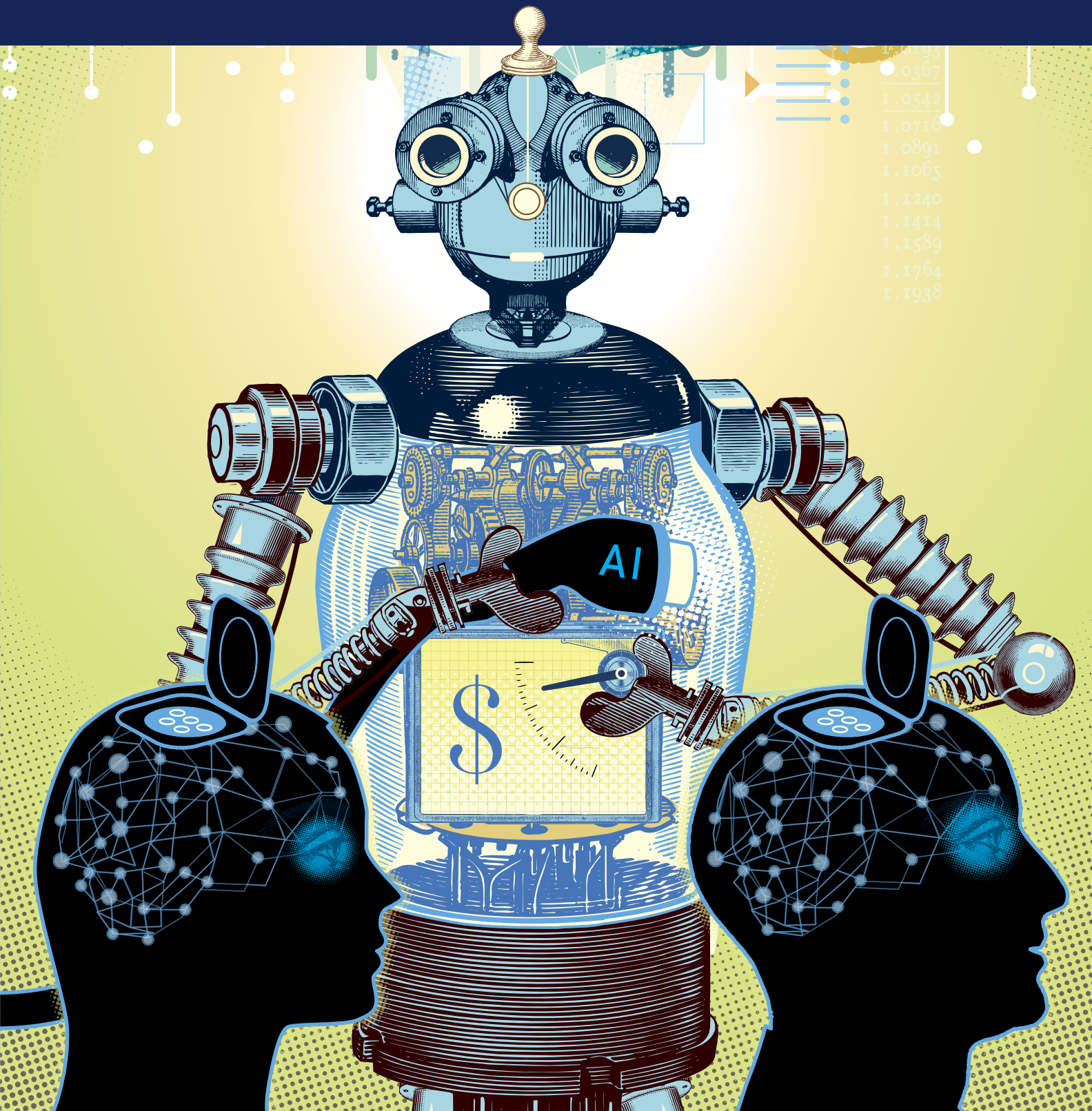
FALL 2026
CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES

MONITOR

Progressive news, views, and ideas



AI's triple threat

All in at the AI casino
Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood / 14

Making a killing
Paris Marx / 18

Hewers of code, drawers of data
Si Thu Naing / 21

Brownshirt chatbots
Shama Rangwala / 24

Centrespread / 26

A generation of non-thinkers
Mia Travers-Hayward / 28

Resisting the data centre invation
Simon Enoch / 30

Ignore all previous instructions
Dru Oja Jay / 32

Beneath the cloud, the land
Skylee-Storm Hogan-Stacey / 34

Generational anxiety, generational action
Molly McCracken / 36

Up Front

The downside of AI data centres in downtown Vancouver
Simon Enoch, Andrew Lonhurst, and Rachel Pettigrew / 6

Privatizing airports and letting oil and gas companies off the hook
David Macdonald / 8

Alberta's lunge toward private health care is a warning to all of Canada
Andrew Longhurst and Dr. Paul Parks / 9

Gender pay inequality in Atlantic Canada
Daniel Cerdis Sandi and Christine Saulnier / 10

Ontario emergency room wait times surge
Andrew Longhurst / 11

CanCon at risk with death of *Online Streaming Act*
Garry Neil / 12

Winnipeg should embrace "Buy Local"
Stuart Trew, Noah Fry / 13

Viewpoints

Prime Minister Carney's trade policy shock doctrine
Stewart Trew / 37

Canada loves Arab culture, not Arab politics
Nashwa Lina Khan / 38

The short-sighted deorbiting of the International Space Station
Benjamin Segobaetso / 40

Thirteen years since the Lac-Mégantic disaster
Bruce Campbell / 42

Books

The power of familial ties and cultural bonds
Emily Zarevich / 45

Why public policies produce health inequities—and how to change it
Andrew Longhurst / 46

The fiction in renoviction
Sofia Sokolski / 48

The birth of the Canadian Conference of Teamsters
Joseph Fantauzzi / 49

Monitor Huddle **1** / From the editor **2** / Viewpoint **3** / Letters **4**
CCPA in the spotlight **5** / Get to know the CCPA **43** / CCPA donor profile **44**
The good news page by Elaine Hughes **51** / Last word **52**

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CCPA
CANADIAN CENTRE for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
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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 $60 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

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We loved hosting you at our July *Monitor* Huddle! Join us in November!

Ann Douglas

We hope you can join us for our next *Monitor* Huddle—on November 6, 2026 at 2 pm ET. We'll have guest speakers who contributed to the October *Monitor*, which focuses on the rise of AI—and what that means for Canada, and the world.

Thank you for your continued support. We are living through a tumultuous time and the only way to get through it is together.

P.S. Know someone else who might like to be part of an upcoming Huddle? Please encourage them to subscribe to the print edition of the *Monitor*.

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.

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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 next The Huddle Zoom chat:

When: November 6, 2026 at 2 pm ET

Where: www.policyalternatives.ca/huddle

Sign up now to reserve your spot!

FROM THE EDITOR

By Jon Milton

What AI revolution?

"There is no alternative" is back with a vengeance

If there's one thing that everyone seems to agree upon when it comes to artificial intelligence, it's that it's going to change everything, and there is no stopping it. Like a force of nature—a hurricane making landfall, an earthquake, a wildfire—the AI revolution is coming.

AI, they say, is going to revolutionize work. It will eliminate countless jobs and send labour productivity into the stratosphere. It is going to fundamentally change public services. It will revolutionize warfare. It will transform arts and culture. It will destroy all previous assumptions about the possibilities of technology. OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, in one of his many outlandish claims, said "we are close to creating a genie that can grant any wish."

Even negative stories can reinforce this framing. Scary tales about frontier AI models "breaking containment" out of their testing areas and engaging in "autonomous" hacks against other AI companies reinforce the idea that these new digital technologies are accelerating faster than human designers can control. We are, indeed, on the verge of the AI revolution, everything seems to say—whether we view that as a good thing or not.

But are we? The actual rollout of AI has been, for the most part, underwhelming. The productivity gains have mostly failed to materialize. AI integration into online services like Google search has almost universally worsened the quality of those services, with next to nothing on the upside. Nobody likes AI "art." Companies are re-hiring workers that they laid off to replace with AI during the early days of the rush. Stock markets are beginning to punish major tech companies for their growing debt ratios.

Altman's genie claims are obviously absurd, but they do reflect the way most people view AI technology: as a type of magic. Tech companies and their boosters deliberately mystified AI technology, and that lack of understanding is a key part of why AI seems like an inevitable behemoth.

Take the term "AI" itself: ChatGPT is a Large Language Model (LLM), a type of word prediction machine that guesses, based on probability, which word is likely to follow another—much like the predictive text feature on your cell phone keyboard. It is not, in any meaningful sense, intelligent, in that it contains no internal capacity for logic or to check the veracity of references. Its core function is word prediction, not reason (which is why it is significantly less reliable for information retrieval than a standard search on Google or Wikipedia). "Artificial intelligence" is a marketing term.

> The AI wave is a power grab—one that we have the capacity to resist

By referring to these technologies as "intelligent," we contribute to mystifying them. It certainly feels more serious to tell ourselves that we "asked AI" about something rather than asking the Magic 8 Ball.

But the hype cycle this narrative produces has consequences. Policy-makers across the world are falling over themselves to deeply embed "AI" systems into the economy. They are constructing energy-hungry data centres, replacing public service workers with chatbots, and funnelling public money to tech companies that constantly claim to be on the verge of "revolutionizing" something or other, if only we gave them a little more cash.

Back in the 1980s, governments across the developed world were massively restructuring their economies—they were going to war with labour unions, gutting the welfare and regulatory state, signing away sovereignty through trade deals, and running fire sales for newly privatized public services. It was the early days of neoliberalism, and UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher put it in simple terms: "there is no alternative."

From tech CEOs to the federal government's AI strategy to the chattering classes in the media, that narrative is once again taking hold with regard to a massive restructuring project. This time, the people deploying that rhetoric are using technology (rather than economic theory) to justify their power grab. But just like last time, it is indeed a power grab—and one that we do have the capacity to resist. **M**

VIEWPOINT

By Peggy Nash

How much longer will 'Elbows Up' blind us to the obvious?

A year and a half ago I joined the CCPA as executive director. A longtime supporter and donor of the CCPA, I knew that I could make a contribution to this important organization.

What I didn't anticipate was how collegial, generous and kind the CCPA staff were. Their personal behaviour matched their progressive politics, research and publications.

What we have is a visionary progressive group of staff, and a common goal of working for a better future. What keeps us going is you—our readers, donors and supporters. You are the fuel that has kept powering the CCPA for the past 46 years. Thank you for your dedication.

With this column, I plan to help keep you abreast of the latest developments with our work, and I will likely not be able to resist adding my opinions about the latest events. After all, the column is called Viewpoint.

So here goes:

In this time of international turmoil, where the supposed rules of trade and international relations are tossed aside like yesterday's news, Canadians put their trust in the leader who represented stability and expertise—in contrast to U.S. President Donald Trump or even Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre. This was branded as "elbows up", a strong defence of Canada and our values.

Most Canadians still firmly believe in this choice. Canada's refusal to sign a bad trade deal and the push back to President Trump is what Canadians were waiting for.

What has been surprising, however, is the pivot Prime Minister Mark Carney has also made to pour vast resources into defence spending, by some estimates up to $100 billion. This is funding that does not go toward improving our fractured health care system, into public education or into infrastructure like a national electricity grid.

He has also supported the U.S./Israeli war against Iraq, run roughshod over previous environmental commitments and embraced a seemingly naive corporate approach to the use of AI.

Canadians want a leader unafraid to stand up for Canada. Yet we can't forget that Canada did not speak out about the U.S.'s undemocratic removal of the Venezuelan president or about the ongoing genocide in Gaza. Why are we not helping Cubans in their time of crisis? Why aren't we defending the Canada Health Act as Alberta violates it?

We continue to see growing wealth travel up to enrich those at the top, while the average person struggles. With this rise in inequality, when Canadians find it harder each week to make ends meet, it is the right time to make it easier for Canadians to join unions and seek better wages and working conditions. Yet our federal government has often sided with employers, especially in the transportation sector. And now a senate committee is proposing to further weaken our federal labour standards. Weakening labour rights not only makes life harder for Canadians, it undermines our democracy, as more and more people see the system just doesn't work for them.

At this time of AI anxiety about job loss and loss of control over galloping change, enhancing our Employment Insurance system would add a stabilizer to the lives of many working people who face reduced or loss of income.

The Carney government is taking Canada down a more conservative path with regard to the environment, labour rights and social programs. Will this all be worth it if he secures a better deal with the U.S.? Or will Canadians come to the conclusion that his 'Elbows Up' is limited?

With so many pressing issues, the CCPA is pulled in many directions. We appreciate hearing from you. Are we taking on the issues you care about? Do you agree with our analysis?

I hope this column is a conversation rather than a bullhorn. Please let me know what you think. M

> Enhancing EI would add a stabilizer to working people who might lose their job

Peggy Nash is executive director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

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

Spring 2026 *Monitor*

I commend Erika Shaker for her absolutely excellent article in the spring edition of the *Monitor*. With the speed of things (we all need to slow down), the lack of solid info in our culture, and my own limitations, I am often looking for that which captures the struggle we are facing in Canada and around the world. Erika's article "Street Smarts: Lessons from Sesame Street" so hits all the nails on the head. It is so well written, so concise, so clear, so in touch, so wise, so embracing of what we need to be doing to bring alive what builds community as the centrepiece of a strong Canada. God bless Erika and everyone at the *Monitor*. The *Monitor* is a shining example of solid journalism in a world that is way the hell off base.

Patrick Callaghan
Pictou, NS

I just finished reading Erika Shaker's trenchant piece in the spring issue of The *Monitor*. It encapsulates so much that worries me these days. Since the 1980s, Canadians have been blindly and placidly heading down a dangerous road. I teach at university. I recently started a class on inequality with a photo of people in tents with the Montréal skyline in the background. I asked the students if this was normal to them. Some nodded; it was. For my unfortunate students, this is just the way it is. They cannot imagine the world otherwise. Not long afterwards, coming out of the metro in downtown Montréal, I passed a woman, who appeared to be homeless, who was squatting in the street going to the toilet. This is the country we have become thanks to tax cuts, soaring wealth and income inequality, and pervasive individualism. It breaks my heart. This should not be normal. My thanks to Erika Shaker and to the others who contributed to the latest *Monitor* for reminding us that such inequality is not a law of nature, but a matter of the choices we have made. Let us choose otherwise!

Nicole Gombay
Montréal QC

Thank you for Nick Gottlieb's article "The soldier, the banker, the oil tanker" in the Summer 2026 issue. It shows the reasons for the continuing primacy of oil in politicians' decisions. It shows how the US built and works to maintain its economic dominance. It answers some of my questions, such as why, despite its demented government, the US and its dollars continue to dominate the world economy. Another question that is partially answered is why Cuba has never built up any alternative energy resources with the help of countries like China—it's in progress. The article also shows, from the economic angle, why Carney's focus on fossil fuel expansion and neglect of alternative energy is seriously misguided.

Moira Rehmer
Montreal QC

Summer 2026 *Monitor*

At a time when provincial and federal governments are saddling Canadian citizens with a new humongous debt while the oil industry enjoys a war-induced windfall profit of $60+ billions and prospects of increased climate degradation, it is essential to have the perspectives that the CCPA research and the *Monitor* brings. As Nick Gottlieb writes in the summer *Monitor*, we either "choose a path of international cooperation, rejecting the United State's new world order and winding down our fossil fuel production in line with 'fair share' approach to climate mitigation" or "We can throw our weight behind the U.S. quest for 'energy dominance'... This path requires that Canada endorse U.S. adventurism; it requires that Canada fight to shackle developing countries with out-of-date infrastructure; and it requires that, when push comes to shove, Carney will be standing behind Trump as he commits crime after crime."

Carney confirms his choice: the bankers, the oil corporations and the military will carry the day. It remains to be seen how many Liberal MPs will toe the line or follow their better judgment and their conscience. In the meantime, the ball is in the court of civil society and organs such as the CCPA to mount the necessary opposition.

Bruna Nota
Toronto ON

CCPA IN THE SPOTLIGHT

By the numbers: April 1 to June 30, 2026

"Our researchers work hard to stay relevant, provide timely analysis on the popping issues of the day, and to ensure the CCPA continues to have an impact in the public discussion about Canada and its future." —*Peggy Nash, executive director, CCPA*

2.6K
That's how many times the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) was mentioned in the media during the second quarter of 2026.

40%
That's how many articles and interviews with CCPA experts that were featured on radio platforms in the second quarter—1K+ mentions!

43%
That's how many online articles featured CCPA experts in the second quarter—1K mentions!

13%
That's how many TV interviews CCPA experts did in the second quarter—369 appearances!

Top CCPA publications and issues attracting media interest, second quarter 2026. Check them out on policyalternatives.ca.

Failure, by Design: Ontario's Deepening Hospital Funding Crisis, Andrew Longhurst, May 11, 539 mentions

Closing the gaps: Gender pay inequity in Atlantic Canada, Daniel Cerdas Sandí and Christine Saulnier, June 24, 224 mentions

Improving primary health care access: Lessons from Canada and Scotland, Andrew Longhurst, June 2, 28 mentions

On windfall tax on oil and gas industry—Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood and David Macdonald, April 14-June 25, 126 mentions

On federal "Carney" cuts—David Macdonald, 91 mentions

Critique of federal government repeal of luxury tax, David Macdonald, June 19-22, 43 mentions

On rent, renters and rental housing, Ricardo Tranjan, 19 mentions

What's popping on @policyalternatives social media channels?

#1 post in the second quarter of 2026: **The oil and gas industry is ranking in billions in profits from the war on Iran**

Facebook: 45K followers

LinkedIn: 20.8K followers

Instagram: 13.9K followers

Bluesky: 9.5 followers

We are reaching more people!

We grew 3,027 more social media followers in the second quarter of 2026.

Are you not following the CCPA on social media? Find us @policyalternatives

UP FRONT

The downside of AI data centres in downtown Vancouver
Simon Enoch, Andrew Lonhurst, Rachel Pettigrew / 6

Privatizing airports and letting oil and gas companies off the hook
David Macdonald / 8

Alberta's lunge toward private health care is a warning to all of Canada
Andrew Longhurst and Dr. Paul Parks / 9

Gender pay inequality in Atlantic Canada
Daniel Cerdis Sandi and Christine Saulnier / 10

Ontario emergency room wait times surge
Andrew Longhurst / 11

CanCon at risk with death of Online Streaming Act
Garry Neil / 12

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Stuart Trew and Noah Fry / 13

Simon Enoch, Andrew Longhurst, and Rachel Pettigrew

The downside of AI data centres in downtown Vancouver

The Government of Canada and Telus announced plans in the spring to advance three "AI factory projects" in British Columbia. These projects are the first to be developed under the federal government's "Enabling large-scale sovereign AI data centres" program, which invests in "promising AI infrastructure projects."

The use of the term "AI factory" rather than "data centre" is telling. For all intents and purposes, the proposed facilities are hyperscale data centres that will perform both the training of AI models and their operation.

But if the federal government and Telus had hoped to avoid public opposition simply by renaming data centres as something else, they will, no doubt, be disappointed. Indeed, the announced project raised more questions than answers—particularly for the residents of Vancouver, where two of these facilities are to be built.

As Jesse Cole reports, the proposed Vancouver facilities include a 100,000 square foot, repurposed facility in the Mount Pleasant neighbourhood, as well as a 400,000 square foot development at 150 West Georgia—adjacent to Vancouver's B.C. Place stadium. Both locations are densely populated, meaning that the proposed facilities would have to be sited close to residential neighbourhoods.

One must ask: Why are three levels of government encouraging energy-intensive server racks to be located in the middle of prime inner city locations? Are there not better social uses, like housing and businesses?

As we know from the U.S. experience, the closer these facilities are to residential neighbourhoods, the more public opposition they often generate. Data centres require large and extensive cooling systems to function, meaning they emit constant and repetitive noise from industrial fans and other mechanisms. Residents living in close proximity to data centres report difficulties sleeping and other health problems brought on by the incessant low-frequency drone of these buildings.

Yet conventional noise by-laws are often insufficient to regulate the constant 24/7 noise of these buildings.

Attempts at installing suppression devices or sound baffling to reduce noise have had mixed results. Consequently, more local governments are looking to increase the setback limit for these facilities to ensure they are a safe enough distance from housing, schools and hospitals so that they do not affect quality of life. Dropping one of these facilities in an already densely populated neighbourhood will make proper setbacks all the more difficult to achieve.

In order for data centres to deliver on their promise to provide virtually continuous service, they must be able to operate under any circumstances. This means ensuring they have redundant back-up power requirements to weather black-outs or any other power interruption.

Back-up power for these facilities almost always means diesel generators—sometimes hundreds of them. For a 100MW facility like the one proposed in downtown Vancouver, this could mean anywhere between 25 to 50 diesel generators on site, depending on their size. Diesel generators are notoriously dirty, emitting fine particulate matter associated with a host of health and breathing problems. It's why diesel generation is often strictly regulated.

However, as electricity grids strain under demands, the pressure to switch to diesel generation at the slightest hint of a potential energy disruption has been growing. Placing that many generators directly in the middle of the urban core could be a major public health issue.

Due to these challenges, the state of Virginia—home to the largest concentration of data centres in the

world—concluded that the "industrial scale of data centers makes them largely incompatible with residential uses."

That leads to the next question: Who asked for this? One would hope that extensive consultations of affected communities would be conducted before moving forward with a project that has the potential to be profoundly disruptive—both in the construction phase and the operational phase. And as it turns out, there was a consultation, just not one that captured what is actually being built.

When the City of Vancouver rezoned 150 West Georgia in 2023, the applicant at the time—Creative Energy Vancouver Platforms Inc., which owns the site and operates the downtown steam heating network—sought to add "bulk data storage" as a permitted use to an already approved commercial building. Six people submitted comments during the online engagement period. By the day of the September 28, 2023 public hearing, a single written submission was received (in support) and the rezoning passed.

The only legally binding public benefit secured through that process was a community amenity contribution of $295,425 (found on page six of the referral report), which is less than the cost of a single affordable housing unit in Vancouver. The $9 billion in projected economic activity, the 525 permanent jobs, and the renewable energy commitments announced were not secured in the application with the city.

This is precisely the problem that Community Benefit Agreements (CBA) are designed to solve. A CBA is a legally binding contract negotiated between a developer and the affected community before a project proceeds. Unlike a standard rezoning process, which captures only a narrow set of contributions calculated against a floor area, a CBA can require developers to commit to local hiring targets, living wages, noise mitigation measures, environmental monitoring, and ongoing community oversight. Critically, these commitments are enforceable, not aspirational talking points delivered at a press conference.

For large-scale infrastructure projects with significant community impacts like data centres, CBAs are one of the few tools that shift bargaining power toward residents rather than investors. Voluntary commitments are only as strong as the incentive to keep them.

The absence of these binding commitments is not incidental. B.C. Green Party Leader Emily Lowan has accused lawmakers of using a "build-first regulate-later model," and called for a moratorium on new data centres in the province until stronger regulation and environmental policies are in place.

Promising to be the "world's most sustainable sovereign data centres," Telus announced that these facilities will run almost exclusively on renewable power and will use state-of-the-art cooling technology to minimize water consumption, as well as recaptured heat. In his remarks, Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation Evan Solomon stated that "this is how you build right."

While it is important that these facilities be built to the highest environmental standards, it does raise the question of why we do not regulate to ensure that all future builds meet such standards. Instead, we seem to be relying on boosterism and wishful thinking that private corporations will prioritize the environment in their mad rush to cash in on AI infrastructure without asking the right questions about impact. **M**

Simon Enoch and Andrew Longhurst are senior researchers at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Rachel Pettigrew is a research assistant at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

David Macdonald

Privatizing airports and letting oil and gas companies off the hook

CCPA Senior Economist David Macdonald's presentation to the Senate Finance Committee on Bill C-30

Bill C-30 set out important precursors to possible airport privatization by instructing airport authorities to assess the value of their airports. Why do this unless the government is planning a sell-off? Privatizing airports is a dangerous road. It takes a public, non-profit service and turns it into a private monopoly designed to squeeze passengers for profit.

We should be encouraging markets where they make sense. We have multiple airlines, and we should push them to compete more. That helps consumers. But a single airport is a natural monopoly. If it's a non-profit, then, by design, it doesn't chase monopoly profits. If we sell it to a private company, that company will use the monopoly power to rake in monopoly profits for its investors.

To make matters worse, the spring update suggests the federal government might actually lower the rent it receives if it sells airports to new for-profit owners. That would be a direct handout to pad corporate bottom lines, with zero benefit to passengers. I'd encourage senators to reconsider selling off our public assets—likely at fire-sale prices—just so private businesses can cash in at flyers' expense.

Now let's talk about oil and gas profiteering. Since the start of the Iran war in March, the oil and gas sector has already made $12 billion more in profits than they would have without the war.

In fact, over the course of this very one-hour session, oil and gas raked in $10 million in excess profits. At current price levels, oil and gas corporations will make over $70 billion in excess profits this year alone.

I'd encourage this committee to consider an excess profits tax on that sector. The Canada Recovery Dividend taxed excess profits from the banking sector that they made during the pandemic re-opening.

If we were to apply a similarly designed excess profits tax on oil and gas, it would raise $1 billion a month. Given the pain at the pump, I'd ask you to consider the excess profits tax we implemented during the Second World War, when excess profits were taxed at 75 per cent.

Such an approach would raise $4 billion a month for the federal government. These revenues could be used to help more Canadians get off of gasoline and oil, with better support for heat pumps, charging stations and EV car subsidies.

I'd like to conclude with some of the impacts of the Comprehensive Expenditure Review in the two departments I've examined in some detail: Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) as well as Global Affairs.

As you'll recall, the Comprehensive Expenditure Review was meant to find efficiencies at departments or close programs that weren't being used—that's not what happened at the two departments I examined in detail.

At IRCC, the cuts weren't about efficiencies at all, they were just good old fashioned service cuts and cost downloading. The costs of a housing program for asylum seekers was downloaded to the cities. A quarter billion a year in preventive health care was cut for refugees and settlement services to help new Canadians get jobs and learn English or French was cut by a third of a billion dollars, even as we accept more economic migrants.

When it comes to Global Affairs, it was Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson who famously challenged wealthy nations like Canada to commit 0.7 per cent of their economic output to international aid. Unfortunately, funding cuts at Global Affairs are about to plunge our development assistance spending back to 1964 levels.

These cuts dismantle Pearson's legacy. We need to remember that most of Canada's international goals cannot be achieved through military means. **M**

David Macdonald is a senior economist at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Privatizing airports is a dangerous road. It takes a public, non-profit service and turns it into a private monopoly designed to squeeze passengers for profit.

Andrew Longhurst
and Dr. Paul Parks

Alberta's lunge toward private health care is a warning to all of Canada

As Alberta implements its two-tier health care system with Bill 11, policy-makers and commentators are increasingly debating whether Canadian provinces should pursue more private-pay medicine in response to the long wait times, and other challenges, that patients currently face. This is not the best way forward.

Alberta's experiment with two-tier health care—access to surgery based on wealth, not need—will worsen wait times and undermine the principles of Canadian medicare.

And while our health care system is failing many Canadians, the solution is not to make it better for those who can pay while making it considerably worse for everyone else.

In Canada, access to health care is supposed to be based on need, not on ability to pay. Yet Alberta's newly passed Bill 11, which took effect on September 1, moves the province toward U.S.-style, for-profit health care.

For the first time in Canada, surgeons will be allowed to work in both the public system and a private-pay market for medically necessary surgeries. Before Bill 11, physicians could leave the public system and work privately, but they had to choose. Under Alberta's new model, surgeons can participate in both systems simultaneously. Even Quebec, which has a more developed private sector, does not allow physicians to bill the public insurance plan while also charging other patients privately for the same medically necessary services.

This change will hurt the public health care system in many ways, but three concerns stand out:

First, Alberta already faces a shortage of nurses, anesthesiologists and other specialized staff. Many of the surgeries targeted for expansion—including hip and knee replacements, cataract surgery, hernia repairs, and endoscopic screening procedures—depend on these same professionals. Private facilities will compete with public hospitals for scarce personnel, drawing resources away from the public system.

Second, Alberta's recent experience expanding for-profit surgical clinics is discouraging. Median wait times have *increased* for nine of the 11 major procedures being tracked, including all cancer surgeries. Greater reliance on for-profit surgical clinics has coincided with longer waits, including in emergency departments.

Third, the system creates perverse incentives. Surgeons and private facilities will be able to profit while faster access is available to those who can pay. There is no business model for private-pay surgeries if public wait times are short. During the Alberta government's announcement, Health Minister Adriana LaGrange did not discourage physicians from making a "sales pitch" to patients seeking faster treatment. That is not a side effect of the policy. It is a predictable consequence.

Proponents point to Germany and Australia as models. But those comparisons are misleading. In many European countries, private practice is tightly regulated and most surgeons have hospital employment contracts that constrain private activity. Most also devote a larger share of spending to publicly funded care. Australia heavily subsidizes private insurance and has longer waits than Canada. Neither country demonstrates that two-tier care improves access for everyone.

Canadians should pay attention because the implications extend beyond Alberta. It is the first province to legislate two-tier health care while encouraging a private insurance market for medically necessary care. If this approach spreads, it could fundamentally change the character of Canadian Medicare and conflict with the *Canada Health Act*'s ban on financial barriers to care.

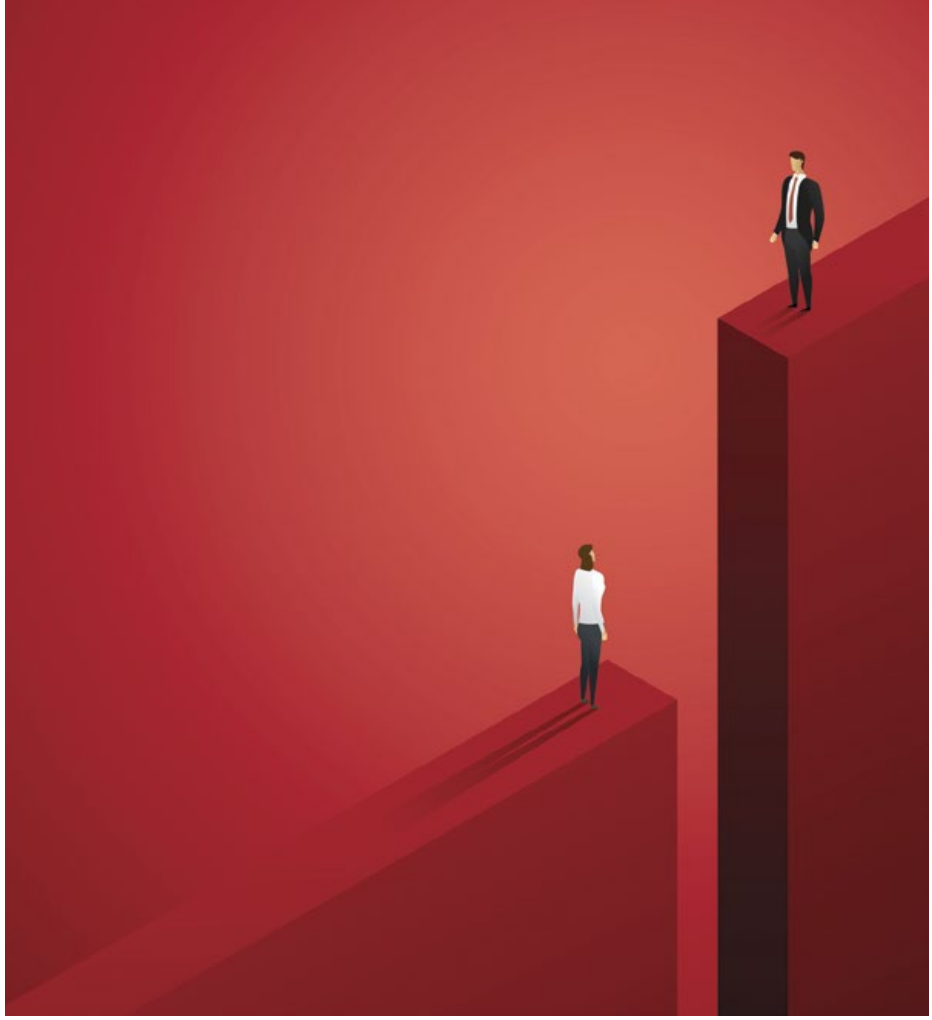
The issue comes down to a choice between two visions of health care—and two visions of Canada. One treats health care as a public good, where access is based on need. The other treats health care as a market, where investors profit from illness. Canadians should have an open discussion about health care. It should start with a simple question: do we want a system that rewards queue-jumping for the rich, or one that guarantees access based on need? Bill 11 moves Canada in the wrong direction. **M**

Andrew Longhurst is a senior researcher at the CCPA. Dr. Paul Parks is an Alberta-based emergency room physician.

Daniel Cerdas Sandí
and Christine Saulnier

Gender pay inequality in Atlantic Canada

Women earn less than men in every province



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Atlantic Canada is home to some of the lowest and highest gender pay gaps in the country.

Our report, *Closing the Gaps: Gender pay inequity in Atlantic Canada*, shows pay gaps by sector, industry, occupation, and unionization status, as well as key demographic indicators, including racialized status, Indigenous status, and immigration status.

Our report calculates how many extra days into 2026 the average woman in each province must work in order to make how much the average man made in 2025.

June 12, 2026 was Equal Pay Day for women in Newfoundland and Labrador, who face the second largest provincial pay gap in the country.

Equal Pay Day reminds us that women are still working days, weeks, and in some cases, months longer to earn what men earned the year before.

While the size of the gender pay gap varies across Atlantic Canada, the pattern is unmistakable: women earn less than men in every province.

The gaps are even larger for racialized women, Indigenous women, immigrant women, and women with disabilities. These inequalities reflect discrimination, how our labour market values work, who has access to good jobs, and the policies governments choose to implement.

Closing these gaps will require stronger pay equity laws, better wages and working conditions, stronger collective bargaining rights, and continued investment in care supports such as child care.

"This report puts numbers to what working women have lived for decades, and confirms that the gaps are built into the system," says Jody Dallaire, chair of the New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity.

"New Brunswick has just made pay transparency law, a concrete step forward. But revealing the problem is not the same as solving it.

"Pay equity is the best tool to correct the historic undervaluation of work done mostly by women, and our government's commitment to extend it to the private and care sectors would be the most significant step of its kind in Canada since Quebec in 1996. Equal pay for work of equal value is a fundamental human right, and women cannot afford to wait any longer."

"This report on gender pay equity in Canada is an essential piece of reporting for advocates, government, and employers alike," says Vanessa Bradley, executive director, P.E.I. Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

"It's encouraging to see that P.E.I. has the lowest wage gap in Canada at five per cent, and this report also shows that there is other important data that reveals more of the full story.

"P.E.I. has the greatest gap of the Atlantic provinces between racialized women and non-racialized men at 42 per cent, which is a statistic that deserves attention and advocacy. Reports like *Closing the Gaps* shed necessary light on where we're missing the mark, and how we need to continue to advocate for pay equity for all."

"It is unacceptable that women in Nova Scotia earn significantly less than men. We need stronger pay-equity legislation and enforcement to end this unfairness," said Melissa Marsman, president of the Nova Scotia Federation of Labour. "Fair pay is a human rights issue and an economic issue, and households across the province are looking to decisionmakers to take action." **M**

Daniel Cerdas Sandí is a research assistant at the CCPA-Nova Scotia Office and Christine Saulnier is director of the CCPA-Nova Scotia Office.

Andrew Longhurst

Ontario emergency room wait-times surge

Ontario hospitals are facing a deepening funding crisis, and the result is longer wait times at emergency departments, fewer hospital staff members, and declining patient care. This is a funding problem the provincial government has caused and one it has the power to solve.

The majority of Ontario hospitals have run deficits since 2022. In the last fiscal year (2024-25), 55 per cent of public hospitals were in deficit. The year before that, it was 50 per cent, and the previous year, an even higher number of public hospitals—63 per cent—ran operating deficits.

While the hospital funding crisis affects all hospitals, it's the smaller and rural hospitals that are the hardest hit by provincial funding austerity.

In 2024-25, smaller hospitals made up only 49 per cent of all Ontario hospitals but represented 61 per cent of the hospitals in deficit. The dire financial situation facing Ontario hospitals is unprecedented: More than 70 per cent of hospitals are forecasted to end this fiscal year in deficit.

What's driving these hospital budget deficits?

Provincial funding is not keeping up. Hospital costs are rising at about six per cent each year, but the Ontario government is only funding the hospital sector up to four per cent. This leaves a large funding gap, which translates into real spending cuts.

Since labour costs make up more than 70 per cent of total hospital expenses, hospitals are being put in the unenviable position of having to try to maintain services while cutting costs.

But it simply can't be done.

Public hospitals are having to make the difficult decision to lay off staff and reduce services.

At Markham Stouville, the hospital cut 65 jobs. In North Bay, the hospital has cut about 40 positions, as well as cutting back hours for medical imaging, which is necessary for patient diagnosis and reducing wait times. In March, Toronto's University Health Network laid off 28 registered nurses who provided specialized kidney care.

The result is, sadly, predictable: Staffing cuts due to provincial underfunding come at the expense of timely access to hospital care. In fact, over the last five years, emergency room wait-times have increased by 67 per cent. And some communities are even worse off: In Perth and Smiths Falls, emergency room waits have increased by 91 per cent.

The significant increase in emergency room wait times clearly shows a system under strain, unable to cope with the demand for hospital care. And the longer patients languish in the emergency room, the risks of deteriorating health status, poorer outcomes, and even death, increase.

There are multiple causes for the stunning growth in hospital admission wait-times, but the provincial government's funding austerity is the main one.

It is a vicious cycle that creates other negative outcomes: Deteriorating care conditions create worsening working conditions for health care workers, which drives the health care retention crisis.

As the gap grows between the level of care that health care providers *want* to give and the actual level of care they *can* give, workers leave the profession. Between 2016 and 2024, hospital job vacancies per 100,000 people doubled.

The ball is the provincial government's court. It has the power to address the provincial funding crisis that's undermining patient access to care.

The crisis rippling across Ontario shouldn't sentence Ontarians to reduced access to medical care. Yet that is precisely how provincial funding austerity is playing out across the province.

Ontario is the province that spends the least on health care on a per-person basis. This has to change.

The provincial government has a responsibility to invest in Ontario's public hospitals to ensure that Ontarians across the province can access health care services in a timely manner. **M**

Andrew Longhurst is a senior researcher at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and author of the research study *Failure, By Design: Ontario's deepening hospital funding crisis.*

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Garry Neil

CanCon at risk with death of *Online Streaming Act*

Canada gives in to U.S. pressure and removes the requirement for online streaming services to contribute to the production of Canadian content

In June, with trade negotiations with the U.S. as a backdrop, the federal government announced it would roll back the chief function of the 2023 *Online Streaming Act*: the requirement that streaming companies finance the production of Canadian content.

By doing so, the federal government has capitulated to U.S. pressure and gutted the cultural exemption in Canada's trade and investment agreements.

On June 3, the government issued a policy direction to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), the body which regulates broadcasting and telecommunications in Canada.

The government ordered the CRTC to remove its pending requirement for streaming services (primarily U.S.) to contribute between five and 15 per cent of their Canadian revenues to Canadian content. While the CRTC is an arms-length agency, it is likely to comply with the policy direction.

Concurrently, the government announced it would provide $600 million annually to support Canadian music and audiovisual productions, including Indigenous, French, and equity-deserving communities. The government argues the funding support is essentially equivalent to the levy on steaming services.

There are major problems with the new government approach.

Structural cultural policy measures are durable, and they are protected by cultural exemptions in agreements like the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA). Examples include content quotas, priority placement, and spending requirements on key players, including broadcasters, cable companies and others.

While direct subsidy of domestic producers is permitted under trade and investment agreements, government grants are notoriously fickle, and subject to political whim. Next year's budget will certainly have different priorities.

It is ludicrous for the government to contend that streamers will simply increase the subscription fees of Canadian viewers in response to the CRTC requirement. First, it is a competitive field. Second, several European countries and others have similar measures, including content quotas up to 30 per cent. France requires steamers to reinvest 25 per cent of domestic revenues in French productions. Third, streamers currently produce, acquire and show high-quality works that attract global audiences, and they must continue to do so.

The CRTC requirement would simply ensure a small share of their Canadian revenues would be devoted to Canadian content, a small fraction of their inventory. It is estimated Netflix is spending $20 billion annually on content.

This is a difficult time for Canada's recorded media industries. According to the Canadian Media Producers Association's *Profile 2025* report, Canadian film and television content production declined by 2.2 per cent, a second consecutive year of decline.

The Canadian Association of Broadcasters, for their part, commissioned the *Broadcasting in Canada 2025* report, which found that the dominance of streaming services has caused a structural crisis in the Canadian broadcasting industry.

Streaming services now dominate advertising revenues. In the past few years, total internet-based advertising in Canada rose from $0.56 billion to $17.7 billion, while broadcaster advertising revenues fell from $3.0 billion to $2.6 billion.

As a consequence of these challenges, the CRTC also adjusted the regulatory framework for traditional broadcasters and lowered their obligations.

Traditional broadcasters making more than $25 million annually will contribute 25 per cent of their annual revenues to support Canadian content. This is down from current requirements ranging from 30-45 per cent, but still higher than the CRTC requirement for foreign streaming servicers. Broadcasters making less than $25 million will be exempt from these contributions, the same threshold applies to streamers.

The Canadian recorded media industry (music, television, radio, theatres and online) is struggling in this age of streamers and AI. The government's June 3 decision will hasten its demise. **M**

Garry Neil is the author of *Canadian Culture in a Globalized World, The impact of trade deals on Canada's cultural life* (Lorimer, 2019).

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Noah Fry
and Stuart Trew

Winnipeg should embrace "buy local"

There is no such thing as a free lunch, but one closer to home probably feels better. For years, local favourite Salisbury House has been the chosen vendor for Winnipeg-owned golf courses. This spring the city went against local tastes and chose Aramark, an American-owned company, for the job.

When our public entities buy local, they create jobs, provide economic stability and improve responsiveness to the public. In this uncertain global climate, "buying local" is not a gimmick but a necessity. Up until recently, this philosophy was persuasive.

Mayor Scott Gillingham has, however, reversed course on a Buy Local policy. Following staff feedback, the mayor claims the policy would violate trade obligations. He is both right and wrong.

While there are limits in Canadian trade deals to buying local, they are not determinative. Not only can Winnipeg establish a Buy Local policy, the City would be at a disadvantage if it does not.

The City of Winnipeg has public procurement obligations in three key trade deals: the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with the European Union, the internal Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) and the smaller New West Partnership Trade Agreement (NWPTA).

These agreements prohibit Winnipeg from discriminating against European or out-of-province firms when spending money on covered purchases of goods, services or construction projects. In plain language, Winnipeg cannot favour its own suppliers at the expense of either European, Canadian or Western Canadian suppliers.

These agreements also stop Winnipeg, in most circumstances, from setting aside some contracts for small or women-owned businesses or requiring winning bidders to contribute to local economic development.

As onerous as these terms are, there are still ways for Winnipeg to implement a Buy Local policy.

First, these trade-related procurement rules only apply to certain purchases. Smaller purchases are not covered, which means Winnipeg can do what it wants.

Second, these agreements require equal treatment for covered suppliers. This includes European and other Canadian companies, not companies from the United States.

Third, while Winnipeg cannot explicitly favour local firms on tenders above the trade agreements' low spending thresholds, it can favour suppliers with other intrinsic characteristics. For example, the city could give preference to unionized workplaces, co-operatives, or certified sustainable or fair-trade goods and services.

The city's Sustainable Procurement plan is commendable for its thoughtful engagement with ecological, economic and social barriers. It is especially effective in communicating the value and potential for Indigenous and social enterprise set-asides.

If the city can do this, why can't it favour local suppliers or at least bar American vendors? It can. Other Canadian jurisdictions are showing how simple such a policy can be.

For example, Brampton, Ontario introduced a Made in Canada policy that blocks American suppliers from its purchases. The municipality of North Vancouver is similarly building on its current Buy Local policy to consider ways to exclude U.S. suppliers.

Canadian provinces are also introducing Buy Local policies, despite having more cumbersome procurement obligations in trade agreements.

Last year, Manitoba introduced a *Buy Canadian Act* that favoured local suppliers in eligible purchases. Here, Canadian suppliers are favoured whenever possible.

Ontario recently legislated a *Buy Ontario Act*. Its approach has been to favour Ontarian suppliers first and, when the CFTA is applicable, Canadian suppliers next. Quebec and New Brunswick have done the same.

Even the federal government, whose public spending is more restricted in trade deals than any other jurisdiction, has created a Buy Canadian Policy. This policy favours Canadian suppliers, content and materials within major strategic purchases.

Without a Buy Local policy, Winnipeg's local businesses could needlessly miss out on lucrative opportunities while others eat their lunch.

Originally published in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. **M**

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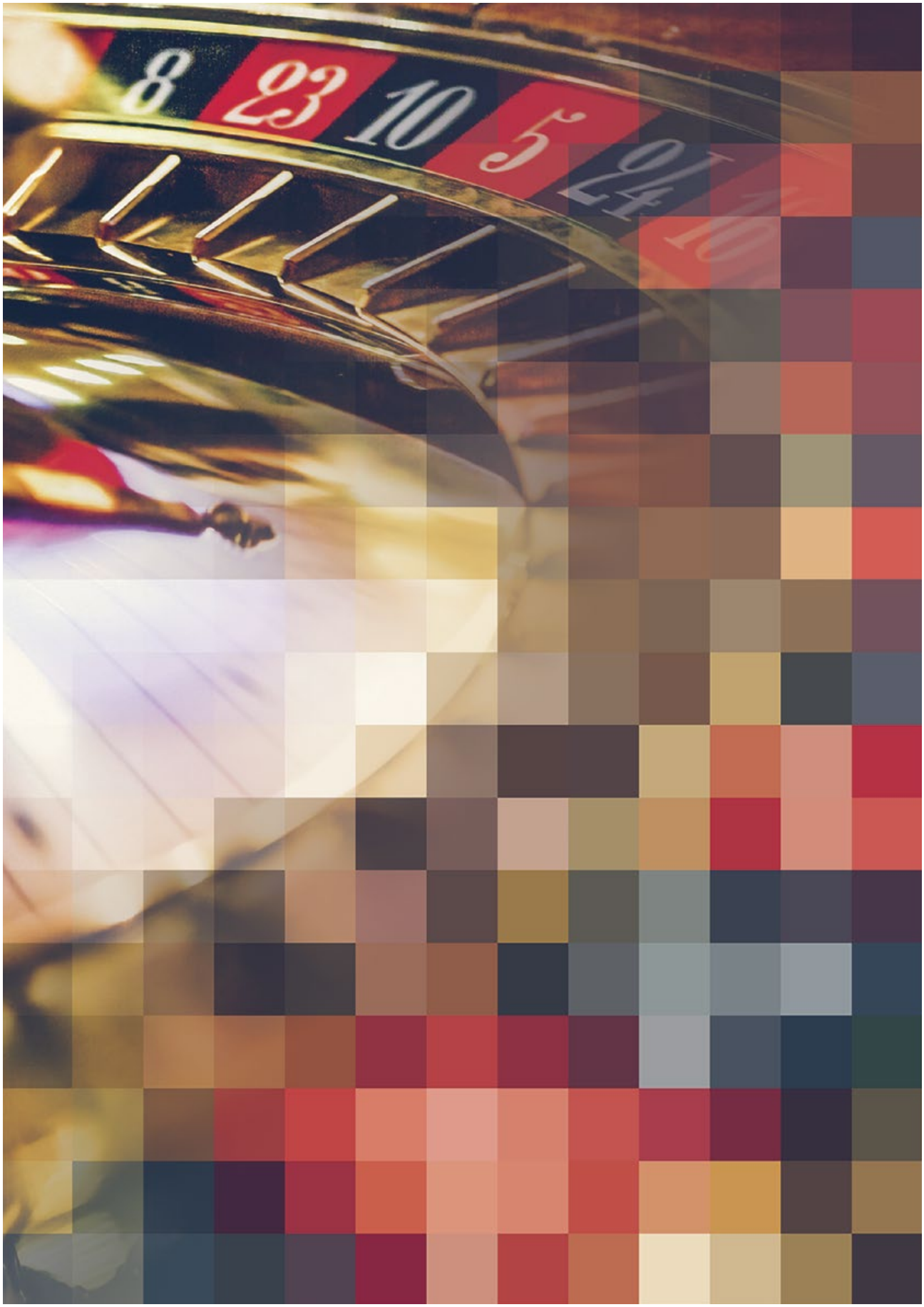

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Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood

All in at the AI casino

The federal government is betting everything on an AI future that may never exist

Artificial intelligence (AI) is eating the world—its data, its capital, its energy, its attention. Never before has a novel technology been so quickly and so forcibly integrated into every facet of our lives. No time for deliberation, no expense spared.

The biggest boosters of the various technologies and products that fall under the "AI" banner are, unsurprisingly, the big tech companies that have the most to gain from widespread AI adoption. But they are not alone: governments around the world are all in on AI, and Canada is no exception.

In its recent AI strategy, the federal government declared that "to thrive in the era of AI, Canadians need to trust in its promise." It was a revealing plea. If the benefits of AI were obvious and immediate—and the harms merely speculative—there would be no need to appeal to the technology's future promise.

Instead, the opposite is true. The proliferation of AI is awash in immediate harms, but the benefits remain elusive. Widespread AI adoption is thus a costly bet—a gamble on future prosperity with our jobs, our planet and very minds at stake.

Welcome to the AI casino.

Ante up

The scale of the AI mania is extraordinary. Global investment in the AI supply chain may top US$2 trillion this year—approaching two per cent of global GDP. Most of that money is pouring into the physical infrastructure that enables the AI economy. In the next three years, an estimated US$3 trillion will be spent on the construction of new data centres alone. Within a decade, AI is projected to be a US$5 trillion industry—comparable to the entire economy of Germany or Japan.

The sums are not only large in absolute terms, but they are also large relative to other sectors of the economy. More than half of all venture capital is now being absorbed by AI companies. In the U.S., AI investment accounted for a third of GDP growth in 2025. Major AI companies, such as OpenAI and Anthropic, are now valued at a trillion dollars apiece. Legacy big tech firms, such as Alphabet (Google) and Microsoft—already among the largest corporations in history—are pivoting aggressively into AI infrastructure and products.

AI industry investment in Canada is smaller by several orders of magnitude. Compared to the US$286 billion invested in U.S. AI companies in 2025, only US$4.3 billion was invested in Canadian firms. Compared

to the trillion dollar valuations of leading American AI companies, the largest-AI focused firm in Canada, Cohere, is valued at "only" US$7 billion.

For all its talk of aggressively embracing AI, the federal government is only ponying up $2 billion for new computing infrastructure—a tacit acknowledgment that Canada cannot beat the U.S. at its own game. Nor should we try. But the feds nevertheless remain fervently committed to AI adoption as a matter of principle.

Among other goals, the national AI strategy aims to increase the rate of AI adoption among Canadian businesses from 12 per cent today to 60 per cent within a decade. The strategy hopes to reach a million post-secondary students and thousands of K-12 teachers with AI "literacy" programs. And it aspires to "transform public service delivery" through AI.

And if all of those AI tools happen to be made and owned by American firms? So be it. Digital sovereignty—the principle of domestic (and, ideally, democratic) control over the technology we use—is an aspiration to which the federal government pays lip service. But, when push comes to shove, AI adoption is a higher priority.

After all, the benefits of AI adoption are so incontrovertibly large and widespread that we cannot afford to get bogged down in questions of risk and harm. Right?

Betting the farm on productivity

The AI boom has several premises, including an appeal to the alluring and enduring myth of inevitable technological progress. But the big bucks pouring into the industry today are driven by a simpler promise: productivity growth.

Productivity refers simply to a worker's output per hour worked. Productivity growth is how much that output per hour worked increases over time. Continued growth in labour productivity is necessary for modern, debt-fuelled economies that would otherwise collapse in on themselves. And, indeed, employers have succeeded for decades in squeezing more and more value (and profit) out of every worker—whether or not that value was shared with workers themselves. Corporate enthusiasm for AI is merely the latest incarnation of that profit-motivated logic.

According to Claude developer Anthropic, AI adoption will double the rate of productivity growth in the next decade. Independent assessments are less rosy, but still tend to converge on potential gains in productivity growth in the range of 10 to 20 per cent. If that pans out, it would indeed add trillions of dollars to the global economy. In Canada, industry-adjacent studies project a cumulative, AI-driven boon of $300 billion to the Canadian economy over the next 10 years.

The problem is that actual productivity gains are elusive. The vast majority of corporate AI pilots are finding no return on investment. A Statistics Canada study concluded that "there is no statistically significant direct association between AI adoption and productivity" among Canadian firms to date. Companies that embraced AI tools and started laying off workers, including Ford and IBM, have started rehiring them. Half of employers who made AI-driven job cuts admit it was a mistake.

There are a few reasons for AI's economic underperformance. The first is technological. Despite the appearance of intelligence, AI tools—especially the large language models (LLMs) underpinning popular chatbots, such as ChatGPT, Gemini and Copilot—are fundamentally unintelligent. They are prediction machines that do not (and cannot) know whether their own outputs are accurate or reasonable. Even as these tools get more capable and reliable over time, they can never be 100 per cent trustworthy. To make matters worse, they are also inherently backward looking, capable only of inference based on past data, which means they struggle with novel situations and edge cases. Those are big problems in contexts where accuracy, judgment, creativity and liability matter.

The second problem is institutional. Most individuals and organizations do not know how best to deploy these technologies—or whether they should be deployed at all. Handing a nurse a screwdriver and saying, "use this, it's the next big thing," does not automatically make that nurse do more or better work. To the surprise and chagrin of many in the tech sector, not every job is like software development.

In fact, AI adoption can often have the opposite of the intended effect. For example, the amount of time workers must now waste reviewing and parsing what researchers call AI "workslop" often offsets any time saved in the first place. The assumption that indiscriminate AI adoption will make all workers and/or organizations more productive has not been the case in practice, and it is bound to be wrong in some (perhaps most) cases moving forward.

The big question then—and the big bet underpinning the trillions of dollars in AI investment—is whether those promised productivity benefits will actually materialize at scale. If they don't, AI mania will prove to be the largest financial bubble in history, and its collapse would have massive and far-reaching consequences. Index and pension funds, including Canadian funds like the CPP, are now deeply implicated in the AI industry, so the damage would not be localized.

But even if the technological and institutional hurdles are overcome and the AI industry delivers on its promised productivity panacea, an even more important question remains: is it worth it?

Skin in the game

A true accounting of the costs of the AI boom is a daunting task.

There are the environmental costs of data centres, especially the burning of fossil fuels to meet ballooning electricity demand. There are the democratic costs of AI-fuelled mis- and disinformation. There are the human rights costs of AI-enabled corporate and state surveillance. There are the cognitive costs of offloading more and more of our thinking to machines. There are the security costs of entrenching dependence on foreign, especially American, AI infrastructure. There are the cultural costs of AI systems imbibing the totality of human intellectual and artistic expression without consent, credit or compensation. The list goes on.

Each of these costs represents an existential threat in its own way—to the habitability of the planet, to the viability of democracy, and so on. AI is proving to be a force multiplier for so many of the challenges we are already struggling with.

Any claims of AI's economic benefit to Canada must be weighed against the profound risks it poses across all of these other domains. But even in the domain of the economy and of worker productivity, it is not clear that workers in the aggregate will be made any better off by the federal government's enthusiasm for AI adoption. We are rolling the dice both in terms of job quantity and of job quality.

On job quantity, there is intense academic disagreement about the risk of AI-related automation of the workforce. While most workers, especially knowledge workers, are theoretically exposed to AI for at least some tasks, that does not necessarily equate to replaceability. As noted above, AI-driven layoffs have proven to be premature—and have been reversed—in many contexts where the technology was simply less capable than the humans who lost their jobs. To date, AI adoption has not had a significant effect on overall employment levels.

Yet it is already evident that AI is having structural effects on the workforce. Stable overall employment levels hide worrying trends. In the tech sector, for example, hiring of senior level employees has remained stable or even increased as hiring of junior level employees has fallen precipitously. Banking, law and other sectors are following suit. In Canada, entry-level job vacancies are at their lowest levels in a decade despite a growing population, and youth unemployment is near record levels.

Young workers are thus the canaries in the coal mine. As AI systems improve and employers get smarter about deployment, the universe of at-risk positions (and whole professions) will inevitably grow. Canada's national AI strategy aspires to create 250,000 new jobs through AI by 2031. It does not mention how many jobs will be lost along the way.

On job quality, AI is reorganizing work itself in ways that undermine the autonomy and dignity of workers—even where they are not outright replaced. Workers who were previously responsible for producing creative or intellectual work are increasingly relegated to reviewing the outputs of AI systems. Workers must also contend with algorithmic management, a term that refers to managerial tasks, including hiring and disciplinary decisions, being offloaded to AI systems. All of this is happening in contexts where AI-powered workplace surveillance is increasingly ubiquitous and brazen.

The upshot is an intensification and dehumanization of labour that would make Marx blush.

The house always wins

The cruel irony here is that, to the extent AI is already or will potentially improve workplace productivity, many of those benefits may prove to be short-lived. Gutting entry-level employment and deskilling the professional workforce creates enormous vulnerabilities for individual institutions and the economy writ large. Organizations that depend on senior professionals overseeing AI systems are going to be in a lot of trouble when those leaders move on and there are no junior workers in the ranks.

Geopolitical risk also looms over Canada's AI enthusiasm. Canadian firms were recently cut off from leading American AI models by decree of the U.S. government. Microsoft, which is a pillar of the federal government's AI infrastructure, has acknowledged it cannot guarantee the security of sensitive public data. Outsourcing public and private sector capacity to U.S.-controlled services is a noose we tie for ourselves.

When it comes to gambling, the only winning move is not to play. Eventually, the house—which, in this case, is the nexus of U.S. big tech companies and state imperialism—always wins.

For Canada, that has two major implications.

First, we need to slow down. Rushing to indiscriminately adopt AI across every sector and domain of Canadian life, as the federal government aspires to, is a dangerous and unnecessary risk, especially where those systems are not domestically controlled. The harms are too real and too immediate to justify the speculative, long-term benefits.

Second, to the extent that the various technologies underpinning the AI boom have the potential to be genuine public goods—as they do in narrow, sector-specific applications such as energy efficiency and scientific research—we need Canadian-controlled options. That will require investment and experimental adoption, but it is a far cry from AI chatbots being forced into every workplace and school in the country.

There's no denying that AI is here to stay. And there is little we can do about rapacious U.S. tech companies. But we don't have to go to their casino. It's time for Canada to play our own game. **M**

Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood is a senior researcher at the CCPA and the co-author, with Rachel Pettigrew, of *Think Twice: A citizen's guide to artificial intelligence in Canada*.

Russian drone attack on Odessa CP

Paris Marx

Making a killing

While we debate chatbots and productivity, the deepest AI implementation is happening in the military-industrial complex

In early June, Prime Minister Mark Carney stood in front of rows of medical workers to unveil his government's new AI strategy. "AI for All" envisioned the rollout of artificial intelligence throughout Canadian society to make sectors more productive, provide benefits to Canadians, and ultimately increase Canada's economic output.

For Carney, the choice to announce his strategy at a hospital seemed like a strategic one: he wanted the technology and his plan to increase adoption to be perceived positively by an increasingly skeptical public. In this way, AI would be associated with improvements to health care, better educational outcomes, and reduced demands for employees at work. It sought to paper over the growing list of social harms associated with AI—issues that have 68 per cent of Canadians calling for heavy regulation.

But alongside his optimistic advocacy for AI, Carney has been embarking on another major policy change with its own economic dimension: a military buildup the likes of which Canadians have not seen in decades. The government is committing up to $100 billion to buy a dozen new submarines, along with purchases of surveillance aircraft, icebreakers, joint-strike missiles, plans for new armoured vehicles, and plenty of additional

military hardware. At some point it will make a long-delayed decision about new fighter jets too.

Many of these purchases are for traditional and very expensive military equipment, but as the wars in Ukraine and Iran, along with the genocide in Gaza, have shown, warfare is changing. Low-cost drones are an effective counter to traditional hardware and AI-infused weaponry can inflict devastating effects on their targets, which all too often include innocent civilians. These are technologies more often associated with the United States, Israel, Ukraine, or Iran. But Carney seems intent on ensuring Canada isn't left behind on the more deadly and repressive markets for AI.

The deadly consequences of AI

For the past several years, Ukraine has been rapidly advancing its AI capabilities, equipping its Hornet drones with an AI-assisted targeting system that has contributed to its more frequent strikes on Russian infrastructure and supply lines. It has also used the technology for real-time planning and assessment of damage after strikes. These are uses that Western supporters of Ukraine would be likely to cheer because the technology is aiding an ally push back against an aggressor. But it can just as easily be deployed to depraved and deadly ends.

Take Gaza as an example. For the past several years, Israel has been utilizing AI targeting systems with names like Lavender and The Gospel to identify individuals and buildings with links to militants from Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad. The effect has been to produce a list of targets much more rapidly than in previous military campaigns on the strip; targets that insiders say get "rubber stamped" for attack, with little checking of the reliability of the system's outputs. In October 2023, a military colonel in charge of the target bank said those AI systems allowed the Israeli army to generate targets more quickly than it could attack them for the first time.

When those systems are combined with human decision-makers that disregard civilian life, the consequences are catastrophic. Journalists at *+972 Magazine* and *Local Call* documented how the Israeli army used AI systems identifying supposed militants in high-rise buildings to justify bringing down the entire structure, in a concerted campaign to make civilians feel the cost of the war. They also found that the Israeli army systematically attacked individuals in their homes, often at night when their families would be around them. In order to do this, they tracked suspected militants until they reached their family homes using yet another AI-powered software called "Where's Daddy?"

The human cost of those actions are immense. Officially, Israel has killed more than 75,000 Palestinians in their attacks on Gaza, but experts estimate the real number is far higher, while 92 per cent of residential buildings have been flattened. But the carnage hasn't ended in Gaza. As the United States and Israel turned their bombs toward Iran earlier this year, they once again employed AI systems to determine a wide range of targets across the country, hitting everything from nuclear facilities to a girls' elementary school on the very first day of the war.

There's little indication Canada is involved in these actions. But that doesn't mean it won't get to that point in the future. The Canadian government has continued sending weapons to Israel, despite the genocide it has carried out in Gaza, and to the United Arab Emirates, even as it fuels a genocide in Sudan and some of those weapons have been smuggled to Sudanese fighters. Canada claims to be a moral player on the world stage, but economics seems to trump everything else—and that's especially the case in the Carney era.

Canada's military-AI nexus

At the centre of the government's strategy is a company called Cohere. In Carney's announcement of the AI strategy, he touted how the company creates its own large-language models, making Canada one of only four countries with that capacity domestically. Yet Cohere is far from a model corporate citizen.

Cohere is being sued by 14 publishers, including the *Toronto Star*, for illegally using their copyrighted material to train its AI models and for allowing its products to generate fake articles attributed to those publications. The company's attempt to dismiss the lawsuit was denied last year. Notably, Carney's AI strategy has nothing to say about copyright infringement by AI companies.

Given the central position it holds in Carney's plan to increase AI adoption, Cohere is poised to receive significant new public funding on top of the hundreds of millions it's already received. Yet despite Carney's talk of the importance of having Canadian companies build domestic data centres, Cohere chose a U.S.

Carney seems intent on the more deadly and repressive markets for AI

company called CoreWeave to develop its AI factory. Not only does CoreWeave have very questionable financial arrangements, but there were Canadian options available; they just would have taken a little longer to complete the project.

Just as U.S. AI companies like OpenAI, Anthropic, and the major players like Google and Meta have sought public contracts in recent years, so too has Cohere. It's working with the Canadian and British governments to insert AI into the public sector—even as chatbots make up patients' medical information, hallucinate immigration applications, and give Canadians incorrect tax advice. But it's also been seeking those military contracts too.

Since December, it's signed partnerships with the Canadian subsidiary of French defence company Thales, Swedish defence firm Saab, and German submarine marker ThyssenKrupp. Essentially, if the Canadian government is making a big new military procurement, Cohere seems to be in line for a lucrative AI contract as part of the promised domestic investment. It's early days for Cohere's move into military procurement, but as the government aims to ramp up defence spending, it wouldn't be surprising for the company to see that sector as a growth area. It wouldn't be the only one.

Earlier this year, researchers Mélina Poulin and Nicolas Chartier-Edwards warned about the militarization of the Canadian AI industry. Despite presenting itself as being concerned with principles of AI ethics, the industry was quietly shifting toward military and dual-use applications for their products, given where the business opportunities increasingly presented themselves. The experts expressed alarm at how that process was "taking place in a regulatory void, as Canada has no legislation on AI or autonomous weapons, and operates within an ethical vacuum that serves corporate opportunism and state complacency."

Canada seeks AI implementation at virtually any cost

A poor choice of partners

The government certainly isn't providing much reassurance that the push to adopt AI won't go sideways. In 2024, the Department of National Defence (DND) released a report chastising the department and the military for their slow and fragmented adoption of AI, setting out a strategy to streamline and accelerate that process. Under Carney, the pressure is only escalating, as he's made it clear his focus is on adoption. Where his AI strategy seeks to address harms, it seems more designed around getting Canadians onside than really grappling with the extent of the technology's drawbacks.

The DND has not shown itself to be a good judge of its partners. Between 2020 and 2025, it spent more than $45 million on a contract with Palantir, the U.S. data analytics firm co-founded by far-right billionaire Peter Thiel. Palantir CEO Alex Karp has defended the company's work with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement as it's rounded up immigrants across the country, including dozens of Canadians, and called for U.S. tech companies to defend U.S. power, including by "making America more lethal." Cohere had to disavow its previous work with Palantir earlier this year.

As the Canadian government sets out on a course to ramp up military spending and push AI at all costs, we need to be on guard for the ways those two industries are undoubtedly going to seek to collaborate regardless of the human cost of a greater application of AI in surveillance and warfare. We know the government is unlikely to stand in the way. Another pillar of the Carney agenda is a more conservative approach to crime, and there we can see AI is already being trialled in prisons and prompting concerns from legal experts.

This feels like a key part of the bait and switch underway. The government is trying to frame AI through a lens of social and commercial benefits that are mainly proving elusive, while trying to distract the public from the long list of harms that experts have identified and failures of implementation across the public and private sectors. But the harms can be so much greater, with people's lives being shaped and even taken with the assistance of unreliable systems and authorities eager to use them to displace accountability.

Mark Carney is "all in" on a vision of AI that echoes industry narratives and seeks implementation at virtually any costs, including in the military. The public, however, is not behind him. And across various industries, the level of AI adoption has been slow, and the promised productivity gains have not materialized. One of the most significant exceptions to that rule, outside the tech sector itself, has been in the military-industrial complex. When we look back at the "AI revolution," we may well see it primarily as a revolution in the technology governments use to kill, maim, and surveil. **M**

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Si Thu Naing

Hewers of code, drawers of data

Canada in the precarious middle of the global AI supply chain

Writing in the 1930s, economist Harold Innis described Canada's economic situation in biblical terms: the country, he said, acted as "hewers of wood, and drawers of water." This, he wrote, was Canada's resource economy: a country structurally pegged to larger powers, a place to draw resources from—resources which would go on to have high skill, value-added processes performed outside Canada's borders.

While the Canadian economy has certainly changed a lot since that time, the pattern remains legible in Canada's resource economy: over 90 per cent of Alberta's diluted bitumen, for example, is exported for refining in the United States, with refined products returning at a premium. How, then, is that dynamic playing out in the rapidly expanding AI industry?

Data is not bitumen—it is invisible, intangible, and borderless, and that is precisely what makes its extraction easy to overlook. Yet the extractivist logic is identical: companies gather raw data from populations, refine it via underpaid overseas labour, and sell back globally as proprietary infrastructure.

What makes Canada's position in the AI economy structurally distinct is that the pressure toward asymmetric value extraction runs in both directions simultaneously. Downstream, Canadian-funded AI development draws on cheap annotation labour from the Global South, building products on a foundation of annotation labour whose conditions are often undercompensated and psychologically harmful. Upstream, the foundational intellectual property (the model architectures, the GPU chip designs, the platform infrastructure) is largely held by American technology corporations.

Canada's $2 billion sovereign compute investment risks, in substantial part, building infrastructure

that runs foreign-owned AI platforms under Canadian hosting arrangements. Canada occupies the precarious middle of a global value chain: extracting from those below while being extracted from above.

Sovereignty over the server rack is not the same as sovereignty over the system, and sovereignty over the system is not the same as capturing the economic return. A July 2025 Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada analysis found that despite launching the world's first national AI strategy in 2017, Canada still holds under three per cent of global digital services exports, a figure that has barely moved in two decades. The compute infrastructure companies are building (with significant public subsidies) risks repeating the same pattern at a larger scale.

Canadian AI companies are already active in the Global South. TELUS Digital runs a global annotation business employing workers in the Philippines, India, and Latin America. None of this is subject to supply chain diligence—a Philippines government official has described data annotation as an "informal sector" with no regulatory protective mechanisms in place. Canada's *Fighting Against Forced Labour and Child Labour in Supply Chains Act*, in force since January 2024, was designed for physical goods crossing physical borders. Data annotations travel by file transfer and API call, and do not appear in a customs manifest.

Back in Canada, Alberta's electricity regulator had over 30 AI data centre projects in its approval queue as of February 2026, representing approximately 93 per cent of Canada's planned AI compute capacity. The proposed Wonder Valley project alone would emit enough greenhouse gases to erase Alberta's entire coal phaseout gains. The project also draws up 24 million cubic metres of water annually from the Smoky River under a licence the Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation challenged and lost. Canada's *National Observer* confirmed on the day of the AI for All launch that the strategy contains no new protections for water or climate.

Canada's only dedicated AI legislative instrument, the *Artificial Intelligence and Data Act*, died in January 2025 without producing a single enforceable rule. In its place, a patchwork of existing instruments governs AI development: privacy law through the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* (PIPEDA), human rights and consumer protection statutes, and a voluntary Code of Conduct for Generative AI. None requires companies to disclose training data provenance or upstream labour conditions.

The gap is not due to lack of legislative capacity. In June 2026, the federal government introduced Bill C-34, the *Safe Social Media Act*, to protect children from online harms. Similarly, Bill C-35, the *Ban on Importing Goods Made with Forced Labour Act*, is now at the second reading. The bill would ban imports of goods produced by forced labour, but as drafted it keeps the same physical-goods framing. The gap is less a total absence of law than a mismatch between existing frameworks and the realities of AI supply chains.

The EU AI Act requires providers of high-risk AI systems to document the origin and collection processes of their training datasets. Canada lacks a comparable general statutory rule requiring public transparency of training data provenance.

The Centre for International Governance Innovation argues that Canada should anchor its domestic AI rules to international standards and actively build regulatory interoperability with its trade partners, rather than constructing a comprehensive regime that competes with the rest of the world. The authors explicitly carve out areas where domestic rules are warranted: online harms, Indigenous data rights, and federally regulated sectors.

However, the three jurisdictions that dominate the global AI economy do not merely have different rules; they operate on incompatible premises. The EU anchors AI governance in fundamental rights. China subordinates it to state authority. The U.S. governs primarily through executive directives, a tool one administration can issue, reverse, or weaponize with no legislative process at all.

In June 2026, for example, Washington issued an export-control directive to Anthropic restricting foreign access to its most advanced models, citing national security. Two weeks later, the administration partially reversed itself. This abrupt policy swing shows that access to frontier AI can be revoked by foreign executive decision alone; sovereignty over publicly funded server racks means little if the model running on it can be summarily switched off.

Interoperability across major AI jurisdictions is a values problem, not a technical coordination challenge. Mutual recognition cannot reconcile fundamentally incompatible definitions of fair labour, consent, or public interest. True sovereignty cannot be outsourced to a lowest-common-denominator international standard. Deferring the hard questions—who bears the cost of annotation labour, whose land hosts the infrastructure, and who captures the return on public investment—is abdication.

Canada's position as a late entrant into AI governance is not a handicap if it is used wisely. The existing frameworks represent years of hard-won compromise Canada does not need to repeat from scratch. The question is not which regime to align with, but which instruments are consistent with Canadian values: the labour commitments, the Indigenous obligations, the public accountability traditions. That judgment cannot be outsourced. It is precisely the work that a sovereign AI strategy should be doing.

Supply chain sovereignty

Digital sovereignty, then, requires extending its logic to the full supply chain. The five measures below use

existing federal authorities; none requires new legislation.

First, reform procurement. The Treasury Board should, through an amendment to the Directive on the Management of Procurement and the Policy on Social Procurement, require companies receiving federal AI funding to attest that training data was produced under conditions consistent with International Labour Organization standards, placing the compliance burden on large subsidized recipients rather than startups. Canada already imposes comparable conditions in other procurement contexts.

Second, assess dependency before buying. The Privy Council Office should, through its existing machinery-of-government authorities, require a standardized dependency assessment before any federal department procures an AI system above a defined threshold: who controls the data, who owns the IP, and what happens to publicly funded assets if the commercial relationship ends.

Third, bring back the watchdog. The federal government should re-establish the Canada Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE) by executive order, the same mechanism used to eliminate it, with an expanded mandate covering AI annotation labour. The timing makes the case. CORE's first and only formal finding of human rights abuse, issued in March 2024 against Dynasty Gold Corporation, showed the mechanism could work when resourced to investigate. In June 2026, the government eliminated the office entirely, citing a thin track record that critics attribute to the office never being given power to compel testimony or documents. Closing Canada's only corporate human rights watchdog just as a new wave of AI-funded supply chains opens abroad is a choice worth reversing.

Fourth, attach consent conditions. The federal government should, as a condition of signing any future federal memoranda of understanding for large-scale data centre approvals, attach free, prior, and informed consent requirements consistent with the UNDRIP Act. Provincial regulators evaluate projects one at a time; the federal funding lever applies across all of them.

Fifth, fund augmentation, not automation with federal funding. A February 2026 Brookings Institution framework distinguishes pro-worker AI, which expands what workers can do and raises the value of their expertise, from automation that simply replaces labour at lower cost. Replacing workers is often simply the path of least resistance. AI for All's pro-worker language is currently aspirational; requiring recipients of federal AI funding to demonstrate which category their deployment falls into would turn that language into a procurement condition.

Canada has a pattern of letting accountability instruments arrive late: softwood lumber, mining due diligence. AI need not follow the same arc. The question for Canada is whether it will act while the pattern is still interruptible.

AI for All is an ambitious strategy. Its ambition is incomplete insofar as it does not yet address the costs being externalized onto annotation workers in the Global South, onto Indigenous communities where data centres are being built in Canada, and onto lower-income countries that will purchase Canadian AI products without the institutional capacity to govern them.

Canada can choose to govern the asymmetric value extraction it is already part of. Or it can entrench the dependency that the strategy was designed to escape. **M**

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Shama Rangwala

Brownshirt chatbots

AI in academia and in the fascist political project

In the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode "The Measure of a Man," android character Commander Data is on trial to determine his humanity—whether he possesses subjectivity, agency, and therefore self-determination, or if he is simply a machine that can be replicated for (slave) labour. The trope of the artificial subject abounds in our culture: Spielberg's *A.I.* conjures the synthetic child-as-futurity, *Her* offers a disembodied AI companion, and *Blade Runner* imagines labouring Replicants.

Fascism separates those who are marked for life and those marked for death through policing the category of the human. In our shared stories, the imperative to humanize the excluded is ostensibly anti-fascist: to want Data to be human is to be against the fascist domination of those rendered non-human.

My work in the Humanities researches and teaches cultural representations—how we communicate ourselves, our histories, and our possible futures. In its political dimension, this work can illuminate relationality across difference, enable anti-capitalist critique of the state and empire, and connect the cultural imaginary to real violence. From this perspective, how might the institutional imperative to embrace AI serve anti-human political ends?

Chatbots in the classrooms

The term "university" points to the ideal of a unified diversity of research fields, methods, and knowledge production, with all having equal status. Yet the corporatization of the university—including investments in war-profiteering—privileges those disciplines that serve capital accumulation and returns on private investment.

Understanding the operations of Generative AIs—Large Language Models (LLMs) that scrape archives and produce outputs based on probability—reveals why this form would support fascist relations. While all kinds of learning technologies have facilitated knowledge, connection, and flourishing, the LLMs differ in what part of the intellectual process is being automated.

If one is learning calculus, for example, a graphing calculator may facilitate an understanding of the theory of calculus by generating the graphs without compromising an understanding of the equations or their applications. That is, a graphing calculator automates graph generation while leaving the student's deeper understanding of calculus intact. While there is little substantial variation in the graphing

of an equation, the movement from thought to writing can take infinitely diverse forms, each signifying differently.

LLMs are qualitatively different from the graphing calculator, as they automate an essential aspect of intellectual labour. Compiling bibliographies, summaries, critiques, and writing itself, are all intellectual labour. The pedagogical goal of course assignments is not product but rather process itself. GenAI risks automating the very process, friction, and struggle through which understanding emerges.

The I-subject of the chatbot presents itself as an authoritative and often sycophantic voice. Its affective orientation is one of affirmation, praise, and understanding—a crude but seductive facsimile of what is lacking when humans are alienated from each other. This simulated relationality exacerbates capitalist alienation and its concomitant social and political problems, manifesting in new forms such as AI-induced psychosis.

The chats provide information in a commodified form, as smooth singular outputs—an extension of the corporatization and deintellectualization of the academy, with knowledge-as-commodity for job training. Using GenAI as an editor or research assistant removes the training from knowledge production and is an egregious labour issue, affecting the current and next generation of intellectual workers. It is a fundamental violation of the process of knowledge (re) production in the academy. LLMs may have legitimate uses, but the institutional imperative for their adoption and integration serves a broader nefarious political purpose.

Automated brownshirts

The political economy of GenAI as it actually exists also points to more explicit ties to a broader fascist political project. While some attempt to develop more "ethical AI," the technologies academic institutions are adopting come from large tech companies engaged in mass surveillance—the very infrastructure of fascist regulation.

AI is an essential technology of contemporary fascism on multiple fronts. Imperialist wars of aggression and genocide use AI-powered tech for surveillance and drone strikes, with Palestine, Iran, and Ukraine serving as laboratories where states test and refine AI-powered death. Resource depletion and waste from data centres is devastating communities, and particularly hitting already marginalized communities.

Our capitalist cultural imaginary imbues GenAI chatbots with more humanity than actual human beings subject to colonialism and imperialism, whom capitalism renders surplus to the imagined technofuture. Understanding the cultural, social, political, economic dimensions of AI and how it relates to the category of the human allows us to understand why it's easier to imagine Data as human than a Palestinian man who resists occupation—and that this is not an accident but rather fundamental to how capitalist ideology is mediated and reproduced.

At a time of capitalist crises, ecological collapse, and ascendant fascism, the AI imperative in the academy is inseparable from war. The commodity-form and I-subjectivity of its putatively frictionless outputs, embedded in a glossy technofuturist fantasy, are contemporary forms of what Walter Benjamin warned was the fascist aestheticization of politics: "All efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war."

When these mass technologies are used not to distribute wealth and ownership to those actually producing value, the workers, they can only lead to destruction. As Benjamin writes:

> The horrible features of imperialistic warfare are attributable to the discrepancy between the tremendous means of production and their inadequate utilization in the process of production—in other words, to unemployment and the lack of markets. Imperialistic war is a rebellion of technology which collects, in the form of 'human material,' the claims to which society has denied its natural material.

This is the logic of AI under capitalism: technologies of immense productive capacity, rather than being mobilized for human flourishing are instead turned toward surveillance, extraction, and war, with human beings reduced to data, surplus, and fuel.

21st century machine-breaking

As Pope Leo XIV writes in his first Papal Encyclical, "The ability to access vast amounts of data and information should not be confused with the ability to derive meaning and value from it" and warns that "Humanity—in all its grandeur and woundedness—must never be replaced or surpassed."

Famously, the English Luddites who smashed machinery understood this reality: their protest was not against technology as such, but against machines that worsened labour conditions and devalued craft. That industrial system spanned the destruction of Indian textiles, the horrors of the Atlantic, the cotton fields of the U.S. South, and the muslin dresses of Victorian ballrooms. Technology, then as now, touches every part of social, political, and cultural life.

We must resist the conversion of the human into surplus material—cogs in the machine, waste to be discarded, replicated Datas to enslave. We must reject the digital golems that perform a grotesque simulation of our humanity. We must refuse the corporate AI imperative in our institutions, demand public goods and just relations of productions, and commit to the practice of seeing each other fully. M

Shama Rangwala is an associate professor of Humanities at York University.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is being touted as the next big thing, but it comes with major downsides

- **AI is affecting our jobs:**
  Some employers are using AI to intensify surveillance, tracking workers' pace, keystrokes and eye movements to make decisions about discipline and promotion. Young workers are at risk: according to Statistics Canada, entry-level positions are declining twice as fast as senior level roles.

- **AI is resource intensive:**
  AI data centres consume massive amounts of electricity and water—much of that new demand is being met with fossil fuels, not clean energy. That's a direct hit to Canada's climate targets.

- **AI contributes to misinformation:**
  "AI slop" creates low- to mid-level quality content, with no regard for accuracy or copyright violations. It can make it harder to decide what's real and what's fake.

- **Personal data is at risk:**
  Generative AI is fuelled by massive data collection—with no guaranteed protection for how our personal data will be used. An Ipsos report showed that only 27 per cent of Canadians trust companies that use AI will protect their personal data.

Many Canadians have concerns

Looking at the downsides of AI, it's no wonder Canadians feel a deep distrust. A June 2026 Ipsos survey of people in 32 countries found Canadians remain among the least trusting and least enthusiastic of AI.

Only 26 per cent of Canadian respondents expressed excitement about AI products and services while 67 per cent said they felt nervous about AI.

Three things Canadians want:

Regulation: 85 per cent of Canadians believe AI should be regulated by governments to ensure ethical and safe use, even if doing so slows development.

Limits on AI data centres: An Angus Reid Institute poll showed Canadians are wary of AI: 68 per cent would oppose a large AI data centre being built within a few blocks of their home, with rural and urban Canadians equally resistant.

An AI tax: That Angus Reid poll also showed that 79 per cent of respondents would support a tax on companies that replace workers with AI.

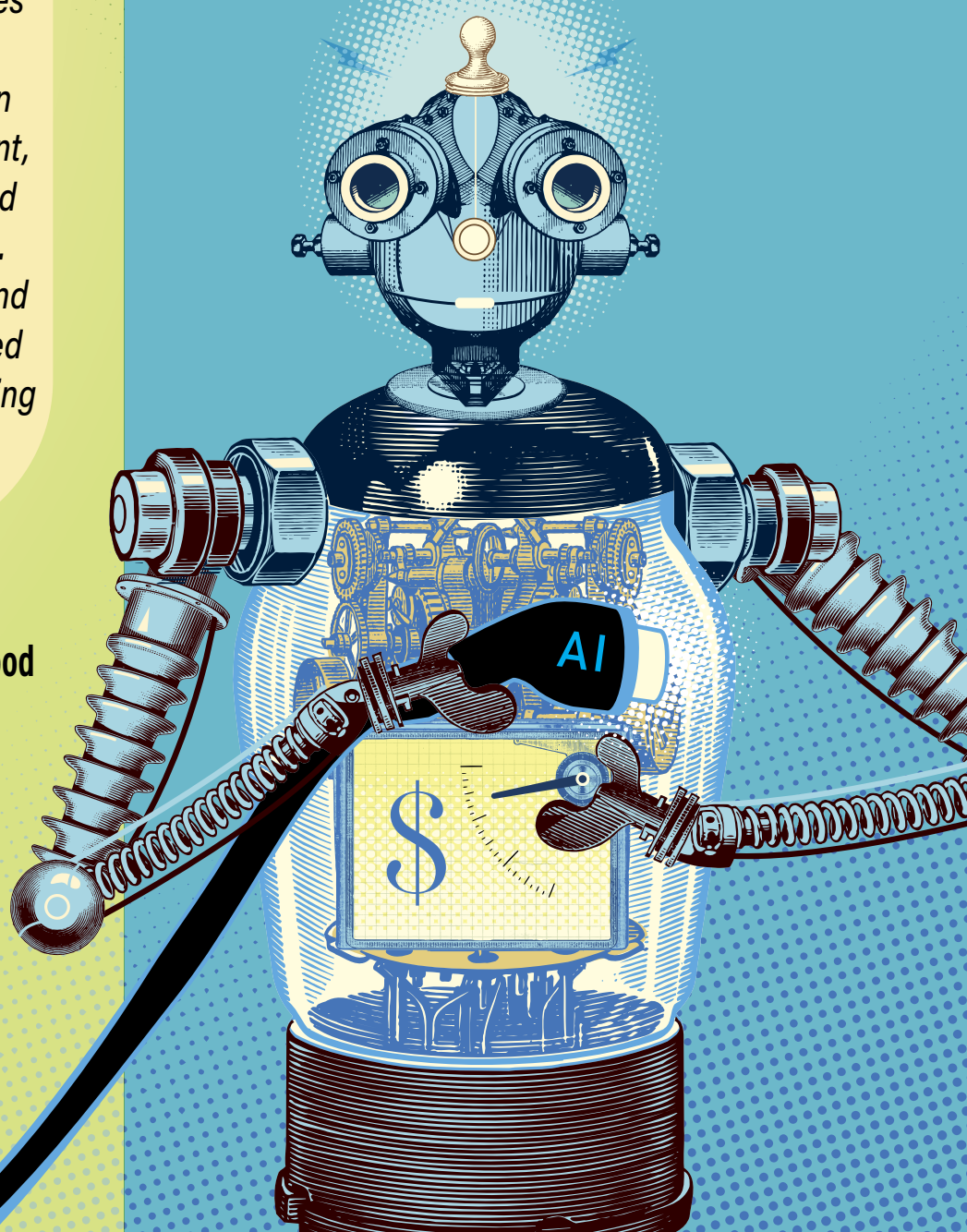
Illustration by Carl Wiens | Design by Joss Maclennan

AI'S ASCENT COMES WITH RISKS

MANY CANADIANS FEEL A DEEP DISTRUST OF IT

"The rapid rise of AI is driving public fear and mistrust. Many of the productivity benefits associated with AI are still speculative, but they are premised on ultimately automating entire domains of human labour. Moreover, the proliferation of unregulated commercial AI systems poses potentially serious risks to privacy, sovereignty, human rights, cognitive development, the democratic process and other vital public priorities. All the while, the financial and environmental bill associated with AI training and processing continues to grow to eye-watering heights."

From ***A Citizen's Guide to AI*** by CCPA's **Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood** and **Rachel Pettigrew**



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Mia Travers-Hayward

A generation of non-thinkers

If personal AI tutors seem too good to be true, that's because they are

My grades took a dive in grade six. I was caught up in social dynamics, too preoccupied to notice the slip—but Madame Guth did. I was wandering back to homeroom, riding an adrenaline rush after disrupting my music class until I was sent to the hall, when she pulled me aside. We locked eyes as she said "you can do better," snapping me out of a stubborn spell of contrarianism.

Public school teachers change the trajectory of children's lives, yet their value is undermined by profit-fuelled fantasies of big tech. While shielding their own offspring from screens, tech leaders claim AI is the panacea for a broken system. Fear not, their personal AI tutors are coming to save those of us too poor for "intentionally low-tech" Waldorf Schools.

This vision is built on a lie. Tech won't save our school systems. AI tutors can't substitute the care of a human teacher. Nevertheless, opting out of a digitalized education is becoming a luxury good.

Just use AI

Despite evidence to the contrary, tech companies pitch their products as indispensable to modern learning. Administrators rely on PowerSchool to house student data despite a massive Canadian breach. Educators use AI to generate lessons, subverting their own professional judgment. Students tethered to Chromebooks are given access to AI chatbots regardless of impacts on critical thinking.

Results in K-12 schools are not promising. Stanford researchers examining AI tutor use in elementary schools found low engagement and no academic benefits. Yet, most companies avoid any accountability for learning outcomes. Their insider knowledge may explain why tech executives shelter their own from the same platforms they peddle to public schools.

What science actually shows is that learning is relational. Students thrive when they have positive, trusting relationships with trained educators. AI companies claim their products are not meant to supplant teachers. In practice, replacement is the economic logic behind their pitch. Why bother funding a professional teaching workforce, if an AI tutor can offer something vaguely resembling an education to those with no better option?

Anthropic frames teachers as "co-architects shaping how AI develops." The company just announced Claude for K-12 teachers,

a sweeping move to weave their tool into educators' pedagogical practice, scaling rapidly without sound evidence of outcomes.

Microsoft—as the lead partner on the American Federation of Teachers' (somewhat controversial) National Academy for AI Instruction—positions their commitment to "enhance, not replace, the educator's role in the classroom." This conflicts with their founder's view that it's only a matter of time and private investment until AI tutors match the efficacy of human teachers.

Sal Khan, founder of Khan Academy, was an early champion of AI as an opportunity to realize personalized tutors and teaching assistants. Yet, after scaling his own AI tutor, Khan walked back his vision, suggesting it serves, at best, as a passable tool for already-motivated students. According to Khan, the educational revolution will not be driven by AI, but "investing in the human systems."

Oppressive dependence

Amidst the hype, we rarely hear from public educators on the front lines. In spring 2026, the Canadian Teachers' Federation surveyed over 6,000 K-12 teachers across the country, asking what worried them most about their profession.

Their responses tell a very different story than big tech's. Educators described watching AI erode the capacities that schools exist to foster, "taking away the opportunity to think, process, analyze, and create," warning that "we are training a generation of non-thinkers and everyone seems happy to go over that cliff."

Others described threats to their profession—"AI is taking our place"—with one educator predicting "AI programs will be implemented to deliver individual lessons on a device and the teachers will become underpaid babysitters." Many described the burden of adapting their pedagogy to prevent cognitive offloading, while bracing for when "the government will tell society that teachers are not needed and we can do this all with AI."

These are not testimonials from technophobes, but professionals watching AI systems reshape their jobs.

More families are pushing back on digitalized education. Jonathan Haidt's *The Anxious Generation* compelled many parents to demand phone-free schools, a policy adopted across Canada.

Now, Canadian families are raising concerns about widespread AI adoption in schools. But there is a risk that even the tech-free movements in public education become segmented by class. Sociologist Annette Lareau's *Unequal Childhoods* documented how middle- and upper-class parents advocate vocally for their children's education, while working-class families are less likely to do so. Common Sense Media found that children from lower-income households were exposed to double the amount of screen time as those from higher-income families.

Movements alone are not enough. To protect universal, human-centred public education from untested, unregulated tech, we need policy.

Go where the money flows

Two policy levers stand out as opportunities for the public to challenge tech power.

The first is EdTech procurement. Vast sums of public money flow to tech companies, yet processes are fragmented across boards, provinces, and territories. National EdTech procurement standards designed for the AI age would help ensure the platforms that make it into schools are safe—and actually work. Standards could force companies to complete privacy and human rights impact assessments; demonstrate efficacy for teaching and learning; and meet high bars of algorithmic transparency and explainability.

Second, *The Safe Social Media Act* (Bill C-34) should be amended to address online harms in K-12 public education. If passed, the Digital Safety Commission will develop age-appropriate design standards for regulated services—currently, social media platforms and AI chatbots. The bill should also explicitly regulate AI platforms used in K-12, given the risks to children's privacy, safety, and cognitive development. This upstream mechanism would hold vendors accountable for designing safer products from the outset, including avoiding engagement-maximizing and anthropomorphic features known to harm young people.

These policies would create a more responsible pipeline that keeps shoddy tech from flooding public schools, while leaving room for the thoughtful integration of tools with genuine benefits. Crucially, educators, students, and families must be given time and space to define the boundaries of technology in public school classrooms. Where technology isn't a solution, the government must make broader systemic fixes, like smaller class sizes, more teacher prep time, and better mental health supports.

Confronting power

I've been researching AI in public education for three years. Early on, I noticed a trend—that concerns about AI in education are often frontloaded with an acknowledgement of potential benefits. This is a symptom of our wider power struggle.

We need to flip this, and demand our government take harms in education seriously before acknowledging alleged opportunities. For this to work, we also need a renewed consensus about the purpose of public education, and what it is we're defending. bell hooks' theory that education is the practice of freedom is worth revisiting, one which can liberate us from the notion that data-driven, algorithmically powered public schools are our only option. **M**

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Simon Enoch

Resisting the data centre invasion

Data centre developers and governments are trying to make an end-run around the public, but the public is fighting back

There is no question that the political landscape upon which the data centre industry conducts its business has undergone a massive sea change over the past year. It was only a short time ago that data centre developers could expect communities to shower them with promises of tax concessions, subsidies and regulatory relief in a desperate bid to attract them to their towns and cities. Fast forward to today and it is now the data centre developers that promise to shower host communities with gifts as they confront ardent opposition across Canada and the United States.

Communities across both countries are calling on their governments to enact increased regulations and even moratoriums on new builds in order to exercise a modicum of democratic control over the industry. Recognizing that public opposition is now the number one constraint on their continued expansion, data centre developers have resorted to public promises to better protect the public from the economic and environmental costs of their facilities as well as promising increased transparency in a bid to soothe public anger.

But you would be naive to think that the data centre industry is

about to leave its fate in the hands of the public. Instead, we are beginning to notice a disturbing trend that sees data centre development—often in collusion with local governments—increasingly shielded from public scrutiny and democratic contestation.

Data centre developers are already notorious for the levels of secrecy they demand of local governments and the scarce amounts of information they make available for public deliberation. This has frustrated citizen groups who quite rightly ask how they are supposed to make democratic decisions on these proposals when they are often operating entirely in the dark in regards to the economic and environmental impacts of such facilities.

The industry has also lobbied heavily to prevent the introduction of rules or regulations that might constrain its activities, regardless of how publicly popular those constraints would be. The industry is also not adverse to outright buying political influence by showering sympathetic politicians with campaign contributions. Suffice it to say, data centre development has not been an ideal exercise in democracy at the best of times. However, recent data centre proposals seem to strain to meet even these lowly democratic standards.

In Regina, the time between the official public announcement of Bell's 300 MW data centre proposal to final approval was a mere 90 days. Touted as Canada's largest data centre and one of the largest investments in the province's history, Bell's proposed facility—that would consume the equivalent amount of energy of the entire city of Regina—was shepherded through the approval process. Despite the proposed scale of the project, it was not subjected to a provincial Environmental Impact Assessment. Asked about the speed of approval for a project of this size, municipal politics experts agreed that it was "practically unheard of." University of Winnipeg's Aaron Moore further cautioned that "it just seems impossible to me to vet something like that in the amount of time that was given."

This trend of fast-tracking data centre proposals is not exclusive to Saskatchewan. Alberta also appears to be waiving environmental assessments for some of its proposed data centres, while in the United States, federal environmental reviews of data centre projects have all but disappeared under the Trump administration. Conveniently, the removal of these regulatory hurdles also serves to remove opportunities for the public to learn about these projects and participate in deliberations. There is a growing sense that data centre developers and sympathetic governments are working behind-the-scenes to quietly advance the approval process far enough to ensure that the time provided for actual public deliberation and contestation of these projects is limited.

"A race to build AI data centers before the public can protest," as one headline put it. Certainly that has been the experience of the residents of Lorneville, New Brunswick, who learned that their government had known about and facilitated the development of a proposed AI data centre for a full year before informing the public. Residents of a Michigan community who were successfully sued into submission to allow a data centre expressed similar sentiments, "I think the plan was to move as fast as possible—so by the time anyone challenged it, they could say it was too far along to stop," said one resident.

The fact that developers and governments resort to these tactics demonstrates the power that concerted community organizing has exacted on the data centre issue over the past year. Should communities continue to effectively use democratic mechanisms to win victories like moratoriums over future builds, expect to see the industry and sympathetic governments work to limit those democratic mechanisms even further. Indeed, we are already seeing governments engage in all sorts of political chicanery in data centre debates that will only serve to undermine the democratic legitimacy of these projects in the long run.

While we should certainly celebrate the victories won through community organization and democratic mobilization, we should also see the data centre debate as a stepping stone to broader concerns with the state of democracy in our country. As other commentators have pointed out, in many ways data centres act as a proxy for larger debates over Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its impacts on society. Many feel that AI has been forced upon us with little if any choice. We have been asked to accept as inevitable a supposedly world-changing technology that will shatter the economic stability of millions with little question.

As the most material manifestation of AI, data centres offer the one space where people can actually exercise some modicum of democratic control over this technology. Yet we should not lose sight that it is often the wider anxieties of AI that fuel data centre opposition. Making the case that data centres provide the means to create and sustain what many fear is a profoundly anti-democratic technology controlled by an ultra-wealthy elite can allow us to connect data centre opposition with wider issues of inequality, corporate power and what real democratic control over our future looks like. **M**

Simon Enoch is a senior researcher for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

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Dru Oja Jay

Ignore all previous instructions

Notes on civil society organizing against the AI industry

"We believe our province can compete with any jurisdiction on Earth," Alberta Premier Danielle Smith recently said, reacting to Meta's plans for a $13 billion data centre north of Edmonton. "Alberta is well on the way to becoming a central player at the heart of the AI revolution."

Smith is far from alone in pursuing AI investments. At every level of government, politicians are scrambling to attract the favour of tech oligarchs. Over $2 trillion has been invested in AI already.

A productivity tool that drafts form letters or writes code is not the kind of thing that attracts trillions in investment. That, and the resulting political power, comes from a story about millions of jobs replaced by AI agents.

The oligarchs are keenly aware that their power depends on entrenching the narrative that keeps the money flowing. The story depends on a few key elements: AI is inevitable, if you don't embrace it you'll be left behind, and it is the most powerful way to solve our biggest problems.

Where is civil society?

The story is a rallying flag for billionaires to coordinate a world-historic power grab. The concentration of control they are projecting is scarcely comprehensible. Even with just a story and some impressive tech, they have the money to buy a lot of narrative power—and suppress alternative ways of understanding the situation.

Media coverage reinforces the AI industry narrative. Even when there is criticism, it happens against the backdrop of an inevitability that smuggles in corporate power.

The dominant voices are government officials, policy experts, and, occasionally, academics. Public opinion appears occasionally, mediated by pollsters. When community groups or civil society appear at all, it is at the margins.

And that's unfortunate: civil society is our best hope for a compelling and grounded alternative to the dominant AI narrative.

Editorial decisions to the side, civil society has largely not been able to create a narrative that can

punch through. Non-profits, unions, foundations, and researchers are not immune to the flood of money and its disorganizing effects.

Since lots of civil society orgs (or individual employees) use AI, many feel like they can't criticize the companies that create it. This muddying is hyper-amplified by the enormous funding for promotion of AI. The federal government alone allocated $174 million to AI adoption initiatives, including funding for non-profits. Tens of millions more have flowed through AI leadership training, with Microsoft and Google as major players.

Universities are swimming in funding infused with the inevitability narrative. In the U.S., three of the biggest university donations from industry total $1 billion, a sum that seems large until you realize that it is one one-hundredth of one per cent of the capital the industry plans to spend on data centres alone. Universities in Canada are opening the doors to corporate donations and massive private gifts for AI training.

Trade unions are also not immune. Union members' workplace experiences with AI range from helpful tech to dystopian surveillance. And even here, the big tech money is pouring in. One fund is partnering with teachers' unions to train educators in AI, and building trades have a similar partnership with Microsoft.

Despite these obstacles, NGOs, unions and academia have produced some excellent critical work. But how can they elevate it to actually impact the debate about AI—and public policy?

Strategy for civil society

Faced with an extremely powerful industry that is broadcasting its narrative on every available channel, civil society will have to be disciplined to get an alternative message through.

The first step must be to address the pernicious influence of the industry. It's probably not possible to get everyone to stop accepting government and industry "AI literacy" money. The important thing is to create spaces that are explicitly critical of the power of the tech oligarchs.

One such space is the emerging Civil Society Hub for Tech Justice, a network of academics, unions and non-profit leaders that came together after the Civil Society Summit on the AI Industry in Montreal in May 2026. But one place to have a conversation that doesn't get derailed isn't enough. To develop common messages and strategies, we need critical working groups, caucuses and even secret meetings—at conferences, within boards, and in workplaces.

Once we carve out the space to discuss deeply, we will still disagree on a lot. There will be debates about technology, acceptable types of AI, and environmental and social impacts. Many will not be resolved.

And because we're famously in silos, everyone is obligated to represent their issue as the primary frame. Journalists facing intellectual property theft and the destruction of their industry are not likely to find a common top-line message with parents working on the mental health effects of large language models, community members fighting a data centre, or advocates working to curb digitally enabled gendered violence.

A civil society should focus on shared narrative infrastructure. In the same way that the AI industry narrative comes back to "this is inevitable, get on board or get left behind," civil society narratives can reinforce our understanding of an unprecedented concentration of money and power in the hands of a few tech oligarchs.

A narrative infrastructure strategy allows us to connect to a common source and weave in other struggles without losing control of our own messages.

A public sector union might say "the government is trying to replace workers with malfunctioning chatbots, because they're under pressure from an industry that is spending billions to convince us to send our tax dollars to corporate headquarters instead of our neighbours and fellow citizens."

An environmental activist might say "this data centre will create pollution equivalent to adding six million new fossil-fuel-burning cars to our roads, and the industry is wielding its enormous power to get the government to subsidize it—and the reason they have that power is because they have promised investors they are going to replace millions of workers."

If every civil society actor commits to highlighting the same causes and weaving a tiny part of the web between related issues, it will create a story that has a real chance to break through.

Narrative infrastructure

AI has become the banner under which billionaires are coordinating an unprecedented accumulation of power, and civil society can only respond effectively if it learns to connect its struggles rather than fight them separately.

The AI backlash is well underway, and data centres and AI-everywhere is encountering resistance that is as fierce as it is instinctual and inchoate. The way that the narratives around data centres develop is, by default, mediated through algorithms. Civil society is uniquely positioned to mediate narrative development through something a bit more conscious.

Weaving our struggles together while telling a recognizable origin story for the ills of the AI industry will be key for adding depth to popular analysis, empowering the emerging resistance, and anchoring a new wave of activism in material realities and values of wide-reaching solidarity. **M**

Dru Oja Jay is the executive director of the Council of Canadians. He co-organized the Civil Society Summit on the AI Industry in May 2026.

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Skylee-Storm Hogan-Stacey

Beneath the cloud, the land

Digital sovereignty in a First Nations context

Two major events—sudden U.S. aggression towards Canada and the rapid growth of the AI industry—have converged over previous years to create a new focus among Canadian policy-makers on digital sovereignty. Less discussed is how that priority can coexist with the government's claims to be building reconciliation and Indigenous self-determination.

Concepts of sovereignty are distinct and are as varied as the Indigenous communities that exist from coast to coast to coast. I examine these questions with a framing I am most familiar with: through a *Haudenosaunee* or *Rotinohshonni* lens. However, explorations of First Nations' digital sovereignty are distinctions-based conversations that need to be rooted in local protocols and rights-holding collective First Nations.

Digital sovereignty is often viewed as a state's right to a digital space that is controlled by and accessible to its citizens, reflects its stance and values, and is secured against the influence of other states. The First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC) defines data sovereignty—and, by extension, First Nations sovereignty—as the "recognized right and legitimacy" of a First Nation "to exercise authority over its affairs, a right to self-government, non-intervention, and freedom from interference in internal affairs."

As such, when it comes to understandings of sovereignty and Indigenous digital sovereignty, Canadians must appreciate that their assumptions and beliefs may not align with those held by Indigenous Nations. Kahnawà:ke Mohawk activist and scholar Gerald Taiaiake Alfred wrote in his 2009 book *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* that modelling or achieving Indigenous sovereignty in a way that mirrors the settler state is not a pathway to nationhood or freedom. Instead, Alfred explains that 'sovereignty' in an Indigenous nationhood context does not take the simple forms that states like Canada and the United States have come to expect:

> "Traditional indigenous nationhood stands in sharp contrast to the dominant understanding of "the state": There is no absolute authority, no coercive enforcement of decisions, no hierarchy, and no separate ruling entity."

First Nations' digital sovereignty manifests in ways that reflect their own conceptions of governance, thereby actualizing their sovereignty. Realizing this in the digital space for First Nations becomes an important conversation that is not only technical but also a broader discussion about protocols, responsibilities, and rights.

The Earth layer

Benjamin H. Bratton, the author of *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty*, created the concept of 'the stack,' that is, different layers that build the digital world.

Key concerns for First Nations appear throughout the stack, starting with the Earth layer, which is "the foundational layer" of the entire stack. There is no computation "without a planet, and no computational infrastructure without the transformation of matter into energy and energy into information." As Canada begins its push toward their AI Sovereign Compute Strategy, First Nations are turning their attention to the impacts on the land. First Nations' territories are vital for the Earth layer of the sovereign stack—it would not exist without First Nations' lands.

The tensions between Canada's race for sovereign digital infrastructure and First Nations' sovereignty cannot be ignored when discussing this current moment. The Council of Canadians has produced a "Resisting Data Centre Development in Canada" toolkit where they address the Canadian federal government's push for using land that is certainly Indigenous territory. One of the contributors to this toolkit, Jeff Doctor, an impact strategist, community organizer, and Cayuga citizen, notes that Canadian digital sovereignty "requires unfettered access to Indigenous land. Land which we still not only have a right to, but will actively resist any encroachment on or dispossession from."

First Nations have serious concerns about the infinite-growth mindset of technology economies that rely on physical resources extracted from the land. Alfred describes in *Peace, Power, Righteousness* that traditional people "recognize a responsibility to participate in the economy with the intent of ensuring the long-term health and stability of the people and the land," and that "development for development's sake, consumerism, and unrestrained growth are not justifiable." First Nations' understandings of digital sovereignty encompass the health of the land—not just the location of digital data.

Data sovereignty and data territoriality

Data sovereignty is a subset of digital sovereignty which deals with the ownership of the data which powers the digital world. It is particularly relevant here because that data includes data from sovereign, rights-holding First Nations. But through digitization, Indigenous data risks becoming disconnected. Stephanie Russo Carroll, Ahtna and citizen of the Native Village of Kluti-Kaah, says that digitization "flattens knowledge" and changes it from our "lived human experience." This makes us "less accountable to those data, to each other, to humanity, [and] to the planet."

"By rebuilding data systems to keep origins, relationships, and responsibilities front and center," writes Danica Pawlick-Potts, an Indigenous Data Sovereignty scholar from the Alexis Nakota Sioux First Nation, "universities and research organizations can shift from extractive habits to accountable, place based stewardship—supporting better research today and stronger relationships for future generations."

First Nations digital sovereignty is not Canadian digital sovereignty in a different font; it is relational and situated within community-driven protocols and responsibilities. "Territorializing Data," is a concept coined by Pawlick-Potts which explores how First Nations could create data "territories." She describes territory not as a "container of space but rather a relational and strategic configuration through which authority over data is grounded, signaled, and enforced." Pawlick-Potts emphasizes that these data territories are "relationship-defined," and "they are constituted through ongoing relations with human and more-than-human kin, ancestors, and future generations rather than fixed solely by state."

Territoriality could represent actionable, practical steps for digital system design that respect First Nations' assertions of digital sovereignty. Pawlick-Potts is careful to say that "Territoriality is not sovereignty itself; rather, it is how sovereign authority is made actionable and enforceable within digital systems. Sovereignty defines the right, authority, and purpose; territoriality specifies the how. While sovereignty is expansive, political, and jurisdictional, territoriality is operational, relational, and mechanism-focused."

Relational sovereignty

First Nations digital sovereignty is grounded not only in technical infrastructure but also in community-driven protocols, relational responsibilities, and a deep connection to land. In order to enact it, we need to move beyond settler-state frameworks through First Nations' community perspectives, and the critical role of Indigenous protocols in shaping digital spaces. As digital technologies continue to shape our world, it is essential to support data governance models that are accountable, place-based, and respectful of First Nations' rights and worldviews—something that could be explored through tangible actions that use technology with lower ecological impacts, or by situating territoriality in the design of digital systems.

To further understand and support the principles that guide First Nations information governance, readers are encouraged to learn more about the First Nations Principles of OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) stewarded nationally by the First Nations Information Governance Centre. These principles provide a foundation for ethical, respectful, and effective data stewardship rooted in First Nations' self-determination, supporting First Nations in achieving data sovereignty within their own worldviews. M

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Molly McCracken

Generational anxiety, generational action

Parents can help their children build a healthier relationship with the online world, but only if they do so collectively

"When can I get my own phone?" my eight year old daughter asks me. "Never," I say to myself, wanting to protect her from the open internet. Families are living through unprecedented exposure to technology that is both an undercurrent and overcurrent of our lives. Phones and tablets are everpresent, always available to "look something up" and risk going down the rabbit hole of everything else available at an instant touch. As the parent of two school-age children, both with ADHD, technology's "dopamine hits" are a risk and reward we are constantly dealing with.

Management of technology for children has been mostly left up to families—but communities, schools and governments all have a role to play. The recent introduction of the federal *Safe Social Media Act* will help, but governments must also provide public services and give children healthy alternatives, as children are especially driven to screens when there's little else to do, and families when they need a digital babysitter.

Last winter, parents at our school gathered for meetings based on the book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* by Jonathan Haidt. Haidt explains that individual families cannot solve this problem alone, that community action is essential to protecting children from internet harms and improving mental health. This community action needs public government support to be successful.

Haight explains that parents are trapped by a collective action problem. Many parents don't actually want to give children smartphones or social media, but they feel pressured because they see many others with access to social interactions like group chats.

The social dilemma is that everyone would benefit if most families delayed smartphones and social media, but it's difficult for anyone to go first.

Rather than telling parents to simply "be stronger," Haidt says communities need to create new social norms by delaying smartphones and creating opportunities for children to play outside together. To buffer against the proven negative impacts of social media on mental health, children must develop competence through real-world experiences, not merely reduce screen exposure.

What does this look like? Families are busy—usually both parents are working to keep up with how expensive everything is. Some are lucky enough to have $10-a-day child care, but many are not. Years of cutbacks mean the community centre and library have limited programs and hours. Summer camps, and lessons for sports, music, and arts add up. Grandparents and extended families do not always live nearby. All of this leads to stressed out families and children at risk of mental health challenges.

If we are serious about protecting children from the harms of the online world, we need to build a richer offline one. That means investing in the public spaces and services that children and families want to participate in: quality recreation, libraries, parks, community centres, after-school programs, child care and summer camps. It means creating neighbourhoods where children can safely ride their bikes, walk to a friend's house and spend time together without needing a screen to connect. These investments are essential infrastructure for children's mental health. Strong communities make it easier for parents to set healthy limits because children have meaningful alternatives to screens.

Our family should not have to shoulder this challenge alone. I want my daughter to ask me "When can I roller-skate to meet my friends at the community centre?" instead of asking about getting a smart phone. Just as governments regulate unsafe products and build roads for public safety, they have a responsibility to create the conditions in which children can thrive. We all will benefit from changing the anxious generation into a healthy generation. **M**

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Stuart Trew

Carney's trade shock doctrine

This spring, officials from the federal government's trade and employment policy departments held a public consultation on how Canada handles labour rights in its free trade agreements and how those rights are enforced. The officials proposed walking workers (and their interests) off the plank, into the choppy waters of Hurricane Trump, to keep the leaky ship of corporate globalization afloat.

They didn't *quite* put it that way, obviously. But that's how I interpreted the suggestion that Canada needed to be *flexible* about labour rights if the government's trade diversification strategy was going to work.

This shift looks like a trade policy example of the "shock doctrine", described by Naomi Klein in her book of the same name. Canada is using the disaster of the U.S. trade wars and fears about geopolitical uncertainty to perpetuate deregulation and austerity for workers.

Canadian trade deals normally include binding dispute resolution for addressing labour rights violations. The process is cumbersome and vulnerable to political interference, which is probably why it is almost never used. Still, trade-related labour disputes can potentially lead to sanctions and are a core demand of working people across the world.

Recent Canadian trade deals have expanded the kinds of labour violations that can trigger a dispute—from the infringement of basic rights, like the right to organize a union, to ending discrimination in the workplace. The Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement that replaced NAFTA even lets workers in Mexico directly challenge labour violations in their workplace without relying on their government to bring a claim forward.

Trade expert Gavin Fridell describes this momentum on trade and labour as a "trade justice ratchet." Labour unions and other progressives opposed to the corporate trade agenda have successfully expanded both "what is considered legitimate to 'trade' negotiations (social and ecological rights)" and expectations "around enforceability, coverage, speed, and transparency."

While the Mexican government initially saw the worker-initiated labour dispute process in CUSMA as a veiled kind of protectionism, that process has proven valuable to Mexican workers in Canadian- and U.S.-owned factories. Corrupt union contracts have been overturned and workers reinstated following rapid-response investigations launched by U.S. and Canadian officials, with assistance from labour unions.

Independent Mexican labour unions would like to see the mechanism continue past the current CUSMA review and expand into new sectors. Canadian and American unions would like to see their governments include rapid-response mechanisms in new trade deals and apply to workers' rights violations at home.

The federal government is heading in a different direction. It is using President Trump's "rupture" to the global trading order to ratchet back labour protections in trade deals under the delusion this will be good for corporate profitability and international relations.

For example, where newer Canadian trade deals have ratcheted up expectations on countries to progressively improve and expand their labour laws, a "right to regulate" clause in the just-ratified Indonesia trade deal gives governments wide berth to set weaker protections for workers.

An AK Wien report notes the problem of such weak labour language in a similar EU-Indonesia agreement, especially in highly traded sectors like nickel mining and processing, where labour violations are common.

"In Indonesia the classification of certain industries—including mining—as 'national vital objects' has been used to restrict worker's rights, including prohibiting strikes and limiting freedom of assembly," the group writes. "Workers at these companies face the threat of dismissal and criminalization."

Many developing countries, including Indonesia, believe enforceable labour and environmental chapters are a hidden form of protectionism or even neocolonialism. They argue, with some justification, that Western governments are mainly interested in raising the cost of foreign imports to level the playing field with their domestic producers.

It doesn't help that the federal and many provincial governments in Canada are also suppressing or choosing not to enforce environmental or labour laws in "strategic" sectors as a means of attracting foreign investment to major projects and infrastructure—a blatant trade violation.

But hypocrisy is a shield, not a reason, for ditching important and effective innovations in the protection of core labour rights. The government should be ashamed. **M**

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Nashwa Lina Khan

Canada loves Arab culture, not Arab politics

There is a version of Arabness that Canada has learned to enjoy, consume, and elevate. It appears in restaurants, music, fashion, nightlife, slang, and festivals, in plazas like Ridgeway, where over 100 halal restaurants become impromptu community centres after 10 p.m., in words like "wallah," "yallah," and "mashallah" slipping into everyday conversation, and the keffiyeh worn as style before it is understood as a statement.

Drake is one of the clearest Canadian examples: long before Habibti, he was folding Arabic phrases and Arab-coded intimacy into his music. In 2020, on "Only You Freestyle," he rapped the viral line "Habibti please, ana akeed, inti wa ana ahla". It was unexpected, funny, familiar, flirtatious, unmistakably part of a diasporic Toronto-London world. Years later, Habibti's rollout of Arab and Muslim references feels like a cultural vocabulary transmitted to the world.

This contradiction plays out across Canadian multicultural life. Ottawa's 2026 shawarma festival, where Xav Trudeau headlined, is a telling example: a third-generation member of a family long heralded for multiculturalism and liberal policy—even as his father's government sent weapons that killed Yemenis and failed to halt arms transfers to Israel during a genocide. At the festival, Arab food and immigrant cultural life were packaged together while the politics shaping Arab and Muslim lives abroad went unspoken and they took selfies with a Trudeau.

Arabness, in these moments, is not foreign, it is local culture, city branding, and multicultural proof. However, visibility is not the same as power and consumption is not the same as belonging. A shawarma festival is diversity, "habibti" can sell an album, but Palestinian solidarity can cost someone their job in multicultural Canada.

The keffiyeh has followed the same arc on a much bigger stage. North American fashion first caught onto the scarf in the late 1980s. Urban Outfitters revived it in 2007, marketing it as an "anti-war" accessory before pulling it

from shelves amid backlash, and Louis Vuitton put its own $705 version on shelves in 2021. Canadian brand Aritzia's TNA line did the same over a decade ago. Cultural critic Salma Mousa calls this the "representation trap"—political symbols hollowed out and repackaged as aesthetic.

The trap only catches some people on a runway, a rack, or at a Toronto FIFA World Cup opening. It is a different object in a classroom or at a school board meeting. What changes is who is wearing it and whether that person is assumed to be making a political statement.

That is exactly what happened at Iroquois Ridge High School in Oakville, Ontario in April 2024. Circulated video shows guidance counsellor Kathryn Patterson confronting a student about his keffiyeh, telling him it reminds her of Hamas. A year later, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board trustee Nili Kaplan-Myrth called a presenter's keffiyeh "an act of aggression". The National Council of Canadian Muslims called it an unfair conflation of Palestinian identity with violence. The keffiyeh was read by people meant to protect the very people they targeted.

This is not incidental hostility. It is patterned enough to have a name. The Canadian Arab Institute defines anti-Arab racism as discrimination, profiling, surveillance, stereotyping, prejudice, and violence against people of Arab origin based on ethnicity, national origin, language, name, culture, or appearance. It shows up in media, education, employment, policing, poverty, and foreign policy.

Although the rise of anti-Arab racism and simultaneous rise in popular culture may seem new, Arab presence in Canada is not. Ibrahim Bounader, the first known Arab migrant to Canada, left Lebanon and settled in Montreal in 1882. More than 140 years later, Arab life is woven into Canadian cities—yet that presence has not produced safety nor full belonging.

The same country that consumes Arab culture as evidence of its own cosmopolitanism leaves Arab people vulnerable to suspicion in its streets, schools, workplaces, and airports.

Anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia are not identical but, in Canada, they are often shaped by the same racialized security logic. Arab communities include Muslims, Christians, Druze, Jews, and atheists and most Muslims worldwide are not Arab. Still, Arabness and Muslimness in Canada—especially since October 2023—are frequently collapsed through stereotypes of terrorism, foreignness, and threat. An Arabic name, a hijab, a mosque, a keffiyeh, or support for Palestine can all become signs of suspicion.

This repression has deeper roots—with Iraqi communities surveilled by CSIS during the Gulf War, RCMP profiling of Muslim men that intensified after 9/11, and Quebec's Law 21, which bars visibly Muslim women from public-sector jobs.

Another case documented by the Islamophobia Research Hub at York University involved Hamza, a Muslim student in a special needs program at a York Region high school who was violently attacked by students who called him "Hamas" instead of Hamza and left him bloodied with a fractured nose. The school failed to call an ambulance; his parents moved him to another school while the bullies remained.

The Hub's report, *Documenting the "Palestine Exception": An Overview of Trends in Islamophobia, Anti-Palestinian, and Anti-Arab Racism in Canada in the Aftermath of October 7, 2023*, also cites 345 reports of job losses or forced leaves and 474 human rights complaints from Canadian Muslims by March 2024—the Palestine exception threatening rent, careers, and mental health.

The Arab Canadian Lawyers Association defines anti-Palestinian racism as a form of anti-Arab racism that silences, excludes, erases, stereotypes, defames, or dehumanizes Palestinians and their narratives. The Palestine exception does not only chill public conversation, it disciplines life.

The threat is not only administrative. In 2017, six Muslim men were killed while praying at the Islamic Cultural Centre of Quebec City. In 2021, four members of the Afzaal family were killed in London, Ontario in a white nationalist attack. Canada has produced its own anti-Arab and anti-Muslim violence. It is homegrown, not imported. Suspicion falls on the mosque, the keffiyeh, the flag, and the protest while white nationalist ideologies are too often treated as fringe.

Multiculturalism must be judged not by what it celebrates but by what it permits. A country that welcomes Arab food but polices Arab protest is not practicing justice. A school that celebrates diversity but disciplines Palestinian identity is not practicing equity. A workplace that praises representation but punishes employees for naming Palestinian suffering is not practicing human rights.

Canada does not have an Arab culture problem, it has a problem with Arabs who break the model-minority mold: grateful, marketable, quiet.

Arabs are allowed to be cool, delicious, entrepreneurial, stylish, funny, musical, and marketable. Arab Canadians are much less welcome when they are grieving, organizing, resisting, or asking what Canada's commitments to human rights mean.

This year, a 12-metre exhibit on the Nakba at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights drew hundreds of protesters and a federal minister calling it "an error" before it had even finished its opening weekend. That is the limit of symbolic belonging: a country that can love the sound of Arabic in a Drake lyric but still can't stomach the story of its people in a museum built to house exactly this kind of history. **M**

Nashwa Lina Khan is an interdisciplinary scholar, writer, and curator. She is host of Habibti Please.

Benjamin Segobaetso

The short-sighted deorbiting of the International Space Station

The planned retirement of the International Space Station (ISS) marks the end of one of humanity's greatest scientific and diplomatic achievements.

Since the first modules were launched in 1998, the ISS has served as a permanently inhabited orbital laboratory, advancing scientific knowledge while demonstrating unprecedented international cooperation in space.

After nearly three decades of operation, however, structural aging, material degradation, escalating maintenance costs, and operational limitations have prompted the international partner agencies, including Canada, to plan its controlled deorbit during the early 2030s.

Current plans call for a controlled atmospheric re-entry that will direct the station's remaining debris into the South Pacific Ocean near Point Nemo, the world's largest designated spacecraft disposal area.

From an engineering perspective, this approach is understandable. It minimizes the risk of an uncontrolled re-entry over populated regions and is widely regarded as the safest available method for protecting human life and infrastructure. Consequently, discussions surrounding the ISS's retirement have largely focused on orbital mechanics, engineering feasibility, and operational safety.

Yet this technical framing conceals a broader ethical question. Controlled deorbiting does not eliminate environmental risks; it redistributes them. Rather than removing the environmental consequences of disposing of a 400-tonne orbital structure, it transfers those consequences to one of Earth's most remote marine environments.

Although Point Nemo is geographically isolated, it remains part of the global ocean—a shared ecological commons whose capacity to absorb repeated spacecraft disposal remains poorly understood. The ethical significance of the ISS deorbit therefore lies not simply in how the station is retired, but in what this decision reveals about humanity's approach to managing technological waste across interconnected planetary environments.

This issue extends well beyond the fate of a single space station. The ISS is unlikely to be the last large orbital structure requiring retirement. Governments and private companies are already developing commercial space stations, orbital manufacturing facilities, data centres, and other long-term infrastructures in Earth orbit.

Decisions made today are likely to establish precedents for how future generations manage the end-of-life of increasingly large technological systems in space. What appears to be a single engineering decision may ultimately become the default model for disposing of orbital megastructures throughout the 21st century.

The proposed disposal strategy exemplifies a process of moral distancing—the tendency to regard environmental harms as more acceptable when they occur in geographically remote locations that receive little political attention or public scrutiny.

Point Nemo has become the world's spacecraft cemetery not because it lacks ecological value, but because its remoteness creates the perception that environmental consequences occurring there are ethically insignificant. Such reasoning reflects a broader pattern in environmental governance, whereby environmental burdens become politically acceptable once they are displaced beyond the immediate visibility of those who benefit from the activities producing them.

Viewed in this way, the retirement of the ISS is not merely an engineering challenge but a test of planetary governance. Geographic isolation should not be mistaken for ethical neutrality. The absence of nearby human populations neither diminishes the ecological significance of remote marine ecosystems nor relieves humanity of its responsibility to protect them.

Existing space governance frameworks emphasize operational safety and legal compliance but provide relatively little guidance regarding the environmentally responsible retirement of large orbital infrastructures. As a result, engineering efficiency and cost-effectiveness have often taken precedence over broader considerations of environmental stewardship, ecological justice, and intergenerational responsibility.

Rather than asking only whether controlled deorbiting complies with existing legal obligations or minimizes immediate risks, virtue ethics asks what this decision reveals about the character of a spacefaring civilization.

The virtue of prudence supports preventing an uncontrolled re-entry that could threaten human life.

However, genuine prudence requires consideration of long-term ecological consequences, not merely the management of immediate operational hazards.

Likewise, the virtue of justice requires that environmental burdens be distributed fairly rather than shifted to remote ecosystems simply because they lack political visibility. A civilization committed to responsible stewardship should not equate remoteness with moral permissibility.

The ISS illustrates this expanding technological presence. Its final trajectory will link low Earth orbit, atmospheric re-entry, and the Pacific Ocean in a single technological process, demonstrating that modern environmental impacts increasingly transcend conventional ecological and political boundaries.

This interconnectedness exposes an important weakness in existing governance systems. International law generally regulates outer space, the atmosphere, and the oceans through separate legal regimes and institutions. Yet the retirement of the ISS shows that these domains are inseparable. A spacecraft constructed in orbit ultimately becomes an atmospheric and marine environmental issue. As technological systems become increasingly interconnected, governance must also evolve toward integrated models of planetary stewardship capable of evaluating cumulative impacts across multiple environmental domains.

Recognizing this ethical gap does not require rejecting controlled deorbiting outright. Rather, it requires acknowledging that alternatives deserve more serious consideration before ocean disposal becomes the default solution for future space infrastructure.

One possibility is on-orbit disassembly, in which astronauts or robotic systems dismantle large structures module by module. Individual components could then be safely deorbited, repurposed, or incorporated into future missions. Such an approach would reduce the concentration of debris entering the atmosphere while developing technologies that will be essential for servicing future commercial stations and deep-space habitats.

iStock

A second alternative is orbital recycling and manufacturing. Instead of treating the ISS as waste, its structural materials could become valuable feedstock for in-space construction, supporting an emerging circular space economy and reducing dependence on launches from Earth.

Other proposals include repurposing portions of the station for commercial research or education, preserving elements of the ISS as an orbital heritage site, or delaying deorbit until autonomous robotic servicing technologies become sufficiently advanced to enable safer dismantling and reuse. Although each option presents technical and economic challenges, collectively they demonstrate that ocean disposal is not the only conceivable end-of-life strategy.

Equally important are institutional alternatives. Before disposing of globally significant orbital infrastructure, the international community could require comprehensive environmental impact assessments, independent ethical review, transparent public consultation, and evaluation of multiple disposal scenarios.

The planned retirement of the ISS represents far more than the end of a remarkable engineering project. It is a defining moment in humanity's evolving relationship with the environments it increasingly inhabits, transforms, and ultimately leaves behind.

The debate over Point Nemo is not simply about where the ISS should fall. It is about the kind of planetary governance humanity wishes to cultivate. If remote environments continue to serve as repositories for technological waste because they are politically invisible, moral distancing risks becoming institutionalized as a principle of environmental management. By contrast, adopting governance grounded in prudence, justice, stewardship, and intergenerational responsibility would establish a more sustainable ethical foundation for future space exploration. The retirement of the ISS should therefore be understood not as the conclusion of one historic mission, but as the beginning of a broader conversation about how a spacefaring civilization ought to manage its technological legacy across the shared environments of Earth and beyond. **M**

Benjamin Segobaetso is a recent Ph.D. graduate in the Ethics and Public Affairs program at Carleton University.

Bruce Campbell

Thirteen years since the Lac-Mégantic rail disaster

Victims of the disaster still haven't seen justice—and recent court decisions have made things worse

Thirteen years ago, on July 6, 2013, a runaway train carrying 72 tank cars of volatile shale oil derailed and exploded, obliterating the centre of the historic town of Lac-Mégantic. That night, 47 people died, and 27 children lost their parents.

The Lac-Mégantic disaster was the consequence of a decades-long trajectory of mutually reinforcing policies—deregulation, fiscal austerity, privatization—that enhanced corporate self-regulation, and systematically eroded safety protections.

Today, the federal government is moving at warp speed to "remove red tape", which it sees as obstructing its economic objectives and private sector priorities. Its planned cuts to the public service workforce will undoubtedly include cuts to regulatory agency staff.

The power relationship between the government regulator and the regulated industry—regulatory capture—was a central contributing factor to the tragedy, repeatedly subverting public safety to profit.

Industry executives and owners blamed the locomotive engineer and two frontline staff, but the deck was stacked so heavily against these employees that calamity was inevitable. Investigators laid charges against the employees, but they were acquitted. No corporate executives or owners were charged. No senior government officials have been held to account.

The victims' families filed a class-action lawsuit and, in 2015, they reached a combined settlement for a $460 million victims' compensation fund. CP Rail (now CPKC) refused to pay into the fund, stating it bore no responsibility for the tragedy. In May 2025, the Supreme Court of Canada ended efforts to sue CPKC over its responsibility, declining to hear an appeal.

Major railways in Canada have their own police forces with full investigative and jurisdictional powers. They have authority to enforce all federal and provincial laws within 500 metres of railway property.

In June 2025, rail safety activist Robert Bellefleur, responding to worries from neighbours about a collapsing culvert under the railway tracks, took photos and sent them to the company. Three days later, a CPKC maintenance crew repaired it. CPKC sent two armed private police officers to Bellefleur's home, accusing him of illegal entry. Quebec's Director of Criminal and Penal Prosecutions (DPCP) issued a fine of $700, including legal fees against Bellefleur. He decided to pay the fine since fighting it in court would have been costly.

The federal Transportation Safety Board (TSB) created a watchlist to highlight "those issues posing the greatest risk to Canada's transportation system" and that need to be rectified by Transport Canada.

Its most recent 2025 watchlist highlighted a number of long-time systemic safety issues, including fatigue management, safety management, and crews failing to recognize and follow signal indications. Drug and alcohol impairment issues were added to the latest watchlist.

Four to six CPKC trains, each consisting of 225 freight cars and tankers carrying hazardous goods, pass through Lac-Mégantic daily. These trains often measure over 3.8 kilometres long. In 2018, the federal and provincial government committed to funding a bypass around the town centre. Upon completion, Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC), will own and manage it.

In September 2025, the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) received the CPKC's application to construct the bypass. The CTA has not yet made a decision on the subject.

The government, the railway corporations, and the justice system have failed the people of Lac-Mégantic.

The government continues to delay implementing safety measures necessary to diminish the probability of a recurrence. As the Environmental Commissioner in the Auditor General's Office warned, "The window for a recurrence of a Lac-Mégantic-type disaster is still open." M

Bruce Campbell is former Executive Director of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. He authored *The Lac-Mégantic Rail Disaster: Public Betrayal, Justice Denied*, (Lorimer 2018).

YOUR CCPA
Get to know **Alanna Yuen**

POSITION: **ADMINISTRATION & DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR**
WHERE YOU LIVE:
WINNIPEG, MANITOBA
YEARS WITH THE CCPA: **<1**

What drew you to the CCPA? I first became aware of the organization through the annual Manitoba Living Wage updates and appreciated the advocacy the CCPA was doing around fair compensation. When I saw the posting for my position, I looked into the organization more thoroughly and was pleased to learn the CCPA shared a few of my values: accessibility, social justice, and sustainability.

As a neurodivergent person, I was also very interested in working 80 per cent full-time (four days a week). In the past I've struggled with the typical 9 to 5, Monday to Friday work week, and was excited to see a role that would allow me to bring my best, rested self. Not to mention the opportunity to flex my administration and communications skills, while also learning about fund development!

You come to the CCPA with a Creative Communications background. Tell us about some of your adventures. I've done freelance communications work with all sorts of clients, from a local tech company to a national cooperative. One of my favourite gigs was with Heritage Winnipeg. I designed the cover of a newspaper insert for their free, annual Doors Open event where culturally and historically significant buildings around the city open their doors to the public. Other highlights of my work history include photographing powwows, interviewing First Nations peoples, and supporting Elders and Knowledge Keepers in sharing and preserving traditional teachings.

What's keeping you busy at work? Learning about fund development! I just finished an online fundamentals of fundraising course, which was informative and has laid a solid foundation. I'm now working on a solicitation plan for a potential donor for the Manitoba office's annual fundraising brunch in November and beyond. Fundraising has a lot of similarities with communications because it involves research, getting to know your audience, and maintaining relationships.

I'm also supporting my team with the Alternative Municipal Budget by taking photos around Winnipeg and doing copyediting for the different chapters.

When you're not at work, how do you decompress? I love to grab my binoculars and go for walks in my neighbourhood. I live five minutes away from a river where there are all sorts of animals: foxes, groundhogs, deer, beavers, muskrats, and lots of birds! Sometimes I'll take my camera with me, too. Being close to nature brings me a lot of peace and helps me feel grounded.

Lately I've been playing Stardew Valley on the Nintendo Switch, which is a super cute, cozy farming game. I also enjoy making hoop embroidery, going on hikes with my partner, and listening to music (some of my favourite artists are Judas Priest, ABBA, and Frank Ocean).

What are you reading these days? *The Company We Keep* by Alexandra Elle. The book offers reflections on friendship and how to be intentional in all our relationships, including the one with ourselves.

What gives you hope? People who are working toward collective liberation. People like Mariame Kaba, who does work around transformative justice and prison abolition, and Francesca Albanese, who reports on human rights violations in Palestine. I also appreciate a local organization that supports survivors of childhood sexual abuse, Heartwood Healing Centre.

The CCPA's work is powered by donors like you

Meet Ellen Tolmie, Toronto, Ontario

Who was someone who had a big influence on you? He was my first photography teacher: Kryn Taconis (1918-1979) opened a wider world for me, inspired my own passion for documentary photography and demonstrated a visual creativity and ethical humanism I still strive to emulate. Tall, blond and very Dutch, he migrated to Toronto in 1959 with his Canadian wife, Tess, who was returning after 12 years living in Europe. (Tess was also a major, beloved influence.)

Kryn became a photographer during WWII in a Holland occupied by the Nazis, helping to forge documents for hiding Jews. Caught, he was imprisoned for several months. Deeply averse to pretence, Kryn said he had not been heroic as he didn't fully appreciate the danger. But this was only part of the story: on being released, he returned to clandestine work, helping transport Jews through also-occupied France to safer ground. Then aware of the risks, he thought it was one of life's inescapable 'choices' if one is to live with oneself. In 1944, he was part of a team that photographed starvation conditions in a besieged Amsterdam before the Allies broke through.

That experience began his career as a photojournalist, first in Europe, then in the 1960s in Canada, criss-crossing the country and becoming perhaps our most accomplished photo documentarian in that time.

I met him when he began teaching at my (very mediocre) community college in 1969-70, where he was evidently the most accomplished photographer. Kryn fascinated me with his imagery, his modesty and his stories: including when, in 1957, he went behind the lines of Algerian rebels during their war of independence from France. Until then, I hadn't realized that photography could help illuminate a political situation. We were friends and colleagues until he died in 1979. I keep his memory close: of a creative force who manifested joy, sadness, a dry humour and a deeply principled humanism in his way of seeing and living.

How did you become a CCPA supporter? After working most of the '70s as an editorial photographer in Toronto, I moved to New York in 1979, then to Bogota, working in documentary film and photography. Back in New York in 1990, I directed Unicef global photography until returning to Toronto in 2014. Away for 34 years, I had a lot of catching up to do!

The CCPA is Canada's *only* think tank committed to a progressive vision of the politically possible, that also cogently deconstructs the puffery and deflection that those in power, both Liberal and Conservative, persistently deploy in the service of the rich and entitled. What's not to like!

Name policies to make people's lives better. TAX the rich as they used to be taxed, when Canada was a far more *economically* equal society.

STOP subsidizing the oil/gas industry that is unconscionably profitable, refuses to clean up after itself, is owned overwhelmingly by foreign interests and is helping destroy the planet!

REGULATE social media and A.I. Make them liable for their gross theft of other people's data and creations and for rampant defamatory disinformation. Fix that so we can enjoy a digital commons that nurtures democracy and reflects the genuinely humanist goals the Internet was initially envisioned to be.

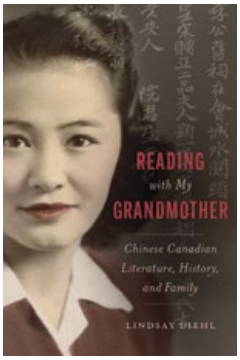
REFORM our elections, instituting proportional representation.

CCPA
CANADIAN CENTRE for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
CENTRE CANADIEN de POLITIQUES ALTERNATIVES

A life insurance gift is a charitable donation that you can arrange now to help the CCPA in the future. Making a life insurance gift is not just for the wealthy or the elderly. It's a legacy gift that makes a special impact. To ask about how you can leave a gift of life insurance 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.

E.R. Zarevich

The power of familial ties and cultural bonds



READING WITH MY GRANDMOTHER
LINDSAY DIEHL
Wilfrid Laurier University Press, April 28, 2026

"In these written accounts, I discovered what a meticulous storyteller she can be. Recalling moments of her life in detail, she sometimes even draws maps or sketches to accompany her words. As a result, stories that I have heard many times before—stories of her scalding her foot in a pot of hot water her mother had placed on the floor to heat the room, or stories of her father who was often away from home, working hard to make a living or perhaps gambling with friends—take on new life and dimensions."

When someone has an inquisitive mind inclined to literature, it's easy to wonder if one's own personal stories could ever compete with published authors of high renown. Professor Lindsay Diehl has a trailing thought, which is that an individual's stories don't have to compete at all, but, rather, find a beneficial connection and harmony with those who put their stories in print first.

In Diehl's ponderous and intellectual memoir, *Reading With My Grandmother*, the author and professor of Asian Canadian studies weaves her family's legacy of being hard-working, humble Chinese Canadians immigrants with more circulated stories of Chinese Canadian cultural fusion such as Paul Yee's celebrated novel *A Superior Man*, or Wayson Choy's *Paper Shadows: A Chinatown Memoir*. In particular, it is her late grandmother's fascinating stories told over steaming cups of tea that are drawn out, refined, and appreciated for their fullness from positive exposure to works by people who had the same experiences and survived to write them down. In grandmother's lifetime, grandmother and granddaughter found solidarity from being great readers, and their combined efforts to produce their own book demonstrate their familial literary finesse.

A love letter to the power of family ties and cultural heritage

Grandmother's common sense and Diehl's university education unite to comment on everything from previous racist Canadian laws discriminating against Chinese immigrants to the daily routines of newcomer families who have been uprooted from their home country to adapt to new places, new languages, and new—though often limited and underpaid—job opportunities. The contents of grandmother's real-life letters are analytically compared to the themes, characters, and plotlines of great Chinese Canadian novels and memoirs. And there are many recurring similarities: mass fear of deportation, gambling addictions, rigid gender roles, lack of access to health care, loneliness, and white settler supremacy.

Reading with My Grandmother shifts storytelling structure frequently, rotating from traditional memoir to academic essay to epistolary correspondence between grandmother and granddaughter. Diehl's regular use of cited quotations from scholarly sources during the academic segments demonstrate her rich learning and commitment to accurate research. However, her own voice tends to get lost in the sea of borrowed quotes for pages at a time. There often seems to be a slight reluctance to express ideas entirely in her own voice, which distracts from the author's own voice.

Where *Reading With My Grandmother* draws the most engaging narrative strength is the tender relationship between Diehl and the elder woman she most admires,

the warm and intelligent matriarch of her family. It is clear from Diehl's affectionate writing tone during the memoir parts that between the two women there was, when her grandmother was still alive, great respect, trust, and unconditional love, constituting a semi-professional relationship in which Diehl's grandmother allowed Diehl the incredible privilege of recording her private life for public readership.

These kinds of bonds are rare and precious, especially when they're between women in marginalized communities. When the rest of the world displays hostility, there is always safety and comfort to be found within a close-knit family. During a visit to her grandmother's nursing home, Diehl's writes of the wisdom her grandmother quietly passed on, knowing that the time to pass on was near: *"On that day, her storytelling seemed shaped by themes of love and persistence, as if she is trying to reassure me that affectionate bonds live on—they can never be broken."*

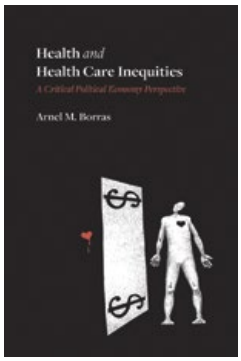
Reading With My Grandmother is a love letter to the power of family ties and the cultural heritage people can inherit if they just take the time to listen to their elders. Both Diehl and her grandmother can be commended for beautifully documenting and sharing their mature and insightful perspectives on everything that mattered and still matters to them. **M**

E.R. Zarevich is a journalist and cultural critic from Burlington, Ontario, Canada. Her writing is published regularly by *Local-News.ca* and can also be found through *Jstor Daily*, *Inspire the Mind*, and *The Queen's Quarterly*, among others.

Book review

Andrew Longhurst

Why public policies produce health inequities—and how to change it



HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE INEQUITIES: A CRITICAL POLITICAL ECONOMY PERSPECTIVE
ARNEL BORRAS

Fernwood Publishing, February 2025

Canadian residents do not have the same access to health care, nor do they experience the same health outcomes. Arnel Borras's new book, *Health and Health Care Inequities: A Critical Political Economy Perspective*, provides an insightful overview of how health and health care inequities are socially produced under neoliberalism.

His timely contribution is concerned broadly with how market-oriented public policies intersect with social location—including class, gender, race, Indigenous status, and disability—and produce differential health outcomes for people.

Borras comes to this topic with diverse lived experience. An immigrant to Canada, he worked as a factory labourer and nurse, and now serves as an assistant professor in the nursing school at St. Francis Xavier University.

The book begins by offering an explanation of how health outcomes and inequities are socially produced by the determinants of health. Diverging from many accounts of the social determinants of health that derived from lifestyle and environmental factors, such as pollution and chronic disease, Borras is firmly interested in the "determinants of the determinants." These are the public policies that produce different health-related outcomes depending on who you are, where you live, and your occupation.

He marshals empirical evidence to show that class is the primary driver of socioeconomic and health inequities, but it is also intertwined with Indigeneity, race, and gender.

Borras reviews three different political-economic approaches to understanding how money and political power affect health: neoclassical economics, Keynesian economics, and political economy. Borras critiques the first two for their inability to explain the interrelationship between public policies and social location—and how these dynamics fundamentally influence your health.

Indeed, neoclassical economics—with its idealized supply and demand curves—has little to offer in the explanation of why some groups face such different lived experiences than others. It is critical political economy, with its focus on institutions, that offers the most useful explanation of how "capitalism

limits the influence of workers and ordinary people on state decisions impacting societal and public health affairs".

Drawing on inspiration from Engels' analysis of the squalid housing conditions of the English working class, Borras applies a political economy framework to Canada's neoliberal housing policies, historicizing the shift from public investment in housing in the pre- and immediate post-war years to the rise of market-oriented housing policies, which set the stage for the widespread housing insecurity and homelessness that we are grappling with today.

Considering the extent to which adequate and affordable housing (or lack thereof) shapes life trajectories, Borras's early focus on housing policy is a welcome contribution. As the author reminds us, "substandard housing leads to more sickness and deaths among low-income workers and people experiencing poverty".

Shifting gears, Borras dives into inequities in health care that contribute to health divides between groups within society. He helpfully and correctly tells the history of public medicare's creation as a fight between working people and powerful institutional forces, including organized medicine, insurance companies, and allied right-wing political parties.

The historical evolution of public health care is more relevant than ever as the Alberta government, backed by the private health insurance industry and corporate providers, has passed legislation to create a two-tier health care system in that province.

We are reminded that there has been a seesaw of advances and defeats in the history of public medicare. While the *Canada Health Act* does not cover all health care needs, including dental care and pharmaceuticals, it remains powerful legislation that—at its core—reflects the principle of social solidarity and remains a buttress against monied interests.

The second half of the book draws on key informant interviews to underscore how the political power and ideational power of "big capital" influence these key policy arenas. Drawing on the growing literature on the political economy of health, Borras argues that health is political in several ways, as "health is treated as a commodity, political decisions and interventions affect the social determinants of health, people's health is considered a right and part of citizenship, and power is used to control health within economic and political systems".

Indeed, health is an arena where policy actors engage in political struggles to have influence and power "over state policies that affect how healthy people are."

Developed by political scientist John Kingdon, the "multiple streams framework" offers one way to conceptualize how actors engage in policy change. According to this framework, there are three streams—identifying problems, developing policies, and dealing with politics. These streams converge to create "windows of opportunity."

Although it's helpful to review this prominent framework within public policy and political science, it fails to offer an explanation of *why* ideas and policies become dominant, and others face such resistance. For this, we are better served by the critical policy studies literature from anthropologists, geographers, and sociologists, which remains attentive to the power of key policy actors and the institutional struggles over particular ideas and policy models.

Even if this literature is not referenced in Borras's book, the recognition that structural power, including corporations and monied interests, comes across through the key informant interviews woven through chapters four and five.

This is an important contribution of this book: it offers insight into why health inequities persist in Canada, despite the evidence about what is required to close these health gaps. A quote from retired Ontario Coalition Against Poverty organizer John Clarke highlights the reality that the mobilization of evidence is deeply political since "the limitations of it have to be understood because we're not up against a system that is fundamentally rational".

As Borras laments, "capital power, interests, and ideology have a more significant impact on health policies than we previously thought, suggesting that decisions are not mainly based on research and evidence".

Borras's conclusion is that capitalism—and particularly the neoliberal variety we face today—is fundamentally incompatible with making measurable advances in health equity. It is the power imbalance that exists between working people and corporate capital, which reproduces these health divides.

We need to build an alternative political economy to capitalism. Borras locates these in the Nordic welfare states rather than the liberal welfare regimes of Canada, Australia, and the U.S.

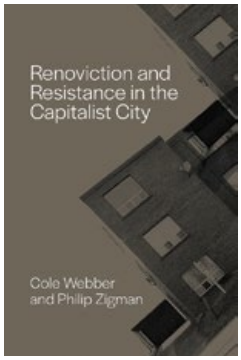
The book offers strategic areas where we must organize within the electoral arena and through civil society, including trade union politics, if we are to become more equal as a society and address these health divides. Strengthening workers' rights and employment standards, improving income supports, building non-market housing, increasing access to public health care, and cultivating solidarity across social location should be at the top of the agenda.

For many readers of the *Monitor*, the arguments and solutions will not be new. However, *Health and Health Care Inequities* provides an accessible introduction to the role of public policy and the creation of health inequities under neoliberal capitalism. It draws attention to the enduring problem of persistent and pervasive gaps in health outcomes based on who you are and where you live—and why this demands political action. **M**

Andrew Longhurst is a senior researcher at the CCPA.

Sofia Sokolski

The fiction in renoviction



RENOVICTION AND RESISTANCE IN THE CAPITALIST CITY
COLE WEBBER AND PHILIP ZIGMAN
Between the Lines, June 2026

Eviction by any other name is still eviction. In *Renoviction and Resistance in the Capitalist City*, co-authors Cole Webber and Philip Zigman unpack renoviction—a trendy term that diagnoses certain evictions as illegitimate while deflecting deeper scrutiny of the function of eviction in the Canadian housing system.

Renoviction and Resistance in the Capitalist City is a handbook on eviction, but also an indictment of the capitalist housing relations that produce it.

The authors argue that understanding renoviction as an illegitimate or illegal practice obscures the reality facing tenants: a commodified housing system that enables, facilitates, and incentivizes eviction. The dichotomy between legitimate and illegitimate evictions, they say, is a false one which incorrectly implies that better knowledge of law alone can defend tenants from displacement.

Assuming landlords stick to legal tactics for removing tenants from their homes (often, they don't), landlords can evict tenants without breaking any laws. This is because the state primarily protects landlords' right to profit from housing, not tenants' right to live in it.

In acknowledging this, *Renoviction and Resistance in the Capitalist City* strips the capitalist legal system of ideological veneers. The resulting book is a refreshing break from victim-blaming narratives that pin tenants' evictions on their own ignorance of the legal system.

The book's premise is that renoviction is fundamentally motivated by displacement, not renovations. The landlord business model relies on replacing existing tenants with tenants willing to pay more.

Landlords aren't the only actors interested in maximizing rent: municipalities promote the use of land that generates the greatest property taxes. Provincial laws enable landlords to push out tenants for renovations, with little concern over whether such renovations are necessary, or actually take place once tenants are evicted.

> Renoviction is an illegimate practice; it obscures the reality facing tenants

The legal process for challenging a renoviction is fraught with obstacles for tenants, who bear the burden of proof and effort. Landlords have teams of paid lawyers and staff; for many working-class tenants, bringing a case forward against their landlord takes money and time that they don't have. The stress of securing legal representation, time off work, child care, and other arrangements means that many tenants don't attend their own eviction hearings.

When tenants win, their landlords receive a slap on the wrist: fines they can quickly recoup by collecting higher rents on vacated units or profiting from the sale of an emptied building.

Webber and Zigman are clear: the state is no hero to tenants. At best, the state responds to select working-class grievances with reforms—for example, bylaws requiring that landlords compensate tenants for eviction—while upholding its support of more mundane expressions of exploitation.

At worst, the state is the armed enforcer of landlords' right to pursue profits at the expense of tenants. It collaborates in pressuring tenants out of their homes, by use of the carrot or of the stick. Governments and non-profits urge tenants to exercise their legal rights. The experiences of tenants across Canada show their insufficiency and impracticality.

If tenants can't count on the legal system to defend them, they have to

defend themselves. This view might seem cynical, but it opens the door to hope for what can be achieved when tenants take collective control over their living conditions by organizing with their neighbours. Tenants aren't ignorant, passive subjects whose fate depends on the goodwill of government officials or non-profits. By uniting with neighbours in their buildings and rental districts, tenants can refuse the eviction plans of their landlords and their enforcement by the state.

As a tenant organizer in Ottawa, I've seen this collective power in action: neighbours resolute to stay in their home in spite of renoviction schemes from their landlord and city council. In the end, my neighbours were displaced; but this doesn't mean they failed.

How could I call resistance to renoviction a loss when so many evictions go by without a fight? Tenants knowing their rights and, more importantly, knowing their *neighbours*, are little victories.

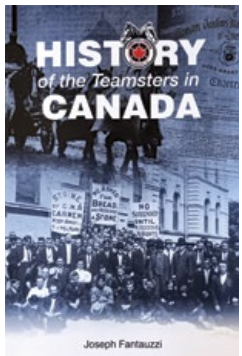
The tenant struggle is a collective struggle. In fighting, tenants develop the knowledge to win bigger. It's this context that makes books like this one essential. It compiles legal know-how, landlord tactics to look out for, and lessons learned in struggle across Canada so tenants don't have to start from square one. Writing in a sphere dominated by academics, advocates, and non-profits whose writing only further obscures housing relations, Webber and Zigman inform and empower. **M**

Sofia Sokolski is a University of Ottawa BSocSc in Political Science and Communications graduate and an incoming Masters student at UofT (also in Political Science).

Book excerpt

Joseph Fantauzzi

The birth of the Canadian Conference of Teamsters



HISTORY OF THE TEAMSTERS IN CANADA
JOSEPH FANTAUZZI
Teamsters Canada, 2026

As the International Brotherhood of Teamsters' (IBT) General Executive Board gathered for its regular quarterly meeting in Carlsbad, California [in October 1975], it had plenty of items on its agenda. It was at that meeting that the course was set for what would ultimately become the sovereignty of the IBT's Canadian wing. In reality, the meeting itself was merely a rubber stamp which capped off years of work. Behind the scenes, negotiations spanning half a decade between Canadian Teamsters and the IBT had finally convinced the General Executive Board of the need for greater autonomy. In a move that separated Canadian locals across the country from their respective places in the Western, Central, and Eastern Conferences, the General Executive Board announced that all Canadian affiliates would be combined into a single group: the Canadian Conference of Teamsters. The point, [General President Frank] Fitzsimmons argued, was to streamline the union's efforts in Canada. A Director for the Canadian Conference was not named at the October board meeting. That announcement, Fitzsimmons said at the time, would come later.

Just a few days into [1976], the IBT held a regular quarterly meeting in Palm Springs, California. The Teamster leadership had numerous items to deal with while in the sunny city, including the formalizing of several appointments. In one move, for example, Fitzsimmons filled the role of General Secretary-Treasurer, which had been recently vacated by Murray Miller upon his retirement. The board officially elevated Ray Schoessling to that position, and Fitzsimmons administered the oath of office.

The agenda then moved ahead to another pressing issue, which had been unresolved since October 1975. In pursuing the creation of the Canadian Conference, Teamsters north of the 49th parallel had sought increased jurisdiction to deal with unique research questions, to exercise more power in bargaining within Canada, and greater authority to develop lobbying strategies at both the federal and provincial levels. But who would serve as Director? To answer that question, Fitzsimmons had looked to the west coast—Vancouver, specifically. In

the end, the IBT tapped International Vice President, and Joint Council 36 President, Edward Lawson to lead the new body.

A few weeks later, an article appeared in the top right corner of Page B3 of the *Toronto Star* about a recent tendency displayed among the Canadian wings of international unions: the establishing of an autonomous identity. Under the headline, "Surge of nationalism gets union members autonomy in Canada", the story launched with a narrative describing the difficulties of convincing workers in Quebec to join an international union that was headquartered in the United States. In that province, which had for years become increasingly conscious of its distinct national identity, such a prospect could be, as the reporter put it, "frustrating and hard on personal dignity." For example, Aime Gohier, then an executive board member of the Service Employees International Union, told the *Star* that workers in Quebec would ask the international's representatives, "'Why should we listen to you? You get your directives from Washington.'" The article sought input from the leadership of several internationals, and quoted the representatives of several organizations, including the Canadian Labour Congress (which had begun a push for more autonomy for the Canadian wings of international unions), and the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks (now the Transportation Communications Union). It also related a horror story about a half-dozen staff members who said they were fired from the International Chemical Workers Union (now part of the United Food and Commercial Workers) due to pressing for Canadian autonomy, and a merger with the Canadian wing of the competing Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (which has since been merged into the United Steelworkers via the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers International Union). Those workers decided to set up their own union, the Canadian Chemical Workers (since merged into Unifor by way of several prior amalgamations).

A dozen or so paragraphs into the *Star*'s article, the story turned to an example of a Canadian wing of one international union that had successfully achieved additional autonomy: the Canadian Conference of Teamsters. Lawson indicated to the *Star* that the creation of the conference was not the product of some flippant hand-wave by IBT leadership. Rather, negotiations for more autonomy had been quietly occurring throughout the past half-decade or so. Under the agreement with the IBT, the Canadian Conference would continue to receive funding from the international, which the article characterized as having historically been "the strength of the Teamsters in Canada." To that end, the IBT would bankroll 75% of the operations north of the border. Lawson was careful to note that the creation of the Canadian Conference was not a signal that Canadian Teamsters were breaking away. "We'll be an autonomous conference, but still an integral part of the international union," he said. The Star did, however, manage to find an anonymous detractor within the Canadian Labour Congress to pour cold water on the Teamsters' approach. "It's difficult to have an awful lot of autonomy when someone else is paying the bills," the unnamed commenter charged. The *Star*'s article noted that the Canadian Conference would hold an inaugural session in March with the goal of commencing operations in early April. Some believe that the way in which the Canadian Conference was created—that is, enhanced autonomy under the IBT's umbrella—may have worked to placate more radical elements who would potentially have preferred for Canadian Teamsters to separate themselves entirely from the IBT.

Early March in Toronto can be a cruel reminder that winter's icy grasp has not yet relented. Indeed, Teamsters rising from their slumbers on March 9, 1976, would have been blasted with a windchill that made the morning feel as cold as -14°C by 5 a.m. But as is so often the case in Canada, throughout the day, the weather, and the mood for Canadian Teamsters' business became warmer. That day, 100 delegates gathered in Canada's biggest city to mark another stage of organizing: the founding session of the Canadian Conference.

The session drew several IBT leadership officials. Fitzsimmons and Schoessling had made the trip to Toronto, along with Central Conference Director Roy Williams, Southern Conference Director Joseph Morgan, Western Conference Director M. E. "Andy" Anderson, and Vice President Robert Holmes. Lawson, as Director of the Canadian Conference, chaired the convention. The agenda was packed. Delegates approved bylaws to govern the Canadian Conference, appointed staff, and established national and regional offices. While today the headquarters of Teamsters Canada is in Laval, national headquarters was originally planned to be in Ottawa. Regional offices were also to be established across the country in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. Delegates also formalized the regional leadership structure. Peter Wilson, then the Vice President of Joint Council 36 and Secretary-Treasurer of Local 464 in British Columbia was named to direct the activities in Vancouver. Robert Wilson, a former leader of the Canadian wing of the IBT, was tasked with overseeing operations in Toronto. And Omer Malbouf, President of Joint Council 91, was handed responsibility for Montreal. **M**

THE GOOD NEWS PAGE

Compiled by Elaine Hughes

Saskatchewan women MLAs finally get their own bathroom

Until now, the women who make up 30 per cent of Saskatchewan's legislative chamber have had only a one-stall bathroom on the government side of the chamber while men had their own private bathroom with stalls and urinals. After 114 years, the problem is about to be rectified with a new, five-stall, private women's bathroom for MLAs.
CBC, May 28, 2026.

Calgary retiree crafts one-of-a-kind wooden bicycle

Anton (Tony) Koch, 83, has spent a lifetime making furniture, turned bowls and intricate wooden model trains—but his latest creation may be his most ambitious yet. Koch has created a full-sized bicycle made entirely of wood that you can actually ride. The bike includes hidden screws at key stress points and ball bearings inside the wheel hubs and pedals.
CTV News, May 5, 2026.

One of the world's largest net-zero housing developments

In Vancouver, one of North America's most expensive cities, the Squamish Nation has created Senakw, a sustainable development project that, once completed, will provide 6,000 homes.
The Narwhal, July 9, 2026.

First Inuit-led university

Construction is underway on Nunavut's Inuit Nunangat University (INU) and student residence—the first Inuit-led university in Canada. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), which represents the country's Inuit and is a driving force behind the university, is seeking $160 million in funding to prepare Inuit Nunangat University to open its doors in 2030.
CBC News, April 25, 2026.

Silenced U.S. climate scientists hit back

The U.S. administration has been extremely hostile to climate research, firing thousands of federal scientists while cutting funding to agencies keeping tabs on the environment. In response, former staff from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's climate.gov website have launched a new website, climate.us, which aims to restore access to "accurate, accessible and scientifically rigorous" climate information. It was funded by more than 2,500 private donations.
Positive.News, July 3, 2026.

Frog bacteria a cure for cancer?

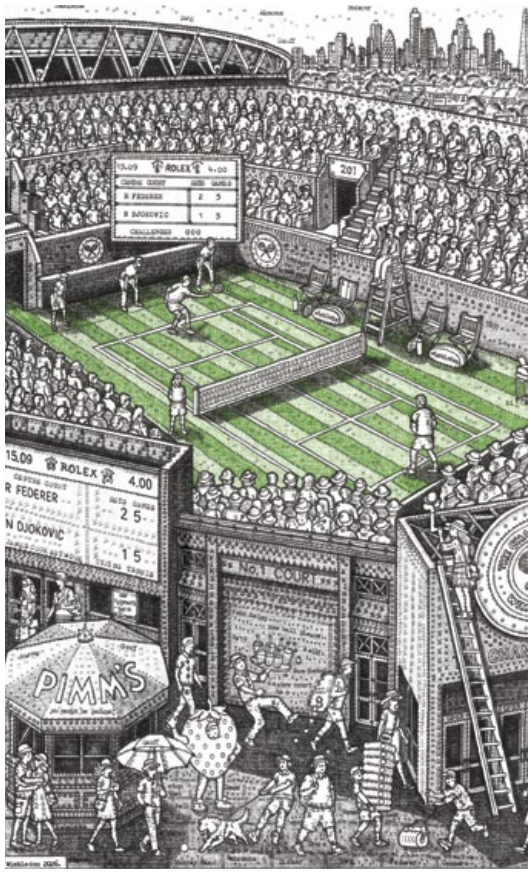
Led by Professor Eijiro Miyako, a team of scientists at Japan's Advanced Institute of Science and Technology recently discovered that a natural bacteria from the intestines of a Japanese tree frog (Ewingella americana) achieved a 100 per cent tumor elimination rate in mice—with just a single intravenous. Not only did the gut bacteria kill the cancer cells, it also engaged the animal's immune system for "comprehensive tumor destruction".
Good News Network, July 12, 2026.

Ingenious cardboard powwow regalia

Ryland Louis, a 13-year-old from Moosomin First Nation in Saskatchewan, wanted to dance at a recent powwow in a grass outfit but his mom couldn't afford one, so he took matters into his own hands and created a headdress out of cardboard. He said it's not his first time making stuff out of cardboard; he also makes armour, shields, and swords to play with his little brother. It took him a day-and-a-half and two boxes to make. He said if other kids want to dance, to keep trying and to not give up. "Make cardboard stuff," he said. "Don't give up on your dreams—they're possible."
CBC News, May 26, 2026.

Detailed drawings using only typewriter keystrokes?!

East London artist, James Cook, 29, has created a series of amazing artworks—including a scene from Wimbledon's centre court—using just keystrokes from a vintage typewriter. It took him around 378 hours, working nine hours a day. He says he types over a million letters and symbols onto paper to create his masterpieces, using only his right index finger. He's been using typewriters since he was 17 and today owns around 100 typewriters from across the world, most of them arriving as donations from fans.
Good News Network, July 11, 2026.



THE LAST WORD

Erika Shaker

A better future is possible

Earlier this year, we brought together people from across the country to talk about wealth inequality. What we heard was deeply troubling: young people are losing faith that government can actually help make their lives better.

Not just losing patience. *Losing hope*.

Twenty years ago, when we first launched the Growing Gap project, people trusted that governments would step up and look out for their best interest. Today, that trust is evaporating.

The obstacles young people face today are exponentially bigger than what many of us dealt with growing up. When you're watching your rent eat up 60 per cent of your paycheque, when you're drowning in student debt your parents never had to carry, when home ownership feels like a fantasy—it's hard to believe anyone cares about you.

That's why we need your help. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) is launching the Growing Gap 2.0—a renewed, solutions-focused project to close the wealth gap and restore access to the financial future young people deserve.

Will you make a donation today to support the research, policy proposals, and public education we need to show young people that someone is fighting for them?

This isn't about avocado toast or too many lattes. The cost of housing, education, child care, and food have skyrocketed while wages have stalled.

When our team conducted focus groups this past spring, one thing became crystal clear: older folks get it. They understand the rules have changed. They're grateful they were able to buy a home, retire with some security, and they're worried sick about their children and grandchildren who won't have those same opportunities.

Right now, there's not a single city in Canada where someone working full-time at minimum wage can afford to rent a one-bedroom apartment. Student debt and tuition fees have tripled in the last 50 years. The price of food has increased 30 per cent since 2019. Canada's youngest households now have a debt-to-income ratio of 178 per cent.

Young people are watching the ladder get taken away from them. Older folks are watching their loved ones struggle. And everyone is wondering: what happened to the Canada we believe in?

Your gift to the CCPA's National Research Fund will fuel the research and policy solutions we need to reverse these trends before we lose an entire generation to desperation.

I know you understand what's at stake. Your commitment to the CCPA tells me you're someone who believes in taking care of each other. Someone who remembers that many of us had help when we were first starting out. You're caring, generous, and determined to build a country where everyone has a fair shot.

Together, we can close the wealth gap, restore opportunity, and prove to young people that collective action still works.

When I look around my community, I see young people who are losing hope that they'll ever achieve what so many of us took for granted. A stable job. A place to call home. Maybe even the chance to start a family or retire with dignity. When people become hopeless, they can become susceptible to extreme ideas.

These aren't lazy young people looking for handouts. These are hardworking, talented people facing systemic barriers that didn't exist a generation ago.

Together, we can change that. We can push governments to put in place policies that restore balance. We can show young people that they are not facing the affordability crisis alone. We are standing with them, fighting for their future.

When we set young people up to succeed, we all benefit. It is an investment in our collective future.

The world is vastly different than it was 50 years ago. The challenges ahead are complex. We can't afford for the next generation to give up on the idea that we should take care of each other. Looking out for each other is who we are.

Twenty years ago, we set out to make income inequality unavoidable in public conversation. We succeeded. Now we're going further. We're going to make it unacceptable. **M**

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

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or contact Letisha Toop at **1-844-563-1341 x319** or **monitor@policyalternatives.ca**

“We see a future where intelligence is a utility, like electricity or water, and people buy it from us on a meter. One of the most important things in the future is that we make intelligence, to borrow an old phrase from the energy industry that didn’t quite work, ‘Too cheap to meter’.”

—Sam Altman, OpenAI CEO