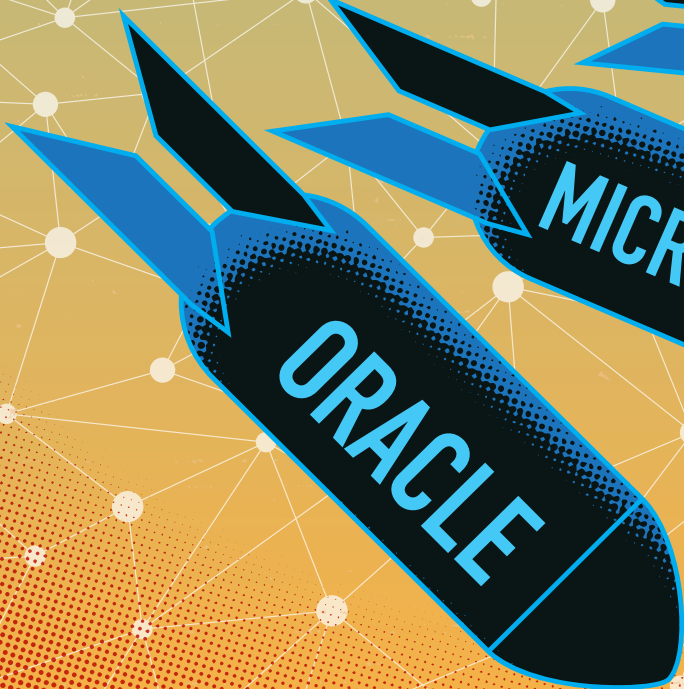
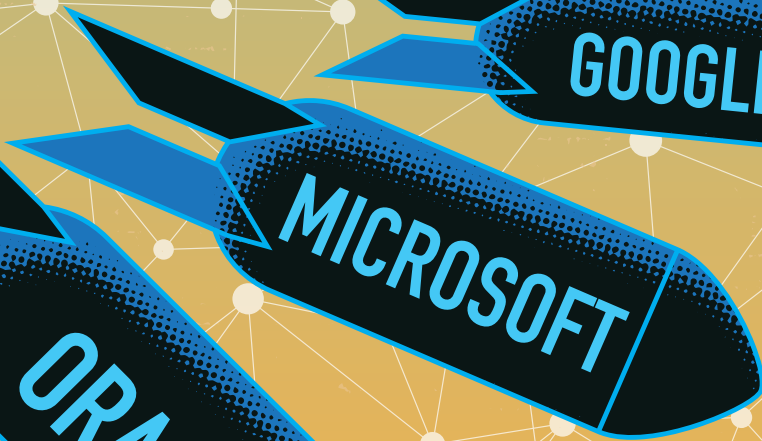


WINTER 2026  
CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES

# MONITOR

Progressive news, views, and ideas



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### Cover illustration by Carl Wiens

Carl Wiens has enjoyed a successful career spanning more than 30 years, producing conceptual illustration for books, newspapers and magazines. Carl's award-winning work is published in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Canadian Geographic* (infographic), and others. Working with Kids Can Press, he has two fully illustrated children's books: *Wild Bridges and Buildings* and *The Science of Song: How and Why We Make Music*. He teaches information-based illustration courses at Sheridan College, including a 'citizen scientist' workshop for fourth year students, focused on an appreciation of science and community involvement. Carl lives in Belleville, Ontario and enjoys exploring the Bay of Quinte area by bicycle, kayak, and hiking.

### Centrespread design Joss MacLennan, illustration by Carl Wiens

Joss MacLennan is the creative director of Joss MacLennan Design. She combines a passion for clear, simple language with a strong visual sense. Her background is mainly in design, but includes painting, drawing and illustration as well. Decades of experience help her find the central message and the way to convey it.



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CANADIAN CENTRE  
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de POLITIQUES ALTERNATIVES

## MONITOR

Founded in 1980, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) is a registered charitable research institute and Canada's leading source of progressive policy ideas. The CCPA began publishing the *Monitor* magazine in 1994 to share and promote its progressive research and ideas. The *Monitor* is published four times a year. The print version is mailed to all supporters who give \$35 or more a year to the CCPA.

You can [gift the \*Monitor\*](#) to a friend or family member, [view previous issues](#), and read more [free, timely content](#) at [www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca)

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Editor: Trish Hennessy

Associate Editor: Jon Milton

Senior Designer: Tim Scarth

Layout: Susan Purtell

Editorial Board: Catherine Bryan, Simon Enoch, Sabreena Ghaffar-Siddiqui, Jon Milton, Jason Moores, Erika Shaker, Trish Hennessy

### How to contact the CCPA

Letters to the editor  
[monitor@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:monitor@policyalternatives.ca)

### CCPA National

141 Laurier Avenue W., Suite 501  
Ottawa ON K1P 5J3  
613-563-1341  
1-844-563-1341  
[ccpa@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:ccpa@policyalternatives.ca)

### CCPA BC

[ccpabc@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:ccpabc@policyalternatives.ca)

### CCPA Manitoba

204-927-3200  
[ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:ccpamb@policyalternatives.ca)

### CCPA Nova Scotia

902-943-1513  
[ccpans@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:ccpans@policyalternatives.ca)

### CCPA Ontario

[ccpaon@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:ccpaon@policyalternatives.ca)

### CCPA Saskatchewan

[ccpasask@sasktel.net](mailto:ccpasask@sasktel.net)

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

By Erika Shaker

## Together, we'll create a strong foundation for the CCPA's future

Thank you for marking CCPA's 45th anniversary by being part of our legacy

The privilege of thanking so many of you for your longtime investment in our work—and the people who do—has been one of my great joys since becoming National office director six years ago.

As I look back on 2025, one of the highlights was the enthusiasm with which many of you responded to our challenge to help celebrate our 45th anniversary.

We set a goal for ourselves to create a strong financial future and to build on our successes of the past 45 years. So last year, many of you would have received our legacy mailing, where we outlined our goal of connecting with at least 45 donors who have included the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives in their will—after all, good news is meant to be shared!

Over 50 of you reached out to share the good news with us: that you have included or intend to include the CCPA in your will or via some other form of a future donation, like life insurance. We also had

a great number of you ask us for more information on what's involved and the different options for setting up a future donation to any charities of your choice.

The CCPA is a truly special and unique organization—and I've been overwhelmed to hear your stories about what our work means to you, too. I love connecting with you about our shared appreciation for the *Monitor*. My mom is quick to tell me when she receives her issue, and what she's learned from the topics covered. Like many of you, she shares her copy with friends and neighbours—sharing really is caring! I've heard from those of you who have gifted the *Monitor* so friends and family can have a subscription of their own. (See our back page ad to learn how to gift the *Monitor*).

And it's because of the foresight and generosity of donors like yourself that not only are we still here—we're more committed than ever to working for a better world we can be proud to bequeath to future generations.

If you have already made a decision to leave the CCPA a legacy gift and have chosen to keep this decision to yourself, please consider letting us know—we would be honoured to thank you for contributing to that goal. And for those of you who are considering including the CCPA in your will, thank you for letting us know that our 45th



anniversary year provided you with the incentive and inspiration to tell us about your decision.

### New year, new opportunities

As we ring in this new year, I'm taking stock of what we've accomplished at the CCPA during a time of tremendous upheaval—in Canada, but internationally too. We've had some key wins, like \$10 a day child care, and movement on pharmacare and dental care. But history tells us that we can take nothing for granted and that progress is not a given—we saw the small steps that had been taken toward a more fair tax system eroded. We must build on these gains. With near daily confirmation of the erosion of so many democratic principles south of the border, we all see that there is no time for complacency.

Last year's federal election brought in a new minority Liberal government, but it also came with a vastly weakened NDP, and the promise of continued division with an emboldened right wing. I'm thinking about what the decisions being made at those tables over the next few months will mean for the next 40 years—for the world in which my kids will grow up, and how it will look.

As they get older, I am so proud of them and the questions they are asking about what these decisions mean for their friends, for their schools, for their communities.

This was my eldest's first opportunity to vote in an election—and what a pivotal one to cut her electoral teeth on. In the weeks leading up to e-day, our family had countless discussions about various platforms and priorities. We watched the near daily rollercoaster of polls and announcements as both kids navigated school and a job market increasingly challenging for so many of us, but especially young workers.

As I observe their deep commitment to their communities, and their compassion and empathy, I am so proud and so grateful to know

that the next generation is also dedicated to making the world a better place. At the same time, I am bearing witness to the impact on young people of the decisions being made today.

After all, they're inheriting many of the social, economic, and climate problems that threaten to make their lives more challenging than ever. I have faith in the upcoming generations to do what's right. But, like many of you, I have a growing sense of urgency that we ensure our young people know we have their backs—so they can have ours.

There are a growing number of you who have future generations in mind and have included the CCPA in your will—I'm so grateful to be able to express my thanks to you directly, but to also let you know how this remarkable gift will help the CCPA continue to keep its independent voice, to unabashedly press for a better world.

Your investment in the CCPA is a major reason for our increased level of public recognition and the growing impact of our policy solutions. That so many of you—this year, and in years prior—have taken the significant step of arranging a gift in your will, or in another form, underscores your confidence in our work today and our shared understanding that a more just, equitable and sustainable world is possible.

I am also so grateful for donors like you who continue to invest in the CCPA so that we can keep making a positive difference; those of you who share that commitment to a better, brighter world of our own making. The next four years will determine the next forty—and our future will be the next generation's present.

If you have made the decision to leave us a legacy gift in your will, please do think about reaching out to my colleague Katie Loftus at [katie@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:katie@policyalternatives.ca) or 613-563-1341 ext. 318—we really would love to thank you! ■

Erika Shaker is Director of the CCPA's National Office.

# FROM THE EDITOR

By Jon Milton

## No sovereignty without digital sovereignty

"We built a country east and west and north. We built it on an infrastructure that deliberately resisted the continental pressure of the United States. For 120 years we've done it. With one signature of a pen, you've reversed that, thrown us into the north-south influence of the United States and will reduce us, I am sure, to a colony of the United States—because when the economic levers go, political independence is sure to follow."

Those were the words of John Turner, former leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, as he debated

## U.S. tech firms tied to U.S. military industrial complex

Brian Mulroney during Canada's 1988 federal election. Turner was attacking Mulroney's decision to sign a free trade agreement with the United States—an agreement which, a few years later, would be replaced with NAFTA. Free trade was the defining issue of that election—arguably Canada's last in which two genuinely distinct national visions went head to head. Sovereignty or integration?

Mulroney won that election, and economic integration with the United States became the unquestioned baseline of Canadian politics. Turner stepped down as Liberal leader and free trade hawk Jean Chretien replaced him, and even the NDP came around to free trade (with more guardrails). The question of sovereignty in Canada, just like in most of the increasingly globalized world, fell to the wayside. The debate was over.

Until it wasn't. Despite being comatose for nearly three decades of neoliberal globalization, the 2020s have seen a dramatic revival of sovereignty as an animating force in global and domestic politics. From muscular state-led responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, to the United States' growing rivalry with China, to racist panic around immigration and borders, the question of national sovereignty has returned to the foreground of politics across the world.

In Canada, just as in the 1980s, that revival has been driven by fears of being absorbed by an increasingly unhinged and fascist United States. Those fears drove the Liberals to an upset victory over the Conservatives in last year's federal election, amidst the U.S. president's threats to annex Canada and turn it into the 51st state.

Today, though, unlike in the 1980s, Canada has already effectively ceded an enormous part of its sovereignty to the United States. Gaining it back will not be an easy task.

Turner said that "when the economic levers go, political

independence is sure to follow.” Those economic levers, today, are deeply tied into digital infrastructure—almost all of which is controlled by the United States. From cloud services to social media networks to data centres to media distribution, U.S. firms control global digital infrastructure.

Those U.S. tech firms are increasingly tied to the U.S. government and military-industrial complex. Data collected as part of what author Shoshana Zuboff calls “surveillance capitalism,” which firms like Google and Meta use to sell ads, is easily converted into data that ensures U.S. global economic and military dominance.

The expansion of U.S. tech infrastructure to every corner of the world has, in effect, allowed for U.S. sovereignty to penetrate deep into countries outside of its borders, including Canada. Canadian government websites are hosted on U.S.-owned cloud servers subject to U.S. law. Strategically important Canadian companies use U.S.-owned communications systems and Canadians build their understanding of the world on U.S. run social media algorithms. The digital sphere—absolutely central to life in the 21st century—operates under the near-exclusive sovereignty of Uncle Sam. The only other country that could be said to exercise digital sovereignty, other than the United States, is China, which effectively banned U.S. tech firms and developed its own digital infrastructure.

The digital sphere, then, is one of the most key components of sovereignty in the 21st century.

Previous Canadian governments asserted sovereignty by building and nationalizing physical infrastructure, like railroads and hydroelectric power plants. Digital infrastructure, today, plays a similarly crucial structural role.

We will, of course, not get to re-live the 1988 election. But we can learn from it—and possibly undo some of its mistakes. ■

# INTRODUCING THE *MONITOR* HUDDLE

Do you love reading the *Monitor*? Join us for a live chat about what you’ve read! Host Ann Douglas will facilitate a warm and engaging conversation with key contributors to the *Monitor* and, of course, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) experts.

## Join our inaugural The Huddle Zoom chat

**When:** Thursday, January 29, 2025 at 8 pm ET/5 pm PT

**Where:** <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/huddle>

### Ann Douglas

Imagine how good it would feel to be invited to spend time with a group of caring, thinking people who are committed to building a better world.

Now imagine how *great* it would feel to be invited to do that on a regular basis, in a way that would allow you to build community.

That’s what we’re hoping to create with, and for, subscribers to the *Monitor*.

We’re calling it The *Monitor* Huddle.

Here’s how we see it working.

Each time a new issue of the *Monitor* arrives in your mailbox, you’ll be invited to a one-hour virtual conversation celebrating its launch.

Not only will you have the chance to take a deep dive into the contents of that particular issue: you’ll have the opportunity to hear from some of our contributors. Who knows? They might even share some bonus content! Then we’ll be opening up the conversation so you can reflect on what you’ve heard, ask questions of our in-house experts and other invited guests, and otherwise connect with the entire The Huddle community.

What we’re aiming for is an intimate and thought-provoking conversation—the kind that leaves you feeling seen and supported, validated and encouraged, by people who share your values. Being in

community with other people has always been important, but it feels especially important right now, as we continue to deal with the relentless fallout from multiple, intersecting crises.

Connecting with other people who refuse to settle for a badly broken status quo can help us to feel anchored rather than unmoored as we continue to navigate a tremendously uncertain time. I don’t know about you, but I’ve been craving something like this for a very long time: a chance to build community with other people who dare to imagine better. I live in a rural area with long, harsh winters that can make driving a bit iffy, so a lot of my community building activity happens online. And while social media allows me to stay connected to other people, it doesn’t necessarily lend itself to deep or nuanced conversations. (How’s that for the understatement of the year?)

That’s why I’m volunteering to try to get The *Monitor* Huddle up and running.

I’d love it if we could build this together. ■

---

Ann Douglas is the author of 26 non-fiction books including, most recently, *Navigating The Messy Middle: A Fiercely Honest and Wildly Encouraging Guide for Midlife Women*. She is also a long-time fan of, and occasional contributor to, *The Monitor*. Ann and her husband Neil live in the Ottawa Valley, where she is hard at work on her first novel.

# YOUR LETTERS

We love to hear from our *Monitor* community. Please send your letter to the editor (250 words or less) to [monitor@policyalternatives.ca](mailto:monitor@policyalternatives.ca)



## Summer 2025 *Monitor*

Amid all the chest pumping and flag waving about the CBC/Radio-Canada, one needs to remember where the CBC gets its funding.

Of course it is directly from the federal government (indirectly from Canadian taxpayers).

He who pays the piper calls the tune.

The CBC is a mouthpiece of the Canadian state, especially when it involves reporting on foreign affairs.

One need look no further for proof of this than the CBC/Radio-Canada reporting on the Russia-Ukraine war vs. the genocide in Gaza, where it refuses to name it a genocide despite the proof seen daily on our electronic devices and the declarations by many genocide scholars and international human rights organizations.

Further proof can be seen by who the CBC chooses to interview about the economy and related stories.

Professor Ian Lee of Carleton University is routinely interviewed

and if you look at his bio online and listen to him, it is clear he is a right-wing free market shill.

As Trish Hennessy wrote, "It's (CBC) far from perfect—I have my beefs...."

I listen to CBC Radio in Toronto mainly as it has no commercials and for its local news, but its foreign affairs reporting is appallingly government line/propaganda.

If all one wants from the CBC is local news, book reviews, music, interviews of artists, documentaries, etc. you are well supplied, but if you want independent non-government reporting on foreign affairs, then you need to look elsewhere for trusted alternative sources on the internet.

**G. Turner**  
Toronto ON

I began Peter Pronzos' "A Change Is Gonna Come" (*Monitor* Viewpoint, Summer 2025) pleased with his punchy summary of our global situation: too many people consuming too much of the planet, endangering all lives, including our own. I finished with a sense that either he or I or both of us have gone off course somewhere.

The key may be his reaction to William Rees' early conclusion that "On a finite planet already in overshoot it is not biophysically possible to raise the material standards of the poor to those of the rich sustainably..." Pronzos focused on Rees' prescription that "the world community should cooperate on redistribution...to share the benefits of development more equitably." But if we are already in overshoot mode, more equitable distribution of spoils is a distraction. In a bus freefalling from a cliff it doesn't matter much where you sit.

Pronzos pleurably reports Erica Chenowith's finding that, in the 20th century, "...an amazing 53% of non-violent campaigns succeeded in their political goals." But the 20th century was one of unprecedented material growth in the West when

(to the detriment of the planet!) there were lots of goodies to hand out. When people look back on the 21st century, with its contracting and disastrously failing economies and nations, will they be as happy in deprivation as we have been in enrichment?

Pronzos also finds hope in researcher Chenowith's observation that, in the 1900s, every non-violent political campaign succeeded if 3.5 per cent ("or fewer") of the population worked for it. If almost everyone is confused, apathetic, desperate to survive, or enjoying wealth, small minorities can run society's affairs. Is that what democracy amounts to these days?

**Bob Weeden**  
Salt Spring Island, B.C.

Thank you for the coverage in the summer *Monitor*. As a retired public health officer (Alberta, Ontario and B.C.) I'm in full agreement with the sub topics covered. Local papers were the eyes, ears and speech of the communities I lived in and an invaluable outlet for our public health messaging.

Having lived and worked in Calgary, Simcoe Ont., Guelph, Fergus, Ont. and, now, Kimberley, B.C., I've been a strong user and supporter of both local media and the CBC. For the most part, I've praised both. I continue to strongly support our local CBC out of Kelowna. Especially Chris Walker and his team on the Day Break program. Their coverage of local (Kootenays, Columbia and Okanagan) events and issues, as well as pressing and current national and international topics is exemplary. A morning without them is a morning missed!

However, I wish I could say the same about the local media. Our *Kimberley Bulletin* has deteriorated over the past 15 years. As a retiree, I subscribed to get local news and a weekly editorial from Gwynne Dyer. Dyer was soon dropped and replaced by the local editor's editorial.

This was acceptable, then the editor retired and the paper went flat—and ‘journalistic boosterism’ (as per the Simon Enoch’s article) took over. There is nothing unpredictable in its pages. I won’t be resubscribing.

As a non-social media person, I do get the E-Know (East Kootenay digital local news on email), which, unfortunately, puts the *Bulletin* to shame.

All that said, I am NOT a fan of CBC’s hourly news coverage and Your World Tonight at the coveted six p.m. slot. Far too much ‘if it bleeds it leads’ and STILL news out of New York, L.A., Chicago usurping Canadian items, but that’s another story.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to vent.

**Doug Kittle**

Kimberley, B.C.



### Spring 2025 Monitor

I was pleased to note Luis Ernesto Pineda Gomez’s reference to a national job guarantee program in his “It’s time to end the precarity that comes with tipped work” in the *Monitor’s* spring issue. I have not seen this common sense, non-inflationary proposal vetted before in the CCPA periodical. The job guarantee is, of course, a key component of Modern Money Theory (MMT), whose proponents, like Randall Wray and Stephanie Kelton, include it as an essential part of what could be achieved through implementation of a larger MMT program. MMT enjoys growing interest among

progressives across Europe and the Americas. I would like to see more discussion of MMT, which offers an alternative to conventional, taxation-limited notions of how we can support increased social and public investment, in the pages of your fine CCPA quarterly.

**Bruce Dodds**

Benito, Manitoba

### Re: Fiscal discipline is not austerity for austerity’s sake, Lucy Hargreaves, September 29, 2025, *Globe and Mail*

The CEO of Build Canada claims there is a “five-alarm fire” because Canada’s debt-to-GDP ratio will climb past 43 per cent. However, the comparable ratios today for the U.S. and Japan are 120 per cent and 230 per cent respectively, and their skies do not appear to be falling.

As for tax rates, they have historically been lowered, even as the public debt has increased, and some taxes on carbon eliminated. Rumours of impending tax hikes are thus greatly exaggerated.

Apparently Canadians must endure austerity not for its own sake, but so more funds can be freed up for “incentives,” “tax reform,” pro-growth reforms” and government contracts that benefit the very companies that the writer represents.

Should we be surprised at this special pleading?

**Larry Kazdan**

Vancouver, B.C.

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# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The latest from the CCPA

## The path towards Canadian sovereignty

Canada can't become a sovereign country by doing the same old things, explains a new compendium of essays offering a playbook for economic self-sufficiency, published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA).

*Elbows Up: A Practical Program for Canadian Sovereignty*—co-sponsored by the CCPA, the Centre for Future Work, and several national civil society organizations—is a response to corporate rallying cries responding to Donald Trump with a familiar playbook: deregulation, austerity, tax cuts, and fossil fuel expansion.

"We've been there, done that," says Jim Stanford, Economist and Director of the Centre for Future Work and CCPA research associate. "What's worrisome is that the federal government seems to be listening to these demands. It has made several concessions to try to appease Trump—including huge increases in defence spending, restrictions on refugees, abandoning counter-tariffs, and scrapping the digital services tax.

"This hasn't worked, of course. Trump is as aggressive and unilateral as ever."

The collection includes contributions from 20 progressive economists and policy experts, many of whom participated in the *Elbows Up Economic Summit* held last month in Ottawa. They propose:

- Economic nation-building and the energy transition: Investments in sustainable energy and energy conservation will provide a larger

and more lasting economic boost than more fossil fuel pipelines.

- Stronger communities and affordable homes: The positive impact of government investment in public transit and affordable and non-market housing.
- Breaking free of the staples trap: U.S. tariffs have deliberately targeted Canada's high-tech, value-added industries, like automotive, primary metals, pharmaceuticals, aerospace, and machinery. A strong industrial strategy is needed so this frontal attack does not consign Canada to its previous role as supplier of primary staples products.

- Fulfilling the potential of the care economy: Canada's trade-oriented, goods-producing industries receive most attention, yet almost 80 per cent of our GDP is produced in non-traded sectors. This includes the care economy, like health care and education, which need more investment, too—not austerity.

Canada needs to build big things, but we need to build the *right* big things, and the *right way*.

"Canada's national resilience depends on diversifying Canada's economy, strengthening renewable energy, supporting value-added industries and investing in housing and the care economy," says Stanford. "We need a more holistic and ambitious strategy to build a truly independent, prosperous, and sustainable Canada."

## From Captain Canada to Captain Crunch

The federal government's fall budget was chock full of "Captain Canada" items but was hamstrung by expensive tax cuts, defence spending, nods to Trump's demands, says CCPA Senior Economist David Macdonald.

"The prime minister campaigned on a 'Captain Canada' theme in the face of tariff and annexation threats from Trump, but there's a lot in this budget that attempts to

appease Trump—and the federal Conservatives—as this government battles minority status," says Macdonald.

The budget allocates 2.5 times more to defence than the Conservatives had in their election platform and cuts the same amount from expenditures as the Conservatives wanted.

"If there was ever an olive branch extended to the NDP, it's on fire in this budget, with no nod to NDP priorities, putting that party between a rock and a hard place on how to vote on it," says Macdonald. "We were promised Captain Canada, but the cuts required to pay for defence spending will come back to bite Canadians."

## Damned with faint praise

Perhaps lost in federal budget news dominated by job cuts and military spending was the extent to which the federal government is also abandoning the climate commitments of the previous government, says Regina-based Senior Researcher Simon Enoch.

While there is no doubt that this budget represents "a dramatic abdication of environmental leadership," will it be enough to quiet the constant criticisms of Carney by petro-province premiers Danielle Smith and Scott Moe? Enoch doubts it.

"The federal budget includes the elimination of multiple measures that have long irked both Smith and Moe, who view any federal environmental constraints of the oil and gas industry as evidence of eastern treachery," says Enoch.

Gone is the much reviled emissions cap, what Smith once called a "deranged vendetta against Alberta," and Moe deemed "an outright attack on Saskatchewan's energy industry."

Expect both premiers to remain guarded in their praise, says Enoch: "The sound and the fury with which they met the introduction of these

measures will not be matched in their elimination.

“With both our federal and provincial leaders intoxicated by the faint economic prospects of an environmentally unencumbered and unconstrained oil and gas industry, it will fall to those of us in Western Canada who are cognizant of what the realities of climate change will bring to make the case that the dismantling of Canada’s climate commitments is not worthy of any praise.”

---

### Manitoba’s budget just got harder to balance

The fall federal budget cut important funding for Indigenous reconciliation and health care in Manitoba, says Winnipeg-based CCPA-Manitoba Director Molly McCracken.

“The federal budget’s focus on capital spending and spurring private sector investment means that those not directly involved in the construction or trades will miss out on the economic goals of this budget, and any gains will not “trickle down” to the rest of Manitobans,” says McCracken.

Without a focus on redistribution of income and a reversal of the cuts to spending on social programs, income inequality will widen and poverty will persist and deepen. In turn, this will put pressure on Premier Wab Kinew’s hallmark commitments to end chronic homelessness and balance the Manitoba budget by 2027-28.

The latest fiscal provincial update predicts the provincial deficit will rise to \$890 million in 2025-26. This is due to massive tax cuts from the previous provincial government, the cost of wildfires in Manitoba this past summer and the economic impacts of U.S. volatility.

“The federal budget impacts on Manitoba provide further impetus for the province to revisit its fascination with balancing the budget in the midst of the affordability and climate crises,” McCracken says.



iStock and Gina Gill-Hartmann

### No help on the way for Ontario

Last May, CCPA’s detailed analysis of the Ontario budget argued that it failed to address years-long funding shortfalls, leaving the province vulnerable to the economic storm on the horizon.

The Ontario government’s fall economic update scripted more of the same,” says Ottawa-based Ontario Research Director Ricardo Tranjan.

“Whereas we hoped for a course correction from a budget that delivered little, the government is staying the course, insisting on inaction,” says Tranjan.

Amid economic uncertainty, job losses and widespread food and housing insecurity, the document touts “nearly \$12 billion in cost savings for businesses” and actions aimed at “unleashing our economy.”

“We have seen this film before,” says Tranjan.

Tranjan says: at a time when Ontarians need a firm government with the courage to raise revenue and spend it on concrete programs and services that make life better, the government of the day asks us to sit tight and wait for the market to do its magic.

“We are told that costly supports for big businesses will make housing more secure, food more affordable, education more accessible, and

other much-needed public services more available. But that never happens. And it won’t this time.”

Regretfully, the real message the fall economic statement delivers is that there is no help on the way for Ontario families and communities.

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### Nova Scotia workers deserve better protections

The CCPA Nova Scotia released *The Foundations of Decent Work: An Evaluation of Nova Scotia Labour Standards*, a report that assesses the effectiveness of minimum protections for fairness for workers. The authors find that Nova Scotia lags behind other Canadian jurisdictions, leaving many workers facing unjust and unfair working conditions.

Halifax-based CCPA Nova Scotia Director Christine Saulnier says change is needed now.

“To suggest Nova Scotia’s labour standards need updating is an understatement,” says Saulnier.

The report outlines immediate improvements needed to strengthen mostly existing provisions. It also recommends the government establish a Fair Wages and Decent Jobs Commission to consider how best to fill gaps and create quality jobs, taking into account new technology, extreme climate events, societal changes, and various forms of work organization and business operations. ■

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## Rebuilding the left in Canada

In November, I spoke at a CCPA Manitoba event in Winnipeg, recognizing the contributions of labour, social justice and democratic advocate Errol Black and honouring the work of the National Farmers Union, Manitoba Chapter.

Like Errol, I became active in my union, the broader labour movement, politics and the CCPA, because I know that fighting for a better world is our only option.

### The problem

That money flows upward, and misery downward.

Profits rise, public services erode, and workers fall behind.

Families face unaffordable housing, crumbling health care, long waits for services, and stagnant wages.

Indigenous communities still wait for clean water and decent housing.

Progressive governments find limits on their democratically endorsed goals, with the threat of capital flight.

Frustration grows—and right-wing populists like Donald Trump or Pierre Poilievre channel that anger, blaming immigrants, diversity, and taxes instead of the economic rules that enrich the few.

The dominance of views that “private is better than public,” that “taxes are theft,” and that deficits are intolerable, limit our politics. They push even progressive leaders to the centre. Yet this ideology is failing most people—and that failure creates opportunity.

Many grow weary of fighting.

Environmentalists watch governments ignore climate warnings while wildfires rage.

Workers, burdened by debt, insecurity, and multiple jobs, have less time to organize.

Social isolation and online polarization make reaching people harder.

Labour laws weakened over decades constrain workers, as corporations threaten to move jobs offshore.

Conservative populists court workers while undermining their rights—knowing that without strong movements, progress falters.

Farmers once formed the cradle of Canadian socialism. Their solidarity reminds us that solutions are collective, not individual.

Inequality is now impossible to ignore. Billionaires hoard wealth, manipulate media, and shape politics to protect themselves—even as they burn the planet.

Movements from Occupy to climate strikes to post-pandemic labour uprisings have reignited resistance. Post pandemic, essential workers—grocery clerks, health care staff, postal and port workers—saw their “hero pay” cut, but many fought back and won. Their resistance is inspiring.

As federal politics drift right with conservative solutions, space opens for a renewed left rooted in justice, solidarity, and democratic ownership.

### The way forward

First, we must speak the truth: neoliberalism has failed. Privatization, austerity, and corporate self-regulation are failures. Let's think big—about what people truly need.



The CCPA's *Alternative Federal Budget* shows what's possible when the public good drives policy: a resilient, self-sufficient Canada built on equality and sustainability. Bold taxation, industrial strategy, gender equity, and climate action aren't radical—they're necessary.

We need both *movements and elected progressives*. Politicians work inside institutions; movements create the pressure and public will that make progressive change possible. We can't outsource politics to leaders—movements must organize, educate, and mobilize.

Organizing starts with listening. Meet people where they are, even those who disagree. Build trust through shared goals and practical victories. Avoid divisions and pettiness; unity and strategy win.

Housing activism shows the model. Here in Canada, CCPA Senior Researcher Ricardo Tranjan reframed housing as class politics, and activists like Chiara Padovani and the York South-Weston Tenant Union turned that analysis into action. Through their collective action, including multiple rent strikes, they negotiated collective agreements with corporate landlords, winning rent reductions and apartment repairs.

This community solidarity is how the left rebuilds: by meeting material needs and demanding collective rights. This is how workers' movements began, long before that had legal recognition.

Rebuilding the left means organizing inside and outside institutions, linking research with action, and grounding politics in the community. It means joy, art, humour, and kindness—because movements thrive on hope as much as struggle.

We stand in the home of the Winnipeg General Strike, where workers once demanded dignity and eventually won. That spirit still lives.

We only lose if we quit. Let's keep our sense of humour, our humility, and our solidarity. Let's focus on the goal—and go forward together. ■

Peggy Nash is the CCPA's executive director.



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Marc Lee and Stuart Trew

## It's time to put our elbows up for real

Canada must resist striking a bad deal to end U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs, even if it means more short-term pain, because surrendering key industries and sovereignty will cost far more in the long run.

Canadian concessions to the Trump agenda—including cancelling a multi-billion dollar digital services tax, introducing worrying border and immigration reforms, and potential participation in a costly continental missile defence scheme—have clearly gone unnoticed in Washington. And the federal government walked back most of the retaliatory tariffs on U.S. goods introduced earlier in 2025.

Eyes have now shifted to the mandatory six-year review of the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA), the updated North American trade deal that replaced NAFTA in 2020, with

public consultations underway in all three countries. Prime Minister Mark Carney appears to be coordinating a joint response to the review with Mexico, whose economy is also buckling under stress from Trump's tariffs.

Thus far, a large share of Canadian and Mexican exports to the U.S. receives tariff-free treatment under CUSMA.

The challenge has been sectoral tariffs hitting steel, aluminium, automobiles, pharmaceuticals and lumber that anchor employment in Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia, with more on the way. Most recently, Trump announced new tariffs on furniture, trucks, pharmaceuticals, and medical and personal protective equipment.

Canada's trade balance swung sharply negative through 2025, meaning Canada is now importing more than it exports. Trump's tariff strategy, draining jobs from trade partners to boost U.S. manufacturing, is basically working against Canada. Whether it is successful in inducing new investments in the U.S. remains to be seen.

Other countries, jolted by tariff whiplash, have scrambled to cut narrow deals with Washington. For the most

part, these deals have been limited, focused on transactional arrangements that accept a lower tariff in exchange for commitments on investment in the U.S. and market access for U.S. corporations.

Canada has gone the other direction by seeking to roll security into a broader deal that may prove expensive but without guarantees of market access. For example, Trump has said Canada could participate in the latest iteration of the U.S. missile defence scheme (previously called “Star Wars” now referred to as the “golden dome”), the long-controversial U.S. missile shield project, if it is willing to pony up \$100 billion.

No deal is better than a bad deal, and this is especially true of a bad deal that further locks Canada into the orbit of a deeply troubling administration that views acquiescence as weakness, a sign to demand more and more. In terms of economic concessions, two major areas may be on the table to secure a deal: critical minerals and agricultural supply management programs. Critical minerals like lithium are key to electric vehicles.

Even with such concessions, Canada may still face only reduced tariffs on important industrial exports to the U.S. Moreover, it is not clear what any new trade and security deal is worth with such a volatile U.S. president who will clearly resort to tariffs to exert leverage in any future situation that displeases him.

Canada needs to regain its “elbows up” vibe, with the chance to strengthen, not just defend, our economy from U.S. economic imperialism. This includes deepening investment in Canadian public services, expanding key infrastructure using Canadian resources, and being prepared to step in, through national ownership if necessary, to preserve industrial assets.

At this pivotal moment, reverting to the 2024 status quo, however much businesses want it, is a fantasy. It’s time for Canada to raise its elbows to reassert its sovereignty, not bend the knee. ■

Marc Lee and Stuart Trew are researchers with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Simon Enoch and Jon Milton

## The post office must be defended

When Stephen Harper’s government announced the end of door-to-door mail delivery in favour of community “super-boxes” in 2014, then Canada Post CEO Deepak Chopra was asked about the difficulty this would pose for elderly and disabled Canadians. Chopra responded that they would “appreciate the exercise.” Canada Post management’s seeming disdain for their own customers enraged Canadians as well as the federal Liberals. Liberal MP David McGuinty mockingly called Mr. Chopra’s postal plan “Mail Participation”—a reference to the government’s national fitness program. Then-Liberal leader Justin Trudeau campaigned on restoring door-to-door delivery, chastising Prime Minister Harper for “asking Canadians to pay more for less service. That is unacceptable.”

It appears what was once unacceptable to the Liberal party has now become acceptable. Prime Minister Carney’s announcement to “free” Canada Post of the obligation of door-to-door delivery and restrictions on rural post office closures may sound like he is leaving the decision in the hands of Canada Post’s management, but without any other alternative plan, it is a virtual certainty that this decision will end door-to-door delivery for millions of Canadians. And while Carney wants to create as much distance as he can from this decision, the Liberals will wear this. The Harper government found, much to its regret, that ending door-to-door delivery was one of the more unpopular decisions it made during government, with Canadians ejecting them from power a year later.

Carney will no doubt face many of the same questions that the Harper government did. How will the use of community mailboxes affect Canada

Post’s ability to deliver packages in urban centres—the one aspect of mail delivery that is on the increase but competition is fierce? How can Canada Post hope to compete with private couriers that continue to deliver door-to-door? How will those with mobility issues access their mail? Who will be responsible for ensuring that community mailboxes are cleared of snow and ice and accessible in the winter? What about security of the mailboxes and concerns about rampant identity theft? Breaking into one super-box could afford identity thieves a treasure trove of information. Is Canada Post factoring in the costs for monitoring the security and accessibility of these boxes?

The same questions accompany the decision to allow for the closure of rural post offices. What will be the criteria for closure? The government seems to believe that any formerly designated rural area that is now suburban doesn’t require their own post office—despite the size of many suburbs. Given that larger packages that cannot be delivered to community boxes or packages that are not retrieved from community boxes are often sent to the nearest post office—what will be considered a reasonable distance for folks to travel? For rural and remote communities, post offices often represent the sole outpost of the federal government, providing vital goods and services that cannot be accessed elsewhere. Closing these offices is to effectively sever these communities from the wider country. Once again, accessibility is a real concern.

This massive change is all justified using the long-running argument that Canada Post is bankrupt—that declining letter mail has made the crown corporation insolvent and unable to maintain its operational status quo. And when we look at the numbers, they do indeed seem dire at first glance. From 2018 to 2025, the crown corporation posted total losses of around \$5 billion. While the independent crown corporation does not typically receive taxpayer funding from the federal government, the feds



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stepped in last year with a \$1 billion cash injection to keep the lights on.

But those numbers only tell part of the story. Between 2018 and 2023, Canada's stamps only increased in price by seven per cent—compared to 26 per cent in the United States, 32 per cent in Brazil, and 70 per cent in New Zealand. Estonia made the largest price increase during that period—at 254 per cent—and only Japan and Italy had smaller price increases than Canada.

This year, partially in response to Canada Post's ongoing financial crisis, the organization increased stamp prices from 99 cents to \$1.24. This brought in a whopping \$376 million in additional revenue to the post office in the first six months of 2025. Parcel delivery during this period took a significant hit due to the uncertainty of ongoing negotiations with the union but if parcel revenue had remained constant from the previous year, then Canada Post's total loss in the first

half of this year would have only been \$25 million. While that number is still significant, it is far from the apocalyptic scenario we were hearing about in the previous years—which is now being mobilized to dismantle the post office.

Cutting back on Canada Post's rural presence is actually a direct attack on the long-term viability of the organization, because it reduces that principal advantage that the crown corporation has over its competitors—its ability to reach every corner of the country. Unlike the increasing numbers of gig economy contractor operations in Canada, the post office is a truly national network which, by law, has the ability to serve every address in the country. No other competitor in the logistics market has such deep reach across the country. Making Canada Post viable in the long term needs to be about playing into that strength—not reducing it.

In many ways, the post office was Canada's original "nation-building"

project, a term which has come back into vogue recently in response to threats from the United States. From the time that the first postal route was established between Montreal and Quebec City in 1734, the post office has been a key piece of infrastructure that brings the country together. That continues to be true today, as Canada Post serves as the only network covering every address in the country.

Too often when public services are cut, the burden is shifted onto the individual or the community. Cuts to Canada Post will be borne by those least able to carry them and by rural communities that have been all but abandoned. In an era of increasing social isolation and lack of community connection, perhaps cutting the one national public service that ties the country together isn't the best idea. Canadians knew this instinctively ten years ago. Prime Minister Carney may find, to his chagrin, that Canadians have long memories. ■



Canadian Press

Katherine Scott

## The path to prosperity set out in budget 2025 leaves millions behind

The millions struggling to pay their rent and put food on the table were looking for relief in budget 2025—and they were disappointed.

In the hunt for billions in defence dollars, the federal government has chosen to follow the neoliberal playbook—shrinking government, cutting taxes and leaving more to the private sector—an approach that has shown, time and again, to lead to greater inequality, limited opportunity and reduced prosperity.

While poverty is rising and the gap is growing between rich and the rest of us, the government missed the opportunity to deliver a budget that lifts up all Canadians.

It reinforces the narrative being peddled by business elites that governments are an obstacle to prosperity, that social programs are a drain on the economy, that natural resources and

manufacturing are the only industries that count.

We now have a sense of what the government means by “spending less so we can invest more” and who exactly is expected to “sacrifice”—which really means doing without—for Canada’s future prosperity.

Budget 2025 confirms plans to reduce federal spending by \$60 billion over the next five years, eliminating an estimated 40,000 positions in the public service, roughly 10 per cent of the total workforce.

Even as automobile plants are laying off thousands of workers, the federal government is queuing up to deliver its own set of even larger job cuts that will fall disproportionately on women, people with disabilities, and Indigenous workers.

It says something about the value that the government attaches to the labour of public servants. It also speaks to their back-to-the-future vision of economic growth, one that’s tied up with expanding the military and exploiting Canada’s natural resources.

Many of the “equity” initiatives included in budget 2025 were pre-announced, such as the reskilling package to train 50,000 workers, ongoing funding for the National School Food Program, and a new refundable tax credit for Personal Support Workers (PSWs). There are new investments as well, including

funds for youth employment and gender-based violence.

These are welcome initiatives but insufficient to the task of containing the cost-of-living crisis and building an inclusive economy that supports us all.

The budget’s two top affordability measures were the elimination of the consumer carbon levy and the middle- and upper-income tax cut, which will worsen the income gap in Canada.

Child care, pharmacare, health care, income security and a host of other vital programs were effectively ignored—programs that are crucial to gender equality, social justice and our collective ability to prosper and thrive.

Budget 2025 states: “By spending less, we can make the generational investments that grow our economy and protect the essential programs that keep your costs down.” What does this even mean? George Orwell couldn’t have captured the blatant contradictions contained in this budget better.

In the election, the Liberals promised to review policies and programs using an equity lens to identify and understand the potential impact of government actions across diverse groups “because our ability to recognize the value of all Canadians is what makes Canada strong.”

Notwithstanding selected investments, their commitment to equity and diversity now appear to be in doubt in the face of the large spending cuts and singular focus on private sector-led development.

Canadians recognize the seismic shifts underway in the global order and the demands they place on our security. Canadians are prepared to step up to set Canada on a secure and independent footing. But meeting those needs cannot come at the cost of dismantling the very programs that make our society equitable and our economy resilient.

This course of action is setting Canada up for failure, repeating the mistakes of the past. Reducing income and wealth inequality ought to be at the centre of the government’s nation-building strategy, not an errant footnote. ■

Katherine Scott is a CCPA senior researcher.

Ricardo Tranjan

# Olivia Chow is going to war on Bill 60—other mayors should join her

The Ontario government introduced Bill 60, *Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act*. It includes many troubling legislative changes, but popular outcry so far has focused on the direct attack on tenant rights.

With good reason.

This is the most vicious, one-sided tenancy legislation since landlord-tenant relations started being regulated in the late 1960s.

Thousands of people and numerous tenant groups have been mobilized since last week. Mayor Olivia Chow is among them.

In an executive committee motion released this week, she asked city council to direct the city solicitor to “review legal options to protect renters and challenge provisions of Bill 60.” In other words, she’s ready to take the Ontario government to court.

Mayors across Ontario should follow suit, because they will live with the consequences of this bill, including the eviction avalanche it will likely trigger.

The original bill stated the government’s interest in exploring “alternative options on lease agreement expiry rules.” Housing activists quickly deciphered this statement as an attempt to introduce fixed-term leases. Ontario currently has indefinite leases, which means tenants can stay in their unit for as long as they need and want, unless the landlord has legal reasons to take the unit back.

Fixed-term leases would make tenants perpetually insecure—even more so than now. They would also mean the end of rent controls since landlords could hike rents between leases.

In response to widespread mobilization over the week, the Ontario government took this idea off the table—for the time being.

The second set of disconcerting proposals—the ones Mayor Chow’s motion zooms in on—concerns evictions.

Bill 60 aims to fast-track evictions. If approved, it will give tenants less time and fewer ways to pay rent in arrears, dispute an eviction application, or appeal an eviction decision. It also takes away tenants’ right to one month’s rent in cases where landlords decide to move back into the unit.

The bill goes as far as taking away discretion from Land and Tenant Board (LTB) adjudicators, who will have less room to weigh the particularities of the case before ruling on an eviction order.

Bill 60 effectively moves Ontario toward an *evict first, ask questions later* approach.

That’s not all.

The bill’s briefing deck notes that “Tribunals Ontario is exploring options

to increase access to LTB decision orders,” which would provide “another vetting resource available to landlords and tenants to consult prior to entering lease agreements.”

This suggests the government’s intention is to allow landlords to check whether tenants have a “record” before renting to them.

Setting the potential unconstitutionality of such a measure aside, if enacted, this proposal would create a list of blacklisted tenants who will have a tough time finding housing ever again.

Since cities are responsible for assisting people who become unhoused, mayors and councillors across Ontario should be deeply troubled by Bill 60. In addition to fast-tracking evictions, it can sentence blacklisted tenants to lifelong housing insecurity.

It’s an atrocious bill that will only benefit the very few. ■

Ricardo Tranjan is Ontario research director at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the author of *The Tenant Class*.



Molly McCracken

## Manitoba: Home to startling levels of poverty and inequality

Amid threats from the U.S., Canadians are standing up for the values we hold dear. Foremost among Canadian values are respect for human rights and dignity.

Canada has long been a global leader in advocating for human rights, with Manitoba at the heart of this effort, embodied in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Despite this, more people are being left behind by the lack of bold action to uphold social and economic rights and act on poverty in our country and province.

Income inequality is on the rise—data released this past July found the wealthiest 20 per cent of Canadians are taking home more than ever, and the lowest 20 per cent have less than before to pay for rising food, shelter and transportation costs. The highest-income earners are gaining from investments, while the lowest-income earners have declining wages, increased costs and cannot get ahead.

Poverty is on the rise in Manitoba—11.9 per cent, or 179,370 people, live below the poverty line now. Of those who are low income, Manitoba has the highest rate of those living in deep income poverty, at 75 per cent below the government's official poverty line.

Just under seven per cent of Manitobans, or 103,995 people, survive on less than \$11,341 a year or \$945 a month. The rise in visible homelessness and people struggling with, and dying from, problematic substance use is sadly no surprise given the pittance of the "social safety net."

Manitoba also has the lowest rate of intergenerational income mobility in Canada, so that rises in the poverty rate here mean more people are trapped in poverty, born into families

where they themselves have a higher likelihood of a lifetime of poverty and passing this along to the next generation.

Against these alarming trends, what can the Manitoba government do?

Last year, the province began consultations for a new poverty reduction strategy, as required by legislation.

The Manitoba poverty reduction strategy should take a human rights-based approach to focus on meeting the needs of people living in poverty by realizing the human rights to housing, nutritious food, health care, decent work, education, transit and information.

The Manitoba government has taken action in key areas. Long-overdue reforms to decolonize the child-welfare system are moving forward. New social housing, the school nutrition program, and free birth control are positive.

However, there remain large gaps in evidence-based policy to address poverty. For example, there have been no increases to welfare, despite high inflation and skyrocketing food bank use. The response to the homelessness crisis, while important, is insufficient to meet unhoused people's complex needs for housing and holistic support. Low-income people pay more for bus fare but are getting less service. Single moms below the poverty line still pay

Manitoba has  
the highest rate  
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those who are low  
income

\$40 a month for child care, if they can get a spot. Adult literacy programs have long wait lists.

The *Manitoba Poverty Reduction Strategy Act* directs the Manitoba government to bring down poverty rates for all Manitobans, but signals put out in the development of the poverty reduction strategy appear to be efforts to temper expectations.

When the engagement strategy was released, it was announced that the government's focus is on babies and children, youth aging out of care and seniors.

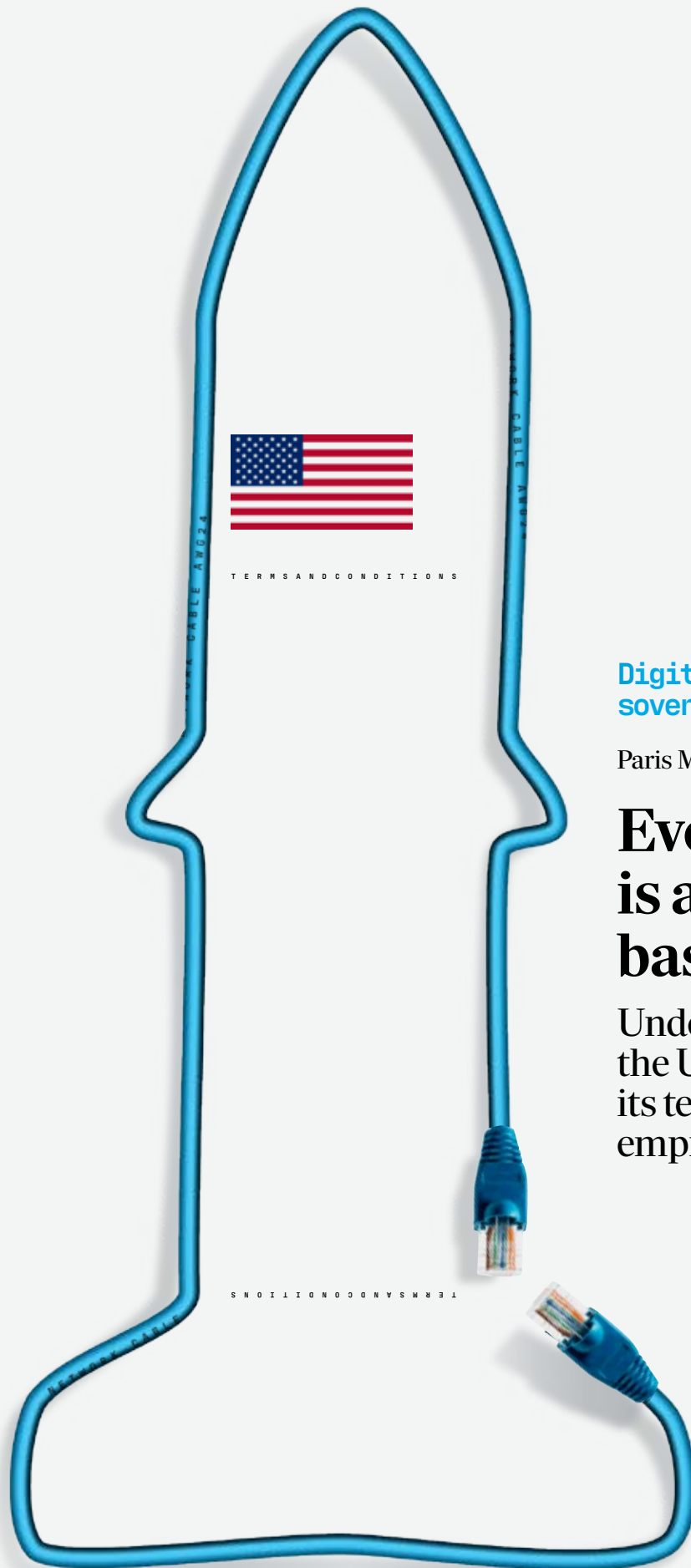
Why predetermine the groups in need of support in the consultation phase? What about an adult who was a youth in care seven years ago and is homeless now? What about a single adult aged 61 living in poverty? What about a person with disabilities living in poverty? Are they not also deserving of help?

The attempt to moderate expectations could be due to the commitment to balance the Manitoba budget by 2027, which is hamstringing the government's fiscal capacity to act on poverty. Manitobans are caring people. Surely the majority would rather see a deficit and have those with means pay a bit more in taxes, so that fewer suffer a lifetime of poverty?

Anti-poverty activists are watching for the new provincial strategy, which should set out a clear target and timeline as to how much poverty rates for all the affected populations should be brought down, by when, and how. For example, British Columbia's 2024 10-year plan aims to reduce overall poverty by 60 per cent, child poverty by 75 per cent, and senior poverty by 50 per cent.

The plan should focus on supporting people to escape the trap of poverty. Make Poverty History Manitoba has a comprehensive plan based on the lived experiences of Manitobans in poverty to bring down poverty rates. We hope the Manitoba government sets out a bold plan to enact social and economic human rights in Manitoba. ■

Molly McCracken is director of the CCPA Manitoba. This article originally appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press*.



Digital  
sovereignty

Paris Marx

# Every data centre is a U.S. military base

Understanding how  
the United States uses  
its tech companies to serve  
empire

In February, U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order sanctioning the International Criminal Court (ICC) and its chief prosecutor, British lawyer Karim Khan. The move came in response to the court's decision to issue an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the crimes against humanity he committed in the ongoing Gaza genocide.

The move was outrageous for many reasons, and not even the first time the United States had sanctioned an ICC chief prosecutor. Khan's predecessor was also in Trump's crosshairs when she opened an investigation into crimes in Afghanistan, where the actions of the United States would not be excluded.

The sanctions on Khan hampered the work of the court, and he found that not only were his UK bank accounts frozen, but he also lost access to his Microsoft email address. He ended up switching to Swiss privacy-focused provider Proton Mail. While it has not made the same impact in Canada, the news about Khan losing his access to Microsoft services quickly rippled through the halls of power across Europe when it was revealed in May.

The withdrawal of service showed European lawmakers how vulnerable their access to the technologies they rely on not just in their personal lives, but to run governments and key institutions. They were also facing escalating pressure from the Trump administration and the billionaires of Silicon Valley to roll back their world-leading tech regulations, and U.S. Vice President JD Vance

showed up on the continent a week after Khan was sanctioned to lecture Europe about its values, approach to free speech, and attempts to exclude the neo-Nazi party Alternative for Germany from political power.

Microsoft tried to distance itself from the controversy, but even its spokesperson admitted there had been a "disconnection of [the court's] sanctioned official." The company didn't help its case when Microsoft France's director of public and legal affairs told the French Senate under oath in June that it "cannot guarantee" it would be able to deny requests from the Trump administration for data stored on its servers within the European Union.

As European lawmakers grew increasingly concerned about a U.S. digital "kill switch" and the security of the cloud services supplied by major U.S. companies they'd come to rely on, one thing was clear: they were not nearly as sovereign as they previously believed, and their dependence on U.S. tech had to be addressed.

### **Rolling back tech regulation**

Canada is not immune from these vulnerabilities. Due to our geographic proximity to and greater dependence on the United States, they are arguably even more present as Canadians reassess our relationship with our neighbour to the south. We have already seen how effectively the United States can apply pressure to Canada in the tech domain and beyond.

If we look at Europe, the pressure from U.S. tech executives like Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg or Apple CEO Tim Cook is much more

apparent. The chief executives and company spokespeople regularly single out European regulations causing them commercial headaches. In Canada, that pressure is still there; the executives just don't often speak out publicly. The more vocal opposition is outsourced to domestic tech leaders and our own coterie of commentators that echo narratives beneficial to the big U.S. tech giants.

Over the past couple years, we saw a concerted campaign by Canadian tech executives, aligned with the right-wing politics their counterparts in Silicon Valley adopted, begin to openly push a political program in their interests, often paired with explicit support for Pierre Poilievre and the Conservative Party. However, since Mark Carney replaced Justin Trudeau at the helm of the Liberal Party, they've embraced the central banker-in-chief. He's committed to attracting investment above all else, and that means he's much more open to their policy demands.

As a result, we've seen a rapid erosion in the government's efforts to rein in U.S. tech companies. Since April, planned AI regulations have been put on ice, along with the online harms bill that sought to address harmful behaviour in online spaces. That was in spite of concretely seeing how those platforms are used by bad actors to sow division within society as wildfires spread across the country again this past summer. In parts of the country, local politicians had to directly respond to disinformation spreading online that people desperate for updates were falling for.

In June, another pillar in the Trudeau government's attempt to regulate the tech industry fell when Donald Trump walked away from trade negotiations, saying he would only return once the Canadian government repealed its digital services tax. Executives like Zuckerberg have lobbied Trump to try to kill those taxes in countries around the world. Late on the Sunday night before the tax was supposed to come into effect, Carney and Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne announced it would be sacrificed so talks could continue. Months later, a comprehensive deal with the United States remains elusive.

It can be easy to believe that all this pressure is a product of the way Trump's return to office emboldened U.S. tech companies, but it's simply brought a longstanding process out into the open. The U.S. government has long recognized how much it benefits from ensuring other countries are dependent on products and services made by companies in its jurisdiction. For years, it used trade negotiations to insert clauses in agreements that limit foreign governments' ability to regulate its tech companies and has used its diplomats to apply pressure in other ways.

For example, CUSMA contains measures that constrain the authority of the Canadian government to regulate the tech industry. The agreement limits the ability to regulate cross-border data flows, to force companies to reveal their source code, to discriminate between foreign and domestic tech firms, or to expect them to store data on Canadians within our borders. On top of that, U.S. officials under the Biden administration regularly pressured the government when it moved forward with tech regulations, including with the streaming bill and digital services tax. The *Online News Act* is the latest to find itself in U.S. crosshairs.

Protecting the global market share and curtailing attempts to rein in U.S. tech companies is bipartisan policy in the United States. They may occasionally get angry at certain domestic consequences of the tech products they depend on, but Democrats and Republicans alike are not very concerned about how those issues play out beyond the country's borders. Ensuring other countries depend on U.S. tech companies not only increases U.S. power, but also provides it with ample economic benefits.

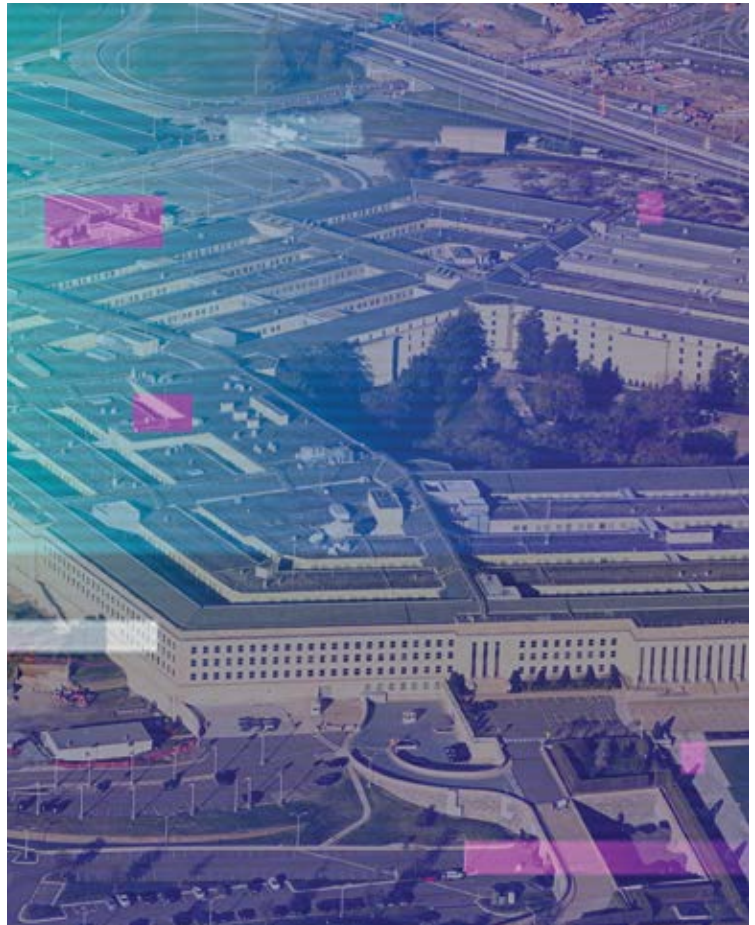
### **The consequences of dependence**

Political developments in the 1980s and 1990s played a key role in shaping the dominant position the United States holds today. In the late 1980s, then Senator Al Gore recognized that technology and power were inseparable. In a speech to the senate, he declared that "the nation which most completely assimilates high-performance computing into its economy will very likely emerge as the dominant intellectual, economic, and technological force in the next century."

Gore and President Bill Clinton were intent on ensuring the United States reaped the gains of the emerging internet. What started as a military and academic project had already begun to be commercialized, and in 1995, they completed the handover of the public infrastructure to the private sector. U.S. companies got a head start on building the businesses that would dominate the digital economy, and much easier access to capital to rapidly scale domestically and later internationally.

In those years, the model of the internet was established—and the private sector was firmly in charge. There were debates about carving out a "public lane" on the "information superhighway," but those efforts were ultimately defeated.

The U.S. government used its influence to push for telecom deregulation and the removal of trade barriers around the world, aiding its companies to move into international markets. Tech advocacy groups assisted in their own way by crafting a narrative that the internet was inherently liberatory and any attempts by governments to restrict the expansion of digital services, platforms, and the companies that run them was an inherent breach of their citizens' rights. Over time, U.S. companies rode the wave to global dominance, and as they took over new markets, domestic competitors



were acquired or simply failed in face of the pressure.

Our dependence on U.S. tech has long been a problem, just one that many people in power did not want to touch because of how it would anger the United States. Even proposing basic tech regulations prompted rebukes from the U.S. government and threatened the prospect of investment from those digital colonizers. But that dependence left us without the tools to get a handle on key avenues for communication and commerce.

As U.S. tech companies fought to roll back workers' rights in the gig economy and beyond, allowed false information to spread across social media platforms, decimated the funding model for journalism, and had countless other negative social impacts, the Canadian government was limited in its ability to respond. All the while, as more Canadians—both individuals and companies—became dependent on U.S. digital services, the profits were siphoned back to the United States, fueling a growing economic divide that has prompted economists to start sounding the alarm.

### Reclaiming digital sovereignty

There is one thing we can say for Trump's attacks on Canada: they have finally given us the space to speak openly and honestly about

many of the ways the U.S.-Canada relationship has not been working for us for a very long time—and the digital dimension of our lopsided economic integration is a massive part of that. If Canada is to regain greater autonomy over its affairs and build a better society, we must get serious about reclaiming our digital sovereignty.

Since Trump's return to office, governments have been ramping up defence spending to ensure they can defend themselves in a world where the United States is no longer a security guarantor and possibly even a security threat. That same seriousness should be given to digital technology.

As our European allies have found first hand, our dependence on U.S. companies for cloud services creates a severe vulnerability, where the U.S. government can request whatever data it wants or can even shut off our access at a moment's notice. During the election campaign, Carney said he would be reassessing public cloud contracts going to Amazon, Microsoft, Google, and Oracle. More recently, when he announced the first batch of nation-building projects, the prime minister called out the need for a sovereign cloud. He is taking steps in the right direction, but the devil will be in the details.

Our ambition cannot stop there though. In far too many cases, our governments, universities, schools, and other public institutions—not to mention private businesses—are run on Microsoft or Google services. Now is the perfect time to get governments off Microsoft 365 and schools off Google Classroom by properly resourcing a new public agency or Crown corporation dedicated to building technology in the public interest.

European state, local, and even departments of national governments are already taking the initiative to move in that direction. There are ample open-source tools already out there that could be adapted to those institutional use

cases, with a mandate to work in close collaboration with public institutions to ensure their new suite of digital services properly meets their unique needs. Governments could even think about bringing tech development closer to communities, building on a model not dissimilar to public libraries.

We have an opportunity to think bigger and to challenge those fundamental assumptions that were crafted in the 1990s to convince us digital technology had to be left to the private sector. For three decades, the goal of tech development has not been to improve our lives or to serve the public good, but rather to maximize shareholder value and to increase the power of the companies that control it. It's that nature of digital technology that is at the root of so many of the social harms that the tech oligopoly have saddled us with in recent years. We need to recognize that was a choice, and we can choose to take a different path.

But we must also be aware of the pitfalls ahead. Some Canadian tech executives that, until recently, were pushing for a Conservative government are embracing a program of digital sovereignty as well, but it is explicitly not one that centres the public good. Instead, they're pushing the government to continue pulling back on regulations, while deploying billions through public procurement, incentives, and subsidies to flood into their businesses. They want to hold onto the Silicon Valley model and the harms that it's created, but better cash in on it for themselves. They want to join the digital colonizers rather than bring them down. ■

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Paris Marx is a tech critic, author, podcaster, and international speaker. He hosts *Tech Won't Save Us*, writes *Disconnect*, and is author of *Road to Nowhere*.





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Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood and Rachel Pettigrew

# Whose (artificial) intelligence?

## The many contradictions of the AI moment

We are living through an “AI moment”—a period of dizzying change in the field of artificial intelligence that is sowing fear, hope and confusion in equal measure.

Will the latest wave of AI technologies transform the world for the better, ushering in a new era of robot-assisted leisure? Are we on track for a dystopian future where all our jobs are replaced and any benefits accrue to an increasingly small number of global corporate overlords? Or will reality fall somewhere in the middle, with a great technological upheaval creating benefits for some and destitution for others—a more familiar historical pattern?

The truth at this stage—equally comforting and disquieting—is that no one truly knows where we are headed.

Not the AI scientists scrambling to build and release new AI models without first understanding their implications. Not the investors throwing billions at the next hype bubble. Not the governments simultaneously pushing AI adoption while debating the merits of regulation. And not the end users—workers, students, citizens—rejecting or embracing AI tools.

Underpinning all this uncertainty are the many contradictions of the AI moment itself. As we work toward a collective understanding of what artificial intelligence

means—a necessary step on the path to articulating a clear collective vision for AI in our society—here are some of the most fundamental issues we must grapple with.

### **AI is advancing exponentially—and progress is slowing down**

The term “artificial intelligence” is an umbrella for a variety of related technologies. The particular AI systems taking the world by storm right now, popularized by ChatGPT, are called large language models (LLMs). These systems are trained on massive bodies of text—essentially everything on the internet—through which they learn to predict the likely order of words in a sentence when prompted by a user’s input.

LLMs are inherently unintelligent. They have no internal “world model,” which means they do not understand what words mean and they have no logical sense of how those words fit together. But by stringing together words in a sensible way based on complex pattern recognition, they create the illusion of intelligence. And that illusion is getting better and better.

Indeed, LLMs can now perform many creative and problem-solving tasks that were previously thought to be impossible for machines. New generations of models are released every few months, each exceeding the capabilities of the last, driven by exponential increases in the computing power used to train them.

But there are indications that these models are not improving as quickly as they once did. If early LLMs were 70 per cent as capable as humans at a given task, later models may only be 85 per cent as capable. It requires more and more energy and money to train models that are only incrementally better than the ones that came before.

Whether LLMs will continue on a path toward artificial general intelligence (AGI)—essentially human-level intelligence across all cognitive tasks—or whether they are hitting a technological wall is fiercely debated, but it has profound consequences for the potential impacts of AI in the near future. We need to be just as prepared for AI to continue getting better, either through LLMs or other AI technologies, as we are for AI development to slow down.

## **AI is not good enough to do most jobs—but will replace many workers anyway**

AI in its various guises has been automating labour for a long time. However, it is the threat that LLMs pose to large swaths of the knowledge economy that is keeping people up at night.

Given their fundamental lack of logic and inherent unreliability, it is tempting to assume that the latest, LLM-driven wave of AI systems cannot replace actual workers. Indeed, even the most advanced LLMs struggle with hallucinations, which means they invent fictional details or make basic factual errors that a human never would. Most jobs also require a degree of relationship building and human interaction that AI systems alone are incapable of replicating. Ultimately, there are very few jobs today that can be replaced, one-for-one, by an AI system.

Yet AI is already displacing and will continue to displace workers in many knowledge and service-based fields. How can that be?

First, many jobs do not require a high level of expertise or precision. An AI system—even one that makes occasional mistakes—need only be as competent as an average worker to be a viable replacement. And even if an AI system is not as competent as the worker it is displacing, operating most AI systems is much cheaper than paying a salary, which may be a worthwhile trade-off for profit-minded employers.

Second, even where a human worker plays an irreplaceable role, fewer of those workers are necessary when AI systems can take on an increasing share of specific tasks. Rather than a team of five researchers, for example, you may now only need one researcher to prompt, vet and compile the outputs of various AI tools and then present the results to other humans.

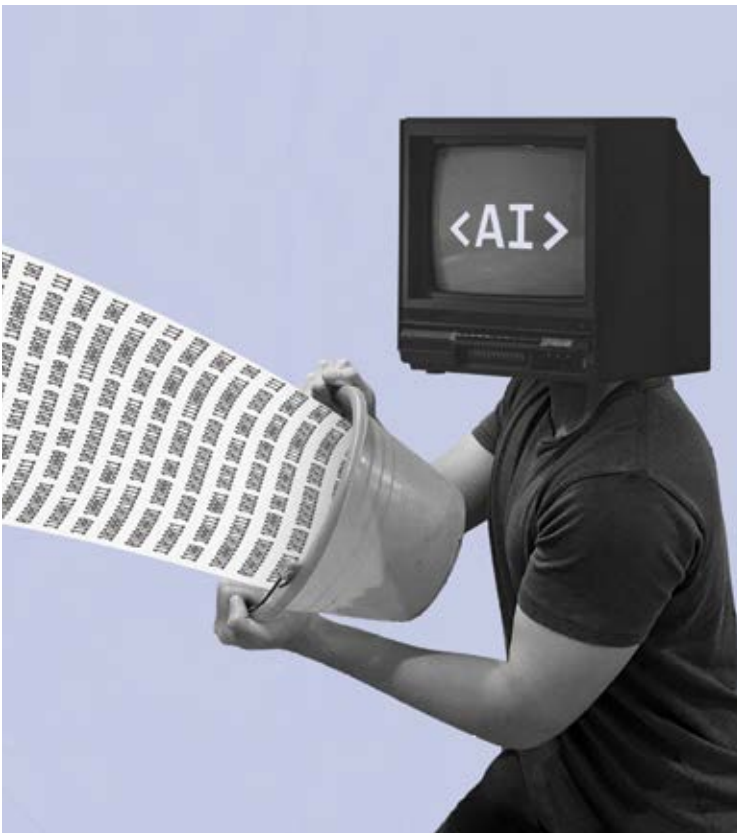
A “good enough” AI is a big threat to large sections of the workforce—especially younger, less-experienced workers—whether or not the underlying technology continues to improve.

## **AI is making us more productive—and making us dumber**

AI systems, especially LLMs, are often compared to calculators. We may have lost the ability to perform long division, but computer-assisted computation allows us to work faster and take on more complex challenges than before. The latest wave of AI tools make a similar promise—by handing off routine cognitive tasks to AI, such as summarizing notes or writing emails, we can focus on more interesting and productive work.

It is too early in the modern AI era for definitive studies, but there is some early evidence to support that idea. Workers who lean on LLM assistance save time on simpler tasks leading to increases in productivity relative to their peers.

However, as with calculators and long division, this process of “cognitive offloading” comes with costs. A



growing body of literature is finding that the more people depend on AI tools, the weaker their cognitive functioning and critical thinking skills become.

It's a catch-22—the more we rely on AI tools, the more we need to be able to critically assess their outputs. Yet the more we use them, the worse we get at doing so. This is an especially large problem for the education system. Students who use AI tools to bypass actual learning are the least equipped to responsibly use those tools.

The purported productivity and well-being benefits of AI may be short-lived if they come at the cost of long-term social and cognitive decline—a tension that governments and businesses have been reluctant to consider.

### **AI is a boon to democracy— and a tool of oppression**

Like the early days of the internet, the nascent AI revolution has an air of democracy about it. Some of the most advanced AI tools ever developed are freely available and billions of people worldwide are using them. Many who could not otherwise afford it now have access to a personalized tutor, business partner or therapist—or at least a simulacrum of one.

Those are real benefits, but they obscure systemic injustices in the development and deployment of AI systems. Among other issues, these systems are often trained on copyrighted or private works without the creators' consent. They reproduce biases in their training data, including racial and gender discrimination. They consume vast amounts of electricity and water. And they perpetuate an economic model that sees large tech companies, mainly in the U.S., extract and exploit the data of people around the world for their own private gain. Many AI tools have been deliberately shaped to advance the particular political or ideological views of their creators without those biases being disclosed to users.

And that's just how the models are built. The way AI tools are being used, in practice, introduces countless other concerns, such as AI-powered disinformation campaigns designed to shape public discourse and undermine the democratic process.

It is easy to view AI as an ephemeral, abstract phenomenon that exists only on our devices. But we cannot lose sight of the messy history and contested political economy of AI systems in the real world.

### **AI adoption is overhyped— and underappreciated**

As a consequence of the preceding contradictions, artificial intelligence is both more and less consequential than many hope and fear. In 1978, the futurist Rick Amara famously observed that we tend to overestimate the effect of a technology in the short run and to underestimate the effect in the long run. Many transformational technologies have since followed that path, including smart phones and social media, both of which started out as fringe curiosities before rapidly consuming our information environments.

AI appears to be on the same path. The number of tasks that AI can competently perform today does not match the breathless claims of AI boosters. The actual economic impacts of AI today pale in comparison to the billions of dollars flowing into AI companies. And AI-fueled disinformation on social media is still largely identifiable.

Yet dismissing AI out of hand—assuming it will never deliver on its disruptive potential—is equally naive. Even if the underlying technologies stopped improving, the integration of artificial intelligence into every aspect of our lives will have profound consequences in the coming decades. By the time those effects are truly felt, it may be too late to do anything about it.

### **AI cannot be controlled— and must be regulated**

The through line for these contradictions is a tension between the almost mythical inevitability of technological progress and the inherent uncertainty of technological adoption.

On the one hand, the cat is now out of the bag. There is no future without large language models and other AI systems playing a prominent role. But how AI comes to shape our economies, cultures, relationships and very minds depends on the collective choices we make in the formative months and years to come.

Government regulation is not the whole solution, but it has a large role to play. The tech sector will not take responsibility for protecting the public good in the face of such profound disruption.

It's an area Canada has struggled with historically. The 2017 *Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy* was criticized for privileging the voices of industry while excluding workers and users. The 2022 *Artificial Intelligence and Data Act* collapsed under similar criticisms. And the latest AI Strategy Task Force, which included no representation from the labour or social justice movements, seems poised to repeat those mistakes.

Yet past failures cannot stop us from trying again. We are at a crucial societal juncture for artificial intelligence. And to arrive at an AI-saturated world that actually serves the public interest, we need a clear-eyed view of what artificial intelligence is and is not—messy contradictions and all—and a collective vision for the technological society we all want to live in. ■

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Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood is a senior researcher with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives where he focuses on the social and economic dimensions of climate change, industrial policy and artificial intelligence. Rachel Pettigrew is a researcher, activist and Master of Social Work candidate at the University of Calgary. Her work focuses on environmental justice, community resilience and social policy.

# HENNESSY'S INDEX

By Trish Hennessy

## Cyber security threats

+60%

That's how much of the global cloud infrastructure market was dominated by U.S. tech giants like Amazon, Google and Microsoft in 2023.

+80%

That's how much the European Union (EU) depends on foreign countries for its digital products, services, infrastructure and intellectual property.

48%

That's how many Canadian businesses relied on cloud computing in 2023.

"A vast amount of Canadian data is stored on foreign soil, making it subject to foreign laws. And when push comes to shove, those laws protect their government's interests—not yours."  
—Open Media

98.3%

The percentage of organizations around the world that had relationships with at least one third party that had experienced a data breach within two years.

159%

The percentage increase in ransomware attacks in Canada's IT industry between 2022 and 2023. It went up by 157 per cent in Canada's finance industry and 133 per cent in Canada's construction industry.

2023

A record-breaking year for ransomware, (a type of malicious software that denies access to its victim's assets or devices until a payment is made) according to the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security. It's estimated that the number of ransomware incidents rose by 74 per cent globally in 2023 compared to 2022.

\$1.1 million

The average ransom paid in Canada in 2023—an increase of almost 150 per cent within two years.

\$6.32 million

That's the average amount that Canadian organizations pay for each data breach they experience.

15 million

That's how many people fell victim to a ransomware attack on LifeLabs in 2019—the largest reported data breach in Canadian history. The attackers gained access to LifeLabs' systems and sensitive information.

11,000+

That's how many individual online accounts were compromised in 2020 cyberattacks on the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). The attackers got access to sensitive taxpayer information and direct deposit details.

\$25 million

That's the potential fine for data breaches in the European Union (EU), which has taken digital sovereignty measures to protect the public. It's part of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation, which seeks to unify regulations on how data is looked after online.

Sources: Open Media <https://openmedia.org/article/item/digital-sovereignty-why-canada-needs-control-over-our-data-and-networks>; ESCP International Politics Society, <https://pppesp.com/2025/02/04/digital-sovereignty-in-europe-navigating-the-challenges-of-the-digital-era/>; Open Media <https://openmedia.org/article/item/digital-sovereignty-why-canada-needs-control-over-our-data-and-networks>; Cyentia Institute and SecurityScorecard report, 2023. <https://securityscorecard.com/research/cyentia-close-encounters-of-the-third-and-fourth-party-kind/>; Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, <https://www.cyber.gc.ca/en/guidance/national-cyber-threat-assessment-2025-2026>; Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, <https://www.cyber.gc.ca/en/guidance/national-cyber-threat-assessment-2025-2026>; Canadian Cyber Threat Exchange, <https://cctx.ca/cyber-facts/>; Corbado, <https://www.corbado.com/blog/data-breaches-canada>; Corbado, <https://www.corbado.com/blog/data-breaches-canada>; World Economic Forum, <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2025/01/europe-digital-sovereignty/>



Stained glass image of Luddites burning the Westhoughton Mill / Wikimedia

Jon Milton

## Reviving Ned Ludd

### Towards a worker sovereignty over technological development

After the Canadian union of Postal Workers' strike in 1975, workers won an important and relatively unprecedented gain in their new collective agreement—protections against technological change.

It had been a years-long battle. Starting in 1972, the union had been encouraging the public to boycott the then-new postal code system, because the workers managing the new automated sorting system inside warehouses were paid significantly less than previous hand-sorters.

As former CUPW leader Jean-Claude Parrot outlined in his memoir *My Union, My Life*, this new article provided a clear definition of technological change, required management to provide advanced notice, and protected the jobs of workers subjected to the change.

The words in the contract were not enough, though. Almost immediately after signing, management began implementing a flurry of new technological changes and ignoring the language of the agreement they had signed—even arguing before labour tribunals that they had the right to ignore it. Before long, postal workers were walking off the job in wildcat strikes across the country. Eventually, the two sides reached something of an agreement, and postal workers won a number of imperfect protections.

It was, Parrot writes, a time when policy-makers and employers were pushing technological changes harder than ever before. Initially, they sold it as a dream—technological change would allow for greater leisure time and less work. The economy would be more efficient, and all would move together into a

future of common abundance. What they got instead was low-wage automated tasks and new workplace surveillance technologies like Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) in postal warehouses.

Their employers said that they were simply opposed to technological advancement, clinging to the past. They were enemies of progress—they were, in other words, Luddites.

Today, that term is generally used as a pejorative for someone who has an irrational fear of technological development, or even of the very concept of “progress,” which boosters so often use as a stand-in for technology. It's a term that is being used more frequently these days, as tech oligarchs attempt to roll out new “artificial intelligence” systems in workplaces, communities, and institutions across the world.

The Canadian government, for its part, is “all in” on AI development, according to newly minted Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Data Innovation Evan Solomon. Despite deep and brutal cuts across public services, the 2025 federal budget dedicates over \$1 billion in new funding to develop AI infrastructure over the next five years. A significant chunk of that will presumably go towards rolling out those systems within government in order to “streamline” operations and enable the promised layoffs and cash savings.

Public sector unions will, of course, oppose these measures, which will eliminate good jobs and worsen the quality of public services. For their opposition, they will likely be called Luddites—opponents of progress.

But that argument fundamentally misunderstands what the workers’ movement fights for with regard to technological development—as well as what the actual Luddites stood for.

### **Breaking the machines**

In the early 1800s, there was a name on the lips of every mill owner in England and Wales: Ned Ludd.

Over the course of over a decade (peaking in 1811-12, when attacks were near daily), hundreds of textile mills had been subject to attacks by mobs of masked individuals who broke into mills to destroy machines in the night, sometimes clashing with local sheriffs and security forces in the process.

The people engaged in the attacks were skilled textile workers who were seeing their lives upended by the arrival of the new industrial weaving machines. Those machines helped convert their skilled and relatively well-paid work into cheap, unskilled, industrial piecework, with the low wages that came along with it.

Whenever they destroyed a mill, they signed their action under the name of their supposed leader, Ned Ludd—an imaginary figure who,

legend had it, smashed two knitting frames after having been lashed with a whip by his boss for being idle. The movement of machine breakers the legend inspired called themselves Luddites.

Despite the way that the term “Luddite” is used today, those workers were not simple technophobes fighting a doomed battle against inevitable progress. “Their revolt was not against machines in themselves, but against the industrial society that threatened their established ways of life, and of which machines were the chief weapon,” writes Gavin Mueller, author of *Breaking Things at Work*, which frames Luddism as an enduring part of the workers’ movement.

“To say they fought against machines makes about as much sense as saying a boxer fights against fists.”

The Luddites’ actions, Mueller argues, took place in an era when the nature of work was undergoing a profound shift—from production occurring via small artisans towards the mass industrial model that still dominates today. Because the Luddites’ rebellion occurred during this transition period, workers were not yet organized as a class, and did not have the capacity to engage in

The Luddites were workers who organized against exploitation-increasing technologies

modern industrial action like strikes and collective bargaining. So, rather, they engaged in coordinated acts of sabotage. They were engaged in what historian Eric Hobsbawm calls “collective bargaining by riot.”

The Luddites were one of the earliest and most explosive flashpoints where workers were explicitly organized against exploitation-increasing technologies. They were also one of the clearest, because of their near-exclusive and deliberate targeting of the machines themselves. But resistance to management technologies has been a longstanding and permanent feature of labour relations under capitalism.

Whether the early machines of industrial mass production, the technology that enabled the automation wave in the 1970s and 80s, or today’s digital “AI” technologies, workers have consistently turned technological change into a terrain of struggle, both inside and outside the workplace.

### **Scientific management, then and now**

Organizing Foodora couriers in Toronto was no easy task. The food delivery app—similar to others like Doordash, Uber Eats, and JustEat—had workers all across Toronto, without a single worksite or any way for the workers to be in contact with one another. The company, like so many other “gig economy” operations, also classified its couriers as “independent contractors” rather than workers, which prevented them from legally forming a union under the Ontario labour code.

The couriers were “managed” by the app on their phones, rather than by a human manager. They would sign up for schedule blocks and then be assigned work based on the automated functioning of the app’s algorithm, which also included various types of productivity-scoring measures that were invisible to the workers but had major impacts on the types of jobs that they were offered.

That type of management is known as “algorithmic management,” a term that scholars initially coined to describe the labour model of Uber and Lyft before applying it to other “gig economy” operations.

At its most basic, algorithmic management refers to the automation of certain supervisory and management tasks. In the case of food courier operations, such as Foodora, that means the dispatch worker. As Callum Cant writes in *Riding for Deliveroo*, a memoir about organizing gig couriers at the UK-based gig courier operation, the app serves as an automated dispatcher, removing the need for that type of human labour. The app also serves as a disciplinary agent, much like a human manager does by punishing workers who work slowly and rewarding productivity. All of this is done in a way that is deliberately made to keep workers isolated from one another.

Gig economy operations typically describe themselves as technology companies, as if the “innovation” that they produce is primarily technological in nature. They present themselves as being driven by inventiveness and innovation. But they aren’t inventing new products—taxis existed before Uber, just as food delivery existed before Foodora. The primary innovation that these companies are engaged in is administrative and managerial.

Algorithmic management—of which the coming wave of workplace AI should be considered an extension—is the latest in a long line of managerial science innovations whose primary goal is to extract more value from labour. Beginning with Frederick Taylor, the American engineer credited with creating the principles of scientific management, the entire discipline of management has been primarily concerned with how to “rationalize” the labour force in order to extract the most profit from each unit of labour.

“Taylorism,” as it came to be known, went about that in two principle ways—through work intensification and de-skilling of skilled labour. Later “innovations” in management science, such as Henry Ford’s assembly line system and Toyota’s system of “lean production”, continued that process. Algorithmic management has amplified it further.

Workers, of course, have the opposite interests, which is why the technology that enables these changes often becomes such an important flashpoint in workplace struggles.

Foodora workers—backed by none other than the Canadian Union of Postal Workers—won their union drive in 2020, after an Ontario labour tribunal found that they had been illegally misclassified as independent contractors. Some of the primary animating factors in the success of the drive were a desire to have greater say over the application’s algorithmic management on issues like shift distribution. Foodora shut down its Canadian operations shortly afterwards, and had to pay



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a significant sum of money to the workers whose union it had busted.

### **Technology is built in the image of its owners**

In 1971, the recently elected socialist government of Chile embarked on a new and unprecedented project: it was going to create a network of computers that could talk to one another. They were going to create the internet, or at least something like it.

Project Cybersyn, as it was called, built on the growing discipline of cybernetics. The vision, as outlined by Leigh Phillips and Michal Rozworski in their history of economic planning, *The People’s Republic of Walmart*, was to connect computers on factory floors across the country to each other and to the State Development Corporation, in order to facilitate economic planning. Chile’s president, Salvadore Allende, hoped that it could be used by worker-owned workplaces to coordinate democratizing the economy.

It all came to an end when U.S.-backed elements of the military, led by Augusto Pinochet, overthrew the government and installed a brutal military dictatorship in 1973, which enjoyed full U.S. support until its fall in 1988. Project Cybersyn was consigned to be a footnote in history.

The world certainly would look different today if Chile’s mission—to create the technology of democratic socialist economic planning—had succeeded. Instead, the field of technological advancement is dominated by capitalist firms looking to use technological advances to squeeze ever-increasing profits out of workers, consumers, and the natural world.

Technology works in the interest of its owners. Until working people hold democratic control over the development and deployment of technology, it will continue to be a force to accelerate the exploitation of workers and further the interests of bosses. It’s no surprise, then, that workers continue to be animated by the spirit of Ned Ludd. ■

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Jon Milton is associate editor of the *Monitor*.

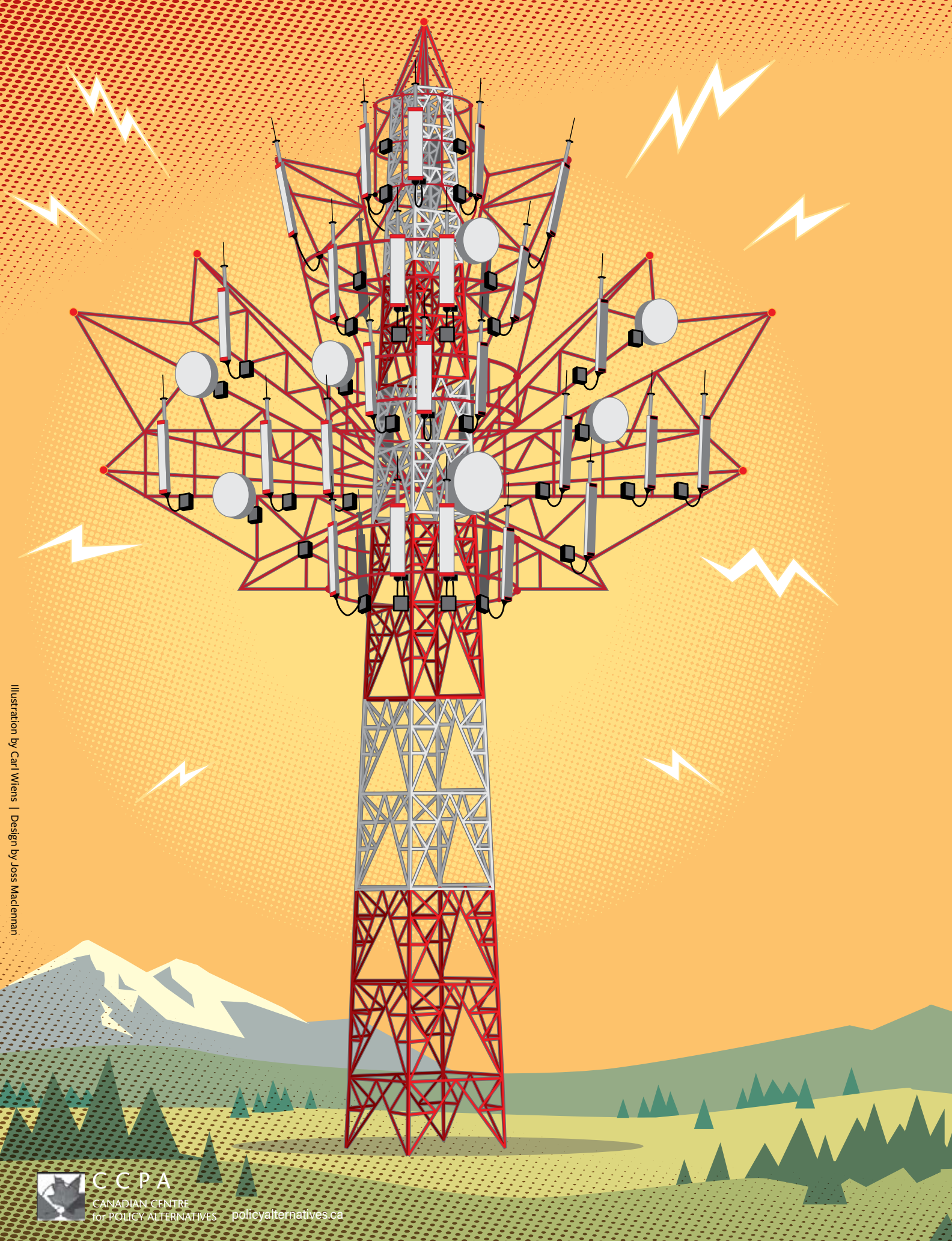


Illustration by Carl Wiens | Design by Joss MacLennan



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# DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY

## It's about Canada controlling its own data

We certainly don't want to lose our data to the U.S.—especially in the face of Trump's 51st state taunts.

### Why Canada needs a digital sovereignty plan

**Too U.S. dependent:** Canada relies too heavily on American-based technology companies like Google and Amazon. We need to safeguard our digital infrastructure—the data storage, hardware and software we rely on.

**It's an economic threat:** Without national providers, Canada is at risk of unfair practices, such as price hikes.

**Regulatory compliance:** Without national providers, it's hard for governments to enforce regulations on the technology companies they rely on.

### Solutions:

**Develop cloud-agnostic services:** "Cloud companies offer a vast array of tools to help users build their own digital services. While valuable, these can create lock-in effects. Digital services built using these tools can work only on these companies' cloud services. Cloud-agnostic services avoid this by using only tools that can work on any cloud platform. By building digital services in this way, public and private organizations can ensure that if there is any disruption in American cloud services, they can easily move their activities to Canadian or other clouds." —Guillaume Beaumier, *Policy Options*.

**Embrace open-source software:** That would give governments and businesses the flexibility to develop in-house expertise or to hire a new company if a provider raises its prices or stops offering services in Canada.

**Boldly invest in our own digital capacities:** Develop a made-in-Canada digital industry to break free from our dependence on American mega-corporations.



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Christine Cooling

## On airwaves and algorithms

Canada asserted cultural sovereignty with strong broadcasting policy. What does that mean in the digital age?

When Canada passed the *Online Streaming Act* (Bill C-11) in April 2023, policy-makers presented it as a historic revision of the nation's broadcasting legislation: to bring streaming platforms into the same cultural policy apparatus as radio and television. With online streaming services now defined as broadcasters, the Act requires platforms to showcase Canadian stories and music (CanCon) and contribute to the production of Canadian stories and music in English, French, and Indigenous languages. The Canadian Radio-television and Communications Commission (CRTC) is currently developing its regulatory plan for implementing the modernized policy in the digital age.

When the *Online Streaming Act* was first introduced, supporters described the bill as a defence of Canadian culture against American-based streaming giants such

as Netflix. This defence rests on a longstanding logic: that cultural sovereignty can be legislated from above, that culture can be safeguarded through federal policy.

Yet, the very terrain of sovereignty has shifted. What was once imagined through domestic airwaves and program schedules is now mediated by platform economies and transnationalism. The notion of cultural sovereignty, central to Canadian cultural policy since the licensing of commercial radio in 1922, has not disappeared. It has instead been rearticulated as digital cultural sovereignty: a twenty-first century expression of the longstanding desire to define and defend the nation's cultural identity.

C-11, amending the 1991 *Broadcasting Act*, signifies both continuity and disruption: continuity in its belief that state intervention can preserve and promote a national identity, and disruption in its

attempt to extend an analogue-era regulatory philosophy onto the internet, a borderless entity.

### Broadcast policy as cultural policy

The debate over online streaming regulation echoes nationalist anxieties that shaped early broadcasting policy. As radio broadcasts entered Canadian living rooms, politicians and lobbyists feared American dominance of the airwaves. The idea of public broadcasting was soon introduced as a means of asserting cultural sovereignty and fostering national consciousness across a vast, young country with a dispersed population. A rhetoric of cultural nationalism—protecting “Canadian” culture from external threats while resisting internal tensions—sought to justify economic and cultural objectives.

That legacy persists. But platforms are transnational, data-driven,

and governed by black box algorithms that elude public service mandates. Bill C-11 transposes a twentieth-century system onto digital infrastructures, where normative regulatory philosophies are troubled and symbolic boundaries set by signals and borders are transcended.

Throughout Canadian history, broadcasting policy has been articulated as more than an economic imperative. It is a form of cultural discourse, where competing narratives and myths of nationhood, belonging, and representation are continuously negotiated. When we interrogate broadcasting policy in this way, we can historicize how sovereignty has been constructed and contested across time—from the Aird Commission's recommendations for a fully public system in 1929 to the *Online Streaming Act* nearly a century later.

The idea of sovereignty for the nation-state, more broadly, necessarily privileges certain voices while excluding others. Broadcasting debates have often excluded Indigenous, racialized, and marginalized communities, and contemporary processes continue to privilege industrial and institutional interests.

### Signals from above and below

When introducing Bill C-11, the *Online Streaming Act*, in parliament in 2022, then-Heritage Minister Pablo Rodriguez declared that platforms must “contribute to the strength and vitality of Canada’s cultural sector,” because “Canada’s strong culture is no accident.”

From above, policy-makers and industry leaders see cultural sovereignty as something to secure through top-down rules and regulations: funding requirements, regulatory oversight, and content mandates like those in the *Online Streaming Act*. This approach is hopeful, but assumes that federal policy can meaningfully impact cultural outcomes in the digital age in the same way it has for radio and television.

From below, sovereignty is about people’s everyday media experiences, including those online. It involves how Canadian creators and audiences gain visibility and participate culturally on the global stage. When Canadians talk about promoting “Canadian culture” online, they often focus on how Canadian content must be discovered globally, the precarity of cultural work in the domestic industries, and whether diverse voices are genuinely represented in federal policy-making. These themes go beyond questions of an elusive national identity or technocratic industrial objectives.

These two perspectives, political and participatory, are connected but work in different ways. Policies like the *Online Streaming Act* set out some important conditions for cultural visibility in Canada, but sovereignty also emerges in daily media practices—through active creation, sharing, and engagement. Today, looking at culture from below shows how Canadians define belonging, representation, and participation in digital spaces.

All that is not to say that the gap between perspectives is the result of bad policy (indeed, I hope Bill C-11

will prove itself a much-needed step forward). Rather, it reflects enduring questions about how cultural power and participation are structured and enacted in contemporary Canada.

### Whose sovereignty?

This contrast between rhetoric in Ottawa and public engagement reveals competing conceptions of cultural sovereignty in the digital age. The first, sovereignty from above, frames it as protection: the state’s capacity to support cultural industries and promote a sense of Canadian-ness. The second, sovereignty from below, frames it as agency: the ability for individuals and communities to participate meaningfully in cultural expression and to define their own identities on the national and global level.

Of course, neither vision alone is sufficient. Top-down regulation necessarily risks reproducing colonial and exclusionary logics and leaving governance entirely to transnational corporations will inevitably deepen inequities and issues of access, visibility, and funding. The challenge lies in reframing cultural sovereignty in the digital age not only as protectionism, but also as participation.

Reimagining sovereignty as *participation*, in this context, means recognizing audiences and creators as active cultural agents, not merely as markets to be protected. While the CRTC’s public hearings and consultations represent a form of participatory governance, a pluralist system inevitably privileges those with resources, technical literacy, or institutional support. In practice, a more participatory understanding of sovereignty might mean recognizing the informal negotiations that already take place across digital platforms—where creators advocate for visibility, audiences mobilize around shared cultural concerns, and communities experiment with new forms of storytelling and self-representation.

These processes challenge the idea that regulation is something done to culture, instead positioning it as an ongoing dialogue between policy, platforms, and publics. Participation, in this sense, is less about formal inclusion in hearings than about enabling the conditions for diverse voices to meaningfully shape Canada’s digital sovereignty. We need transparency, accessibility, and adaptability in policy-making, regulatory and funding decisions, and platform governance.

The *Online Streaming Act* modernizes a century of broadcasting policy, but it also reminds that cultural sovereignty, whether analogue or digital, is never settled. It is continuously negotiated between institutions and publics, between Parliament Hill and Canadian living rooms, between the signals sent from above and the voices heard from below. ■

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Christine Cooling is a PhD student, Communication & Culture, at York University, book review editor at the *Journal of Radio & Audio Media*, and associate editor of the *Canadian Journal for the Academic Mind*.



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Bianca Wylie

## A digital infrastructure plan

Asserting digital sovereignty means mapping out the real world of digital infrastructure—and understanding which parts of it are best suited for public intervention

It would be nice, delightful even, if the country's current problems were technical in nature. But technology is always second order to politics. Technological systems reflect the politics of their environment and their funding. A government intent on increasing austerity, coupled with an enthusiasm for militarization, has no capacity to execute an inspiring formulation of digital sovereignty.

The idea that a country wants to have agency over its technology systems is understandable. But let's take care not to confuse this desire with anything resembling progressive politics. To achieve a progressive digital sovereignty requires investment, work, and

power shifting beyond anything current and past governments have shown the stomach for.

The chaos of the moment will not be the last in a line of upheavals, including an evolving relationship with our southern neighbour. In this context, we should be making all possible efforts to refuse tech policy that installs more rigid and stale colonial nationalism directly into our infrastructure, creating an ever more brittle culture. What's needed is a pluralistic and adaptive tech policy paradigm focused on localization, openness, repair, and maintenance. A paradigm that prioritizes investments in the people around the tech, not the tech itself.

This paradigm includes pragmatic acceptance of the current state—and use—of digital infrastructures in both public and private sectors. Consider three parts of this landscape: legacy infrastructures, the public sector data environment, and digital public infrastructure.

### Legacy infrastructures

Legacy infrastructures, in both the public and private sectors, are complex, deeply built out, and enmeshed. These are decades-old sets of investments in large, highly used, and hardened systems—from telecommunications to software to databases, many of which are not Canadian. These are, generally, monolithic systems, in engineering

shorthand. From a technical angle, these aren't the types of systems you change unless you must. In the public sector context, legacy systems are underfunded, taken for granted, and ill-maintained.

The idea that we must have Canadian versions of these systems is non-viable. It would cost hundreds of billions of dollars to replicate existing capacities, many of which are as banal as case management systems. Databases. These systems have been over-engineered, to our detriment. And while there is likely some value in understanding how to reorganize them in incremental ways, it would be a major work effort.

Much of our digital environment is like capital expenditures in decades past—things like highways or factories. The pieces aren't easily movable, and it would be folly to build them twice. There is, however, work to be done to build on top of and around them—but the dependencies will remain. Interdependence is not something that we can eliminate. There are hard constraints on the marginal value of investing public monies in managing these engineering realities differently.

### **The public sector data environment**

Next, turn to the public sector and its approach to data management. Recently, federal leaders have made announcements that signal desire to apply artificial intelligence to public service operations at all orders of government. There is, however (and thankfully), a wide gap between the realities of the public sector data environment, both federally, provincially, and at the local level, and the idea that major productivity gains are around the corner via automation.

Government-held data is subject to a range of regulations and conditions. At the operational level, there are still workflows that depend on manual extraction and copying from system to system. Beyond these technical frictions, there are also political, administrative, and legal ones—federalism, public sector culture, organizational design, and engineering constraints. These factors generally combine and conspire to stop anything from happening too quickly in public service reform. Which is a good thing.

Meanwhile, the federal government recently awarded a company named Cohere some type of access to our public data systems through a memorandum of understanding. The announcements about the endeavour are vague: improving public service operations and expanding commercial opportunities, with an emphasis on the value of supporting a Canadian company. There are numerous reasons why we can't run any old commercial product through a public sector data environment, but whether it's Canadian or not, we have to reorganize this discussion into one about labour rather than one about domestic innovation.

Most of the computational infrastructure in government bureaucracies manages banal tasks. Politicians'

recent enthusiasm to push public sector automation is driven by a longstanding political interest in efficiency. The question for policy here, as ever, is what, exactly, should be subject to automation, and why. One could argue that having more data scientists on hand is a better adaptive approach for long-term public benefit than any automated tooling.

### **Digital public infrastructure**

Finally, there is the matter of digital public infrastructure. This is a useful site for more attention in our digital sovereignty conversations. There is a track of digital public infrastructure work currently underway by the federal government, one that requires immense amounts of inter-departmental coordination. The three core parts of a digital public infrastructure program, as per the 2023 G20 multilateral consensus and guiding principles on digital public infrastructure, are: digital identity, digital payments, and data exchange systems.

Digital public infrastructure requires careful development, public engagement, and ongoing investments in maintenance to ensure issues related to democratic legitimacy, consent, accessibility, and surveillance are addressed. This program must also always include parallel investments in analogue systems for equity and redundancy purposes, as well as be optional rather than mandatory in its use.

Investment in digital public infrastructure is one approach to ensure that the increased focus on digital sovereignty does more than enrich a small number of Canadian tech firms—a handful of which are well-situated to receive billions of dollars in public money.

Digital public infrastructure helps create the conditions for more place-based innovation policy and effort, outcomes that build on the federal government's commitment to deliver universal high-speed internet access by 2030. This approach offers an alternative to the extractive shape of data centre placement politics—a political economy we should be running away from, not towards. It also encourages us to use best-of-class technology, as per international standards.

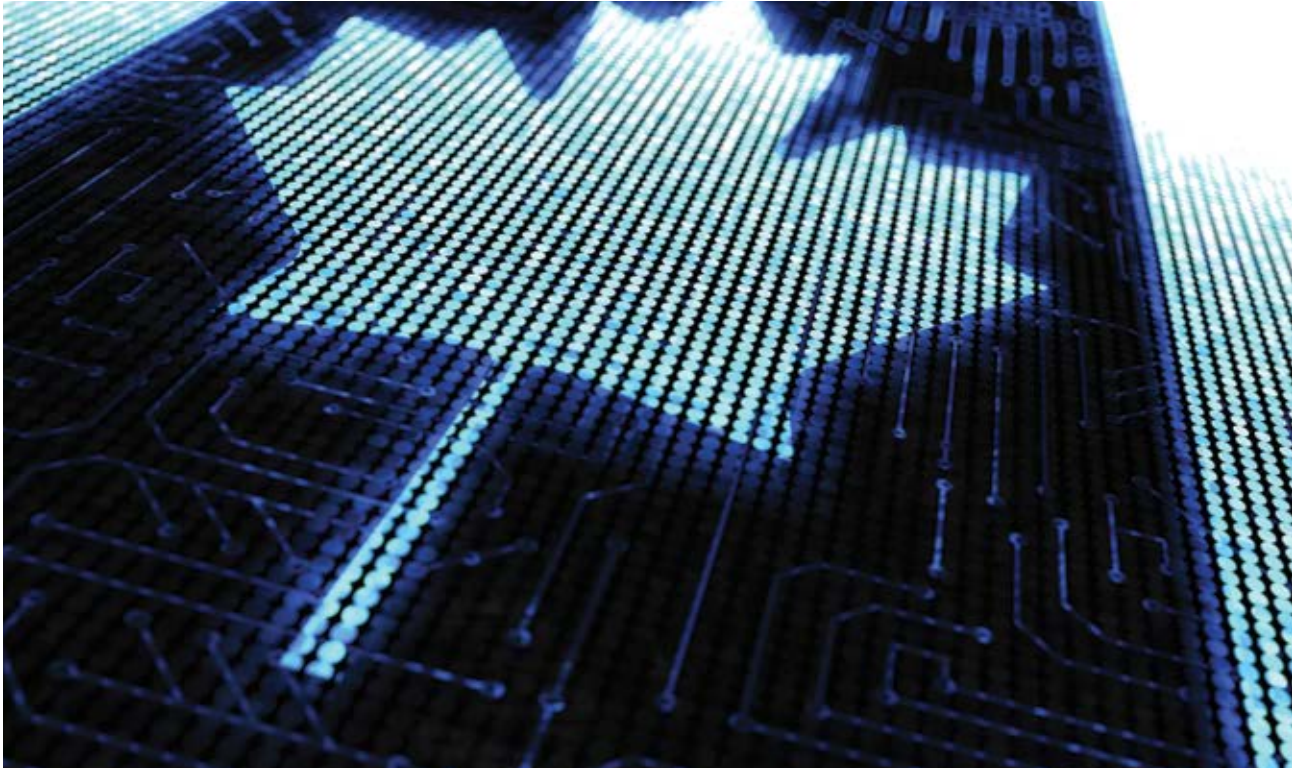
### **A digital industrial strategy**

The real world of digital sovereignty should be about investing in people over products. Digital anything is secondary to primary responsibilities of reconciliation, repair, and equity in service delivery and procurement.

The path we're on instead is techno-solutionism: the cheapest, straightest line governments can choose towards efficiency and savings, and the most impoverished innovation strategy possible for a young country with every opportunity to do differently. ■

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Bianca Wylie is a writer with a dual background in technology and public engagement. She is the founder of Time & Space Studios, a partner at Digital Public and a co-founder of Tech Reset Canada.



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Kaylie Tiessen

# The trade war goes digital

## Notes on how trade agreements prevent Canada from exercising digital sovereignty

Digital services represent one of Canada's fastest growing trade-related opportunities. According to the World Trade Organization, Canada's trade in digital services—both imports and exports—grew by more than 200 per cent between 2005 and 2024. Across industries, removing frictions from trade relationships has been a centrepiece of increasing total trade volumes, with real potential to help grow Canada's economy.

However, this pursuit of seamless digital trade has often come at the cost of digital sovereignty. In our quest to facilitate international trade, Canada agreed to rules that compromise our ability to fully

control and regulate our digital landscape. These agreements, while beneficial for trade, limit Canada's ability to protect our data, enforce privacy standards, and consider local economic interests.

Large tech firms in the U.S. and elsewhere can decide how social media operates, how disinformation spreads, and who can access our data if it is stored in an international data centre. None of that is sovereign.

The path to regaining governance capacity over our digital world is long. We need to impose current and new rules on large digital platforms. We also need to gain the right to hold platforms accountable in the first place.

The United States shields digital platforms from liability for third-party content through Section 230 of the *Communications Act* (1996). Canada enshrined something similar into CUSMA in 2018. This means that, while Canada could implement its own law that would hold digital platforms liable for hate speech published by a third party on its platform, only companies not subject to cross-border CUSMA rules would be required to follow it.

Canada hasn't been absent from the digital sovereignty fight. The current moment in Canada's economic history requires us to become more savvy about our digital trade agenda and rebuild the ability to regulate international

digital companies operating inside Canada. A core challenge to reclaiming sovereignty is that we've tied our hands through successive trade deals.

The digital chapter in CUSMA (Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement) may be the most egregious, but the CETA (EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement) and even the new Canada-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) restrict the ability of the Canadian government to regulate certain aspects of our digital economy in the public interest.

Under CUSMA's digital trade chapter, Canada promised not to pass rules that treat American or Mexican digital products—such as apps, e-books, online games, streaming content and connected software—worse than a similar Canadian digital product. That means Canada can't develop a law or regulation that explicitly boosts made-in-Canada apps through higher rankings, lower fees or taxes foreign digital products more heavily, as these would likely fail the non-discrimination test. One exception to this rule is for defence-related purchases.

We're also barred from requiring that data collected by foreign companies be processed and stored locally—that means that even if Canada builds a true sovereign cloud, the country will not be able to require digital giants based in the United States to use it.

CUSMA bars us from requiring transparency from any digital provider regarding their source code or algorithms—bye-bye social media and AI safety. We cannot restrict the cross-border transfer of information by electronic means unless it is necessary to achieve a legitimate public policy objective. And once data has crossed the border, it is no longer subject to Canada's laws, including privacy laws.

Like CUSMA, the CEPA and CETA require that suppliers from their countries are treated no less favourably than Canadian firms—making “buy Canadian” more difficult to achieve.

The CETA agreement also made it more difficult for financial regulators and supervisors to act or react to changing markets by designing laws or regulations to curb undesirable market behaviour or outcomes.

The U.S.'s *CLOUD Act* (Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data), which is not a trade agreement, allows U.S. authorities to gather American companies to disclose data, including e-mail and other electronic communication, documents stored on a cloud and non-content data.

Canada has spent numerous legislative sessions trying to assert some form of sovereignty over the markets digital conglomerates operate in. The *Online Streaming Act*, the *Online News Act* and the *Online Harms Act* are all recent, high-profile examples of the federal government trying to exert autonomy and control over our digital world, with one hand tied behind their back.

Meta and Google had different approaches to undermining the *Online News Act*, but undermine they did—Google by negotiating a lower price tag in exchange for its agreement to pay, and Meta by blocking Canadian news from its apps entirely.

TikTok was banned from all federal government devices and the company was forced to close its Canada office. That hasn't changed the fact that the data TikTok collects from Canadians travels across borders and can be accessed under the rules of whatever country the data is stored in. The move may have given the public the illusion of action but deeper questions about what was achieved remain.

Achieving full digital sovereignty requires multiple infrastructures and rules layered on top of each other.

In September, 70 individuals and national organizations published an open letter listing 14 recommendations that, together, can help build digital sovereignty. They range from introducing a new and improved online harms act and reconsidering the cancellation of the digital services tax to establishing a national observatory for digital governance and building the capacity of the public service to govern the digital marketplace.

Prime Minister Mark Carney has mentioned a sovereign cloud, with a plan to build data centres across the country. In their election platform, the Liberals promised to regulate AI and to unlock its full potential. That's not possible without digital sovereignty.

All of these efforts will absolutely help us build sovereign digital infrastructure. But without renegotiating trade rules, any company operating in Canada will have the ability to opt out of most regulations the government sets.

If we don't have control over what digital tech companies are and are not allowed to do with our data or how they are or are not allowed to manipulate us, then they will always be in charge and we will always be subordinate.

Right now they decide what information is delivered to our feeds, how disinformation is allowed to spread and whether or not kids are at risk of being addicted to technology. In the United States, they can be made to share our data with authorities. They decide how e-commerce businesses and large companies are ranked in apps, what books are recommended for us to read and what job advertisements Canadians see.

With the right digital alternatives in place, Canadians could choose to avoid the extractive, manipulative architecture that puts all of our privacy and sovereignty at risk. But those other options will always be available if we're not allowed to kick them out, or require them to operate by our rules.

Canada needs our sovereignty back. Getting it will require rewriting trade rules. ■

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Kaylie Tiessen is the chief economist at SHIELD.

# Delusion factories

## Reining in the corrosive effects of disinformation

Canadians are increasingly aware of the corrosive effects of disinformation on democratic institutions.

The spread of disinformation has catalyzed support for fringe movements and undermined trust in the democratic process. The Canadian government has recognized the detrimental effects of disinformation on Canadian politics and democracy.

Other countries have taken decisive steps to tackle disinformation. The European Union has passed binding regulations; Australia mandated revenue-sharing between platforms and legacy media; India banned TikTok for violating national laws.

Meanwhile, Canada's policy response remains limited and piecemeal—it's time for Canada to take this issue seriously.

### Social media platforms as disinformation drivers

The line between domestic disinformation and foreign interference is blurring—and Canada has yet to sufficiently respond to the disinformation proliferating on American platforms, like X and Meta. When disinformation promotes annexation or incites distrust in democratic systems, its effect is institutional erosion. The Freedom Convoy protests, the rise of Wexit separatism, and declining trust in elections have all been fueled by online disinformation.

X (formerly Twitter) has become a hub for hate speech. After Elon Musk's takeover of X, hundreds of white nationalist accounts were unbanned. Musk himself is a perpetrator of disinformation—spreading

conspiracy theories, calling former Prime Minister Trudeau 'governor,' and re-sharing disinformation from Rebel News.

Meta has removed Canadian news from its platform in response to federal legislation mandating the company to compensate Canadian legacy media. Meta has also ended its fact-checking program, which had existed specifically to target disinformation on the platform.

These compromised platforms are riddled with insufficient—or non-existent—fact-checking tools and Canada has been hesitant to regulate them directly.

### Disinformation as foreign interference

Canada has a foreign interference problem, and it's coming through our phones. The Communications Security Establishment (CSE) and Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) have issued repeated warnings about hostile state actors weaponizing online spaces to weaken democratic cohesion. Their strategy is familiar: polarize, destabilize, exploit.

Canadians have also become more distrustful of social media as a news source, yet, young people, aged 15 to 34, 85 per cent reported getting news or information from social media or the internet. Amid the decline of legacy media and the growing inability of Canadians to discern fact from disinformation, the Canadian government must reinvest in and support traditional journalism to combat disinformation.

If Canada goes back to the fundamentals of what the CSIS defines as foreign interference, Meta rolling back fact-checking is in conflict

with the *Online News Act* and disallowing Canadian content on their platforms could be constituted as detrimental to the interests of Canada.

Platforms are not neutral. Their algorithms and recommendation systems optimize for engagement, not truth. The most emotionally charged content rises to the top—often conspiratorial, inflammatory, or outright false.

### What can we use from Canada's toolbox?

The spread of disinformation continues to destabilize Canadian democracy, fuel ideological extremism, and erode trust in public institutions. While Canada has been slow to act at the platform level, it already possesses legal and institutional tools that, if sharpened or reinterpreted, could offer partial solutions.

**Canada Elections Act, s. 91 (Bill C-76):** Prohibits publishing false information about candidates or election officials to influence results. However, the removal of the "knowingly" standard makes it both broader and more legally vulnerable. The Act does not clearly apply to foreign actors who target Canadian audiences, leaving a gap in enforcement when it comes to disinformation originating outside the country. Clarifying or amending this section could help address the role of foreign political figures or influencers in Canadian elections.

**Criminal Code s. 319:** Covers hate propaganda, including speech that promotes genocide or incites hatred. Therefore, it could apply to disinformation campaigns that promote hate against marginalized

groups. However, prosecutions under this section are rare, and it doesn't address how such content spreads algorithmically on major platforms.

**Public safety briefings:** CSIS and CSE regularly warn of disinformation's role in ideologically motivated extremism; this opens the door for invoking emergency tools if foreign interference can be proven.

**Support legacy media:** In the absence of trustworthy news outlets, Canadians are left vulnerable to the spread of disinformation online. Reinvesting in legacy media is essential to ensure citizens have access to accurate, reliable information that upholds democratic discourse.

Each of these existing tools offers a narrow entry point to address disinformation, but none are currently being used in a way that reflects the scale or structure of the problem. Expanding these tools could allow for a more targeted response: adapting election laws to cover foreign interference, enforcing hate propaganda laws against coordinated disinformation campaigns, and recognizing foreign disinformation as a stand alone national security threat.

The biggest shortcoming is a lack of coordinated strategy. Canada has no hard laws regulating algorithmic manipulation or platform accountability for spreading disinformation or hate speech. Although CSIS and CSE have recognized the role of disinformation, foreign disinformation still lacks the formal classification as a national security crime unless tied to espionage, terrorism, or sabotage.

If Canada is to take disinformation more seriously, it will need new and improved public policy tools that respect constitutional rights such as freedom of expression. To better understand how these platforms could be held accountable to our hate-speech laws, we can look to examples from abroad.

## Learning from the EU

The European Union's regulatory frameworks demonstrate that serious regulation of disinformation is both feasible and enforceable. The *Digital Services Act* (DSA) and the *Digital Markets Act* shift responsibility onto platforms, requiring algorithmic transparency, systemic risk assessments, and clear moderation procedures. These aren't vague guidelines. They come with teeth. Failure to comply can result in fines of up to six per cent of the company's global revenue.

Canada can follow suit by shifting away from voluntary moderation and moving toward structural reform: mandating transparency about how platforms curate content, requiring that users be allowed to opt out of algorithmic recommendation systems, and ensuring that independent researchers have access to platform data.

The EU's Code of Practice on Disinformation also shows that voluntary commitments only work when paired with regulatory pressure. U.S. big tech



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companies, like Meta and X, have resisted transparency even under EU law, proving that self-regulation fails without legal consequences.

Canada has some legal tools, but without holding platforms accountable for how they function—not just what they host—these tools fall short. The EU's approach offers a model: treat disinformation as a systemic risk and regulate the infrastructure that enables it.

## Canada's next steps

If platforms continue to amplify disinformation, refuse transparency, and undermine Canadian democratic institutions, regulation alone may not be enough. In extreme cases, countries have turned to stronger measures to protect their information ecosystems.

Countries like Australia, India, and Pakistan have already taken bold steps like forcing platform compliance or imposing partial shutdowns when national interests were at stake. Australia even pushed Facebook into a revenue-sharing agreement with local media. These aren't knee-jerk bans—they are calculated policy decisions in response to repeat offenders.

Canada has already banned TikTok from federal devices and shut down its offices in Canada. Those precedents matter. If platforms are hosting annexationist content, promoting foreign state propaganda, and dismantling trust in Canadian institutions, why should they maintain unrestricted access to Canadian users? ■

# The backup plan

## A framework for protecting the Canadian digital public square, inspired by the European Union

At present, the Canadian government's ability to regulate Canadian digital space is hampered by international agreements. Specifically, sections 17.19.2 and 17.19.3 of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) form a liability shield protecting online media companies. This threatens our digital sovereignty and increases our susceptibility to online harms. Canadian negotiators should aim to remove—or at least modify—these sections during the upcoming 2026 CUSMA review. However, a backup plan is necessary.

The *European Union Digital Services Act* (EU DSA) could inspire a framework to address disinformation and online harms in Canada that would be permissible, even given an unchanged legal context—including the World Trade Organization General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). The framework should emphasize reasonable transparency and regular reviews for accountability and assurance of good faith acting on the part of private corporations that now moderate the digital public squares of the 21st century.

This framework will need a name. Let's call it the *Online Platform and Intermediary Integrity Act*.

The framework could start with a voluntary code of conduct agreement on disinformation, similar to the EU's DSA Code of Conduct. Disinformation is a central multiplier of harms—it not only confuses people but also can lead them to make decisions that are not in their own interest and may harm others. This mechanism might be called

the *Reasonable Code of Conduct Agreement on Disinformation*.

Signatories would commit to demonetizing disinformation content and actors, ensuring political advertising transparency, clear labelling of Coordinated Inauthentic Behaviour, provisions of user empowerment tools (data privacy, additional filtering and blocking controls, and avoidance of “dark patterns” in design), and supporting independent research.

There should also be some risk-based platform obligations. Platforms could be required to conduct periodic risk assessments—annual for Very Large Online Platforms, and every second year for smaller platforms.

The definition of Very Large Online Platforms will need tailoring to the Canadian context, with options including user thresholds, adherence to EU designations, or a combinatory system.

Platforms would then be required to publish mitigation plans and implementation timelines, and regulatory authorities could request redacted assessment disclosures. The only things redacted would be those that fall under the category of trade secrets or information of similar nature.

Platforms could be required to publish standardized transparency reports, and a multi-stakeholder body would develop reporting metrics.

There would also need to be auditing and oversight. Very Large Online Platforms might be subject to annual third-party audits, with findings published in redacted form to safeguard sensitive information. An office, perhaps called the Platform Transparency and Integrity Office, would coordinate independent audits, facilitate research access to platform data, and act as a liaison with international regulatory counterparts.

In keeping with our CUSMA obligations, platforms would not be treated as content creators—unless they do actually create the content—and would, therefore, not be liable for content, which is required under CUSMA. Platforms would simply have procedural obligations (reporting, auditing, transparency).

A rapid takedown mechanism responsive to the needs of people victimized by the spread of content

Safeguarding our digital commons demands robust policy, vigilance and innovation

like “revenge porn,” in the form of a mechanism that anyone could use to report material, and which platforms would be required to review and act on quickly should also be implemented. This mechanism would also notify the users who produced the content with the given reasons and give them the option of appeal.

Finally, funding needs to be considered. Europe’s DSA essentially charges “supervisory fees” capped at 0.05 per cent of EU revenues, and it seems reasonable to mimic such a system. The disbursement of such funds would be under the purview of the Platform Transparency and Integrity Office.

This is more of a guide than an extensive elaboration. There are also two major deviations from Europe’s DSA:

1. Very Large Online Search Engines are excluded on grounds of complexity, diplomatic risks, and Charter concerns. Focusing on Very Large Online Platforms allows Canada to target the most pressing harms, match regulatory capacity to need, and build an incremental approach that can expand later if necessary.
2. There are no comparable individuated units like the DSA’s Digital Service Coordinators, which operate on a national level in the EU. Adapting such a structure to Canadian provinces would likely only invite disharmony to no real benefit.

## Getting started

**Step 1:** Initiate a series of multi-stakeholder consultations to draft the anti-disinformation policy—these would include platform representatives, government officials, academics, and researchers. These are essential to work out agreeable terms and engage the relevant parties in a long-term dialogue that increases buy-in.

**Step 2:** The establishment of the responsible office and the creation of standards for reporting and audits would have to come into being.

**Step 3:** A pilot anti-disinformation policy with willing platforms and iterations based on audit findings. From here, the transparency data and evidence from the pilots could be used to build support for potential future statutory powers.

Together, these mechanisms could hamper disinformation and online harms in several ways. By demonetizing disinformation content and ensuring transparency in political advertising and Coordinated Inauthentic Behaviour, the framework would reduce the financial incentives for spreading harmful content and would increase accountability. User empowerment tools to fact check and report disinformation, along with supports for independent research, would help with the identification and mitigation of harmful content.

Research should further increase our capacity to perceive patterns that might be used to track developing issues, and potentially even create checkpoint-style notification systems for individual users to allow them to access resources.

Risk assessments and the publication of mitigation plans would ensure that platforms are proactive in addressing emerging threats, like those related to hate group campaigns and Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence.

Transparency reports and third-party audits would enhance accountability and allow for independent scrutiny, ensuring that harmful content is addressed promptly and effectively. Additionally, the explicit legal protections from liability should encourage more voluntary cooperation and foster a less antagonistic relationship between all relevant parties.

This Canadian DSA-like framework is likely to face criticism on free expression grounds, with concerns that takedown duties could chill speech, as well as pushback over costs, and fears of government overreach. These risks can be mitigated by limiting content removals to clearly illegal content, embedding strong procedural safeguards (appeals, transparency, misuse protections), and framing supervisory fees as capped cost-recovery measures. For Very Large Online Platforms, this framework offers real advantages: regulatory certainty, alignment with the EU DSA, lower litigation risk, and reputational benefits from demonstrating accountability.

Another concern in the Canadian context is that of increased bureaucracy, which is often framed as a waste of taxpayer funds. However, as with the DSA, supervisory fees would be designed to effectively pay for the entire *Online Platform and Intermediary Integrity Act*. It might even make sense to frame it as the creation of new jobs.

In the end, safeguarding our digital commons demands robust policy and a spirit of collective vigilance and innovation. As we reimagine the boundaries of platform responsibility and user empowerment, the tools we forge become the architecture of a more resilient online world. It is here, at this intersection of regulation and cooperation, that the promise of a safer, fairer, and more truthful digital future can be realized for Canada. The challenge lies in our willingness to act as stewards to the vast and delicate landscape where our lives increasingly unfold. We need to forge a way ahead that mitigates the risks and harms inherent to our evermore chronically online lives. ■

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Gabriel Rojas Hruška is a writer and researcher committed to ethical, inclusive approaches to technology and public policy.

Stuart Trew

# CUSMA 2.NO

Given the U.S. administration's violent aggressions at home and abroad, its abandonment of any pretense of addressing the climate emergency, and its beggar-thy-neighbour trade policy, how should the federal government approach this year's review of the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA)?

How about, not at all?

Behind spurious claims about correcting trade imbalances and addressing the fentanyl crisis, the Trump administration's clear goal is to drain jobs from Canada and Mexico. Sectoral tariffs on steel, aluminum, copper, automobiles and automotive parts, furniture, lumber, heavy trucks, buses and likely more products to come fundamentally jeopardize Canada's and Mexico's economic prosperity.

How does Canada salvage a fair rules-based trading relationship with the U.S. under such economic coercion? Why would we even try when the outcome is almost certain to include high tariffs on important Canadian exports?

Recent U.S. "deals" with Malaysia, Cambodia, Japan, South Korea and the European Union are one-sided lists of concessions to Trump that leave tariffs in place—and leave countries defenseless against future U.S. actions. We doubt Canada or Mexico will fare much better.

Even if the CUSMA review gets underway in a reasonable manner, a new bargain that deepens Canada-U.S. integration (e.g., by harmonizing customs tariffs, investment screening policy and other economic security measures with the Trump administration) would weaken Canada's national economic development options

and undermine relations with other countries.

We might be better off letting the agreement die, or at least letting it fester until a more reasonable administration is in place in Washington.

Canadian business lobby concerns about losing CUSMA are delusional. The agreement provides none of the investment certainty they claim it does. Prior to Trump's latest tariff tantrum, many Canadian and U.S. firms were paying low U.S. most-favoured nation tariff rates on cross-border trade rather than benefiting from CUSMA's tariff-free option.

Among the half-dozen disputes lodged under CUSMA's dispute settlement chapter, only one challenge was successful against the U.S.—related to how customs agents calculate North American content in automotive parts—and the Biden administration ignored it. Far from being essential to North American trade relations, CUSMA may be useless.

While running for prime minister, Mark Carney wisely pointed out that the old Canada-U.S. relationship, "based on deepening integration of our economies and tight security and military cooperation, is over." The Trump administration's hostile trade wars against Mexico and Canada force us to "fundamentally reimagine our economy," Carney said.

Unfortunately, as prime minister, Carney's actions have seemed to reinforce, rather than diverge, from corporate elite preferences for deeper integration.

Retaliatory tariffs, which buffeted the blow of U.S. steel and aluminum tariffs—and sent a message to Washington that Canada would

not be bullied—were withdrawn. A carefully developed digital services tax was mothballed at Trump's urging, but with no apparent effect on Canada-U.S. trade negotiations. Canadian content rules for streaming services may be next to go.

Instead of scrambling for an inevitably temporary settlement with the boorish Trump gang, Canada should refuse to participate in any CUSMA review while tariffs remain in place. Trade defences against Trump's economic warfare—including retaliatory tariffs and restrictions on exports to, and investment from, the U.S.—should go back up. The digital services tax should be un-paused.

If the government feels obliged to participate in the CUSMA review, under no circumstances should Canada make any further concessions to the Trump administration in areas such as digital trade, supply management, cultural policies or national security integration.

While the CCPA, along with Mexican and U.S. trade justice and human rights advocates, submitted recommendations to our respective governments in November for CUSMA reforms that would benefit workers, Indigenous Peoples and the environment, we have little hope they will be considered. Trump will almost certainly threaten to or actually pull out of the treaty as leverage to strike harder bargains with Canada and Mexico.

In that event, the Carney and Sheinbaum governments, in consultation with the public, should strike a new bargain—set a new model for rules-based trade that takes into account binding human rights and climate obligations on states. ■

Stuart Trew is director of the CCPA's Trade and Investment Research Project.

Agnes Black, Kaitlin Bloemberg, Caroline Murphy

# Health care workers seeing price of climate change inaction

The summer of 2025 will be remembered in Canada as the year that wildfires threatened our health and our homes, from coast to coast to coast, from Northwest Territories to Nova Scotia, from Manitoba to B.C. The area burned this year is larger than the country of Ireland.

Worsened by climate change, wildfire and extreme heat are harming the health of Canadians and putting our health care system at risk. Dangerous air quality warnings have resulted from catastrophic wildfires burning across the Prairies, and tens of thousands of Canadians have been evacuated from their homes. Regardless of how wildfires start, climate change-enabled hot and dry conditions dramatically increase their risk and spread.

When it comes to the health care systems that care for us, recent reports show that even under low-emissions scenarios, heat-related hospitalization rates are expected to increase by 21 per cent by 2050, while the costs of death and reduced quality of life from heat events are projected to be \$3 billion per year. Mental health challenges, such as depression and anxiety, are currently associated with productivity losses of \$51 billion per year in Canada. Experts expect this to increase due to climate change and add significant strain to the health care system. Recent research from British Columbia found heightened feelings of anxiety and distress among youth due to climate change, echoing findings of global youth studies on this topic.

As nurses and nurse practitioners, we have seen the direct

impacts of climate change on our patients' health and on our health care system. We are deeply concerned that Canada is not moving swiftly enough to shift patterns of investment, creating green jobs and green infrastructure.

In Canada, this year is the first time that "zombie fires"—fires that smoulder over the winter and return in the spring—have lasted two winters. These fires are not typically visible as they are buried underground, spread slowly with little oxygen, and then flare again in spring with higher winds and dry weather.

Climate scientists expect that wildfires will transition from being seasonal occurrences to year-round burning. The impacts on the communities near wildfires, and on the communities and health care systems receiving evacuees, and the air quality (and respiratory health) of the country cannot be understated.

A recent actuarial report lays out the economic case very starkly.

"The risk of Planetary Insolvency looms unless we act decisively. Without immediate policy action to change course, catastrophic or extreme impacts are eminently plausible..."

Framing the issue even more bluntly, U.S. politician Sheldon Whitehouse noted, "Climate risk makes things uninsurable. No insurance makes things unmortgageable. No mortgages crashes the property markets. Crashed property markets trash the economy. It all begins with climate risk."

Author John Valliant writes that our current global economic system is an unsustainable one whose collapse is inevitable—a system leveraged against the viability of our future world. He notes that since around the year 2000, global temperatures have been rising noticeably, and our carbon "debt" has become unsustainable. We are now facing the consequences.



All of us want to promote health for Canadians, a robust health care system and a strong economy. This cannot be achieved while our leaders are failing to consider the short- and long-term costs of climate change. While we can and must take steps to adapt to climate change (by creating stronger emergency preparedness systems, etc.). We must also work at mitigation, containing the problem upstream by moving rapidly away from fossil fuels.

Experts advise that while “deep, rapid, and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions would lead to a discernible slowdown in global warming within around two decades,” failure to do so may lead to irreversible impacts on our food and water systems.

World economic leaders posit that taking strong action to address climate change will increase countries’ economic growth, rather than slow it, and that setting bold targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and creating the policies to achieve them, “would result in a net gain to global GDP by the end of the next decade.”

It is urgent that politicians not only acknowledge these true costs but fund solutions to the climate crisis. Governments must make major investments in renewable energy now, so that we can transition away from fossil fuels. Climate scientists argue that we must “prioritise earth system health over short-term economic metrics.”

As nurses and a nurse practitioner who have committed our careers to promoting health, we urge Canada’s leaders to protect population health, our economy and our health care system by urgently addressing upstream causes of climate change, acting swiftly to cut emissions, and protecting future generations. ■

The authors are members of Canadian Association of Nurses for the Environment (CANE-ACIE), which represents nurses dedicated to the improvement of planetary health across all domains of nursing practice, policy, research and education.



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## Viewpoint

Gavin Fridell

# Canada needs green steel and iron

Prime Minister Mark Carney and his ministers have set up camp in Washington, D.C., hoping to convince President Trump to reduce tariffs on imported Canadian steel, aluminum, lumber and automobiles.

At the same time, the federal government and many provinces are helping businesses seek out new opportunities in Europe and Asia, to lessen Canada’s trade dependence on the U.S., while teasing out the semblance of a domestically oriented industrial strategy.

Often lost—or, more worryingly, buried—in the trade chaos is the ever-present burden of climate change. The need for Canada to chart a pathway to a greener future is still there, as Prime Minister Carney acknowledges when he says Canada should become an “energy superpower” in conventional and clean energy technologies, including nuclear and hydro power, hydrogen, battery storage, and carbon capture and storage.

Given calls from labour and industry for a more coordinated, economy-wide response from the government, Canada should not overlook the value of green steel and iron in national development and trade diversification plans.

In their recent report, *Strategic Decarbonization of the Canadian Iron and Steel Industry*, Jonas Algers and Chris Bataille argue that Canada is well suited—given its resources, skilled workforce, geography and infrastructure—to become a leader in green steel and green iron for domestic use and export. Turning this potential into actual production is the hard part.

Despite dreams of clean energy leadership, Canada continues to facilitate the expansion of oil and gas, what the World Bank calls “dirty” goods.

Canada is the world’s fifth largest energy exporter, mostly fossil fuels that contribute to climate change. Carney has promoted these industries as nation-building

opportunities for growth. Media reports suggest the federal government has proposed to President Trump that the defunct Keystone XL oil pipeline be revived in exchange for U.S. tariff relief on steel and aluminum.

While Canada has no shortage of scientific achievements to help decarbonize the economy, the reality is that it has fallen behind in implementation—where new technologies are deployed, scaled, tested, and improved, leading to greater efficiency and lower costs, as Ezra Klein and Derek Thompson outline in their book, *Abundance*.

One indication of Canada's laggard status is solar power, where global supply chains are dominated by China, thanks to its top-down model combining subsidies and protections with mandated targets to become a world leader. China manufactures 80 per cent of solar modules. Canada is the headquarters of one of the world's largest solar companies, Canadian Solar, but almost all of its manufacturing is in China, Southeast Asia, and the United States.

A similar story exists in wind power, with China dominating 64 per cent of all value in global supply chains in 2023. This includes a dominant role in manufacturing turbine nacelles, gearboxes, generators, blades, power converters, towers, rare earth minerals, and steel. Canada stands out in blades, manufacturing 0.6 per cent of the global total.

There is a lot of talk around critical minerals needed for the latest technologies, including electric vehicles (EV) and renewables. Even here, China dominates, producing critical minerals far cheaper than most competitors, often in environmentally damaging ways, cornering key markets. China accounts for 95 per cent of battery-grade graphite and rare earths, 70 per cent of lithium, 65 per cent of nickel, and 75 per cent of cobalt.

There is no simple road to clean energy "superpower" status, but the first step must be acknowledging how far Canada has fallen behind. From there, it will be possible to develop policies that strengthen Canada's standing in key industries. This will include steel and iron.

As Algers and Bataille note in their report, these linked sectors account for 11 per cent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and two per cent of Canada's total emissions. They also currently sustain 23,000 direct, generally well-paying jobs in Canada, and indirectly support 100,000 more.

Iron ore, the key component in steel, is mostly mined in Quebec and Labrador. Most steel processing takes place in Ontario and Quebec, drawing primarily on iron ore imported from Minnesota. The iron sector is larger than steel, worth \$5 billion in 2022, making it Canada's fourth most valuable mined mineral.

In 2023, Canada was the world's third largest exporter of iron ore, producing 13.9 metric tons for domestic use and 55.1 metric tons for export largely to the European Union, China, Japan and South Korea. Canadian steel is generally cleaner than its peers, and

40 per cent is produced with scrap in low-emission electric arc furnaces (EAFs). The remaining 60 per cent, however, is produced with high-emitting blast furnaces, a major contributor to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

It is here that Algers and Bataille see a key node for intervention. Currently, iron ore is shipped, as pellets, to mills where it is combined with coke (from coal) and reduced to iron in blast furnaces before being turned into steel. The pair argue, instead, that iron ore can be converted into hot briquetted iron (HBI) close to mining sites, using green hydrogen from renewable resources (hydro and new onshore wind) as a reducing agent. The result is "green iron."

This industrial transition is entirely feasible and the industry is already making important moves, if at an insufficient pace. Algoma and ArcelorMittal Dofasco mills in Ontario have begun transitioning to EAF steel, although it remains unclear what iron they will source and the extent to which they will draw on natural gas as a main energy source.

Algers and Bataille draw parallels between Canada and Sweden, which is emerging as a leader in green steel and iron. Despite similar conditions in both countries, "total emission reductions put forward by the three Swedish [steel] companies amount to over 50 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, while the Canadian companies have planned emission reductions totalling 6.2 million tonnes," they write.

There are challenges that need to be overcome for a just and "worker-centered" transition. Much of the current interest from corporate steel makers in EAF, after all, is based on the fact it is less labour intensive, allowing them to shed workers.

Indigenous communities must be directly involved in the planning and equity of any expansion of mining or wind energy, based on free, prior and informed consent. Furthermore, while a shift to green iron and steel could increase employment in Quebec and Labrador, jobs could decline in Ontario (where the mills are) and Alberta and B.C. (where coal is mined).

Algers and Bataille argue government and industry must adopt a "holistic approach" that shifts workers from declining industries into new ones, like hydrogen and wind turbine production.

While not an easy challenge, it is something other countries, including China, the EU and South Korea, are pursuing, making the switch to green steel and iron in manufacturing and demand.

"Canada's natural resources and infrastructure offer significant advantages for green HBI production, enabling greater domestic value capture while helping trading partners to decarbonise their iron and steel industries," Algers and Bataille write.

Canada can become a leader in this emerging green industry, or it could be left behind. ■

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Gavin Fridell is a research professor in Global Development Studies at Saint Mary's University in Halifax.

Jasmine Ramze Rezaee and Leila Sarangi

# Canada's poverty goal is falling behind

Canada vowed to end poverty by 2030, yet progress has stalled. The government can't wait any longer to deliver real solutions.

In 2018, the Trudeau government launched *Opportunity for All*, Canada's first-ever national poverty reduction strategy. It established an official poverty line and set legislated poverty reduction targets: a 20 per cent cut by 2020, and a 50 per cent cut by 2030, compared to 2015 levels. The plan also created the National Advisory Council on Poverty, tasked with monitoring progress and holding governments accountable.

At the time, the ambition was clear: build a Canada without poverty, where economic growth actually lifts everyone.

Between 2015 and 2019, poverty declined. New investments like the Canada Child Benefit, enhancements to the Guaranteed Income Supplement, and improvements to the Canada Workers Benefit helped millions of Canadians. The government showed that poverty is not inevitable—it is a policy choice.

But in recent years, that progress has stalled. Disappointedly, we are seeing the highest increases in poverty on record.

According to Statistics Canada, 3.8 million people were living in poverty in 2022. By 2023, the most recent numbers available, the official poverty rate had risen to 10.2 per cent, up from 9.9 per cent the year before. For the first time since the strategy began, poverty is climbing. At this pace, Canada risks missing its 2030 target and could even fall behind the 2020 benchmark it has already achieved.

This isn't just a matter of numbers. Rising poverty means more workers unable to keep up with rent or groceries despite holding down jobs, and more children growing up with the stress and stigma of going without. It means food insecurity, already at record highs, will deepen, disproportionately affecting communities that already face systemic barriers, including Indigenous, Black, and single-parent-led households. And it means homelessness, which has already doubled in Canada since 2018, will become even more prevalent.

We are seeing these trends because a growing number of people are worse off. In the first quarter of 2025, income inequality reached another record high, beating the previous record set last year. Inequality is growing at precisely the moment when public trust in institutions is fraying.

Clearly, the problem isn't that Canada lacks a strategy. It's that the political urgency we saw in 2018 has faded. Under Carney's government, the conversation has shifted toward fiscal restraint, budget cuts, and austerity measures, even as millions of Canadians struggle to make ends meet.

Poverty reduction is no longer treated as a national priority.

We don't need to be told to wait for further economic growth to justify spending today. We need concrete action.

Canada has already proven what works: strong income supports, investments in housing, child care, and public services, and a commitment to measure progress and act

on evidence. What's missing now is the will to stay the course.

The cost of inaction on poverty far outweighs any investment required to address it. Every dollar spent on social programs, income supports, and targeted benefits is dwarfed by the long-term consequences of poverty: poorer health outcomes, lower educational attainment, lost productivity, and increased social service expenditures. One study from 2008 estimates the annual cost of poverty at roughly \$80 billion, a figure that is undoubtedly higher today.

And, again, the numbers only capture a sliver of the story. There are profound moral costs in allowing fellow Canadians to struggle needlessly and democratic costs as well: widening inequality erodes trust in institutions, undermines social cohesion, and threatens the legitimacy of our political system. Poverty is not just an economic issue. It is a test of our values as a society and the strength of our democracy.

At a time of rising polarization and extremism we can and must do more.

If Canada fails to deliver on its own legislated targets, it will not just be a policy failure; it will be a betrayal of the millions of people who were told they would not be left behind. Poverty reduction was never meant to be a short-term experiment. It was supposed to be a heartfelt commitment backed by tangible actions. It's time for the Canadian government to step up. ■

Jasmine Ramze Rezaee is the director of Policy and Community Action at Right To Food and Leila Sarangi is the senior director of Strategy and Innovation with Family Service Toronto and a national director for Campaign 2000.



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Kaitlin Peters and Ariane Hotte

## Posties' child care program is cutting edge

Unions have long been champions in the fight for better child care. From organizing child care workers to speaking out for more accessible, affordable, and high-quality services, they've played a vital role in pushing the conversation forward.

One of the most striking examples comes from the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) and its Child Care Fund. This initiative not only helps expand high-quality licensed child care, it also steps in where government systems fall short, especially for postal workers caring for young and adult children with disabilities.

The impact goes beyond individual households and CUPW

members. The union's work shines a light on the gaps in government policy, showing how unions continue to serve their members while fighting for the broader public good. By treating child care not as a private problem but as a social justice issue, they're helping to build a future where care is a collective responsibility. Such efforts will contribute to transforming child care into a government funded public good every household has the right to access.

CUPW members began to demand more support for child care in the 1970s and 1980s, as more women joined the workforce at Canada Post. Many of these women began speaking up about the

child care challenges they faced, whether it was finding backup care, securing options for evening and night shifts, or simply accessing reliable services. Their concerns were voiced to CUPW and Canada Post management, and in 1991, CUPW successfully bargained for a groundbreaking solution: a jointly administered child care fund capped at \$2 million.

The fund was designed to support child care projects and carry out child care needs assessments and research. It was a trailblazer; the first of its kind in North America, and among the first in the world. But in its early years, the fund fell short of its potential. That changed in 1995, when CUPW

secured sole control and hired a dedicated child care coordinator, transforming the fund into a powerful tool for change. To this day, Canada Post continues to provide money to support the fund, and the union manages the fund's projects.

From the beginning, CUPW placed equity and accessibility at the heart of its work, with one of its first major investments dedicated to supporting parents of children with special needs. In 1996, the union produced *In Our Way*, Canada's first study on the workplace barriers faced by parents of children with disabilities. The results were clear: these families faced steep costs for out-of-pocket expenses not covered by government benefits, including for essential specialized equipment and private therapy to bypass long public waitlists.

In response, CUPW partnered with SpecialLink, the National Centre for Child Care Inclusion, to launch the Special Needs Project. As part of this project, CUPW provides a benefit based on individualized funding to help postal workers offset expenses such as respite care, child care, transportation, and uninsured health services for children with disabilities aged 0 to 18. The Moving On Project extends similar support to parents of adult children with disabilities, covering costs like life skills training and equipment.

Beyond these additional costs, parents of children with disabilities continue to face persistent challenges navigating fragmented services, especially for immigrant parents, who may experience language barriers and lack familiarity with complex and bureaucratic government systems. In response, CUPW employs bilingual Special Needs Advisors and support navigators who provide members with personalized guidance and connect members with services that can be difficult to locate on their own.

While these provisions can't completely ease the financial strain and stress of caring for a child with a disability, CUPW's fund and advisory support offers postal workers' families recognition and some relief by helping bridge the gap between what's needed and what public systems provide.

CUPW's Child Care Fund goes beyond supporting families of children with disabilities, it also helps postal workers across Canada access high-quality licensed child care. In the first five years of the fund, the union launched 11 community-based projects aimed at improving child care access for its members.

To ensure projects meet real needs, CUPW staff consult with local union executives who have an understanding of their members' child care challenges, drawing insights from direct conversations and membership surveys. The union also funds research on child care across Canada to better understand household needs around child care accessibility, affordability, and inclusivity. Through these member-informed initiatives, CUPW has found that postal workers face many of the same challenges as other Canadian households,

including difficulty finding care in rural and remote "child care deserts."

This process has led to dozens of child care initiatives nationwide, often in partnership with high-quality licensed not-for-profit centres. CUPW provides administrative grants to these centres, improving care for all children, not just union members, while also offering partial fee subsidies and prioritized access for CUPW families.

One especially notable initiative is CUPW's support for licensed home child care in Newfoundland and Labrador. In the spring of 1996, the union conducted a comprehensive child care needs assessment of its members in the St. John's area. The assessment revealed a major gap: existing child care programs could not meet members' needs, and there was no regulated home-based child care in Newfoundland. Child care provided in a caregivers' home is often the most practical solution for shift workers and particularly members living in rural and remote areas, preventing families from having to drive long distances to the nearest licensed centre.

In response, CUPW established and funded the precursor to the province's only home-based care agency. Not only did the resource centre offer play groups, a toy and equipment lending library, and parent resources, it recruited caregivers and modeled regulations the government could use in a public system. Formerly known as the CUPW Family Resource Centres, the Family and Child Care Connections agency recruits, trains, monitors, and provides operational grants to family child care providers who are encouraged to offer part-time, evening, and flexible hours to meet the needs of workers with non-standard schedules. The agency also monitors the quality of home-based care providers, initially developing internal policies and quality standards that would go on to inform Newfoundland and Labrador's Early Childhood Services Committee's development of quality standards for the early learning sector.

Home-based providers have access to medical benefits and are compensated for statutory holidays, vacation days, and professional development. In turn, the agency now supports 165 home-based care providers, giving families in rural and remote Newfoundland and Labrador access to licensed, high-quality home-based care.

CUPW's efforts to address child care deserts and gaps highlights the need for the government to adopt locally driven planning, grounded in community insight, to ensure child care expansion reaches the areas of greatest need.

Empowering municipalities to lead local child care planning would enable them not only to identify needs but also to actively improve, develop, and expand publicly managed services that are inclusive and high quality. ■

The CCPA's work is powered by people like you

# Meet Anne Bishop

## A CCPA donor for 22 years and a legacy donor

### Tell us about someone who was a big influence on you and how you became a CCPA supporter.

Someone who had a huge impact on the direction of my life was one of my teachers, Helene Moussa. In 1974, she was hired to develop a new, social-justice centred curriculum at the Centre for Christian Studies in Toronto (now in Winnipeg), where I was an adult education student. She brought with her a lifetime of experience in Africa's anti-colonial struggles, years of experience teaching progressive, participatory adult education in Ethiopia and New York and a large, international activist network. That program upended my understanding of the world and became the foundation for everything I have done since.

I was involved in some earlier organizations doing policy work. When CCPA came along, it seemed natural that my interest in progressive policy would go there. For years I didn't have the financial resources to be a donor, but I introduced my parents to the organization by passing on my copies of the *Monitor* and they became regular supporters. Now that they are gone, my partner and I have put part of my inheritance from them into a trust that can carry on supporting the CCPA and other organizations important to my parents and to us even after the end of our lives.



### What have you read or watched that has made you think in a different way?

The first assigned reading in Helene's course was Paulo Friere's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which began the transformation of my worldview and became the foundation of my life's work in adult education. There have been so many other important books since: Merlin Stone's *When God Was a Woman* revolutionized my thinking about gender; Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* helped shape my picture of the world I am working for; Tyler Shipley's *Canada in the World* brought my national and international analyses together; James Gleik's *Chaos* transformed my understanding of how complex systems behave and change.

And here's a single sentence example—in the Winter 2025 issue of the *CCPA Monitor*, Jon Milton quotes Martinique-born writer and politician Aimé Césaire saying that "fascism is colonialism turned inward...the violence that European empires commit elsewhere in the world coming home." I've been thinking about that line ever since and quoting it to others as we watch this year's political events unfold.

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

By necessity, activists spend much of our energy fighting *against*. It is so important to also know what we are fighting *for*. The work of the CCPA gives us that—well-researched options, backed up by solid data, figures and examples from places where these approaches have worked. As government budgets come out, I can usually tell you what's wrong with them. Because of CCPA's alternative budgets, I also know what they could look like. I am grateful for CCPA Nova Scotia's booklet *Building Inclusive Communities*, published ahead of the 2024 municipal elections, so that when I'm asked what the municipality could be doing differently, I have answers. I also rely heavily on the CCPA's data when I talk about Canada's wealth and income gap in my writing and teaching.

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



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# YOUR CCPA

## Get to know Trish Hennessy

POSITION: **SENIOR STRATEGIST, SENIOR EDITOR, MONITOR EDITOR**  
YEARS WITH THE CCPA: **17**  
(WITH A SHORT BREAK IN BETWEEN)

### What drew you to the CCPA?

I was working on a Bachelor of Social Work policy degree at Carleton University when the librarian recommended I read the CCPA's *Monitor* magazine, then edited by the incredible Ed Finn. On the bus ride home, I read economist Hugh Mackenzie's analysis of Mike Harris tax cut costs and I was hooked. I tried getting an internship with the CCPA but they weren't taking on students that year.

### You made it to the CCPA eventually. What led you here?

After finishing my Master's of Sociology degree at OISE/ University of Toronto, the CCPA posted for the director's position of its new project, the Growing Gap. By this point I had worked closely with economist Armine Yalnizyan on her groundbreaking income inequality research in 1999. I also ended up working with Hugh Mackenzie on the CCPA's Ontario Alternative Budget roundtable, starting in 2000 when I was a NDP researcher at Queen's Park. I asked them to dinner and proposed that we do this as a group. They said yes! I got the director's job and the rest is history. I'm tremendously proud of the work we did—under the direction of former CCPA Executive Director Bruce Campbell—between 2006 and 2012 (after which I moved on to open the CCPA's Ontario office as its inaugural director—another great challenge!).



Trish and partner Craig at the Willow Bunch Golf Course last summer.

**Then you left?** In fall 2018 I left to become executive director of Upstream, a research institute focused on the social determinants of health. In spring 2020, I brought Think Upstream to the CCPA as a project. It was so great to be back, and still is, even in my newer role as strategist and editor.

**What are you reading these days?** As always, I've got two books on the go, but I'll focus on one: I'm reading *All the Beauty in the World: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Me*, by Patrick Bringley. The author used to be a security guard at the Met, and he writes lovingly about the

paintings, drawings, and sculptures he was tasked with safekeeping. Every time I go to New York City I head to the Met. This book brought me even deeper into the world of the Met as the reader sees the art museum through the lens of a security guard with a passion for the arts. It makes for great escapism.

**When you're not at work, how do you decompress?** I adore my job, and since it's focused on real-life policy challenges, work is almost always on my mind. But as a long-suffering Toronto sports fan—having lived there for 22 years—I'm a sucker for a Blue Jays baseball game or a Raptors basketball game. I used to play both sports in my youth. I also love to golf when I'm in my hometown of Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan. The golf course is a source of pride among the locals. It's nestled in the hills where Sitting Bull and his people took refuge after winning the Battle at Little Bighorn.

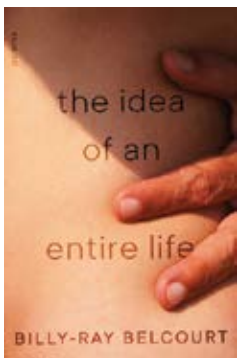
**What gives you hope?** Working for the CCPA. Honestly, I am lucky my dream of working at the CCPA came true. Over the years, I've collaborated with—and learned from—hundreds of smart, passionate policy analysts and activists on the hottest issues of our time. We fight the good fight, and when we win even the smallest policy victory, it's amazing to be a part of it. Even in times of uncertainty, as we are living in right now, I have the good fortune to work with a team of great people who analyze economic and policy developments, offer solutions, and push back against lies and misinformation. I wake up every morning with a purpose.



Photo billy-raybelcourt.com

E.R. Zarevich

## The emotional spectrum of a Queer and Indigenous life



**THE IDEA OF AN ENTIRE LIFE: POEMS**  
BILLY-RAY BELCOURT

McClelland & Stewart, September 2025

I must be something worth glancing at, even if, like all natives, I begin in a text from the past.

I'm not naïve: North America doesn't exist.

Queer people will be free, the current political regime will erode. History is a type of affective excess. It leaks, like a long novel. Oh, the grandness of an unspectacular

Friday, a train barreling toward a country of ecstasy."

This excerpt is taken from "The Cruising Utopia Sonnets," which is, in turn, taken from Cree writer Billy-Ray Belcourt's latest offering to the literary canon, *The Idea of an Entire Life: Poems*. Published in September

2025 by McClelland & Stewart, *The Idea of an Entire Life* translates an eventful lifetime of reconciling multiple selves into less than a hundred pages of lyrical language.

Billy-Ray Belcourt is from the Driftpile Cree Nation in Alberta. He identifies as LGBT. He expresses everything that he is and everything that he has experienced through impassioned poetry, and he has a voice that doesn't shy away from being overtly political and resolutely intimate. *The Idea of an Entire Life* is a book that entreats readers to be emotionally and intellectually mature because it requires understanding of the broad spectrum of emotions and the politics that are shaping Canada's current construct.

Belcourt, as a poet, opens every possible door for his readers and invites them into his world. Courageously vulnerable and exposed, he holds back nothing. As if the reader were his closest confidante, he shares every strong emotion that has haunted him in the lonely hours where the past has the opportunity to creep in. In his poems, he grieves the lost presence of his many male ex-lovers whose bodies awakened his sensual side and brought him much-needed human connection. He reminisces a childhood spent connecting to nature when adults and their unfair laws were confusing him. He embraces the sadness that comes with the knowledge he now has as an adult, fully educated on his people's past.

Joy flashes between the lines, in the small moments the author captures between trips, classes taught, whirlwind affairs, and self-education. "I love how simple it is to live right now (it so rarely is), how small and inconsequential my desires are (which rarely are)," he expresses in "Subarctica," when his journeys land him at his mother's house for a week of rest and respite from his busy lifestyle.

Belcourt exercises his responsibility to speak out against the harm done to his people as a

scholar, activist, and writer who has established influence. In "The Past Tense" Belfort tells the story of J. B. Gambler, a native man who threatened violence against the Indian agent who'd come to take Gambler's children away to a residential school. Belcourt knows for a fact that the government punished Gambler for his insubordination by withholding food rations from his family. Belfort then implies that the children were taken away to the residential school anyway, though Belcourt doesn't know for sure. The official records are missing that information.

Silence is a room where language resides in the walls. The subtle erasures of childhood, the negative space left behind by lost sons, etc.,

Belcourt writes.

By telling Gambler's story, *The Idea of an Entire Life* becomes even more profoundly an act of bravery. Belcourt is reclaiming the individuality that was denied to generations of Indigenous Peoples who were kidnapped from reserves to be forcefully assimilated, abused, and molded into who they weren't. Through writing these poems about

his dual queer and cultural identities, putting them down in print to be published and permanently available to the public, Belcourt initiates healing in the most defiant manner possible. Like Gambler, he's fighting back in his own way.

The importance of family relations is also not exempt from this book's reflections. Through his prose, Belcourt frequently alludes to his relationship to his *kokum*, which is the Cree word for grandmother. Her wisdom challenges him to reflect even more deeply on what's troubling him. She accepts him, understands him, and provides an anchor in his life when it appears to be his nature to frequently travel between his powerful emotions and question things around him. In "Prayer," Belcourt's *kokum* entreats him to retain hope and never give into his despair by reminding him that, somewhere on Earth, the grass is still green, and life is still going on. ■

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E.R. Zarevich is a journalist and cultural critic from Burlington, Ontario. You can find her work published regularly on *Local News Burlington* and *Jstor Daily*.



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Bruna Nota

# 10 essays that may help you question the dominant worldview



## THE RAVEN ESSAYS: INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, EDUCATION, AND SELF-DETERMINATION

JOHN BORROWS, DAWN HOOGEVEEN,  
MAX RITTS, AND SUSAN SMITTEN,  
EDITORS

University of Toronto Press 2025

**B**e warned! This book may undermine the single story most of us have absorbed about indigeneity and Indigenous Peoples.

As you open the beautiful cover to *The Raven Essays*, in the essay “Ravens and Moon” by Adrian Nadjiwon, you are introduced to different worldviews. By the end of the book, you may notice yourself perceiving things differently. You may be questioning some of the premises of the dominant worldview in which we are steeped.

The 10 essays in this book, the result of a decade of awards by the non-profit organization RAVEN (Respecting Aboriginal Values and Environmental Needs), celebrate reciprocity, land-based, community-led scholarly learning.

Students, both Indigenous and allied, provide wise knowledge from their different disciplines, using diverse creative methodologies.

Each essay is an immersion in Indigenous governance principles.

Each opens a window on aspects of Indigenous expansive values.

Each is an invitation to question the dominant worldview and brings into relief the lack of wisdom of much mainstream knowledge, which is so detrimental to harmonious living among humans, and among all living things.

Wade Houle, in his essay, “My Story”, suffuses with great dignity and gentleness the words and gestures forming his history. The purpose-rich and healing effects of ceremonies are contrasted with the debilitating authoritarian, restrictive regulations of *The Indian Act* and the heartless family and social policies of the colonial government that banned ceremonies.

The gifting of tobacco in his naming ceremony is not a transaction, but part of “a system of gift giving, of profound and endless

sharing” (Leanne Betasamosake Simpson “Theory of Water”) that acknowledges the wisdom of the elder asked to give Wade his Spirit name. The gifting, Houle says, “It is an act of humility, respect and love...it allows the people involved to centre themselves, and provide purpose and reason.”

This essay leads to the exploration of the questions this anthology addresses and that the late Senator Murray Sinclair invited all Canadians to ask themselves: “Where do I come from? Where I am going? Why am I here? And who am I?”

Da Chen, in his essay “Environmental Planning in Toronto”, highlights the positive effects the “Dish with One Spoon” treaty would bring to the governance of Toronto’s cityscape if Indigenous environmental obligations were incorporated in the city planning process.

This treaty can also be seen as a direct rebuke to the settlers’ legacy of unregulated extraction, devoid of responsibility, causing scarcity for the many to allow the few to live in luxury.

In “On Salmon Aquaculture Supremacy”, Erica Hiroko Isomura contrasts how the Indigenous governance principles that consider salmon a relative would acknowledge the whole community and provide better protection than the science used by the Department of Fisheries and Ocean.

The Indigenous governance principle of equality and interdependent relationality between fish, fern, reed, rock, sand, deer, bear, otter, algae, allowed the Stó:lo, (colonially known as the Fraser River), to co-create us

Where do  
I come from?  
Where am  
I going?

and host the salmon for millennia while honouring human responsibility towards the whole community.

Professor John Borrows situates the book, addressing the questions posed by Senator Sinclair as he offers an overview of the varied ways students have provided leadership and creatively helped shape the Indigenous legal profession.

In her poetic afterword, Professor Sarah Hunt takes us along to dance with Raven until, entering the colonial space, the dancing stops. We leave the sacred space of interconnection with our fellow beings and enter the colonizing space of separation and rejection, where Indigenous faculty supports students on “*the activism and demands for structural change.*”

At a practical level, it led me to wonder what Canada would be if colonists had welcomed the gifts the Indigenous Peoples were offering beyond survival knowledge and nature bounty; how much richer the life of Canadians would be today if we practiced the Indigenous governance principles of a “good life for all our relations”

I read these essays at the same time as I read Omar El Akkad *One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This*. The deepest sadness at the powerful world’s hypocrisy and cowardice so compellingly described by El Akkad collided with the exultant possibility of what real participative democracy could accomplish, as portrayed in Rivera Sun’s third novel of the ‘*Dandelion*’ trilogy: *Winds of Change*.

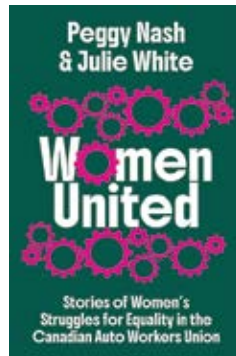
At the end of The RAVEN Essays, you realize that the sane culture that was the norm for millennia could be ours again. ■

Bruna Nota is an activist.

## Book excerpt

Peggy Nash and Julie White

# From World War II to now: Women’s struggle is real



## WOMEN UNITED: STORIES OF WOMEN’S STRUGGLES FOR EQUALITY IN THE CANADIAN AUTO WORKERS UNION PEGGY NASH AND JULIE WHITE

Between the Lines, November 2025

### WWII

To keep the economy running and to boost the war effort, women were recruited into the paid workforce in droves.

They built aircraft and military vehicles; they drove trucks and other heavy equipment. With secure jobs during the war years, workers’ confidence rose and they joined unions to push for a better deal from employers. Incomes improved with negotiated union contracts. There were hundreds of strikes during the war years, and key strikes by auto workers, steelworkers, and women’s clothing workers would manage to secure a stable place in the workforce.

The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) was a group of unions that broke away from the

American Federation of Labor (AFL) and formed a central labour organization to which unions became affiliated. Unlike the skilled workers normally in unions at that time, they were dedicated to organizing unskilled industrial workers from the mid-1930s to 1955. Until the CIO, mass organizing of unskilled workers in industries like auto, steel, and rubber had been organized around their craft or skill. With innovative organizing techniques like sit-down strikes and blockages, they had broken through with some key union recognition strikes in the auto and steel industries. For example, in 1937, the auto workers won a momentous 44-day sit-down strike at General Motors in Flint, Michigan.

The CIO, early on, had pledged belief in full sexual and racial equality, and during the war turned its attention to appealing to women workers. The goal of equal pay for equal work became a key incentive for women to join.

Equal pay was not a new concept. There had been a demand for it since the 1880s. Men were concerned that lower wages for women would exert downward pressure on their wages. But it was during the war years, when women worked alongside men in industry, that the concept just seemed fair. Also, it was an important incentive for women to sign a union card. While some argued for more women’s involvement in unions to prevent cheap labour, many saw that it was about uniting women in

the labour movement to advance women's equality.

### **Post-war period**

In the early post-war period, women were pushed to leave the paid workforce and return to the domestic domain. But some women remained and continued to press their union for greater rights for women. The structures the union created toward the end of the war, such as women's departments, conferences, and committees, would also outlast the retrenchment of the 1950s and 1960s, when women were pushed out of many workplaces and back into the home. The memories of their potential from the war years could not be erased. Women understood their capacity to earn income and expand their rights.

These constitutional structures endured in the following decades until second wave feminists again took up the torch of equity and fairness. They did this with the power of the union to organize in their workplaces and fight for fair working conditions and wages. They would also eventually do this by expanding separate programs for women, 2SLGBTQ+ members, Black, Indigenous, and workers of colour. But that would take time and the efforts of those who were following in their mother's footsteps seeking economic independence and fair treatment at work.

### **Interviews with women**

Many of the women we spoke with still felt the pain of the barriers thrown in their way. Women's progress in the union has often been a game of snakes and ladders. The privilege and the joy of representing workers, of taking on a bigger role in the union, often meant falling into line with the male leadership while eking out progress where possible. Failure meant getting blocked or squeezed out.

Some women were isolated and had to figure things out on their own and find support and advice wherever they could. (One)

was parachuted into a mess of an assignment with no office, no staff, no organization. Many would have bailed, but she stuck it out.

Some women found that being the woman or the only Black woman, was isolating and undermined their full participation.

Most of the women interviewed loved the union and recognized the positive change it had made in their life. Women were inspired by the power of the auto bargaining units that could bring industry to its knees. They could bargain key breakthroughs on child care, gender-based violence, or international solidarity.

Yet that power brought with it a strong male culture born out of the earliest organizing days. While striving to be progressive, that culture could also resist sharing power, especially with women. Some women decided when they clashed with that culture that their love of the labour movement was not worth sacrificing their principles or self respect. Some women refused to compromise to win a position. Some joined the staff and then left or stayed but harboured resentment. Some were unhappy, others just swallowing their own views in bitterness.

The union's culture could also foster competition and envy among women because there were so few spots open to them. It was a system that could undermine a woman in a leadership position, cutting her off from other women.

Many women learned that the only way to survive was to organize other women, to gain in numbers, and open more spaces for women. This was a building process that took many years.

### **Stickin' with the union**

What helped make the labour movement women's programs so successful in Canada was the ability of labour women to join with their sisters in the community to fight for change. Whether in strike support, fighting for abortion rights,

child care, or against gender-based violence, they forged a relationship that made both groups stronger.

When this growing movement conflicted with the impact of neoliberal economics on the lives of workers, especially in manufacturing, it could have stalled the progress being made on equity issues. Nevertheless, CAW activists (and many in other unions) pressed on and made progress. These initiatives shone a light on how entrenched the dominant cultural norms were, in manufacturing in particular, but in female-dominated sectors as well. This tension between the traditional workplace and the feminist movement was real in the lives of women, racialized, and gender-diverse workers. They loved and appreciated their union, called on their union to defend their rights, but still sometimes found the union leadership or culture pushing back or blocking their way.

Change can take a long time and it doesn't happen on its own. The women in this book tell stories that show that gains don't just happen but are the product of organizing and struggle, courage and leadership, over many years. Each of the people we interviewed for this book showed leadership, each struggled to make a difference. The men we interviewed are examples of allies who supported and assisted women and gender diverse activists in their efforts. Allies can be essential to making progress. But ultimately, activists pushed for and achieved change. ■

# THE GOOD NEWS PAGE

Compiled by Elaine Hughes

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## A smarter way to charge electronic devices

A team of researchers at the University of Minnesota has unveiled a powerful new alloy, Ni<sub>4</sub>W, that could radically reshape how electronic devices store and process information. This metal can switch magnetic states without using external magnets—a leap that could reduce the energy consumed by everything from phones to data centres.

*SciTechDaily, July 22, 2025*

## Solar: Europe's biggest source of power

According to an analysis from energy think tank Ember, at least 13 EU countries saw solar output hit a new monthly high in June 2025. Solar amounted to more than 40 per cent of generation in the Netherlands and 35 per cent in Greece. Analysts say that the June surge in solar power helped Europe weather a brutal heat wave, which saw temperatures soar upwards of 43 degrees C.

*YALE E360, July 11, 2025*

## Renewables will be world's top power source by 2026

According to new forecasts from the International Energy Agency (IEA), renewable energy, driven by extremely rapid growth in wind and solar output, will overtake coal to become the world's top source of electricity by 2026 at the latest. The rise of renewables, which topped 4,000 terawatt hours (TWh) in 2024, will pass 6,000TWh by 2026.

*Carbon Brief, July 31, 2025*

## New York finalizes rule for new buildings to be electric

The New York State Assembly reported that New York is now the first state in the U.S. to require new buildings to be built entirely electric, without hookups to fossil fuels, including gas. The rule was initially passed in 2023 as the *All-Electric Buildings Act* and was finalized with the State Fire Prevention and Building Code Council's approval in late July 2025.

*ECOWATCH, September 24, 2025*

## The Seine River in Paris cools 800 buildings

About 60 miles of piping channels water to and from the Seine River to naturally cool 800 Paris buildings. The network also includes pumps and heat exchangers, which bring the cool temperatures of the Seine's undercurrent and, as the water circulates through the buildings, the water absorbs the heat present in the air, returning to the river to deposit that thermal energy into the water without any heat discharge back out into the city. With the recent clean-up of the Seine now complete, Paris has now effectively doubled its cooling power.

*Good News Network, September 23, 2025*

## Saskatchewan to pay \$40M to residential school survivors

In response to a proposed class action launched by previous students of the Île-à-la-Crosse boarding school in northern Saskatchewan, Premier Scott Moe has apologized and agreed to pay \$40.2 million in restitution to them and their families. The boarding school was established in about 1860 by the Roman Catholic church and operated until the 1970s, when the Île-à-la-Crosse School Division assumed operations. During that time, an estimated 1,500 children—most of them Métis from northern Saskatchewan—were forced to attend.

*CBC News, September 29, 2025*

## Mexican entrepreneurs create vegan leather out of prickly pear cactus

In 2019, Mexican entrepreneurs Adrian Lopez Velarde and Marte Cazarez Duarte threw their hats in the vegan leather trade by becoming the first people to make leather from nopales, or prickly pear cactus. In the last six years, Desserto has partnered with Adidas, Otterbox, Michael Kors, Fossil, BMW, and more to make plant-based outfits, shoes, bags, phone cases, watch bands, and whole car interiors.

*Good Headlines, September 28, 2025*

## Indigenous voices awards recipients

The Indigenous Voices Awards—the only major Canadian literary prize to celebrate creativity and excellence in published and unpublished work by emerging Indigenous writers—today announced Rosanna Deerchild (Cree) as this year's recipient for published poetry in English and Wayne K. Spear (Kaniien'kehá:ka) and Georges Erasmus (Dene) as this year's recipients for published prose in English.

*Indigenous Voices, June 21, 2025*

## First Nation going solar

The Onion Lake Cree First Nation, which straddles the Alberta-Saskatchewan border about 50 km north of Lloydminster, is installing rooftop solar panels on 123 homes in the community of about 7,000 people. The \$1.28-million project is being paid for by federal grants and more than \$500,000 from Raven Outcomes, which helps Indigenous communities find funding for projects.

*CBC, October 1, 2025*



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“Our assertive response needs to go beyond the trade arena and directly address our excessive dependence on the United States for critical national communication infrastructure. U.S. colonization of the Canadian internet is already well underway, and—short of decisive intervention—is fast headed toward 51<sup>st</sup>-state status.”

—*Andrew Clement, Hill Times*

