highest* risk in the existing scientific evidence may still pose *significant* risks."

In 2018 the federal government re-defined the term "vulnerable populations," as it relates to federal chemical management. But the term is still contentious, and McArthur prefers the term "vulnerablized."

She explains: "If we can look at vulnerable in that framework, then we understand that people are being made vulnerable as a result of systemic racism, sexism, gendered thinking or ableism. We're making people vulnerable because of the laws that we have, or their failures."

This concept is vital, given that toxic chemicals can accumulate in the body over time, and toxins may have stronger impacts when they interact with each other.

"Let's say I have a job where I'm exposed to substances that are of concern," McArthur continues. "I might also be exposed to those in the community where I live, and my mother might have been exposed to those when she was pregnant with me. These combinations of exposures make a person particularly vulnerable. But we're not assessing those if we're not looking at all those variables. Not everybody has equal access to the choice to *not* be exposed."

Balancing the right to a healthy environment

On October 8, 2021, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted Resolution 48/13 recognizing that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a human right. UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, Canadian environmental lawyer Dr. David R. Boyd, celebrated by tweeting a shot of himself with a raised fist. The irony? Canada is not one of the 150+ countries who recognize the right to a healthy environment.

While environmental groups welcome this addition, they are also united in fighting the problem. Dr. Elaine MacDonald, program director at Ecojustice Healthy Communities, points out that there are 14 troubling words that follow "the right to a healthy environment." They are: "which may be balanced with relevant factors including social, economic, health and scientific factors," states MacDonald. "We want everything from the word 'which' onwards to be struck from that clause. The courts can decide how to balance it against other issues and other aspects of CEPA. We don't want the right to be undermined before it even becomes law."

McArthur adds: "If you qualify that by arguing that economic factors can supersede it, it's no longer a right to a healthy environment. It's a right to economic activity."

CEPA is largely about pollution prevention and toxic substance regulation. This addition, once properly worded, would bring a human rights lens to the legislation. It would "[shift] that lens so there's recognition that somebody has the right to a healthy environment, the right to not have their air polluted, their drinking water polluted," explains MacDonald. "Government

decision-making under CEPA will require them to take that into consideration."

Cassie Barker, senior program manager of toxics at Environmental Defence, points to the opportunity for citizen engagement around environmental justice issues. "How this right is meaningful, how it is enforced, and how citizens can participate in decision making—those are the key components of environmental rights," notes Barker. "The hope is that we're giving vulnerable groups legislative tools to tackle environmental injustice."

Bill C-226: A national strategy to redress environmental racism

Centering racialized communities

Bill C-226 mandates the Minister of the Environment to develop a national environmental racism strategy, including research on the link between race, socio-economic status and environmental risk, and to provide environmental hazard locations. Requiring consultation with community groups, the strategy may include policy changes, financial compensation (reparations) to impacted groups, and the collection of race-based data.

When compared to the strong advocacy focus on Bill S-5, Waldron (see timeline on Bill C-226) finds that Bill C-226 is often considered an exotic sidebar. Her priority is the exact opposite: "Bill S-5 does not focus on racialized communities—it focuses on vulnerable communities," explains Waldron. "That's not enough, because of all vulnerable communities, racialized communities are the most impacted."

Bill S-5 lumps racialized communities in with other vulnerable populations. Waldron acknowledges that children, women and the elderly are disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation and toxins. "But I'm talking about the politics of it," she says. "That's what Bill C-226 does. It talks about the health impacts on racialized communities, and the fact that they are targeted by industry in a way that children, women and the elderly are not."

Waldron also points to a key knowledge gap: "A lot of people in environmental science or justice haven't had the benefit of critical race work. They don't know how to articulate that through the issue of environmental justice."

Waldron has seen plenty of health impacts to racialized and Indigenous women living close to toxic sites. These include higher rates of cancer, reproductive illness, respiratory illness and birth anomalies. Her research in Nova Scotia showed that Indigenous and Black communities were more likely to live in rural or isolated places.

"Government is more likely to put industry in places that are out of the way, because there's an assumption that the people who live there will not fight back, or they don't have the voice to be heard," Waldron notes. "Where people live, social class, level of education, skin colour, culture, gender—we have to look at these intersections."

Situating environmental racism in a historical context

According to Waldron, it is vital to consider how the past has impacted the current state of environmental racism. "It is born out of systemic inequities that have come out of colonialism. There's a robustness to it, it's baked into our systems," Waldron notes. "Environmental racism manifests out of environmental policies. Ideologies about race and who isn't valuable get written into these policies in ways that are not obvious.

MODERNIZING CEPA

A TIMELINE

2016

The current parliamentary review of CEPA begins. The House of Commons designates the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development to undertake a comprehensive review of CEPA provisions and operations.

2017

The Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development releases its report, *Healthy Environment, Healthy Canadians, Healthy Economy Strengthening the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999*, outlining a whopping 87 recommendations.

2018

The federal government releases its official response. Its follow-up report to the Committee outlines commitments to strengthen protection of the environment and health of Canadians through policy and program improvements, future law reform, and continued engagement on key issues.

2019

Prime Minister Trudeau gives the Minister of Environment and Climate Change a mandate to better protect people and the environment from toxins and other pollution by strengthening the Act.

April 2021

Bill C-28 is introduced but dies on the order papers due to the 2021 federal election.

February 2022

The proposed legislation is re-introduced in the Senate as Bill S-5 Strengthening Environmental Protection for a Healthier Canada Act.

BILL C-226
A TIMELINE

2015
Dr. Ingrid Waldron[1] starts advocating for an environmental racism bill. She and Lenore Zann, then a member of the Nova Scotia legislative assembly, draft such a bill and it is put forward several times in subsequent years, but it never passes.

2020
Zann, now a federal Liberal member of parliament, approaches Waldron and about giving the bill another shot—this time as a federal bill. Waldron makes the bill more robust, adding sections on reparations and the need to collect better statistical data, and more about health care. Zann puts it forward as Bill C-230 in December of that year.

Spring 2021
Bill C-230 passes second reading in the House of Commons. But, like Bill C-28, it dies on the order papers later that year when the federal election is called.

February 2022
The proposed legislation is re-introduced to the Senate by Elizabeth May as Bill C-226: An act respecting the development of a national strategy to redress environmental racism.

Environmental policies continue to be written in the same way, and the cycle is never broken. White people always talk about neutrality. Everything seems very neutral, but it's not."

Giving impacted communities a voice
A key aspect of the bill is the requirement to consult with impacted communities. "There are five principles of environmental racism, and one of them is that the people who are most impacted are not at the table making policy decisions," notes Waldron. "We have to do this strategy right. Let's hear what racialized people on the front lines have experienced."

Race-based data can demonstrate the impacts of environmental racism
Everyone can agree on the need for disaggregated data. "The government will have to collect statistical, race-based data that looks at the intersection of race, socioeconomic status, and toxic burden in the communities that are most impacted," explains Waldron. "You can't address an issue if you don't know what's going on."

Mapping toxic sites is one way to provide evidence of the impacts of environmental racism. Waldron's ENRICH Project produced an interactive map of environmental racism hotspots across Nova Scotia. Now, the Canadian Coalition for Environmental and Climate Justice (CCECJ) is working on a Canada-wide environmental racism map. As Bill C-226 requires the involvement of community groups in environmental policymaking, the CCECJ could be a valuable partner in co-creating the strategy.

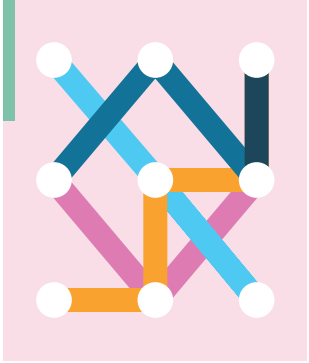
Waldron hopes that this bill will de-silo the environmental and health sectors. "Environmental scientists work on pollution, but never truly make links with health," Waldron explains. "It's siloed off. This bill is going to legitimize the health impacts. It's important to know the full gamut of the health issues affecting communities."

Do the bills go far enough?
Waldron acknowledges that Bill C-226 isn't a magic wand that will suddenly clean up our environment and eliminate toxic impacts on racialized people. She also knows that, because it is a Private Members' Bill, it's possible that it will pass but then no concrete action will be taken. She sees other benefits beside the legislation situating Canada as a global environmental racism leader: "It holds the government's feet to the fire. It makes them much more accountable and creates transparency. If they're not doing what they said they would, the public can remind them of that when elections come around."

Barker sees a real opportunity for race-based data to demonstrate the impact of environmental racism, thus holding industry to account. "We hope for more prohibitive decisions that will prevent a lot more toxics and pollution. More data will hopefully inform better policy decisions. But Bills S-5 and C-226 together still aren't enough, because we need more substantial legislative and budgetary tools to change course on toxics and climate."

Both bills are expected to go to the House of Commons this coming fall. In the meantime, McArthur calls upon all Canadians to get in touch with their elected officials and tell them why passing this legislation is important. "It doesn't have to be from policy experts or physicians. Hearing from constituents that this is important to them, even via anecdotes and stories, really does make a difference. A quick note or phone call can help officials move things forward."

1. Dr. Waldron is founder and executive director of the ENRICH Project and co-founder of the Canadian Coalition for Environmental and Climate Justice. Currently she is the HOPE Chair in Peace and Health in the Global Peace and Social Justice Program at McMaster University. She is also the author of *There's Something in the Water: Environmental Racism in Indigenous and Black Communities* (Fernwood, 2020).



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GDP v. Well-being

1937
The year economist Simon Kuznets presented the original Gross Domestic Product (GDP) formulation in a report to the U.S. Congress. The goal was to capture all economic production in a single measure. The rest is history.[1]

1944
The year (following the Bretton Woods conference that established the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) when the GDP became the standard tool for assessing a country's economy. It's the beginning of when a country's status became tied to the size of its economy.[2]

$682.98 billion
Canada's average GDP between 1960 and 2020. It started out at $50.73 billion in 1960 and rose to its highest point, $2,316.06 billion, in 2013.[3]

24.32%
America's slice of the global GDP pie—the biggest in the world, followed by China's at 14.84%. Canada's checks in at 2.09%.[4] That said, Canada is #9 on Investopedia's top-10 richest countries in the world list.[5]

1999
The year Atkinson Foundation convened Canadian experts with the goal of creating a well-being index to inform policymakers in ways that the GDP measure never could.[6]

2008
The year France established a commission to define "post-GDP parameters of success." The OECD and EU launched "Beyond GDP" campaigns in that year too.[7]

2009–10
The years the Canadian Index of Wellbeing releases two reports showcasing eight well-being domains for Canada, including: community vitality, democratic engagement, education, environment, healthy populations, leisure and culture, living standards, and time use.[8]

2012
The year the annual World Happiness Report was launched. In 2022, Canada ranked #16 in happiness, and Finland #1.[9]

2012
The year the Rio+20 UN Summit paved the way for the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—new international benchmarks to guide governments' economic policies.[10]

2017
The year Kate Rawlins published her book *Doughnut Economics: seven ways to think like a 21st century economist*—a holistic compass for human prosperity built on a social foundation.[11]

2019
The year the New Zealand government framed its national budget as a well-being budget focused on five priorities taking mental health seriously, improving child well-being, supporting the aspirations of the Māori and Pasifika populations, building a productive nation, and transforming the economy.[12]

2020
The year the New Zealand government amended its well-being budget priorities to include just transition to a climate-resilient, sustainable and low-emissions economy; enabling all New Zealanders to benefit from new technologies and lift productivity through innovation; lifting Māori and Pacific incomes; skills and opportunities; reducing child poverty and improving child well-being; and supporting improved physical and mental health outcomes for all New Zealanders.[13]

2021
The year Canada's federal government announced the creation of its Quality of Life Strategy, including considering life satisfaction "as an overarching indicator to complement several key domain-specific indicators in providing a high-level assessment of overall quality of life in Canada."[14,15,16] 2021 was also the year that Penguin Random House published Jason Hickel's book *Less is More: How Degrowth Will Save the World*. Hickel has become a leading spokesperson for degrowth—a vision for a post-capitalist economy—as a means of avoiding ecological collapse.[17] And the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released its 22nd Alternative Federal Budget, which is the ultimate well-being federal budget in Canada.[18]

1. FOREIGNPOLICY.COM/2011/01/03/GDP-A-BRIEF-HISTORY/ **2.** FOREIGNPOLICY.COM/2011/01/03/GDP-A-BRIEF-HISTORY/ **3.** TRADINGECONOMICS.COM/CANADA/GDP (NOTE: U.S. CURRENCY WAS CONVERTED TO CANADIAN CURRENCY ON JUNE 7, 2022, VIA WWW.XE.COM/CURRENCYCONVERTER/) **4.** FOREIGNPOLICY.COM/2017/02/24/INFOGRAPHIC-HERES-HOW-THE-GLOBAL-GDP-IS-DIVVIED-UP/ **5.** WWW.INVESTOPEDIA.COM/INSIGHTS/WORLDS-TOP-ECONOMIES/ **6.** UWATERLOO.CA/CANADIAN-INDEX-WELLBEING/ABOUT-CANADIAN-INDEX-WELLBEING/HISTORY **7.** FOREIGNPOLICY.COM/2015/06/02/A-POST-GDP-WORLD/ **8.** UWATERLOO.CA/CANADIAN-INDEX-WELLBEING/ **9.** WORLDHAPPINESS.REPORT/ED/2022/HAPPINESS-BENEVOLENCE-AND-TRUST-DURING-COVID-19-AND-BEYOND/#RANKING-OF-HAPPINESS-2019-2021 **10.** FOREIGNPOLICY.COM/2015/06/02/A-POST-GDP-WORLD/ **11.** DOUGHNUTECONOMICS.ORG/ABOUT-DOUGHNUT-ECONOMICS **12.** WWW.BEEHIVE.GOVT.NZ/FEATURE/WELLBEING-BUDGET-2019 **13.** WEALL.ORG/RESOURCE/NEW-ZEALAND-IMPLEMENTING-THE-WELLBEING-BUDGET **14.** WORLDHAPPINESS.REPORT/ED/2022/TRENDS-IN-CONCEPTIONS-OF-PROGRESS-AND-WELL-BEING/ **15.** WWW.THINKUPSTREAM.CA/POST/A-QUALITY-OF-LIFE-STRATEGY-FOR-CANADA-COULD-BE-LIFE-CHANGING **16.** WWW.CANADA.CA/EN/DEPARTMENT-FINANCE/SERVICES/PUBLICATIONS/MEASURING-WHAT-MATTERS-TOWARD-QUALITY-LIFE-STRATEGY-CANADA.HTML **17.** WWW.JASONHICKEL.ORG/LESS-IS-MORE **18.** POLICYALTERNATIVES.CA/PUBLICATIONS/REPORTS/ALTERNATIVE-FEDERAL-BUDGET-2022

SABRINA FERNANDES

Less is more?

Degrowth as a change in direction

THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS tells us about climate disaster, but greenhouse gas emissions are not the only limits being crossed.

We deal with pollution, ecosystem collapse, loss of biodiversity, soil infertility, and a system based on extracting incredible amounts of raw materials from one place while residues accumulate untreated somewhere else. The metabolism of our planet is hurt and interrupted every day by systematic practices of production and consumption that cannot be addressed by simple individual change. These are cumulative processes tied to the maintenance of capitalism, which requires more resources, from altering nature and exploiting labour, to keep growing.

The imperative of growth behind capitalism is about a particular *kind* of growth. It is measured in currency and stock and can also be illustrated by World Inequality[1] data that shows that since 1995 the world's richest grew their wealth by almost 20 times more than the bottom 50% of global society. According to Oxfam,[2] annual greenhouse gas emissions grew by 60% between 1990 and 2015, and the richest 5% contributed to 37% of this increase. This is the kind of growth that we mean should be eliminated when we discuss degrowth.

Degrowth debates are pluralistic and it is important to emphasize that. As the imperative of growth has affected places differently according to a long history of colonization, imperialism and uneven capitalist development, degrowth cannot offer a one-size-fits-all answer. Wealthier countries have reaped the benefits of capitalist growth in ways that contributed to the underdevelopment of poorer regions, especially regarding two elements: unequal economic exchange and unequal ecological exchange. International production is divided according to the cost of labour, with cheaper wages in extractive and manufacturing industries in the Global South, whereas specialized labour demanding particular skills is awarded with higher wages in the North. This is also uneven because capitalism contributes to pockets of exploitation everywhere, even in the richest of nations.

The current system condemns entire societies to exploitation and underdevelopment in Latin America, Africa and South Asia, while their local elites still benefit from connections to elites in wealthier places where the working class is also divided into those who can consume the many products of capitalism and those who have to sell their labour so cheaply that they can barely make ends meet. The cost of living crisis in places like the United Kingdom, where 1.3 million people[3] are expected to fall into absolute poverty by 2023, means that the imperative of growth does not translate into the ideological claims behind a trickle-down approach. When the economy grows, the richest get richer. And when there is a crisis, the richest continue to get richer whereas the poor struggle and the state claims overall inability to provide for all basic needs.

This general state of inequality means that while the growth imperative must be confronted, degrowth is not about reducing goods and services in the same proportion for everyone. The proposal is to change the logic behind how we produce things and organize society so we can finally tend to the basic needs of everyone as well as the reasonable wants that are possible in a planet with finite resources.

To avoid a degrowth perspective that is purely quantitative and ignorant of the need to grow some sectors of industry, infrastructure and services so we can finally address the gaps left by poverty and inequality, placing degrowth within an ecosocialist strategy is vital. Ecosocialism proposes a post-capitalist society that addresses the class antagonism between the majority who work and produce value and the minority who accumulate obscene levels of capital in the process. Therefore, ecosocialism must do away with the current system of private property. But the understanding that the capitalist system is inherently destructive of nature also requires a strategy that is ecological and rejects the temptation to move away from capitalism while copying its patterns of extraction, production and consumption. If there is a problem of underdevelopment in the periphery of capitalism, the notion of development under ecosocialism must rely on alternative perspectives on the improvement of people's lives. Ecosocialism must build an infrastructure, but one that is made to last and that is less hostile to the environment; one that creates jobs, but also more free time and opportunities for collective leisure that contributes to "living well."

The climate crisis—the accelerating loss of biodiversity, the existence of dead zones in the ocean due to overwhelming amounts of plastic, and the poisoning of water systems due to predatory large-scale

mining practices, among other things—means that it is time for a degrowth imperative on the general mode of production and consumption today. By attacking the direction of accumulation, degrowth is an anti-capitalist tool. As such, it must be tactical in its approach to the general inequality of living standards and lived experiences. Some areas must degrow immediately and other areas more gradually; whereas, at the margins, growth will be induced in many sectors, but in a different direction.

The fossil fuel industry is a primary target for degrowth. Fossil fuels are the main source of greenhouse gas emissions and still benefit from far greater public and private finance than sectors connected to climate change adaptation and mitigation. Obviously, the world cannot give up fossil fuels overnight, but this realization has long been used to postpone more radical measures that are necessary to lessen fossil fuel exploitation and dependence. Transition must be gradual, in the sense that its pace depends on the infrastructural inequalities that must be addressed and the availability of substitutes.

This understanding, however, can no longer be used to prolong the viability of the fossil fuel industry and the interests of fossil capital. In fact, one of the traps of fossil capital is its use of "diversification" and investment in renewables to ensure that its corporations can profit from new green markets while keeping the old ones. A fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty[4] is a worthwhile endeavor to keep this in check through a moratorium on the exploitation of new reserves where there are alternatives available and a plan for phasing-out current operations.

To address inequalities, a calculated effort to transfer appropriate technology to countries in the Global South whose economy is highly dependent on fossil fuel income is required. Their economic vulnerability is no reason to exclude these countries from their ecosystemic responsibility, but the historical responsibility of the nations that have contributed the most to climate change means they should aid the others in their phasing-out plans and efforts to diversify the economy together with a just transition towards renewables. This historical responsibility also adds to the great necessity of investing in adaptation projects in vulnerable areas. In this case, growth is directed towards a qualitative change in social and economic infrastructure.

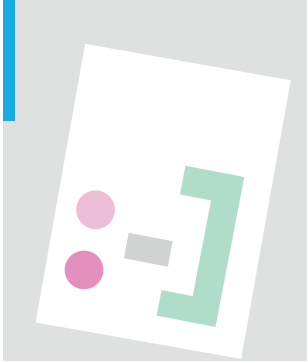
Adapting today is cheaper than dealing with damage in the future, and it will preserve more human life and associated ecosystems. Thus, degrowth is not detached from an investment system built around compensation and, better yet, racial and climate reparations, as Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò argues.[5] In fact, a successful degrowth tactic within an ecosocialist paradigm, which includes a radical vision of climate justice, requires reparations in order to properly attend to the urgencies of the ecological crisis while fostering alternative economic relations on the ground. It is unrealistic to require Venezuela, for example, to quickly phase out its petroleum operations without proper support for agro-ecological investment, installation of wind and solar power, and sovereign diversification of its domestic industry, when the United States alone has historically emitted about 50 times more CO^2 into the atmosphere[6] than the South American country.

The logic behind private property gets in the way of such proposals, since much of this investment is perceived as expenditures that not only come with no profit attached but also halt prospective profit opportunities. This is clearly the case with breaking patents for strategic technology and promoting a delinkage paradigm[7] for innovation. But there is actually more room for targeted and useful innovations, such as those focused on efficient housing and electrified public transit, when pricing and profit do not influence knowledge creation and production. For example, if one hopes to degrow the passenger car industry, both conventional and electric, then buses and trains should be the ones to run on clean electricity and their systems should be expanded to more areas.

But we also have to avoid fetishizing electrification along the way, since the minerals required are limited and their extraction impacts[8] local communities and natural systems. The entire mining industry needs to come under the degrowth imperative, even the new wave of green extractivism focused on strategic minerals for renewables. The contradiction between the growing demand for such minerals and the need to regulate the supply has to be addressed through priorities; for example, by focusing primarily on the more than 800 million people without access to electricity today, and through implementing systems geared towards reuse, recycling, remaking, efficient product design and without planned obsolescence.

Ecosocialist degrowth[9] requires planning and it cannot be done only from a local or national perspective. Regional integration is important, since ecosystems do not respect human-made borders, and internationalist solidarity must guide the debate over priorities and the mandate to bring a dignified life to the majority of society—dignity that has long been denied by the capitalist system while it destroys the prospects for life due to its never-ending hunger for cheap labour and natural resources. M

1. wir2022.wid.world/executive-summary/ **2.** oxfam.org/en/press-releases/carbon-emissions-richest-1-percent-more-double-emissions-poorest-half-humanity **3.** resolutionfoundation.org/publications/inflation-nation/ **4.** rosalux-geneva.org/climate-researcher-calls-for-a-fossil-fuel-non-proliferation-treaty%EF%BF%BC/ **5.** global.oup.com/academic/product/reconsidering-reparations-9780197508893?cc=de&lang=en& **6.** ourworldindata.org/co2/country/venezuela **7.** keionline.org/delinkage **8.** foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/07/renewable-energy-transition-critical-minerals-mining-onshoring-lithium-evs-climate-justice/ **9.** monthlyreview.org/2022/04/01/for-an-ecosocialist-degrowth/



The good news page

Activision Blizzard's Raven Software workers vote to form industry's first union

A small group of Wisconsin-based quality assurance testers at Activision Blizzard's Raven Software, which develops the popular Call of Duty game franchise, voted 19–3 in favor of unionizing in mid-May, creating the first labor union at a major U.S. gaming firm. Though the group of about 20 workers only represents a small portion of the company, which employs nearly 10,000 workers globally, the vote marks a symbolic victory for labor advocates in an industry increasingly mired with allegations of abuse and poor working conditions. / Guardian

River otter spotted in Detroit River for first time in 100 years

Recently, Eric Ste Marie, a marine ecologist studying at Windsor University in Ontario, reported seeing a river otter in the Detroit River. River otters hadn't been seen in the river for 100 years, but cleanup efforts in the past few decades have paved the way for their return. River otters are an "indicator species," and their presence is a measure of cleanliness in the water according to John Hartig, a visiting scholar at the Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research who focuses on pollution cleanup in the Great Lakes. "If they're there, it's a good sign." / CNN

Floating tidal project linked to Nova Scotia grid in Canadian first

After a decade of development and testing, a floating tidal energy project in the Bay of Fundy was recently connected to Nova Scotia's power grid. The brainchild of Edinburgh-based ocean energy specialist, Sustainable Marine, the project looks like a cross between a catamaran and a rake with wind turbines on its tines. It marks a milestone for Canada's marine energy ambitions as the bay's huge tidal wave resources could be harnessed for thousands of megawatts of clean energy in the future. / The Energy Mix

Conservation groups protect 21,000 western Maine acres

Conservation organizations in Maine have preserved more than 20,000 acres in the western part of the state. The newly conserved lands border the Appalachian Trail and include trails that access it. The Forest Society of Maine said it worked with dozens of organizations and individual donors to raise money to protect the lands. "These lands, which are rated highly for their resiliency to climate change, are now protected from conversion to non-forest uses in an area experiencing strong development pressures," the society said in a statement. / AP

California breaks ground on world's largest urban wildlife crossing

Construction recently started on a $90 million bridge over a freeway and feeder road about 35 miles (56.33 kilometres) northwest of downtown Los Angeles, billed as the world's largest wildlife crossing for mountain lions and other animals caught in Southern California's urban sprawl. The bridge will stretch 200 feet (61 metres) over U.S. highway 101 to give big cats, coyotes, deer and other wildlife a safe path to the nearby Santa Monica Mountains. It is expected to be completed by early 2025. "This wildlife crossing could not have come at a better time. It is truly a game changer," said Jeff Sikich, biologist for the National Park Service. "Today's groundbreaking sets a path toward saving our local mountain lions and supporting the diversity of wildlife in this whole region." / AP

Nonspeaking valedictorian with autism shares her voice in commencement address

Rollins College valedictorian, Elizabeth Bonker, one of five graduating students to earn a 4.0 GPA, recently delivered an address at her school's commencement ceremony in Winter Park, Florida. Clad in a cap and gown decorated with flowers, Bonker explained through a text-to-speech program how she typed her remarks using a single finger with the help of a communication aide. People with nonspeaking autism (about 30% of all people with autism) have trouble developing speech. In Bonker's case neuromotor issues inhibit her communication and her ability to do some other basic tasks. Learning to type changed everything for her. "That one critical intervention unlocked my mind from its silent cage," Bonker said during her address. During her time at Rollins, Bonker also founded Communication 4 ALL, a non-profit that supports her dream of ending stigma and silence for other nonspeaking people with autism. / CNN

Near-extinct species restored to the vegetable kingdom

Historically collard greens have been an inexpensive, nutrient-rich and much-loved vegetable in the U.S. for many Southern families, especially African Americans trying to feed their families healthy food year-round. Now, a group of seed savers, farmers, activists and academics, known collectively as the Heirloom Collard Project, are preserving and reintroducing people to rarer collard varieties, and connecting with older seed stewards before their stories are lost to time. / NPR

ASAD ISMI

The possibilities for buen vivir

YOU MAY HAVE heard the term "Buen Vivir" when it was made part of the constitutions of Bolivia and Ecuador (in 2009 and 2008 respectively), the first countries to give rights to nature.

Buen Vivir (BV) is an Indigenous-led philosophy and movement spreading throughout Latin America and beyond that presents an alternative to unsustainable capitalist growth. It arises mainly from Indigenous philosophies of the Kichwa/Quechua people based in Ecuador (who call it *Sumak Kawsay*) and the Aymara people based in Bolivia (who call it *Suma Qamaña*).

BV means "living well, but not better than others, or not at the expense of others" writes Zuhal Yeşilyurt Gündüz,[1] associate professor of political science and international relations at TED University in Ankara, Türkiye. Most importantly, BV is about decolonization. It "challenges the legacy of colonialism which has unjustly rendered non-Western knowledge systems as inferior," writes Cecilia Uitermark[2] of the Netherlands-based Sinchi Foundation, which supports Indigenous projects around the world.

BV sees humans not as individuals but as part of communities that include nature, animals, plants and spirits. At the same time, it's not solely an Indigenous philosophy. For example, it has been influenced by the degrowth movement in the Global North. Like degrowth, BV rejects both unchecked growth and capital accumulation, and strives to establish harmony. To create this harmony, BV calls for "a self-sustaining and non-accumulative economy in balance with nature" that emphasizes "local and small-scale food production," according to Uitermark.

Gündüz contrasts capitalism with BV: "While capitalism puts the individual at the forefront (the right to buy, sell, possess, throw [out]), *Buen Vivir* places the rights of the individual below the rights of the people, societies and nature.... In *Buen Vivir*, people can never own soil, land, water, resources and forests. Placing a price on nature would mean to own and possess the planet, to buy and sell it like a commodity."

Ecologist Eduardo Gudynas, executive secretary of the Latin American Centre for Social Ecology in Uruguay and a leading promoter of the movement, emphasizes that BV "is equally influenced by Western critiques [of capitalism] over the last 30 years, especially from the field of feminist thought and environmentalism. It certainly does not require a return to some sort of Indigenous, pre-Columbian past."

While much has been written about Buen Vivir, especially by academics, it has proved difficult to implement at the state-level. This is to be expected. A particular condition of BV is that it cannot be implemented in one country only—it requires regional and international cooperation to take root in a long-lasting form.

The leftist government of President Rafael Correa that governed Ecuador from 2007 to 2017 tried to put BV into practice by asking rich countries for $3.6 billion in exchange for not extracting Ecuador's petroleum deposits, which amount to almost a billion barrels of oil. Correa received only a fraction of the money requested and so Ecuador had to return to oil extraction. (Oil is the country's main export.)

Correa's former foreign minister, Guillaume Long, told me that Latin American countries like Ecuador "have depended on raw materials for at least 500 years, so this model cannot be changed in a few years. An immediate moratorium on oil or mining extraction can be disastrous.... In Ecuador's case this would only leave agriculture, which does not generate adequate revenue."

Long agrees that BV should be implemented and that Ecuador needs to move away from raw material exports, but to do this properly there needs to be a long-term transition plan.

"The Correa government had such a plan and sowed some of the seeds of its implementation," Long says, "but you need about 20 years of continuous stable progressive government before the plan can achieve significant results."

And how many progressive political parties can stay in power for 20 continuous years in an electoral system?

Long says that the second requirement for the realization of BV is education. The public needs to be taught about this philosophy that many people are not familiar with. You also need a high level of public education in general to move away from a raw materials–based economy, so that people can be empowered to engage in more knowledge-centred productive activities.

Long points out that the Correa government did well in this area, increasing education spending from 0.7% of GDP to 2.3% at a time when the Latin American average for education spending was 0.8%.

The third requirement for transitioning to BV, says Long, is a strong tax base: "A lot of countries that are dependent on raw materials suffer

from low levels of tax collection," he explains. "They go through boom-and-bust cycles as the prices for their raw materials fluctuate on the international market. To stabilize this trend, you need to have effective taxation because that gives you a constant income, so that even if oil prices collapse you still have enough income to keep the state functioning."

Here too, the Correa government was able to massively increase the taxes it collected—from $3.5 billion annually to $15 billion annually, according to Long. This was done mainly not by raising taxes but by making tax collection much more efficient. Long points out that $15 billion was 50% of annual state expenditure— about the same amount of money Ecuador made from selling oil every year.

The fourth condition needed, explains Long, is significant public investment in those sectors of the economy that can move it towards BV: "Buen Vivir requires huge cultural change. It's very difficult to implement this post-materialist vision of development if everything is based on the market and consumption."

The leftist government of Indigenous president Evo Morales, which governed Bolivia from 2006 to 2019, wrote Buen Vivir into its constitution in 2009. But this government also met with several challenges when it tried to implement BV, says Angus McNelly, a lecturer in international relations at the University of Greenwich (U.K.) who specializes in Bolivian politics.

First, McNelly says, "the liberal structures of the state were left unchanged—rule of law, balance of power within the state, individual freedoms, social contract between state and citizens—so there was no way of situating state policies within nature. Liberalism is based on the premise of human exceptionalism because of [humans'] capacity to reason, which places them outside (and above) nature. The institutions produced under this ideology reflect this, allowing no place for the rights of nature written into the new constitution."

Second, McNelly explains, like Ecuador, when the Bolivian government tried to put BV into practice it "quickly collided with the harsh reality of the political economy of development in South America—a region that has been inserted and re-inserted into the world markets and the global division of labour in a subordinate position [as raw material supplier]."

This was especially true around the time that Morales came to power, which coincided with what McNelly describes as a global commodities boom driven by China's industrial transformation and mass urbanization.

The commodities boom "drove natural resource prices sky-high, leading South American countries to expand the extraction of natural resources to take advantage of this boom," says McNelly. "The commodification of nature through extractivism is the polar opposite of Buen Vivir," he explains, "but it was the basis for the redistributive policies and modalities of social inclusion of progressive governments in the region, including [that of] Morales."

The boom ended in 2013, but extractivism remains "the dominant feature of political economy and the principal mode of capital accumulation in Bolivia and South America," according to McNelly. He emphasizes that the boom "forged new forms of dependency that make breaking with this model extremely difficult."

McNelly believes that "an alternative pathway like the one offered by Buen Vivir can only be achieved with accompanying change in the imperial core and especially the de-financialization of natural resources. The scope for this happening at the moment seems quite limited."

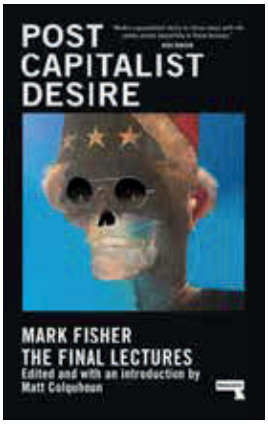
This situation has not changed with the Luis Arce government coming into power in Bolivia in 2020 (Arce belongs to Morales's party, Movement Towards Socialism or "MAS".) However, social movements in Bolivia are pushing the Arce government to move away from extractivism and towards Buen Vivir. In April 2021, Indigenous and farmer organizations along with trade unions signed a letter to the government stating:

> Convinced that we must confront the climate crisis with integrated solutions that include a reduction of greenhouse gases, an energy transition, changing our patterns of consumption and production, a change in our logic of accumulation and concentration of wealth and power, a change in the logic of seeing Mother Earth's beings as resources and commodities, instead of as brothers and sisters, our family; convinced that we must recover our ancestral harmonious relationship with Mother Earth, we are convinced that to reunify with it requires a change in the system that implies overcoming extractivism, productivism, mercantilism, patriarchy, racism, egocentrism, individualism, neocolonialism, and anthropocentrism. M

1. "Another World is Possible: The Post-COVID-19 World—Buen Vivir" vox.lacea.org/?q=blog/post_covid19_world **2.** "El Buen Vivir—The Post-Pandemic Way Forward?" sinchi-foundation.com/news/el-buen-vivir-the-post-pandemic-way-forward/

REVIEW BY ARIAN KHAMENEH

How can we imagine a post-capitalist future?



POSTCAPITALIST DESIRE: THE FINAL LECTURES
MARK FISHER, MATT COLQUHOUN
2020, Repeater

THIS VOLUME PRESENTS Mark Fisher's final public talks before his tragic death by suicide a mere month after the last lecture in this compilation was given, cutting short another 10 planned lectures. Edited and introduced by Matt Colquhoun, one of Fisher's students, the transcribed lectures give a degree of insight into how Mark Fisher thought about the prospect of post-capitalist existence.

While his oft-cited and oft-memed bestseller, *Capitalist Realism*, describes the bleak inescapability of a world dominated by capital, Fisher's lectures on post-capitalist desire have a playfulness in their discussion of how we can imagine a sense of being that is separated from capitalist consciousness.

Fisher is purposefully open-ended on the concept as he describes a different society that is born out of capitalism and yet isn't tainted by the negative associations with communism. To Fisher one of the main hindrances to developing a post-capitalist imagination is "consciousness-deflation." Time-poverty is the main process through which awareness is prevented, which nowadays is exacerbated through electronic devices that ensure we're always tethered to a world articulated through the imperatives of capital. After a day of wage labour in the outside world (or at least the virtual version of it), then domestic labor at home, plus endless distractions available, there is simply no energy to start thinking of how things could be otherwise. "Capital must always prevent that awareness amongst people that they could live differently and have more control over their own lives. It *must* prevent that. It *has to* do it, and it has to *keep* doing it," Fisher says.

In a sense, this is the narrative thread that runs through all of Fisher's work. The struggle of inventing alternative forms of organizing society amidst a cultural atmosphere where capitalism appears inevitable. There are worlds, desires, modes of being that are available to us outside the parameters of thinking about how to make money. As the iconic mural attributed to Fisher at Goldsmiths in London quotes: "Emancipatory politics must always destroy the appearance of a natural order."

Postcapitalist Desire is an odd work, in that as a series of lectures that cover certain books and authors, it is sometimes difficult to separate Fisher's thinking from the review of the authors on the syllabus. The unpolished, conversational nature of the text gives the feeling of being there, albeit occasionally making for digressive, cluttered reading. Unlike 20th century thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan, whose published lectures were accessible occasions to exhibit their own ideas, Fisher's lecture series is situated in the modern university with its structured course syllabi and board-approved learning requirements. However, the casualness of it all also allows Fisher's wit and unpretentious nature to shine through. One such highlight is his comment on Jean-Paul Sartre's drug-fueled production of his *Critique of Dialectical Reason:* "He wrote it on speed. Yeah. And you know what happens when people write on speed! [Laughter.] *They* think it's brilliant... [More laughter.] Others..."

True to the norm of lectures, a lot of time is spent asking students (and the reader) the big questions. How do contemporary political movements seize power without reproducing domination? How can anti-capitalism be imagined without being marred by Leninist dogmas? What are the actual necessities now that put limits on human freedom?

According to Fisher, central to the development of another consciousness is the possibility of working less and having more autonomy over living our lives in a way that accommodates our needs. Fisher's ideas bring reminiscences of the younger, more romantic Karl Marx, who imagined how a world free of wage labour would unleash the creative potential of human beings and allow us a liberated existence that can be spent on reading classic novels and fencing—unbound by "time-poverty" and a crippled consciousness. These questions weren't mere intellectual

abstractions for Fisher either, as he often wrote openly and honestly about his tenuous connection to the labor market and the perpetual money problems he faced in his struggle towards reconciling meaningful work with making a living.

In another candid moment, Fisher half-jokingly admits to his students during the first lecture that he "doesn't know anything about economics." Fisher is less concerned with how it would be economically feasible to realize a post-work society, as he is interested in the psychosocial barriers towards post-capitalism and how culture and life at large could be imagined differently if such schemes were to become a reality. While his preoccupation with culture over economics grants a certain accessibility that makes for luminous reading, critics might point out that a lack of fiscal knowledge can fail to lift social visions from reveries to reality. As anyone who has ever engaged in a debate with a neoliberal evangelist can attest to, one of the first barrels of critique towards leftists is that they "don't understand economics."

Nevertheless, much of the appeal in Fisher's ideas lies in his persistent centering of class as the focal point of understanding society without resorting to the stale materialism that is often symptomatic of traditional Marxism. Fisher believed in a leftist project that is forward-looking and technologically sophisticated, but that distances itself from nostalgia towards past glories. As Fisher explains in a lecture on post-capitalism outside this book,[1] he saw one of the hindrances towards the popularization of anti-capitalism to be its associations with reverting to a barter system and living in a tent. Hence his suggestion of developing concepts like "luxury communism" and "acid communism," where pleasures equivalent to Starbucks and iPhones can still exist.

One of the keys of post-capitalism in Fisher's eyes is the convergence of the libidinal, creative elements of counterculture and the strategic components of organized labour. He takes us back to the 1960s, when the coalescence of these forces held the most promise. The failure of the countercultural movement revealed the persistence of norms and structures like marriage and the nuclear family. Further, it yielded to decades of a culture marked by individualism. Indeed, Fisher identifies individualism to be one of the byproducts of crippled consciousness: "Ordinarily, before your consciousness has been raised, you will treat the mismatching of your experience from ideology as a failure in you." When individuals don't realize that they're all partaking in a shared experience of subordination to capital, they tend to form their identities and their experiences on an atomized level.

These notions have only gained more relevance in a time when the "rise and grind" lifestyle of achievement, self-development and competition has gained a sizable contingent of followers among young men. Fisher bluntly sees off the boot-strapping billionaire class of CEOs who wake up at 4 a.m. to meditate: "They're just this weird form of addict—a work addict." Mark Zuckerberg specifically is mentioned as one of the "puppets of capital without any kind of reflection." Echoing Marx's warning against moralism towards the bourgeois class, Fisher posits that they, just like everyone else, are hampered by a lack of consciousness.

The inversion of the individualism of Silicon Valley tech bros is collective group consciousness, which is informed by one's standpoint. For example, when a group of women talk together, they realize that they share many of the same experiences, which are ultimately rooted in the patriarchy, rather than their individual shortcomings.

Revisiting some of the topics of his infamous critique of callout culture, "Exiting the Vampire Castle," Fisher remains wary of a leftist project in moralism and woundedness: "In the place of a positive political project, we have a moralistic project of condemnation."

The heavy influence of Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Slavoj Žižek and the Frankfurt School is felt throughout Fisher's lectures, but it's in his positions on identity politics and post-work where he is at his most inspiring.

The lecture format gives Fisher the opportunity to offer the type of erudite nuance that is often absent in the public debate. While his polarizing Vampire Castle essay drew the ire of certain leftists who were quick to brand him an ignorant white male, Fisher does demonstrate a commitment to intersectional group consciousness. With reference to feminist standpoint theory, Fisher subscribes to the idea that individuals from subordinated groups have a privileged understanding of the social world, but when class isn't part of the picture "[...] it's like this void, this hole, which means that the given picture is necessarily incomplete."

Thus, the challenge is to develop intersectional group consciousness that draws on the collective experiences of subordinated groups without falling into the political–economical dead-end of moralism and woundedness.

Post-Capitalist Desire showcases the enduring relevance of Fisher's thought, particularly his preoccupation with post-work. In an era of The Great Resignation and the FIRE (Financial Independence, Retire Early) Movement, Fisher's perspectives on post-work resonate. As young people are becoming privy to the increasing difficulty in achieving social mobility and home ownership, the appeal of *Postcapitalist Desire* looms large. M

1. "The Political Aesthetics of Postcapitalism," a lecture given November 16, 2011, in Zagreb: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAQ6lhpVIss&t=398s.

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