

The Leveller

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2018

Building consensus since 2009

VOL. 11, NO. 3



FEATURE

PATTERNS OF NEGLECT

BY NEAL ROCKWELL

HERON GATE RESIDENTS SUFFER FROM A LEGACY OF POOR MAINTENANCE AND LANDLORDS' USE OF A MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE TO OVERTURN BYLAW ORDERS

It's been six months since the corporate landlord Timbercreek first issued eviction notices to 105 families residing in a collection of town homes within their Heron Gate housing complex.

Most of these families were made up of people of colour, many immigrants and refugees. A large portion of these families organized during the spring and summer to save their homes under the banner of the Herongate Tenant Coalition.

In the end, Timbercreek managed to get most of these tenants out by their Sept. 30 deadline. The homes now sit boarded up and surrounded by a fence and security patrol, as they await demolition.

The fence, in a way, is a testament to what the activists achieved. When Timbercreek demolished an earlier tract of houses in 2016, there had been no fence, just as there had been no movement to oppose the demolition. The fence is a symbol that recognizes the power of these tenant activists, which clearly the company has come to perceive as enemies.

The day after Timbercreek's deadline, Oct. 1, was a grim and cloudy day. The atmosphere had transformed completely from a month before, when these townhouses were still filled with people.

Now the eviction zone felt like a ghost town. A few families were in the process of moving. Most of the houses were empty.

Workers had already begun to rip out old appliances and shelving, throwing things in chaotic piles behind the homes. Some houses had the windows boarded up and others had asbestos warnings taped to the front doors.

I began documenting what was happening in Heron Gate in late May after being contacted by some of the coalition's organizers. My original focus was to record what was happening on the ground in the community.

Later, I reported on the way the municipal planning process – and the high-level intersections between developers and politicians, often mediated by consulting firms – that helped produce the on-the-ground disaster in Heron Gate (*The Leveller* 11.3, Sept/Oct 2018).

For this article, I began to trace how the demo-viction of Heron Gate was enabled by the failure of the City of Ottawa's By-law and Regulatory Services Branch (Bylaw) to enforce basic maintenance – and the way Timbercreek exploited a little-known municipal body called the Property Standards and License Appeal Committee where landlords can appeal Bylaw orders without tenants' knowledge.

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CANADIAN OIL INDUSTRY STILL MAKING BILLIONS

TAR SANDS PROFITS BLOCK CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRESS

Rick Telfer

Alberta's tar sands continue to be enormously profitable for the five largest bitumen-extractive corporations in Canada, according to a new report released on Nov. 8 by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) and the Alberta-based Parkland Institute.

The report – entitled "Boom, Bust, and Consolidation: Corporate Restructuring in the Alberta Oil Sands" – examined the finances of Sunoco Energy, Canadian Natural Resources Limited (CNRL), Cenovus Energy, Imperial Oil and Husky Energy from 2009 to 2017. These "Big Five" companies produce 80 per cent of Canada's bitumen.

The oil companies enjoyed an economic boom period until an oil price crash in late 2014: the bust. According to the research, a "prolonged glut in global oil markets" led to the price of oil losing "nearly half of its value in the second half of 2014." Consequently, "2015 was the worst year for Alberta job losses since 1982."

However, the Big Five still paid \$12.56 billion in dividends to shareholders since then, for a total of \$31.76 billion over the entire period.

In 2017 alone, the Big Five banked \$7.3 billion, paid \$6.2 billion to shareholders,

and remitted \$4.72 billion in government taxes and royalties. In total, the Big Five's profits were \$46.6 billion in 2017.

In comparison, the Alberta government's revenues totalled \$47.3 billion in 2017, and the federal government reported \$293.5 billion in revenue for the fiscal year ending in 2017. In other words, the Big Five raked in the equivalent of 98.5% of the Alberta government's revenue and 15.9% of the federal government's revenue.

"Despite the 2014 oil price crash and the ongoing hand-wringing over pipelines and the price differential, the reality is that the Big Five oil sands producers have remained incredibly profitable corporations," said Ian Hussey, the lead author of the report.

"There's no question that the price crash had a major impact on the industry in Alberta, most importantly on the almost 20,000 workers who lost their jobs in 2015, but the Big Five are doing just fine," Hussey added.

In response to the report, Ben Brunnen, a vice-president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, told CBC News that the figures show that "both companies and the governments are sharing in the benefits of the

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The Leveller

EDITORIAL

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT (OUR) DEMOCRACY?



If you’re the kind of person who reads *The Leveller*, you’ve probably been pretty disappointed by recent election results. From Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil to Ford in Ontario, Trump in the US to François Legault in Québec, creepy and hateful politicians seem to be riding a tide of victory.

Right here in Ottawa, voters just passed up several chances to elect the city’s first black councillor.

Think about that. It’s 2018. Ottawa has never had a black councillor. Or mayor.

It’s enough to make a good-hearted person despair. Or maybe... question a few sacred cows.

What if the problem’s not just corporate media consolidation, social media polarization, and right wing popularization?

What if voting is just a mostly-symbolic act that grants – at best – different branches of the same ruling elite the illusion of consent to rule us and make decisions for us?

What if the problem is democracy?

Okay, okay, maybe not democracy as a concept or ideal – but definitely democracy as it’s practiced in our society, in the place known as Canada. You know, state de-

mocracy, party politics, first-past-the-post, majority-wins, representative democracy.

Let’s talk about how that democracy works.

Party politics means a representative’s first allegiance is to their party, not the people who supposedly elected them. Combined with first-past-the-post, it creates a winner-take-all situation, where partisans become enemies and a vote doesn’t count if it’s not for a winner.

This fosters polarization and pushes politicians (and their followers) to treat each other as enemies. It makes debates and legislative votes mostly for show – grandstanding for future elections rather than making good policy or legislation.

The goal is not to make better legislation, but to prove the opposition is incompetent and immoral. No real decision-making takes place in legislatures – all of the decisions have been made elsewhere, generally by unelected, unaccountable, and even unknown officials.

In this system, politicians get ahead by demonizing and discrediting the other side(s). This way, a large enough minority of voters will hold their nose and choose them as the lesser evil over their opponents.

This electoral minority will then generally be converted by our archaic first-past-the-post system into a parliamentary majority and near-absolute governing power.

The governing party can then ignore its opponents and anyone who didn’t vote for it – except to try and demonize and discredit them, while their opponents try to do the same to them. And so on, endlessly.

What’s so democratic about a system that converts the votes of a minority into the tyranny of the majority?

Hell, what’s so great about the tyranny of the majority?

If it’s bad to have your life ruled by one person – a master, a king – is it so much better to have it ruled by many?

Is choosing our rulers really the best we can do?

Wouldn’t it be nice if we could choose to rule ourselves? To meet our needs and make decisions cooperatively, not coercively – with enthusiastic, ongoing consent rather than an occasional “if I have to, I guess”?

Whatever the method of election, granting one group of people power over the rest creates a governing class whose interests differ from those governed. It’s naive to think people will ignore their own interests. Government itself, power itself is the problem.

Rather than chasing ‘democratic’ utopias and illusions, we should work to create realistic systems that reward non-hierarchical cooperation. Traditional Indigenous gift economies and consensus councils at least prove such things are humanly possible. Meanwhile, co-ops and affinity groups, to say nothing of Indigenous governments like that of Nunavut (but see p. 13) prove alternatives can succeed in the modern world, even without radical changes to overall society.

Something has to change. “Basically, average citizens only get what they want if economic elites or interest groups also want it,” is the way Vox summarized a 2014 study by political scientists Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page.

Or as Gilens and Page put it themselves, “Multivariate analysis indicates that economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence.”

“If you don’t vote, you don’t get to complain,” goes the old saw.

Fuck that. If you’re not offered a meaningful choice, it’s legitimate to refuse that choice.

Okay, okay, yes, there is something to be said for thinking – even voting – strategically. Even small differences between idiotic politicians who basically care nothing for justice can translate into real and meaningful differences on the ground for suffering and marginalized people.

So vote strategically, vote realistically, if you want.

An earlier *Leveller* editorial board (way back in April 2011), suggested readers “vote without faith,” without seeing it as “an almost sacred expression of our core political ideals and the only legitimate way to achieve meaningful political change.”

Here at 2018 *Leveller*, we admittedly would prefer to see a liberal in office over a conservative, and a democratic socialist over a liberal.

But sometimes we just don’t care.

A lot of other people don’t care either. And we don’t blame them.

Voter apathy and low voter turnout is a reasonable reaction to the near-meaningless choices our current political system offers.

So let’s stop wringing our hands over political apathy and launching crusades that present voting as some sort of self-evident moral duty. Instead, let’s work to transform the system that so drastically limits our choices.

And we’re not here to tell you how to do that – please just work for transformation from whatever angle and in whatever way excites and motivates you.

Lev·el·ler

noun

1 Historical: During the English Civil War (c. 1649), one who favoured the abolition of all rank and privilege. Originally an insult, but later embraced by radical anti-Royalists.

2 One who tells the truth, as in “I’m going to level with you.”

3 An instrument that knocks down things that are standing up or digs up things that are buried or hidden.

The Leveller is a publication covering news, current events, and culture at Carleton University, the University of Ottawa, the Ottawa/Gatineau region and, to a lesser extent, the wider world. It is intended to provide readers with a lively portrait of their campuses and communities and of the events that give them meaning. It is also intended to be a forum for provocative editorializing and lively debate on issues of concern to students, staff, and faculty as well as Ottawa residents.

The Leveller leans left, meaning it challenges power and privilege and sides with people over private property. It is also democratic, meaning that it favours open discussion over silencing and secrecy. Within these very general boundaries, the *Leveller* is primarily interested in being interesting, in saying something worth saying and worth reading about.

The Leveller needs you. It needs you to read it, talk about it, discuss it with your friends, agree with it, disagree with it, write a letter, write a story (or send in a story idea), join in the producing of it, or just denounce it. It needs you—or someone like you—to edit it, to guide it towards maturity, to give it financial security and someplace warm and safe to live. Ultimately it needs you to become a more truly democratic and representative paper.

The Leveller is an ambitious little rag. It wants to be simultaneously irreverent and important, to demand responsibility from others while it shakes it off itself, to be a fun-house mirror we can laugh at ourselves in and a map we can use to find ourselves and our city in. It wants to be your coolest, most in-the-know friend and your social conscience at the same time. It continues to have its work cut out for it.

The Leveller is published every month during the school year. It is free.

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Whether you're looking to add your accent to our voice of dissent or if you're interested in learning what it takes to get a grassroots media project up off the ground, contact editors.the.leveller@gmail.com to find out how you can get involved.

The Leveller is experimenting with paying our contributors, recognizing that your time is valuable and without you, the Leveller would cease to print.

\$100 - Investigative pieces

\$15 - Columns

\$50 - Feature spread

\$10 - Comment/Opinion

\$25 - Most others – campus, news, magazine, culture, comics

To facilitate paying our contributors, the Leveller has created an Investigative Journalism Fund, so that we can sustain this payment model as well as fund larger investigative research projects, or perhaps even add a journalist to the payroll someday.

Contact operations.the.leveller@gmail.com to contribute any amount.

The *Leveller* acknowledges that Ottawa is on unceded Algonquin territory.

The Leveller

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TAR SANDS
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

development, which is actually quite consistent with the nature of the royalty and resource development system that was built in Alberta.”

“So I would sort of make the case that [what] we see here is an example of the system working quite well,” said Brunnen. If shareholders are not rewarded in what is “a very competitive market for capital,” investors will take their money elsewhere, he added.

Meanwhile, Hussey explained that the “highly integrated” multinational oil companies – all with “significant assets in the US” – have been able to shift their operations in order to remain profitable.

Additionally, as the report details, “restructuring in the Alberta oil sands industry has consisted of several global oil giants selling their oil sands assets and the acquisition of much of this productive capacity by the Big Five” from 2015 to 2017. This was the post-bust consolidation period.

The report explains that “the Big Five were all vocal on what this phase of consolidation means for the future of the industry, with all five downplaying the possibility of large-scale expansion of productive capacity in the near-term. There will be expansion of production, but largely through increased efficiency of current facilities and because of past investments.”

Given the Big Five’s cost-cutting and slowing investment, the report concludes that the oil production sector has “weak fiscal, investment, employment, and innovation benefits.”

Worse, “if the Big Five are able to continue to steer provincial and federal fiscal, energy, and climate policies, Canada will not be able to live up to its Paris Agreement obligations for the year 2050.”

The Paris Agreement, an international accord which came into effect in Nov. 2016, aims to limit global warming to an increase of 1.5°C in order to avoid catastrophic climate breakdown. The target is widely regarded as ambitious and the agreement is non-binding.

The central problem, according to the report, is that



Rainforest Action Network activists doing a banner drop over Niagara Falls. Photo: Rainforest Action Network

“gross profits are the key factor that determines the accumulation strategies of these oligopolistic corporations.”

Another report released on Oct. 18 entitled “Who Owns Canada’s Fossil-Fuel Sector?” – also by the Parkland Institute and the CCPA – explored the profit-seeking problem in greater depth by determining “who has both an interest in the sector’s continued growth and the economic power to shape its future.”

The authors of the report found that, between 2010 and 2015, 25 investors controlled more than 40 per cent of total fossil fuel industry revenues.

The report concluded that “the financial benefits from fossil-fuel production go predominantly to a relatively small number of corporations, investment funds, wealthy families and governments” who wield immense economic power. A great deal of the industry is foreign-owned, and Canada’s five largest banks – RBC, TD, Scotiabank, BMO and CIBC – rank among the top investors.

“Financial institutions, pension funds and asset man-

agers together own substantial blocs of shares in many of these companies,” explained Bill Carroll, co-author of the study and a professor of sociology at the University of Victoria. “Each institutional investor may own less than 10% of any single company, but as a group they own far more. This places them in a position to exert control as a ‘constellation of interests.’”

To have any chance of achieving the Paris target, the Nov. 8 report concludes that “Canada and other countries need to implement much higher carbon taxes, and fossil-fuel-producing jurisdictions like Alberta need to develop and legislate plans for phasing out hydrocarbon production over the next number of years.”

“Albertans have to ask if it’s worth it to continue to bet on the cost-cutting sector with weak fiscal and employment benefits that has emerged from the crash,” said Hussey, “or if now is the time to put in place the policies to position the province to benefit from the ongoing global energy transition.”

MINISTER FULLERTON CAN’T HIDE FROM \$15 AND FAIRNESS

STUDENTS AND WORKERS RALLY TO PROTECT WORKERS’ RIGHTS



Workers and students unite to confront Minister Fullerton.

Photo: 15 and Fairness Ottawa

Brad Evoy

On Nov. 2, students and workers from across the Ottawa region gathered at the Kana-ta office of Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities Merilee Fullerton. They were there to protest the repeal of fair labour laws and the \$15 minimum wage within Ontario.

Last year, the Ontario labour movement had heralded a great success with the passage of Bill 148, which sought to increase the minimum wage, secure pay equity, add two paid sick days for employees, remove requirements for needless doctor’s notes for accessing leave, among further worker protections.

The Ford government has moved to largely strip away these protections and freeze the minimum wage at 14 dollars until 2020 through Bill 47, tellingly titled the Making Ontario Open for Business Act.

This act, if passed, will have devastating impacts upon working class families in Ontario – much like the government’s actions to wind down the Basic Income Pilot and the insurance premium reduction from the Workplace

Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB).

At the rally, the central message to Minister Fullerton, loudly and clearly, was that “Ontario should be addressing precarious work and promoting quality education across the postsecondary education system, not rolling back reasonable and modest improvements to labour law,” according to \$15 and Fairness Ottawa.

“Ontario should be addressing precarious work and promoting quality education across the postsecondary education system, not rolling back reasonable and modest improvements to labour law.”

Members at the rally furthered this message by connecting Bill 47 to other notable attacks on unionized college and university contract faculty, repeals to sexual education in primary and secondary schools, and the wider renewed push for austerity that reminded many of the violent, repressive era of Mike Harris.

This rally was preceded by

a major mobilizing effort on Halloween at Carleton University, where students gathered support while dressed in their seasonal best to push back against the repeal. The costumed ghosts and ghouls gave candy and haunting reminders of the Ford government’s legislation to members of the campus community.

A further mobilizing effort will be held on Nov. 15 at 1:30 p.m. called “The People’s

Hearings on Bill 47: Speak out for fairness!”

This will be hosted outside of Conservative MPP Jeremy Roberts’ office (1580 Merivale Rd, Nepean). Roberts both refused to accept petitions opposing Bill 47 and will vote in favour of the bill, regardless of opposition. The date is also the start of the next stage of the process to pass the bill in the legislature.

CANADA POST’S ROTATING STRIKES JOB ACTION WILL CONTINUE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Caroline Rodriguez-Charette

Canada Post workers are partaking in rotating strikes all across the country, with no indication of when they will end.

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), which represents 50,000 employees, have been on rotating strike since Monday, Oct. 22, due to their demands not being met. The job action will continue to increase if negotiators do not start making some progress.

Postal workers are striking for wage hikes, pay equality between rural and urban mail carriers, job security, improved benefits, and an overtime ban.

The union would also like to bring back postal banking, which ended in 1968. Thousands of rural and Indigenous communities do not have banking services, as the big banks have closed 45 per

cent of their rural branches in the last two decades.

Mike Palecek, the national president of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, stated in an interview with the CBC, “We’re trying to get management to move. Negotiations haven’t been fruitful. We haven’t seen a willingness to address any of our fundamental issues.”

The rotating strikes – meaning certain Canada Post locations will walk out on different days for 24 hours. CUPW decided on rotating strikes in order to minimize the postal disruption for customers.

Canada’s largest processing centre in Toronto was on strike for a second time in three weeks on Nov. 6, causing massive backlogs at their facilities. There were over 150 trailers full of mail and packages waiting to be unloaded and sorted out at Canada Post facilities, according to Canada Post



Canada Post workers are using rotating strikes to put pressure on management, while minimizing the postal disruption for customers. Photo: Lester Balajadia

spokesman Jon Hamilton.

Customers should expect several days of delay for mail and parcel delivery as the strike activity continues.

CUPW told the *Globe & Mail* that they plan to carry on with the job action until Canada Post “gets serious about bargaining.”

Joel Harden

MPP, Ottawa Centre



Our office is here for you with:

- Monthly Town Halls
- Canvasses
- Community Organizing
- Help Accessing Government Services (such as housing, ODSP/OW, healthcare, OSAP etc.)

Connect with us and let's get organized!

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SURVIVORS SPEAK

HEARING THE VOICES OF THE SEXUAL VIOLENCE SURVIVORS AT CARLETON UNIVERSITY

Yasmine Ghania

Where could you find more than 10 sexual violence survivors in a room? Probably many places on campus, but definitely at the “Survivors Speak” event.

The CUSA Womxn’s Centre hosted their third “Survivors Speak” event on Nov. 1, where Carleton students told their experiences of sexual violence through poems, songs and monologues.

As a means of respect, *The Leveller* will not share their names.

The Womxn’s Centre aims to be a safe space for those who identify as womxn. It provides free condoms, pregnancy tests and other resources. All womxn can use this space for breastfeeding, prayer and self-care.

The Womxn’s Centre was previously named the Womyn’s Centre. According to *The Charlatan*, this was changed to allow transgender women and women of colour to represent themselves in more inclusive spaces.

The event was held on a Thursday evening. About 50 people – four of them men – gathered at Rooster’s Coffeehouse. Conversations were initially light; people were talking about their day, casually complaining, or making

weekend plans. But then the event began and everything changed. The room grew somber. Everyone was silent.

The first survivor, a 21-year-old, went to the front of the cafe and began performing a spoken word poem titled “The Girl Who Didn’t Say No.” She said it was about three of her friends.

The first friend was sexually assaulted by a family relative when she was five years old. The second assault happened to her friend when she was in high school. As the performer was about to talk about the third assault, her voice started breaking and she forgot the lines of her poem.

The audience remained attentive and didn’t look away. She then talked about how the third person was raped by one of her friends when she was 20 years old. Her voice grew louder and louder as she said “when a survivor tells you their story, you shut up and listen.”

That’s when she revealed that all three stories were about her.

It was now time for the second performer. She was a first year student who was sexually assaulted by her uncle. “I’m an infant. I’m a toddler. I’m a six-year-old. I didn’t realize till I’m

18 years old the extent of what happened, what he did and how far he went,” she said. Her poem was titled “Bright.”

Why you might ask? The rest of it was about an experience she had only two weeks before this performance. She said she was at a party and had drank a lot. A man she didn’t know saw her stumbling and held her up by the arm, taking her to a different room in the house.

She said that in that moment, she “wanted to make the night worth it.” She began to take off her clothes.

What do you expect happened next? Well, the man covered his eyes and took her back to her house. He put her to bed, put a glass of water beside her, and held her hand.

Many other performances

followed. One was a song by a Foot Patrol volunteer. Foot Patrol is a student operated service on campus. It provides volunteers who are able to walk with students who don’t feel safe walking alone. They can walk as far as an hour off campus. They also provide another service called Walk and Talk, where a volunteer will stay with you on the phone until you safely arrive to your destination.

This particular volunteer said she performed last year, sharing about an experience she had as a child. She said after that performance she committed to performing again at the next event. But since that time, she was sexually assaulted again.

Every performer had a different story – stories that they

said will affect them for the rest of their lives. One performer said, “I didn’t come here because I wanted to, I came here because I needed to.”

There were even members of the audience that didn’t initially intend on speaking but ended up telling their stories. Looking all around the room one took a deep breath and said “I was raped by my boyfriend at the time. He didn’t believe that I was a virgin so he wanted to check for himself.”

She said this was her first time publicly speaking about her experience and thanked the audience for listening.

At the end of the event, Harar Hall, the programming coordinator of the Womxn’s Centre told *The Leveller* about the university’s Sexual Vio-

lence Policy, which is currently on review by the Office of the Vice-President. Hall said it’s on review for many things such as its lack of accommodations.

Right now, the policy recommends professors accommodate students who are survivors of sexual violence. But it’s not required. This means that if a professor chooses not to accommodate a student, they might have to write their exam in the same room as their perpetrator.

Hall said students need to be vocal about this policy and express concern in order for the university to actually change it. She continued by saying that a lot of people don’t even know that there are revisions happening to this policy.

“Think about what you can do to make a change.”

DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS

Sometimes a difference in degree can add up to a difference in kind. Trends in tuition and funding over the past three decades have reshaped post-secondary education, its role in society, and the lives of students.

For most of the 20th century, the federal government generally provided over 80 per cent of universities and colleges’ funding. Starting in 1993, Liberal governments under Jean Chretien and Paul Martin slashed provincial transfers in the name of deficit-slashing – and post-secondary funding has never recovered.

Today governments supply only 50 per cent of post-secondary education funding. This has decisively shifted the cost of post-secondary education onto students and wealthy donors. The result is more corporate universities and colleges, which are more expensive for students and more precarious for workers.

UNIVERSITY & COLLEGE FUNDING, THEN & NOW

- In 1992-93, the federal government’s contribution (adjusted for inflation) amounted to \$3,291 per post-secondary student; in 2015-16, the federal government’s per student contribution was only \$2,007 per student. That is almost 40 per cent less per student!
- In 1992-93, the federal government’s cash transfer for PSE was equivalent to 0.41 per cent of GDP. In 2014-15, it was only 0.20 per cent.
- Average undergraduate tuition and fees have increased by 159 per cent from 1990 to 2012, after accounting for inflation.
- In 1985, tuition accounted for only 16 per cent of the revenue of universities. By 2015, that proportion had grown to 40 per cent.

Stat sources: CUPE, the Canadian Union of Public Employees’ “Myth Buster: Federal funding in post-secondary education” and “Backgrounder No 1: Federal Funding for Post-Secondary Education.”

Special Membership Meeting

Friday, November 16th
St-Patrick room 435, 1-3pm



General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, December 5th
Canal 2104, 5:30pm



GMMS ARE OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS. COME BE HEARD, GET INVOLVED, AND HELP LEAD YOUR UNION AS WE PREPARE FOR OUR UPCOMING ROUND OF BARGAINING.

CONDOS ON AN ALGONQUIN SACRED SITE? PANELS EXAMINES ONGOING COLONIALISM

Matt Cicero

GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM

It was on a cold autumn Saturday at the end of October that close to a hundred people came together for a panel discussion named "Reconciliation: Remembering Creator's Sacred Pipe."

The discussion aimed to show why settler construction companies are building condominiums at Akikodjiwan (Chaudière Falls), an Algonquin sacred site.

There were four speakers on the panel: Algonquin faith leader Albert Dumont and Algonquin intellectual Lynn Gehl, as well as white settlers Lindsay Lambert, a historian, and Randy Boswell, a professor of journalism.

Two construction companies, Dream and Theia Partners, want to build condominiums on Albert and Chaudière Islands next to the Chaudière Falls. The area, like all of Ottawa, is stolen Algonquin land, but the falls and surrounding islands are also a sacred Algonquin site. In 2007 Domtar closed the last pulp mill on the islands, clearing the way for Dream and Theia Partners to buy the land.

Albert Dumont clearly underlined the racism of the plans to destroy the sacred site. "Nobody's going to go to another house of worship and knock it down," he said.

The panel happened in a large hall in the brown brick building of the Alexander Community Centre. The hall was functional, with an off-white linoleum floor lit by large fluorescent lights. Participants sat in black plastic chairs around close to twenty long plastic tables covered in plastic tablecloths. It's a scene familiar to anyone accustomed to activism in Ottawa.

If the setting was cold, the people brought warmth. The event was organized by grassroots activists – more than a dozen volunteers set up tables, brought food and water, and collected tickets.

Two Algonquin women affiliated with Theia Partners and Dream also attended. The construction companies have gained the support of three Algonquin band councils – Pikwākanagān, Timiskaming and Long Point First Nations. These band councils have given their approval for the condominiums, and in exchange for this support the corporations have promised to "create opportunities in the region for their members, [and] raise awareness about their people and culture".

When the panel had finished, one of these Algonquin women accused the panellists of lying because they had described the apartments being



Albert Dumont and Lynn Gehl, two presenters at a panel critiquing condos planned for an Algonquin sacred site. Photo: Monica Vida

sold as condos rather than "One World Zero Carbon Living Spaces." They are described as condos on the company website.

STOLEN LAND

Lindsay Lambert has made defending the sacred site a part-time job. He's an antiquarian by trade, but has made it his business to dig up everything he can about the land title to the area. According to Lambert, Windmill and Dream Unlimited, as well as the previous occupant, Domtar, don't have a legal deed to the property. If this is true then they don't legally own the property.

"They're breaking their own laws. They're stealing

[Akikodjiwan] from everybody," Lambert said.

There are two separate issues when it comes to ownership of the area. The most fundamental is that Ottawa, and the Ottawa river watershed are the stolen land of the Algonquin nation. The Algonquin Anishinaabe have never ceded or surrendered any part of their territory.

The second is that, according to Lambert, the municipal, provincial and federal governments are ignoring an act of parliament – An Act Respecting Certain Works on the Ottawa River (1870). This act states that any works "in the channel or waters" of the Kitchi Zibi (Ottawa river) "shall be subject to the exclusive leg-

islative authority of the Parliament of Canada."

Lambert also says that the National Capital Commission (NCC) breached its mandate by not acquiring the area when it became available in 2007 since the falls and islands were designated as a National Interest Land Mass by the NCC and the Treasury Board in 1988.

Algonquin Elder William Commanda, who died in 2011, worked for years to have the sacred site returned to the Algonquin. According to the archaeological record, Akikodjiwan has been used as a sacred site for 6,000-8,000 years.

ONGOING COLONIALISM

According to Gehl, settler plans to build high-end condominiums in and around an Algonquin sacred site are only the latest chapter of colonial efforts to dispossess the Algonquin Anishinaabe. The Algonquin Anishinaabe nation, whose territory was once defined by the Kitchi Zibi (Ottawa river), is now divided in two by the provincial boundaries along the river that once united them.

In 1839 Upper Canada (Ontario) passed the racist Crown Lands Protection Act, which declared all lands to be British and subject to British administration. Algonquins were not considered to be civilized enough to own their own lands.

Large tracts of land were given to lumber companies,

and the 1853 the Public Lands Act provided land grants of a hundred acres of Algonquin land to settlers for free. The 1868 Free Grant and Homestead Act again provided free land to settlers. In both cases Algonquin were prevented from acquiring land through these government policies.

For Gehl, it is essential to recognize the history of colonial land theft in order understand why some Algonquin are consenting to condominium construction on a sacred site: "It's quite similar to a mother who's trying to feed her kids, and she has some furniture. And you come in and offer her 10% of what it's worth and she has to take it because she has to feed her kids. It's not really legitimate, or fair, or just."

ONGOING RESISTANCE

Although construction at Akikodjiwan has begun, activists concerned with protecting the site haven't given up yet.

This summer the annual spirit walk led by Albert Dumont brought out close to two hundred people. One month later a wampum ceremony was conducted at Victoria island.

A constitutional challenge has been filed to appeal the decisions by the Ontario Municipal Board and the Motion Judge of the Divisional Court's refusal to consider Algonquin rights and title when they approved the construction of condominiums on Akikodjiwan.

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L'INJUSTICE ENVIRONNEMENTALE

Les inégalités sociales face au changement climatique

Anne-Sophie Svetchine

Le changement climatique, global et universel, est loin d'unir les êtres humains face à une menace commune. À l'échelle nationale ou internationale, les populations défavorisées, tout en étant les moins responsables du réchauffement climatique, sont en première ligne pour en subir les conséquences.

Le Groupe d'experts intergouvernemental (Giec) sur l'évolution du climat vient de publier son dernier rapport basé sur l'étude de la différence entre un réchauffement planétaire de 1,5°C et un réchauffement de 2°C. Selon le coprésident de cette session du Giec, Hans-Otto Pörtner, « Chaque petit excès de réchauffement supplémentaire compte, d'autant que passer 1,5°C accroît le risque de changements profonds voire irréversibles, comme la perte de certains écosystèmes ». Le Giec appelle une nouvelle fois les pays à s'unifier et à prendre des mesures sans précédent. Dans ce contexte pourtant inquiétant, la majorité des pays signataires de l'accord de Paris ne respectent pas leurs engagements. À l'heure où les enjeux écologiques

nous rappellent la fragilité de notre humanité, l'interdépendance entre les hommes est évidente. La planète fonctionne en circuit ouvert, la pollution d'un pays entraîne des conséquences pour l'ensemble.

Le réchauffement climatique est particulièrement dévastateur pour les populations défavorisées. Les populations des pays du Sud, davantage dépendantes de la terre et de l'agriculture, le sont également du climat. Aggravés par le réchauffement planétaire, les phénomènes extrêmes tels que les sécheresses ou les inondations risquent d'entraîner des situations désastreuses: famines, épidémies, conflits, déscolarisation des enfants. Privées des ressources pour assurer leurs besoins de base, leur santé ou leur sécurité, des communautés entières devront se déplacer. Selon Kristalina Gueorgieva, directrice de la Banque mondiale depuis 2017, « le réchauffement climatique peut ajouter 100 millions de pauvres ». En outre, la hausse du niveau des océans va menacer d'immersion des îles et certaines villes côtières obligeant les populations à fuir; selon le rapport du Giec de 2014, 884 millions de personnes sont menacées. Dans un contexte

de raréfaction des ressources, ces exodes massifs pourraient devenir sources de conflits ou de guerres.

L'injustice est criante car, selon le rapport d'Oxfam de 2015, « la moitié la plus pauvre de la population mondiale est responsable de seulement 10% des émissions de CO2 mondiales » et « parallèlement, environ 50% des émissions mondiales sont imputables aux 10% des habitants de la planète les plus riches ». Les pays riches imposent impunément les conséquences de leurs comportements environnementaux aux plus pauvres. Le Canada est honteusement en retard sur ces enjeux. Selon les données du World Resources Institute, les Canadiens sont les terriens qui polluent le plus l'atmosphère avec 24,4 tonnes de CO2 générés par habitant.

Ces injustices environnementales ne se limitent pas à leur dimension internationale. Elles se manifestent à l'intérieur même des pays. D'ailleurs, le concept de justice environnementale est né aux États-Unis, au début des années 1980, après qu'il a été constaté que les usines polluantes ou dangereuses étaient principalement construites à côté de quartiers pauvres ou de minorités eth-

niques. Victimes de la pollution de ces usines, les communautés défavorisées subissaient en première ligne les risques liés à leur toxicité. Les troubles de santé liés à l'environnement dans les pays du Nord restent généralement sous-évalués. Selon l'OMS, 12,6 millions de personnes sont décédées d'une pathologie en lien avec l'insalubrité de l'environnement en 2012 et la pollution de l'air tue, à elle seule, 7 millions de personnes par an dans le monde. Là encore, les populations défavorisées sont les premières victimes. Si les effets de la pollution de l'air et le smog affectent tous les habitants d'une ville, ce sont les ménages les plus pauvres qui doivent généralement habiter près des grandes voies de circulation et des aéroports. Dans son livre *Les inégalités environnementales*, paru en 2017, Catherine Larrère insiste sur l'injustice de cette situation et ajoute que « si les zones les plus polluées ou les plus exposées aux risques sont habitées par les populations les plus défavorisées, ce n'est pas seulement parce que le logement y est moins cher, c'est aussi parce que c'est dans les quartiers habités par des populations défavorisées que l'on implante des activités polluantes ou à



Photo: Anne-Sophie Svetchine

risque ».

La pression citoyenne pour un changement global et politique est plus que jamais nécessaire. Des mouvements de revendication se multiplient. En France, depuis le rapport du Giec, plus d'une centaine de mobilisations ont vu le jour sous le mot d'ordre #IlEstEncoreTemps. Au Québec, les élections provinciales ont été une occasion de se mobiliser.

Depuis le 15 septembre, des marches pour le climat ont eu lieu aux quatre coins de la province. La dernière en date s'est tenue en novembre, organisée par le collectif citoyen « La Planète s'invite au parlement » et soutenue par Attac Québec, cette association lance un appel: « Faisons de l'enjeu climatique la priorité qu'il doit être, justice sociale et justice climatique sont liées ! »

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FROM HARD NUMBERS TO HARDER REALITY

CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS, GATHERING STORIES FROM THE HERONGATE EVICTIONS

Mumina Egal
and Josh Hawley
Members of the Herongate Tenant
Coalition

On Sept. 29, 2015, tenants from 80 townhouses on one parcel of land in Herongate received eviction notices from their landlord, Timbercreek Asset Management. The tenants were told to be out by Feb. 29, 2016, in the dead of winter.

This was the first round of Timbercreek's Herongate evictions, and it corresponds with an almost unbelievable rise in homelessness among Ottawa families.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

Chronic homelessness among families rose by 171.3 per cent from 2016–2017, from 87 to 236 families, according to the City of Ottawa's own data, as presented in the "10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan Progress Report, 2014–2017."

Chronic homelessness is defined as being currently homeless while also being homeless for six months in the past year.

The largest spike in those seeking refuge in emergency shelters from 2016–2017 came from families. The total number of individual family

members who stayed in emergency shelters rose by 13.1 per cent, far surpassing the overall growth rate of 5.1 per cent.

With a shortage of shelter space, most families were placed in motels and post-secondary residences.

The population for Timbercreek's Heron Gate property, recorded by Statistics Canada, decreased by 272 people from 2011 to 2016. (The 2016 census date was May 10, 2016, well after the first Timbercreek move-out date). The reduction in population indicates the people who were forced out moved either elsewhere in the city or left the city altogether.

Timbercreek's Heron Gate property accounts for 92 per cent of the residential land for one entire census tract. This census tract has the highest level of what CMHC calls "core housing need" in the entire city, at 45.5 per cent.

A household is said to be in 'core housing need' if it

- 1) does not meet at least one of the adequacy, affordability or suitability standards; and
- 2) would have to spend 30 per cent or more of its total before-tax income to pay the

median rent of acceptable alternative local housing.

This area also has the highest percentage of immigrants in the city, at 52.4 per cent. It also has the second-highest prevalence of low-income in the city, at 48.1 per cent.

Timbercreek Asset Management is part of the City of Ottawa's Rent Supplement Program, which allows landlords to offer units to low-income people. The city covers the difference in rent at 30 per cent of the tenant's income. In 2011, only 9 per cent of people in Timbercreek's Heron Gate paid a subsidized rent.

Timbercreek received \$1,309,308.97 in municipal subsidies from the City of Ottawa from 2012–2017. Yet it has failed to do regular maintenance and repairs, particularly to their Herongate properties, even when issued work orders by the City.

All of these disheartening numbers are directly related to the fact that Timbercreek controls the vast majority of this particular area's housing. While one for-profit entity, Timbercreek, is linked directly to these cold, hard facts, the day-to-day realities of tenants

become ever more difficult. Landlords are incentivized to purposefully neglect their properties in the pursuit of profit and they are often successful in getting away with it.

STORIES BEHIND THE NUMBERS

These numbers present a quantitative, albeit technical, exposition of the racialized poverty, systematic neglect and structural violence to people of colour that is pervasive in Heron Gate.

During the organizing and documentation efforts of the Herongate Tenant Coalition in summer 2018, these statistics were brought home through several firsthand accounts of tenants' lived experiences, one of which is detailed below.

Timbercreek regularly receives City of Ottawa-issued work orders pertaining to its Heron Gate property, for everything from routine maintenance to major structural repairs. In May 2014, Timbercreek was ordered to do multiple repairs for one particular townhouse located on Heron Road.

In June 2018, at this same townhouse, the Herongate Tenant Coalition documented some of the very same issues mentioned in the city's work order. Timbercreek did not do the work it was ordered to do by the city and, over the course of four years, the house was left to fall into a state of shocking disrepair.

The house was rented throughout this period by a non-native English-speaking single mother of five, who spoke to *The Leveller* on the condition of anonymity. She

was ultimately forced to move in the late summer after eviction notices were given to 105 households on May 7, 2018. This was the second phase of Timbercreek's mass eviction.

But first she and her children suffered through a home infestation of cockroaches that caused her to bag her food in garbage bags and resort to using her car in lieu of the kitchen cupboards. A piece of plywood replaced her broken backdoor, as she was not able to pay the almost \$1,000 demanded by Timbercreek for the repair.

Mould in the basement prevented anyone from going downstairs. There were broken cupboard doors, holes in the walls, and windows that were decades old.

What emerged through home visits and conversations with this tenant was a clear pattern of neglect by the landlord, Timbercreek Asset Management, and the inadequacy of bylaw officers to properly enforce property standards and City-issued work orders. This pattern was corroborated by documents obtained through Freedom of Information requests obtained by *The Leveller*.

The original work order for this tenant's house was issued by the City of Ottawa on May 14, 2014, and demanded that Timbercreek complete the following repairs: "Repair all windows; Repair bedroom door-frames; Repair broken screens, all windows basement main level and upper level windows shall be all equipped with screens; Kitchen ceiling to be repaired; Repair taps in bathtub; Bathroom vanity needs to

be repaired holes inside; Repair cupboards, there are holes, repairs cupboard doors as they don't open and close properly."

These issues were not addressed by Timbercreek, based on firsthand documentation and the collection of work orders by the Herongate Tenant Coalition in summer 2018 at this very same house.

The work order collected by the Herongate Tenant Coalition and delivered to Timbercreek on August 2, 2018, raised the following issues: "Back door broken; Hole in bathroom door; Cockroaches; Kitchen cupboards broken; Kitchen ceiling has hole; Kitchen windows don't open; Bathroom sink is broken."

The tenant was forced to live in these atrocious conditions for years, despite Timbercreek receiving a city-issued work order for these repairs in 2014, which went completely ignored.

As a non-native English speaker, the tenant had less power to advocate for herself to Timbercreek or Bylaw. Ultimately, she could not do anything about the abysmal condition of her home.

Would Timbercreek address these concerns if someone from the dominant society demanded repairs to their units?

Timbercreek has used the strategy of long-term neglect of their properties as a convenient excuse to demolish them and build new homes with a new tenant base, while taking advantage of immigrant and non-English-speaking tenants, forcing them to live in subhuman conditions.

"I WAS VERY SCARED BECAUSE I AM NEW TO THIS COUNTRY AND MY ENGLISH IS NOT VERY GOOD"

THE VERBAL MISTREATMENT OF IMMIGRANT TENANTS IN HERONGATE

Mumina Egal
and Josh Hawley
Members of the Herongate Tenant
Coalition

For months, the Herongate Tenant Coalition has documented the long-standing intimidation tactics Timbercreek has employed. In June 2018, tenants reported at one of its weekly meetings that face-to-face intimidation had occurred, targeting non-English speaking women who had received eviction notices in May 2018.

Tenants said the property manager, Paul Boutros, was knocking on the doors of

non-English speaking tenants and asking when they were moving. If they responded they were not moving, Boutros reportedly stated the locks on their doors would be changed if they did not move out voluntarily by Sept. 30.

Tenants also alleged that Boutros threatened to collect all their belongings in garbage bags and throw them out if they did not leave by that date.

This explicit targeting of non-white, non-English speaking women in the neighbourhood is nothing new, as it is part of the pervasive structural inequality and racism these

women face on a regular basis.

The Coalition went door-to-door to collect information in the neighbourhood from May to July 2018, forming a highly localized census and obtaining accurate numbers on who was being evicted. The Coalition found there was an average of 5.4 people per house, totalling almost 600 people who faced eviction, including over 200 children, for the 105 households impacted. This census also showed that 93 per cent of the people who faced eviction were people of colour, the vast majority of whom were Muslim.

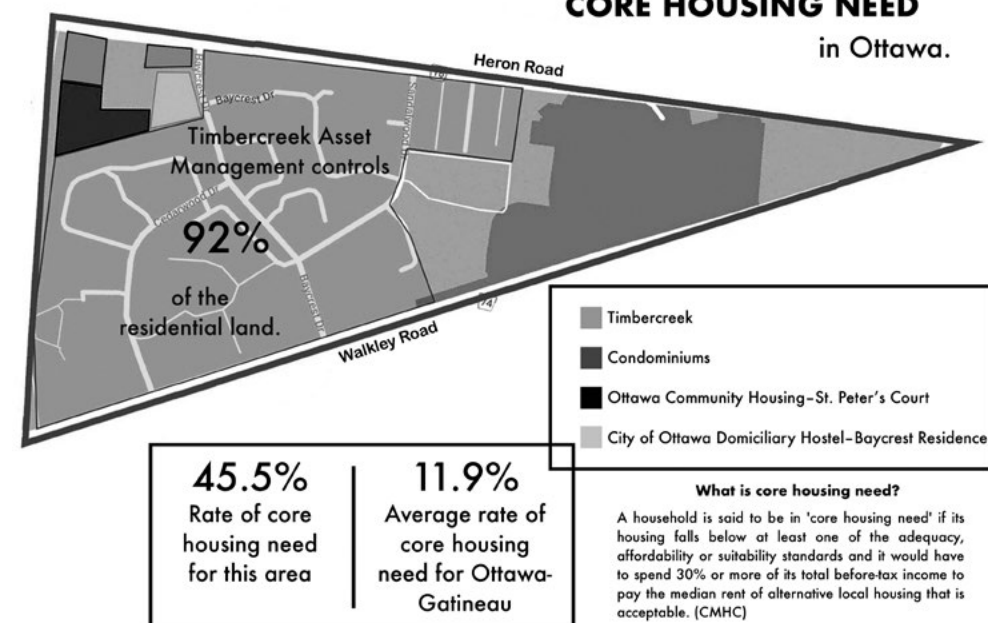
The Leveller interviewed Sophia (not her real name), the mother of a newly arrived Herongate family. Along with her four children and husband, she recently fled a country in turmoil to build a new life in Canada.

What happened when the property manager, Paul Boutros, came to your door last week?

Paul knocked on my door and asked me very nicely if I was moving. When I told him I wasn't moving, he asked me

Timbercreek's Herongate falls within one census tract.

Statistics Canada shows this area has the highest level of
CORE HOUSING NEED
in Ottawa.



why. I told him "because what is happening is not right and we are fighting to stay in our home."

When I told him this, his whole face and attitude changed. He started to raise his voice, threatening me. He said if I didn't move by the end of that month (September) that he and his company would come in my home, and throw all my stuff outside. He said he would call the police and he would change the key.

I was very scared because I am new to this country and my English is not very good. Sometimes I feel like because of this, I cannot say how I really feel.

Paul was very scary and I was alone with my little child at the time he knocked on my door. My husband usually is the one

to talk to the staff, so it was difficult for me to say anything.

You said you felt very scared to respond to Paul. Why?

As I said, I am new to Canada and do not speak the English language very well yet. I do not know all of the laws of this country and fear he has the power to affect my status.

I also feared that if I said anything more to him, maybe he could target my family and make it difficult for us to rent a home elsewhere in the city. This is also why my family and I support the movement, but sometimes fear to show our faces at the events and meetings.

It is very hard, this situation – being new to this country and already being kicked out of the home and community

we just got settled in.

Do you think Paul only knocks on certain people's doors or do you think it was just by chance that he happened to knock on your door?

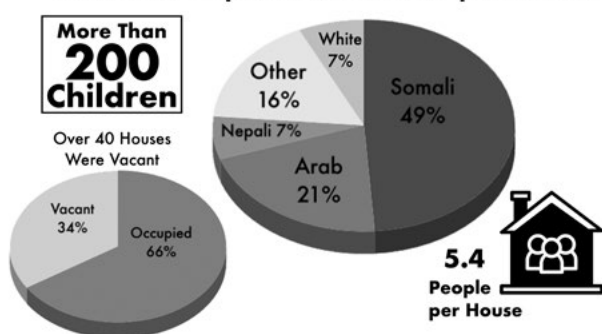
Maybe. It is very easy to take advantage of someone who doesn't know their rights and hasn't been here for a long time. He knocked on my friend's door who knows English very well and the laws of the land very well and didn't speak to her this way. So why me?

Why did he speak to me this way? Because he thinks he can threaten me with no consequence. He did the same thing to my friend who is also new to this country, threatened her and her family.

From May to June 2018, Herongate Tenant Coalition conducted a door-to-door census of the houses Timbercreek wants to demolish. 123 of the 150 houses were accounted for.

Here's what they found:

93% of the People Affected are People of Colour



PATTERNS OF NEGLECT

HERON GATE RESIDENTS SUFFER FROM A LEGACY OF POOR MAINTENANCE AND LANDLORDS' USE OF A MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE TO OVERTURN BYLAW ORDERS WITHOUT TENANTS' KNOWLEDGE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

THE LAST HERON GATE TENANT

I returned to Heron Gate on Oct. 4. The Herongate Tenant Association had organized a rally and press conference against the evictions. Demonstrators, observers and members of the media snaked through the abandoned homes on their way to the Heron Gate rental office. The walk was narrated by organizers with a bullhorn.

After the rally, I met up with Abdullahi Ali at his home.

Ali and his family were the last people to move out. They had intended to stay on indefinitely to fight the evictions, but chronic flooding in his basement had led to his home developing a significant mould problem, so they reluctantly decided to move.

The place they had been able to find wasn't available until Nov. 5, so despite Timbercreek's desires, they were planning to stay put until then.

Ali was upset because earlier that day he had met with a city Bylaw Officer. He had originally called Bylaw on July 25 about the basement flooding. According to Ali, the officer, Jean Sarault, had investigated the flooding that day, then told him 10 days later, "I put in the work order."

Ali then heard nothing at all until Oct. 3 when Sarault called Ali and told him that he had received a report from Timbercreek that the work had

been done, that management had

fixed the problem – they had "sealed the window."

Ali was incredulous because the problem he had initially called about had to do with a leaking foundation, a common problem in the entire section of interconnected townhouses. I saw numerous work orders and photos from other residents that corroborate that this was an ongoing problem, spanning several years.

Ali asked that the officer at least come to inspect the situation for himself, to which Sarault agreed. He came by the following day, but not much came of it. Ali said that Sarault had spoken to management and that Sarault took their word that the flooding had been caused by a window, which had since been repaired.

Ali pointed out that there was no evidence of work to the window (something I also saw), and that there was no water damage evident at that location. He also pointed out the history of flooding throughout the other townhouses.

At one point, Ali grew frustrated and said "use your common sense," to which Sarault apparently replied, "I don't need to use my common sense."

All of this struck me as a little odd. It felt inappropriate that the Bylaw Officer would simply take the management's word on the matter, especially in light of the numerous complaints in other connected units. Actually, the truth of the matter turned out to be a bit stranger.

Abdullahi Ali's Kafkaesque experience with Bylaw, as Timbercreek's last Heron Gate tenant, tied in with questions I'd had since I began documenting Heron Gate last spring. Just walking around the housing complex, I would see numerous bylaw violations. I often wondered, "how is this possible?"

Timbercreek also receives hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in government money, as part of the housing supplement that helps to subsidize housing costs for low-income families. So the full question I've been asking myself is "how is it possible that living conditions can be so poor here, while Timbercreek can continue to receive so much government money?"

A LEASING AGENT

Philippe Parisot, 28, is currently studying Computer Engineering at Algonquin College, but 10 years ago he spent a summer working as a

leasing agent at Heron Gate. That was when it was still owned by TransGlobe. Nonetheless, his experiences offer some valuable insights.

Parisot said he was optimistic when he began working, but things quickly soured. "They trained me terribly," he said. "They threw me into the fire with zero training whatsoever." Yet his employer was frequently angry and abusive about his inability to do his job properly. Parisot described the work environment as toxic.

Parisot's job was to show apartments to potential tenants. He would be given a list of apartments he could show and would then be paired with a prospective renter. If a client was interested in taking an apartment, Parisot would then hand them over to another agent in the office.

Many of the apartments he showed were in very bad condition, broken down and very dirty.

"Some of the carpets were filthy brown, like full of filth. Sometimes there was still garbage on the floor, it wasn't even vacuumed." At one point, when showing an apartment, he opened a door to a room and saw the floor littered with blankets and syringes. He quickly closed the door and ushered the potential renter out of the unit.

When he brought this up, his boss simply replied that it was either a diabetic or squatters. Throughout this time, Parisot's employer stressed that the apartments would be cleaned and renovated before renters moved in, but Parisot began to have his doubts.

The office, he explained, was often full of tenants complaining about issues that went unfixed and people moving into apartments that hadn't been renovated. He recalled a student in tears in the office because the apartment she had moved into was infested with mould.

Parisot said that, by and large, the potential renters assigned to him were immigrants and refugees. He said that he couldn't recall ever being assigned a white client. Parisot is half-Chilean and speak a number of languages, which he suspected was the reason for these assignments.

His boss would frequently tell him to "show the worst apartments first." Parisot said, "I saw some really really disgusting units and it was strange to me that my boss kept telling me to show those first."

As his conviction grew that he was being pushed to put refugees and immigrants into Heron Gate's worst units – and that those units would not be properly cleaned and repaired – he became increasingly distressed. After two months, Parisot couldn't take it any longer and quit.

A SINGLE-MOTHER RENTER

Everyone I've spoken to has told me that Timbercreek is a little better than TransGlobe in terms of maintenance. However, in August I spoke with Elizabeth Aguilar, a single mother who nearly rented from Timbercreek. In the fall of 2017, Aguilar was shown two apartments in Heron Gate's Cedarwood tower. In many ways, her story complements Parisot's from the inverse perspective of a potential client.

She told me that the first apartment Timbercreek showed her was "really dirty."

"In the apartment," she said she "found what appeared to be a bed bug or two." She went on, "I asked them if they did a [bedbug] inspection. They said they did. I asked for the name of the company; they said they didn't want to give it to me."

Like many of the apartments Parisot had shown, this one had filthy carpets and garbage that had not been disposed of. Aguilar explained that in the kitchen "there was food in the cupboards still... It was quite dirty... I asked them to change the carpet, it was between gray and black... the [window] screen was ripped... the bathroom had no faucet, no shower head."

Feeling desperate, Aguilar agreed to take the apartment on the condition that all the repairs be done beforehand. She took photos to document the issues.

In the end, Aguilar did not end up moving into Heron Gate, as she managed to find an apartment in a building not owned by Timbercreek elsewhere in the city.

A FORMER RESIDENT

Mavis Finnamore is an organizer with Ottawa ACORN and a former Heron Gate resident. She lived in the complex for more than 30 years as it passed hands from Minto to TransGlobe and then to Timbercreek. She lived in the section of Heron Gate that was demolished in 2016, then moved elsewhere.

In speaking with Finnamore, I wanted to return to the role that Bylaw played in all of this, to the way it related to the equation of maintenance problems and neglect at Heron Gate.

As a concerned resident and ACORN activist, Finnamore has had a lot of experience with Bylaw. At one point she was part of an ACORN initiative to guide bylaw officers through a host of mass inspections at Heron Gate. This exercise led to citations for more than 500 infractions, she said.

Oftentimes, however, Finnamore stressed that dealings with Bylaw did not go so smoothly. She described a situation involving the parking garage beneath her home "I called Bylaw and they sent... an officer... She said 'oh deary, can you look at this!' I said 'yeah, you can see the cracks in the concrete, where the drains have blocked, etc...' And she said 'don't worry I'll go to the office and talk to them.' That was the last I heard of her and when I questioned what was going on, there wasn't even a record of a report."

It is Finnamore's opinion that "There's an attitude in the [Bylaw] office that if they don't have to go out, they won't and if they can talk to the management first there is a prejudice against tenants."





**WORDS & PHOTOS BY
NEAL ROCKWELL**

AN EXPERT WITNESS

Daniel Tucker-Simmons is a lawyer representing a number of recently evicted Heron Gate residents in a human rights case, including Abdullahi Ali. He has also represented “dozens and dozens” of people in tenants rights cases and has extensive experience with the city Bylaw office and standards of maintenance issues.

Tucker-Simmons said, “To be fair to Bylaw, they’re often swamped, like they’re understaffed in my experience. They’re under quite a lot of pressure to resolve things quickly. I’ve seen in the past Bylaw actually issuing an order and then the landlord doesn’t follow through with it, the tenant calls Bylaw, Bylaw calls the landlord who says to Bylaw they fixed it, without verifying it. It’s really a matter of resources and they do tend to take landlords’ word for it – especially corporate landlords.”

I suggested that this seemed rather counterintuitive, that landlords had the greatest incentive to be dishonest in these cases. He responded, “It isn’t a good system. It’s broken.”

“It’s almost like an economy of scale,” Tucker-Simmons said. “If there’s so many maintenance issues that Bylaw can’t deal with a fraction of them, then there’s an incentive to have more maintenance issues [rather] than fewer.”

COMPLAINTS COMPLAINTS COMPLAINTS

The Leveller filed a number of Freedom of Information requests with the city relating to bylaw complaints by tenants and Timbercreek work orders. These documents paint a picture of homes in a chronic state of disrepair.

Between 2012 and 2016 alone, 34 families made bylaw complaints. At the time of the evictions there were 105 families living in this area, so this would represent around one third of them. Keep in mind, this means going above and beyond submitting a work order to Heron Gate management, which would be the preliminary step in trying to have maintenance issues addressed.

The notes in these documents show tenants in despair, repeatedly pleading with Bylaw that Timbercreek refuses to address their problems.

AFTER THE DELUGE

Ali wasn’t the only person in his interconnected row of townhouses, which all shared a common foundation, to have problems with basement flooding. For one of his neighbours, the problem was even worse. For more than a year, rampant mould growth had rendered the basement unusable.

This former neighbor does not speak English, so her son had tried to reach Bylaw on multiple occasions, apparently to no avail. Timbercreek never dealt with the issue.

WHETHER FROM LACK OF FUNDING, NOT TAKING TENANTS’ VOICES SERIOUSLY OR IN THE CREATION OF QUASI-JUDICIAL BODIES THAT HAVE THE POWER TO OVERRIDE BYLAW OFFICERS’ AUTHORITY TO DO THEIR JOBS, WE SEE A BYLAW DEPARTMENT THAT IS COMPROMISED IN ITS ABILITY TO PROTECT TENANT’S RIGHTS.

THE PROPERTY STANDARDS AND LICENSE APPEAL COMMITTEE

All of this brings us back to Abdullahi’s house. As I mentioned earlier, I found it odd that Bylaw would simply accept management’s account of Ali’s leaking basement, especially when other residents who had had a similar issue corroborated his claim.

I put this issue to the city, asking them why the bylaw officer had seemed so resolute in his refusal to believe Ali and so adamant to take management’s word for the story. I was answered by Chief Bylaw Officer Roger Chapman, the head of the department, and his response was quite interesting.

“The matter of water entering the basement of the unit in question (2827-D Sandalwood) was investigated and an Order was issued to make repairs to the foundation to prevent water from entering,” Chapman wrote.

“In accordance with the Property Standards By-law and Building Code Act, a property owner has the right to appeal the Order.

“In this case, an appeal was made by the property owner to the Property Standards and License Appeals Committee, a quasi-judicial body established by City Council to hear appeals and render decisions which are final and binding.

“Upon reviewing the evidence, the Committee found the work undertaken by the property owner was in compliance and considered the matter to be addressed.”

This showed that the bylaw officer initially had believed Ali, and had in fact issued a work order to Timbercreek to repair the foundation.

But what was the Property Standards and License Appeals Committee?

No one I spoke to had ever heard of it. Tucker-Simmons had not heard of it. George Brown, another lawyer who has worked on numerous tenants rights issues, had never heard of it.

It turns out the Property Standards and License Committee was established by City Council in 2010. According to Ottawa City Bylaw 2013-416, the “Committee may confirm, modify or rescind the order to demolish or repair.”

Section 97 of the same bylaw stipulates that “An owner or occupant who has been served with an order made under the Building Code Act and who is not satisfied with the terms or conditions of the order may appeal to the License and Property Standards Committee.”

I reached out once again to Ali, and he reiterated firmly that he was completely unaware of this committee or its ruling, and stressed that no one had done any work on his window, which had never been the issue.

I went back to Ottawa’s Media Relations and asked why Ali had not been notified of any of these proceedings and why he hadn’t given any testimony or been asked for evidence. What evidence *had* been provided in this ruling?

Roger Chapman got back to me with one document, the Appeals Committee decision, which was issued on Sep. 19.

The document states that Bylaw Officer Sarault was present for the ruling, as well as the Appellant, whose name is redacted, but is obviously Timbercreek, although we don’t know which employees specifically attended.

In terms of evidence, Sarault claims that he visited Ali’s unit on July 26 and noticed water on the floor of the basement. The decision then states that the Appellant (Timbercreek’s representative) did not dispute there was a building “deficiency... but presented evidence to support that the cause of the deficiency – specifically a one-inch hole in a basement window frame – was identified and suitable remedial action was undertaken.

“The PSO [Officer Sarault] agreed that the identified cause could very well have been the reason for the flooding,” the ruling went on, “and he expressed his satisfaction with the Appellant’s remedial action. The Appellant also independently informed the committee that plans are underway to demolish the complex that the said property is part of. As required, tenant eviction notices have already been delivered and it is the Appellant’s hope to have all tenants evicted by September 30, 2018.”

The document then goes on to consider the matter dealt with and closed.

To my question as to why Ali had not been notified of these proceedings, Chief Bylaw Officer Chapman responded, “The complainant was notified of the decision of the Committee on October 3, 2018.”

When I interviewed Ali on Oct. 4, he despairingly referred to the idea that the flooding could have come from the window as “a big fat lie.”

Whatever notification Ali received came after the decision was already made. Moreover, when I spoke to him, he certainly didn’t seem aware that it had taken place at all. From his conversation with Sarault, his understanding was that the report on the window had come from Timbercreek rather than been handed down by this Committee.

Another outstanding question is how often has Timbercreek been using this committee as a tool to quash bylaw orders? How often do landlords make use of it in general?

THIS IS THE BEGINNING NOT THE END

While Timbercreek has been successful in its most recent round of evictions, this does not necessarily signify defeat for Heron Gate residents, as roots have been planted for longer-term resistance to Timbercreek’s agenda. Also, there is also still a pending human rights challenge.

As Josh Hawley previously argued in the pages of *The Leveller* (also in Issue 11.3, Sept/Oct. 2018), it seems that the coherent corporate strategy for Heron Gate “has long been to drive the properties into the ground, force out ‘legacy tenants’ through wholesale demovictions, and maximize profits through increasing the density of units on each parcel – rather than abide by the city’s official guidelines on intensification.”

As UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing Leilani Farha explained in a piece for Huffington Post, Timbercreek practices “unscrupulous demographic engineering in search of profits: replacing poor and vulnerable people with those who possess greater purchasing power.”

The current state of bylaw enforcement in Ottawa seems to have enabled this exploitive process.

Whether from lack of funding, not taking tenants’ voices seriously or in the creation of quasi-judicial bodies that have the power to override bylaw officers’ authority to do their jobs, we see a Bylaw department that is compromised in its ability to protect tenants’ rights.

It is furthermore strange that there is a committee where landlords can appeal bylaw orders without informing tenants. The members of this committee, as far as I can determine, come from the business and real estate community. As such, they are more likely to be sympathetic to a landlord’s perspectives.

Imagine a trial conducted behind the accuser’s back, where the prosecution could not present evidence, and the police and judge tended to just accept the accused’s version of events. That seems to be how this committee functions.

Last year, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised to enshrine adequate housing as a fundamental human right in Canadian law. Canada is already a signatory to a UN convention that recognizes housing as a human right. With skyrocketing housing prices, it is vital this right be put into practice sooner rather than later.



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A large crowd stands outside of Toronto's Roy Thomson Hall amidst a strong police presence.



Photos: Y.A. Montenegro

TORONTO PROTESTS BANNON AND FRUM AMIDST POLICE BRUTALITY

1500 PEOPLE OPPOSE BANNON- FRUM DEBATE, BUT NOT WITHOUT A SEVERE STATE RESPONSE

Y.A. Montenegro

On Friday, Nov. 2, more than 1,500 people gathered outside of Roy Thomson Hall in Toronto to protest "The Rise of Populism" Munk Debate featuring Steve Bannon and David Frum. The sold-out event was delayed for several hours as the roaring crowd of protesters shouted at police and attendees. Twelve people were arrested, with at least two detainees suffering severe injuries.

Police blocked off the southern entrance off Simcoe Street with the mounted unit, guarding the 2,630-seat theatre as the crowd drew close to the front entrance. As part of the crowd attempted to break through police barricades, police beat protesters with batons and pepper spray, but protesters stayed defiant.

"Who do you serve? Who do you protect?" they chanted at police, while other parts of the crowd yelled "shame" at the lineup into Roy Thomson Hall.

The presence of Bannon and Frum drew the ire of Toronto residents and community groups who had been calling for cancellation of the Munk Debate weeks in advance to no avail.

In an interview with Open Borders Media, Rachel Small of the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network and Council of Canadians describes the reason the community groups came together was to prevent "these two white supremacists [from] speak[ing] in our city... Especially Steve Bannon as a white supremacist leader [who] some would say is the spokesperson and poster boy of the white supremacist movement globally."

Bannon, a former White House Chief Strategist for the Trump Administration and former Executive Chairman of Breitbart News is a known proponent of far-right nationalism with deep connections with white nationalist, alt-right fascist movements. Bannon's admirers include the likes of Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke, Matteo Salvini of Italy's Northern League, and the Far-Right Brothers of Italy Party. Most recently, he endorsed the campaign of Brazilian President-Elect, Jair Bolsonaro, who has openly glorified the Brazilian military

regime of the 1960s and 70s, including its use of torture and elimination of leftist political opponents.

Frum is a neoconservative Canadian-American political commentator, senior editor at The Atlantic magazine, and former George W. Bush speech writer. He helped coin the phrase "Axis of Evil" and was a major proponent for the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

"We're here because we know this fascism well," said Viviana Avila of the Women's Coordinating Committee for a Free Wallmapu at Friday's rally. Avila had originally escaped Augusto Pinochet's military regime in Chile during the 1970s and later came to Canada as a refugee. "We had a pre-revolutionary process that was aborted by people like them. We lived through [a dictatorship] and suffered it on our own skin. It multiplies with the support and conviction of everyday people and, of course, by unleashing unthinkable repression against its enemy – the Left."

Others present at the rally also questioned the event's dubious international connections, through the financial ties of now-deceased founder of Barrick Gold, Peter Munk, whose charitable foundation funds the Munk Debates.

"It is this man, the founder and chairman of Barrick Gold, whose stolen wealth has funded the Munk Debates – the event we are here today to protest," stated Kate Klein of the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network, speaking to the crowd. "Despite his attempts to position himself as a philanthropist, Munk's real reputation as a racist, greedy, dictator-loving tycoon cannot be erased, and we will not let it be erased," in reference to Munk's approval of Pinochet and other authoritarian leaders.

Several protesters were arrested, severely beaten, and injured throughout the night, which according to initial activist reports left two people with concussions. Small was part of the initial group that was arrested by police early on at the rally.

"I was arrested alongside two others while we attempted to lock ourselves in the entrance to the box office," stated Small on her experience in custody. "We were tackled by

cops, and my friend was also punched in the face, giving her two black eyes, a chipped tooth and a concussion. Others in the crowd were pepper sprayed at very close range, and cops attempted to take away the community medics' supplies while they were treating people."

Small's account of the events that transpired that evening have also been reported by other activists who indicate that another protester was assaulted by police while being arrested, also resulting in a very serious concussion.

"The police used a lot of unnecessary force during the event," said RC, a member of the University of Toronto community who wished to be referred to by her initials and was assisting with detention support after the rally. "They attacked several people who had nothing to do with any of the non-violent direct action, including punching a bystander woman in the face. They gave two other women who were involved with the direct action concussions."

Additionally, Small reported that several other arrestees taken to a different police division had been waiting in court services wagons for five to six hours in the scorching heat, with no water, food or bathroom breaks.

"Some faced terrible police violence while being arrested and in the hours after. Another person was assaulted while being arrested resulting in a very serious concussion. Others were held in a police van for upwards of five hours, which is a terrifying experience in November," Small stated.

Supporters indicate that police misled the public lined up outside of two Toronto Police Service (TPS) Divisions, as well as legal services long into the night while people waited for the release of the arrested. "We were told several times by the police that [the person with the concussion] would be released shortly and we had been instructed to take her immediately to the hospital emergency room upon her release," stated RC. "We were strung along this way until 4:30 a.m. when it became apparent that they were not going to release her any time that night."

In a statement made by one community group, police reactions have been increasingly biased against anti-racist and anti-fascist protesters.

"Time and time again, Toronto Police Services shows where their allegiances lay and once again shows why there is absolutely no reliance to be had on the state in the face of fascism's global resurgence," stated Toronto Against Fascism in a public statement.

People watching these events and actions unfold from Ottawa have raised similar concern about the behaviour of the police locally and about possible repercussions for anti-racist movements.

"These police tactics, while brutal, may be a sign of things to come," said John Evans, a member of Carleton University who was in support of the protest. "It should be a cause of everyone's concern if we see the rise of far-right candidates in conjunction with hate crimes across the country. Canada isn't immune to fascism."

HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT RATES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE IS NO COINCIDENCE

CAPITALISM ONLY VALUES 'PRODUCTIVE' CREATIVITY

Kristen Williams

In recent years, we've seen a big push to include disabled people in employment.

In 2017, the Ontario government initiated a three-pronged strategy to decrease disability unemployment rates and show employers the positives of hiring disabled people.

The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion was started in 2016 by self-proclaimed "diversity and inclusion practitioners," creating campaigns and awareness around disability-barriers to employment.

Despite efforts like these, statistics show that unemployment rates are twice as high for disabled people when compared to our able-bodied peers. It's unfortunate, especially when studies have shown that disabled employees, when given the chance, are loyal workers with high attendance rates.

With all these efforts and facts, it's almost absurd then, that disability unemployment rates are astronomically high. Almost.

A little theoretical analysis provides some insight into why we can't seem to break into the workforce and stay there. Capitalism, above all, values productivity, especially productivity if it can be easily monetized.

Creativity may occasionally be permitted, but usually only for a privileged few and only when channeled in 'proper' directions – i.e. towards turning everything into a measurable transaction. Ultimately, capitalism values predictable responses and obedience to authority in the name of monetary gain.

In order to leverage economies of scale for efficiency and profit, production at the most common and lowest levels of the capitalist economy rely on worker conformity – the abil-

ity to treat workers as essentially interchangeable. Almost by definition, people with disabilities are not interchangeable workers. They do not fit automatically into existing capitalistic systems.

Capitalism dehumanizes at every chance, hoping to achieve efficiency, even at the expense of the people behind it.

People with disabilities on the other hand, often rely on creativity to make our lives work, requiring outside-the-box thinking to accommodate our differences and best use our skill sets. We harbour resourcefulness in the face of unpredictability. We must, in order to succeed in a world that isn't often ready or willing to accommodate our existence.

We live interdependent lives, often utilizing the helpfulness of others for everyday tasks – perhaps the very opposite of independence and individualism that capitalist dogma so boastfully spouts. We thrive through adaptation.

It makes sense then that disabled people have great difficulty finding and maintaining work: our values, born of necessity, fly in the face of capitalistic values and goals, through no fault of our own. To make certain everyday parts of our life work, we have to get creative, ask for help when we need it (even if that's often), and sometimes fight for change just to get basic needs met.

The stark contrast between the exploitative nature of capitalism and values born out of living life as a disabled person suggest that even with the best efforts of the government to make disabled people employable, we will always find ourselves on the outskirts of employment.

Capitalism is inherently ableist, and until society values human life over the success of capitalism, little will change.



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A MODERN DEMOCRACY RUN BY CONSENSUS?

HOW NUNAVUT'S GOVERNMENT HELPS AUTONOMY AND HURTS COLONIALISM



The Legislative Assembly of Nunavut in Iqaluit.

Photo: assembly.nu.ca

Mike Hermida

While Canadian provinces have partisan governments, Nunavut is walking another path. The territory's Legislative Assembly is distinct from the rest of Canada because it uses a consensus government system, which has existed since the territory's birth in 1999.

As its name suggests, the system of governance is characterized by consensus within the territorial government. There are no parties in the territory's Legislative Assembly.

A consensus government rejects partisanship and strives to have a government with similar principles to those traditionally used by the Inuit.

In Canada, only Nunavut and the Northwest Territories have consensus-based governments. While there is no official definition of a consensus government, there are many

aspects that differentiate the territories' governments from the rest of Canada.

According to Nunavut's official website, when the Cabinet calls an election, 22 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), who run as independents, are elected. After the election, MLAs choose their Premier, Cabinet and Speaker of the House as a whole.

The remaining MLAs hold the Cabinet accountable, creating a checks-and-balance system on the government. MLAs are not bound to vote in a partisan or ideological way.

Key to this political system is the Full Caucus. Here, all MLAs discuss policy in private. Everyone is treated as an equal, regardless of political status. The Full Caucus is where differences are reconciled and compromises are made before public debates begin in the Legislative Assembly.

The government website stresses that, although the system is based around consensus, "unanimity is not required for the passage of Bills or other items before the House." Nonetheless, the lack of enemy-like relationships, seen in partisan governments, make unanimous consent a common event.

The government says this results in "greater civility than that which is often evident in partisan legislatures. Heckling is very rare, for example."

This is a marked contrast from the rest of Canada, which often sees trivial and uncivil discourse. For example, the House of Commons once had a debate between the Conservative and Green party over the use of the word "fart" in the Parliament.

Consensus government is premised on the ideas of decolonization and autonomy of the people of Nunavut.

The territory has a majority Inuk population, many of whom were sent to residential schools, including the first Premier, Paul Okalik.

"When I was leading the government, I asked for equal treatment like any Canadian," Okalik said in an interview for the University of Washington. "And that meant having the same power as any government in the country. We have a long enough history of colo-

control over Nunavut's public (Crown) lands and resources to the Government of Nunavut."

Okalik also explained that the "provinces have control and ownership of their resources; 100%. And they get to collect the royalties; 100%. And they get to manage those resources."

Territories, on the other hand, have no such control. The goal of devolution is to give Nunavut control over its

Nunavut, as well as its neighbour Northwest Territories, can be seen as examples of functional democratic governments that apply and adapt traditional Aboriginal decision making.

nialism in our country and we want to part from that."

Many aspects of traditional Inuk governance are emulated in the modern-day government. The most important aspect is that of decision-making by consensus. The concepts of co-operation and respect have always been important to the Inuit.

Also, lawmakers are trained in Inuktitut (a language of the Inuit) and the government has four official languages: English, French, Inuktitut, and Inuinnaqtun (a related Inuit language). All of these aspects are a step away from colonialism because they foster a land that is more similar to pre-contact Inuk life, with less control in the hands of the colonizer.

An important objective of the Legislative assembly is devolution. The territory's website describes devolution as "the process of transferring

resources. This would foster economic self-sufficiency and equality with respect to the provinces.

Devolution is especially important for Nunavut because its internal waters include part of the Northwest Passage. The Northwest Passage is a route from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, which passes through the Arctic Archipelago.

Control over the passage can be lucrative, thanks to its increased use for cargo and passenger ships. Okalik explains that "if we are able to bear the fruits of those internal waters, we can potentially be self-sufficient."

Devolution will happen when the government of Nunavut, the federal government, and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. – a legal corporation of the Inuit for the purposes of treaty rights and treaty negotiation – negotiate a final agreement.

As of yet, negotiations have not started because the federal government has not agreed to come to the table.

Devolution would also help fight colonialism because it would take power away from the federal government and give it to the Indigenous-centric territorial government.

Nevertheless, Nunavut's political climate is not without its problems. Former Premier Paul Quassa was ousted after a vote of no confidence. The CBC reported that the motion was a result of Quassa's decisions surrounding the Northern Lights conference in Ottawa this May, where the four-day event cost almost \$600,000.

The motion was also due to Quassa's decision to pull out of the Grays Bay Port and Road Project, which would have connected the Northwest Passage to the Northwest Territories' diamond mines. MLA John Maine accused Quassa of being an autocrat, which is incompatible with a consensus government.

However, the fact that Quassa was ousted and replaced with Cabinet member Joe Savikataaq shows that consensus government can solve its problems without major conflict. After all, Quassa is still an MLA.

The existence of a consensus government like that of Nunavut is proof that it is possible to run a government in a way that is highly functioning and not politically divided.

Nunavut, as well as its neighbour Northwest Territories, can be seen as examples of functional democratic governments that apply and adapt traditional Aboriginal decision making. The rest of Canada should strive to create similar governing styles that fight partisanship and colonialism.

WHODUNIT



MATCH THESE WORDS OF WISDOM TO THE PUBLIC FIGURE!

- "We have a tremendous amount of money to play with in our military."
- "It's very clear that while people are talking about the presumption of innocence, they're not talking about the presumption of innocence for survivors and people who have been assaulted."
- "It doesn't violate anyone else's rights for trans people to have rights."
- "It is okay to feel guilty about things that you are guilty of. It will not kill you, but hiding from that guilt and responsibility can kill others."
- "I don't want to talk about facts."
- "The older generation... pretty well ruined this world before passing it on to us. They gave us this thing, knocked to pieces, leaky, red-hot, threatening to blow up; and then they are surprised that we don't accept it with the same attitude of pretty, decorous enthusiasm with which they received it."
- "And then you have victims stating that when they go to the police, in the rare occasions they do go... you have the police badgering the victim with a battery of blaming questions, where the victim feels like she is being re-raped. And that is paralleled, that happens again, that is echoed in the three-ring circus of the court, where victims are slut-shamed and blamed and their character is assassinated."
- "The President continues to exceed the expectations of white supremacists."
- "When you spew hate speech, people act on it. Very simple. And this is the result. A lot of people dead. Senselessly."
- "It's easy for people to cry identity politics when they've always been represented."

- Mike Pompeo, U.S. Secretary of State
- Anonymous letter-writer to Atlantic Monthly, Sept. 1920
- Deb Halaand, first Native American woman elected to Congress
- Lili Bernard, Bill Cosby accuser
- Stephen Cohen, co-president of the Pittsburgh Jewish New Light Congregation
- Chase Strangio, ACLU staff attorney
- President Trump
- Elle Reeve, Vice News correspondent
- Ijeoma Oluo, author of So You Want to Talk About Race
- Soraya Chemaly, author of Rage Becomes Her



(a) Trump; (b) Soraya Chemaly; (c) Chase Strangio; (d) Ijeoma Oluo; (e) Mike Pompeo; (f) Anonymous; (g) Lili Bernard; (h) Elle Reeve; (i) Stephen Cohen; (j) Deb Halaand

VENUS ENVY

SEXUAL HEALTH & PLEASURE ALERT



Hey V,

I'm a 23 year old cisgender bisexual man and I haven't had sex because I'm ashamed of my penis size. My penis size is considered below average (less than 5 inches), and for that reason I'm not very comfortable bringing it out.

With my partners I focus on pleasing them so that they're distracted, but once they want to

reciprocate, I find one excuse or another to get out of the situation. But recently I entered a committed relationship with this woman I really like and she's expressed interest in having sex, and this weekend we're meant to have a romantic getaway.

How can I approach this situation?

- Bashful Isn't Gratifying.

Hi BIG,

Our cultural obsession with penis size is profound. So profound in fact, that in 2016 Donald Trump defended his penis size on live TV, in the middle of a presidential debate. This is not even the first presidential penis we've been obsessed with, which shows just how strong the links are between penis size, masculinity, and power.

While those associations are all kinds of misogynistic and transphobic, it's still easy to see how it's led so many men to feel self-conscious about their size. I can imagine that it's really hard for you to hear constant jokes and put-downs about penis size. It's not surprising that this has made you feel so much shame about your body.

For the record though, there are lots of men with huge dicks who are both awful people and terrible in bed. There are also lots of people having incredible sex without any penis involved at all. I think that for most people, penis size is a relatively unimportant part of the hot sex equation.

Are there people who love having something large inside of them? Sure, but even lovers of large insertables can get their fill through many fingers or bigger toys.

Before your weekend getaway, I would recommend having a conversation with your new partner before you're both naked. I don't think you need to do this with every person you have

sex with, and I don't think you need to "confess" or apologize for the size of your penis.

I do think it's important to share big sexual insecurities with our committed partners so that they have a chance to show up for us.

If you're not sure how to bring it up, you could try something like: "I want to tell you that I'm a little insecure about the size of my penis. This has stopped me from having sex with other people, but I'm telling you because I really like you and want to go there with you. I'm hoping it won't be a big deal, and that you'll still be attracted to me/want to have sex with me/want to be in a relationship with me."

Our preoccupation with penis makes us so unimaginative about all the possible ways that people can have good sex. I can't say that no one will ever react badly about the size of your penis, but know that if they do, it has nothing to do with your ability to please someone sexually. Overall, being great in bed means communicating openly and caring about your partner's pleasure.

And that's great, because it sounds like you're already doing those things with the people you've been with. I think most people would be thrilled to find those qualities in a lover.

Sincerely,

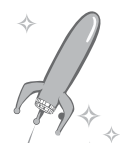
SAM WHITTLE
Sex Educator and Owner of Venus Envy

Send questions you want answered in to editors.the.leveller@gmail.com

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LETTER WHEN IS COMES TO SEX ED, INFORMED CHOICE IS BETTER THAN CENSORSHIP

Dear Leveller Editors,

Firstly, thank you for highlighting student-led efforts to walk out of class in protest of repealing the Ontario sexual education curriculum along with the under-told Indigenous history of this country.

I have been following the media since Ford's government revoked the necessary changes and promised a snitch line against teachers who continue to work with a curriculum that was responding to a needed change.

As a teacher, I would happily give notice of the curriculum that is being covered in the classroom, and give parents the option to keep their kids at home during lessons that they wish to shelter them from. At the end of the day, at least most of the class will understand that censorship or prohibition doesn't work as well as informed choice does.

There is a very important piece missing from public dialogue. Why did sexual education need to be updated? What is happening in schools today?

Consent is essential after all, and more people would know that if the Ontario curriculum had been updated sooner.

I would like to share a few examples from inside the

classroom, from my experience as a supply teacher in intermediate and senior schools across Ottawa.

What would you say as an adult in a senior class when the first response to "how do you know that someone wants to have sex?" is a casual "by what they are wearing"? Would you think they need better sex ed?

What would you do if two of your grade 9 students were loudly (very loudly) watching pornography on their phones in class, only to protest your requests to turn it off – and to further protest your efforts to have a conversation about why this is not ok? Would you confiscate their phones?

What about when you do confiscate them and a nude photo of an intermediate student pops up on the screen – and you have to call the police on yourself for being in possession of child pornography, albeit accidentally?

Would you know what to do when you found out that one of your students had forced themselves onto several (yes several) students in your class?

How would you respond after you cut your hair and get asked by more than one student "whether you're a boy or a girl"?

Would you agree something has to change when

students (yes students) have catcalled in your direction on your first day at their school?

Having experienced all this, would you agree that the curriculum definitely needed to be updated? Might you concede that there must be some deeply ingrained issues in society for students to have learned these behaviours by accident?

In fact, these issues are very deeply rooted for us to not even be able to talk about them. Sadly these are not the only examples that I can share, and every scenario that I've shared really is something that I have witnessed or experienced first-hand in Ontario schools within the past five years.

When I graduated high school I understood the pressure to engage in sexual activity, but didn't understand consent. I knew that Indigenous people existed, but I did not know that their culture had so brutally been stripped from them.

These are the conversations that are missing in the classroom and in society, and I wonder how we'll ever have them with a government that thinks it's ok to prohibit education.

Thank you again for your efforts to share the story.

Sincerely,
A teacher

CHEAP EATS for HUNGRY LEVELLERS

BY THE LEVELLER EDITORS

Tight on time and cash and wondering where to find a neighborhood spot that'll feed feed you like family? We've all been there. Social justice warriors need happy bellies, even in times of austerity.

So the Leveller Editorial team rounded up recommendations for favorite food spots that deliver on delicious meals, generous portions and non-inflationary prices.

FONTENELLE RESTAURANT

55 Montreal Rd. Vanier

An old relic of a diner on the edge of Vanier with a very loyal customer base. Classic, hearty breakfasts for under \$10, and a full lunch menu, too.

LA BOTTEGA NICASTRO

64 George Street, Byward Market

Huge deli sandwiches filled with your choice of bread, Italian deli meat, cheese – all for \$7 and topped with antipasto, pickled eggplant, peppers and fresh veggies too. A sure way to cure a hankering.

KETTLEMAN'S BAGEL

12 Bank St. Glebe

Wood-fired bagels make these generously stuffed sandwiches some of the best in town. All sandwiches come in at under \$10 but some of the tastier and most reasonably priced are the Breakfast Bagel, Vegetarian TLC and BLT.

HORN OF AFRICA ETHIOPIAN

384 Rideau St., Downtown

There are many reasons to love Horn of Africa. You get to eat with your hands, the dishes are richly spiced meat and vegetarian stews, they're served with spongy injera bread and most of the choices are as satisfying physically as they are financially (i.e., usually under \$10). Favourite plate hands down is the Yebeg Kay Watt which is lamb drowned in complex and spicy Berbere sauce.

GOOD EATS

473 Albert Street, Downtown

They're only open 7-2:30 so if you're in the neighborhood, count yourself lucky. Their menu changes often but it's always full of creative, healthy options for breakfast under \$7, next-level soups and salads you actually look forward to digging into.

PHO BO GA LA

784 Somerset St. W. Chinatown

It's hard to go wrong with dozens of pho places in this neighbourhood, but at Pho Bo Go La the soup bowls are the size of kitchen sinks, the sides are fresh and the servers are always friendly.

QUÊ HƯƠNG

787 Somerset St W. Chinatown

Banh Mi are tasty and affordable Vietnamese sandwiches. This place has a special place in our heart, seeing as it's a one-woman operation run by a friendly and somewhat deaf grandma in her 80s, Le Nguyen, who came to Canada as a refugee in the '70s.

SHAWARMA PALACE

Bank, Rideau, Carling, and Orleans

Shawarma might just be the perfect drunk/hang-over food. It's flavourful, filling and packed with both veggie goodness and garlicky grease (to mop up all that alcohol). There's great shawarma places everywhere, but with five locations around town, there's probably a Shawarma Palace near you.

ALJABAL BAKERY

6469 Jeanne D'Arc Blvd N. Orleans

This place is out of the way even for Orleans, but go if you get the chance. The Lebanese pies are astonishingly cheap and delicious, and the owners will treat you like family.

YKO BBQ CHICKEN

375 McArthur Ave. Vanier

At this restaurant of foods done the Cote d'Ivoire way, you can get an order of chicken, rice and plantains for \$12.50 – and it will probably last you more than one meal.

BON APPETIT!

LISTINGS

TUES NOV 13

DISCUSSION: Challenges Facing Violence Against Women Shelters in Canada, 251 Bank st, 2nd floor. \$10. Register online or in person at 116 Third Ave, Octopus Books. 7pm.

WORKSHOP: I'm Coming! A Guide to Women's Orgasm. Venus Envy, 226 Bank St. 6:30pm.

WED NOV 14

RALLY: Rally against immigration detention at the Supreme Court of Canada, 301 Wellington St. Rally at 8am sharp. Pack the court from 9am-12pm.

ONLINE ACTION: Stop the Deportation of Moe Harkat!, 9 AM to MIDNIGHT, to read the sample letter and send your message: iclmg.ca/stop-harkat-deportation/

FOOD: Pierogies for Peace. 329 Bell St South, The Carleton Food Collective. 6pm.

SERIES: Yoga Unity: Relaxation, Healing and Building Community for Women of Colour. Every Wednesday, 6pm at Rideau Sports Centre, 1 Donald St. PWYC.

EVENT: OCTEVAW's Feminist Lip Sync Battle, Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW), Suite 601, 250 City Centre Ave, Tickets · \$11.62 - \$32.84. 7-10pm.

THURS NOV 15

RALLY: The People's Hearings on Bill 47: Speak out for fairness! 1580 Merivale Rd, Nepean. 1:30pm.

SERIES: Yoga in the Atrium, Thursdays, 6 PM, University Centre Atrium, Carleton University, FREE.

TALK: The Canadian Peace Congress presents Stephen Gowans. 602 Loeb Bldg, Carleton. 7pm.

SUN NOV 17

RALLY: Stick it to Ford: Defend Our Communities. 1 PM, Deco Labels & Tags (28 Greensboro Dr, Toronto) -- that's Ford's business.

SUN NOV 18

SYMPOSIUM: Carleton University Green Energy Symposium (CUGES). 9:30am-2:30pm.

MEETING: Ottawa Quakers - Largely silent mtg for worship, 91A Fourth Ave. Newcomers welcome!. 10:30am. Every Sun.

COMMUNITY FORUM: Usaping Migrante: A community sharing and discussion on changes in immigration and employment policies. Jack Purcell Community Centre. 2-5pm.

LAUNCH: Ottawa launch of nitisânak by Lindsay Nixon! Venus Envy. 226 Bank St. 6:30pm.

COMMUNITY GATHERING: Two-Spirit, Trans and Gender Diverse. Tom Brown Arena, 141 Bayview Road. 5:30pm.

ECOLOGY OTTAWA: Green Infrastructure Launch Party & Info Session. Carlingwood Library. 6:30pm.

TUES NOV 20

OPIRG CARLETON ROOTS RADIO: CKCU 93.1 FM. 12pm. Every 2nd Tuesday. www.ckcufm.com.

VIGIL: Transgender Day Of Remembrance - Ottawa 2018. Canadian Tribute to Human Rights, Corner of Lisgar and Elgin. 6pm.

BOOK LAUNCH: Taking the Rap: Book Launch and Panel Discussion with Anne Hansen and Joey Twins. C307 Learning Commons (CRX) building, UOttawa. 6pm.

COMEDY NIGHT FUNDRAISER: For Ticket Defense Program. Rooster's, Carleton U. 8:30pm.

WED NOV 21

SERIES: Yoga Unity: Relax-

ation, Healing and Building Community for Women of Colour. Every Wednesday, 6pm at Rideau Sports Centre, 1 Donald St. PWYC.

PANEL: Wrongful Convictions: The Story of Exonoree Maria Shepherd. 221 Lamoureux Hall, UOttawa. 7pm.

BOOK LAUNCH: Polyamorous book tour - Ottawa. Venus Envy, 226 Bank St. 7:30pm.

THURS NOV 22

PANEL: The Future of Solitary Confinement in Ontario and Canada. C020 Learning Crossroads (CRX), UOttawa. 4pm.

SERIES: Yoga in the Atrium, Thursdays, 6 PM, University Centre Atrium, Carleton University, FREE.

BOOK LAUNCH: Displacing Blackness Book Launch. 25OneCommunity 251 Bank Street, 2nd floor, FREE. 7pm.

PANEL: Ask *Women Anything. Young Women Changing the World. Bar Robo. 7pm.

SAT NOV 24

PANEL: Who is using our digital identities? Somerset West Community Health Centre, 55 Eccles St. 1pm.

FAIR: Ottawa Small Press Fair. Jack Purcell Recreation Association. 12-5pm.

MON NOV 26

AIDS AWARENESS WEEK OF EVENTS: facebook.com/events/203990417163731/

CARDS AGAINST MISOGYNY: Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW), Suite 601, 250 City Centre Ave, Tickets · \$11.62. 7pm.

TUES NOV 27

WORKSHOP: Naloxone and Harm

Reduction Training. UC 513, Carleton University. 1pm.

WED NOV 28

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM TO END GENDERED VIOLENCE: facebook.com/events/113939836193142/

SERIES: Yoga Unity: Relaxation, Healing and Building Community for Women of Colour. Every Wednesday, 6pm at Rideau Sports Centre, 1 Donald St. PWYC.

WORKSHOP: Going Down: Fellatio Workshop. Venus Envy, 226 Bank St. 6:30pm.

SCIENCE: Ignite! Free Talks: Women in Science. Canadian Museum of Nature. 6:45-9pm.

MON DEC 3

WE *HEART* OPIRG WEEK: Every day in the Carleton Unicentre Atrium, free snacks & info, 11am.

TUES DEC 4

WE *HEART* OPIRG WEEK: Every day in the Carleton Unicentre Atrium, free snacks & info, 11am.

OPIRG CARLETON ROOTS RADIO: CKCU 93.1 FM. 12pm. Every 2nd Tuesday. ckcufm.com.

WED DEC 5

WE *HEART* OPIRG WEEK: Every day in the Carleton Unicentre Atrium, free snacks & info, 11am.

THURS DEC 6

WE *HEART* OPIRG WEEK: Every day in the Carleton Unicentre Atrium, free snacks & info, 11am.

SERIES: Yoga in the Atrium, Thursdays, 6 PM, University Centre Atrium, Carleton University, FREE.





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BY MEDIUM SUBSTITUTE

AQUARIUS

(Jan. 20 - Feb. 18)

Aquarius, do you ever feel like a work in progress – without the progress? Do you ever wish someone had written an owner's manual for your body? Do you spend days making 'to-do' lists, but never quite get to the 'do' part?

Me too.

PISCES

(Feb. 19 - March 20)

Hope can triumph over experience, Pisces.

ARIES

(March 21 - April 19)

30% of statistics are made up, Aries. Ok, I don't know if that's true, but I do know that more than half of those surveyed side with the majority.

TAURUS

(April 20 - May 20)

Taurus, did you notice how, after Obama, Canadians elected their own handsome "hope-y change-y" leader? Well now Ontario has its own right-wing, crypto-fascist buffoon. Are we anything more than a nation of pale copycats? And speaking of pale, did you catch how polite Ottawa adroitly dodged multiple chances to elect its first black councillor this past month? Democracy!

GEMINI

(May 21 - June 20)

Gemini, I'm thinking of starting a clandestine insurgent rebel clown army. Will you join me?

CANCER

(June 21 - July 22)

Please come home, Cancer, so I can go to sleep.

LEO

(July 23 - Aug. 22)

What is the opposite of loneliness, Leo? I've got that song by Thee Silver Mt. Zion Memorial Orchestra & Tra-La-La Band stuck in my head – you know, the one that goes "When the world is sick / Can't no one be well? / But I dreamt we was all beautiful and strong."

I'll take off my skin, Leo, will you take off yours? It's like Charles Eisenstein said, you know, "We won't have community until we need each other."

VIRGO

(Aug. 23 - Sept. 22)

If tweet is the verb and Twitter is the object, Virgo, then is twit the subject?

LIBRA

(Sept. 23 - Oct. 22)

Libra, a friend once told me, "Words are useful if they can take you to the point at which words are no longer necessary."

SCORPIO

(Oct. 23 - Nov. 21)

This month I'm calling on you to commit senseless acts of beauty, Scorpio. Just because something is useless doesn't mean it isn't important.

SAGITTARIUS

(Nov. 22 - Dec. 21)

Motivational speakers and self-help authors will tell you that the only thing standing in the way of you living a happy and successful life is... you. Those people are lying to you, Sagittarius. (Stop blaming yourself).

CAPRICORN

(Dec 22-Jan 19)

Capricorn, you know how your idealism keeps tempting you into thinking you're doing something subversive – but then that subversive thing can't escape the logic and alienation of capitalism? No? It's just me, huh?

Better luck next month, I guess.





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