

# MONITOR

Progressive news, views and ideas

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## MONITOR

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Please send feedback to  
monitor@policyalternatives.ca.

Editor: Stuart Trew  
Senior Designer: Tim Scarth  
Layout: Susan Purtell  
Editorial Board: Alyssa O'Dell,  
Shannon Daub, Katie Raso, Erika  
Shaker, Rick Telfer, Jason Moores

Contributing Writers:  
Lynne Fernandez, Elaine Hughes,  
Asad Ismi, Cynthia Khoo, Anthony  
Morgan.

*CCPA National Office*  
141 Laurier Avenue W, Suite 1000  
Ottawa, ON K1P 5J3  
Tel: 613-563-1341  
Fax: 613-233-1458  
ccpa@policyalternatives.ca  
www.policyalternatives.ca

*CCPA BC Office*  
520-700 West Pender Street  
Vancouver, BC V6C 1G8  
Tel: 604-801-5121  
Fax: 604-801-5122  
ccpabc@policyalternatives.ca

*CCPA Manitoba Office*  
301-583 Ellice Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1Z7  
Tel: 204-927-3200  
ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca

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

*CCPA Ontario Office*  
720 Bathurst Street, Room 307  
Toronto, ON M5S 2R4  
Tel: 416-598-5985  
ccpaon@policyalternatives.ca

*CCPA Saskatchewan Office*  
2nd Floor, 2138 McIntyre Street  
Regina, SK S4P 2R7  
Tel: 306-924-3372  
Fax: 306-586-5177  
ccpasask@sasktel.net

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

### Contributors

**Matthew Behrens** is a writer and community organizer with Homes not Bombs. For years, the group's antipoverty organizing was the subject of intense surveillance by the antiterrorism units of the RCMP and Toronto Police.

**Robin Browne** is an African-Canadian communications professional and the co-lead of the 613-819 Black Hub, living in Ottawa. His blog is called The "True" North.

**Ram Kumar Bhandari** is a social justice activist based in Nepal who has over a decade's experience working with marginalized communities, in particular the families of the disappeared, victims and survivors of conflict, ex-combatant youth, ethnic minorities, rural youth, and women's groups. Ram helped launch a community radio station in Nepal, the Network of Families of the Disappeared (NEFAD), the Committee for Social Justice, and the Conflict Victims Common Platform, among other organizations.

**Angelo DiCaro** is Director of Research at Unifor, Canada's largest private sector union and the key union representing auto workers.

**Mihskakwan James Harper** is from Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation in Treaty 8, Alberta. He graduated from the University of Manitoba with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and is currently pursuing a master's in renewable energy from KTH Royal Institute of Technology and Ecole Polytechnique.

**Trish Hennessy** is Director of the Think Upstream project and a senior communications strategist with the CCPA's national office. She is focused on social determinants of health, sustainable development goals, income inequality, decent work, an inclusive economy and well-being budgeting. Trish was the founding director of the CCPA-Ontario and co-founded the Ontario Living Wage Network.

**Joe Kadi** is a teacher and writer living in Calgary, Alberta, within the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta.

**Seth Klein** served for 22 years (1996–2018) as the founding director of the CCPA's B.C. office and is the author of *A Good War: Mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency*, which is out from ECW Press this September. Seth founded and served for eight years as co-chair of the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition and is a founder of the Metro Vancouver Living Wage for Families campaign.

**Richard Sharpe** is a member of the 613/819 Black Hub and United Nations Decade for People of African Descent Push Coalition and leads initiatives in support of Canada's commitments to the United Nations Decade for People of African Descent. His work regionally, nationally and within the federal public service is intended to improve the condition of Black and African diaspora communities in Canada.

**Katherine Scott** is a senior researcher at the CCPA's national office where she directs the centre's gender equality and public policy work. She has worked in the community sector as a researcher, writer and advocate for 20 years, focused on a range of issues from social policy to inequality to funding for nonprofits.

**Scott Sinclair** is a senior researcher at the CCPA's national office where he directs the centre's Trade and Investment Research Project (TIRP). TIRP brings together researchers from over 20 Canadian NGOs and trade unions and collaborates with international researchers to analyze and propose alternatives to corporate-driven globalization.



**Michael DeForge** lives in Toronto, Ontario. His comics and illustrations have been featured in *Jacobin*, *The New York Times*, *Bloomberg*, *The Believer*, *The Walrus* and *Maisonneuve*. He worked as a designer on *Adventure Time* for six seasons. His published books include *Very Casual*, *A Body Beneath*, *Ant Colony*, *First Year Healthy*, *Dressing*, *Big Kids*, *Sticks Angelica*, *Folk Hero* and *A Western World*.

# plotting a JUST RECOVERY from COVID-19

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*In loving memory of John Loxley, who taught us  
that governments, like people, always have choices  
(see back cover for the CCPA statement on John's passing).*

- Activist government • Gender equality
- Black empowerment • A Canadian industrial strategy
- Reconciliation and the management of biodiversity
  - Fair trade and a new internationalism

*Articles by*

Trish Hennessy • Katherine Scott • Richard Sharpe  
 • Angelo DiCaro • Mihsakwan James Harper  
 • Scott Sinclair and Stuart Trew  
*on how we can turn the pandemic crisis into  
an opportunity for lasting change.*

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# We want a just recovery, no ifs, ands or Butts

**DON'T KNOW** who first used “build back better” as a slogan for the post-COVID recovery. Today the rather awful catchphrase is unavoidable wherever you look. Joe Biden promises to “Build Back Better” if he’s elected president in November (it’s the title of his election platform with Kamala Harris). Boris Johnson claims his government is going to “build back better and build back greener” after the U.K.’s economic drubbing by pandemic job loss. And a new Task Force for a Resilient Recovery in Canada thinks these three words, or the ideas behind them, are the key to uniting and directing private and government finance toward “the jobs, infrastructure and growth that will keep Canada competitive in the clean economy of the 21st century.”

So, what does it mean to build back better? Beginning around 2004, the term applied to infrastructure reconstruction strategies meant to improve a community’s physical, social and economic conditions following major disasters. According to one backgrounder on the concept, “the theory behind [building back better] supports the inclusion of the people... into every stage of reconstruction planning and implementation. This means the psychological, social and economic impacts of every reconstruction and recovery decision made need careful consideration in order to ensure that people’s needs are put first” (emphasis added).

Today, governments, banks and other big corporations, environmental organizations and everyone in between have claimed “build back better” as a mantra for making sure pandemic recovery policies, in the words of a recent OECD report, “trigger investment and behavioural

changes that will reduce the likelihood of future shocks and increase society’s resilience to them when they do occur.” That report, *Building Back Better: A Sustainable, Resilient Recovery after COVID-19*, also urges governments to “focus on well-being and inclusiveness” and to align pandemic investments “with long-term emission reduction goals, factoring in resilience to climate impacts, slowing biodiversity loss and increasing circularity of supply chains.”

Sounds great—sign us up! Not so fast. Like *resilience*, *sustainability* and even *people’s needs*, “build back better” is a loaded, empty and contested concept all at once. The ambiguity is unavoidable and needn’t be a bad thing. At least in Canada, the recovery is still a partly filled in canvas and progressives hold some of the brushes. With the lengthy COVID-19 pandemic continuing to rupture and transform the global economy, and practices of liberal (or neoliberal) governance in transition, there are possibly better opportunities today than during the Great Recession to reclaim privatized or marketized parts of the social economy (e.g., housing, child care, drug insurance) for the common good.

At the end of July, the CCPA released an Alternative Federal Budget Recovery Plan to convince the Canadian public and our elected governments of the need to think even bigger than most of the “triple B” plans out there. It’s more of a build-forward than a build-back plan, but there are definite similarities. For example, in an introductory AFB macroeconomic chapter, CCPA economist David Macdonald writes that “the old normal was unacceptable because it left far too many people behind. It

led to preventable suffering and early deaths.” Moreover, he says, “the old normal was putting us at much higher risk of natural disasters, and on track to making our planet unliveable.”

However, there are fundamental differences between the AFB Recovery Plan and other Canadian calls for building back better. The Task Force for a Resilient Recovery, for example, which includes Trudeau’s former chief of staff Gerald Butts (now at the business consulting firm Eurasia Group), merely repackages some old and some newer market-governance techniques for the COVID moment. These include “leveraging private capital, targeted tax cuts and incentives, regulatory sandboxes (to enable innovation), and behavioural ‘nudges’—to spur jobs and generate lasting economic activity.”

It’s fair to say this response to COVID-19 would entrench rather than scale back market relations as the defining feature of the Canadian social economic model. Much as certain ideologues in government might be happy “nudging” corporations and their financiers into new productive endeavours, we have had a glimpse of at least one alternative: direct public financing and guidance of basic public services and essential manufacturing, which have both strained under the pandemic demand as a result of a generation of cost-cutting government austerity.

With the right emphasis, and a commitment to correcting the many inequities in Canadian society, a just recovery *could* put people’s needs first, as “build back better” models say it should. But only if we are clear about what that means. **M**



## Vaccine research should be truly global

There was a lot of noise in the media this summer about alleged Russian hacking of Western research into a COVID-19 vaccine. Justin Trudeau has stated that countries are co-operating in that research, but it appears Russia is excluded. It matters not who discovers the vaccine. Co-operate and get it done.

Just as Donald Trump's and Jair Bolsonaro's first concern is getting people back to work to assure a minimum negative impact on profits, Western nations seem preoccupied that the vaccine's discovery should be controlled in a fashion that the pharmaceutical industry receives its take. It matters not to these interests that, due to not having a viable vaccine in Russia, there could be a serious mega-spike in COVID-19 cases there, which might spread across our planet in a second uncontrollable wave causing an even higher death toll.

It will be society which brings into being and pays for a viable vaccine and therefore it should be society, as a whole, which benefits from it—regardless

of which country discovers the vaccine.

**Allan Hansen,**  
Edmonton, AB

## Antiracism and inequality

I agree with Anthony N. Morgan that there will be little progress in antiracism development in Canada until we reduce inequality experienced by people of colour and other marginalized groups in our population (“To make Black lives matter, make Black jobs matter too,” July/August 2020). When we look at who suffers most with the COVID-19 pandemic we find it is marginalized groups such as Indigenous people, immigrants and Black people in our society.

True, new curricula and education in general may go some way in reducing racism, but without a change in who receives and amasses money we will not notice much change in the presence of racism in Canada 20 years from now. We must listen to Morgan when he writes, “I believe now is the time to revisit, reform and/or reintroduce stronger employment equity legislation.” Beyond legislation, we need economic change for antiracism to rise beyond sentimentalism.

**Barry Hammond,**  
Winnipeg, MB

## Mixed messages on mixed income housing

I was happy to see the *Monitor* feature the affordable housing crisis (“An opportunity to end

housing poverty,” Natasha Bulowski, May/June 2020). However, the first article had me confused. After a lengthy discussion about the potential for the nonprofit sector to provide affordable housing, the author points out the weaknesses of nonprofits, concluding that handing housing responsibilities to that sector contributes to the crisis. That had me scratching my head. Does the research indicate that nonprofit housing is helpful or harmful?

As well, mixed-income type housing is at first described as desirable—making for healthier communities and also benefitting middle-income families that struggle with affordability—and then later as undesirable (due to loss of rent-geared-to-income units).

I was also disappointed that the discussion about nonprofit housing made no mention of housing co-operatives, which are numerous in Canada (over 92,000 units) and are run according to democratic control. That responds to one of the criticisms of nonprofit housing noted in the article: lack of transparency and accountability.

It seems to me that the development of nonprofit housing (preferably co-operatives) and public housing could coexist and contribute together to alleviating the housing crisis—if our governments step up to that challenge.

That's the other piece we need to focus on: impressing on our representatives what must be done to address this dire situation. I would like, for

instance, to see an analysis of the National Housing Strategy—its strengths and weaknesses, and how it could be improved.

**Rena Ginsberg,**  
Toronto, ON

## Editor's response

The CCPA's provincial and national offices have published a number of analyses and commentaries on the federal government's National Housing Strategy. In 2018, for example, CCPA-BC economist Marc Lee made a submission to a federal public consultation on the NHS in which he calls on the government to shore up two core aspects of the strategy: a much larger public build-out of non-market housing, and a more coherent housing and income support system based on Manitoba's Rent Assist program. These measures would attack the problem of the financialization of housing and make sure that landlords cannot appropriate rental subsidies by hiking rents. The Alternative Federal Budget Recovery Plan (the focus of this issue of the *Monitor*) also contains a housing chapter (written by Nick Falvo) that recommends improvements to the NHS. Readers can find everything the CCPA has produced recently on housing by following this link: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/issues/housing-and-homelessness>.

*Send your letters to [monitor@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:monitor@policyalternatives.ca).*



## New from the CCPA

### COVID-19 support: keep it coming

The federal government's role as backstop during the COVID-19 pandemic shouldn't end with the first wave of reopening but ramp up with more investments to ensure a just, equitable and sustainable recovery, according to the **Alternative Federal Budget (AFB) Recovery Plan**, released at the end of July. The project, like the annual AFB, was a collaboration between many organizations and researchers from a variety of sectors, populations and areas of expertise.

Among the priorities in the AFB Recovery Plan requiring immediate action are universal public child care (so people can get back to work), reforming employment insurance (to be at least as sufficient as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, or CERB), strengthening safeguards for public health, decarbonizing the economy and tackling the gender, racial and income inequality that COVID-19 has further exposed (see pages 12 to 25 of this issue of the *Monitor* for more on the AFB and a just recovery).

"COVID-19 has opened the public eye to the

capacity of the government to help regular people, not just the banks and corporate Canada, in times of crisis," says CCPA economist **David Macdonald**, co-ordinator of the AFB and this Recovery Plan. "We should be using the same approach to ensure that everyone—especially the most disadvantaged and marginalized—have the supports they need to recover."

### Research priorities skip renewables

A new report from the **Corporate Mapping Project** and **Parkland Institute** examines the implications of public research funding priorities for sustainable energy development. In **Knowledge for an Ecologically Sustainable Future?**, University of Alberta political economist Laurie Adkin traces funding from multiple governmental and corporate sources over a period of 20 years to document which areas of energy and environmental research have been prioritized in Alberta's leading research universities. Adkin confirms the heavy weighting of this investment in fossil fuels-related research and technology development centred in faculties of engineering.

Renewable energies, energy efficiency, conservation, social planning and sustainable agriculture, on the other hand, have been comparatively underfunded. For example, 63% of Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) funding went to fossil fuels R&D compared to 11% for renewables.

Canada Foundation for Innovation funding has favoured fossil fuels R&D over other categories of energy research by a ratio of 4:1. And provincial agencies have allocated about \$6.4 billion to fossil fuels-related research since 1997, with almost two-thirds of this taking the form of royalty credits or grants to corporations.

### Care workers need a raise, not praise

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the holes in our social safety net painfully obvious. A horrific example is the impact of the pandemic in long-term care homes. In their new **CCPA-Ontario** paper, **What Does it Cost to Care?**, **Sheila Block** and **Simran Dhunna** show that it would cost about \$1.8 billion to increase care levels and equalize wage rates across the long-term care sector in this fiscal year. That's just over 1% of total provincial program spending in Ontario, and less than half what the government has given up (\$4 billion) in tax cuts. "The premier has heaped praise on frontline health care workers for their work during the pandemic, and rightly so," says Block. "Now is the time to go beyond words and support them in a very real way, and that means better jobs and more co-workers."

### Loxley's last words on social impact bonds

The irreplaceable **John Loxley** sadly passed away on July 28, surrounded by family and listening to songs

from his 77 years of life (see the CCPA's statement of tribute on the back cover of this issue of the *Monitor*). A professor of economics at the University of Manitoba and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, John was a dear friend and colleague of the CCPA and will be sorely missed. A founder of the alternative budget concept and long-standing critic of the public-private partnership model of infrastructure construction and public service delivery, John had recently turned his expert attention to social impact bonds (SIBs), a kind of P3 for government-delivered social services.

In a paper out this June, **Social Impact Bonds and the Financing of Child Welfare Revisited**, John updates his research on three SIB case studies he wrote about in 2017—the Sweet Dreams Supportive Living project in Saskatoon, Canada, and the Newpin Social Benefit Bond and Benevolent Society Social Benefit Bond in New South Wales, Australia—and discusses a relatively new Australian SIB, the Newpin Social Benefit Bond of Queensland. The paper finds that SIBs, with their accompanying high transaction costs and exorbitant returns to investors, are not needed and should be replaced by normal government funding arrangements.

*For more reports, briefing notes, blogs, videos and infographics from the CCPA's national and provincial offices, please visit [www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca).*



## Colour-coded Justice

ANTHONY N. MORGAN

# A litany of reports, but little accountability for police violence against Black Canadians

**WHEN IT COMES** to anti-Black racism in Canadian policing, we don't have an information gap, we have a police accountability gap. I'm reminded of this as I review some of the findings of two significant reports released jointly in August by the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

*A Disparate Impact* is the second interim report to come out of the commission's inquiry into racial profiling and racial discrimination of Black persons by the Toronto Police (the first report, *A Collective Impact*, was released in 2018). It includes two expert reports from criminologist Scot Wortley, who analyzed police data from 2013 to 2017 to uncover systemic racial disparity in arrests and charges and in the use of police violence on Black people.

The reports note that while Black people only make up 8.8% of Toronto's population, they account for about one-third (32%) of all the charges in the charge dataset while White people and other racialized groups were underrepresented. Black people also made up 38% of cannabis charges despite conviction rates and many studies showing that Black people use cannabis at similar rates to White people.

Wortley further found that Black people were involved in a quarter (25%) of all Special Investigations Unit cases resulting in death, serious injury or allegations of sexual assault—an overrepresentation that cannot be explained by factors such as patrol zones in low-crime and high-crime neighbourhoods, violent crime rates and/or average income. And Black people were more likely to be involved in use-of-force cases where police stopped and questioned someone ("proactive" policing) than in cases where police responded to a call for assistance ("reactive" policing).

For Black communities and their allies, these findings confirm what we've known for decades: anti-Blackness

pervades policing. While our policing and justice systems need to do much better to institutionalize the collection and public reporting of race-based disaggregated data, since at least the late 1980s there have been several significant reports highlighting systemic anti-Black racism in Canadian police services.

After Toronto police shot and killed Lester Donaldson in his rooming house in 1988, the Black Action Defence Committee (BADC) mobilized Toronto's Black communities in protest. These actions were equally a response to the lack of accountability for the Toronto police killings of Buddy Evans in 1978 and Albert Johnson in 1979, as well as the generalized violent mistreatment of Black Torontonians by Toronto police over the course of a decade.

The public agitations ultimately led to the 1988 establishment of the Toronto Race Relations and Policing Task Force. In 1989, a report of the task force included recommendations for increasing accountability, transparency and equity in policing, all in response to concerns of racism experienced by Black Torontonians. This was a watershed moment, as it ultimately led to the passage of the Police Services Act, which established the Special Investigations Unit as a civilian oversight body.

Despite these reforms, Black civilians in Ontario continued to be subjected to high rates of police use of lethal force. As such, the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System was established in 1992, this time in response to the police killing of Raymond Lawrence, a 22-year-old Black man. The commission's final report in 1995 provided further evidence of systemic anti-Black racism in policing and made recommendations similar to those from the earlier task force.

More recently there was the 2017 report of the Independent Police Oversight Review by Justice Michael Tulloch. Some of the important recommendations from this report were reflected in the Ontario government's latest policing legislation, the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, though the most progressive recommendations, such as a complete overhaul of police oversight structures, were ignored.

Despite these and several other critical reports on police violence, including a damning CBC expose on the issue in 2017, Black Torontonians and Black Canadians

Since the late 1970s, no police officer in Canada has ever served time in jail for killing a Black civilian.

remain disproportionately impacted in incidents of racial profiling, police contact (carding, arrests, detentions, searches) and police use of force, especially lethal force. It's important to note that, since the late 1970s, no police officer in Canada has ever served time in jail for killing a Black civilian.

It's time Canada held a commission of inquiry into the policing of Black and Indigenous people, as called for by lawyer Julian Falconer following the outcome of the trial of off-duty police officer Michael Theriault and his brother, Christian. While Christian was acquitted of all charges, Michael was found guilty this year of assaulting a Black youth named Dafonte Miller. Perhaps a commission may finally usher in the sweeping and overdue police reforms we desperately need to help close the police accountability gap that has claimed far too many Black lives in our country. **M**

Anthony N. Morgan is a Toronto-based human rights lawyer, policy consultant and community educator. He wishes to disclose that he used to work for Julian Falconer and previously represented Dafonte Miller in a legal capacity.

## Worth Repeating

### Anticapitalism and antiracism

To love capitalism is to end up loving racism. To love racism is to end up loving capitalism. The conjoined twins are two sides of the same destructive body. The idea that capitalism is merely free markets, competition, free trade, supplying and demanding, and private ownership of the means of production operating for a profit is as whimsical and ahistorical as the White-supremacist idea that calling something racist is the primary form of racism. Popular definitions of capitalism, like popular racist ideas, do not live in historical or material reality. Capitalism is essentially racist; racism is essentially capitalist. They were birthed together from the same unnatural causes, and they shall one day die together from unnatural causes. Or racial capitalism will live into another epoch of theft and rapacious inequality, especially if activists naïvely fight the conjoined twins independently, as if they are not the same.

—Ibram X. Kendi, excerpted from his 2019 book, *How to be an Antiracist*.



## Below the Fold

CYNTHIA KHOO

# Where is the consent of the algorithmically policed?

IN HER 2012 BOOK, *Consent of the Networked*, Rebecca MacKinnon noted that the companies and governments “that build, operate, and govern cyberspace are not being held sufficiently accountable for their exercise of power over the lives and identities of people who use digital networks.” MacKinnon’s observation, that both public and private sector actors are “sovereigns operating without the consent of the networked,” is even more apparent today, not least in the context of policing and law enforcement in the criminal justice system.

Law enforcement agencies across Canada have been deploying various algorithmic policing technologies on the public without any advanced notice, let alone prior informed consent. This lack of due process and democratic engagement is disturbing given the high risk that these technologies may result in a range of constitutional and human rights violations, as new research (in which I was involved) by the Citizen Lab and the International Human Rights Program at the University of Toronto details.

For example, police services in Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto, Peel, Halton, Ottawa, Durham, Niagara and Hamilton, as well as the RCMP, all admitted in early 2020 to having used or tested a controversial facial recognition tool built by Clearview AI. But they only did so in response to media inquiries following a *New York Times* feature on the company, which mentioned its technology was being used by Canadian law enforcement authorities. Similarly, we only found out the Toronto Police Service had been using another facial recognition technology for more than a year after the *Toronto Star* reported the fact in May 2019.

These are high-stakes matters that should not be left up to the discretion of individual police forces. Facial recognition technology poses a significant threat to the right to privacy, by potentially putting an end to the ability to maintain anonymity in public. It also allows police to repurpose data previously collected in a different context (such as using mugshot databases) without any built-in mechanism to ensure that constitutional safeguards against unreasonable search and seizure are appropriately calibrated to account for algorithmically enhanced police capabilities.



On another front, the RCMP has repeatedly engaged in social media surveillance targeting sociopolitical movements for Indigenous rights and racial justice, including Idle No More and Black Lives Matter. Again, the public tends not to hear about it until years later, and only through news media revelations. Additionally, in March 2019, *The Tyee* exposed that the RCMP had been engaging in never-reported “proactive” and “ongoing wide-scale monitoring” of individuals’ Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media activity “for at least two years.” The initiative, known as Project Wide Awake, used software from a Washington, D.C. contractor that also works with U.S. intelligence and defence.

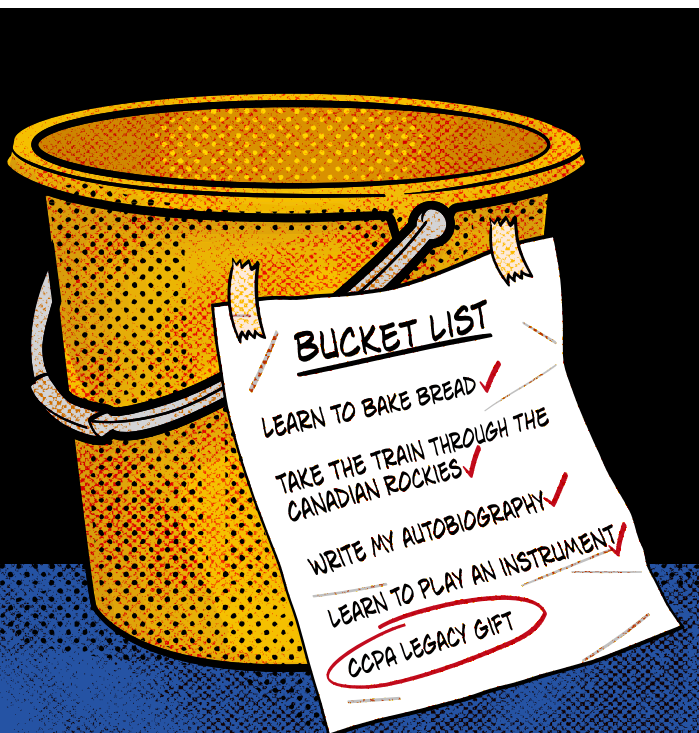
This April, the RCMP issued a public tender seeking expansive and intricate algorithmic social media surveillance capabilities, exacerbating pre-existing concerns with police surveillance chilling freedom of expression. Studies have shown that those who know or merely suspect their online activities are being monitored by government are prone to engage in self-censorship. Further, the right to equality is violated when historically marginalized groups who face systemic discrimination are targeted for disproportionate and particularly invasive scrutiny by law enforcement, especially if they are targeted for surveillance due to the very act of advocating for their equality and civil rights.

The criminal justice system is exactly the wrong place for the kind of entrepreneurial recklessness, techno-solutionism and “ask for forgiveness, not permission” attitude that Silicon Valley encourages. Yet relying on the coerced “forgiveness” of a surveilled population is exactly what law enforcement agencies do every time they roll out another new technology for use on the public without any notice, public dialogue, consultation, or a meaningful and consequential way for the networked, the governed, and the policed to simply say “No.”

## The criminal justice system is exactly the wrong place for the entrepreneurial recklessness and techno-solutionism glorified by Silicon Valley.

The Canadian public, including its most disproportionately policed members, have not consented and do not consent to the use of secretive facial recognition technologies, or to indiscriminate social media surveillance of social movements, or to algorithm-boosted police stops, or (by definition) to any advanced policing technologies we have not been informed of. Relevant questions must be asked *before* use, not after the fact. To that end, the public is owed immediate public disclosures of all algorithmic policing technologies under use, development or consideration by law enforcement agencies across Canada. It does not take an algorithm to know that this is the right thing to do. **M**

Cynthia Khoo is a technology and human rights lawyer, and a research fellow at the Citizen Lab, Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy, University of Toronto.



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## Work Life

LYNNE FERNANDEZ

# Under cover of COVID, an attack on democracy, workers and public assets

**WE HEAR A LOT** these days how you should “never let a good crisis go to waste.” True to their ideological stripes, governments in Alberta and Manitoba have taken this advice to heart. They are using the COVID-19 crisis to go after workers, unions and public institutions, and other right-leaning governments are paying attention.

The Kenney government struck quickly in March, laying off up to 20,000 educational assistants and school custodians. CUPE Alberta President Rory Gill lamented that these workers were callously cut loose and told to get help from federal government programs.

The federal government should be doing the heavy lifting, of course. But some provinces have too eagerly thrown off their public sector workers instead of finding work for them or using the federal wage replacement program to keep them on the books. Will they be called back once the crisis is over?

On July 7, Alberta advanced its reputation as Canada’s pre-eminent anti-worker province with the introduction of the omnibus Bill 32, the “Restoring Balance in Alberta’s Workplace Act.” York University’s David Doorey says the law builds on previous UCP legislation that replaced card check with mandatory voting when workers want to organize.

“[Bill 32] goes much further in undermining the traditional Canadian model of collective bargaining in an effort to drag Canadian labour law downwards to the U.S. model,” he wrote in a post for the Canadian Law of Work

**Alberta advanced its reputation as Canada’s pre-eminent anti-worker province with the omnibus Bill 32.**

Forum. “Other right-wing governments, including those in Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, are paying close attention.”

Soon after taking office, the Pallister government in Manitoba also eliminated card check in favour of mandatory voting, and its antagonistic treatment of public sector workers during the pandemic has been stark. The premier’s overwhelming concern, greater than the pandemic itself, is eliminating Manitoba’s deficit, even though most economists say it is perfectly manageable.

Nonetheless, the deficit was the justification Pallister needed to try and force hundreds of public sector workers to accept wage cuts totalling \$500–900 million. My colleague Jesse Hajer and I found that such a cut, had it gone through, would have had a devastating effect on labour income, tax revenue and provincial GDP.

An outcry from local economists and business leaders caused the government to back off somewhat. Still, 200 Manitoba Hydro workers have been laid off for four months—despite the fact that any moneys saved by the Crown corporation will not help provincial coffers, and there’s no shortage of work at the utility.

Fortunately, governments don’t always get their way. The Pallister government’s obsession with debt reduction led to legislation, in 2018, that set public sector wage increases to 0% for two years, no more than 0.75% in year three and 1% for year four. The Manitoba Federation of Labour contested the bill and, in some rare good news, won. In June, Manitoba Justice Joan McKelvey ruled the legislation prevents workers’ right to collective bargaining and violates freedom of association as guaranteed by the Charter.

A union coalition headed by the Ontario Federation of Labour is fighting a similar Ontario law passed in 2019. Steven Barrett, the coalition’s lead counsel, told the Canadian HR Reporter the Manitoba court “also found that it is unfair to require public sector employees to shoulder the burden of the government’s own revenue reduction decisions.” The ruling is even more relevant in a recession when public sector salaries are needed to support consumer demand.

Not deterred, and perhaps emboldened by Alberta’s pandemic-shielded anti-worker efforts, the Pallister government tried to pass Bill 44, the “Public Utilities Ratepayer Protection and Regulatory Reform Act,” during an emergency sitting of the legislature on April 15. If passed (the opposition NDP temporarily had it taken off the agenda), the bill will strip the Public Utility Board, a hundred-year-old consumer watchdog, of its ability to influence things like hydro rates, while putting Manitoba Hydro on its first steps toward privatization.

COVID-19 is providing cover for all kinds of nefarious moves by government. Campaigns for a just recovery will need to take these tactics seriously if we are to turn this crisis into a legitimate opportunity to rebuild a better world. **M**

**Lynne Fernandez** is the Errol Black Chair in Labour Issues at the CCPA-Manitoba.

# THE CCPA IN PROFILE

## HEATHER LAWSON

### MCINTURFF FELLOW IN GENDER JUSTICE

Heather Lawson is the CCPA's first Kate McInturff Fellow in Gender Justice. A recent McGill University graduate in economics and philosophy, Heather will start a law degree at Dalhousie University this fall. She spent the summer with the CCPA helping to research and design our new gender budgeting portal. The *Monitor* caught up with Heather in Vancouver.

#### **What did you hope to achieve this summer at the CCPA?**

Prior to my work at the CCPA, I was splitting my time between a sexual assault centre, an Indigenous education nonprofit and a unionization drive. In these roles I felt I was doing important "ground level" work, but I was missing the ability to challenge larger systems at play. As a McInturff Fellow, I could do just that. I got a chance to use my knowledge and experience in anti-violence, anti-colonialism and labour rights to research police budgets, prisons and the state of intimate-partner violence during the pandemic. Getting the chance to build on my theoretical knowledge of economics and incorporating feminist research was extremely valuable to me. I was also grateful to gain experience in public policy work before attending law school in the fall.

#### **What are the challenges and opportunities for doing feminist research at this moment?**

Feminist research should be foundationally intersectional. Gender budgeting arose from the recognition that policies are not neutral in how they affect individuals. One major challenge I have encountered is the quality and transparency of government data. Much of the data in Canadian reports is not disaggregated by race. Without the ability to examine how policies affect people as a result of important identifying factors, feminist researchers are less



able to meaningfully engage with anti-oppression work. Right now, mass movements are demanding the dismantling of systemic racism, and many independent studies are filling in important data gaps and educating the public about the ways in which budgeting upholds white supremacy. This grassroots cultural shift is an opportunity for feminist researchers to critically examine the work they are doing and how they are doing it.

#### **What exciting progressive policy or community work are following or involved with?**

The community work that I am most proud of was at the sexual assault centre where I worked in Montreal. It was my job to create partnerships with community organizations representing marginalized groups and I was involved in policy work to more meaningfully address sexual violence on university campuses. From my current home in Vancouver, I have organized a book club for survivors of sexual violence.

#### **What are your plans next year?**

In the fall I will be attending the Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie University. Although I have always intended to focus on criminal law, I am going in with an openness to other fields of study. Working with survivors of sexual violence, I grew increasingly frustrated with the failures of the legal system. I hope to get involved with the anti-violence community at Dalhousie and continue to advocate for survivors. I also hope to engage with movements newer to me such as prison abolition, environmental justice and Indigenous law.

#### **What does a feminist researcher do in their spare time, given the circumstances?**

I was lucky this summer to get to explore a new city (in a socially distanced way, of course!). That meant hiking, camping and lots of beaches. I celebrated Pride and returned to its roots by reading Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues*. I am also trying some more creative activities, like painting, before I *really* hit the books again in law school.

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*The CCPA created the Kate McInturff Fellowship in Gender Justice to honour the legacy of senior researcher Kate McInturff, who passed away in July 2018. Kate was a feminist trailblazer in public policy and gender-based analysis and achieved national acclaim for her research, writing and advocacy. The fellowship supports a paid internship at the CCPA for a student committed to fighting for gender equality through policy research.*

## Inspired

# Tracking the virus, not you

ACCORDING TO HER BIO, Nicky Case mostly make games and interactives “that help folks learn through play,” but also comics, videos and longform essays. “These ‘playful things,’” she writes, “have been about game theory, mental health, being a queer person of colour, epidemiology, complex systems theory, cognitive science, math, voting systems, and one time I made a webcam toy that turned you into anime.”

In April, in response to news that various countries had developed or were developing COVID-19 contact tracing apps, Case published an illustrated guide to pro-privacy technology that “can foil both COVID-19 and Big Brother.” That guide is published here in light of the release this summer of Canada’s official virus tracking app, COVID Alert, which is available for iOS and Android phones.

COVID Alert got the thumbs up from Canada’s federal and provincial privacy commissioners. “Canadians can opt to use this technology knowing it includes very significant privacy protections,” said Daniel Therrien, Privacy Commissioner of Canada, at the end of July. Michael Geist, a University of Ottawa expert on internet and e-commerce law and regulation, also congratulated the government on the app on his blog.

“The Canadian COVID Alert app is ultimately as notable for what it doesn’t do as for what it does,” Geist wrote in early August. “The voluntary app does not collect personal information nor provide the government (or anyone else) with location information. The app merely runs in the background on an Apple or Android phone using bluetooth technology to identify other devices that come within two metres for a period of 15 minutes or more.”

In other words, as many people pointed out on social media following the release of COVID Alert, the government app is multiple times less intrusive than literally everything else on your phone, including virtually all apps and the operating system itself.

—Stuart Trew, *Monitor* Editor

A problem with COVID-19:  
You're contagious ~2 days  
before you know you're infected.



But it takes ~3 days to *become* contagious, so if we quarantine folks exposed to you the *day* you know you're infected...



We stop the spread, by staying one step ahead!

\* what about *never-symptomatic* people? turns out they don't play a large role in COVID-19 spread! see citations at end

For example, Bob's.

Bob also has a privacy-first tracing app, that's compatible with (or the same as) Alice's.



If Alice & Bob stay close to each other for 5+ minutes, their phones will exchange unique gibberish.

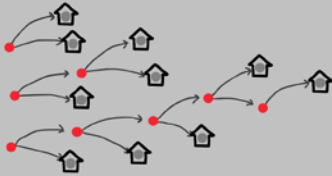
The database stores Alice's gibberish:



Again: the random messages give the hospital **NO INFO** on where Alice was, who she was with, what they were doing, or even *how many* people Alice met! It's meaningless to the hospital...

\* different countries' hospitals could exchange messages, but because they contain no info, no privacy is lost.

This is called "contact tracing". It's a core part of how South Korea & Taiwan are *already* containing COVID-19, and what we must do, too.



We wouldn't even need to find all the contacts! We only need to find ~60% of them...

\* ~60%? again, see citations at the end!

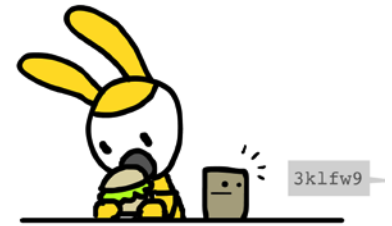
Alice gets a tracing app! (& its code is open to the public, so folks can verify it in fact does the following...)



Every 5 minutes, her phone says uniquely random gibberish to all nearby devices, using Bluetooth.

\* 5 minutes is just an example! and technically it's "pseudo-random," since it's not quantum... does NOT matter.

Because the messages are random & don't use GPS, they contain NO INFO about Alice's identity, location or anything.



Now - while her phone sends out random messages, it also *listens* for messages from nearby phones.

Both their phones remember all the messages they said & heard over the last 14 days.

WHAT I SAID		WHAT I HEARD	
aSt5yv	1lwda6	89cckxj	3klfw9
8jUILL4	5lPomk	g83kxS	wWjcd6
rtxnbk	33trGb	1789xI	439Hxs
49dju7	ryteq8	59f7y5	zpw7UU
12poLV	VB490s	FFyc67	xlc902

Again: because the random messages contain NO INFO, Alice's privacy is protected from Bob, and vice versa!

\* 14 days is also just an example! epidemiologists may learn that the "infectious period" is actually shorter or longer.

The next day, Alice develops a dry cough and fever.

Alice gets tested.



Alice has COVID-19.

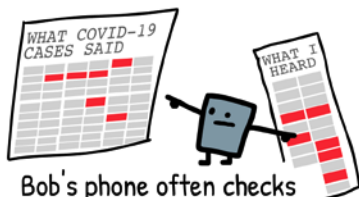
It is not a good day for Alice.

But she shan't suffer in vain! Alice uploads her "What I Said" messages to a hospital database, using a one-time passcode given by her doctor. (The code is to prevent spam)



Alice can also *hide* messages from times she wants to keep private, like evenings at home!

...but not to Bob!



Bob's phone often checks the hospital's list of random messages from COVID-19 cases, and see if it "heard" any of them from nearby phones in the last 14 days.

(The gibberish gives Bob NO OTHER PERSONAL INFO.)

\* the real DP-3T protocol is even MORE secure! it uses a "cuckoo filter" so phones know ONLY the covid-19 messages they heard, without revealing ALL covid-19 messages.

If it heard, say, 6 or more COVID-19 cases' messages (6 x 5 min = 30 min total exposure), the phone warns Bob to self-quarantine.



And thus, Bob cuts the chain of transmission - one step ahead of the virus!

\* again, these numbers are just examples!

And that's it!

That's how digital contact tracing can proactively prevent the spread of COVID-19 while also protecting our rights.



Thanks, Alice & Bob!  
Stay safe.

a

just

By Trish Hennessy

recovery

The pandemic is a call for personal and collective change

**B**Y NOW WE are long past the shock of COVID-19, the virus that shut down the world, the economy, the relative predictability of life. You and I are just one virus exchange from illness and potential death. Millions of Canadians have lost their ability to earn a living. They risk eviction, mortgage default, food insecurity, homelessness and mental health struggles. Those who still have a job either find themselves on the frontlines risking exposure to the virus or they work from home, perhaps isolated, maybe also caring for young or aged family members, or both.

Without the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), that overnight replacement for employment insurance during the economic

shutdown, millions of Canadians would have been desperate. The \$2,000 monthly CERB cheque saved lives, reminding us of how governments can place public health and safety above all else when they choose to. Public servants, and politicians working across partisan lines, created this safety net in the middle of a cold spring, working from their homes, with children underfoot. They moved mountains. Doing so allowed people to shelter down: service, retail and accommodation workers, artists, hair stylists, massage therapists and many others could get by, if for a time.

Canada is a stable country as a result of the CERB and other federal and provincial support measures. Canada is not the United States. So far, we have managed to keep COVID-19 outbreaks

relatively in check. For the most part, we are not turning on each other. But the virus is still among us and we will continue to face a great amount of uncertainty for a long time to come. Will I get the virus? Will someone I love get it? There is so much we cannot know, including when or whether a vaccine can pull us out of this.

But some things we do know. We know the social determinants of health reveal the interconnections between racial, income and health inequities. COVID-19 has compounded those inequities. People in racialized and low-income communities in Toronto and Montreal, for instance, have been harder hit by COVID-19. In July, the Toronto Public Health Unit released data showing 83% of COVID-19 reported cases in Toronto identified with a racialized group. In Montreal, racially diverse neighbourhoods have a higher rate of COVID-19 cases.

We know that women are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, as they tend to work the frontlines of hospitals, public health units, long-term care homes and grocery stores. Women risked and continue to risk their lives to keep us safe, often on low salaries or no salary at all.

Women are also overrepresented in sectors like retail, tourism and accommodation that have not yet recovered and may not for some time. And for many women, the only path back into paid labour is through the availability of child care. So we know that universal, publicly funded, affordable child care is a necessary part of Canada's just recovery.

We know that CERB guaranteed everyone out of work what is essentially a basic income. We know that people who are on social assistance and people with disabilities also face constraints and added costs as a result of the pandemic, but provincial income support programs remain inadequate to the task. The time to address the punitive, intrusive, inadequate aspects of social and disability assistance is long past due. We have a social responsibility to ensure that everyone has the tools they need to live a life of dignity.

We know all of this. And yet still we tolerate government policies that perpetuate poverty among women, families, single adults, people with disabilities, immigrants, and Indigenous and racialized peoples. We need to move from complacency to action to ensure a just recovery.

There are myriad ways to break the cycle of poverty and this is our moment. The toolkit includes but is not limited to:

- basic income standards for people who are not in the paid labour market;
- a minimum wage that's a living wage;
- affordable and adequate housing;

- food security;
- affordable universal public child care;
- pathways into higher education, skills training and jobs;
- expanded access to the Canada Child Benefit and EI (post-CERB);
- employment and pay equity;
- labour protection for all workers, particularly migrant and temporary foreign workers who are vulnerable to exploitation;
- the right to organize a union; and
- a strategy to address anti-Asian, anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism and discrimination.

These solutions, and many more, are laid out in detail in the CCPA's Alternative Federal Budget Recovery Plan released during the summer. They require heightened and sustained federal, provincial and municipal government leadership and even more funding commitments than we've already seen in the COVID-19 crisis.

History will judge the CERB—and the federal government's decision to protect people's lives by delivering this basic income during a pandemic—as the right thing to do. History will also judge provincial governments that did little or nothing to protect people, or those that cut funding and laid off public service workers in the middle of a global crisis.

Future generations will judge us, too, if we do not demand our governments prepare for the next wave of COVID-19 and a protracted economic downturn.

To ensure a just recovery, we must make clear that government austerity is not the answer; it will do more harm than good. For months now, conservative governments and think-tanks in Canada have been making the case for government cuts. Time-worn tropes have been hauled out, including: *We can't leave this debt to future generations.*

Yes, the federal government has incurred a tremendous deficit and will be required to continue to do so because the government has the duty to protect us. We also know that the government has the ability to continue borrowing from the Bank of Canada at historically low interest rates while also addressing the revenue side of the equation.

And here I present to you the elephant in the room: 25 years of tax cut politics forces governments to go into deficit in any crisis, be it an economic recession, a climate emergency or, in this case, a pandemic. As we adjust our expectations of each other, of our lives and of our governments, the time has come to reckon with the politics of tax cuts. To kill the beast.

When Canada faced crises of similar proportions in the past—world wars, the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Great Recession of 2008-09—governments spent our hard-earned tax dollars to provide us with the

support we needed. Because that is what governments are supposed to do in times of crisis. In every case but the Great Recession, governments eventually raised taxes, particularly on the rich and on corporations, to ensure that those who had the most contributed to recovery and to societal well-being.

We don't know yet what will come of small, independently owned restaurants and retail businesses working with razor-thin margins during a pandemic, but we do know that some major corporations saw COVID-19 as a licence to print money. Grocery empires, we are looking at you. Two major chains, Loblaws and Metro, reportedly saw a huge surge in first quarter profits this year compared to last, yet they both scrapped bonus pandemic pay for workers prematurely in June. There is clearly room for the government to raise taxes on major corporations that made money over a pandemic. The government has a social responsibility to do so and corporations have a social responsibility to contribute more, to be a part of the collective solution rather than simply cashing in.

Of course the most assured path to a just economic recovery is sustainable, decent work for all. We know this too: the old model of economic growth has failed us. The global, just-in-time economy rewarded some businesses and workers while forcing a growing number of workers into precarious, low-paying jobs. In fact, the pandemic threatens to expedite the growth of precarious work. We already see it with the rise of delivery services through online platforms that gouge restaurants and the workers who use their own vehicles to deliver the food.

I'm most interested in jurisdictions that are seriously implementing inclusive economy tools to create more stable jobs for people who are marginalized, disadvantaged and sidelined from the labour market. In Cleveland, for instance, The Democracy Collaborative is creating social enterprise opportunities for marginalized and racialized workers who otherwise have no foothold into the labour force.

We can create similar opportunities here in Canada, leveraging government procurement and infrastructure dollars to create a more inclusive economy. For instance, turning a government infrastructure investment into a community benefit agreement that employs marginalized workers and trains them to work their way into the skilled trades—the future middle class—benefits everyone.

In Toronto, the Eglinton Crosstown LRT became the first large-scale infrastructure community benefit agreement project in Ontario. Its goal has been to give historically disadvantaged communities and equity-seeking groups apprenticeship and journey person opportunities. Similar initiatives are underway for other government-funded infrastructure projects, powered by groups like the Toronto Community Benefits Network, the Windsor/Essex Community

Benefits Coalition, and Inclusive Economy London and Region, to name a few.

These projects also attempt to draw on the power of public anchor institutions to direct their procurement and contract funds toward local social enterprises, which is good for workers and for the local economy. COVID-19 has disrupted supply chains and strained the old economic model. We are in a period of transition and must be open to new, more inclusive ways of organizing an economy.

And as we rethink our economy, we can draw inspiration from New Zealand, where the government has committed to well-being budgeting. Yes, economic growth is still included as a measure of success—but it is not the only measure. These budgets also take into account ecology, Indigenous inclusion, public health and mental health. That New Zealand is a model of how to handle a global pandemic is a testament to a strategy that puts well-being above all else. It works.

One could argue that the federal measures enacted in the response phase of COVID-19 this spring and summer were part of a well-being budgeting approach, albeit ad hoc and considered temporary. They exposed how dependent the economy is on public health, not the other way around. We must remember this lesson for future generations, because if we do not, the biggest debt we saddle them with will not be financial—it will be social and ecological.

et's face it: before COVID-19, Canada grew complacent. Canada is one of the richest countries in the world. There was never an excuse to ignore child poverty, family poverty, adult poverty, seniors' poverty or feminized and racialized poverty. There was never an excuse to ignore an increasingly unaffordable housing market, growing homelessness, an opioid crisis, racism, xenophobia, climate change.

There was never an excuse to ignore child care costs that have grown into the size of a mortgage, university and college fees that saddle youth with greater debt than previous generations, growing household debt with exorbitant interest rates that trap people. This all happened on our watch.

It is time to press the reset button. COVID-19 gives us that opportunity. It's not like we don't have the answers. This year's AFB Recovery Plan provides the blueprint for change that we need.

Many Canadians will not be able to return to their job anytime soon due to the impact of the pandemic. The AFB proposes major reforms to expand eligibility for income supports and ensure greater income adequacy once the federal government transitions CERB recipients to the EI system. These reforms have long been needed; COVID-19 renders them urgent.

For those who do return to the labour market, the availability of affordable child care is key. The AFB lays out a plan for a fully publicly funded, accessible



and affordable child care system across Canada. It also seeks to fulfil the historic vision of a fully comprehensive and universal health care system that includes pharmacare, improved long-term and home care, and access to disability and mental health supports—all more important than ever because of COVID-19.

The blueprint for racial and Indigenous justice, for improving housing and food security, and to save our planet from climate change is there in the AFB Recovery Plan, informed by experts and social justice movements. It is the ultimate well-being budget, and it's a tool that we all can use to press governments into action.

In those moments in history when Canadians demanded their governments think big, we won important improvements to the social safety net, new workers' rights and workplace protections, a universal public health care system, public pensions and affordable university tuition. Most of these things have benefited me over the course of my lifetime. Being the first in my immediate family to get a university degree was life altering for me. It was personal and it was collective: people like me who benefited from a public education and other public programs and supports strove to build a better world—not just for *ourselves*, but for everyone.

I am an ardent child care advocate not because I require child care. It's because I know that early learning and child care is an upstream solution. This public service gives children the early start they need to succeed and it enables women to join the paid labour force and raise the quality of life for themselves and their family.

For similar reasons, I have come to embrace the idea of a basic income standard for the unemployed and people receiving social and disability assistance. I know their standard of living would improve, their hope and trust in the future would grow, and their ability to participate in the things some people took for granted before the pandemic would increase.

But I also know that income alone isn't the solution—we need a basic services guarantee that helps every Canadian secure affordable housing, nutritious food, pharmacare, dental care, mental health care, and specialized support for people with complex needs.

These goals are personal for me, but they're also a challenge to all of us. It's about rising with a collective voice to promote transformative change. Let this be the one good thing to come out of a global pandemic—that we tackle the underlying problems that divide us and threaten our health and safety, as well as the planet. **M**



MIHSAKAWAN JAMES HARPER

## Can we achieve climate action and reconciliation in a post COVID world?

**I**N A MATTER of months, the possibilities for continued growth in 2020 have quickly evaporated as the COVID-19 pandemic challenges the resiliency of nearly every institution on Earth.

But interestingly, the very idea of growth has been put into focus by the pandemic as largely harmful, a status quo not worth fighting for after all.

The pandemic has made us question, at least made me question, what life after COVID would, could, and should look like. What are the alternatives to that status quo?

After taking a step back, we find somewhat obvious overlaps between the ongoing climate crisis and this pandemic. One more step back and Indigenous perspectives on life and growth come into view as an interconnected system that presents a clear path forward, all together.

### The origins of COVID-19 and importance of biodiversity

While the origins of COVID-19 are still under investigation, it is highly probable that the virus has a zoonotic origin (a transfer from animal to human through some interaction). This is known as a spillover event. Indeed, the U.S. Centres for Disease Control (CDC) reports that six in 10 infectious diseases are zoonotic, an important insight into the prevention of future viral outbreaks.

As many scientific studies have found, human manipulation of the land is the primary driver in past diseases like HIV/AIDS, Ebola, and Zika virus. As more agricultural and grazing land requires the destruction of forests, and increased urbanization encroaches into animal habitat, the risk of zoonotic transmission increases. Any short-term benefits of social and economic developments are outweighed by the disastrous long-term economic and health effects related to viral outbreaks.

Moreover, land use changes for resource extraction or agricultural activities eliminate carbon reservoirs and increase pollutants into the atmosphere and nearby

waterways, expanding the territorial range of malaria-carrying mosquitos. Fundamentally, these changes, on a large scale, strip ecosystems of biodiversity, increasing the success of viruses.

The case for biodiversity protection and conservation is no longer just about climate action, but about the future of human health.

### **The long overdue energy sector transformation**

There is much to say about the origins of COVID-19, but there are also the consequences, which can be linked to the climate crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the petroleum industry to a point we have never seen before: negative oil prices. The West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded below \$0 for a few moments in late April, meaning that suppliers would pay for someone to take the surplus oil off their hands. Similarly, Western Canadian Select (WCS) traded at -\$4.68 a barrel, forcing the oil economy of Alberta into one of the worst economic conditions it has ever seen.

In response, governments have provided relief to the industry, like the orphan wells clean-up program. Packaged in the promise of job creation and economic stimulus lies the ugly truth that the petroleum industry in Canada is too much of a liability. Through government royalty payment reductions, flow-through shares,

pipeline buyouts and clean-up initiatives, the industry continues to thrive despite conditions where it would ultimately fail in a free and open market. This pandemic has shown that the industry is simply too fragile to weather uncertainties.

We must build an energy system that is resilient to even the most adverse and unforeseen circumstances. The good news is that there are plenty of people, communities and groups in Canada proposing policies that can help catalyze clean energy growth through renewable energy sources, most of which have no fuel supply risk.

With solar and wind production costs dropping below those of oil and gas, it also means that the business case for this transition is clear. Modern day power purchase agreements and feed-in-tariffs that offer producers multi-year contractual pricing agreements (a tool at the disposal of governments) are far more stable and less risky than the volatile petroleum market.

In a convenient parallel to the phrasing of some Numbered Treaties, renewables offer energy as long as the sun shines, the water flows, and the wind blows.

### **Reconciliation, empowerment and self-determination**

It is not simply our relationship with the land and energy that needs to change, but our relationship



with each other, as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In fact, the protection of our environment and a resilient economy of the future are embedded in a pathway that leads toward building new and strong relationships.

It is understood that Indigenous peoples represent less than 5% of the world's population but protect over 80% of its biodiversity. Therefore, to ensure that the sensitive ecological systems we know today thrive tomorrow, Indigenous peoples must be empowered to exercise their ability to protect and defend these territories, not just for Indigenous rights, or climate action, but to help prevent the next outbreak, as Indigenous peoples have been telling the world for thousands of years. Known to economists as protection of natural capital, delegating responsibility for Canada's biodiverse ecosystem to Indigenous peoples is not just an economic pathway, but one that will also exercise each nation's rightful claim to sovereignty.

Moreover, and beyond Indigenous control of Indigenous lands, engaging Indigenous peoples in shovel-ready green projects like housing upgrades can provide immediate employment opportunities while also reducing overall energy demand (not to mention addressing the ongoing housing crises in many Indigenous nations across Canada). Education funding for clean jobs for Indigenous people also ensures long-term economic investment, especially now when there may be more personal opportunity to learn.

Finally, as more Indigenous nations, especially those reliant on diesel generators, engage in renewable energy projects, where nations have a major stake, there are opportunities not only to decarbonize the energy system of Canada but provide long-term economic returns.

### Preventing the next COVID, or collapse

The COVID-19 outbreak has no doubt hurt many families and brought health care systems to the brink of collapse. Like any crisis, it is a chance to evaluate what is most important and how to move forward as a stronger collective that protects the health and well-being of all.

If there was a way to achieve climate action while also reducing the risk of future outbreaks, would you do it? If there was an opportunity to reconcile a strained relationship while also building a resilient energy system, would you consider it?

The more sustainable and empowering government policies are, the more likely our nations, people, and communities worldwide are to benefit. **M**

This briefing note was first published on the Yellowhead Institute website and is reprinted here with permission from the author and the institute.



KATHERINE SCOTT

# A feminist recovery plan for a gender-just future

## Whether through willful negligence or callous disdain, we risk setting back women's equality by a generation

**AS COVID-19** precipitated an economic shutdown of historic proportions, “some aspects of our economies are actually in overdrive,” according to the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women. Around the world, women are busier than ever taking care of loved ones, homeschooling, provisioning supplies, and finding ways to shoulder the enormous economic and social burdens of this time.

In Canada, these truly extraordinary, almost always unpaid efforts are being largely ignored. As I write this, provincial and territorial governments have yet to announce coherent plans for opening schools safely. Proposals are being floated to offer part-time onsite education with online learning the rest of the time. But who do governments think will make this scenario work at home? Who have already been pushed out of the labour market?

From health to the economy, physical security to income security, the COVID-19 crisis has magnified and exacerbated existing gender disparities, especially among people facing intersecting forms of discrimination (e.g., gender plus class, class plus race, race plus disability, etc.). As primary caregivers and care workers in the public and private sectors, women are at the forefront of the crisis, containing the pandemic and providing needed care and support.

Women also represent the majority of workers in sectors hardest hit by the economic shutdown and slowdown, such as accommodation and food services, child care and educational services, business administration and retail trade. Large numbers of racialized women and immigrants work in these sectors, which include some of the lowest paying and most precarious jobs in Canada. These people have scant access to paid sick leave, health benefits or other workplace protections. Those with precarious immigration status or in criminalized work have no protection at all.

Statistics Canada's June jobs report showed improving employment levels across the economy, but as feared, job creation among women is lagging behind men (see chart). Another large group of women left the labour force through the first months of the pandemic and haven't returned. Among core-age women (25–54) the proportion “not in the labour force” was down from a high of 22.2% in April but is still much higher than it was in February.

Growth in the number of women outside the labour market points to the huge barriers that women, mothers in particular, are facing right now. Women with children between the age of six and 12 had recovered only 36% of their lost hours by mid-June, while mothers of young adults (18–24) were 78% of the way back. Lone-parent mothers had only recovered 23% of their pre-pandemic hours by June.

Indigenous women, women with disabilities, those with precarious immigration status, racialized women and members of the trans and non-binary community face the greatest challenges. They are most likely to live in poverty, with the least access to affordable food, quality housing, needed health services, and social supports.

Rates of gender-based violence were already high in Canada even before the pandemic. On average, a woman is killed by her intimate partner every six days. Thousands of women, girls, and trans and non-binary people face a heightened risk of violence at home under COVID-19 isolation measures, whether it takes the form of emotional, physical, economic or sexual abuse.

Government austerity has left us unprepared for this moment. Decades of public service cuts and increased

privatization shifted more of the costs and labour involved in caring work onto women and their families. Community services won't be able to meet demand as revenues dry up and the cost of operating safely increases.

In a recent survey, one-third of child care centres and homes reported they either weren't sure they would be re-opening or had already decided not to. Those remaining child care operations will be offering fewer spaces in order to comply with new physical distancing measures.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the ways our economy and care work are fundamentally intertwined. It has also shown the critical role that our social safety net plays, or fails to play, in times of crisis. The response of public health care systems and the CERB emergency benefit have helped flatten the curve. Our long-term care sector, however, has failed miserably to protect our most vulnerable older people.

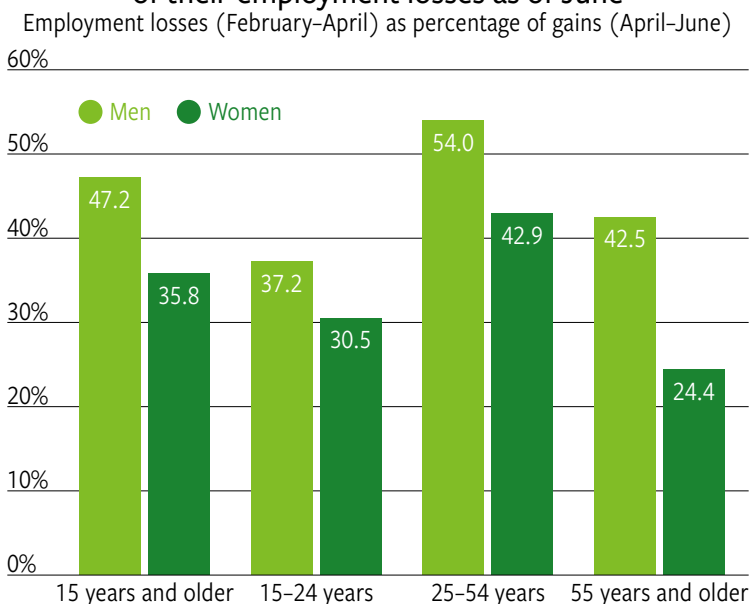
A just recovery requires that our governments seriously tackle entrenched barriers to gender equality. A return to normal won't cut it. But to create the new programs that will meet the immediate and future needs of women, it is essential to collect and integrate gender disaggregated data, broken down by racialized group, disability, immigration status, etc., to reflect how different people experience daily realities and challenges differently.

A feminist recovery plan must also continue to financially support people with continuing caring obligations, or facing the ongoing loss of employment or reduced earnings, as the economy recovers. Barring a sudden turnaround in employment, many women will exhaust their CERB benefits in the next few months and won't have recourse to employment insurance or other social assistance. These programs, with their overly restrictive eligibility requirements, should be redesigned to weed out gender bias.

Without child care, many mothers won't be able to return to work at all. And if that happens there can be no recovery. Household incomes and spending will fall, pulling the Canadian economy down with it. Now is the moment to build out our social infrastructure, to create a system of comprehensive, high quality, publicly managed caring services across the country. Investments in the care economy pay for themselves over time through increased employment and earnings, reduced reliance on income security benefits and emergency services, and healthier communities.

This is also the moment to take decisive action to end violence against women, girls and gender diverse peoples, a situation made much worse by the current crisis, whose requirement to shelter in place closes down routes to safety. These pressures are acute among Indigenous women, women with significant mental health concerns, LGBTQI2S people, women with

### Women have recouped one-third of their employment losses as of June



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, LABOUR FORCE SURVEY SUPPLEMENTARY INDICATORS USED IN JUNE 2020 ANALYSIS

disabilities, rural residents, and immigrant and refugee women, all of whom are at higher risk of violence than others.

An initial investment of \$50 million for shelters serving women and children fleeing violence and sexual assault centres, including shelters supporting Indigenous women, helped. But it is not nearly enough to meet overall need for service and safe and affordable housing. Next steps must finally include a comprehensive, appropriately resourced national action plan on violence against women and gender-based violence, and the implementation of the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which include a unique plan to address violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people.

The federal government responded to COVID-19 with unprecedented investments to protect the health of citizens and insulate households and businesses from the economic shutdown. As we move out of the initial phase of the emergency, there are calls for public austerity—calls that must be vigorously resisted.

It will take strong voices to advance a feminist recovery plan in the face of entrenched privilege, institutional lassitude and interminable federal-provincial wrangling. One week, the federal government issues an “Economic and Fiscal Snapshot” that acknowledges the gendered impact of the crisis. The next, it gives \$19 billion to the provinces and territories to restart their economies, but only 3% of that money is set aside for child care, 2.5% for people experiencing challenges related to mental health and homelessness, and perhaps 4% for long-term care.

Whether through willful negligence or callous disdain, these missteps and missed opportunities by government are setting back women’s equality by decades. A gender-just recovery must instead centre the needs and perspectives of women, girls and gender-diverse people. It will take all of our voices to bend this curve. **M**



RICHARD SHARPE AND ROBIN BROWNE

## Recognition, justice and development for Black Canadians

**T**HE DISPROPORTIONATE impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black and other racialized people, and the global mass movement for police reform in response to the police killing of George Floyd this June, have once more exposed deep-set social inequities in Canada, the United States and elsewhere. According to writer Nora Loreto’s recent investigation, evidence suggests that half of the health care workers in Canada who have been sickened and killed by the COVID-19 virus are Black and another 25% are racialized.

The fact that Canadian governments do not systematically collect race-based data on health, criminal justice and employment has added to the crisis felt by Black communities. Informed decisions about how to address the impacts of the pandemic cannot be made without this information. Recent protests against police brutality have led Black Canadians and allies to demand programs, new initiatives and reporting mechanisms to improve the socioeconomic and health outcomes of Black Canadians.

In January 2018, Canada officially recognized the UN International Decade for People of African Descent (UNDPAD). Since that announcement, the government has promised to distribute approximately \$43 million over five years to various Black community-based projects aimed at addressing racism and discrimination.

However, structural impediments within the bureaucracy have stalled parts of that money in the system. As a result, we have seen only nominal results on government commitments to Black Canadians over the past year. Under so-called normal conditions inaction was unacceptable. As the pandemic puts even more strain on the socioeconomic situation faced by Black Canadians, inaction is needlessly reckless.

The Alternative Federal Budget (AFB) Recovery Plan, which calls for federal policy and funding commitments in a number of areas related to COVID-19 recovery, includes a chapter outlining areas for action prioritized by African diaspora communities across Canada. These include disaggregated race-based data collection, justice and public safety, economic inclusion and federal public service reform. Achieving results in

these areas will create the opportunity for real progress in support of the UNDPAD in Canada.

### **Toward a just recovery**

On June 16, Canada's Parliamentary Black Caucus issued a statement challenging the government to move swiftly to address systemic inequality facing Black Canadians. "The reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic proves that governments can act quickly and ably in crisis," it read. "Black Canadians are in a state of crisis: it is time to act. Words and symbolic gestures, while important, are not enough."

Black and African diaspora Canadians of all backgrounds believe that Canada's diversity is indeed a natural resource. The federal government has a responsibility to invest in this resource, which will in turn enrich the economic and social well-being of our country and all of its citizens. These investments and political reforms will ensure that Black Canadians are not left behind during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the immediate goals of the AFB Recovery Plan is to get Black businesses, hit disproportionately hard by the pandemic, back up and running, including by helping them hire Black youth. The plan calls for the federal government to ensure that 20% of procurement contracts this fiscal year are given to Black-owned businesses and 4% the following year.

Black communities in Canada are facing a variety of challenges and opportunities associated with the development, deployment and adoption of rapidly emerging digital technologies, which became essential to business continuity and survival in the midst of COVID-19 environments. Black communities also want the government to provide at least \$5 million to help Black-owned businesses classified as essential services in their respective provinces (as of April 11) adapt to new demands and pressures stemming from COVID-19,

including moving online. To help Black youth, the plan calls for the extension of the 75% wage subsidy for hiring, rehiring and retaining on a full-time basis (30–40 hours/week) until March 31, 2022.

The AFB plan also asks the government to release the remainder of the \$25 million in Black community capacity building funds it announced in the 2019 federal budget, and to extend and update the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) requirements to target Black businesses.

### **Rebuilding after COVID**

In the longer term, the AFB plan calls for action in several other areas in support of Black Canadians, including economic development, governance, health, justice and immigration. For example, it calls for establishing a Black Women Entrepreneurship Strategy modelled on the 2018 Women Entrepreneurship Fund, and the development and resourcing of a community child care and elder care plan to assist Black children and families. The AFB also calls for the establishment of a foundation with \$20 million of matching funds to help equity-seeking groups advance and seek work in skills and trades, entrepreneurship and technology.

To ensure gains can't be easily reversed if the government changes, the AFB plan asks to create an UNDPAD Anti-Black Racism Secretariat to be housed in the highest office of government, the Privy Council Office. To reverse years of discriminatory hiring, the plan calls for Black Canadians to be appointed to senior positions in cabinet, the civil service, and on boards, commissions and agencies. Also, it asks that Black Canadian lawyers be appointed to the federal judiciary and the Supreme Court.

The AFB plan calls on the government to declare anti-Black racism what it is—a national health crisis—and asks the federal government to work with the provinces to provide culturally appropriate health and well-being support for Black communities.

### **And justice for all**

Most of these demands target the system with which Black Canadians have the most contentious relationship: the justice system.

Black folks call for increased legal aid funding across Canada to enhance access to justice for low-income, racialized populations. The federal government can also do more to help those living under the weight of criminal records by expunging all minor cannabis convictions and minor convictions for first-time offenders; abolishing mandatory minimum sentences; funding community groups to help people who *have* been incarcerated serve sentences out of prison, based on restorative justice models; granting parole eligibility after two years, not the current five; and finally, reviewing life sentences, which are getting longer and longer.

**One of the immediate goals of the AFB is to get Black businesses, hit disproportionately hard by the pandemic, back up and running, including by helping them hire Black youth.**

Black Canadians also demand that the RCMP stop racial profiling and carding (other police services are encouraged to do the same) and work with provinces to enhance accountability infrastructures to address police brutality, police violence and harms to Black communities.

Black people (and everyone else) should be protected from online hate. We can do this by implementing the recommendations made Roger McNamee, author of *Zucked: Waking up to the Facebook Catastrophe*, and former Research in Motion (Blackberry) CEO Jim Balsillie to the International Grand Committee on Big Data, Privacy and Democracy with respect to curbing online misinformation and hate speech. Balsillie recommends making big tech CEOs and company board members personally liable for content on their sites.

For Black folks escaping bad conditions in their own countries, Canada must do a better job investigating immigration practices that discriminate against people from Black and Brown countries. The federal government must also review the visa approval process and expedite a permanent residence process for Black refugees and asylum seekers who are working as nurses and patient care attendants in the Canadian health system.

To ensure this all happens, the AFB Recovery Plan proposes that the Prime Minister's Office and the Parliamentary Black Caucus should report annually on progress made in dismantling systemic barriers. These reports should include a discussion of current issues and recommendations for including the work plan for the UNDPAD in Canada. Finally, since the Canadian government only recognized the UNDPAD in 2018, it is only fitting for Canada to extend it to 2027 and call it the "Canadian Decade."

It's a long list, but Black Canadians have been waiting a long time for recognition, justice and development. **M**



ANGELO DICARO

## Canada's auto sector revival will take more than wishful thinking. We need a plan.

**C**ANADA LACKS a coherent strategy to guide the development of its critical domestic industries. To proponents of market liberalization, deregulation and free trade, this is fine. Any vestige of active, goal-oriented and government-directed industrial strategy is anathema to them. Intervention is for developing nations, they say, but the best economic strategy for us is to have no strategy at all.

This directionless approach to economy-building has failed. Fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic shows how badly Canadian domestic production capacity is lacking, to the point that mask-making has befuddled some of our greatest minds. Yet this pandemic has also renewed interest in how governments might actively reshape supply chains or repurpose productive capacity in the national interest.

Call them industrial strategies or development programs, it doesn't much matter. The fact is, the need for direct government action to rebuild local industry is clear and present. And none is more important than in the Canadian auto industry.

Auto manufacturing has a long history in Canada dating back to the early 1900s. Its growth surged over the 20th century, buttressed by close trade ties with the United States, and after 1965 a strategic trade and investment arrangement known colloquially as the Auto Pact. The Canadian auto industry thrived, and by 1999 we were the fourth largest auto-making nation in the world, producing roughly three million vehicles per year.

It was not long after this high-water mark that the domestic industry began to falter. Canada lost significant volumes of vehicle output (a decline of about 40%) along with tens of thousands of high-value and high-skill unionized jobs in factories, offices and in the trades.

There are many reasons for this. Most notably, a string of bilateral and multilateral trade agreements forced weak-kneed governments to dismantle industrial development policies. In 2000, the World Trade Organization dealt Canada a devastating blow by deeming

the Auto Pact, which required U.S. automakers to link Canadian car sales to domestic investment, illegal. Canada officially ended the pact in February 2001. In its wake a different approach to sector development emerged.

In the post-Auto Pact world, government's role was to provide a helping hand to industry through regulatory and financial support rather than leadership or supervision. Successful program launches in subsequent years, including at Ford, General Motors and Chrysler facilities (the traditional Big Three automakers), offered good news and served to pacify naysayers. In 2008, Honda and Toyota opened new "greenfield" facilities in Alliston and Woodstock, Ontario, respectively.

Sadly, these were Canada's last new plants. Today, annual light-duty vehicle production has fallen to under 1.8 million per year. This is as much to do with Canada's deteriorating automotive trade performance as the pooling of auto investments in places like Mexico, China and the low-wage southern U.S. states. According to the Michigan-based Center for Automotive Research, Canada received just 7% of the US\$124 billion in total North American auto investment between 2009 and 2018—less than \$1 billion on average per year.

Over this same time, Canada lost critical assembly capacity with the full closures of Ford Talbotville, GM Windsor Transmission, and the GM truck plant in Oshawa, along with hundreds of associated supplier plants. The recent halting of vehicle assembly at GM Oshawa (once the centre of Canadian auto production) and loss of the third shift at FCA's Windsor assembly plant is the latest in a string of bad news.

This shrinking auto manufacturing capacity could not come at a worse time for Canada. Demand for next generation commercial and passenger zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs), especially electric-powered vehicles (EVs), is on the rise. New supply chains are forming to produce critical component parts for these vehicles, with new research, development and skills training to support them.

The expectation is that light-duty EV sales will make up over 50% of new car sales globally by 2040. Auto-making nations are clamoring for this investment. As of 2019, major global automakers, including the Detroit Three, pledged to invest more than US\$300 billion in the electrification of their vehicle lineups. All have bypassed Canadian facilities.

The hands-off, fingers-crossed approach to sector development has run its course. It just doesn't work.

In its place, Canada needs aspirational and active government policies to both incubate the growth of Canada's EV supply chain and drive investment in an infant yet burgeoning sector.

The good news is that Canada has a head start. In 2016, the Quebec government struck a deal with PSA

Peugeot Citroen to study high-performance EV components. Canadian universities are specializing in electric and hybrid vehicle technologies. Innovation hubs across the Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge corridor (a primary site for auto parts production) are world-renowned. Canada's bountiful hydroelectric and other GHG-free energy capacity puts the country on solid footing to be a world leader in lifecycle, low-carbon emissions manufacturing.

In 20 years, Canada can become a global leader in both the development and production of clean, autonomous and connected vehicles. That is the vision. However, without a co-ordinated national strategy in place to turn this vision into a reality, Canada will flounder as other nations press ahead.

China, for instance, using a mix of state-led domestic production mandates, consumer subsidies and procurement policies, aims to control 80% of global market share for key EV powertrain components by 2025. China's new credit trading system (CTS) encourages the production of high-quality electric vehicles and is fueling a robust domestic EV supply chain. China is on pace to capture two-thirds of the world's lithium-ion battery production capacity alone, far ahead of other major auto-producing regions like North America and Europe.

Cognizant of this threat, the European Commission has created the European Battery Alliance, a co-ordinated effort across government and industry to encourage production of battery components on the continent. There is no comparable level of co-ordination in North America. It is unclear whether new rules for EV sourcing under the USMCA (the "New NAFTA" that went into effect July 1) is incentive enough to increase global market share, and what (if any) benefits will trickle into Canada.

Regardless, Canada can still prosper. Initiatives like the Project Arrow concept car, led by the Canadian Automotive Parts Manufacturers Association, show that the domestic industry has the knowhow to bring EVs and component parts to market. Canada has the skills and the infrastructure, but lacks the co-ordination and focus to make auto and EV sector development a national priority.

alls to resuscitate domestic supply chains in the wake of COVID-19 create meaningful political space for such a discussion to happen. There is a natural opening for government and policy-makers to envision how modern industrial policy might assist in achieving the twin goals of economic development and environmental sustainability.

At its heart, industrial policy is an exercise in goalsetting. It is an effort to co-ordinate interrelated policies across government departments and jurisdictions. Any fully formed strategy can also only happen through social dialogue and in close consultation with workers and industry experts.





SCOTT SINCLAIR AND STUART TREW

## Trade, industrial policy and solidarity

**The global economy failed its pandemic test as supply chains buckled under pressure. Contrary to free trade dogma, market constraining policies may help us build a more sustainable, thriving internationalist future.**

Canada's EV strategy should start with a comprehensive mapping of existing capacities and materials needed to forge a complete supply chain for EVs and component parts in Canada. Through this exercise, governments can identify gaps, isolate and co-ordinate investments (both direct and indirect) and strategically target new product developments.

An EV strategy should include the setting of domestic production targets for vehicle assembly and component manufacturing. This can complement the current federal goal to make 100% of all new vehicles sold in Canada GHG-free by 2040. An effective industrial strategy should also require federal, provincial and municipal governments to work together on ambitious infrastructure programs, including public and household charging stations, to expand the consumer market for EVs and meet environmental policy objectives.

All governments can leverage their purchasing power to aggressively reduce emissions and localize production by attaching stringent content rules for fleet purchases. Emphasizing low lifecycle emissions standards in procurement orders can persuade suppliers to consider local sourcing. Requests for proposals might also embed vehicle afterlife requirements, linking disassembly to a job creation and a sector development strategy, especially in battery recycling, drawing inspiration from Europe's End of Life Vehicles Directive.

A co-ordinated approach to sector development must also tie in public awareness and marketing programs, consumer purchasing incentives, research and development investments, and skills training and labour market planning across jurisdictions and between ministries. All of these efforts must synchronize with progressive trade policy to meet Canada's sustainability goals, including measures that disincentivize the importation of GHG-intensive products for EV use and that attach strict environmental and labour conditions on goods entering the Canadian market.

Of course, these are just some starting-point ideas. How such a program might connect with downstream vendors like auto dealers, or upstream suppliers like steel and aluminum producers, are questions for further discussion.

For decades, auto workers have called on government to initiate a national auto sector strategy, but to no avail. In the meantime, we are losing good auto jobs, and communities are reeling with the significant negative spin-off effects. Every assembly job affects 10 others throughout the economy. There is very good reason for governments to treat an auto sector rebuild as a strategic priority.

Sadly, the window for Canada to act is closing. Canada must reclaim its spot among the top class of world automakers. The *laissez-faire* approach of the past 20 years has shown us that this won't happen by accident. What Canada needs is a plan. **M**

**T**HE COVID-19 PANDEMIC exposed structural problems with Canadian trade policy that have gone unattended for too long. While some within trade policy circles yearn for a swift return to business as usual, we should instead let this crisis spur a deeper discussion about neoliberal globalization's contribution to the unconscionable rise in inequality, corporate power and ecological insecurity—and how we might reverse this trajectory.

For decades, Canada has been at the forefront of efforts to design a binding global trade and investment architecture that deliberately constrains how governments, at all levels, can regulate their economies. The idea behind this agenda is that key decisions about trade should in most circumstances be left to global corporations focussed on bottom-line profit rather than the well-being of Canadians, the Canadian economy or the environment.

Successive free trade agreements since the Canada–U.S. FTA and NAFTA have locked in this free market vision through expanded legal protections for foreign investors, intellectual property monopolies and market access for global corporations, while steadily imposing new restrictions on public interest regulation, public services, Crown corporations and the use of government procurement to enhance local benefits (via “buy local” preferences, for example).

Proponents of this agenda promised it would lead to “jobs, jobs, jobs,” rising productivity across the economy and sustainable economic growth. The actual results are quite different. In our 2019 paper for the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, a German think-tank, we noted how Canada's trade deficit with the EU increased significantly in the two years since we ratified a free trade deal with Europe. Additional Canadian exports of oil, gold and other raw materials (which were not covered by EU tariffs even before CETA) were outpaced by imports of European manufactured and high value-added goods.

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed how risky this disproportionate reliance on the export of raw and semi-processed resources can be when global demand bottoms out, or during unexpected crashes in commodity prices. On an encouraging note, we are finally talking positively about industrial policy—the idea that governments can democratically set overall economic goals, like the transition to a zero-carbon economy, and then design policies, including incentives, public investment, and regulations, to achieve them.

In April, the WTO estimated that global trade volumes would decline by 13–32% in 2020 (the trade body has since lowered its worst-case scenario while the IMF expects goods and services trade to contract by 11.9%). Canadian exports and imports fell by a quarter in April as Canada’s trade deficit with the world hit \$4.3 billion before partially rebounding in May. In July, the Bank of Canada projected the Canadian economy would shrink by 7.8% this year.

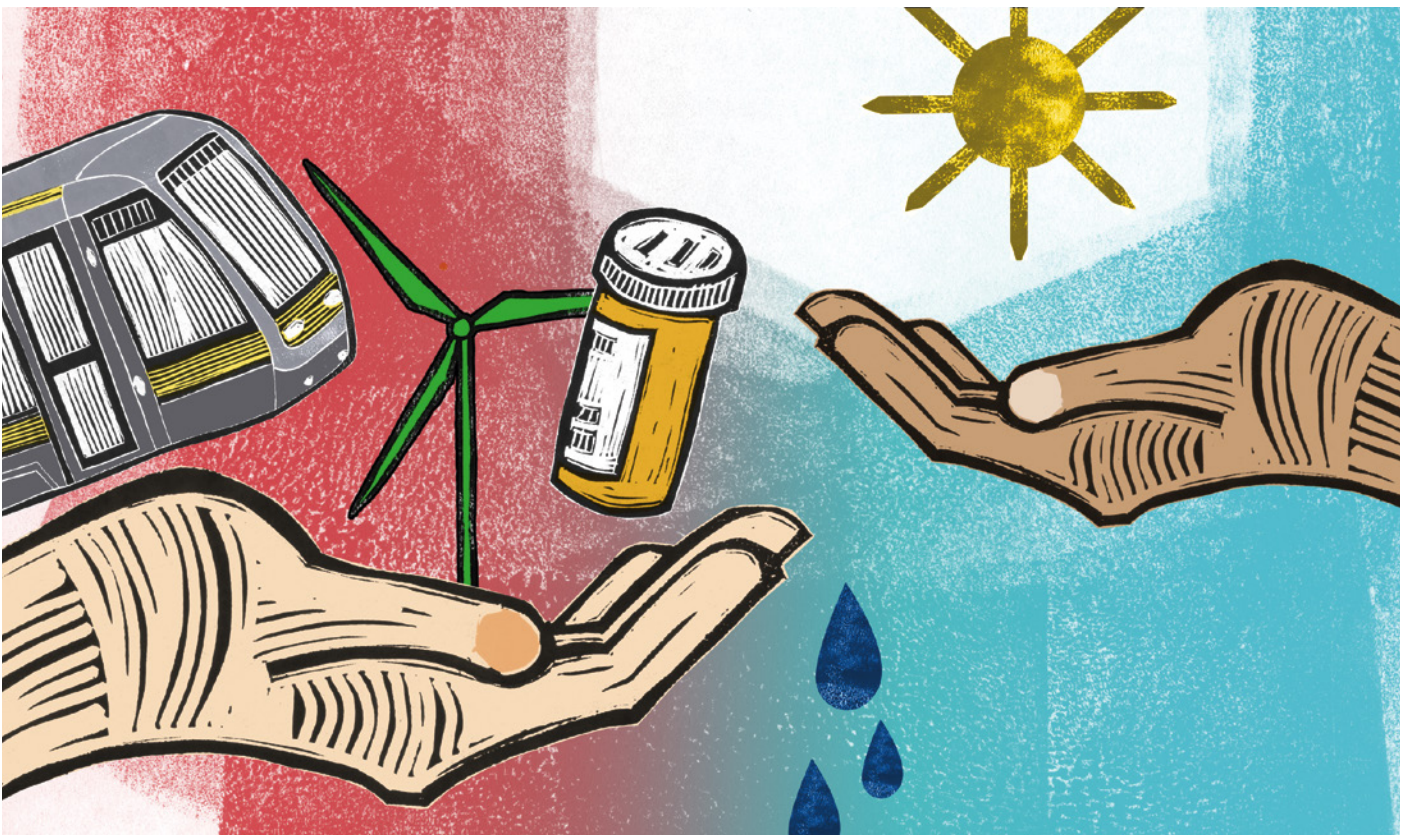
As bleak as these numbers are, we need to distinguish between the effects on Canadian trade from the controlled *shutdown* of the economy (to protect people from the spread of the coronavirus) and those resulting from an unanticipated *breakdown* in supply chains. We must then ask ourselves whether a traditional *laissez-faire* response is appropriate to a just recovery, or if it’s time for our governments to re-emphasize industrial strategy aimed at enhancing the resilience of

more regional, mixed and environmentally sustainable economies.

The impact on employment and economic activity from the controlled shutdown is staggering, but it was done purposely and for good reasons. By contrast, global shortages of medical supplies, and the impact on employment and provincial government finances of the sudden drop in fossil fuel prices, expose an inexcusable lack of planning and precaution on Canada’s part. So, what could we be doing better?

In the short term, key parts of the government’s COVID-19 legislation should stay on the books. Bill C-13 authorizes public spending to acquire essential medical supplies and allows the temporary suspension of patents to respond to the public health emergency. This gives the federal government the ability to address any supply chain obstacles to producing or procuring medical supplies, equipment or medications it decides are needed in the immediate crisis.

To better prepare for the next global health crisis, Canada must fix its extreme dependence on imported medical equipment, diagnostic kits, personal protective equipment and medicines. In 2018, we had a trade deficit in medical supplies of more than \$13 billion. For precautionary and economic reasons, far more of these supplies can and should be produced domestically. Looking ahead, Canada’s publicly funded and owned R&D and manufacturing capacity needs to grow substantially, to give public health authorities the capacity



to “switch on” production at the drop of a hat to meet domestic and global needs in times of crisis.

More than this, federal and provincial governments should undertake detailed studies of Canada’s exposure to future disruptions of global supply chains for other critical goods, from rare earths to foodstuffs, and develop plans to minimize risk. These studies should include independent research, surveys and site visits. And they should be multi-departmental: letting input from trade officials trump that from environmental, health, Indigenous, and other ministries was a mistake of the neoliberal period we can easily reverse.

Given the need to halve greenhouse gas emissions over the next decade, and Canada’s status as a highly polluting, high-cost oil and gas producer, now is surely the time to speed up a just transition to renewables.

Canada’s energy exports have increased more than ten-fold since the mid-1980s. Energy’s share of total exports has also risen, from 11% to 23% (by the end of 2018). The bulk of these are fossil fuels. Current oil prices are below Canada’s average cost of production, but without policy intervention, volumes may still rebound as companies seek to avoid the costs of shutting down production.

This dependence is financially and, more importantly, ecologically unsustainable. Canadian governments must step away from this dangerous dependence by withdrawing support for fossil fuel development and export from Canada’s trade and investment promotion activities and ending subsidies to the fossil fuel industry. Those resources should be shifted to the just transition to a decarbonized economy.

Another staple of Canadian trade—food—also needs a rethink. The slogan “feed the world” loses any of its benevolent original meaning in a country where high-carbon and ethically suspect industrial meat and multinational-patented GMOs dominate exports to countries whose small producers simply cannot compete on cost. The resumption of “normal” trade for Canada’s agri-food export sectors should not come at the expense of increased self-sufficiency for food staples in developing countries.

Canada’s highly concentrated meat processing sector must be decentralized to create more stability in the domestic market while de-emphasizing the export of greenhouse gas-intensive industrial meat. Supply managed sectors (for dairy, poultry and eggs), while impacted, have proven far more resilient during the crisis. Canada should revitalize supply management and single-desk marketing (like the former Canadian Wheat Board), and vigorously defend them from erosion by international trade agreements.

Recent trade agreements, notably CETA, have severely restricted the scope for “Buy Canadian” policies outside of a few excluded sectors such as defence. But it

is still possible to tap the huge potential benefits from more activist procurement policies without overtly violating agreements like CETA. “Buy Sustainable” conditions—to maximize community benefits, local hiring, decent work conditions, unionization, and community or worker control—could be attached to all major public procurements of infrastructure, goods and services, for example. Set-asides for historically marginalized groups (e.g., businesses owned by Indigenous people, women, and Black and other racialized people) should be much more liberally employed in Canadian procurement policy.

On the flipside of sustainable purchasing policies, Canada should also be prepared to apply trade sanctions against flagrant environmental and human rights abusers, including the Bolsonaro regime in Brazil for its encouragement of clearcutting and depopulation of Indigenous lands for agricultural and mining operations. Current policy shrinks at the idea of interfering with “the market,” even where it may be the most effective lever we have to penalize human rights and environmental criminals.

Canadians should welcome the removal of investor–state dispute settlement (ISDS) from the CUSMA (“New NAFTA”). Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland is right that ISDS undermines national sovereignty to enact legitimate environmental policies, among other measures. So why does Global Affairs Canada persist in negotiating new ISDS clauses in ongoing trade talks, with Mercosur, for example?

We need to freeze all Canada’s bilateral investment treaties and free trade deals that include ISDS and join international negotiations toward a binding treaty on human rights and transnational corporations. Let Canadian corporations sort out their own investment insurance when operating abroad, and let’s put Canada’s official international relations on a footing of solidarity and internationalism.

Canada’s trade and investment policy needs a radical makeover. Trade should serve greater societal interests, not hold them captive to corporate demands for profits. Canada’s current neoliberal trade model is incompatible with the need to put sustainable development at the heart of our domestic economy and encourage a democratic and equitable international order.

But we must not allow Canada’s current trade treaty entanglements to interfere with or discourage a just post-pandemic recovery. Where there’s a will, there’s a way. There is an urgent need for new ecologically sustainable industrial and social strategies that would contribute to Canada’s reconciliation obligations to Indigenous peoples, substantially decarbonize our economy, and make our country more resilient in the future to shocks like COVID-19. **M**

# Meet Ben McDonald, Monthly Donor

**Ben McDonald has been a monthly supporter of the CCPA for 20 years and lives in beautiful Yellowknife, Northwest Territories (NWT). We caught up with Ben earlier this summer.**

## Who is inspiring you right now?

I would prefer to mention a group that I'm involved in—Alternatives North, a social justice coalition that has operated in the NWT for nearly 30 years. Through largely volunteer efforts, its activists try to perform a pared down version of the type of research, public education and advocacy that CCPA does elsewhere in the country. The newspaper of record in the NWT has described Alternatives North as the “unofficial opposition” in our territory. The group punches way above its weight.

## What has the CCPA done lately that's made you feel proud to be a supporter?

Every year, I'm amazed by the Alternative Federal Budget. It reminds me that a better world is possible. Recently, I'm also hearing more CCPA spokespeople on TV and radio, criticizing the neoliberal agenda in a way that it more than deserves.

## Tell us about someone who really influenced your thinking.

One of the people who had a huge impact on my life was a sociology professor I had at university. I enrolled in his class by chance,



because it fit well in my first-year schedule. He changed my world-view. He was very progressive, exposing the inequality and class system in Canada, a situation that is even worse today than back then. The CCPA's research and publications continue to inform me about the issues he raised for me back then, offering me evidence and support to keep me going.

## How has COVID-19 changed your life and how are you coping?

I'm attending many more online meetings and webinars than ever before. As a retiree with very few obligations beyond my control

before the pandemic, I've adapted to the physical distancing regime fairly smoothly. I subscribe to *Canadian Dimension* (recently gone online), *Walrus*, *Briarpatch*, *Practical Sailor* and the *Airship News*. I'm an online subscriber to *rabble.ca*, *The Tyee*, *New York Review of Books* and *The Intercept*, as well as to podcasts like *Canadaland*, *Revisionist History* and various CBC programs. I also have some escapist TV friends and have spent more time on Netflix than usual.

## What is your hope for the future, and what one policy might get us there faster?

I have been a supporter of The Leap and think that its plan for a Green New Deal is the way we have to go. I live in the NWT and all of The Leap's components resonate here: First Nations rights and self-determination, urgent action on the climate crisis, no one left behind, greater equality, etc.



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ASAD ISMI

# Virus contained, inequality let loose

**Vietnam won international praise for its response to COVID-19. But the country's intensifying capitalist restructuring may leave its people sicker and more impoverished.**

AS OF THE first week of August, official records showed that 10 people had died of COVID-19 in Vietnam since the outbreak of the virus earlier this year. Up to then, the country of 97 million had been the pandemic's standout containment star, holding infections to just over 550 by July 31. While Vietnam's achievement is good news, the successful containment was a tactical necessity for a country whose export-oriented economy, and the health system it helps fund, are increasingly dependent on a healthy if underpaid workforce.

Kamal Malhotra, the United Nations Resident Co-ordinator for Vietnam, says there are 10 key factors in Vietnam's COVID-19 success: "early action, excellent contact tracing, strategic and free testing, shutting down flights [from bordering China, and later the EU and U.S.]..., mandatory 14-day free testing, food- and lodging-based quarantine for passengers on arrival and for those asymptomatic and even for those twice removed from infected patients, [a] whole-of-government and whole-of-society co-ordinated response with clear centralized decision-making authority, transparent real-time public communication, good enforcement of measures, compliance by [the] general public [and] an overall effective and largely free primary health care system for citizens for COVID-19 related medical care."

Malhotra tells me that, despite "a recent COVID-19 new wave based in the city of Danang, which has now led to its first batch of deaths

since the end of July," he remains confident that Vietnam, "using the strategies enumerated above, will bring this new wave under control within a relatively short period of time."

At approximately 1,000 to one, the ratio of COVID tests to infections in Vietnam is by far the highest in the world. While, this was in part a response to concerns the country's health care system would not be able to handle a mass influx of patients, according to Malhotra there was never any ambivalence that the health of the people was most important, and that this would also then lead to a healthier economy in both the short and long run. The cumulative cost of Vietnam's response in early July, at about 0.2% of GDP, is remarkable, and no new debt has been incurred.

Since the "normalization" of its relations with the United States in 1995, inequality has grown in Vietnam as a consequence of its rapid shift to capitalism. Hanoi's economic strategy focuses on export-oriented industrialization, which consists of making Vietnam a cheap labour haven to attract foreign investment made up mainly of Singaporean, Chinese, South Korean, Japanese, Taiwanese and Thai factories in 18 Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in coastal areas. Vietnam's main exports are electrical equipment, electronics, footwear, clothes, coffee, leather and fish.

A major component of Hanoi's export-oriented economic model are 13 bilateral and multilateral

free trade agreements including the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which came into effect in December 2018 and comprises 11 countries (Canada, Japan, Chile, Australia and Mexico and others), and the European Union-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), which took effect August 1. Vietnam became a member of the World Trade Organization in 2007 with support from the George W. Bush administration. As China-U.S. relations worsen under presidents Trump and Jinping, many Western firms with production in China are looking to move into Vietnam.

Angie Ngọc Trần, a professor of political economy at the California State University Monterey Bay who specializes in historical and contemporary labour movements in Vietnam, tells me workers "who toil in the export-oriented industries," such as textiles, garments, shoes and electronics, have not fared well during this period of neoliberal restructuring. There is only one state-mandated labour federation in the country and Vietnam only last year ratified ILO Convention 98 on the right to organize independent unions. Free speech is also curtailed in the country.

"Overall, wildcat strikes are still going on with complex reasons, increasingly with broader political and economic concerns," says Trần. "Many strikes still occur in foreign-invested companies, which often fail to comply with terms of labour contracts, including [committing] wage thefts and shirking benefit contributions such as

mandatory social insurance contributions. [The foreign companies] also fail to publicly announce wage rates and give no paid vacations.”

Trần calls Vietnam’s SEZs “Special Exploitation Zones” designed to entice foreign investment in manufacturing. Minimum wages in the country range from US\$132 to US\$190 per month, which Oxfam points out is far below the living wage for the region. The Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL), the official and only trade union central in the country, complained in April 2013 that wages only covered 50% of necessary spending for workers. Most urban workers “were destitute and physically wasted away,” said the VGCL. “They rent cheap, shabby rooms and cut daily expenses to a minimum [and] suffer serious malnutrition and other health risks.”

The SEZs have also increased poverty and inequality in the countryside. According to Nick Davies, a journalist for *The Guardian* (U.K.) who visited Vietnam in April 2015, “Millions of farmers have been driven off their land to make way for factories or roads. In the early ‘90s, nearly all rural households (91.8%) owned land. By 2010, nearly a quarter of them (22.5%) were landless.”

A 2017 Oxfam report on Vietnam expressed alarm at how great the economic gap had become between richest and poorest. “The richest man in Vietnam earns more in a day than the poorest Vietnamese earns in 10 years and his wealth is so great that he could spend \$1 million every day for six years before exhausting it,” said the report, which identified 210 superrich individuals with more than US\$30 million each and a total fortune of about US\$20 billion (12% of Vietnam’s GDP at the time). Many of these nouveau riche got that way by “taking advantage of loopholes in the governance system,” wrote Hanoi-based journalist Tran Le Thuy in the *Nikkei Asian Review* in March 2019. Some are former bureaucrats appointed to lead privatized state services (a phenomenon Canadians will be familiar with from the Mulroney years).

In her article, Le Thuy quotes former Vietnamese president Truong Tấn Sang, who wrote in the country’s *People’s Daily* newspaper that corruption is worse now than it has been in the Communist Party’s 70-year history. “There is collaboration between those in power and rent-seekers to abuse state policies,” he wrote. “They arrange business deals that benefit some individuals and groups greatly, but cause immeasurable damage to the state budget and disrupt the economy.”

In addition to the maltreatment of workers, most of the SEZs are also characterized by “poor performance and mismanagement, accompanied by severe environmental degradation and land waste,” according to Nguyen Minh Quang, a geopolitics lecturer at Can Tho University in southern Vietnam. Protests have forced the government to suspend its plans to add more of these

low-wage, low-regulation export processing zones. In June 2018, thousands of people demonstrated in large towns in six provinces against the government’s attempt to pass a draft law that would set up three new SEZs benefiting mainly Chinese companies. Workers also went on strike in two provinces.

The protesters were concerned about “losing national sovereignty to China,” says Trần, noting the 99-year leases proposed for companies in the draft legislation. They also raised questions about further environmental damages for which foreign companies are already notorious in Vietnam. “If this law is passed, unchecked toxic industries and ambiguous union protection will endanger generations of Vietnamese workers and their families and the environment for everyone,” warned Trần in a July 2018 article. The government has backed off its intentions to introduce the draft law in the National Assembly for the time being.

A quarter-century of capitalism has landed Vietnam in a low-income, low-technology trap from which there appears no easy way out. As Trần puts it, in a 2015 article, “Vietnam’s position in the global supply chain has exposed firms to low value-added assembly operations and workers to non-livable wages, sub-standard working conditions and a vicious cycle of underdevelopment and poverty.”

Trần gives the example of electronics, the leading export industry in Vietnam. The foreign multinationals that dominate the sector could transfer technology and skills to local Vietnamese companies if they made the latter their suppliers. But U.S. and Asian electronics companies in Vietnam “are assembly plants that use imported raw materials and do not connect to the local economy.”

This situation is partly due to the fact that unlike in China and South Korea, the Vietnamese government has not implemented a national industrial policy geared toward knowledge and technology transfer so that Vietnam could move up the industrial development ladder. Add to this the massive negative impact of COVID-19 on world trade and Vietnam’s economic model could be facing a bleak future.

Vietnam’s second biggest export industry is clothing and its largest customer the United States, whose economy contracted by a record-breaking seasonally and inflation adjusted rate of 32.9% in the April-June quarter due to the COVID lockdown. Given the situation, the U.S. is unlikely to increase and may not maintain the level of clothing imports from Vietnam, which had increased 16% from 2019 to early 2020. If President Trump wins the U.S. election in November, he may choose to see the US\$55.8 billion trade deficit with Vietnam (for 2019) as a problem. **M**

RAM KUMAR BHANDARI

# COVID-19 has taken a high toll in Nepal, but it may also accelerate social and political change

**I**N SOME WAYS, for the people of Nepal COVID-19 was just one more pandemic among others: poverty, structural injustices, inequality, environmental damage. Still, the virus has taken a heavy toll that is not reflected in official counts.

While about 100 people had died from COVID-19 by mid-August, the virus has mentally affected tens of thousands of others. Deaths from starvation near Nepal's border with India can be directly attributed to the closure of this vital trade route during the lockdown, in place since mid-March. There have also been dozens of maternal deaths, around 300 perinatal deaths, and over 2,200 recorded deaths by suicide since then.

For many years, Nepal's so-called liberal communist government has failed to provide daily services, health care and social protections for the poor, unemployed youth, and populations in remote areas. Normally, over five million Nepalis are employed in unskilled work in the Persian Gulf states and India. Many of these people lost their jobs due to the economic fallout from COVID-19 and are waiting to return to Nepal. As a result, the remittance economy is facing a recession that will have huge socioeconomic impacts in a country where more than half of people depend on cash transfers from abroad.

Already there is renewed socio-political conflict in Nepal that may change the course of the country. Informal and formal protests have been organized by various social groups as well as the radical

left Communist Party of Nepal, currently led by Netra Bikram Chand ("Biplab"). While the party was banned by the government in February 2019, it is growing in popularity across the country where people are organizing against injustice, privatization, corporatization, institutional corruption and the neoliberal policies of the current political establishment. Over 1,000 radical left movement leaders and supporters are being held as political prisoners in Nepal. Most of the leaders of the Communist party have gone underground, as the government continues to arrest leaders during the pandemic.

In the name of containment, the government is grabbing power, strengthening military intelligence, cracking down on critical thinkers and oppressing the poor. The recently enacted Media Council Bill, Information Technology Bill and Mass Communications Bill limit freedom of expression, while the role of the National Human Rights Commission is to be limited. A Special Service Bill passed this March includes provisions giving the national intelligence agency unlimited surveillance and search powers that permit interception of private communications without judicial oversight.

Instead of preparing to overcome the pandemic, the government is going beyond constitutional norms to control social mobility and political activism. On the other hand, people have learned to return to their roots. Many have started more organic lifestyles and agricultural production and have

resumed land use in the countryside that is respectful of biodiversity. The pandemic has further helped connect the older generation to the country's young, and urban dwellers to families in rural villages, who have been disconnected from social life for years.

In rural Nepal, where the impact of COVID-19 has been felt acutely and unemployment was soaring, land is again productively and sustainably generating income through agriculture and co-operatives. Local social entrepreneur and naturalist Akku Chowdhury, who operates a Retreat for Conscience in the tourist destination of Pokhara, says "we are happy to live with our mother Earth and create spaces for local entrepreneurs. We believe the small is beautiful and less is more lifestyle."

Like an X-ray, COVID-19 is bringing Nepal's political and social fault lines to the surface. Despite the Maoist victory of the mid-2000s and establishment of a democratic republic in 2008, a certain class holds onto feudal power with money and muscle, and runs the show with a (Western) neoliberal perspective detached from community roots, the spirit of peoples' movements, and struggles for social change. For real change we must look to our own traditions and heritage, plant community enterprises for organic growth, and nurture social solidarity and a sustainable local economy. **M**



## The good news page

COMPILED  
BY ELAINE HUGHES

Archaeologists discovered that the legendary Navan Fort, a circular earthwork near Armagh, Northern Ireland thought to have housed the mythologized “kings of Ulster,” includes a vast Iron Age temple complex that may be among the largest constructed in Europe between the first millennium BC and first millennium AD. / In a deal with the State of California, the Native American Esselen Tribe of Monterey County has reclaimed 1,199 acres of ancestral lands along the scenic Big Sur coast lost to Spanish colonial settlement nearly 250 years ago. Tom Little Bear Nason, chairman of the tribe, said they will build a sweat lodge and traditional village, and teach the public about their culture, but there will be no permanent homes or businesses built on the land, which is home to endangered steelhead fish spawning grounds and encompasses old-growth redwoods, oak woodlands and meadows. / Astrophysicists at the Sloan Digital Sky Survey have created the world’s largest three-dimensional map of the universe based on patterns and signals from more than two

million galaxies and quasars. / The Cliffs of Fundy in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador’s Bonavista Peninsula have been declared UNESCO Global Geoparks. In Nova Scotia, the designation was made possible by unprecedented co-operation between the municipalities of Cumberland and Colchester, and the Confederacy Of Mainland Mi’kmaq, which is building a new Mi’kmaq cultural centre on the site. / [Smithsonian Magazine](#) / [Associated Press](#) / [CNN](#) / [CBC News](#)

France’s green party, Europe Écologie Les Verts (EELV), swept local elections in June by allying itself with the former ruling Parti socialiste, and has transformed the country’s political map in the process. Lyon, Bordeaux, Strasbourg, Tours, Besancon and Poitiers all went green as President Emmanuel Macron’s La République En Marche party lost left-leaning supporters. In Marseille, Michele Rubirola, a green, became the city’s first elected female mayor. / The mayors of more than 40 major cities from Montreal to Medellin pledged to seek a “green and just” economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, which includes investing in low-carbon transit. / Greta Thunberg pledged to donate her one million euro (about \$1.57 million) Gulbenkian Prize for Humanity award to charitable projects combating “the climate and ecological crisis.” / Germany declared a ban on the sale of single-use plastics, including polystyrene



cups and boxes, effective July 21, 2021. / A novel redesign of the Philippines’ traditional three-hulled bangka (smaller version pictured) that transforms wave energy into electrical propulsion will be ready for testing in early 2021. The brainchild of Jonathan Salvador, a marine engineer and owner of shipbuilding company Metallica Marine Consultancy, Fabrication and Services, the wave-powered bangka will be able to hold 100 passengers, four vans and 15 motorcycles. / [Ricochet](#) / [Reuters](#) / [BBC News](#) / [Deutsche Welle](#)

Pakistan’s first National Parks Service aims to create 5,000 new jobs, mainly for young people to work as park guards and custodians, and get local communities involved in running national parks, boosting ecotourism as they protect nearby conservation areas, which are set to expand from 13% to 15% of the country’s territory by 2023. / Later this year, Rewilding Britain will launch a network of landowners, farmers, community groups and local authorities to rewild 300,000 acres of land, restoring habitats and bringing back missing

species such as beavers. / Elsewhere in England, a £1 million (\$1.75 million) project funded by the U.K. People’s Postcode Lottery, Kent Wildlife and the Wildwood Trusts hopes to bring one male and three female European bison (a close relative of the extinct Steppe bison) to England in 2022, in the hope the animals will bring back other wildlife including nightingales and turtle doves. / The world’s whales have enjoyed quieter oceans since March as international shipping slowed and cruise ships were docked during the pandemic. Scientists using networks of underwater hydrophones are hoping that by studying how the mammals’ communication changes when the drone of ships changes, we can inform new policies to protect them. / In the city of Herat, the all-girl Afghan Robotics Team recently finished the design of a lightweight, battery-operated mobile ventilator that costs as little as \$700. Afghanistan’s Minister of Health applauded the innovation and eagerly awaits the device’s approval from the World Health Organization. / [Reuters](#) / [The Ecologist](#) / [MSN](#) / [NPR](#) / [Good News Network](#)





ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL DEFORGE

SETH KLEIN

## Mobilize like we mean it

**Lessons from the Second World War have guided Canada's response to the pandemic. We can apply them to fight climate change too.**

**U**NDER NORMAL circumstances, there is rarely a shortage of Second World War pop culture out there to digest. Movie theatres (remember those?), Netflix offerings and bookstore shelves are full of modern takes on our mid-century wartime experience. Then COVID-19 struck, and suddenly *everyone* was drawing comparisons to the war, most of them focused on the crash course in wartime economic planning our leaders undertook to confront the pandemic. We haven't witnessed this kind of all-in mobilization in over half a century.

As it happens, I have spent the last year and a half writing a book

about Canada's Second World War experience. In *A Good War: Mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency* (out from ECW Press in September), I search that experience for lessons for how to confront the climate crisis (remember that?) and quickly transition off fossil fuels.

But life is full of curveballs. Just as my book was going into production, the global pandemic crisis took the climate crisis off the front burner, at least for now. Luckily for us, how governments responded to the initial wave of the crisis offers a testing ground and proof of concept for combatting climate change.

*A Good War* takes as its opening premise that the approach we have

been taking to tackle climate change for the last 30 years is simply not working. Canada's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have only flatlined since the year 2000—they are not going down. Our emissions in the year 2018 (the last year for which we have statistics) were almost exactly where they were in the year 2000.

We are not on a path to stave off a horrific future for our children and future generations. We have run out the clock with distracting debates about incremental changes. But where it matters most—actual GHG emissions—we have accomplished precious little. And so, a new approach is needed.

cut my political teeth in the peace movement of the 1980s, and I am the child of Vietnam War resisters. So there is no small irony in me saying this. But I am now convinced that to confront the climate emergency a wartime approach is needed, and moreover, that our wartime experience should be embraced as an instructive story. Climate breakdown requires a new mindset—to mobilize all of society, galvanize our politics and fundamentally remake our economy.

My book project began as an exploration of how we can align our politics and economy in Canada with what the science says we must urgently do to address the climate emergency. And it is that. I had always planned to include a chapter on lessons from the Second World War.

But as I delved into that work, I began to see more and more parallels between our wartime experience and the current crisis, and ultimately decided to structure the entire book around it. Not because I get all weirdly animated about war. Nor is it because I think we need a metaphor about sacrifice, and certainly not because I think there is anything glorious or appealing about war.

Rather, it is because I see in the history of our wartime experience a helpful—and indeed hopeful—reminder that *we have done this before*.

I see in the history of our wartime experience a helpful, and indeed hopeful, reminder that we have done this before. We have mobilized in common cause across society to confront an existential threat.

We have mobilized in common cause across society to confront an existential threat. And in doing so, we have retooled our entire economy in the space of a few short years.

### The battle plan

To execute a successful battle, we need a plan—a roadmap to guide us through the stages of climate mobilization. From my study of Canada's Second World War experience, and in particular how we successfully mobilized on the home front, the following key strategic lessons emerge.

#### 1. Adopt an emergency wartime mindset, prepared to do what it takes to win

Something powerful happens when we approach a crisis by naming the emergency and the need for wartime-scale action. It creates a new sense of shared purpose, a renewed unity across Canada's confederation, and liberates a level of political action that seemed previously impossible.

Economic ideas deemed off-limits become newly considered, and we open ourselves up to fresh ways of thinking. We see the attacks on our soil for what they are. And we become collectively willing to see our governments adopt mandatory policies, replacing voluntary measures that merely incentivize change

with clear timelines and regulatory fiat in order to drive change and meet ambitious targets.

#### 2. Rally the public at every turn

Many assume that at the outbreak of the Second World War everyone understood the threat and was ready to rally to Mackenzie King's call. But that was not so. It took leadership to mobilize the public.

In frequency and tone, in words and in action, the climate mobilization needs to look and sound and feel like an emergency. If our governments are not behaving as if the situation is an emergency, then they are effectively communicating to the public that it is not.

As occurred in the war, our governments need to develop and execute multifaceted advertising programs that boost the level of public "climate literacy" and outline and explain their policy responses. The news media and educational institutions need to reimagine their approach to this crisis, and we must demand that they do so.

We need to marshal the cultural and entertainment sectors, which requires major public funding for arts and culture initiatives that seek to rally the public. And we need to better include the public in decision-making as we refine our climate policies, through the use of citizen assemblies and other means of democratic engagement.

#### 3. Inequality is toxic to social solidarity and mass mobilization

A successful mobilization requires that people make common cause across class, race and gender, and that the public have confidence that sacrifices are being made by the rich as well as middle- and modest-income people. During the First World War, inequality undermined such efforts. Consequently, at the outset of the Second World War the government took bold steps to lessen inequality and limit excess profits. Such measures are needed again today.

#### **4. Embrace economic planning and create the economic institutions needed to get the job done**

During the Second World War, starting from a base of virtually nothing, the Canadian economy and its labour force pumped out planes, military vehicles, ships and armaments at a speed and scale that is simply mind-blowing. Remarkably, the Canadian government (under the leadership of C.D. Howe) established 28 Crown corporations to meet the supply and munitions requirements of the war effort.

That is just one example of what the government was prepared to do to transform the Canadian economy to meet wartime production needs. The private sector had a key role to play in that economic transition, but vitally, it was not allowed to determine the allocation of scarce resources. In a time of emergency, we don't leave such decisions to the market.

Throughout most of the war years, the production and sale of the private automobile, in both Canada and the U.S., was effectively banned. Instead, those auto factories were operating full tilt to churn out wartime vehicles. Howe's department undertook detailed economic planning to ensure wartime production was prioritized, conducting a national inventory of wartime supply needs and production capacity and co-ordinating the supply chains of all core war production inputs: machine tools, rubber, metals, timber, coal, oil and more.

The climate emergency demands a similar approach to economic planning. We must again conduct an inventory of conversion needs, determining how many heat pumps, solar arrays, wind farms, electric buses, etc., we will need to electrify virtually everything and end our reliance on fossil fuels.

We will need a new generation of Crown corporations to then ensure those items are manufactured and deployed at the requisite scale. We will require huge public investments in green and social infrastructure to expedite the transformation of our economy and communities. And as we did in the war, we will need to mobilize labour to get this job done, banishing unemployment in the years to come.

#### **5. Spend what it takes to win**

A benefit of an emergency or wartime mentality is that it forces governments out of an austerity mindset and liberates the public purse, much like we have seen in response to the current pandemic. The Second World War saw an explosion in government spending. In order to finance the war effort, the government issued new public Victory Bonds and new forms of progressive taxation were instituted.

Yet these new taxes and what remains to this day (pandemic deficit notwithstanding) historic levels of public debt did not produce economic disaster, as is so often claimed. On the contrary, they heralded an era

# The climate emergency demands a similar approach to economic planning. We must again conduct an inventory of conversion needs, determining how many heat pumps, solar arrays, wind farms, electric buses, etc., we will need to electrify virtually everything and end our reliance on fossil fuels.

of record economic performance. As we confront the climate emergency, financing the transformation before us requires that we employ similar tools.

#### **6. Leave no one behind**

The Second World War saw over one million Canadians enlist in military service and a similar number employed in munitions production, which is far more than are employed in the fossil fuel industry today. After the war, all those people had to be reintegrated into a peacetime economy. That too required careful economic planning and the development of new programs for returning soldiers, from income support to housing to post-secondary training.

Those postwar programs weren't simply the result of government largesse and goodwill. They stemmed from the demands of labour and social movements, who after the ravages of the Depression and war insisted on a new deal.

The ambition of these initiatives provides a model for what a just transition can look like today. They should inspire us to develop robust programs for all workers whose economic and employment security is currently tied to the fossil fuel economy, with a

special focus on those provinces and regions most reliant on oil and gas production.

### **7. Reject the straightjacket of neoliberal economic thinking**

The previous lessons all share a common thread: the casting off of free-market economic ideas and assumptions that have kept us from doing what we need to do in the face of the climate emergency. During the war, given the urgency and scale of the task, both the general public and private sector leaders understood that the economic transformation had to be state led.

Canada's Second World War government was by and large a free-market oriented administration (indeed, that orientation had severely constrained government action during the Depression of the 1930s, at the price of great hardship). But in the face of the urgent need to confront fascism, its leaders were no longer ideologically rigid. They were prepared to embrace a level of economic planning, public investment and public enterprise that seemed previously unimaginable.

### **8. Transform government**

Once an extended emergency is truly recognized, all the institutions and machinery of government are focused on the task of confronting it.

During the Second World War, Mackenzie King appointed a powerful war subcommittee of cabinet to oversee the government's efforts. We need a Climate Emergency War Cabinet Committee today, and a Climate Emergency Secretariat in the Prime Minister's Office and each premier's office, co-ordinating our emergency response as a whole-of-government approach.

Just as we have created a governance architecture for fiscal planning, budgeting, budget consultations and accountability in the present, so too we need to build similar systems for carbon budgeting.

## **Some of Canada's most inspiring renewable energy projects are happening under First Nations' leadership.**

We need new federal-provincial-municipal cost-shared programs focused on the climate crisis, including a new federal Climate Emergency Just Transition Transfer to collaboratively fund new green infrastructure and job training initiatives, with funding going disproportionately to the provinces with the most heavy-lifting to do in this transition.

We need to breathe a new, ambitious spirit into the civil service. During the war, C.D. Howe created end runs around the existing civil service to expedite wartime production. That was effective but also produced its own problems.

The challenge now is to transform the public service—to recruit and promote the people willing and able to make bold things happen quickly. We need visionary and creative people in key leadership positions in the civil service and to bring in outside experts, civil society leaders and entrepreneurs as needed to drive change and oversee the necessary scale-up.

And we need all political parties to advance policy agendas that are truly consistent with what the science demands of us.

### **9. Indigenous leadership, culture, and title and rights are central to winning**

Indigenous people played an important role in the Second World War. Today, their role in successfully confronting the climate crisis is pivotal. As our mainstream politics dithers and dodges meaningful and coherent climate action, the assertion of Indigenous title and rights is buying us time, slowing and blocking new fossil fuel projects until our larger politics come into compliance with the climate science.

Some of Canada's most inspiring renewable energy projects are also happening under First Nations' leadership. It is imperative to both honour and support such efforts, first by embedding the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into law at all levels of government, and second by ensuring that Indigenous communities and nations are full partners in the development of our climate emergency plans.

### **10. Everyone has to do their bit**

The Second World War was a total war effort. It was not merely prosecuted by government, the military and war manufacturing firms. All households played their part. Every company in the country made adjustments. All institutions were engaged.

The same is true today. Households will need to shift their consumption, their transportation and how they heat their homes. All companies and institutions, public and private, need transition plans.

Thousands of young people want a role to play, and many could find meaning in a new national Youth Climate Corps. And social movements will need to keep governments' feet to the fire at every stage.

### **11. This time, human rights must not be sacrificed**

The government's invocation of the War Measures Act in 1939 came at too high a price. People

were imprisoned and interned without due process. Communities were forcibly relocated. Civil liberties were forsaken. Canada’s wartime experience offers cautionary tales of what not to do.

The current crisis gives us a historic opportunity to avoid the sins of the past, and to engage in a form of emergency mobilization that is collaborative rather than coercive.

## 12. Canada is not an island

We don’t win wars by ourselves, and neither can we opt out when justice demands our engagement. Canada’s population is relatively small, yet we have punched above our weight before. We certainly did in the Second World War—and we can again. This lesson applies at multiple levels.

First, while Canada’s domestic GHG emissions may be small at a global level, we are a major international exporter of fossil fuels and international investor in GHG-intensive, highly exploitative mining projects. Second, in addition to taking climate action at home, Canada must embrace our responsibilities to the rest of the world.

During the Second World War, Canada was extremely generous with our financial transfers to various allies, despite unprecedented demands at home. Our historic per capita GHG emissions have been disproportionately high, carbon pollution does not stop at our borders, and we are one of the world’s wealthiest countries.

Given all this, it is incumbent on Canada to substantially boost our financial transfers to poorer countries, particularly in those regions hardest hit by the climate crisis and extreme weather. This is not a matter of charity, but of necessity and justice.

Third, we must make right one of the most shameful chapters of Canada’s Second World War legacy: the response to refugees. Before, during and after the war, Canada refused to open its doors to people fleeing persecution, particularly Jews seeking to escape Nazi-occupied Europe.

In the coming decades, the crises of people displaced by climate impacts will surely be a defining issue. This time, we need to act with honour.

## 13. When necessary, real leaders throw out the rule book, and they are the heroes

Throughout my book we encounter people who, in the face of a humanitarian crisis, defy orders and the norms of their time and circumstance—they are the ones who change the course of events. These are some of the people we remember from the Second World War, and they will be the people history again recalls as climate emergency champions.

## 14. Know thine enemy

Before engaging in battle, we need to know what we are up against. The enemy was clear in the Second World War. Today, less so.

We face numerous barriers to change, particularly a fossil fuel industry that has done much to block climate action. One of the most insidious barriers is a dynamic I call the “new climate denialism,” along with its various manifestations, peddlers and enablers. The new climate denialism currently dominates our politics, and it is the new *modus operandi* of the fossil fuel industry.

**A** *Good War* puts “meat on the bones” of each of these lessons. The book is a historical excavation, an unearthing of what we are capable of when we collectively approach an emergency with a new mindset, not only with respect to economic change, but with a new spirit of collaboration and purpose.

The book is also an invitation to our political leaders, to reflect on the people who saw us through the Second World War, and to consider how they wish to be remembered, as we undertake this defining task of our lives. But it is equally an invitation to all of us to reflect on who we want to be as we confront this crisis together.

The climate emergency does not present exactly the same challenge as that war and the battle against fascism. There are differences, of course. But the lessons the war teaches us about how to confront an existential threat are many and valuable.

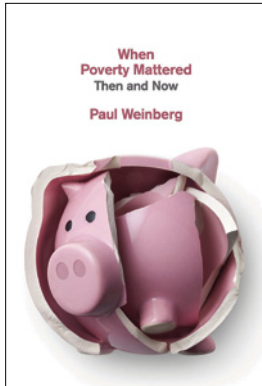
Like most people who read the latest scientific warnings, I’m afraid. In particular, I feel deep anxiety for my children, and about the state of the world we are leaving to those who will live through most of this century and beyond. All of us who take seriously these scientific realities wrestle with despair. The truth is that we don’t know if we will win this fight, if we will rise to this challenge in time.

But it is worth appreciating that those who rallied in the face of fascism 80 years ago likewise didn’t know if they would win. We often forget that there was a good chunk of the war’s early years during which the outcome was far from certain. Yet that generation rallied regardless, and in the process surprised themselves by what they were capable of achieving. That’s the spirit we need today. **M**



Seth Klein is the former director of the CCPA-BC and the author of *A Good War: Mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency* (ECW Press, September 2020), from which this was excerpted and adapted for the *Monitor*.

# Prioritizing poverty across two generations of Trudeaus



## WHEN POVERTY MATTERED: THEN AND NOW PAUL WEINBERG

Fernwood, October 2019, \$22

**C**ONCERNS ABOUT repressive federal overreach during a national crisis, the rise of right-wing violence, illegal acts committed by Canadian spy agencies, and gross economic inequality are the stuff of 2020 headlines. Yet as Paul Weinberg eerily documents in his recent book, *When Poverty Mattered*, the same issues dominated public discussion a half-century ago. While the faces have changed since 1970 (Justin for Pierre), the structural flaws (social, economic and political) being challenged at the end of the swinging sixties remain depressingly familiar—and even further entrenched—today.

Through interviews and extensive archival material, Weinberg recalls how, despite Toronto's postwar economic boom, large numbers of people were surviving without electricity and heat, and welfare officials checked up on single mothers to see if toilet seats were up, in an effort to sniff out violations of the “spouse

in the house” rule that was not overturned until 1986. The 1960s were also a fertile period of creative organizing among poor people. This included a short-lived social change research institute called Praxis Corporation, which would feature prominently in the high-profile 1970s scandals that led to two major commissions of inquiry into RCMP illegality.

Stateside community groups sprung up almost daily in the mid-1960s under U.S. President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, but Canadian entities were equally prolific and diverse. There was the grassroots Just Society Movement, for example, launched by two single mothers who refused to apply for government funding. Praxis, created by University of Toronto professors, was able to leverage its middle class bona fides to win government contracts researching pressing social problems. Like their American cousins, these Canadian groups, many of which undertook initiatives based on participatory democracy and community control, were a constant source of study, surveillance, infiltration and disruption by state anti-subversion agencies.

But the antipoverty policies of the Lester Pearson era suffered a significant body blow following the ascension of the fiscally conservative Pierre Trudeau government, which employed liberal-sounding phrases like “the just society” as it laid the framework for what would later become neoliberal austerity. Pierre Trudeau told his 1968 campaign trail audiences that “no government is a Santa Claus,” and warned of the “danger” of the “revolution of rising expectations.”

Then-NDP leader Tommy Douglas condemned Trudeau as a “1930s Tory” to the “far right” of Pearson. This description was confirmed by the Trudeau government's insistence on supporting “equality of opportunity” instead of poverty eradication and social equality, along with its refusal to incorporate social and economic rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

**D**espite Trudeau's lack of interest in substantive economic change, there was still enough momentum left over from the Pearson years to address poverty. In a speech to the Empire Club of Canada in 1972, Senator David Croll, who led a Senate committee on poverty, proposed that poverty is “a great social issue of our time and unless we act now, nationally and in a new and purposeful way, five million Canadians will continue to find life a bleak, bitter and never-ending struggle for survival.” In response, Doris Power of the Just Society Movement decried what she named the faddish “discovery” of the poor, insisting instead that there had been no similar investigation of corporate power and wealth concentration.

Ian Adams, William Cameron, Brian Hill and Peter Penz all resigned from Croll's committee when it became clear the government wasn't particularly interested in eliminating the causes of poverty. In their independent 1971 study, *The Real Poverty Report*, the senators wrote that “to be poor in our society is to suffer the most outrageous kinds of violence perpetrated by human beings on other human beings.” They went on to ask a pertinent question, one rarely addressed

by those in political life: “What are the consequences for a society that claims to have a democratic system, enjoys trappings of wealth and economic power spectacularly beyond the reach of most nations in the world, but allows one-fifth of its population to live and die in a cycle of unrelieved misery?”

Weinberg notes how groups like the Just Society Movement and the Hamilton Welfare Rights Organization, among many others, had no time for the niceties required to reach accommodation with a system whose functionaries were diametrically opposed to the needs of their “clients.” Instead, these groups came up with direct action approaches to confront those who, especially in the social service world, acted as police agents of the poor.

Such groups found welcome support from Praxis, which in addition to acting as a social justice hub at its downtown Toronto offices held educational sessions with the likes of Jane Jacobs, Mel Watkins, Stephen Clarkson and Abraham Rotstein, while also producing an impressive ream of studies on how to inspire democratic control of communities. Some of those reports were at the bequest of a federal government that, on the one hand, encouraged the ‘60s generation to “join the system” and work from the inside, while simultaneously fearing an outbreak of “guerilla bureaucrats” who were interested in more than simply pushing paper until they could collect their pensions.

The fact that some of those bureaucrats were hiring Praxis to write research reports sparked concern among Trudeau cabinet ministers as well as the Mounties’ Security Service counter-subversion team. Describing Praxis as a “left-of-centre intellectual pressure group,” the RCMP warned of the group’s capacity to influence government policy. The job of the iconic police force was to devise a plan to “deal with the potential security threat and embarrassment to the government posed by groups of this nature.”

The RCMP’s dirty tricks campaigns against Quebec independence advocates were legendary in the 1970s. Weinberg expends considerable effort trying to determine what role the RCMP may have played in the lesser-known 1970 break-in and fire at Praxis, during which files ranging from lists of supporters to registrants for a Canada-wide antipoverity conference were stolen.

What role, he asks, did the Mounties’ connections with and infiltration of far-right organizations play? In addition, did what happened to Praxis occur in the context of an apparent *carte blanche* issued to RCMP officers by Commissioner W.L. Higgitt to break the law? In an infamous memo, Higgitt promised his force that they would in the course of breaking the law be protected “to the greatest extent possible from criminal, quasi-criminal or civil responsibility.” Weinberg also interrogates the role played by conservative journalist Peter Worthington, who found himself in possession of

some of the stolen Praxis documents and then turned them over to the Mounties.

Unfortunately, the ultimate truth may never be established, for as Weinberg points out, a major opportunity was lost when the McDonald commission that looked into the RCMP’s illegal activities refused to consider the Praxis affair as part of its mandate. He nonetheless shares valuable insights from an inquiry researcher who lamented that the commission seemed more interested in repairing the damage to the force’s reputation than in getting to the bottom of the culture of illegality in the RCMP.

The historical overview Weinberg provides is helpful as we face significant austerity challenges in the coming years. As Canadians look to the “post” or “later” period of the COVID-19 pandemic, they will be reminded that the class structure of this country remains permanently intact and that the RCMP, CSIS and the Canadian military will be on standby to suppress any outbreaks of democracy. Indeed, of everything happening in the world today, these organizations appear to fret most about the same “excess of democracy” that a group of 1970s academics, industrialists and politicians, under the banner of The Trilateral Commission, diagnosed as the biggest challenge arising from the 1960s social movements.

One can already see the battle lines being drawn for the new Trudeau government. Even mainstream media is asking whether the \$2,000 monthly CERB allotment should be the new basic income calculated by Ottawa. How, many will ask, can Trudeau and his provincial counterparts go back to stingy social assistance payments that condemn millions to the degrading, humiliating and unacceptable poverty that 50 years ago was pegged as the great social issue of the time?

And while the fight heats up for a basic income, free child care, free tuition and free transportation, and truly affordable housing, how many millions will be spent surveilling, infiltrating and disrupting those efforts? In the early 2000s, CSIS famously issued a report naming anti-globalization protesters as a security threat, no doubt shaken by the possibility that the popular chant of the era, *another world is possible*, might be acted upon to generate systemic change.

While we haven’t gotten there yet, the originator of that phrase, author-activist Arundhati Roy, reminded us earlier this year that there is still time. Writing in the *Financial Times* that, “Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew,” she sees the present global challenges as “a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.” As Weinberg’s book teaches, it is and has always been up to us decide how and when we walk through. **M**



JOE KADI

ILLUSTRATION BY MAURA DOYLE

## Connecting the dots

**From smoke-filled skies to the sweet smell of a dying spruce, we are losing touch with the life around us.**

SPENT THE MORNINGS of August 2017 in the same way Emily Byrd Starr did, roughly 100 years earlier, waiting for the sound of trees being taken down before their time. One episode in L. M. Montgomery's *Emily of New Moon* recounts a feud that ends with the neighbour's fateful decision to cut down the grove of spruce and hardwood trees that abuts Emily's family farm. Emily, who loves trees in general and the small grove in

particular, finds the waiting period interminable.

"When would the blow fall? Every morning Emily listened miserably as she stood on the sandstone doorstep of the kitchen, for the sound of axe blows on the clear September air. Every evening when she returned from school she dreaded to see that the work of destruction had begun. She pined and fretted.... Almost she wished Lofty John would begin and be done with it."

My reason for fretting and pining? The large lot next to my southwest Calgary rental, with numerous trees and the 1950s bungalow in the centre. Built during a time when land—for gardening, for children's play, for beauty—was important, and a small dwelling more than adequate. The assumption was that this 750-square-foot house, with two bedrooms, provided plenty of space for a family of five or six or seven. Recently, the lot and house



have been sold. Not to a family of six but to a developer. Who would do what Calgary developers regularly do.

In the same way that Emily's concern focused on a small grove, my concerns in the summer of 2017 focused on a small corner of the world. And yet strands from that small corner had global inferences.

In a world short on trees, losing even a small number of them matters. Using non-renewable fossil fuels to manufacture and transport housing materials, in order to replace perfectly appropriate existing housing, matters. Adding hardwood floors and granite fireplaces to our overflowing landfills matters. Following the values of consumer culture, which insist on quadrupling the size of 1950s family housing, matters. Choosing to design and build houses with heating and electrical sources coming from non-renewable fossil fuels, rather than solar and wind sources, matters. Using the profit motive as the sole guiding principle, in spite of staggering advances in designing sustainable dwellings, matters.

Doing all of these in the midst of clear evidence of global warming and the ensuing climate chaos matters. All of these events were unfolding right beside me, in a house and a lot that I knew well. I had been inside the house and taken note of viable pine doors and cupboards, hardwood floors, granite fireplace, built-in bookcases. The lot contained a multitude of healthy trees: a 60-year-old birch, two 60-year-old Engelmann spruce trees, three mountain ashes (beautiful indigenous trees whose berries are a favourite of local birds), two spruces 15 to 20 years old, a gnarled crabapple tree that still produced fruit, a twisted old lilac with tree-like stature.

A small corner of the earth, yes. But acting as a microcosm providing important information about the depths of our ecological crisis, saying much about values, beliefs, spirituality, worldview. As Indigenous folks, ecofeminists and holistic thinkers have long understood.

A small corner of the earth, a small set of actions occurring in the midst of clear evidence of global warming and the ensuing climate chaos. As I waited and watched, I did so with my windows closed, even though it was August. Otherwise I'd have choked on the smoke from forest fires in British Columbia (there have been 1,200 since April 2017) and the nearby wildfire in Banff National Park.

The smoke arrived in Calgary in early July and stayed like an unwelcome house guest who speaks vaguely of departure at an unnamed future date. The Vernon Creek fire in Banff National Park was contained in August, but fire officials said it wouldn't go out until a foot of snow fell in the mountains. (Yes, Virginia, environmentalists are correct when they talk about how interconnected we truly are. We share everything: the beauty and the terror.)

## Environmentalists are correct when they talk about how interconnected we truly are. We share everything: the beauty and the terror.

Wildfires are part of the natural weather patterns in Western Canada, and at the same time they constitute an example of extreme weather events. Consider the significance of what the climate scientists have been saying for, oh, the last 30 years or so. But who's counting? Thanks to global warming and climate chaos, extreme weather events happen with more regularity and more intensity; that is, their quantity and quality increase. The pattern in British Columbia and Alberta is unmistakable, if we pay attention.

And therein lies the rub. The frightening lack of attention. I had an impossible number of casual conversations that summer with people who exclaimed about Calgary's great weather, hot and dry. Let me spell this out: we were in the midst of a serious drought, with temperatures in the atypical high 20s and low 30s, and the municipal government issuing warnings about the damage the drought is doing to our urban forest, and parts of the province burning up, and smoke entering our homes, and health officials suggesting we stay indoors.

I would have given my eyeteeth to any weather reporter who connected the dots:

"Keep in mind that 2017 is the fourth hottest year on record, following 2016, 2015, 2014. Here in Calgary the temperature today reached 32 degrees Celsius, well above our seasonal high temperature. And we are still in a drought, another weather abnormality for our summer months. These are the patterns climate scientists have been warning us about for the past decades."

I have yet to hear that weather report.

In the first night of the 2017 Canmore Folk Festival, over the long weekend in August, we had all the signs of a big rainstorm moving in. Thunder and lightning, wind picking up, temperature dropping,

# “I watched it right up to the point where they were about to take out the birch. Then I had to go inside.”

clouds rolling in. I was prayerfully and desperately hopeful. But the storm passed over, and within 30 minutes three people told me how happy they were.

“Isn’t it great?” one said breathlessly. “I was so worried it was actually going to rain!”

I wanted to weep, for our stupidity and ignorance. It reminded me of the moment in Barbara Kingsolver’s book *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, where she and her family stop at a convenience store and notice the sky darkening suddenly. The furious cashier insists it better not rain, as that would alter her plan to wash her car.

“I am not one to argue with cashiers, but the desert was dying,” Kingsolver writes. “We had all shared this wish, in some way or another; that it wouldn’t rain on our day off. Thunderheads dissolved ahead of us, as if honoring our compatriot’s desire to wash her car as the final benediction pronounced on a dying land.”

Kingsolver’s reference to final benediction, to prayer, is not lost on me. I remember my grandmother praying over her large, exorbitantly healthy backyard garden that boasted a fruit-bearing apricot tree—a rare sight in that pocket of southern Ontario. She had grown up in rural Lebanon, where the hill farmers deliberately understood the connection between adequate water and sunlight and healthy crops,

and routinely prayed to whatever creator they honoured to keep that connection healthy.

Reverence, sacrament and prayer are, I believe, one possible antidote during these troubled times. Along with engaging in practical actions, I pray about the environmental crisis. Prayer can provide me with solace; it can assuage anguish. Certainly it helped me in the days preceding the attack on the trees next door, their murder a foregone conclusion. And so I bore witness, blessed the trees, and thanked them. I felt they may have known what was coming.

I spent the days following the attack offering more blessings. I also honed in on small moments of grace. One of these took place with my neighbour Dawn, the elderly working-class woman who has lived for 45 years on the other side of the street. She talked to me about how upset she was, all the while hanging her wet cotton sheets on the clothesline.

A similar moment happened when I ran into Bill, another neighbour, as he loaded paint cans into his truck for a long day’s work. “I watched it right up to the point where they were about to take out the birch,” he said, “then I had to go inside.” His eyes grew moist as he looked at the ground, blinking.

These moments reminded me that suffering shared is suffering lessened. Not removed, but lessened.

In Montgomery’s 1923 novel, there’s a happy outcome. The blow does not fall. Emily resolves the feud and saves the trees.

I admit it: I envy writers like Montgomery. Like me, she worshipped the natural world, and found beauty, solace and rejuvenation there. She could revel in this love, and share it with readers. She could create a happy ending in which the trees live. I could do no such thing. After three hours of throbbing machines and shaking earth, by noon on September 1 it was all over.

I had expected a local sawmill to “harvest” the trees and then use the wood in some way. I hadn’t considered the possibility that the house and trees would be mercilessly bulldozed together. Living trees and hardwood floors and an intact granite fireplace tossed indiscriminately into a bin that would take them to the landfill. The overflowing landfill, that is. Yet that is what happened.

When I stepped outside my home the next morning, I inadvertently took in the beautiful smell of sap. It produced in me that happy feeling of being in an evergreen forest. After a few seconds, the reality of the experience set in. My sensory enjoyment was a result of the senseless murder of a 60-year-old community of spruce trees.

The blow had fallen. It has been a painful one. **M**



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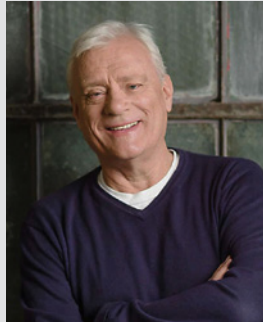
# In tribute to John Loxley (1942–2020)

## Thank you, brother

JOHN LOXLEY was sought after by governments—provincial, federal, and international—for his wise counsel. Yet he was happy and perhaps felt more at home explaining the ideas of progressive economics to trade union and community activists, with clarity and without condescension.

It's worth recalling what progressive movements faced in the 90s, when the implacable TINA (There. Is. No. Alternative.) was being used to justify so many cruel and regressive policy choices that we knew were dangerous and destructive. Too often we were reduced to what felt like inchoate rage, pitting our anger and our random examples against the brick wall of TINA.

John and Choices showed us a better way through people's budgeting: the magically (in retrospect) simple idea that, rather than simply assert that the policies being implemented were wrong-headed, we should demonstrate that they were not the inevitable result of the economic situation, but were instead, well, choices. And that better choices could and should be made.



The Alternative Federal Budget continues in the tradition that John taught us. It is a carefully calibrated and unimpeachable demonstration that, given the economic situation in any given year, positive and progressive policy options are always available. The annual AFB remains an important part of the work of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

It can be said without exaggeration that economists have won the Nobel Prize for lesser contributions to the “dismal science.”

John Loxley made a huge contribution to the growth and credibility of the CCPA, especially in his home province of Manitoba, but also nationally.

We are indebted to him.

We pledge to honour his memory and respect the contribution he made, by continuing the work that he did so well, demonstrating that the choices that place the well-being of people at their core are always the better choice.

—From the Board and Members Council  
of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives