

THE MAGAZINE OF THE MACDONALD-LAURIER INSTITUTE

INSIDE POLICY

SEPTEMBER 2023



CANADIAN MEDIA in crisis

How the latest policy initiatives fail to bring much needed help

Also INSIDE:

Defending Indigenous compensation

Collapse of Canadian diplomacy

Cohousing as solution to housing crisis

Louis St-Laurent's legacy





INSIDE POLICY

THE MAGAZINE OF THE MACDONALD-LAURIER INSTITUTE

Published by the Macdonald-Laurier Institute

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ISSN 1929-9095 (print) 1929-9109 (online)

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From the editors

Parliamentarians returned to Ottawa in September for the fall session of the House of Commons. They'll have their work cut out for them with a restless Canadian public expecting action on the cost-of-living crisis. The government is also expected to introduce new legislation regulating online expression.

We're fortunate to have, as this issue's cover story, a piece from **Peter Menzies**. Menzies, a former vice chair of the CRTC where he served for 10 years, gives an insider's view of the regulatory "mayhem" the Trudeau government has unleashed on the communications sector via badly designed legislation targeting digital streaming services and the sharing of online news. Menzies warns that things are likely to go from bad to worse with the overreaching *Online Harms Act* around the corner.

Continuing the theme of regulatory failure, **Nigel Rawson** and **John Adams** contribute a piece on the disadvantages faced by Canadians living with rare disorders in obtaining the cutting-edge drugs they need. The article, the first in an eight-part series, contends that Health Canada is inefficient in vetting such drugs when compared to regulators in the United States and Europe.

With ballooning grocery bills a cause for national concern, **Vincent Geloso** offers a timely analysis of the Competition Bureau's recent report on competition among national grocery chains, urging Canadians to view the report with a healthy dose of skepticism.

Staying on affordability, **Milton Friesen** pitches cohousing as an "integrated and scalable strategy" to tackle our housing crisis, with the added benefits of sustainability and social connectedness.

Ken Coates sets the record straight amidst the disinformation being circulated by the opponents of Indigenous reparations, clarifying that there is nothing "alleged" about the historical wrongs committed against Indigenous Canadians.

Two pieces shed light on the 'culture war' highlighted in September by the 1 Million March 4 Children and counter-protests. **Stuart Parker** explains how "trans extremism" led to his excommunication from the Marxist left. **Daniel Dorman** further unpacks the flawed thinking behind the postcolonial ideology driving today's Woke activism.

Turning to defence policy, **Paweł Markiewicz** takes a hard look at whether a growing NATO can continue to defend alliance territory from Russian aggression.

Lastly, **Patrice Dutil** contributes two excellent articles to the issue. The first chronicles Canada's diplomatic fall from grace as a once respected middle power. (Justin Trudeau's disastrous showing at August's G20 Summit in Delhi is a reminder of just how far we've fallen). The second harkens back to a better time, focusing on the dignified statecraft of widely respected Canadian prime minister Louis St-Laurent.

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Detractors of Indigenous compensation are entrenching public disinformation

There is nothing “alleged” about the interventions, discrimination, paternalism, and colonialism embedded in generations of federal Indigenous policy.

Ken Coates

Although Indigenous constitutional, treaty and legal rights are a matter of record, Indigenous policy in Canada remains a matter of continuous and intense debate. The social, economic and cultural challenges and accomplishments of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples are generally well-known but have not yet been addressed properly.

Commenting publicly on developments in this area can attract harsh negative responses. Appearances on talk radio programs often spark particularly nasty reactions, primarily by non-Indigenous listeners who criticize me for being too supportive of Indigenous demands and aspirations.

There are times when the need to respond to commentaries in the media becomes over-

whelming. A recent op-ed on the *True North* website is a case in point.

The provocative article, “Indigenous reparations, underdevelopment, and dysfunction need rethinking” talks about compensation “for alleged injustices.” There is nothing “alleged” about the interventions, discrimination, paternalism, and colonialism embedded in generations of federal Indigenous policy, or the racial discrimination that marked Indigenous-newcomer relations in Canada. These are realities that run through to the present through the effects of multi-generational trauma, which is something the commentary also criticizes.

The article refers to the expenditure of “billions” of dollars as though the spending is somehow inappropriate, referring to the funding as “reparations” with another

name. The author correctly points out that a lot of money is being spent, but incorrectly suggests that the expenditures are wrong-headed. Recent tribunal decisions have shown that the amounts spent fall far short of appropriate national standards.

Indigenous people in Canada were treated poorly for generations. They faced countless restrictions and impositions by government, potential employers, and the public at large. There is overwhelming evidence that governments have treated Indigenous peoples inappropriately and often illegally. The recent settlements – the billions that the authors seemingly object to – are direct compensation for acts of government lawlessness, neglect, discrimination, incompetence, or injustice.

The op-ed makes it clear – repeating

hickr.com/photos/pntroudeau

something Indigenous leaders have said constantly and for decades – that Indigenous socio-economic development lags well behind national norms. It emphasizes poor and disadvantaged settlements but pays no attention to the impressive achievements by many communities. It needs to be said that problems created over a century or more are not solved overnight, and not simply with money being spent by federal, provincial and territorial governments.

The article cites my own ongoing concern that non-Indigenous support for Indig-

of Ottawa. When she was federal Justice Minister, Jody Wilson-Raybould – one of the most astute and influential Indigenous leaders in Canada – was frustrated by the unwillingness of the her own government, and indeed the country, to embrace real and transformative change. As she recently said, “They – many of the people in positions of power – still do not get it. I have told many stories of sitting around with government colleagues and speaking about the recognition of Indigenous rights and the implementation of treaties and how to

communities. It also fails to mention the rise of Indigenous entrepreneurship, successful self-governing nations, the profitable Indigenous economic development corporations, and impressive steps in cultural expression.

Indigenous peoples, however, remain strong in the face of generations of efforts to suppress their cultures. The compensation agreements that the author focuses on address some of the illegal and unjust acts of the past, ones that undermined families and harmed whole communities. Every negotiated settlement is a belated govern-



Indigenous communities understand their challenges better than government officials, academics, and outside commentators.

enous program is soft and unreliable in the long-term. I do worry about this, but I am even more concerned that governments believe that money matters more than other elements of resolution, and that governments’ willingness to spend money is not matched by enthusiasm for real change and the empowerment of Indigenous peoples.

The author quotes me as saying that government proceeds “*in the absence of understanding what actually works to improve the lives of Indigenous peoples.*” I believe this strongly. Long-term solutions rest on listening to Indigenous governments, leaders and peoples. The Indigenous require – and deserve – to have their rights respected without having to constantly prove it in court. Treaties must be respected, implemented, and modernized. Indigenous self-government, properly funded, works much better than federal paternalism. Long-term funding commitments are vastly preferable to annual applications for program funding and constant reporting to Ottawa.

Indigenous peoples need continued and dramatic change, but this is proving much more difficult than getting money out

make transformative change to support self-determination, including self-government – and it was like I was from a different planet.”

Canada has failed to fulfill its obligations to Indigenous peoples in many ways. The *True North* article is incorrect in arguing that “there is no grass-roots discussion of the ills of welfare dependency and little about the downside of federal government paternalism” and little interest in reform “from within.” This is simply untrue. Indigenous communities understand their challenges better than government officials, academics, and outside commentators. Considering the staggering harms inflicted on them over centuries, their collective determination and resilience are remarkable.

Yes, this costs money, and it will cost even more in the future. Most of it pays for the provision of basic services – education, health care, policing, infrastructure, and socio-economic opportunity – that most other Canadians take for granted.

The article does not discuss lousy water systems, poor roads, or the challenges of providing proper education, health care and adequate Internet in rural and remote com-

ment recognition that they ignored Canadian law and their responsibility to Indigenous communities.

The article raises impractical ideas – like eliminating Indian status and reserves – that are non-starters at every level. The elements of a better Indigenous future are already in place, if not yet fully realized. Modern treaties, self-government agreements, local economic development cultural institutions, First Nations school boards, colleges, universities and health authorities are only a few of the signs of the robust and impressive Indigenous resurgence. Indigenous communities and leaders know the problems only too well; they are building the solutions themselves.

Following the advice of Jody Wilson-Raybould, putting real authority and resources into the hands of Indigenous governments, and being open to dramatic Indigenous-driven changes in the Canadian status quo, is the right way to go forward. ❁

Ken Coates is a Distinguished Fellow and Director of Indigenous Affairs at MLI and a Canada Research Chair at the University of Saskatchewan.



Government laws designed to rescue Canadian media have done the opposite

The federal government has made a regulatory mess with wrongheaded legislation targeting digital media content. Expect things to get even worse with the Online Harms Act around the corner.

Peter Menzies

Few things are more fundamental to a nation's economic prosperity and social cohesion than a robust communications framework.

Canada has its challenges in terms of rural and northern internet and mobile connectivity,

but the nation's overall communications mainframe is, by most international measures, in good shape. The rest of the story involving what gets carried on the mainframe (i.e., the actual content) isn't as pretty. In fact, two recent communications policy initiatives proposed by the federal government have put tens of thousands of jobs at risk in the creative and news industries.

Money goes where it is likely to generate profit, and if some key arteries aren't unclogged quickly, the flow of communications investment dollars in Canada could seize up. Worse, the future of what has been a thriving creative economy, driven by independent content creators, is now uncertain.

Meanwhile, the news industry is on the cusp of becoming permanently reliant on government subsidies – a dependency that's certain to undermine the public's already wavering trust in its independence.

But first, the good news. While measures vary by source and date, Canada consistently ranks among the world's top 20 nations when it comes to fixed broadband connectivity, and as high as No. 1 in

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has been risk-averse in its dealings with Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNOs) and smaller Internet Service Providers (ISPs) looking for competitive access rates to incumbent networks. Still, competition is one area that appears to be a priority for the CRTC. The regulator's new chair, Vicky Eatrides, has a background in competition policy; a new vice chair, Adam Scott, is thoroughly familiar with the Telecom industrial framework; and the new Ontario Regional Commissioner, Bram Abramson, has experience as a regulatory officer for a smaller telco. (Abramson's former employer, TekSavvy

1990s: the funding of certified TV and film properties, ensuring Canadian content (CanCon) gets priority over foreign programming and ensuring designated groups – BIPOC and LGBTQ2S, among other acronyms – and official language minorities are represented. How exactly the CRTC intends to achieve this without disrupting what has been a booming decade for film and television production in a freewheeling global market remains to be seen. As does how it will give its supply-managed content priority without imposing economic harm on the 100,000 Canadians who earn a living in the unlicensed, uncertified world of YouTube and other major streaming platforms.

The news industry is on the cusp of becoming permanently reliant on government subsidies – a dependency that's certain to undermine the public's already wavering trust in its independence.

the world when it comes to mobile internet capacity. Given that most of nations in the top ten for broadband connectivity are smaller in landmass than Prince Edward Island, this is a considerable achievement for a country the size of Canada. This connectivity, however, has come at a premium – consumer in this country are historically among those paying the highest rates anywhere in the world, particularly when it comes to mobile plans. Costs to consumers remain high but have been trending downward in recent years as carriers shift strategic priorities from acquiring new consumers to retaining existing ones.

Far more challenging is a regulatory environment that is less than friendly when it comes to attracting private investment.

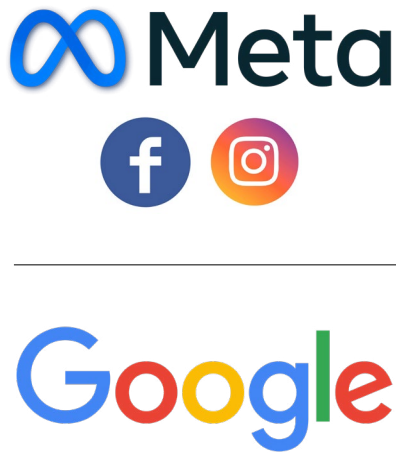
Solutions, recently waved the white flag in its efforts to compete in the Canadian market and put itself up for sale.)

Now the bad news – and, fair warning, there's a lot of it.

Canada is aggressively regulating the internet – not in priority areas such as privacy, algorithms and data collection, but in terms of its content and its users' freedom of navigation. The *Online Streaming Act* (Bill C-11) came into force in the spring, amending the *Broadcasting Act* to define the internet's audio and video content as "broadcasting" and, as such, placing all this content under the authority of the CRTC. The goals remain the same as they did during the broadcast radio and cable television world of the early

While the CRTC has promised to provide at least preliminary answers to these questions by the end of next year, years of regulatory haggling and court challenges await and the regulator's reputation for the timely resolution of matters is spotty at best. As of September 22, for instance, it still hadn't dealt with a cabinet order to review its CBC licensing decision; a decision which, itself, which took 18 months for the regulator to reach (following a January 2021 hearing that was held three years after the term of the CBC's previous license had expired). Regulatory sloth of this nature on a routine matter does not inspire much optimism for the expedient handling of the far more complex issue of online streaming.

Indeed, the burden of the *Online Streaming Act* has already overwhelmed the CRTC's administrative capacities. In August, it auto-renewed the licenses of 343 television channels, discretionary services, and cable and satellite services for two to three years each. It subsequently announced it wouldn't be dealing with any radio matters at all for "at least" two years. It even nervously punted a demand for the cancellation of Fox News' Canadian carriage into the future by declaring it necessary to re-do the entire framework involving



As much financial harm as Meta's departure will cause, there is consensus that Google's departure - if it occurs - would be a disaster on a nuclear scale.

Even if a deal is reached, the best the news industry can hope for is that Google's financial concessions will offset a portion of the losses suffered from losing access to Facebook, Instagram and Threads (among other Meta properties). Any money that can be squeezed out of an agreement with Google would be meaningful but a far cry from the

“Rarely has legislation designed to assist a sector been so poorly constructed that it has managed to make everything worse for everyone involved.”

cable carriage of foreign television channels. It has clearly signaled that it plans to manage nothing other than telecom and *Online Streaming Act* issues for years to come. Everything else is on hold until such time comes to initiate a catch-up process that, in turn, will itself take years to clear the logjam. All this at a time of significant disruption that demands corporate and regulatory nimbleness.

But even what appears to be catastrophic regulatory arrest pales in comparison to the impact of the federal government's second significant piece of new internet legislation: the *Online News Act*. Rarely has legislation designed to assist a sector – news production – been so poorly constructed that it has managed to make everything worse for everyone involved.

Based on the unproven premise that Big Tech companies were profiting from “stealing” content from news organizations, the Act was designed to force Meta (Facebook's parent company) and Google to redistribute their considerable advertising revenue to those who used to receive the lion's share of this revenue - newspapers and

broadcasters. From the beginning, Meta indicated that the premise and the cost of the legislation, unless amended, would force it to cease the carriage of links to news stories and suspend its existing support programs for Canadian journalism.

The government and the news industry lobbyists who backed the bill grossly overestimated their economic value to Meta and insisted the tech giant was bluffing. Last week, however, Brian Myles, Director of *Le Devoir*, told an online panel hosted by the Canadian Journalism Foundation that it was clear Meta wasn't bluffing and, going forward, news organizations would have to adapt to its exit from the market and the considerable financial impact it will have on their industry. He nevertheless held out hope that a rapprochement of some kind might still be possible with Google.

Like Meta, Google has indicated that it, too, will suspend both news linkage and its current partnerships with Canadian news organizations, unless the federal government can provide more economically acceptable options than what it has heretofore offered.

hundreds of millions the industry was dreaming of a year ago. The largest recipients of any such windfall, of course, will be those who least need it – namely CBC and Bellmedia.

The bottom line is that, following passage the *Online News Act*, there will be less revenue for Canadian news organizations than there was just a few months ago. As a result, publishers are pleading for “temporary” measures such as the Journalism Labour Tax Credit and Local Journalism Initiative to be not just extended but enhanced. Up to 35 percent of legacy newsrooms costs would be covered by the federal government while, without Facebook, it will be near impossible for local news innovators outside of the legacy bubble to build audiences.

Next up is an anticipated *Online Harms Act*, designed to control “lawful but awful” speech through a government-appointed Digital Safety Commissioner. Expect more policy mayhem in the months to come. ❄️

Peter Menzies is a senior fellow at MLI and a former vice-chair of the CRTC.

The alarming collapse of Canadian diplomacy

Historically, Canada presented a realist, straightforward diplomacy that articulated the values of a shared humanity. Today, our global presence is inconsequential.

Patrice Dutil

It is hard to remember a time when Canada's presence in the world was more negligible than today. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Washington on June 20 and then flew on to Egypt. There is no sign that thought was given in New Delhi to make even a symbolic stop in Ottawa. Evidently, Modi was not impressed by Canada's new *Strategy for the Indo-Pacific Region* that promised focused attention on his country.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's 2018 trip to India was nothing less than a diplomatic fiasco. The Canadian delegation had blundered by including a BC businessman convicted for trying to assassinate an Indian cabinet minister and Trudeau was ridiculed for dressing up in traditional Indian garb. Canada's visit inflicted real discomfort and apparently the relationship is still in disrepair.

And yet it should not be. For fifty years, from 1955 to 2006, Canada donated almost \$2.4B to India, supporting it through some of its darkest days. Canada is India's 9th largest trading partner, importing \$7B in goods and services from that country, and exporting \$7.4B. There is every reason that a strong, even exceptional, relationship should exist between Canada and India. That the relationship has disintegrated beneath even a ceremonial stop-over in Ottawa is deeply concerning.

Modi's recent flyby is hardly the only time Canada has gotten the cold shoulder in recent years.



“
What is going
on here?”

In late 2021, Canada was left out of AUKUS, the defence and security alliance between Australia, the United Kingdom and the USA focused on the acquisition of nuclear submarines. Even though AUKUS will be discussing plans highly relevant to Canada's maritime security for the foreseeable future (Canada, most observers agree, needs nuclear submarines to police its waters in the Arctic), the door has been closed.

A few months later, when Norway organized international talks with the Taliban in January 2022, Canada was not even invited. (The US, Britain, Germany, Italy and the European Union all attended). How was this even possible? Canada was at war with the Taliban from 2001 to 2011. 158 of Canada's soldiers died there and we spent almost \$4B in international assistance to the region. In the normal course Canada should have had a seat at the table.

In June 2023, Canada declined to take place in NATO's Air Defender 23 event, its largest ever air defence exercise. In its absence, Canada ranked alongside bit players Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania and Iceland.

These successive diplomatic snubs point to real rot in how the government is defining its priorities. Earlier this year, for example, Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly was caught bragging about being invited to facilitate a peace process between separatist groups and the central government in Cameroon. Cameroon denied that they had invited a mediator and Canada's diplomats were humiliated.


Ottawa has also strained its relations with the Dominican Republic over a bizarre plan to open an office there to coordinate assistance to Haiti. Santo Domingo denounced the plan publicly and Canada backed down and instead committed to boosting its offices on both sides of the Dominican-Haitian border. Despite calls by the USA and France to do more for Haiti, Canada's diplomacy has accomplished next to nothing.

Where the government does feel comfortable is nitpicking flaws in the domestic policies of other countries. Over the past few months, Justin Trudeau was ridiculed for lecturing his Italian counterpart on her government's LGBTQ policies. Undaunted, he did it again when the Polish prime minister visited Canada in early June.

Meanwhile, of course, leaks from Canada's intelligence community outlining that Beijing has no trouble involving its agents on Canadian soil to sway opinion and, perhaps, votes, were met with blame shifting and stonewalling by the government.

What is going on here?

Even in the days of the British Empire, prime ministers such as John A. Macdonald, Wilfrid Laurier and Robert Borden were engaged in the affairs of the world and were respected in the two foreign capitals that mattered back then: London and Washington. Mackenzie King's government oversaw a massive turn towards the global community during the Second World War and the postwar era that saw the emergence of the United Nations. Louis St-Laurent engaged Canada in the affairs of the world,


Ottawa's foreign policy machinery has grown deaf and unable to communicate with the world and as a result, Canada's strength has waned.

from fighting the Cold War in Korea and in numerous other countries, supporting those who fought the influence of the Soviet Union and simultaneously launching official development assistance and numerous peacekeeping activities. St-Laurent even visited India in 1954 and addressed the Indian parliament. Historically Canada presented a realist, straight-forward diplomacy that articulated the values of a shared humanity. No posturing or costumes were necessary.

Canadian prime ministers did their best to match those efforts over the next fifty years. Brian Mulroney's tenure was particularly noteworthy in this respect.

Governments should get better at diplomacy as they age and gain experience. But something has gone amiss and Canada's diplomacy does not match its strengths. Canada is the world's second largest country, the eighth largest economy, the 35th most populous nation. Its military budget makes it either the 10th largest or the 15th largest, depending on the year (it is roughly comparable to Australia, Brazil, Italy, Israel, Iran, and the UAE). Canada would easily rank in the top ten if it lived up to our

defence spending commitments (2 percent of GDP) required by NATO membership.

But those strengths are squandered. Canada consistently pretends to stand for values but the record shows that the world has had enough of listening to Canada's empty virtue signalling. This was obvious when Canada's bids to win elections to the United Nations Security Council were rejected by the world community in 2010 and 2020, but it is equally evident in its bilateral relations.

The reality is that over the last thirty years, Canada's prime ministers have not been ambitious in foreign policy matters. Jean Chrétien was too focused on cutting the government's budget and slashed the budget allocated to foreign affairs. Paul Martin's government seemed literally frozen, unable to articulate a coherent policy. Stephen Harper's priorities were narrowly cast and Justin Trudeau's idea of foreign policy has been nothing more than a mixed bag of well-intentioned but poorly received pronouncements and postures mostly designed to appease a portion of his electoral coalition.

At the same time, Canada has had no less than 16 foreign ministers over the past 30 years with an average tenure of less than two years on the job. The vast majority of them, including Ms. Joly, have never studied nor been involved in foreign affairs before attaining this important portfolio.

Our prime ministers and their chosen foreign ministers have been lacklustre in the pursuit of a strong foreign policy for decades. Ottawa's foreign policy machinery has grown deaf and unable to communicate with the world and as a result, Canada's strength has waned. From top to bottom, a radical new approach is urgently needed for Canada's foreign policy. ❁

Patrice Dutil is a Senior Fellow at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute. His latest book is Statesmen, Strategists and Diplomats: Canada's Prime Ministers and the Making of Foreign Policy (UBC Press).

Intolerant authoritarians of the new left



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Stuart Parker, a lifelong Marxist, outlines how Woke authoritarians and trans extremists expelled him from progressive society.

Stuart Parker

Since I turned sixteen, I have, to varying degrees, been a minor public figure, associated with various radical protest movements and political projects. In 1988, as founder of the Canadian Green Party's youth wing, I began a series of protests against McDonalds' use of ozone-destroying foam packaging, leading to the company personally naming me in a series of newspaper ads defending itself in the following year.

In 1993, I was elected leader of the BC Green Party – in part on the strength of that campaign and in part because of my promise to get myself arrested in the Clayoquot Sound logging road blockades that year (a promise whose fulfilment led to me being tried for criminal contempt of court later that year). In 1998, I was arrested again in the Slokan Valley; and in

I have consistently courted controversy, taken unpopular positions and aligned myself with those on the far left of the political spectrum.

the same year, was forcibly ejected when I tried to crash CBC's Nisga'a Treaty debate. Whether leading referendum campaigns for proportional representation, campaigning against climate change or protesting government austerity

programs, I have consistently courted controversy, taken unpopular positions and aligned myself with those on the far left of the political spectrum – feminists, environmentalists and socialists – over the past thirty-five years. And I continue to serve as president of Los Altos Institute, a Marxist think tank.

And yet today, I am described variously as “conservative,” “far right” and “a literal Nazi” by members of the Woke left. And that is because, starting in 2020, I began publicly dissenting from the left consensus on one issue: gender identity.

Previously, I had mobilized the Green Party to support the first viable transgender city council candidate in Vancouver history in 1996, Jamie Lee Hamilton, and consistently supported trans activists' causes for most of my life. My proximity to the community made me aware that radical changes were taking place in that in that

community and within political movements seeking to represent the community in the 2010s, and that leaders like Hamilton were being shunted aside by a new leadership class.

The cultural changes in that community were emblematic of larger changes taking place on the political left as it became “Woke” in the second half of the decade. I use the term Woke, advisedly, as a person holding a PhD in Religious History; it is a perhaps accidental reference to the history of religious movements on this continent. The 1770s and 1820s are referred to as the First and Second Great Awakenings, periods of time when Anglo-America was seized with religious

to fire me from my job; none have contacted my landlord to demand that I be evicted from my home. Yet, all these things have happened to me since I began to dissent from Woke Left orthodoxy in 2020. In 2021, even though I never mentioned my dissenting views on the air, complaints were filed with the radio station with which I volunteered over posts I had made from my personal Twitter account and my show was taken off the air, despite having switched to a completely non-political format, interviewing historians and artists. And then there were the outrageous smears I suffered in 2021 (like those faced by Chilliwack School Trustee Barry Neufeld) baselessly claiming

individuals in my fortnightly Runequest group received months of personal threats and harassment demanding that they withdraw from our game and publicly denounce me. I’ve lost a number of multi-decade friendships, including my thirty-year friendship with the person who initiated the threats last year.

And my games have not been the only site of this harassment. Simply following me on Twitter or being connected to me on Facebook results in people receiving threats and demands that they cut ties and denounce or face the same fate of un-personing that I have. Many friends are now hesitant to appear in photos with me on social media for



The cultural changes in that community were emblematic of larger changes taking place on the political left as it became “Woke” in the second half of the decade.

enthusiasm and fervour, often taking on political dimensions. Unfortunately, it seems that the Third Great Awakening currently upon us lacks the democratic character of the First and Second.

As a result, since 2020, I have faced new kinds of political opposition that I never experienced from any political adversary of my past. In all my years of protesting Weyerhaeuser, Slocan Forest Products, McDonald’s, Dupont Chemical and others, and in all my years of facing off against Conservatives, Liberals, Reformers and Social Democrats (Socreds) on the hustings, I now face the kind of opposition I have faced from the Woke left.

None of my prior adversaries ever reported my romantic partners to child protection authorities in an attempt to have their children seized because someone who holds the views I hold was permitted to live in their residence; none have lobbied my employer

that I was an unprosecuted serial child rapist, amplified by then-Minister of Education, Jennifer Whiteside.

By 2022, I was unemployed, single and had been forced to move back to my hometown to access the support of long-time friends as I attempted to recover from the attacks and the decimation of the life I had been living just a short time before.

But that is when things got even weirder. Although this had been taking place all along, without a job, relationship or space in the public square to attack, my detractors could focus on just one thing: contacting my friends, comrades and acquaintances and demanding that they publicly denounce me and sever their ties with me.

A popular target has been my hobby, tabletop role playing games. I have been barred from a convention I had been attending for seventeen years and its associated online community. And

fear of reprisals they will face if they simply share a pint and a plate of food with me.

So, what terrible things must I have said to warrant this reaction, to be labeled “a literal Nazi?” Like the late Jamie Lee Hamilton, the founder of the modern trans rights movement in my city, I oppose what is euphemistically called “life-saving, gender-affirming care” for minors. In other words, I do not believe that pre-adolescent children should be put on chemical castration drugs, followed by cross-sex hormones and then undergo a series of amputations and cosmetic surgery that will permanently sterilize them and leave almost all incapable of ever experiencing an orgasm.

And I certainly do not agree with the BC government’s view that if parents are not willing to do this to their trans-identified children, the state should seize the children, place them in foster care and sterilize them against their parents’ will. Like many trans-

gender adults, like those who run the Gender Dysphoria Alliance, I agree with Chris Elston (AKA Billboard Chris) that children cannot consent to puberty blockers because there is no way a person who does not yet have an adult brain can make adult decisions, especially when the chemical castration drugs they are given inhibit brain development.


I also believe that rape shelters, transition houses and women's prisons should be single-sex facilities and that men should not be permitted to "identify" into these spaces. Today, aside from Rape Relief Women's Shelter, which faces constant harassment for its maintenance of single-sex spaces, any man can enter these spaces simply by saying "I am a woman." No hormones, no surgery, no makeup required. And the Canadian Bar Association has made it its mission not just to place male serial rapists in women's jails, which they successfully did a few years ago; they celebrated another victory this spring by successfully placing male serial child rapists in prison mother-baby units.

Also, while I support any adult expressing their gender however they wish to whomever they wish and to seek out medical procedures that assist them in doing this. I do not believe that these procedures change a person's biological sex, which is literally inscribed on every single cell of their body. Nor do I believe that people should be penalized for calling calling a man he/woman she when they talk about them with third parties.

These beliefs are, apparently, "extreme right." And anyone who espouses them, even if they are a communist, a climate activist, a long-time trans ally or even a trans-identified person themselves, must not merely be disputed; they must be purged from society, pushed out of their profession and relentlessly harassed until they either recant their beliefs, suffer a psychiatric collapse or die. Trans extremism or, as I have come to call it, "genderwang," has become the primary boundary maintenance condition on the Woke left. Anything less than absolute slavish adherence automatically makes you

an enemy of the people, identical to Hitler.

Progressive society under Woke hegemony has become post-political. It has ceased to have meaningful political demands since the rise of mid-2010s hashtag politics. #DefundThePolice, #LandBack and #MeToo are not political ideas; they impersonate politics. Wokes do not make policy proposals and have no capacity to assemble the broad coalitions necessary to enact policy through democratic processes. Instead, these things function as a boundary strategy. If you are



*Does it mean
I have stopped
working to arrest
the Greenhouse
Effect, bring down
capitalism,
redistribute wealth?
Of course not.*

not willing to say "trans women are women" or "all cops are bastards" (#ACAB) or that 100 percent of the land in North America should be handed over to a group comprising less than 2 percent of the population, you are evil. Energy that would once have been put into building networks and alliances of people are now put into punishing apostates.

So, what does it mean that I am now a "conservative." Does it mean I have stopped working to arrest the Greenhouse Effect, bring down capitalism, redistribute wealth? Of course not. That is because in post-political Canada, conservative and progressive are less political positions and more social locations. What people are increasingly doing is evaluating and understanding their political affiliations not in aspirational terms, in terms of the society they want to create, but in

social terms, in terms of the society in which they can tolerate inhabiting in the present.

The result is a kind of social partition. You either live under Woke authoritarianism or you live in a society that tolerates heterodoxy to some degree and is understood to be "far right." It is becoming impossible for people to exist in and pass between the two societies. Communities, friendships, romantic relationships: all of these things are being annihilated by this process of partition.

In the twentieth century, there were not just many long-term inter-faith marriages but marriages that spanned the political spectrum. The couples could be members of opposing parties and would joke about canceling out each other's vote every election.

Such a thing is unimaginable today. While there are intolerant authoritarians everywhere they have only attained hegemony on the political left. And so, it turns out that I am treated with far more tolerance, far more kindness by the people I have been fighting on climate and capitalism my whole life than I am by my former comrades – unless they, like me, have withdrawn or been expelled from progressive society.

I am reminded of one of the great satirical plays of classical Athens, Aristophanes' *The Acharnians*, from 2500 years ago about an Athenian who, during the protracted war against Sparta, discovers a shop in the agora that sells personal diplomatic treaties. So, he purchases a personal peace treaty with Sparta and a hilarious slapstick comedy ensues, illustrating the absurdity of an individual opting out of a Manichean struggle between two societies, of being at peace with a society at which your neighbours are all at war. I have to admit that I was this risible character for the past half-decade. But I have got the point now. I'm taking up full-time residence in Sparta because I don't want a pike driven through my back. ❀

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Waiting for new drugs for rare disorders in Canada

Health Canada is ineffective compared with American and European regulators.



This article is the first in an eight-part series from the authors. The series, *Waiting for new drugs for rare disorders in Canada*, is an in-depth look at the disadvantages faced by Canadians with rare disorders in accessing needed, innovative drugs.

Nigel Rawson and John Adams

Canadians living with rare disorders are seriously disadvantaged compared with sufferers in other countries because Canada has no national strategy for these disorders. By contrast, developed countries have policies encouraging manufacturers to launch “orphan” drugs for rare disorders. This is the first in a series of

“*In Canada, we make a short-sighted virtue of raising barriers that delay or deny access to important innovative medicines.*”

articles about obstacles facing patients in Canada to access rare disorder drugs.

In Canada, we make a short-sighted virtue of raising barriers that delay or deny access to important innovative medicines, especially costly ones, for patients with unmet or poorly met health care needs. Canadians with rare disorders are particularly impacted. Patients’ experiences manifestly demonstrate evidence of the barriers they confront to gain much-needed access to new medicines.

The primary step in accessing any new medicine is for its developer to submit an application regarding the drug’s safety, effectiveness and manufacturing quality for regulatory authorization. Let’s look at a new medicine called Roctavian for severe hemophilia A as an example to see differences between review processes of

Renée Depocus using iStock

the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Health Canada.

Hemophilia A is a rare genetic bleeding disorder experienced by around one in 10,000 people. Sufferers lack the normal ability for blood to clot after an injury due to a deficiency of an essential clotting protein called Factor VIII. This inherited deficiency places them at risk for painful, potentially life-threatening bleeds from even modest injuries such as dental work.

The standard of care for severe hemophilia A is infusions of Factor VIII administered intravenously two to three times per week (that's 100 to 150 infusions per year). Sufferers' lives revolve around these infusions. Nevertheless, many

- Orphan drug status: this is a program intended to advance the evaluation and development of drugs that demonstrate promise for treatment of rare disorders;

- Breakthrough therapy designation: a program to allow Americans early access to important new medicines;

- Priority review status: this means the FDA's review performance target is four months shorter than its usual standard, although the review is no less stringent; and

- Regenerative medicine advanced therapy designation: a recently introduced program to facilitate the development and review of new treatments for unmet medical needs in patients with serious conditions.

gave Roctavian orphan drug status and conditionally authorized the medicine in June 2022. No submission for regulatory approval for Roctavian has been made to Health Canada so far.

This could be due to the lack of a rare disorder strategy or other incentives, combined with the last six years of uncertainty around Ottawa's plan to reduce the cost of new expensive therapies to a level that would be unsustainable for their developers. It could also be due to the multiple barriers erected by payers in Canada over the last 20 years that manufacturers must overcome to get new medicines to patients who need them, (which we discuss in the next four articles in this series.)

Canada has no program or law to provide incentives for new orphan drugs and Health Canada has no similar programs for breakthrough or advanced regenerative therapies.

continue to experience breakthrough bleeds resulting in progressive and debilitating joint damage.

Few new treatments for hemophilia A have been introduced for decades. However, the new science of human genome sequencing has resulted in novel therapies for many previously untreatable or poorly treated disorders – Roctavian is one. For several years, Roctavian has been undergoing trials in humans that have demonstrated its efficacy, safety and manufacturing quality. A single Roctavian infusion results in low levels of bleeding without need for Factor VIII infusions. That's one infusion versus hundreds.

The FDA has at least four programs to encourage drug developers to bring new therapies to patients who need them and granted Roctavian:

Canada has no program or law to provide incentives for new orphan drugs and Health Canada has no similar programs for breakthrough or advanced regenerative therapies. Health Canada has a priority status review process but can only cope with a limited number of these reviews at a time – and the priority reviews we do manage usually duplicate earlier reviews by American or European regulators.

Health Canada talks about being a world-class regulator. However, the lack of incentive programs and the limit on priority reviews tell a different story. Instead, Health Canada merely repeats the work of world-class American and European regulators.

The FDA approved Roctavian in June 2023. The European Union also

Canada's place in global launches of new drugs is slipping. We have fallen out of the top tier. Wait times for patients to access new medicines are growing. Canadians with rare disorders desperately need incentives to encourage developers to launch their drugs here. Health Canada should work collaboratively with drug developers to rapidly move new medicines through its regulatory process – as the FDA does – or mutually recognize medicines approved in the United States or the European Union as being marketable in Canada. ❁

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Peter Bond

Skepticism is a good lens for viewing the Competition Bureau's grocery market study

The Bureau's report contradicts itself and illustrates that the grocery industry is actually competitive.

Vincent Geloso

The grocery sector has been under constant scrutiny by politicians and regulators for the rising prices of food bought in stores. The latest to enter the fray is the Canadian Competition Bureau with its much awaited report on the state of competition in the industry.

The report, published in late June,

uses Statistics Canada data from the last two years, which show that price increases for food bought in-store are outpacing the general rate of inflation. This is then tied to the wave of mergers in the industry that has taken place since the late 1990s. The assumption made by the bureau is that the number of firms in the industry – which is lower now than in 1998 – is the

best indicator of competition. Thus, more review of mergers is argued to be warranted.

There are, however, multiple problems with both the evidence the Board uses and the assumptions it makes to reach that conclusion.

The first set of problems is tied to the data used. If one decides, unlike the Competition Bureau, to extend the study of prices for

food bought in stores back to 1998, one will find that grocery prices have increased faster than inflation. However, looking at prices for food bought in restaurants yields the same conclusion – they, too, have increased faster than inflation. This is one clue that the report’s conclusion is weak, because the restaurant industry is known to be highly competitive. Why would prices increase as fast in that competitive industry as the supposedly uncompetitive grocery industry?

come with it. This has value to consumers, as it saves them time in meal preparation and cooking at home. One way to circumvent this is to look at prices collected by web-scraping – generally, goods sold online and delivered over mail. Because of the shipping component of the services, most of these goods are less likely to be a blend of “goods and labour services”. These indexes (largely produced for the USA only) show that grocery prices since 2015 had lower inflation

question of relevance is whether these incumbents can be challenged. The threat of competition alone can be sufficient to make firms behave competitively, and this appears to be the case for the Canadian grocery sector as the Competition Bureau *itself* admits implicitly. The report points out that some foreign firms are reluctant to enter the Canadian market because profit margins are too small – which is essentially saying that the current firms in the grocery



Alex Hancy

We should take the Competition Bureau with a grain of salt as it makes questionable diagnostics and contradicts itself by illustrating that that the industry is actually competitive.

The answer lies in what is actually being measured by Statistics Canada when it collects price data. Many will assume that the price being recorded for, say, a pound of beef is the price of the good itself. However, that is not the case. The grocery industry has increasingly been incorporating into its pricing a greater number of services in the goods that we buy at the store. This can be seen with pre-cleaned produce for salads, pre-seasoned and pre-marinated meats, pre-cooked meats, sliced vegetables, etc. These items, which are growing in popularity (not just in Canada, but in the USA and Europe as well), were not an important feature of what grocery stores offered less than a decade ago.

This means that if you looked at what Statistics Canada listed as the price of a pound of beef in 1998, you were probably looking mostly at the price of the beef itself. Today, that figure represents not just the beef but all the bundled labour services that

than the overall food prices tracked by government agencies.

As such, the data used by the Competition Bureau is not measuring the same “good and service” over time, which leads it to a false diagnostic. However, this does explain why restaurant prices are also increasing faster than inflation: the demand for prepared meals (either in grocery stores or restaurants) is growing fast.

This brings us to the Competition Bureau’s shaky assumption that competition is measured by the number of firms present in the industry. It is entirely possible for a market to have few firms, or even a single one, because they are the ones that will have the lowest costs of production. In cases like these, mergers might even help consumers if it means an efficient firm can scale up and produce even lower prices.

When a market ends up with a few highly efficient firms, then the only

sector are aware that they can be threatened and that they need to provide high quality goods and services at low prices to deter the entry of potential competitors.

We should take the Competition Bureau with a grain of salt as it makes questionable diagnostics and contradicts itself by illustrating that that the grocery business is actually competitive. That being said, there are policies that could be deployed that could create more potential for entry by competitors. However, this would involve removing the multiple licensing requirements for groceries and stores that provinces impose which limit competition, or that regulatory compliance costs – which are more burdensome to smaller firms trying to grow – should be slashed. ❁

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Генеральный штаб ЗСУ / General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine via Facebook

Can NATO members back up promises to defend the Eastern Flank?

Putin will keep testing NATO resolve toward defending 'every inch' of alliance territory.

Paweł Markiewicz

Besides testing the resolve of the world's defenders of democracy, the war in Ukraine has also been a wakeup call about the poor state of military capabilities among some NATO allies.

During a meeting of Russia's Security Council in July, President Vladimir Putin delivered a tirade when presented with information that Poland has purportedly come to terms with the fact that Ukraine is on the verge of defeat.

He alluded to Warsaw allegedly preparing to deploy “a well-organized,

The war in Ukraine has also been a wakeup call about the poor state of military capabilities among some NATO allies.

equipped regular military unit” to Western Ukraine with the goal of “subsequently

occupying” territory that in the past fell within Poland's borders. Besides claiming that Polish forces would “stay [in Ukraine] for good,” he also cited Belarus, insinuating how “they [Warsaw] dream of Belarusian land”, before sternly warning that any aggression against Russia's ally in Minsk would merit a military response.

While those in the West may be tired of hearing Putin's invocations to the past, historical politics is a potent tool that shapes Russian ideology and helps legitimize the *Russkiy mir* or ‘Russian world’ concept driving, among other initiatives, Moscow's war in Ukraine. The message to be taken from this

latest diatribe is that he won't relent hostile actions toward NATO countries, especially those closest to Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. A significant number of Alliance forces (e.g.: American, Canadian, and British personnel) are currently stationed in these countries.

Putin's rant came days after NATO partners had converged on the alliance's eastern flank in Vilnius, Lithuania for their annual summit, seeking to maintain political and military cohesion for Ukraine while bolstering defence plans and deterrence capabilities to offset potential large-scale threats from Russia.

The summit addressed a weighty topic on the minds of experts and decision makers alike – Ukraine's future as a NATO member. Although ultimately deciding not to invite Ukraine to join, NATO nonetheless moved

NATO when it comes the question of when to admit Ukraine.

At Vilnius, NATO allies addressed several other pressing issues. For the first time since the end of the Cold War they accepted defence plans specifying that the alliance will respond to future attacks with at least 300,000 troops.

Approved regional plans mean that NATO will prepare to fend off Russian threats, including in the North Atlantic and Northern Europe; the decision to let Sweden join the alliance will tremendously benefit defence and deterrence capabilities in this region and in the Baltic Sea area. Finally, addressing one of the most pressing challenges facing allies in the wake of Russian military aggression, i.e. the need for significant key defence investments,

year. The first weapons deliveries reached Belarus most likely around mid-June.

Second was the short-lived military revolt by the private Wagner Group company, revealing an apparent growing internal crisis within certain levels of Russian power. It ultimately resulted in the redeployment of Wagner mercenaries to Belarus (sources indicate from 2,000 up to 10,000). During a meeting with Putin on July 23, Lukashenka mentioned that the Wagner troops in Belarus want to go "on a trip to Warsaw" – a thinly veiled threat against Poland, NATO, and the West in general.

Decisions by NATO leaders at the Vilnius summit will go a long way in restoring the alliance to its fundamental role of containing and deterring Russian aggression. Even as political declarations move Ukraine

A series of additional regional political and security challenges laid down by Putin indicated that NATO will have even more to prepare for in the near future.

the needle beyond its broad declarations on this question back in 2008. They agreed to forego the Membership Action Plan process necessary to receive a formal invitation to join NATO, increasing Kyiv's chances for membership in the near future. Creating a NATO-Ukraine Council gives Kyiv added means for permanent and regular consultations on the same terms as existing members, allowing it to influence new forms of cooperation with NATO and exert pressure on its admission. However, the political process toward reaching a consensus – which included Ukrainian officials using the summit to publicly pressure the alliance for an invitation to join, and members adopting a mild declaration – showed that fissures exist in

NATO members committed to spending a minimum of 2 percent of their GDP on defence – making it a threshold, not a ceiling. This will force many allies to take collective defence more seriously.

Coupled with Russia's renewed aggression in Ukraine (during the summit, Kyiv came under rocket attack for the second time in July), a series of additional regional political and security challenges laid down by Putin indicated that NATO will have even more to prepare for in the near future.

First was Putin's plan, announced in March 2022, to place Russian nuclear warheads in Belarus – an agreement that Belarusian strongman Aleksander Lukashenka signed onto on May 25 of that

closer to NATO membership, the awkward steps to reaching them reinforce some of Putin's assumptions about the West. He interprets the NATO allies' lack of consensus about a definitive timeframe for Ukraine's membership (leaving it in a 'waiting room' status) as a sign of deep divisions between Alliance members – cracks that he will continue exploiting in order to break the West's resolve for Kyiv.


Allies also missed an opportunity to publicly roll back military self-restraints contained in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, in which they agreed to not permanently deploy substantial combat forces (understood as more than one brigade) in new member states on NATO's eastern flank. Although defence plans approved at Vilnius

– which include reaffirming commitments to increase eastern-flank battlegroups to brigade size units “where and when required” – will help the alliance address large-scale threats if Russia chooses to attack NATO, Putin will likely maintain his view that any lingering forms of self-restraint represent weakness. This will embolden him to further escalate tensions, for example by deploying nuclear weapons in Belarus or to a region where NATO is increasing its defence capabilities, like the Arctic. He’ll also uphold his view that, without NATO troops permanently stationed on the eastern flank, members there (e.g. Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) remain a “grey zone” that can be gambled away by the West, opening a door for Russia to once again expand its influence in Eastern Europe.

Moves by Putin to increase military posturing, like turning Belarus into a “Fort Russia”, signal that he now has a multifaceted set of options for escalating threats against the West. Should Russia escalate its threat via Belarus, NATO would likely be forced to rethink its response plans on defending the eastern flank. This will include putting forces on alert for potential military exercises close to NATO borders between Russian, Belarusian, and Wagner forces. Given this possibility, Poland preemptively moved military units to areas along its border with Belarus. Mindful of how Belarus tested NATO readiness by launching the hybrid border crisis in 2021 against Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, the alliance must be prepared to respond to similar hybrid- or cyber-attacks in its eastern neighborhood. If NATO considers increasing its troops on the eastern flank near Belarus (i.e. in Poland, Latvia and Lithuania), it will need to revisit its nuclear policy toward Russia to counter what will likely be Putin’s brinkmanship threats stemming from Russia’s nuclear weapons in Belarus. It’s unlikely that they will be removed in the near future, enabling Putin to use them as a bargaining chip in possible negotiations over Ukraine.

Barring a historic Russian defeat, or internal political crisis forcing a cessation of hostilities and regrouping scenario, Putin will keep testing NATO resolve toward defending ‘every inch’ of alliance territory.

Canada has, since 2017, played a lead role in NATO’s multinational enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) battle group in Latvia, making it a frontline alliance member. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recently said



Given the under-resourced state of its own armed forces, Canada may have hit a ceiling on what more it can offer Ukraine.

Canada will be increasing its presence there with a tank squadron.

Ottawa has been one of Ukraine’s most vocal supporters, sending important military supplies (most notably eight Leopard-2 battle tanks), assisting in humanitarian efforts for refugees temporarily settling in Poland, and expediting visa processing for those seeking refuge in Canada (about 175,000 to date). Canada has provided over \$8 billion in direct assistance to Ukraine since Russia’s invasion in February 2022. As well, Trudeau committed to continue Canada’s role in training Ukrainian security service and military personnel through Operation Unifier – the effectiveness of which is being proven on the real world battlefield – and has joined the effort to train the Ukrainian Air Force to operate and maintain Western fighter jets.

Good intentions notwithstanding, and given the under-resourced state of its own

armed forces, Canada may have hit a ceiling on what more it can offer Ukraine, or how it would bolster its eFP battle group in Latvia to keep commitments around increasing it to a brigade size level.

NATO members’ concerns about the scale of Russian aggression (Canadian forces in Latvia have been the target of Russian hybrid attacks in the past and will likely be again), combined with agreements made at Vilnius about defence obligations, have put Canada at the centre of some post-summit fallout, focused on Ottawa’s record as a laggard in defence spending. As a frontline but non-European NATO member Canada spends much less (about 1.3 % of its GDP) than, for example, its Central and Eastern European partners.

Canada, like many of its partners, must do its homework (i.e. by publishing a blunt and honest defence review) in order to make tough but necessary political decisions on spending real dollars on defence.

Next year’s NATO summit in Washington D.C. will mark the 75th anniversary of the alliance’s creation and its core commitment to defending its members and deterring aggression in its neighborhood. While it would be fitting to see a victorious Ukraine join the Alliance at that occasion, what’s more likely is that the alliance will face further challenges to its cohesion and defence posturing in Europe. This summer in Vilnius, NATO allies made it clear they stand with Ukraine now and for years to come. However, its commitments to defence and deterrence will face serious near and long-term pressure. Putin knows his war of aggression is not just about Ukraine’s independence and the place of freedom in Europe, but also about Russia’s imperial future – something he’s willing to keep raising the stakes on to uphold. ❁

Paweł Markiewicz is a historian and the executive director of the Washington D.C. Office of the Polish Institute of International Affairs. This article was written with support from Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS).

Scaling the cohousing approach to solve affordability, social isolation, and environmental challenges

Cohousing reflects an integrated and scalable strategy to help address the housing crisis.

Milton Friesen

Providing adequate housing across the country is perhaps the major challenge for Canadian society today. Solving Canada's housing crisis is an undeniably daunting task, in part because the wrong approach could negatively impact nearly every sphere of Canadian life. The wrong approach could lead to environmental degradation, financial instability at every level of government, and a whole range of social issues. There is no magic key, enacting a plurality of housing policies will be essential, but there is one candidate that could simultaneously address several issues: cohousing.

Cohousing is a form of private housing that trades off smaller private spaces for better quality common use areas such as laundry, dining and entertainment. Participants work together to design, build and then live in the housing complex together.

The development of a cohousing project can deepen social connections, lower the threshold for home ownership, support multi-generational communities, meaningfully reduce environmental impacts of housing, and strengthen the civic fabric of communities. None of these dynamics are independent from each other in practice and they must therefore be addressed together in finding scalable housing solutions.

Last year, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) estimated that to address affordability alone, we will need an additional 3.5M *affordable* housing units by 2030. Overall housing demand is also greater than the available supply



Brandon Griggs

“Overall housing demand is also greater than the available supply.”

but affordable housing is urgently needed and is a good place to start to address the overwhelming demand. The environmental impact of building and maintaining 3.5M units of new housing stock using traditional approaches is substantial. Given labour demands, inflation and supply chain dynamics, adding 3.5M units in a conventional way is very unlikely. We need

to explore solutions not being met by current approaches.

Aled ab Iorwerth, Deputy Chief Economist at CMHC says:

“Canada's approach to housing supply needs to be rethought and done differently. There must be a drastic transformation of the housing sector, including government policies and processes, and an ‘all-hands-on-deck’ approach to increasing the supply of housing to meet demand.”

The cohousing approach reflects an integrated and scalable strategy to improve the Canadian housing crisis. What has been missing is a creative dialogue with the question of scale as a central tenet. What if half of the 3.5M units needed in Canada by 2030 were cohousing units? What are the current barriers to developing 1.75M cohousing units? Beginning with the

CMHC estimate and a cohousing figure of 35 household units per community, Canada would need to develop 50,429 cohousing communities to meet 50 percent of affordable housing demands. What would have to change in the cohousing approach for us to begin to think at this scale? What would have to change in the noted legislative, market and cultural structures across Canada to make such scaling possible?

Cohousing is a well-established approach to housing development. Distinct from coop housing or condominium ownership, cohousing communities collaborate from

fewer have lived in one. When we consider our own housing choices, almost none of us have had the chance to choose any real alternative to mainstream home ownership options. Condominium development is structurally designed to maximize private space and minimize common space because the market model is structured to reward that approach. This leaves most condominiums with high private ownership density and low social interaction dynamics by design. Condominiums are compact housing without a corresponding level of actual community. Being lonely in well-appointed

The physical design of cohousing communities incorporating about 35 units is well established and lends itself to becoming the standard. A cohousing community on new land will be different than an adaptive re-use cohousing community in a suburb, a downtown core or in an apartment/condo tower. Modifying from a basic format can speed up development and remove some uncertainties for investors or financial institutions that support these kinds of projects. Localized models should base their cohousing communities on the existing housing and available land types provide



Distinct from coop housing or condominium ownership, cohousing communities collaborate from the very beginning in developing the project.

the very beginning in developing the project, learning to work together to design their housing before they move in and live as neighbours. Cohousing communities have smaller privately owned spaces offset by larger and higher quality common use areas. These common spaces are significant in sustaining the neighbourhood connections that provide an antidote to social isolation.

The reduced need for privately owned space means more people per given land and building area. Moving to a larger scale, this could be tuned to lower home ownership costs, permitting access to the housing market for people who would otherwise be priced out of a single detached home. At the very small scale of current cohousing developments, these cost savings are not being fully realized but in a scaled form the savings could be significant (alongside other noted benefits).

Cohousing in Canada is rare enough to ensure that most people have never seen or visited a cohousing community and even

boxes has a social and health cost that we are only beginning to understand.

The long standing cohousing movement provides benchmarks and insights from which new strategies can be developed. Denmark has the most significant level of cohousing globally but has faced challenges that we will need to address and learn from in Canada: How do you scale cohousing so that it becomes a viable option for Canadians rather than an anomaly? What are the legislative, market, cultural and perceptual barriers that prevent scaling of a cohousing approach?

The benefits of cohousing are the key drivers. How would our villages, towns and cities be influenced by the presence of 50,429 communities with higher levels of belonging and economic stability alongside a much lighter environmental footprint? What happens when we can generate significantly more neighbourly well-being, reduce social isolation and permit a far greater proportion of Canadians to own homes?

common forms from which to work. Scaled up cohousing could adopt and refine these available options in a way that builds into the current system.

Financing models for existing cohousing often require participants to have significant up-front money with an 18-24 month time period until move in is possible. Existing financial institutions are not amenable to these non-typical construction loan arrangements. Scaling will require significant access to financial tools capable of bridging that gap and reducing risk. Governments could provide guarantees, alternative financial sources like credit unions could make use of greater levels of local knowledge and trust, and existing local homeowners could be part of an investment mix that directs their equity toward their community.

Developers and builders have had difficulty factoring in the social benefit of various housing strategies and therefore tend to discount social connectivity as an investment value. Yet, we know that places

people love are more valuable than places they don't care about. Communities that are neighbourly, walkable, interactive and beneficial to families across the demographic spectrum are highly sought after. Cohousing represents these values but when building or financing the project, social benefit is presently seen as too imprecise to count as a positive offset. Advances in social impact investing, measurement of social capital and trust, as well as the negative effects of social isolation and consequent health system burdens all mean we are in a position today to consider social factors more than has been the case in the past.

Common space calculations should include current development strategies to include parks and other public spaces alongside smaller scale common spaces within the buildings in ratios that reflect what prior cohousing design processes have taught us. We need policies and approaches that deliver strong benefits at the scale represented by 25-40 unit developments. Single detached homes are too small as a social unit while multiple towers and condominiums are too large. This is a critical and overlooked scale for generating many of the social goods we need.

Developers would need to be an integral part of the process of building but with a role that is different than they currently have as single-detached, apartment or condo builders. Municipal governments would need to reconsider current separation by usage zoning and development requirements toward zoning that reflects more integrated, complimentary and use based regulation. More mixed development forms are needed – approaches that allow commercial and residential uses to develop in the same places. Transect planning does this. It is a form of urban planning that regulates building structure density starting from the core and working out to the rural / agricultural space without pre-determining what goes in those spaces. Traditional planning separates commercial and residential uses making

walkability, access to transit, sociable streets and other common goods much more unlikely. Planning the overall structure but not the usage allows for commercial and residential development to co-mingle supporting more complete neighbourhoods.

Cohousing would fit within such progressive forms of code development. Provincial and federal support will be essential as various structural impediments are encountered from legacy planning laws that are no longer sensible. Higher orders of government could also support early stages of new cohousing models in much the same way that the benefits of electric vehicles have been given a lower risk on-ramping by means of subsidized purchasing and infrastructure arrangements.

“
Cohousing is
deeply social
by design.”

Greater institutional development and civic participation benefits could also be realized through higher levels of cohousing because a cohousing community is a scale of social structure that is bigger than a family unit but smaller than a large corporate or public institution. Social life for individuals requires this wide range of relationships. Civic vitality is also enhanced by social organizations that range widely by type and size. Noted across the past several decades of social science research, the thinning of civic life at an institutional level (clubs, interest groups, sports associations, faith communities, and other voluntary networks) has had a range of negative effects. We have fewer but more powerful and pervasive business and government institutions and waning numbers of the kinds of social

infrastructure that act like binding agents to turn our communities into networks of places where people belong.

Cohousing is deeply social by design but gets beyond the hyper individualism that threatens our public square. These little 'platoons of civic strength' noted by Edmund Burke and Alexis de Tocqueville can buttress both the quality of life for individuals as well as for other larger institutional entities across business, legal, health, and education settings.

Transformation of the housing sector is needed across the three orders of government: business, non-profit and civil society. Grappling with the scaling challenges of cohousing will stimulate the discussions and debates needed for those transformations. Cohousing at scale may look different than it does currently but if social, economic, community and environmental benefits can be retained, we will have gained important ground on key quality of life issues in Canada.

Cohousing isn't a political solution. It is a convergence of interacting, concrete realities reflecting all the dynamics of physical building and social organizing. Like all functioning communities, the proposed model for development is a blend of private and public responsibility, a balance of the need for both private space and community belonging.

There is no silver bullet. All approaches to solve Canada's housing crisis represent difficulties but inaction will continue to be a significant cost. The building of the railway was pivotal for Canada, a defining moment even with all of the consequent benefits and ills. It may well be that solving our current housing crisis is the generational challenge that weaves together various strained social and political challenges facing our nation – and results in a solution greater than the sum of those obstacles. ❁

Milton Friesen served as municipal councillor in Vegreville, Alberta and was on the steering committee of the Thriving Cities Project at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture (University of Virginia).

The broken ideology behind postcolonial activism

‘Postcolonialism’ is usually espoused by well-meaning people intent on correcting genuine injustices and yet the word is almost always spoken in ignorance of its ideological baggage.

Daniel Dorman

Postcolonial theory is the dominant ideology behind the recent renaming of Canadian roadways and institutions, the vandalism of statues depicting historical figures, and the now yearly calls to cancel Canada Day celebrations. As Manitoba Senator Don Plett argued earlier this year, in reference to the renaming of Sir John A Macdonald Parkway, these efforts are part of an “ideologically driven campaign which seeks to vilify not only Macdonald, but Canada itself.” Postcolonial activism is the force behind this popular distortion and disparagement of Canadian history and institutions.

‘Postcolonialism’ is usually espoused by well-meaning people intent on correcting genuine injustices and yet the word is almost always spoken in ignorance of its ideological baggage. Far from expressing a straightforward (and laudable) desire to break away from the ills and legacy of colonialism in Canada, Postcolonial theory is intimately tied to an intellectual tradition infused with irredeemably corrupt and irrational assumptions about the nature of truth and justice in society. Sadly, this means that individuals committed to pursue justice in Canada through ‘postcolonialism’ are wielding the wrong tool – they’ve taken a chainsaw to trim the rosebush and the result will not be pretty.

Postcolonial theory is a subset of critical theory, a sub-discipline of sociology and literary theory. The seminal thinker of postcolonial theory was Edward Said, a prominent Palestinian-American professor, literary critic, and political advocate. Born in

1935 in Jerusalem and educated in the British and American school systems, he wrote of the complex relations between Western colonial powers and Eastern nations from first-hand experience and from a personal concern to “understand the ways cultural domination has operated.”

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In his landmark text *Orientalism* (1978), Said aims to detail and push-back the “web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, [and] dehumanizing ideology” faced by Palestinians and other Arabs. Like many ‘postcolonial’ activists today, Said’s *intentions* were commendable.

What is damning about Said’s work is the critical lens he draws from earlier theorists. Said inherits philosophical assumptions from one of his intellectual heroes, Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci.

Gramsci belongs to an early 20th-century group of Marxists who sought to understand why a Marxist revolution did not happen in the industrializing Western Europe. This group revised Marx’s

economic theory by claiming that literary and cultural productions collude with economic interests to suppress the working class and create a false adherence to the order of society. Gramsci expanded Marx’s definition of ‘ideology’ into what he coined ‘hegemony’ to denote the cultural ideas he thought constituted the coercive power structures of society.

Said explicitly adopts Gramsci’s cultural Marxism and his understanding of hegemony. Said wrote: “Too often literature and culture are presumed to be politically... innocent.”

The problem here is that Gramsci and Said’s cultural Marxism is dismissive of the possibility of objective truth or justice. In Gramsci and Said’s understanding, intellectual and cultural productions are ultimately bent towards coercion, not truthfulness; for Gramsci, Said, and postcolonial theorists yet to come statements of fact are merely political propaganda from a dominant class.

In *Orientalism*, the work which catalyzed ‘postcolonial theory’, Said explained his assumption that: “all academic knowledge about India and Egypt [or any other place] is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact... no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author’s involvement”. In other words, Said believed that the pretension to knowledge is merely the tool of an oppressor.

Postcolonialism layers a radical skepticism about the capacity for human knowledge over a radical cynicism towards

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Courtesy of Ms. Jean Riley

A hard realist with a tender heart, Louis St-Laurent fifty years after his death

St-Laurent was a proud Canadian who served his country with quiet dignity and a demand for excellence. He was devoted to national unity and accomplished enormous changes in policy to modernize Canada.

Patrice Dutil

Fifty years ago, Canada bid an official farewell to Louis St-Laurent, one of the best citizens of its history. Sadly neglected by the public memory nowadays, St-Laurent was a transformative prime minister, one of the very best. Hardly any aspect of the country was left untouched by the government he headed from 1948 to mid-1957: from the arts to transportation infrastructure, from hospital insurance to the creation of the RRSP, from the launch of Canada's international assistance to struggling nations to the Pearson peace initiative on

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the Suez Canal, he was at the centre of a dynamic government that got things done.

The TransCanada highway and the St. Lawrence Seaway were his doing. Building infrastructure was also his undoing: his

stubborn support for a cross-Canada gas pipeline ultimately defeated his government, but this was not something he regretted because the country needed it.

Louis St-Laurent negotiated the final settlements to bring Newfoundland and Labrador into Confederation; he insisted on naming a Canadian to the post of Governor General; he made the Supreme Court of Canada the final court of appeal – no longer could recourse be had in London. St-Laurent cut the last strings that attached Canada to the UK.

He opened the doors to more immigrants from around the world than ever. He fought

the Cold War and invested heavily in the country's military, even commissioning the country's last aircraft carrier.

He made Canada the modern country we know today. He was not a showman. He preferred straight talk and avoided empty boasts. There was quiet assurance to the man that inspired the voting public and that earned him respect on the streets of the country and in international capitals. He won the biggest ever victory for the Liberals 1949 and his government was easily re-elected in 1953. The Liberals won the popular vote in 1957 (almost 41%), but the Diefenbaker Progressive Conservatives won seven more seats.

children, could afford occasional trips to Europe as well as a summer home on the Ile d'Orléans. Life was good. He had no interest in politics.

The economic downturn of the 1930s hit the family hard, but St-Laurent persisted. A Liberal in his soul (he was devoted to Wilfrid Laurier), St-Laurent had no interest in electoral politics, though he enjoyed an enviable public profile. As the war took its toll, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King courted St-Laurent, hoping he could join cabinet. St-Laurent, who was about to turn 60, did not think he could bring much to the government. That changed when Japan attacked Pearl Harbour

general population feared an insurrection of Japanese nationals inside Canada. It was a foolish perception and, in hindsight, a grotesque error of judgment and law, but at the time it was seen as perfectly legitimate (it was a continental initiative, incidentally, launched in the United States).

St-Laurent earned the confidence of the prime minister and his colleagues. He was a wise man who appreciated the political realities of public policy – a hard realist with a tender heart. After the war, he was made Minister of External Affairs (a post traditionally held by the prime minister). Here again, he distinguished himself. Not afraid to adopt policies that even Mackenzie



Louis St-Laurent with William Lyon Mackenzie King
(City of Toronto Archives)

St-Laurent earned the confidence of the prime minister and his colleagues. He was a wise man who appreciated the political realities of public policy – a hard realist with a tender heart.

The son of a shopkeeper in the small town of Compton, Québec, Louis St-Laurent seemed to break all the rules of Canadian politics. Born in 1882, he grew up in a fluently bilingual environment (his father, a proud Québécois, spoke only French; his mother spoke only English). He studied to become a lawyer at Laval University. He turned down a Rhodes Scholarship so he could get his law practice up-and-running. Louis St-Laurent was in a hurry: he desperately wanted to marry Jeanne Renault and he needed the money to do it. He hanged his shingle in Quebec City, bought a house on the Grande-Allée and made his life there. His little law firm grew prosperous as companies in Quebec, various parts of Canada and the United States sought his counsel. He had five

in early December 1941. St-Laurent informed King that he would take up the invitation to serve and was sworn in as Minister of Justice a few days later. He was a good decade older than the average minister.

He was handed heavy files, not least the case against Japanese Canadians. The hostile mood of Canadians, particularly in British Columbia, towards Asian immigrants had not changed much since the 1870s, but with Japan's attack on American soil, it darkened even more. As Minister of Justice, St-Laurent was implicated in the mass deportment to various camps and the theft of property that ensued. It was war, he later recalled, with some regret, but context mattered. Canadian prisoners of war were brutally treated by the Japanese army; people in government as well as in the

King disliked, St-Laurent harboured views about an internationalist Canada that surprised many.

Mackenzie King thought St-Laurent would make for a great prime minister, and so did his colleagues. At age 66, he became the oldest man to assume the office (except for old Charles Tupper in 1896) and again broke an unspoken rule of politics.


His first forays were in external affairs. He had no qualms in recognizing Israel, spearheaded the creation of NATO and launched international assistance with the Columbo Plan in 1950. He led Canada into the Korean War and fought the spread of communism. His view was that Canada had a vital role to play on the international scene. It had earned that right in two world wars and the Korean conflict and had

something positive to contribute to peace. His international tour in 1954 (the first for a Canadian prime minister, that included capitals in Europe as well as Islamabad, New Delhi, and Tokyo) was a smashing success. Lester Pearson was sent on a one-week visit to Moscow a year later.

As prime minister, St-Laurent easily commanded his cabinet. He inherited many superstars that had been recruited by Mackenzie King, but made better use of them than ever. He also attracted men of high talent. More than that, he gave them latitude to try new ideas. In that respect, he was probably the best cabinet manager this country has ever had. St-Laurent was a serious man who gave a serious hearing to anyone who needed it. Once he gave a green light, there was no going back. That sort of assurance is gold and his ministers knew it. That he aimed for balanced budgets was not lost on his ministers either. He was an old man in politics but everything he did was surprisingly new and fresh.

By 1957, even after another very active and successful four years of innovations, St-Laurent led the polls going into the June election. Now 75 and tired, he had hoped to retire but his party would not allow it. His performance, reported on television, began to flag. A big event at Maple Leaf Gardens went sour and John Diefenbaker's campaign suddenly caught fire in the last weeks of the campaign. The Liberals had been in government for 22 years and despite all their successes, many voters wanted a change. The country lurched to the right, electing more candidates from the PC and the Social Credit parties. St-Laurent could have tried to form government with the Leftist Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (as King had done in 1921 with the Progressives), but that idea was quickly dropped and the Liberals decided to withdraw and regroup.

St-Laurent resigned quietly a few months later and was succeeded by Lester Pearson. He returned to Quebec City with Jeanne and quietly resumed his law career



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with his son Renault. He also returned to his *alma mater* Laval University to teach occasional courses in commercial law. Modest to a fault, he did not seek to interfere in the affairs of the nation. He died on 25 July 1973 at the age of 91.

Canada had been transformed in the intervening years as the Diefenbaker, Pearson and Trudeau governments launched all sorts of initiatives to accommodate demands for bigger government. People talked about rights, inter-generational conflict and nuclear war. Inflation triggered by the oil shock of that year distracted conversation. St-Laurent, the man of a past generation, did not seem relevant. A state funeral and a dignified requiem mass was sung in his honour at Notre-Dame de Québec cathedral on 28 July; a few hours later he was buried next to his parents. In his eulogy, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau called St-Laurent a man of “order and reason”, a prime minister “who had served his country and humanity in exceptional ways.” He noted that a “moral purpose guided and directed all his actions” in all he did. A former student, Senator Jacques Flynn (PC-Québec) said that St-Laurent had embodied “unity, harmony and hope” in his day. Joey Smallwood fondly remembered how St-Laurent was “sincerely anxious that Newfoundlanders should be happy to be Canadians.” US President President Nixon, now embattled in the Watergate scandal, underlined St-Laurent's important contributions to the “structures of world peace,” noting in particular his important role in creating NATO.

Louis St-Laurent was a proud Canadian who served his country with quiet dignity and a demand for excellence. He was devoted to national unity and accomplished enormous changes in policy to modernize Canada. He has been forgotten mostly, but perhaps, Canadians will find it in their hearts a moment to spare him a thought. ✨

Patrice Dutil is a Senior Fellow at MLI. He is the editor of *The Unexpected Louis St-Laurent: Politics and Policies for a Modern Canada* (University of British Columbia Press)

Postcolonial activism (Dorman)

Continued from page 24

the possibility of justice in the world. In postcolonial theory, truth is just the opinion of the powerful and justice is merely whatever is advantageous to the stronger.

There is a horrifying irony in the idea that postcolonial theory could be a tool of ‘truth and reconciliation’; if postcolonial theorists succeed in implementing their vision of ‘truth and reconciliation’ it would be indistinguishable from ‘coercion and oppression’.

This short history of postcolonial theory underscores that postcolonialism is promoted by progressivist political elites influenced by Marxist thought. ‘Postcolonialism’ is not the original expression of Indigenous Canadians seeking justice.

The attraction of postcolonial theory to many Canadians is its pretension to a moral high ground, its stated intention to root out injustice. The danger posed by ‘postcolonial’ theory is not from malicious intent but from an excess of virtuous feeling without understanding. Postcolonial activists should keep their zeal for justice but should drop the theoretical framework which eliminates the possibility of achieving any real justice and perverts their efforts into an unthinking, revolutionary hatred of Canada's history. ✨

Daniel Dorman is the Communications Manager at MLI.

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