

MONITOR

Progressive news, views and ideas



GREEN NEW DEAL

meet the

ALTERNATIVE FEDERAL BUDGET

— *how* 25 YEARS of ALTERNATIVE
FEDERAL BUDGETING *can*
STRENGTHEN DEMANDS
for a SUSTAINABLE,
CARING *and* DEMOCRATIC
ECONOMY



CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
CENTRE CANADIEN
de POLITIQUES ALTERNATIVES

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CCPA
CANADIAN CENTRE
for POLICY ALTERNATIVES
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AFB 2020

New decade, new deal

/14-25



What can 25 years of
alternative budgeting offer the
campaign for a Green New Deal
in Canada? Quite a lot.

*Stuart Trew and
Hadrian Mertins-Kirkwood*

plus /

A quarter-century chronology
of the Alternative Federal Budget,
and CCPA economist Marc Lee's case
for a federal carbon budget

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STUART TREW

Inconvenience and indifference

INDIFFERENCE, said Antonio Gramsci, is “the mainspring of history.” By that he meant it is not the active few who determine what comes to pass, for better or worse, but “the absenteeism of the many.” The indifferent masses, he said, “allow the knots to form that in time only a sword will be able to cut through.”

The B.C. government’s continued failure to respect Indigenous rights looks very knotty indeed. In early February, a militarized RCMP force invaded Wet’suwet’en territory to enforce a provincial court injunction asserting the supremacy of Coastal GasLink’s rights to build a pipeline—to carry fracked gas from Dawson Creek through north-central B.C. to Kitimat, where LNG Canada will liquify and export it—over the rights of Wet’suwet’en hereditary chiefs to govern in their traditional lands.

“It’s a whole damn army up there,” said Chief Woos (Frank Alec), just ahead of the raids. “They’ve got guns on, they’ve got tactical gear on. They look like they’re ready for war.”

Twenty-one people were arrested and removed from the B.C. interior for blocking Coastal GasLink workers from accessing Wet’suwet’en lands. They included Unist’ot’en chiefs Howihkat (Freda Huson) and Geltiy (Brenda Michell), while they and other matriarchs were holding a ceremony in honour of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Journalists reporting on the raids have been harassed by police, told to stop filming arrests, and in cases forcibly removed from the area, drawing condemnation from the Canadian Association of Journalists.

The raids have sparked outrage and solidarity actions across Canada on a scale we haven’t seen since Idle No More sprung to life nearly a decade ago. Dozens of people have been arrested for blockading B.C. ports while other

protests temporarily shut down the provincial legislature. As Parliament returned on February 18, Mohawks of the Tyendinaga First Nation continued to blockade rail tracks near Belleville, Ontario, stopping commuter and commercial goods transport across CN’s eastern network. In Halifax, activists temporarily blocked Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland from entering city hall; the offices of Carolyn Bennett, minister of Crown-Indigenous relations, were occupied.

Alongside these acts of solidarity we have also seen a backlash, given much media airplay, from people who believe the provincial court’s injunction is, or should be, the end of the story, or who complain of being inconvenienced by its fallout. Premier Horgan felt strongly for the people who had been “denied access to their workplace” by the action targeting the B.C. legislature, then told media the Mohawk activists “haven’t got a clue...how complex these issues are.” On the other side of the country, Freeland told a media scrum after her meeting with Halifax’s mayor that all Canadians, including government officials, should be able to “go about their rightful and legitimate business.”

But legitimacy is exactly what the Wet’suwet’en chiefs are contesting. The Unist’ot’en is a house of the Gilseyhu Clan, one of five Wet’suwet’en clans who have governed that part of B.C. for as long as anyone can remember. Though 20 band councils, who govern reserves in the area under conditions set out in the colonial Indian Act, have signed benefits agreements with TC Energy (owner of Coast GasLink), all five clans of the Wet’suwet’en “have unanimously opposed all pipeline proposals and have not provided free, prior, and informed consent” for work to proceed on Wet’suwet’en lands, according to the Unist’ot’en website.

The RCMP raid violates Wet’suwet’en law. It also flies in the face of

a decision in December from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which called on Canada to “immediately halt the construction and suspend all permits and approvals for the construction of the Coastal GasLink pipeline” until “the Wet’suwet’en people...grant their free, prior and informed consent, following the full and adequate discharge of the duty to consult.” The BCCLA and UBCIC have filed a joint complaint about RCMP tactics and the police exclusion zone with the force’s chairperson of the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission.

“There remains no more important relationship to me and to Canada than the one with Indigenous Peoples,” said Prime Minister Trudeau in his mandate letters to new ministers in December. The RCMP’s literal dismantling of a sign on Wet’suwet’en territory reading “Reconciliation,” which went viral on social media, calls this statement into question. It is beyond awkward that, at the same time, the prime minister was outside the country seeking support from 54 African governments, many of which have appalling human rights records, for a Canadian seat on the UN Security Council.

Rather than untie the knot that spawned both the Idle no More movement and current Indigenous protests, the federal and B.C. governments, by continuing to deny Wet’suwet’en title and appealing to contested notions of legitimacy and “the rule of law,” are making it tighter and more complicated. The least we can do, in the rest of Canada, is to not let inconvenience, or indifference to Canada’s obligations to Indigenous peoples, move events slowly, but surely, toward the intractable.

When our neighbours and friends are being driven off their land at gunpoint to make way for a fracked gas pipeline, let it kick us into action, not absenteeism. **M**



Tax it all

Re: "Why tax fairness?",
Nov/Dec 2019.

Yes, we should tax fairness.
But more importantly, we
should tax foulness.

Thomas O'Shea,
Vancouver, BC

Apples to oranges

Re: BDS's questionable
values, Letters, Jan/Feb
2020.

Reading Raffy Dotan's
letter carefully, one
concludes that the author
is not denying that Israel
deserves criticism for its
policies and actions against
the Palestinians. Rather
he is saying that BDS
subscribers, if governed by
moral values, "would have
directed their attention
and action not only at
Israel," but also at a host
of other countries such as
Saudi Arabia, Qatar, China,
etc., that have exploited
citizens in other countries,
and in some cases the
Palestinians themselves.
The author concludes that
because BDS is against
only Israel and not the
others, this amounts
to being anti-Semitic,
proof being, as he states,

"Obviously, anti-Semites
are more likely than others
to criticize Israel."

It's like saying, because
you don't go against the
other bad guys, some of
whom are also hurting the
Palestinians, you shouldn't
exclusively attack Israel.
There's an apples and
oranges comparison here.
The Israel/Palestinian
conflict is unlike the other
described deplorable
situations. It began over a
century ago as European
Jews were being oppressed
and discriminated against
in their own countries. The
solution was found miles
away in lands where dwelt
Palestinians, who were
not part of this European
problem.

Israel is an illegal
occupier of these lands
and has continued the
control and colonization of
the Palestinians. For this
reason, it's a bit of a stretch
for the author to say:
"Nevertheless, I hold Israel
to higher, not lower, moral
standards than any other
country."

C.E. Mayotte, Ottawa, ON

On cryptic reviews and crypto-distractions

I believe that in order to
widen the circle of influ-
ence we must use simple,
unobstructed language.
There is nothing in politics
or social sciences that
could not be well explained
in simple terms. Specifically,
I have in mind the book
review by Madeline
Lane-McKinley ("Unthinking
the family"), which includes
the following: "Lewis
demonstrates how the
revolutionary possibilities
of 'full surrogacy' and family
abolition can be merely

grasped at, precisely
because of the dystopia we
find ourselves in."

So goes the whole review.
There is not one clear, simple
sentence to be found. Why
not state in a simple and
unobstructed way what is
being proposed in the book?
I would like to know how
many people will actually
read this book? Who are the
targeted readers?

Another comment deals
with the proposed creation
of the cryptocurrency Libra
by Facebook ("Monetizing
the social network"). The
article wrongly supposes
that everybody is well familiar
with cryptocurrencies and
only some fine points need
to be discussed. My propo-
sition is different. Since the
subject of cryptocurrencies
is obscure and poorly
understood by most people,
including myself, it should be
properly explained in the first
place. Only then does it make
sense to go into fine details.

I surmise that the
true purpose behind
cryptocurrencies is
absolute privatization of
money creation presently
performed by banks. It
would be a final step by
the private sector on its
way to absolute control of
economic order. Collecting
personal information is a
trifle matter compared to
this true objective.

Martin Jelinowicz,
Toronto, ON

Hey Alberta, get an HST

Re: Hey Canada, get off our
lawn!, Jan/Feb 2020.

For years, Alberta has
boasted of being the only
province to not charge
provincial sales taxes. Now,

after partying when times
were good, the Alberta
government wants a bailout
to cover what it didn't save
up for. Had Albertans been
paying what everyone else
pays in Canada in PST/HST,
they would have a large
rainy-day fund. But they
didn't, and so now they
need a bailout.

Fair enough. Perhaps
Albertans were misled by
leaders who did not want or
have the courage to save up
in good times or to diversify
the sources of income to
cover the bad times that are
inevitable in an economy so
focused on a small number
of resource types. So yes,
Canada should agree to
help, but that help should
come with two conditions.

First, that Alberta enact a
harmonized sales tax (HST)
at the median provincial
rate (7%), which would
generate \$7 billion/year
in new revenue. Second,
that the funds supplied by
the federal government be
devoted to hiring workers
to clean up orphaned oil
and gas wells.

These are a huge
problem that taxpayers
will be inevitably called on
to cover, and it won't get
better by ignoring it. Hiring
unemployed workers in
the oil and gas industry
will stimulate the local
economies that need it
most. And the extra funds
raised by the HST can cover
the Alberta government's
funding shortfalls in the
meantime.

John Bechhoefer,
Vancouver, BC

**Send letters to monitor@
policyalternatives.ca. We
will contact you if we plan
on running your letter in a
future issue.**



New from the CCPA

Assisted living in B.C.

Between 2010 and 2017, British Columbia's older population (75+) grew by about 50,000, but the province added only 105 publicly subsidized assisted living units and 1,130 private-pay units during that time. According to a new CCPA-BC study by **Andrew Longhurst**, seniors who cannot afford to pay privately may go without care altogether or wait until their health deteriorates to the point of requiring a nursing home or hospitalization.

Assisted Living in British Columbia: Trends in Access, Affordability and Ownership finds a 17% province-wide drop in access to subsidized assisted living, measured as the number of units per 1,000 people aged 75 and older, between 2010 and 2017. The study raises concerns about the growing role of for-profit companies and corporate chains that provide the vast majority of private-pay units in the assisted living sector, while non-profit organizations provide the majority of publicly subsidized units.

"Allowing assisted living facilities to be treated as financial commodities is at odds with the basic social

purpose of providing care to vulnerable seniors," says Longhurst, who makes two key recommendations in his study. First, there should be new capital and operating funding opportunities for non-profit organizations and health authorities to increase the supply of publicly subsidized assisted living units as part of a home and community care funding plan. Second, there must be public disclosure and reporting of ownership, costs and quality of care to enhance transparency and accountability in both assisted living and long-term care residences.

Netting zero in the north

Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN), centred in Nelson House in north-central Manitoba, has embarked on a comprehensive program of economic development that addresses employment, training, healing from trauma, infrastructure development and energy self-reliance. According to a new CCPA-Manitoba report about the program, the First Nation is vitally concerned with nurturing young people and is now interested in sharing its learning with other First Nations communities.

Report authors **Lawrence Deane** and **Cassandra Szabo** explain that NCN's development initiative involves "converging local production with meeting local basic needs [and] reflects the quadruple bottom line of social enterprise (employment creation, environmental protection, social development and

income generation)." NCN's training program goes beyond simply imparting employment skills to young participants, who must then find their way in uncertain labour markets. Instead, it functions "as a labour market intermediary, connecting NCN trainees and residents to employment opportunities and employers, and supporting them after the hiring phase in adapting to possible employment challenges."

The report, **Nisichawayasihk: A Future Net-zero First Nation?**, surveys some of the scope and implications of the NCN initiative. It discusses the importance of training for NCN young people, the effects of finding employment and the wider impact that employment development is having on the community. Finally, it outlines the initiative's vision for next steps.

Solidarity with striking teachers

The CCPA-Ontario continues to provide resources in support of the province's elementary and secondary school teachers, who have been on rolling strikes for much of the new year as they face down plans from the Ford government to increase class sizes, cut jobs and roll out online "e-learning" classes as a mandatory part of children's education.

In his February 6 blog post on the CCPA's **Behind The Numbers** website (www.behindthenumbers.ca), senior researcher **Ricardo Tranjan** provides and explains how to use an online calculator that allows parents, teachers

and students (and anyone else who's interested) to estimate, using total enrolment numbers, the number of teaching positions that will be eliminated in each school should the government's current plans become real.

"As with our previous board-by-board analyses, the formula behind the calculator produces results that closely mirror the [Financial Accountability Officer's] estimates," writes Tranjan. In total, the calculator estimates that 999 elementary teachers and 8,985 secondary teaching positions will be eliminated by 2023-24. The minor (less than 1%) discrepancy between these numbers and the FAO estimates "is likely due to FAO having access to more precise enrolment growth projections," says Tranjan.

Peace River frack-up

The CCPA-BC is calling for an immediate ban on fracking activity close to BC Hydro's two existing Peace River dams, as well as Site C, after reviewing hundreds of documents (obtained via freedom of information request) that raise concerns the Peace Canyon Dam could fail in the aftermath of an earthquake triggered by fracking operations. You can read **Ben Parfitt's** two-part report on those documents on the PolicyNote website (www.policynote.ca).

For more reports, commentary and multimedia from the CCPA's national and provincial offices, visit www.policyalternatives.ca.

Up Front

ARUSHANA SUNDERAESON | NATIONAL

Fighting period poverty in Canada

It's hard to believe that in 2020 there is still a stigma around menstruation. It is beyond clear that access to menstrual hygiene products and information about periods is a basic human right, not a luxury. As Jasmine Ramze Rezaee, manager of advocacy at YWCA Toronto, told me recently, "No woman should go without access to menstrual products because of financial barriers [and] some menstrual products should be fully funded by the government."

In July 2015, former NDP MP Irene Mathysen sponsored a private member's bill, which was passed in the House of Commons that month, to remove the so-called "tampon tax" from all menstrual products including tampons, pads, sanitary belts and menstrual cups. While important, removing the GST from these items does not make them significantly more affordable. It's why some provincial governments are looking for ways to make menstrual hygiene free and accessible.

Last April, the B.C. government issued a first-in-Canada ministerial order that requires all public schools to provide free menstrual products for students in school bathrooms. Shortly afterwards, Toronto-area provincial opposition legislator Bhutla Karpoche tabled a bill to recognize May 28 as Menstrual Hygiene Day in Ontario. Karpoche was inspired to do so by community organizations like The Period Purse and FemCare Community Health Initiative, as well students from elementary and secondary schools

in her riding of Parkdale–High Park who were part of the Girls Government program at Queen's Park.

"I have been so impressed with their ability to articulate the problem of lack of access to period products like pads and tampons and their dedication to increasing access to products that help support menstrual hygiene management," said Karpoche in a media statement at the time. "I hope my bill will help build momentum around this issue as these students continue their important advocacy work."

Period poverty, the inability to afford menstrual products, is a big concern for women in Canada and around the world. According to a 2018 report from Plan International Canada, one-third of Canadian women under the age of 25 say they've struggled to afford menstrual products. The report summarized the results of a survey of 2,000 women to see what the social, emotional and financial costs of menstruation were in this country.

According to the Plan International survey, feminine hygiene products were among the top-three material costs of being a woman across all age groups with the exception of women over 65. Women under 25 say they spend on average over \$200 more per month on personal appearance and hygiene products than men. On top of that, the survey found that 83% of women feel that their period prevents them from fully participating in

activities, while 70% say they have missed school or work or have withdrawn from social activities because of their period.

In fact, a large number of countries have implemented "menstrual leave" policies that give woman the option of taking paid or unpaid leave from work, if they need it, during menstruation. Unfortunately, most employers are not obligated to pay workers for the absences. Other countries, such as Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan and Zambia, have implemented menstrual leave through labour legislation. Italy recently worked on passing a menstrual leave law, however, women that want to take menstrual leave need to get a medical note to show their employer.

Menstrual leave is controversial, as it can reinforce workplace or societal sexism and is sometimes considered to be a type of reverse discrimination. Making sure menstrual products and education are affordable and accessible for women is more universally accepted as a way to ensure women do not suffer health implications such as toxic shock syndrome, which occurs when tampons are left in for an extended period of time.

For the longest time, menstruation has been treated like a secret that is only talked about among women and girls instead of as a natural, beautiful and powerful process of being a woman. Breaking down such misunderstandings, and removing barriers to accessing menstrual products, are both fundamental to the goal of normalizing periods and menstruation.

If you are interested in helping to end period poverty in Canada, you can get involved by reaching out to community organizations in your area, including domestic violence shelters, Indigenous centres and LGBTQ2S+ advocacy groups, among others, to see what items are needed. Plan International Canada has a tool on its website (plancanada.ca/periods-matter) that allows people to email their province's minister of education to demand that menstrual hygiene products are made free in all public schools. And campaigns to reduce the stigma of menstruation, like those from the charitable Toronto-based The Period Purse, or Oxfam Canada, always need extra help.

ARUSHANA SUNDERAESON IS A DEVELOPMENT AND DATABASE OFFICER AT THE CCPA'S NATIONAL OFFICE. FOLLOW HER ON TWITTER @ARUSHANAS.

So long, MSP!

British Columbia’s Medical Services Plan (MSP) premiums are no more. That’s great news because MSP premiums were a very unfair tax (or “regressive,” as we economists like to say).

In its first budget (in 2018), the provincial NDP government announced it would phase out MSP premiums by 2020. The government has made several other changes to personal taxes including adjustments to income tax, the provincial sales tax, and the tobacco and carbon taxes. We crunched the numbers to find out how these changes impact households at different income levels. We found that only B.C.’s richest are paying higher tax rates, while the vast majority of households are seeing their effective tax rates fall.

For the bottom 90% of households, total provincial taxes fall from an average of 9.1% of income in 2016 to 7.9% in

2020. In contrast, for the most affluent 1% of households, the effective tax rate rises over the same period from 9.6% to 10.5% (see Figure 1).

The tax reduction for the majority of households is almost entirely a result of the elimination of MSP premiums. MSP was a particularly unfair tax because whether you make \$45,000 or \$450,000, you paid the same flat dollar amount (\$900 per year per adult back in 2017), though those with very low incomes got assistance. Under this system the rich paid a much smaller share of their income in MSP than modest- and middle-income earners.

The top 1% of households will also benefit from not having to pay MSP premiums anymore. But they pay more under the new income tax bracket of 16.8% on income over \$153,900. This is good news for tax fairness in B.C. In contrast, tax cuts made by the previous

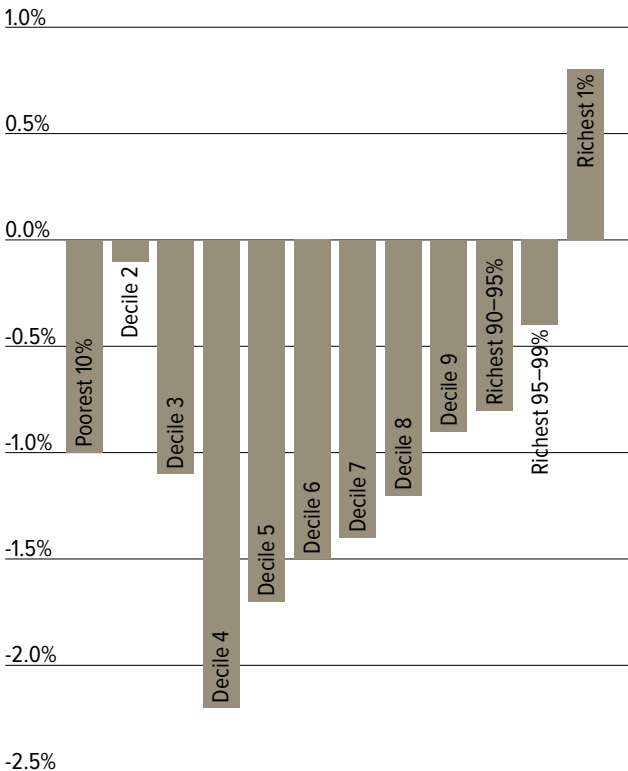
government between 2000 and 2016 benefited the top 1% far more than middle- and modest-income households, while MSP premiums more than doubled (see Figure 2).

Eliminating an unfair tax like MSP is important, but it costs \$2.7 billion a year in lost provincial revenue. It’s important to replace that revenue because there’s a huge backlog of social and environmental investments needed in this province.

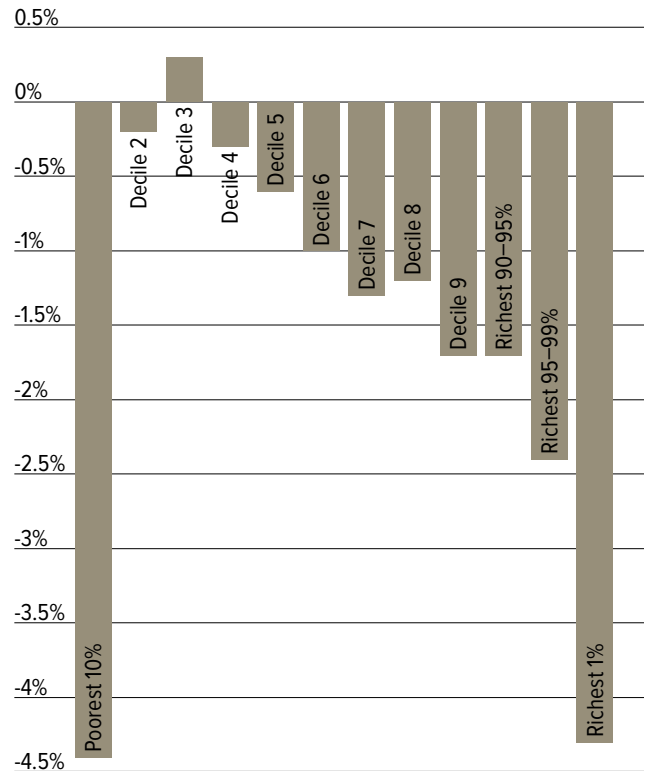
To address the loss of revenue from MSP, the government introduced the Employer Health Tax (EHT), which is charged as a share of payroll for large and medium-sized employers. This is a positive move in terms of tax fairness—but the EHT covers only \$1.9 billion of the \$2.7 billion in MSP revenue we’re losing each year.

While the EHT doesn’t fully replace MSP, provincial revenues have been shored up in other ways, including corporate income tax increases, the new top income tax bracket and important tax measures targeting high-end and vacant real estate.

ONLY TOP 1% PAY MORE
CHANGE IN EFFECTIVE TAX RATE, 2016–20



UNDER PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT, BENEFITS WENT TO TOP 1%, WHILE MODEST AND MIDDLE-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS BENEFITTED THE LEAST
CHANGE IN EFFECTIVE TAX RATE, 2000–16



The tax reduction for the majority of households is almost entirely a result of the elimination of MSP premiums.

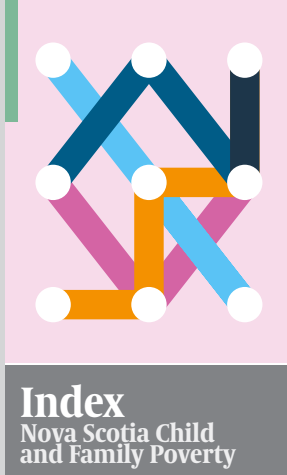
Overall, though, two decades of successive tax cuts have eroded our ability to fund public services and investments. Provincial government spending has declined dramatically as a share of our total economic pie (GDP) over the past two decades. The current government's tax changes and investments in public programs have ended this downward trend, but not reversed it.

In fact, if we dedicated the same share of our GDP to public spending today as we did in 2000, we'd have over \$7 billion more available each year to invest in urgent social and environmental priorities. In concrete terms, the government could quadruple funding to the CleanBC climate plan, add 10,000 units of new affordable housing per year, raise welfare rates to 100% of the poverty line, fully implement universal \$10/day child care and eliminate tuition fees for domestic students—with room to spare.

The good news is that we are an incredibly wealthy province, and there are many opportunities to make further improvements to tax fairness while also shoring up B.C.'s capacity to make the public investments we need.

So, good riddance to the MSP. Let's celebrate this major improvement to our tax system and get down to work on the next steps.

ALEX HEMINGWAY IS AN ECONOMIST AND PUBLIC FINANCE POLICY ANALYST AT THE CCPA'S B.C. OFFICE.



"It is extremely challenging for a child struggling under the weight of poverty to focus on learning. As a result, youth living in low-income households generally have worse academic outcomes and are twice as likely to drop out of school. Every classroom in our province is impacted in some way by growing income inequality, which is why Nova Scotia's teachers are calling for a province-wide strategy to end child poverty."

—Paul Wozney, president, Nova Scotia Teachers Union

40,710
Number of children (close to one in four) living in poverty in Nova Scotia.

-0.82%
Drop in the percentage of children living in low-income circumstances in Nova Scotia since 1989, the year an all-party resolution in the House of Commons promised to end child poverty by the year 2000.

3rd highest
Nova Scotia's provincial child poverty rate was the third highest in Canada, and the highest in Atlantic Canada, in 2017.

67,350
Number of children who would be living in poverty if not for government income benefits.

-8.7%
Reduction in child poverty in Nova Scotia since the introduction of the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) in 2016. The federal government estimated the CCB would reduce child poverty by 40% from 2013 levels by 2017, but according to census data it has declined by only 15.8% in Canada overall.

88%
Portion of the decrease in child poverty in 2017 attributed to the impact of the federal CCB. Government transfers work, but without more provincial investment, Nova Scotia will continue to fall behind.

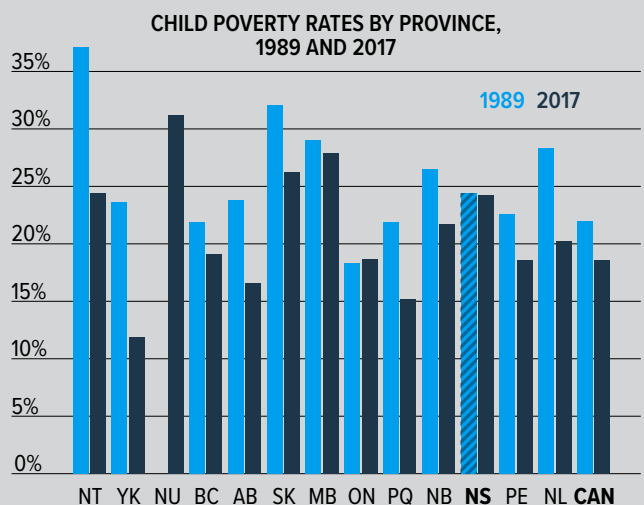
100%
Portion of Nova Scotia families that rely on government support as their only source of income who also live in poverty because the amount of support falls far below the poverty line.

20.2%
Child poverty rate in Antigonish—the lowest in the province by census division. The highest rates of child poverty are in Cape Breton (34.9%), Annapolis (34%) and Digby (33.1%), where more than one in three children lived below the after-tax low income measure in 2017.

75%
Child poverty rate in the rural postal code of Micmac, which includes the Sipekne'katik First Nation. Fifty postal areas in Nova Scotia have child poverty rates above 30%. In Fall River, part of the Halifax Regional Municipality, the rate is 4.5%.

31%
Child poverty rate for children aged 0–2, representing 7,910 infants. This is the highest rate for any developmental age group.

53.1%
Percentage of the children living in lone-parent families in Nova Scotia who lived below the poverty line in 2017.



Excerpted and adapted from the 2019 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia: Three Decades Lost, by Lesley Frank and Laura Fisher, which was published by the CCPA–Nova Scotia in January.

INSPIRED

Artist Mike Kendrick on his “Canadian Energy Centre” poster

This design was born out of feelings of frustration and disbelief with the actions of Alberta’s UCP government. Since being elected on the promises of job creation and affordability for everyday Albertans, our province has seen tens of thousands of jobs lost as a result of cuts to government programs and services and a \$4.7-billion corporate handout. Those millions of dollars’ worth of cuts have harmed the livelihoods of teachers, nurses, rural citizens, and the most vulnerable members of our society, worsening the quality of life for many.

All the while, Jason Kenney’s government has allocated \$30 million of public money to a right-wing propaganda machine—after campaigning against the former NDP government’s “irresponsible” spending. In the few months of its existence, the Canadian Energy Centre has made one embarrassing attempt after another to bolster petrostate rhetoric, harassing citizens and spreading misinformation by spin doctors who masquerade as reporters.

As an artist in Alberta, I’ve been directly impacted by the actions and cuts of this government, and I’ve spent the time since the provincial election feeling hopeless and angry over what they’re doing to our province. I believe that effective political action and social change comes in many forms and is strongest when each person contributes their individual talents to the greater good.

The UCP has willfully ignored protests and letter writing campaigns, and we need to do more to be heard. I’m not an organizer or a public figure, but I know how art and communication intersect to embolden ideas and help people unite for a common cause. I designed this poster to lampoon the ridiculous wastefulness of the CEC and challenge Albertans to consider the ways that our government is trying to influence our thoughts and silence dissent.

Of course, there’s an irony to the timing of this design. Days after I shared it, the CEC was criticized for plagiarizing its logo design. And then it happened again with their second logo. Twitter users began sharing my design as the “official” logo of the CEC, and the message has spread like wildfire. While they’re wasting taxpayer dollars on vanity campaigns, I’ve been able to donate to Climate Justice Edmonton to help other Albertans better organize and advocate for effective policies—policies that don’t rely on the hollow promises of a dying industry that’s responsible for the climate crisis we find our world caught in.

Mike Kendrick is an artist, designer and jokes enthusiast who revels in the absurd. Check out his work at ironcladfolly.com or on Instagram @ironcladfolly. His Canadian Energy Centre illustration is available to purchase as a poster or on a T-shirt at www.etsy.com/shop/ironcladfolly.

DEFENDING THE MINDS
OF PATRIOTIC ALBERTANS

CANADIAN ENERGY CENTRE



WITNESS IT

REPORT IT

FEAR
THE
FUTURE

REPEAT
THE
PAST



BUREAU OF PROVINCIAL UNITY

PETROLEUM
THOUGHT CRIMES
DIVISION

WORTH REPEATING

Promises, promises

In 1970, a national child care system was recommended by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.... There was significant divergence about what a system should look like, with the newly emerging feminist movement pushing against existing notions of child care and arguing for child care as a matter of gender equality. In the end, the conference did agree that “governments needed to do more to ensure that a wide range of day care services were available around the country.”

...In 2015, the Liberals pledged to create a “national framework” that would make sure “affordable, high-quality, fully inclusive child care” is available to everyone who needs it. Once elected, however, the multilateral deal on child care that they signed with all provinces and territories (except Quebec) stopped far short of setting out a national framework, instead leaving provinces and territories largely in control of how to spend the \$7.5 billion over 11 years that was committed to child care in the 2017 federal budget....

What’s next? During last fall’s election campaign the Liberal party promised funding support to increase access to child care for school-age children.... Yet mentions of child care in the Liberal minority government’s Speech from the Throne last December were nowhere to be found.... Canada’s minister in charge of federal efforts to expand child care [has] announced that the upcoming federal budget will outline how funding to create 250,000 before- and after-care spaces will be rolled out.

—Excerpted from a January 29 article by Marg McPhail on the Rise Up! website, a digital archive of feminist activism. This year’s Alternative Federal Budget (see cover feature on page 14) includes a plan to create a national child care plan. And in March, the CCPA will release its 2020 child care fees report, which compares the prices parents pay for child care spaces across Canada.

CAMILLE LABCHUK | ONTARIO

U.S.-style “ag gag” laws come to Canada

In 2015, Ontario turkey farm Hybrid Turkeys was convicted of animal cruelty after a whistleblowing employee came forward to expose shocking abuse. Footage recorded by the employee and aired on CBC’s *Marketplace* program showed birds suffering from festering and bloody open wounds, birds being repeatedly beaten with shovels and other metal objects, and workers advising employees to kick turkeys.

This was not an isolated incident. Whistleblowers in Ontario have also revealed horrific chicken cruelty at Maple Lodge Farms’ chicken slaughterhouse, appalling conditions for pigs at Crimson Lane Farms, and suffering minks at Millbank Fur Farm, which is now facing charges.

But now, chilling new legislation introduced in Ontario and Alberta could make it illegal for whistleblowers to expose animal abuse and neglect in farms, slaughterhouses, and during animal transport. Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, was introduced by Ontario Agriculture Minister Ernie Hardeman on December 2, and follows on the heels of Bill 27 in Alberta, the Trespass Statutes Amendment Act, passed in only 10 days late in November without any serious legislative scrutiny.

These bills reflect a worrying, U.S.-inspired effort to further conceal farmed animal cruelty in Canada. “Ag gag” laws became common in the U.S. during the last decade in an effort to stifle undercover exposés of farming conditions. With animal rights advocacy on the rise in Canada, it is perhaps not surprising that the powerful farm lobby is pushing back here, too.

The Ontario and Alberta bills massively hike up trespassing fines and make it an offence to obtain permission by “false pretences” to be on farm property. This vaguely worded prohibition could effectively shut down undercover exposés into conditions on industrial farms, which may involve seeking employment without disclosing an intention to blow the whistle on cruel and illegal conditions.

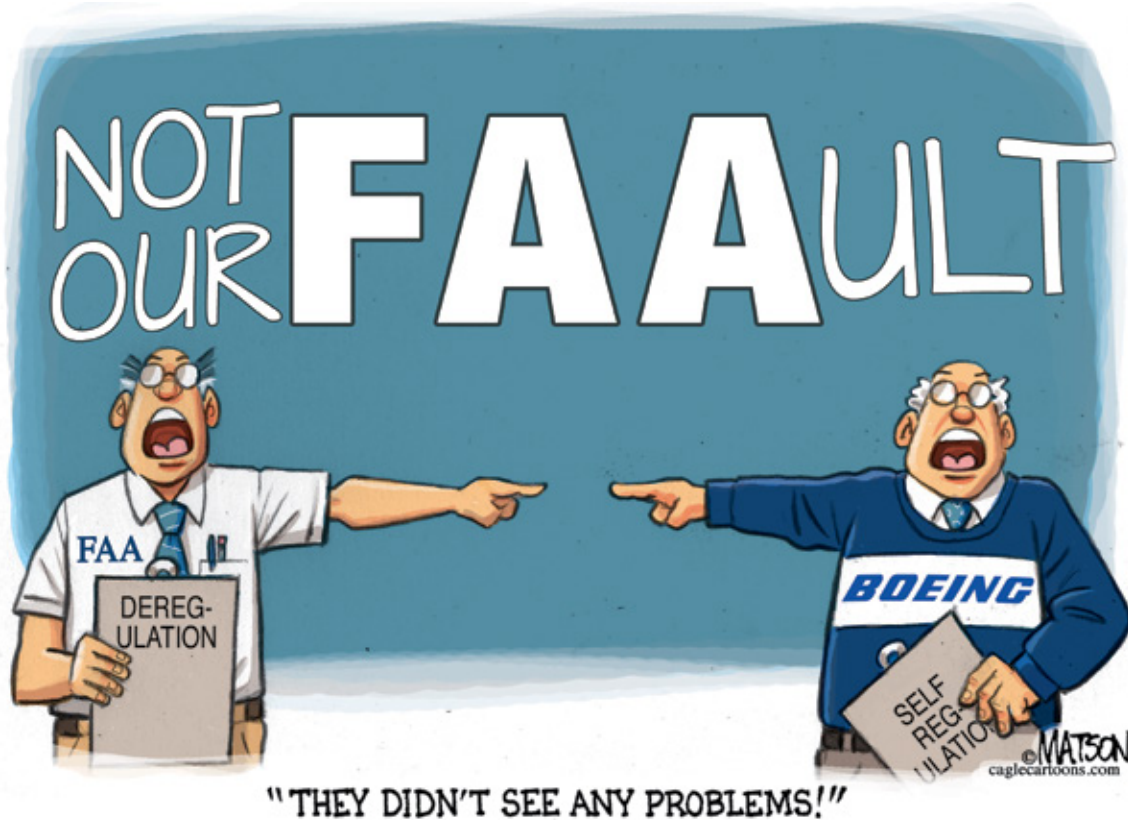
Similar laws in multiple U.S. states have been struck down by the courts as unconstitutional, including in Utah, Idaho, Iowa and Kansas. Canada’s ag gag laws will inevitably face similar legal challenges, as they may well violate Charter rights to freedom of expression.

The public is highly dependent on whistleblowers right now to pull back the curtain on farms, slaughterhouses, puppy mills, labs and other animal-use industries. This is because there is currently no meaningful government oversight of farms—there are no on-farm animal welfare regulations, and no public inspections to monitor the tens of millions of animals confined on farms. Undercover exposés regularly lead to animal cruelty prosecutions and convictions. Greater transparency is good for animals, food safety and public confidence.

Ontario’s Bill 156 also targets citizens who hold vigils outside slaughterhouses, making it an offence to interact with animals on slaughter trucks or give them water. In Canada, animals can be transported for days at a time without food, water or rest, and advocates outside slaughterhouses have exposed horrific conditions inside transport trucks. Save Movement founder Anita Krajnc was prosecuted for criminal mischief in 2015 for giving water to suffering pigs in a transport truck on a hot summer day and was acquitted after a much-publicized trial. It’s clear that this did not go over well with the farm industry.

Ontario’s Bill 156 should be rejected by legislators. Both that bill and Alberta’s new ag gag law are likely unconstitutional. In 2019, citizens expect meaningful oversight for farmed animals. Instead of trying to further cover up on-farm conditions, the public would be better served by a government that introduces laws to protect animals on farms and provide for public inspections, shedding some light on what typically is kept behind closed doors.

CAMILLE LABCHUK IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ANIMAL JUSTICE.



BRUCE CAMPBELL | NORTH AMERICA

Boeing and Lac-Mégantic, disasters foretold

The Boeing 737 Max 8 crashes—Lion Air in Indonesia in October 2018 and, five months later, Ethiopian Airlines in Addis Ababa—killed 346 people including 18 Canadians. Comparisons with the July 6, 2013 Lac-Mégantic oil train disaster reveal a predictable pattern.

Both disasters were the violent consequence of a decades-long trajectory of deregulation in the aerospace and railway industries. Safety precautions were systematically eroded to the point where the likelihood of an accident became a game of Russian roulette, i.e., not if but when. In both cases regulatory agencies were captured by their regulated industries. A revolving door of senior agency officials—moving from industry to regulator and back to lucrative industry lobbyist positions—aided and abetted the deregulation process. In both cases

lower level regulatory staff opposed regulatory outsourcing measures, warning against “the fox guarding the hen house.” They were ignored or reprimanded for speaking out.

With Canadian railways, the implementation of “safety management systems” (SMS) sealed the transition to company self-regulation. And this at a time of looming danger posed by the exponential increase in the transportation of oil by rail. There were multiple critical evaluations of the system, including by the federal auditor general, which concluded in a 2013 report that departmental oversight “was not sufficient to obtain assurance that federal railways have implemented adequate and effective safety management systems.”

In both Canada and the U.S., regulatory agencies experienced major budget cuts, layoffs and an exodus of

trained personnel, eroding their ability to do independent evaluations of company practices. In both the railway and aerospace industries, safety was increasingly subordinated to shareholder value as Wall Street investment funds, focused on short-term returns, came to dominate corporate decision-making. With Boeing this was aggravated by competition pressure from Airbus.

Both the Canadian and U.S. governments implemented “red tape reduction” regulatory policies that force regulatory agencies to offset each proposed new regulation by removing one (two in the U.S.) or more existing regulations that constitute a cost to business—further sidelining safety.

The primary cause of the Boeing crashes was faulty stall prevention software and malfunctioning sensors. The 737 Max 8’s pilot manual contained no information regarding the plane’s new software. This was done to convey (falsely as it turned out) that airlines did not have to engage in costly pilot training with the Max 8. Nevertheless, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) allowed Boeing to self-certify its aircraft. Within Boeing, engineers

criticized the software whose development had been offshored to inexperienced low-wage designers. In the words of one Boeing engineer, the 737 Max 8 was “designed by clowns and supervised by monkeys.”

In Lac-Mégantic, following a railway-drafted loophole in the operating rules, the regulator granted permission to Montreal Maine and Atlantic—a company obsessed with cost cutting and with an appalling safety record—to operate its massive oil trains with a single crew member. This was done over opposition within Transport Canada and from the inspectors’ union.

Furthermore, the regulator ignored warnings from a National Research Council report it commissioned, which stressed the need for numerous safety precautions before allowing single-person crews. Canadian Pacific, which was contracted to haul the volatile cargo to the Irving oil refinery, chose to subcontract with a dangerously unsafe company, whose line ran through Lac-Mégantic, rather than choosing a safer but less profitable route in conjunction with Canadian National.

In the aftermath of both the Boeing and Lac-Mégantic disasters, industry executives blamed the pilots and the locomotive engineer. In both cases the decks were stacked so heavily against these employees, catastrophe was a foregone conclusion.

Canada and the U.S. were the last countries to ground the Boeing 737 Max. While in the U.S. both a criminal investigation of the FAA and congressional investigation into the crashes were struck, Canada has thus far declined to hold an independent public inquiry into the Boeing crashes—despite urgings to do so from the victims’ families.

Transport Canada was obligated to double check the U.S. certification of the aircraft. Did it exercise due diligence, or did it simply rubberstamp the FAA certification? Why was it not given information regarding the existence of the stall prevention software system on the Max 8? Why was it not provided the risk analysis done by the U.S. Department of Transport experts, which determined that the Max 8 had a vastly greater likelihood of crashing than other aircraft?

In Canada, in the Lac-Mégantic aftermath, criminal charges were laid against three frontline railway workers who were subsequently acquitted. No company executives or owners were charged despite substantial evidence of corporate criminality. No senior government officials or politicians have been held responsible.

Two parliamentary investigations into the Lac-Mégantic disaster had limited mandates. The Transportation Safety Board investigation left many unanswered questions,

foremost among them: Why did the final report erase six causes in the original investigation team report related to the decision to allow this delinquent company to operate with a single-person crew? The federal government, under both Harper and Trudeau, has repeatedly refused to hold an independent judicial inquiry into the tragedy.

Responding to the shooting down of the Ukraine Airlines plane in Iran, which claimed the lives of 57 Canadian citizens, Prime Minister Trudeau rightly stated: “The families of the victims want answers. I want answers. That means closure, transparency, accountability, and justice. We will not rest until we get that.” The 737 Max 8 victims’ families also deserve justice. The Lac-Mégantic victims’ families are still waiting for justice nearly seven years after the tragedy.

The pattern of corporate negligence and regulatory failure that produced these disasters is clear. Repeating the promise, “safety is my number one priority,” unless it is accompanied by concrete government actions that align with this promise, makes recurrence of the pattern a certainty.

BRUCE CAMPBELL IS ADJUNCT PROFESSOR WITH YORK UNIVERSITY’S FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES, FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES, AND AUTHOR OF *THE LAC-MÉGANTIC RAIL DISASTER: PUBLIC BETRAYAL, JUSTICE DENIED* (JAMES LORIMER & CO). THIS COLUMN FIRST APPEARED ON THE NATIONAL NEWSWATCH WEBSITE ON JANUARY 28.



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Colour-coded Justice

ANTHONY N. MORGAN

Reflections on my big Obama moment

I **JANUARY**, I joined more than 6,000 people at the Toronto Convention Centre to hear former U.S. president Barack Obama speak about “the future of work.” Seeing him in person for the first time got me reflecting on the past, and what remains my most impactful Obama moment.

I was two months into my first year of law school at McGill University when, on November 4, 2008, the world stopped to watch whether Barack Obama would win the 2008 U.S. presidential election. It was a typically chilly night in Montreal, and I was crowded into the small living room of a “student chic” condo of one of the other five Black law students in my year. Four of five of us were there, along with half a dozen non-Black, mostly white fellow law students.

Our anticipation grew steadily as the night went on. Frenzied, boozy chatter and excited laughter dimmed to a hum of quiet tension on the occasional comments coming out of CNN’s Wolf Blitzer. I still remember the pregnant pause and sudden stillness in the room when he finally announced, “This is a moment that a lot of people have been waiting for. This is a moment that potentially could be rather historic.”

We held our breath. And then, it happened. The screen lit up: “BARACK OBAMA ELECTED PRESIDENT.” The room erupted into raucous cheers, shouts, tears, hugs and high-fives.

It was a rapturous moment for all of us. The warmongering, exceptionalist George W. Bush presidency had been disastrous by any measure; here was someone offering a hopeful way out of the country’s self-inflicted political quagmires. But this election night was a particularly powerful moment for me and the other Black law students in the room. It tied us together with a surge of excitement, a gripping euphoria, and the pleasurable feeling of infinite possibilities.

This was not just because Obama is Black. That mattered, of course. But Obama’s victory also helped shore up our own insecurities as legal students at one of Canada’s leading (and overwhelmingly white) law schools.

We were hyper aware of the fact that before Obama became president, he was a confident yet sometimes uncertain Black student trying to navigate the challenges of a law

school that had a racial dynamic not much different from the one we experienced at McGill. Obama felt like us. And on that night in November 2008, he was us. We had won!

In the midst of the celebration, it felt like a part of the weight of centuries of Afrophobia, slavery, segregation and anti-Black racism had been lifted off our hearts, minds and spirits. I remember pausing at one point and quietly thinking to myself, “Is this what freedom feels like?”

Yet, as joyous as this occasion was, the 2008 election is not my most memorable Obama moment. It’s what happened to me shortly after that has marked me most deeply to this day.

Strolling the Montreal sidewalks home, I overheard a few short words from a conversation between two white men and a white woman a few paces ahead of me. “Umm, does this mean that we have to respect Black people now?” Strangers to me, they burst into laughter, then noticed I was within earshot.

The trio quickly hushed and scurried across the street. When they got to the other side, their laughter continued, only this time with a hint of uneasy nervousness.

Perhaps they were embarrassed. Perhaps they felt they were laughing ironically at the status quo collective disrespect of Black people. I think it’s more likely their embarrassment was from the slip-up of letting a Black person hear how poorly society truly felt about Black people, even when one of them had ascended to the U.S. presidency.

This is my big Obama moment. Not the historic win, the feelings of freedom it inspired. Not the sensation of floating

The moment I most remember is how quickly the bubble burst on my dreamy and joyous fantasies of a Black U.S. presidency.

through the downtown streets of Montreal as I made my way home that night after the election party, excitedly wondering about the possibilities that would come next.

No, the moment I most remember is how quickly the bubble burst on my dreamy and joyous fantasies of a Black U.S. presidency. It has helped me stay woke ever since.

The Obama event in Toronto this January featured a who’s who of Black community leaders, professionals and politicians. Since then, many have asked me what it was like to have my “Obama moment.” I tell them it was sobering.

What I’ve really wanted to say is that, sure, symbolically, Obama is cool. But in reality, what Black people need is to be respected politically, economically, socially. Without this, “hope and change” is just a joke. **M**

ANTHONY N. MORGAN IS A TORONTO-BASED HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER, POLICY CONSULTANT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATOR. HIS COLUMN, COLOUR-CODED JUSTICE, APPEARS REGULARLY IN THE MONITOR.





AFB *meet* GND

What role might the
Alternative Federal Budget
play in fleshing out the
details of a Green New
Deal for Canada?

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25 years of budgeting “as if people mattered”

—

AN ALTERNATIVE FEDERAL BUDGET CHRONOLOGY



1994 Slash and burn

Finance Minister Paul Martin claims that, “For years, governments have been promising more than they can deliver, and delivering more than they can afford.” His first budget freezes transfer payments to the provinces for income supports and education, along with hiring and salaries in the public service. Martin promises to slash the deficit, “Come Hell or high water.”

1995 Not a “wish list”

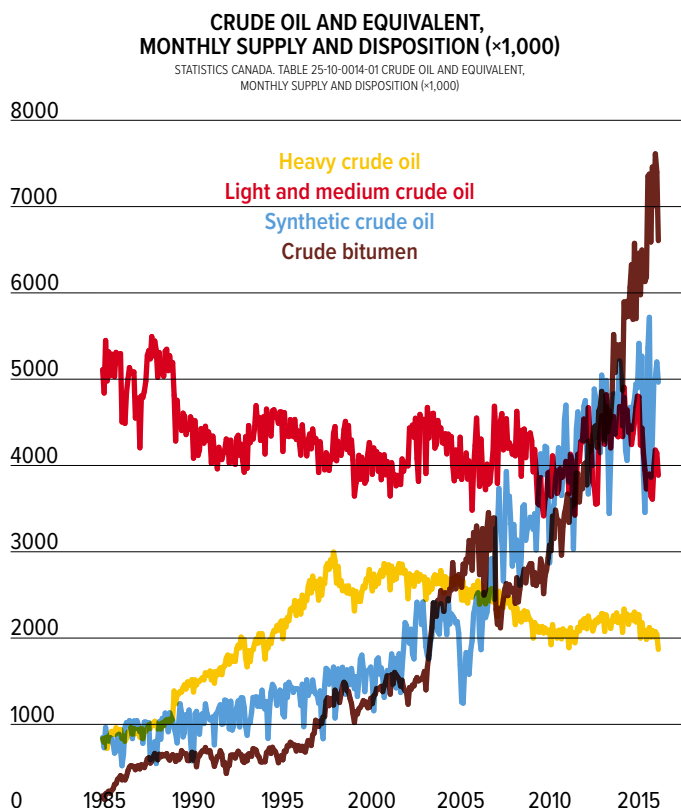
Cholces, which organized the first alternative budgets in Canada in the early 1990s (focused municipally in Winnipeg and provincially around the Manitoba budget), partners with the CCPA to release the first Alternative Federal Budget. In its first paragraph, the AFB declares itself “not a ‘wish list’” but the “product of extensive consultation with many social, community and labour organizations across the country to determine priorities with realistic assumptions.” It promises 1,200,000 new jobs will be created over three years; economic growth and tax reforms will generate new wealth for strengthening our social security system.

THE IDEA OF a Green New Deal—a radical and comprehensive transformation of the economy to cut greenhouse gas emissions while tackling inequality—has been gaining steam over the past few decades as an organizing principle for the environmental and social justice movements. But it wasn’t until 2019 that the GND exploded into the mainstream. Democrats in the U.S. Congress brought the idea to widespread public attention when they introduced a resolution on a Green New Deal last February. Although it never became law, the resolution galvanized U.S. activists and resonated around the world with its progressive rationale and blueprint for ambitious legislative action.

In Canada, the Pact for a Green New Deal, a large and growing citizens movement, brought together thousands of Canadians at more than 150 town halls across the country last year to explore a GND for Canada. Recommendations and next steps are expected in 2020. Most recently, Peter Julian of the federal New Democratic Party introduced a Green New Deal motion in Parliament. It is a concise and transformative legislative framework for a sustainable and inclusive Canadian economy.

What does a Green New Deal look like? Different advocates have advanced several visions, but the general principles are more or less the same in each:

1. We face a climate crisis that requires rapid, global decarbonization, chiefly but not exclusively through the replacement of fossil fuels by cleaner energy sources.
2. We face an inequality crisis that requires massive redistribution of income and wealth, and the political power it buys, away from an entrenched elite and toward citizens.



Considering the herculean effort entailed in decarbonizing the Canadian economy, the days of humdrum, fiscally balanced budgets may need to be put behind us indefinitely.

3. Canada remains a colonial state that was built on and still facilitates the expropriation of Indigenous lands and livelihoods. Genuine reconciliation with Indigenous peoples will require the transformation of federal–Indigenous relations in line with principles enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

4. Any just transition to a more sustainable world must be accompanied by a hopeful, inspirational vision for the future that includes good jobs, vibrant communities, widespread social and economic well-being, and general good times all around.

The details matter, of course, and there are many questions that GND advocates have yet to think through or agree on. For example, how can we produce enough electricity to rapidly replace all fossil fuels if we preclude new, large-scale hydro and nuclear projects in our communities? Where will we mine the environmentally harmful resources necessary to produce lower-emission technologies? Will new, green jobs be good, unionized jobs that are accessible in the places where jobs are needed most?

Furthermore, how will we pay for it all? Although inaction will be more expensive in the long term, the price tag of any Green New Deal in the short term is in the trillions of dollars for Canada alone. Even with unprecedented public spending, governments do not currently have the capacity to fund this transition in full, which means private capital needs to be incentivized or coerced into action.

The good news is we needn't start from scratch. GND advocates, such as Naomi Klein, the U.K. economist Ann Pettifor, and a host of bright, young U.S. socialists including Kate Aronoff, Alyssa Battistoni, Thea Riofrancos and Daniel Aldana Cohen, among others, have laid out a number of workable answers, including many that are featured in the Alternative Federal Budget the CCPA co-ordinates each year with dozens of partner organizations and activists.

For example, both the AFB and GND crowd have called for cracking down on tax havens, tax loopholes and fossil fuel subsidies to help fund a transformative social and environmental agenda. Public banks, increased carbon taxation, green bonds and steeper deficit financing are other AFB mainstays that double as GND options for accelerating the just transition.

All these commonalities—in particular the GND's insistence on democratizing our economies and using the climate emergency as a catalyst to rapidly roll-out new and enhanced, socially equalizing public services—got us seeing

1996

Aiming at the wrong target

“The twin objectives of the Liberal government's economic policy are to curb inflation and eradicate the deficit,” says the 1996 AFB. “The goal of employment creation has been sacrificed to these fiscal priorities. When the government speaks of ‘fighting inflation,’ it really means ‘disciplining’ labour and holding down real wages—by deliberately creating and maintaining high levels of unemployment. This has been accomplished by having the Bank of Canada sustain very high rates of interest.” (High interest? Imagine that.)

1997

“Genuine Progress” vs. GDP

CBC's *The National* runs a 20-minute segment on the AFB as skepticism of the Liberal government's slash-and-burn strategy builds. Other media refer to the AFB as the only coherent critique of Liberal fiscal policies. On top of the standard AFB policy framework, the 1997 edition includes background papers on taxation, pensions, the interest rate–debt connections, and how Canada might move away from GDP growth to consider other factors of national economic success or failure within a Genuine Progress Indicator, or GPI.

1998

Show us the money!

Cholces and CCPA publish a guide book (with ARP), *Show Us The Money!*, for how to set up alternative budgeting in your community. "The central message of this book is that budgets are, above all, political documents and that people should not be afraid of them," says John Loxley in the introduction. "Democratizing the budget process is important if we are to effectively resist the platform of the neo-conservatives and replace it with a public policy more in tune with the needs of ordinary Canadians." (Used copies of the book can be found around the internet, but it is otherwise out of print.)

The 1998 AFB includes background papers on "engendering" budgets (i.e., making them accountable for how policy affects men and women differently), how the Chrétien government achieved a balanced budget, and how future AFBs will commit to "green" budgeting as a way to address the climate crisis and improve environmental protections.

1999

A "lost decade"

By 1999, having balanced the federal budget faster than any other G7 country, Canada faces the reality of another financial crisis. Average prices are decreasing due to low inflation, and despite assurances from the Bank of Canada that the country's "fundamentals" have never been better, in fact they "have been weaker throughout the 1990s than at any time in the past 65 years," says the AFB. The federal government is not living up to promises to offset inequality and instability in the private sector and has no plans to spend new surpluses restoring government services.

the Alternative Federal Budget, now in its 25th year, in a brand new light. Was the AFB a proto-Green New Deal in the making? Or, more proactively, can we make use of alternative budgeting to develop the detailed fiscal plan that will make the GND a reality in Canada?

Twenty-five years ago, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives joined forces with the Winnipeg-based Cholces coalition to draft the first Alternative Federal Budget (AFB). There were two main objectives to the exercise, according to John Loxley, an original co-ordinator of the AFB and first chairperson of Cholces. The first was to demonstrate that "there are, indeed, alternative approaches to economic and social policy."

Budgets are not merely legers to be balanced by skilled fiscal technocrats; they reflect the values and ambitions of the people who put them together. At the dawn of a new decade, in which the actions of governments will decide whether we succeed or fail to confront the climate emergency, those choices have never felt more important.

A second, related goal of the AFB was to build popular support for progressive alternatives to government austerity and to show how they are fiscally achievable. This was especially important in the project's early days.

An anti-deficit delirium had set in across Canada in the 1990s based on overblown fears about the country's debt and a one-sided debate about how to reduce it. Then-finance minister Paul Martin's insistence on cuts—to government services and programs, to provincial transfer payments, to public sector wages—as a way to shrink Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio was, we argued, a choice, not an inevitability. To prove it, the 1995 Alternative Federal Budget modelled a scenario where the deficit was reduced to 3% of GDP (the government's own target that year) while social spending was maintained or increased in some areas.

Much has changed in Canada since those days, some of it for the better. Canadians are less inclined today to believe political

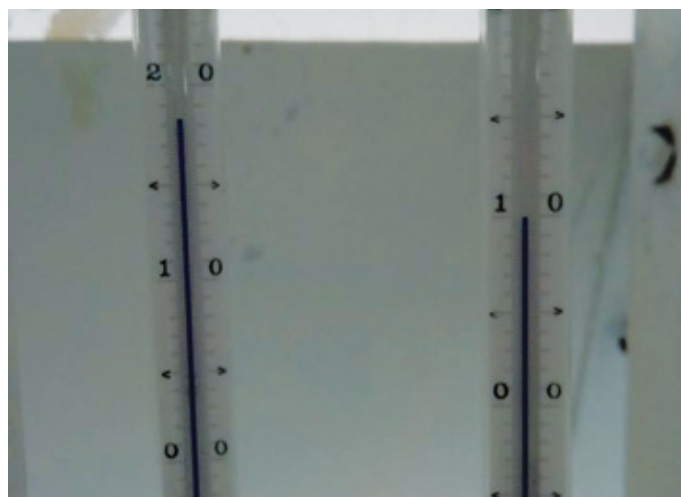


Photo taken by Argentina's meteorological agency at its Esperanza Antarctica station on February 6 showing a record-breaking temperature of 18.5 degrees Celsius.



Democratic U.S. presidential candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez announce the introduction of public housing legislation in November as part of the Green New Deal. REUTERS/ERIN SCOTT

rhetoric about the alleged menace posed by government deficits, for example. Many analysts suggested the Liberal victory in the 2015 election may have been attributable, at least in part, to Trudeau's promise to run deficits to pay for his party's "Real Change" platform. Although the NDP was calling for many fair tax reforms advocated by the AFB, which would have allowed the government to redistribute Canada's wealth toward sustainable job growth, the party's determination to appear "fiscally conservative" backfired. The Canadian public was apparently willing to incur relatively higher deficits if it meant bigger spending on social services and infrastructure.

Circumstances, and priorities, have also changed in more fundamental ways since the deficit-slashing 1990s. The Mulroney government had been a key player in the development of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). But it and subsequent governments ignored commitments to bring greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions down to 1990 levels by the year 2000. Then starting around that year, consecutive governments actively supported (with subsidies and other measures) a rapid expansion of heavily polluting tar sands oil production and worked to undermine U.S. and European actions that might threaten this trajectory.

At a low point for Canadian politics, the Harper government likened Canadian climate justice activists and Indigenous communities who opposed new fossil fuel infrastructure to foreign-funded terrorists. The violent RCMP crackdown on Wet'suwet'en land defenders and their allies in early February, which included the suppression of press freedom, are a sign of how entrenched this dangerous and deluded attitude has become within the Canadian state.

Global inaction on climate change has resulted in a situation where, according to the IPCC, we now have less than a decade to cut GHG emissions in half, on a path to net zero emissions by 2050, if we are to avoid the worst impacts of the climate emergency. Considering the herculean effort entailed in decarbonizing

2000

Focus on health

Choices and the CCPA use the fifth anniversary of the AFB to highlight the connections between budgeting and well-being, noting how governments have failed to meet their promise to end child poverty by the turn of the millennium, and promising to "enhance the health of Canadian families and communities through major public reinvestment in housing, early childhood education, health care, environmental protection and income security."

2001+2002

Known unknowns

The Monitor ransacked the CCPA's national office for these two AFBs but came up short. The going theory is they were victims of rendition by the George W. Bush administration (with the Canadian government's support), sent to unknown torture chambers for the threat they posed to the neocon project. If anyone out there has a copy, let's talk: monitor@policyalternatives.ca.

2003

"Budgeting as if People Mattered"

AFB co-founder John Loxley publishes a book, *Alternative Budgets: Budgeting as if People Mattered* (Fernwood), which outlines the basics of alternative budgeting in Canada (federal, provincial, local) while drawing on international experiences of women's budgets and the Porto Alegre democratic, or participatory, budgeting exercises coming out of Brazil's World Social Forum.

2004

Oh hai, Paul

"A hero's welcome is awaiting The Man Who Killed Big Government," begins Armine Yalnizyan's 2004 AFB technical paper, *Paul Martin's Permanent Revolution*, referring to Martin's coronation as prime minister. "An unprecedented string of budgetary surpluses continues alongside a struggling health care system and crumbling infrastructure for water, roads, electricity, schools and hospitals... Has the public's reduced expectation of government become a lasting feature of Canadian politics or will Canadians ultimately demand a more sustainable approach to governance?" The question is as important today as it was then.

2005

Good minority, bad minority

On the 10th anniversary of the AFB, Canadians were getting used to "surprise" surpluses (#fakenews) announced ahead of the budget. We were also getting tired of seeing 90% of this extra money thrown onto the debt pile rather than reinvested in social transfers. The 2005 AFB proposes that pressure on the minority Martin government might sway the Liberals to "use forthcoming budget surpluses strategically in any way that may garner them votes." It recommends the surplus go to improving access to the basics of life—"clean water, food, shelter, access to education and health care"—and tackling inequality. "From 1989 to 2001, the incomes of the top 20% of wealthiest Canadians grew by over 16%, while the incomes of the bottom 40% shrank by about 5%," the AFB notes.

the Canadian economy, the days of humdrum, fiscally balanced budgets may need to be put behind us indefinitely.

And contrary to the popular narrative in Canada, we are not the reckless first movers, sticking out our necks while the rest of the world clings to the status quo. Across the globe, governments and political movements are raising their climate ambitions. The European Commission recently unveiled a trillion-euro investment plan to decarbonize the European Union by 2050. New Zealand and others have committed to phasing out fossil fuel production entirely. In the United States, Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders has proposed spending US\$16.3 trillion (84% of GDP) on a Green New Deal to reach 100% renewable energy for electricity and transportation by 2030 and full decarbonization by the 2050 target.

Given the scale of today's challenges, it is extremely disappointing that our government still manages its revenues and spending much the same as it did when we launched our first AFB 25 years ago. Modest federal deficit spending aside, the assumptions driving budgetary decisions are locked in the past.

New revenues from economic growth have been used to cut taxes for businesses and wealthier Canadians when that money could have further enriched measures and programs to reduce inequality, eradicate poverty and meet the climate emergency head-on. The government's first action in this post-election parliamentary session was to spend a further \$6 billion a year on another "middle class tax cut" that leaves, at most, \$15 a month in the pockets of people who will barely notice it.

There have been promising social investments since 2015—in housing, child care, arts and culture, and infrastructure, among other areas—and commitments to seeking equity for Indigenous, racialized, LGBTQ2S+, disabled and other historically marginalized communities. There have also been some steps taken to make Canada's tax system fairer and more fiscally sustainable, such as the closure of income-splitting loopholes that mainly benefited Canada's highest-income earners, and enhancements to the Canada Revenue Agency's ability to go after corporate and high-wealth tax cheats. These and other measures, notably the Canada Child Benefit, have been mainstays of the AFB for years.

However, as long as this government holds firm to an ideological belief that incentivizing private sector-led growth and finding "market" solutions is always preferable to government-led progress, we will remain needlessly constrained in

Both the AFB and federal government maintain relatively low debt-to-GDP ratios of around 30% over the next three years. This conservative fiscal costing does not make the AFB plan any less ambitious.

what we can do to create good, sustainable jobs and help the most vulnerable among us.

The federal carbon tax is a good thing, for example. But why is there no solid plan to use the revenues to fund sustainable, emissions-reducing public infrastructure (e.g., free public transit), or to help workers in the fossil fuel sector and their communities make a just transition to a decarbonized economy? Why is municipal access to the new \$200 billion infrastructure bank contingent on private sector co-financiers making a 7–9% profit on their investment?

The reason is simple. A quarter-century of neoliberal dogma, much but not all of it enforced in binding international trade treaties, has succeeded in limiting both the imagination and real policy flexibility of decision-makers. Our governments are either encouraged or required to choose from an ever-narrowing array of acceptable fiscal and economic options that have, over the last three decades, increasingly privatized prosperity and socialized risk and debt.

By now most Canadians are familiar with the graph showing stagnating real (after inflation) wage growth alongside runaway income gains at the very top. If little has been done to lower greenhouse gas emissions, even less is going on to counter our age's outrageous levels of inequality. A decade after the biggest financial crisis of our time, banks and tech giants are raking in record profits and, in many cases, avoiding paying any taxes at all.

The current mood is now one of deep skepticism for the status quo, not just in Canada but across the globe. Parties who fail to respond are being voted out of office and chanted into submission by mass demonstrations (see the feature in this issue by James Clark).

The effectiveness of fake news may be as much a symptom of disenfranchisement as it is a statement of the power of new social media technologies; rising support for anti-immigrant populist messaging also cannot be disentangled from the widening social inequality of the neoliberal era. History shows us how quickly public dissatisfaction can turn to cynicism, and much worse, when enough people do not see their lives and priorities reflected in government actions.

More than ever, the 2020 Alternative Federal Budget (out in March) is a blueprint for meaningful social engagement and positive change that both the federal governments and Green New Deal advocates would do well to consult. The ideas in its pages are good ones, the result of broad discussions between partner organizations with roots in frontline struggles for justice, equity and a just transition off fossil fuels.

"In creating these budgets," explained Loxley in 2003, "activists learned about the possibilities and the limits of reform and gained greater credibility and confidence in agitating for social change and in opposing regressive government policies. This process of submitting policy ideas to a disciplined analysis in an open and socially inclusive forum represents a unique accomplishment."

Following AFB tradition, our 2020 edition is not a "blue sky" wish-list for the government in power. The plan incorporates the government's own economic growth and deficit forecasts so that we can show what more is possible even given the same constraints, whether or not they are real or self-imposed.

2006–2008

Squandered wealth

"The last minority government launched a Canada-wide child care plan, negotiated landmark agreements with First Nations, and made critical new investments in post-secondary education and training, affordable housing, urban infrastructure, and foreign aid," begins the 2006 AFB. But that was under a Liberal minority. Now Stephen Harper's newly united Conservatives hold a plurality of seats in the House of Commons and promise to cut taxes and pay down debt even faster than the Chrétien or Martin governments had.

There was ample fiscal room to uphold Martin's promises to First Nations and move ahead with public service expansion. Instead, "the first Harper budget found an extra \$10 billion for tax cuts," notes AFB co-ordinator Judy Randall in May 2006. "His plan is to cut far more deeply into program spending, as today's tax cuts become tomorrow's program cuts." On a positive note, the Conservatives create the Parliamentary Budget Officer to provide independent scrutiny of government fiscal measures, as recommended in past AFBs.

The 2007 and 2008 AFBs continue to log a growing list of Conservative cuts—to Status of Women Canada, to the Court Challenges Program, to the GST, to the autonomy of the Canadian Wheat Board, to health care, youth employment and Indigenous communities—and start to think through alternative budgeting in a post-surplus, low-tax era. The Conservative government's tax cut agenda to date "reduces Canada's fiscal capacity by close to \$190 billion over the next six years," says the 2008 AFB.

2009–2015

Crash and stall

Ahead of the Harper government's first budget after the biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression, the 2009 AFB says the immediate challenge is "to stabilize the credit markets and inject sufficient aggregate demand into the economy to compensate for the collapse of private consumption and investment until the recovery begins." We endorse a "go big" approach of spending 4.3% of GDP on a stimulus package, and propose a five-point test for whether opposition parties should support the budget, based on revamped employment insurance, support for provincial anti-poverty programs, investment in public infrastructure, industry-specific funding for restructuring, and an emphasis on spending over tax cuts.

While consumer spending held in the aftermath of the crisis, and the size of the Harper minority government stimulus plan startled some libertarians and deficit hawks in the party (even if tax cuts outpaced spending three-to-one), Canada's exports dropped by 18% and imports shrank by 19% between the third-quarter of 2008 and the release of the 2010 AFB, with a significant hit on Canadian manufacturing jobs (as in past recessions) and employment levels elsewhere in the economy.

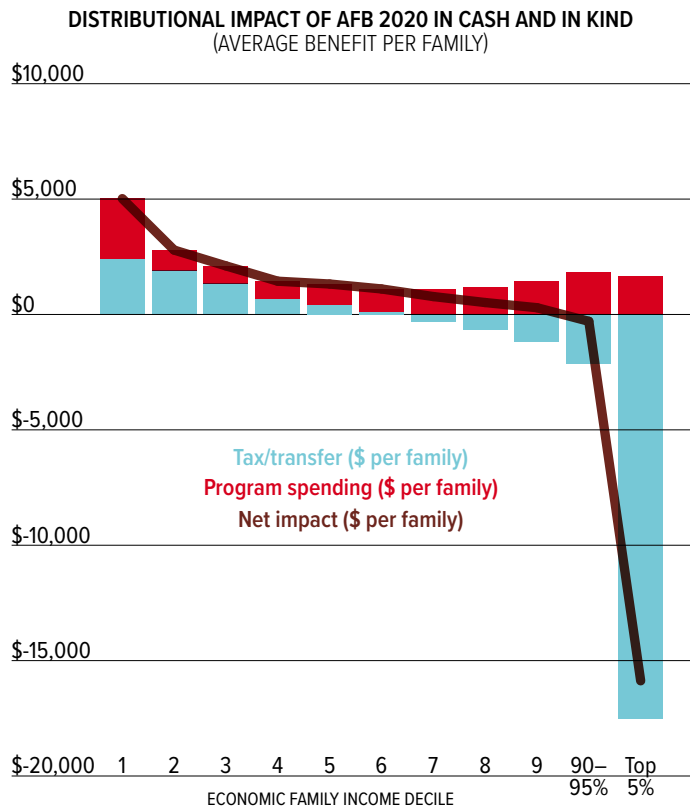
AFBs in the post-crisis period focus on rethinking and rebuilding the Canadian economy in more sustainable, crisis-proof ways. "The global meltdown helped discredit a free-market system where governments turned a blind eye to lax regulations and let their citizens bear all the risks of a wild-west economy," says AFB 2011. The Harper government's return to austerity after winning a majority government, in an ideological and panicked rush to eliminate the deficit, can only lengthen Canada's pain when new spending would be much more effective, argue AFBs between 2012 and 2014.

For example, where the Trudeau government has planned to run a \$28-billion deficit this fiscal year, dropping to \$18.5 billion by 2022-23, the AFB logs a slightly larger \$42.5-billion deficit this year and a \$20.5-billion deficit in 2022-23. We can do this while significantly expanding public spending by closing unfair tax loopholes, applying higher taxes to extreme personal and corporate wealth, and eliminating or diverting harmful spending such as the billions of dollars Canada spends annually on subsidies to the fossil fuel industry.

Still, at the end of the day, both the AFB and federal government maintain relatively low debt-to-GDP ratios of around 30% over the next three years. This conservative fiscal costing does not make the AFB plan any less ambitious, nor does it mean it can't get us to where we need to be as envisioned in most Green New Deal scenarios.

In fact, according to our estimates, AFB 2020 would lift between 600,000 and 1.2 million people out of poverty (depending on how poverty is measured) in its first year and eliminate poverty outright within a decade. And it would substantially lower the cost of living for all but the wealthiest Canadians (see graph on this page). All this while restructuring the Canadian economy to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions through a National Decarbonization Strategy that includes a clear timeline for the phase out of most oil and gas extraction by 2040.

The AFB vastly expands the availability of affordable child care, creating a universal pharmacare program, increasing the supply of affordable and supportive housing, and expanding mental health care services and services specifically targeted to older people. AFB 2020 reforms employment insurance, the



Adopting all the AFB 2020 actions would mark an important shift in government policy-making and put the Canadian economy on more inclusive and sustainable foundations.

Guaranteed Income Supplement and old age security payments so they deliver more in benefits to more people. Post-secondary tuition fees are eliminated, while the Canada Child Benefit, immigration settlement services and other rights and benefits are extended to everyone regardless of their immigration or citizenship status.

The AFB also pursues a just transition to a cleaner economy for those workers and communities most affected by ambitious climate policies, such as the phaseout of oil and gas production. We propose direct investment in hard hit communities to diversify the economy and create new jobs. The AFB also creates new funding to train new workers, especially those from historically excluded groups, for good jobs in the clean economy.

Canada's history of colonialism and the state's role in the genocide of First Peoples, its economic links to the North Atlantic slave trade, and more recent examples of state-sanctioned discrimination leave a long shadow. Official apologies alone are not enough. In addition to targeted social programs, better data collection on how racialized groups from all backgrounds—Black and African-diaspora Canadians, Indigenous peoples, new immigrants, etc.—are faring, as repeatedly called for in the AFB, can help us target and remove structural racism from our political and economic institutions.

Providing a transformative vision for the future that both acknowledges and challenges current political and economic conditions is especially important as the political salience of the Green New Deal grows. As the climate crisis deepens and the demand for alternatives swells, we can only expect the GND to attract more and more serious attention in the coming years. Advocates need a clear and practical agenda to make the most of this opportunity without sacrificing either environmental or social prerogatives. The AFB can help in this respect.

Adopting all the AFB 2020 actions would mark an important shift in government policy-making and put the Canadian economy on more inclusive and sustainable foundations. It would do so without significantly adding to Canada's debt at a time when public debt is truly the least of our problems.

In that sense, the AFB shares many of the same objectives of the growing Green New Deal movement in Canada. It is our bold new deal for an uncertain new decade. We hope its ideas will inspire government action and embolden the public imagination about what it is possible to achieve when, in Loxley's words, we begin "budgeting as if people mattered." **M**

STUART TREW IS SENIOR EDITOR OF THE *MONITOR* AND HADRIAN MERTINS-KIRKWOOD IS SENIOR RESEARCHER WITH THE CCPA'S NATIONAL OFFICE.

2016–2019

Incremental change

In the lead-up to the 2015 federal election, AFB priorities could be found throughout the NDP, Green and Liberal Party platforms. In its first budget, the majority Liberal government introduces a new Canada Child Benefit that substantially increases child support for Canadian families while lowering the overall child poverty rate. The 2017 federal budget cancels the \$200-million public transit credit, one of several expensive and ineffective boutique tax credits long criticized by the AFB, while making a commitment to directly funding child care through the provinces. Importantly, the government introduces gender-based analysis to the budget process, as called for in the AFB way back in 1998 and ever since.

In its 2018 budget, the federal Liberal government introduces a federal "use it or lose it" second EI-linked parental leave; improves funding to national research granting councils (SSHRC, NSERC and CIHR); substantially increases funding for First Nations; does a better job of disaggregating statistical data based on gender and identity; makes some improvements to international development funding; and introduces a national carbon tax in provinces that do not implement their own. All of these measures have shown up in some form in previous AFBs.

Likewise, in 2019, the government announces some baby steps toward a national pharmacare program and caps the extremely expensive stock option deduction, which overwhelmingly benefits high-income earners. What might the 2020 federal budget take from the AFB? May we recommend all of it?

MARC LEE

Canada needs a carbon budget!

WHEN IT COMES to climate change, Canada's leaders have been great at setting targets far into the future then failing to meet them. Nationally this pattern goes back to the Mulroney–Campbell years, and has continued through prime ministers Chrétien, Martin, Harper and Trudeau. The Paris Agreement on climate change was signed in December 2015, yet four-and-a-half years later Canada does not have a plan to meet its 2030 pledge of a 30% reduction in carbon emissions (relative to 2005 levels).

The problem with far-off targets is that governments can easily forget about them, as they will likely be out of office before the day of reckoning comes. In place of new climate actions, the federal government has been more interested in building a new pipeline to the B.C. coast for Alberta bitumen and developing a liquefied natural gas (LNG) export industry, taking more carbon out of the ground and putting it into the atmosphere.

That's not to say we shouldn't have targets and timelines. Of course, we should. But setting targets well beyond the lifespan of a typical government is clearly not working. What we need are short-term targets—a plan to reduce emissions this year, and next year, and the year after that. What we need is a carbon budget.

A carbon budget looks much like a conventional fiscal budget, with annual emissions reduction targets alongside the government actions to achieve them (e.g., credible investments that create jobs in green infrastructure), and routine monitoring and reporting. A precedent for this type of carbon budgeting approach can be found in the United Kingdom.

The problem with far-off targets is that governments can easily forget about them.... What we need are short-term targets—a plan to reduce emissions this year, and next year, and the year after that.

In 2008, the U.K. government passed a Climate Change Act that set a 2050 emissions target of 80% below 1990 levels, along with a carbon budget system based on three five-year periods going forward at any time. For example, the first carbon budget (for 2008–2012) was achieved, and the country is on track to meet its second (2013–2017) and third (2018–2022) carbon budgets as well.

To provide independent oversight the U.K. created a publicly funded Committee on Climate Change (CCC), which makes recommendations on mitigation measures, monitors outcomes and engages in research. The committee's 200-page report to parliament in June 2017 provides a detailed analysis of progress to date, projections of the gap between current policies and future targets, and

sector-by-sector recommendations to achieve the targets.

While climate action is not perfect in the U.K., this type of forward thinking and accountability would be most welcome in Canada. Carbon budgets clearly have promise in providing clarity and discipline, especially when accompanied by rigorous independent oversight.

We also need to start accounting for the emissions from carbon we extract and export, which is burned elsewhere but not counted in Canada's greenhouse gas inventory. A supply-side version of carbon budgets would look at fossil fuel extraction and exports with a view to putting those amounts on a downward trajectory.

A new framework of carbon budgets, along with independent auditing and oversight, would make it hard for our politicians to have it both ways on climate action and fossil fuel expansion projects. It could thus avoid carbon emissions getting locked in by new fossil fuel production capacity.

The key is to actually commit to reducing emissions *every year*. As we get going we may need to tighten up the carbon budget to be more aligned with climate science, but at least we would be moving in the right direction. **M**

MARC LEE IS A SENIOR ECONOMIST WITH THE B.C. OFFICE OF THE CCPA.

How we pay for it

AS IN PAST YEARS, the 2020 Alternative Federal Budget (AFB) adopts the same macroeconomic assumptions (about growth, etc.), government expenditures and revenues, and debt and deficit projections as Finance Canada laid out in its fall 2019 Economic and Fiscal Update.

We do not do this on principle—the government has room to significantly and safely increase the deficit and debt to stimulate job creation and subsidize new and existing programs—but to demonstrate how the same fiscal conditions can produce vastly different

budgets depending on the choices you make.

While some AFB priorities can be paid for by shifting around program spending within federal departments, a large share of the expanded and new services, transfers and programs we highlight in AFB 2020 are made possible by substantially reforming the federal tax system. The following table, taken from the AFB’s macroeconomic summary chapter, lists each of the fair taxation reforms we are proposing and their cost or savings to the government.

In total, we estimate that by eliminating regressive tax exemptions, closing tax loopholes and empowering the Canada Revenue Agency to go after tax cheats, the federal government could raise \$53 billion in 2020-21, rising to \$68 billion in 2022-23. Increasing federal revenues by this much would bring them closer to their long-term average value (over 50 years) as a share of GDP. **M**

DAVID MACDONALD IS SENIOR ECONOMIST WITH THE CCPA'S NATIONAL OFFICE AND LEAD CO-ORDINATOR OF THE ALTERNATIVE FEDERAL BUDGET. TOBY SANGER IS DIRECTOR OF CANADIANS FOR TAX FAIRNESS AND AUTHOR OF THE AFB'S FAIR TAXATION CHAPTER.

AFB 2020 tax changes and their costs/savings	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Eliminate stock option deduction	-130	-300	-400
Equalize capital gains treatment (personal)	-6,500	-6,890	-7,303
Equalize capital gains treatment (corporate)	-6,500	-6,760	-7,030
Lifetime cap on principal residence exemption	-500	-600	-700
Eliminate business meals and entertainment expense	-500	-500	-500
Reform the dividend tax credit	-1,000	-1,000	-1,000
Lifetime cap on TFSA contributions at \$65,000	-130	-150	-170
Restrict use of “passive investments” in private corporations	-100	-100	-100
Reverse the basic personal amount increase	-3,015	-4,050	-5,145
Increase corporate income taxes from 15% to 21%	-7,600	-9,500	-11,400
Small business tax rate from 9% to 11%	-820	-1,230	-1,640
Limit corporate deductibility for executives making over \$1 million	-300	-300	-300
Financial activities tax	-6,500	-6,630	-6,763
Limit excessive use of interest deductibility	-2,477	-2,339	-2,064
Ensure large foreign e-commerce companies pay their fair share of tax	-2,000	-2,060	-2,122
New top marginal tax rate of 37% on incomes over \$500K	-1,390	-1,460	-1,532
Annual 1% wealth tax on net worth over \$20 million	-5,712	-6,071	-6,461
Inheritance tax on estates worth \$5 million (and up)	-2,000	-2,000	-2,000
Apply corporate tax on multinationals based on real economic activities in Canada	-2,000	-4,000	-6,000
Restore the Canada Revenue Agency’s budget	200	400	600
Returns from prosecuting high income and corporate tax evaders	-1,000	-2,000	-3,000
Frequent flyer tax	-500	-500	-500
Eliminate fossil fuel subsidies	-2,092	-2,173	-2,265

Meet Bruce Campbell, legacy donor

Every so often, the *Monitor* gets to know one of the CCPA's many amazing supporters. In this issue we talk to Ottawa's Bruce Campbell, who happens to be the CCPA's former Executive Director! Bruce, whose book, *The Lac-Mégantic Rail Disaster: Public Betrayal, Justice Denied*, was featured recently in the *Monitor*, has decided to give back to the CCPA in one of the most impactful ways he can.

Hi Bruce, what are you reading right now?

The latest is actually a draft of a book that will be published this fall by my ex-colleague and former CCPA-BC director Seth Klein. It evokes the government mobilization during the Second World War as a template for what is needed to respond to the current climate emergency. It is a powerful and compelling book, meticulously researched—a tour de force.

Tell us about someone who was a big influence on you early in life.

As a graduate student I was drawn to Ed Broadbent as an example of a politician with integrity and policy depth. As fate would have it, I had the privilege of working for the NDP caucus during the 1984–88 free trade agreement debate. I got to brief Ed frequently. It was the realization of a dream.

The work of the CCPA came to my attention during this period. It was a vital progressive counterpoint to the corporate-funded Fraser Institute. My second dream was realized when I was hired as the CCPA's first research fellow... and a few years later, as Executive Director.



In your opinion, what makes the CCPA special?

The special gift for me was the opportunity to work alongside a remarkable group of dedicated colleagues—as well as board and council members—from across the country. The CCPA's unique federated structure has allowed it to work collaboratively on interrelated policy issues at the municipal, provincial, national and international level. All its work, present and past, is impressive.

What is your hope for the future?

My hope is that a government comes to power that is not beholden to large corporations and billionaires. A government that brings in a progressive wealth/income tax and protections against tax evasion. A government that will use the revenue to help implement universal dental and pharmacare, free tuition, affordable housing, etc., and measures to assist government mobilization for the climate emergency.

Why did you decide to arrange a gift to the CCPA in your will?

It is way to give back for all the CCPA has given me. It confers a sense of peace and comfort knowing that when I'm gone, a little piece of me lives on to support the indispensable work the CCPA does.



CCPA
CANADIAN CENTRE
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CENTRE CANADIEN
de POLITIQUES ALTERNATIVES

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



The good news page

Compiled by
Elaine Hughes

Waking up to the climate emergency

Tech companies, bleeding public trust at an inverse rate to their rising profits, are pledging to go green. Microsoft recently announced it will be carbon negative by 2030. Apple said last March it had reduced emissions by 64% since 2011. Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos has claimed the warehousing, distribution and ecommerce giant will be carbon neutral by 2040 as it rolls out 100,000 electric delivery vans. Google parent Alphabet Inc. will include recycled plastic in all products by 2022. And Facebook has committed to using 100% renewable energy by the end of this year. / About 100 homes and 30 faculty buildings at Keele University in Staffordshire, U.K. are being heated by a 20% hydrogen natural gas blend as part of an experiment to reduce carbon emissions. About 240 clicks southeast, London Mayor Sadiq Khan announced in January the launch of a green energy company to provide “fair priced” electricity in a city where one in 10 people cannot afford their energy bills. / After setbacks, the

Ocean Cleanup project, founded in 2013 by Dutch inventor Boyan Slat, has unloaded its first pile of plastic trash in Vancouver, B.C. The haul includes huge ghost nets (fishing nets lost at sea) and millimetre-sized microplastics collected from the Great Pacific Garbage Patch in the northcentral Pacific Ocean, which can now be sold to make “attractive, sustainable” products. / Reuters / Guardian (U.K.) / New Atlas

Our fragile friends

Calling it the largest wetland acquisition in a decade, the State of Florida has reached a deal with a real estate company to acquire 20,000 acres (just over 80 square km) of the Everglades slated for oil production, thereby protecting the wetlands and more than 60 endangered and threatened species. / A six-week expedition to the under-explored Indonesian islands of Peleng and Taliabu, led by Frank Rheindt at the National University of Singapore, discovered five new yet highly threatened species and five subspecies of birds, including the Taliabu grasshopper and leaf-eater warblers and the Myzomela honeyeater. / A coyote that was run over accidentally in Manitoba by Eli Boroditsky, who then drove the animal home where it was picked up by Manitoba Conservation, has been treated and returned to the wild. / CNN / Guardian / CBC News

Long live the ban

Rome has banned all diesel vehicles, vans and motorbikes from its streets from dawn to dusk, joining the other central and northern Italian cities of Milan, Turin, Florence, Piacenza, Parma, Reggio Emilia and Modena. / The European Commission decided in early January to ban Bayer’s (Monsanto owner) insecticide thiacloprid, which has been linked to declining bee populations and negative impacts on groundwater and human health. The EU banned the use of neonicotinoids (outside of greenhouses) in April 2018, while France has outlawed the pesticides entirely. / In Europe, as of January 2, thermal paper, which is commonly used in commercial receipts, can no longer contain bisphenol A (BPA), a known endocrine disruptor, in concentrations greater than 0.02%, effectively banning the product. / The City of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan voted earlier this year to ban plastic bags, making it the first city in Canada’s second highest waste-producing province to do so. / Reuters / Planet Ark News / CBC News

People helping people

Every Tuesday, Regina’s non-profit, volunteer-run REACH program sets up pop-up grocery stores in several downtown and North Central locations, including the lobby of the YWCA, the māmawēyatitān centre, the Regina Senior Citizens Centre and five other low-income senior

apartments—bringing affordable food directly to people living in neighbourhoods where it is most scarce. / Since 2017, Detroit’s Neighbor to Neighbor program has brought foreclosure rates down by 90% by alerting homeowners and renters whose property taxes are in arrears and helping them apply for poorly advertised, complicated government support. / Women-run, women-only bus and taxi services in Papua New Guinea and at Delhi International Airport are ensuring hundreds of thousands of women and girls can safely ride to and from work and school, or to catch a flight, when normally they would be at high risk of sexual assault or robbery. / Seattle’s first-of-its-kind homeless shelter, Eagle Village, has opened to exclusively service Indigenous Americans from the United States, Alaska and the Pacific Islands. “We make up less than 1% of the total population and make up over 10% of our homeless population,” says Colleen Echohawk, executive director of Chief Seattle Club, which runs Eagle Village. Because of the history of mistreatment by the U.S. government, a lot of Indigenous people don’t trust traditional government-run shelters, she adds. / CBC News / Reuters / Stanford Social Innovation Review / She the People / NPR

ASAD ISMI

U.S., Canada side with fanatical coup regime in Bolivia

Racist interim government vows “God has returned to the palace”

ON NOVEMBER 10, 2019, a U.S.-backed group of neofascists in Bolivia deposed the government of Evo Morales on spurious accusations of electoral fraud. The coup government’s first act was to unleash the army and police on mainly Indigenous protestors in the capital of La Paz, killing at least 10 people. Further massacres pushed the coup’s death toll above 30, with hundreds more wounded in clashes between supporters of Morales’s Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party and state police.

The coup regime is now led by Jeanine Áñez, a Christian-fundamentalist senator and opponent of Morales, who in 2013 tweeted (translation): “I dream of a Bolivia free of indigenous satanic rites, the city is not for ‘Indians,’ they better go to the highlands or El Chaco.” On claiming the presidency after the army “asked” Morales to step down (he fled to Mexico following threats to his life and has since moved to Argentina), Áñez declared, “Thank God the Bible has returned to the Bolivian government.” About two-thirds of Bolivia’s population is Indigenous, forming a major part of Morales’s support base. Before the coup, MAS held majorities in both the Bolivian chamber of deputies and the senate.

Entering the presidential palace on November 10, also with a bible in his hand, was Luis Camacho, a millionaire neofascist and prominent member of both the U.S.-supported right-wing separatist group Santa Cruz Civic Committee (of Santa Cruz province) and its paramilitary Youth Union (also U.S.-funded), which attacks Indigenous people. Both groups were involved in an attempt on Morales’s life in 2009. “God has returned to the palace,” Camacho posted to Facebook

on November 10. “To those who did not believe in this struggle I say God exists and is now going to govern Bolivia for all Bolivians!”

The coup regime has scheduled new elections for May 3, 2020, but these are unlikely to be free and fair. As Alexander Main, director of international policy for the U.S.-based Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), tells me, many MAS leaders have been targeted with dubious charges. “Morales himself is unlikely to return to Bolivia to help support the MAS campaign, as he has been accused of terrorism and sedition by top de facto officials,” says Main. “It appears likely that the de facto authorities will do all they can to prevent MAS leaders from running and they may also create an environment of fear and intimidation for MAS supporters that want to be involved in the electoral campaign.”

Angus McNelly, lecturer in Latin American politics at Queen Mary University of London (U.K.), agrees with Main, pointing out that 100 MAS politicians have been arrested or were forced to flee from the law. Former government minister Carlos Romero was blockaded in his house by a civilian vigil after his address was leaked and had to seek medical care for lack of food and water. “Romero was arrested while he was at hospital receiving medical care,” McNelly notes. “This attack on the MAS might mean that it cannot field its strongest candidates, and that some sections [of the populace] are afraid to vote for the MAS.”

Morales was accused by the opposition of winning the October 20, 2019 election through fraud. The U.S.-dominated Organization of American States (OAS), which sent

an electoral observation mission to Bolivia, announced the day after the vote—but before all the votes were counted—its “deep concern and surprise at the drastic and hard-to-explain change in the trend of the preliminary results.”

However, a CEPR analysis of the election returns showed “no evidence that irregularities or fraud affected the official result that gave Morales a first-round victory.” In fact, the centre declared on November 8, “statistical analysis shows that it was predictable that Morales would obtain a first-round win, based on the results of the first 83.85 per cent of votes in a rapid count that showed Morales leading runner-up Carlos Mesa by less than 10 points.”

Mark Weisbrot, co-director of CEPR, accused the OAS of lying to the public about the election results, pointing out it was “highly questionable” for the organization to issue a press statement doubting the election results “without providing any evidence for doing so.” He added that the OAS “isn’t all that independent at the moment,” considering the Trump administration was “actively promoting this military coup” alongside its right-wing allies in the region. These allies include the former Argentine government of Mauricio Macri and the Bolsonaro presidency in Brazil. Immediately following the coup, Chrystia Freeland, then Canadian foreign minister, declared her government’s support for new elections, claiming, “It is clear that the will of the Bolivian people and the democratic process were not respected.”

The OAS statement on election results put the coup machinery in motion. Camacho’s paramilitary gangs

served as shock troops, kidnapping and torturing elected officials, burning public buildings, ransacking Morales's home, attacking his ministers and holding their families hostage to compel their resignations. Bolivian general Williams Kaliman Romero, who trained at the U.S.-run School of the Americas, then "suggested" to Morales on November 10 that he should resign.

According to Sacha Llorenti, Bolivian ambassador to the United Nations, "Loyal members of Morales's security team showed him messages in which people were offering them \$50,000 if they would hand him over." Some reports out of Brazil and Argentina have claimed Kaliman was paid US\$1 million by the U.S. for his role in the coup and that he has since fled to the United States, along with other Bolivian police chiefs who were paid to look the other way on the day of the coup. As Marjorie Cohn, professor emerita at Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego, puts it, "The United States' fingerprints are all over the coup."

Morales claimed in an interview with Agence France Press that the U.S. overthrew him to gain control of Bolivia's vast lithium reserves. Lithium is used to make batteries for electric cars and Bolivia has the largest deposits of the mineral in the world. Demand for lithium is expected to soar as the manufacture of electric cars expands. According to Morales, Washington has not "forgiven" him for pursuing lithium extraction projects with China and Russia rather than the U.S. "Industrialized countries don't want competition," he said, "that's why I am absolutely convinced, it's a coup against lithium. We were going to set the price of lithium."

Washington has also been opposed to Morales's remarkable achievements in the areas of poverty reduction, wealth generation and redistribution, the nationalization of mineral wealth and the enshrinement of Indigenous rights. All of these dramatically signified reduced U.S. control over Bolivia highlighted by the expulsion of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2013 and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in 2008, partly for "political interference."

"Bolivia made enormous social and economic progress during the Morales presidency," Main tells me. "Thanks to the Morales government's heterodox, state-led economic policies—which promoted strong growth and better redistribution of the country's wealth—poverty was reduced by 46% and extreme poverty by 60%. Unemployment declined by 50%. An important factor behind these remarkable advances that should be noted by other governments in the region was the fact that public investment under Morales reached the highest levels of the region."

Morales also almost tripled Bolivia's per capita GDP and instituted three cash transfer programs for mothers, children and pensioners. Of course, all of Morales's policies have not been beyond objection. There has been a contradiction between MAS's support for Indigenous rights and the rights of nature (both embedded in the Bolivian constitution) and his continued promotion of and dependence on mineral extraction for the generation of revenue.

"Countries with left- and right-wing governments across the region have all pursued an extractive agenda in the region in large part due to the way Latin America has been inserted into the world market," says McNelly. "The difference between Morales and his predecessors is that his government was able to capture more of the surplus and redirect it toward the Bolivian population. The problem for Morales is that the MAS was supposedly pursuing an alternative form of development through the notion of *vivir bien* (living well)."

The social base of the MAS is largely rural and drawn from the Indigenous peasantry in the Andean highlands and the valleys of Cochabamba, McNelly explains. But these groups have very different conceptions of nature and how to manage resources. "What essentially happened was that arguments for exploiting Bolivia's extensive natural wealth for the good of *all* Bolivians—particularly those who were the social base of the MAS who saw the greatest material improvement—won over arguments for protecting Mother Earth."

McNelly adds that this brought Indigenous communities benefiting from extractivism into conflict with other Indigenous nations that were "displaced and dispossessed" by such activities. Prominent examples are the conflict over the construction of the highway through the Isiboro-Sécure Indigenous Territory and National Park (TIPNIS), the El Bala and Chepete hydroelectric dams and the Mallku Khota mine.

Domestic decisions about the structuring of the economy will always be limited by the ways a country has been inserted in the global economy, says McNelly. "The question is whether Bolivia has the option to follow an alternative pathway [as] a small, poor country with little to no room to manoeuvre in negotiations with superpowers such as China or the United States. The whole region is inserted as a source of primary resources and changing a country's position in the global economy is very difficult."

The coup regime, which represents Bolivia's white-dominated ruling class and is allied to western multinational corporations, will almost certainly reverse Morales's resource nationalizations and wealth redistribution and poverty reduction programs if they are elected to government in May. In a January 3 *Unitel* (local Bolivian media) election poll, 20.7% of Bolivians said they would vote for MAS, followed by 15.7% for *Áñez*.

On January 19, Morales announced in Argentina that the MAS candidates for president and vice-president would be Luis Arce (former economy minister) and David Choquehuanca (former foreign minister) respectively. Jorge Derpic, assistant professor in Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the University of Georgia (U.S.), told *Al Jazeera* these choices were aimed at getting middle class votes and Indigenous votes. "MAS may be able to win the election with these two candidates," Derpic predicted.

McNelly is more skeptical, pointing again to the massive attacks on MAS politicians by the right. "Although it is ahead in the polls, the MAS is unlikely to win in the May elections," he tells me. **M**

JOHN RAE

The missing links to disability equality

Five ways to move persons with disabilities off the sidelines and into the mainstream

ON MARCH 4, 1975, I attended a public forum in connection with a study on the unmet needs of blind Canadians. That night, I jumped feet first into community organizing.

Already in 1975, the beginnings of Canada's disability rights movement were well underway. Persons with disabilities all across the country, but especially in the west, were examining their situation and discovered:

- a chronic lack of physical access throughout their communities;
- a lack of accessible transportation;
- a lack of accessible and affordable housing;
- an absence of personal care programs;
- a number of service agencies that had taken on the role of speaking for us, but did not involve us to any meaningful extent in their decision-making; and
- a chronic level of unemployment that amounted to a travesty in an affluent country such as Canada.

South of the border the activism of the civil rights and women's movements was bearing fruit. Persons with disabilities decided that if self-organizing could bring about improvements in the United States, similar actions could and should bring about progress here in Canada. We began to form our own organizations to provide persons with disabilities with a vehicle for self-expression and collective action.

Now, 45 years on, it is astonishing how many barriers still exist to the full participation of persons with disabilities. Weak building codes aren't adequate to create full, physical access to our social spaces. There is not nearly

enough accessible and affordable housing. Transportation systems are only slowly being retrofitted to make them more accessible. Unemployment and extreme poverty rates for persons with disabilities have barely improved, yet the cutbacks to essential services keep coming.

These are only a few of the barriers that continue to prevent persons with disabilities from playing the roles in our society they want to play—roles that are readily available to our non-disabled counterparts.

Does this mean that no progress has taken place? Definitely not. But the pace of progress over the past 45 years has been painfully slow, often occurring only after extensive lobbying and fights on the part of disability rights organizations. This progress has taken two steps forward and one and a half steps back.

So, what is needed? The following five changes would make a big difference.

Vigorous use of a “disability lens”

Every initiative—every new program, grant, contract or piece of legislation—should be looked at through a “disability lens.” Government bodies would have to demonstrate that none of the dollars involved in the initiative will be used to perpetuate existing barriers or contribute to the creation of new barriers. Fail the disability lens test and the initiative fails too.

Smart procurement policy

Governments and businesses possess immense purchasing power in the marketplace. By only purchasing items that are accessible and usable by a large number of people—and by spelling this out in requests for



proposals—these two important social institutions could apply immense pressure on manufacturers to produce more accessible goods and products. An accessibility focused procurement policy in Canada would surely influence other countries to meet their obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

A change of attitude

Due to slowly improving accessibility in our physical spaces and transportation systems, more and more individuals with disabilities are out and about in our communities. Persons without disabilities can no longer avoid seeing us.

However, our mere presence seems to cause discomfort among many people. Perhaps that's because it forces many non-disabled individuals to confront the truth that "you are just an accident or illness away from becoming disabled." The reality is that many currently able-bodied individuals will experience disability at some point in their lifetime, either temporarily or permanently as they age.

Although many organizations have spent countless hours and dollars trying to improve public attitudes—some with innovative ideas, others with counter-productive initiatives—reports confirm that attitudes toward persons with disabilities have improved only slowly, and many still question the value of a disabled person's life.

New approaches are desperately needed, and governments at all levels must take the lead.

Better government policy

Canada has enacted a great deal of equal access legislation, but it fails to provide adequate resources to the bodies, like human rights commissions, assigned to enforce these laws. Some legislation, like the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (which is weak to begin with), is largely unenforced. This government neglect of equality laws has created expectations within the disability community that are not being realized in practice.

Government cutbacks worsen the situation, as does the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's common practice of "deeming" permanently injured workers "as being employable" so their benefits can be decreased or cut. Social assistance programs are replete with disincentives; many participants feel that they are better off remaining on social assistance than seeking employment.

New programs are needed to reduce the disincentives in social assistance, build new housing that is fully accessible, and address the disproportionately negative impact of the precarious nature of work on the disability community. The community is hopeful that the recently enacted Accessible Canada Act will be accompanied by new programs to bring about tangible improvements in the quality of life for all Canadians with a disability.

Leadership roles for persons with disabilities

Statistics Canada recently reported that the incidence of disability now exceeds 20%. Yet governments, businesses

We rarely encounter anyone teaching in our education system who shares our life experiences.

and social service organizations remain stubbornly unwilling to involve persons with disabilities in their decision-making processes.

Persons with disabilities are not well represented in the corporate boardrooms where decisions about what new technology will be built are discussed and determined. Our absence often results in new technology being introduced with needed accessibility features only added later.

We are not present in newsrooms where decisions are made about what stories will receive coverage and what hook will be applied. We rarely encounter anyone teaching in our education system who shares our life experiences. We are rarely involved in determining academic research agendas, and too often only get asked for our input once a project has been funded and begun work.

We are not adequately represented in ministers' offices, premiers' offices or, for that matter, the Prime Minister's Office. These are the places where most major public policy decisions—affecting the futures of all of us, including persons with disabilities—are really made.

Bringing a significant number of persons with disabilities into places where critical decisions are made would not only help reduce our chronic level of unemployment. It would also provide organizations with a source of badly needed in-house expertise on disability, and this should help reduce the development of new barriers.

Final thoughts

For nearly half a century, persons with disabilities and our organizations have focused on the compelling business case for inclusion. We have learned our rights and argued for action on the legal duty to accommodate. And we have articulated the moral imperative of including more persons with disabilities in the mainstream of society. There is no more excuse for inaction in the government and corporate boardrooms of this country.

The action that is and must be taken now has to directly involve more persons with disabilities—in the design, development and implementation of new policies and programs, for example. After all, those of us who live with disability every day are the real experts. Failure to act on the five priorities described here will amount to callously consigning the next generation of persons with disabilities to the scrap heap of history. This would be a tragedy. **M**



JAMES CLARK

PHOTO BY JASON HARGROVE

Another year of revolt

Twenty key struggles to watch in 2020

MASS MOVEMENTS erupted all over the world in 2019, as millions of ordinary people protested austerity, corruption, climate change and oppression. Some movements have already toppled governments, giving us a glimpse of what could be in store for 2020, while others are only now coming to a head. Win or lose, their outcomes will be felt globally and affect whether other struggles spread, stagnate or retreat.

Just a couple months into the new year, we look at 20 key struggles around the world that could make 2020—like 2019—another year of revolt.

Canada

1. *The fight for Indigenous sovereignty*

Since Idle No More emerged in late 2012, Indigenous activists have transformed the environmental movement in Canada. By 2019, Indigenous sovereignty and reconciliation had become foundational demands for climate justice, at least in the most advanced sections of the movement, while Indigenous youth played a visible role in the climate strikes on September 20 and 27.

This development has helped orient activists to the most urgent—and concrete—struggle for climate justice in 2020: the fight against pipelines. Following the federal election, the Trudeau government's priority is completing the Trans Mountain Pipeline "as quickly as possible." The movement's priority must be defeating it.

Building solidarity with Indigenous struggles has become even more urgent in the first few weeks of 2020, as activists in Wet'suwet'en continue to block construction of the Coastal GasLink pipeline across their territory in northern British Columbia, while resisting court-imposed injunctions and RCMP raids.

In late 2019, the *Guardian* (U.K.) revealed RCMP plans to use lethal force against Wet'suwet'en land defenders, drawing international condemnation of police tactics and inspiring a wave of solidarity that continues across Canada.

2. *Ontario teachers vs. Doug Ford*

In April 2019, 100,000 students at over 600 schools across Ontario led a record-breaking walkout over education cuts and increases to class sizes; the next day, 60,000 teachers and their supporters descended on Queen's Park for a Rally for Education. By October, 55,000

education workers had forced the Ontario government to reverse hundreds of millions of dollars in education cuts, by credibly threatening a strike during the federal election.

By the end of 2019, Ontario teachers had conducted three one-day strikes against the Ford government's cuts to education. As the dispute dragged into 2020, the teachers escalated their tactics, staging a provincewide teachers' strike on February 6 and planning for more coordination among the four biggest unions.

Whatever the outcome (the Monitor went to print in mid-February—eds.), the stakes couldn't be higher. If the Ford government defeats the teachers, it will be a blow to all other public sector workers whose collective agreements will soon expire. But if the teachers defeat Ford, it will add momentum to the growing opposition to Ford's austerity agenda and keep the government on the back foot.

3. Alberta's public sector vs. Jason Kenney

Just months after their election in April 2019, Premier Jason Kenney's United Conservatives had already taken a hit in the polls following a first wave of cuts to public services.

Alberta's public sector unions could take a lesson from Ontario's experience under Premier Ford: don't wait to mobilize opposition, and lead it from outside the legislature. The early and frequent protests against the Ford government in Ontario—from the fight for \$15 and fairness, to the parent-led fight for autism funding, to the student-led walkouts over changes to sex education and increases to class sizes—were critical in deflating public support for the Conservatives, and in pressuring labour and the opposition NDP to take a harder line.

Kenney's declining popularity in Alberta is an opportunity not to be squandered. How labour and the left respond will determine whether the government

feels confident to implement the rest of its agenda or under pressure to retreat.

Quebec

4. The movement against Bill 21

Quebec's Bill 21, which bans public sector workers from wearing religious symbols, attracted lots of criticism from the left in English Canada during the 2019 federal election, but in a way that depicted Quebec as more racist than the rest of Canada and that obscured the growing movement against the law inside Quebec.

An emerging alliance of Quebec-based socialists, anti-racists, civil liberties activists and faith communities is already far better poised to defeat Bill 21 over the long term, by campaigning against the law at the local level, rather than rely on a heavy-handed intervention by the Canadian state that attempts to impose a solution from Ottawa.

Latin America

5. Protests for peace and against corruption in Colombia

In late November 2019, millions of people in Colombia joined strikes and protests against plans by President Iván Duque Márquez to slash the minimum wage for young people and raise the retirement age for workers. Protesters also opposed rampant corruption throughout the country and escalating violence against human rights activists, while demanding that the government show more support for Colombia's beleaguered peace process.

The emergence of a mass movement in Colombia is significant in light of the government's alignment with U.S. foreign policy and because it adds momentum to the wave of revolts that have swept Latin America in the last year.

A fresh wave of protests erupted in late January 2020, provoking another heavy-handed response from the government. While the U.S. praised Colombia's crackdown, protesters promised more co-ordinated actions in March.

6. Indigenous resistance to the coup in Bolivia

Following the first round of Bolivia's presidential election in October 2019, right-wing groups and sections of the military organized a coup against Indigenous president Evo Morales, who was forced to resign on November 10 and later fled the country (see Asad Ismi's feature on page 24). Though Morales had won enough votes in to avoid a runoff he offered to hold one anyway. But opposition groups were only concerned with removing Morales, not a fair election.

Canada, the U.S. and other governments rushed to endorse Bolivia's new leadership while denying a coup



Ontario teachers take part in a strike on February 6.

@ETFOEDUCATORS



University students join ongoing anti-government protests in Baghdad, Iraq, February 6, 2020.

REUTERS/THAIER AL-SUDANI

took place. But over the weeks that followed, a mass, Indigenous-led movement emerged in support of Morales, calling for his restoration. This movement has the potential to push back the coup and mobilize Indigenous and working-class support for Morales's Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) in advance of new elections on May 3, 2020.

7. The revolt against austerity in Chile

What started in October 2019 as a student-led protest against metro fare increases quickly developed into a mass movement against 30 years of austerity in Chile. Within days, over a million people marched in Santiago to protest inequality and condemn police repression against protesters. Since Augusto Pinochet's U.S.-backed coup in 1973, Chile had been a laboratory for neoliberal reforms, which has led to the country's massive wealth gap (see "Inequality's offspring" in the Jan/Feb 2020 Monitor).

While their scale has decreased, protests continue to test Chile's government. In late December, embattled President Sebastián Piñera announced that a referendum on a new constitution, including who might draft one, will take place in April 2020. The call for a new constitution has been a central

demand of protesters, who want to secure their right to health care, education and other public services.

New protests erupted in early 2020, including among football fans. During a match between Chile and Brazil in the national stadium on February 4, protesters set fire to their seats in response to the death of a fan who had been run over by a police truck the previous week. Police violence continues to fuel protesters' anger, as more Chileans join the movement.

Middle East

8. Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq: a new Arab Spring?

The Arab world saw a wave of protests sweep the region in 2019, leading some observers to speculate whether a new Arab Spring could be on the horizon in the year ahead. In Egypt, where Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has cracked down on all forms of dissent since coming to power in a 2013 coup, a number of small but significant protests took place in September 2019 to condemn the government austerity measures and widespread corruption.

In Lebanon the scale of the protests has been much bigger, bringing the country to a standstill and forcing the government to resign en masse. What started as a protest over a proposed tax on

WhatsApp has ballooned into a mass movement against corruption, inequality, sectarianism and oppression. Protesters now demand the removal of Lebanon's ruling class and the creation of a new political system.

In Iraq, a large-scale movement emerged in Baghdad and much of the south in early October, when protesters demanded jobs and services and condemned government corruption. As the protests spread, their demands grew to include an entirely new, non-sectarian political system.

In the wake of U.S. airstrikes in December on armed militia groups, some of which are part of the Popular Mobilization Forces, fresh protests had targeted the U.S. Embassy in the Green Zone, provoking a crisis for both the Iraqi and U.S. governments. Weeks after the U.S. assassination of Iranian general Qasem Soleimani on January 3, millions of people marched in Baghdad and across Iraq, calling for the full removal of all U.S. and foreign troops.

The same conditions of austerity, poverty and disenfranchisement that provoked the Arab Spring in 2011 remain throughout the region and, in many cases, have become worse. As anger combines with confidence, and as 2019's protests attract more support, the entire region could see the beginnings of another Arab Spring take root in 2020.

9. Anti-austerity protests in Iran, global anti-war protests

The people of Iran face two distinct struggles in 2020. The first is against their own government's crackdown on the mass protests that emerged in November 2019 in response to a large hike in fuel prices, and which soon provided an outlet for pent-up

anger at declining living standards, partly the result of renewed sanctions.

The second, which has momentarily paused the first, is against the continuing threat of a U.S.-led attack on Iran. While December's protests in Iraq were turning their rage on the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, President Donald Trump was trying to blame Iran. In early January, Trump's targeted assassination of Qasem Soleimani brought the region to the brink of war and sparked a new wave of global anti-war protests, including in Canada. Protests resumed in Iran following the accidental shooting down of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 on January 8, which killed all 176 passengers on board, amid heightened tensions with the U.S.

Regardless of their stance on Iran's government, the left outside Iran must be unconditional and unequivocal in its opposition to an attack on the country. The threat of war appears to have receded, at least for now. But Trump's volatility and the longstanding antipathy of the U.S. government toward Iran have put pressure on activists to rebuild a global anti-war movement as quickly as possible.

Africa

10. *The next phase of revolution in Sudan*

In December 2018, protests against the rising cost of bread spread across Sudan. In the months that followed, a full-scale revolution swept the country, toppling Sudan's decades-long ruler, Omar al-Bashir, in April 2019, and leading to an agreement in August 2019 to initiate a transfer of power to a civilian government over 39 months.

However, as we learned from the Egyptian Revolution, the military will never really give up its power but wait patiently for the right moment to restore its rule and wipe out the gains of the revolution. In order to avoid the same fate, Sudan's revolution will need to sustain its presence in the streets and resist calls to cede power to the Sovereignty Council of Sudan.

11. *Protesters return to the streets in Algeria*

Mass protests erupted again in Algeria in December 2019, calling for a boycott of the presidential election in which all five candidates had links to former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who was forced to step down in April 2019. Months before he resigned, in December 2018, scattered protests took place against Bouteflika's attempt to run for a fifth term as president. By March 1, 2019, over three million had joined protests across the country.

Like Sudan's revolution, Algeria's continues to mobilize in order to prevent the ruling elites from seizing power for themselves and rolling back the gains of the last year. The coming year will be a critical period of transition; sustained protest on the streets and in the country's workplaces will be needed to move the revolution forward. Although their size has decreased, weekly Algerian demonstrations have continued into 2020.

South Asia

12. *Student-led protests against anti-Muslim citizenship laws in India*

Mass protests swept the country in mid-December 2019, in response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposed Citizenship Amendment Act, which would fast-track Indian citizenship for non-Muslims who emigrate from Muslim-majority states in the region. Students have been at the forefront of the protests, including widespread condemnations of repression by the police, who recently stormed Jamia Millia Islamia university.

On New Year's Eve, "protest parties" erupted in major cities all over India, and demonstrations have continued well into 2020.

13. *Kashmir's struggle for national liberation*

On August 5, 2019, India's parliament revoked Kashmir's special status, which gave the disputed region limited autonomy. Anticipating widespread protests, the Indian government has led an unprecedented crackdown on all dissent in Kashmir, arresting, detaining and transferring hundreds of people, and shutting down the internet and mobile phone calls.

While government repression may have prevented more visible protests, the situation remains in flux,

Demonstrators shout slogans during an anti-government demonstration in Algiers, Algeria, December 24, 2019. The sign reads "No to military regime."

REUTERS/RAMZI BOUDINA



especially as protests rage across India over Modi's anti-Muslim citizenship law. Those protests will no doubt fuel anger in Muslim-majority Kashmir over the possibility that India will attempt to re-settle the region to promote Hindu nationalism.

East Asia

14. *The democracy movement in Hong Kong*

Millions of people participated in pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong in the last six months of 2019, in opposition to a proposed bill that would have allowed people suspected of having committed a criminal offence to be extradited to mainland China. Although the bill was withdrawn in September, the movement continues to mobilize for other demands, including universal suffrage.

In November, students faced off with police at Hong Kong's Polytechnic University; just weeks later, pro-democracy groups won majorities in 17 of 18 councils in local elections. While protests slowed in November, hundreds demonstrated on New Year's Eve and thousands more joined a mass march on January 1, 2020.

The outbreak of the coronavirus in mainland China has both interrupted the movement and fuelled

anger at Hong Kong's government. While mass demonstrations have ceased in response to the epidemic, thousands of health care workers struck in early February to protest the city officials' response to it.

United States

15. *The Bernie Sanders campaign*

Although the corporate media has largely ignored, dismissed or maligned his second run at the Democratic presidential nomination, it is nonetheless grudgingly acknowledged by most news outlets that Bernie Sanders could actually become the nominee—despite the botched result in the Iowa Caucuses on February 3.

Since his first run in 2015, Sanders has given voice to dozens of grassroots struggles in the labour and social movements in the United States and, in the process, massively shifted mainstream politics to the left. Sanders's campaign is critical for the left because it represents the best chance to defeat Trump in the 2020 election. He is showing how you can succeed in politics by building a mass movement of ordinary people in support of bold, progressive reforms that speak to real working-class concerns.

Britain

16. *The Labour leadership contest*

Labour's historic defeat in the December 2019 general election has put wind in the sails of party centrists and liberal media pundits who have opposed Jeremy Corbyn's anti-austerity agenda from the moment he entered the 2015 leadership race. It has also emboldened Democratic centrists in the United States who are terrified that Bernie Sanders might win the party's nomination for president.

While not the most crucial working-class struggle in 2020, the Labour leadership race will generate critical debates for the left to engage, especially how a compromise on Brexit to accommodate party centrists eroded working-class faith in the party's ability to carry out its bold platform.

Europe

17. *Expanding strikes against pension reforms in France*

After failing to quell months of escalating protests by the gilets jaunes movement in France, embattled President Emmanuel Macron faced a growing strike movement in December 2019, as trade unions launched a nationwide mobilization against Macron's proposed pensions reforms. Strikes continued throughout the holiday season as workers at the Paris Opera House, including members of its orchestra, who performed a free outdoor concert for demonstrators, joined the protests.

Another round of strikes took place in January and February, although turnout was smaller than in December. Nevertheless, a broad section of workers—teachers, lawyers, garbage collectors, fire fighters, ballet dancers and



Anti-extradition bill protesters hold lights while forming a human chain during a rally to call for political reforms in Hong Kong, China, September 13, 2019. REUTERS/TYRONE SIU



French firefighters simulate setting themselves on fire during a demonstration to protest against working conditions in Paris, France, January 28. REUTERS/CHARLES PLATIAU

more—has been part of the movement. If they manage to defeat Macron’s reforms, it will give strength to all other anti-neoliberal struggles underway in France and across Europe.

Global

18. *Climate justice*

At the close of 2019, the world watched in horror as huge swathes of Australia were engulfed in wildfires, similar to the destruction of parts of the Amazon rainforest earlier in the year. In response to these and other climate-related events, the climate justice movement reached new heights in 2019, with the climate strikes in September bringing millions of people, most of them students, into mass political activity.

As frustration grows with the failure of governments to take effective steps to tackle climate change, especially in the wake of COP25 in Madrid, the climate justice movement will continue to dominate in 2020. But a key challenge facing the movement is its ability to connect demands for climate justice to the day-to-day struggles facing ordinary people in their workplaces. In order to make their struggle more immediate, accessible and concrete, climate justice activists will need to recast their demands to align with working-class struggles for decent work, good jobs, public services, economic security and equity—including migrant rights and Indigenous sovereignty.

19. *Migrant rights*

The movement for migrant rights has grown in size and influence all over the world, as millions of people fleeing war, persecution, inequality and climate

disasters seek refuge and a better life in countries far from their homes. During the 2019 federal election, migrant rights activists drew attention to the racism that informed most of the campaign and dominates the lives of immigrants, refugees and migrant workers in Canada and around the world.

As the foreign policy agendas of rich, developed countries fuel more wars and climate disasters, more people will be forced to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere. Defending migrants’ rights and supporting their demands for justice should be a priority for activists in 2020, and a necessary complement to countering the racist scapegoating that attempts to deflect blame onto the most vulnerable groups for the economic decisions that continue to impoverish the global working class.

20. *Anti-oppression*

Anti-oppression struggles—against sexism, misogyny, transphobia and homophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, anti-Black racism, ableism and other forms of oppression—were a central part of the protest movements that emerged in 2019 and represent their growing sophistication to tackle more than one issue at once.

During the anti-austerity protests in Chile, young women led demonstrations against rape culture and misogyny. During the Sudanese Revolution, the women-led *Kandaka* in White campaigns gave leadership to the entire movement. During the anti-austerity protests in Lebanon, demonstrators condemned homophobia and sectarian-based bigotry in the country’s political culture. During the student-led protests against Ford’s cuts to education in Ontario, students grappled with questions about white supremacy and how structural racism affects organizing and activism.

This drive to equity will no doubt continue in 2020, especially among young people and newly radicalizing activists. But it will also require as much support and reinforcement as possible from longer-standing activists in the face of arguments that try to deny the connection between oppression and the broader demands of our movements.

This list of twenty struggles is by no means exhaustive or necessarily representative. But it gives a sense of the dynamic movements that began or developed in 2019 and that will continue well into 2020 and beyond. While their successes so far are reason to feel optimistic about the year ahead, their outcomes are far from certain. Activists must do what they can to deepen solidarity with all of these struggles and movements, to improve their chances that they’ll end in victory for workers and oppressed people everywhere. **M**

James Clark is a socialist, trade unionist and anti-war activist based in Toronto. This article was originally published in January in *Spring* magazine. It has been updated for publication in *The Monitor*.

REVIEWED BY SCOTT SINCLAIR

Public enterprise and the public good

THE SPORT AND PREY OF CAPITALISTS: HOW THE RICH ARE STEALING CANADA'S PUBLIC WEALTH

LINDA MCQUAIG

Dundurn, August 2019, \$28.99

LINDA MCQUAIG skilfully tells the compelling story of Canada's rich and varied history of public enterprise. In the veteran journalist and prolific author's hands, a vital, often forgotten element of Canadian history and national identity comes to life.

As it turns out, Canadians are rather good at public enterprise. McQuaig turns to historians such as H.V. Nelles to explain this. He argued this tradition was a response to our unique political economy, an assertion of independence from our huge southern neighbour, and a corrective to the narrow-minded conservatism of Canada's business elites.

The book recounts the creation of public electricity in Ontario in the early 20th century; the development of insulin, vaccines and other life-saving medicines in publicly owned labs; the building of the Canadian National Railway, which in turn spurred the rise of public broadcasting; and the remarkable success and popularity of public banking in the post-Confederation period.

Recovering this historical memory is far from a purely academic exercise. McQuaig convincingly argues that public enterprise, which has been unremittingly disparaged and dismantled over the last half century, is the best option to rebuild Canada's decaying infrastructure, meet social needs such as those of the unbanked, confront the impending climate emergency, and more.

The book revisits the regrettably thwarted efforts of Peter Lougheed, Trudeau the elder and, much later, former Newfoundland and Labrador premier Danny Williams to challenge control of the oil sector by foreign multinationals and win greater public

benefits from this publicly owned resource. She contrasts the precarious state of public finances in free-enterprise Alberta with Norway, which pioneered a state-led approach and has amassed an impressive rainy-day fund for when the oil inevitably stops flowing.

By reclaiming the past, McQuaig illuminates the persisting advantages of public enterprise. Foremost among these are the ability to pursue the common good, and the capacity to think long-term and meet those needs (such as developing medicines for rare diseases) spurned or exploited by the private sector. Other advantages include not needing to turn a profit, the financial stability and attractive financing imparted by government backing, and, not least, the ability to attract talented innovators and dedicated workers motivated by the call to public service.

McQuaig stresses that the creation of public enterprise involved not only vision but political struggle. From publicly owned hydroelectricity to medicare, public enterprise has been fiercely resisted by entrenched commercial interests.

She also debunks the myths that under free-market capitalism the state simply sits on the sidelines as a neutral arbiter. The liberal state is interventionist, but typically to support its friends in the corporate sector.

For example, in an effort to staunch the rising tide of support for publicly owned electricity in Ontario, then-premier George William Ross amended the Municipal Act to prevent local governments from competing with private utilities. His obstructionism led to him being thrown out of office in 1905, clearing the way for the province's rapid electrification under public ownership.

Catchy slogans, like former Alberta premier Ralph Klein's "get government out of the business of business," mask a cozy and collaborative relationship between supposedly free-enterprise

governments and the private sector. Public revenues are foregone or channelled in support of private profit. Public protections are weakened under the banner of reducing red tape.

Today, as McQuaig deftly explains, the Trudeau government has twisted the sensible idea of a public infrastructure bank into what amounts to a giant slush fund for its pals in the private sector, such as private equity mogul Larry Fink, whose BlackRock minions were even invited to help federal officials draw up plans for the bank.

Anyone who doubts the perils and pitfalls of the private-equity approach should read McQuaig's chapter, "The worst deal of the century," on Ontario's Highway 407 privatization boondoggle. This deal has cost the Ontario public tens of billions of dollars in foregone revenues and left a vital provincial transportation artery under private, foreign control.

On the other hand, once they are established, public enterprises are typically so successful that they command strong support both from the public and even parts of the business community. That makes them hard to dislodge, even when facing strong corporate opposition.

In the face of climate change, rising inequality and populist disenchantment, the case for public enterprise is today as compelling as ever. McQuaig lays out an inspiring array of possibilities, including publicly researching and manufacturing medicines, creating a postal banking service, and manufacturing electric buses and vehicles by taking over Oshawa's world class facility left idle by corporate outsourcing.

This is an important book. McQuaig makes a convincing case for the revitalization of public enterprise. By doing so, we can tap into our traditions, outsmart vulture capitalists getting rich at public expense, and unleash our inherent instincts to serve our communities and the public good. **M**



MURRAY MACADAM

Swords into ploughshares

Toronto, 1982

THE NEWS HIT like a bombshell—because it was.

We in the Cruise Missile Conversion Project (CMCP) were stunned, and devastated, by the screaming newspaper headline one day in October 1982. Someone, or some group, had set off a bomb at the Litton plant, injuring four people, one of them seriously.

The Litton Industries plant in the Toronto suburb of Rexdale built guidance systems for U.S. cruise nuclear missiles. My work as a writer on peace issues had introduced me to members of CMCP, who were scandalized by

Litton's involvement in the U.S. arms buildup. The Cruise Missile group was unique within the peace movement, with its focus on the nuts-and-bolts task of converting military industries to peaceful uses and in its bold advocacy of civil disobedience to stop the war machine in its tracks.

Soon after the bombing, a group called Direct Action claimed responsibility. It was a huge setback to our

Litton protest, 1982.

PHOTO CREDIT: DAVID SMILEY

work of carefully building relationships with Litton workers, and gaining public support. We knew that a few Litton workers had quit their jobs following our efforts.

Now the mood was tense at Litton, and within our group. As the police continued their investigation of the bombing, we knew that we were in their crosshairs, as a radical group. Nor did it help that one of our collectives, focusing on civil disobedience actions, was called Direct Action. Realizing that a police raid on our office was likely, we agreed to remove the Direct Action collective's files from the CMCP

office and hide them elsewhere. I was working as CMCP's office co-ordinator, at our tiny office in Bathurst St. United Church, Toronto, whose minister, Stuart Coles, strongly supported our efforts, as did another minister based there, Brent Hawkes, pastor of a small gay-positive congregation called Metropolitan Community Church.

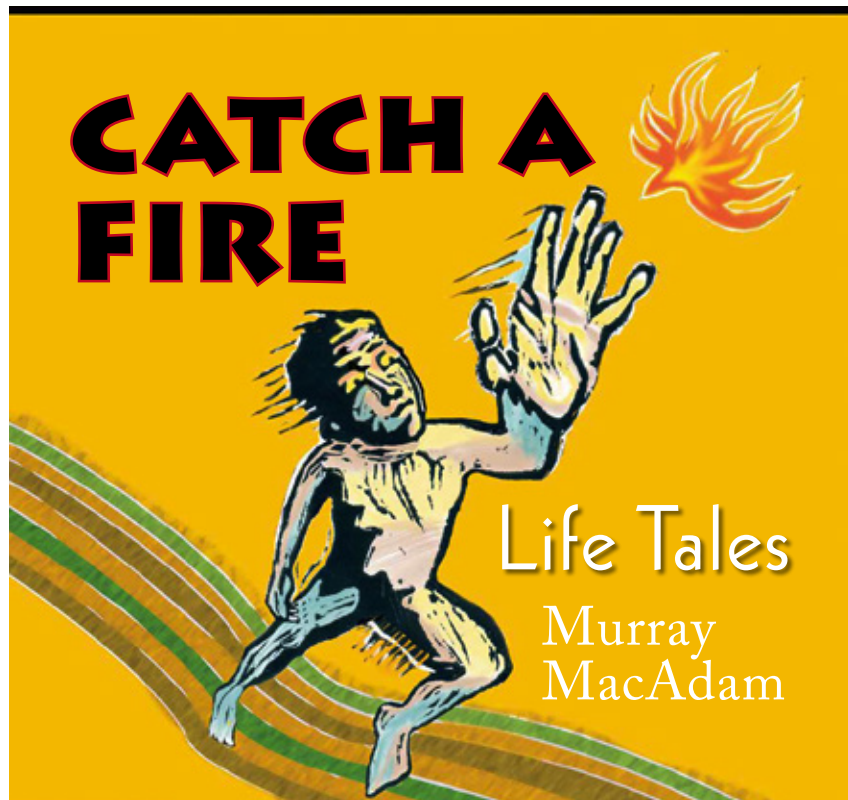
Soon after the bombing, I was at work one morning, when I looked up and saw a middle-aged man walk into our office and towards me, followed by another one. "It's them," I immediately told myself. Gruff and grim-faced, the lead cop flashed his badge, but didn't introduce himself. The interrogation began. What did I know about the Litton bombing? What did our group know about it? Had we spoken to anyone about it? After I told him I knew nothing about it, nor did anyone in our group, a long, exhaustive search of virtually every piece of paper in the office followed—and there was lots of paper in those pre-computer days. They even emptied the garbage pail.

The cop's hostile manner continued, deepening my anxiety. I was at his mercy. I thought about the repressive countries where the police and military ran roughshod over people.

But I was allowed one phone call. I called Brian Iler, a progressive lawyer and a warm, likeable guy. What a relief when he showed up at the office soon afterwards. Once Brian arrived, the cops remembered the manners they'd "forgotten" when I was alone with them.

At length, having found nothing to link CMCP to the bombing, but with many of our files in hand, the cops prepared to leave. By now, many people, and the media, had heard about the raid, and a few supporters had called me, for which I was grateful. Mr. Lead Cop thrust his face inches from mine, his manner still aggressive, no doubt disappointed that their search had turned up nothing. "There's lots of reporters out there waiting to talk to you. Can you handle that? I notice you have a stutter." I assured him I'd be fine.

Soon after he left, I opened the office door to face a barrage of flashing lights as reporters and photographers peppered me with questions about the raid. A *Globe and Mail* photographer



took a shot of me turning our waste paper basket upside down. When the media were finally through with me and left, I slumped down on a chair outside the office and closed my eyes, drained. Brent Hawkes walked over, sat beside me calmly, looked into my eyes and asked if I was OK. Immediately a huge weight lifted from my shoulders.

Meanwhile, CMCP's work continued, under the shadow of the bombing. A few weeks later police announced the arrests of four young activists in Squamish, B.C., who were later convicted of the bombing. None of us had had any contact with them. Several served prison terms, including one named Ann Hansen. Despite the injuries they'd caused at Litton and the blow they'd struck against non-violent advocacy for peace, when arrested they were planning another bombing.

A few weeks after the bombing, a beefy guy named Peter began attending our CMCP meetings. His size, the way he tried to ingratiate himself among us, his willingness to buy copies of all our publications, his manner of speaking, even the foods he liked such as bratwurst—all told us clearly he was an undercover cop. We debated how

to respond to him, before agreeing to welcome him, since we had nothing to hide.

At the time, with my wife Ruth away at teacher's college in Kingston, I was looking for a roommate to share our apartment, and Peter said he needed a place. We got along OK, despite my misgivings as to his presence among us, and I figured that the longer Peter hung out with us, the more he might question his work as a spy. After all, we were all about conversion. So I was open to having him move in with me.

All of a sudden, Peter vanished, without a trace or a word to us. I called his number. "Peter?", a woman answered, her voice remote, as if coming from a sealed office. "Oh... he's gone to do explosives training." **M**

MURRAY MACADAM IS A VETERAN SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVIST IN PETERBOROUGH, ONTARIO. HIS MEMOIR, *CATCH A FIRE*, IS AVAILABLE AT WWW.MURRAYMACADAM.COM.



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