

# MONITOR



FIGHT FOR \$15

SEX ED!

STOP POLICE CARDING GO TO PAGE 27

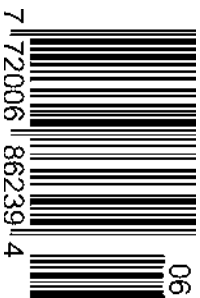
CANCEL WAGE HIKE

VICTORY!

PAY DAY

RAISE THE MINIMUM WAGE ADVANCE TO PAGE 30

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES  
MAY/JUNE 2018  
\$6.95





**CCPA**  
CANADIAN CENTRE  
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES  
CENTRE CANADIEN  
de POLITIQUES ALTERNATIVES

## MONITOR

Vol. 25, No. 1  
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](mailto:monitor@policyalternatives.ca).

Editor: Stuart Trew  
Senior Designer: Tim Scarth  
Layout: Susan Purtell  
Editorial Board: Peter Bleyer, Alyssa O'Dell, Seth Klein, Kate McInturff, Erika Shaker, Emily Turk

CCPA National Office:  
141 Laurier Avenue W, Suite 1000  
Ottawa, ON K1P 5J2  
Tel: 613-563-1341  
Fax: 613-233-1458  
[ccpa@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:ccpa@policyalternatives.ca)  
[www.policyalternatives.ca](http://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](mailto:ccpabc@policyalternatives.ca)

CCPA Manitoba Office:  
Unit 205-765 Main Street  
Winnipeg, MB R2W 3N5  
Tel: 204-927-3200  
Fax: 204-927-3201  
[ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca)

CCPA Nova Scotia Office:  
P.O. Box 8355  
Halifax, NS B3K 5M1  
Tel: 902-240-0926  
[ccpans@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:ccpans@policyalternatives.ca)

CCPA Ontario Office:  
720 Bathurst Street, Room 307  
Toronto, ON M5S 2R4  
Tel: 416-598-5985  
[ccpaon@policyalternatives.ca](mailto: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](mailto:ccpasask@sasktel.net)



The *Monitor* is a proud member of Magazines Canada.

## Contributors

**Ricardo Acuña** is Director of the Parkland Institute and sits on the CCPA's Member's Council.

**Alyssa O'Dell** is Media and Public Relations Officer at the CCPA.

**Marc Edge** is a professor of media and communication at University Canada West in Vancouver. His last book, *The News We Deserve: The Transformation of Canada's Media Landscape*, was published by New Star Books in 2016.

**Matt Elliott** is a city columnist and blogger with *Metro Toronto*, and a professor of journalism at Humber College.

**Poh-Gek Forkert** is a research scientist and toxicologist who has published extensively on the metabolism of toxic chemicals. She is professor emerita at Queen's University.

**Pam Frache** is Co-ordinator of the Fight for \$15 and Fairness campaign in Ontario.

**Melissa Graham** is Vice-President of Citizens with Disabilities Ontario and founder and co-organizer of the Toronto Disability Pride March.

**Trish Hennessy** is Director of the CCPA-Ontario.

**Alex Himelfarb** is a former federal government executive with the Privy Council, Treasury Board, and numerous other departments, and currently chairs or serves on various voluntary boards. He chairs the advisory board of the CCPA-Ontario.

**Elaine Hughes** is an environmental activist in several non-profit groups including the Council of Canadians, where she chairs the Quill Plains (Wynyard), Saskatchewan chapter.

**Syed Hussan** is Co-ordinator of the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change.

**Emery Huszka** is a southwestern Ontario farmer and President of the National Farmers Union-Ontario.

**Asad Ismi** covers international affairs for the *Monitor*, with a focus on Western imperialism and resistance to it in the Global South.

**Jennefer Laidley** is a research and policy analyst with the Income Security Advocacy Centre.

**Marc Lee** is a senior economist with the CCPA-BC.

**Kate McInturff** is a senior researcher with the CCPA and director of the Making Women Count project.

**Anthony Morgan** is a Toronto-based community advocate and lawyer.

**Randy Robinson** is a freelance researcher, educator and political commentator based in Toronto.

**Luke Savage** writes and blogs about politics, labour, philosophy and political culture.

**Edgardo Sepulveda** is an independent consulting economist with more than two decades of utility (telecommunications) policy and regulatory experience. He writes about electricity, inequality and other economic policy issues at the Progressive Economics Forum.

**Robin Shaban** is an Ottawa-based economist.

**Erika Shaker** is a senior researcher at the CCPA and director of the Education Project.

**Natalie Spagnuolo** is a PhD candidate in critical disability studies at York University and serves on the social policy committee of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities.

**Ian Waddell** is a former Member of Parliament and former minister of environment and intergovernmental affairs for the B.C. government.



### Remie Geoffroi

This month's cover artist is an Ottawa-based illustrator who works regularly with the largest magazine publishers, including Condé Nast, Disney, Hearst, Prometheus and Time Inc. He is a regular contributor to the *Monitor*.



Book reviews in the *Monitor* are co-ordinated by Octopus Books, a community-owned anti-oppressive bookstore in Ottawa.



## THE ONTARIO ELECTION

**DEMOCRACY AND POPULISM** 14 • **PUBLIC SERVICES** 18 • **TAXES** 21  
**INCOME SECURITY** 23 • **ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE** 26 • **RACIAL JUSTICE** 27  
**WAGES** 30 • **MASS TRANSIT** 32 • **EDUCATION AND PRECARIY** 35  
**ELECTRICITY PRICES** 38 • **FOOD AND FARMERS** 44

### COLUMNS

**Alternate Futures:  
The confusion about  
payday lending**  
Robin Shaban **12**

### BEHIND THE NUMBERS

**Alberta's shockingly bad  
case for the Trans Mountain  
pipeline expansion**  
Ricardo Acuña **13**

### FEATURES

**Fixing Canada's ableist  
immigration policy**  
Natalie Spagnuolo,  
Melissa Graham and  
Syed Hussan **47**

**The Italian election and  
the future of the European left**  
Asad Ismi **50**

**How a Mulrone-era  
treaty might save the  
caribou (again)**  
Ian G. Waddell **52**

### BOOKS

**U.S. conservatism  
and the alt-right: Aberration  
or natural conclusion?**  
Essay by Luke Savage **54**



STUART TREW

# Ontario hits a fork in the road

**KNOW WHAT YOU'RE** thinking. Not Ontario. Talk to me about anything but Ontario. Well, you *may* be thinking that if you happen to live outside of Canada's largest province, as many CCPA supporters do. Then again, you may be stuck here with us—stuck pondering another election, and the possibility of a new government at Queen's Park, Toronto, Centre of the Universe. In either case, I promise this will be worth it. Because as far as provincial elections go, the June 7 vote in Ontario is a rather important one, with the potential to make waves across the rest of Canada.

A Progressive Conservative victory, under the leadership of the former Toronto city councillor Doug Ford, would almost certainly usher in a new era of harsh and unnecessary austerity, in a province that is just coming to appreciate the power of collective action and fair taxation to do good in people's lives (see Alex Himelfarb on page 21). On the other hand, all the other major parties are promising to expand on recent upgrades to the province's social safety net (see Jennefer Laidley on page 23), with proposals for free pharmacare, dental care and child care, better labour protections (see Pam Frache on page 30), and measures to democratize environmental policy (see Poh-Gek Forkert on page 26).

In her introductory article on page 14, CCPA-Ontario Director Trish Hennessy, who co-edited this special issue of the *Monitor* with me, explains the gravity and some of the contradictions of this political moment in Ontario. She takes us through the drama of the pre-election period, and describes how and in what ways a battle that might have been fought on capital-C "Change" and adjustments—some minor, some more important—to social and economic policy morphed into a polarized clash of personalities with the populist rage dial turned to 11.

"I can't watch the party I love fall into the hands of the elites," Ford said as he launched his PC leadership bid from his mom's basement at the end of January. "The elites of this party, the ones who have shut out the grassroots, do not want me in this race. But I'm here to give a voice...to the hard-working taxpayers of this province, people who have been ignored for far too long." Like Donald Trump in his battle for control of the disorganized Republican party, here was Ford the underdog outsider with a plan to make Ontario great again.

It's unclear whose voices Ford wants to amplify within the party, the traditional home of the low-tax, low-regulation, business class vote, but such is the beauty of right-wing populist rhetoric. Everyone, low-wage or laid-off workers in particular, can imagine he's talking about them when his real policy agenda would leave them in the dust. The risk in sounding too much like Trump, or perhaps, frighteningly, its intended purpose, is that it will stir up racist resentment toward policies, including new social programs, that would significantly reduce racial and gender bias in the labour market and public institutions (see Anthony Morgan on page 27). An essay on recent Trumplify by Luke Savage in our books section (page 54) and Asad Ismi's article on the Italian elections (page 50) show how successful such campaigns can be, and how dangerous to democracy.

So far at least, Ford's election campaign has taken aim at alleged Liberal largesse (overspending). His first real policy announcement (the PCs ditched their atypically moderate "People's Platform" along with their former leader Patrick Brown) came in the form of a promise, in early April, to fire the CEO of the recently privatized Hydro One, who earns a salary of more than \$6 million. Even if this were an option for a new premier (it isn't), sacking the

hydro boss would not fix the problem of soaring electricity bills. The NDP has promised to bring the utility back under public control, which would also be difficult (though not impossible), while proposing "cancelling or renegotiating bad private contracts, or letting them expire," something Edgardo Sepulveda claims will be essential for reducing electricity rates in the province (page 35).

The trouble with covering elections and other fast-moving stories, at least for a bimonthly like the *Monitor*, is that you risk being out of date the minute you go to the printers. We've tried to avoid that here by focusing on longer-term political and policy developments, and by looking ahead as much as possible—not to guess the result on June 7, but to acknowledge that whoever forms the next government, our collective push for fairer taxes, better child care, free pharmacare and dental care, racial justice, more public power and expanded public services continues apace.

**N**ow for some housekeeping. We've changed the way we do a few things at the *Monitor* in response to reader demands for shorter and lighter takes on issues we all find important. For example, we've added an Up Front section dedicated to shorter commentaries from CCPA researchers and allies. Behind the Numbers will now pick apart the economic logic and dubious facts used to justify policies or projects that take Canada, or the world, in the wrong direction. We're reintroducing the Worth Repeating section, where you'll find short statements reflecting the events and people making history. And a shortened Index draws the connections not made by the mainstream press, in this case (page 7) between stories about the stock market troubles of the world's high-tech and social media monopolies. **M**





## Pot, prescriptions and police

I enjoyed John Akpata's observations on the beneficiaries of the new cannabis laws ("Prometheus Re-bound," March/April 2018). There is an additional aspect that bears scrutiny, one that may shed more light on the behind-the-scenes considerations at play.

I was a cold reviewer of a draft report on Canada's "war on drugs" about three decades ago. The document presented a comprehensive overview of the history of drug use and outlined the reasons leading to the emergence of the critical, criminalized stance that still prevails in so many nations. Among other things, the draft report included an assessment of the impacts of several alternatives to the "war on drugs," one of which was the decriminalization of marijuana use. A potential benefit of that option would have been the freeing up of considerable human and financial resources invested in law enforcement, legal and judicial processes, and correctional services, not to mention the military's role. (The senior official to whom the draft report was submitted, a former police officer, ordered substantial

edits to remove text that might stimulate questions about the wisdom of the government's continued support for the "war on drugs.")

When one considers the number of Canadians who are incarcerated for marijuana possession, one must further calculate how many police officers were needed to investigate and apprehend the suspects, how many lawyers and court officials were involved in processing those accused, and how many correctional personnel were needed to administer the institutions in which those found guilty were incarcerated. The attributable costs are huge. It is little surprise that a former police chief was put in charge of drafting federal marijuana legislation. There are empires of jobs and budgets and high-status positions that must be preserved and expanded. Who better to safeguard the vested interests of the law enforcement-legal/judicial-corrections triad than a former senior member of the self-described "brotherhood" of law enforcement agencies?

**L. Lehtiniemi,**  
Glen Robertson, Ont.

Congrats to the CCPA for publishing John Akpata's well-written article on the cannabis industry in Canada. I am both a health professional (hospital pharmacist) and someone who helped my adult (but under 25) daughter navigate the complicated process of getting authorization for medical marijuana (for chronic pain) through the Health Canada program. I've become familiar with the peculiarities that

exist in how medical use is regulated. In my practice I have watched our profession completely fail to implement a coherent policy for patients to use their authorized medical marijuana products during a hospital admission. And I, too, have been left wondering how the decisions about regulating legalized recreational marijuana are being made, and by whom. I agree that former law enforcement officials are overrepresented, and health professionals seem to be underrepresented.

I could go on and on about testing for THC levels and how poorly correlated this will be (if at all) with impairment of drivers. How are we so concerned about this, especially for regular medical users? We don't seem to be equally worried about impairment from the many other medications that can cause blurred vision, dizziness or drowsiness, which we pharmacists seem comfortable offering under the sensible advice, "be cautious and know how this affects you first, then make sure the effects are worn off before driving." If we ordered everyone off the road who regularly takes one of these medications, it might at least have the one benefit of solving our traffic problems.

**Terri Betts,**  
North Vancouver, B.C.

## P3s and debt

It was interesting to read the piece by Keith Reynolds on public-private partnerships ("As U.K. audit slams P3s, B.C. projects continue," March/April 2018), but the article failed to note one of



the most attractive aspects of the model for government: deferral of the debt.

A P3 behaves both like a lease and a capital project; accounting for these massive projects has a significant effect on long-term debt and therefore the debt-to-GDP ratio that government credit ratings are so attentive to. Since the P3 project starts out as a lease and only later, at the mid-life of the contract/agreement, converts to debt, a multi-billion-dollar project with a P3 agreement of 30 years or more doesn't come on to government debt "books" for 15 years or more. This feature of P3s allows the government to carry out big-ticket capital projects without incurring "debt" for several election cycles, while in the near term demonstrating great fiscal responsibility. Also supporting the P3 system is the notion that the economy will have grown so much during the intervening years that, by the time the debt does come into the debt portfolio, the amount will appear less significant compared with the much larger GDP.

Once the P3 program developed momentum, the need to reconsider this rationale served nobody's interest in

government. Furthermore, access-to-information and privacy legislation keeps public scrutiny at bay. These deals are confidential; only the fairness commissioner actually reviews the project, and can only comment if they feel the deal is not "fair." The commissioner is bound by confidentiality to not report the details. No wonder government and P3 proponents love these deals.

**Mark Brown**, Victoria, B.C.

---

### Site C deficiency

Seth Klein's assertion that, "It is the curse of social democratic governments that, on economic matters especially, they are inclined to let others tell them what is and isn't allowable," is perceptive ("Site C's economic justifications are unconvincing," March/April 2018). It allows so many on the left to fall for Margaret Thatcher's dictum that "there is no

alternative," and the battle is lost before it commences. It is, unfortunately, part of the mindset that makes electoral victory paramount.

Social democratic parties craft their electoral platforms to conform as closely as possible to those of the other main parties. Socialism is abandoned, leading many who want real reform to question the efficacy of voting. I know the response is "if we don't gain power we can do nothing," but gaining power by promising to do nothing is of no value anyway. Tony Blair gained power and ended up becoming an apologist for neoliberalism.

Surely there are many young people who are only too aware that they are doomed to be permanent members of the precariat and would respond to a democratic socialist appeal. That wouldn't win the next election, but it might start something big. It is increasingly clear that

the alternative to a truly social democratic governance is too depressing to contemplate.

**Brian Shackleton**,  
Ottawa, Ont.

### Corrections

We referred to the wrong Hendrix (it's Jimi, not Jimmy) in our March/April 2018 cover feature on cannabis capitalism. And the patient survey cited in that article was conducted by Tilray, not the Canadian Medical Cannabis Council to which the company is a member. The *Monitor* apologizes for the errors.

---

Send us your thoughts, feedback, corrections, poems, praise or complaints to: [monitor@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:monitor@policyalternatives.ca).



# WE'VE MOVED!

The CCPA National Office is now located at:  
141 Laurier Ave W, Suite 1000  
Ottawa, ON K1P 5J2



# Up Front



PHOTO BY ROGUE COLLECTIVE (FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS)

ALYSSA O'DELL | NATIONAL

## Kinder Morgan fight may be just getting started

The build started with a single West Coast cedar tree. In the early hours of March 10, against the backdrop of forest-covered Burnaby Mountain on the shores of B.C.'s Burrard Inlet, volunteers carried in wood planks and cement corner stones and set to work.

Within hours, they had constructed a traditional Coast Salish Indigenous "Watch House" on public lands near the gates of Kinder Morgan's Burnaby tank farm—terminus of the proposed Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, approved by the Trudeau government in 2016 despite significant opposition in B.C.

Spurred by an unprecedented call from Indigenous spiritual leaders and elders for allies to mobilize in peaceful resistance against the expansion, which

opponents say threatens the life-sustaining waters in its path, the Watch House serves as a home base and spiritual centre from which to monitor and respond to ongoing construction by Kinder Morgan.

"My ancestors built Kwekwewnewtxw—'a place to watch from'—when danger threatened our people. Danger threatens our people now, as Kinder Morgan tries to send hazardous diluted bitumen through our territory," said Watch House guardian Will George, a member of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation (People of the Inlet), who have called the coastal area home for thousands of years.

Then the waves came.

Wave one saw upwards of 10,000 people take to the streets of B.C.'s Lower Mainland in one of the largest

shows of solidarity against the project. A delegation from the 150-signatory Treaty Alliance Against Tar Sands Expansion, led by Indigenous youth water protector Autumn Peltier, was there in support. The Quebec Mohawk, Lakota and Dakota Nations also expressed solidarity.

Next came wave after wave of civil disobedience actions, blockades and mass arrests. At the time of writing, almost 200 people had been taken away by police in defiance of a court-ordered injunction against protesting at the site: Indigenous activists and youths, community members, environmentalists, teachers and retirees.

The founder of Canada's largest software company, OpenText, was arrested. So was a former Trans Mountain engineer concerned with the company's ability to clean up in the event of a spill. Two sitting MPs—Burnaby South NDP MP Kennedy Stewart and Green Party Leader Elizabeth May—were also booked by the RCMP.

"I suspect [civil disobedience] is just going to keep ramping up over the coming months," CCPA-BC Director Seth Klein, who was at the March 10 rally in Burnaby, told the *Monitor*. "The laws of nature and the laws of man are on a collision course, and one of [those] is immutable. The other isn't."

Research published by CCPA-BC and the Corporate Mapping Project has shown the pipeline expansion will undermine Canada's ability to meet its international climate change commitments, and has also debunked the notion that getting Alberta oil to tidewater will fetch a higher price in Asian markets. If completed, the pipeline project would expand Trans Mountain's Alberta-to-tidewater capacity threefold, leading to a 700% increase in oil export tanker traffic through the wild and rugged coastline of the Salish Sea.

A spill would be catastrophic for sensitive local ecosystems and the people who depend on them. Several court challenges from the cities of Burnaby and Vancouver, the B.C. government and a number of First Nations (including from the Tsleil-Waututh, Coldwater, Stk'emlupsemc Te Secwepemc and Squamish Nations) remain outstanding. To many thousands on the ground the risk is simply unacceptable.



“The Trudeau government campaigned on a promise of real change,” Dustin Rivers, a spokesperson and elected councillor with the Squamish Nation, said at a March 9 press conference in Vancouver. “Nothing has changed for our people.... [O]ur Nations are deeply, deeply concerned about the impacts that this [pipeline] will have on our rights as a people today, and the rights of people to come.”

Water is a relentless force of nature. A tiny stream of flowing water will carve its way through the toughest of rock, marking the land in its path for thousands of years. The importance of protecting water is central to the culture, spirituality and long-term prosperity of many of those fighting against the pipeline on the ground. They too are relentless.

“We as First Nations people are left with a decision to make: trust a government to say that ‘we have a plan in case there’s a spill,’” Rivers elaborates. “Our history shows us that we should not trust the government when they make such promises.... They need to change direction and change course because we aren’t.”

The power of water can at times be overlooked, just as the years of Indigenous-led pipeline resistance in B.C. and across North America have often been disregarded or downplayed in the mainstream media and corridors of political power.

Anyone who has watched the waves roll in on the ocean tide will know that is a mistake.

On April 8, Kinder Morgan announced it would suspend all “non-essential” activities and spending related to the Trans Mountain expansion project due to opposition from the province of B.C. The company plans to consult further with stakeholders and has set a hard deadline of May 31 to determine if the project will proceed.

ALYSSA O’DELL IS MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER AT THE CCPA. FOLLOW HER ON TWITTER @ALYSSAJ\_ODELL.

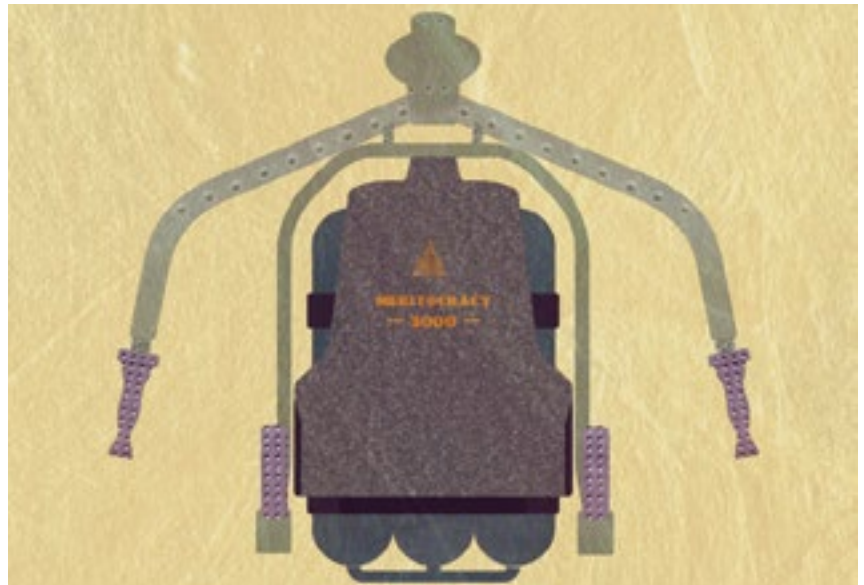


ILLUSTRATION BY KATIE RASO

KATE MCINTURFF | NATIONAL

## The best candidate for the job?



At the end of February, Ottawa city councillor Diane Deans proposed the creation of a women’s bureau to support the greater engagement of women in city politics. Similar initiatives have been proposed and even implemented in a number of Canadian cities. But when questioned about the idea, Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson said it wasn’t necessary.

“At the end of the day, when I go into the polling station, I want to vote for the most competent person,” he told 1310 NEWS host Rick Gibbons a few days later. “If that happens to be a woman, she’ll get my vote. If that happens to be a man, he’ll get my vote.” Watson went on to claim that a woman politician arguing for the support of more women in elected office is in a conflict of interest.

OK, time for some straight talk about the meritocracy. Let’s just examine the logic of this argument. First, we all vote for the person with the greatest competence (Trump, anyone?). Therefore, the persons elected to office represent the natural selection of the most competent representatives of our community (because nobody faces any barriers to running for office). Twenty-eight per

cent of city councilors in Canada and 18% of mayors are women. Ergo, men are better councilors than women by a factor of three and better mayors by a factor of five.

Do you see where this logic is going? The Federation of Canadian Municipalities doesn’t collect data on diversity in municipal politics, but it’s obviously pretty white out there. The logical conclusion of the meritocracy argument, then, is that white men are more competent than everyone else. That is a racist and sexist conclusion. Straight out of the 19th century.

Women face real and specific barriers to participating in politics. First, women continue to perform an extra 10 hours a week of unpaid work. Running for office requires a major commitment of time and the ability to work irregular and long hours. That’s harder to do if you are already down 10 hours. Second, women who take leadership roles are often viewed negatively where men in positions of power are generally treated as leaders.

Third, female politicians are subjected to a very specific kind of harassment—online and in person. Female MPs from

all parties have come forward in the last year to describe the level of harassment they have to deal with, from unwanted physical attention to rape threats on Twitter. Finally, women earn less on average, are more likely to work part time (particularly because they have a hard time affording the cost of child care) and have a greater difficulty accessing financing. All of these economic limitations make it harder for them to take three months off from work to run a campaign or raise enough money to get it rolling.

Now to the second fallacy. Mayor Watson argues that Councilor Deans is in a conflict of interest because she is an elected official supporting the election of a particular group (women) that makes up half the population. This is called representation. This is what we elect our officials to do: represent us. And if we are underrepresented in our political institutions, then one of the means to shift that balance is to have support from elected officials. Supporting representation for the underrepresented half of the city is not a conflict of interest. It's, dare I say it, the sign of a competent politician.

So why do people continue to cling to the notion of a meritocracy? What can we do to check that inclination with a bit of real talk about bias and barriers in our society?

The popularity of current studies on unconscious bias provides some direction on this front. According to the research, human behavior reflects cultural norms (no big surprise there), and some of those norms tell us what leaders look like and what they don't look like. As we make choices in the world (like which candidate to support in an election) we act out those biases. The "unconscious" part of the term for this behavior takes some of the sting out of it because, well, who would want to think of themselves as innately biased? We have good intentions. We mean well, or so we think.

However, with the cat out of the bag, we have the potential to create a world in which we are not condemned to replicate those biases but can make more conscious choices. For example, research published in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine* documents how doctors prescribe more pain medication to white patients than African American patients with identical symptoms. Harvard professor Mahzarin Banaji found that when doctors were simply reminded of this fact on their computer screen before prescribing the pain medication, dosages were the same for both African American and white patients.

We need to be honest about how certain social biases have been good to certain racial and social groups. No one wants to hear that their achievements aren't the result of their own virtues. I like the idea that I got where I did entirely through hard work and smarts. The problem is, I didn't. Coming from a middle class family meant that I could afford to spend the better part of decade in school and earn a PhD. There are plenty of smart people out there without PhDs, but I get the benefit of that extra bit of status because of something that has nothing to do with my merits.

Although it may be a pain in the ego to take that in—if you are on the beneficial end of social biases—take it in you must. You cannot hold the opinion that discrimination exists in the world and that relations of power are unequal, and at the same time believe that your white male self is in power solely as the result of merit. It is precisely in coming to terms with the fact that the meritocracy doesn't exist that we can find our way to a better, more representative democracy.

KATE MCINTURFF IS A SENIOR RESEARCHER WITH THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES. FOLLOW HER ON TWITTER @KATEMCINTURFF.



## Index Fighting with FAANGS

Facebook's stock price dropped more than **17%** between March 16 and March 27, wiping **US\$80 billion** off the social media company's market value, following news it would be banning Cambridge Analytica from using its **2.2-billion**-user platform. The U.K. data analysis firm is accused, among other things, of illegitimately harvesting personal data for political aims in the 2016 U.S. presidential election at the behest of Steve Bannon, who would become Trump's short-lived chief strategist. Shares of other FAANG companies (Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix and Google) more or less followed the social network down the toilet in March and had barely recovered when the *Monitor* went to print.

Amazon's shares dropped **3%** on Wednesday, March 28 on reports President Trump was "obsessed" with the company and has, according to one source, "wondered aloud if there may be any way to go after Amazon with antitrust or competition law." On the face of it, Trump says he's worried about "mom and pop" stores being put out of business by Amazon's monopolist online power. But the property tycoon turned U.S. president is more likely listening to groaning real estate investment trusts and other owners of malls and major retail

spaces (his own company included) that have borne the brunt of online shopping trends. (Trump's vendetta also "appears focused on the fact that [Amazon CEO Jeff] Bezos also owns the *Washington Post*, which has been strongly critical of him in its editorials," argues the *Financial Times*.) Trump's recent corporate tax giveaway (lowering the tax rate from **35% to 21%**) was expected to mainly help the Walmarts of America, who unlike smaller retailers have the money to reinvest tax savings into technology and acquisitions. The union-busting big-box retailer spent **US\$4 billion** in 2016 buying up ecommerce sites including Jet.com, Bonobos, Moosejaw, ShoeBuy and ModCloth. Amazon bought Whole Foods for nearly **US\$14 billion** last June.

Beginning January 2019, Quebec will require all companies, domestic and foreign, to collect the **8%** provincial sales tax on digital services such as Netflix, iTunes and other streaming sites—something the federal government refuses to do, even as other OECD countries seek to tax and better regulate the FAANGs. In February, Trump's treasury secretary, Steven Mnuchin, said the president "feels strongly" that the government should permit sales taxes on online purchases—another jab at Amazon, apparently. Quebec estimates applying PST to Netflix will generate **\$154.5 million** in new public revenues in the next five years. If Netflix were required to collect and submit GST/HST (as its Canadian competitors do), federal and provincial governments would collect an additional **\$80 million** annually to put toward social services.

SOURCES *Montreal Gazette, Toronto Star, CNN Money, Axios, CNBC, Digiday, Forbes.*

## Clearing the smog around mobility pricing



**M**etro Vancouver is at a critical point where congestion-induced delays are the norm on the region's roads and bridges. Congestion problems will only steadily worsen because of our growing population and with every additional car added to the region's roads. Expansion of public transit is widely seen as essential to ensure accessible mobility, but progress has been slow going.

Enter mobility pricing.

An independent commission is reviewing new options for pricing Metro Vancouver roads and bridges in order to manage congestion and support investment in the overall transportation system — and to do so fairly. This work follows the success of implementing congestion charging zones in London, Stockholm and Singapore where drivers pay a fee to get into the central city.

The biggest obstacle to mobility pricing will be political. Asking drivers to pay more for their trips is going to be a tough sell. While Metro Vancouver's growing congestion problems may make many drivers more amenable to new solutions, willingness to pay is another matter.

In London and Stockholm, initial opposition turned into support once systems were up and running: drivers saw a 20% reduction in congestion with shifts to transit or changes in driving patterns. And new investments in transit meant riders experienced better

service. In Stockholm, after a six-month trial, voters supported the new system in a referendum.

The Metro Vancouver commission is considering two models of mobility pricing: congestion point charges, which would likely result in tolls on most regional bridges and other key choke points on highways, and distance-based charges, which would vary by time and location. Exactly what charges/rates would apply, how these would differ by time of day and day of week and how they would apply to different types of vehicles is to be determined.

No region has implemented per-kilometre charges, although several U.S. states have pilot projects underway, and this option would be riskier and costlier due to new technology requirements. Congestion point charges, on the other hand, would be similar to the tolling systems recently removed from the Port Mann and Golden Ears bridges, but they would be spread more broadly through the region.

Mobility pricing will likely be a failure if it is perceived to be unfair — although fairness is in the eye of the beholder. A key equity concern is that low-income households with no other options are adversely affected while affluent drivers can travel more quickly without noticing much of an impact on their budget.

Some people cannot immediately change their behaviour and/or may live in areas where it is hard to even imagine

alternative ways of getting around. This is related to the high cost of housing, which forces low-income households to move further away from the central city to find affordable housing. These users already pay because of the increased time spent travelling, which can add up to hundreds of hours per year.

B.C.'s carbon tax experience holds lessons for mobility pricing. A low-income credit is funded out of carbon tax revenues and this should be considered for mobility pricing targeting low-income drivers or more broadly all low-income households. Using mobility pricing revenues to expand public transit can further address congestion by getting more people out of their vehicles. It also benefits most low-income households because they are much more reliant on public transit.

Current congestion is largely caused by drivers imposing time costs on other drivers. But public costs of driving include building and maintaining roads and bridges, policing and related public services, subsidies to fuel production and parking spaces. There are also external costs imposed on society as a whole: carbon emissions, air pollution, sprawl, noise, and the environmental costs of upstream fuel extraction and processing.

It is entirely reasonable, therefore, that it should cost more to get behind the wheel. Over the long term the only way to accommodate a growing population is a major expansion of public transit.

Metro Vancouver transit users already experience mobility pricing with transit fares and distance pricing on Skytrain and Seabus. Translink (the region's transportation authority) is reviewing the pricing structure for public transit and is likely to make transit rides more distance-sensitive.

If the political hurdles can be overcome, well-designed mobility pricing — with credits for lower-income people and public transit investments — could be an important part of the solution to manage congestion and accelerate the shift away from auto-dependency. But the devil is in the details: attention must be paid to the equity aspects of whichever design is chosen.



PHOTO BY MARK WOODBURY (FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS)

MARC LEE IS A SENIOR ECONOMIST WITH THE CCPA-BC. FOLLOW HIM ON TWITTER @MARCLEECCPA.



# Caught black, white and red handed



Canadians can seem like such pushovers, until you push us too far. Then you could be in for a big surprise.

So it may be with our Competition Bureau, which has endured years of scorn for allowing stratospheric levels of press ownership concentration in Canada. Media bosses have no doubt come to expect that they could concoct the most outrageous of monopolies and get a pass from the antitrust regulator.

No more.

In November, the country's two largest newspaper chains, Torstar Corp. and Postmedia Network, traded 41 Ontario titles then closed almost all of them, laying off nearly 300 workers and creating dozens of local monopolies. Executives at both companies insisted they were as surprised as everyone else.

Postmedia president Andrew MacLeod claimed they had been "extraordinarily careful" not to share any knowledge about their plans for the properties. CEO Paul Godfrey went him one better, telling CBC News: "We did not have any idea what they were going to do and they didn't have any idea. We understand the...legal rules involving collusion and you can ask anybody from Torstar, you can ask anybody from Postmedia."

Thus when the Competition Bureau raided Postmedia's and Torstar's offices this March, nobody expected to find a shred (or unshredded bit) of evidence to the contrary. Surely, any conspiracy would have been conducted orally, making it much harder to prove. Not so, apparently.

The *Globe and Mail* soon revealed that documents submitted to the Ontario Superior Court to obtain the search warrants detailed a written agreement dubbed "Project Lebron" after the basketball star LeBron James. In it, according to the *Globe*, Postmedia and Torstar agreed not to compete for years in the markets they vacated.

The *Globe's* coverage of the story seemed to revel in the fix the paper's rivals had found themselves in. A day after the news broke, columnist David Milstead quipped that Postmedia had a "Pecker problem." He was referring to David Pecker, the chairman and CEO of *National Enquirer* parent company AMI who was named to Postmedia's board of directors in 2016 at the behest of Chatham Asset Management, a New Jersey hedge fund with a major ownership stake in the company.

## WORTH REPEATING

**"If machines produce everything we need, the outcome will depend on how things are distributed. Everyone can enjoy a life of luxurious leisure if the machine-produced wealth is shared, or most people can end up miserably poor if the machine-owners successfully lobby against wealth redistribution. So far, the trend seems to be toward the second option, with technology driving ever-increasing inequality."**

The late Stephen Hawking (1942–2018) in an October 2015 Reddit "Ask Me Anything" conversation.

**"And a guy walked up on me and said to me, 'Leave Trump alone. Forget the story.' And then he leaned around and looked at my daughter and said, 'That's a beautiful little girl. It'd be a shame if something happened to her mom.' And then he was gone."**

Stormy Daniels on *60 Minutes* this March, describing threats she says she received while attempting to go public with an alleged affair with the president.

**"When we're down by \$20 billion, \$40 billion, \$60 billion, \$100 billion, the trade war hurts them, it doesn't hurt us. So we'll see what happens.... We're going to straighten it out. And we'll do it in a very loving way. It'll be a loving, loving way."**

U.S. President Donald Trump speaking to the press in early March. On April 3, the U.S. applied a 25% tariff on US\$50 billion worth of Chinese imports.

**"As the Chinese saying goes, it is only polite to reciprocate. The Chinese side will resort to the [World Trade Organization] dispute settlement mechanism and take corresponding measures of equal scale and strength against U.S. products in accordance with Chinese law."**

From an April 4 Chinese government statement announcing retaliatory tariffs on U.S. imports.

**"I have a dream that enough is enough. That this should be a gun-free world. Period."**

Yolanda Renee King, Martin Luther King Jr.'s 9-year-old granddaughter, addressing a massive student and youth rally in Washington, D.C. on March 24—one of hundreds of similar demonstrations to demand stricter gun controls following a Florida school shooting this year that killed 17 people.

**"Instead of creating space for this man who took a life, whose actions took a life, why not create more space for Indigenous people to share our side of the story about colonialism and the implications within our society."**

Jade Tootoosis, cousin of the slain Colten Boushie, speaking to the press at the end of March about news Gerald Stanley's lawyers were seeking a publishing contract for the man acquitted in Boushie's death.

**"We're all going to die."**

Colin Kahl, a senior national security official under Barack Obama, commenting on the appointment of John Bolton as Trump's senior policy advisor. Bolton has argued for a nuclear pre-emptive strike on North Korea and is widely expected to encourage Trump to provoke war with Iran.

Pecker has been in the news a lot this spring following accusations in a lawsuit filed by former *Playboy* model Karen McDougal that AMI paid her \$150,000 for an exclusive about her affair with U.S. President Donald Trump, a close Pecker associate, and then spiked the story. The supermarket tabloid mogul, mused Milstead, was now “perhaps the moral centre of Postmedia’s board of directors.”

As for the publisher of Canada’s largest daily, Milstead noted a corporate abandonment of the company’s founding ideals favoring social justice. “As Torstar has become a diversified media company, the Atkinson Principles have remained confined to the operations of the *Toronto Star* newspaper,” he wrote. “Had they governed the entire company, Torstar might have avoided this whole mess.”

Again, timing aggravated perceptions, as the website *Canadaland* had revealed just days earlier that Torstar is invested in a company that operates dozens of online gun forums in the U.S.

It remains to be seen whether the Competition Bureau investigation will result in charges. The governing

Competition Act provides for penalties of up to \$25 million in fines and 14 years in prison for conspiracy to reduce competition. However, even with a smoking gun in writing, we should remember the courts have been reluctant in the past to sanction press monopolies. Seized company memos showed clear corporate co-operation in the decision by the Southam and Thomson chains to close competing dailies in Ottawa and Winnipeg in 1980, yet a judge concluded the companies demonstrated “good business sense, not an illegal conspiracy.”

The Competition Bureau’s predecessor, the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission, actually obtained a conviction in 1972 on charges of monopoly against the Irving Oil family after it acquired all five dailies in New Brunswick. It was overturned on appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, however, which broke new ground in ruling the Crown must prove not only a lessening of competition, but also a detriment to the public.

Though the Competition Act consists mostly of civil sanctions—the Combines Investigation Act, which it

replaced in 1986, was shut out in 76 years of pressing criminal charges in merger cases—it retains criminal penalties for anyone who conspires with a competitor to fix prices for a product or “to allocate sales, territories, customers or markets for the production or supply of the product; or...to fix, maintain, control, prevent, lessen or eliminate the production or supply of the product.” However, the Competition Bureau’s case against Postmedia and Torstar could well be weakened by the fact it ignored similar trades and closures in B.C. by dominant news chains Black Press and Glacier Media.

The next move in this game of Monopoly will prove interesting. It may be a long shot, given the bureau’s history, but it be highly satisfying if that card lying face down on top of the pile read “Go directly to Jail. Do not pass Go. Do not collect \$200 million.”

MARC EDGE IS A PROFESSOR OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION AT UNIVERSITY CANADA WEST IN VANCOUVER. HIS LAST BOOK, *THE NEWS WE DESERVE: THE TRANSFORMATION OF CANADA’S MEDIA LANDSCAPE*, WAS PUBLISHED BY NEW STAR BOOKS IN 2016.

— CCPA’S FIFTH ANNUAL —

# TELEPHONE TOWN HALL



**JUNE 20, 2018**

**YOU’RE INVITED** to a lively discussion with CCPA economists, researchers, and our Executive Director Peter Bleyer. This event is open to all current donors.

All you have to do is answer the phone on June 20, at 7 pm ET, and you’ll have the opportunity to ask questions live and share your thoughts on key issues.

If you don’t want to miss out on your invitation to our 2018 Telephone Town Hall, be sure to make a donation today!

VISIT [WWW.POLICYALTERNATIVES.CA/GIVE](http://WWW.POLICYALTERNATIVES.CA/GIVE) TO DONATE



## New from the CCPA

### Carbon tax vs. cap-and-trade

The CCPA, in partnership with the **Clean Economy Alliance (CEA)**, released a report in March that modelled the impact of two potential carbon pricing scenarios in Ontario: a revenue-neutral carbon tax, which meets requirements imposed on provinces by the federal government, and Ontario's current a cap-and-trade system, where revenues are recycled into climate-related programs.

The report by **Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood**, titled **No Bad Option**, finds that both schemes reduce carbon emissions with no measurable impact to Ontario's economy. However, writes Mertins-Kirkwood, for any form of carbon pricing to work, emissions must be priced high enough to drive systemic changes and the price must be supported by strong complementary climate policies.

### Selling out Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Party government consistently claims it does not harbour a "privatization agenda." A new CCPA-SK report,

however, shows that over the past decade the government has sold over \$1.1 billion in public assets and eliminated at least 1,227 public sector jobs via privatization and outsourcing. **Selling Saskatchewan: A Decade of Privatization 2007–2017** identifies the more significant statements and policy decisions involving privatization, public-private partnerships (P3s) and outsourcing in that period.

While new Premier Scott Moe says there are "no circumstances" under which he would consider selling any Crown corporations, he has also advocated for the increased privatization of the public health system and the continued privatization of the province's liquor retailer. In light of the contradictions between the government's rhetoric and actions—"We will not privatize existing government-owned liquor stores," said former premier Brad Wall in 2013, before eventually doing exactly that—the CCPA-SK encourages the new premier to be clearer about his government's intentions.

### Nova Scotia Alternative Budget

Like the Alternative Federal Budget released by the CCPA in February, the **Nova Scotia Alternative Budget** lays out a sustainable fiscal framework to support the development of inclusive and prosperous communities in the province. The Nova Scotia economy has seen only one solid year of growth since 2010, employment increased only 0.6% between 2016 and 2017, and wages are struggling to keep



Movie still taken from *The Invisible Heart*.

up with inflation. Yet exactly when the government should be spending to stimulate the economy, it has insisted on maintaining so-called fiscal restraint.

"There is an urgency for our government to use fiscal policy as a lever for a different kind of economic growth that is no longer exploitative, no longer sacrifices the environment, our natural resources or the quality of life of the many," says **Christine Saulnier**, director of the CCPA–Nova Scotia and co-ordinator of the province's Alternative Budget Working Group. "This Alternative Budget invests in the transition to a green economy with renewable energy, maximizing energy efficiency, and expanding the sectors of our economy that are already low carbon—caregiving, teaching, social work, arts and culture—while investing in protections for our water, land, and air."

### New doc probes experiment in privatization

**The Invisible Heart**, a new documentary featuring CCPA research, tracks the birth and expansion, "from Wall Street to life

on the street," of social impact bonds (SIBs) as an alternate, highly profitable way of funding essential social services.

In the SIB model, instead of governments paying non-profit organizations to deliver social services, they pay private investors a profit for making the investment on the government's behalf. Social impact bonds are not charity, as some of the business voices in *The Invisible Heart* suggest. They're not really philanthropy either, where the giver expects nothing in return (except maybe good karma). Rather, they're a financial scheme with a promise of a healthy private-sector profit.

The film, which features conversations with CCPA economist **David Macdonald** and CCPA President **Larry Brown**, premiers in Regina on May 8 with a panel presentation on SIBs, then moves on to Vancouver (May 15), Toronto (May 17) and Ottawa (May 30). *The Invisible Heart* will also feature (minus panel presentation) at NorthWestFest in Edmonton on May 9. More info: [www.theinvisibleheart.ca](http://www.theinvisibleheart.ca).

To see more reports, commentary, infographics and videos from the CCPA's national and provincial offices, visit [www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca).



# ALTERNATE FUTURES

ROBIN SHABAN

## The confusion about payday lending

**HOW DO YOU**, personally, define usury? My guess is that most Canadians have a very vague idea of the concept.

Some would probably say that a usurious loan has an interest rate so high that the borrower cannot realistically pay it back (e.g., subprime and payday loans). But what is the exact threshold that defines fair vs. unfair interest? Are there other elements of a loan that can make it exploitative?

Other people may see usury as an irrelevant, archaic sin, to be tossed to the wayside next to the sins of wearing mixed textiles or trimming your beard. Given the history of political thought on the concept, it makes sense why we cannot agree on its meaning.

Up until the mid-1500s, the definition of usury was relatively straightforward: charging interest on a loan. To paraphrase Luther, issuing loans is damnable because interest is purely extractive. The people receiving these loans, who were often poor and living in agrarian communities, were simply paying for access to money for consumption, much like those who use consumer debt today.

However, John Calvin re-examined the Christian thinking on usury in the 16th century. In urban centres across Europe, commerce was becoming more sophisticated. He recognized that early capitalists wanted loans to fund their ventures, and that the capitalists anticipated earning a return from these debt-backed investments. Calvin argued that a loan was acceptable if it was issued only for commercial purposes and had several other key characteristics.

Firstly, the terms of the loan should let the borrower make as much as, if not more than, the principle and interest. Interest rates should be consistent with “natural equity,” not set according to the going rate in the market. Furthermore, the money should only be used to fund ventures that were consistent with the collective good. Lastly, Calvin was concerned that a lender should not be “addicted to his gain and profit.”

Importantly, Calvin thought that it was usurious to lend to the poor, or to charge more than what laws stipulated at the time. Indeed, across Europe, many nations had established usury laws that set maximum interest rates for lenders.

Jump ahead to 1889. England had abolished its usury laws 35 years earlier in preference of a free-market approach that sanctified the concept of the contract. If someone agreed to a loan against their better interests, why should

the state intervene? Canada followed suit. That year, the still new Canadian government enacted the Interest Act, which abolished the usury laws some provinces had previously established.

Since then, several laws in Canada have intermittently limited interest rates. Most recently, in 1980, the Small Loans Act was replaced by a provision in the Criminal Code making it illegal to charge more than 60% interest. In 2007, the law was revised so that a lender could charge more than the legal rate if it was licensed by a province to offer payday loans. The interest rates on these provincially sanctified loans have in some cases surpassed 700%.

In essence, Canada’s laws sanitize usury. They allow users to offer loans while safeguarding borrowers against the stereotypical harms we associate with loansharking: extortion, murder and other bodily harm, and organized crime. Fundamentally, the current laws do not address the underlying financial harm of exploitive lending that European theologians of the past understood.

Indeed, the case of payday lending in Newfoundland and Labrador demonstrates our culture’s blatant apathy toward financial exploitation.

In 2013, the RCMP and provincial police wrapped up a three-year investigation into illegal payday lending in the province. At that time, there were no provincial laws on payday lending, yet several lenders were operating anyway, and charging some of the highest interest rates in the

**It is intensely contradictory for a nation to have a usury law that permits and advances the crime.**

country (e.g., \$30 per \$100 borrowed).

While the investigation found there was a “reasonable prospect of conviction [for] some of the potential offences,” the public prosecutors decided it was “was not in the public interest” to file charges. Ultimately, it is intensely contradictory for a nation to have a usury law that permits and advances the crime.

Our muddled thinking arises from a tension between our moral intuitions and the ideologies underpinning capitalism. According to the latter, borrowing is good for investment and growth. But that logic is also directly responsible for outrageous interest rates being applied to people who are least likely to be able to pay them.

This cognitive dissonance prevents us from taking a good, hard look at current systems of lending through the lens of fairness and justice. Canadians as a whole need to reflect on the false tradeoff between personal liberty and justice, and recalibrate their moral compasses. **M**

ROBIN SHABAN IS AN OTTAWA-BASED ECONOMIST WHO COVERS FINANCE FOR THE MONITOR. YOU CAN REACH HER AT CONTACT@ROBIN-SHABAN.COM.

# Behind the numbers

RICARDO ACUÑA

## Alberta's shockingly bad case for the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion

**P**REMIER RACHEL NOTLEY and other supporters of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain expansion project—in the mainstream media, the Saskatchewan government, the B.C. Liberals, the federal government and the oil industry—all claim the pipeline is in the national interest and that the benefits of the project far outweigh the risks. The problem is, none of them have put forward credible and current evidence to prove it. And the big numbers they're using to sell us on the merits keep changing.

In early February, the Alberta government encouraged followers on Twitter to "Share the facts. Show your support" for Trans Mountain. The 21-second video, which had been viewed over 217,000 times by mid-March, makes three unsourced claims about the economic benefits of the Trans Mountain pipeline: it would generate \$18.5 billion for "roads, schools, and hospitals," create 15,000 jobs during construction, and sustain 37,000 jobs per year. Do any of these claims hold up to scrutiny?

**1** First, there appears to be no real evidence or credibility to the claim that 15,000 jobs will be created during construction. As economist Robyn Allan pointed out in an August 2017 *iPolitics* op-ed, while the number has been used repeatedly by Prime Minister Trudeau, Premier Notley and former B.C. premier Christy Clark, it is a total fabrication. Kinder Morgan's own submission to the National Energy Board states that the total number of construction jobs for the project would be 2,500 per year for two years, though the company has since happily jumped on the better-looking 15,000-job bandwagon.

**2** The claim of \$18.5 billion in economic benefits seems to come from a January 2016 report on the pipeline by the Conference Board of Canada, which built on numbers contained in a 2013 report by the same organization. The authors of that report calculated that the project would result in "\$18.5 billion in revenues for federal and provincial governments over the first 20 years of operations," or \$925 million annually, split primarily between Ottawa, Alberta and B.C.

But this number is based on old forecasts showing the international price of oil climbing to and remaining over \$100 a barrel (levels not seen since mid-2014) much more quickly than is actually happening. It is also based on the Trans Mountain expansion being the only approved pipeline. But Kinder Morgan's West Coast gambit is now competing with TransCanada's southbound Keystone XL and Enbridge's Line 3 (from Hardisty, Alberta to the Manitoba-U.S. border south of Gretna), as pointed out again by Allen, this time with earth scientist David Hughes in a *Tyee* interview last May.

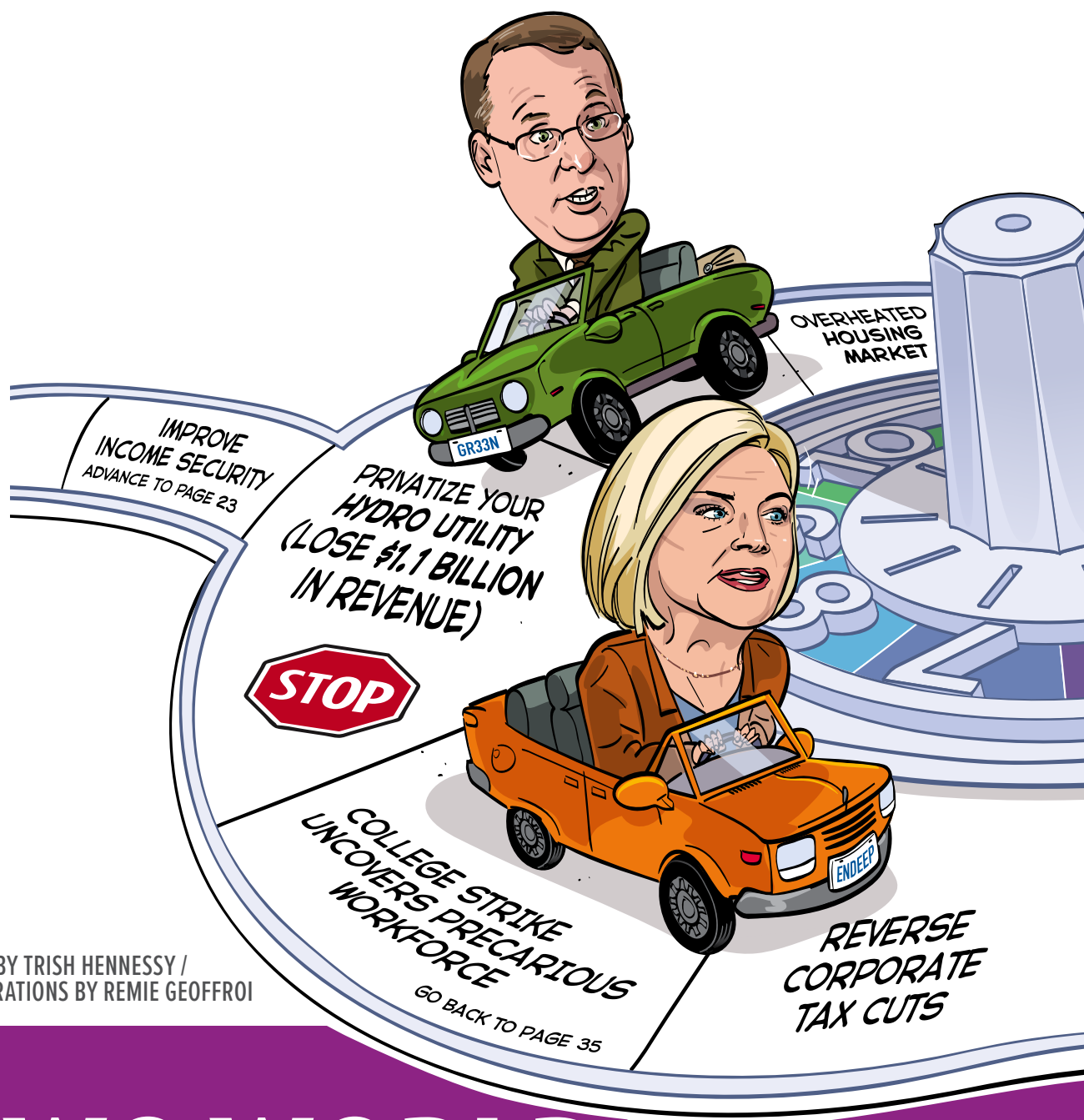
**3** The projection of 37,000 jobs per year also seems to come, in a roundabout way, from the "nearly 34,000 jobs annually for 20 years" estimated in the 2016 Conference Board of Canada report, plus another 3,000 jobs that Kinder Morgan appears to have invented for good measure. That lower Conference Board number is meant to include every single direct, indirect and induced job resulting from the pipeline itself, increased bitumen production, increased tanker traffic, and even from the investment of increased profits and dividends. It's a stretch at best, but made even less reliable given the degree to which the reduced price of oil and lower profit expectations also impacts the jobs projections, since reduced dividends through lower profits would necessarily mean reduced job creation.

The nature of employment in the oil and gas industry has changed significantly since the Conference Board first did its calculations back in 2013. Parkland Institute Research Manager Ian Hussey pointed out in an April 2017 blog that current estimates suggest at best one-third of the industry jobs lost between 2014 and 2016 will be recovered by 2021, and in the worst case scenario that number drops to one-quarter. The issue was highlighted recently by Suncor's announcement that its new driverless trucks at oil sands mines will eliminate 400 jobs.

Kinder Morgan expansion fans face the added inconvenience of Alberta's 100 megatonne cap on emissions from the oil sands, which is not taken into account in any economic forecasts. In his analysis of the Trans Mountain expansion, Hughes explains there is already enough combined rail and pipeline capacity to accommodate Alberta oil sands production up to the emissions cap. Moving any more of it would break the province's own climate rules.

We're very happy to "share the facts" on Kinder Morgan with the Alberta government, on Twitter or anywhere else. The thing is, the real facts do not make a very good case for a new pipeline through B.C. **M**

A LONGER VERSION OF THIS ARTICLE APPEARS ON THE PARKLAND WEBSITE: [PARKLANDINSTITUTE.CA](http://PARKLANDINSTITUTE.CA).

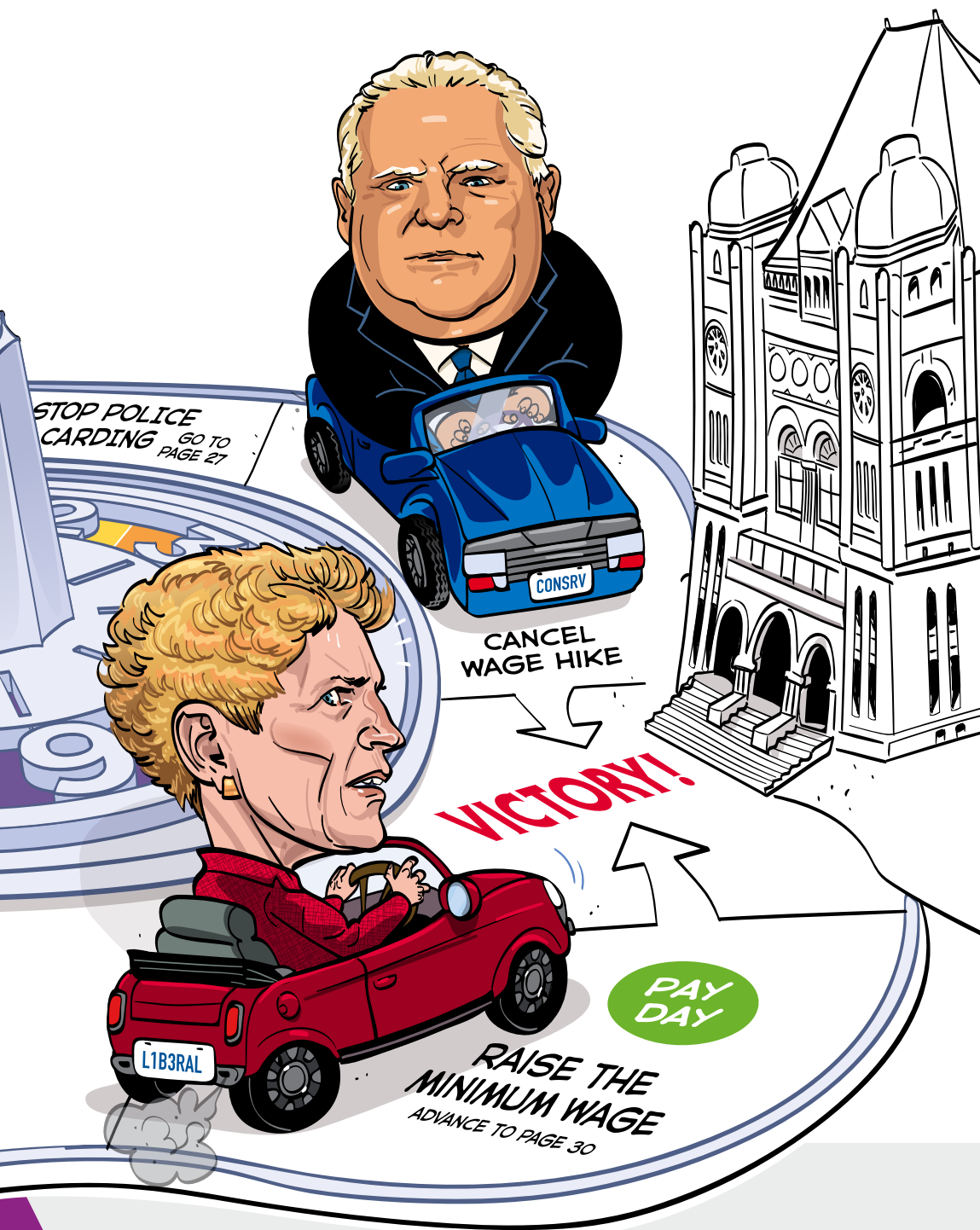


STORY BY TRISH HENNESSY /  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY REMIE GEOFFROI

# TWO WORLDS COLLIDE

ONTARIANS WILL CHOOSE BETWEEN STARKLY DIFFERENT VISIONS OF WHAT GOVERNMENTS ARE SUPPOSED TO DO WHEN THEY GO TO THE POLLS THIS JUNE.





**T**his is a story about two elections: the one about the “change” Ontarians might have had if circumstances hadn’t thrown the province into political chaos, and the one we are now facing, which is about change and much more.

While the first contest would probably have wobbled, like a low-energy pendulum, between centre-right and centre-left visions of good government, today’s battle is causing that pendulum to swing widely between two poles. The province is being asked to choose between right-wing, anti-government populism and

the prospect of significant improvements to Ontario’s social policies and higher-quality public services.

The political narrative shifted rapidly and dramatically. At the beginning of the year, polls were rating Kathleen Wynne the least popular premier in Canada. And after 15 years of Liberal governance (five on her watch), the opposition parties were priming for a ballot box question centred on “change.” The only question seemed to be: what kind of change would Ontarians choose?

NDP leader Andrea Horwath, polling as the most likeable party leader (yet struggling then to translate that into a rise in NDP support), unveiled a vision document under the slogan *Change For The Better*. Meanwhile, the Progressive Conservative's leader at the time, Patrick Brown—who polls indicated was the most likely to win an election—was calling for *Change That Works For You*. The guarantee in Brown's platform was simple: if, as premier, he failed to deliver the goods in his first term, he would personally resign.

Today, Brown is sitting as an independent, ditched by his party following allegations of impropriety (which he steadfastly denies), triggering a shotgun leadership campaign to replace him. Enter Doug Ford, brother of the deceased Rob Ford, former mayor of Toronto. Arguably the most dramatic pre-election period in Ontario's history has set the stage for one of the province's—and perhaps Canada's—more polarizing election campaigns.

Ford immediately dropped his predecessor's rather moderate (for the PCs) platform and had only promised a five-point plan when the *Monitor* went to print. But he is waging a populist campaign on the steam of what he calls Ford Nation, an audience borrowed from brother Rob that has readily jeered and booed at the very mention of Premier Wynne's name during Trump-like rallies.

Comparisons to Trump's successful campaign are legion in the press. The *Toronto Star's* Martin Regg Cohn pointed out in early April how Ford, himself a one-time Toronto city councillor, alleged the PC leadership vote would be rigged against him, once attacked the Toronto police as being out to smear his family name, and often plays fast and loose with the facts.

Ford discounted the similarities in an interview with CTV News in March. "We've been in politics for 30 years, before even Donald Trump

even existed," he said, but went on to praise the recent U.S. corporate tax cut, from 36% to 21%, for allegedly bringing U.S. manufacturing jobs back "in droves." In fact, manufacturing jobs have been recovering fairly steadily in the U.S. since 2010, and recent spurts are the result of several factors, including the return of oil prices and a more "flexible" (read: underpaid and precarious) U.S. labour force, most of which predate his presidency.

You could even say Ford's main campaign promise, though he doesn't put it exactly this way, is to make Ontario great again. If there is a shaky policy foundation behind this idea it is his plan to find "efficiencies" in government without cuts or layoffs. Ford has promised to scrap sex education in schools, a nod to the social conservative faction that helped elect him PC leader. He rejects the carbon tax Brown had proposed to replace the Liberal government's cap-and-trade program. And, if elected, he says he'll fight the federal carbon tax as well, in court if needed.

Ford talks about how Wynne's "cheques are going to bounce," yet he displays a loose familiarity with things fiscal. Responding to the Ontario budget tabled on March 28, the PC leader misinterpreted a small (\$200 on average) tax increase for those earning \$130,000 or more, claiming "a family of five will be paying \$1,000 more in new taxes."

CBC reporter Mike Crawley asked Ford to explain the math. "We know that they've increased the taxes \$200," Ford said. "Times five is \$1,000." Crawley asked why the kids in that family of five were paying income tax. "I'm not saying kids," Ford responded. "If there's five people in your house that are paying taxes, there's going to be five people paying \$200 more in taxes." It probably goes without saying how unlikely that situation is.

Should Ontario voters choose Ford at the polls on June 7, the province would lurch sharply to the right—perhaps even more so than it did after Mike Harris led the PC party to victory in 1995. Under Harris, the quest for tax cuts led to a war on the poor, a war on unions, a war on teachers and deep cuts to public services, notably health care and education, that still hurt today. As premier, Harris did practically everything he promised to do in his election platform, *The Common Sense Revolution*.

What Ford would do specifically, if elected, is anybody's guess. But if he were even a quarter as busy as Harris was, it would dramatically alter the policy landscape that has unfolded, and continues to evolve, in Ontario of late.

**It's unclear whether a polarizing election campaign will lead to greater voter engagement and higher turnout, or whether voters will get turned off and tune out.**

A province that is coming to appreciate the power of government to do good things in people's lives, and the value of fair taxation in achieving collective objectives, could be thrust back into another dark age of austerity, deregulation and the rule by the rich.

Kathleen Wynne took the premier's job five years ago, in 2013, after a divided Liberal party chose her to replace Dalton McGuinty, who had stepped down after a decade in power. The McGuinty government had gotten a bit long in the tooth, and was shrouded by scandals. Top among them were the spending controversies at Ornge, the air ambulance service the Liberals privatized in 2006, and a controversial decision ahead of the 2011 election to scrap two unpopular natural gas plant projects at a cost to the public of \$1 billion (see sidebar on next page).

Then there were the decisions that harmed relationships with public sector workers. As the Liberals were choosing their new leader inside the former Maple Leaf Gardens in January 2013, tens of thousands of teachers and their allies rallied outside to protest anti-strike legislation the government had brought in to impose a contract. The McGuinty government had been implementing austerity budgets in the name of deficit reduction as recommended by the former banker Don Drummond. A majority of Drummond's 362 proposed cuts were eventually adopted.

After so much catering to the party's right wing, Wynne's promise to her Liberal colleagues to be an "activist premier"—to set a new tone at Queen's Park—made her the internal "change" candidate of 2013. She wasn't supposed to win; many within her party thought former cabinet minister Sandra Pupatello, a blue Liberal, would get the nod. But Wynne proved to be a formidable opponent.

When she took over as premier, the Liberals were at the head of a minority government facing a PC opposition led by Tim Hudak. Wynne's first budget, delivered on her 100th day in office, made several concessions to the NDP in a bid to prevent a June 2013 election call. There was a nod to the NDP's push for cheaper auto insurance, some funding announced for youth jobs (during a prolonged period of high post-recession youth unemployment), and money for better home care services. Vowing to vote against the budget, Hudak said "it is now awfully difficult, if not impossible, to tell the Liberals and the NDP apart." The NDP would contest that characterization but support the government, putting off an election for another year.

## ONTARIO ELECTION BY THE NUMBERS

\$0

Cost of child care for kids aged 2.5 to 4 (Liberal promise).

\$0

Cost of dental care for everyone (NDP and Green Party promise).

\$0

Cost of pharmaceutical drugs for anyone 24 or younger, plus expansion of coverage for seniors (Liberal promise).

\$0

Cost of pharmaceutical drugs for everyone (NDP promise; Greens also propose a provincial plan in the absence of federal pharmacare).

\$9,690

Per capita program spending in 2017-18—lower than every other province.

\$15

Minimum wage scheduled for January 1, 2019 (Liberal and NDP promise).

\$14

Minimum wage would be frozen at \$14 but those workers would be removed from income tax rolls (PC promise).

\$9.8 billion

Estimated lost revenue over three years if Ontario scraps cap-and-trade and does not bring in a carbon tax (PC promise).

"4 cents on the dollar"

Amount of "efficiencies" PC leader Doug Ford claims he could find across all government ministries (that's equivalent to \$5.8 billion in cuts).

\$6.7 billion

Deficit forecast for 2018-19 under Liberal plan, to be paid down over six years.

\$19 billion

Estimated cumulative revenue loss in 2017-18 due to decades' worth of tax cuts.



In retrospect, the 2014 provincial election might look like a dress rehearsal for 2018, at least if you remove this year's Patrick Brown drama. Early polls back then suggested Hudak had the potential to be premier-in-waiting, there was deepening mistrust of the governing Liberals, and Horwath remained the most popular of the three main candidates. Hudak came out of the gates with a promise to create a million jobs if the PCs were elected. But, like Ford's income tax calculations, those numbers didn't add up, as the CCPA and others pointed out.

To add fuel to the fire, Hudak promised to cut 100,000 public sector jobs and bring in American-style "right-to-work" legislation, which would lead to union busting and more low-wage work (i.e., more workforce flexibility) in the province. It didn't go over very well, not even on the right. In a fumbled attempt to capitalize on Hudak's diminishing popularity, the NDP attempted to woo PC voters, losing some of its base in the process. Judy Rebick, the long-time Toronto social justice leader, said of the Ontario NDP, "They seem to be running on a kind of right-wing populism, not at all on party policy, or in any way talking about social justice or democracy."

In the end, whatever Horwath's team was trying to do didn't work. Wynne secured a majority government on June 12, 2014. The Liberals will be aiming for a repeat performance this year.

Much has unfolded since the last Ontario election. The NDP has broken ground in two provinces, Alberta and British Columbia. Federally, Stephen Harper's decade-old Conservative government was upended by the "sunny ways" of Justin Trudeau's Liberals. In Alberta, the NDP government became the first in Canada to commit to a \$15 minimum wage. In B.C., the NDP campaigned on a \$15 child care promise and won last spring's election. Federally, the Liberal government is imposing a price on carbon, expanding affordable housing, and has made improvements to the national public pension plan.

Right-wing complaints of a national turn toward socialism are grossly exaggerated, but it is important to remember that not so very long ago the political backroom wisdom focused only on tax cuts and smaller government. The advent of social policy expansion represents a potential break from that prevailing neoliberal ideology, though a very uncertain one. We are at an interregnum—a potential disruption in the social order. How this highly contested terrain is shaped by the Ontario election might hint at political opportunities and challenges, as well as which way the electoral winds are blowing elsewhere in Canada.

In Ontario, the past year has been characterized by a notable shift in the political narrative. Premier Wynne has presided over the biggest overhaul of labour and

## THE MEANING OF "EFFICIENCY"

A brief history of fiscal discipline in Ontario

Ontario PC leader Doug Ford's assertion that he can painlessly reduce provincial government spending by 4% is a central plank in his election platform. Yet he has no plans, he says, to trim what he calls "the bloated government of Ontario" through cuts to public sector jobs or services. "I don't believe in the word 'cuts,'" he told CBC. "I believe in the word 'efficiencies.'"

Ford calls for the use of "lean systems," "best practices," and "benchmarks" to bring costs down, as well as "sharing synergies in procurement." "We drive efficiencies in the private sector, and we're going to start driving efficiencies in the public sector as well," he said in March.

It's an appealing notion. By touting efficiency, politicians can promise more of what voters want—reduced wait times for health care, lower taxes, whatever—at no extra cost. It's something for nothing.

So where are these efficiencies?

It's not a new question. Ontario finance ministers of every stripe have made public service efficiency a top priority since at least the recession of 1990-91.

Past budget speeches tell a tale of governments "watching every penny," insisting on "value for money," and aggressively rooting out "inefficiencies and waste." Finance ministers have used

"zero-based budgeting" and launched "comprehensive reviews," calling on "private-sector expertise" to help "eliminate programs that are outdated." "Sweeping reforms" have resulted in "restructuring and streamlining" of all kinds of public services, which have been "transformed and refocused" through sustained "fiscal prudence."

Government ardour for fiscal discipline has been keenest in years when the province was in deficit (19 out of the last 27 years), but it scarcely lessened in easier times. Finance ministers have routinely reported savings in the hundreds of millions of dollars through efficiency measures.

employment law in a generation. After years of struggle, workers now have better vacation provisions, more sick pay, better control over work scheduling and equal pay for precarious work. The Wynne government raised the minimum wage from \$11.60 to \$14 on January 1 of this year and promises to bring it to \$15 an hour by next January. (Horwath would do the same; Ford would freeze the minimum wage at \$14.)

Despite a well-funded corporate lobby to resist the new labour reforms and quash the \$15 and Fairness movement, public opinion has shifted in favour of these government interventions in the market. When Tim Hortons took action in January to eliminate workers' breaks and some benefits in retaliation against the higher minimum wage, there was widespread public backlash. It hurt the brand. In fact, research firm Leger says Tim Hortons plummeted from the number four brand in Canada last year to number 50 this year.

And yet the sudden arrival of Ford on the provincial stage sets Ontario up for a critical test. Ontarians may not like how Tim Hortons has treated its workers this year. They may appreciate new social programs on offer. But if enough Ontarians can be convinced—by Ford, right-wing think-tanks, and much of the media—that the bigger problems are debt and taxes, none of this might matter.

Ford has a knack for being the centre of attention. He's positioned himself as the “no nonsense” candidate who's going to drain the swamp at Queen's Park, cut taxes, and bring manufacturing back to Ontario in the one way conservatives do best: deregulate. The Liberals and NDP, on the other hand, appear to be competing for the share of voters who believe governments can afford to be much more activist. Both would expand social policy in ways we haven't imagined possible for a long time, and that would create new jobs and new prosperity.

On January 1, the Wynne government implemented a first step toward a provincial pharmacare plan, making more than 4,400 prescription medications free for anyone aged 24 and under, and promising to do the same for seniors if re-elected. The NDP is proposing a pharmacare plan for everyone, to be in place by 2020, though at first only 125 “essential” drugs would be covered, with the stated goal of expanding that list in the future.

Horwath has also promised universal dental care as an expansion of the Ontario government's Healthy Smiles program, which currently offers dental care to anyone 17 and under. To counter that, Wynne is promising to expand limited reimbursement for dental costs to those without extended health plans. What Ford thinks of either idea—pharmacare or dental care—is, as mentioned, anyone's guess so far. Instead, he's been focused on his

This may explain why, in 2018, Ontario has the lowest program spending per capita of any province in Canada, according to budget documents.

Headline-grabbing examples of mismanagement and waste do exist, of course. In 2016, the auditor general of Ontario reported that the e-Health health records system had cost \$8 billion but was still not fully functional. In 2014, auditor Bonnie Lysyk said the government had paid \$8 billion too much when it used public-private partnerships, or P3s, to build 74 major infrastructure projects. In 2013, Lysyk pegged the cost of cancelling two gas-fired electricity plants in Oakville and Mississauga at up

to \$1.1 billion. The tangled mess that was the Ornge financial scandal, which auditor Jim McCarter reviewed in 2012, may have cost provincial coffers as much as \$100 million.

These losses, which all occurred after the introduction of “private-sector expertise” into public service administration—presumably to “drive efficiencies”—were significant. But they took place over a long period of time. The first Ontario P3s were approved in 2001. E-Health began in 2002. Meanwhile, from 2001-02 to 2017-18, the province spent close to \$1.7 trillion on program expenses. Egregious examples of spending run wild may account for 1%

of total program spending, on average, but not 4%.

In the past, the truly major reductions in real government spending have typically come from the elimination of programs, reductions in transfers to individuals (e.g., social assistance), job cuts for public employees, and pay cuts.

Pay and benefits for public employees account for over half of program spending by government and its agencies (hospitals, schools, etc.). And if history is any guide, the main road to major cost-cutting without cuts to jobs and services runs through pay and benefits, not unidentified “efficiencies.”

—Randy Robinson

mainstay talking point: Kathleen Wynne is writing cheques and those cheques are going to bounce.

Likewise, on child care the goal posts are moving on the progressive side. The Wynne campaign is promising to offer free child care for preschoolers aged two-and-a-half to four, at which point they enter free full-day kindergarten (a program implemented by the McGuinty government).

At her April 16 platform launch, Horwarth raised the stakes by promising \$12 child care for children of all ages and free child care for households making less than \$40,000.

Green Party Leader Mike Schreiner, whose party does not hold a provincial seat and had about 5% public support in early spring polls, is including a plank to address economic inequality—complete with a promise to reduce poverty, increase social assistance rates and introduce a basic income benefit rate at 100% of the Low Income Measure.

This is the kind of political battle for progressive ideas that helps everyone in the end.

The June election will be difficult to predict, but the challenges facing the next government will be the same regardless of who's in charge. Since the global recession of 2008-09, Ontario's economy has been on a slow growth path. Consumer spending has been doing much of the heavy lifting. But with a growing housing bubble in some cities (like Toronto), and mounting household debt, the economy is vulnerable to an interest rate hike, to another recession, and to trade wars that could choke Ontario exports to the United States, its biggest customer.

To fund her social policy expansion promises, Wynne is betting that Ontarians would rather accept a \$6.7 billion deficit, to be paid down over six years, than hear about raising taxes. Horwarth, meanwhile, is promising to raise taxes on corporations and the wealthy, raising more revenue and planning on a smaller and shorter-term deficit than Wynne. Ford is anti-tax—whether on income, corporations or greenhouse gas emissions. Among the three front-runner parties, only the NDP is going into the election ready to talk about the taxes needed to pay for more and improved public services.

For years, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has been clear on the fact that Ontario has a revenue problem. Economist Hugh Mackenzie estimates that the province loses about \$19 billion in cumulative annual revenue thanks to two decades of tax cuts. Unless the next premier is willing to address this problem,

Ontario will carry long-term deficits (exposing itself to right-wing anti-debt critiques) or have to cut public programs or privatize more.

Given a growing and aging population, demand for public program expansion isn't letting up, so making more cuts is politically unrealistic. Bottom line: while the conversation heading into this election is framed as a choice between progressive policy expansion or anti-government populism (care vs. change), the conversation about the taxes needed to fully fund any party's promises has only just begun, with the NDP's willingness to introduce a new suite of taxes and run a far smaller deficit than the other parties.

As the wise Alex Himelfarb, CCPA-Ontario advisory board chair and former clerk to the privy council, has said, governments that are afraid to raise taxes have two choices—go into deficit or sell off public assets (see next article). Part of Wynne's unpopularity rests on this fundamental dilemma. She decided to both go into deficit and sell off public assets, namely the province's majority shares in Hydro One (see Edgardo Sepulveda on page 38). Outrageously high hydro bills ensued and Wynne is having trouble living that down.

The moral of the story is that activist premiers may be capable of moving the needle on key social policies, but unless they're equally progressive on the revenue side of the equation, it's hard to strike a true balance.

At the beginning of this year, the race between Wynne, Horwarth, Schreiner and Brown, though very much about "change," was, under the hood, fuelled by policy. And that policy was, for the most part, sticking fairly close to the centre of the ideological spectrum, if not trending left. With Brown's replacement by Ford, it's not clear how much of that debate will survive the flash and brash of conservative populism, with its strong anti-government rhetoric.

It's also unclear whether a polarizing election campaign will lead to greater voter engagement and higher voter turnout, or whether voters will get turned off and tune out. Democracies can't be left on autopilot; they require engaged citizenry to hold governments accountable and to ensure they put the public interest first. Toronto survived the tumultuous populist politics of Rob Ford's single term as mayor, but the city became more polarized and many vital social policy advancements still remain stalled four years later.

U.S.-style politics has come to Ontario and, if it prevails, may be coming to a province near you too. **M**





ALEX HIMELFARB

ILLUSTRATION BY JOEP BERTRAMS

## Reconnecting taxes and the common good

### Ontario cannot afford a race to the bottom after Trump's corporate tax giveaway

**I**t didn't take long after the Trump regime passed its "huge" tax cuts, overwhelmingly favouring corporations and the wealthy, for the predictable warnings to show up in Canadian newspapers, provincial legislatures and the House of Commons. Our economy will be squashed if we don't find the courage to join in the tax-cutting. Businesses will founder. Rich people will flee Canada. Jobs will disappear.

Sure, our tax revenues as a share of the overall economy are lower than they've been in over five decades. Yes, government expenditures are lower than they have been since the days before we had public pensions,

medicare and mass education. But more tax cuts are still offered up as the best—or even the only—option.

The failure of decades of tax-cutting to yield the promised increases in innovation and productivity has not constrained the willingness of some political parties and governments to treat ever-deeper cuts, especially for businesses and the rich, as indisputably good economic policy. If past cuts didn't have quite the effect they were meant to, they say, perhaps the cuts just weren't deep enough. Failed economic ideas don't die easily.

Clearly, Canadian politicians cannot ignore the implications of tax cuts or

other major economic policy changes in the United States. But they would be wise to ask what our neighbour may be giving up with these latest cuts, and where our comparative advantage might really lie. We oughtn't to assume the benefits of tax cuts or to ignore their costs.

**M**any took the last federal election as a sign that Canadians were ready to say no to more austerity, to say yes to more spending. Indeed, the political orthodoxy of annual balanced budgets as *the* measure of fiscal responsibility seems finally to have been jettisoned, at least by some

## So long as taxes are viewed as a burden, austerity will continue to blunt the political imagination and limit our sense of what's possible.

governments. But this small, though welcome step does not begin to allow these governments to reverse decades of austerity. Any new spending Canadians are being offered is still highly constrained, funded as it is through some combination of deficits and often costly privatization schemes and sales of valued public assets.

Simply put, austerity will continue to hold sway, to make poverty and inequality seem inevitable, ambitious universal programs impossible, environmental decline irreversible, unless we attack current thinking and policy on taxes and the common good head on.

When we do dare to talk about taxes today, other than simply more cutting, our focus tends to be tax fairness. That's as it should be. Decades of cuts have made our tax system less progressive. They have favoured the wealthy and powerful. And the extensive coverage of the Panama and Paradise Papers generated widespread outrage at the ease with which many of the richest have been able to avoid and evade, legally and otherwise, their even relatively modest tax obligations.

All of this has no doubt undermined the legitimacy of our tax policies. But it has also led many to conclude that the majority of people pay too much in taxes rather than that the rich pay too little. Tax cuts continue to sell politically. Tax increases, not so much. The thing is, as essential as tax fairness is to a more equal society, we also need to collect enough tax revenue to pay for the country we want.

While we can expect that taxes will be front and centre in elections—provincial, municipal and federal—over the next couple of years, debates will likely revolve around whose taxes to cut and by how much. The revenue gap, however, seems still pretty much a political no-go zone.

In part, at least, this reflects the success of the tax cutters in equating government with waste and corruption. Of course governments have to be held to account for spending abuses and gross inefficiencies. Waste and misspending drain an already very shallow pool of public trust. But as studies continue to show, the extent this is actually happening has been grossly and often deliberately exaggerated, part of the longstanding assault on the very idea of government, and a key strategy used to justify the pretence that tax cuts are a free good.

Many of the worst examples of waste are one-offs while the tax cuts they justify are enduring. Tax cuts never pay for themselves. Invariably, they have real costs: public services are squeezed and opportunities to improve government

programs lost, with the consequences falling most heavily on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, and on future generations who of course don't get to vote.

Ironically, as we weaken government and undermine public services, as wait times go up while access goes down and out-of-pocket costs rise, we increasingly question just what our taxes are buying. Austerity is self-perpetuating.

As Ontarians prepare to choose our next government, we ought to be as ready to ask who will pay for the inevitable tax cuts on offer as we are to ask who pays for new spending. If the answer is that tax cuts will be paid for by ending the gravy train we ought to demand specifics, since there is rarely if ever enough gravy to offset the cuts. Equally, any promise to reverse the decades of austerity needs to come with a revenue plan.

If the best we are offered is the promise that we will be asked to reserve less of our income for the common good, that the government will leave a little more cash in our pockets, we need to ask ourselves how that will stack up against the ever-rising costs of child care, housing, tuition and other fees, and out-of-pocket costs for services that used to be free.

Most important, beyond calculating the direct benefits we and our families might be getting from what's on offer, we ought also to be asking how what the parties are proposing will help us tackle our collective challenges: climate change, inequality and poverty, failing infrastructure, environmental decay, justice for Indigenous peoples, and racism and bigotry.

This election, in other words, will be a chance to decide whether we want something other than austerity—on “light” setting or full blast—and, if so, whether we are willing to pay the freight.

Decades of austerity, during which we have been asked to view ourselves as primarily taxpayers and consumers rather than as citizens pursuing some common good, have no doubt reshaped our collective view of taxes. So long as taxes are viewed as a burden, or worse, a punishment, rather than as how we operationalize the common good, austerity will continue to blunt the political imagination and limit our sense of what's possible.

Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, who died just over a year ago, spent the latter part of his career documenting the decline of the collective, the loss of trust in one another and in our governments, the loss of confidence that we can together shape the future. He worried that our collective action problems—those things we can solve only together—have never been more challenging, but that our collective toolkit has been severely weakened by decades of austerity. Rethinking taxes, which are, after all, how we pay for those things we do together because we could never do them at all or as well on our own, will be essential to rebuilding the collective.

We cannot hope even to begin to achieve a just transition to a green economy, or to provide a measure of economic security in an increasingly precarious world, or to reverse growing inequality and persistent poverty if we don't reconnect taxes to the common good. **M**

# Real income security in Ontario

A new roadmap calls for transformational change to social assistance and other income supports. Whoever forms the next government has to take it seriously.

**S** your income secure? Do you swipe your credit card at the supermarket without really looking at how much you're spending? Can you pay all your bills every month? Can you afford your medication? Do your kids have the clothes, shoes and school supplies they need? Is your home safe and warm?

Or do you skip meals to make sure you can pay the rent and your kids are fed? Are you a regular at the local food bank? Do you have trouble getting there because you can't afford the bus fare? Do you have to figure out which bill to pay each month and which one to risk disconnection on? Do you cringe when your doctor hands you a prescription, knowing you can't afford to fill it? Do you struggle with bedbugs? Mould? A landlord that never does the repairs? Are you living too far from your job and the services you need because rents are too high?

Do you feel like nothing will ever change, no matter what you do or how hard you try?

Nearly two million people in Ontario struggle daily with these questions. Their jobs don't pay enough to cover their bills, or they don't get enough hours, let alone benefits, to make ends meet. Welfare pays \$721 a month, not nearly enough to cover rent. Benefits for people with disabilities don't get them much closer to this increasingly out-of-reach feat, especially for those living in cities.

What's more, people getting low social assistance benefits receive few supports to deal with domestic violence or illness, mental health or literacy challenges, or the impacts of racism or colonialism, which are all often connected to their need for income support.

Simply put, Ontarians living in poverty or with low incomes cannot afford basic necessities and services that many of us take for granted and that would make getting through the day so much less of a battle. Their struggle with poverty and income insecurity can be attributed in no small part to benefit systems and regulatory structures that are outmoded and ineffective, and long past due for change.

**M**any parts of Ontario's income security system need updating. The province's two social assistance programs, for example, were designed to be difficult to access, punitive and coercive. While steps have been taken in recent years to alleviate some of these programs' worst aspects, the system hasn't fundamentally changed in 20 years.

Ontario Works provides benefits of \$721 per month—nowhere near what it takes for a single person to pay for rent, food or any of the other regular daily costs of living. That was by design, based on the misplaced notion that keeping people poor gives them an incentive to find a job.

In reality, low benefit rates create barriers to finding work: they make it difficult to buy clothes for job interviews, pay to print resumes, or afford telephone and internet services, which are essential for finding and applying for work today. More fundamentally, \$721 a month does not pay for clean and safe housing from which one can even begin to contemplate working. Low benefit rates are good at one thing and one thing only: kicking people when they're down.

Ontario Works also assumes that everyone is employment-ready and

that the labour market is accessible to everyone. There is no recognition in the system of barriers to employment, including caregiving needs, racism, trauma, colonialism, violence and other factors that leave people economically and socially isolated, nor is there much support to effectively deal with these barriers.

The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) is very difficult to access. People already dealing with the impacts of having a disability are required to navigate a complicated application process for which there is no support and that often requires them to get multiple reports from doctors and other specialists. Applicants who are denied benefits face an appeals process that can take up to two years to resolve.

Even though people can work while they're on ODSP and remain eligible for benefits, the system makes it so hard to prove you have a disability that newly entering or getting back into the workforce becomes nearly impossible. And at \$1,151 a month for a single person, ODSP benefit rates are only slightly better than those for people on Ontario Works.

Both programs also require constant reporting—Where do you live? How much do you pay in rent? Do you live with someone else, and what is your relationship with that person?—and a host of other requirements. The rules are enforced by caseworkers who have to closely monitor the lives of recipients. People can be cut off for the slightest infractions, often triggered by inflexible computerized administrative protocols, putting their source of income at risk.

This system of surveillance and punishment treats low-income people



like they're not responsible, not entitled to support, essentially guilty until proven innocent. It forces caseworkers to act like welfare police when they probably took the job out of a desire to help.

Both Ontario Works and ODSP deduct part or all of many other regular income sources, including employment insurance, workers' compensation and Canada Pension Plan disability payments. These clawbacks ignore recipients' past contributions to federal and provincial support programs, and all but ensure they will continue to live in poverty.

Furthermore, neither program adequately supports people's individual ambitions and goals, whether that's finding and keeping work or accomplishing other objectives like completing high school or volunteering in the community.

Imagine living under that kind of system. Now, imagine there was a plan for transforming these and other programs so that they lift people out of poverty, and make it more difficult for anyone to fall into poverty, while providing sufficient income to live with health and dignity. Wouldn't you want your government to implement that plan?

The plan exists. It was developed by a broad group of voices in Ontario (Indigenous, advocacy, lived-experience, private-sector and administrative) and published by the provincial government on November 2 last year under the title "Income Security: A Roadmap for Change." It details a 10-year strategy to transform income security in Ontario to put people—and their needs and rights—at the centre of the system.

Importantly, the roadmap recommends increasing the amount and improving the quality of the benefits and services available to low-income people. But even more fundamentally, it also presents a new understanding of income security in Ontario—promoting economic and

social inclusion, treating people with respect and dignity, and helping them reach their full potential.

For example, instead of trying to push people receiving Ontario Works benefits into the first available job, the reformed system would take a more person-centred and trauma-informed approach. Once a person's immediate needs have been met—like stable housing—the system could then help them achieve other goals, like getting their high school equivalency diploma or dealing with childhood abuse trauma through mental health treatment.

Instead of locking people with disabilities into a program that's not responsive to their shifting needs, or to the reality that they may need lifelong support, ODSP could be improved while the system enlists people with disabilities to help build a new assured income model that is less restrictive, provides stable income over the long term, and supports moving in and out of the workforce as a person's disability allows.

Instead of imposing income support programs on Indigenous peoples, the government could work with them to create a system that supports both social and economic inclusion, and provides holistic, wrap-around services that promote the physical, spiritual, mental and emotional well-being of the individual, family and community. It could also take steps to ensure the programs are ultimately controlled by First Nations, with sufficient funding to meet the particular needs, realities and issues of those communities.

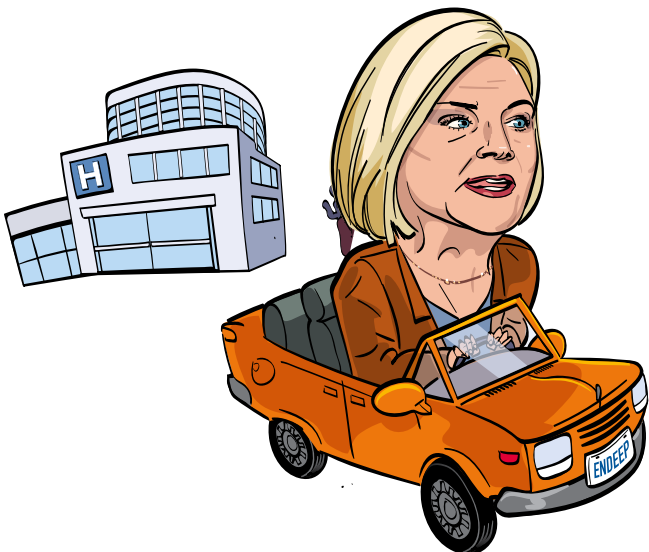
Instead of being rule-bound and controlling, the system could promote a culture of trust. It could transform the role of the caseworker into a case collaborator whose function would be to help people identify and solve problems, and who would receive appropriate professional development and training on issues like Indigenous cultural safety and anti-oppression.

Maybe most importantly, instead of condemning people to a life in poverty, the system could commit to ensuring real income security. Making sure everyone has enough to pay for the costs of living and participate fully in their communities has to be the bottom line.

The roadmap's guiding principles of adequacy, rights, reconciliation, access to services, economic and social inclusion, equity and fairness, sustainability, and respect and dignity seem uncontroversial at first glance. But actually, they're revolutionary. The question now is whether they will see the light of day in government policy.

The provincial government received more than 800 responses to its call for feedback on the roadmap earlier this year. Reaction was overwhelmingly supportive; in many cases, people urged government to go even further. The government responded in its March 28 budget.

While the proposed three-year annual 3% rate increases are less than the roadmap recommends, the budget does include a set of three-year commitments on a number of incredibly important reforms to social assistance that would make significant progress on the transformation described above. It also commits to working with Indigenous



communities to improve the design and delivery of social assistance programs.

The budget also proposes a new albeit modest drug and dental program for people without existing coverage, fully financing seniors' medication needs under an expanded OHIP+ program, which currently covers more than 4,400 medications for youth under 25, and matching federal government funding on a housing benefit.

This being an election year, it's far from certain these changes will be implemented unless the current Liberal government is re-elected. But their proposed package of reforms has raised the bar for what we can and should expect from all the parties vying to form government. So, what have the other parties said? As of early April, here's the lay of the land.

The NDP has come out strong on expanding drug and dental coverage. They've promised to implement universal pharmacare—for people of all ages—starting with 125 essential medicines and expanding coverage over time, as well as a plan to fill the gaps on dental coverage for people without workplace coverage and seniors, and to improve dental coverage for those on social assistance. The NDP endorsed the roadmap and its findings, saying it would work with the income security reform working groups to implement its recommendations. The NDP also committed to the full three-year plan of rate increases recommended by the working groups.

So far, the Progressive Conservatives have recognized the need to act on poverty, by promising a tax break for Ontarians with incomes under \$30,000 (most people earning that already pay no income tax). They would freeze the minimum wage at \$14, halting the move to a \$15 minimum wage. The PCs intend to release more detailed policy commitments as the campaign moves forward, and we will be watching to see if they take positions on expanding health care coverage, transforming social assistance, improving supports for people with disabilities, and working with Indigenous communities toward a better future.

Ontario's political parties have an opportunity now to do the right thing, and the smart thing. The last census showed that about 14% of Ontarians live in poverty, though rates are higher for women, children, people from racialized communities, Indigenous peoples, newcomers and people with disabilities. The province's Changing Workplaces Review found that about 30% of people employed in Ontario are in vulnerable, precarious jobs, with similarly disproportionate impacts for people in those groups just mentioned. To top it off, social assistance rates haven't kept up with the real costs of living. Ontario Works supplies only about 51% and ODSP 79% of the income it would take to be lifted above the poverty line.

These levels of poverty cost governments in Canada an estimated \$4 to \$6.1 billion each year due to lower tax revenues arising from lost productivity. Even if no changes are made to Ontario's income security system, those costs will rise for the province. Projections are that Ontario will spend \$2 billion more by 2020 on the same outdated,

**The roadmap presents a new understanding of income security in Ontario—promoting economic and social inclusion, treating people with respect and dignity, and helping them reach their full potential.**

counterproductive programs that result in poor outcomes for low-income people.

A recent report from the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy says that increasing spending on social services will improve people's health more than increasing spending on health care. Why not invest now in improving life for low-income people in Ontario instead of continuing to spend money on a system that simply perpetuates poverty?

It's a question Ontarians should be putting to their candidates when they come knocking for votes before June 7. We've got a solid roadmap for ensuring income security that has broad support. All parties need to commit to making sure that everyone in Ontario can answer yes to the question: is your income secure? **M**

# Intervenor funding and the right to a healthy environment

**O**fall the issues and dividing lines in this provincial election, the government's approach to resource management and project approvals has made barely a ripple. That's probably a relief for party leaders, who aren't facing a high-profile pipeline battle on the scale of B.C. and Alberta. But it's a shame for voters who are left in the dark about how their next government will handle disputed projects when they do come up for consideration and public debate.

In my work with the public as an expert consultant, I have observed citizen groups battling developments that pose potential threats to the environment, human and animal health, and community livelihood. For marginalized populations in particular, including Indigenous and rural communities, participating in environmental decision-making processes can be enormously challenging. It can cost quite a lot (in time and money) to counter the financial and political clout of proponents, including companies and corporations, behind project developments.

Ontario used to provide intervenor funding to individuals and citizen groups to level the playing field in environmental decision-making. Funding from public and private proponents was granted to defray expenses including legal assistance, expert consultants, administrative costs and other relevant services. But the initiative, known as the "Ontario model" and lauded internationally, fell out of favour with the austerity-obsessed Mike Harris government. It has yet to be resuscitated, despite multiple calls to do so and our increasing awareness of the vulnerability of ecosystems to large-scale industrial activity.

Intervenor funding had its early beginnings in the last years of the Bill Davis Progressive Conservative government, when former environment minister Andy Brandt established a limited case-by-case system. Ian G. Scott, who was appointed attorney general by the Liberal-NDP coalition government elected in 1985, expanded on the PC program and instituted the Intervenor Funding Project Act of 1988. The legislation established a three-year pilot project to provide funding to citizen groups advocating on behalf of the environment in proceedings before the Environmental Assessment Board, Ontario Energy Board and the Joint Board. Importantly, these funds were available ahead of hearings or proceedings and could be used for lawyers, experts, co-ordinators and other related expenses. Reporting mechanisms helped ensure accountability for the expenditure of funds.

By the time the pilot project ended, an NDP government led by Bob Rae had replaced the David Peterson Liberals. The Intervenor Funding Project Act was renewed and extended to 1996, but that's when its life ended. The Harris government began dismantling environmental legislation almost immediately upon taking office in 1995, and in March of the following year, a notice quietly appeared on the government's environmental registry with the title "Sunsetting of The Intervenor Funding Project Act."

The political decision to allow the act to expire was vehemently opposed by environmental advocates, who said it would give companies and governments the upper hand in situations where communities or citizen groups opposed projects for their potential adverse environmental impacts. A

formal request to re-enact intervenor funding legislation in Ontario was refused by the Harris government.

In June 2004, a year into the post-Harris Liberal government led by Dalton McGuinty, a minister's advisory panel was struck to provide recommendations on improving Ontario's environmental assessment program. The panel produced a two-volume report in March 2005 that identified various "barriers to public participation" and recommended that the terms of reference for every undertaking "include an outline of how the proponent will assist the public in participating in the process." Funding for community groups "would be commensurate with the size and nature of the project," said the report. Unfortunately, the panel's recommendations were never implemented.

Nearly 50 environmental groups sent Premier Kathleen Wynne a letter in December calling on the government to review and reform the Environmental Bill of Rights to legally recognize the human right to a healthy environment, improve access to environmental information and improve the quality and legitimacy of environmental decision-making. Both the NDP and Greens are promising to strengthen the Bill of Rights in their platforms.

I propose that intervenor funding must be added to the agenda. In its absence, environmental decision-making is tilted in favour of proponents, and democracy and the environment suffer as a result. The panel recommendations from 2005 urging the government to find a way to facilitate public engagement in the environmental assessment process are as important and relevant today as they were 13 years ago. **M**





ANTHONY MORGAN

## Populism and racism in two Ontario elections

Mike Harris's Common Sense Revolution sent racial justice policy back decades. We can't afford to let it happen again.

**T**hinking of Ontario's upcoming provincial election, I am reminded of what Karl Marx once said about history: "Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce." In 1995, Ontario was taken by the tragedy of Mike Harris's Common Sense Revolution (the official name of his Progressive Conservative platform). Now, in 2018, the province is at risk of falling for the farce of what you could call the Common Man Revolution of PC leader Doug Ford.

In rather typical populist fashion, Ford says he is championing the interests of "common" or "everyday" people versus those of an entrenched

political elite. The latter are portrayed as self-indulgently committed to bloated budgets and wasteful government spending. Ford's Common Man Revolution, in contrast, calls for billions of dollars in tax cuts and a dramatically smaller government, all ostensibly in the interest of decreasing provincial deficits, balancing budgets and making life more affordable for average, hard-working Ontarians.

While Harris never dedicated his '90s brand of austerity to the common people, his Common Sense

Black Lives Matter protesters rally outside Queen's Park in April 2016.

PHOTO BY FRED LUM/THE GLOBE AND MAIL.

Revolution was similarly characterized by massive cuts to taxes, social spending (on health, education and social assistance) and the size of the public service, along with a downloading of funding responsibilities to municipalities. In this way, Ford can be considered a redux of Harris, his modern populist posturing masking a farcical commitment to now old-fashioned neoliberal policy priorities.

However, if the similarities in content between the Harris and Ford revolutions are not so interesting (they are both conservatives, after all), their timing most definitely is. Both men emerged in response to meaningfully progressive, though deeply imperfect, shifts in socially equitable policy-making by the ruling

incumbents (the NDP in 1995, the Liberals in 2018). When we consider specifically the instances of racial justice policy reforms that preceded each election, the curious historical continuities become clearer.

### **The hemorrhaging of a racially just agenda**

Among the primary targets of Harris's disdain during the election campaign of 1995 were employment equity, racially equitable reform of the criminal justice system, and government-led antiracism initiatives. Bob Rae's NDP government had ambitiously embarked on a plan to address systemic discrimination in Ontario workplaces. Notably, it appointed a leading jurist, Juanita Westmoreland-Traoré, a Black woman, as Employment Equity Commissioner of Ontario, where she led provincewide consultations on the experiences of discrimination in Ontario's labour market.

These efforts culminated in the adoption, in 1993, of the Employment Equity Act. Its purpose, as stated in the preamble, was "the amelioration of conditions in employment for Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, members of racial minorities and women in all workplaces in Ontario and the provision of the opportunity for people in these groups to fulfil their potential in employment." The legislation sought to achieve this by creating diversity benchmarks for employers, and supporting the development of more inclusive work environments for historically marginalized employees among groups identified as being most targeted by discrimination in the labour market.

On the criminal justice front, in October 1992, the NDP launched the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System (CSROCJS) with a mandate "to inquire into and make recommendations about the extent

to which criminal justice practices, procedures and policies in Ontario reflect systemic racism." The commission was established following raucous years of righteous advocacy and organizing by the African Canadian community, most notably the vocal and fearless Black Action Defence Committee (BADC).

At that time, BADC was aggressively and publicly challenging anti-Black police brutality and other forms of racism in policing and within other Canadian institutions. The group is commonly remembered for leading a large, peaceful protest in May 1992 to condemn police killings of Black civilians. That action would erupt into what is remembered today as the Yonge Street Riot—an uprising of frustrated, mostly young civilians who had had enough of living on the edges of socioeconomic disenfranchisement.

After windows were broken and fires set to businesses and police vehicles along Yonge Street, the protestors were set on by mounted police and highly armoured tactical units. Premier Rae responded to the uprising by promptly tasking Stephen Lewis to investigate its underlying causes. Lewis would report a month later that the unrest was due in large part to Black Ontarians being fed up with widespread, systemic anti-Black bias in policing, employment, housing and education. He recommended an inquiry (the CSROCJS), which, in December 1995, would call for urgent and significant law and policy reform.

The June 1992 Lewis report had also recommended bolstering the province's antiracism efforts by strengthening the Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat, which the NDP had established in 1991. Lewis specifically called to increase the secretariat's funding, hire more staff and undertake a comprehensive effort to collaborate with community groups to raise Ontarians' collective consciousness about racism and their capacity to recognize and constructively address it. The Rae government accepted this recommendation, expanding the budget, staff complement and activities of the secretariat.

By 1995, Mike Harris's Common Sense Revolution was vociferously attacking each of these racially progressive policy initiatives in their campaign against the NDP government. The employment equity measures were misrepresented by the PC party as creating a hiring quota system that prioritized non-white applicants irrespective of their qualifications.

Soon after Harris took power, the Employment Equity Act was repealed and its associated commission disbanded. The Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat swiftly and unceremoniously suffered the same fate, and the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System, which completed its seminal and still yet-to-be replicated report less than six months after Harris took office, was discarded into the dustbin of history.

### **Harris foreshadowing Ford?**

The Liberal government, under Dalton McGuinty and now Kathleen Wynne, has avoided calls to reinstate the CSROCJS even as the conditions that led to its creation can be said to have resurfaced. Yesterday's BADC is today's

**We should keep an eye out for politicians looking to channel the Common Sense Revolution's success in discrediting racial justice policy initiatives as examples of Liberal largesse, wasteful spending and political correctness run amok.**

Black Lives Matter (BLM), whose strategic organizing and advocacy prompted the Ontario government, in 2016, to appoint Justice Michael Tulloch, of the Ontario Court of Appeal, to conduct an unprecedented review of police oversight in Ontario. The process culminated in a March 2017 report in which Tulloch credits BLM for pushing the Ontario government to act, and which makes several recommendations that would lead to the introduction of the Safer Ontario Act, 2018.

The new act, voted into law on March 8 this year, provides the first major update to policing and police accountability legislation in the province since the NDP passed the Police Services Act in 1990. The new act gives chiefs of police broader powers to suspend officers without pay, and requires that all reports of the Special Investigations Unit (SIU), which determines whether to lay charges against officers in cases of alleged serious injury or sexual assault against a civilian, be made public.

The secrecy of SIU reports became a major flashpoint of debate following the killing of Andrew Loku by Toronto Police in July 2015. The new act also strengthens the requirements to notify the SIU when an officer (even when off duty) has seriously injured a civilian—a reform that was almost certainly inspired by the alleged assault of then 19-year-old Dafonte Miller by off-duty Toronto police officer Michael Theriault and his brother. That case is now before the court.

These changes are not without controversy, and politically powerful police associations have expressed considerable opposition to some of the new measures. For instance, Bruce Chapman, president of Ontario's police association, told a provincial standing committee studying the legislation: "I trust my fellow officers, and I know that we welcome the opportunity to build public trust and accountability in law enforcement. But changes must be reasonable. The government is hurting our ability to keep Ontario safe by handcuffing police while we should be handcuffing criminals."

Finally, in 2016, the Liberal government also somewhat tepidly introduced an Anti-Racism Directorate, an Anti-Racism Act and a three-year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan. While these initiatives have not been as fiercely critiqued as the other two racial justice policy actions, conservative politicians and right-wing media nationally are once more denying the existence and/or perniciousness of racism.

This resurgent wave of colour-blindness crusaders is energized by the Trudeau government's recently announced plans to engage in national consultations on the experiences and impacts of racism in Canada. The *Globe and Mail's* parliamentary bureau chief Bob Fife, along with national columnists John Ibbitson, Rex Murphy and Margaret Wente, and Conservative MP Maxime Bernier, have all dismissed the need and relevance of these national consultations.

Though Ford, in his early campaigning before the *Monitor* went to print, had yet to wade too far into these issues, we should keep an eye on PCs looking to channel the Common Sense Revolution's success in discrediting

## Ford can be considered a redux of Harris, his modern populist posturing masking a farcical commitment to now old-fashioned neoliberal policy priorities.

such racial justice policy initiatives as examples of Liberal largesse, wasteful spending and political correctness run amok—alleged distractions as the average (read: white) Ontarian struggles to make ends meet.

### The rise of white rage

Ontario voters need to be honest with themselves. Though it is thus far unspoken, there is an ever-present link connecting Harris's "common sense" revolution with Ford's "common man" revolution. That link is "white rage."

The term was coined by Carol Anderson, a professor of African studies at Emory University, who defines "white rage" (in her book of the same title) as a form of resentment-fueled social, political and legal backlash against actual and perceived advances made by racialized citizens through racial justice law and policy reforms. White rage, she explains, is not characterized by overt expressions of racial violence or animus by right-wing political leaders, media and/or their supporters. It's more subtle and discrete.

"White rage is not about visible violence, but rather it works its way through the courts, the legislatures and a range of government bureaucracies," Anderson writes in her book. "It wreaks havoc subtly, almost imperceptibly.... It's not the Klan. White rage doesn't have to wear sheets, burn crosses, or take to the streets. Working the halls of power, it can achieve its ends far more effectively, far more destructively."

It may be difficult to recall now, but Harris was never explicitly or overtly racist in his targeting of the racial justice initiatives of his era. A generation later, we should expect Ford, and other politicians, to be even more sophisticated than Harris was in the use of coded-language and dog-whistle political campaigning aimed at justifying the rollback of hard-fought-for racial justice initiatives before they can have a chance to deepen diversity and increase racial equity in this province.

The very term "white rage" admittedly sounds like alarmist hyperbole. However, when we allowed it to be called "common sense," Ontarians paid a tragic cost. We cannot let this history repeat itself, as tragedy or farce, through our own self-deception. **M**



# Workers, wages and the Ontario election

Hard-won improvements to labour law can be rolled back. Our job, before and after the vote, is to make sure they are expanded — no matter who forms the next government.

**W**orkers won substantial improvements in 2017 to the laws that govern Ontario workplaces. Outside the province, the \$14 minimum wage (rising to \$15 in January 2019) likely garnered the most attention. But it was just a piece, albeit an important one, of a legislative reform package that will make a big difference to the lives of millions of people in Canada's most populous province.

What exactly did Ontario workers gain under the government's Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act (Bill 148). Well, for a start:

- ▶ 10 days of job-protected emergency leave was extended to an extra 1.7 million workers in small workplaces. And for all workers, the first two emergency leave days are paid (a first for Canada).
- ▶ Workers with more than five years of service with an employer are guaranteed an extra week of paid vacation (up to three weeks from two).
- ▶ People performing similar work, whether they are employed full time, part time or as casuals, must be paid the same — a big win for women and workers of colour, who are overrepresented in non-full-time positions. The law also applies to temp agency workers, who must also be paid the same as workers hired directly by the client company.
- ▶ A fairer calculation of public holiday pay for part-time workers.
- ▶ Measures that will make it easier for workers to join unions, including the extension of card check and successor rights in the building services sector (e.g., for unionized security guards or

cleaners, who frequently lose their jobs when a new service provider takes over a building contract).

- ▶ A new financial penalty for employers who keep workers on call all day without guaranteeing them a shift. By this time next year, these workers, and anyone whose shift is cancelled with less than two days' notice, will be entitled to a minimum of three hours' pay. Furthermore, workers who aren't given four days' notice of their next shift will have the right to refuse it without reprisals.

In addition to these changes in Bill 148, which received royal assent in November, the Ontario government announced this winter that it was enacting labour legislation to hold companies accountable for workplace injuries suffered by temp agency hires. Under current Ontario law, temp agencies absorb the costs of these injuries, including increased Workers' Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) premiums, which creates a financial incentive for companies to hire from temp agencies and to assign those workers the most dangerous jobs.

Because these workers are already treated as temporary and disposable, there's no incentive for the client company to properly train them. This helps explain why the injury rates of temp agency workers are notoriously high, and why companies are so keen to outsource rather than put people on the payroll. Our victory in making the client company responsible for workplace injuries takes away another key incentive for companies to use temp agencies.

Unfortunately, the existence of this new labour legislation does not mean we can sit back and relax. We

haven't actually won \$15 and fairness (the name of our campaign), at least not yet. The \$15 landmark, alongside a number of other crucial provisions in Bill 148, won't come into place until 2019 — many months after the late spring election. As we know from Ontario's past experience, legislation can be repealed just as easily as it is created.

## Business and political backlash

One big reason to stay vigilant is that Ontario businesses have expressed varying degrees of opposition to these modest concessions to workers. Although the \$15 minimum wage tends to get the most flack in the mainstream media, a very different story is being told in the back pages of the business press, on the Ontario Chamber Commerce and Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses websites, and in articles published by employer-side law firms.

Most of this lower-profile analysis admits the minimum wage is not the key factor in business objections to the reforms. It's the subsequent wage increases, the ones other employees who already earn \$14 or \$15 an hour will be demanding, that worry them. The big business lobbyists are also against the new public holiday pay provision that ensures part-time workers are compensated properly for statutory holidays. And they particularly oppose the legislation's equal pay provisions, which make it easier for workers to join unions, as well as the scheduling rules listed above.

In a May 2017 opinion piece published in the *Toronto Sun*, lawyer Sunira Chaudhri proclaimed that, with Bill 148, Premier Wynne had



“effectively unionized Ontario,” equipped the Ministry of Labour with a “sharper set of teeth to sink into offending employers” who violate the law, and forced a redistribution of financial resources from the top of the salary grid to the bottom. We can debate the veracity of these assertions, but there’s no doubt that corporate Ontario is mad as hell.

In his Progressive Conservative (PC) leadership bid, the former Toronto city councillor Doug Ford, brother of deceased former mayor Rob Ford, made it absolutely clear he opposes a \$15 minimum wage, and that he puts business considerations above the well-being of workers. “The market should dictate,” he’s fond of saying when asked about any number of issues.

Unlike his predecessor, Patrick Brown, who was not confident enough to directly attack calls for \$15 and fairness (“it’s not the \$15, it’s the phase-in”), Ford is now promising to leave the minimum wage at \$14, cancelling the January 1, 2019 hike. He opposes any measure that cuts into the profit margins of business and he opposes union rights.

A PC government could easily reopen and repeal Bill 148—and roll back workers’ wages even further. We should remember that Ford’s father (Doug Ford, Sr.) was the Member of Provincial Parliament for Etobicoke-Humber during the Mike Harris regime (1995–2002). One of the first things that government did was roll back progressive labour laws implemented by the Ontario NDP, and they didn’t stop there. The Harris government rolled back employment standards, attacked unions, slashed social spending, eliminated rent control and imposed lethal cuts to social assistance rates (the nearly 25% rate cut has still not been fully restored).

There is a different mood in Ontario today than back in ’95. Thanks to grassroots organizing, people are feeling more confident to demand better work, which is why the Wynne government’s new labour laws are popular. It also explains why the Liberals are campaigning so hard on the \$15 minimum wage and taking up the mantle of fairness at work. But it’s not a given that support for these changes will translate into another Liberal government mandate.

After 14 years in office, there is legitimate anger at the way the government privatized hydro, underfunded social programs and botched its green energy plan by delivering it privately rather than publicly. Just last fall, the government legislated back to work 12,000 college faculty who were striking for equal pay between part-time and full-time college teachers (see page 35).

At the same time, the spontaneous explosion of solidarity for Tim Hortons workers, in Ontario and across the country, after some franchises clawed back benefits in response to Bill 148, is a testament to the anger with corporate Canada that exists just below the surface among millions of ordinary people. It seems clear, from interactions the \$15-and-fairness campaign has had with people over the past years, that a big vision for stronger laws, especially motivated in response to Tim Hortons, would be extremely popular.

## Electoral battleground

So, which provincial party will best capitalize on this moment by offering a vision that gives expression to a growing anti-corporate sentiment? The answer to this question lies with us.

That any labour law improvements made their way into law in the first place is thanks to workers who fought for them in every corner of the province. Workers identified their own agenda and stuck to it, even when pundits said we should stop it or drop it. Our movement has engaged in literally hundreds of thousands of conversations—in houses of worship, on campuses, in our communities and in our workplaces. Together we have built each other’s confidence to fight, to challenge the corporate fearmongering and to expose the big business agenda that would rather fix the price of bread and keep wages at sub-poverty levels than share their vast wealth with the rest of us.

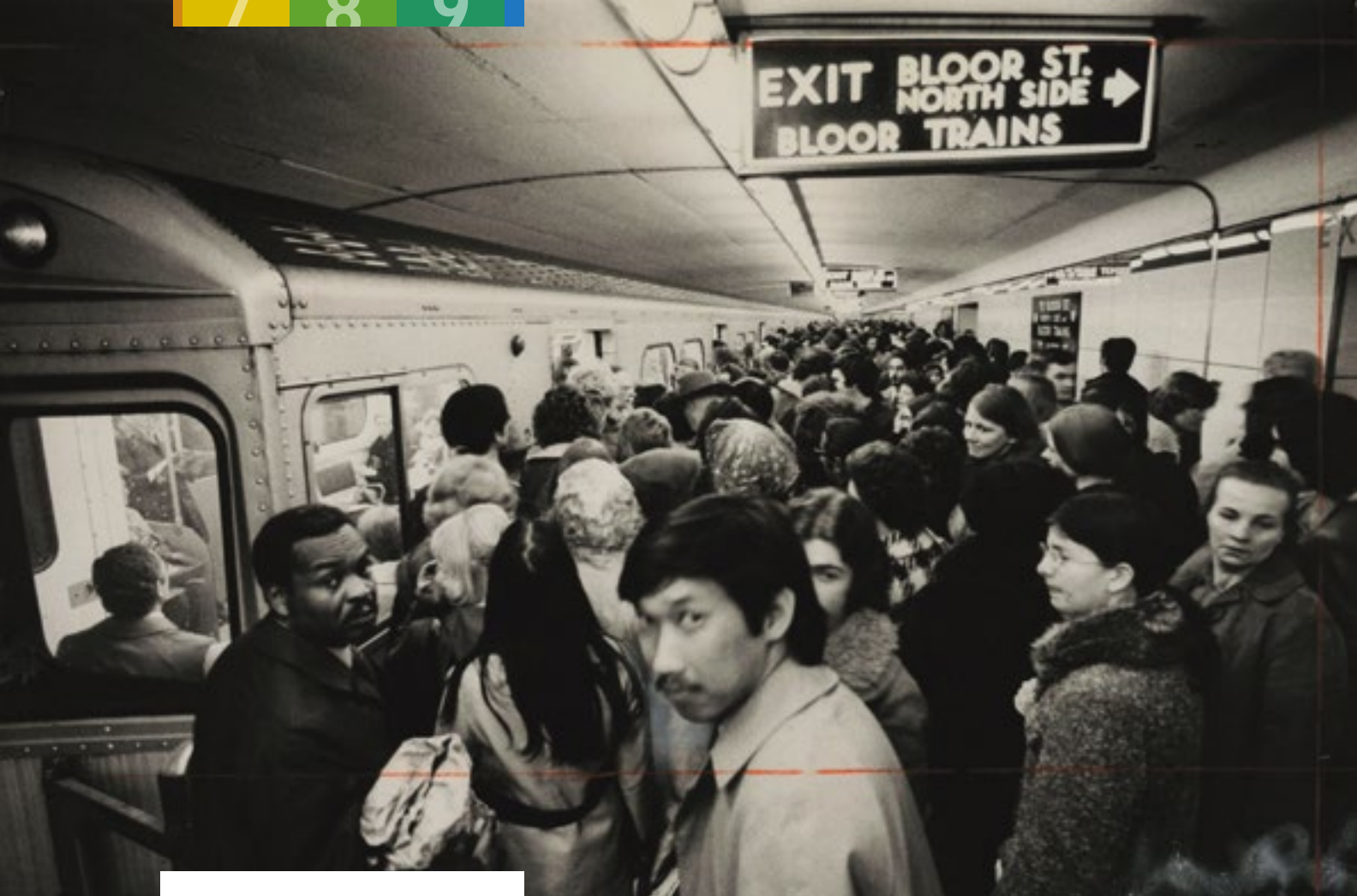
With an Ontario election just weeks away, more workers than ever will be paying attention to politics. Now is precisely the right time to demand the boldest possible vision for decent work, and to organize to see it through. In doing so, we not only build the confidence of workers to demand more of their politicians, we also build the confidence of candidates running in the June election to think big. Elections that are not driven by movements from below rarely deliver the goods we want.

It won’t be enough to defend what is already on the table. Using momentum from legislative wins to date, workers must be calling for more: better enforcement of labour laws; at least seven (not just two) paid emergency leave days; an end to exemptions that leave too many workers without basic employment standards; more protections for migrant workers; greater regulation of temp agencies; just-cause protection for workers when they demand their rights under the law; the right of all workers to join unions without employer intimidation; broader-based collective bargaining so that workers can organize across sectors and across franchises like Tim Hortons.

And that’s just a start. Winning these kinds of legislative changes could give workers more power at work and even greater confidence to fight on every front, inside and outside the workplace.

In this context, we write off Doug Ford at our own peril. We simply cannot allow him to masquerade as a defender of the “little guy” when the PC party under his leadership is driving an agenda that will make life worse for those it purports to protect. At the same time, we have to acknowledge why people may be drawn to Ford—we must recognize the kernel of truth that makes his populism attractive to some voters—so that we can focus legitimate anger in a constructive direction.

In the end, if we agree that successful electoral outcomes are a byproduct of effective movement-building, then one thing is absolutely clear: we need to use the days and weeks ahead to build a movement so powerful that no matter who forms the next government they will be too afraid to attack our gains, and have no option but to deliver more. **M**



MATT ELLIOTT

## Next stop, a subway that works

The provincial election is an opportunity to move away from slogan-based transit planning

**In March** 2012, the late Rob Ford, then mayor of Toronto, stood up at a city council meeting and repeated a word three times. “The people of this city have spoken loud and clear,” Ford said. “They want subways, folks. They want subways, subways, subways.”

Ford couldn't have known it at the time, but his folksy refrain would ignite a long, complex and truly ridiculous saga putting billions of dollars on the line. It's a story with multiple twists and turns, of plans cancelled, then revived, then changed, then changed again, and again, and again. It's a saga that continues to this day.

Though Ford's personal role in this story never went much further than

the 2012 soundbite, the mayor's populist demand for “subways, subways, subways” eventually won support and funding commitments—from all three levels of government—for a Toronto subway link to Scarborough. In the years since, however, the project has become one of the most divisive and heated issues in Toronto politics.

The subway saga is poised to play a not insignificant role in the Ontario election, which is a good thing. Major parties hoping to control Queen's Park

Rush hour at Yonge and Bloor has been rough for some time now

PHOTO BY TIBOR KOLLEY/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

owe it to voters to declare whether they support (politically and financially) the Scarborough subway plan on the books, and how that support fits within their larger transportation plans for the Toronto region.

### The Scarborough subway

First, let's back up. Though recent debates about the Scarborough subway often focus on arcane technicalities and funding disputes, the extension itself is relatively simple.

The existing Scarborough RT transit line, opened in 1985, is in bad shape and requires major refurbishment. Proof that ill-advised Toronto transit

decisions are not a new thing, the RT was built using an untested, provincially developed technology whose success in the field was supposed to attract interest—and buyers—from transit systems all over the world. It didn't work out quite like that.

The RT had trouble in the snow—kind of a problem in Toronto—and few other cities showed interest in the technology, which was bought by Bombardier in a series of hasty deals. Government attempts to work with the company on upgrades to refurbish the RT proved costly and challenging (sound familiar?). And so, in 2006, the Toronto Transit Commission started looking at options for wholesale replacement.

Initially, officials zeroed in on a light rail option, part of a region-wide LRT plan backed by former Toronto mayor David Miller called Transit City. The Scarborough LRT would have followed the existing RT route but with a new northerly extension. The plan was approved and later packaged into a master agreement with the provincial government. As part of the deal, the province agreed to pay all capital costs associated with the project.

Here's where Rob Ford comes in. The populist's startling 2010 election win, and his rabble-rousing on subways two years later, sparked a new idea that found majority support on city council and among Liberal legislators (MPPs) looking ahead to a 2013 byelection in Scarborough: what about just building a subway instead?

Extending the Bloor-Danforth subway line into Scarborough would achieve two things. First, because it would have to be built along a new route, the subway option would allow the RT to continue operating during construction, which wouldn't be possible with the LRT. Second, it would be a *subway, subway, subway*, and people like those.

Switching from LRT to a subway would cost Toronto about \$75 million in sunk costs (to be paid back to the province) and required the city to commit to covering all cost overruns and assuming full responsibility for maintenance. But hey, the result would be a *subway*. Moving things further along, the Harper government of the day agreed to kick in \$660 million.

In the initial proposal, the subway extension was to have three stops. But that plan was approved with only the barest of cost estimates. As the cost climbed, Mayor John Tory whittled the subway down to a so-called express plan, with six kilometres of track and one station located at the Scarborough Town Centre shopping mall.

That's where the plan remains today. The cost? Well, it depends who you ask. City staff say somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$3.35 billion—a whole lot more than the LRT, which was originally pegged at just under \$1.5 billion—but with a boatload of caveats, since the estimate was made before any design work had been completed. A revised estimate is due out in 2019. All bets are that it will be higher.

The opening date for the subway is very tentatively set for 2026. But given the roller-coaster-ride history of this project, the odds of that happening, without further changes, are not very good. And this year's provincial election will surely be a factor in the project's future.

So, where do the various parties stand? Let's dig in.

### Ontario Liberal Party

Even with Ford's enthusiasm, and a majority of Toronto city councillors in favour of the subway option, it would not have become a reality without the sudden and enthusiastic support of the Ontario Liberals.

The Scarborough-Guildwood byelection in 2013 saw the party unceremoniously ditch its previous support for the LRT plan and go all-in on subways. Mitzie Hunter, the Liberal candidate in that election, and Glen Murray, then transportation minister, dubbed themselves "Subway Champions," while Premier Kathleen Wynne also expressed her support. It worked. Hunter took the day.

Liberal support for the subway also came with another benefit. Whereas under the LRT plan the province committed to paying all costs, the provincial contribution to the subway was capped at about \$1.5 billion (in 2010 dollars), with no future obligation to pay any maintenance or operating costs.

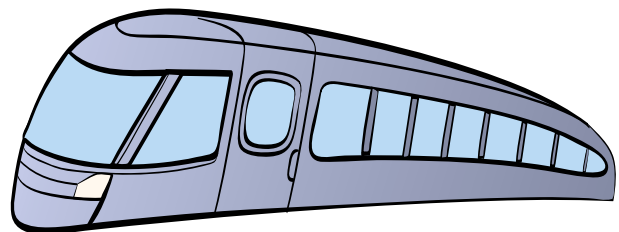
From a purely political perspective, the Liberals' Scarborough subway gambit was a win all around. The party has since shown no sign of changing course, even as the city struggles with mounting subway costs. "I have always deferred to city council in terms of plans," Wynne told reporters in 2016.

### Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario

In a bid to demonstrate that Progressive Conservatives are even bigger subway champions than the governing Liberals, short-lived party leader Patrick Brown promised not just to support the Scarborough line, but to pay for the whole darn thing, Toronto's share and all.

This was music to the ears of Mayor Tory and many councillors who believe costs will continue to mount. But it comes with a catch: the PC platform also calls for Queen's Park to take ownership of all TTC subway tracks, tunnels and stations, and assume responsibility for planning and building new subway lines. (Wynne's Liberals have also floated a version of this idea, pledging to study it should they win re-election.)

That would be a big shift for Toronto, cutting the mayor and councillors out of the planning process for subways





while leaving the city on the hook for costly bus and streetcar routes.

New PC leader Doug Ford further muddies the waters. The former Toronto councillor, and brother of the mayor who helped launch this saga, has lately described transit as his “speciality” while promising to double-down on the kind of transit politics that led to the Scarborough Subway in the first place.

Talking to reporters on March 28, Ford promised to add back the two stops eliminated from the Scarborough plan and extend the subway further to connect to the existing rail line on Sheppard Avenue. It’s unclear exactly how much this would cost, or who would pay for it, or how many would ride this new transit infrastructure.

### The Ontario NDP

Despite running Adam Giambrone—the former TTC chair who was instrumental in developing the LRT plan—in the Scarborough-Guildwood byelection in 2013, the Ontario NDP also jumped on board the Scarborough subway support train. In fact, NDP candidates in Scarborough have consistently boosted the project, and party leader Andrea Horwath has not called for modifications let alone cancellation.

There are some signs the NDP view may be shifting. Felicia Samuel, who is set to run for the party this year in the riding of Scarborough-Rouge River, signed her name to a TTC Riders petition formally asking the Liberals to conduct a study comparing the LRT with the subway.

And the NDP’s new platform omits any mention of the Scarborough subway, focusing instead on the much-needed relief line subway through downtown Toronto. The platform also admonishes Wynne for “ripping up Toronto’s

ambitious Transit City plan”—a plan that included the Scarborough LRT instead of the subway.

### Evidence-based transit planning

It’s not like better transit strategies don’t already exist. The relief line plugged in the NDP platform, a subway project first proposed more than a century ago, would run through the east side of downtown Toronto, providing an alternate route to the core. Former TTC CEO Andy Byford called it his top priority, claiming it’s the only project that would relieve the constant—and often dangerous—overcrowding on the Yonge Street subway line.

Despite a clear need for the line in Toronto, the project hasn’t found enough champions. To date, the provincial and federal governments have committed only to paying for preliminary planning costs, but it’s been a challenge to find politicians willing to commit to covering a real share of the approximately \$7 billion needed to build the line.

Making that pledge, as the NDP do in their election platform, makes a statement. Even better would be for a provincial party to spend the campaign period establishing its commitment to transit planning based not on political considerations but on evidence, including ridership data, which strongly supports the relief line. That kind of commitment would include taking a fresh look at the merits of the Scarborough subway relative to the LRT plan.

Mostly, though, it would mean finally moving on from the transit populism of the Rob Ford era. Evidence-based transit planning may not be as smooth a slogan as *subways, subways, subways*, but it would be better at moving people around a busy and growing city. **M**

## Boost the impact of your monthly CCPA donation just by switching from credit card to direct debit!

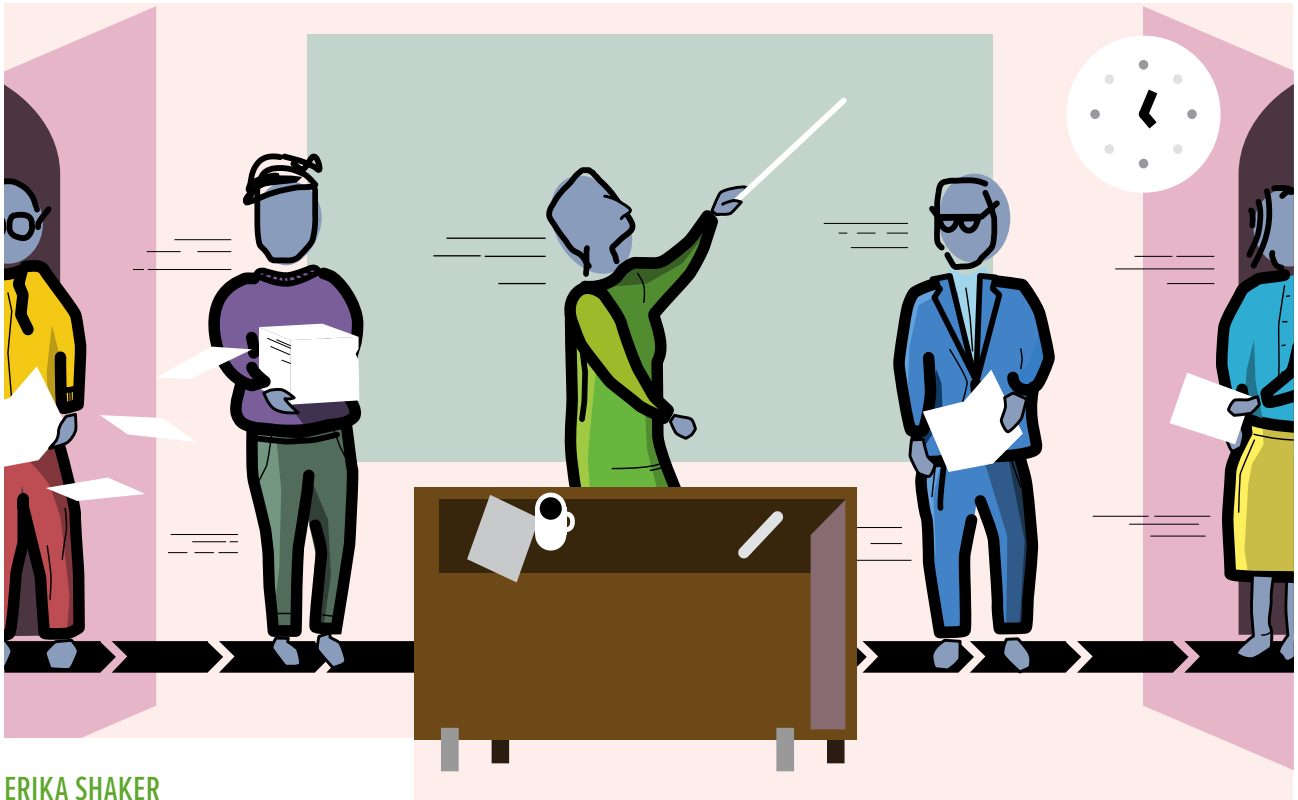
Switching to direct debit contributions from your bank account can save up to 6% in processing fees every month. That means more of your contribution will be put to work funding research that promotes equality and social justice.

**It’s easy. Just send us a quick note with your phone number and a void cheque.**

Send mail to 500-251 Bank St, Ottawa, ON K2P 1X3. For more information, contact Jennie at 1-613-563-1341 ext. 305 or [jennie@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:jennie@policyalternatives.ca).

**YOUR  
DONATION  
CAN GO  
FURTHER**





ERIKA SHAKER

## Lessons in precarity

New research is uncovering what it means to work insecurely in today's economy — and how a corporate just-in-time mentality at Ontario campuses is transforming education.

**W**hen Ontario college faculty went on an unprecedented strike last fall, the central issues were academic freedom and working conditions, specifically the rise of precarious work. At least 70% of college faculty are contract employees (partial load, sessional or part time), earning significantly less than their full-time colleagues for virtually identical work. Many work limited hours, with no job security, and are required to reapply for contracts every four months.

A key demand from the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) in bargaining with the colleges was a 50:50 split between full- and part-time faculty to ensure more educational stability for students and more employment security for workers. The College Employer Council (CEC)

countered that creating 2,840 new full-time jobs would result in the loss of 7,120 contract positions. They didn't mention these contracts can involve working only a few hours a week — not so much a job as a fishing expedition for bite-sized units of work that need to get done by someone, anyone.

This fragmentation of work, the cobbling together of multiple short contracts to make ends meet, is the logical extension of a just-in-time mentality that is now being applied in Ontario colleges and universities. Workers in this system are without inherent value other than their ability to perform a task in the immediate and to disappear when it's finished. Though quality of work necessarily suffers from such impermanence, employers are freed of their responsibility to provide professional development

and other benefits to their workforce. It is up to the workers themselves to acquire or update the skills necessary for the next required task, and then hopefully be selected to perform it.

Fragmentation of the workforce and workday is one of the defining features of precarity today. Groundbreaking research by PEPSCO (Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario) indicates that half of workers in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area are in work considered to be precarious. The nuanced implications of this shift in employment trends have also been addressed by the Law Commission of Ontario, which looks at precarity in the context of "vulnerability," and how extenuating socioeconomic circumstances (including implicit bias) make one worker more susceptible to living precariously than another.

Recently, precarity has been discussed as part of the consultations on Bill 148, the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, which is designed to address the changing nature of work. The legislation fills a lot of gaps in Ontario's workplace protections. Unfortunately, it does not address the practice of continuously extending fixed-term contracts without any guarantee of being made permanent—a common practice on university and college campuses. As such, even after the striking teachers' collective agreement is updated to reflect Bill 148, Ontario colleges will be able to continue leaning heavily on contract work, which by some estimates "saves" them as much as \$300 million a year in labour costs.

In a new CCPA research paper, *No Temporary Solution: Ontario's Shifting College and University Workforce*, Robin Shaban and I record a shift from permanent to temporary work, more unpaid work, and workers performing multiple jobs in Ontario's post-secondary institutions, though the shift is uneven and not experienced by everyone. We also note that these indicators of precarity are frequently stacked: if a worker is precariously employed, they are more likely to work unpaid overtime or to have multiple jobs.

Specifically, Robin and I identify a proportionate rise in work categories that are more precarious by design (research and teaching assistants) alongside a decline in those that traditionally have been less precarious (librarians). There has also been an increase in precarious work within certain job categories, resulting in an increase in the proportion of temporary workers in student services and plant operations, administration and college academic staff. We further identify a slight yet steady decline in the proportion of full-time university instructors and college academic staff.

To put faces to these numbers, we gathered testimony from workers on more than a dozen campuses who live with the personal and professional fallout from this work model. Faculty are given little notice of work or course cancellations, a few of them said. Timelines shift annually, "because our administration does not consider the preparation of the timetable and the posting of work a priority," according to one Brescia College employee. Further, instructors frequently must apply each year to teach their courses, with no consideration for seniority.

Where once contract faculty would have uniformly been paid by the hour, today some colleges pay per student, which

can result in extremely low levels of compensation. Collegiality and relationship development has been affected by these shifts, particularly for those contracted to do online work, who have little connection to the campus and must develop their coursework on their own time, according to a Georgian College worker.

"Some contract faculty have used the food bank, got second jobs cleaning houses. Quit after two weeks," said another employee from Fleming College. "Lack of access to faculty after class as they go to a second job or are not provided with an office. Accept lesser contracts as they are precarious. Accept multiple contracts. Full-time work is being broken down into contracts."

The second issue prioritized by college faculty during the strike was academic freedom, which their chief negotiator J.P. Hornick described as a question of "who should make decisions in a classroom, the professor or the administrator."

The union argued that choices about course content, textbooks and materials for in-class use, as well as the determination of whether assignments had been completed and who should pass or fail, must remain the purview of the people doing the teaching. This was a no-cost demand but still a sticking point for management, which preferred the term "academic control" (theirs) to "academic freedom" (the faculty's). The distinction underscores how power dynamics and professional recognition in the workplace fed into the work stoppage last year.

Academic freedom is predicated on faculty having specialized knowledge in their field, awareness of relevant content or how context may have changed, and the ability to set assignments and allocate grades based on professional expertise. It is rooted in a more complex, nuanced, iterative approach to education that sees the profession as much more than a collection of detached inputs and outputs, but as a specialized calling that should be appropriately compensated.

In the precarity model, knowledge production, discussion and dissemination are disentangled by management into a series of simpler tasks for faculty to perform, much like how a computer might disaggregate data to complete a function. These teaching tasks are cheaper to the college or university than full-time instructors, and carried out mainly to satisfy the expectations of paying consumer-students.

This model has direct implications for quality of education. For example, many of the workers surveyed for our report spoke of the inability of students to access contract faculty outside of regular scheduled classroom hours. Others suggested it was more difficult for precariously employed faculty to push back against management's demands to change ("inflate") grades. Furthermore, a number of survey respondents said quality of education has no relevance in the new management style, at least in part because decisions were being made by those with little or no background in the subject being taught.

When employers redefine jobs as a series of fragmented or potentially unconnected tasks whose permanence is not guaranteed, it makes work itself, as well as the lives of workers, more precarious. One respondent from Georgian College

**Workers in this system are without inherent value other than their ability to perform a task in the immediate and to disappear when it's finished.**

described how faculty work had been shifted to technicians (for half the pay), but the faculty themselves were so short of money they were scooping up the technical roles:

*I could give you countless stories of our part-time faculty who live with serious stress not knowing if they have work [from] semester to semester. Some are individuals who have spent in excess of \$80,000 to earn their credentials only to be part-time faculty for 10 years and more. Often they must work at several institutions and their vehicles become their offices. Of course the quality of education suffers when the faculty are stressed and do not feel supported or valued or a real part of the team. They are also unable to fully develop themselves as faculty through their own professional development and research because they cannot afford the time.*

Of course, universities and colleges are not just places of work—they are places of learning, too. But as we know, teaching/working conditions and learning conditions are inextricably linked. Does this more precarious, fragmented work model have implications for student learning inside and outside the classroom?

There is significant research suggesting that when faculty are less available to students, or when academic freedom is threatened, or when faculty do not have access to formal or informal departmental support, the quality of their work, and of the education students receive, suffers. A Durham College employee who responded to our survey pointed out how difficult it is to ensure consistent educational quality when “the faculty who are precariously employed are exhausted and usually are running [back and forth between] at least two other college campuses to teach in order to earn a living wage.”

I'm not the first to point out the irony in precariously employed faculty teaching students who will graduate, in debt, to find mainly precarious forms of employment in today's “job-churn” reality (Finance Minister Bill Morneau's term). Writing in the *Globe and Mail* earlier this year, McGill University Principal and Vice-Chancellor Suzanne Fortier argued that higher education should in fact reflect and accommodate this precarious work model: “a learning environment that responds to the needs and constraints of workers,” was how she put it.

Fortier's description of this learning model is eerily similar to how business leaders are spinning the future of work—not so much precarious as flexible and self-directed, even liberating:

*Ultimately, it will be individuals who need to take control of their own educations in order to shape their career paths and discover new horizons of learning. We are already seeing this “take charge” mindset among students on campuses across Canada. They are involved in research and innovation activities, thus not only feeding their own insatiable curiosity, but developing skills and leadership capacity. They are choosing to take a course or two online in order to free up their schedules so that they can participate in an experiential or action-based learning opportunity, thus seeing how they can apply their knowledge and skills in the workplace.*

## Course correction needed for Ontario education

Twenty years ago, the Mike Harris Progressive Conservative government changed how education was funded in the province. By design, his funding formula was intended to squeeze the education system financially and centralize control at the provincial level, pitting the needs of students and demand for school infrastructure upgrades against fair compensation for teachers and the power of local school boards. There was hope for change when the Liberals took power in 2004, led by Dalton McGuinty, the “Education Premier.” But Harris's core funding formula still exists mostly intact today.

A new report for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives by Hugh Mackenzie, *Course Correction*, maps out a blueprint for change based on four principles: inclusive, customized funding; increased investment and accountability in special education and second-language training; valuing schools as community anchors; and valuing the educators in public schools. “Until we fix the way Ontario funds public education, chronic problems such as aging schools, portables, and avoidable school closures will keep rearing their ugly head,” says Erika Shaker, who directs the CCPA's education research.

It's a modular (Fortier's word) do-it-yourself vision of education, where a degree is reconfigured as a series of student-driven learning and skill acquisition opportunities to satisfy individual “curiosity,” but also to respond to rapidly changing career path requirements or—let's be honest—employer demands. The job market is unpredictable, in other words. Education needs to be freed from its traditional confines to keep up and to allow students to unleash their inner CEO.

In effect, this view of education is a direct application or reflection of how precarity has reconfigured work, whatever the sector, into a series of modular tasks. Workers are expected to sink or swim depending on their ability to adapt and exhibit a “take charge” mindset (also known as can-do-ism) that doesn't need the cushion of steady, predictable hours, benefits or adequate compensation—the things that allow for a decent standard of living and work-life balance.

The cure for precarity is, apparently, to create more precarity. To be grateful for it. To hug it tighter. Last fall, Ontario college teachers fought to change this script, not just for education workers but potentially for everyone. The arbitration award underscored many of the principles OPSEU members were striking for, and resulted in a provincewide task force to address precarious work, student success and mental health. The provincial government has been put on notice that “job churn” should be considered less an inevitability than a deliberate decision to undermine workplace and community stability and sustainability. **M**

# Power to the people

Privatization and electioneering have made electricity prices unbearable in Ontario.

**E**nergy. It is the perennial election issue in Ontario, and for good reasons. A series of provincial decisions spanning decades has led to long-term structural problems in the electricity sector. As a result, since 2010, electricity prices have risen dramatically. Predictably, so has inequality and energy poverty.

Successive governments have tackled the problem of high electricity prices with short-term schemes designed to win elections. The latest such scheme, the Wynne government's so-called Fair Hydro Plan, will lower electricity prices in the near term but eventually saddle ratepayers with steep repayment obligations and even higher utility bills in the future.

There is a way out of this quagmire, but only if we are honest about the province's past mistakes, in particular Ontario's overreliance on the private sector.

## Rising prices and electricity poverty

As shown in Figure 1, Ontario's retail electricity prices more than doubled from 2001 to 2016 (almost three times as much as in the rest of Canada) and increased 7% a year between 2010 and 2016. The unprecedented and prolonged price hike has been felt throughout the province, but the additional burden has hit lower-income households very hard.

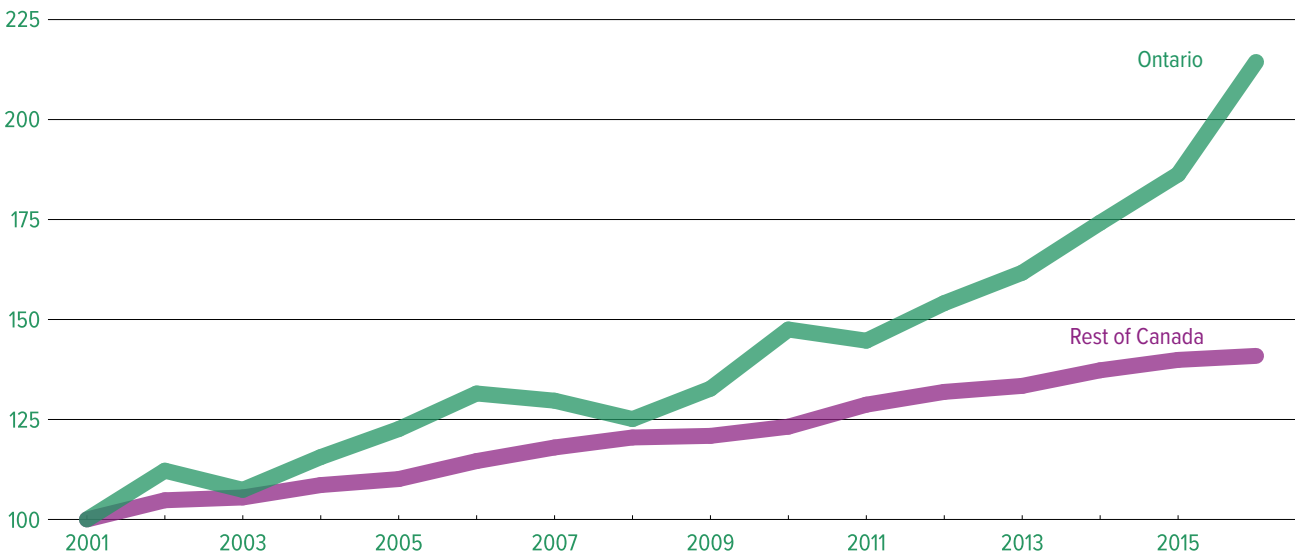
For households that pay their hydro bills directly, Figure 2 shows that the bottom 20% of Ontario households by income paid about \$1,600 in electricity bills in 2016, accounting for about 7.6% of their income. In contrast, low income households in the rest of Canada pay about \$1,100 per year. (On average, Ontario households pay 2% of their income on electricity.) As lower-income families devote a growing portion of already inadequate incomes

to electricity bills, electricity poverty increases.

Like many other provinces, Ontario used to have an integrated public utility monopoly providing electricity generation, transmission and distribution to consumers. In 1999, a few months before that year's provincial election, the Progressive Conservative (PC) government of Mike Harris split the public utility, then called Ontario Hydro, into Hydro One (transmission and distribution in rural areas), Ontario Power Generation (OPG) and several other entities, all with a view to enabling competition and privatization in a new electricity market. (Legislation to decommission the monopoly had been passed the previous year.)

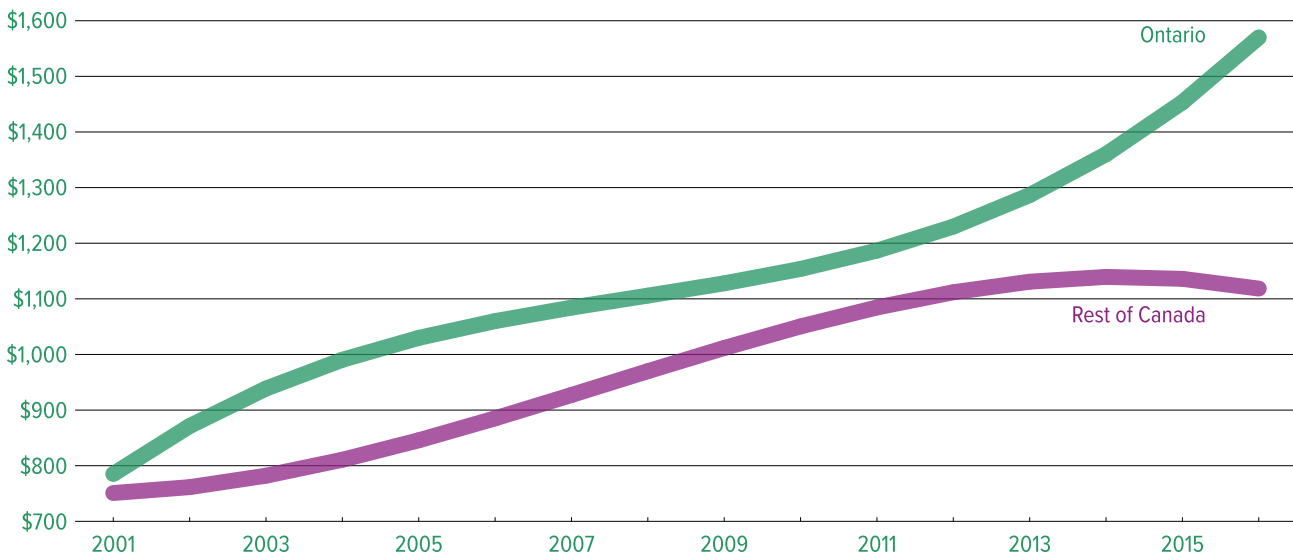
The PCs claimed that government "interference" was to blame for Ontario Hydro's lacklustre performance and high debt. To kick-start the new market, the province mandated that

**FIGURE 1** ELECTRICITY PRICES (ELECTRICITY CPIs, 2001=100)





**FIGURE 2** LOW-INCOME (FIRST QUINTILE) HOUSEHOLD ANNUAL ELECTRICITY EXPENDITURES, TRENDS



OPG reduce its dominant market share in generation, including by “de-controlling” a portion of its assets. OPG did this by entering into a long-term lease arrangement (a public-private partnership where the province maintains ownership but the assets are privately managed) for nuclear power generation in the Bruce Peninsula with what is now Bruce Power.

Four years later, on the eve of the 2003 election, the Liberals were campaigning on a plan to phase out about 7.5 gigawatts (GW) of coal capacity, which accounted for about a quarter of overall capacity. They claimed that to reliably “keep the lights on,” the province would need to come up with a system different from the PCs to ensure sufficient replacement generation.

The Liberals, after winning that election, would eventually fulfil their promise to phase out coal power while increasing the province’s installed capacity of renewable (wind and solar) energy. Unfortunately, a policy of private unregulated generation of electricity would all but ensure prices would climb. The lights would stay on and the grid would become greener, but at an unreasonable cost for consumers.

### Stealth privatization

The Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty decided that *all* new power generation would be provided by the private sector. OPG generated virtually all provincial electricity before it was required to spin-off Bruce Power; today it controls less than 40% of installed capacity (now mostly nuclear and hydro), while Bruce Power holds 15% or so, and private and independent power producers account for about the remaining 45%. In effect, the Liberals implemented the PC vision of electricity privatization.

This long-term shift from public to private power had a number of implications, including with respect to price. Figure 3 shows how total generation payments increased by more than two-thirds from 2006 to 2017, reaching almost \$15 billion last year. Bruce Power and OPG revenues have been relatively stable over the period, while those of private and independent generators have increased sevenfold. In the context of declining demand, this increase in payments resulted in higher overall prices that were passed on to consumers.

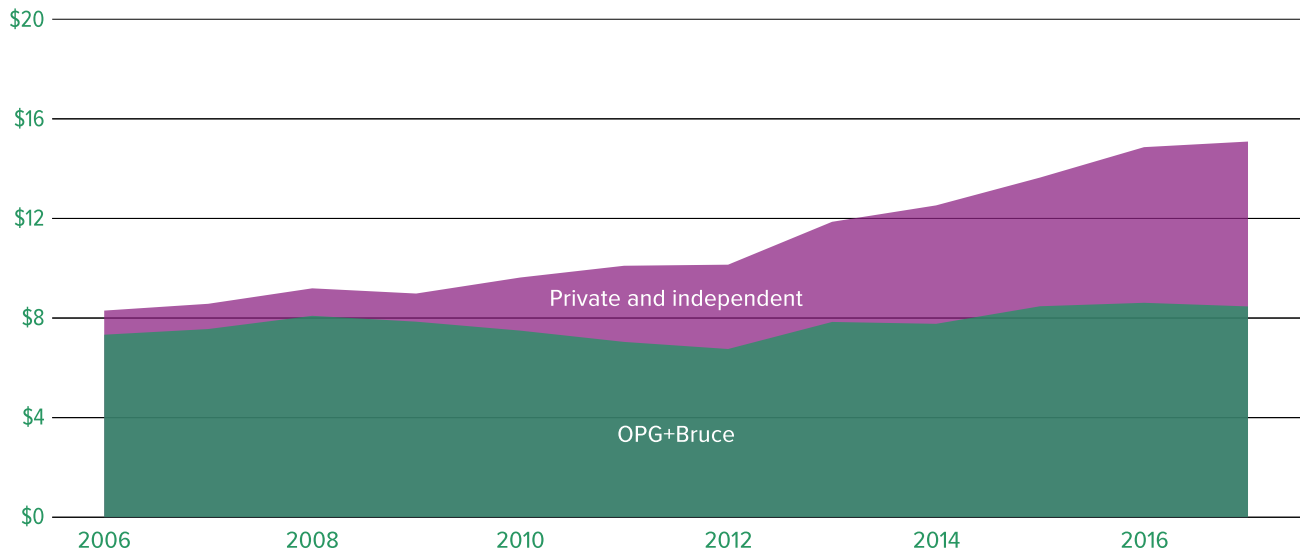
But not all prices increased equally. Figure 4 shows that OPG and Bruce Power have produced electricity in a narrow range around \$60 per megawatt hour (MWh). In contrast, prices for private and independent generators have increased by about 14% a year over the last decade (those prices are now more three times higher than what OPG and Bruce charge). It was only natural: the private entities demanded additional returns that a compliant government was eager to provide in return for achieving its sector vision.

### Policy by contract

Once the Liberal government had decided on private infrastructure, it adopted a unique contract-based regime for these power producers that, unlike most OPG assets, was not subject to economic regulation by the Ontario Energy Board (OEB). Rather than relying on the wholesale market price to drive private investment, as would have been the case under the Harris government’s 2002 market, the Liberals determined that the risk of insufficient private investment required entering into long-term contracts that guaranteed producers a fixed price for 20 years.

In addition to paying the wholesale price, consumers are required to also pay the differential between it and

**FIGURE 3** GENERATION REVENUES (\$BILLIONS)



the higher contract price. This differential is the infamous global adjustment (GA) embedded in provincial hydro bills. Ontario centralized all contracting under the newly created Ontario Power Authority (OPA), whose functions were taken over by the wholesale market operator (the Independent Electricity System Operator, IESO), and virtually all new private sector generation has since occurred via OPA/IESO contracts.

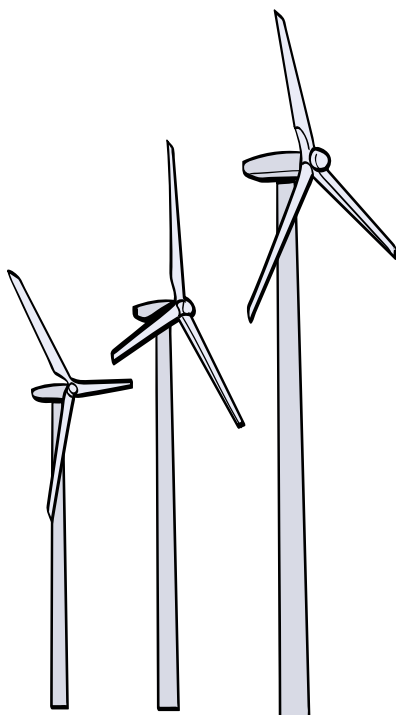
In total, more than 30,000 contracts are managed under this system. Most are standing offer arrangements (SOAs)

that guaranteed prices for any qualified takers. This includes the feed-in tariff (FIT) program introduced after the passage of the 2009 Clean Energy Act, which is split into small “micro-FIT” contracts and larger projects. Micro-FITs, generally small-scale household solar rooftop installations, account for about 85% of all contracts but less than 1% of capacity. Another 4,000 larger FITs account for about 10% of capacity. The remaining 300-odd contracts are generally industrial-sized, accounting for 85% of contracted capacity, and have been negotiated bilaterally with OPA or were awarded competitively.

Ontario’s auditor general has noted that FIT prices in the province were significantly higher than in other jurisdictions with a feed-in tariff program. It is hardly surprising that Ontario’s open-ended, guaranteed contracts for power purchases attracted investment multiple times the initial expectations; higher prices for electricity were grandfathered in, even as FIT rates dropped with each subsequent program rollout, hence its “gold-rush” nature.

Because renewables are intermittent generation technologies, they also needed to be supplemented by additional gas plants, which increased in tandem with renewables. On top of this, the province negotiated several large-scale renewable and gas projects bilaterally, likely resulting in higher prices to consumers relative to a competitive procurement. Figure 5 (on page 42) shows the increase in gas capacity as coal is phased out and renewables take off, which significantly reduced emissions and pollution from the Ontario power sector.

Ontario’s low-income households paid a high price for the province front-end loading the transition to renewables and not building in any flexibility in its 20-year contracts. From being relatively very expensive a decade ago, some renewables will soon be comparable in price to traditional generation technologies. The irony is that Ontario will not



be able to take advantage of those lower prices because current (over) capacity, another symptom of sector mismanagement, is likely to be sufficient for at least half a decade. In the meantime, consumers will continue to pay high “baked in” prices contracted by OPA in the gold rush starting in 2009.

### Renewable capitalists

One of the ways the Ontario government promoted the energy transition process was by pointing out that in Germany, a benchmark country for the energy transition and one on which the Green Energy Act was modelled, perhaps up to half of renewables contracts had been taken up by co-operatives and other non-commercial entities, thus “democratizing” the supply of electricity. The reality in Ontario, however, is that even after a decade, less than 5% of renewables contracts were actually taken up by co-operatives.

This inequality of opportunity, with large corporations taking up the vast majority of new renewable energy generation, is also reflected at the household level. While no such data exists for Ontario, evidence from the United States suggests that higher-income households are many more times as likely as low-income households to install rooftop solar panels under the micro-FIT programs.

### Rising prices and the electoral cycle

As rising electricity prices naturally became a perennial electoral liability, governments devised financing schemes to temporarily reduce prices or push increases down the road. Prior to 2002, various governments had required Ontario Hydro to defer costs and/or take on debt to keep prices at politically acceptable levels. After market opening,

governments had to use other methods, including taking on new debt and paying out of current revenues (i.e., from the tax base).

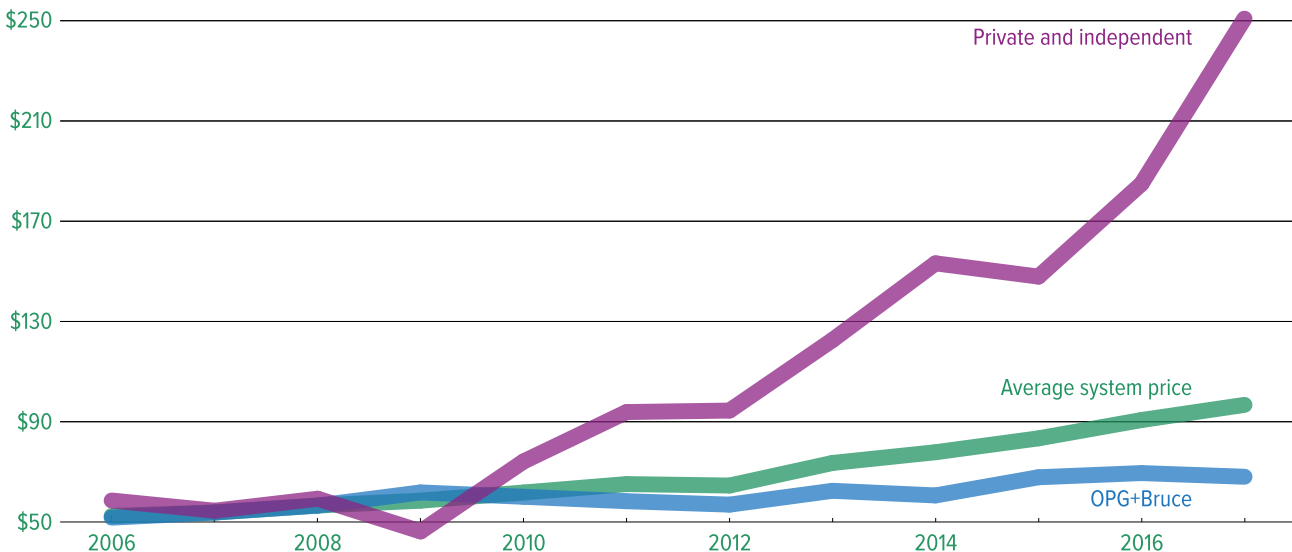
The Fair Hydro Plan (FHP), implemented by the current Wynne government in anticipation of the June 2018 election, is just the latest variation of these financing schemes. Ontario consumers received an across-the-board 25% reduction in electricity prices in 2017, consisting of 17% from the deferral of certain payments to power producers (the GA on electricity bills) and 8% from the rebate of the provincial portion of the HST (financed from the tax base).

The FHP’s 17% (and subsequent) reductions are financed from the “rate base” and mostly funded by new borrowing of \$18.5 billion, according to the Financial Accountability Officer, to be taken in installments of \$1 to \$2 billion per year and paid back, along with \$21 billion in interest, over a 20-year period. That is some short-term gain for a lot of long-term pain, as illustrated in Figure 6. The FHP is also an expensive universal program in that it provides the same percentage decrease to low- and high-income households. This is in contrast to the belatedly introduced (2017) Ontario Electricity Energy Program (OESP), which provides targeted electricity bill reductions to some low-income households.

It’s easy to see why the Liberal government and the auditor general are feuding over the nature of this financing and whether (or how) it should be accounted for in the province’s books. Most of the financing will be done through a new special purpose vehicle (SPV), and involves a first-in-Canada structured financing product. Throughout this whole process producers continue to get 100% of their payment.

In essence, the province will make up the 17% difference between the price producers earn for power and what consumers are paying under the FHP by issuing ratepayer

**FIGURE 4** GENERATION PRICES (\$/MWh)



obligation charge bonds. Based on a direction from the energy minister, the first tranche of these bonds (\$500 million), issued by the SPV in February, was scooped up by investors.

The SPV paid CIBC World Markets, RBC Securities and Goldman Sachs Canada a total of \$2 million in commissions, while the other nine investment banks netted a total of half a million. In the future, bondholders will recover their principal and interest directly from ratepayers via the “Clean Energy Adjustment” line item that will be added to electricity bills in Ontario.

The FHP requires the energy minister to actively approve borrowing to keep prices low. The Liberal government will continue the Fair Hydro Plan if returned to power. If the government changes, whether to approve such borrowing will be one of the first decisions faced by the new minister. If not, prices will spike 17% overnight.

The PCs and NDP both voted against the FHP-enabling legislation, but neither has yet clearly stated what they would do if elected. Neither has the Green Party. Will they continue to borrow under a scheme they’ve criticized or allow prices to go back up to pre-FHP levels, or something in between? They’ll need to figure that out quickly.

### What should be done?

The FHP is an expensive non-solution to a long-standing structural problem. The main driver of Ontario’s inflated electricity cost structure has been the adoption of regulation-exempt, long-term contracts to procure new private sector generation capacity at above-market prices.

The government has belatedly indicated it will implement more flexible and less costly means to procure capacity in future, but that the solution will not “extract value from contracts,” thus failing to address the legacy of

thousands of long-term contracts that have ratepayers on the hook for another generation.

Both the PCs and NDP have mentioned they would review some contracts but have been unclear about what exactly that would look like. There are several options available for such a review.

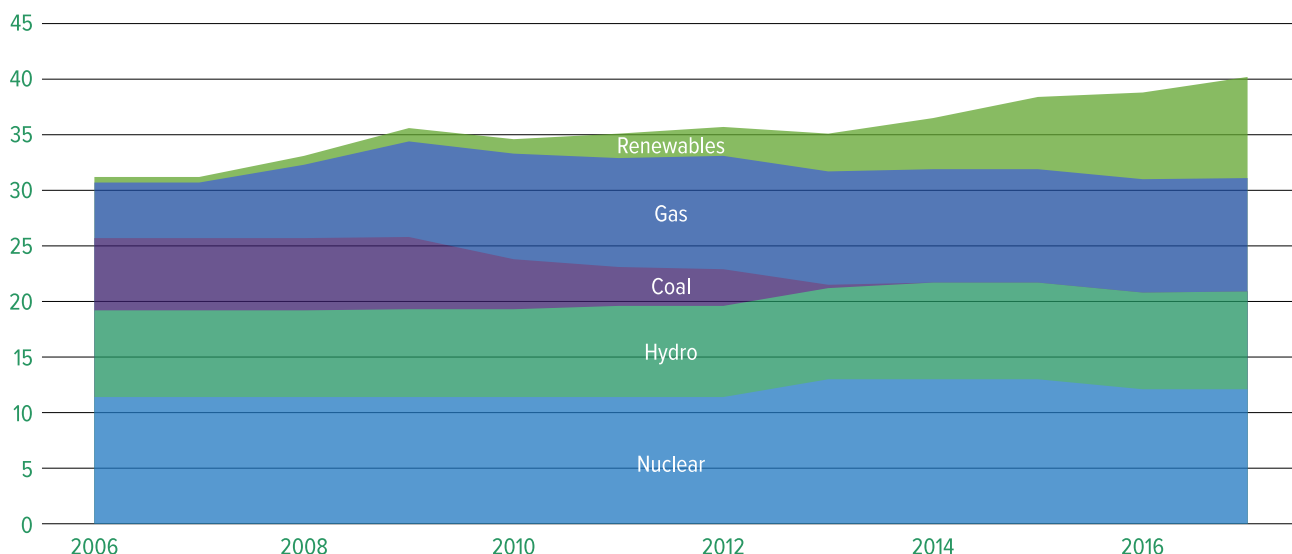
First, it is important to create a hierarchy of contracts to understand the task at hand. At the top of that list (first tier) could be those new (non-OPG or Bruce Power) contracts that were not competitively sourced and whose contract price was established via bilateral negotiation or an SOA. Altogether these account for perhaps 11 GW of installed capacity and in the range of \$4–5 billion in annual revenues. The other (second tier) contracts could also be looked at if necessary.

Second, it is important to note that the review, whatever shape it takes, would not be an easy or fast process, and would be subject to legal and political risk, since some of these contracts include confidential termination and other compensation provisions if unilaterally amended by the government.

The energy minister would need a top-notch multi-tiered negotiating strategy to deal separately with industrial and SOA-type contracts covering all technologies, all backed by a willingness to cancel some contracts. Under this last-case option the affected power producers would no longer receive the GA above the wholesale market price. In tandem, the provincial government might also enact legislation shielding it from any claims of additional compensation.

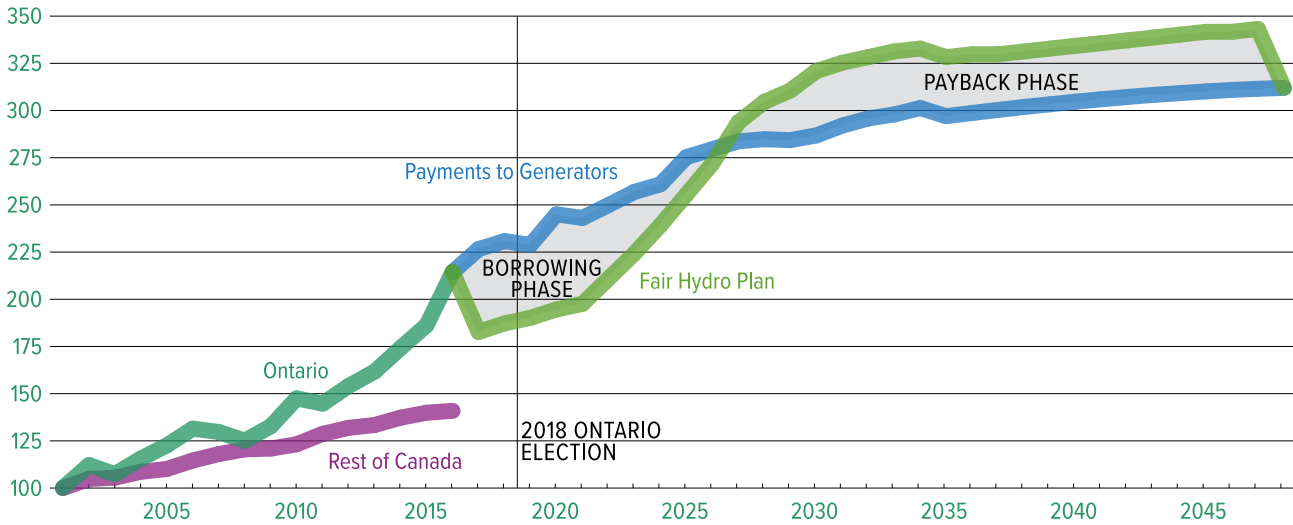
Another option would be to replace some of the industrial and larger FIT contracts with a new regime whose main principle would be to provide a regulated rate of return to producers over the life of the contract. The micro-FITs could be adjusted collectively under the same principle. The costs of this process to a new government, including any actual

**FIGURE 5** INSTALLED CAPACITY BY TECHNOLOGY (GW)





**FIGURE 6** REPRESENTATION OF “FAIR HYDRO PLAN”  
(ELECTRICITY CPIs, 2001=100)



compensation paid to successful litigants, would likely be small compared to the permanent savings to ratepayers.

How big would those savings be? It is feasible that a total of perhaps \$1–2 billion per year could be saved under a combination of the options (including by also looking at the second tier contracts), an amount equivalent to the annual borrowing under the Wynne government’s FHP.

### Conclusion

Before the implementation of the Fair Hydro Plan, high electricity prices were the number one concern of voters in Ontario. As voters head to the polls this spring, electricity bills may be just one of many ballot box issues. In that sense, the plan appears to have “worked” for the Liberal government. Down the road, however, other people, and other governments, will have to deal with the fallout of these decisions.

For those outside of Ontario and Canada this process is a cautionary tale about the interplay of some of the most important political and economic trends many societies face today. Outright and sudden privatization of the electricity supply was not considered politically feasible, so privatization was brought in gradually and stealthily. The NDP voted in favour of the Green Energy Act in 2009. Unlike the PCs, who have vowed to repeal it, the NDP and the Greens appear to continue to support it in principle.

Initially, criticism by progressive groups was muted by the promise of energy democratization and the content of that privatization: renewables generation that helped reduce emissions and pollution, and had widespread support from environmental organizations.

In Ontario, the electricity sector became a prime case study of some of the inequality-creating trends buffet-

ing our societies. Corporations and their investors, who secured lucrative contracts, and high-income households that could afford rooftop solar panels made out like bandits, while low-income households in Ontario faced growing electricity poverty. When prices became a political liability, the government responded not by going after the power producers, but rather by borrowing on behalf of ratepayers (with a cut to the investment bankers, of course).

While the decarbonization of the electricity sector is well advanced, it has barely begun in most other sectors in Ontario and elsewhere. There is much to be learned from the experience so far. Objectives matter, but Ontario shows that governance, policy and implementation may matter even more. Calls for a low-carbon future should be resisted if, like in Ontario, they are based on privatization, unregulated contracts and financing mechanisms that enrich the private sector.

The principles of climate justice and a “fair transition” require that we reject the idea that greater suffering by low-income households, increased inequality and massive ratepayer debt are simply the “price to be paid” for a low carbon future. We have the tools to do better. **M**

EMERY HUSZKA

# Canada's national food policy needs local input

A federal discussion on the future of agriculture could determine how much Ontario food makes it onto provincial shelves and dinner tables.

**C**anada is finally discussing a national food policy, but what does that really mean for eaters and the farmers who grow our food in Ontario and across this country? It's a question we should be putting to our elected representatives, and those hoping to join their ranks, at all levels of government.

At its core, a national food policy must consider how Canadians will feed themselves, now and in the future. But while it's positive this important conversation has been opened up in Ottawa, the federal government and large agricultural players are still pushing an old refrain: economic gains through an export-first food policy.

That message was transmitted yet again in a recent report from Finance Minister Bill Morneau's Advisory Council on Economic Growth. The Barton Report (the advisory council is headed by McKinsey & Company management consultant Dominic Barton) wants Canada to focus on increasing processor capacity to facilitate the export of agricultural products.

"Enabling the sector to move up to 2nd place in agriculture and to 5th place in agfood would imply an additional US\$30 billion in exports in today's distribution of global export shares, equivalent to nearly 2 per cent of current GDP," the council wrote in February. Canada is currently the 5th largest agricultural exporter and 11th largest food exporter.

Unfortunately, while farmers do need strong processing partners, focusing on export capacity will not feed Canadians. Ontario farmers would be better served by a bigger-picture strategy that considers domestic as well as export opportunities, the financial burdens on farmers and the

environmental impacts of large-scale farming.

The National Farmers Union believes that access to healthy local food is a right. Provincially certified abattoirs, direct marketing opportunities and support for smaller-scale farming operations will be more productive and sustainable in the long term than export-led growth.

The results of a narrow policy of export promotion and government support for export-sized operations, to the exclusion of farmers focused on the domestic eater, are plain to see: family farm ownership is replaced with non-farm ownership and control; farmland is reduced to a commodity to be mined instead of a living system to be fed and nurtured; farm owners become indentured employees to national and multinational corporations; local high-quality food becomes less important than durable food for processing; control of Canadian food is consolidated within the processing and retailing sectors; and gross margins on farms escalate while net margins evaporate.

On top of its environmental benefits, moving the agricultural policy target from exports to localization will engage more people in food production and encourage economic growth within the rural communities where farmers live and work. Food exports are important, but they ought to occur because of genuine consumer need abroad, not because of artificially inflated domestic supply.

## A food policy must include farmland

Statistics Canada has recorded a consistent annual drop in the number of farm operations in this country. In

addition to the trend of operations growing larger and swallowing up smaller farms, investment funds and foreign governments have become powerful buyers of farmland globally, removing ownership and control from the farmers working the land and increasing the cost of farmland to a point where it cannot be recouped.

While governments in Ontario and B.C. have taken steps to regulate foreign ownership in urban centres, there hasn't been the same action for farmland, as detailed in the NFU report *Losing Our Grip*. Public policy can and should prioritize small-scale ownership and efficiency per acre over large-scale bargaining power.

As a society, we also need to acknowledge that while food production is a business, food itself, like the air we breathe and water we drink, is a basic necessity whose protection and management should not be left alone to capitalist markets. Without careful public oversight and public interest reforms, we risk losing control of our food systems to monopolist corporations.

The potential for structural failure was brought home to Canadians recently when two large-scale businesses, food processor Weston Foods and retailer Loblaws, admitted they had been fixing the price of bread for more than 14 years. Our governments' poor oversight did not go unnoticed by consumers, who were offered a piddling \$25 Loblaws gift card as compensation.

Consumers showed their own power to change the food system when, years earlier, they forced Loblaws to reverse a corporate decision to remove Canadian-made French's ketchup from store shelves. Clearly, consumers wanted to purchase Canadian-grown food. We

should be doing more to make sure family farms have the land, distribution systems, buy-local labelling regimes and other support they need to make that happen.

### A food policy must consider the environment

Food production methods must be tied to ecological activities such as carbon sequestration in soil. An appropriately sized farm operates on a closed loop where nutrients that are used in growing the food are fed back through animal manure or cover crops. Farmers also maintain and nurture grasslands, woodlots, wetlands and other natural areas in the public interest, providing environmental goods and services in the process while covering the costs out of their own profits.

The stewardship and conservation role played by farmers could be greatly expanded and enhanced with more public support. Underfunded protection plans are futile in the face of land values rising beyond their productive capacity and an increasingly industrialized, export-driven machine for food production. Bigger farms are not the enemy, but allowing smaller more environmentally responsive family operations to become extinct is an absolute shame on our part.

### Farmers need market access at home

Canadian trade negotiations always put foreign market access for agricultural exports in the spotlight. Market access for local farmers here at home is just as important—a fact brought home again by the NAFTA renegotiations. In those talks, the Trump administration is coming hard after Canada's supply-managed agricultural sectors when we should be holding them up as examples of sustainable, equitable food models to be emulated here and abroad.

Canada's dairy, egg and chicken farmers are protected by high tariffs for a reason: these farmers produce almost exclusively for the Canadian market and create a reliable, steady supply of high quality food in the process. Farmers in supply-managed sectors are also guaranteed a fair and sustainable price for their labour, and consumers are guaranteed a stable price at the grocery store. The Ontario government and Canadian NAFTA negotiators need to make it clear this system is off limits in any new deal.

Coming back to the issue of labelling, a CBC *Marketplace* investigation last year found several instances of farmers' market vendors claiming their produce was local when in reality it was purchased at a central food terminal, or other producers labelling a product as organic when it was not. Such infractions undermine the trust eaters have in farmers, which also negatively affects market access in Canada. A more strictly enforced labelling regime could improve that situation.

As Canadian consumers request more local food, farmers need to be able to meet that demand through regional food processing systems that have scale-appropriate regulations. Abattoirs that process 100 animals a week, where the inspector sees every single animal, do not pose the same food safety risks as an abattoir that process 1,000 animals



Farmers' market in Toronto's David Pecaut Square

(TOM FLEMMING, FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS)

a minute. Without these local businesses, farmers will not be able to supply their local markets with the safe, healthy food demanded by appreciative eaters.

### A food policy vision for Canadians

What does our national food system look like in 50 years? Who controls it and what input will citizens have? Do rural communities shrink and merge, undercutting the infrastructure that supports local farms? Does sprawl-based economic growth overrule long-term, community-based, sustainable and scalable models of planning? Do towns die because costs go up, income and jobs decrease, government-imposed costs of compliance balloon, and people quit making the effort, broken by their lack of options?

Or is there an alternative? Do farmers of all sizes make a living wage that they can spend locally so that their communities thrive? Do services and infrastructure grow as farmers return to the land? Do we mitigate climate change through sustainable farming practices? Do new farmers have access to farmland through transition programs that reward retiring farmers with a fair pension so they don't have to cash out their farm operations?

To take control of our food sovereignty, eaters must continue to vote with their wallets, of course. But when politicians come knocking at election time, those same eaters can also let would-be federal or provincial politicians know how important local food is to them as a constituent. **M**





## The good news page

Compiled by  
Elaine Hughes

**T**he global solar market grew 29.3% in 2017 to reach an operating capacity of 405 gigawatts, according to data from industry group SolarPower Europe. China led the pack with 52.8 GW of new solar capacity, followed by the United States (10.6 GW) and India (9.6 GW). A record 1,057 megawatts of small-scale (6 kilowatts) solar-powered systems, the equivalent of about 3.5 million rooftop panels, were installed across Australia in 2017, smashing the previous record set in 2012 and at half the installation price. Power generation from U.K. wind farms hit 14.2 GW on March 17, enough to meet 34.2% of Britain's energy needs, according to National Grid UK. The continuing decline in the price of offshore wind projects is helping the country cost-effectively shut down old nuclear and coal-fired power plants. / E360 / Guardian (Australia) / Reuters

**A** total of 57.8 million hectares of crop land were organically managed at the end of 2016, up 7.5 million hectares from 2015, the largest one-year jump ever recorded. Market research company Ecovia

Intelligence estimates that the global market for organic food reached US\$89.7 billion in 2016 led by the United States. On March 1, long-time environmental activist Carol Van Strum, author of the book *A Bitter Fog: Herbicides and Human Rights*, was awarded the international David Brower Lifetime Achievement Award for outstanding environmental and social justice work. Van Strum helped lead the fight, beginning in the 1970s, against aerial spraying of Agent Orange and other herbicides in and around Five Rivers, Oregon. The federal government has directed \$4.3 billion back into two Kingston, Ontario prison farms run by CORCAN, a division of Correctional Services Canada. The prison farm program was killed by the Harper government in 2010. A new barn is planned for the Collins Bay prison to house 33 cows from the original program, and will eventually expand to include chickens, pigs and a bee colony to make honey. / All About Feed / CBC / Mongabay

**T**he Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board recently approved unionization of all non-managerial Tim Hortons employees in Canora, about 160 km northeast of Regina, making it the first franchise in the province to have a certified union. Many of the employees are new immigrants, work part time and have other jobs, and the union members plan to fight for seniority and new rules on scheduling, among other bargaining topics. New Yorkers are getting a free, publicly funded

cybersecurity app for their smartphones, Quad9, to combat the recent spate of ransomware attacks of the type that knocked Atlanta's municipal systems offline for a week in March. Washington State Governor Jay Inslee signed his country's first law banning perfluorinated chemicals in food packaging, including microwave popcorn bags, fast-food wrappers and pizza boxes, and in foams used to contain petroleum or chemical fires. "This common sense measure will protect consumers, protect our health and protect our environment from unnecessary toxic chemicals," Inslee said. / CBC / Reuters / NWPB

**E**ighty Olive Ridley turtles, listed as "vulnerable" by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, recently hatched on the southern end of the two-mile-long Versova Beach in Mumbai, India, a sight not seen there in decades. In order to ensure their safety, a team of volunteers slept

on the sand so they could watch over the turtle nests and protect the young from predators as they made their way to the water. The Exmoor pony (pictured), believed to originate with the prehistoric Mongolian "horsebeasts" that trekked from Alaska to Britain some 130,000 years ago, is also doing better, at least in the U.K. With its unique oatmeal-coloured markings around its nose and eyes, and its double-layered, moisture-repellent winter coat, the Exmoor is well-suited to the harsh environment and the poor vegetation found on the moorlands in southwest England. Only about 50 ponies survived the Second World War. Today, though they are listed as "endangered," about 150 free-roaming ponies are looked after by the Exmoor Pony Society. There are around 500 breeding mares and 100 licensed stallions throughout England and about 3,000 Exmoor ponies worldwide. / Good News Network / Ecowatch



PHOTO BY THOMAS HAEUSLER (FLICKR CREATIVE COMMONS)





NATALIE SPAGNUOLO, MELISSA GRAHAM  
AND SYED HUSSAN

PHOTO BY DAWIT ASSIER

## Equity deferred for disabled migrants

Reforms to Canada's ableist immigration law, while incomplete, show how strong migrant groups and disability organizations have become.

**N NOVEMBER 2013**, Qyzra Walji, a 21-year-old London, Ontario woman with a disability, died in what police at the time treated as a murder-suicide. Qyzra, her father and her mother were each found dead with gunshot wounds. They were to be deported the following day to Tanzania. Despite living in Canada for 15 years, the family had been denied immigration status because Qyzra, a person with a disability, was thought to pose an "excessive demand" on Canadian health and social services. For 15 years the family had put in applications and requested interventions from politicians and bureaucrats, but had been denied.

The death of the Walji family exposed the immense pressures exerted by an unjust immigration system that discriminates against applicants based on disability status. After the events of 2013, migrant justice groups like No One Is Illegal-Toronto conducted protests and began to organize. The coalition Migrant Worker Alliance for Change (MWAC) took on the issue the same year and worked in league with disability organizations to make disability discrimination in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) a political priority.

Section 38 of the IRPA lists the health grounds on which a person or

an entire family can be denied permanent residency, including their being an alleged threat to public health or public safety, or the likelihood they will "cause excessive demand on health or social services." The threshold for excessive demand is determined in part by data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), which estimated that total health spending would reach \$6,604 per Canadian in 2017. If immigration officials determine an individual is likely to incur costs greater than that amount they can be denied permanent residency.

In 2008, the same institute determined that the average cost of a single

hospital stay in Canada was \$7,000. In other words, if an applicant can conceivably be expected to require one hospital stay in a year they have already surpassed the excessive-demand threshold. Other services that are considered in an assessment of excessive demand include special education, vocational rehab services, or any other service or device that helps a person function physically, emotionally, socially, psychologically or vocationally that is at least partially funded by the government.

Disabled people in Canada can tell you it gets easier to be disabled in this country when you have the means to cover your own health care needs. The same is true for people who immigrate to Canada. The reality of the excessive-demand clause is that it not only reinforces the class divide among disabled and non-disabled immigrants to Canada, it also undermines the status of disabled people who were born in this country; it puts a value on their lives equivalent to the “burden” they create for the health and social services systems.

This regime in the IRPA also increases the vulnerability and exploitation of low-waged migrant workers who are denied status upon arrival. Workers who become sick or injured because of substandard work conditions in Canada can be denied permanent status based on their injuries. Migrant workers who have come to Canada through federal schemes such as Caregivers or the Live-in Caregiver Program, Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) or Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) cannot change workplaces without losing their work permits, which means they cannot easily refuse dangerous or unsafe work, forcing them to risk illness or serious injury. The excessive-demand provision treats these migrants as disposable, as mere objects to be transferred across borders.

Disability organizations have been on the frontlines of social justice, demanding respect for their differences and an end to their systemic marginalization, including through discriminatory laws. The Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD),

the largest national disabled person's organization, has been involved in immigration reform since the early 1980s, when it raised the issue of disabled refugees during the federal election campaign and asked for amendments to the Immigration Act. The organization continues to work with disabled migrants facing medical inadmissibility decisions. Despite the high stakes in these struggles, however, very little public attention was paid to the issue until recently.

In 2015, amidst growing coverage of discrimination against migrants with disabilities and their families, a roundtable and public discussion on Canada's immigration regime was held at the United Steelworkers Hall in downtown Toronto. It was organized by disability advocates and the family of Felipe Montoya, a York University professor whose 13-year-old son Nico, a person with an intellectual disability, was denied permanent residency based on the excessive-demand provision.

With a strong turnout from the community, the town hall discussion brought together migrants with lived experience of excessive-demand rules, advocates from disability and migrant justice groups, and legal and academic experts. Once Nico Montoya's story broke through, many disability and migrant justice activists, as well as HIV/AIDS advocates, came together or worked independently to educate members of Parliament and civil servants about the impact of excessive-demand determinations. Migrant caregivers bravely spoke about how being separated from their families affected them.

As a result, the federal government formally began to study Section 38 in 2016. A recent open letter initiated by disability justice and migrant justice organizations presents a forceful case for reforming the IRPA, echoing what organizations like the CCD have been arguing for decades: the excessive-demand clause “constructs disabled people only in negative terms—solely as a drain on resources. It erases the valuable contributions of disabled people to their communities.”

This is an increasingly important conversation to have, especially as the

federal government releases what it calls a gender equity budget, promises new investments in immigration and has spent significant funds consulting on a national Disability Act. Excessive demand places disability rights in Canada, and the state itself, in contradiction. The hypocrisy of all of these promises in light of the IRPA cannot be denied.

Meanwhile, recent immigration scandals, like the highly publicized case of the Montoya family, have shown us that the success of permanent residency applications for disabled people remains the exception. Nico and his family were finally granted status, but only on account of ministerial involvement—the charitable intercession of a political representative on the Montoyas' behalf to reverse the inadmissibility finding on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. Other migrants are left to wonder why such pardons are granted in some cases and not their own.

Such exceptionalism in the application process creates the impression that the only possible point of entry to Canada for disabled people is through their connection to a non-disabled relative. In some cases, the government has seemed more willing to grant status to families with children with disabilities as long as the parents are non-disabled, perhaps based on the belief that these families contribute more to society, are more valuable. This means that it is far more likely for higher-income earners to be accepted than lower-wage migrant caregivers.

The Montoyas, Danielese (see sidebar on next page) and others facing medical inadmissibility went public with their stories not just for themselves and their children, but to seek justice for all migrants and people with disabilities. Their individual and collective action has pushed the issue onto the federal agenda, culminating in a parliamentary review of the IRPA that in December recommended Section 38(1)(c) be repealed. This progress was not a result of the government seeing the light, but rather decades of organizing among marginalized

communities that galvanized in the years since Qyzra Walji's terrible death in 2013.

On March 12, the Caregivers Action Centre, with the Council of Canadians with Disabilities, HIV/AIDS Legal Network and Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, organized a day of action and rally to end medical inadmissibility. Members of these organizations called for the immediate and full repeal of Section 38(1)(c) as recommended by a parliamentary committee late last year.

"The Canadian law in dealing with immigrants with disabilities is outdated and should change," said Jane de Jesus with the caregivers. "People with disabilities are not a burden on our community. Caregivers and all migrant workers need permanent residency upon arrival with no more discrimination based on ability."

John Rae, first vice-chair of the CCD, also spoke at the rally, telling the crowd the IRPA "is demeaning to Canadians with disabilities, prevents the free movement of individuals guaranteed in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and too often requires families to choose between coming to Canada and leaving a loved one behind."

On April 16, Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen announced changes to his department's practices in response to the parliamentary standing committee's findings and demands of civil society groups. Disappointingly, rather than dismantling the medical inadmissibility regime as advised, Minister Hussen has chosen to fine tune it by raising the cost threshold and promising to tweak how social services are defined. While we anticipate that the removal of references to special education, personal support services, and social and vocational rehabilitation services would spare some from dismissal, the IRPA continues to uphold the idea that disabled people are a burden on the country's health and social services, and allows for their rejection as creating "excessive demands." The changes are also silent on migrants already living in Canada, leaving many without a path to family reunification as a result of the act's treatment of disability. This missed opportunity to repeal S38(1)(c) amounts to an abandonment of justice by the federal government and deferred equity for migrants with disabilities.

The federal government says it wants to improve opportunities for disabled Canadians, increase employment and remove the stigma associated with impairment and disability supports. But as long as the excessive-demand clause remains in place, the value of disabled people will continue to be calculated based on their use of health and social services. In doing so, the government denies the intersections between economic security and health, for migrants and residents alike, as though an individual's ability to manage their health needs or those of their family does not factor into their search for a better life.

On the other hand, the day of action this March has shown us again how committed migrant and disability communities are to continuing the fight for justice and equality for disabled people. The full repeal of 38(1)(c)—a regressive and ableist part of Canada's immigration system—can be postponed, but clearly not for much longer. **M**



## Speaking out for change

Among those affected by the excessive-demand provision are caregivers who come to Canada through a federal work program. Members of this group are predominantly racialized women from the Global South, many of whom are mothers of children with disabilities.

Josarie Danieles, a member of the Caregivers Action Centre (CAC) who came to Canada in 2010, paid over \$6,000 to a recruitment agency and ended up in an abusive and exploitative employment program. But she persevered, continuing to work so that she could eventually have her family join her.

But like many other women, Danieles was denied the option of reunification after immigration officials decided her older daughter, Precious Ann Margaret (pictured), had "intellectual retardation," an antiquated and offensive term identifying Precious as a person with an intellectual disability. The verdict was devastating for Danieles: the degradation of her daughter's identity as a disabled person meant her family would be prevented from becoming permanent residents.

"We've made all these sacrifices with the assurance that there's a pathway to permanent residency," Danieles told the *Toronto Star*. "I spend so many years away from my family. Every night I stay up with my pinched heart."

These cases, and there are countless others, expose how the excessive-demand clause in the IRPA is rooted in gender and racial inequity, forcing some families to choose between leaving their disabled family member behind or leaving the country. The burden of that choice falls predominantly on women, as they are more likely to be carers for disabled children.



ASAD ISMI

# Italians leap into the unknown

Political outsiders take hold of parliament in a significant challenge to the status quo

**IN A STUNNING** repudiation of both their national political establishment and the European Union, Italians handed two Euroskeptical parties, the Five Star Movement (Movimento Cinque Stelle, M5S) and the League (Lega), a majority of votes in elections held on March 4. The result, which *Euronews* called “a big shock [to the EU]” and an “earthquake,” comes two years after Britain’s exit from the EU, to which the Italian vote is being compared.

The populist M5S, led by 31-year-old Luigi di Maio (pictured), won 32.7% of the vote (up from 25% in the 2013 election), making it the most popular party in Italy, while the neofascist League got 18% (up from 4% in 2013). Both parties drew support by criticizing the EU’s imposition of economic austerity on Italy and calling for a referendum on the country’s membership in the union. (Both have also since softened their positions on the EU.) But neither the League nor M5S won the 40% of the vote required to form a majority in the Italian parliament, and it was unclear, as the *Monitor* went to print, whether a coalition would be formed or a new election date set.

The League is part of the centre-right coalition created by three-time prime minister Silvio Berlusconi and his Forza Italia (Go Italy) party. That coalition also includes Fratelli d’Italia (Brothers of Italy), another neofascist party but a relatively newer one with roots in the far-right, post-Second World War Italian Social Movement. The Brothers got 4.3% of the vote and the centre-right coalition altogether took 37%. Berlusconi himself is banned from holding political office due to a fraud conviction.

“The election result was an unprecedented defeat for the Italian pro-European forces,” says Dario

Quattromani, professor of political science at Roma Tre University in Rome. He includes the former ruling centre-left Democratic Party (PD) of Matteo Renzi (who resigned as leader after his party’s clobbering at the polls) and Berlusconi’s Forza Italia in that category. “[These parties] registered a diffuse sense of distance and disillusion coming from their usual voters.”

Italians blame the country’s massive unemployment rate (just under 11% in early April, but around 32% for youth) and poverty in part on budget cuts enforced by an austerity-obsessed EU. Italy’s statistics office estimated 4.7 million Italians (8% of the population) lived in absolute poverty in 2016, with most of them concentrated in the south of the country. Another 30% of Italians are at risk of poverty.

The Italian economy experienced only a weak recovery after the 2008

recession and is hobbled by debt equivalent to 131% of the country’s GDP. According to Mario Pianta, an economics professor also at Roma Tre University, “20 years of stagnation and decline mean a generation with ever-lower expectations in terms of income, work and life.”

Membership in the euro has “clearly been a factor in explaining the rise of populism in Italy,” wrote *Guardian* (U.K.) economics editor Larry Elliot in a March column, “because it has made it impossible for governments in Rome to restore competitiveness by devaluing the currency—something they did on a regular basis in the days before monetary union. The disciplines of euro membership have resulted in slower growth, stagnant wages, high unemployment and austerity—perfect conditions for the Five Star Movement to exploit.”

It’s not surprising, in this economic context, that M5S’s election guarantee of a monthly basic income for the poor and unemployed met with resounding approval in Italy’s south, which is poorer than the north and middle of the country, where most industry is concentrated. The M5S won almost all its votes in the south whereas the League attracted the support of richer northern Italians with its promise of a flat tax on income.

## Fearmongering about immigration

The issue of immigration was a political boon for the League, whose leader and candidates exploited public fears, notably of unemployment, to the max. About 600,000 migrants, most of them from Libya, have entered Italy in the past five years. Since, under EU rules, migrants to the continent must be

PHOTO BY TONY GENTILE/REUTERS





processed in their country of arrival, the issue provided more fire, alongside austerity fatigue, for the anti-EU vote.

Matteo Salvini, the League's leader, has vowed to raze Roma camps and claims that Italian society is threatened by Islam. "We are under attack. Our culture, society, traditions and way of life are at risk," Salvini stated in January, promising to deport 500,000 people and stop the migrant "invasion."

Even more reprehensible is Salvini's remark that Italy needs a "mass cleansing, street by street, neighborhood by neighborhood." When earlier this year a right-wing terrorist shot and injured six African migrants in a drive-by shooting in the town of Macerata in central Italy, the politician blamed the victims. Meanwhile, Salvini has praised how things were run under Mussolini's dictatorship.

The Five Star Movement combines leftist and rightist positions. Like the League, it is anti-immigrant and calls for deportations, but its leaders are less strident on the issue and more critical of European and U.S. imperialism, which they blame for the exodus.

"One of the most telling critiques that the Five Star Movement aimed at the Democratic Party was that the latter supported the overthrow of the Libyan government and the consequent collapse of Libya as a functioning nation," says Conn Hallinan, an analyst with Foreign Policy in Focus. "Most of the immigrants headed for Italy come from, or through, Libya."

The NATO-led military attack on Libya in March 2011, which was backed by Italy and the EU, essentially destroyed the North African country. Libya remains mired in chaos and civil war seven years later. Hallinan adds that Renzi and his PD party never challenged the EU or NATO on their wars in Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia and Syria, "wars that fuel millions of immigrants."

Instead, the EU chose to give Turkey €6 billion (\$9.4 billion) to stop immigrants from coming to Europe. This situation provided the Italian neofascists with a crucial issue to exploit, raising them from marginal status to national powerbrokers in Italy and beyond.

## The centre is not holding

The collapse or marked decline of the centre-left in Italy and the rise of anti-establishment and right-wing parties follows a European trend, as seen in recent elections in Germany, France and the Netherlands. But, according to Hallinan, this does not indicate that European voters are necessarily moving to the right.

"When center-left parties embraced socially progressive policies, voters supported them," he points out. In Portugal, two leftist parties formed a coalition with the Social Democrats to lower the jobless rate and end many of the austerity measures enforced on the country by the EU. In recent local elections, voters gave them "a ringing endorsement," Hallinan notes.

Jeremy Corbyn took the British Labour Party to the left with a program to renationalize railroads, water, energy and the postal service, improving Labour's polling numbers in the process (the party has been neck-and-neck

with the Conservatives for over a year). Polls also show public approval of Labour's plan to support green energy, enhance the National Health Service, and fund education and public works.

Whether the M5S can attain power and lead Italy in a progressive direction remains to be seen, but the party has already softened its criticism of the EU considerably. Di Maio declared after the election, "It's not time to leave the euro anymore and the Movement doesn't plan to exit the European Union." He also stated that the M5S "does not want to have anything to do with Europe's extremist parties," and desires "maximum dialogue with European government forces."

Simona Guerra, an associate professor of politics at the University of Leicester, U.K., explains that the M5S has limited options with respect to eurozone membership, since Article 75 of the Italian constitution prohibits the use of referendum in the authorization or ratification of international treaties. In any case, she says, the movement's attitude on such matters "can be best described as 'Euroalternativism,' a pro-systemic opposition to the EU integration process, supporting the EU, but willing to change the direction of the integration process itself."

This desire to work from the inside to change the EU will most likely limit M5S's progressive options. It could also disillusion M5S supporters who voted for an anti-establishment party, thus opening political space for what Guerra calls an "anti-anti party."

Could the Potere al Popolo party (Power to the People) fit that description? The PaP took 0.95% of the votes in the March election—not enough for a seat in parliament, but a promising start, according to the party's 37-year-old spokesperson, Viola Carofalo. Potere al Popolo was launched three months before the election as an anti-capitalist, communist, socialist, feminist and pro-immigrant party, and draws much of its support from young voters, mainly in the south of Italy.

"What we desperately need in Italy is a political renewal, and this necessarily means a politics led by the young, by women, by people of colour, by diversely abled people, by people who are in politics because they believe in change and not because it has become a career," Carofalo told *Jacobin* magazine in March.

Accused by some of splitting the left vote, Carofalo claims her party's priority is not, primarily, elections, "but rather getting people to participate in politics and in rebuilding communities, in rebuilding solidarity within our society." She says Potere al Popolo is making links with similar groups across Europe, including France's *Insoumise* and *Podemos* (in Spain), who are seizing power back from "career politicians," including those on the traditional left.

The message may sound as populist as anything the League or M5S put out, but, as they say, "When in Rome...." Carofalo and other European progressives are struggling to grasp the enormity of the challenge at hand. Rather than mourning the "death of liberal democracy," as so many mainstream columnists have been of late, these new left leaders are engaged in the hard work of building solidarity across classes, generations and cultures. **M**



IAN G. WADDELL

## Two countries, one threatened herd

A Mulroney-era conservation treaty offers a possible lifeline to endangered caribou in the wake of Trump's thumbs up to Arctic drilling.

**EACH AND EVERY** year, the porcupine caribou herd—an estimated 100,000 to 200,000 animals—travels 2,400 kilometres from its winter range in the boreal forests of Alaska and northwestern Canada to calving grounds on the Beaufort Sea coastal plain, then back again. That's the longest migration of any land mammal on earth. There is nothing else like it in the Americas—nothing like it in the world, really, with the possible exception of the wildebeest migration across the African Serengeti.

Obviously, caribou don't respect international boundaries, as humans are supposed to. But the Canada-U.S. border is still important for the herd. That means talking about Donald Trump, but first we need a short history lesson.

On the U.S. side of the northern end of the Alaska-Yukon border sits the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Republicans in the state have been trying for 50 years to allow oil and gas exploration and development in part of the refuge known as the "1002 area," a 1.5 million acre tract (about 6,100 square kilometres) on the coastal plain. The porcupine caribou calving grounds extend for hundreds of kilometres on both sides of the international boundary, including this critical "1002 area."

In March 1989, a bill allowing drilling in that area was speeding through the

U.S. Senate only to be derailed, ironically, by the Exxon Valdez oil spill that same month. In 1996, the Republican majority in both U.S. houses voted to allow drilling, but then-president Bill Clinton vetoed it. Since then, unbeknownst to resident caribou, Republicans have tried and failed 50 times to open up the Arctic refuge to oil and gas exploration.

But then came Donald Trump, disruptor in chief, with a similar strategy but more gumption to see the plan through. The U.S. president tucked a provision allowing drilling into the recent Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, which he signed into law just before Christmas. There may still be hope for the porcupine caribou herd, at least here in Canada, but again, a little history is in order.

A caribou in Alaska's Brooks Range

(DANIEL VAN DER MAAS, WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

In 1974, a consortium of big oil and gas companies announced a plan to ship Arctic gas from the Prudhoe Bay oil field in northern Alaska. The oil would travel via pipeline across the north slope of Alaska and Canada's Yukon territory to the Mackenzie Delta, where an additional pipeline would take Canadian gas, along with the Arctic oil, down the Mackenzie Valley through Alberta to the lower U.S. states. It was to be the biggest privately financed project in Canada's history.

The Liberal government of the day, led by Pierre Trudeau, our current prime minister's dad, appointed Justice Thomas Berger of the Supreme Court of British Columbia to head a royal commission to study the social, environmental and economic impacts of the proposed project. The Berger Commission became famous when the judge decided to hold community hearings in Indigenous villages all around the western Arctic. Through reporting by the CBC, many Canadians, probably for the first time, saw and heard Indigenous people speak in their own languages about their ways of life.

As a young lawyer and special counsel to Justice Berger, I travelled with "The Judge," as we called him, on a JetRanger helicopter tour of the region before the hearings got started. We flew over a flat strip of land between the Beaufort Sea and the British Mountains that run parallel to the coast. Looking down we saw several wolves, three grizzly bears, and migrating caribou, but no humans. No one spoke. Having crossed the mountains, we flew over a land of small lakes and rivers called the Crow Flats, which was never covered by glaciers. This is where the people of Old Crow, the most northerly village in Yukon, go to hunt muskrat.

Finally, we saw the outline of a small village—rows of wooden cabins and a few bigger buildings like the schoolhouse and general store—on the banks of the Peel River. There are no outside roads to this village even today. The caribou nearby are the primary source of food of the Gwich'in First Nation, who traditionally built their communities to align with the caribou's migration patterns. The caribou are also routinely hunted by other Indigenous peoples, including the Iñupiat, Inuvialuit, Hän, and Northern Tutchone.

I recall The Judge saying to me the next day, "You know, Ian, do you realize the magnificence of what we saw yesterday? It's the last of North America, the eighth wonder of the world." In his final report three years later, Justice Berger would expand on these thoughts:

*The Northern Yukon is an arctic and sub-arctic wilderness of incredible beauty, a rich and varied ecosystem inhabited by thriving populations of wildlife. The Porcupine caribou herd, comprising 110,000 animals or more, ranges throughout the Northern Yukon and into Alaska. It is one of the last great caribou herds in North America. The Yukon Coastal Plain and the Old Crow Flats provide essential habitat for hundreds of thousands of migratory waterfowl each summer and fall. This unique ecosystem—the caribou, the birds, other wildlife, and the wilderness itself—has survived until now because of the inaccessibility of the area. But it is vulnerable to the kind of disturbance that industrial development would bring.*

The royal commission report recommended that no pipeline should be built along the northern Yukon coast and that the calving grounds of the porcupine caribou should be preserved by establishing a wilderness park in the area.

The Mulroney government accepted Berger's recommendations, and in 1992 renamed the Northern Yukon National Park the Ivvavik National Park, to be jointly managed by Inuit people and Parks Canada as agreed in a 1984 land claim. In 1995, under similar circumstances, the Chrétien government created the Vuntut National Park in an area adjacent to and just south of Ivvavik, to be co-managed by the Vuntut First Nation and Parks Canada.

There is a huge benefit to the caribou from the fact these parks came out of the land claims process and are therefore constitutionally protected. In plain English, in order to get a pipeline through those parks, or drill inside of them, you need the consent of the First Nations on whose land the activity is to take place. Alternately, you need to change the Canadian Constitution. The latter being extremely difficult to achieve, the porcupine caribou herd is protected forever—in Canada at least.

As ugly as Trump's new drilling amendment is, this tale does not have to have a sad ending. Remember, the Republicans have tried this more than 50 times since the Exxon Valdez tanker spill showed Alaskans, Canadians and the world how vulnerable the Arctic was to oil and gas development. And beyond national parks, Canada has another tool in its belt to protect the herd.

On July 17, 1987, the Mulroney government and Reagan administration signed the Canada-U.S. Agreement on the Conservation of the Porcupine Caribou Herd—a positive binational effort to protect the species from damage to its habitat and migration routes. Under the treaty, which is still in force, Canada has the right to be consulted before any drilling can take place in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. We should exercise that right.

The treaty also established an eight-member binational board with the responsibility to look at the potential impacts of oil and gas development in the border region and, if necessary, to raise hell about it. At the very least the board could insist on a proper environmental assessment of drilling and other projects. Problem is, the board is in limbo at the moment.

The Trudeau government has been vocal with the U.S. in the recent past on caribou protection. Now they have to be really vocal. Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Chief Bruce Charlie told the CBC in October he would be asking the prime minister to be tough with Trump about maintaining the protected area. "We'll fight to the very end for this," he said.

The government could do this by building on the actions of Pierre Trudeau, Tom Berger, Brian Mulroney and Jean Chrétien to reinvigorate the Canada-U.S. treaty provisions in partnership with the First Nations stewards of the Arctic. For the future of the porcupine caribou, let's hope they do. **M**



LUKE SAVAGE

# Conservatism against democracy

## Trump and the radical right

*This is not conservatism as we have known it. This is not Republicanism as we have known it. These are race-baiting ideas, anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant ideas, anti-woman—all key tenets making up an emerging racist ideology known as the “Alt-Right.” Now Alt-Right is short for “Alternative Right.”*

**S**UCH WERE THE words of the Democratic Party’s presidential nominee, Hillary Rodham Clinton, in August 2016—less than three months before her shock electoral college defeat by Donald Trump.

Clinton’s rhetorical attempt to separate Trumpism and its militant fringes from the Republican Party and the conservative mainstream channelled a deeper current of thinking among liberals and other American elites. Namely, that the former is wholly an exception to, and aberration from, the latter, which, we are ceaselessly told, is merely interested in pursuing the more respectable goals of smaller, less meddlesome government and defending states’ rights.

Trump’s surprise election, to the most powerful political office in the world, was understandably experienced by many as a sudden and cataclysmic event. Yet more than a year later, we still find something resembling Clinton’s dichotomy informing and inflecting much of the cultural mainstream’s understanding of the Trump phenomenon, often with poor and decidedly unhelpful results.

This suggestion forms one of the key narratives in David Frum’s bestselling anti-Trump polemic, *Trumpocracy: The Corruption of the American Republic*, which undertakes great effort to salvage the idea of a more upright

### DISCUSSED IN THIS ESSAY



#### **ALT-AMERICA** THE RISE OF THE RADICAL RIGHT IN THE AGE OF TRUMP

DAVID NEIWART

Verso, 2017

#### **DEMOCRACY IN CHAINS** THE DEEP HISTORY OF THE RADICAL RIGHT’S STEALTH PLAN FOR AMERICA

NANCY MACLEAN

Viking, 2017

#### **TRUMPOCRACY** THE CORRUPTION OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC

DAVID FRUM

HarperCollins, 2018

#### **KILL ALL NORMIES** ONLINE CULTURE WARS FROM 4CHAN AND TUMBLE TO TRUMP AND THE OLD RIGHT

ANGELA NAGLE

Zero Books, 2017

#### **UNDER THE COVER OF CHAOS** TRUMP AND THE BATTLE FOR THE AMERICAN RIGHT

LAWRENCE GROSSBERG

Pluto Press, 2018

conservatism from the Trumpian nightmare. It continues to stimulate the sometimes well-intentioned but ultimately misguided project to forge a cross-partisan Resistance, consisting of everyone from committed Democrats to anti-Trump columnists at conservative house journals like *National Review*.

But the widespread impulse to treat the Trump phenomenon as some temporary short circuit in the history of American conservatism, or as a sudden spasm in an otherwise functional political experiment (comforting as that idea may be), carries with it considerable risk. That risk can already be seen in the lacklustre responses of some leading Democrats to the rolling offensives of the Republican congressional majority, from tax cuts to anti-immigration initiatives. Such is the president’s unpopularity, some may conclude, that a relatively conventional electoral strategy is all that is required.

Eventually, perhaps (so this reading of events goes), the Republican Party will once again take the more respectable form it assumed during the candidacies of figures like John McCain and Mitt Romney. The midterms will bring the Democrats surging back in the House and Senate, building momentum for 2020, after which an acceptable equilibrium can be restored.

Regardless of outlook or political affiliation, those of us who both recognize and seek to understand the Trump phenomenon, particularly in light of a seemingly ascendant far-right worldwide, would be advised to eschew this complacent thinking. The Trump presidency did not emerge from nowhere, and it cannot be stressed enough that many of its root



causes and core elements will still need to be addressed following its defeat.

Amidst the largely uninspiring bonanza of mainstream Trump lit (e.g., Frum, Timothy Snyder's cash grab *On Tyranny*) and cultural paraphernalia (Steven Spielberg's cloyingly smug film *The Post*) there has been a less recognized but vastly more interesting current of commentary emanating from the alternative media, smaller publishing houses, and journalists and historians determined to pierce through the often deafening white noise.

In contrast to a media culture now predisposed to short-termism and rapid response, Angela Nagle's detailed study of the alt-right subculture, *Kill All Normies*, and Lawrence Grossberg's *Under the Cover of Chaos: Trump and the Battle for the American Right* seek more serious explanations and accounts for the Trump phenomenon and the various currents surrounding it. Within this emerging cannon, two books, both published in 2017, stand out as particularly interesting efforts at understanding the right's ascendancy in America.

The first is Nancy MacLean's *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America*, an expansive history of conservative ideas whose story begins in the 1950s but reaches back into the 19th century. The second is David Neiwart's *Alt America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump*, a more recent history of the far-right fringe. Only the latter deals with the man himself, Trump, but both offer us useful, if somewhat different, accounts of how he got to the presidency and who put him there.

Neiwart's story appropriately begins amidst the wreckage of the 2016 U.S. political scene. Most Americans surveying the damage, he writes in the book's opening chapter, are "startled by the ugliness and violence that has crept into the nation's electoral politics," and recognize its source in the form of "the sudden appearance of the racist far right as players."

But, argues Neiwart, these groups never really went away and have, in fact, "been flourishing in recent years, fed by the rivulets of hate mongering and disinformation-fueled propaganda flowing out of right wing media," along with the mainstream media's complacency.

What follows is a rich and detailed account of various fringe groups and their activities: neo-Nazis and other white identitarians, Christian fundamentalists, "patriots" and neo-confederates, anti-Semites, conspiracy theorists, Tea Party fanatics and others. Even before the Trump ascendancy, Neiwart argues, the threat posed by these militants and their ideas was all too visible in the form of rising instances of racially motivated domestic terrorism, such as Dylann Roof's murderous shooting spree at the Methodist Episcopal Church in South Carolina in June 2015.

In Trump, Neiwart argues—and convincingly demonstrates with primary sources—many of these groups had found their muse. While Trump is not, according to the author, a fascist in the formal meaning of the term, his candidacy and subsequent presidency have been hugely emboldening to the militants of the radical right, thanks

largely to his abandonment of the more restrained racial dog whistles common to some of his less ostentatious progenitors.

For Neiwart, information is the key to understanding the robustness and persistence of the far-right. It is nothing short of "an alternative universe," he writes, whose residents have "reconfigured their imaginations.... [It is a place where] suppositions take the place of facts, and conspiracy theories become concrete realities."

Internet conspiracism unsurprisingly features heavily in the account, particularly in the chapter Neiwart devotes to the alt-right. The conspiracy industry, from Alex Jones's widely viewed Infowars to Breitbart to even more fringe sources, thrives on being a closed system of confirmation bias and weaponized misinformation. This feature inevitably leads to ever deeper radicalization and eventually the full-throated embrace of authoritarianism.

"Trump is the logical end result of a years long series of assaults by the American right, not just on American liberalism but on democratic institutions themselves," says Neiwart. "With Trump the long-term creeping radicalization of the right has come home to roost."

*Alt-America*, particularly given its level of detail and decades-spanning narrative, has much to commend it and there is no basis for disputing the conclusion quoted above. Those seeking to better understand the history of the racist militants who accreted to the Trump campaign, and so terrifyingly made their presence felt last summer in Charlottesville, Virginia, could look no further than his book.

Nonetheless, Neiwart's focus on the epistemological structures and psychology of the radical right, while undoubtedly important, at times risks giving the impression of a malignant information system rather than a conscious political project at work. (To his credit, the author doesn't let liberal America entirely off the hook and refuses to dabble in the kind of amateur, Trump-voter anthropology that's become such common fare for the legacy media.)

While Neiwart very much understands the long-term influence of the movement's many fringe groups in attacking and degrading democratic institutions, defending racial exclusion and perpetuating racist violence, *Alt-America* contains little analysis of how sublimated versions of all three have enjoyed a parallel existence within the ideologically conscious mainstream of the conservative movement and the Republican Party.

In *Democracy in Chains*, historian Nancy MacLean also seeks to pull back the covers on the sinister and secretive thinking of the radical right. But her subject is something altogether different from the activities of militiamen, neo-Nazis and other groups operating on the cultural fringes: MacLean is interested in the highly educated ideologues and intellectual activists of the conservative movement.

Beginning her story with the southern backlash to the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision (in 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled state-enforced school segregation unconstitutional), MacLean develops a rich historical narrative detailing nothing less than a conscious, decades-long counterinsurgency by billionaires and other white elites

aimed at replacing democratic governance with oligarchy.

Her main character is the Tennessee (and eventual Nobel prize-winning economist) James McGill Buchanan. While he is less known in the pantheon of conservative intellectuals than figures such as Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, MacLean makes a strong case that Buchanan played a formative role in shaping over a half-century of right-wing politics, beginning with his efforts to establish a centre for political economy and social philosophy at the University of Virginia in the wake of the Brown decision.

This was, in many ways, the foundational event of modern American conservatism, says MacLean; the moment at which conservatives would visibly begin to embrace the ideological themes that would prevail in the decades that followed, informing the doomed 1964 presidential candidacy of Barry Goldwater, the thinking of leading Republicans from Nixon to Reagan, the efforts of contemporary GOPers like Scott Walker and Chris Christie.

Buchanan's pioneering efforts, MacLean argues, would lead U.S. conservatism, if windingly, into the ongoing war against democracy spearheaded by plutocrats such as Charles and David Koch, with its rhetoric of "individual rights" over and against the ostensibly opposed actions of the state, its rabid embrace of the market as the preeminent sphere in human life and property rights as the basis for freedom, and the foregrounding of "states' rights."

She writes:

*A quest that began as a quiet attempt to prevent the state of Virginia from having to meet basic national democratic standards of fair treatment and equal protection under the law would, some sixty years later, become the veritable opposition of itself: a stealth bid to reverse-engineer all of America, at both the state and national levels, back to the political economy and oligarchic governance of midcentury Virginia, minus the segregation.*

As a historian of social movements, MacLean is as keenly interested in the specifics of Buchanan's ideas as their impact. (The book apparently came into existence when she quite accidentally stumbled upon the economist's archives and correspondence.) For Buchanan and the wealthy patrons in his orbit, she argues, "equal protection under the law," as stipulated by U.S. federal courts, primarily implied coercion and an imposition on "the rights of the individual." Liberty, in this view, consists in limiting the state's role as much as possible, at least when it comes to non-disciplinary functions like health care, education and social protection.

Those ideas will be familiar enough to anyone who has engaged with modern conservatism. But, as MacLean shows, their actual origin lies not in the stolid calculus of economics, but rather in the profoundly antidemocratic social theory of the 19th-century U.S. vice-president John Calhoun, nicknamed "the Marx of the master class" by historian Richard Hofstadter.

In the views of both Buchanan and Calhoun, the democratic majority posed a mortal threat to the elite economic minority and thus had to be curtailed. Intervention by the state itself, influenced as it was by majoritarian pressures, in fact created and enabled a class society over and above the labour relations inherent in a capitalist economy. Popular movements of any kind that might threaten their economic privileges or exact concessions through the state, whether the civil rights movement, feminism or organized labour, were also a threat. The solution, they believed, amounted to nothing less than mass disenfranchisement, maximum political obstructionism, and the divestment of the state from many of the responsibilities it had assumed with the New Deal.

As MacLean demonstrates, far from being a democratic theory in competition with liberalism or socialism, the ideas Buchanan taught and promoted, with the help of activist billionaires and sympathetic Republicans, consciously set out to destroy the institutions of democracy

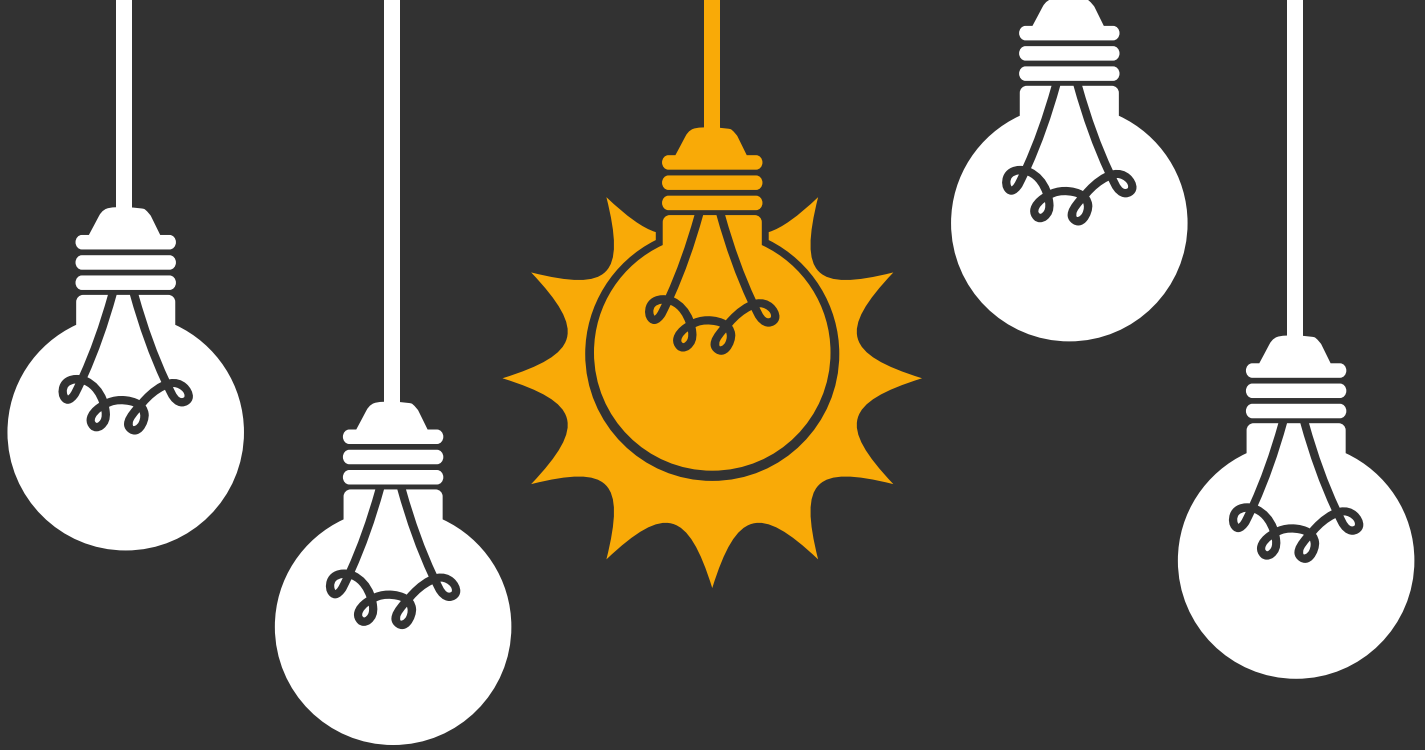
altogether. To this end, their alliance with white supremacy was not just incidental but foundational—an outgrowth of southern grievances born from the federal desegregation efforts of the 1950s and '60s, and ruling class backlash to the redistributive properties of postwar Keynesianism and the New Deal.

In trying to ground the Trump phenomenon within the broader history of American conservatism, to which conservatives should we look? To the fringe militants and neo-confederate conspiracists of the socially atomized, jackboot-sporting far-right? Or to the academy-dwelling intellectuals and economists who, decades ago, quietly set their antidemocratic counterrevolution into motion?

The answer is that we must turn to both groups: the one is not independent of the other. Racism and oligarchic capitalism have always been intimately connected in America, and their primary political locus since the 1950s has been the conservative movement and the Republican Party that represents it.

Let's face it, the GOP has been all too happy, for many decades, to gesture and wink clandestinely at those on the radical fringes. Trump may be an aberration in the sense that he was not the first preference of the party establishment, its leading intellectuals or its billionaire power brokers. But, whether he knows it or not, the president is arguably a purer expression of their core values and beliefs than those politicians hatched from think-tanks and chambers of commerce that the party usually selects as its tribune.

In Trump, elite contempt for democracy and its racist undertones becomes explicit in the figure of a billionaire uninterested in rhetorical deference to its norms or constraints, and who, in 2016, traded in the Republican Party's familiar dog whistle for a foghorn. A more nuanced and effective response to Trumpism, therefore, does not consist in rescuing the better angels of American conservatism, but in recognizing the overriding threat to democracy it poses and fighting back by rallying to democracy's defence. **M**



# 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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

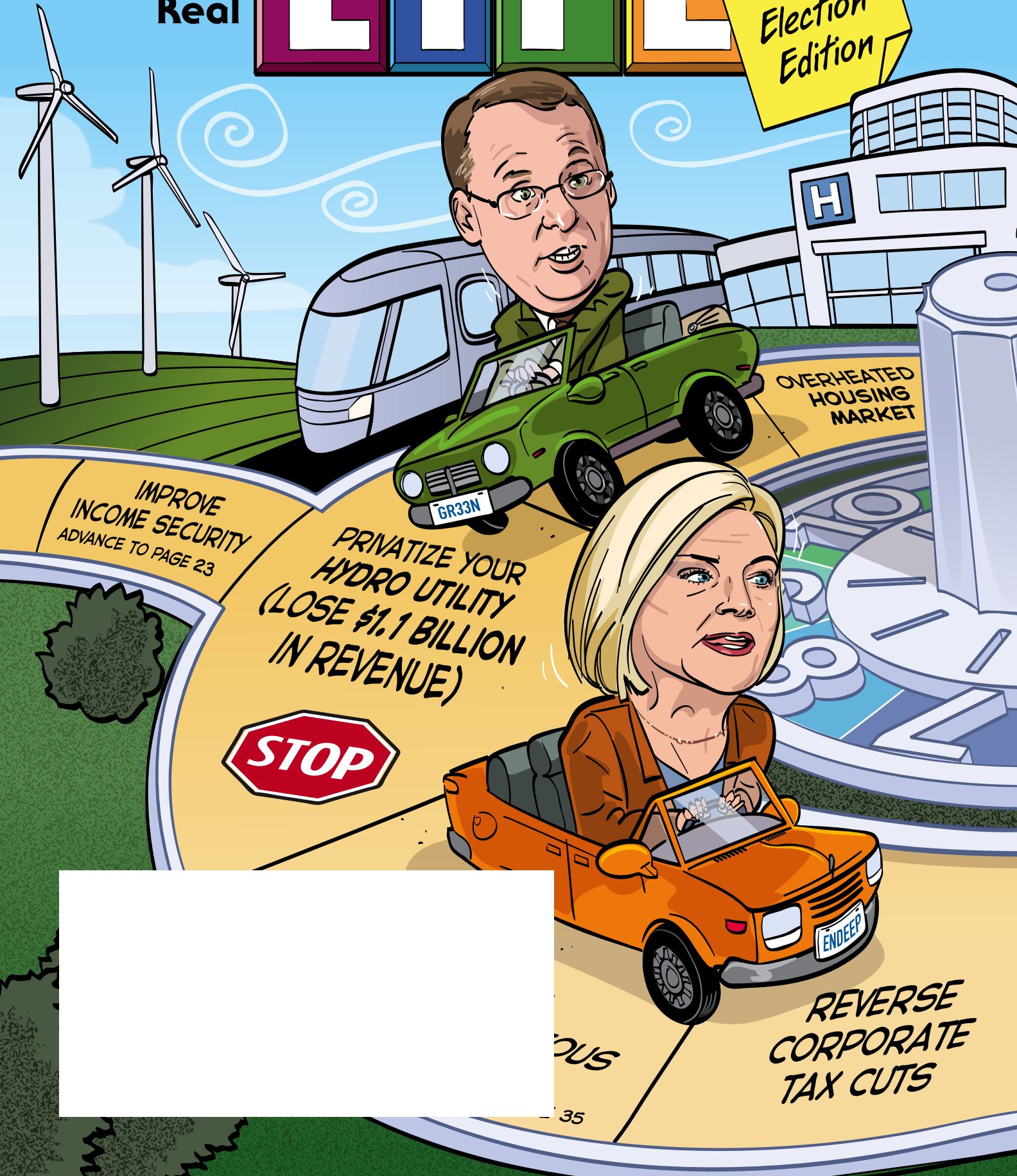
Please do not trade my name with other organizations.

Return this form to:  
**500-251 BANK ST.  
OTTAWA, ON K2P 1X3**  
Or donate online at:  
**WWW.POLICYALTERNATIVES.CA**

Is  
This  
Real

# LOLIFE

Ontario  
Election  
Edition



IMPROVE  
INCOME SECURITY  
ADVANCE TO PAGE 23

PRIVATIZE YOUR  
HYDRO UTILITY  
(LOSE \$1.1 BILLION  
IN REVENUE)

**STOP**

OVERHEATED  
HOUSING  
MARKET

REVERSE  
CORPORATE  
TAX CUTS