



The Winter of our Discontent

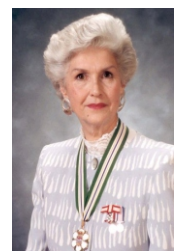
The March issue of *Orders of the Day* is understandably pre-occupied with the so-called "Freedom" protests and with the increasingly caustic pressure on our democratic institutions. For most of February, our nation was in the grip of a small yet hostile collection of anti-vaxxers, misguided truckers and malcontents. In Victoria, for several weekends in a row, the Legislature Precincts have been plagued by parades of honking drivers who somehow subscribe to the notion that disturbing the peace and hurling insults at mask-wearing locals is what "freedom" means. In this issue:

Former British PM Sir John Major tells us: "We are living through a time of uncertainty and political turbulence – at home and overseas. At home, we take democracy for granted; we should not. It is far more complex than simply having the right to vote. In many countries, there is a widespread discontent of the governed, and democracy is in retreat." Page 4 & 5.



The Mailbag: Our readers speak out on Pages 6 & 7, including Val Roddick, who writes: "Democracies the world over are definitely rattled and, yes, we should be concerned. Presently, one of the major missing links is "responsibility."

Director Ken Jones sent us a speech delivered by former Lieutenant Governor Iona Campagnolo in 2003 in which she reminded parliamentarians that "we know as few others do, that to achieve anything of value we must practice the art of collaboration across differences, eliciting each other's understanding and perhaps even their support." Page 15.



Her Honour

The Honourable Janet Austin, OBC

Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia

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The Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia is strictly non-partisan, regardless of members' past or present political affiliation. Founded in 1987, the Association was formally established by an Act of the British Columbia Legislature on February 10, 1998.

Orders of the Day was conceived, named and produced in its early stages by Bob McClelland, former MLA and cabinet minister, following his retirement from office. Hugh Curtis ably helmed this publication up through May 2014.

From the Editor's Desk

In a recent article published by NBC Think, Shachi Kurl, the president and public face of the Angus Reid Institute (ARI), wrote: "Five years ago, as the world was coming to grips with the unprecedented election of former President Donald Trump, many took comfort in Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. While Washington disengaged from traditional allies, pulled out of international treaties and disparaged refugees, Trudeau and his 'sunny ways' government provided an inspiring counterweight. Canadians took pride – moral superiority even – in their policies embracing multilateralism abroad and pluralism at home.

"But even then, there were signs that, while this country was better protected against Trump-style populism, so-called Canadian exceptionalism did not render it immune. In 2017, as the White House imposed a moratorium on Syrian refugees, polling showed 25 per cent of Canadians believed their country should adopt a similar ban. That same year, a white supremacist opened fire at a mosque in Quebec City, killing six."

In this issue of OOTD, ARI digs deeper into the issue of Canadian disenchantment ... a condition exacerbated by the "Freedom Convoy" protests that hobbled Parliament Hill and several border crossings for most of February. ARI has found that a significant minority believes political compromise is unattainable, while a disconcerting 59 per cent of those polled believe Ottawa does not care about issues that are important to them.

On Page 14, the Council of Canadians reminds us that across the world, the kinds of tactics used by the "freedom" protesters have been used to grow right-wing populist movements that feed on the politics of division and xenophobia. "The impact has been to dramatically erode social benefits and quality of life of all but the wealthiest," the Council warns.

In mid-February – in James Bay, a block from the Legislature – I witnessed a honking protester leap from his truck and verbally attack a woman with demeaning obscenities. It was appalling.

This really is the winter of our discontent.

The President's Report

As I'm writing this, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has been underway for two days. It is with sinking hearts that we witness this renunciation of accepted norms by Vladimir Putin, who seems to believe that freedom and democracy are optional concepts at best. It reminds us how frail and tenuous democracy and peace remain, even after an absence of major military conflict in Europe for a number of decades. The current Ukrainian president was elected by his people with a 73 per cent majority, but this appears to be of no interest to the Russian aggressors.

We think of the Ukrainian people and the imminent danger that confronts them at this time. With the conventional, nuclear and cyber weapons at hand today, there is apprehension about where this will all end. Human rights, democracy and freedom, are direct casualties. Let us hope that human lives, at least, may be spared.

Here at home, we've seen significant protests undertaken in the form of the truckers' convoy, affecting Ottawa in particular. I won't comment on the driving factors behind the protest and the response here, but I have to say I was concerned the protest was ended through the use of the Emergencies Act, which was revoked before passage by the Senate. The enabling bill never entirely

became law while still allowing the government to exercise all the powers provided by the Act, such as the freezing of individuals' financial accounts.

To me, it seemed rather chilling to observe how, in this digital age, the government has ever greater recourse to arbitrary administrative sanctions. We have seen people de-platformed on social media. Now we see the government locking people out economically as well.

I think it's imperative to consider these events critically to determine whether we have seen some erosion of individual freedom and protection of our human rights here in our own country. Democracy, freedom and legal due process are precious gifts. Let's always be sure to be vigilant to ensure they are able to thrive and flourish.



John Les,
President, AFMLABC

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Democracy is in retreat; we can't take it for granted

By Sir John Major

(A speech at the UK Institute for Government in February)

“In democracy we trust?”

We are living through a time of uncertainty and political turbulence – at home and overseas.

At home, we take democracy for granted; we should not. It is far more complex than simply having the right to vote.

In many countries, there is widespread discontent of the governed, and democracy is in retreat. Nor is it in a state of grace in the UK.

In the last decades of the 20th Century, the number of democratic countries grew dramatically: The arbiter of civil liberties, Freedom House, classified 110 nations as democratic.

Democrats were so confident that their way of government was the wave of the future that they stopped arguing for it. Their confidence was premature.

In each of the last 15 years, democracy has shrunk a little, as political and civil liberties have been diminished.

In many countries, democracy has never taken root. Where it has, it risks being weakened by populism – often with added xenophobia or muzzled by elected autocracy.

It is challenged by protest groups or new – and more extreme – political movements. Even our great allies in the United States are facing populist attacks on their democracy. We should beware: When America sneezes, we often catch their cold.

Good government has a duty to deliver unwelcome messages to electors. This is not easy in a world where politicians are under continuous scrutiny from an uncontrolled internet, 24-hour media, and an increasing number of impatient special interest groups.

Under this spotlight, unwise promises are made to placate critics or win votes and – when these are not met – the public loses a little more faith.

The hard truth is that, while the government can do much, it cannot do everything. All problems cannot be swiftly and painlessly resolved on demand; it is impossible. If politicians admit that, they earn trust and respect.



Discontent grows when inequality widens, incomes stagnate, or when problems seem unsolvable. The benefit of the doubt – that most precious of political commodities – is lost when governments are seen to be “failing.”

In the last 20 years, a financial crash, unpopular wars, faltering globalization, and an unfair distribution of the benefits of growth have all contributed to the present sour resentment of government.

Our democracy has always been among the strongest and most settled in the world. It rests on the conviction that the UK Government acts for the wellbeing of all four of our nations. With nationalism growing – in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – not everyone shares that conviction.

It also relies upon respect for the laws made in Parliament, an independent judiciary, acceptance of the conventions of public life, and self-restraint by the powerful.

If any of that delicate balance goes astray – as it has, as it is – our democracy is undermined. In small but meaningful ways, our government is culpable of failing to honour these conventions.

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When governments fall short, candour is the best means of binding up support.

But that candour must be freely offered – not dragged out under the searchlight of inquiries. If it is not whole-hearted and convincing, the loss of public trust can be swift and unforgiving.

We have seen that playing out recently. Trust in politics is at a low ebb, eroded by foolish behaviour, leaving a sense of unease about how our politics is being conducted. Too often, ministers have been evasive, and the truth has been optional.

When ministers respond to legitimate questions with pre-prepared soundbites, half-truths, misdirection, or wild exaggeration, respect for government and politics dies a little more. Misleading replies to questions invite disillusion. Outright lies breed contempt.

In our democracy, we can speak truth to power. But, if democracy is to be respected, power must also speak truth to the people. And yet, in recent years, that has not been happening.

There has been cynicism about politics from the dawn of time. We are told that politicians are “all the same.” This untruth conditions electors to condone lies as though they were the accepted currency of public life. But politicians are not “all the same.” And lies are just not acceptable.

To imply otherwise is to cheapen public life and slander the vast majority of elected politicians who do not knowingly mislead. But some do – and their behaviour is corrosive. This tarnishes both politics and the reputation of Parliament. It is a dangerous trend.

If lies become commonplace, truth ceases to exist. What and who, then, can we believe? The risk is nothing and no one. And where are we then?

Parliament is an echo chamber. Lies can become accepted as fact, which – as the Speaker has pointed out – has consequences for policy and reputation. That is why deliberate lies to Parliament have been fatal to political careers – and must always be so.

If trust in the word of our leaders in Parliament is lost – then trust in government will be lost too. At No. 10, the prime minister and officials broke (pandemic) lockdown laws. Brazen excuses were dreamed up. Day after day,

the public was asked to believe the unbelievable. Ministers were sent out to defend the indefensible – making themselves look gullible or foolish.

Collectively, this has made the government look distinctly shifty, which has consequences that go far beyond political unpopularity.

No government can function properly if its every word is treated with suspicion. A report by the Constitution Unit of University College London tells us that the public trusts the courts more than the civil service, the civil service more than Parliament, and Parliament more than the prime minister.

The lack of trust in the elected portion of our democracy cannot be brushed aside. Parliament has a duty to correct this. If it does not, and trust is lost at home, our politics is broken. If trust in our word is lost overseas, we may no longer be able to work effectively with friends and partners for mutual benefit – or even security.

Unfortunately, that trust is being lost, and our reputation overseas has fallen because of our conduct. We are weakening our influence in the world. We should be wary. Even a casual glance at overseas comment shows our reputation is being shredded. A nation that loses friends and allies becomes a weaker nation.

And, when ministers attack or blame foreign governments to gain populist support at home, we are not taken seriously. Megaphone diplomacy merely increases hostility overseas. International trust may not be easy to regain.

(Sir John Major served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Leader of the Conservative Party from 1990 to 1997, and as Member of Parliament for Huntingdon, formerly Huntingdonshire, from 1979 to 2001. Sir John delivered this speech at the Institute of Government on Feb. 10, 2022. As Prime Minister, Sir John Major oversaw Britain's most prolonged period of continuous economic growth and the beginning of the Northern Ireland Peace Process. Following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, in 1997, Major was appointed a special guardian to Princes William and Harry with responsibility for legal and administrative matters. The Institute for Government is the leading UK think tank working to make government more effective.)

Letters

In the OOTD mailbox, it is the winter of our discontent

DEMOCRACIES ARE DEFINITELY RATTLED

Democracies worldwide are definitely rattled, and, yes, we should be concerned. Presently one of the major missing links is "responsibility."

Democracies require their general populations to accept responsibility for their own lives and their country. Today's democracies are rapidly becoming "nanny" states ... spending their time chasing and charging at windmills instead of working and pulling together to support and maintain a positive future for generations to come while having fun achieving goals that are sustainable and realistic.

Responsibility – starting at birth – should grow and thrive as we progress through life's journey. If we each do the best we can, our democracy and our country will undoubtedly respond appropriately.

If we continue to think it is either someone else's job or that we need to be constantly entertained – then we will vanish just like the Romans. And, from all accounts, the ensuing Dark Ages were NOT a lot of fun.

A carefully expanded, well-built and well-designed public/private partnership of our entire educational system would be an excellent investment.



Val Roddick,
(Liberal, Delta South, 1999-2009)

I COULD WRITE A BOOK ...

This whole awful mess has become so complex and fluid that it is almost impossible to comment briefly. I could write a book! So my comment: The caucus I was part of was encouraged to share and recommend books to read. In keeping with that practice, I recommend *Fascism. A Warning* authored by Madeleine Albright. And for movie night, I suggest an old movie, but timely for now – *Cabaret*.



Katherine Whittred
(Liberal, North Vancouver-Lonsdale, 1996-2009)

LONGING FOR GOOD NEWS

Abbotsford is sometimes regarded as the "Bible Belt," which can frankly be a somewhat spurious appellation. I thought, however, that it would be appropriate to begin with a brief story to provide a measure of encouragement at this time.

A preacher – who could sometimes have a high regard for his pastoral skills – returned to his church unannounced on Saturday evening to collect some papers. He found the lights were on in the main auditorium. He was surprised to discover the custodian sitting at the front reading from a Bible.

"Hey, do you know what you're reading?" the preacher asked. The custodian slowly turned. "I don't understand everything," he replied, "but it does tell me who wins in the end."

I think we all long for good news. We observe the turmoil, the civil disobedience, and wonder if life will ever return to normal. COVID-19 and its effects linger on. It's been two years since the first case was confirmed, and we are keen to bid farewell to the virus and its danger (and inconvenience) to so many of our citizens, especially seniors.

Our economy is struggling, and many sectors such as retail, restaurants and tourism are languishing.

Overdoses are still top-of-mind, and so many of our residents have tragically died from overdosing on "street drugs" (not to mention abuses with prescription drugs).

I regard myself as an optimist – which I affirm on social media – and I believe there will be better times ahead. As I reflect on past crises, there is often a catharsis, a personal passage, which transforms and makes us stronger.

This is the time to acknowledge we can't individually change the world, but we can have salutary impacts close to home, in our community, in our neighbourhood, and with our family. We can't always understand the circumstances, the trajectory of our society, but we can be comforted knowing that "this too will pass."

There will be sunny days ahead.



Simon Gibson
(Liberal, Abbotsford-Mission, 2013-2020)

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VAXXED TO THE MAX ... AND SEAT BELTED

I'm vaxxed to the max and a strong supporter of vaccine mandates. By way of background, I was a member of the government that mandated seat-belt use in BC. It was not very popular at the time, but it was legislation that saved lives and reduced health care costs.

Doing the right thing is not always easy. The same principle applies to COVID-19 vaccines. If the state is responsible for healthcare, the state has the right to mandate good health care practices. Until we are all safe, no one is safe.



Bruce Strachan
Social Credit, Prince George South, 1979-1991)

"THESE ARE NOT NORMAL TIMES"

(Recently) a small minority thought it acceptable to bring swastikas and Confederate flags to Parliament Hill. Let us not mince words: The Confederate flag symbolizes slavery. Whips deformed Black bodies. Forced labour mangled limbs. Torture almost always preceded lynchings.

Intellectually, I know that very few people today would support what the Confederate flag represented. I will assume that the Confederate flag was tolerated ... out of respect for the individuals' freedom of expression.

However, in my heart, I was left wondering who else supports this flag. Without real-time denunciations, how am I to know? That is what scares me. Even 188 years after the abolition of slavery in Canada, in some people's eyes, I am not equal, nor should I be free. This is why I celebrate Black history and Black Canadian history every February and throughout the year."



MP Greg Fergus
(Liberal, Hull-Aylmer, 2015-
Parliamentary Secretary to the PM)



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Canadian disenchantment: 3-in-5 say Ottawa doesn't care

Scenes of anger, defiance, and resentment on the streets of Ottawa last month appear to be symptomatic of a broader sense of disengagement and frustration with the state of Canadian democracy, according to new data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute.

This latest ARI study finds Canadians equally divided over whether the country can be accurately described as having a “good system of government” (42 per cent do, 45 per cent do not).

And while some may argue that the collaboration required in a minority government is a feature of the nation's democracy and not a bug, the sense is that partisanship and politics may be preventing the type of cooperation that would produce better results for constituents.

No room for political compromise

Indeed, 37 per cent of Canadians feel that there is no room for political compromise these days in Canada. This proportion is highest in the more conservative core of the country, in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Beyond those areas of anticipated criticism, however, are significant portions of the country across the political spectrum that do not feel well-represented in Ottawa.

In no region of the country does a majority of residents say that they feel the federal government cares about issues important to them. Quebecers are most bullish on this question, with 41 per cent saying they feel heard by Ottawa. Notably, seven-in-10 past Liberal voters (69 per cent) say that this government cares about issues that matter to them, followed by two-in-five of those who supported the NDP (40 per cent) and Bloc Québécois (39 per cent) in September, and just 11 per cent of past CPC voters.

Divide and division have become common words used in Canadian politics of late. When Erin O'Toole stepped down as party leader of the Conservatives after being ousted by a majority vote of party MPs, he asked the next leader to recognize Canada “is divided and people are worried.”

Last month, as a convoy of truckers and their supporters descended on Ottawa, NDP leader Jagmeet Singh called them a “divisive group of people on the right.” Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also criticized the protest, calling them a “fringe minority” with “unacceptable views.” That prompted the ‘d’-word in response from Alberta Premier Jason Kenney, who said he was concerned by the “divisive comments” from Trudeau on the protest in dismissing the concerns of the protesters.

Little wonder then, that a significant segment of Canadians believe political discourse in this country is devoid of

compromise. While just under half (48 per cent) disagree, two-in-five (37 per cent) are of the view that when it comes to talking politics, Canadians have retreated to their corners and are refusing to move.

That feeling is strongest in Alberta and Saskatchewan, where at least two-in-five believe political compromise is lacking in the country, but at least one-third in all regions believe this is the case.

Women are more likely than men to believe there is room for politicians with differing views to work together, while at least two-in-five of men of all ages believe there is no space for political accommodation.

Echoing the divisiveness in Canada cited by their former leader, past Conservative voters are more likely to believe there is significant political discord in the country – half (48 per cent) say this. While past voters of Canada's other major parties are more likely to believe there is a middle ground, at least three-in-10 of partisans of all stripes believe there is no room for political compromise.

Three-in-five believe the federal government ignores issues important to them

As a significant minority believes political compromise is unattainable, many are disillusioned with the federal government itself. Three-in-five (59 per cent) believe Ottawa does not care about issues that are important to them.

This is the majority opinion across the country and the sentiment of three-quarters in Alberta (73 per cent) and Saskatchewan (76 per cent). Those in Quebec (41 per cent) and BC (39 per cent) are most likely to feel heard by Ottawa.

Women over the age of 55 are the only group where half (51 per cent) feel like the federal government is attuned to issues they feel are important. For every other demographic, more believe Ottawa does not care about their key issues than the opposite, including seven-in-10 men under the age of 55.

The Liberals have formed government since 2015 when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau led the party to a majority government in his first election as leader. Still, one-quarter (25 per cent) of those who voted Liberal in the 2021 election say they don't believe the federal government cares about the issues they believe are important. This may be emblematic of a disconnect between the party and its supporters or a consequence of strategic voting, which has aided the Liberals in the past two elections. For past supporters of the rest of the major political parties, a majority believe this, including nearly all (88 per cent) of those who voted Conservative last fall.

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More believe the electoral system is weakening than becoming stronger

ARI asked Canadians whether a series of significant pillars of strong democracies – the equal application of the rule of law, free and fair elections, protection of human rights, ease of participation in politics, and the concept that power lies with the people – were strengthening or weakening in this country.

On some measures – human rights, ease of participation – more Canadians believe the country has improved than worsened. On others, more Canadians believe the pillars are eroding than standing strong.

One-third (34 per cent) believe there has been damage to the country's free and fair elections compared to the one-quarter (23 per cent) who believe this aspect of democracy has been bolstered. Half (51 per cent) believe the power of the average Canadian is decreasing.

Finally, a majority (53 per cent) believe there has been a weakening when it comes to the equal application of the rule of law. This, notably, as some wonder about the differences in treatment of participants in the “Freedom Convoy,” compared to how past demonstrations by Indigenous and Black Canadians have been handled.

Across the country, there is significant belief that some of these fundamental tenets of democracy are weakening. That feeling is strongest in Alberta, where two-thirds (67 per cent) believe the equal application of the rule of law is waning, and three-in-five (58 per cent) believe elections aren't as free and fair as they used to be. Only in Quebec does the number of people who believe Canada has strengthened its electoral system (28 per cent) outnumber those who say the opposite (21 per cent).

CPC, NDP voters critical of direction of democratic influence

Young men, particularly those under the age of 35, are most likely to believe Canada has lost ground on the equal application of the law, human rights, ease of participation in politics, and keeping the power with the people. As well, almost half (46 per cent) of 18- to 34-year-old men say elections have become less free and fair.

For three of the five key tenets presented to respondents, past Liberal voters are more likely to say they are strengthening than weakening. For the others – the power is invested in the people and the rule of law applies equally to everyone – there are near equal numbers who say it is strengthening as weakening.

By contrast, past Conservative and NDP voters are more likely to believe Canada's equal application of the rule of law and the democratic power of the average Canadian has weakened than strengthened. As well, a majority of CPC voters in the most recent federal election believe there has been a weakening of the electoral process.

Few believe Canada is immune to 'Trump-style politics'

Last year, for the first time, the Sweden-based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance listed the U.S. as a backsliding democracy. The institute cited the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol and former President Donald Trump's baseless claims of electoral fraud during the 2020 election as causes for concern.

Just one-in-10 believe Canada is immune to Trump-style politics – which some have defined as based in populism and nationalism, and characterized by deceit, self-aggrandizement, and eroding the checks and balances of government.

Is it time Canada became a Sanctuary Country?

(Editor's note: Sanctuary ... in a time of unprecedented global turmoil, it's at the core of the very best Canada can be. Jim Hume, *The Old Islander*, takes us on a sanctuary journey into the deep dark past. It is a fitting reminder in March, a month when we are supposed to celebrate the elimination of racial inequities. The United Nations proclaimed the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 1966. Every year, March 21 is recognized as a day where the international community can come together in an effort to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. British Columbia first proclaimed the day in 1989.)

By Jim Hume
The Old Islander

There was a time when humankind got along with minimal legal encumbrances.

In biblical times, what we know today as the Middle East was exploding with population growth. Ten tribes of Israel were carving up the land and agreeing that the Levites among them would own no land in the new country but would be its new overall 10-tribes "administrator."

The Levites, as multi-generations of governing bodies have discovered since, soon learned being in charge of things may briefly be good for the ego but can also be painful.

One of the festering sores facing the Levites in their new role was a law as ancient as humanity itself: The old Mosaic "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth." The Levites were wise in their ways which is why they were asked by tribal brothers to take on the toughest of tasks, that of persuading fellow Israelites to give up the power to slaughter – without trial or examination – a person who had been responsible for the death of another. Any blood relative of the dead, even if the death had been obvious accidental manslaughter, could openly kill the killer.

"So they (the Bible tells us) set apart Kedesh in Galilee in the hill country of Naphtali, and Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the hill country of Judah. And beyond the Jordan (River) east of Jericho, they appointed Bezer in the wilderness on the tableland, from the tribe of Reuben, and Ramoth in Gilead, from the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan, from the tribe of Manasseh."

And, thus, were created the first six Sanctuary Cities of Israel, scattered throughout the country with each one reachable by not more than one day's journey from anyplace where one human being had taken the life of another and could automatically, without trial, be executed by a member of the victim's family. The Sanctuary City Law decreed that if an



accused could reach sanctuary before the family took its lawful tribute, the accused could not be harmed until charged with murder and found guilty.

Readers may justifiably be wondering why I'm delivering a sermon on a law several thousand years old and involving long-forgotten Sanctuary Cities and the unpopular protection they were offering. I have a few reasons, among them the fact that Sanctuary Cities still exist, and Canada has several. They don't deal with life-for-life vengeance anymore, not in Canada, anyway, where the death penalty was banished years ago.

So how come Toronto, Hamilton, London, and Montreal have Sanctuary City designations while Vancouver modestly dropped the title Sanctuary City but has an officially adopted Access to City Services Without Fear for Residents With Uncertain or No Immigration Status. That designation has earned praise from the Canadian Labour Congress "for Vancouver taking action to support non-status migrants beyond the standard designation."

Sanctuary Cities may no longer be needed to protect the precious belief in Canada that every person is innocent of any charge until proven guilty, but they obviously have a role to play in an expensive humanitarian effort.

Residents of Canada "with uncertain or no immigration status" are hard to count.

The Canadian Institute of Health Resources admits: "There are no accurate figures representing the number or composition of undocumented immigrants residing in Canada. A guesstimate of about half a million has been proposed nationally, but this number varies among other sources that suggest there are anywhere from 20,000 to 200,000 undocumented workers."

"In 2003, Ontario's Construction Secretariat claimed there were 76,000 non-status immigrants in Ontario's construction industry alone. Other sources assert that at least 36,000 failed refugee applicants had never been deported, and another 64,000 individuals overstayed their work, student, or visitor

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visas in 2002. If it is assumed that workers are accompanied by family, the numbers in Ontario would rise to the highest figure previously estimated for all of Canada. With respect to settlement, Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto have the highest number of undocumented migrants with nearly 50 per cent residing in Toronto alone.”

Why the hang-up with the numbers? Simple answer: Hiding in our major cities are a minimum 200,000 refugees from other countries seeking a Holy Grail called “Canadian landed immigrant status.” Some are here having crossed a remote border without detection. Others have watched official study visas or limited work permits lapse, and on being rejected for landed immigrant status, they have quietly found work somewhere and blended unnoticed into our cosmopolitan population.

Racism is something they have to live with; incidents they have to nurse quietly at home, and bullying and derision about accent or colour are tolerated without complaint. There are no health care benefits or unemployment benefits, just social isolation and the constant fear of discovery and deportation by federal authorities.

The Canadian Labour Congress has been a steadfast friend of the would-be Canadians and has had some success getting smaller municipalities to remember that Sanctuary City policies are consistent with Canadian Charter protected rights to equality and security of person; and that many municipal services can be provided with the promise of “access without fear.”

United States of America has a wonderful Statue of Liberty at the entrance to its main harbour on the East Coast. Its inscription once earned the U.S. worldwide admiration – and a little envy here in Canada: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free.” The U.S. seems to have lost sight of the message and its meaning in recent years.

Maybe we could build on the Sanctuary Cities foundation and offer the world a Sanctuary Country with the first huddled mass to be welcomed being the one that’s already here but afraid to show its face.



(You can read more from Jim at <https://jimhume.ca/>)

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Foreign actors (Russia) spreading lies in Canada

By Andrew Nikiforuk
Tye contributing editor

Most Canadians probably think that the right-wing U.S. Fox News network has dominated global coverage of Canada's so-called "Freedom Convoy." But they'd be wrong.

Russia Today, or RT, a state-owned agency set up by President Vladimir Putin in 2005 with an annual budget of \$400 million, has offered nearly twice as many articles: Some 1,200 stories.

RT's editor-in-chief has alternately described the agency as an unofficial "soft power" branch of the Russian Defence Ministry and as an "info weapon."

U.S. historian Timothy Snyder has written that RT "wished to convey that all media lied, but that only RT was honest by not pretending to be truthful."

With access to seven million Canadian households plus French-language TV from Quebec - before Putin invaded the Ukraine - RT was serving up a steady diet of anti-vaccine and anti-mask articles since the beginning of the pandemic as part of long-standing propaganda campaign to destabilize democracies by dividing their citizens.

During the Ottawa occupation, it offered one toxic editorial by Sputnik France (another Russian state agency) that described the Canadian state as "dictatorship" and the "first iteration of a Chinese-style social credit regime in the western world."

Such messages spread like spores. At a press conference, trucker convoy organizer Tom Marazzo told reporters his movement was not anti-government. But he quoted, perhaps unknowingly, a line from the Russian editorial: "The only plan that they [the government] have is violence and the institution of a Chinese-style social credit score system."

In fact, prominent supporters of the Ottawa occupation like Ontario MPP Randy Hillier have urged Canadians to trust Russian state media over established news outlets in their own country.

So what's going on here?

Nothing good, say cyber security and disinformation experts.

They have warned for years that disinformation campaigns directed by foreign actors in Russia, China and Iran could dangerously pollute democracies and polarize debate with low-cost campaigns on the internet.

"The pandemic provided a huge opportunity for Russian propaganda," said Marcus Kolga, director of DisinfoWatch, a project of the MacDonald-Laurier Institute. "It is fuelling the movement we (saw) in downtown Ottawa, and it is scary stuff."



Since Putin invaded Ukraine, Canada's largest television providers have removed Russia Today from their services and the propaganda news outlet has shut down its U.S. operations.

Kolga told The Tye that Russian state media has aggressively published conspiracy theories and anti-lockdown/anti-vaccination narratives over the last year. The disinformation is all geared to legitimize movements or radical groups that can inflame and twist protests. The aim is to harness public anxiety and fan it towards chaos and even sedition.

In a 2019 report, Kolga warned that the Kremlin aims to "exacerbate existing divides, subvert international institutions and help create a world where its own form of corrupt authoritarianism flourishes" with incessant disinformation.

Algorithms that 'reward anger'

Russia has already used COVID disinformation to destabilize Canadian missions overseas.

In December, government defence scientist Matthew Lauder documented how Russian disinformation sought to undermine Canada's NATO mission in Latvia by spreading lies that Canadian troops were spreading the coronavirus to the local population. The scientists noted that the Russian government was clearly targeting extreme groups to spread these lies and had "demonstrated a clear capacity, capability and desire to generate disruptive effects, in particular by amplifying and exploiting uncertainty and anxiety regarding the pandemic."

As detailed in Timothy Snyder's book, *The Road to Unfreedom*, Russia's foreign policy has a perverse propaganda focus. Because it can't make its fragile oligarchy stronger (a third of Russia's hospitals have no running water), the Russian leadership focuses on making competing democracies weaker or more like Russia, a brutal kleptocracy dependent on disinformation campaigns both at home and abroad.

continued next page

David Shipley, a cybersecurity expert and chief executive officer of Beauceron Security, adds that disinformation doesn't create new divisions, but it powerfully exploits and widens existing tensions and genuine discontent with a mix of conspiracy theories and emotionally tailored messages.

The blockades and Ottawa's three-week long occupation, for example, owe much to a large percentage of the population suffering from pandemic fatigue, Shipley told The Tyee.

Add to that stress a catalyst. "We wouldn't have (had) an Ottawa occupation without those social media algorithms that fed people junk information and rewarded anger. And we wouldn't be where we are now if politicians had not used vaccines as a political wedge issue," he explained.

Disinformation can't steer a protest, but it can accelerate it like wind filling the sails of discontent.

When Shipley told the CBC ... that he suspected Russian foreign actors have played a role in disseminating COVID conspiracies and disinformation that helped stoke protest, he was immediately targeted by a right-wing U.S. website called NewsBusters that labelled his analysis as "a truly bizarre conspiracy theory."

Fuelling all sides of divides

Russian propaganda has played a critical role in escalating divisions in Europe and North America by fostering conspiracy theories on vaccines, masks and other health measures.

As one recent European report documented, Russian disinformation on COVID-19 exaggerated "the pandemic's severity to left-leaning audiences" while "understating the threat to right-leaning audiences" with what analysts described as "Russia's fire hose of falsehoods strategy."

As western governments resorted to controversial lockdowns to slow the spread of COVID, RT characterized them as a pretext for creating totalitarian states, declaring, "Americans won't stand for it." RT also warned of "destructive mass protests" as "western countries that forever preach about the authoritarian impulses of certain foreign states suddenly began to resemble the real autocrats."

In addition, Russian operatives have sown distrust in vaccines, particularly mRNA vaccines, by spreading falsehoods about side effects to North American and European audiences. The key message: "Western governments are not to be trusted and are massively incompetent."

Two years ago Ahmed Al-Rawi, director of SFU's Disinformation Project, analyzed ads placed on Facebook and Instagram by the Russian Internet Research Agency, or IRA. His conclusion: "The IRA made use of the business model of Facebook and Instagram in an attempt to further divide its targeted audiences and by highlighting mostly negative issues with a potential goal of fuelling political rage."

We're not taking the threat seriously

Al-Rawi doesn't think the Canadian media or politicians have taken the threat of engineered information on the internet by foreign players seriously.

The creation of Facebook accounts using fake identities to support and raise money for the trucker convoy also smacks of Russian influence, said Shipley.

Far-right supporters of the Canadian trucker convoy stole the identity of a Missouri woman and listed her as the creator of three Facebook groups to help drum up support and raise money for the protest. An in-depth article published by the Verge documents "How Facebook Twisted Canada's Trucker Convoy into an International Movement."

"It is clear significant elements of social media were manipulated. Who, what and where still has to be figured out," added Shipley.

Russia began to pioneer recent disinformation campaigns first in the Ukraine in 2014 and then the U.S. presidential election in 2016. Among other tricks, Russian Twitter accounts encouraged certain Americans to vote by text – an impossibility resulting in voter suppression.

Since then, Russia operatives have also actively supported right-wing movements and funded white supremacists in Europe to destabilize democracies there. One such Canadian group, Diagonon, played a role in the Ottawa occupation.

Kolga told The Tyee that Canadian governments need to take the threat of disinformation by foreign actors more seriously. Sweden, for example, recently set up a national psychological warfare defence unit and Canada needs to do something similar.

"Our democracy is in serious trouble. What we (saw) in Ottawa (was) a product of ignoring the warnings."

Shipley thinks that CRTC needs to seriously consider the regulation of media companies' use of algorithms that boost hate and anger. "They are tearing us apart."



(Andrew Nikiforuk cares deeply about accuracy, government accountability and cumulative impacts. He has won seven National Magazine Awards for his journalism since 1989 and top honours for investigative writing from the Association of Canadian Journalists. *The Tyee* – <https://thetyee.ca/> – is an independent, online news magazine from BC founded in 2003 and devoted to fact-driven stories, reporting and analysis that informs and enlivens our democratic conversation.)

Council of Canadians “shocked, disgusted” with Freedom Convoy

(A statement from the Council)

The Council of Canadians was formed in 1985 to fight for Canadian democracy and the rights of all Canadians. Canadians from every background understand that public health is a crucial part of our social cohesion and that collective rights are essential in upholding the public good.

The so-called “Freedom Convoy” that occupied parts of Ottawa represents the polar opposite of these values. Like many people in Ottawa, we have been shocked and disgusted with the appearance of swastikas and confederate flags in their city and deeply shaken by the behaviour of some of the convoy participants.

While many people are exhausted from the impact of the pandemic and frustrated with the difficult limitations taken to protect public health, the reality is that those measures are necessary to prevent more lockdowns. The convoy's slogan of “freedom” ignores the pain, suffering, and thousands of deaths from the pandemic and the sacrifice of health care workers. Their slogan should be exposed and opposed across this country.

The protests evoked a direct comparison to the events of Jan. 6th in the U.S. capitol in Washington, D.C. With many differences, both these events have been conduits for far-right groups, including white supremacists, to assert their dominance over our democracy.

Some of the organizers have ties to racist groups, some have been involved in strikebreaking, and some were part of a previous truck convoy to oppose environmental action. Across the world, these kinds of tactics have been used to grow right-wing populist movements that feed on the politics of division and xenophobia. The impact has been to dramatically erode social benefits and quality of life of all but the wealthiest.

What is remarkable is the double standard in how the police have responded to the actions of this group compared to a very different use of force and arrests at Indigenous or climate justice protests or the Toronto G20 Summit. Those approaches were wrong, and so is the impunity that this group seems to enjoy. **(Editor's note: Written before the Emergencies Act was invoked.)**

Public health experts at every level of society confirm the overwhelming evidence in support of vaccines, back the use of vaccines to fight the global pandemic of COVID-19, and encourage vaccines to be made available across the globe. They urge people from all walks of life to follow preventative measures like wearing masks and social distancing. The organizers of the convoy action were advocating precisely the opposite.

We know that our physical, economic, and social recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic can only be achieved through social solidarity. Building an inclusive, caring Canada – while recognizing both the history and current reality of this country – is the real challenge ahead for Canadians.

(Since 1985, the Council of Canadians has been a home for people who believe a better Canada is not only possible but necessary. The Council's work has always been built on a solid foundation of timely and strategic campaigns for the values, social programs and progressive policies we all believe in. The Council brings people together through collective action and grassroots organizing to challenge corporate power and advocate for people, the planet and democracy. It advocates for a society built on democracy, justice and care for each other. The CofC believes we can learn from the perspectives and struggles of others as we work together for a more just world.)



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HELPING WHEN LIFE CHANGES



Two sword lengths apart then; old war buddies now

(Editor's note: Thanks to AFMLABC director Ken Jones for digging this out of his archives and sending it along to us. Lieutenant Governor Iona Campagnolo presented this commentary as part of her speech in December 2003 at the Western Regional Reunion of the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians. As most former MLAs will tell you: There is more that unites them than divides.)

By Her Honour Iona Campagnolo
27th Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia
(2001–2007)

Although the historic “two sword lengths” of the Parliamentary Aisle once separated some of us, as members of governing and opposition parties in the House of Commons, we remain very much like former team members in any other institution, be it sport, the military or the church. We know all the rewards and all the costs of public life, and we generally share more than might be supposed, regardless of differing philosophies.

We remain forever “old war buddies,” happily able to trade battle stories and relive the highest highs and lowest lows that humans can experience (and that none who have not lived them can ever imagine!) As no others in our society, we have been disciplined by the iron law of what is attainable when reasonable people collaborate across differences to find the elusive threads of common ground on which to build an ever-more civil society.

No one knows the demands of public life better than those who have experienced it. It is that shared experience that has provided us with an unbreakable bond of kinship and a similar connection to continued responsibility that is captured by the existence of this association.

As former legislators, we bring specialized skills to the task of global and national citizenship. We have helped to shape laws by which our fellow citizens continue to live. We have served in the “trench warfare” of partisan politics, and we know as few others do that to achieve anything of value, we must practice the art of collaboration across differences, eliciting each other's understanding and perhaps even their support.

The Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians is committed to using this specialized knowledge and experience in the service of parliamentary democracies both here at home and around the world. By fostering the spirit of community among former parliamentarians, this association offers our country a potentially formidable tool in our national capacity to be of service at home and throughout the global society. In my opinion, it is a force that could be put to greater use!

I am sure you will excuse me for being rather short on protocol. (Old colleagues will be surprised that there is any at all!) Take opportunities to renew old friendships, to reacquaint ourselves with the best of the old battles and to respectfully remember our lost colleagues.

Take opportunities to strengthen the role of former parliamentarians. Each of you has played a very special and unique part in shaping the history of our own “best West,” for which, as a representative of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and in the name of all our citizens, I sincerely thank you.

(Born on Galiano Island, the Honourable Iona Campagnolo became the first woman Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia in 2001. Her introduction to politics began in 1966 when she served on the school board in Prince Rupert and as chair for five years. Iona was elected to the House of Commons in the riding of Skeena. Shortly after that, she was appointed parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and then served as a Minister in the Government of then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau as Canada's first Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport.)



NATO: Canada's first post-war alliance

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was created in April 1949, Canada's first peacetime military alliance.

It placed the country in a defensive security arrangement with the United States, Britain, and Western Europe. (The other nine founding nations were France, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Italy.)

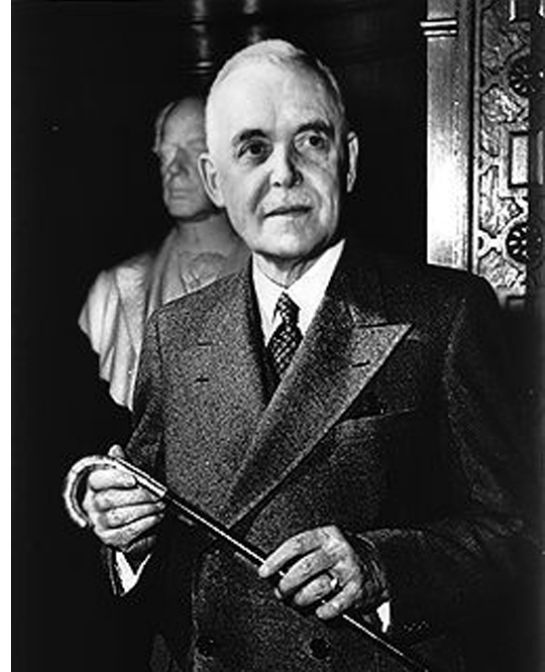
During the Cold War, NATO forces provided a frontline deterrence against the Soviet Union and its satellites. More recently, the organization has pursued global peace and security while asserting its members' strategic interests in the campaign against Islamic terrorism.

In 1947, at the beginning of the Cold War and in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Soviet Union (USSR) created a buffer zone in Eastern Europe between itself and the West. It did so by pursuing a policy of aggressive military expansion at home and subversion abroad. It imposed its will on East Germany, Poland and other nations along the Soviet border, a source of much concern in Ottawa and other Western capitals. There was real fear that France, Italy or other nations might eventually ally themselves with the Soviets.

The problem was complicated by what Ottawa saw as resurgent isolationism in the United States, as well as an unwillingness in the U.S. Congress to pick up the international burdens that France and Britain, both weakened by the Second World War, could no longer bear. The answer seemed to lie in an arrangement that would link the democracies on both sides of the Atlantic into a defensive alliance. This would protect western Europe from attack while involving the U.S. firmly in world affairs.

The first public support in Canada came from Escott Reid at the Couchiching Conference in August 1947. Reid was a civil servant at the Department of External Affairs (now Global Affairs Canada). Other Canadians, including External Affairs Minister Louis St-Laurent, picked up the idea. It was soon discussed in Washington and London. Secret talks between the British, Americans and Canadians followed. These led to formal negotiations for a broader alliance in late 1948; by that time, St-Laurent was prime minister.

Canada's representative at the negotiations was Hume Wrong. He was ambassador to the U.S. and a hardheaded realist. Wrong believed any treaty should be for defence alone; this view was popular among the other participants. A provision supporting Ottawa's wish for economic ties was included in the treaty, but little came of it.



Louis St-Laurent was a prime architect of Canada's international policies after the Second World War and promoted Canadian membership in NATO.

At the core of the treaty was the collective security provision of Article 5, that "an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all."

NATO existed largely as a paper alliance until the Korean War (1950–53). That led the NATO states – many of them fighting in Korea under the banner of the United Nations – to build up their military forces. For Canada, this had significant consequences. By the mid-1950s, about 10,000 Canadian troops were stationed in France and West Germany. They included an infantry brigade group and an air division. The Canadian contribution was small compared to the larger NATO members, but its quality was widely considered second to none.

By the late 1960s, high defence costs, plus the equipping of Canadian jets and other forces with U.S.-supplied nuclear weapons, fed criticism at home about Canada's role in NATO.

By 1966, France had pulled out of NATO's military structure, although it remained a member. The government of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau considered a similar withdrawal. In 1969, it decided to cut Canada's contribution drastically.

Source – The Canadian Encyclopedia