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IDEAS THAT LEAD

*Quelle Surprise!* Quebec Wants More  
(Seats in the House of Commons, that is)

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Demographics is destiny, we're often told. But while Canada's fastest-growing provinces – primarily in the West – have every right to expect that their increasing share of the country's population will be matched in their political representation at the federal level, the morass of Canadian federalism stands in the way. Barry Cooper takes a close look at a recent Bloc Québécois demand that Quebec be given more MPs.

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Fretting and finger-pointing won't fix a housing crisis suffering from spiraling prices and insufficient supply. At some point, reality must be acknowledged. Nowhere is this problem more acute than in Vancouver, one of the world's most overpriced real estate markets. Through the eyes of embattled homeowners, market experts, politicians and industry players, Doug Firby surveys the hypocrisy of Vancouver's broken housing landscape.



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Canada's Freedom movement is inspired people around the world who want pandemic mandates to end and their freedoms restored. Still, many Canadians remained guarded or wished the truckers and their hangers-on would just fall silent, go home, get their shots and behave. George Koch checked out Canada's Freedom movement in person.



# Quelle Surprise! Quebec Wants More (Seats in the House of Commons, that is)

By Barry Cooper

First Published March 26, 2022



**E**arly in March the House of Commons voted in favour of a Bloc Québécois motion that, in the words of Bloc leader Yves-François Blanchet, rejected “any scenario for redrawing the federal electoral map that would result in Quebec losing one or more electoral districts or that would reduce Quebec’s political weight in the

House of Commons.” The Bloc, the NDP and the Greens all voted unanimously for the motion, as did the Liberals apart from Toronto MP John McKay.

The Conservative caucus was largely divided by region: the yea votes came overwhelmingly from MPs representing constituencies in Laurentian Canada while

the nays came mostly from the West. Prominent among the eastern yeas were former leader Erin O’Toole, along with all ten Quebec MPs. Leslyn Lewis, an Ontario MP and candidate in the current leadership race, voted no. But even in the West, no fewer than ten Conservatives – led by interim leader Candice Bergen – supported the motion. Front-running leadership candidate Pierre Poilievre (an Ottawa MP) and past leader Andrew Scheer (from Saskatchewan) skipped the vote.

Blanchet’s motion did not compel the government to act, which effectively made it symbolic. Or should have. The government certainly appeared to feel compelled. The new Supply and Confidence Agreement announced later in March between the federal Liberals and NDP – effectively creating a leftist coalition government – explicitly backs the motion’s intent. It declares that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and NDP leader Jagmeet Singh “commit to ensuring that Quebec’s number of seats in the House of Commons remains constant.” That suggested something



*“Any scenario ... must be rejected”: Bloc Québécois leader Yves-François Blanchet’s recent successful motion – since introduced as a government bill – rejects any possibility that Quebec could lose even a single MP due to demographic change. (Source of photo: The Canadian Press/ Sean Kilpatrick)*

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more than symbolism. Sure enough, just days later the Liberals tabled Bill C-14, *An Act to amend the Constitution Act, 1867* (electoral representation), to, as the *National Post* euphemistically put it, “protect Quebec’s voice in Parliament.” If passed into law, it would prevent Quebec from ever losing any seats.

What is the significance of these moves? To understand, we need to look at the history of redistribution of Parliamentary seats. The black-letter law version is found in s. 51 of the *Constitution Act (1867)* where the redistribution “process” is an administrative exercise. It begins after each decennial census (currently every second census) in order to

produce a seat-distribution in the House of Commons that reflects a decade of changes and movements in the Canadian population. The current process began in October 2021 and is expected to be completed in September 2023. The earliest the new electoral map will come into effect is sometime around April Fool’s Day, 2024.

The general purpose of redistribution, as with “redistricting” in the U.S., is to



*How did the Tories vote? Among the Conservative MPs supporting the Bloc motion were (left to right along top) interim leader Candice Bergen, former leader Erin O’Toole and current leadership candidate Marc Dalton; among those voting against were (left to right along bottom) current leadership candidates Leslyn Lewis and Scott Aitchison, plus high-profile Ontario MP Michael Chong. (Source of photos except for bottom middle: The Canadian Press)*

constituency around that number, so that each Member represent a constituency with about the same number of people. (Constituencies can vary greatly in physical size, of course.)

This objective is acknowledged in the federal legislation dealing with redistribution. It is called the “electoral quotient,” quotient being a mathematical term that describes the result of dividing

*Representation Act*, the electoral quotient was said to reflect the principle of “democratic representation of the Canadian people.” As we will see, it is not the only principle governing Canadian electoral laws.

Nevertheless, representation by population, or “rep-by-pop” to give this principle a more familiar name, is fundamental for liberal democracy because it institutionalizes the idea that all citizens should have an equal vote. Voter equality means there are no second-class citizens. If the seats in the House of Commons were divided this way, Quebec would receive 71 Members under the new distribution,

reflecting Quebec’s census population of  $8,604,495 \div 121,891 = 70.59$ , which is always rounded up.

Instead, Quebec wants 79 seats.

### Rep-by-Pop Versus So-Called Sectional Equality

“Rep-by-pop” was a source of great controversy during pre-Confederation Canada. It arose in 1841 during debates over the *Act of Union*, which unified the colonies of Lower and Upper Canada (now Quebec and Ontario, respectively) under a single government, the parts of which were renamed Canada East and Canada West. At issue was whether the two sections of “Laurentian” Canada would have the same number of representatives in a single legislative assembly despite the population of Lower Canada/Canada East being 18 percent greater than that of Upper Canada/Canada West. If this occurred, the population disparity would provide considerable over-representation for English-speaking Canadians in the common legislature.

The contrived balance between the number of legislators from each colony was called “sectional equality.” Not

**Voter equality means there are no second-class citizens. If the seats in the House of Commons were divided this way, Quebec would receive 71 Members under the new distribution, reflecting Quebec’s census population of  $8,604,495 \div 121,891 = 70.59$ . Instead, Quebec wants 79 seats.**

ensure that every Canadian constituency has approximately the same population. Under such an electoral system, a vote in PEI is about equal in significance to a vote in Alberta. The most obvious way to achieve this goal is to divide the population of Canada by the number of seats in the House of Commons, and then build every

one quantity (such as the population of Canada) by another (such as the number of seats in the House of Commons). Following the previous decennial census, the electoral quotient was 111,166. Canada’s population has grown over the past decade so that today the electoral quotient is 121,891. In the 2011 Fair

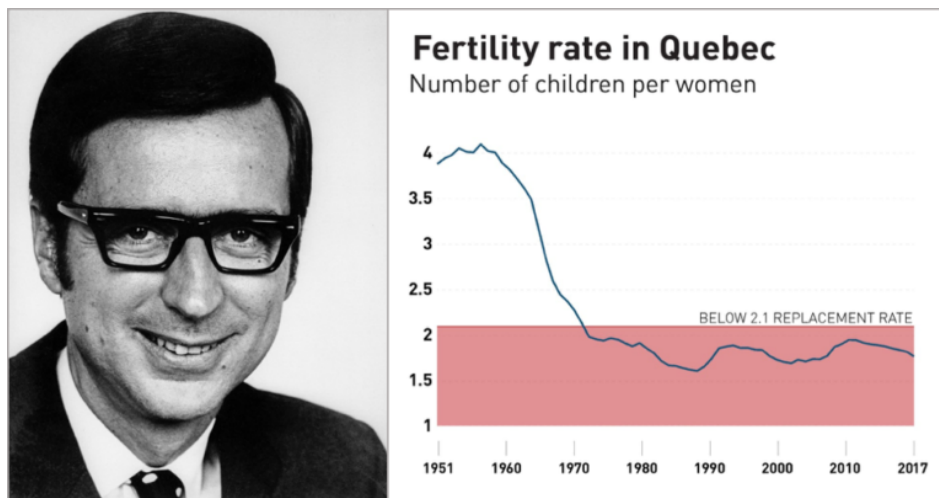
surprisingly, the champions of rep-by-pop back then were the French-speaking and Catholic inhabitants of Canada East. By 1851, immigration from the British Isles had made English-speaking and mostly Protestant Canada West more populous than Canada East. Now the champions of rep-by-pop were the inhabitants of Canada West and the champions of sectional equality lived in Canada East.

The debate went on into the 1860s, when the “Fathers” of Confederation hit upon a solution: a bicameral or two-house legislature. The lower house would be elected along rep-by-pop lines, with the new province of Ontario getting 82 Members of Parliament, Quebec 65, Nova Scotia 19 and New Brunswick 15 (PEI, Newfoundland, B.C. and the Prairies did not join Canada until later). The upper house would have 72 seats, with each region – Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes – having 24 Senators regardless of population.

As noted, section 51 of the *British North America Act*, as Canada’s founding constitutional document was then called, provided for the redistribution of seats after each census (these initially occurred once per decade). With several modifications over the past century-and-a-half, sectional equality (later renamed “proportionate equality”) coexisted with the arithmetic equality of citizens. With one obvious exception: sectional equality for the Senate was never extended to the West, a vast region of four provinces. The last attempt in the early 1990s to create an elected, effective and equal or “Triple-E” Senate went nowhere.

### Quebec's "Revenge of the Cradle"

As Canada developed, Ontario grew dominant in population but Quebec’s share of Canada’s population soon began a slow but long-term slide. Laurentian Canada’s control of Ottawa enabled this relative decline to be managed by a greater emphasis on “proportionate equality” as well as Quebec’s own vigorous policies encouraging population growth. Quebecers long maintained Canada’s



*The empty cradle strikes back: Quebec's birthrate plummeted in the 1960s during the Quiet Revolution; Premier Robert Bourassa (left) attempted to reverse the province's eroding demographic stature with a "baby bonus" program in the 1980s, but was largely unsuccessful. (Source of graph: Institut de la Statistique du Québec)*

highest birthrate. Their baby production inspired them to adopt the 19th-century expression *la revanche du berceau*, the revenge of the cradle. The underlying argument was that Quebec's expanding population would assure its importance in Canada. And it worked to a degree: as late as the 1950s Quebec had a fertility rate of 3.9 children per woman. Within a generation, however, the average rate had fallen to 1.4 children per woman, lower than the Canadian average of 1.7, itself a long way below the replacement rate of 2.1. (In addition, Quebec had previously lost nearly 1 million people to emigration, mainly to the U.S.)

Canada's growing population. As in the 19th century, however, most immigrants perceived that they were coming to a predominantly English-speaking North America. Even before the Canada-Quebec Accord of 1991, which gave Quebec full control over its immigration policy and process, the predominance of the French language in that province, coupled with its increasingly heavy-handed language laws promoting French and discouraging English, made it less attractive for many prospective immigrants.

Added to that was Quebec's enduring nationalism. Expressed in such terms as *pure laine* ("pure wool" or "genuine") and

## The revenge of the cradle had failed; Quebec would need new means to defend its federal interests.

If proportionate equality was to be salvaged, something new had to be done. In 1988 Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa tried to reverse his province's demographic decline by ramping up a new and expanded "baby bonus" program. As Nicole Boudreau, president of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society of Montreal, said at the time, "This is a serious problem for Quebec. If the population declines, then we will have a more difficult time maintaining our identity and culture."

Immigration was now the chief driver of

*vieille souche* ("old stock"), as well as in more contemporary legislation such as Bill 21, *An Act Respecting the Laicity of Quebec*, this cultural phenomenon did not make the province any more attractive to religiously inclined immigrants (or, arguably, some visible minorities) even if they spoke French. Nor was Quebec's introduction of a well-subsidized daycare program sufficient demographic stimulus.

What had taken place since the 1950s was the famous "Quiet Revolution," whereby in the dizzyingly short period of

one generation Quebec transformed itself from a largely rural and piously Catholic society of mainly large families into a more or less secular urban one where women joined the workforce, contraception and abortion were not unknown and many fewer babies arrived in the world. Moreover, the previously central roles of nuns and priests in health and education as well as ethical, political and spiritual affairs was largely taken over by secular intellectuals, journalists and nationalist politicians. The revenge of the cradle had failed; Quebec would need new means to defend its federal interests.

### Three Constitutional Distortions Undermine Rep-by-Pop

Quebec's apparently irreversible demographic decline relative to the other provinces motivated even greater demands for proportionate equality and sectional representation. Historically, however, the real challenge to achieving the principle of democratic representation through rep-by-pop came from what might be called constitutional legacy distortions.

The first of these, the Senate floor rule or "senatorial clause," dates from 1915. It guarantees that no province has fewer seats in the House of Commons than in the Senate. The initial beneficiaries were all in the Maritimes and the provision was later extended to Newfoundland and Labrador. Seven additional House seats result.

A second distortion is the "grandfather clause," according to which future redistribution may never allocate a province fewer seats than it had in 1985. This provision benefits Quebec, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador, all of which have lost population in relative or even absolute terms since it was enacted. Twelve seats are involved, four of which are allocated to Quebec.

The third distortion is called the "representation rule," introduced in 2011. It applies (in principle) to all provinces that were overrepresented at the end of the previous redistribution. If these provinces would become underrepresented, even



*Distorting demographics: The Senate floor rule, or "Senatorial clause" was introduced in 1915 and is the first of three (soon to be four) significant distortions to the principle of democratic representation in Parliament; pictured, the Centre Block of the Parliament Buildings as it appeared prior to 1916.*

after the application of the senatorial floor and grandfather clauses, they would be given extra seats so that their representation was proportional to their share of the national population. Only one province qualified: Quebec. In 2011 it gained two additional seats for a total of 78, six more than it would have received under strict rep-by-pop rules ( $7,903,001 \div 111,116 = 71.09$ , rounded up to 72). (The seemingly strange disparity between calculating a province's seats based on the electoral quotient versus using the same province's share of the national population arises from the over-allocation of seats to the Atlantic provinces under the previous two distortions, as well as to the territories getting three seats when their population justifies a total of just one.)

Under the pending redistribution, using the same combination of rep-by-pop principles and distortions, Quebec would be allocated 77 seats. One might think that normal people whose first allegiance was to democratic representation would say: fine, our province has lost one seat, but we still have five (or even six) more than we deserve. Not, however, the political philosophers of Quebec. Hence the March 2, 2022, motion of BQ leader Blanchet in the House of Commons, which was preceded by some remarkable utterances.

When the implications of redistribution

first came to light last fall, Blanchet vowed he would personally unleash "the fires of hell" if that happened. Sonia LeBel, Quebec's "Minister Responsible for Canadian Relations," declared that "we are part of the founding peoples of Canada," which apparently meant that Quebec deserved special treatment.

The Government of Canada's initial response was entirely predictable: Jean-Sébastien Comeau, press secretary to Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Dominic LeBlanc, said the Liberal government was working on a proposal to ensure Quebec's "political weight" was maintained. "We reject any scenario where Quebec loses a seat," professed Comeau.

The collective specialness of Quebec, its "specificity" as they say in that province, was emphasized by its premier, François Legault. Hardly a political, let alone a constitutional term, "specificity" is effectively translated into the claim that Quebec is a "nation," though how it differs from the Siksika Nation or the Rider Nation, for that matter, has never been specified. No one, for example, referred to French political theorist Ernest Renan's famous essay of 1882, "*What is a Nation?*" which argues that "nation" is a "spiritual principle" and its existence a "daily plebiscite" that affirms its life. Even so, Ottawa has twice recognized Quebec as a "nation," once



under the Stephen Harper government as a “nation within a united Canada” and then more recently by the Justin Trudeau government as a “nation” *tout court*.

### Onward to the "Fourth Distortion"

Premier Legault now explained that the spectre of Quebec's losing a seat was a “test” for Trudeau. Why? “Because,” Legault said, “It's nice to recognize that Quebec is a nation, but now there has to be an effect.” So, as Machiavelli would have said, the effective truth that Quebec is a “nation” means that it can never, ever, lose a single legislative seat in the Parliament of the country from which it considers itself essentially separate. As Legault explained to the CBC, “I think the nation of Quebec deserves a certain level of representation in the House of Commons, regardless of the evolution of the number of inhabitants in each province.” He did not elaborate or explain why Quebec deserved special treatment from the nation with which it maintains “relations” – apart from the

vague claim that constituting a “nation” expressed the even more abstract notion of specificity.

Blanchet then took up the cause of the “nation.” Because of the Liberal-led

principles, including rep-by-pop, were simply irrelevant. “If the affairs of the state,” Blanchet went on, “could be managed by statistics alone, then we would need to ask ourselves what we are doing here”

**The demands and claims of Quebec politicians today are indistinguishable from the demands and claims of Quebec politicians 180 years ago: from sectional equality when the benefits of rep-by-pop no longer favoured Quebec, to proportionate equality, to ‘specificity,’ and now to an undefined nationhood that still entitles Quebec to a certain irreducible number and ‘weight’ in the Canadian Parliament.**

declaration last year that “recognized the status of the French nation of Quebec,” Blanchet said it followed that “protecting Quebec’s political weight is good for everyone who recognizes the existence of the Quebec nation.” Democratic

in Parliament. In fact, “We cannot allow decisions to be made by statistics.”

Yet that is how laws get passed in Parliament: one MP, one vote, and the result is counted. It's a statistic! No matter: “It is unacceptable that Quebec’s weight could be reduced within any kind of Canadian institution at this point in time.” Accordingly, “We must not allow ourselves to be weakened.” The notion that Quebec’s demographic history clearly shows the province had “weakened” itself was apparently beyond Blanchet’s ken. Instead, his and Legault’s lengthening string of euphemisms (“evolution”) and non-sequiturs (“deserves,” “unacceptable”) would have to carry the freight.

Legault, of course, agreed and expanded upon Blanchet’s claim: “Whether it’s more [seats] for everyone or fewer for everyone; what’s important is the percentages, that we keep the percentage of seats that we currently have.” As a result, population changes are really beside the point – mere statistics. Blanchet then expanded upon Legault’s demand that the “percentages” not change. As these two men see it, the idea that Quebec is a nation isn’t merely consistent with its claim upon a guaranteed share of seats in Canada’s House of Commons – it’s proof thereof!

This would mean that, since the next redistribution will increase the House of



*Getting to the heart of “specificity”: According to Premier François Legault, it's not enough that Quebec is recognized as a nation within Canada, his province also “deserves a certain level of representation in the House of Commons, regardless of the evolution of the number of inhabitants in each province.” (Source of photo: The Canadian Press/ Francis Vachon)*

Commons by four seats, from 338 to 342, Quebec must get one of them. Period. What a pair!

## An Old Story but an Enduring – and Worsening – Outrage

Placed in the context of Canada's constitutional history, the demands and claims of Quebec politicians today are indistinguishable from the demands and claims of Quebec politicians 180 years ago: from sectional equality when the benefits of rep-by-pop no longer favoured Quebec, to proportionate equality, to "specificity," and now to an undefined nationhood that still entitles Quebec to a certain irreducible

well. The summary of Bill C-14 states its key concept: "That, when the number of members of the House of Commons and the representation of the provinces in that House are readjusted on the completion of each decennial census, a province will not have fewer members assigned to it than were assigned during the 43rd Parliament." We are now in the 44th Parliament. By preventing Quebec from losing a seat now or ever after, Bill C-14 would meet one of the two key demands in Blanchet's motion. If it passes, Canada will have institutionalized a fourth distortion to the principle of equal-weight voting through rep-by-pop. And Bill C-14 seems likely to pass, for one wonders how an MP who

is a national good that should always be defended, and that favouring one province above all others using layers of constitutional and legislative tricks is intrinsically wrong? Instead, they appear to see the issue mainly as another opportunity to pander to Quebec in hopes of a few more votes.

So now what? Emmett Macfarlane, a political scientist at the University of Waterloo, says that the next step, guaranteeing Quebec a specific share of seats in the House of Commons, might require a constitutional amendment. That would be even truer if the claim on an additional seat were involved. Fortunately, that is highly unlikely. Perhaps the most

## Elections Canada's Plans For Allocating MPs Across Provinces from 2022 to 2032

Province/Territory	Population as of July 1, 2021	Current seat allocation	Initial new seat allocation based on population	Senatorial clause	Grandfather clause	Represent. rule	Total seats
British Columbia	5,214,805	42	43	-	-	-	43
Alberta	4,442,879	34	37	-	-	-	37
Saskatchewan	1,179,844	14	10	-	4	-	14
Manitoba	1,383,765	14	12	-	2	-	14
Ontario	14,826,276	121	122	-	-	-	122
Quebec	8,604,495	78	71	-	4	2	77
New Brunswick	789,225	10	7	3	-	-	10
Nova Scotia	992,055	11	9	1	1	-	11
Prince Edward Island	164,318	4	2	2	-	-	4
Nfld. and Lab.	520,553	7	5	1	1	-	7
Yukon/NWT/Nunavut	127,893	3	N/A				3
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,246,108</b>	<b>338</b>					<b>342</b>

Source: Elections Canada, Redistribution of Federal Electoral Districts 2022

number and "weight" in the Canadian Parliament. *Plus ça change...*

The answer to the question posed near the beginning is therefore clear: the Bloc Québécois motion means the perpetual entrenchment of Quebec as a, or perhaps the, major power in the Canadian federation. Nothing connected to the democratic representation of citizens can touch in importance Quebec's sectional or proportionate equality. That is what the current crop of Quebec politicians wants.

And, it seems, the current crop of federal politicians from outside Quebec as

voted for the same principle less than four weeks earlier could now justify voting against its expression in law.

The four distortions are a grave affront to the other provinces and fundamentally unfair to their voters. And this makes the split Conservative vote noted above particularly disappointing. It suggests that many Tory MPs regard this as mainly a regional-grievance issue and not an issue of democratic fairness and high principle. If they did, why wouldn't Ontario and Atlantic MPs agree with most of their Western colleagues that democratic representation

sensible solution, Macfarlane thinks, would be to give the fastest-growing provinces even more seats and leave Quebec at 78, as the new law contemplates. That way, Macfarlane says, "Quebec is still outpaced as a proportion [of seats in the House of Commons] but the province doesn't face the indignity of having a seat taken away."

Indignity? Perhaps another perspective is needed to handle this endless question of the dignity – or better, the *amour propre* of – Quebec. We have seen that Quebec is already protected from the application of the principle of democratic representation



by entrenched legacy distortions. But which are the unprotected provinces? It will not come as too much of a shock to discover that they are the major (if often unwilling) contributors to rectifying the so-called fiscal imbalances of the federation, namely Alberta, B.C. and Ontario.

And, just in case it needs to be said, it follows mathematically that if some provinces for whatever reason receive “extra” seats beyond their share of the national population, those that do not are mathematically under-represented based on their population. For example, under the next redistribution Alberta’s contingent of MPs is due to rise from 34 to 37 in an expanded, 342-seat Parliament. So far, so good. But the inclusion of 21 (or, if Quebec gets its way, 22) non-population-based MPs spread over seven provinces dilutes the representation of the remaining three provinces.

Alberta will have one MP for every 120,100 Albertans – very close to its proper mathematical quotient. But, following all of the topping-up, Quebec will have one MP for every 110,300 Quebecers.

productive provinces will be resisted by the beneficiaries. Moreover, the economic and demographic projections for Saskatchewan and Manitoba indicate that the current political benefits they receive under the grandfather clause will erode over the next decade or so. Best of all for Quebec, Manitoba will likely join Saskatchewan as a “have” province and so become “eligible” to transfer more and more wealth to Quebec and points east.

Within a fairly short time, then, the whole of the West will be exploited politically to ensure that Quebec retains the over-representation of its “political weight” in the House of Commons – just as it does in the Senate and Supreme Court. At the same time Quebec, the world’s latest stateless nation, gets to retain the benefits of being part of Canada, such as equalization payments, while keeping a veto over such things as violating the sacred terroir of the “nation” with pipelines, the use of which sustains the transfer of Western wealth to the “nation.”

So long as Quebec remains an officially have-not province, chronically on the

**So long as Quebec remains an officially have-not province, chronically on the receiving end of fiscal transfers from the West and Ontario, all this talk about Quebec’s dignity being challenged with the loss of a House of Commons seat is faintly comical. Why is it too much to expect Quebec to pay its own freight?**

While that doesn’t seem like a large difference, it will mean that nearly 370,000 Albertans (10,000 per constituency) will be, mathematically, without representation in Canada’s Parliament. Put another way, based on Quebec’s “special” quotient, Alberta should have 40 or 41 MPs. It’s a similar story for B.C. and Ontario. And it is an outrage.

The so-called have-not provinces, particularly Quebec, have been, are and will continue to be politically overrepresented in comparison to the productive provinces. This is one reason why any effort seriously to change the equalization extortion of the

receiving end of fiscal transfers from the West and Ontario, all this talk about Quebec’s dignity being challenged with the loss of a House of Commons seat is faintly comical. Why is it too much to expect Quebec to pay its own freight? Besides, since when do fiscal dependencies attain the dignity of genuine nationhood?

*Barry Cooper is a professor of political science at the University of Calgary. His latest books are Paleolithic Politics (2020) and, with Marco Navarro-Génie, COVID-19: The Story of a Pandemic Moral Panic (2022).*

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# How Taxes and Regulations are Worsening Vancouver's Housing Crisis

By Doug Firby

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**B**ernie Burnett is not sure how much longer she can afford to stay in her modest two-storey house near Jericho Beach, in a once-middle class neighbourhood in Vancouver's West Point Grey not far from UBC. As house prices in the city climbed relentlessly, her annual property taxes have soared eightfold –

from less than \$3,000 when she bought the house in 2001 to more than \$24,000 last year. Although Burnett rents out part of the house, she has had to defer a portion of her property taxes for seven years. She now owes the city more than \$150,000.

"This debt is going to be passed down to my children," says Burnett, a 62-year-

old widow who's retired from her job as an engineering assistant for the city. "If it wasn't for deferment and for the fact that I have a roommate, I would not be in that house." Adding to the tax burden, the house, which she bought for \$850,000, is now valued at around \$6 million, triggering a one percent city surtax that applies to properties valued over \$5 million. Burnett invests minimally in upkeep because she considers the house, with its 170-foot-deep lot, to be a "tear-down" that one day will fall into the hands of a wealthy investor. Yet she feels compelled to stay in the area to care for her ailing father, 96, and mother, 92. "I have nowhere to go," Burnett says. "I'm trapped."

Burnett's situation is perhaps on the extreme end of a nonetheless common experience facing long-term Vancouver residents caught in the vortex of Canada's housing frenzy. The ratcheting up of property taxes on houses becoming ever-more valuable is yet another way in which housing has become unaffordable in Vancouver. A recent B.C. Freedom of Information request by Ryan LLC, a division of global tax services and software provider Ryan ULC, revealed that British Columbians – mostly in Vancouver – are having to defer their property taxes more than ever.

According to the report, "As of May 2021, nearly 73,000 residents, mostly seniors who were eligible, deferred their taxes, up from 41,488 residents in 2015/16." Despite those concerns, in December Vancouver City Council approved a 6.35 percent property tax increase, even bigger than the 5 percent it had initially asked city staff to budget for.

That soaring real estate markets have pushed the dream of home ownership out of reach of many, perhaps even most, Canadians is no longer news. The crisis is typically blamed on rock-bottom interest rates and high levels of immigration that stoke demand, and more recently on a buying frenzy sparked by the pandemic's push to have millions work from home. Other factors that drive up prices are believed to include offshore investors parking funds in jurisdictions perceived as





*No vacancy: To discourage speculators, Vancouver homes are now subject to vacancy taxes; a \$1.3 million house would take a tax hit of \$65,000 a year, more than 16 times the amount of the regular property tax.*

safe and stable – like Canada – as well as domestic investors (including large funds) purchasing real property as a hedge against inflation and worsening global uncertainty. At the same time, average personal income in Canada has largely stalled, while general inflation is making virtually everything else less affordable as well.

But misguided government policies have played their part in worsening the housing price problem. For a shining example, look no further than Vancouver. Academics, developers and some city councillors there say efforts by provincial and municipal government to “manage” the market and tamp down prices have had disastrous unintended consequences. Onerous new taxes on homeowners have pushed prices higher, they say, while simultaneously discouraging the construction of new housing units that is so badly needed. Meanwhile, permitting delays and the ever-growing tangles of red-tape ensnaring developers add to the cost, and contribute to the supply

crunch driving prices up.

### Vancouver's Middle-Class-Crushing Metamorphosis

Through the years that brought such wrong-headed moves, Vancouver morphed from a virtually idyllic, middle-class-friendly West Coast urban oasis into

one of the world's most expensive cities. Data from the British Columbia Real Estate Association (BCREA) show a benchmark price on a single-family house in the Greater Vancouver area (which includes the City of Vancouver, North Vancouver, West Vancouver, Burnaby, Richmond, Surrey and White Rock) of \$917,564 in 2011. Today, it is \$1,775,652. Over the same period, the average apartment price went from \$380,318 to \$727,797. An international survey in 2022 cited Vancouver as the third most unaffordable of more than 90 major real estate markets in eight nations, behind only Hong Kong and Sydney, Australia.

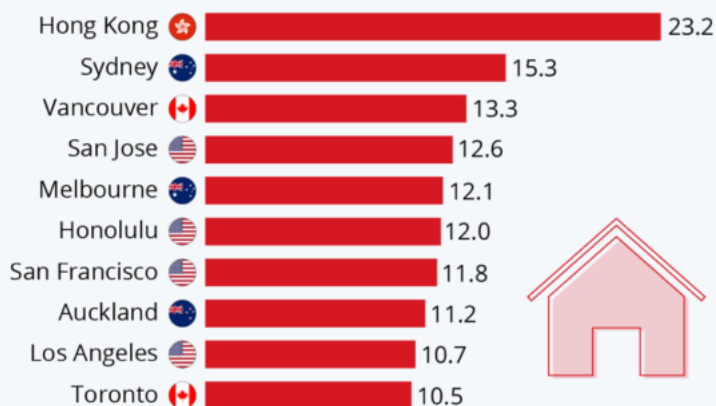
For years it was fashionable for governments and politicians (even some of the NDP variety) to blame foreign investors and immigration for driving up prices. The province noted that offshore investors, mainly Chinese, purchased \$1 billion worth of real estate in British Columbia in just a five-week period in 2016. More recently the alleged culprit became money laundering, a government-appointed expert panel claiming that as much as \$5.3 billion may have been laundered through the real estate market in 2018 alone, raising housing prices by an estimated 5 percent.

Many such buyers were thought to be speculators who purchased houses and apartments in hopes of soon flipping them for a quick profit, often leaving them empty in the meantime. A city report estimated in 2016 that there were 10,800 vacant homes and condos in Vancouver. Officials convinced themselves that if speculators could be discouraged and those empty properties rented, affordability would improve.

So in came punitive new taxes. B.C.'s Bill 28, commonly known as the *Housing Priority Initiatives Act*, became law in August 2016. It imposed

## Where It Is Hardest to Afford a Home

Least affordable international housing markets ranked by house price to annual income ratio (2022)\*



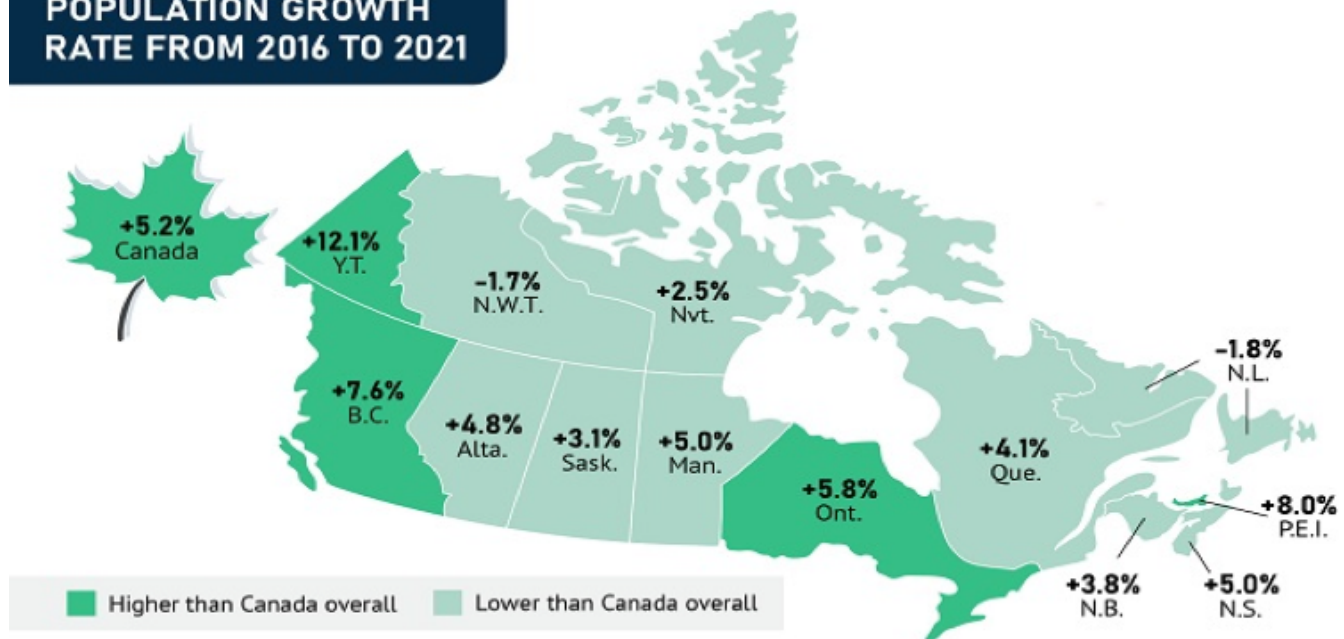
\* median house/apartment price divided by median annual gross income  
Source: Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey



statista

*An international survey by Demographia of 92 major housing markets in eight countries shows Vancouver to be the third most unaffordable, behind only Hong Kong and Sydney, Australia; politicians have long blamed foreign buyers for much of the problem.*

## POPULATION GROWTH RATE FROM 2016 TO 2021



*What's driving the price up? Population growth is part of what's causing Vancouver's housing shortage, although critics say high taxes and onerous regulations are discouraging or delaying much-needed supply. (Source of graph: Census of Population, 2016 and 2021 (3901))*

an additional property transfer tax of 15 percent on residential properties purchased in certain parts of B.C. by foreign buyers, later increased to 20 percent. The act also amended the Vancouver Charter so that the city could impose a municipal tax on vacant residential property, and Vancouver quickly imposed an annual levy equal to 1.25 percent of a property's assessed taxable value.

Two years later, the province introduced its own Speculation and Vacancy Tax, which is in addition to Vancouver's own

Vancouver would face a combined empty-home tax hit of \$65,000 per year – which is over 16 times the amount of regular city property tax.

The new taxes, particularly the foreign buyer's tax, were popular at the time and, data suggest, succeeded in driving a lot of foreign investment out of the market. According to data from the B.C. Ministry of Housing, foreign buyers accounted for just 1 percent of property purchases last year, down from 3 percent in 2018. A Vancouver city staff report last month concluded

housing prices in Greater Vancouver have grown faster than ever.

In a recent interview, David Eby, Minister Responsible for Housing in B.C.'s NDP government, told *C2C Journal* that the taxes had the desired effect of curbing foreign investment, "But [what] we didn't see at the time was the significant increase in population. There was a big spike in migration that we were not prepared for." According to Statistics Canada, B.C.'s population grew by 7.6 percent from 2016 to 2021, to just over 5.2 million. There was

**'It takes two years to get a permit that used to take six months,' Stovell says. 'It takes five years to get a rezoning. It's become quite a broken system.' He estimates the delays and complex requirements add 10-15 percent – hundreds of thousands of dollars – to the price of a Vancouver home.**

"empty home" tax. The two total 5 percent of a property's assessed value for foreign owners and so-called "satellite families" (and 3.5 percent for Canadian citizens or permanent residents who don't list the housing unit as their primary residence). A calculator on the WOWA real estate information website shows that a foreign-owned home assessed at \$1.3 million in

that the number of private dwellings unoccupied or occupied by temporary or foreign residents has fallen to its lowest level since 2001.

Yet despite a temporary drop in prices in 2016, the taxes and the reduction in foreign ownership have wholly failed to attain the government's stated key objective – to drive down the price of housing. In fact,

enough housing growth to handle normal times, Eby asserts, but "we had no slack."

Others argue the taxes worsened the supply crunch and drove prices ever higher. Andrey Pavlov, a professor of real estate finance at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, B.C., told *C2C Journal* that the taxes discouraged real estate development by raising the risk of investment. In 2019

alone the number of permit applications to build rental units dropped by half from the year before, Pavlov says.

"The speculation and vacancy tax is wildly popular," Pavlov admitted in an interview. "It was marketed as a way to ensure every unit was used. But it is counterproductive." It also hit B.C. residents hardest – not foreigners. According to a provincial "technical briefing" prepared for B.C.'s mayors in November 2021, the tax applied to 2,423 British Columbians but only 1,594 foreign owners.

There is no question that both Vancouver and the B.C. market as a whole are suffering from too little housing stock. The BCREA reports that total provincewide listings in January 2022 had fallen by 14.7 percent year-over-year. That month there were about 13,000 listings across the province, barely one-third what the organization would consider a "healthy" level of about 40,000. In Greater Vancouver, there were about 12,000 listings last month, the BCREA reported, while the city would need 24,000 to be in what it considers market balance.

### **Eighteen Inspections and Three Years' Delay – For a House**

Market experts and real estate developers say B.C.'s municipal and provincial governments have created so many disincentives to investment that developers are highly reluctant to put shovels in the ground to start new housing projects. And it's not just taxes, says Pavlov, but the onerous burden of red tape and high fees. For example, the City of Vancouver lists 18 separate inspections required merely for a single-family home, plus an additional five inspections for a detached garage. Vancouver's building permit fees are twice the average rate in major U.S. cities, according to figures compiled by the Altus Group, a real estate and data company. "This is insane," Pavlov said. "The fees are so big they cannot be justified."

Aside from the sheer number of inspections, Pavlov says permit applications contain complex requirements

that often have little bearing on a building's impact on residents' health or safety, or on its neighbours. For example, a tree protection clause requires that a barrier be erected around any tree on a construction site, and that the barrier be inspected before work can proceed. The rule applies even to young trees. "A barrier is required around a tree that can be replaced for \$50," said Pavlov, meaning the cost of compliance is many times the value of the thing being protected. "It's the type of intrusion the city allows itself."

Further, Vancouver's building code requires enhanced insulation on both the interior and exterior of every building, unlike codes in much colder cities, such as Winnipeg and Edmonton. "Vancouver has the mildest climate in Canada," says Pavlov. "To require insulation in Vancouver that isn't required in Calgary makes zero sense."

Nonsensical requirements increase costs and further delay projects in a market where the approval process is already notoriously slow. Pavlov cites Altus Group data showing that one-third of the Vancouver building applications submitted in 2016 were still under review in 2019 – three years later. A memo written in December by Andrea Law, the general manager of the city's development, buildings and licensing department, stated that there is a backlog of more than 500 applications from people seeking permits to build single-family homes, duplexes and laneway houses.

Developer Jon Stovell, CEO of Reliance Properties Ltd., says application processing times have tripled from what they were 10 to 20 years ago. "It takes two

years to get a permit that used to take six months," Stovell says. "It takes five years to get a rezoning. It's become quite a broken system." He estimates the delays and complex requirements add 10-15 percent – hundreds of thousands of dollars – to the price of a home. The city, Stovell says, simply doesn't pause to consider the cumulative effect of all this regulation: "It's built up like a coral reef until they rip the bottom out of any ship that tries to sail through. The government is just making it too hard, too time-consuming and too expensive."

Bryn Davidson, CEO of Lanefab, which builds laneway homes, says the "layers and layers" of regulation aren't even prioritized. "We treat window trim rules the same way as life-safety rules," he notes. "That's the absurdity of having all this stuff bloating our system at a time when we have a housing crisis."

### **NIMBYism, Bureaucratic Foot-Dragging and Ideology Combine**

The short supply of land zoned for housing in Greater Vancouver is yet another problem, developers say, one for which residents themselves share the blame because so many oppose high-density developments in their neighbourhoods. To take one high-profile example, after years of discussion the city began planning in 2019 to authorize the construction of 25,000 new units to house 50,000 residents within a 10-minute walk of a subway line being built on Broadway Avenue between Clark Drive and Vine Street.

Stovell says the city has invested



*Barriers to investment: Jon Stovell, CEO of Reliance Properties Ltd., (right) says endless regulation is a disincentive to building: "The government is just making it too hard, too time-consuming and too expensive."*





*Pushing back: Lisa Dominato (left) was part of a non-profit group that tried to build a new housing development on Vancouver's Commercial Drive (shown on right) but gave up after endless roadblocks and financial requirements from the city; recently elected as a city councillor, now she's fighting to change the system. (Source of right image: Kettle Boffo)*

"billions" in creating the new subway yet has encountered strong public resistance to the envisioned housing through local community councils, whose objections include everything from high-rise shadowing to traffic issues. City councillors, Stovell acknowledges, are "caught between a rock and hard place" – aiming to increase housing density while facing organized opposition from local residents who fear that allowing more apartment complexes will drive down their property values.

This is particularly frustrating, says City Councillor Lisa Dominato, because local opposition to high-density housing does not represent the majority view in the city.

units for people with mental illness, to be subsidized by the income from 200 proposed market housing units plus commercial space. Faced with endless red tape, the group eventually dropped the entire proposal. In announcing the end of the project, Kettle stated: "Given the recent financial requirements placed on it by the City of Vancouver, the project is no longer economically feasible." "It was a very frustrating process," says Dominato. "It was 10 to 12 years of conversations [with the city]."

Dominato went on a campaign to shred Vancouver's red tape, last March bringing a motion before City Council to require bureaucrats to clear the permit backlog.

the deadlines.

Pavlov says the mayor and senior City Hall bureaucrats agree on the need to build more housing units and cut red tape. Yet, like the characters Vladimir and Estragon in the play *Waiting for Godot*, no one seems to be moving. "I don't understand politics," Pavlov sighs. "Some councillors say we shouldn't build any market housing at all – only subsidized housing."

B.C. Housing Minister Eby told *C2C Journal* that Vancouver's interminable permit times have been a "systemic problem" for at least a decade, and he is frustrated by the lack of results. "It seems to be very complicated for reasons that have eluded me," Eby said. "There's a marked division between what [city] politicians say they want and what actually gets done."

The province is loathe to intervene directly, but Eby said his government is considering several options to pressure the city to step up reform efforts. In 2019, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs launched a Development Approvals Process Review aimed at improving municipal government development and construction approval processes and timelines. One of its provisions would reduce the number of required public hearings on a permit application. The province is

**Paul Sullivan worries that the ever-worsening unaffordability of housing is forcing workers to move out of the city and could make matters even worse. 'The real crisis is still to come,' Sullivan predicts. 'We're running out of labour. We won't have enough workers to build houses here.'**

A recent survey, she said in an interview, found that 75 percent of Vancouver residents want more housing and more housing choices.

Dominato, a first-time councillor, says she decided to run for council three-and-a-half years ago in part because she personally experienced the endless roadblocks her not-for-profit group faced when seeking approval for a housing development. The Kettle Society had proposed to redevelop its site to accommodate 30 non-market

Its several proposed measures included requiring staff to report to council within 30 days "with an action plan to clear the City's permit and license backlog by or before the end of Q3 2022." It also proposed streamlining regulations, using credentialed professionals to supplement staff, seconding staff from other departments and adopting new technology to speed approvals. The motion passed, Dominato notes ruefully, only after Vancouver's mayor amended it to remove

also considering setting targets for new housing, Eby said. Any city failing to meet its targets might get less funding for new infrastructure, such as transit.

Pavlov has a unique idea to help break Vancouver's high-density housing NIMBYism: auctioning off densification rights to the highest bidder. That way, the housing would go where it is most needed and the money raised could be used to compensate local property owners who actually suffer a decline in their property

values. "That would go a long way toward overcoming opposition," Pavlov predicts.

### Reform in the Nick of Time – Or the Worst Still to Come?

There does seem to be a creeping realization that piling on taxes and regulation is no solution to Vancouver's worsening housing crisis. Everyone agrees it needs a fix. Dominato sees a direct link between adequate housing supply and keeping Vancouver within financial reach for Canadians. "I don't want Vancouver to become a resort town," she says. "It's a desirable place to live. We need to continue to add more supply."

Paul Sullivan, principal and regional leader of Ryan LLC, worries that the ever-worsening unaffordability of housing is forcing workers to move out of the city and could make matters even worse. "The real crisis is still to come," Sullivan warns. "We're running out of labour. We won't have enough workers to build houses here."

And what about Bernie Burnett, the homeowner trapped in her overvalued, under-maintained and tax-burdened West Point Grey house? Burnett may not be sure of exactly what would ease Vancouver's housing crisis – but she is certain that ever-higher taxes won't be it. "[It's] not the solution," she says. "All they're doing is digging us in deeper, and they're getting no results. When my parents pass, I'm just going to sell the house and get the hell out of Dodge."

*Doug Firby is an award-winning veteran journalist and newspaper manager based in Calgary, Alberta, who has worked in print and electronic media for more than 40 years.*

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# Who Killed Granny? Pandemic Death Protocols in Canada's Long-term Care Facilities

By Anna Farrow

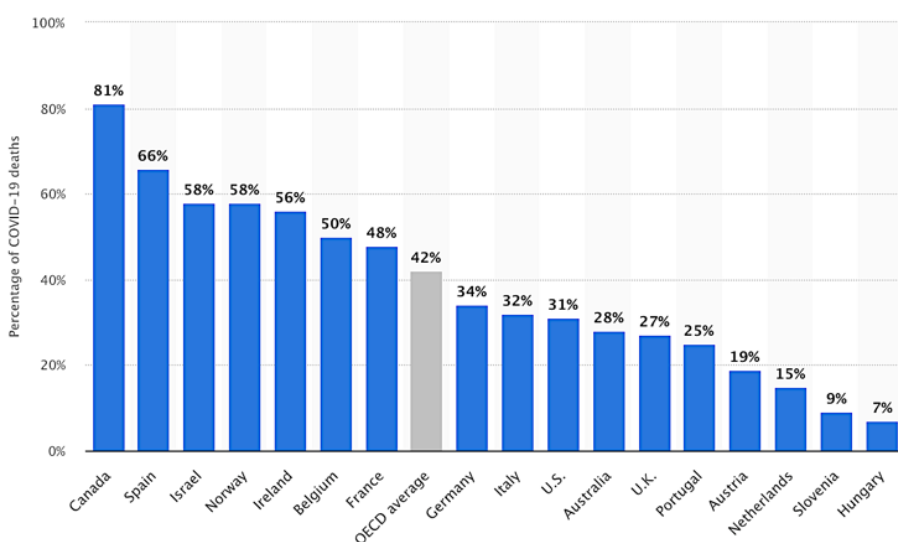
First published March 7, 2022

As if at a magic show, we have been sitting in a darkened room and the spotlight has been directed, not to white gloves, cups and balls, but to graphs and projections, hospitalization and death rates. We are captivated and yet our attention span is short. Early on, we checked the rising case counts daily; latterly it is the percentage of the population vaccinated or the global rise and fall of Omicron. With so many numbers crossing our screens it's easy to lose track of the ball.

There is, however, one set of figures that should have caught and kept our attention: the shocking proportion of Covid-19 deaths that took place in Canada's long-term care facilities (LTCFs) during the pandemic's first wave. This proportion was high everywhere, but Canada's numbers were in a class by themselves. At the end of May 2020, Canada was reporting that 81 percent of the country's Covid-19 deaths took place in LTCFs. This compared to an average of 38 percent in the other 37 OECD countries. That proportion has fallen, but a December 2021 report by the Canadian Institute for Health Information noted that LTCFs still accounted for 43 percent of Covid-19 deaths.

In one sense, the high numbers are not entirely surprising. Although residents of LTCFs represent fewer than three percent of those aged over 65, they are the weakest and most vulnerable among us. And Covid-19, like other respiratory infections, preys especially on the elderly and infirm. Protecting the vulnerable aged

was the reason governments worldwide gave to justify restrictive pandemic policies. The Don't Kill Granny campaign first emerged in Preston, England, in August 2020, when the city banned social mixing between households. "Don't kill your gran" was quickly adopted by the U.K.'s then health minister, Matt Hancock, and used



*A grim leader-board: Canada led the world in the share of Covid-19 deaths that occurred in long-term care facilities (LTCF) in the early stages of the pandemic; as of May 2020, 81 percent of Covid-19 fatalities were in LTCFs – almost double the OECD average. (Source of graph: Statista, 2022)*

to encourage young people to limit their social interactions.

But much remains opaque about the circumstances and nature of the many thousands of reported deaths in Canada's LTCFs. There have been commissions and reports, but in Canada, only one province – Quebec, which suffered the highest percentage of long-term care Covid-19 deaths – has had public hearings to examine those circumstances. Revelations from that inquiry and an evaluation of measures taken in other places suggest that the real question should be, “What did kill gran?”

### **Besieged During the Fearsome First Wave**

Between February and April of 2020, nursing homes became islands whose residents were marooned in a viral sea of SARS-CoV-2. Nurses and personal aides were sent home because of infection, and the intensifying climate of fear meant many healthy staff did not report for work. Staffing had long been a problem in Canada's nursing homes and no one in the health and social services sector was surprised to witness an already weak system buckle in some provinces under the pressure. To make matters worse, lockdown policies barred family caregivers and close friends, who often provided daily support to their loved ones, from the facilities. And not just physically, for family members often spent weeks unable even to contact their loved ones or staff.

Louise Langlois experienced the anxiety and frustration of the situation firsthand. Her mother, Viviane, was a resident of the CHSLD Herron in Dorval, Quebec. (CHSLD is the French-language equivalent to LTCF.) On March 12 the home's receptionist called to tell her that the Herron was under lockdown. There would be “no ins and outs, and we will keep in touch.” But they did not keep in touch. For a period of two weeks, Louise was unable to speak with her mother or even to reach staff. Although Viviane had a telephone in her room, her dementia meant that she did not know to answer when it rang.

Louise is certain her mother wasn't being properly fed or looked after in those initial weeks of lockdown. She believes that, as a matter of self-protection, Viviane put up a “carapace” to survive. She's

## **There were common themes across the five long-term care facilities: lack of permanent, trained, and coordinated staff; misuse of narcotics; shortage of supplies; inadequate nutrition and hydration of residents.**

now happily resettled in another CHSLD but when Louise tries to talk to her about “Covid-19 time” or “lockdown,” her mother looks at her uncomprehendingly. With so many LTCF residents suffering some form of dementia, and with family caregivers, doctors and even police unable to enter the facilities for weeks, there are few witnesses to the reality in the nursing homes during that crucial period. Much of the data has not been retrieved; most of the stories remain untold.

In late April, the siege was broken. Military personnel were deployed to five LTCFs in Ontario and five CHSLDs in Quebec. “Operation Laser” was quickly scaled up in Quebec; by May 7, 20 CHSLDs were receiving support and some 1,300 Canadian Armed Forces members were in the homes. The reports published at the end of their mission gave the Canadian public its first real glimpse into the situation.

To read Brigadier General C.J.J. Mialkowski's report about the Ontario homes is to read a document that conveys in the precise, meticulous language of a soldier the horror the military personnel felt. It reads as dispatches from a new kind of battlefield. There were common themes across the five facilities: lack of permanent, trained, and coordinated staff; misuse of narcotics; shortage of supplies; inadequate nutrition and hydration of residents. Personal support workers, said one note, are “often rushed and leave food on table but patients often cannot reach or cannot feed themselves (therefore they miss meals or do not receive a meal for

hours.)” In another centre, “forceful feeding observed by staff causing audible choking/ aspiration [and] forceful hydration causing choking/aspiration” were reported. At the same residence, patients were “observed

crying for help with staff not responding,” sometimes for over two hours.

But even more than the military reports, in Quebec it was the work of journalist Aaron Derfel – and specifically his April 10 *Montreal Gazette* article about CHSLD Herron – that laid bare the grim conditions. A year later, a coroner's inquest began in Quebec, examining deaths in seven CHSLDs between March 12 and May 1, 2020. Testimony at the inquest would raise more questions about what factors, other than the virus itself, might account for the staggering death rate.

### **Why Did So Many Elderly Patients Die?**

There has been one sizable roadblock hindering attempts to answer: reliable data on cause of death was not always collected. An auxiliary nurse, whose identity is protected by a publication ban, testified before the Quebec inquest that many of the deaths at her facility were labelled as suspected Covid-19 cases because “it would be easier to blame the virus than to acknowledge the hard truth that these people suffered from malnourishment and dehydration.” Why was this so? “I felt,” she added, “that it was a way to escape culpability.”

If this was true in one beleaguered facility, it is reasonable to conclude that it could also be true in others. Despite inaccurate, missing or compromised data, the question must therefore be pressed: what actually happened in the LTCFs in the spring of 2020?

In Quebec, the most common



explanation is a term used both by Premier François Legault and Quebec's coroner, Géhane Kamel – “organizational negligence.” Poor coordination, lack of proper lines of communication and command, scarcity of personal protective equipment, inadequate funding and staffing – all have been identified as systemic weaknesses.

But there is reason to believe that nursing home residents suffered not just from a broken-down system, but from a deliberate effort to protect the healthcare system at the expense of vulnerable LTCF residents. The rationale for the latter plan is easy to grasp. It was feared that, as was happening in northern Italy, pandemic patients with acute illness would flood the hospitals. To ensure sufficient beds, staff and respirators to care for them, a restriction on non-urgent patients would be necessary, as well as protocols to determine which patients would receive care and which would be placed on “end-of-life pathways.”

The strategic underpinning for such decisions is a concept known as population triage – or disaster triage. In a 2019 article on this topic, Michael Christian, a specialist in emergency preparedness, wrote that disaster triage is concerned with “allocating scarce resources in order to ‘do the greatest good for the greatest number.’”

While this utilitarian maxim “easily slips off the tongue,” he warns that “many overlook its profound implications” as the focus of decision-making shifts from “individual

patient outcomes to population-level outcomes.”

Following China's lead, nations around the world engaged in an exercise of population triage never before attempted or even conceived. The lockdowns meant to slow the spread of infections so hospitals could prepare for the onslaught were part of



Both Quebec premier François Legault (left) and Quebec coroner Géhane Kamel (right) blamed the death toll in LTCFs on “organizational negligence,” a claim that ignores the many deliberate policy changes and recommendations that left the elderly dangerously exposed and vulnerable. (Sources of photos: (left) François Legault (@françoislegault)/Twitter, (right) Montreal Gazette (@mtlgazette)/Twitter)

disaster triage. In England, the ubiquitous advice was “Stay Home – Protect the NHS – Save Lives.” That message was on every government minister's lips and on billboards everywhere. The National Health Service, not the individual patient, was prioritized.

Hospitals were to prepare for the reception of Covid-19 patients: triage in advance. As the elderly in the care homes were deemed least likely to benefit from Covid-19 care offered in hospitals, transfer of sick patients from the long-term care facilities to the hospitals was discouraged. Quebec's Health Ministry issued a directive on March 19 – barely a week after the

several U.S. states including New York and New Jersey, and in England.

On March 17 Danielle McCann, Quebec's Minister for Health and Social Services, announced that by offering alternative locations for hospital patients and postponing elective surgeries, the province would be able to free up 6,000-8,000 of the province's 18,000 hospital beds. According to the minister, the number of beds expected to be needed was based on data emerging from Italy.

Quebec's projection, like so many others, turned out to be a grotesque overestimation. Nearly a month later the number of people hospitalized for Covid-19

was only 733. Covid-19 hospitalizations would peak in mid-May with a seven-day average of 1,600.

On November 18, 2021, McCann testified at the inquest that only a few hundred

hospital patients were actually transferred to the nursing homes. But that was not without cost. That same day, Kamel noted that one elderly patient transferred to Herron in the early days of the pandemic was found dead two days after the transfer. His family believe he had been abandoned in the confusion. How many other similar

**Cuomo, a left-leaning and highly popular Democrat, effectively created a series of super-spreader events among his state's most vulnerable population. New York's health department originally reported the transfer of 6,327 patients and recorded 8,500 deaths among long-term care residents. The true numbers – 9,056 transfers and some 15,000 deaths – were only revealed much later.**

global pandemic had been declared – instructing nursing homes not to send residents to hospitals unless in exceptional circumstances. Conversely, hospital patients who were not in critical condition were to be either sent home or transferred to care homes. This practice was adopted in multiple jurisdictions: Quebec, Ontario,



cases might there have been?

The same was happening in New York, where then-Governor Andrew Cuomo issued a directive that drove thousands of hospital patients to nursing homes. The directive forbade the homes from turning away patients who tested positive for Covid-19, and it would later be learned that many were not tested in any event. Cuomo, a left-leaning and highly popular



*An excess of prevention: Early in the pandemic, Quebec's Health Minister Danielle McCann announced provincial triage measures meant to free up 6,000 to 8,000 hospital beds, based on early Covid-19 statistics from Italy; it would prove to be a massive overreaction. (Source of photo: The Canadian Press/Jacques Boissinot)*

Democrat, effectively created a series of super-spreader events among his state's most vulnerable population. The state's health department originally reported the transfer of 6,327 patients and recorded 8,500 deaths among long-term care residents. The true numbers – 9,056 transfers and some 15,000 deaths – were only revealed much later, under pressure from the New York State Bar Association's Task Force on Nursing Homes.

### Just How Far Did "Population Triage" Go?

The truth about these population triage measures becomes still more troubling when we learn more about their actual scope.

In the U.K., it did not end at withholding advanced care from elderly Covid-19 patients who were deemed unlikely to survive. Instead, "Do not resuscitate" (DNR) orders for residents of care homes became standard. A DNR stipulates that "neither basic (heart compressions and ventilation) nor advanced (defibrillator or medicines) CPR should be performed."

Care homes were asked by the NHS managers to issue a blanket DNR for all residents.

Similarly, for five months first responders of Urgences-Santé, a Quebec ambulance service, were instructed not to resuscitate those whose hearts had stopped. "During the summer and spring, we just modified our protocol to protect the paramedic, to protect the health system, to protect the people – all people – because we didn't know...how to protect ourselves, how contagious it was," said Pierre-Patrick Dupont, director of care at Urgences-Santé.

Hospital medical staff were advised to prepare to ration intensive care beds and ventilators. The first to be treated were those who had the best diagnostic outcome. If too many candidates qualified, priority should be given first to those who are of "*un stade moins avancé*," or those who have more life to live; second, to healthcare professionals; and finally, to those chosen by lottery, "*la randomisation*." While that did not prove necessary, in the nursing homes a catalogue of horrors – neglect and isolation, malnutrition and dehydration, and death upon death – was unfolding.

The Quebec coroner's inquest that began last June revealed that as non-critical patients were being transferred from the hospitals to the LTCFs, family members of residents were being contacted and advised to revise the end-of-life instructions attached to their relative's file. A Health Department document filed at the inquest recommended that residents who had been classified as recipients of A or B-level care (that is, as receiving treatment to prolong life) "should move towards C and D levels," as those who would now receive only "comfort care," subject to end-of-life protocols.

The CHSLD Sainte-Dorothée lost nearly half its residents, but the coroner's inquest focused on one death in particular. Anna José Maquet, a 94-year-old resident, died on April 3. (It is unclear whether Maquet had tested positive for Covid-19; either she was never tested or the results were not recorded.) According to the testimony of

her son, Jean-Pierre Daubois, the family had a phone conversation with their mother on the evening prior, during which she said she was feeling fine. The next morning, she choked while drinking a liquid and later threw up her medication. At 12:45 p.m., morphine was administered. By nightfall she was dead.

Maquet's death does not seem to be a result of careless or indiscriminate use of narcotics such as the military observed in Ontario nursing homes. In fact, morphine was part of a "respiratory distress protocol" that nurses at Sainte-Dorothée had been instructed to use, a protocol apparently issued by the local health authority, the CISSS Laval.

Sylvie Morin, assistant chief nurse at CHSLD Sainte-Dorothée, testified to the use of the protocol: "They made us put them all on the respiratory-distress protocol...morphine, scopolamine, Ativan." Morin recalled that in early March her unit leader was visibly agitated. In a conversation with Morin, the unit leader said that if Covid-19 entered the nursing home it would empty the facility. "She had 250 death certificates [and] 250 forms for the respiratory distress protocol." Morin pushed back, telling her boss, "Come now, they're not all going to die." Later, however, she would come to believe that "it was all set up ahead of time." Not all residents who were administered the protocol died, "but most did."

### A Legitimate Treatment, or Stealth Euthanasia?

A respiratory distress protocol (RDP) may sound perfectly appropriate in the context of a SARS virus. After all, a small proportion of those who contract SARS-CoV-2 develop a form of pneumonia that can cause acute respiratory distress syndrome, which requires special attention and treatment. But the RDP described by Sylvie Morin is not such a treatment.

What is it, then? It is a combination of drugs deployed in end-of-life care, particularly in the last days or hours of life. Scopolamine is given to help control airway secretions; Ativan (lorazepam) or another

benzodiazepine like Versed (Midazolam) to manage agitation and delirium; morphine for pain control. While the layperson might suppose that the protocol is used to assist a patient to breathe, the main effect is to reduce the urgent drive to breathe. Used in combination, these drugs have a very narrow therapeutic window. It is a fine balance between administering a dose that successfully manages the pain and agitation of a dying patient and one that

five health authorities, including the CISSS Laval where CHSLD Sainte-Dorothée is located, the physicians found that the Covid-19-specific protocols recommended doses that were too high.

In low doses, the combination of benzodiazepines, morphine and scopolamine achieves the aim of relief from anxiety and pain. In higher doses, the result is typically respiratory depression and death. As mentioned, the

these palliative-care protocols. They are typically used in carefully monitored hospital or hospice settings. Was any use of them in the LTFCs even appropriate? If administered by teams who are undertrained and unfamiliar with the protocols, is the practice consistent with a recognized standard of care? Questions about these kinds of protocols are emerging, and need to be pursued, in other jurisdictions as well.

**A Montreal neurologist interviewed for this article noted that respiratory distress protocols are used almost exclusively after consultation with a palliative-care team or when it has been established that the level of intervention is consistent with a palliative approach. He said he found it hard to believe such a protocol would be a standing order.**

actually causes death. The drugs must be dosed carefully and the patient monitored closely.

A Montreal neurologist interviewed for this article noted that RDPs are used almost exclusively after consultation with a palliative-care team or when it has been established that the level of intervention is consistent with a palliative approach. He said he found it hard to believe such a protocol would be a standing order.

Michael Ferri, Chief of Psychiatry at Pembroke Regional Hospital in Ontario, echoed that concern: "It does not surprise me that it is part of a protocol for respiratory distress especially in palliative care, supported by palliative care physicians. What is disturbing, however, is the apparent intent to use this protocol widely, in situations without careful palliative physician oversight and without accountability for outcomes."

More distressing news about the protocols came out last month. On February 2, 2022, *Radio-Canada* reported that its journalists had obtained the RDPs developed for Covid-19 patients in 20 Quebec health authorities. They asked a panel of 12 physicians from the Quebec Association of Palliative Care Physicians (SQMDSP) to examine those protocols. The doctors' findings were disturbing. In

"therapeutic window" is narrow. In light of their findings, the SQMDSP informed the Fédération des Médecins Omnipatricsiens du Québec (FMOQ) that the Covid-19-related protocols were inappropriate and that any training based on them should be immediately withdrawn. Hours before publication of the *Radio-Canada* article, the FMOQ announced it had withdrawn the online training.

A number of important questions arise from the SQMDSP report. It is clear that there were two sets of protocols being used in the spring of 2020: one for Covid-19 patients and one for non-Covid-19 patients. The dosing was higher in the Covid-19 protocols. The *Radio-Canada* article notes that, "No protocols with potentially excessive doses were identified by the Society in the respiratory distress protocols for non-Covid-19 patients." We also know that, in at least the case of Anna José Maquet, a patient whose Covid-19 status was in doubt was administered an RDP issued by the health authority. Were there two sets of protocols in use at the CHSLD Sainte-Dorothée? If so, which one did Anna José receive?

Another question is the use of RDPs in a non-clinical setting. As noted by Ferri, careful oversight and clinical reasoning are required in the administration of

In April 2020, members of the U.K.'s House of Commons Health & Social Care Committee questioned Health Secretary Matt Hancock at a virtual meeting. Luke Evans, a Conservative MP and physician, prefaced his questions by suggesting something was missing from the Covid-19 "battle plan." For some people, he said, death is an inevitability and there should be provision for those who would not make it to intensive care units. "A good death needs three things. It needs equipment, it needs medication, and it needs staff to administer it." He then asked, "Do you have enough syringe drivers? Do you have enough medication, particularly midazolam and morphine?" Hancock answered yes to both questions. The MP's questions and the Health Minister's ready response suggest that the U.K. government had already prepared to impose end-of-life protocols on patients who had been deemed too old or frail to receive treatment.

### **The Prodigious Use of Killer Drugs**

The prodigious use of such drugs raises further questions. Midazolam, for instance, a quick-acting benzodiazepine used for sedation and muscle relaxation, facilitates intubation in the emergency department and in operating rooms. It is used in

palliative care to provide rapid relief from agitation and air hunger. (In Canada, it's used in Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) protocols, and in the U.S. as part of the process for administering the death penalty through lethal injection.)

In England, the five-year monthly average prescription total for midazolam was 15,000 – but in April 2020 this figure leaped to 38,353 prescriptions. Accord Healthcare, one of the drug's five manufacturers, reported it had sold two years' worth of stock to U.K. wholesalers in March and that by the end of April those supplies had been depleted. In May, the country's pharmaceutical regulator gave Accord approval for a further 22,000 packs of French label stocks to be sold into the NHS.

The subject is an uncomfortable one, to be sure. In a July 2020, *Daily Mail* Online article, Patrick Pullicino, a retired neurologist and neuroscientist who held multiple senior academic and clinical positions over a long career, suggested that the triage protocols consigned vulnerable patients to end-of-life care. In Pullicino's view, this result was unintentional. As he wrote, "This flow-chart encouraged use of end-of-life sedation with midazolam – effectively resulting in euthanasia pathways." The Association for Palliative Medicine of Great Britain and Ireland, however, disputed Pullicino's evaluation. "I absolutely do not believe," declared the association's president, Amy Proffitt, "That there have been cases of euthanasia in care homes related to Covid-19."

Such a position is increasingly difficult to maintain, however. It is belied both by facts on the ground and by the striking similarities between procedures in diverse jurisdictions. A *Wired U.K.* article suggests that Sweden may have been on a parallel track. It notes both the non-admission of the elderly and infirm to intensive care units and the administering of "a palliative cocktail of morphine and midazolam, because the homes were not equipped to administer oxygen," as well as the fact that this protocol was not restricted to Covid-19-positive patients. According to Andrew Ewing, a professor at the University of



*Final gasp: Midazolam is used in palliative care to reduce agitation and "air hunger," as well as in MAiD protocols in Canada; in April 2020 the U.K. health care system consumed more than twice the normal amount.*

Gothenburg, "A person who got a urinary tract infection and required hospitalisation, for example for IV antibiotic or fluids, would not get that care either. They received palliative medicine instead."

From the very beginning of the pandemic, it seems, there were plans in several countries to implement a system of population triage that included the administration of end-of-life drugs to those considered too old or frail for intensive (or, in some cases, even standard) Covid-19 medical treatment. We know that the associated protocols can induce death, and that they were sometimes employed on residents in public care who were not in immediate danger of death or even Covid-19-positive.

Neither the extent of these measures nor their justification has been properly examined as yet, despite deeply disturbing indicators that they amount to a kind of involuntary euthanasia. Like many other public health policies introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic, these protocols and their implementation demand strict legal investigation and close public scrutiny. That in the early going "granny" very often died unexpectedly is not in doubt. We owe it to her to find out why.

*Anna Farrow is a Montreal-based director of a non-profit organization representing English-speaking Catholics in Quebec who has written for Mercatornet, Catholic World Report, The Catholic Register and other publications.*

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# If You Want to Judge the Freedom Movement, Go See it for Yourself

By George Koch

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What critics of the Freedom Convoy seem to hate most, what just about drives them around the bend, is seeing the protesters enjoying themselves. The sputtering Jim Watson, mayor of Ottawa, seemed almost overcome with indignation when describing the bouncy castles, barbecues, dancing and music on Parliament Hill. *The insolence. The effrontery. Intolerable!* This is an occupation, after all, or perhaps an insurrection, or even sedition. It isn't supposed to be *fun*. In any event, it must be illegal. Why, just the other night there were unauthorized fireworks over the House of Commons!

In his own blustering way, and certainly without meaning it, Watson was onto something. There is a lot of joy among the Freedom Convoy protesters in Ottawa and at the ongoing Freedom Rallies, marches and slow-rolls all over Canada. Anyone looking at this nationwide phenomenon with open eyes and an open mind – if they can see past the oceans of Canadian flags, themselves a joyful sight if ever there

was one – can't help but notice the pure, natural, unforced and unrestrained joy. It is everywhere and all around. In an article on the *Narcity* website, Cassandra Navarette recounts making this discovery for herself, stunned yet exhilarated that the reality proved so different from the official reports.

Last Saturday I felt it the moment I got out of my car a few blocks from Calgary's Freedom Rally, locking eyes with a stranger unloading a sign and both breaking into big smiles. It strengthened as I walked down 13th Avenue towards Central Memorial

Park, noticing people streaming in from all directions. There was no anger in evidence; everybody just seemed happy. There were as many women as men, plus quite a few children.

Amidst the smiling faces and laughing voices at the park, with music, singing of *O Canada*, spontaneous conversations with people all around, hugging strangers and calling out in unison for "Freedom!" bobbing in a sea of waving flags, the feeling became almost overwhelming. I realized that never in my life had I felt so



Some "occupation": These Canadian demonstrators in central Ottawa are happy and proud to show it. This enrages the miserable: Trudeau, Watson, Sloly, Singh, Carney and their ilk. (Source of all photos: Shutterstock)

glad to see my country's flag. Never had I been so proud of my fellow Canadians. I could hardly see through the tears streaming down my face.

This is key. As things stand in Canada, after two years of "two weeks to flatten

obligatory "of-coursing." Of course it has attracted oddballs and eccentrics, plus those whom the past two years have badly rattled or broken. Of course you will encounter anger and come across some hard-to-unravel and extreme opinions. "My

other side isn't playing by the old rules. It hasn't been for a long time. You are being manipulated if not lied to at nearly every turn – by politicians, activist groups, police chiefs and most of all the mainstream news media. They want you to shut up, obey and stay home in fear.

Grant A. Brown wrote the other day that the federal Liberals and news media aren't so much lying as inverting the truth. I'd put it a slightly different way: there's just no relationship between what they say and the truth. Their narrative is all. If the truth happens to coincide with or advance the narrative, then some of what they say could be true. But that's it. You have no way of knowing which is which, unless you verify everything independently – or stop relying on the mainstream media. They are utterly unrestrained and will say anything. A few examples follow.

### **The number of protesters is consistently understated.**

If any journalist bothered to think about it, they would realize that each Saturday in dozens of cities and towns tens of thousands of Canadians – perhaps even 100,000 or more – are out demonstrating. They could even report that. Yet they either ignore the topic or dismissively mention individual events. Last Saturday I looked around the Calgary crowd at length, trying to estimate the number, and could not come to anything less than about 3,000 people. Then I counted a representative square of 100 people, and then counted squares, stopping at a dozen, at which point I was barely 1/3 of the way across the park. As the orderly street march got underway, the numbers seemed larger still: four lanes packed with people for hundreds of metres. The local media reported a turnout of 1,000-1,500, without any stated basis.

### **The claims that Parliament Hill was "occupied" or "blockaded" are bogus.**

If it were true, MPs and staff could not walk freely to their jobs. As Alberta Conservative MP John Barlow said on

## **We live in a country whose Prime Minister denounces his opponents and critics with the most intolerant and vile terms – 'misogynists and racists' – and openly expresses his loathing of at least one-third (perhaps half) of his fellow citizens. And our side needs to apologize?**

the curve," being happy is itself an act of rebellion. In standing alongside fellow human beings and feeling good about it, you are declaring your refusal to live in fear. You are asserting your most basic freedoms – the freedom to formulate your own thoughts and to feel the things that come naturally. You are rejecting the manufactured climate of fear and crisis, the never-ending rollout of oppressive measures, the mainstream news media's panic porn, the Liberal government's awful hatred of ordinary Canadians and of Canada itself. Feeling happy – and showing it – is a big deal.

So is waving that flag. I never thought I would thank Justin Trudeau for anything, but I must say, he has handed Canadians a priceless gift. Through his trashing of our nation's history, his claim that our country has no identity, his portrayal of Canada as a place of racism and oppression, his open sympathy for those who hate Canada and would burn it to the ground, his implication that our flag is dirty and shameful, Trudeau has made the Maple Leaf itself a symbol of opposition and, yes, even rebellion. He has handed the Freedom Movement a beautiful, stirring, unmistakable emblem, a single unifying banner for everyone to rally round: Canada's flag. Who but the hard-left, the bitter, the haters, can be against that? Have you noticed all the flags popping up on vehicles, roadside fences, homes and businesses? Thank you, Justin!

Obviously the Freedom protests aren't only about joy. Here I must do some

search for the truth has taken me down to some very dark places, and at times it was hard to come back," a friend confessed to me the other day. But what else can one expect in such trying times? What's called for isn't rejection and contempt, but sincere conversation and a warm hug. And of course, if people behave abusively towards bystanders, businesses or law enforcement, commit vandalism or other crimes, they should be called out or reported as appropriate.

But for myself, I refuse to apologize when someone points out an individual lapse in a sea of positive behaviour and largely articulate signage (even if one lady spelled it "Pifzer"). For one thing, that isn't me, or the person next to me, or the one beyond that. One Confederate flag and one swastika in an entire nationwide movement? And you want me to grovel? Are you joking? We live in a country whose Prime Minister denounces his opponents and critics with the most intolerant and vile terms – "misogynists and racists" – and openly expresses his loathing of at least one-third (perhaps half) of his fellow citizens. And our side needs to apologize? Forget it. I no longer hesitate: "Let's go, Brandeau."

And, yes, there is much that is deadly serious. Here I speak to the remaining law-and-order, obey-the-restrictions, play-by-the-rules conservatives who shy away from the Freedom movement in discomfort, distaste or out of sheer elitism. You need to get it through your heads: the



his way into the House of Commons on Tuesday, "This isn't like [the protesters] brought Ottawa to a screeching halt...I live right downtown when I'm in Ottawa. I've managed to get to work. I haven't been kept up all night." A *C2C Journal* correspondent reported similar freedom of movement in downtown Ottawa throughout the protest period – as well as the cleanest sidewalks she's ever seen there.

"As someone who lives right on top of the convoy, there is no noise at night," reported blogger David, an Ottawa data scientist who recently wrote about his night-time stroll among the protesters. After meeting people from every province except PEI, David concluded: "They are our moral conscience reminding us – with every blow of their horns – what we should have never forgotten: We are not a country that makes an untouchable class out of our citizens."

Oh, and a reminder for those millions of Canadians (including most of our governing elite) who appear to have forgotten: peaceful assembly and expression both are enumerated *Charter* rights, and "expression" includes more than just speech. There's nothing improper or illegal as such about the Freedom protest, which is taking place almost entirely on public property. Nor does the *Charter* stipulate a time limit. And also recall that public authorities across Canada for months on end tolerated crime-ridden, gang-operated, drug-infested, filth-laden homeless encampments that made genuine no-go-zones out of inner-city parks and truly terrorized local residents.

**The repeated claims of "crimes" and other serious lawbreaking would be laughable if they weren't so outrageous.**

The best (or worst) that Watson and Ottawa police chief Peter Sloly have come up with are illegal parking, failing to drive in proper lanes and setting off illegal fireworks, along with harrumphing about lots of further "investigations" into alleged crimes (some of which, if they occurred, were probably against the protesters). NDP leader Jagmeet Singh disgraces himself daily with fictitious calumnies. All



*The mainstream media accuse them of stealing from the homeless, but here Freedom Convoy protesters are photographed shoveling snow in downtown Ottawa.*

three men seem bereft of self-awareness.

More vaguely, protest opponents have grouched about various alleged threats, littering and stealing from homeless – even as streaming videos and other reports have

restraint. Two speakers were former police and said they believe a large percentage of rank-and-file officers sympathize and hope things don't escalate. This makes sense, since a large proportion of police officers remain unvaccinated and many police unions negotiated their way around vaccine mandates. Indeed, several major Canadian police forces might have effectively collapsed had their unvaccinated members been fired.

Not all police are acting properly, however. A by-stander video shows Ottawa police roughly hauling away a very small and frail elderly man. His sole offence, the arresting officers state, was "failing" to present identification. There is no such law in Canada. Carrying identification is simply not a requirement of citizenship, nor for going about one's lawful business. It is the law, however, for police officers to provide their names and badge numbers when requested – and the video shows repeated (though highly foul-mouthed) demands to

**About those fireworks. As mentioned, expressing joy is now an act of rebellion. And few things are more exuberantly joyful than fireworks, a physical assertion that to be human is to strive for the heavens and that light shall drive out darkness.**

shown protesters shovelling sidewalks, picking up and neatly arranging garbage, and handing food and cash to homeless. Crime in Central Ottawa appears to have plunged.

About those fireworks. As mentioned, expressing joy is now an act of rebellion. And few things are more exuberantly joyful than fireworks, a physical assertion that to be human is to strive for the heavens and that light shall drive out darkness.

**What are we to make of the police?**

Speakers at the rally I attended went out of their way to praise law enforcement members for their professionalism and

do so. This the two Ottawa cops refused to do. They broke the law. And they remained masked outdoors, which made them even harder to identify.

Disturbing as this scene was, immeasurably worse will be if the authorities decide to move aggressively against the Ottawa, Coutts (Alberta), Emerson (Manitoba) or Ambassador Bridge protesters. Then we will have the spectacle of largely unvaccinated police officers, many of whom won't even believe in what they are doing, arresting an at least partially vaccinated group of truckers for the crime of vocally protesting vaccine mandates to which they but not the police are subject. Grotesque.

## The threat of violence comes primarily from the left.

From the beginning public authorities and mainstream media issued fevered predictions and insinuations of violence. Their hope was as naked as it was disgusting. As of this writing, there has been only one significant known act of violence committed throughout the entire cross-Canada convoy, border-crossing blockades, Parliament Hill protest and innumerable freedom rallies and slow-



Come and see it with your own eyes. Scenes from Calgary's Freedom Rally, February 5, 2022.

rolls. This was by the self-declared "punk antifa" lunatic in Manitoba who ploughed his vehicle into a group of Freedom demonstrators (while wearing a mask!), then tried to get away. Police describe it as a "hit-and-run." Another reported incident, an alleged arson attempt that could have ended horrifically, was very likely a hoax.

## Claims that Freedom demonstrators in Calgary are routinely harassing bystanders and health care employees are either invented or greatly exaggerated.

Local media have retailed claims by staff at the Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre,

across from Central Memorial Park, of routine harassment by anti-vax-mandate protesters. I've been to the Centre many times and for years had offices two blocks away. I know first-hand that patients and staff are always at risk of harassment and even physical assault at the hands of the tragic human wreckage that clusters around the centre virtually round the clock. Drug deals occur openly throughout the neighbourhood and it can be downright frightening to walk from one's car to the Centre.

Except on Freedom Rally day. Then the druggies keep a low profile while the demonstrators steer clear of the Centre. Last Saturday I made a point of standing near the entrance and saw nothing untoward. It is of course possible that an isolated extremist might at other times harass an employee – but there are armed police in the Centre 24/7, plus private security. The local media, however, insinuate that this discredits an entire national movement.

In thinking about contentious issues these days, I often find myself asking, "If their views are so right, why do they need to lie about so much?" Truth is not afraid to be challenged but a lie typically hates uncomfortable questions. The response to the Freedom movement from opponents, critics, many politicians, certain other elite leaders, police chiefs and much of the mainstream media has been of this nature.

If you ask yourself the same thing, perhaps you will begin to think about where the truth might actually lie. Perhaps you will conclude the time has come to place a Canadian flag on your mailbox, door, lawn or car. Perhaps the next time a friend or relative sneers at "those damned truckers" you will find a voice that offers a few words in defence. Perhaps the next time the police ludicrously warn the public to "avoid the downtown core" on Freedom Rally day, you will take that as your signal to do the opposite: drive down there, park and walk peacefully to that day's rally alongside fellow Canadians of every colour, belief and description.

And see for yourself. See the ocean of flags. Hear our national anthem. Sing

it. And hear "Freedom!" shouted. After "love," the most exhilarating, intoxicating, wondrous word in the English language. There's no way to know how this will end. Bad things could already be happening. Ontario's Ford government this morning declared a state of emergency while B.C. announced it will expand vaccine mandates. But I couldn't say it better than how one of the nation's more controversial commentators put it the other day: "Don't you wish you were there?"

*George Koch is editor-in-chief of C2C Journal.*

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