MONITOR

Progressive news, views and ideas

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MONITOR

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

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Big ideas

Up Front

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Books

Staples

RÓISÍN WEST

Big ideas to kick at the darkness

NOVEMBER CAN feel bleak. The crisp bright beauty of October fades away, and a colder, quieter grey sets in as we prepare for longer, darker nights. On the heels of a particularly uninspired election, with protests at hospitals across the country and Canada facing a Delta-fuelled fourth wave, this fall seems a little darker than most.

Knowing that uncertain days were ahead, we wanted to offer a counterbalance to the partisan jabs, the daily COVID-19 counts, the doomscrolling. In preparation for this issue, I asked the contributors for their Big Ideas. More specifically, I encouraged them to think of progress as a relay race. No one person or single moment can be responsible for fixing everything. So if a baton were passed to them, what would be their big idea to advance equity and sustainability in Canada? I'm thrilled to share this collection of ideas for Canada's future, and I hope that it makes your November a little brighter.

The big idea that I've been sitting with this fall is one that we can commit to at the individual level but that also scales well to the community, organization and government level. That idea is reconceptualizing how we think about, talk about and practice accountability. I was reminded of the need for a re-evaluation on Twitter where some Black and Indigenous organizers that I follow were expressing their skepticism about taxing the rich. Until that point, I had considered taxing the rich to be a slam dunk policy proposal with widespread support. But these organizers explained that increasing tax reserves within the current system would only lead to increased spending on things that threatened their lives and the lives of their loved ones: policing, the military and incarceration. When we talk about taxing the rich, we do so in a framework that also imagines a budgeting process that prioritizes progressive projects like pharmacare and housing. We imagine a budgeting process that puts people first and is accountable to communities.

In her writing, Mia Mingus explains that people typically think of accountability as something external, i.e., we *hold* other people accountable. But accountability, she posits, is an intrinsic process; it can't be put upon you. By the same token, accountability is not a tool of enforcement or punishment. Instead, accountability is a generative process that strengthens and repairs a relationship. In order to fulfil this potential, though, accountability must be offered proactively. We must show up when we make mistakes or cause harm and we must be present for the people that are harmed or affected by our actions.

Mingus divides accountability into four key components: self-recognition; apologizing; repair; and behavioural change.

Why is accountability a big idea? The way that Mingus invites us to be accountable counters the policing model of accountability we are typically taught to understand as something that is placed upon us when our misdeeds are revealed.

A generative and proactive accountability is a particularly transformative idea at this stage of the pandemic. As adrienne marie brown details in *We Will Not Cancel Us*, "Our emotions and need for control have been heightened during this pandemic—we are stuck in our houses or endangering ourselves to go out and work, terrified and angry at the loss of our plans and normalcy, terrified and angry at living under the oppressive rule of an administration that does not love us and that is racist and ignorant and violent. Grieving our unnecessary dead, many of whom are dying alone, unheld by us. We are full of justified rage. And we want to release that rage." Finding space to practice and receive accountability when the world is upside down is truly a tall aspiration but a worthy one all the more.

When scaling accountability up to the organization and government level, power dynamics and the exponential capacity to cause harm become key factors in creating and practicing accountability.

We can't immediately fix the lack of accountability at a macro level in Canada. We can't promise that a more equitable tax system would fund more equitable programs. But we can start the practice of embracing accountability on an individual level. Because the more familiar we become with the language and practice of accountability, the easier it will be to demand it from our institutions and our leaders. "We all have work to do. Our work is in the light...be accountable and go heal, simultaneously, continuously," adrienne marie brown reminds us. "It's never too late."

A quick housekeeping note from me before you turn the page. When my wonderful colleague Katie Sheedy joined our team, I decided our office had reached "peak Katie" and it was time to make an overdue leap and change my name. In honour of my roots in the prairies and my mother's roots in Ireland, I chose Róisín. As always, you can reach me at *monitor@policyalternatives.ca*. I hope that this issue makes the dark days a little brighter and, as always, I would love to hear from you if an article in this issue resonated with you. M

New from the CCPA

New research associates join the fight in Nova Scotia

CCPA research associates regularly contribute to op-eds, blogs and reports, undertake peer review, and sit on our Research Advisory Committee. The CCPA Nova Scotia office is excited to welcome **Dr. Catherine Leviten-Reid**, Associate Professor in Community Economic Development at Cape Breton University and co-chair of the Housing for All Working Group; **Claire Horn**, a Killam Postdoctoral Fellow with the Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University; and **Tari Ajadi**, PhD Candidate in Dalhousie University Political Science.

Will BC raise the bar on paid sick leave?

In May 2021, the province brought in a temporary entitlement to three days of COVID-19-related paid leave and promised to establish a permanent program as a basic right of employment effective January 2022. The province is presently consulting with the public about the number of paid sick days it will bring in.

CCPA-BC has been working closely with advocates, including the BC Federation of Labour and the BC Employment Standards Coalition, to push for 10 days employer-paid leave for all workers, including full- and part-time, casual, seasonal, temporary agency and temporary foreign workers—regardless of immigration status.

As our Senior Economist Alex Hemingway notes, "You can bet that large corporate employers and their lobby groups have been working hard behind the scenes to limit the number of paid sick days BC ultimately legislates, and to pressure the government to foot the bill."

Making the case for immigration policy transformation

Since the mid-1950s, the Canadian government has increasingly relied on precarious and/or temporary migrant workers to meet a growing demand for care work. Restrictive immigration policies and programs that promise a pathway to permanent residency but place limitations on workers' rights and freedoms have fostered a highly vulnerable workforce that is subject to working in low-wage and undervalued sectors with little protection.

New research from **Rishika Wadehra**, the **2021 McInturff Fellow** at the CCPA, argues that, in addition to immediate reforms to current caregiver pilot programs to help protect vulnerable migrant care workers, Canada should work toward granting permanent resident status to all migrants upon arrival. Granting migrants permanent resident status and equal access to available supports and services is key to ensuring basic human rights for all.

One election down and another on the horizon

With the federal election now in the rear-view mirror, Ontario voters are looking ahead to a mammoth showdown in the June 2 provincial election. The pre-election policy landscape is rapidly taking shape. In October, the Ford government made health care the centrepiece of its Throne Speech (find Ontario Director Randy Robinson's analysis of the speech at MonitorMag.ca) but bluntly avoided any mention of child care, education, poverty, the climate crisis, or the chaotic housing market. CCPA-ON will tackle those topics and more in the months to come, with major reports on the pandemic job market, education funding, and the minimum wage.

Checking the scales used to measure P3 effectiveness

Using evidence gathered by provincial auditors, *Is There Value in Value for Money Assessments? Testing the VfM Test in Western Canada* demonstrates how the assumptions built into the VfM test as well as the interests of those who author them, have created an assessment method that is heavily weighted in its favour. The report identifies 47 publicly-available VfM assessments from P3 projects in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia conducted over the past 15 years. Of these 47 assessments, only one recommended against the P3 model in favour of a traditional public build. CCPA Saskatchewan Director Simon Enoch states that "the fact that the VfM tests so overwhelmingly recommended the P3 model in virtually every instance lends credence to a longstanding criticism that these tests are often biased in favour of the P3 model. In light of how compromised these tests are, the procurement system in Saskatchewan needs to be fundamentally reformed."

Supporting our unsheltered relatives

This fall, the Manitoba office launched Speaking Up, a series of conversations about a better future. The first presentation on October 14, featured Grace Akerstream Laing, the Mama Bear Clan Coordinator with North Point Douglas Women's Centre and educator and community activist, Mitch Bourbonniere in conversation with CCPA-Manitoba Interim Director Josh Brandon. This robust discussion explored how the pandemic has made life increasingly precarious for Winnipeg's most vulnerable residents and what can be done to support the city's homeless. To follow this speaker series and learn more about upcoming events, visit policyfix.ca. M

Alex Hemingway / BC Office

Robust wealth tax could raise $363 billion over 10 years

AMID A RISE in extreme inequality, the idea of an annual tax on the wealth of the super-rich has risen to prominence in recent years in many countries. New analysis shows that a robust wealth tax in Canada—one that goes further than those currently on the table in the federal election—could cumulatively raise at least a quarter of a trillion dollars in revenue over the next decade.

During the pandemic, billionaire wealth skyrocketed globally (and Canada was no exception), exposing major gaps in social investment. Large emergency expenditures provided a critical lifeline, raising the question of how concentrated wealth might be tapped to raise more public revenue going forward.

Recent polling suggests that a wealth tax is a point of unity among the Canadian public, with the policy garnering 89% support overall, including 83% of Conservative voters. It's equally striking that a near-consensus among the public has translated so unevenly to the party platforms.

In its 2021 election platform, the federal NDP proposed an annual tax of 1% on net wealth over $10 million which is more modest than wealth taxes on the super rich as high as 6% and 8% proposed by Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, respectively. The Green Party backed a smaller wealth tax that would apply the 1% rate to net family wealth over $20 million. The Liberals, Conservatives and Bloc Québécois opposed a parliamentary motion for a wealth tax last year, though the Bloc's election platform has since backed a one-time measure.

This analysis focuses on wealth taxes specifically, but it should be noted that the NDP, Greens, Bloc and Liberals each propose additional taxes on the well-to-do, though none of these policies would raise as much revenue as a wealth tax, nor do they target wealth directly. A suite of policies is needed to tackle extreme inequality and raise public revenue, so adding more tools to the toolbox is welcome.

Prior to the pandemic, wealth inequality in Canada had reached new extremes. Research from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives showed that by 2016, Canada's 87 richest families each held, on average, 4,448 times more wealth than the typical family. Together these 87 families held more wealth than the bottom 12 million Canadians combined.

> A wealth tax on the super rich could play a major role in financing sustained social and environmental investments after the pandemic.

The richest 1% controlled 26% of Canada's wealth in 2016, according to a Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) report. Recent academic research suggests that figure may be even higher at 29% of Canada's wealth.

Speaking of the 1%, a household in the top 1% of wealth holders in Canada is not necessarily rich enough to be subject to the proposed taxes. A wealth tax over $10 million would apply to only the richest 0.5%, representing about 75,000 families in total. In other words, these wealth tax proposals apply only to the richest of the rich, but they could still raise significant revenues.

Taxing extreme wealth: room to think bigger

How much revenue could be raised by a more robust annual wealth tax that aims higher than the 1% rate currently on the table and moves closer to some of the more ambitious policies being proposed by certain American legislators?

To answer this question, I modelled a moderate wealth tax with three brackets: 1% on net wealth over $10 million; 2% over $50 million; and 3% over $100 million.

This wealth tax would go further than the NDP's proposal (the strongest in the Canadian election platforms, which would solely apply a rate of 1% to wealth over $10 million) but remains much lower than the rates in Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders' recent policy proposals and draft legislation.

Indeed, more aggressive wealth tax rates would also be needed in Canada to make a real dent in enormous fortunes and begin to truly deconcentrate extreme wealth rather than simply slow its growth as lower rates would do. Still, for a small country acting as a first mover by imposing a wealth tax on the

super rich, moderate rates rising to 3% are a sensible place to start.

My revenue projection uses the High Net Worth Family Database from the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) and is informed by the latest research from academic economists specializing in wealth taxes.[1]

Based on conservative assumptions, I estimate that a moderate wealth tax (1% over $10 million; 2% over $50 million; 3% over $100 million) would raise more than a quarter of a trillion dollars in net public revenue over 10 years, a cumulative total of $363 billion. If the tax were in place today, it would raise an estimated $28 billion in its first year, with revenues rising annually to $46 billion by its tenth year.[2]

To put this in perspective, $28 billion is approximately what it would cost to pay for universal pharmacare, $10-a-day child care and eliminating tuition fees for post-secondary education *combined*, which would each have knock-on benefits for the economy and household budgets.

The NDP's modest 1% tax on wealth over $10 million would raise a lower but still very substantial amount. If the tax were in place today, it would raise $17 billion in its first year, rising to $26 billion in its tenth year, with a cumulative total of $218 billion over the 10-year budgetary window. The Green Party's smaller wealth tax would raise $12 billion in its first year and $157 billion over the 10-year window.

Allowing tax avoidance and evasion: a political choice

By relying on more up-to-date research from academic economists specializing in wealth taxation, I arrived at a higher revenue estimate than the PBO's estimate for year one of the NDP proposal of $10.9 billion. The PBO assumes a very high level of tax avoidance and evasion that is not consistent with the most recent academic research on wealth taxes. This includes key work by economists Gabriel Zucman and Emmanuel Saez, who analyzed the revenue potential of Warren and Sanders' wealth taxes and the UK Wealth Tax Commission based out of the London School of Economics.[3]

Would Canada's super rich flee the country to avoid a wealth tax? Some might, but a well-designed wealth tax would not allow them to dodge their tax obligations in this way. As in the Warren and Sanders wealth tax proposals, a steep "exit tax" should be applied on expatriation, in recognition of Canadian society's contributions to these fortunes. Exit tax rates are set at 40% in the Warren and Sanders plans and could be set even higher. The UK Wealth Tax Commission suggests a similar policy option in which wealth tax obligations continue to apply to the super rich for a set number of years after emigration.

As Saez and Zucman emphasize, levels of tax avoidance and evasion are policy choices. Ramping up tax enforcement is not only possible but critical to making a wealth tax work. The good news is that we already largely know how to do it. Key measures include increased funding for enforcement efforts focused on the rich, steeper penalties for tax cheats, enforcement against financial services providers that enable evasion and stronger transparency and third-party reporting requirements for financial institutions doing business with Canada. Focusing a wealth tax on a narrow band of the richest 0.5% also helps facilitate a high rate of compliance audits. The growing body of research on wealth taxes outlines the practicalities of enforcement in more detail. The key barriers to wealth taxes are not technical or economic, but political.

Analysis from the PBO also reinforces the effectiveness of stepping up enforcement efforts in the existing tax system. It estimates that recent federal investments in business tax enforcement alone (which are modest and should go further) have brought in nearly six dollars for each dollar spent on enforcement, plus a further boon to provincial revenues. New election platform analyses from the PBO project that further enforcement against tax evasion and avoidance would generate multi-billion dollar payoffs in revenue at a similar rate of return, something multiple party platforms tap into as a revenue source.

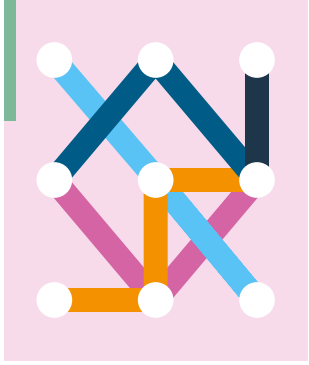
Taking back wealth to fund the public good

There is a huge backlog of desperately needed public investments in this country, which could help us tackle major challenges: unaffordable child care, the climate crisis, scarce and unaffordable housing, millions living on incomes below the poverty line and major deficiencies in seniors' care, among many others.

Canada is more than rich enough to meet these challenges. But we need to harness our national wealth, which all of us have a hand in creating, and direct more of it into investments for the common good. A wealth tax on the super rich could play a major role in financing sustained social and environmental investments after the pandemic, which would enhance economic growth and strengthen the foundations of a healthy economy and society for the long term.

Of course, the wealthy citizens of this country are influential and will fight to block such a policy from being enacted. They may succeed unless, building on extraordinary levels of public support and lessons learned from the history of social movements, people organize from below to take on the power of organized money. M

To find a complete reference list, visit MonitorMag.ca



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WHEN WE TALK about big ideas, the Alternative Federal Budget (AFB) stands the test of time as a visionary progressive project. For over 25 years, the AFB has shown that government budgets illustrate their priorities and that governments *can* choose to prioritize building an equitable and sustainable future for everyone who calls Canada home.
In *Alternative Budgets: Budgeting as if People Mattered*, the late John Loxley wrote:

"Slashing budget expenditures, cutting taxes and reducing the size of the public sector, both services and jobs, constitute a key platform in the right-wing political agenda. The budget has become a prime area of political struggle and the left has come to understand that fighting back requires more than a purely defensive posture. It demands no less than a rebuttal of right-wing fiscal arguments and the generation, with broad input, of progressive economic and social policies within a coherent and responsible fiscal framework. Therefore, alternative budgets are as much tools of political empowerment as they are blueprints for a more progressive political outlook, and these two elements should not be separated."

This year's AFB is dedicated to John Loxley who held a central role in the AFB and the broader alternative budgeting movement. Here is a quick peek at some of the numbers behind the AFB. The 2021 AFB will be released later this month.

54

The number of organizations that participated this year.

2009

David Macdonald's first year as AFB coordinator. The budgeting project began in 1994 as a partner project between the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and Winnipeg-based CHO!CES: A Coalition for Social Justice.

73

The percentage of First Nation communities in 2013 that had water systems at high or medium risk of contamination. The AFB that year called for a 0.5% increase to the corporate tax rate in Canada to fund improving on-reserve water systems and ending this crisis once and for all. At present, 45 long-term water advisories remain in effect in 31 communities. According to Water Today, a website that tracks advisories issued across the country, the number of short-term advisories (currently 43 in First Nations communities across Canada) has been climbing in recent months.

$1 billion

The amount of funding that the 1998 AFB allotted for climate change adaptation. The budget achieved this by diverting subsidies away from the resource sector and petro-chemical industries, while introducing a tax on carbon emissions. These funds, in turn, were earmarked to create a Canadian Atmospheric Fund for climate change mitigation and supporting a just transition for workers impacted by decarbonization. By contrast, the 1998 federal budget allotted $50 million over three years to "build momentum toward concrete actions and results" on climate change.

2005

The year that the AFB sounded the alarm on the chronic understaffing affecting health care facilities across Canada. "Sick Canadians," cautioned AFB writers, "are being deprived of proper nursing care because the funds and facilities have not been provided at levels needed to employ adequate nursing staff."

Policy changes that the AFB advocated for that have since become policy include:

- The creation of the Parliamentary Budget Officer in 2006
- The creation of a new top tax bracket at 33% in 2016
- Increasing the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) for low-income seniors in 2016
- The cancellation of family income splitting, a tax loophole that was used primarily by the wealthiest families in Canada, in 2017
- The capping of the stock option deduction in 2021 (although we advocated for its full elimination).

99

The page of the 2021 Federal Budget that features a graph from David Macdonald and Martha Friendly's child care research.

27

The number of years that the AFB project has delivered costed budgets, demonstrating that progressive, equitable, and sustainable policy choices are not only possible but economically desirable.

To learn more about the Alternative Federal Budget and to find the 2021 AFB when it is released, visit: policyalternatives.ca/projects/alternative-federal-budget

Inside Trade

STUART TREW

Trade rules that help everyone

(or at least don't get in the way of helping)

TO FIT THE THEME of this issue, I've been asked to "blue sky" an international trade regime that works for everyone. Not just the bankers, wealth managers, commodities traders, miners and intellectual property rightsholders who currently monopolize the payout from market-based globalization. *Everyone*. And to do it in 1,500 words—when today's free trade deals run 1,500 pages or more! OK, Róisín, challenge accepted.

Actually, it wasn't so hard a task. This year's Alternative Federal Budget (AFB) includes some interesting fair trade reforms as part of a cohesive, internationalist Canadian foreign policy. I was lucky to work on a section of the AFB, titled "Canada in the World," with some brilliant people at Unifor, the National Farmers Union, Cooperation Canada and other organizations. What follows is a summary of some of our ideas for making trade fair and equitable for people everywhere.

Trade and sustainable development

The AFB was released this year a few weeks ahead of the 12th ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization, which remains in disarray after the Trump administration unilaterally blocked new appointments to the organization's appellate body for reviewing trade disputes. In early October, WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala warned the ministerial conference "will be a failure" if member countries cannot agree at least on a new fisheries agreement text, and she urged them to find a compromise on the proposal, now a year old, to waive WTO-enforced intellectual property rights on COVID-19 vaccines and treatments.

Developing countries are once again being scapegoated by the West for stalling agreement on these and other items, like new restrictions on agricultural support programs. But rich and middle-income countries bear as much if not more of the blame for the mistrust and confusion at the WTO, partly due to their pursuit of divisive plurilateral agreements, or "joint statement initiatives" (JSIs), that remove policy space to governments in areas like digital policy and e-commerce, the regulation of services and foreign investment facilitation.

In league with the CCPA's international allies, in particular the Our World Is Not For Sale network (OWINFS), the AFB reorients the World Trade Organization so that it supports a multilateral trade system geared, at a minimum, to ensuring shared prosperity for all and achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, the AFB directs Global Affairs Canada to change Canadian trade policy at the WTO in the following ways:

- **Cease work on the joint statement initiatives.** Global civil society groups argue the JSIs will primarily benefit multinationals from rich countries at the expense of sustainable industrial development (including support for domestic digital firms and services), public services expansion and privacy protections (e.g., public sector data localization requirements) in low- and middle-income countries.
- **Set a global floor for labour rights and protections,** as proposed by the International Labour Organization in its Decent Work agenda.
- **Strongly support a package of proposals for greater policy space,** building on the Special and Differential Treatment agenda at the WTO, as the primary focus of near-term WTO negotiations.
- **Fully support the proposal from India and South Africa, backed by more than 100 WTO members, to suspend intellectual property rights on COVID-19-related vaccines, treatments and equipment for the duration of the pandemic.** These disciplines must be permanently waived for least-developed countries.
- **Negotiate a permanent climate waiver at the WTO** so that countries can pursue rapid decarbonization and environmental protection measures—even measures that encourage domestic job creation—without fear of provoking a WTO dispute.

Withdrawal from investment treaties

I've commented on the investor–state dispute settlement (ISDS) regime several times in this space, and *Monitor* readers are likely familiar with the ins and outs of it. Essentially, ISDS gives foreign firms and investors an exclusive right to bypass local courts and sue countries, sometimes for billions or even tens of billions of dollars, when they feel a government decision has unfairly hurt their investments or their ability to profit from them.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of all ISDS claims against Canada have targeted environmental or resource management decisions by federal or provincial governments. A greater share of Canadian ISDS cases abroad challenge the same kinds of measures.

Just this September, an ISDS tribunal agreed with the Canadian mining firm Eco Oro that the Colombian government's constitutionally mandated ban on mining in the sensitive *páramo* wetlands violated the firm's right to "fair and equitable treatment" under the Canada–Colombia Free Trade Agreement. As I write this, the tribunal is considering how much Colombia must pay the firm in compensation for the government's decision to live up to its domestic and international environmental obligations.

Canada has signed dozens of treaties containing ISDS, but recently agreed to remove NAFTA's ISDS process from the renegotiated CUSMA. The AFB directs Global Affairs Canada to begin to phase out ISDS wherever it exists in current trade and investment treaties and to stop negotiating new agreements with ISDS in the future.

Trade and Indigenous peoples

Consultation with Indigenous nations and communities on Canadian trade policy is spotty and does not affirm the rights articulated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Many original treaties that were signed by First Nations with European colonizers contained clauses guaranteeing those nations the exclusive right to trade and to the use of resources on their lands. Canada's free trade agreements, on the other hand, primarily protect the rights of multinational capital to exploit and profit from their activities on unceded and treaty-protected Indigenous lands.

Though CUSMA does not contain a dedicated Indigenous rights chapter, as requested by the Assembly of First Nations during the NAFTA renegotiations, there is a clear general exception for any measure that a party "deems necessary to fulfil its legal obligations to Indigenous [P]eoples." This should cover a state's legal, social, economic, cultural and moral obligations to Indigenous Peoples, as protected by UNDRIP and treaty law.

While a step forward from NAFTA, this language "will likely nonetheless prove insufficient," since it is left up to each country to adopt all obligations to Indigenous Peoples "instead of making them mandatory," concludes a collaborative report on the CUSMA negotiations from 2019. Moreover, CUSMA "does not recognize the impacts and disproportionate burden of the global effects of free trade on Indigenous [P]eoples."

The AFB establishes a permanent Indigenous advisory committee to take part in all Canadian trade negotiations and ensure a gender and regional balance among committee members. It also commits $60 million over five years to enhance First Nations' capacity to engage and participate in Canadian international trade delegations and in trade negotiations.

Trade and public interest regulation

Since 2018, the Trudeau government has spent millions on a regulatory "modernization" agenda to bring Canadian regulatory policy in line with corporate demands for less "red tape" and more "coherent" regulations between Canada and its trading partners. If this sounds rather *Harperesque*, it's because this business-friendly, trade-biased regulatory strategy chugs along no matter who is in power at the federal level.

To correct the democratic deficit in Canada's regulatory policy, the AFB commits $1 million per year for two years to expand the federal government's external regulatory advisory committee. The committee currently includes only one consumer advocate and should include at least one labour representative, one public health expert and one environmental expert.

The committee's discussions, along with all intergovernmental meetings of regulators and the private sector related to regulatory co-operation, will be meticulously documented and details made publicly available on the Canadian government website. This new AFB funding will allow departmental regulators to ensure regulatory developments are not captured by industry lobby groups in Canada or from Canada's trading partners.

This AFB also redirects Canada's international regulatory co-operation efforts toward sharing knowledge, transferring technology and co-ordinating experimentation to ensure clean energy and manufacturing methods can be equitably rolled out.

A partly-cloudy vision of trade reform

A quarter-century of global trade and investment liberalization, governed and policed by the World Trade Organization (WTO) and thousands of international free trade and investment agreements, has failed to equitably integrate low- and middle-income countries into the global economy. Modest declines in absolute poverty over this time went into reverse during the pandemic, and in any case hardly made up for the ecological damage, rise in inequality and precarious forms of work, stagnating wages, and loss of developmentalist policy space of the "hyper-globalization" era.

What we produced in the AFB is neither an endorsement of today's institutions of trade and investment governance nor a comprehensive plan to replace them. It outlines how Canada could seize what influence and agency it has on the world stage to scale back trade rules that hamper effective responses to today's biggest challenges. Our trade rules should do no harm to the planet and be written so the gains from international trade primarily benefit working people.

"Blue sky" is probably not the right term for this plan. But you *could* call it a "partly cloudy" vision for trade reform, reflecting the enormity of the task ahead. M

Colour-coded Justice

ANTHONY N. MORGAN

Oppression will try to steal your ability to dream. Don't let it.

THE TASK, I thought, was simple: Write a piece that offers a big idea for change...

But as I sat down to begin writing, I felt stuck.

I wanted to articulate a big and beautiful vision of justice for Black people in Canada. I wanted to paint a picture of a Canadian reality where our laws, policies and political processes fostered and facilitated Black freedom, self-determination and collective well-being. But I couldn't.

I couldn't find the vision, let alone the words to describe what I was struggling to conceive.

Instead, as I took time to think more deeply about the realities of being Black in Canada, the emotional weight, psychological fog and haunting shadow of the persistence of systemic anti-Black racism clouded my consciousness.

This reminded me that one of the first casualties of systemic oppression is the freedom-imagination of the oppressed. By freedom-imagination, I mean the ability to truly dream and see beyond the boundaries of the systemic injustices faced by one's people in order to envision a future where they are properly supported and encouraged to realize their fullest individual and collective potential.

As I waded through the muddy mental waters of penning this piece, I became more conscious of the ways that the normalization and chronic persistence of social, political, cultural and economic disadvantages curtails, clouds and crowds out oppressed communities' ability to fully and clearly see worlds beyond their social suffering. This is true for folks experiencing anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, queer-antagonism, trans-antagonism, sexism, ableism, Islamophobia and/or any other kind of discrimination related to an identity that is fundamental to an individual's inherent value, worth, and dignity as a human. So how did I get from under this mental cloud in order to write this piece?

After connecting a couple of close friends and sharing my struggles with this piece, I started to recall the concept of 'freedom dreams.' I was reminded about how important freedom dreaming is to and for Black life, struggle and liberation. I specifically started to think about this concept as it was originally introduced, framed and articulated in the powerful work of preeminent African American scholar and theorist, Robin D.G. Kelley: *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*.

In the preface of Kelley's 2002 text, he captured (with far greater clarity) the questions that I was quietly grappling with as I sought to write this:

> How do we produce a vision that enables us to see beyond our immediate ordeals? How do we transcend bitterness and cynicism and embrace love, hope and an all-encompassing dream of freedom, especially in these rough times?

Though published almost two decades ago, these words resonated deeply with me as I tried to find words for this column. It's exceptionally difficult to produce a vision of freedom in such rough times. And rough times these are for too many Black people in Canada.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionately high impact on Black communities in terms of their infection and mortality rates as well as their increased risk of exposure. This stems from Black people being concentrated in front-line health, child care, and food services jobs; having a higher reliance on crowded public

transit; and living in congregate housing settings such as public and social housing communities.

Added to this is the fact that the social tsunami of solidarity and support Black people received in the wake of the racial awakening of 2020 sparked by the murder of George Floyd has translated into a trickle of true change for Black communities. The avalanche of promises by institutions to do better by Black people (especially in the areas of policing and criminal justice) have been largely unmet, with the lives of the vast majority of Black people being unchanged.

Despite the year 2020 featuring countless grand gestures and rousing rhetoric from Canadian politicians regarding the need to name and address anti-Black racism, when it came to the fall 2021 federal election, Black people in Canada were met with a deafening silence from the country's federal party leaders. Addressing anti-Black racism was never mentioned as a key priority of any of the parties. Then, the dying days of the campaign revealed yet another photo of Prime Minister Trudeau in blackface.

To top it all off, there were the months of appalling anti-Black sexism (aka misogynoir) experienced by former federal Green Party leader, Annamie Paul, at the hands of members of her own party. In front of all of Canada, this ostensibly progressive party had its members vindictively collaborate to torpedo Paul's leadership, causing her to resign post-election, calling her leadership experience "the worst period in her life."

All of this cumulatively affects the individual and collective psyche of Black people in Canada. It's exhausting. It's maddening. So I hope I can be forgiven for struggling to—invoking the words of Kelley—produce a vision that enables us to see beyond the immediate ordeals of being Black in Canada.

But as difficult as it is in these times to freedom dream, I've still decided to write this column.

While offering no big vision for change here (though I have arguably offered this in my previous columns), I was still determined to submit this as an expression of defiant resistance to the bitterness and cynicism that is so seductive when considering the strains of being Black in Canada at this moment. Though, like many Black people in Canada, I'm tired, frustrated and disappointed, I remain ardently committed to freedom dreaming. Though I'm feeling battered, bruised and worn, using Kelley's words, I still choose to embrace love, hope and an all-encompassing dream of freedom, despite living in these rough times for Black Canadians. Why? Because Kelley's words remind me of how important freedom dreaming is even in moments when I cannot produce that vision of freedom. He writes,"Without new visions, we don't know what to build, only what to knock down. We not only end up confused, rudderless and cynical, but we forget that making a revolution is not a series of clever maneuvers and tactics but a process that can and must transform us."

Though my vision is still forming and unshared here, and though the recent tough times in Black Canadian life weigh heavily on my mind, body and spirit, I draw on the strength and memory of the world's most famous freedom dreaming ancestor.

I (still) have a dream... M

CCPA DONOR PROFILE

Meet Bob and Brooke Gibson, CCPA donors

We sat down recently with Bob Gibson to ask him about why he and his wife Brooke decided earlier this year to designate the CCPA as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy in addition to their regular support of our work. The Gibsons feel that the CCPA is special because of its depth and persistence and "it seemed logical to do something worthwhile with the money."

Why did you choose to set up a future gift via life insurance?

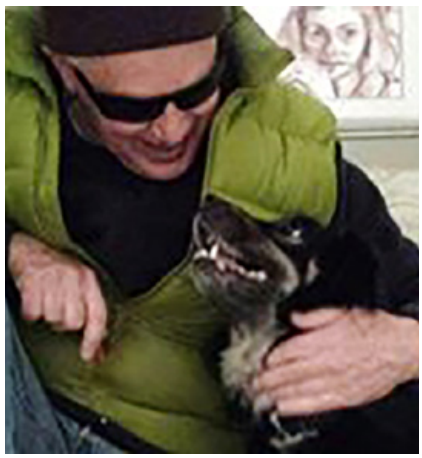
Life insurance companies make redemption of whole life policies during the policyholder's lifetime as difficult as possible. Rather than fighting the red tape and leaving heirs with the burden, it seemed logical to do something worthwhile with the money.

What has the CCPA done lately that's made you feel proud to be a supporter? In your opinion, what makes the CCPA special?

Its depth and persistence.

What have you read or watched to keep your mind busy and your soul fed during these strange days of COVID. Favourite reading material, magazine, TV show, etc.

Like everyone I live in a cultural bubble, reading left coast periodicals like the *Guardian Weekly*, enjoying and admiring the *Monitor*. I find podcasts like *Canadaland* to be the best source of immediate and honest news.



Tell us about someone who was a big influence on you early in life and how you became a CCPA supporter (how your ideals and those of the CCPA became aligned).

My grandfather, an agronomist, was politically active all his life.

As a student at McGill in the early 60s I was also exposed to the radicalism taking shape at the time, although I regret my failure to engage actively. Brooke, however, has moved the dial on that front since her experience as a protester at the 2001 Quebec G20, which led her to take active roles since then in anti-war protests, refugee settlement and Indigenous support.

Tell us about someone you find particularly inspiring right now.

My children and their children. My son is an urban artist in Montreal ("street name" Roadsworth) whose work for the past 20 years has centred around drawing attention to climate change and creating livable urban space. My daughter has created *The Scales Project* (thescalesproject.com), a forum for connection and communication through art about the climate crisis and ecological collapse.

What is your hope for the future? Name one policy the government should adopt today that would make people's lives better.

Universal basic income. It's simple and straightforward. Child care subsidies, which are now widely supported politically, serve as a proof of concept. An equitable distribution of wealth would make a huge difference socially and economically.

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

THE **BIG IDEAS** ISSUE

Bold ideas for Canada's future

HADRIAN MERTINS-KIRKWOOD

The zero-carbon suburb

It's not just heat pumps and electric cars. To truly decarbonize, we need to reimagine how we live, starting with urban sprawl.

LOOK OUT YOUR front door. What do you see?

If you're one of the 60% of Canadians who live in a detached, single-family home, or one of the 11% living in semi-detached homes and duplexes, you probably see many other homes like your own.

You probably see a lot of cars, too, since 90% of Canadians own or have access to a personal vehicle. There are as many registered vehicles as there are people in this country. And the people in your neighbourhood probably need those cars. Can you see a grocery store, school, or doctor's office from your home? Can you see any workplaces?

If you're one of the 7% of Canadians who live in an apartment building over five stories tall, your view is probably very different. From your window in the heart of the city, you might see other towers like your own, teetering above a grid of busy streets, interspersed with all the amenities of daily life and interconnected by public transportation.

You probably don't need a car to get to work or school or to access the services you need. And as you survey this forest of concrete from your box in the sky, it might feel like you're at the cutting edge of urbanization in Canada, setting an example for growing communities across the country.

But you'd be wrong.

Because the future of most Canadian communities is not densely-packed urban skyscrapers, as space-efficient as they are, any more than it is the continued expansion of car-dependent urban sprawl, which is deeply at odds with the necessity of achieving a zero-carbon economy.

No, the future of communities in Canada looks a lot more like the underappreciated middle child of Canadian urban design: low-rise apartments and multi-unit houses, mixed in with commercial and public spaces, to form liveable, walkable and sustainable communities.

It's the best path forward for a climate-safe future, and it's time we get used to it.

The downsides of sprawl and suburbanization are well-documented, especially in terms of their environmental impacts.

So-called "greenfield" development destroys natural habitats and farmlands that serve important functions, including flood control, biodiversity protection and carbon sequestration. Suburbs facilitate and even necessitate environmentally-destructive lifestyles, since they are almost always car-dependent and suburban homes are typically larger than urban ones, requiring more energy and materials to heat, cool and maintain.

There are other costs, too. Low-density communities stretch public services (such as schools and waste collection) thin, which results in higher costs and/or lower quality. Car dependence increases air pollution and reduces physical activity levels, both of which are tied to worse health outcomes.

Moreover, sparse, single-family homes are known to erode social connections and reduce wellbeing, in no small part because long work commutes are overwhelmingly linked to lower happiness.

High-density towers are much more efficient and have a smaller environmental footprint than housing the same number of people in detached homes, but they introduce problems of their own.

One is crowding. Putting thousands of people on a single block without a commensurate investment in surrounding infrastructure can strain the very services they are meant to take advantage of, such as transit and public green spaces. Another is affordability. Condo towers in particular are typically profit-seeking corporate projects that often price out existing residents. Municipalities increasingly mandate developers to provide affordable units, but the thresholds remain above what lower-income households can pay.

And then there are social obstacles. For example, tower living is not very attractive to some families, many of whom desire a yard and more space than an apartment can provide.

Today, only 20% of Canadians live in what experts call the "missing middle" of low-rise apartments and multi-unit houses. Advocates point out that these kinds of buildings solve many of the problems with both low-density sprawl and high-density towers. For example, they offer residents adequate living space and (often) a front door to the street without the cost and land use of a detached house. Medium-density housing is also more material-efficient than towers (low-rises can be built mainly with

wood, rather than steel and concrete) while being more land-efficient than houses.

European cities have long taken this approach. Berlin has a comparable population and population density to Toronto yet its skyline is remarkably flat thanks to a preponderance of 3–6 story buildings. Walk through any neighbourhood in Paris, Amsterdam, or Athens and you'll be hard-pressed to find towers or detached houses at all.

Not only do these cities fit more people comfortably into less space, they use the space better. The first floors of many low-rise buildings on main streets are reserved for commercial use—an uncommon practice in Canada and one often limited to high-rise buildings in downtown cores. Every neighbourhood can have its own grocery stores, offices and other amenities, freeing residents from traveling to a designated commercial area for daily necessities.

While these cities do have downtowns, they don't have the same hub-and-spoke feel as most North American cities. Suburbs still exist, but they are not sprawling areas designed solely to house commuters. Instead, neighbourhoods are often self-contained and self-sufficient with public transit links to other areas. People can drive but rarely have to.

There's an important economic logic to this sort of city design that is often lost on North Americans. We spend so much time and money trying to transport people from their far-flung homes to the opportunities and amenities of the city when we could be bringing more of the city to where people already live. Mixing homes, businesses and public services, so that people can walk or bike everywhere they need to be on a daily basis, is even more efficient than moving people around with public transit, which itself is dramatically more efficient than relying on personal vehicles.

The case for mixed, medium-density cities is even stronger in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which demonstrated how much work can be done outside of a traditional office environment. Urban cores still have an economic and cultural appeal but are less necessary than before. On the other hand, we must avoid pressures to increase sprawl simply because more workers can do their jobs further afield.

Another important consideration is, of course, climate change. More frequent extreme weather and the imperative of net-zero building emissions means the vast majority of buildings across Canada must be retrofitted or rebuilt as infills in the next 20–30 years. That will involve insulating, flood-proofing and replacing gas-fired furnaces with heat pumps as well as finding ways to fit more homes into less space to take advantage of district heating and other energy efficiency technologies that work best at scale.

We also need to recognize that not every internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicle on the road is going to be replaced by a zero-emission alternative. The economic and environmental cost of getting 34 million zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs) on Canadian roads within thirty years is untenable, but getting ICE vehicles off the road is non-negotiable. Many people who once drove won't be able to anymore, especially as our population grows, and our cities need to be prepared.

How we got here is a function of history; cheap cars and cheap land encouraged a particular model of urban development. Why our cities aren't moving away from this approach is a more pernicious question and one that's long frustrated housing advocates and environmentalists alike.

Municipal zoning rules are often held up as the culprit. Many Canadian communities cordon off different areas for single uses—businesses here, houses here, towers here. We also place counterproductive limits on new developments (e.g., requiring a minimum number of parking spaces for homes). Those rules need to change. Most neighbourhoods of single-family detached homes in medium-to-large Canadian cities can and should be rezoned to allow 4–6 unit homes and 3–5 story mixed-use apartment buildings.

A secondary obstacle is the current for-profit property development model. New supply is prioritized where it will make the most money (hence the surfeit of downtown luxury condos and cheaply-made suburban houses) and not where affordable homes and accessible commercial spaces are needed, such as around transit hubs. Although rezoning will help open up the missing middle to private development, a greater emphasis on and funding for non-profit and public development can help jumpstart vibrant, affordable medium-density neighbourhoods.

Any way you slice it, the obstacle is fundamentally an issue of politics. Our leaders at all levels of government have been content to facilitate a version of the city that, if it ever served people well, is no longer fit for our zero-carbon future.

While achieving a climate-safe city will involve challenges, it will create opportunities, too. The sooner we get compact, walkable and sustainable communities, the better off we'll be. M

YOUR CCPA
Get to know **Mariwan Jaaf**

OFFICE: **B.C.**
POSITION: **DIRECTOR OF OPERATION AND FINANCE**
YEARS WITH THE CCPA: **EIGHT**

This issue is all about big ideas. Where do you go or what do you listen to/read when you are looking for inspiration? Generally, I look to grassroot movements and Indigenous People's resistance groups all over the globe to continue learning from their struggle against oppression and injustice. I have also been following the Progressive International closely. It is a great source of inspiration and it provides an amazing toolkit for transformational and critical thinking, resistance and building movements. I also enjoy reading/listening to fiction. The two books I have on the go now are Thomas King's *Indians on Vacation* and *No Friend but the Mountains* by Behrouz Boochani.

What are you most excited to do with the CCPA B.C. team next year? Our office went through strategic planning process from late 2019 to mid 2020. The first and central priority of this plan is to bring decolonization and racial justice into our work in a substantial way. This goal has been a focus of our work in the BC Office in varying degrees for some time. I'm most excited to bring Indigenous rights and an anti-oppression lens into our work processes both internally and externally and doing so in a respectful and thoughtful allyship way.

Outside of the CCPA, what progressive issues are following? As a Kurd, I have been following the Socialist Democratic Project in Rojava (North-east Syria) building

governing systems with principles of direct democracy, women's liberation and ecology. The multi-ethnic feminist cantons set up in Rojava were beacons of stability and peaceful coexistence in the midst of a catastrophic civil war in the rest of the country, until the fascist Turkish regime along with its puppet ultranationalist Arab allies waged war against it under the most ironic "terrorism" excuse. I have actively participated in raising awareness about the Kurdish struggle for the right of self-determation, freedom and justice.

Extracurricular activities: I enjoy playing pickleball, a sport that combines elements of badminton, tennis and table-tennis. I play both indoors and outdoors. I also love cooking, especially with our children during Kurdish and Muslim celebrations as a way to connect with my background and culture. I do believe that food and cooking rituals are essential in staying connected and building relationships across cultures and society.

What are you most hopeful about in the coming year? I'm most hopeful as I see racial justice and anti-oppression conversations becoming mainstream now more than ever. I'm also very hopeful to see so many young climate activists around the globe coming together and demanding change and taking charge on the frontline. In our office, I'm very excited we start working on our new major project *Understanding Precarity in B.C.*, led by our Senior Economist Iglika Ivanova, and the director of SFU's Labour Studies Department, Kendra Strauss, and in partnership with other BC universities, academics, and community partners. The project is funded by a multi-year grant by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), and will be looking at the rise of precarious work, with an ultimate goal of reducing systemic inequalities and providing critical research on the widespread consequences of precarious work, particularly on women and racialized workers.

What makes you proud to work for the CCPA? I'm very proud to be part of the CCPA-BC, a team with shared values deeply rooted in social and climate justice, and a focus to bring about a world just and equitable. It is not usual to be able to come to work every day with a team that challenges the status quo thinking and expands the policy debate to focus on relevant issues and solutions that tangibly affect people's lives.

ANDRÉE FOREST

Land back

Unsettling the original injustice

LAND BACK. Two words simple in premise and profound in meaning. These two words get at the essence of the original injustice between our three oceans: the separation of nations from their homelands. Interweaving movements spanning generations, *land back* is a longstanding request and a growing chorus for redress. Land back is at the heart of demands for justice, restitution and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples. The root idea is relatively simple: returning land to Indigenous stewardship. But it means much, much more.

Colonization in what has become Canada was the process through which Indigenous Peoples were dispossessed, and settler colonialism is the result of ongoing occupation since that time. Those who colonized stayed and settled and new immigrants arrived. Dispossession was legislated and persists today; this colonization is ongoing and embedded in industries, organizations, governments and institutions. It is ongoing in the failure of the Canadian government to live up to promises made in Treaties and in the myth of "Crown" land.

Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang capture how central land was and is to the project of colonization precisely because of its importance for Indigenous peoples:

Land is what is most valuable, contested, required. This is both because the settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital, and also because the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence.[1]

As Cara Mumford[2] echoes, the significance of land for Indigenous Peoples cannot be overstated: "For the Anishinaabeg people, the land does not just refer to the soil or the resources contained within. The land is identity. It is our home, and the home of our ancestors and our descendants. It is our classroom and our cupboard." Indigenous Peoples and Nations have an inherent right to land that goes far beyond ideas of property, territory or borders into foundational concepts of relationship, responsibility and reciprocity. People need the land, waters and interconnected webs of life just as these systems need the care of their Peoples to be sustained and to thrive. Sustainability and custodianship are universal concepts to Indigenous Peoples. The irrevocable damage (effects of resource extraction, environmental degradation and climate change) caused by settler activities are repercussions of this relational rupture.

The concept of *terra nullius* made possible European claims to territory that rested on the idea that these lands had no rightful inhabitants. The very notion of Crown land might be best approached as a stubborn colonial myth, one that enabled the political and economic plans of settlers. In order to facilitate Euro-Canadian settlement, railroad construction and resource control, treaties were negotiated between European nations (including the British Crown) and First Nations. Treaties were intended to outline the rights, responsibilities and relationships necessary to share the land peacefully. What stemmed from there were paternalistic government policies (the Indian Act came into effect only five years after the first numbered Treaty was signed) that created a separation and a sequestration of First Nations people onto reserves. These were concerted efforts that led to "land theft on a gigantic scale, forced removals and exhaustion of natural resources."[3] The Métis, despite having led the creation of the province of Manitoba, were scattered and forced to create communities on road allowances and Crown land—still a new concept at the time. Many Inuit communities were displaced and relocated entirely.

The assumption of governments having underlying title to land persists to this day while the Crown still represents a foreign monarch. The fall of queenly statues in Winnipeg this past summer speaks to this absurdity. How is it that monarchs and their representatives responsible for the attempted genocide of Peoples continue to exert power over the lands and waters that give life to those Peoples? Since most of our systems have colonialism at their root, we must find an answer. The answer has always been land back. The Crown-funded Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (1996), unequivocally stated that "there must be a fundamental reallocation of lands and resources" and the government must "resolve questions about the redistribution of lands and resources as expeditiously as possible."[4] Much of the settler and government resistance to return of land is because most imagine it cannot be done without the same trauma and displacement that got us here. A return of land that is based in love, care and respect for one another is possible and will need to be so.[5]

The answer is land back because land back means coming into relation with that which sustains

life here. A hopeful vision for this future includes one where Indigenous languages are once more spoken amongst families, pines, and mosses. Where Indigenous children can find meaning through water- and land-based education, through lives lived in relation to land. Where healthful communities are possible through a resurgence of cultural food practices. Where Indigenous peoples protect forests and waterways from encroachment and pollution without the threat of arrest. Where climate change is mitigated with practices spanning millennia that are held in the wisdom of the Earth and of Indigenous Peoples.

Further, this vision must include contemporary realities of urban centers often far from home communities: ensuring greenspaces and waters are cared for in cities, that no one lives in poverty, that no Indigenous person—that no person at all—lacks a home. This vision does not romanticise a return to pre-contact but recognizes that the very separation from land has affected culture, language, teachings, families, and entire kinship systems. There must be a well-resourced focus on undoing the harms of colonialism and all the ways its impacts show up every day in the lives of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people today. Land back is non-Indigenous folks recognizing that reparations are imperative. Land back is allowing a return to reciprocity with the living world as the basis for our lives. Land back is Indigenous people coming back to ourselves[6].

There will not be a uniform solution to land reparations, as each Peoples and Nation is different in its history and experience of colonization. There are, however, many ways these reparations can be made and myriad projects that show how transfers of stewardship and healthy land sharing might be possible. They show us the spirit and intent of the treaties, recognize that some lands remain unceded, and show how all Canadians benefit from the protection Indigenous Peoples provide to environments in their care. Pimachiowin Aki in Manitoba. The Treaty Land Sharing Network in Saskatchewan. Indigenous Protected Conservation Areas like Walpole Island Land Trust in Ontario.

Addressing the damages caused by severing Indigenous relations to land, working critically and practically to redistribute land and sharing Indigenous teachings that prioritize being in healthy relationship with land are all critical pieces of decolonization. Land back must come first. Decolonizing the rest will follow. M

To learn more in depth from Indigenous scholars and artists on the topic of *land back*, check out this three-part video series from the David Suzuki Foundation, read Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor* and start creating relationships with Indigenous organizations and people in your community. For references, please visit MonitorMag.ca.

SANDRA HUDSON

Canada's crisis of democracy

THIS COUNTRY IS in the midst of a crisis of democracy. Nothing made that more evident than the 2021 federal election. And no—I am not simply referring to the typical frustrations with an electoral system in which most of our votes don't count. I am not even referring to an electorate that allows for a creeping fascist element of Canadian political culture to gain a significant portion of the vote.

What was most stunning about the snap election was how divorced it was from the reality that people were living. Here we were in the eighteenth month of a devastatingly deadly pandemic, an economic crisis, worsening violent white supremacist organizing, the worst year on record for consequences of the climate crisis, a public health crisis, a child care crisis, a houselessness crisis, an overdose crisis, an eviction crisis and a mental health crisis. The electoral campaign should have reflected the pain and urgency most people were experiencing and each party's platform should have provided a roadmap to address it. Instead, in the beginning, the focus of the campaigns largely critiqued the fact that the election was even called. By the end of the campaign, the most important news appeared to be how angry incumbent Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was at anti-vaccine protestors.

What is the point of a political system that ignores the needs of its people during a crisis?

We need bold action. But this election proved that our political system can still function while ignoring the urgent problems the pandemic exacerbated. In some cases, politicians had ready access to available policy options because activists had taken on the work of determining the solutions that were desperately needed.

Safe supply of drugs and defunding the police are two clear examples. Despite rising deaths from drug overdoses, support from Health Canada for safe supply, and a pandemic-related emergency change to the *Controlled Substances Act* allowing for more safe supply measures, politicians failed to offer a strategy to incentivize provinces to provide access to safe supply.

Similarly, despite continued disparate, violent treatment of Black and Indigenous people by federal, provincial and municipal police forces across Canada; the popularity of defunding the police; a summer of over 200 protests across Canada in support of Black lives; continued revelations of sexual violence within police forces; and swaths of data showing that police

are remarkably ineffective at everything society expects them to do, parties failed to engage the question of policing.

This tells us that the people for whom these policies would most directly support—Black people, Indigenous people, survivors and victims of sexual violence and people who use drugs—are not valued in this system.

In other areas, it was exceedingly obvious that, though new policies were urgently required, none were offered. We live in a world where access to communication, the internet, mobile phones and computers are absolutely necessary for our survival. Despite that truth, access to communication is entirely provided through the private sector, pricing many communities out of adequate services, leaving coverage up to service providers who are primarily concerned with expanding profit, not expanding access to remote areas. In this new pandemic world, people were required to access work, school and social experiences virtually. For households that could not afford multiple devices, or without internet access,

this presented a serious problem. You would think that nationalizing communications, or at least creating a platform for universal access, would be on the table given these problems. The best we got was a commitment to stop price gouging from mobile phone companies.

We are still dealing with the economic consequences of the pandemic. Many workers are no longer willing to return to jobs where they are undervalued. Health care professionals are leaving the profession after long periods of burnout. Students are receiving substandard education over virtual meeting applications. Despite all these issues, free education was never brought up as an issue worthy of discussion and debate, nor were any measures expanding access to post-secondary education and training.

These are just a few choice examples. I could say more about how the housing crisis was interpreted solely as an issue of mortgages and ownership, while houselessness and evictions were ignored. Or that the climate "debate" seemed prepared to pretend that the hottest temperatures ever recorded on this side of the planet did not contribute to the entire incineration of a western Canadian town. But my overarching point is that if the political system cannot adequately consider, or even acknowledge, our crises when they are at their worst, that political system is failing.

Politics has become entirely divorced from the experiences of average people. And some people who are desperately looking for answers will find them—even from people who are attempting to exploit and manipulate them. Fascist and white supremacist organizations that use xenophobia and other hateful concepts to explain the crises plaguing society benefit from a political system that ignores those crises. We all will suffer if these organizations continue to rise in popularity.

I refuse to believe that our society is simply out of good ideas. But I do believe that this crisis of democracy is largely driven by a capitalist system where those who hold power are primarily influenced by people seeking to amass more wealth through the existing political system. Billionaires' profits increased significantly during the pandemic. Why would they want to use their influence to do anything other than support the status quo?

We are living in a world where there is no crisis too great, no rationale too logical to ignore if billions in profit are to be made. But this state of affairs only continues for as long as we let it.

Progressive organizations who have been engaging in politics as usual need to move away from dutifully lobbying politicians to make change. Our power is in our collectivity and our ability to out-organize the profiteers of this system. Our political system does not deserve our support as it continues to shrink the proportion of people who matter to it.

We need to shift our approach—can we ever expect that appealing to the better nature of politicians will work if it doesn't during one of the most serious public health crises of our time? This is a serious question to consider as we careen further into the climate crisis. It is not enough to make bold critiques on privately owned social media apps that profit off of our rage. We need to put that rage into building the world we wish to see, regardless of what political parties are doing.

This big idea is a mirror: our democracy is broken, and it becomes evermore so under the current increasingly inequitable profit-driven system that underpins how we are expected to provide for one another. As we are forced to contend with the deadly consequences of that reality, those of us fighting for change must be more insistent, more strategic and more intentional in ensuring that anti-capitalist principles inform the core of our work.

There is hope, in that abandoning traditional politics as usual in defiance of a duplicitous system is somewhat liberating. There are no limits to the creative strategies we could employ in our fight against the capitalist capture of our societies.

May the end of the pandemic bring about a populace energized in the fight against capitalism as one of the primary architects of harm in our lives, and may we organize in our refusal of a system that ignores us when we need support most. M

SETTLER WORK:

Understanding the Gustafsen Lake Standoff

Each edition of the *Monitor*'s "Settler Work" series explores a new area where we, as settlers, need to address the harms that colonization has caused and continues to cause to FNIM communities. Through this journey, it remains important that we continue to bear witness to the ongoing investigations of former residential "school" sites across the country. While these searches have largely fallen out of public discourse, the work continues and the number of graves revealed is rising. It is critical that we continue to show up for the communities impacted by these discoveries and give them space and support for their grief.

While the Gustafsen Lake standoff might seem like an outlier to feature in an issue on big ideas, this conflict between the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and Ts'peten Defenders connects to Canada's colonial past. It also reflects the violence faced by land and water protectors across the country, as well as Indigenous defenders in other countries fighting against Canadian petro projects and extractionist industries. Twenty-six years after the initial conflict, Canada is overdue to examine how the RCMP and B.C. government escalated their response so disproportionately that they involved four hundred tactical officers who fired a total of 77,000 rounds of live ammunition at 18 Ts'peten Defenders.

LEGAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Gustafsen Lake Standoff took place in the summer of 1995 but the roots of this conflict can be traced back to Confederation.

The Royal Proclamation of 1763: Originally issued by King George III at the end of the Seven Years War, the Royal Proclamation officially claimed British territory in North America. It "explicitly states that [Indigenous] title has existed and continues to exist, and that all land would be considered [Indigenous] land until ceded by treaty." Further, the Proclamation prohibited settlers from claiming land that had not first been purchased by the Crown from the Indigenous community who had claim to it, and then sold to the settlers. In effect, the Proclamation established that only the Crown could buy land from First Nations.[1]

The Proclamation is protected by Section 25 of the Constitution Act, which guarantees "(a) any rights or freedoms that have been recognized by the Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763; and (b) any rights or freedoms that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired."[2]

BC joined Confederation 1871: This decision was taken without consulting any of the First Nations in the affected area. The only treaties that BC's first Governor, James Douglas, signed were with Nations on the southwest side of Vancouver Island. Meanwhile, the Lands and Surveyors Commissioner reduced First Nations' territories to a fraction of what had been agreed to with the Crown representatives.

Without treaties, title for the majority of the province was left unresolved.

The Indian Act of 1876: Prime Minister John A. MacDonald and his government passed the Indian Act, which is still in existence today.[3] The Act took control of unceded "Indian Hunting Grounds," in blatant violation of the Royal Proclamation. But it went further.

"When Indigenous political organizing became more extensive in the 1920s and groups began to pursue land claims, the federal government added Section 141 to the Indian Act." Section 141 made it illegal for Indigenous people to hire lawyers or seek legal counsel, preventing them from using the legal system to restore their land rights. These laws expanded to prohibit gathering in groups of more than three or leaving the reserve without a pass.[4]

Indigenous communities in Canada would be unable to pursue justice through the Supreme Court system until 1970. In BC, First Nations would be made to wait until 1993 to negotiate treaty rights, with the exception of the Nisga'a Nation and Treaty 8.[5]

In 1884, the Indian Act was amended to include the "Potlach Ban." The purpose of this ban was to prevent the spread of Indigenous culture, by outlawing Indigenous people from engaging in cultural practices including potlatch and dances.[6] A further amendment in 1927 "banned all forms of dance and the wearing of traditional costumes off reserves anywhere on the Prairies and in British Columbia."[7] The ban was in place until 1951.

Written by Róisín West
Layout & Illustration by Katie Sheedy

GUSTAFSEN LAKE INCIDENT

The Gustafsen Lake standoff, or Gustafsen Lake incident, was a confrontation between the Ts'peten Defenders and the RCMP in the summer of 1995.[8] Ts'Peten/Gustafsen Lake is located in Secwepemcul'ecw (unceded Secwépemc/Shuswap territory) near 100 Mile House in the interior of British Columbia.

Most of the prime land in this region was seized and redistributed to European settlers following the implementation of the Indian Act. As a result, the area around Ts'Peten has been home to the James Cattle, the Empire Valley Ranch and, most notably, the Gang Ranch. This colonization and privatization of the land left "[e]ach of the main communities of Dog Creek and Canoe Creek [situated] on approximately 50 hectares of land, most of it rocky slopes and gravel."[9]

Starting in 1989, Sundancers began meeting at Gustafsen Lake for a 10-day annual Sundance ceremony, after spiritual leaders and elders including Shuswap Faithkeeper Percy Rosette had seen visions of Gustafsen Lake as a Sundance site. At the time, American cattle rancher Lyle James had grazing rights to over 922 hectares for $1314 per year and was using the land to feed his animals. First Nation spiritual leaders met with James to share their plans for an annual ceremony.

During the 1995 ceremony, James' cattle continually entered the Sundance grounds, interrupting the participants and defecating on the sacred grounds. The Sundancers built a fence to keep the animals out.

Several days later, on June 13, James and 12 ranch hands arrived at the site and read an eviction notice to the Sundancers. The ranchers proceeded to occupy the land, record the Sundancers, and threatened them with rifles and whips. Shortly after this intrusion, the Sundancers issued a press release with four demands for a peaceful resolution.

The RCMP implemented a media blackout, preventing journalists from interviewing Defender camp participants. As a result, reporting about Gustafsen Lake repeated framing from the RCMP, calling the Defenders "terrorists" and claiming that they had a "cult mentality."

In mid-August, the RCMP sent unidentified, camouflaged, fully armed men into the forest around the camp to surveill the Defenders. Not knowing who they were, the Defenders shot at the camouflaged men in the woods. The RCMP also cut the camp's phone line so that they could no longer communicate with their lawyer.

In early September, the RCMP brought nine armoured personnel carriers (APCs) to the site, along with four hundred tactical assault team members, five helicopters, and two surveillance planes. By September 15, 1995, the then-Attorney General of B.C. faxed the Solicitor General of Canada requesting additional sniper rifles for the standoff. By the end of the 31-day standoff between the Defenders and the RCMP, the police had fired as many as 77,000 rounds of ammunition. There were 18 Ts'peten Defenders at the occupation.

On September 11, a truck driven by James "OJ" Pitawanakwat, a Ts'peten Defender, exploded when it hit a landmine buried by the RCMP. As Pitawanakwat and his passenger fled, the truck was rammed by an APC and officers shot and killed the dog that was also fleeing the vehicle.

Finally, on September 17, the remaining Defenders surrendered peacefully to the RCMP. Fifteen were charged and found guilty of crimes related to mischief and possessing weapons.[10] William 'Wolverine' Jones Ignace, a leader with the Defenders, was sentenced to five years in prison for his role in the standoff. Pitawanakwat was sentenced to four years but released after serving one. Upon his release, he fled to the United States where he was granted asylum. After reviewing the Gustafsen Lake standoff and resulting charges, American Justice Janice Stewart ruled that Pitawanakwat's charges were "of a political character" and that he was part of an Indigenous movement "rising up in their homeland against the occupation by the Canadian government of their sacred and unceded tribal land."[11]

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Shortly before his death in 2016, Wolverine wrote a letter[12] to Prime Minister Trudeau and then-Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould requesting an inquiry into Gustafsen Lake. Wolverine believed that a public inquiry into the 1995 incident would allow Pitawanakwat to leave the Saginaw Chippewa reservation in Michigan where he currently resides and return home[13] to his Anishinaabe community on Manitoulin Island.

Similar tactics of media blackouts and extreme police and military violence have been and continue to be used against land defenders from coast to coast. The ongoing blockades against old growth logging at Fairy Creek in B.C. have experienced both media blackouts and violence towards journalists who attempt to cover police violence. A coalition of media outlets had to launch a court challenge in the Supreme Court of British Columbia to regain access to Fairy Creek. The coalition "alleged the RCMP has 'intentionally excluded' journalists from the area as it conducts arrests in secret."[14]

When ending the injunction against the Fairy Creek protests, B.C. Supreme Court Justice Douglas Thompson declared the RCMP's "actions are unlawful."[15] xʷ is xʷ čaa Kati George-Jim, a T'Sou-ke land defender at Fairy Creek in an interview with the CBC pointed out that the old growth defenders, many of whom are Indigenous, have been pepper sprayed, dragged, tackled[16] and approximately 1,100 have been arrested. It seems that Indigenous dissent in Canada is met with swift and disproportionate force.

This experience is not limited to Fairy Creek and Gustafsen Lake. A 2019 investigation by the *Guardian* revealed that "notes from a strategy session for a militarized raid on ancestral lands of the Wet'suwet'en nation" showed commanders of the RCMP arguing that "'lethal overwatch [was] req'd' – a term for deploying an officer who is prepared to use lethal force."[17]

WHERE CAN WE GO FROM HERE?

Excerpted from the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action:

45. We call upon the Government of Canada, on behalf of all Canadians, to jointly develop with [Indigenous] peoples a Royal Proclamation of Reconciliation to be issued by the Crown. The proclamation would build on the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the Treaty of Niagara of 1764 and reaffirm the nation-to-nation relationship between [Indigenous] peoples and the Crown. The proclamation would include, but not be limited to, the following commitments:

iv. Reconcile [Indigenous] and Crown constitutional and legal orders to ensure that [Indigenous] peoples are full partners in Confederation, including the recognition and integration of Indigenous laws and legal traditions in negotiation and implementation processes involving Treaties, land claims, and other constructive agreements.

47. We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and lands, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and *terra nullius*, and to reform those laws, government policies, and litigation strategies that continue to rely on such concepts.

92. We call upon the corporate sector in Canada to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and resources. This would include, but not be limited to, the following actions:

i. Commit to meaningful consultation, building respectful relationships, and obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples before proceeding with economic development projects.

ii. Ensure that [Indigenous]peoples have equitable access to jobs, training, and education opportunities in the corporate sector, and that [Indigenous]communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects.

iii. Provide education for management and staff on the history of [Indigenous]peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and [Indigenous] rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.[18]

The final word on next steps rightfully belongs to Ts'peten Defender Wolverine, as excerpted from his letter to Trudeau and Wilson-Raybould:

"According to [UNDRIP], Indigenous peoples have the right to be safe from being forcibly removed from their lands and territories. Even now, aggressive resource extraction and the destruction it inevitably brings regularly occurs on Indigenous lands without the consent of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous lands which, according to the very agreements that founded the nation of Canada, do not belong to Canada to be given away without the free prior and informed consent of the Indigenous people of those lands who never relinquished their rights. In order to build this Nation to Nation relationship, Indigenous peoples must know that they can continue to pursue peaceful processes for protecting their sovereignty, without the threat of state sanctioned violence being used against them. The use of police and RCMP intimidation and force as a method to settle land claims in favour of the Canadian national and provincial governments is antithetical to the creation of a healthy and just partnership between nations. If Indigenous people are prevented from asserting their rights to sovereignty, true reconciliation cannot occur."[19]

"It seems that Indigenous dissent in Canada is met with swift and disproportionate force."

For a full list of references used in this edition of "Settler Work", please refer to the online version at MonitorMag.ca

EMILY EATON AND SIMON ENOCH

In full view

Looking at climate strategy through an equity lens

ONE OF THE impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic has been to expose many of the deep economic and social inequalities that were less visible—but certainly not unknown—prior to the pandemic. From risk of infection to the ability to isolate and/or work from home, the pandemic forced us to acknowledge these inequities. Moreover, the pandemic taught us that if we want people to make choices that preserve public health, it is essential that we implement policies that allow people to make these choices in the first place. For instance, telling people to stay home from work if they are symptomatic without financial support or paid sick leave is ultimately futile; people are not going to prioritize public health if their more immediate basic needs are not met. Those regions that ignored this lesson have not fared as well as those who did not.

These are important lessons to learn, not only for the pandemic, but perhaps even more importantly, for the fight against climate change. Climate policies will also succeed or fail based on whether they address existing social inequalities. Too often, environmental policies that consider inequality—such as the Green New Deal—are accused of "overreach." This type of critique assumes that addressing inequalities is a kind of luxury add-on to environmental policy rather than fundamental to its success. An illustrative example of how inequalities can thwart environmental policy can be seen in Portland, Oregon, where attempts to increase bus ridership had been stalled, despite aggressive targets and incentives. Portland's climate action manager Alisa Kane realized city planners needed to stop asking, "How do we get more people on the bus?" Rather, they should be asking more probing questions like, "Who can't ride the bus safely, and why?" According to Kane, the Portland transit system is not always safe for everyone—there are real dangers to riding transit. Misogyny, homophobia, Islamophobia and other forms of discrimination "don't disappear once the door of the bus opens." No amount of added convenience or speed will convince those who feel unsafe on the system to ride it. This is the unique perspective that an equity lens can bring to environmental policy, ensuring policy doesn't neglect the needs of vulnerable populations who are often impacted on the front lines of climate change.

While marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by climate change relative to other communities, they are often the least likely to benefit from investments in sustainability. Low-income populations and communities of colour are more likely to live in areas with less green space and fewer public transportation options, farther from essential goods and services. They are more vulnerable to heat-related and respiratory illnesses, while living in inefficient housing and closer to environmental hazards. An equity lens recognizes these disparities and ensures that climate policies redress rather than exacerbate them.

If environmental policies are viewed as inherently unfair or unjust, the political cost of imposing them on people can be substantial. Witness the Yellow Vests movement in France, the protests in Chile against metro fare increases and the reception of the carbon tax in Western Canada as examples of governments' failure to adequately consider equity concerns when devising environmental policy. The success of these policies depends on the degree to which people see them as enriching rather than impoverishing their lives. This is why an equity lens is so important to the success of climate policies in Canada's petro-provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, where inequalities—real or imagined—as a result of climate policies are often seized by conservative politicians as a reason to abandon ambitious climate action. In these provinces, all eyes are on cities like Edmonton and Regina that have made ambitious climate commitments, far exceeding the policies of their respective provincial governments. It is essential that the climate goals of these cities are met or even exceeded. Adopting an equity lens in climate planning is one way these cities can ensure their climate policies meet the needs of all residents without creating the kinds of aggrieved constituencies that can be cynically exploited by those opposed to real climate action.

The much-repeated and oft-criticized refrain of the pandemic was that "We are all in this together." We may all be in the pandemic and the climate emergency "together," but we experience it unequally. We've seen what the failure to address those inequalities has meant for the continued life of the pandemic. It is a lesson for the climate emergency that we forget at our peril. M

For a detailed overview of how an equity lens can be applied to climate-planning at the municipal level, see *Renewable Regina: Putting Equity into Action* by Emily Eaton and Simon Enoch. policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/renewable-regina

NICK FALVO

More supportive housing for semi-independent seniors

HAVE A BIG IDEA for Canada. As our population ages, let's rely less on long-term care and more on supportive housing: a cost-effective way for semi-independent seniors to live with dignity and independence.

Long-term care facilities, also known as nursing homes, have an important role to play, especially for seniors with complex health care needs (e.g., Advanced Parkinson's, ALS, dementia). In order to fulfill their promise, LTC facilities also require reform as the pandemic has revealed (e.g., more physical distancing, more funding for staff and less privatization).Outside of LTC facilities there remain many semi-independent seniors who are currently under-supported in their own homes. This is where seniors' supportive housing can play a role for seniors who need 24/7 staff support in their building but not to the same extent as what is provided in long-term care facilities.

Seniors' supportive housing typically involves the following components:

1. A financial subsidy to a non-profit housing provider to keep rents affordable for low- and moderate-income households.

2. The provision of various forms of staff support to the tenant.

3. Units that are typically not shared and which are physically accessible (where appropriate).

4. Permanent tenancy, with protection under provincial/territorial tenant protection legislation (the tenant signs a lease and has recourse to a housing tribunal if their rights are violated).

Services provided in seniors' supportive housing vary according to each tenant and can include assistance with bathing, going to the bathroom, getting into and out of bed, getting dressed and assistance after a fall. They can also provide assistance with transportation, shopping, meal preparation, laundry, housekeeping, financial matters and medication management.

Supportive housing for seniors also involves social and recreational activities. These are similar to home care supports provided to semi-independent seniors in their own homes. In supportive housing, however, the services are offered in clusters to tenants living very close to one another. Sometimes such units make up only a portion of the units in a building.

Other times, the services are offered in non-profit or public 'seniors only' housing. Supportive housing providers can be charities, non-profit agencies, cooperatives, or municipal or provincial social housing corporations. The same organization that owns and operates the building may provide the support services or they may be organized by a different organization.

There are cost savings to be realized with seniors' supportive housing. A recent University of Manitoba study found the annual operating cost for one unit of supportive housing was just one-third the cost of a long-term care bed.

Seniors' supportive housing is especially important for low- and moderate-income seniors over the age of 75 who have health challenges and require assistance with daily activities. It's important to keep in mind that about two-thirds of persons over 75 in Canada are women. In a well-designed system, some buildings—especially in larger cities—can cater to specific sub-populations, including Indigenous Peoples, 2SLGBTQQIA+ tenants and persons who speak a specific language or identify with a particular culture.

Unfortunately, there is not enough seniors' supportive housing in Canada. Some communities have none at all and there are typically wait lists in communities where it does exist. Many existing buildings providing supportive housing to seniors need capital upgrades. In other cases, buildings not currently providing seniors' housing could be converted into seniors' supportive housing.

Seniors are a designated priority group in Canada's National Housing Strategy. Yet, the strategy contains no specific provisions for supportive housing for any age group. The strategy should therefore be enhanced with new annual capital funding for seniors' supportive housing. A condition of this funding should be provincial and territorial support for additional funding to keep rents affordable and to pay for staff support. Another condition of federal capital funding should be that the operators of both the housing and support services be non-profit or public wherever possible.

Canada has learned important lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, one of which pertains to the limitations of long-term care. Let's right this wrong by creating more supportive housing for semi-independent seniors. M

TRISH HENNESSY

A national public bus system

AS A CHILD in the 1970s, I have this lazy summer afternoon memory of a dusty bus pulling off the highway and whirling into the local gas station where you could buy a Coke and a bag of chips for 25 cents.

It was another place and time. I watched in wonder as passengers disembarked and new ones boarded the bus headed to destinations unknown—mysterious places, with a hint of adventure, in my child's mind.

By the 1980s, the bus no longer stopped in my hometown but you could take it from the next town, Assiniboia, and make your way to Regina, with a few pit stops in between.

I would take that bus back home in my early university days. I'd realized by then that the destinations weren't all that adventurous—that the magic of Saskatchewan's inter-city bus network resided in its pragmatic utility. It helped people without cars, young and old alike, get around the province.

The publicly run inter-city bus system gave people like me independence in a province where owning a car was what typically gave you independence. It wasn't just a bus ticket; it was a ticket to new places, to social connection, to university or college, or to a vital medical appointment in the city.

Many people considered it a lifeline. It represents what public service can do best.

When the Saskatchewan government canceled the Saskatchewan Transportation Company (STC) in 2017, it closed off options for people who are low-income, people who have no car, and people who need to get to the city for health appointments.

In its second last fiscal year of operation (2015–16), the STC carried 185,678 passengers over 2.8 million miles, serving 253 Saskatchewan communities. It had a 95% satisfaction rating among its passengers.

Its loss placed an additional burden on rural communities with an aging population and diminished means of inter-community connection.

In 2018, Greyhound's announcement that it was leaving Western Canada compounded the problem and impacted inter-city bus connections and inter-provincial travel.

In Western Canada, Greyhound had 360 stops before it shuttered its business, and 300 of those stops were in communities that had no other service options. It was an admission of market failure. Combine the end of for-profit bus service with the end of publicly funded bus service in places like Saskatchewan and we have a serious problem. The lifeline to inter-community connection and essential services has been abruptly severed with no serious public leadership in sight.

As it stands, the federal government is subsidizing private companies to fill the Greyhound service gap but with no guarantee of equitable access nor longevity.

Sure, some bus companies were quick to say their service could fill the Greyhound gap; however, to make the business model work, they would rely upon government subsidies and choose more populated cities—rural, Northern and remote communities would continue to be neglected.

As it stands, the federal government is subsidizing private companies to fill the Greyhound service gap but with no guarantee of equitable access nor longevity. Essentially, it's asking Canadians to be satisfied with a fragmented "patchwork" system in which private companies compete with each other for the more lucrative routes.

Brent McKnight, associate professor of strategic management in the DeGroote School of Business, calls it a social issue—one that can determine who gets left behind and who doesn't.

"For all countries, this is a social policy issue," McKnight says. "Do we care if rural areas are populated or not?"

This matters more than ever, as the neoliberal ideology that prioritized private, for-profit enterprises ahead of affordable public services is increasingly part of a dying ideology at a time when government leadership is being seen in a new light.

That the private sector couldn't make inter-city, inter-provincial bus services work leaves us with only one option: an upstream option that sees public transit as a social determinant of health and a key ingredient to well-being and social connection.

My big idea is actually an old idea: publicly funded and publicly managed inter-city and inter-provincial bus and rail networks that ensure everyone can afford to move throughout their region and beyond. They're the future for social connection and equitable mobility options.

But there's an additional crisis calling: the climate emergency. A major transnational public transportation system that's based on electricity, not oil and gas, could help Canada meet its Paris climate goals.

The physical infrastructure investment would stimulate economies across Canada at a time when the country is rebounding from one of the worst economic setbacks since the 1930s. Those infrastructure investments would mean local jobs. When Greyhound Canada stopped doing business, for instance, it laid off about 420 employees.

If you attach community benefit agreements to those government investments, it could mean apprenticeships and job creation for people who have been marginalized and sidelined from the labour market, especially people from racialized and Indigenous communities.

And that would lead to a new kind of inclusion and connectedness.

It would also be the next logical step in the paradigm shift away from the neoliberal order, which led the Mulroney federal government to cut national passenger rail service and eliminate connections to cities like Thunder Bay and Moose Jaw.

Every election season, it seems that some political party promises a high-speed rail line between the Quebec and Windsor corridor. It was just promised again in the recent federal election and, who knows? Maybe it'll happen this time. But I'd like to challenge us to think bigger, collectively.

A national inter-city, inter-provincial bus and rail system that is federally funded and managed would create good jobs. It would make small and remote communities accessible.

In an era when we're trying to help towns like my hometown recover from its reliance on the coal economy and pivot to a more diversified economic model, a bus, in all of its utilitarian glory, could symbolize hope.

Those towns could attract younger seniors who want to age out in the country knowing that bigger towns and cities are within reach and that they wouldn't have to rely on the goodwill of friends or their adult children to get them from point A to B. Tourists could go there for festivals and cultural experiences. And, like I did in the early 1980s, students could go to university and get home for the holidays.

No need to reinvent the wheel, so to speak. M

LINDSAY MCLAREN

A well-being approach to governance

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has made clear the strong connections between health and broader social, economic and political circumstances.

In doing so, it has exposed longstanding inequities in the social determinants of health, which are the conditions in which we are born, grow, live, work and age. Such unfair and avoidable differences in health between social groups reflect decades of deregulation, underspending and privatization across public policy domains, coupled with entrenched colonialism and systemic racism.

These health inequities have always existed, but the pandemic has made them especially obvious in the form of significant—and non-arbitrary—variation in who is most at risk of contracting the virus, getting sick and dying as well as who is most negatively impacted by public health measures to contain spread.

Despite these strong connections between health and social and economic circumstances, a pernicious tendency persists among members of the public and politicians to adopt a narrow version of health and its determinants, which incorrectly places the onus of solving health problems on individual behaviours or the health care system.

We need a different approach.

The root causes of health inequities lie in our political and economic systems. They reflect a fundamental organizing principle of our society, which is that the decision-making framework (i.e., the framework for budgeting and planning) across Canadian governments prioritizes market-oriented objectives.

The drawbacks of this framework are significant, well documented and increasingly obvious. For one thing, Canadian and international data consistently show that economic growth, as measured by rising Gross Domestic Product (GDP), does not 'trickle down.' Rather, the benefits of growth have accrued mostly to those who already have high levels of income and wealth, while incomes at the bottom have stagnated. This leads to widening income and wealth inequality, which is toxic to societal well-being.

Furthermore, it is well established that a narrow focus on economic growth has led to ecological degradation on a massive scale. This is because our market-oriented capitalist economy does not recognize the benefits of nature to society, but rather permits

and even encourages activities that destroy our ecosystems. As stated in the Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity, "Governments almost everywhere exacerbate the problem by paying people more to exploit Nature than to protect it and to prioritise unsustainable economic activities."

The extreme ecosystem risks presented by our unsustainable demands on the natural world present serious consequences for health and for health equity, yet that link is infrequently made in public discourse.

Despite the significance and urgency of addressing growing inequality and ecosystem destruction for the well-being of people and the planet, government policies tend to be incremental rather than transformative. According to some commentators, no government in Canada is addressing the underlying problem, which is that our entire way of life and our economy are unsustainable.

An alternative is a well-being approach to governance, which offers a decision-making framework guided by community well-being, conceptualized as a resource for everyday living that supports meaningful participation in social and political life for all. It gives primacy to equity (fair distribution of resources) and ecological sustainability (reducing impact on the natural environment and preserving biodiversity).

A well-being approach offers an opportunity to strengthen social and ecological determinants of health and to redress health inequities such as those highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is consistent with longstanding—yet unrealized—ideas in public health; notably, healthy public policy, which recognizes the consequences for health and well-being of government decisions across ministries; and health-in-all-policies, which systematically consider the health implications of decisions across government sectors, towards improving population well-being and health equity.

A well-being approach to governance is also consistent with a conceptualization of health as positive and dynamic, and not simply the presence or absence of disease or injury. A well-being budget places well-being at the centre of economic and fiscal policies. In 2019, New Zealand tabled its first well-being budget, underpinned by the recognition that "just because a country is doing well economically does not mean all of its people are."

While there has been criticism that New Zealand's approach does not go far enough in some ways, there is recognition that it nonetheless encourages important conversations about the type of society we wish to have, which is a start.

A well-being budget prompts us to think differently about health care spending, which constitutes a large and growing proportion of provincial and territorial budgets yet does not necessarily translate into better outcomes for health and well-being.

Health care spending tends to significantly crowd out spending in other ministries, such as social services or education, which in many cases are more directly positioned to improve social determinants of health and health equity. By embracing a broad, positive and dynamic version of health, well-being budgeting allows us to entertain new approaches to health spending, such as (re)allocating public funds from health to social ministries.

Other examples of a well-being approach include the international Wellbeing Economy Alliance and its new Canadian hub: the Well-being Economies Alliance for Canada and Sovereign Indigenous Nations; the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and Commissioner in Wales, which support public bodies to account for the long-term impact of their activities; the federal Liberal government's Quality of Life framework, included in the April 2021 federal budget; and the important work toward a GDP alternative in British Columbia that centers First Nations concepts of well-being.

What are the potential drawbacks?

A key risk that accompanies this Big Idea is that it will fail to materialize in the intended transformative sense. Indeed, when radical ideals are embraced in the mainstream, they tend to be diluted or lose their critical edge and radicality. In public health, this is called lifestyle drift: the persistent problem where, due to a constellation of historical (i.e., dominance of medicine), ideological (i.e., neoliberal individualism; institutionalized entrenchment of power), legislative (i.e., presence or absence of mandate and supportive legislation) and practical (i.e., apparent simplicity and intuitive appeal) reasons, prevention policy focuses narrowly on health behaviours while failing to incorporate a deep understanding of the social determinants of health.

To realize its transformative potential for social and health equity, a well-being approach to governance must embrace a critical perspective that maintains a steadfast commitment to tackling the inequitable distribution of power, money and resources. Nothing less will suffice. The post-pandemic future is unknown but presents an historically significant opportunity to achieve a broader vision of public health that we should not let pass. M

CARLA RICE, ELIZA CHANDLER, ELISABETH HARRISON AND LACEY CROFT

Access after COVID-19

How disability culture can transform life and work

WHEN COVID-19 first struck in Canada, media reports described a surge of deaths in long-term care homes, retirement homes and congregate residences. Headlines announced the particular dangers of COVID-19 to older people, disabled people, fat people and people with "comorbidities" or "pre-existing conditions." Authorities sometimes mentioned the underfunding of the care sector, poor wages, unjust staffing policies and inadequate infection control practices as factors contributing to the upsurge in COVID-19 deaths. Most headlines evidenced ableist thinking in their suggestions that the underlying cause of the tragedy rested in the bodies of populations living in these settings—those they described as uniquely or naturally "vulnerable" to dying from COVID-19.

As collapse threatened the medical system, governments put into place triage protocols that denied life-saving care on the basis of perceived "frailty," despite their clear violation of the human rights of disabled and older people. Alongside the rapid creation of emergency income support programs that excluded disabled people who receive income supports such as the Ontario Disability Support Program (a provincial support program that amounts to roughly half of the emergency benefit per month) and the almost total lack of meaningful protective measures for workers designated as "essential," legal and policy responses to COVID-19 underlined who is valued and who is considered disposable within Canadian society. The inequity that the pandemic laid bare reveals a society structured by ableism, racism and other "isms" that undergird neoliberal capitalism, wherein anyone designated as "less productive" is seen as burdensome and even expendable.

The COVID-19 crisis has revealed the necessity of changing people's taken-for-granted understandings of disability, to provoke a transformation in how people perceive living with disability and difference. If people understood disability and difference as part of life, as basic to the story of humanity, as a site of creativity and culture-making and as something with which everyone has a relationship, then our policies would reflect the value and vitality of disabled life and our collective health, safety and well-being would vastly improve.

The non-disabled world often regards disability as the result of a problem inherent in an individual. From this perspective, systems such as healthcare and education seek to change—that is, fix or cure– the disabled person so we can fit into existing social arrangements. Disability activists and disability studies scholars such as Rosemarie Garland Thomson have countered this viewpoint by forwarding our understanding that disability results from a mismatch or misfit between a person's body, mind, and environment. Instead of trying to fix or cure disabled people, we must focus on changing our surroundings to welcome differences and create space for people as they are.

This disability-affirmative perspective has given rise to laws and policies mandating accessibility for disabled people. In Canada, provincial and federal accessibility legislation has resulted in changes in many areas, including the built environment, workplace practices, communication, and more.

However, disability activists, artists and scholars have noted that the limited enforcement of accessibility laws results in ongoing exclusion and that laws alone do little to affirm the value of disabled life. This is because accessibility legislation, disability rights conventions, case law and policies tend to make relatively minor modifications to existing ways of doing things to accommodate individuals. This overlooks the social and political potential of disability culture to transform how we understand access and how we all relate to disability. The COVID-19 crisis shows that a hyper-individualized approach to access is inadequate. The sudden presence of a rapidly spreading virus made established ways of working and living impossible for the non-disabled world, underscoring the fact that current arrangements, such as workplace practices, are difficult for many to navigate—disabled and non-disabled alike. And beyond the pandemic, most—if not all—people will at some point experience disability, often because of illness, accidents, or aging.

Many of the strategies our society adopted to bring work and life home were originally developed by the disability community. Disability culture has always put access at the forefront, working to expand how we define and practice access in ways that challenge social norms and typical or normative ways of doing things. As disability studies scholar-activist Catherine Frazee writes, "Disabled people don't seek merely to participate in Canadian culture, we want to create it, shape, stretch it beyond its tidy edges." As

members of the disability community, we resist calls to return to a "normal," for such a return does not centre our knowledge and practices of access.

To enact access collectively, the non-disabled world can learn from disability communities and disability culture, including the disability arts movement, which recognize that access is fundamental to how we work and live. Critical approaches to access allow us to shift from a focus on accommodating individuals toward undertaking access as a collective or distributed responsibility that affirms disability and difference.

Changing culture through critical access perspectives

Disability artist Carmen Papalia has developed a practice called "Open Access" to put a critical access approach into action. Papalia explains that Open Access recognizes that each person holds expert knowledge of their body and their environment. Instead of crossing off a predefined checklist, Open Access is an ongoing response in which access is co-designed by the people who will be present in a space, whether that be a workspace or a cultural space. Open Access invites everyone to think about who might be present and who has been included (or excluded) in the past, with the goal of welcoming everyone into the space.

We take up the term "Open Access" to describe our expansive and evolving approach to access. Its goal is to remake culture with disabled people at the centre, making access foundational instead of an afterthought. It recognizes that access must be an ongoing political commitment and that there can be no straightforward solution to access. To facilitate the commitment of affirming disability as valuable and desirable through access, we consider the possibilities of what access can be before delving into its practice.

For disabled writer-activist Mia Mingus, access occurs in relationships, an idea that she calls "access intimacy." She describes it as "that elusive, hard to describe feeling when someone else 'gets' your access needs...or the way your body relaxes and opens up with someone when all your access needs are being met." Mingus explains that this sense of intimacy may take place in an ongoing relationship or arise in an encounter with a stranger. Like all forms of intimacy, we cannot force access intimacy, but we can create the conditions for it to occur by promoting the idea that disability is vital and valuable in the places where we live and work.

We know that people living with disabilities and differences are not a homogenous group, and so we must recognize how disability intersects with other spaces of belonging and othering in ways that shape people's access needs and requirements. Anishinaabe scholar Dolleen Tisawii'ashii Manning highlights the necessity of decolonizing access. Across Turtle Island and the world, colonialism has caused disproportionate impairment in Indigenous populations. On the lands currently called Canada, the rate of disabilities among Indigenous people is twice that of non-Indigenous people. As Manning points out, the deficiency-based concept of disability was not part of Anishinaabe worldviews prior to contact. Colonialism's production of disability and its imposition of deficiency-based concepts of disability creates an urgent need for Anishinaabe and other Indigenous Peoples to lead conversations about their experiences and needs living with what colonial systems call "disability."

Practicing access during a pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic illustrates our potential to do things differently. Here, we highlight three examples of what an open access approach could look like in practice—both during and beyond the immediate pandemic. Everyone has access needs, but we centre disabled people in illustrating how open access works in practice. The examples we cite are of people with specific access needs, but a wide range of access needs will likely be present in any group of people, including people who do not identify as disabled, who do not have a diagnosed condition, or who do see themselves as living with a difference.

Accessible online communication practices

With the rise of video conferencing in work and social life, disability communities have developed protocols to make online spaces more accessible. To make communication more accessible for Blind/low vision users, speakers say their name when they begin to speak and indicate when they have finished speaking such as by saying "check" or "that was the end of my thought." Speakers share verbally what's happening on screen, interjecting comments like "I see that several people on the call are smiling, clapping and giving a thumbs up." To increase accessibility for D/deaf or hard of hearing people, a speaker might talk slowly to allow sign language interpreters to sign in sync with their words and live transcription to follow at a fair pace. Participants can use their body language to interact with speakers: giving applause in ASL, LSQ or another sign language, smiling or gesturing to express their feelings.

Access guides

Access guides are documents containing accessibility information about a space and/or event, including online spaces and gatherings, that inform participants of what to expect. They take out the "guesswork," and redistribute the untold labour that many disabled people must take on before attending an event by preemptively communicating access. Access guides give users a multi-sensory picture of what it feels like to get to and inhabit a space. They approach access as iterative, evolving and welcoming co-design by people, especially disabled people who will be in the space. Organizers distribute access guides well before an

event takes place or people occupy a space so that users know what to expect and can contribute to the plan accordingly. To give a hypothetical, while preparing to attend an event, people with sensitivity to noise might learn through an access guide that a quiet space has not been designated. They might communicate their need for a place to rest, giving organizers time to update the access plan so that everyone can participate.

For a recent online workshop, the Re•Vision Centre for Arts and Social Justice developed an online access guide that included information and links for the workshop culture (e.g., etiquette and how to express ourselves while someone is speaking) and Zoom features (e.g., editing screen names to include pronouns, choosing a screen view, activating and deactivating control options and turning on closed captions). For an in-person event, an access guide such as the one developed for the Cripping the Arts symposium (a gathering of disability artists, curators, community members and scholars) could include pictures and descriptions of the venue such as space/room layout, accessibility features in the space/event, suggestions for how participants can help make the space more inclusive, descriptions of event activities and a glossary of some of the typical words and ideas used in conversations and performances at the event. This allows participants to ensure their access needs are met without having to disclose them to organizers.

"Relaxing" spaces to welcome difference

Borrowing from a disability arts practice called "relaxed performance," relaxed spaces "let our bodies be bodies" by inviting users to bring their whole selves into the room. During a relaxed performance, rather than requiring audience members to stay seated and listen silently, attendees are invited to move, speak, leave, return, eat, etc. Relaxed performances often include other modifications: dimming lights; reducing sound levels; creating a "chill out space" for people to escape sensory overload; and prior to performances, providing attendees with an "access guide."

We can relax work or education by creating the conditions for people to be in these spaces comfortably in non-normative ways. Relaxing spaces allows us to relinquish normative expectations of how to be by enacting protocols and practices (e.g., an access commitment delivered live at the beginning of an event) that invite people to, for example, moderate the nature and frequency of their participation as well as create alternative ways of participating (e.g., using a shared document in which people can offer feedback while participating in a live conversation). These practices create spaces wherein collective care, mutual aid, interdependent support and "access intimacy" can emerge. When we relax virtual spaces, each person controls their own physical and sensory environment therein and can prioritize their access needs. Similarly, working from home allows people to stretch their bodies to ease muscle and joint stiffness without fear of judgment or reprisal. For these reasons, members of disability communities sometimes experience online spaces as more accessible than in-person options that can exhaust budgetary, time and health or energy resources.

Beyond disabled people, these practices support others in a variety of situations. As these are open access practices, we do *not* intend these examples to become a checklist or be taken up as a list of standardized or exhaustive practices. Instead, new modes and possibilities of being together will surface through trial and error and can be expanded to diverse contexts including job hiring, workplace meetings, event planning and accessibility policy development. In this way, access stays vital and integral to our shared social life.

Access to life

For disabled people, access to life also means access to financial resources. The creation of the Canada Emergency Benefit Response (CERB), Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB) and Enhanced EI during COVID-19 demonstrates that our governments have the capacity to implement widely accessible, adequate income replacement programs. Yet the rollout of these programs did not account for the situation of many disabled people. Despite the financial pressures caused by the pandemic, disability income replacement programs have retained their rigid eligibility parameters and unliveable income levels. Research on universal basic income shows that people on a low income benefit substantially from access to income support, reporting improvements in health, work participation, access to food and housing and social relationships. Early research on the impact of CERB/CRB shows similar benefits, making the question of why these programs did not include disabled people who receive income support all the more urgent.

Conclusion

The economic push to "get back to normal" amid the fourth wave of the pandemic in Canada exemplifies the problematic resilience of an unjust social order that still views disabled people as expendable. We see the continued disregard for disabled life operating through the removal of access gains made during the crisis; implementation of ableist triage protocols; mistreatment of disabled people in health, long-term care and group home systems; and the refusal of governments at all levels to amend policies that leave so many disabled people in poverty. Open access approaches that centre disabled people call on everyone to consider their own and others' needs while recognizing the contributions that disability makes. The COVID-19 crisis has proven the necessity of finding ways to do things differently. Approaches to access rooted in disabled people's cultural knowledge provides us with a less well-travelled but more life affirming pathway to a "new normal," one that makes space for differences of all kinds. M

MARTHA PAYNTER

Organizing to keep hospitals safe

Increased police presence is not the answer

AS AN ABOLITIONIST nurse, I do not support the criminalization of protest at hospitals. Yes, it is deeply discouraging to arrive at work already bone tired from a year and a half of overdoing it to be bombarded by a loud and ludicrous minority comparing vaccination to fascism. Yes, I worry about patients feeling afraid on their way in. But calling for police to descend on the hospitals is not going to improve matters. Patients are more likely to fear the police, who are known in Halifax for racism and violence, than to fear the ill-informed chants of anti-vaxxers.

Before becoming a registered nurse, I volunteered for years as an abortion clinic escort at the then-Morgentaler Clinic (now Clinic 554) in Fredericton, New Brunswick. An anti-choice organization owned the building next door, and every clinic day (Tuesday) a half-dozen or so "antis" showed up to make life difficult. As escorts we wore conspicuous blue cotton tunics, and our only job was to huddle close to patients and make loudish conversation to shield them from the physical onslaught and auditory assault of the protestors. The Fredericton police did not help. They would come in response to complaints from local businesses that clinic volunteers or patients were using their parking spaces. Policing is about the protection of property, not people.

Abortion clinics are probably what come to mind first when thinking about the right to protest at a health care institution. Bubble zone legislation in jurisdictions across Canada seeks to protect staff and patients from this type of harassment. But research has shown that most abortion care providers in Canada generally feel safe and normalizing abortion through public education and media coverage does much more to improve access than policing sidewalks ever could. When we propose a solution, we must imagine how it might impact the most marginalized people among us.

Police have a problem with judicious discernment. In spring 2021, Nova Scotia obtained an injunction against public assembly, in theory to prevent anti-maskers and anti-vaxxers from congregating. Some of the same "progressive" voices that had shouted "Defund the Police" a year earlier were now calling for police action against the COVID-19 deniers. As a result of the injunction, more demonstrators at a car rally for Palestinian sovereignty were charged than at the anti-mask protest. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association launched an action against the province over the injunction, but the ban was dropped before the first hearing.

The first direct action I ever organized with Dr. El Jones, a well-known abolitionist educator in Nova Scotia, was at the Dartmouth hospital. Fliss Cramman, a mom of four Canadian children and a patient healing from major abdominal surgery, was to be deported by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). We wanted her to see our solidarity statement from her window and feel our proximity. We were not protesting the hospital, even though she had been held in shackles, something no health care provider let alone modern government should ever allow to happen to a patient in recovery. Shortly after our demonstration, CBSA dropped their case against Fliss and she started a new life in Cape Breton. I often use the poem Dr. Jones read at that demo when I lecture about prisoner health and health care provider responsibility towards people pushed to the margins. I am glad no police showed up that day.

Continuing to rely on the police only delays and impedes creativity with respect to other ways of responding. What are alternatives to policing hospital protests? We could, for starters, counter-protest. We could wear blue tunics and escort staff and patients alike into the hospital doors. I am a member of several labour unions, and none organized a safety picket to support workers when the so-called "freedom" protests were announced. None reacted to the provincial injunction against assembly, even though strike picket lines would fall under the definition of prohibited large gatherings. None issued statements to defund the police in the aftermath of the police killings of Chantel Moore and Rodney Levi and so many other Black and Indigenous people in spring 2020.

Despite these failures, collective organizing remains the most promising approach to achieving and thriving in a post-COVID-19 future. We need to resist the carceral impulse even when we are unsure of the alternatives and instead ask ourselves what we can do to make things better. The anti-vaccine movement shows we have done a very bad job of nurturing collective care in our society. We will not succeed at changing by inviting police in; we share responsibility for shifting courses. M

ERIKA SHAKER

Marked absent

Navigating the post-secondary policy landscape

MERE DAYS BEFORE the writ dropped, the Prime Minister's speech on International Youth Day highlighted some of the challenges facing young people:

"Young people are powerful leaders of change. They care deeply about our country, understand the issues we are facing, and know that we have to—and can—do better... Over the past year and a half, they have shown incredible strength and determination and made great sacrifices to help keep our communities safe and healthy. Unfortunately, they have also been among the most impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic, with significant job losses and a severe mental health decline."

This made it all the more peculiar that post-secondary education was remarkably absent as a topic of debate during the recent federal election—in spite of the writ period aligning with the final weeks of summer and the start of the fall semester.

Vote on Campus, an initiative implemented in 2015 and expanded in 2019 to increase the youth vote, was cancelled in the fall of 2020. According to one spokesperson, the program "ha[d] never been offered in a minority situation with no fixed date to plan ahead, let alone during a pandemic." But the program was cancelled months before the writ drop, which makes this decision seem like a pre-emptive throw-in-the-towel strategy.

This is not the first time that the pandemic demonstrated the folly of neglecting our public infrastructure or the vital role public institutions like universities could and should play during times of crisis—as communication hubs and service delivery centres, among other things. But I was struck by the ironic bookends to the Prime Minister's glowing Youth Day tribute—the virtual absence of discussion about an entire generation in the policy debates and the somewhat breezy disregard of the implications of cancelling an initiative designed to encourage civic engagement amongst said generation of "leaders of change."

So, after being virtually left out of the election conversation, what realities do students face this fall?

There is no question that debt is an issue that needs to be addressed. Estimates put the average student debt load (federal) at about $28,000, which does not include provincial or private debt. And the impacts are profound: according to one study, in 2018, student debt contributed to 1 in 6 insolvencies in Ontario (a number that has been rising). The same study suggests that when private loans (like credit cards, for example) are factored into debt loads, that dollar amount increases significantly.

And as we know, the effects of debt linger. It makes it more difficult to have savings, or to make major purchases. Debt can even postpone life decisions like having kids, buying

Average university undergraduate fees (weighted), current dollars

	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	% annual change 2020/21–2021/22
Newfoundland and Labrador	2,821	2,971	2,975	3,078	3,078	0.0%
Prince Edward Island	6,485	6,632	6,748	6,881	6,954	1.1%
Nova Scotia	7,718	8,086	8,478	8,746	9,028	3.2%
New Brunswick	6,908	7,108	7,595	7,740	7,983	3.1%
Quebec	2,880	2,956	3,060	3,152	3,274	3.9%
Ontario	8,519	8,793	7,931	7,938	7,938	0.0%
Manitoba	4,227	4,462	4,695	4,901	5,082	3.7%
Saskatchewan	7,257	7,511	7,798	8,235	8,545	3.8%
Alberta	5,736	5,713	5,692	6,111	6,567	7.5%
British Columbia	5,669	5,806	5,936	5,990	6,109	2.0%
Yukon	-	3,510	3,810	3,930	4,005	1.9%
Canada	**6,618**	**6,822**	**6,468**	**6,580**	**6,693**	**1.7%**

STATISTICS CANADA

a car or house (assuming you can afford one), or moving out of your parents'. It can also trap young in a cycle of precarity—cobbling together two or more part time jobs to try and earn enough to cover basic living expenses and pay back their debt once it comes due. And that's a hard cycle to break out of because debt makes it very hard to take chances or pursue a passion unless it comes with a sufficient salary. Not only does innovation become a privilege that those without debt and with a safety net can afford, so does volunteerism and all those other things that look great on a CV.

The pandemic has thrown all this into sharp relief. As CCPA Senior Economist Katherine Scott explained in March 2021: "I think we have to be very explicit about centering the economic needs of young people, and that includes young people that won't be involved in post-secondary because...those with lower levels of education face even more barriers. We have to look at the tools we have, we have to look at the affordability of post-secondary school, as well as a good jobs strategy, and we need to be thinking about the quality of jobs on offer."

The economy matters, of course. Recent Labour Force Survey data suggests that there is a growing divide between younger students (15–19) and their older counterparts (20–24). Throughout the summer, this was very clear: among teenagers, employment in August was 5.8% higher than in February 2020 but dropped 5.3% for those aged 20 to 24. It remains to be seen how these trends will change with the return to school. Data for youth who returned to school this fall is also instructive: the employment rate for students aged 20 to 24 was down 5.1 percentage points. The employment rate among female students aged 20 to 24 was down even further from the 2019 summer average by 7.5 percentage points.

None of this should be shocking—there's a reason debt is referred to as a burden, and one that is not equally shared, as COVID-19 has made even more clear. But it's always struck me as deeply ironic that there's an element of the population that thinks debt is terribly bad for governments, yet somehow character-building for young people who need to learn the value of a dollar and benefits of hard work (even if their work is undervalued and undercompensated). Even the Canada Emergency Student Benefit provided less per month than the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, seemingly confident in the belief that a magical student discount applies to rent and all other living expenses or that every young person has the option of sleeping on their parents' couch until things start looking up.

As federal and provincial operational funding or post-secondary education has, for the most part, continued to decline, institutions have turned to students and their families to make up the difference in fees. It's true that tuition fees are certainly not the only expense associated with post-secondary education. But they are a cost that can be controlled, to some extent, by government policy—far more than student housing, textbooks, or other compulsory fees (which a handful of provinces have made minimal efforts to constrain). And as the cost burden has shifted from governments to individuals, a number of provinces have gone even further by embracing the two-tier model, charging one set of fees for in-province students, and a higher one for out-of-province students (not to mention the gouging international students live with).

As I've pointed out previously, the two-tier tuition fee route and the differences in fees between areas of study, combined with a near universal penchant for after-the-fact assistance rather than reduction and elimination of fees at source, makes it much more difficult to get a handle on the actual costs students and their families are expected to bear (or, arguably, to organize against). And the ongoing maze of overlapping and sometimes contradictory student assistance programs and savings mechanisms creates even more confusion and complications. Students are left to navigate a patchwork lottery of government policies that vacillate between abdicating responsibility and competing public relations exercises.

But what's clear is that in the midst of a global pandemic, with a deeply precarious job market that hasn't come close to recovery for young workers, tuition fees continue to increase. (Ontario is the exception, where fees remain frozen as third highest in the country as a much more generous student grants program was eliminated in 2019.) Despite all this, preferred policy responses seem to be rooted in acceptance that debt is an inconvenience to be managed—by kicking it further down the road, by eliminating the interest charged on it, or by reducing the federal component—rather than an obstacle to be eliminated at the outset.

A federal election would have been the opportune time to speak directly to, in the Prime Minister's words, those young people who "understand the issues we are facing, and know that we have to—and can—do better... [who have been] among the most impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic, with significant job losses and a severe mental health decline." It would have been the perfect moment to speak to the issue of student debt accumulation and its long-lasting effects; to ensure adequate public funding for post-secondary institutions and stem the creep of privatization; to end the reliance on contract workers on campuses across the country; to address the weak job market for this generation and the prevalence of precarious employment in which so many young people find themselves trapped; to acknowledge the impact of precarity and debt on mental health, on civic engagement and on community involvement.

Students are more than political "changemaker" talking points. If we miss this chance to support them, particularly during such an unprecedented context and at such a pivotal time in their lives, we risk leaving a generation behind. M

RICARDO TRANJAN

COVID-19 didn't kill neoliberalism; we must do it ourselves

NEOLIBERALISM IS A broad term used to describe a ruthless variant of economic thinking that weakens a country's immune system, making its population vulnerable to poverty and other social malaise. Margaret Thatcher's U.K. (1979–90) is widely known as patient zero, while Ronald Reagan (1981–89) was responsible for bringing the variant across the Atlantic to the United States, from where it spread across the globe. Most cases detected in Latin America and Africa have been traced back to travellers originating from Washington, D.C., especially the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund compounds.

In Canada, the Macdonald Commission meetings (1982–84) were the first superspreader events. By the mid-1990s, cuts to public services, anti-labour policies, tax breaks for the rich, privatization and other common symptoms of the malaise were seen everywhere.

Unemployment insurance became inaccessible to most of the working force. In 1989, 83% of workers were eligible for benefits compared to 42% in 2018. Provincial social assistance programs were gutted across the country. Ontario's Mike Harris government cut social assistance rates by 22% in 1995, pushing many of the province's residents into deep poverty.

For some 20 years (the mid-1960s to mid-1980s), the Canadian government led the way in the financing of social housing, with fairly positive results. By the late 1990s, Ottawa had decided housing was no longer its problem and downloaded it onto the provinces, some of whom downloaded responsibility further onto municipalities. The upshot: social housing construction slowed down significantly and the existing stock fell into a state of disrepair in many places.

Governments doled out public infrastructure to the private sector: a national railroad (CNR), a highway (407), a hydro company (Ontario Hydro), a ferry service (B.C. Ferries), just to name a few. They were awful deals, by many standards, as Linda McQuaig has pointedly explained.

A neoliberal outbreak has also been documented in post-secondary education. In the 1988–89 academic year, tuition fees accounted for an average of 11% of university revenues, compared to 28% in 2017–18. In the same period, the share of government funding dropped from 71% to 47%, leaving post-secondary institutions to rely on increasingly unaffordable tuition fees.

These are just some examples of a longer list of casualties.

It has been a brutal ride for political activists and social justice advocates who came of age as neoliberalism gained momentum. The struggle often consisted of narrating a never-ending tragedy, orchestrating defence tactics and trying to salvage pieces of our welfare system. In the wicked context of a neoliberal consensus, where the ground constantly shifted to the right, any social policy or program that wasn't ravaged stood out as a symbol of successful resistance.

By the 2010s, a new variant of neoliberalism had become prevalent. Political philosopher Nancy Fraser named it *progressive neoliberalism* since it couples economic policies that ultimately spur financialization with a recognition agenda focused on "empowering" marginalized groups and promoting "diversity" without actually addressing structural racism and discrimination. This highly contagious variant acknowledges the existence of a climate crisis, a housing affordability problem and other socio-economic challenges, but the solutions proposed are invariably more free market, more financialization.

Internationally, Bill Clinton, Tony Blair and Barack Obama are probably the most studied cases of progressive neoliberalism. In Canada, Justin Trudeau is the most prominent example of this variant in action; less visible cases include former NDP leader Tom Mulcair and Toronto's mayor John Tory.

When COVID-19 struck, governments acted with a level of resolve not seen in decades. The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), rolled out in less than a month, addressed shortcomings of the unemployment insurance system that had been documented for 20 years. Excitement over CERB threw kindling on the fire of a basic income debate that had been building in Western countries since the Great Recession. The horrendous state of long-term care homes shocked the country, triggering additional funding and the criticism of profit-making in a vital social service. Low-wage workers were praised as essential workers and received temporary raises. Many provinces enacted temporary eviction bans, some froze rents. Several public health measures were put in place to ensure people's safety and wellbeing, reminding us

that governments are capable of regulating but have simply chosen not to do so for decades.

There were reasons to believe that neoliberalism could be eradicated. Trading one deadly disease for another is no cause to celebrate, but at least we wouldn't have to deal with both.

As the dust of the 2021 election settled, it became clear that this 40-year nightmare is not over. With the exception of the $10-a-day child care—a feat that can be credited to a generation of devoted advocates—little has changed. Justin Trudeau rolled back CERB instead of making the long-due changes to unemployment insurance permanent. His party's platform mentions a new insurance program for the self-employed that leaves out precarious workers. In the housing file, the Liberals continue to focus on making mortgages more accessible and providing loans to private developers. To address the climate crisis, the winning party is promising more of the same inadequately funded, incremental approach that hasn't worked so far. The proposed corporate tax increase targets banks and insurance companies, leaving out all other industries. The earlier promise to implement a national pharmacare plan fell off the map, perhaps because it requires upsetting the pharmaceutical industrial complex. In fact, to ensure vaccine supply in the future, Canada plans to throw money at big pharma rather than going back to its successful experience with publicly owned laboratories. Shamefully, Canada is also resisting international calls to waive patents on COVID-19 vaccines—privileging corporations rather than ensuring more rapid and equitable production for residents of lower-income countries.

COVID-19 didn't kill neoliberalism. The policy agenda for the future remains fundamentally the same. So how do we rid ourselves of this thing?

Political organizing is the most effective inoculation against conservatism. Nothing compares to the gains unions and social movements have made for the working class and other marginalized groups. A hard job on a good day, organizing was even more difficult during the pandemic as convening people became unsafe. But organizers have continued to plough through, unionizing new workplaces, supporting migrant workers and fighting evictions. It is not my place to say what organizers should do next. The role of progressive researchers is simply to contribute however we can to their efforts.

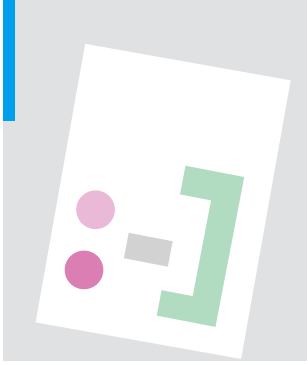
In our own spheres of influence, research and policy types should refuse to go back to the defence tactics that marked the 2000s and 2010s. No more pretending the Centre is a lesser evil than the Right: the Centre is the new Right. A less wealthy Canada created a universal health care system, expanded public education to all children and implemented a *de facto* basic income for seniors. Now we can't even talk about free child care.

No more arguing investments in poverty reduction, equity, health and well-being are good for the economy. Monetizing life is exactly what neoliberalism does. We should assess how well the economy is serving people, not whether lives are worth saving.

No more legitimizing endless consultations on a plan to plan. As I discuss at length elsewhere, government-designed participation doesn't always serve progressive agendas. They are often a decoy. Our time and resources are better spent supporting organizers directly.

No more assuming there is a win-win solution for every issue and that we can build consensus around it. Take housing for example: some pay too much for it, others profit from it. One side will have to give. Pick a side and stand by it.

The world has changed, but neoliberalism is still here. It won't go away if we just ask nicely. We have to push it over the cliff. And we have better chances if we all push at the same time. M



The good news page

COMPILED
BY ELAINE HUGHES

2021 Right Livelihood Awarded to Freda Huson

One of four winners of the 2021 Right Livelihood Award, Freda Huson of Smithers, BC, is recognized for her fearless dedication to reclaiming her people's culture and defending their land against disastrous pipeline projects. Ms. Huson is also a female chief (Dzeke ze') from the Wet'suwet'en people in Canada. "The work I've been recognized for is teaching people our ways, which we are taught from a very young age: to take care of the land that sustains us," said Ms. Huson in an interview. The 2021 Laureates will be honoured during a televised Award Presentation in Stockholm on Wednesday, December 1. / Right Livelihood

Swiss officially mark 50 years of women's suffrage

To mark 50 years since women gained the right to vote in Switzerland, an official celebration was held in the Swiss parliament building and will be commemorated with a special gold coin. After Swiss men decided in favour of women's suffrage in a nationwide referendum, Swiss women officially gained the right to vote on a federal level on February 7, 1971. The country was one of the last countries in Europe to give women the right to vote with the last Swiss canton (state) resisting women's suffrage until 1990. More than 40% of the Swiss parliament is currently composed of women. / SWI

Meet the first two Black women to be inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame

In a recent announcement, Engineer Marian Croak and Ophthalmologist Patricia Bath were the first Black women to be inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in its nearly 50-year history. Bath, who died in 2019 at the age of 76, invented laserphaco, a minimally invasive device and technique that performs all steps of cataract removal, from making the incision to destroying the lens to vacuuming out the fractured pieces. Croak's work on Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) focuses on converting voice data into digital signals that can be transmitted over the internet rather than through phone lines, now essential technology for remote work and conferencing. Croak and Bath will be among the 29 honourees celebrated and inducted at ceremonies in Alexandria, VA and Washington, DC in early May. / National Public Radio

Fort Smith youth create new board game to preserve Cree language and culture

Ryan Schaefer and Eyzaah Bouza, 20, from Fort Smith, NWT, have created a game similar to Snakes and Ladders but with a traditional twist. Named Trails and Overflow, the game takes players through a South Slave trapline where their knowledge of Cree animal names and numbers are tested in a race to the finish line. The game was born out of a 2018 workshop encouraging language revitalization through games. Vance Sanderson, NWT Métis Nation languages manager, says the game can be adapted to different communities around the North. / CBC News

The Great Tapestry of Scotland

The Great Tapestry of Scotland Gallery opened on August 26, 2021 and will house one of the world's largest community arts projects. Hand-stitched by a team of 1,000 stitchers from across Scotland, using over 300 miles of wool to create the 160 linen panels (enough to lay the entire length of Scotland from the border with England to the tip of Shetland), the the Great Tapestry of Scotland is a visual account of Scotland's history, heritage and culture. / Visit Scotland, BIRLINN

A goofy paper horse became an Australian pandemic sensation. Now he's going in a museum.

While in COVID-19 isolation in a Brisbane hotel, David Marriott, now known as the Quarantine Cowboy, used an ironing board, a lamp and brown paper meal bags to create a nearly life-sized paper horse named Russell. Around the world, museums are trying to collect art and ephemera that capture people's pandemic experiences and Marriott's whimsical quarantine escapade struck a chord, resulting in his creation becoming part of the permanent collection at the National Museum of Australia. / The Washington Post

Solar-powered refrigeration trucks will cut pollution from idling diesel engines

A provider of solar and battery power systems, eNow, is set to outfit the XL Fleet's refrigeration trucks with solar-panelled roofs that would cut emissions while keeping 1,000 trailers full of food cool during transportation to local supermarkets as well as powering lift gates, in-cab air conditioning and lighting. Food is normally transported by diesel tractors which, when idling, burn about a gallon of fuel every hour, releasing more than 22 pounds of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. / Good News Network

ALEX HIMELFARB

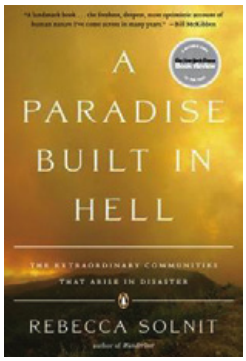
Big change

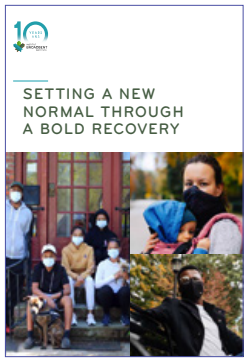
Five readings to help us understand what's needed and what it will take

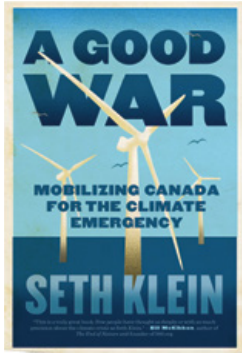
PESSIMIST? OPTIMIST? FATALIST? What might we expect life to bring once we put the pandemic behind us? Will we draw on what we learned to fix what's broken, take on the larger crises of climate change, environmental degradation, colonialism, racism and inequality and build a more just, inclusive and sustainable Canada? We have seen how COVID-19 preyed on our inequalities and turned the cracks in our system into chasms, often with fatal results. Crises can shake us out of our constraining assumptions, help us see that things don't have to be the way they are, and open up previously unimaginable possibilities. Will this be such a time? Or, fatigued, lonely and relieved to see the end of COVID-19 will we be content to return to how things were even with what we now know about the gap between what we are and what we could be?

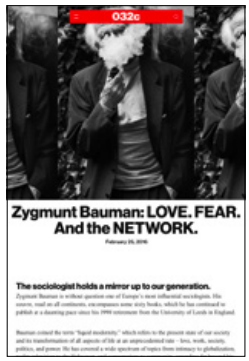
As we saw after the 2008 financial meltdown, crises can, as the saying goes, be wasted. Big change is hard. Those who benefit most from how things are will fight hard to maintain their privilege and power. And, for the many, we mustn't underestimate the inertia born of fear of an unknown future or the sense of powerlessness that decades of austerity politics have yielded.

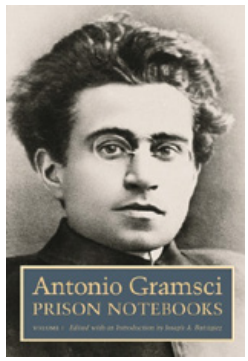
How hard to imagine alternative futures when austerity tells us that life is a zero-sum game, when competition is seen as the sole basis for organizing society, when we no longer believe the state is able or willing to help, when we are told that we have no choice, that globalization and technology are immutable forces. The young know better. But some, especially in my generation, just want to stay the course even if that means managing decline. Many of us have done pretty well and are in good shape to withstand what comes and to help our kids. Is it any wonder that we are seen as the problem when we keep telling those demanding something better that things are just fine, that inequality and poverty











are not much of a problem, that climate change isn't really ours to solve, or that there's not much we can or should do about these things anyways?

Here are five readings to help us understand the stakes and how to close the gap between what we need and what we think is possible.

1. THE PARADISE BUILT IN HELL
REBECCA SOLNIT

Penguin Books, 2010

Solnit is a California-born feminist journalist and blogger. Some critics have complained about what they perceive as her excessive optimism, but this may be just what's needed right now. In *The Paradise Built in Hell*, Solnit examines several natural catastrophes and documents how, in the midst of suffering and loss, people find reserves of altruism and ingenuity and even joy in a new-found solidarity. We saw some of this over the past year in spontaneous instances of mutual aid and in the courage of frontline workers, perhaps in a flicker of a bolder, less partisan politics. Solnit explores how we might hang on to the crisis-enabled generosity and solidarity.

2. SETTING A NEW NORMAL THROUGH A BOLD RECOVERY
ANDREW JACKSON

Broadbent Institute, 2021

Jackson is a progressive economist now with the Broadbent Institute. His report lays out a blueprint for Canada's future after COVID-19, how we might build the care economy, the green economy. Jackson, who well understands the barriers to big change, directly addresses the questions skeptics will inevitably ask about how we will pay for it all and get it done in our diverse and fragile federation.

3. A GOOD WAR
SETH KLEIN

ECW Press, 2020

Klein is the founding director of CCPA-BC, now working with David Suzuki to bring to life the ideas in his important and inspiring book. This is not just another book on the climate emergency. Yes, it begins with straight talk about what's at stake, but it's refreshingly optimistic—or at least hopeful. Drawing on the example of the incredible accomplishments of Canadians during the Second World War—and applying lessons from that war to our current challenges—Klein reminds us that we can achieve great things together.

4. ZIGMUNT BAUMAN INTERVIEW
032C

2016

Bauman was an influential European sociologist who, before his death in 2017, wrote incessantly about his greatest fear: that at a time when we need to be united as never before, we have rarely been more divided. Unable to choose from among his over 60 books, I recommend this interview in which he discusses how extreme individualism, consumerism and decades of austerity have infected our relationships and blinded us to what's possible, to our power, and where he sets out the role of the sociologist "to warn people of the dangers but also to do something about it."

5. THE PRISON NOTEBOOKS
ANTONIO GRAMSCI

Columbia U Press, 2011

Gramsci, a major influence on Bauman, wrote these collected sketches in the 1930s in prison as he watched the rise of fascism in his native Italy. I have often thought his two grand concepts—hegemony and interregnum—contained everything we needed to know about what we will have to overcome to achieve radical change. Gramsci shows us how much what we take to be common sense is shaped by the interests of the powerful; which is to say radical change needs a new common sense. And he sets out how these in between times, when the old world is dying but the new world is not yet born, may bring monsters and "morbid symptoms"—but also possibility.

Pessimism? Optimism? Fatalism? It was Gramsci who described his approach as "Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will." M

SETH KLEIN AND SHANNON DAUB

Remembering Murray Dobbin

Activist, intellectual, mentor, friend

NEOLIBERAL MYTH-BUSTER. Far right exposer. Movement philosopher. Activist. Mentor. Murray Dobbin was all of these.

On Sept. 8, our good friend and comrade Murray died at age 76. Murray was not ready to leave, but after two and a half years, the inexorable brutality of cancer led him to choose medical assistance in dying (MAiD) to end his life on his own terms.

Murray's fighting spirit, sharp intellect and unwavering values guided him through decades of work in service of a better world. Before we knew him, we read his words and heard him on the radio, righteously angry at the neoliberal project unfolding in the 1980s and '90s. The man we got to know was mostly of good humour—with a strain of that suitable outrage, but kind and supportive.

Many familiar with Murray's work knew him mainly as a writer. For years he wrote a political commentary column that appeared in *The Tyee* and *Rabble*. He wrote numerous popular papers for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. He authored five outstanding books, including cutting biographies of Preston Manning (Murray was tracking the rise of the far right in Canada long before others) and Paul Martin (whom he dubbed "the CEO of Canada").

Less known were the countless hours and many years Murray spent donating his time on the national boards of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Council of Canadians and Canadians for Tax Fairness. In 2001, Murray was one of the key architects of the New Politics Initiative, an endeavour to renew the NDP and strengthen its connections to social movements.

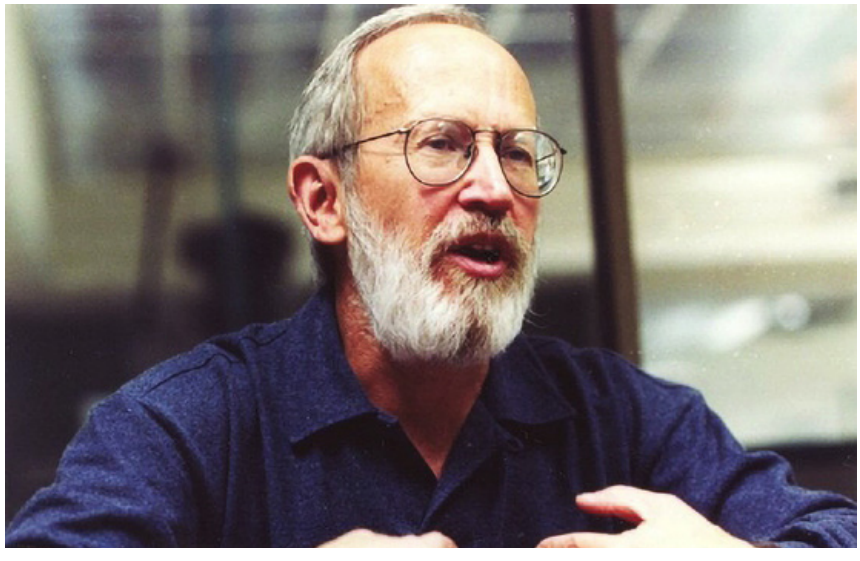
In a lovely tribute they wrote on Rabble, his longtime friends Libby Davies and Kim Elliot recall, "He was a giant of the Canadian left, and had a profound influence on contemporary thinking and action."

Maude Barlow, longtime chair of the Council of Canadians, said of Murray's passing, "Murray was a fierce defender of social justice and spent every waking minute in its service. He made a huge contribution to many organizations and to our movement. He will be sorely missed."

Seth recalls: in the days when Murray was still just an icon to me, his CBC Radio *Ideas* documentary on New Zealand's neoliberal experiment stood out to me. And I will never forget attending a Fraser Institute student conference in the mid-1990s (I was there as an interloper doing MA thesis research), listening to a speaker laud the New Zealand model, and I couldn't help myself—I had to go to the mic and offer some counter points, drawing upon Murray's work. In response, Michael Walker, founder of the right-wing Fraser Institute, came storming up to the podium (pushing aside whoever was supposed to be there) to tell the audience that, while one should always do one's research, whatever you do, "Don't listen to Murray Dobbin!" Well, that seemed to me a very good reason to pay special attention to Murray.

When we were hired in the early days of the BC office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, we had the pleasure of getting to know Murray and we quickly became friends. Murray threw himself into the CCPA–BC office project and spent years as an active research associate and board member.

Shannon recalls: The friend and mentor we got to know was kind, supportive and wickedly funny—in addition to being a relentless fighter of neoliberalism. True mentorship is bringing other people along by treating them as capable peers. As a young person just finding my way in social change movements, Murray



PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN. SOURCED VIA ROGERCURRIEDOTORG.WORDPRESS.COM

treated me as an equal from day one. He helped me figure out what it meant to build intellectual infrastructure for progressives, and inspired self-confidence and clarity of purpose. I know he had this effect on others around us too. It's a remarkable quality (not least for someone who suffered no fools!).

Kevin Millsip, who co-founded the group Check Your Head in the late 1990s in an effort to challenge the corporatization of young people's lives, writes of Murray, "He meant so much to me as a mentor, colleague and friend over the years. His personal and political friendship went a long way to giving me insight and understanding—and what I think of as the intellectual grounding—to support ideas and principles that became part of how I approached the world."

Murray hailed from Saskatchewan, where he began a journalism career with the CBC. He met his life partner and political soulmate of 40 years, Ellen Gould, when they were active in the peace movement and fighting the privatizations of the Grant Devine government of the 1980s. They shared an interest in popular education and spent time at the Highlander Folk School in rural Tennessee learning from Myles Horton. Murray carried the organizing insights he garnered there and elsewhere into his writing and the political counsel he offered, as evidenced in this 2014 *Rabble* and CCPA podcast on reinventing democracy.

Murray didn't want to sign on to paid gigs that would compromise his independence and ability to speak his truth. He and Ellen lived modestly in an environmentally conscious manner. He was a committed social justice activist; someone who not only wrote and spoke but showed up for protests and solidarity. He was ahead of the curve on many issues, including his MA research and subsequent 1981 book on early Métis leaders Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris.

But Murray and Ellen both understood that doing good politics required a human element and they made sure to create space and time in their home for progressives to forge community. "People need those social connections," Murray would say. His favourite slogan, according to Ellen, was "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution."

"While Murray's political persona was fierce," says Ellen, "he was a total sweetheart to share a life with." When Murray and Ellen moved away from Vancouver, the Lower Mainland progressive scene lost a local mentor, but Powell River gained a pair of activists who brought considerable energy to local politics and community building.

Murray had a deep sense of connection to place, including the boreal forest of northern Saskatchewan where he and Ellen spent time every summer, until recently, in a cabin he built with an expert Métis cabin-builder. They spent countless hours hiking, swimming and paddling, even as Murray's illness became critical. Murray loved to spend time outdoors with visiting friends, sharing his delight in his surroundings. Those visits were filled with talk of politics and current events mixed with debates about the merits of camping (Murray in favour, Ellen having none of it), tips for the best places to eat out or get local farm produce and stories of youthful misadventures.

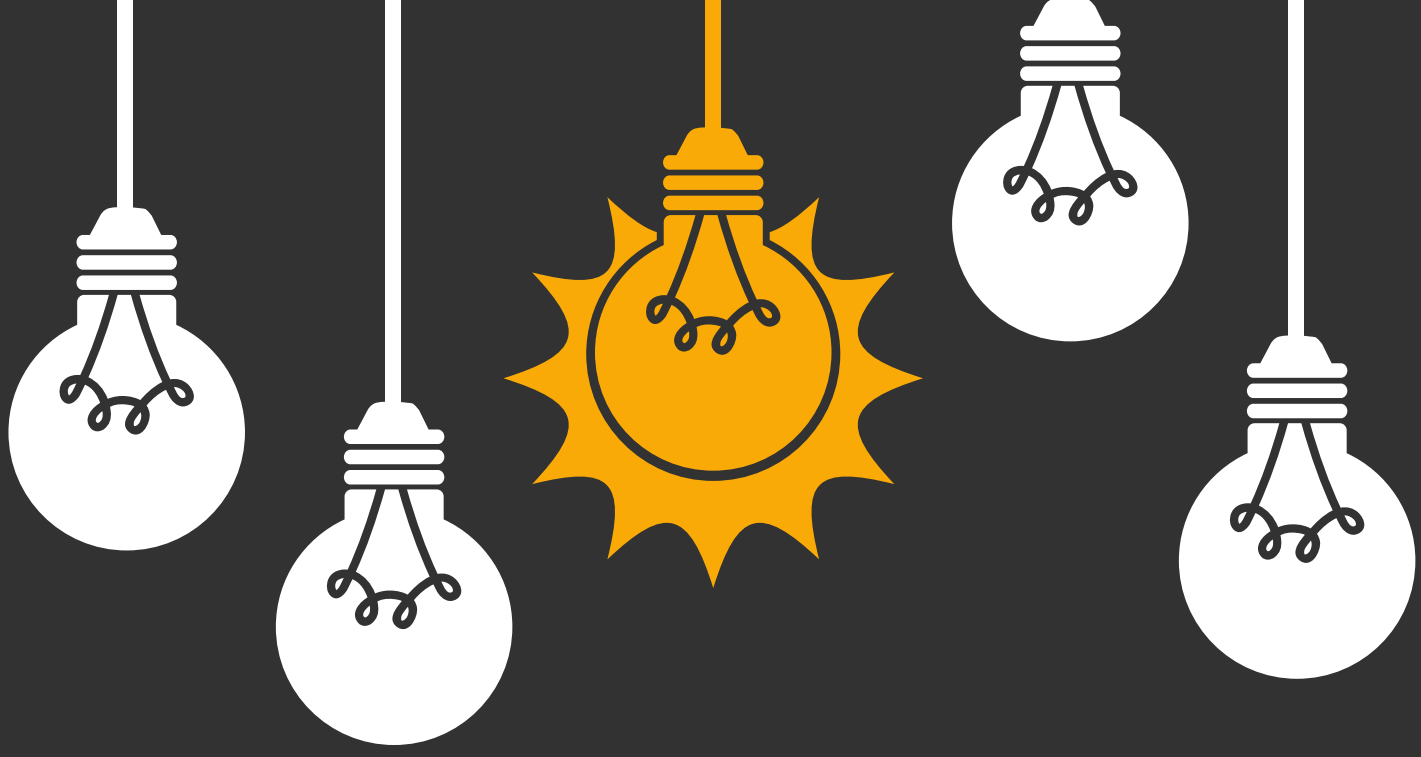
Tyee founding editor David Beers says, "Murray was a courageous voice in service of social justice. And he was an incredible researcher in service of his arguments. He wrote with verve and conviction and people clearly connected. From the earliest days of *The Tyee* until 2016, he published 231 columns in our pages...Murray was always alive to the political moment. Not Ottawa soap operas. Those didn't so much interest him. For him it was politics with a capital 'P.' He cared really deeply, wanted so much for Canada, never wavered from his principles of the highest order. He was inspirational in his fundamental belief that progressive political movements can make a better world."

In a note to Murray just before he died, Naomi Klein wrote, "Your energy, voice and vision are with us and will only continue to gain power and resonance. You saw so much of the hardship we are living through coming. You tried every creative tool to get in the way. And, as you did, you left a rich legacy: of organizing, writing, editing, relationship-building and of careful strategic thinking that is finally being picked up and put into action by a new generation of leaders. Reading back over our correspondence spanning two decades, I am struck that you never lost your excitement or sense of possibility, no matter the setbacks or very real frustrations. The stakes were too damn high, and you were convinced that the left base was ours to build. I still believe that you were right. You always knew, long before I was ready to listen, that true power lay at the intersection of social movements, organized local communities (like yours) and state power. I hope, in the current wave of movement-rooted candidates, you see the fruits of your own patient intellectual labour. Murray, you were on the right side of every fight that mattered, and you waged those fights with fierce focus and great gentleness. A rare gentle-man you are, and I feel blessed to have been in conversation with you over these many years, and alongside you in many fights."

Murray wrestled with how tough it could be to achieve social progress in the face of the neoliberal onslaught. Yet he remained engaged and never let that stop him from strategizing about how we could do better, always laser-focused on understanding how power operates and how it can be challenged. When you get discouraged yet fight on regardless because you feel an obligation to those yet to come, that is a special order of commitment. That was Murray.

Thank you Murray, for your comradeship, encouragement, wisdom, insight and friendship. M

Murray is survived by his long-term partner Ellen Gould, his brother Gary, and his sister Diane.



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