

MONITOR

Progressive news, views and ideas



CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
CENTRE CANADIEN
de POLITIQUES ALTERNATIVES

MARCH/APRIL 2021



CCPA
CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
CENTRE CANADIEN
de POLITIQUES ALTERNATIVES

MONITOR

Vol. 27, No. 6

ISSN 1198-497X

Canada Post Publication 40009942

The *Monitor* is published six times a year by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

The opinions expressed in the *Monitor* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the CCPA.

Please send feedback to
monitor@policyalternatives.ca.

Editor: Katie Raso

Senior Designer: Tim Scarth

Layout: Susan Purtell

Editorial Board: Alyssa O'Dell,
Shannon Daub, Katie Raso, Erika
Shaker, Rick Telfer, Jason Moores

Contributing Writers:

Sheila Block, Elaine Hughes,
David Macdonald, Molly
McCracken, Hadrian Mertins-
Kirkwood, Anthony N. Morgan,
Katherine Scott.

CCPA National Office

141 Laurier Avenue W, Suite 1000

Ottawa, ON K1P 5J3

Tel: 613-563-1341

Fax: 613-233-1458

ccpa@policyalternatives.ca

www.policyalternatives.ca

CCPA BC Office

520-700 West Pender Street

Vancouver, BC V6C 1G8

Tel: 604-801-5121

Fax: 604-801-5122

ccpabc@policyalternatives.ca

CCPA Manitoba Office

301-583 Ellice Avenue

Winnipeg, MB R3B 1Z7

Tel: 204-927-3200

ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca

CCPA Nova Scotia Office

P.O. Box 8355

Halifax, NS B3K 5M1

Tel: 902-240-0926

ccpans@policyalternatives.ca

CCPA Ontario Office

720 Bathurst Street, Room 307

Toronto, ON M5S 2R4

Tel: 416-598-5985

ccpaon@policyalternatives.ca

CCPA Saskatchewan Office

2nd Floor, 2138 McIntyre Street

Regina, SK S4P 2R7

Tel: 306-924-3372

Fax: 306-586-5177

ccpasask@sasktel.net

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*.

Contributors

Lucinda Chitapain (she/her) is an intern at the CCPA, working closely on the Trade and Investment Project. She is a second-year student at Osgoode Hall Law School, with a concentration in transnational and international law.

Kim Dinh (they/them) was born and raised in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. Kim is a labor and immigrant rights advocate, and a digital illustrator in Philadelphia, PA.

Syed Hussain (he/him) is the Executive Director of Migrant Workers Alliance for Change and a member of the Migrant Rights Network.

Erin Knight (she/her) is a Digital Rights Campaigner at OpenMedia. As the lead on OpenMedia's Access pillar, she strives to make quality Internet connections accessible and affordable for all.

Nathan Lachowsky (he/him) is an Associate Professor in the School of Public Health and Social Policy at the University of Victoria, as well as Research Director for the Community Based Research Centre. He conducts interdisciplinary research within a social justice framework in order to achieve health equity for marginalized communities.

André Picard (he/him) is the health columnist at *The Globe and Mail* and the author of six books, including *Neglected No More: The Urgent Need to Improve the Lives of Canada's Elders in the Wake of a Pandemic*.

Andrea Pierce (she/her) is an entrepreneur and community advocate for economic inclusion and development for Black Canadians with UNDPAD Push Coalition and co-founder of Black women focused ImmigrantsCAN IEHDC.

Julia Posca (she/her) is a researcher with Institut de recherche et d'informations socioéconomiques (IRIS) in Montreal. Her work focuses on household debt, economic inequalities and social policy in Quebec.

Michal Rozworski (he/him) is an economist and writer. He publishes frequently on political economy and is the author, with Leigh Phillips, of *The People's Republic of Walmart*. He works as a strategic researcher at the International Transport Workers' Federation and is a research associate with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Joanna Sevilla (she/her) is a Filipino Canadian Illustrator, currently residing in New England.

Katie Sheedy (she/her) is an illustrator, graphic designer and former lawyer based in Ottawa.

Jewelless Smith (she/her), PhD(c) is the Communication and Government Relations Coordinator for the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, and is a PhD candidate at UBC Okanagan. She resides in BC with her service dog, DaVinci.

Paul Taylor (he/him) is Executive Director of FoodShare Toronto and a lifelong anti-poverty activist. In 2020, Paul was named one of Canada's Top 40 under 40 and *Toronto Life's* 50 Most Influential Torontonians of the year.



Sébastien Thibault (he/him)

Based in Matane, Quebec, Sébastien Thibault creates illustrations that provide ironic or surrealist visions of political subjects or current news. He uses graphic shapes, simplified forms, and intense color to create symbolic images for publications like *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Economist*.

UP FRONT

**Looking at COVID-19
through a labour market lens**
Sheila Block and Katherine Scott / 5

**Province has fiscal room to stop
the suffering and serve the public interest**
Molly McCracken / 9

When it mattered most
Erin Knight / 10

Nothing about us without us
Anthony Morgan / 12

FEATURES

No plan, big problem
Michal Rozworski / 13

Fighting on all fronts
Syed Hussan / 17

Waiting to count
Nathan Lachowsky / 18

Our “right to housing” needs some teeth
Paul Taylor / 20

The pandemic as a portal: A year of protest
Katie Raso and Katie Sheedy / 22

Picking up the tab
David Macdonald / 24

Imagining a sustainable Black recovery
Andrea Pierce / 29

Tripping over TRIPS
Lucinda Chitapain / 33

PERSPECTIVES

**The other person of the year
for 2020: The home**
Julia Posca / 28

Pandemic living on the margins
Jewelless Smith / 35

A parable of two roads
Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood / 36

CANON

From the editor / 2

**Building on, and honouring,
the Monitor’s past**
Katie Raso / 3

Good news page
Elaine Hughes / 11

Index / 7

CCPA Donor Profile
Meet Jason Moores, CCPA Donor / 32

**Five books to understand...
a pandemic**
André Picard / 39

A war on disabled people
David Bush / 40

Living principles
Erika Shaker / 42

The decline of collectivity
Ed Finn / 43

KATIE RASO

COVID-19: Neoliberalism's Chernobyl

IN THE EARLY hours of March 7, 2020, my appendix ruptured. Over the next few hours, my partner and I drove to four separate medical centres in Ottawa before I could find an emergency department that had the capacity to admit me for diagnostics and surgery. This was seven days before an Ottawa hospital admitted the region's first COVID-19 patient.

I share this experience because it was profoundly dystopic and entirely antithetical to what we think of when we think of Canada's health care system: driving from one end of Ottawa to the other, then eventually out of town to seek medical care while in crisis. I also share this experience because, while deeply personal, it highlights a universally troubling fact: we brought a needlessly underfunded and ill-equipped health care system in to combat a pandemic. And, unfortunately, the experience is not limited to our acute care system. It is one that extends to mental health services, income supports, public housing, and so much more.

COVID-19 has been called neoliberalism's Chernobyl with good cause. The capacity of our public system to adapt in the face of a sudden and major threat had been all but undermined by four decades of underfunding, leaving the hollowed out remains scrambling to adjust course and to rebuild purposely eroded trust in public institutions, as Michal Rozworski examines in his article.

It would be reductive to say that what is happening is a paying of the piper, because the people left without access to necessary services during this pandemic are not the people who have made the decisions that left our public services underfunded. We are living through

a perfect storm, experienced most significantly by the people at the margins of our society, for whom there has been little relief over the past twelve months.

This issue of the *Monitor* invites members of our community to tell us what the past year has been like for them. Because COVID-19 has been so much more than a health care story. It has shaped every facet of life in Canada.

I won't lie. There is a great deal of frustration and anguish in these pages. But there is also a great deal of hope and resolve. While editing these articles, I was reminded of David Orr's book, *Down to the wire: Confronting climate collapse*. The book paints a bleak picture, not without justification. Still, Orr ended *Down to the wire* with a chapter titled *Hope at the end of our tether*. It's a chapter that I return to frequently. It's a chapter that I think is pertinent, particularly in this moment: as Canada surpasses the grim marker of 20,000 lives lost to COVID-19, as vaccine rollouts muddle along, as unemployment and lost wages threaten the security of workers and their families. We are in a bleak moment. And all is not lost.

Yes, the authors in this issue rightly name the barriers, inequities, and challenges facing communities across Canada throughout the pandemic, because this is not a burden that we have shouldered equally. And it is through the naming of these challenges that we can face them and overcome them.

Already, we are seeing change on multiple fronts. As Syed Hussan details, migrant workers and their allies have spent the past year fighting to get status for all, working tirelessly to protect the migrant and undocumented workers who've

had few protections through the pandemic. Taking inspiration from the disability community's long-standing call of "nothing about us without us," Anthony Morgan outlines a new framework for social reform, while Andrea Pierce details the missing planks that can be addressed to create an equitable future for Black Canadians. New research from David Macdonald detailing which arm of government is funding COVID-19 recovery initiatives, and which provinces are sitting on large pots of unspent pandemic funds, has already put immense pressure on these governments to commit this money to much-needed investment and to increase the transparency of their spending. Just as this issue was heading to print, the Alberta government announced that it will fully access the federal essential worker wage top-up. The Government of Alberta will now distribute up to \$465 million in funding to low-wage, essential workers.

In the penultimate chapter of his book David Orr wrote, "Optimism is the recognition that the odds are in your favor; hope is the faith that things will work out whatever the odds. Hope is a verb with its sleeves rolled up. Hopeful people are actively engaged in defying or changing the odds. Optimism leans back, puts its feet up, and wears a confident look knowing that the deck is stacked. I know of no good reason for anyone to be optimistic about the human future, but I know a lot of reasons to be hopeful."

What follows in these pages is not optimistic. One year into lockdowns, there isn't a whole heck of a lot to be optimistic about, by Orr's definition. But every article in this issue is cause for hope—if we are ready to roll up our sleeves. **M**

KATIE RASO

Building on, and honouring, the *Monitor's* past

WANTED TO WRITE a note to you, separate from the editorial in this first issue that I am overseeing.

I just finished editing Erika Shaker's memorial piece honouring Ed Finn. As I read it, I had so many thoughts and feelings. Sadness that our community has lost this beacon. Regret that I won't be able to share my first issue of the *Monitor* with him. White hot terror to be following in the footsteps of an absolute giant.

And then came the big, unsettling question: who am I to lead this publication? Because... I am no Ed Finn.

I recognize that some of you have met me over email, or through the occasional article that I've managed to write off the side of my desk during my three years with the CCPA. But I'd like the chance to formally introduce myself. I'd like to explain why I've asked you to trust me with the *Monitor*.

I grew up in a community mired in the real time aftermath of neoliberal policies. Following the signing of NAFTA, the factories that provided work in my neighbourhood were downsized, shuttered, and, in one case, turned into a fancy condo. At the same time, I watched Ontario's then-Premier Mike Harris make drastic cuts to education, health care and social assistance. I watched my family and community lose jobs in the public and private sectors. It felt like we were getting squeezed from every side.

A few years later, I'd see just how big the gaps in the social safety net could get as a homeless youth. I'd go on to spend a decade working in the service and gig economy, holding down multiple roles at a time. I didn't get out of this cycle because of anything spectacular on my account. I managed to get out because rent was still affordable enough and tuition still low enough and, let's be honest, the student loan people saw the value in giving me \$25,000 that will cost me over \$45,000 by the time I pay it off. It's not lost on me that the Katie who went off to university in 2006 would be unable to achieve the same goal now, just 15 years later.

And that's why I want to be at the *Monitor*. Because it feels like a door shut behind me, making things even more difficult for those who followed, and I fundamentally do not accept that. The *Monitor* is and always has been a special publication. As former *Monitor* editor Stuart Trew coined, it's a magazine for progressive news, views and ideas. Now, more than ever, we need these ideas and these conversations.

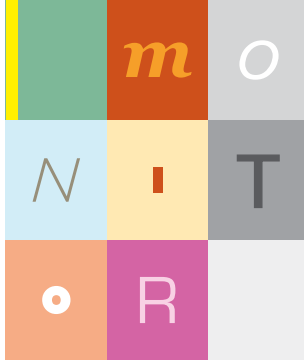
It means a lot to me to be the first disabled editor of this publication and the first person at the helm

who is not a cisgender man. I am excited to increase the breadth of voices that we are able to bring to the conversations that the *Monitor* hosts.

What does that mean for the *Monitor* magazine? We will be putting out more open calls for contributions to make sure that we're getting a more diverse array of voices from coast to coast to coast, in addition to continuing to highlight the great work by CCPA colleagues across the country. The structure of the magazine itself won't change much. We know that you love the *Monitor*, and I am profoundly grateful to both Stuart and Ed for the incredible publication that their hard work and vision has built.

There are two changes that I will flag. Our colleague Lynne Fernandez retired at the end of 2020. As a result, her column retired with her. I've invited Stuart to start a trade column in its place. The other change that I am excited to share with you is the addition of the "Five Books" section. We are fortunate to have so many experts in our midst, why not tap them for their guidance with regards to reading lists? I am thrilled to announce that for the first iteration, the incomparable André Picard, health reporter for the *Globe and Mail*, agreed to put together a list for us. I hope you enjoy the new addition as much as I have. And if there are experts whose bookcases you'd like to have a peek at, I would love to get your suggestions via email.

It is an honour to step into this role and I know that so many of you have been with the CCPA and the *Monitor* for many years. Your support is what keeps us fighting and writing. While I am excited to see what we can build together, what we create honours the *Monitor's* past, without which none of this would be possible. For that reason, it only felt right to give the last word in my first issue to Ed. **M**



Letters

Manufactured debt

I was so pleased to read Andrew Jackson’s article on Modern Monetary Theory in your Nov/Dec *Monitor*—I think it was the first time I have seen a clear summary of how our debts are constructed. I use that term as there seems to be clear evidence of purpose in the development of massive federal (indeed of all governments) debt, which unfortunately was not addressed in the article. This erupted immediately following the 1975 declaration by none other than the Governor of the Bank of Canada that, henceforth, all government funding would come from the privately owned commercial banks and large investors at current interest rates, and not from the Bank of Canada at nil interest, as had been the practice since that bank’s founding in 1935; indeed, a major clause in its charter. Interest rates immediately went through the roof and stayed high or extreme for 19 years until 1994, during which time the 1975 debt of \$20 billion shot up to an unpayable \$380 billion or so, from which it has grown to its current \$650

billion, with a \$30 billion interest bill. Manufactured debt, wouldn’t you say?

Russ Vinden,
Errington BC

Trump and witch hunts

One of the strangest aspects of the Trump phenomenon is the support from women for it. The rising re-powering of the patriarchy, which can be observed in places like Poland and Latin America, as well as the USA, is a strategy that has been used for centuries, even to control men, especially when systems are rising or falling and more control is needed by the ruling elites, an enduring human problem. More and more, the patriarchy will assert its power in the law and the economy, taking away reproductive rights, health rights, child care rights, educational and publishing rights.

Religion, fear and outright oppression by demonizing women, and their rightful demands, are used openly by authoritarian forces.

Even appointing unsuitable women to places of power has, and will be, used to try to demonstrate the complete unsuitability of women. Somehow the failures of men are never used in this way. Witch hunts were used to terrorize all women and, also, non-conforming men. I fear we are approaching a precipice.

Wilma Riley, Victoria, BC

Health-in-all-policies is essential

What a great analysis and recipe for action in Trish Hennessy and Lindsay McLaren article, “A Broader Vision of Public Health” (Nov/Dec *Monitor*). Starting with the naive assumption (if not cynical lie) of Conservative and Liberal policy makers that the “private sector” would “...pick up the slack...,” Hennessy and McLaren catalogue the erosion of capacity in the health care system to deal with the inevitable pandemic (“...always a question of when, not if...”).

Their insistence that public health is more than hospitals, physicians or health care (or even, I would add, access to a personal care giver) strongly resonates with data showing that public health quality is related to the social determinants of health. A decade ago, in *Power and inequality: A comparative study*, Gregg M. Olsen noted that “...a growing body of epidemiological research...well over 100 studies have shown that health is graded by income, or more broadly, socio-economic status.” He further notes that “...redistributing income in society can improve the health of the less well-off without affecting the health of those at the top.” More recently, Andrew MacLeod cites a 2011 *Canadian Medical Association Journal* article that documented investments in reducing inequality can save money by reducing health care costs: “Population-level

health outcomes could benefit from a reallocation of government dollars from health to social spending, even if total government spending were left unchanged.”

Hennessy and McLaren call for a “health-in-all-policy approach,” which is definitely called for and essential. They are razor-focused on their conclusion that health quality, for both individuals and communities, is a direct function of social inequality. Clarity about what needs change is defined by Dr. Danielle Martin. Martin states: “...the biggest disease that needs to be cured in Canada is the disease of poverty. And part of the cure is to implement the fifth Big Idea: A Basic Income Guarantee for all Canadians.”

Vince Salvo, Catlegar, BC

Send your letters to monitor@policyalternatives.ca.

Sheila Block and Katherine Scott / Canada

Looking at COVID-19 through a labour market lens

THE COVID-19 CRISIS has repeatedly demonstrated the profound inequities of our labour market and social safety net. The situation has been particularly acute for low-wage, precarious workers, those with the fewest legal protections and the fewest resources to weather this storm.

Heading into 2021, we compiled some of the key trends revealed by Labour Force Survey (LFS) data, as months of closures and restrictions reshaped Canada's labour market landscape. With vaccination efforts now underway across the country, these trends can serve as key indicators of Canada's recovery and a guide to where interventions ought to be made to ensure an equitable rebuild effort.

The stalled gender gap

The pandemic shutdowns have impacted women-majority sectors hard and fast. By the end of April 2020, 2.8 million women—30% of those working—had lost their jobs, or were working less than half of their regular hours. Low-wage workers, overwhelmingly women, highly racialized, and facing the greatest barriers to employment, suffered the largest share of job losses.

Nine months into the pandemic, women were returning to work and picking up lost hours. But the recovery remains as unequitable as the downturn has been, and women's economic security remains fragile.

With a surge in jobs in the education sector in early fall, women had recouped 79% of their early economic losses by mid-October. But in that same month, in large labour markets like the Greater Toronto Area and

Montreal region, new public health restrictions—introduced in response to rising community infections—precipitated another round of job cuts in women-majority sectors, such as accommodation and food services, and information, culture and recreation. Increased public health restrictions moved to more regions and the attendant layoffs followed in November and December.

The steady progress in employment that characterized the summer

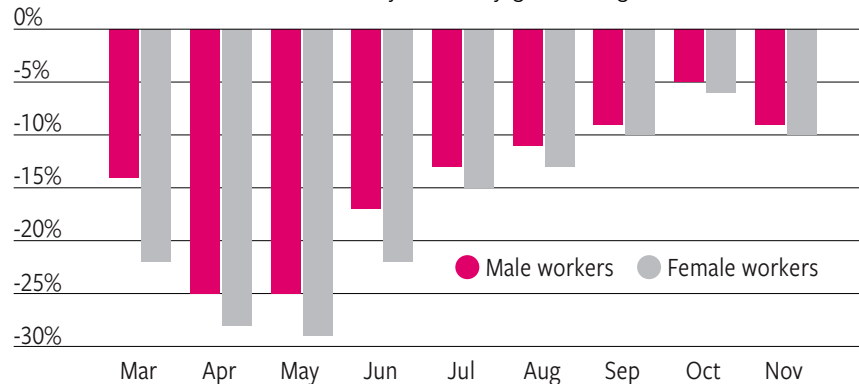
has now stalled. Indeed, the total number of hours worked at all jobs (on a seasonally adjusted basis) actually fell in November. Female workers are working roughly 10% fewer hours in the aggregate than before the pandemic.

The number of long-term unemployed (those whose period of unemployment exceeds 27 weeks) has also been trending upwards, more than doubling between August and November among unemployed women, reaching 25.2% (and one-quarter of unemployed men as well).

The women formerly known as working mothers

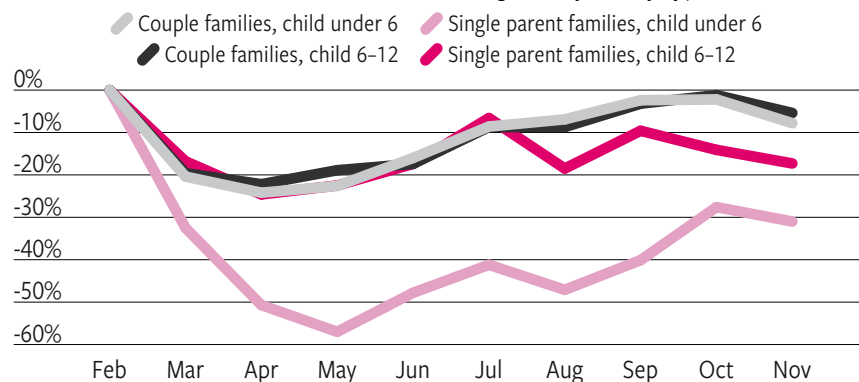
A key piece of the crisis for women's economic security is happening

CHANGE IN HOURS WORKED EACH MONTH
Relative to February 2020, by gender, ages 15+



SOURCES: FEB-NOV 2020 LABOUR FORCE SURVEY PUMF, CALCULATIONS BY D. MACDONALD (TOTAL ACTUAL HOURS, ADJUSTED FOR SEASONALITY).

CHANGE IN HOURS WORKED
Mothers with children under age 12 by family type



SOURCES: FEB-NOV 2020 LABOUR FORCE SURVEY PUMF, CALCULATIONS BY D. MACDONALD (TOTAL ACTUAL HOURS, ADJUSTED FOR SEASONALITY).

on the home front. Women have been stepping up to shoulder a huge demand for unpaid labour and caregiving, and stepping back from paid employment.

Employment gains since April have been especially weak among mothers with children aged 0 to 12, pointing to a continuing unequal division of labour in the home as schools closed and access to child care became uncertain. By August, fathers had effectively recouped all of their employment losses, while 12% of the mothers who had been working in February 2020 were still without work or working less than half of their regular hours.

The September bump in women’s employment still left large numbers of mothers working reduced hours, with single-parent mothers experiencing the greatest economic

challenges compared to fathers and mothers in two-parent families. By September, single-parent mothers had recovered a much smaller fraction of their spring employment losses, especially those with young children under the age of six, who had recouped just 30% of lost hours.

The situation did not improve over the fall. There was another significant drop in total hours worked among mothers between October and November. The November jobs report from Statistics Canada notes that, on a year-over-year basis, there were 54.9% more mothers with children aged 0 to 12 years working less than half of their usual hours than a year ago.

As stark as these figures are, they don’t even capture the proportion of women who have completely dropped out of the labour market,

setting aside their own financial security to care for their families’ needs. As of November, the number of women “not in the labour force” was almost 150,000 higher than in February 2020.

Women aged 35–39 years, in particular, are exiting the labour force “in droves,” according to recent research from RBC Economics, with mothers of children under six years old accounting for two-thirds of the exodus in this key age group. The crisis in the child care sector, in combination with the challenges attached to schooling and home schooling, are exacting a huge toll. Not everyone is finding their way back.

The unequal impact of the pandemic on the racialized labour market

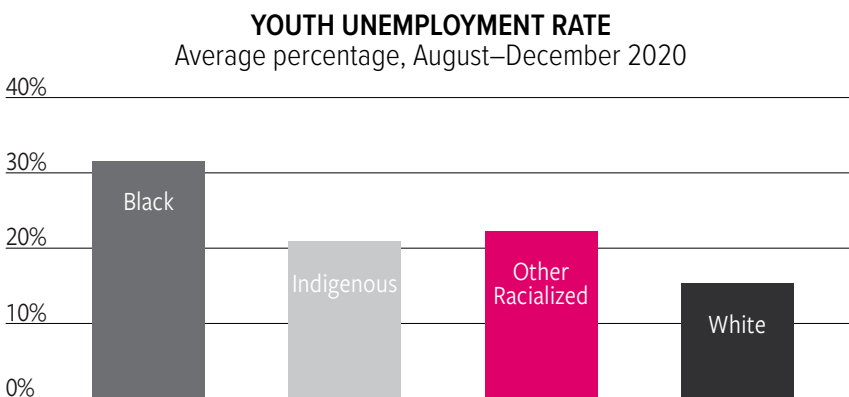
The LFS began publishing race-based data in the summer of 2020. What the data revealed was that, on average, 7.4% of white Canadians were unemployed from July to December—the lowest unemployment rate. Meanwhile, unemployment rates for Indigenous peoples, Black Canadians and other racialized people were significantly higher. At 13%, Black Canadians and Indigenous peoples had the highest unemployment rate: it averaged 75% higher than the rate for white Canadians. At 11.5%, the unemployment rate for other racialized people was not far behind.

December’s LFS showed that youth employment was 10.5% below pre-pandemic levels, compared to 1.8% for core-age workers. The unemployment rate for youth reveals an even greater disparity among these populations. White youth had an average unemployment rate of 15.4%, while the unemployment rate for Black youth averaged 31.6%—twice as high. Indigenous youth and other racialized youth had unemployment rates that were 20.9% and 22.3%, respectively.

There is evidence that recessions have long-term negative impacts on recent graduates, since entering the labour force during periods of higher



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, LABOUR FORCE SURVEY SUPPLEMENT, AUGUST–DECEMBER 2020, STATISTICS CANADA 0920_07 TABLE 2—LABOUR FORCE SURVEY (LFS) ESTIMATES BY OCCUPATION, NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION (NOC) 2016, ABORIGINAL IDENTITY, AGE AND SEX, MONTHLY, UNADJUSTED FOR SEASONALITY, DECEMBER 2020, REPRODUCED AND DISTRIBUTED ON AN “AS IS” BASIS WITH THE PERMISSION OF STATISTICS CANADA, AND AUTHOR’S CALCULATIONS.



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, LABOUR FORCE SURVEY SUPPLEMENT, AUGUST–DECEMBER 2020, STATISTICS CANADA 0920_07 TABLE 2—LABOUR FORCE SURVEY (LFS) ESTIMATES BY OCCUPATION, NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION (NOC) 2016, ABORIGINAL IDENTITY, AGE AND SEX, MONTHLY, UNADJUSTED FOR SEASONALITY, DECEMBER 2020, REPRODUCED AND DISTRIBUTED ON AN “AS IS” BASIS WITH THE PERMISSION OF STATISTICS CANADA, AND AUTHOR’S CALCULATIONS.

unemployment can interrupt early career trajectories and the transition from school to work.

The negative labour market impact of racism on Black youth was evident even before the pandemic struck. The decrease in participation rates for youth in December could be an indicator of longer-term negative impacts. Before the pandemic, a higher proportion of Black youth was not in education, employment or training (NEET). The ongoing labour market disruption could exacerbate this. This could result in the longer-term economic costs of pandemic-related unemployment being disproportionately borne by Black youth.

Policy discussions on how to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on youth have begun; the situation demands an approach that integrates the unequal labour market impacts of the pandemic on racialized groups.

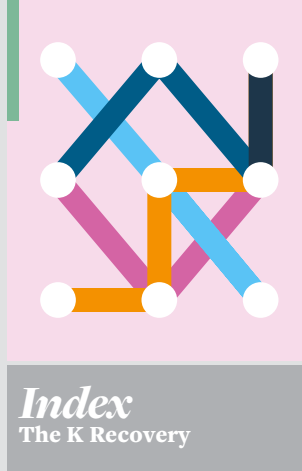
Racialized workers in hardest hit occupations

Sales and service occupations saw the largest job losses between February and December 2020. This is particularly important, given that almost one in three Black, other racialized, and Indigenous women work in these occupations—a larger share than white women. While a larger share of white women's employment (27%) is in these occupations compared to white men (18%) or Indigenous men (21%), white women have a similar share of employment in these occupations as other racialized men (25%) and equal to that of Black men (27%).

Job losses in the occupational groups of sales and service, trades, transport and equipment operators, and manufacturing and utilities disproportionately affected Black and Indigenous men. Pre-pandemic, those three categories accounted for 64% of total employment for Indigenous men, 59% of total employment for Black men, but only 52% of total employment for white men and 51% of employment for other racialized men.

Racialized men had a larger share of employment management occupations, which registered job losses between February and December 2020, compared to Black or Indigenous men. However, other racialized men had a smaller share of employment in trades, transport and equipment operation than other groups of men. In addition, at 14.6%, other racialized men had the highest share of employment in natural and applied science, which is the occupational group that had the largest increase in employment over this time period.

Racialized Canadians and Indigenous peoples have been disproportionately affected by the



36

Number of Canada's 100 top paid CEOs who took advantage of the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) program, getting the federal government to cover their company's payroll.

3

Number of CEOs taking part in the CEWS program who have said they will waive their salaries for 2020. On average, salaries contribute 12% to a CEO's total compensation.

\$37 billion

Amount of wealth accumulated by 20 of the richest Canadians in the first six months of the pandemic.

79%

Percentage of Canadians (including 64% of Conservative voters) who support a 1% tax on wealth paid by people with more than \$20 million in assets.

13,500

Approximate number of eviction hearings held by Ontario's Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) between November 20, 2020, when the tribunal reopened, and January 31, 2021. The Ontario LTB does not release data on outcomes of hearings.

\$1 billion

Monthly value of mortgage payments deferred or skipped by more than three-quarters of a million Canadian homeowners during the pandemic.

14%

Percentage of workers making less than \$17 per hour who have not been rehired or found new employment since February 2020. While the bottom quarter of wage earners continues to struggle, the top quarter of Canada's wage earners are now better off than they were a year ago.

>90%

Percentage of tenants that Grey Bruce Community Legal Clinic represents at Ontario's LTB hearings that were no-shows for their hearings since the tribunal became digital-first. Prior to the LTB transitioning to digital hearings, the provincial no-show rate was 22%.

\$101 billion

Amount of COVID-19 financing that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has loaned to 81 countries to navigate the pandemic thus far. The IMF has stated that it is prepared to release up to \$1 trillion. But the money does not come without conditions.

84%

Percentage of COVID-19 financing loans issued by the IMF that contain emphatic calls for austerity when the pandemic ends. This adherence to austerity measures requires borrower countries to agree to cuts to school and hospital funding, regressive taxation, cuts to support for low-income households, seniors, and women.

health and socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. Racialized workers are over-represented in both front-line work and care work and, as such, are at greater health risk.

The burden of unemployment is not equally shared either. In the short term, income supports for those facing losses of employment and income need to be maintained and enhanced to prevent further widening of the economic disadvantage experienced by Black, Indigenous and other racialized people.

Looking ahead

We have not yet seen the full shape of the recovery. What we do know is that low-wage workers have borne the brunt of job losses in this pandemic. Compounding these impacts has been the unequal distribution of unpaid caregiving work, and the impact it has had on women's labour market participation. National level employment trends across all

industries, one of the government's stated economic markers, is essential to guide the scale and timing of its future spending on economic stimulus and aid programs. But moving forward, the crucial question for an inclusive and sustainable recovery is: who is being left behind?

The longer-term solutions are yet to be determined, because it is unclear what the post-pandemic labour market landscape will look like. But one thing is certain: policy makers will need to address unequal racialized and gender impacts of the pandemic to ensure Canada's economic recovery includes everyone. These policies will need to mitigate how the pandemic has worsened the pre-existing employment and income inequities that are baked into Canada's labour market.

We must also be concerned about the quality of work and what is likely to be the growth in temporary or precarious work practices as economic uncertainty continues

and high levels of unemployment persist. To this end, economic investment in Canada's future must strengthen decent work, employment protections and employment equity—ensuring that the most marginalized who have borne the onslaught of the pandemic are first in line to benefit from the recovery.

Data notes: *Since the pandemic began, Statistics Canada has made additional data available for racialized Canadians and Indigenous peoples. Previously, the LFS did not collect data on the labour market experience of racialized workers: the only data that was available was from the census, which is produced every five years and, therefore, made it difficult to track labour market impacts on racialized people in real time. While data on the off-reserve Indigenous labour market experience had been collected in the LFS prior to the pandemic, more detailed data is now being made available. Unfortunately, as a result of data availability and small sample sizes, we do not have an immediate pre-pandemic comparator to understand the impact of COVID-19 on Black and other racialized people and Indigenous peoples. LFS data that was used in this post to analyze labour market impacts on racialized Canadians was made available starting in August 2020. We used the average of the period from August to December 2020 to compare unemployment rates for Black, other racialized and white Canadians and Indigenous peoples. We used the 2016 census for pre-pandemic comparators for Black, other racialized and white Canadians (due to data limitations, the census data for white people includes Indigenous peoples). We used the 2019 annual averages for pre-pandemic comparators for Indigenous peoples. **M***

Worth Repeating

Say what you mean

“When we are talking about ‘vulnerable people/populations,’ what we really mean is, ‘people who we repeatedly leave out of policies and practices that primarily cater to the dominant group(s) and whom are left fending for themselves.’ It’s our fault that they are ‘vulnerable.’”

—Jaris Swidrovich, Canada's first self-identified First Nations Doctor of Pharmacy

The pitfall of dunking on toddlers

“I think one difficulty for Canadians has been that we're the next door neighbours of a very large country that has arguably one of the worst COVID responses under Donald Trump and comparing ourselves to Trump's approach to COVID and saying ‘oh we're doing pretty well’, that would be like me playing one-on-one with a two-year-old and saying I totally kicked the butt of that two-year-old in basketball. It doesn't mean I'm a good basketball player it just means I'm making a ridiculous comparison.”

—Epidemiologist Dr. David Fisman, from the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, speaking with *The Big Story* on Jan. 6, 2021

Province has fiscal room to stop the suffering and serve the public interest

THE MANITOBA Fiscal and Economic Update released in December showed that Manitoba has much more fiscal room to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. The provincial government needs to rethink its single-minded commitment to austerity and privatization. Otherwise, we are in for a long, hard recovery.

Back when COVID-19 first hit, Manitoba braced for higher expenses than we have thus far incurred. The legislature had approved a \$5 billion deficit, due to COVID-19, for 2020/21.

The December fiscal update projected a deficit of \$2 billion. Debt servicing costs are \$42 million less than anticipated, due to the Bank of Canada's *guaranteed* extremely low interest rates.

We have room to borrow—our debt/GDP ratio is reasonable and much lower than Ontario and Quebec.¹

Yet the update showed that the provincial government cut \$347 million in education, universities, social assistance and the civil service in the last fiscal year. The province has a propensity to underspend in budgeted areas, so there will likely be more cuts. On top of this, the provincial government is still pursuing tax cuts that will reduce its revenue and ability to provide public services.

Much of the money Manitoba has spent on COVID-19 is federal, and some of these federal funds remain unspent or unmatched, as David Macdonald's recent study, *Picking up the tab*, revealed.

Austerity during a time of economic crisis is more damaging than previously thought, according

to Nobel award-winning economist Paul Krugman. Cuts to make the provincial books look good in the short term have huge economic consequences, as government spending accounts for a significant portion of our economy.

We don't have to look far to see the impact of short-term thinking with long-term impacts. Cuts to the public sector made before the pandemic are hindering the province's response now. For example, cuts and underfunding to health care mean that regional health authorities are now desperate to staff roles in contact tracing, vaccination clinics, and long-term care. Since 2016, the province axed at least 2,505 civil service jobs and cut hundreds of management jobs across the public sector, resulting in a huge loss of employees available for redeployment, planning capacity, and institutional knowledge.

The premier issued a call for volunteers to help with contract tracing, and public money went to set up a volunteer matching service. Reliance on volunteers here is inappropriate given the scale of the challenge. If we'd had the civil servants and health staff, they could have been redeployed to the pandemic response. This is likely a contributing factor to Manitoba being the slowest province to vaccinate outside of Atlantic Canada.

Still, during COVID-19, Manitoba continues apace with its privatization agenda: freezing Manitoba Hydro International, privatizing liquor, contracting out provincial highway snow clearing and more.

The private laboratory Dynacare was contracted to do COVID-19 testing, establishing a testing lab with

public money. This testing capacity could have been developed by the public system, and then would have been held in the public interest for the future. Instead, a for-profit corporation now owns these assets, likely leading to more privatization of lab services in the near future.

Out-of-province corporation Morneau Shepell received \$4.5 million in funding for online COVID-19 mental health services, without consultation with local mental health professionals and associations.

Then there is the ongoing reliance of this government on private sector contractors to guide government policy to achieve privatization goals. Since its time in office, this government has spent at least \$23 million on consultants for key policy files—from health care to fiscal policy to public housing—when the government employs professional, highly trained experts.

Once the pandemic is over, two pressing issues will remain: inequality exacerbated by COVID-19 and climate change. Both will require funding to reduce downstream social costs to government, and investment in green infrastructure and jobs.

Don't be fooled—the Manitoba government has the fiscal room to address these big issues while providing for support for those impacted by COVID-19, now and through the recovery. But in order to do so, Manitoba must be spending more—not less—so that our suffering is not extended for years into the future by a painfully slow recovery from this pandemic. **M**

1. See Fernandez and Hajer (2020). "Austerity and COVID-19: Manitoba government creating not solving problems," CBC News.

When it mattered most

How Canada's decades-old digital divide left communities disconnected during COVID-19

“MY SANITY, well-being and career are being held together by Wi-Fi.” These words from an OpenMedia community member capture the relationship that abruptly developed between the Internet and the pandemic last spring. After some initial confusion, millions of workers and students stuck the landing of their transition to online environments. But for millions more, Canada's persistent digital equity rift—the digital divide—suddenly yawned much wider. A perennial inequality issue that has been nipping in and out of the public discourse for decades, the sudden shock of stay-at-home orders (read: work- and study-at-home orders) brought the issue to the fore.

Canada's digital divide is exacerbated by the geographic divide between urban and rural communities. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission's (CRTC) national internet speed target is 50/10 MBps; but in 2019, only 37.2% people in rural Canada could access those speeds at home.

Within city limits, a major barrier to internet access is cost. While national research is limited, available data confirms that lack of affordability is an equally big problem. In Toronto, 52% of low-income households' home internet does not meet the CRTC's speed target.

How has the federal government responded to these gaps? Not expediently. The first major actions to improve access—the rollout of the CRTC's existing Broadband Fund, and the opening of the government's Universal Broadband

Fund (UBF)—were not initiated until nearly five and eight months into the pandemic, respectively.

During the wait, policymakers were tight-lipped about what assistance was coming, and when. The lack of transparency fuelled the mobilization of grassroots organizers, community members, and civil society to call on the federal government to more rapidly address the connectivity crisis. It was only after receiving thousands of messages from the public, and months of pressure from advocates, that the government finally took action.

The delays would have been more understandable if either program were freshly minted during COVID-19. Instead, not only did government help arrive too late, it almost entirely comprised previously committed funding, with only a limited accelerated fund for a few communities to address connectivity over the course of 2021.

While progress on access has been underwhelming, federal action on affordability has actually made things worse. In 2019, the introduction of wholesale internet rates had put some downward pressure on wired internet prices across Canada. In August 2020, the federal government issued a decision that the CRTC's wholesale rates should be higher. The market response was immediate, as wholesale-based providers who had set their retail prices based on the expected rates raised retail prices. The decision was problematic on multiple fronts: immediately increasing financial strain for households, adding across-the-board pressure for internet prices to rise and undercutting the CRTC's

attempt to structurally improve the competition of the country's telecom market.

Sluggish on access and harmful on affordability, the federal approach to closing the digital divide would have been a disappointment in a regular year; but in a pandemic year, it was downright detrimental. Ultimately, the lack of a national broadband connectivity strategy is the root problem here. Without a national strategy that takes internet affordability seriously, maps out who will be connected when, and replaces the current patchwork of leaky-bucket broadband access programs, we will inevitably see further delays and communities left behind.

After the first year of the pandemic, 39% of people in Canada are worse off financially, according to the 2020 BDO Affordability Index. With shrinking household budgets, cheaper internet needs to happen fast; but, as with access, a piecemeal approach will fail to bring everyone in Canada along. It is time for bolder federal policy that deals with the problem's source—lack of telecom market competition—and uses the power of customer choice to end the Big Telecom oligopolies that keep prices artificially high and sustain the digital divide. As Canadians have been saying, our nation just spent a year being held together by the internet. While it is clear that the best time to act decisively to connect Canada, once and for all, was in March 2020—if not years before—the second best time is right now. **M**



New from the CCPA

CCPA in the news

While January 1 signalled the start of a new year, with rising COVID-19 cases, underspending on government-funded pandemic programs, and rampant inequality, the first quarter of 2021 has felt like a grinding afterword to 2020. Through it all, CCPA experts have been in high demand, providing critical analysis on how Canada can weather this storm and build an equitable recovery.

In mid-January, the *Toronto Star* published a hard-hitting critique from **Randy Robinson** (see our CCPA profile on page 35) assessing the Ontario government's COVID-19 strategy. Robinson argued that the province's penchant for half measures only benefited the virus' transmission rates. "Fighting COVID-19 is not a market transaction. It's not about making a deal. It's a life-and-death battle, and the way to win it is to use the power of government to mobilize the resources needed to do so."

At the end of January, **David Macdonald** gave dozens of interviews to CBC radio programs, CTV News, Global, and Zoomer Radio following

the release of his groundbreaking analysis, *Picking up the Tab* (see page 24), detailing how much money provinces were spending—and failing to spend—on their pandemic response programs. **Molly McCracken** and **David Macdonald** co-authored an editorial for the *Winnipeg Free Press* about the money that the Manitoba government was leaving on the table during the pandemic. Macdonald also had published editorials in both the *Hill Times* and *National Observer*, and Parkland Director **Trevor Harrison** had an editorial published in the *Edmonton Journal* commenting on the situation in Alberta.

Lax water policy leading to drought

New research from CCPA BC resource policy analyst **Ben Parfitt** uncovered that lax water policy allows industrial water users to pay as little as 28 cents for an Olympic-sized pool's worth of water in BC, encouraging poor water management and overuse. Parfitt revealed that mining companies, aluminum smelters, pulp mills and even ski hills were responsible for drawing massive amounts of water from British Columbia's rivers, lakes and streams. Parfitt concluded, "Droughts may be here to say. But water policy can flow in new directions. Policies that require industries to play by the same rules that many residents do simply make sense."

Manitoba's austerity eroded pandemic response

In her final report as the CCPA Manitoba Errol Black Chair in Labour Issues, **Lynne Fernandez** worked with **Jesse Hajer** to produce a report examining Manitoba's pre-pandemic austerity agenda and how this positioning has impacted the government's response to the crisis. As **Molly McCracken** details in her analysis (see Up Front section), austerity during a crisis is deeply damaging to subsequent recovery initiatives. The report outlines aspects of what a progressive alternative COVID-19 recovery could look like for Manitoba, based on the model provided by the Alternative Provincial Budget.

Rents keep going up, pandemic or not

Despite the many news stories across Canada lamenting landlords' lost profits as the country's rental market turns into a "renter's market", new analysis from Maytree's **Hannah Aldridge** and CCPA Ontario's **Ricardo Tranjan** reveals that even during a pandemic, rents in Canada continue to rise. The research, available on Behind the Numbers, reports that, "between October 2019 and October 2020, average rents for a two-bedroom unit in Canada went up by 3.5%. The inflation rate for the same period was 0.7%, or five times lower." Aldridge and Tranjan found that in the 12-month period they

studied, rents for two-bedroom units increased by 4.6% in Toronto, 3.6% in Montreal, and 1.5% in Vancouver. While the rate of increase in Toronto and Vancouver was less than the preceding 12 months, the authors assured that, nonetheless, "they unequivocally increased."

Assessing the Biden effect

In the lead up to and following the election of the Biden-Harris administration, CCPA researchers **Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood** and **Stuart Trew** have provided much needed clarity and guidance on what this new leadership to the South could mean for Canada on some key files. Together, Mertins-Kirkwood and Trew have laid out preliminary analyses of what to expect in the first 100 days of the Biden administration on the climate and trade files: what Biden's "Buy American" plan could mean for Canada, and how the new president's commitment to bolder climate action—including the cancelling of the Keystone XL pipeline—could put pressure on a previously tepid Canadian climate action plan. At the end of January, Trew spoke with CBC radio programs across the country about Biden's "Buy American" plan and what trade reforms it could generate in turn. Both Mertins-Kirkwood's and Trew's analyses are available on Behind the Numbers. **M**



Colour-coded Justice

ANTHONY N. MORGAN

Nothing about us without us

IN AN OCTOBER 2019 TEDxToronto talk I delivered, I shared the idea of a framework for social reform aimed at realizing racial justice by transforming the violent relationship between Canada's Black communities and Canada's systems of policing and incarceration. I called it the Sankofa framework.

I conceptualized the Sankofa framework before the outbreak of COVID-19 upended life in Canada. However, after a year of seeing the racially-lopsided impacts of the pandemic in Canada I think that the framework I proposed in my talk is ripe for reconsideration. More than that, I believe that the Sankofa framework can be leveraged to conceptually ground Canada's governmental responses to the racially disadvantageous social outcomes being produced and exacerbated by COVID-19 in Black communities. In particular, the Sankofa framework helps demonstrate the need and value of the federal government, along with the provincial governments with sizable Black populations (such as, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Alberta) to take steps to establish ministries of African Canadian affairs within their respective jurisdictions. These government offices would be responsible for supporting and enabling an efficient, culturally responsive, and community-driven approach to COVID-19 containment among Black communities.

It can be reasonably argued that an important part of why we continue to see elevated rates of COVID-19 infections among Black communities is because Canada is without a well-resourced, co-ordinated, multi-level government response to the particular impacts of COVID-19 on Black communities. In order to sufficiently address COVID-19's racially slanted effects on Canada's Black communities, government offices of African Canadian affairs are needed to facilitate an effective COVID-19 response and recovery within and across provincial boundaries in Canada. To be effective, this kind of culturally appropriate COVID-19 response and recovery strategy would need to be driven, developed and delivered by individuals with lived and/or professional expertise in the complex social realities of being Black in Canada. The attendant offices of government would be well-positioned to help facilitate this by supporting service coordination, organizational

co-operation and collaboration, information sharing and general resource sharing and pooling.

In the language of the Akan people of West Africa, "Sankofa" translates to, "to reach back and get it." Sankofa, then, stands for the idea that for a community to actualize a positive collective future, it must learn from and be informed by its past. I leveraged this principle to name the framework for social reform I proposed because I believe social transformation for Black communities will only be achieved once people, politicians and public policy-makers of all walks realize that Black people tend to experience better outcomes the more they have authority, ownership and control over the systems and circumstances that impact their lives. In my talk, I recalled the slogan popularized by the global disability rights movement, "nothing about us, without us", as a way to capture the spirit of the Sankofa framework for social reform.

The Sankofa can be broken down into two parts. The first calls for identifying and dismantling government policies and practices that have perpetuated anti-Black racism. Sankofa encourages a practice of taking what's been learned from failed approaches to ultimately reimagine and reconstruct laws, policies, practices, institutions and systems of social well-being. The second part of the Sankofa framework is solutions-focused: it calls for us to prioritize culturally-responsive solutions that are developed by Black people for Black people.

In my original pre-pandemic talk, I focused this change on being fostered and facilitated by reallocating public funds that currently go into policing to institutions that support community well-being for Black residents in the areas employment, entrepreneurship, education, housing, health care, child care, arts, culture and leisure. I argued that these broader services get to the root of effectively lowering crime and violence in a way that putting more cops in communities never will.

I now believe that the Sankofa framework for social reform could be used to support the development and delivery of a nationally integrated, intergovernmental COVID-19 response and recovery strategy that is conceived and directed by community members and experts from Canada's diverse Black communities.

Having offices of African Canadian affairs at the federal level and across provinces would serve to better support Black communities through this punishing pandemic. It would also advance the creation of stronger and long-overdue institutions of government focused on how to best support the community well-being of Black people in Canada, which was already chronically compromised for decades before the pandemic. In sum, the Sankofa framework for social reform that I've proposed can help guide politicians and policy-makers towards solutions that don't just work for Black communities impacted by COVID-19, but work with them. **M**

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



MICHAL ROZWORSKI

No plan, big problem

The pandemic response is showing that undermining state planning capacity for four decades has resulted in states with low planning capacity. Who could have expected this?

IN APRIL 2020, Justin Trudeau placed a large order on Amazon. It wasn't for soon-to-be sold out beard trimmers or novelty socks. No, Jeff Bezos was going to help the Canadian government distribute its national stockpiles of PPE to hospitals, health authorities, and other agencies around the country.

The decision to use the for-profit logistics network and know-how of a corporate giant showed just how severely the public sector had been hollowed out before the pandemic struck. It was also emblematic of how the private sector has captured

not just public decision-making but our collective imagination as well. And it showed how reticent governments are to creatively use the tools they do have left—including, in this case, the skilled and unionized logistics workforce at Canada Post.

This is but one example of how states are fighting the COVID-19 pandemic with at least one hand

People wait in line for a COVID-19 test at the Birchmount COVID-19 Assessment Centre in Scarborough, Ontario. PHOTO CREDIT: BOB HILSCHER

tied behind their backs. These same governments have undermined public planning capacity for decades. More than an infectious pathogen, the novel coronavirus is a very harsh mirror held up to pre-pandemic reality. It is showing up the nearly nonexistent industrial policy and democratic planning institutions across much of the world, particularly in North America and Europe. It is exposing the true cost of hollowed-out public services, debilitated trade unions, and cross-cutting economic and racial inequality.

But it is doing so after a long material and ideological assault whose aim was to redistribute resources and power. Public services are meagre because of decades of privatization, outsourcing and austerity. Unions are weaker because they were, and are being, broken. Planning and industrial policy are struggling because we have largely been made to forget how to use them—if we ever really knew. In short, the pandemic has arrived after four decades of neoliberalism, and it shows.

Pro-market, anti-plan

Neoliberalism is often presented as a project to shrink the state: a vicious circle of cutting taxes and cutting public services. No doubt taxes and public services have fallen to the axe. However, more than anything else, neoliberalism has been a project to *remake* the state. Governments still do things, but they do very different things than they did—or could be doing.

It is a creative project: expanding the scope of existing markets and creating new ones where they didn't exist. "Nudging" people replaces providing services; "nudging" businesses replaces regulating them. Market logic replaces deliberate planning. Another favoured term, more at home in corporate-speak, is "aligning incentives." We are not citizens engaged in conscious decision-making, but consumers shepherded along the path of unspoken desires.

Neoliberalism began, in part, as a reaction to the idea of planning itself, to the idea of collective, conscious decision-making. It was shaped by obscure debates in the 1920s, '30s and '40s about the possibility of a centrally planned economy. After the Second World War, when the ideology took shape, these intellectual

concerns translated into real-world fears of the rising power of workers in the advanced economies; of Soviet experiments in planning and associated industrial expansion; and of developmentalism in the global South. The so-called First, Second and Third worlds each produced their own threats to the rule of markets and accumulation of profits.

The remedy was an intellectual assault on collective action. Early neoliberals like Frederick Hayek and their later acolytes treated common knowledge gained through deliberation and action consciously planned in common as illusory, if not outright impossible. It is only when confronted with a wall of toothpaste in the supermarket that I find out how much clean and healthy teeth are worth to me—conveniently translated into dollars per tube. Margaret Thatcher summed it up when she proclaimed, "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families." Only the market can cajole us to do things together or to divulge thoughts we didn't even know we had. That, in neoliberal dogma, is its unique magic. And private profit is its engine.

What may seem like an arcane intellectual debate has now shown up in COVID-19 case numbers and death counts. Countries around the world have been unable to handle a pandemic, one that scientists had long expected to strike, in part because of concerted efforts to undermine and eliminate democratic planning capacity. The aim was to shake our faith in our capacity to solve problems together.

The law of unintended consequences

The manufactured distrust of planning has an impact on how we see the world. Today, unintended consequences are everywhere. They especially suffuse the language of politics. How many politicians have refrained from raising welfare rates or eliminating tuition fees by blaming it on the spectre of unintended consequences?

That actions can have unintended consequences is a simple truism. Putting basic needs like shelter or prescription drugs on the market also has unintended consequences. In this case, the poor are unhoused or denied medical care. The difference is that when it comes to expanding public services, the rich are faced with the consequence of higher taxes, the poor and workers with more dignity and power. The language of unintended consequences is meant to impair our very capacity to make and accept conscious trade-offs, especially those where the wealthy and powerful might be left holding the short end.

The grand neoliberal reforms, whether Margaret Thatcher's erosion of public housing via the right-to-buy scheme or Bill Clinton turning welfare into workfare, were sold on the idea that people had to have an individual stake in things. Only, another stake was being driven through public ownership and public

Countries around the world have been unable to handle a pandemic, one that scientists had long expected to strike, in part because of concerted efforts to undermine and eliminate democratic planning capacity.

decision-making along the way. The project to give individuals “skin in the game” is the same one that dismantled the welfare state in the global North and halted the developmental state in the global South. The point was not just to destroy the state but to refashion it, to enforce market logic.

Pandemics have consequences too

This logic was partially upended by the pandemic. The pandemic has clarified just how much we really depend on each other. It has shown us how much we have in common—so many public health measures, from masks to lockdowns, rely on us collectively committing to an action together—and how much our world has cleaved us apart.

While the right still worried about unintended consequences, furloughs, payments and emergency benefits flowed because not doing so would have led to spiraling infections and deaths. The decision about which work was essential and which was not was a conscious one—one the market was incapable of making. At the same time, decisions about who did the essential work were left up to the old market order. We cannot really say that we are all in this together when death rates and unemployment rates are so disproportionately high among low-wage and racialized workers.

The pandemic may have exposed the injustices and irrationalities of our world but, mostly, governments have used the equivalent of policy duct tape to keep the system from seizing up and breaking down. Income supports have been necessary lifesavers. They have also shown just how inadequate wages and benefits were before the pandemic. Worries that a \$2,000 monthly cheque would dissuade people from looking for work says more about pre-pandemic poverty wages than modest pandemic supports.

Beyond these emergency measures to shore up incomes, the first months of the pandemic could have been used to expand public planning. A simple step would have been to begin creating public distribution networks for masks, food and other essentials—something also very useful for distributing vaccines! This wasn’t impossible: the state of Kerala, India, much less affluent than Canada, did just this. Its government flexed its less atrophied planning muscles and utilized existing public, social and community organizations to distribute necessities and spread public health messages from the very start of the pandemic.

Open windows

Against heady invocations of the end of neoliberalism, it seems that things today remain very different yet, in some ways, very much the same. Much of the state response, so far, has been keeping the capitalism of February 2020 in suspended animation. Governments have rightly taken on debt just to keep people afloat and to avoid a depression, but this is standard Keynesian

Once the need for disaster statism recedes, the question will be whether states can be pushed to invest in a real reconstruction and a deep restructuring.

firefighting. Once these firefighting measures are over, the real fight over the shift to a collective, planned response will begin.

There were some glimpses of this early on, as even some manufacturing plants here and there retooled on government orders: Louis Vuitton made hand sanitizer instead of perfume in France, tractor maker John Deere made face shields in the USA. These, however, were sporadic episodes, unwillingly embarked upon. Once the need for disaster statism recedes, the question will be whether states can be pushed to invest in a real reconstruction and a deep restructuring.

Luckily, the window for change hasn’t closed. If anything, it is only starting to open. In the aftermath of this pandemic, we must undertake the task of remaking the state once again. The pandemic has reaffirmed how much we depend on one another—that society really does exist. We need to foster existing collective projects and create new ones: from renationalized long-term care to expanded public and cooperative housing, from public pharmaceutical companies to delivery driver co-operatives. The world was desperately calling out for a Green New Deal of massive, planned, public investment 12 months ago. Today, it is screaming for it.

Canada Post-script

Interestingly, the Canadian public health agency cancelled the Amazon agreement struck in April after just four months. It turns out the country needed a simpler, more centralized system; a public one better suited to the specificities of procuring and handling PPE while simplifying the logistics of making larger deliveries to fewer locations. In short, it needed a plan.

We will need many more plans as we come out of the pandemic and into an era of accelerating climate change. Our task is to create institutions for democratic planning and collective decision-making that can make those plans, and, in doing so, remake the world. **M**

**ALL WE HAVE
IS EACH OTHER**



SYED HUSSAN

Fighting on all fronts

FOR US MIGRANTS, 2020 was a human rights catastrophe, which continues in 2021. We've been on the front line of the COVID-19 crisis, doing the lowest paid and most dangerous jobs: growing and delivering food, cleaning buildings, and caring for children and the elderly. At the same time, many of us have been excluded from even basic health care and income support during a pandemic.

At least one in 23 people in Canada—over 1.6 million people—are migrants on work or study permits, refugee claimants, on parent and grandparent super visas, or are undocumented. Many are racialized, working-class people.

Faced with multiple lockdowns, many migrant and undocumented people have lost and continue to lose work and wages. The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and the programs that have followed, which have allowed some affected by pandemic layoffs to make ends meet, needed a valid Social Insurance Number (SIN) to access, something that undocumented people and many migrants do not have. Tens of thousands of migrants on study and work permits weren't able to renew their SINs because of permit processing delays by Immigration Canada. The result was starvation, for many.

Lilliana Trejo, an undocumented mother who works as an aide in a long-term care home, articulated what many are facing: "If we don't die of COVID-19, we will die of anxiety, depression, isolation, and hunger." Queen, a care worker who worked at a residential care home until she was diagnosed with COVID-19, had this message: "My mind is on survival mode with every breath I take. Wondering how and if my body is gonna cope with this.

If I don't work, I don't qualify for any of the prepared packages the Prime Minister speaks of because I don't have a Social Insurance Number. I have no family here; it would depend solely on me to cope with my well-being. I have to keep working."

According to the last census, 42.9% of non-permanent residents are low-income, compared to 12.5% of non-immigrants, and 17.9% of immigrants. Non-permanent residents are, thus, extremely vulnerable to economic crises. Yet, no federal or provincial supports were made available, despite multiple requests and proposals by migrant-led organizations.

Those who have continued to work have done so in gravely dangerous conditions. After long-term care homes, the largest outbreaks

have been at low-waged workplaces. Migrant farm workers in congregate work and living conditions faced multiple outbreaks. At least 1,600 were infected, and three died. Similar outbreaks have taken place in meat processing plants, warehouses and large factories. Migrant care workers, including nannies, long-term care and seniors' care home employees, have faced a similar crisis, in addition to labour intensification and increased surveillance. Yet, no on-the-job protections exist for migrants who face deportation if they speak out against commonplace exploitation and abuse.

Even COVID-19 testing and treatment is not available to many migrants and undocumented people in many provinces. In places like Ontario, where all health care is meant to be accessible, many hospitals and facilities have continued to charge exorbitant fees to migrants seeking care. In Nova Scotia and Alberta, many migrants without a health card have navigated the pandemic without access to health care. The Migrant Rights Network is currently campaigning for free and accessible vaccines provision for all migrant and undocumented people.

In addition to these barriers, 2020 has seen a massive increase in racism. Anti-Asian racism spiked in January 2020 and has since expanded to all racialized migrants, as politicians target migrants as disease carriers to distract from their own refusal to enact safety protocols that would limit the virus' spread and provide adequate income supports for people to stay home. Police have disproportionately targeted racialized migrants for violating COVID-19 by-laws. In PEI, for example, 22-year old Javan Nsangira, a Black international

The pandemic exacerbated the existing crisis that migrants live in as a result of being denied basic rights and protections.

student with mental health needs, faced a seven-week jail sentence for failing to self-isolate.

But 2020 is also the year of our courage. In the face of hunger and sickness, migrants organized for justice. This is the year that:

- Immigration detainees in a Laval detention centre went on hunger strike until they were released;
- Migrant farm workers, in the face of outbreaks, walked off jobs, marched on their bosses, demanded their rights and refused to be silent, even when they were fired;
- Migrant care workers refused to be locked up, surveilled and mistreated;
- Migrant students began to organize as migrant workers, demanding rights and status, and successfully changed work permit laws stopping the mass deportation of 55,000 people;
- Migrant sex workers, undocumented people, and others took action calling for status for all landed peoples on May 1, June 14, July 4, Aug. 23, Sept. 20, and Nov. 1, undeterred by detentions and deportations; and
- Migrants won numerous changes to immigration and border policies to ensure our rights.

The Migrant Rights Network is Canada's first and only cross-country alliance of racialized migrant-led organizations. In addition to our collective actions focused on federal changes, our nearly 50 member organizations in nine provinces are fighting for access to health care, social assistance, and workers' rights at provincial and municipal levels, winning necessary changes. Together, we've raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to distribute food and essential supplies to migrants struggling during the COVID-19 crisis.

Our central demand in 2021 continues to be fairness. We cannot have a fair society without equal rights, and equal rights are not possible until each resident in the country has full and permanent immigration status. We are calling on Canada to ensure full and permanent immigration status for all migrant and undocumented people and, going forward, full immigration status for all upon arrival.

The pandemic exacerbated the existing crisis that migrants live in as a result of being denied basic rights and protections. But our fight for justice extends beyond the pandemic. Full and permanent immigration status for all is a call for fundamental transformation of our economic and social systems away from profit and exploitation and towards social liberation and care. It is a rejection of the war, capitalist exploitation and climate policies that force migrants to leave our homes in the first place. Our struggle is for social and environmental justice for all. **M**

NATHAN LACHOWSKY

Waiting to count

2SLGBTQQIA+ experiences are missing from government data collection

BEING DIFFERENT HAS never been easy, and that's especially true in the context of COVID-19. Public health control measures have exacerbated health and social inequities for marginalized communities, including those marginalized based on sexual orientation, biological sex, and gender identity or expression. Although sexuality and gender are protected from discrimination by our national human rights and criminal legislation, individuals with marginalized sexualities and genders consistently experience less secure employment, lower incomes, and less financial security. They are also more likely to experience homelessness and insecure housing. Did I mention that this was all before COVID-19?

In 2017, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made a public apology to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2) communities. In it, he provided a brief history on our country's systematic oppression of these individuals. He also acknowledged that discrimination on the basis of sexuality and gender is ongoing. In 2019, the Standing Committee on Health released a ground-breaking report on the health of LGBTQIA2 communities in Canada. This report highlighted the diverse range of inequities experienced by this heterogeneous population. It highlighted how stigma and discrimination have led to poorer mental

Without data and testimony, the experiences of 2SLGBTQQIA+ people related to the pandemic are invisible to both the state and society more broadly.

and chronic health, which we now know are key vulnerabilities to COVID-19 and associated control measures. The report also highlighted the need for community involvement in decision-making, and for better data collection. To date, we have very little governmental data about these populations in Canada; for example, data on sexual orientation is not collected in the census. It's only this year that Canada's census will include a question on gender identity, for the very first time.

While the government has amassed much data on COVID-19, it has willfully ignored 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in their data collection. This, despite calls to action from these very communities. How does this reflect who we value and care about as a society? Without data and testimony, the experiences of 2SLGBTQQIA+ people related to the pandemic are invisible to both the state and society more broadly.

The sparse research that does exist on COVID-19 among 2SLGBTQQIA+ people has been led by community agencies and universities, because governments simply are not doing it. The limited data we do have tells a stark tale of inequity: during the first wave of COVID-19, Egale Canada estimated that half of 2SLGBTQQIA+ households faced lay-offs or reduced employment—compared with 39% of all households. 2SLGBTQQIA+ people were more likely to report significant impacts on their mental health (42% versus 30%), but were also more likely to self-isolate (58% versus 49%). A second report later in 2020 found that Black, Indigenous and other racialized 2SLGBTQQIA+ were more likely to have been admitted to hospital for COVID-19 and to know someone who died from COVID-19.

Research out of Trent University highlighted that inequities for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are being further exacerbated in this pandemic. 2SLGBTQQIA+ people reported feeling disconnected from

What's in an acronym? Broadening inclusion.

As an astute reader, you may have noticed the evolving acronym throughout this piece. I use 2SLGBTQQIA+ to include Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and other sexual orientation and gender identity minorities. This acronym was used in the recent report on the national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and includes a few key differences from what has been used previously. Two-Spirit is put at the start of the acronym to recognize that Indigenous people were here before European colonization. The second Q for questioning is for those who are still exploring their connection to the assumptive labels of heterosexual and cisgender that mainstream society reinforces. And finally, the plus symbolizes inclusion of others not listed, to recognize the limitations of any acronym.

their communities. Indeed, Pride festivals were cancelled across the country in 2020, and access to community-based organizations has been negatively impacted. 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals also have less access to health care, including gender affirming services and sexual health care.

“Isolation at home” has been a shared COVID-19 experience for many. Yet, “home” for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people is often fraught with homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, and more. 2SLGBTQQIA+ youth were already overrepresented in unstably housed communities prior to COVID-19. Some 2SLGBTQQIA+ youth had to choose between isolating in unsupportive or hostile households, or leaving the place they called home for less secure housing. Even before COVID-19, 2SLGBTQQIA+ seniors in housing facilities reported needing to conceal or manage their identity due to discrimination from other residents and staff; and in the era of essential visitors only, this concealment became more difficult. No one should be forced back into ‘the closet’ for their safety. As we re-envision our approach to housing and long-term care post-COVID-19, we need to consider the ways in which we create affordable,

affirming spaces for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. One unique opportunity to consider is intergenerational housing solutions that facilitate community building, knowledge sharing, and mutual support.

There is no single COVID-19 narrative for our diverse 2SLGBTQQIA+ community. This pandemic has highlighted the fissures in health and social systems, including the barriers that the distinct invisibility of 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in official data creates. Persistent health and social inequities require structural solutions. We must take this opportunity to build a more just society. Let's avoid the need for any future apologies. **M**

PAUL TAYLOR

Our “right to housing” needs some teeth

IN DECEMBER 2019, the City of Toronto took the historic step of recognizing housing as a human right. They affirmed that “housing is essential to the inherent dignity and well-being of the person and to building sustainable and inclusive communities.”

Just four months later, more than a thousand Torontonians were forced to make their own housing, propping up tents in local parks and green spaces. With COVID-19 devastating the city, and shelters inaccessible, these people had no other option to comply with the provincial government’s stay-at-home orders. They quickly discovered that their recently enshrined right to housing didn’t apply during a global pandemic. Since the pandemic began, encampment residents have faced ongoing hostility and forced evictions enforced by Toronto police.

Toronto isn’t the only Canadian city struggling to provide housing to all who need it. Our nation’s collective housing crisis started decades ago, when then-Prime Minister Brian Mulroney initiated major cuts to social housing in 1984. It deepened in 1993, when Paul Martin, in his role as finance minister, abruptly cancelled all spending on new social housing projects. Most provinces followed suit with similar austerity measures, allowing private developers and short-term rentals to overtake city centres. Now, here we are in 2021: with tent communities, forced evictions, and growing social housing wait-lists in cities from Victoria to Halifax.

Balakrishnan Rajagopal, the UN’s Special Rapporteur on adequate housing has said that during

COVID-19, “having no home, lacking space for physical distancing in overcrowded living areas or having inadequate access to water and sanitation has become a death sentence, handed out predominantly against poor and marginalized communities.” Denying housing isn’t just a human rights violation—in a pandemic, it can be a matter of life and death. Yet I see these violations everywhere.

While the encampments serve as some of the most jarring visual depictions of Canada’s housing crisis, they are not the only manifestation of the problem. Here in Toronto, neighbourhoods that are predominantly Black experience twice the rate of evictions as white neighbourhoods, and this disparity is rising. These communities have also been among the worst hit by COVID: Black people make up less than 9% of Toronto’s population, yet we represent 23% of the city’s COVID-19 cases.

Across the province, the Ontario government has retracted the moratorium that prevented renters from residential evictions, and Landlord and Tenant Board proceedings have resumed. These hearings are solely available online due to COVID-19 precautions, and tenants are obligated to participate. There are no alternative arrangements for those without access to technology, or the reliable internet connection that’s needed to participate, and legal clinics have reported that low-income tenants are frequently being denied justice.

Nationally, many First Nations communities lack the housing and infrastructure to protect against the spread of COVID-19. At the time

of writing, there were 57 long-term drinking water advisories in effect for 39 First Nations communities across the country. The continued lack of access to clean water affects overall health and can make regular hand washing impossible. Furthermore, decades of inadequate funding for on-reserve housing has led to severe overcrowding, which has been cited as a contributing factor for these communities’ elevated rates of COVID-19.

Without co-ordinated action from our various levels of government, individual communities have had to pick up the slack. Back in the city, that has meant relying on volunteer-led initiatives. In Toronto, the Encampment Support Network (ESN) is one such volunteer-led group. They support people living in encampments in six locations throughout the city by offering essentials like food and water, while pressuring governments to develop real solutions to the housing crisis.

ESN’s demands—informed by ongoing feedback from encampment residents—are grounded in a rights-based framework. They’ve called on the city to develop a significant amount of affordable housing in the next 24 months; establish a moratorium on evictions and on clearing encampments; ensure that all shelters and support housing include COVID-19 safety measures and overdose prevention/harm reduction services; create an additional 2,000 COVID-19-safe emergency shelter spaces; and provide access to food, water, winter survival gear, fire safety equipment and sleeping bags for encampments residents.

The work of the Encampment Support Network is vital, but I’m



JOANNA SEVILLE

frankly appalled that it needs to be undertaken at all. Volunteers, no matter how well organized, cannot meaningfully address the disparities facing our country. What we need is comprehensive policy that addresses upstream factors, and protects everyone in Canada from housing insecurity altogether. As a country, we've made the protection of fundamental human rights the work of charity instead of our political leaders. To ascribe a basic human right second billing, left to a patchwork of agencies across the country with little political agency is to guarantee failure on a file that simply cannot fail.

We can no longer accept the culture of partisan and jurisdictional bickering that is hindering progress on housing. We need our leaders to work in tandem to face this crisis, including our municipal, provincial, federal, and First Nations government representatives.

It's ludicrous to rely on private developers to keep our cities affordable. We must set significant targets to acquire publicly-owned properties and land for social, co-op, and rent-regulated affordable housing.

Finally, we need to push for bolder strategies that challenge Canadians' preconceived notions of how the government can meet the needs of its people. This

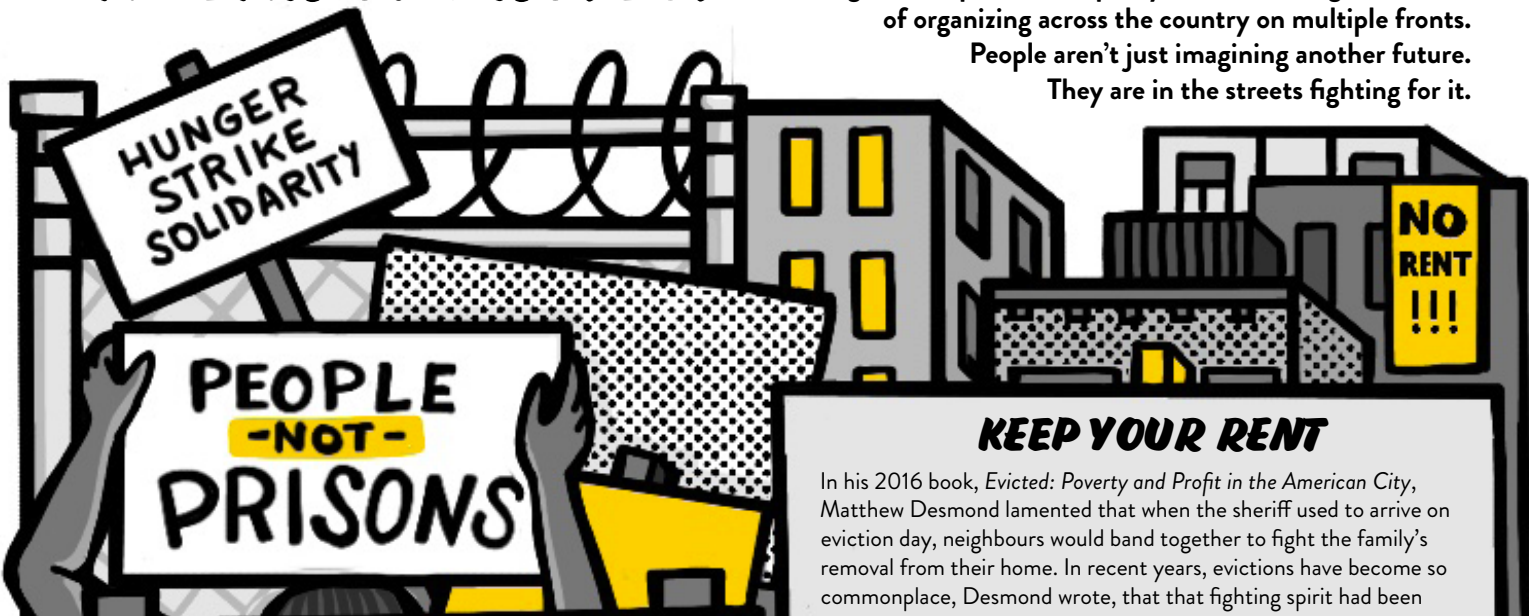
pandemic has proven that our leaders are capable of sweeping interventions, if the political will is there. Let's look to Lisbon, where the municipal government is renting now-vacant Airbnbs and turning them into affordable housing for essential workers. Or Berlin, where rent has been universally frozen for five years to prevent runaway increases. Or Minneapolis, where the city council completely abolished single-family zoning to address its affordable-housing crisis and confront the zoning's role in a history of racist housing practices.

Most recently, I've also found inspiration in the People's Action's "Homes Guarantee" campaign in the United States. Leaders with lived experience of poverty and housing insecurity have drafted a platform that calls for major reforms at all levels of government—including millions of units of social housing and national rent control.

One of the People's Action's grassroots leaders is Linda Armitage, a 77 year-old who faced eviction when her NGO-owned building was almost sold to a for-profit developer. "We are reimagining housing," says Armitage "Housing as a human right?—it's a wonderful value, but by golly, we've got to put some teeth in it." **M**

THE PANDEMIC AS A PORTAL: A YEAR OF PROTEST

Early in the first lockdowns, community organizers asserted that whatever happened next, when the pandemic ended we could not go back to normal. “Normal” as we knew it was a system built on injustice, with racism, inequality, violence, and unsustainability baked into its structure. Something about this pandemic moment allowed focus to become clearer and collective rage to sharpen, as this past year has seen a groundswell of organizing across the country on multiple fronts. People aren’t just imagining another future. They are in the streets fighting for it.



PRISON PROTESTS

When COVID-19 reached Canada, it was immediately apparent that incarcerated people would not be safe from exposure. By mid-March, protests began inside Canada’s institutions and at allied events on the outside.

The first documented hunger strike related to COVID-19 took place at the Laval Immigration Holding Centre in March 2020. Migrant detainees held by the Canadian Border Services Agency, fearing for their safety, began a hunger strike, calling for carceral depopulation to prevent the spread of the virus through the Centre.

In June, people held at Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre staged hunger strikes protesting the lack of clean drinking water, unhygienic living conditions and more. Another, protesting anti-Indigeneity, anti-Black, guard-incited violence, was launched at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre with solidarity from prisoners at the Central East Correctional Centre the following month. By October, the Toronto East Detention Centre was also the site of a hunger strike.

In January 2021, incarcerated people across Saskatchewan began a coordinated hunger strike, protesting the province’s handling of the COVID-19 crisis and asking for Corrections, Policing and Public Safety Minister Christine Tell to resign.

At the time of writing, over 3,800 cases of COVID-19 are linked to Canadian carceral institutions. *COVID19: Investigating Canada’s Carceral Response to the Coronavirus through the Prison Pandemic Partnership* reports that between December 1 and January 8, an average of 50.3 new cases of COVID-19 linked to Canadian carceral institutions were reported per day.

KEEP YOUR RENT

In his 2016 book, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, Matthew Desmond lamented that when the sheriff used to arrive on eviction day, neighbours would band together to fight the family’s removal from their home. In recent years, evictions have become so commonplace, Desmond wrote, that that fighting spirit had been supplanted by resignation.

But mass layoffs wrought by the pandemic have seemingly reignited the original spirit among many renters, culminating in the Keep Your Rent movement.

Across North America, abruptly unemployed renters withheld their rent on April 1. The protest has continued as pandemic-related unemployment and underemployment persists for low-wage workers. B.C. and Nova Scotia have committed to preventing renters from being evicted, but the inability to make rent is resulting in evictions and homelessness elsewhere. Ontario’s Landlord and Tenant Board, for example, resumed eviction hearings on November 20, holding over 12,000 by year’s end.

Affected renters continue to call on provinces to end COVID-19 evictions, negotiate when possible with corporate landlords to prevent mass evictions, and show up for their neighbours on eviction day in a final push to keep families in their homes during the pandemic.



#BLM AND DEFUND THE POLICE

Across Canada this past summer, calls to protect Black and Indigenous lives were paired with calls to defund police departments. Organizers of this newly mainstreamed idea quickly pointed out the substantial and increasing portion of municipal budgets allocated to policing. Canadian taxpayers now spend \$41 million per day on policing. This results in \$15.1 billion spent annually on police departments – upwards of 42% of a municipality's budget.

As public attention turned to the disproportionate rates of street-level harassment and interactions with police that marginalized communities face, the Defund movement also advanced the issue of police in schools. Following years of organizing and pressure, in June 2020 Hamilton Students for Justice (formerly HWDSB Kids Need Help) held a sit-in during the Hamilton Wentworth District School Board's vote on a motion to terminate the police liaison program. Their efforts were successful and the police presence in the HWDSB schools finally ended. Similar organizing in communities including Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Ottawa continues. To see the scope of police presence in schools across Canada, visit defundthepolice.org/canada/.

Black post-secondary students are also organizing against institutional racism. In 2019, University of Ottawa campus security handcuffed and detained Jamal Koulmiye-Boyce, a Black university student, for over two hours for not having his identification. Further, students report frequently seeing racist graffiti and hearing white professors using the n-word in lectures. In December, frustrated by the administration's inaction, a group of students called URacism marched to Tabaret Hall. A 100 hour sit-in protest called on the University of Ottawa administration to meet and discuss a series of items including implementing a university wide anti-racism policy and ensuring independence and autonomy for the Human Rights Department.



LAND BACK AND BEYOND

2020 was a year of Indigenous resistance to myriad injustices—from the violence experience by Mi'kmaq lobster fishers to the unauthorized archaeological dig in Oka opposed by the traditional governing body of Kanehsata'ke to multiple pipeline projects being built without consent from all Nations whose land the projects cut through.

While the year is over, the fight for sovereignty, treaty and land rights, justice, and equity continues for Nations across the country.

On the West Coast, the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs and their allies continue their fight against the Coastal GasLink pipeline being built without consent through their traditional territory. The Secwépemc people have begun building tiny houses along the Trans Mountain Pipeline route to assert their jurisdiction and block construction. There is additional concern about the threats to communities as construction "man camps" have been linked to spreading COVID-19 to rural First Nations communities and have a long history of perpetuating violence against Indigenous women and girls.

In Ontario, 1492 Land Back organizers have spent over 200 days holding back the aggressive, unlawful development of Haudenosaunee land by local developers. The land defenders here, too, have built tiny houses to help make the protest more sustainable during the unforgiving winter months.

The Algonquins of Barriere Lake, Quebec enforced their own moratorium on moose hunting to protect declining populations this fall. They are calling for a five-year ban on sports hunting in the provincial wildlife reserve and a study of the moose population in the area. The community will enforce another moratorium this fall if the provincial government does not enact one.



DAVID MACDONALD

Picking up the tab

THE GLOBAL COVID-19 pandemic has required government leadership on a scale that's unprecedented in modern Canadian times. Including liquidity and unallocated funds, federal and provincial governments have announced almost \$600 billion in spending commitments across 849 measures to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. Our report, released at the end of January, provided a much-needed "who is doing what" exercise, tracking which level of government has picked up the tab for COVID-19, which area the funding went to and, given most of the funding is on the federal government's tab, how the provinces are spending their share of the transfers. The report includes all measures announced on or before December 31, 2020 and any measure in the three fiscal years from 2019-20 to 2021-22.

Key findings

Federalism is doing its job, mostly

The federal government came into this global pandemic with the greatest fiscal breathing room. Even with historic investments in COVID-19 rapid response, the federal government is doing so in an environment of historically low interest rates, a manageable debt-to-GDP ratio, and a Bank of Canada that serves as a backstop. It's only fitting that the federal government took the lead during this time of crisis: the federal government is spending \$343 billion between the fiscal years 2019-20 and 2021-22—\$24 billion of which is being transferred to the provinces. In turn, the provinces have committed to spend \$31 billion. In other words, of all direct spending commitments during the pandemic, only 8% is coming from

the provincial governments; 92% of that spending is on the federal tab.

Most support for individuals and businesses has come from the federal government

Almost all of the money provided directly to individuals or businesses is on the federal tab. Businesses are receiving more help than jobless Canadians. Individuals and businesses receiving government support are only receiving 4% and 6%, respectively, from provincial government coffers.

The federal government is doing the heavy lifting on health care

Health care is the third largest category, including spending on traditional direct health care costs like hospitals, doctors and nurses, but, also, long-term care, personal protective equipment (PPE), COVID-19 testing, contact tracing and mental health. This is a provincial jurisdiction, yet only 12% of COVID-19 health spending is coming from provincial coffers—88% of these expenditures is on the federal tab. The federal government is spending \$30 billion on PPE, vaccines, testing and contact tracing. Another \$9 billion is going to the provinces through Safe Restart agreements. The provinces are spending \$5 billion of their own money on health care.

Almost every province is leaving federal money on the table

Three out of 10 provinces (Newfoundland and Labrador, P.E.I., New Brunswick) haven't even spent the federal money transferred to them for COVID-19 health measures yet.

Six out of 10 provinces (P.E.I., Nova Scotia, New Brunswick,

Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan) haven't met the 50-50 cost-sharing stipulation of municipal supports through the Safe Restart agreements.

Six out of 10 provinces (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, B.C.) didn't access the full federal amount to support low-wage essential workers.

Six out of 10 provinces (Newfoundland and Labrador, P.E.I., New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta) don't have sufficient plans in place to access the full amount of federal long-term care funds, when all they have to do is show the federal government their plans.

Six out of 10 provinces (Newfoundland and Labrador, P.E.I., Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta) are sitting on billions of unallocated COVID-19 contingency funds that are built into their budgets. Ontario, alone, is sitting on a total of \$6.4 billion in unspent COVID-19 funding.

Here's a snapshot of provincial funding priorities—including which provinces are sitting on unspent federal money.

Federal-provincial spending priorities by province

Every province faces different challenges due to COVID-19, so their spending priorities may differ. Most of this is on the federal tab: federal money makes up 84%–99% of all provincial government COVID-19 direct spending. The government of British Columbia is devoting almost 3% of provincial GDP to its measures, Manitoba is managing just under 2%. Quebec's ratio is 1.5%, Ontario and Alberta are committing 1% of GDP. The Atlantic provincial governments are spending under 1% of GDP on COVID-19 measures.

Newfoundland and Labrador: The COVID-19 response is planned to cost \$9,180 per person, or \$4.8 billion dollars—97% of that is on the federal tab. The largest category of support is for businesses, which receive almost \$4,000 a person. The total value of individual supports is \$3,800 per person. As with other provinces, this is mostly all federal money, either through the CERB or its replacements.

Prince Edward Island: Just over \$8,600 a person is planned for P.E.I. spending—95% of it is on the federal tab. Businesses are receiving the most support, worth over \$3,700 a person. As with other provinces, most of this support is on the federal tab, through the CEWS and CEBA. Individual supports in P.E.I. total \$3,600 a person—almost all on the federal tab.

Nova Scotia: In Nova Scotia, \$8,500 a person is being spent on direct COVID-19 measures—94% of that spending is on the federal tab. Individual support amounts to the equivalent of \$3,700 a person, almost all on the federal tab. Businesses have the second highest support level, worth \$3,000 a person.

New Brunswick: Spending on direct COVID-19 measures in New Brunswick totals \$7,500 a person, 99% of which is on the federal tab. The largest support category is for individuals, who will receive the equivalent of \$3,300 a person. The province provided its 25% wage top-up for essential workers and provided its own emergency workers' benefit, but little beyond those programs for individuals. Businesses saw the second highest level of support, worth the equivalent of \$2,900 a person, 98% of which was on the federal tab.

Quebec: COVID-19 spending in Quebec amounts to \$9,400 a person—92% of that is federal funding. Business support amounts to \$3,900 a person, again

predominantly federal money. Individual supports are slightly smaller than business supports, costing the equivalent of \$3,750 a person. Out of that amount the province provides \$100 a person. Provincial spending is generally focused on wage top-up programs and worker retraining programs, although these expenditures also have a large federal transfer component.

Ontario: Government spending in Canada's biggest province will amount to \$9,800 a person on direct COVID-19 measures—94% of which is on the federal tab. Spending on business supports is roughly equal to spending on individuals, just over \$4,000 a person. Most of this is on the federal tab. Provincial supports for individuals are mostly in the form of wage improvements for front-line essential workers, partially offset by federal transfers. Health care spending in Ontario is expected to be the equivalent of \$1,180 a person, with only \$160 on the provincial tab. Of the \$100 a person being spent on child care and school COVID-19 measures, only \$20 is on the provincial tab.

Manitoba: The equivalent of \$9,400 a person worth of supports are in place in Manitoba—\$8,400 of which is on the federal tab. Business takes up the largest support category, providing the equivalent of \$3,600 a person. Support for individuals amounts to \$3,400 a person—almost entirely on the federal tab. Of the \$1,450 per person in COVID-19 health measures, the province is covering 17% of the tab. It also has one of the largest per capita expenditures on stimulative infrastructure.

Saskatchewan: COVID-19 measures in Saskatchewan amount to \$9,000 a person—90% is on the federal tab. Transfers to individuals make up the largest type of support, amounting to \$3,400 a person. The province only matched 5% of total federal essential



**SIX OUT OF
10 PROVINCES**
are sitting on billions
of unallocated
COVID-19
contingency funds
that are built into
their budgets.

worker wage top-ups, which was meant to be shared 25%–75%. The second largest area of support is for business, amounting to \$3,300 a person. Saskatchewan businesses also benefit disproportionately from federal supports to the agricultural sector, as well as supports for cleaning up former oil and gas wells. Only \$200 out of the total \$3,300 per person support for businesses is on the provincial tab. Despite being provincial jurisdiction, 98% of the COVID-19 health care tab in this province was paid for by the federal government.

Alberta: Albertans are receiving the highest level of per capita COVID-19 spending in Canada, worth \$11,200 a person—93% of which is on the federal tab. Alberta receives \$1,200 more support, per person, from the federal government than any other province. Businesses have the highest level of support: \$5,500 for every Albertan. The province’s businesses benefit disproportionately from the federal oil and gas well clean-up fund, as well as the emissions reduction fund for the oil and gas sector. Individual supports are worth \$3,800 a person.

British Columbia: COVID-19 direct measures in British Columbia amount to \$10,300 a person, the

second highest after Alberta. B.C. is second highest due to substantial provincial government spending, whereas Alberta is highest due to far more federal support. Although most expenditures were on the federal tab, 16% of that total is on the provincial tab, the highest provincial contribution in Canada. Individual supports amount to \$4,500 per British Columbian. The B.C. government stands out as providing the highest per capita individual supports, worth over \$800 a person—eight times higher than the next highest province, Quebec. Business supports amount to \$4,000 a person. B.C. businesses also benefit from federal money to clean up former oil and gas wells. Health measures in the province amount to \$1,150 a person, 94% of which is on the federal tab—though, unlike other provinces, B.C. took early leadership by committing much of its COVID-19 health care spending early in the pandemic, prior to knowing the full amount of federal dollars that would later become available.

Providing an accurate overview of the territories was difficult. The distributional proxies used to allocate federal dollars to particular provinces often weren’t available for the territories. As such, this

analysis was not extended to the territories.

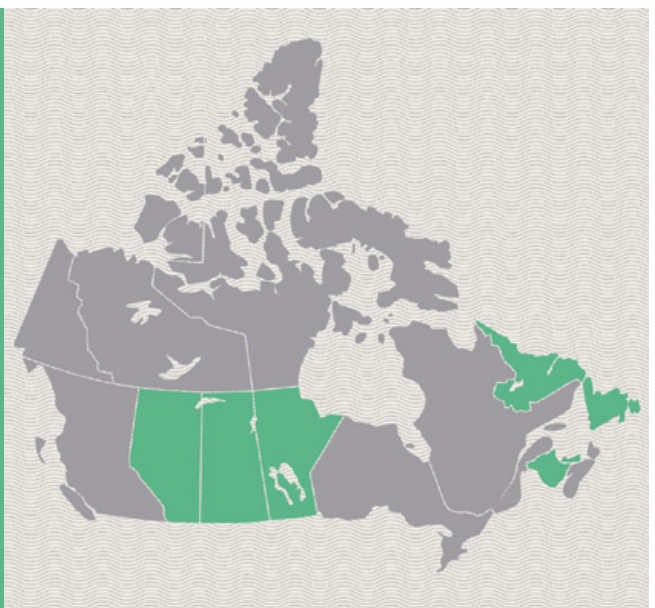
Where do we go from here?

At a time when regular budget updates have been erratic and historically large programs have been created to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19, it can be difficult to determine how much has been spent by whom and on what.

This report shows that, in the aggregate, provincial and federal governments have spent more than they planned to due to COVID-19, however, the heavy lifting, so far, was overwhelmingly done by the federal government, either through direct spending or new transfers to the provinces. Federal funding made up the majority of spending in every province, with the exception of stimulative infrastructure, one of the smallest spending categories. Here, few federal programs apply and the provinces are largely on their own.

Federal leadership is as it should be; Canada needs a strong federal government to mobilize resources. Provincial governments have provided some additional support, but the unevenness of provincial responses suggests differences in fiscal capacity and political orientations—which is even more reason for a strong federal response.

**SIX OUT OF
10 PROVINCES**
don't have sufficient
plans in place to
access the full amount
of federal long-term
care funds.





**SIX OUT OF
10 PROVINCES**
didn't access the full
federal amount to
support low-wage
essential workers.

There were few federal conditions for provincial transfers, and even when there was—like cost-matching municipal supports—most provinces declined to do so but received the funding in any event. If a blind eye continues to be turned to conditions on federal money, the federal government will have a difficult time ensuring that the priorities it sets as conditions for new money are reliably met. Federal power, in a lot of cases, is spending power.

Federal power is also the ability to say funding will flow in areas where we want improvements, such as minimum national standards in long-term care or in child care spending. The Canada Health Act stipulates conditions that provincial health insurance plans must respect in order to receive federal cash contributions, standards which should apply to COVID-19 crisis funding. This is where the real strength lies, even though federal governments have been reluctant to provincial objections to having “strings attached”.

In addition to expenditures, all governments—federal, provincial, and municipal—will see their revenues fall as Canadians lose work and business profits fall. This report does not assess these impacts, but the largest programs—the CERB and its replacements, and the CEWS—are reported on a pre-tax basis, even though both will have substantial amounts of taxes paid to both the federal and provincial governments. These programs are not only supporting Canadians, they also benefit provincial governments, through the taxes that will be owed on the benefits. When the public health emergency subsidies, revenues are likely to rise rapidly as Canadians can freely return to work, earn and spend their money again.

What this analysis indicates is, that, while governments are spending more because of COVID-19, there remains much more fiscal capacity to do more

to mitigate the impacts of this global pandemic and, post-pandemic, to ensure Canada rebuilds better—to be better prepared for future crises, to tackle the inequities that COVID-19 has exposed, and to improve public services and supports that benefit everyone. The lion's share of the spending outlined in this report went on the federal government's tab at a time when interest rates are at historic lows and federal leadership was desperately needed. That leadership will be required for years to come and must be met by provincial partners willing to come to the table, cost-match, adhere to federal transfer conditions, and fully utilize the fiscal capacity within their own jurisdictions.

This requires a new kind of federalism, a more cooperative federalism, where the goals of equality, inclusiveness, fairness, justice, community well-being and global sustainability must remain front and centre. The economic and social challenges that COVID-19 presented Canada aren't temporary, nor are they like previous economic shocks to the system. The situation is more akin to the emergence from the Great Depression and World War Two—historical events that were followed by government leadership to create a welfare state that left fewer people behind. That project remained unfinished, and was greatly unravelled by decades of neoliberal ideology. There can be no return to that kind of austerity. The federal government needs to continue to lead the way and provincial governments need to do their part, starting by investing any unspent COVID-19 federal funds that they've been sitting on. **M**

JULIA POSCA

The other person of the year for 2020: The home

AS A RESULT of the pandemic, the home has been named the other “person of the year for 2020.” Rarely have we spent so much time between the four walls of our home, a situation that, like many others, has been experienced unevenly across the country. The quintessential symbol of comfort and security, the house can also signify squalor, promiscuity, or violence. The beautiful decor that we have seen in countless online conferences, meetings and interviews contrasts with the more modest interiors that form the backdrop of everyday life for many in Canada.

In 2018, Statistics Canada revealed that more than 1.6 million Canadian households, a bit more than one in 10 (11.6%) were “living in core housing need”, that is to say they were “living in an unsuitable, inadequate or unaffordable dwelling, and not able to afford alternative housing in their community.” Housing affordability is the most common problem for these households, with 74% of them saying they live in unaffordable housing. It should also be noted that 37% of single seniors lived in unaffordable housing in 2018.

Tenant households were more likely to be in a core housing need, with 23% facing such a situation compared to only 6.5% of owner households. The same is true for visible minorities, 13.9% of whom were in core housing need, compared with 7.2% of people who do not belong to a visible minority. In addition, according to data compiled by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), in 2011, 33.4% of Indigenous

households in Canada in on-reserve communities were living in housing that was unacceptable in terms of quality and/or size.

The living conditions of households have, therefore, had an effect on how their residents have dealt with the pandemic and lockdowns. The ability to telework in a suitable space, to self-isolate in a comfortable place for extended periods of time, or simply to be confined to a home free of toxic relationships varies greatly depending on the condition of our home and the composition of our household.

In this regard, 43% of owner households in Canada were “very satisfied” with their housing in 2018, compared with only 24% of tenant households, according to other data from the Canadian Housing Survey. In Quebec, these

percentages were 52% and 27% respectively.

Households that own their own home are also more likely to live in a detached home (and, therefore, more likely to be larger). For example, 68% of owner households lived in a detached house in Canada in 2018 (67% in Quebec), while 69% of Canadian tenant households lived in an apartment in a building (78.6% of tenant households in Quebec).

The composition of the dwelling also differs from one household type to another. For example, 22% of owner households comprise a single person, compared with 44% of tenant households (22% and 52% in Quebec). In addition, 16.9% of Canadian owner households belong to a visible minority, whereas 24% of tenant households do. In Quebec, these percentages are 7.2% and 17.3% respectively.

Finally, we must remember that some people simply do not have a roof over their heads at all. The most recent study on the subject, which dates back to 2014, estimated that 235,000 people are homeless in Canada. Unfortunately, the pandemic seems to have aggravated this problem, which affects a population that is sorely lacking in resources to deal with this type of event.

Crises exacerbate insecurity for those whose basic housing needs are not being met. It is to be hoped that the COVID-19 pandemic has reminded our governments of the importance of developing public policies that aim to remedy such deficiencies. By taking action to meet these basic needs, we are also helping to protect the health of Canadians. **M**

The living conditions of households have had an effect on how their residents have dealt with the pandemic and lockdowns.

ANDREA PIERCE

Imagining a sustainable Black recovery

COVID-19 didn't create this crisis

A YOUNG BLACK WOMAN today is more likely to be poor and make less income in Canada than her mother and grandmother, despite having higher educational levels, according to 2016 Statistics Canada census data. In Canada, time and data tells the story. Black women are the only group that has seen a consistent decrease in income compared to all other groups. Statistics Canada's 2016 data shows that the after-tax income of Black women after three or more generations in Canada has declined to \$25,919, despite 28% of Black women having a university certificate, diploma or degree at bachelor level or above. This same trend persists for the rate of low income in Black women, now at a rate of over 200% than of non-visible minority women.¹

The intersection of race and gender means that Black women face a dual penalty. They have lower lifetime earning power than both other visible minority and non-visible minority women and men. The Colour of Poverty reports, "racialized women earned 58 cents, and racialized men earned 76 cents, for every dollar a white man earned in Ontario in 2015," the province where over 50% of Canada's Black population resides. Black women remain underpaid and under-represented in the workforce and significantly more so in leadership positions, even when accounting for levels of education.

Labour force data disaggregated by race reveals that unemployment rates are consistently higher among Black Canadians than the rest of Canada's working-age population. Even among Black Canadians with a post-secondary education,

the unemployment rate in 2016 was 173% that of the rest of the population. When investigating this persistent gap, Statistics Canada researchers have conceded that other factors, not measured by the census, may be affecting the disproportionate unemployment rates of Black Canadians.

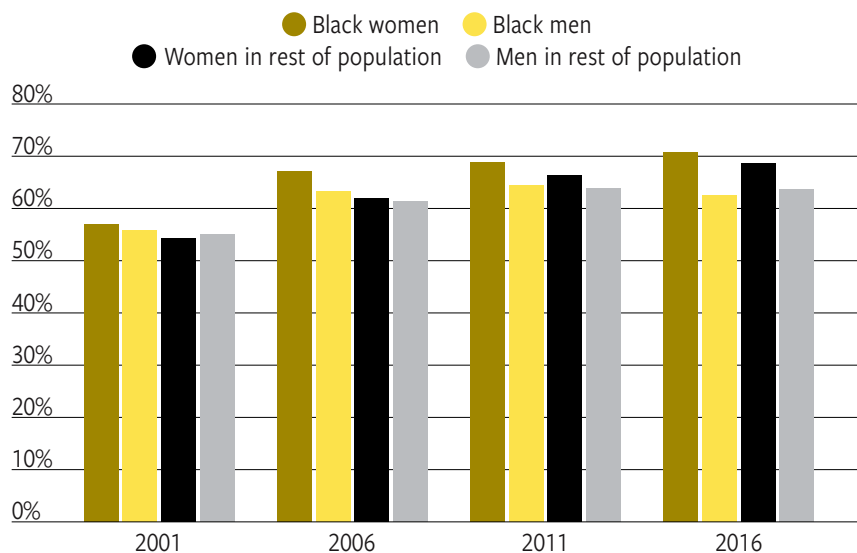
I recently attended a meeting of Black federal employees, where a researcher asked audience members if they had personally experienced racism at work to stand. More than 90% of the room stood up, including me. The next question was: how many had family members who experienced racism at work. The entire audience was now standing. Even I found that frightening as I looked around the room. It speaks to the systemic nature of racism in Canada. Studies have shown that Black women are more likely than any other demographic group to

experience microaggressions in the workplace, including having their experiences and expertise questioned and being held to higher levels of competence. Statistics Canada in their report *Canada's Black population: Education, labour and resilience* stated that 20% of Black women reported having experienced unfair treatment or discrimination at work in the 12 months prior to the survey.

The deep-seated inequality in Canada's labour market has made the impact of the pandemic disproportionately more severe for Black Canadians, particularly Black women. They are more likely to have been laid off than their white counterparts and the lower-wage sectors where they are more likely to be employed have been slower to rebound.

In their analysis of the gendered impacts of the pandemic, McKinsey

INDIVIDUALS WITH A POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION
Ages 25–59, Canada, 2001–16



SOURCES: STATISTICS CANADA, CENSUSES OF POPULATION 2001, 2006 AND 2016; 2011 NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY. [HTTPS://WWW150.STATCAN.GC.CA/N1/PUB/89-657-X/89-657-X2020002-ENG.HTM](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2020002-eng.htm)

& Company reported, “By our calculation, women’s jobs are 1.8 times more vulnerable to this crisis than men’s jobs. Women make up 39% of global employment but account for 54% of overall job losses. One reason for this greater effect on women is that the virus is significantly increasing the burden of unpaid care, which is disproportionately carried by women. This, among other factors, means that women’s employment is dropping faster than average, even accounting for the fact that women and men work in different sectors.” The pandemic has had an even greater impact on Black women, as they are more likely to be physical and emotional caretakers, and front line health and child care workers overseeing the well-being of not only their families but communities as well. The pandemic has been particularly challenging for single parents, and heads of single-income households, 30% of whom fall below the poverty line.

According to Colour of Poverty, over 50% of racialized households in Canada are living in housing that is unaffordable, inadequate (needing repair), and/or unsuitable, compared to 28% of non-racialized

households in similar housing crises. Inadequate housing can, has and will continue to contribute to higher rates of COVID-19 within racialized communities. In the neighbourhoods with the some of the highest numbers of COVID-19 cases in Toronto: Thistletown Beaumont Heights, Mount Olive-Silverstone-Jamestown, and Humbermede, the percentage of residents living in inappropriate housing in 2016 (as described above) in these neighbourhoods was 54.7%, 78.6%, and 68.4%. The percentage of the neighbourhoods’ populations identified as visible minorities was 64.3%, 86.7%, and 77.1%, respectively. Simply put, access to safe, appropriate, affordable housing is both a racial equity issue and public health issue.

Last summer, the CBC broke the story that, despite only making up 9% of Toronto’s overall population, Black residents accounted for 21% of the city’s reported COVID-19 infections. Since then, new research from University of Toronto PhD student Shen Lin has further revealed that foreign-born Black Canadians are nearly twice as likely than white Canadians to have multiple medical conditions that

put them at higher risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19. The pandemic is allowing us to experience the social determinants of health in real time, to witness, with startling clarity, how intersecting identities intensify the disadvantages faced by Black Canadians, particularly Black women. Investments and interventions must be holistic in addressing the effects of multiple interactive factors, to appropriately address the challenges faced by Black Canadians; in particular, women.

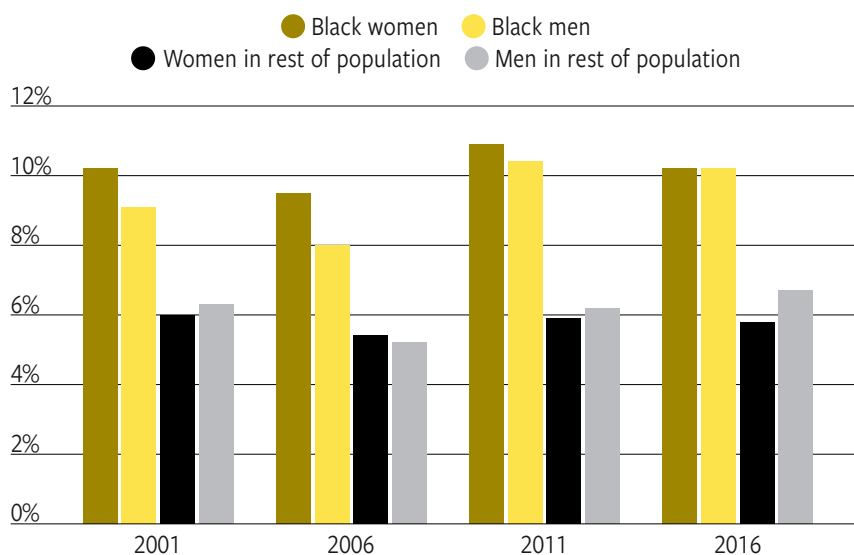
Building a sustainable Black recovery

COVID-19 has multiplied the penalty on Black Canadians and brought to the public’s attention the devastating impact of this crisis on marginalized communities, including Black Canadians. Black Canadians, pre-pandemic, were already in a leaking boat that has essentially been torpedoed by COVID-19. The Black businesses on board this boat were already frail and, after a year of closures, are on life support, with no guarantee of a recovery.

Building an equitable recovery for Black communities requires addressing inequality and barriers in both the public and private sectors.

The *Employment Equity Act* came into force in October 1996, yet the underrepresentation of Black Canadians in the federal public services management and on Agencies, Boards and Commissions (ABCs) should make us hang our heads in shame. At the end of 2020, a group of federal public service workers who identify as Black, Caribbean or of African descent launched a class action lawsuit against the federal government of Canada “for the wrongful failure to promote Black employees in the public service, and for unjustly subjecting class members to the systemic, unlawful practice of Black employee exclusion.” Given the under-representation of Black Canadians in places where appointments are made, it seems a logical

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, AGES 25–59
Canada, 2001–16



SOURCES: STATISTICS CANADA, CENSUSES OF POPULATION 2001, 2006 AND 2016; 2011 NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY.
[HTTPS://WWW150.STATCAN.GC.CA/N1/PUB/89-657-X/89-657-X2020002-ENG.HTM](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2020002-eng.htm)

outcome of that structure is that Black Canadians are under-represented in ABCs.

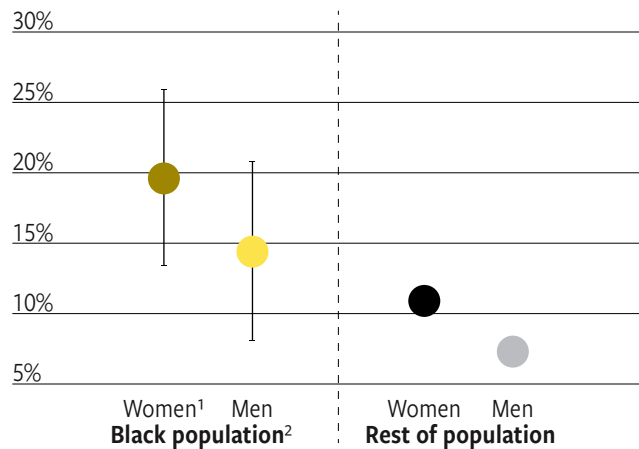
The 2018 Innovation Science and Economic Development Canada report *SME Profile: Canadian start-ups—A perspective based upon the 2014 survey on financing and growth of small and medium enterprises*, states that “both immigrant and visible-minority owners were more likely to start firms than non-immigrant and non-visible-minority owners and startup owners, were better educated than non-start up owners.” But once these businesses are started, they struggle to find support from the government and banks. As the recent lockdowns in Ontario have shown, struggling small businesses were left to shutter indefinitely while big box businesses struck a deal to stay open. Small businesses are the backbone of Black communities, and investments focused specifically on helping these businesses recover from the pandemic will be vital to their survival.

COVID-19 has severely impacted the lives of Black Canadians. We face the very real possibility that many of our small businesses in our communities will disappear if they do not receive targeted help. I propose the following recommendations for addressing these barriers and creating a more equitable recovery for all Canadians, including Black Canadians:

1. Mandate that the federal government departments set targets for diversity in it’s management, agencies, boards, commissions, and procurements/supply chain.
2. Mandate entities receiving federal contracts and grants have a number of Black members on their boards and in management and include Black-owned businesses in their supply chain.
3. Collaborate with Black stakeholders and other under-represented groups in the implementation of Bill C-25.
4. Amend the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and *Canada Labour Code* to include racism as a form of workplace injury, workplace harassment and violence prevention.
5. Increase the number of child care subsidies and extend the hours to provide 24x7 child care to address work hours of Black and other marginalized women, many who work outside standard hours.
6. Fund the proposed National Black Women Entrepreneurship Hub.
7. Increase affordable housing and subsidies to support for Black women.
8. Target Black women in the federal government gender strategy and Black women-owned business in social finance funding.

EXPERIENCE OF UNFAIR TREATMENT OR DISCRIMINATION AT WORK

Working population, ages 15+, Canada, 2016



LINES SHOW 95% LOWER AND UPPER CONFIDENCE INTERVALS. NOTES: 1. SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT FROM THE REST OF THE POPULATION (P < 0.05); 2. USE WITH CAUTION. SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY (CANADIANS AT WORK AND HOME), 2016. [HTTPS://WWW150.STATCAN.GC.CA/N1/PUB/89-657-X/89-657-X2020002-ENG.HTM](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-657-x/89-657-x2020002-eng.htm)

9. Undertake a comprehensive review to change policies and laws that discriminate against Black and racialized Canadians.

10. Mandate that Statistics Canada link the census data to other data sets to understand the impact of race and share the data with the public while respecting privacy laws and regulations.

The path forward

Racism in Canada is insidious, subtle and systemic. But, much like the virus that we have spent the last year fighting, just because something is difficult to comprehend does not make it unworthy of the fight. In this United Nations International Decade of People of African Descent (UNDPAD), to which Canada is a signatory, we should honour this commitment.

Current policy interventions aimed at supporting Black Canadians are inadequate. There is a need to build holistic programming to create supportive community and business environments. It’s time to undertake a comprehensive policy and legal review with a view to identifying and ending provisions that entail direct or indirect discrimination, adopt and strengthen comprehensive policies in collaboration with Black Canadians. COVID-19 has underscored how gender equality and economic growth must go hand-in-hand to ensure a just recovery. Let’s expand on that with some much needed intersectionality of race, abilities, and beyond to ensure that when Canada reopens, it’s a country that works for everyone who calls Canada home. **M**

1. While the *Monitor* and the author use the descriptors Black and racialized, Statistics Canada and the dataset referenced use the term visible minority with Blacks being a subset of the visible minority population within the dataset.

Meet Jason Moores, CCPA Donor

Jason Moores is not what we'd call a typical CCPA supporter insofar as he's a supporter that has likely spoken to many of you on behalf of the organization over the years. In addition to being a monthly donor, Jason has worked with the CCPA's National Office since 2007.

Tell us about someone you find particularly inspiring right now.

Dr. Theresa Tam. I'm writing this on the anniversary of the first case of COVID-19 reported in Canada. First, I'm proud that Canada's Chief Public Health Officer is a woman. She's knowledgeable and steady in navigating the ever-changing landscape that COVID-19 has created.

How has the pandemic forced you to think outside the box?

I never would have guessed that my partner and I would be living at our cottage since last March. We are extremely fortunate to have the option. It's a bit of a test drive for retirement.

Tell us about someone who was a big influence on you early in life and how you became a CCPA supporter?

My parents have had a huge influence on me. I grew up in Oshawa, ON. Both of them were actively involved in politics with the NDP. I remember going to the CAW Local 222 union hall with my dad at an early age to pick up campaign materials, then canvassing across the city.

When I was four, my parents divorced and my mom went back to school to get her teaching certificate.



That was at the start of the '70s, when divorce and women working were both pretty uncommon. So I grew up with the stigma of living in a single-parent home while my mom taught during the day and went to university at night, to earn her Masters degree in education. While my friends' mothers were at home, my mom was working, studying, and struggling to keep things afloat. I grew up watching my mom kicking ass in the face of incredible prejudice (including being called some pretty hurtful names by my friends' parents). While I was so proud of my mom, it quickly became apparent to me at an early age that not everyone felt the same.

Through my mom's struggles, my siblings and I had a front row seat

to witness some of the monumental inequities facing women at that time.

It was this upbringing and my mom's never-ending pursuit of knowledge that shaped my worldview—a view that aligns with the principles upheld by the CCPA.

What have you done to stay recharged during this difficult year?

Work has been pretty intense this past year. One of my efforts in 2021 is to take better care of myself. What feeds my soul, other than the inspiration from my colleagues and our amazing supporters across the country (sorry, sappy but true), is trying to turn off my devices and appreciate what's around me. As I mentioned, I'm extremely fortunate to be living at the cottage during this crazy time so, for me, quiet time, walking in nature right outside my door and connecting virtually with friends and family has kept me grounded.

Could you tell us why you switched to monthly giving four years ago?

For me it was easy. I was able to do it and understood the benefits of providing an assured stream of support that is crucial to CCPA's planning.

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.



CCPA

CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
CENTRE CANADIEN
de POLITIQUES ALTERNATIVES

LUCINDA CHITAPAIN

Tripping over TRIPS

The battle to put public health first at the World Trade Organization

THE NEW YEAR brought with it a spate of new COVID-19 lockdowns across much of the world, alongside worries of new and more contagious variants of the novel coronavirus. For Canada, at least, there is the hope of widespread vaccination by summer's end. The same cannot be said for poorer countries that do not have the means to purchase sufficient quantities of the available vaccines directly from pharma companies or to produce generic versions at home. In January, the World Health Organization warned the world faced "catastrophic moral failure" if it could not find a way to close this gap in access to public health.

Some countries are thinking creatively about how to achieve this feat. In a landmark move, India and South Africa have proposed to the members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) that governments have the right to temporarily suspend certain provisions of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) until herd immunity to COVID-19 is achieved. If the measure passes, countries would no longer be obliged to grant or enforce intellectual property rights over COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostic kits and other related medical technologies. The proposal, initially submitted in early October, has since gathered new co-sponsors and the support of over 100 WTO member governments.

Drafted in 1994, the TRIPS agreement sets out the minimum standards of protection of intellectual property (IP) rights to be provided by all WTO members. These monopoly rights grant

inventors a period of exclusivity to produce and market their creations. Public health advocates have long suggested the agreement has encouraged an increase in drug prices and restrained access to life-saving technologies. In view of the special circumstances in low- and middle-income countries, the proposal from India and South Africa would waive obligations to protect patents, copyrights and technical know-how, which, they argue, provide little incentive to private pharmaceutical companies to meet public health needs and less to make their innovations widely and affordably available.

During a TRIPS Council meeting on Dec. 10, the proposed waiver was met with great resistance from some member states. Canada, the European Union (EU), the United States and Switzerland are among a small group of WTO members withholding their support for the waiver. Most are home to global leaders in the pharmaceutical industry and all have reached private deals with vaccine manufacturers, claiming the lion's share of doses for themselves.

Since decisions in the WTO are normally taken by consensus, these "vaccine nationalists" have stalled global efforts to equitably distribute medical tools to those in need. Nonetheless, in the absence of a consensus, the WTO agreement allows for a vote to be held. The TRIPS waiver could still be passed with a three-fourths majority vote, that is, with support from 123 of the WTO's 164 member countries.

Do the TRIPS flexibilities suffice?

A number of rich countries, and the brand-name pharmaceutical

industry, argue that the TRIPS framework offers governments sufficient latitude and flexibility over IP rights to effectively respond to public health emergencies. Article 31 of TRIPS, for instance, grants governments the power to issue compulsory licences, authorizing national manufacturing of low-cost generic equivalents of patented medicines. In effect, such licences suspend a patent holder's right to exclusive production, especially during public health emergencies. In return, the patent holder gets a royalty. TRIPS rules also allow for parallel importing, where medicines manufactured in one country are exported under a compulsory licence to another country that typically lacks manufacturing capacity.

Existing TRIPS flexibilities, while important, are inadequate, given the scale and the urgency of the COVID-19 crisis. In order to issue compulsory licences or engage in parallel importing, countries must undergo a complex, cumbersome and time-consuming process. The "case-by-case" or "product-by-product" approach, required when using TRIPS flexibilities, is too limiting during the pandemic. Countries are forced to enter into a web of negotiations and bilateral deals with manufacturers for each essential part of a product, including raw materials, various components and packaging materials. When countries lack immediate manufacturing or institutional capacity, removing IP-related barriers on one product in one country alone will not be sufficient.

In particular, compulsory licensing under TRIPS contains territorial and procedural restrictions, making it difficult for countries to truly

collaborate and stand in solidarity. Article 31 is predominantly used to supply domestic markets, thereby limiting the issuing country's ability to export generic equivalents to other countries in need.

In addition to the procedural hurdles, countries face immense pressure from powerful trading partners. The EU and United States, two WTO delegations opposing the waiver proposal, published reports in 2020 condemning countries that continue to make use of compulsory licences. Therefore, the TRIPS agreement is a largely ineffective response to the unfair distribution of medical innovation.

Is the COVAX Facility the answer to vaccine accessibility in Global South?

Early last year, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the COVAX Facility, an initiative pooling funding from nearly 180 governments to accelerate the development and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. The facility, which promises to deliver two billion vaccine doses, 245 million courses of treatment and 500 million diagnostic tests to low- and middle-income countries by the end of 2021, is financed by wealthy economies. But according to internal WHO reports, COVAX faces a very high risk of failure due to “lack of funds, supply risks and complex contractual arrangements.”

Waiver opponents such as the EU and Canada maintain that their contributions to the COVAX Facility and other voluntary measures preclude the need for a waiver. At most, however, these initiatives offer a short-term fix to the growing disparity in access between the Global North and South. While the COVAX alliance may multiply the supply provided by a small number of manufacturers, it does not increase nor diversify the *number* of suppliers, a core objective of the TRIPS waiver.

Without a global scale-up of production in the Global South, the problem of global scarcity is far from resolved. Ensuring that multiple countries have the capacity and technical know-how is vital to building global immunity. As it stands, COVAX's vaccine target only addresses 20% of the needs of Global South countries.

How can IP hinder public health initiatives?

Opponents of the India–South Africa proposal attribute the progress in COVID-19 research to vigorous IP protections. In their view, the current patent system is robust and necessary for pharmaceutical innovation. Thomas Cueni, director-general of the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations, claims that the inequitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines has “nothing to do with intellectual property.” Rather, Cueni says, the challenge boils down to speedy manufacturing; once existing facilities are able to boost manufacturing capacity, doses of the vaccine will reach all corners of the world.

Contrary to Cueni's claims, there have been highly visible examples, throughout the pandemic, where the current IP system has failed to deliver medical supplies and treatment to the people who need it most. Thus far, Big Pharma's “business-as-usual” exercise of IP rights has impeded mass testing for COVID-19, prevented local production of ventilator valves and delayed the crucial supply of N95 respirators for health care staff. These are only a few examples, compiled by the Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), highlighting how IP persistently undermines and obstructs accessibility.

For instance, engineers in Italy created a 3D-printed version of patented ventilator valves in response to growing pressures on the country's health care system. The 3D-printed valves cost about \$2–3 USD to produce (compared to the \$11,000 USD price tag from the manufacturer) and can be rapidly produced. However, in using 3D-printing technologies, there is a great risk the production of these valves infringes on an existing patent, design or copyright. Fearing costly litigation, the engineers have not shared their digital print file and the technology is not widely used.

There is no doubt that COVID-19 has generated abrupt and far-reaching consequences on health care systems across the world. As high-income countries continue to receive additional supplies of COVID-19 vaccines, the Global South is struggling to meet the demands for life-saving vaccines, treatments and other medical technologies. While the TRIPS waiver is not the sole answer to rising global inequalities, it will allow many nations to scale up production of essential COVID-19 medical products reducing global shortages and providing more affordable, equitable access.

The waiver has been endorsed by the WHO, several United Nations agencies, many public health experts and hundreds of civil society organizations, including the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. The next formal meeting of the TRIPS Council is scheduled for March 10-11. Informal discussions between members will continue, to try and find a way forward for the waiver. Growing public pressure on the small group of rich country governments blocking this vital public health initiative, which unfortunately includes Canada, will be critical during this time. **M**

More information on the TRIPS waiver proposal can be found on the CCPA website (www.policyalternatives.ca), on the Trade and Investment Research Project section.

JEWELLES SMITH

Pandemic living on the margins

THIS HAS BEEN a whirlwind of a year for the disability community, their families, support workers and friends. The COVID-19 response began in March 2020 with announcements from the federal government that it was going to take care of Canadians. During the early briefings, we learned more about this fast spreading new virus as we went into lockdown across the country. And we waited.

Early on in Canada's pandemic experience, the federal government announced that it would establish the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) to provide wage replacement funds to those who lost employment due to pandemic closures: a \$2,000 per month benefit for up to four months. It came as an absolute shock to Canadians with disabilities that the government felt *the livable monthly minimum* income is \$2,000, when the maximum amount a person can receive from the Canada Pension Plan's Disability Benefit, by contrast, is \$1,362 per month. For months, the disabled community watched as announcements were made with new supports for businesses, students, seniors, and working Canadians. Absolutely, there are disabled people within these groups, but there are millions of Canadians who aren't and who are left waiting, without relief.

Three provinces, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, offered some form of top up to provincial disability payments. British Columbia offered a monthly top up of \$300 per month for people receiving disability assistance, reduced to \$150 for the first three months of 2021, then eliminated. Manitoba offered a one-time \$200 top up. Saskatchewan provided \$100

per month from June to September 2020 to caregivers of people with intellectual disabilities.

Finally, on June 5, 2020, 132 days after the first case of COVID-19 in Canada, Prime Minister Trudeau announced a bill with measures including a one-time payment of \$600 for people with disabilities who were registered for the Disability Tax Credit (DTC). However, an estimated 60% of Canadians with disabilities do not meet the eligibility requirements and, therefore, will not benefit from the program. This rampant ineligibility relates to how disability is defined under the DTC. The Council of Canadians with Disabilities has long called for reforms to the DTC, including changing the definition of disability to be more inclusive and representative of the lived reality of disabled Canadians.

Beyond financial supports—or lack thereof—disabled people have spent the past year navigating landscapes radically changed by the pandemic. COVID-19 safety measures rolled out quickly, and often without input from the disabled community. Without considering the need for a disability audit of newly introduced measures, many disabled people have experienced new or heightened barriers when navigating reopened businesses and services.

Finally, in September's Throne Speech, the disabled community heard that some relief was forthcoming, in the form of the new Canadian Disability Benefit. However, these changes are contingent on a minority government being able to pass new legislation and meet these commitments, and it assumes that we will not have an early election; a possibility that continues to loom.

Still, the seismic change wrought by this pandemic has unearthed some positive change for disabled people across Canada. Namely, this year we have learned that it is possible for many of us to complete our work from home, and I hope, moving forward, that working from home will continue to be an option, especially for people with disabilities.

The pandemic and the experiences of disabled Canadians during this time offer valuable lessons on where Canada must invest, focus and improve. Many of the cracks and barriers that predated the pandemic have widened over the last year, and governments need to take a hard look at how enacting policies and programs without a disability lens has led to growing inequity and inaccessibility for so many. Going forward, Canada needs to review all of the policies and programs that were implemented during the pandemic, and address any latent discrimination. There is a need at both the policy level and the community level to address assumptions about what disability looks like and who is impacted by disability. And Canada needs to look at how, and why, so many programs and services for people with disabilities are relegated to the work of charities and underfunded secondary service providers. All Canadians need to hold governments accountable as the pandemic continues, and afterward. Failure to do so will only further entrench discrimination for people with disabilities. **M**

*The *Monitor* acknowledges that not all Deaf people identify as disabled. The experiences of Deaf individuals are included in this article while recognizing that they may not identify as disabled.

HADRIAN MERTINS-KIRKWOOD

A parable of two roads

Why the COVID-19 crisis is exactly the right time to push for a low-carbon economy

PICTURE IT: YOU'RE driving down a long straight road. Far in the distance you can see the road getting bumpier and bumpier before suddenly dropping over a cliff.

Bright yellow and red warning signs punctuate the side of the roadway. "Danger!" they proclaim. "Road ends in 12 km! Uneven surface ahead! Reduce speed!"

You look around. A ditch runs beside the road and there is a second road beyond it. This second road is rougher than the one you're on right now, perhaps a bit narrower and certainly not as well travelled. But this other road doesn't end. It veers away from the cliff and extends as far as you can see over the horizon.

The two roads run side-by-side but they are not in parallel. The second road is drifting away the further you drive. The ditch in the middle is getting wider and deeper. And all the while the signs are getting bigger and brighter, too.

"Road ends in 10 km! Seek alternate route!"

You resolve to get onto the second road. It's the only way to keep moving forward, you tell your passengers, and the sooner you make the transition the smoother it will be.



KATIE SHEEDY

But you're afraid to drive through the ditch. You'll have to slow down. Your passengers will yell at you to get back on the road. Your vehicle might take some damage and there's no guarantee you can make it up the other side.

You begin to have doubts. Is the second road really that much better? It doesn't look like many people have taken it before. Even if you made it, you might have to drive slower. And besides, what if the first road continues beyond the cliff? Surely this road wouldn't exist if it just dropped you into the ocean.

Your passengers are arguing now. Some implore you to turn. They point to the warning signs and to the second road, which is getting further and further away. Yet others insist you ought to continue forward. Don't trust the signs, they say. The current road got us this far, after all. It would be ridiculous to abandon it now.

You're conflicted and you're stressed. Your fingers clutch the wheel.

And then you crash into the ditch.

It wasn't your fault. Something jumped into the road and you swerved to avoid it. Your quick reaction undoubtedly prevented a larger disaster. But here you are, reeling, stuck in the ditch. The people in the back seat are urging you to get back on the road. You want to get back on the road, too. You just want things to get back to normal.

You assess your vehicle. It took some damage but it still seems to be running. You figure if you're careful you can probably drive it out of the ditch. You start turning your wheel back toward the road you left.

But you pause and look up at the second road. You're surprised to see that you're already halfway there. In fact, the hardest part of the transition—the shock and pain and uncertainty of the initial tumble into the ditch—is behind you.

Driving back out will be slow and bumpy in either direction. It's a steep and uneven slope and you might even need your passengers to get out and help you push. There will be grumbling and disagreement, not to mention the cost and difficulty of repairing your vehicle, regardless of where you drive it next.

But, if you take the second road now, you won't have to crash through a deeper, wider ditch later. And you definitely won't drive over a cliff.

You turn the wheel around. You take the second road. **M**



The good news page

COMPILED
BY ELAINE HUGHES

During the virtual One Planet Summit, more than 50 countries committed to protecting 30% of the planet, including land and sea, over the next decade. The move has been taken in order to halt species extinction and address climate change. Notably absent from the commitment were leaders from the USA, Russia, India and Brazil. / [AP News](#)

Over the next five years, Britain will allocate \$3 billion (GBP) to projects aimed at protecting and restoring nature and biodiversity. Prime Minister Boris Johnson stated, “We will not achieve our goals on climate change, sustainable development or preventing pandemics if we fail to take care of the natural world that provides us with the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breathe.” / [Reuters](#)

Early in 2021, European think tanks Ember and Agora Energiewende announced that, for the first time, renewables were the main source of electricity for the EU, over fossil fuels. Both wind and solar power sources have

nearly doubled since 2015 in EU countries, causing coal power to decline by 20% last year, making up only 13% of electricity generated in Europe. The milestone follows commitments last month from EU leaders to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 55% from 1990 levels by 2030. / [CNN](#)

Since California implemented a permanent gill net ban in 2002, the secretive harbour porpoise, one of the smallest toothed whales on Earth, has quickly rebounded. Three of the four harbour porpoise populations off the California coast have rebounded, adding an estimated total 8,230 members to their populations. / [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries](#)

In a landmark ruling, Panama’s Supreme Court recognized Indigenous People’s land rights, affirming the collective land rights of the Indigendous Naso people to their land and recognizing their role in protecting biodiversity and fighting climate change in the region. The ruling allowed the Naso people to formally establish Naso Tjër Di Comarca, a 1606.16 km² region where they can continue their subsistence farming, forest management and cultural preservation. / [Center for International Environmental Law](#)

Through a novel blue whale song, first recorded in 2017, verified to originate in the western Indian Ocean and heard from the Arabian Sea coast to

Madagascar, researchers believe they have discovered a new population of blue whales. Blue whales, the largest mammals ever known to exist on Earth are present in all oceans (except the Arctic), but various unique subspecies show up in different regions, each population identified by its unique song. / [Inhabitat News](#)

The French firm, Carmat, plans to begin selling the Aeson, a 900-gram artificial heart which works on lithium-ion batteries and biological sensors to detect which function it must perform at any given time, and will function for several years. Globally, it is estimated that heart disease claims 26 million lives per year and, while European organ donor rates cannot meet the demand for heart transplants, Carmat believes the Aeson will help about 2,000 Europeans per year. / [Good News Network](#)

Jimmy Choi, an athlete diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease at age 27, is famous on social media for his physical feats. But recently, he turned to TikTok to get help designing a better pill bottle for people with Parkinson’s. And Tiktok

did not disappoint. User Brian Alldridge quickly mocked up some designs. Engineer David Exler soon joined the team. Exler and Choi are now testing their fifth prototype and are determined to patent their final designs to ensure that whatever they create, the final product will remain open source and accessible to the people who need this new technology. / [CBC](#)

As the photo of Senator Bernie Sanders wearing his now-iconic mittens at the recent U.S. inauguration ceremony went viral, he added the image to a line of merchandise—sweatshirts, tees and stickers—on his website, with all proceeds benefiting Vermont-based charities, including Meals on Wheels and senior citizen advocacy groups, reportedly raising \$1.8 million in five days. Tobey King, a woman from Corpus Christi, Texas, put a crocheted Sanders doll she’d conceptualized up for sale on eBay to benefit Meals on Wheels with a modest opening price of 99 cents; later, the “Bernie Mittens Crochet Doll” sold for a gobsmacking \$20,300. / [Good News Network](#)



YOUR CCPA

Get to know **Randy Robinson**

OFFICE: **TORONTO, ONTARIO**

POSITION: **DIRECTOR**

YEARS WITH THE CCPA: **TWO**

This issue is all about taking stock of the past year. How has your office set up changed over the past year?

Our office is the people in it more than a physical space, and COVID-19 has really emphasized that. Our senior economist Sheila Block and I are in Toronto and our senior researcher Ricardo Tranjan lives in Ottawa, so we were used to video calls before COVID-19 came along. We have all been working from home during the pandemic, but I do go pick up the mail and look out the window of our one-room office every week.

What are you most excited to do with the CCPA Ontario team next year?

The Ontario election in June 2022 is going to be a big moment. Every election is important, but this one will be taking place in an urgent policy context. Hopefully by then COVID-19 will be over, but we'll still be feeling its effects. For example, we'll still be a deeply unequal society; we'll still have too many bad jobs and not enough funding for public services. At the same time, the climate crisis will be one year farther along: it won't surprise me if the election campaign kicks off after a season of flooding. In the midst of all that, Ontarians will have to decide what they want to do. The worst possible outcome would be to fall back on past neoliberal strategies that basically say, "We're broke, we can't do anything, we have to keep cutting." If we do that, we're basically deciding that things can't get better, everyone is on their own. A much better approach would be a collective response that realizes how awesome democracy can be and what it can do if it's combined



with enough imagination. And our job at the CCPA really is to imagine a way forward that people can actually look forward to instead of dreading. And that's pretty exciting.

Outside of the CCPA, what progressive policy issues that you are following?

When I started in progressive activism I had the idea that I wanted to work on something to do with the natural environment—maybe because I grew up against some trees in a field beside a marsh—but as it turned out, I got wrapped up in trade issues and then public sector trade unionism, which led to an interest in how we fund public services and also how work works. At some point I became fascinated with how employers have been able to make work more precarious. But, to be honest, there aren't many policy issues that don't interest me. They all intersect.

Extracurricular activities: I like being in canoes, kayaks, and being on my bike. I like hanging out with my partner and my teenage daughter (which is my entire social circle during COVID-19). I also sing and

play guitar in a (strictly recreational) three-person band. We played our last gig on March 6 last year, which was the Friday before the pandemic hit. We've been pretty quiet since.

Challenges in your region: I think the challenges in Ontario are much the same as they are in lots of places. There is a very strong and somewhat unconscious belief here that policies that concentrate wealth and power at the top are somehow good for everybody (they're not). As in other parts of the country, other parts of the world, the dissatisfaction people feel with the way things are is being channelled, too often, in a reactionary direction that looks to some people like it's countering the established order but is actually reinforcing it. Trumpism, or whatever you want to call it, can happen anywhere.

Reasons for hope: The vast majority of Ontarians are fair-minded and good-hearted, and they're certainly not afraid of working hard. That's a great place to start from if you're trying to solve big problems that demand collective solutions. I just hope we can solve them soon.

ANDRÉ PICARD

Five books to understand...a pandemic

Everyone knows pestilences have a way of recurring in the world, yet somehow we find it hard to believe in ones that crack down on our heads from the blue sky.

— **Albert Camus**, *The Plague*

HERE HAVE BEEN many deadly pandemics throughout history, including Plague of Justinian, the Black Plague, the Spanish flu and, more recently, AIDS and, of course, COVID-19.

These global afflictions have reshaped history, demographics and politics. They have wreaked havoc on everything from the economy to personal relationships.

Plagues, big and small, have also sparked much reflection, from dry academic tomes through to literary masterpieces; writings that can inform, console and infuriate.

Here are five books that have helped me understand the power of plagues and contextualize the current pandemic.

1. THE GREAT INFLUENZA THE STORY OF THE DEADLIEST PANDEMIC IN HISTORY

JOHN M. BARRY (2004)

Many, many books have been written about the misnamed Spanish flu of 1918-19, but *The Great Influenza* is one of the best. Reading it today is downright eerie because it vividly describes battles over lockdowns and mask-wearing, the heroic efforts of health workers in overwhelmed hospitals and overflowing morgues, all issues that could be ripped from current newspaper headlines. The most sobering aspect, however, is Barry's detailed recounting of post-pandemic political fallout. Once the immediate threat of the flu passed (there was no vaccine; so many people were infected that the spread simply burned itself out), the

lingering economic hardship sparked a nationalistic reaction and political and economic chaos that ranged from the Roaring '20s to the Great Depression and, ultimately, fostered the rise of Hitler and another world war.

2. THE COMING PLAGUE NEWLY EMERGING DISEASES IN A WORLD OUT OF WHACK

LAURIE GARRETT (1994)

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, journalist Laurie Garrett was called everything from the coronavirus Cassandra to the prophet of the pandemic. That's because in her book *The Coming Plague*, she predicted that the world would see increasingly hard-to-control outbreaks of diseases like Ebola, influenza and, yes, coronavirus, all of which have come to pass. She is much more scientist than soothsayer, but recognized that climate change, urbanization and globalization are all created the perfect conditions for both the emergence of new pathogens, their global spread, and potential for destruction.

3. LOVE IN THE TIME OF CHOLERA

GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ (1985)

In a 1988 interview with the *New York Times*, the Nobel Prize winning Colombian author said: "Plagues are like imponderable dangers that surprise people. They seem to have a quality of destiny." *Love in the Time of Cholera* is not a book about cholera, but about lovesickness and human frailty. But, at a time when so many people are isolated and lonely, when our closest relationships become a lifeline (and sometimes a curse), these sweeping tale of romance, heartbreak, death, the torments of memory and the inexorability of old age all seem painfully timely. Besides, what better way to spend long lockdown

days and nights than immersed in a tome that has been called one of the greatest love stories ever told?

4. PLAGUE

A STORY OF SMALLPOX IN MONTREAL

MICHAEL BLISS (1991)

By plague standards, the smallpox outbreak that killed 3,224 people in Montréal in 1885 is small potatoes. But historian Michael Bliss' meticulously researched *Plague* is, as a review *Maclean's* magazine said, "a cautionary tale about human panic and procrastination in the face of disaster." The response to smallpox was, like the response to COVID-19, slow and highly politicized, and the impacts were felt principally by the marginalized. Further, resistance to vaccination prolonged the plague and drove up the death rate.

5. POLIO

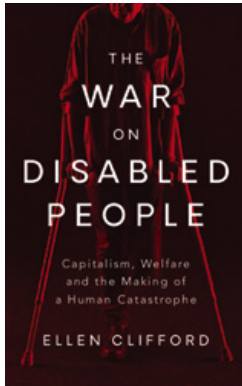
AN AMERICAN STORY

DAVID M. OSHINSKY (2006)

In the years after the Second World War, a time of tremendous medical progress, the age-old illness polio hung over society like a dark cloud, stalking children. David Oshinsky captures that tension and reminds us that fears are shaped by cultural context. The mad race to create a polio vaccine, which ended with banner headlines like "Polio Is Conquered," was unparalleled in history—until the recent supercharged efforts to develop a coronavirus vaccine. The sobering footnote here is that, after victory was declared, there were numerous setbacks, and lingering wounds, as we will undoubtedly see with COVID-19. And the pledge to eradicate polio, one of the most significant public health campaigns in history, remains ever-elusive, a reminder that plagues are not so easily defeated. **M**

WRITTEN BY DAVID BUSH

A war on disabled people



**THE WAR ON DISABLED PEOPLE:
CAPITALISM, WELFARE AND THE
MAKING OF A HUMAN CATASTROPHE**
ELLEN CLIFFORD

Zed Books, 2020

DISABILITY ISSUES are not just issues for people disabled by society, they are of prime importance for the entire working class because of the relationship between disability and capitalism. The last economic crisis in Canada saw an intense and sustained attack on public services and welfare programs that disabled people require to live life. While corporations and banks were bailed out with subsidies and cheap loans, all levels of government were busy freezing, cutting and privatizing vital programs and benefits.

Now, in the midst of a much deeper economic crisis there is every reason to suspect the rich and right wing will aim to foist the cost of this crisis onto the backs of the working class. For disabled people, the impacts of such austerity, will be an utter catastrophe.

Disability and capitalism

A new book by disabled activist Ellen Clifford could not be more timely. Clifford, who is active in the UK with the Disabled People Against the Cuts (DPAC) looks at

the intersection between capitalism and disability and how disabled activists have been fighting against the austerity agenda in the UK.

Clifford employs the social model of disability, which draws a distinction between disability and impairment. For Clifford and disability rights activists in the UK people do not have a disability, they are disabled by society—by capitalism. Disability is a historic and socially created category, not an individual issue. By highlighting the power dynamics in society which disable people with impairments it allows us to demystify the individualized language and understanding of disability, revealing a social oppression. Instead Clifford urges us to “understand disability as the deliberate exclusion of people who can’t serve the interests of profit.”

The social model of disability has allowed groups like the DPAC to build a broad based movement that can overcome the fragmentation and potential divisions within the disability movement. The experiences of impairment are varied and wide ranging and the social model of disability allows people to forge a sense of unity around shared barriers experienced across impairment groups.

Clifford sees that class and disability are materially linked. Poor people are much more likely to be disabled by capitalism through lack of medical care, poor nutrition, violence, workplace injuries and pressure of daily survival. The barriers faced by disabled people in accessing employment, training, education, supports and social networks are part of a system which routinely drives disabled people into poverty and keeps them there. Disabled people have lower incomes because of labour market exclusions

and often higher expenses. The question of disability cannot be separated from the question of class. As Clifford explains:

Disabled people’s position in society is tied to what we represent within capitalism: an ‘unproductive’ element that cannot earn our own living or, if in work, is unable to produce the same levels of profit for employers as non-disabled workers. For capitalism to function, our experience of life must be worse than that of non-disabled people.

Disability is a socially created category. It is structured by an economic system that puts profits ahead of people and a plethora of state policies and institutions which exclude, marginalize and ultimately disable people with impairments. The material basis of this social oppression is constantly reinforced through media narratives of disabled people as victims or as inferior. This stigmatization of disabled people has created conditions for violent attacks, hate crimes and routine discrimination.

Clifford argues that while the struggle for disability rights in the UK made great strides up to 2010, persistent inequities for disabled people remained. The once vibrant disability movement that achieved so much from the 1970s onward had by the New Labour era become “de-radicalized, depleted and betrayed”. This, along with Labour’s neoliberal policies paved the way for the aggressive attacks on disabled people by successive Tory-led governments after 2010.

The sustained and brutal austerity, with cuts to public services and government supports, severely impacted disabled people in the UK. This post-2008 economic austerity should be familiar to Canadian

readers. Increased surveillance, decreased access to benefits, cuts to vital supports, attacks on employment programs, and housing funds have been par for the course for the Tories. The move to a Universal Credit system, which affects roughly seven million people, with its mix of bureaucratic incompetence and outright Tory cruelty has been a particularly harmful experience for disabled people. The decade of Tory rule has resulted in what Clifford calls the resegregation of society, where reduced benefits and support has resulted in the further marginalization of disabled people.

Disabled People Against the Cuts

But it would be wrong to paint disabled people simply as victims of the system. While much of the mainstream media and parts of the left are comfortable with mobilizing the trope of helpless victim for disabled people, disabled people have been organizing and fighting. With the existing disability rights groups having waned under the previous Labour government a new organization, DPAC, emerged as a response to the Tory austerity regime. DPAC, which Clifford is a part of, rejected the charity model of disability and leveraged the idea of the social model of disability that aimed to unite disabled people in order to empower them to organize and lead a movement against the cuts.

DPAC used creative and militant actions to create a large and inclusive movement led by disabled people that aimed to unite in struggle with non-disabled people. DPAC was able to achieve some significant victories against the Tories over the last decade. They forced Atos, a large multinational corporation, out of its contract to deliver the Work Capability Assessment after it was revealed it was systemically pushing people on to lower benefits all in the name of profit. DPAC also was at the forefront of defeating the Tory's plans at

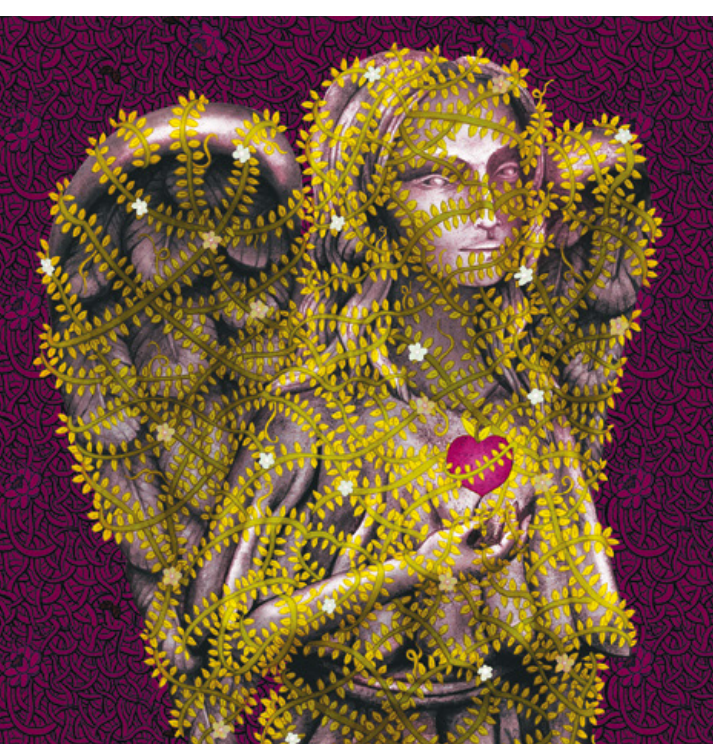
introducing workfare. And most notably, DPAC pushed the United Nations Disability Committee to publicly condemn the actions of the UK government. All of this was achieved through the self-organization of disabled people.

Clifford notes the ongoing cuts and attacks on disabled people makes this bottom-up organizing more difficult, "the danger then is what we end up being spoken for and about and according to the oppressive views of disability that dominate society."

The sustained organizing and resistance led by disabled people against Tory austerity is an example that should inspire. The courage, commitment and clarity of politics found in Clifford's book are a resource that anyone who is serious about building a better world can draw on. Clifford correctly and forcefully reminds us that "it is not inevitable that people with impairments should be excluded and discriminated against, but it is inevitable that policies under a capitalist state will tend to treat less favourably those who are unable to be as productive in the workforce."

The drive for profit and the cruelty of the system are bound together. Clifford makes clear that challenging the dominant ideas about disability and resisting the war on disabled people are not just add-ons in the wider class struggle. They are part and parcel of building bigger and more effective working class movements that can undermine the ruling class, take on the root of oppression, and build a world "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs." **M**

This review was originally published in *Spring Magazine*. It has been edited for length.



Leave a legacy that reflects your lifelong convictions.

Including the CCPA in your will is a gift with lasting meaning. It's a way to share your passion for social, economic and environmental justice, and to help shape the lives of those who come after you.

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

ERIKA SHAKER

Living principles

In memory of Ed Finn

THE FIRST TIME I met Ed, he intimidated me a little bit which, to anyone who knew this incredibly kind and patient man, seems hilarious now. In my defence, I was in my twenties, in a meeting at the CCPA office that I did not yet realize was a job interview. Heather-jane Robertson, Bruce Campbell, Ed Finn and I sat at a wooden table that had once belonged to Tommy Douglas. It was a lively conversation, but Ed spoke very little. Instead, he listened intently.

When I joined the CCPA, it became clear to me that Ed occupied a role at the organization, and in civil society, that transcended his title as Senior Editor. He was a historian, an activist, an adviser, a colleague, a shop steward, a mentor, a pun-master, and a surrogate

great-uncle to the children of his co-workers. It was my absolute privilege to know him in each of these capacities.

Although his reputation as a writer and labour strategist preceded him, Ed's stories were particularly captivating. Like the one of him going toe-to-toe in the 50s with Joey Smallwood over the premier's attacks on unions. Or how he resigned as editor of the *Western Star* in Corner Brook after being instructed to not include the union's perspective in coverage of the loggers' strike.

He would spend hours on the phone with CCPA supporters, who called expressly to discuss politics with him. When my parents came to Ottawa to visit me, one of the things my dad enjoyed most was the opportunity to catch up with

Ed—these two men, both named Ed, both born in the 1920s, both always ready to discuss the Cuban Revolution and the perils of capitalism.

There are other memories, of course. His Kangol hat, casually hanging on the doorknob of whatever room he was in. The CCPA pin permanently affixed to his lapel. The boxes of Girl Guide cookies (his wife Dena was a Spark leader) for the office staff each year. His incredibly principled stands. His generosity. His refusal to pass a picket line without making a donation to the coffee fund and providing a few words of support to the striking workers. His ability to never ever stop learning, stop growing, stop fighting for something better, more fair, more just.

Ed lived through the growth of the welfare state after the economic devastation of the 1930s. He was never prepared to capitulate to the lowering of public expectations of what we were collectively capable of achieving. This unshakeable commitment to a vision of social progress that leaves no one behind ensured that the priorities in his writing remain relevant, as even his earliest *Monitor* editorials demonstrate.

And it's perhaps because of this ongoing relevance and insightfulness that the passing of a nonagenarian has resulted in such an outpouring of shock and grief. In spite of his age, Ed was someone for whom his increasing years never suggested mortality but, rather, timelessness and permanence. It was, and remains, an honour and privilege to learn from this remarkable man, to benefit from his wisdom, and to build on his legacy—with profound gratitude, and always in solidarity.

Born in Spaniard's Bay, Newfoundland, in 1926, Ed Finn grew up in Corner Brook, where he later became first a printer's apprentice, then a reporter, columnist, and editor of that city's daily newspaper, the *Western Star*. His long career as a journalist later included two years at the *Montreal Gazette* and 14 years at the *Toronto Star*.

During his four-year fling in politics in Newfoundland (1959–1962), he served as the first provincial leader of the NDP. He worked closely with Tommy Douglas and helped defend and promote his pioneering Medicare legislation in Saskatchewan. And throughout the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, he did communications work for several labour unions, and served on the board of directors of the Bank of Canada.

From 1994 to 2014 he was senior editor at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and editor of the *CCPA Monitor*. On November 27, 2020, Ed was appointed to the Order of Canada.

Ed passed away peacefully in Ottawa on December 27, 2020 at the age of 94.



ED FINN

The decline of collectivity

SHORTLY BEFORE he died, former Alberta Premier Peter Lougheed astonished us by denouncing what he called “the decline of collectivity” in Canada. “We are becoming increasingly Americanized,” he warned, “and this imposes an un-Canadian individualism on our ethic.”

Coming from Lougheed, whose province had spearheaded the country’s Americanization, this concern was completely unexpected. Never considered a Red Tory—or, in the current far-right parlance, a “squishy” one—he nevertheless was alarmed by the extent to which his party’s current leaders were pushing the corporate agenda. He was particularly disturbed by their promotion of the American-style cult of individualism, which puts personal rights ahead of community values.

Like many others on the left, I was surprised that Lougheed used the term “collectivity” so

approvingly, as something to be preferred over individualism. Usually conservatives—even “squishy” ones—equate collectivism with socialism or even communism, and the word leaves their lips dripping with scorn and venom.

They have the advantage of being able to point to both fascist and communist states, where collectivism was taken to the extreme of almost completely suppressing individual freedom. In the insect world, they can also point to the regimented conformity of the anthill and the beehive.

The consequences of unrestrained individualism, on the other hand, are not so easily demonstrated. Even the social breakdown in the United States is not seen by most people as the result of the glorification of individual liberty, to the detriment of community (i.e., collective) needs. This is largely because, in a capitalist economic system, any constraint on the

freedom of—or, for that matter, of individual business firms—is considered abhorrent, even if such limits are imposed in the broader public interest. To contend, in today’s born-again laissez-faire system, that the common good should be society’s primary goal is to be guilty of the worst kind of heresy.

But weren’t governments originally established to protect and advance collective interests? And wasn’t such an overriding purpose inherently hostile to the cult of individualism? Indeed it was, and so the corporate, political, media, and academic champions of “individual rights and freedoms” had to reverse this prime government mandate. They had to convert government into a mechanism for promoting private and individual interests instead.

So regulations that had curbed the socially harmful activities of individual persons and companies

were weakened or eliminated. Social programs that helped the poor and unemployed—and, thus, interfered with the free operation of the markets—were gutted. Public servants and institutions that allegedly could be provided more efficiently by the private sector were privatized. Taxes that “stifled or discouraged” private initiative were slashed.

“The best government,” we were told by its wreckers, “is the least government.”

Governments have, thus, been transformed from guardians of the public good to boosters of private profit, from seekers of social justice to destroyers of the welfare state. It matters not at all, apparently, that the main beneficiaries of this anti-government rampage have been the big corporations and the wealthy elite. The other 90% of us should be content that we are now free as the plutocrats to live in mansions, dine and shop at the ritziest restaurants and boutiques, and spend our winters on the Riviera. And they, for their part, are as free as we are (if we still have jobs) to shop at Giant Tiger, eat at McDonald’s, and spend their winters shovelling snow.

Many Canadians, however, even if they haven’t embraced the cult of individualism willingly, have come to believe they have no choice. They have lost trust in our economic, social, and political institutions—or, rather, have had that trust betrayed.

The glue that holds any society together is faith in its governments, corporations, courts, churches—faith that these institutions, no matter how flawed, will always be committed to serving and protecting people from poverty, unemployment, sickness, and other afflictions. That glue is coming unstuck in a country where governments put private interests ahead of the public interest, when corporations put the pursuit of profits ahead of the well-being of workers and their communities, when unions have been stripped of much of their capacity to protect their members.

No wonder that so many Canadians have come to the conclusion that they’re now on their own—that each of them is in a struggle for survival, with no help from any quarter. Self-preservation is always a powerful motivator, but especially so in a society that seems to be reverting to a survival-of-the-fittest mentality. The reaction of people plunged into that kind of jungle-law environment is predictable. If their employers are downsizing and outsourcing work, if their governments keep destroying jobs through free trade and social service cutbacks, if their unions’ rights and ability to help them have been reduced—in that kind of ruthless system, people will feel they are on their own.

Their tendency will be to start looking at their co-workers, their neighbours, immigrants—indeed, anyone outside their immediate family—as rivals for the slim pickings of a shrinking economy. Individualism, will run rampant. Cooperation and solidarity will be overwhelmed by a single-minded devotion to self-interest.

The erosion of our health care system, unemployment insurance, and other social programs spurs this flight to individualism. These programs are the tangible expressions of our willingness to look after one another’s needs, to pool our contributions for the common good. As underfunding dismantles them, we are being thrown back, each of us, on our own resources.

Whether Canadians voluntarily embrace individualism or feel compelled to adopt it, the consequences are equally horrendous. Why? Because it rests on a philosophy that is fundamentally flawed and dangerous.

This is the spurious notion that, if each person and corporation is left free to pursue individual advantage, the “market” (or its “invisible hand”) will somehow make sure that the overall result will benefit everyone. In fact, as we have seen, the outcome is the precise opposite. Only the strongest, the smartest, the luckiest, and the fiercest prosper—at the expense of those less strong, less smart, less lucky, and less unscrupulous.

It is one of the worst flaws of human nature that the actions we take as individuals may benefit us separately, at least in the short term, but harm us collectively. These individual actions may be reasonable, even brilliant, if assessed solely on the basis of their immediate personal gains; but, collectively, they can prove disastrous.

The invention of the combustion engine was a giant step forward in human mobility, but, in millions of automobiles, its emissions pollute the air we breathe.

A corporate tycoon, free to amass unlimited wealth, enjoys an opulent lifestyle, but the billions of dollars he and other business leaders hoard or hide in overseas tax havens are unavailable to help the 12 million children globally who die every year from the hunger and disease that adequately funded programs could prevent.

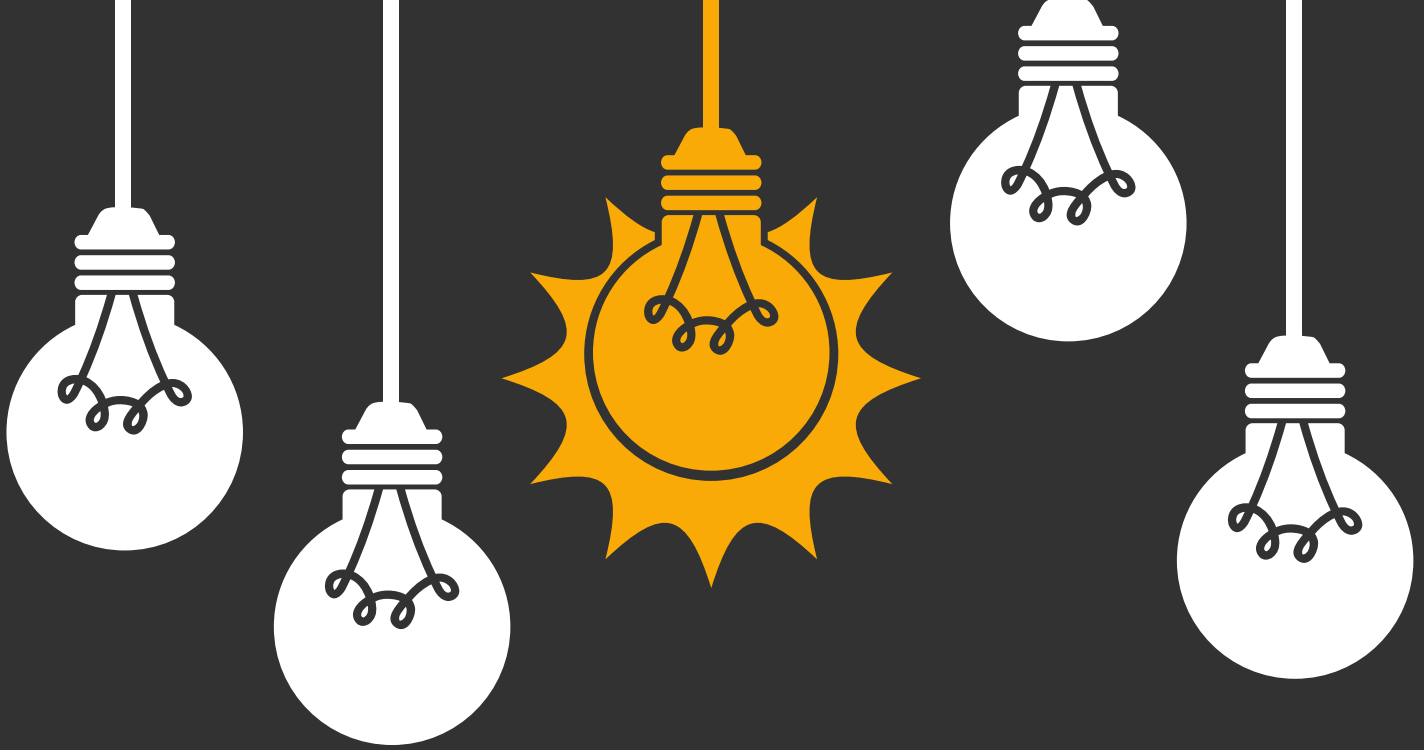
Curtailing and humanizing individual enterprise doesn’t mean we have to become like the ants of the bees; but it does mean that some limits, some regulations, some minimum community standards have to be in place to protect collective rights and meet collective needs.

Otherwise we fall back into the worst kind of medieval society, brutalized by huge income disparities, masses of poor and jobless, urban slums, and high levels of crime and social unrest.

This process of social decay is well under way in the United States, and is increasingly discernible in many Canadian communities, too. It will continue and get worse as long as the cult of individualism holds sway in our boardrooms and legislatures.

Surely, if a committed conservative like Peter Lougheed could have had that insight, it is not beyond the comprehension of most Canadians. **M**

The Decline of Collectivity was included in Ed Finn’s book, *A Journalist’s Life on the Left*, originally published in 2013. The *Monitor* thanks Ed’s family for permission to reprint his work. The original essay has been edited for length.



HELP US SHED LIGHT ON THE ISSUES THAT MATTER TO YOU.

(we've got some bright ideas)

MAKE A DONATION

Tax receipts are issued for contributions of \$15 or more.

I would like to make a monthly contribution of:

\$25 \$15 \$10 Other _____

OR

I would like to make a one-time donation of:

\$300 \$100 \$75 Other _____

PAYMENT TYPE:

I've enclosed a cheque (made payable to CCPA, or void cheque for monthly donation)

I'd like to make my contribution by: VISA MASTERCARD

CREDIT CARD NUMBER: _____

EXPIRY DATE: _____ SIGNATURE: _____

I would like to receive my subscription to *The Monitor*:

- By e-mail
- Mailed to my address
- No Monitor, thanks

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Telephone *(Required)* _____ Email _____

Return this form to:
**141 LAURIER AVENUE WEST,
SUITE 1000, K1P 5J3**

Or donate online at:
WWW.POLICYALTERNATIVES.CA

Yes, I prefer to receive my tax receipt and updates by email.

Please do not trade my name with other organizations.

