

Weighty issues behind the economic numbers

By Brian Kieran
OOTD editor

As we close in on the fall federal election, the economic numbers are mixed at best. It certainly did not help the incumbent government when Stats Can announced that Canada's economy lost almost 12,000 full-time jobs this summer.

TD Bank economist Brian DePratto cautions that those job losses need to be in context. Over the past year, the economy has added 353,000 jobs – the vast majority full-time. "We should remember that this pause in job growth is coming on the heels of a string of robust gains earlier in the year."

Even so, it could have implications for the election campaign. CBC's Power and Politics host Vassy Kapelos speaks for many Canadians when she asks: "If the economy is doing so well, why do so many of us feel like we're not better off, or that we can't get ahead?"

That national angst is bubbling to the surface for a reason: Canadians across the land are paying a very high price for what measures of economic comfort they enjoy. Indeed, a recent Abacus Data survey indicates that 35 per cent of voters identified the cost of living as their top concern heading into the October election (Page 4).

To punctuate this preoccupation by voters, this issue of OOTD focuses on the looming October campaign with a number of election-related articles, including two startling studies: The right-wing Fraser Institute's analysis of the Canadian Consumer Tax Index which shows the average Canadian family spent 44.2 per cent of its income on taxes last year compared to 36.3 per cent on basic necessities (Page 6); and, the left-wing Centre for Policy Alternative's numbing analysis of



rent wages, the amount workers across Canada must earn to afford to rent an apartment ... \$28 an hour in Victoria (Page 7).

As my deadline hourglass drained of sand in August, the incumbent Liberals and the Greens were keeping details of their election platforms close to the vest. But most pundits seemed to agree with Kapelos: "The Liberals, who successfully targeted 'the middle class and those who want to join it' in 2015, will trumpet their record and the (overall economic) numbers – but they'll have to acknowledge the anxiety, too.

"Conservatives will lean heavily on the not-getting-ahead part. One Conservative campaigner says their central message for the campaign will be 'we want people to get ahead, not just get by.'

"The NDP has been talking about affordability for a while now, and you'll notice leader Jagmeet Singh has been especially vocal about issues like the cost of housing during multiple pre-campaign stops. According to a New Democrat working on the campaign, it will be the central message of their campaign."

Her Honour

The Honourable Janet Austin, OBC

Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia

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From the Editor's Desk

The annual AFMLABC Government House dinner is mere moments away and the organizers of this fabulous evening need as much lead time as possible make all the final seating arrangements. So, please, if you have not ordered your tickets already ... do so NOW.

As President Jeff points out next door on Page 3, ordering can be as easy as clicking the appropriate link on our new website (www.formerbcmla.com) or by snail mail (even more reason for haste). You do not actually receive a dinner ticket. Rob Lee places the names of you and your guests on The List. You just have to show up at 6 p.m. of Sept. 20th and enjoy a wonderful evening of comradery.

I'm particularly looking forward to a reunion of sorts with our guest speaker George Garrett, the CKNW reporter I loved to hate back in the 1980s. In those days, radio news was a force to contend with, and Garrett was its spear-carrier. Oh, how he loved to lance The Press Gallery. George would parachute into the Legislative Precincts from Vancouver and would be met with grimaces. I learned the hard way that Garrett did not come to Victoria to find a good political story that none of the rest of us had. Most often, he already had the story in the can. He was just there to polish it up, file live by phone and take a victory lap while the rest of us were getting "match Garrett" orders from our news desks and missing happy hour at the bar.

George reminds us of a time when solid and penetrating political reportage by major radio stations, TV and newspapers was at its pinnacle. I am so proud to have been a Press Gallery member in those heady days. George and I will have much catching up to do on the 20th.

In this issue, our dear friend Jim Hume, *The Old Islander*, digs deep into his archives to remind us that, out here in the Wild West, an unfettered free press was not something that could be taken for granted. Alberta Premier William Aberhart's efforts in the 1930s to wrestle the press into submission is a fascinating story. The hero of the tale, *The Edmonton Journal*, is where I got my start in the late 1960s and where Jim made a name for himself when I was still in J-school back east.

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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.

President's Report

Autumn is in the air, and that means two things: An upcoming federal election and, more importantly to us, the Annual Former MLA Dinner at Government House.

This year's dinner promises to be one of the best. We are excited to have former CKNW reporter George Garrett as our guest speaker. Great speaker, great meal and a beautiful autumn setting at Government House.

And now, you can order your tickets online. Simply go to www.formerbcmla.com, click on "PAYMENTS" and you can order and pay for your tickets (\$115 each) or you can send us a cheque with the number of tickets you want to:

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Plan for a getaway weekend around the dinner. We have secured you member rates for rooms at the Union Club of BC. These are sure to go quickly so contact the Union Club at 250-384-1151 or reservations@unionclub.com and mention that you are reserving for the Annual Former MLA Association of BC Dinner.

As former elected officials, we know the importance of elections. This upcoming federal election is an opportunity for us to encourage people to vote. If each of us can persuade friends, family, colleagues who have not voted recently to participate this year, that can only improve politics in Canada. If you know any young people for whom this is the first federal election in which they are eligible to vote, help them navigate through the party platforms, encourage them to watch a leaders' debate, and maybe even take them to the polling station and then out for a treat to acknowledge their participation! If you know someone in a seniors' facility, or someone who has mobility issues and could use help getting to the polls, offer to lend a hand.

To improve politics in Canada, it matters not for whom we vote but that we all vote.

Finally, our AGM is Friday, Sept. 20th at 1:30 p.m. in the Hemlock Room at the Legislature; all members are welcome. I look forward to greeting you at the Annual Dinner that evening at Government House!



Jeff Bray
President



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Environment a priority election issue, reconciliation not so much

Canadian pollsters are finding that the environment and climate change could be central issues in the October federal election, but reconciliation with Indigenous people barely registers on the radar.

Abacus Data says climate change is among the top three issues considered most important to voters this fall. The firm asked Canadians to identify the most pressing matters from a list of 17 issues that ranged from public transit and income inequality to the deficit and border security.

Thirty-five per cent of respondents identified the cost of living as a top concern, while health care finished second with 34 per cent, and climate change finished third with 29 per cent. According to the report, it marks the first time in the firm's research that climate change has captured "such a central place in the public debate."

Similarly, a Forum Research poll finds the environment has surged into a top-ranking concern for Canadians. The survey found that 26 per cent of respondents chose the environment when asked to identify the most significant issue in the coming federal campaign. Second was the economy, which was identified as a top concern by 25 per cent of respondents, while 16 per cent chose health care as their top concern.

Rounding out Abacus' top six issues: 27 per cent chose "taxes," while 26 per cent identified "housing affordability." Twenty-five per cent selected "good jobs and wages."

Indigenous reconciliation was the issue least likely to be seen as moving votes this fall. Chosen by just five per cent of respondents, it was below "backroom deals" at six per cent – a possible indication the SNC-Lavalin affair won't be as top-of-mind for voters as some parties may have hoped.

With polls already pointing to a tight race between Liberals and Conservatives, Abacus Data also asked about the voting intentions of respondents. The numbers give an indication of which party is seen to have an advantage on each issue.

Among those who prioritize climate change as a top concern, 41 per cent said they intend to vote Liberal, while 21 per cent chose the Greens. New Democrats scored 18 per cent support, while the Conservatives are well back at 13 per cent.

ISSUES IMPACTING YOUR VOTE



Liberals also outrank Tories on health care with 34 per cent to 29 per cent respectively, as well as on the matter of housing affordability.

However, on the top issue – the cost of living – the Tories outperform Liberals 38 per cent to 30 per cent, and also score higher on taxes, and "good jobs and wages." Tories also have some big advantages over Liberals on less popular issues, including the deficit, managing immigration and border security.

On the question of reducing discrimination – another issue in the bottom six – Liberals are ahead at 46 per cent, compared to just 18 per cent for Tories. The numbers suggest the NDP does not have an issue that the party truly owns, though it scores best on income inequality and Indigenous reconciliation.

According to the results, Liberals would fare better if the election campaign centres on climate change, housing affordability, health care, and tackling discrimination, while Tories would perform better if the campaign boils down to pocketbook issues and questions about immigration and the border.

While Tories may struggle if climate change becomes the defining issue of the campaign, Abacus Data CEO David Coletto also thinks there are risks for Liberals on the topic.

Though Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government implemented a carbon price of \$20 per tonne (rising to \$50 in 2022), his government has also championed resource projects and purchased the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project.

The Liberals' "more 'middle-of-the-road' approach, compared to the NDP and Green plans, may be deemed too modest for voters seeking a more ambitious climate agenda," Coletto says.

Will the election test our values of tolerance and inclusion?

Will the fall federal election be a test of the liberal values of tolerance and inclusion that Canadians wave in the face of U.S. President Donald Trump's pervasive intolerance and bigotry, a polarizing virus that seems to be bleeding across the border?

When asked to weight the importance of various election issues, voters are most concerned – more than 20 per cent versus less than 10 per cent – with bread and butter matters like “the cost of living” and “taxes” than they are with “reducing discrimination” and “standing up to Trump.”

Regardless, the leaders of the main parties are sensitive to the potential for a divisive election campaign that may help to erode liberal values. Green Party leader Elizabeth May hit the nail on the head at Vancouver's Pride parade: “We are about to go into a campaign to win seats to form government against each other, but we are together (at Pride in Vancouver) because this matters. This is inclusive and supportive.”

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, NDP leader Jagmeet Singh, and Elizabeth May all said they were glad to be together in Vancouver, celebrating inclusiveness and tolerance. Trudeau said politics is becoming polarized around the world, and events like Pride in Vancouver are an opportunity for political leaders to stand up for human rights and marginalized communities.



“That’s particularly why I’m glad to be here walking alongside a number of party leaders including Jagmeet Singh and Elizabeth May,” the PM said. “This is important; it shows that we are in favour of human rights, in favour of defence of Canadians.”

For his part, Conservative leader Andrew Scheer recently weighed into the debate saying there is no place in society for comments such as the “go home” ones Trump tweeted about four Democratic congresswomen. Scheer said he believes people should be free to criticize their governments without having their backgrounds questioned or being told to leave the country. “I don’t think there’s any place in our society for intolerance or ... those kinds of divisive comments.”

In a recent special report, *The Economist* was of the view that the point of Trudeau’s mandate has largely been to boost Canada’s immunity with “a liberal tonic that combines social justice and environmentalism with advocacy of globalization and a dash of redistribution. The test of whether he has succeeded will not be whether he wins the election in October. Rather, it will come if he loses. Would a Conservative government sustain the broader themes of Canadian liberalism even as it discarded Trudeau’s particular brand of it?”

The Economist was upbeat, arguing that geography, history, political culture, the electoral system, the structure of the economy, and the welfare state all argue for optimism. “They keep the political climate temperate. American slugfests over judicial appointments are foreign to Canada. The head of the panel to advise Trudeau on picking the next Supreme Court justice is a former Progressive Conservative prime minister.”

Citing the increase in immigrants crossing into Canada since Trump was elected, Christian Bourque of Leger Marketing said: “This may be the first time in history that immigration is an election issue nationally.” *The Economist’s* writers said Scheer’s Conservative voters are more alarmed by cross border (refugee) immigration spikes than are the Liberals because Conservatives face a challenge from Maxime Bernier, a former federal minister from Quebec, who wants to reduce the annual immigration target to 250,000 – roughly what it was under former PM Stephen Harper. Bernier’s People’s Party is low in the polls, but the Conservatives cannot dismiss him.

While defending immigration, Scheer has hinted that Canada could become a bit less welcoming. As prime minister he would “set immigration levels consistent with what is in Canada’s best interests.” That said, Alberta MP Michelle Rempel says the Conservatives are “one of few right-of-centre parties that is strongly pro-immigration.”

Both sides are bracing for a bitter election, *The Economist* concluded. “The clash between Trudeau’s new-age liberalism and Scheer’s conservatism may test Canada’s defences against immoderation, but they should hold. Canadian liberalism is so deep-rooted that it does not depend on a Liberal Party victory. If Trudeau loses, the world will no longer be looking to him, as Biden prophesied back in 2016. But liberals will still look to Canada.”

(Sources: The CBC, Canadian Press, HuffPost, The Economist)

Taxes gobble way more income than the basic necessities

By Jake Fuss
The Fraser Institute

The average Canadian family spent more than 44 per cent of its income on taxes in 2018 – more than housing, food and clothing costs combined finds a study by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Taxes – not life's basic necessities – remain the largest household expense for families across the country,” says Finn Poschmann, resident scholar at the Fraser Institute, citing the Canadian Consumer Tax Index which tracks the total tax bill of the average Canadian family from 1961 to 2018.

The “consumer” in question is the taxpaying family that can be thought of as consuming government services. Much like the Consumer Price Index calculated by Statistics Canada that measures the average price that consumers pay for the goods and services they buy of their own choice, the Canadian Consumer Tax Index measures the price of goods and services that government buys on behalf of Canadians. The Canadian Consumer Tax Index thus answers the following question: How has the tax burden of the average family changed since 1961, bearing in mind that the average family has itself changed in that period?

The Canadian Consumer Tax Index tracks the total tax bill paid by a Canadian family with average income. While each of these families had an average income in the year selected, the family is not the same one from year to year. The objective is not to trace the tax experience of a particular family, but rather to plot the experience of a family that was average in each year.

Last year, the average Canadian family earned \$88,865 and paid \$39,299 in taxes compared to \$32,214 on the basic necessities – housing (including rent and mortgage payments), food and clothing combined. In other words, the average Canadian family spent 44.2 per cent of its income on taxes compared to 36.3 per cent on necessities. This is a dramatic shift since 1961 when the average Canadian family spent much less of its income on taxes (33.5 per cent) than basic necessities (56.5 per cent).

The total tax bill includes visible and hidden taxes paid to the federal, provincial and local governments, including income, payroll, sales, property, carbon, health, fuel, alcohol taxes and more.



The interaction of several factors produced the dramatic increase in the average family's tax bill from 1961 to 2018. Among those factors is, first, a sizeable increase in incomes over the period: 1,677 per cent since 1961. Even with no changes in tax rates, the family's tax bill would have increased substantially; growth in family income alone would have produced an increase in the tax bill from \$1,675 in 1961 to \$29,770 in 2018. Second, the average family faced a tax rate increase from 33.5 per cent in 1961 to 44.2 per cent in 2018.

Since 1961, the average Canadian family's total tax bill has increased by 2,246 per cent, dwarfing increases in annual housing costs (1,593 per cent), clothing (769 per cent) and food (639 per cent). “Of course, taxes help fund important public services, but with more than 44 per cent of their income going to taxes, Canadians might wonder whether they're getting good value for their tax dollars,” says Jake Fuss, a Fraser Institute economist.

Taxes		
Income taxes	12,242	31.2%
Payroll & health taxes	7,475	19.0%
Sales taxes	5,839	14.9%
Property taxes	4,254	10.8%
Profit tax	4,726	12.0%
Liquor, tobacco, amusement, & other excise taxes	1,855	4.7%
Fuel, motor vehicle licence, & carbon taxes	1,096	2.8%
Other taxes	1,071	2.7%
Natural resource taxes	343	0.9%
Import duties	397	1.0%
Total taxes	\$39,299	
Total cash income	\$88,865	
Taxes as a percentage of cash income	44.2%	

Source: The Fraser Institute's Canadian Tax Simulator, 2019.

Rental wages required across Canada are unaccommodating

By David Macdonald

The Centre for Policy Alternatives

When we talk about housing affordability, the focus is usually on home ownership and high housing costs. Less discussed is the affordability crisis faced by the third of Canadian households (4.7 million families) who rent their homes.

This analysis looks at the extent of the problem by determining the hourly wage that a full-time worker must make to be able to rent an average two-bedroom apartment using no more than 30 per cent of their income. We call this the rental wage.

The average rental wage across Canada is \$22.40/hr. This is the income you would need to bring home to be able to afford an average-priced two-bedroom apartment. For an average-priced one-bedroom apartment, the national average rental wage is \$20.20/hr. Of course, if a worker doesn't have a full-time job, the rental wage will be higher no matter where they live. Importantly, because all provincial minimum wages are far lower than these average rental wages, it is not possible for many full-time workers to afford to live anywhere without spending more than 30 per cent of their income on rent.

In some cities, the rental wage is much higher than the Canadian average. For example, a full-time worker in Vancouver needs to make \$35.43/hr to afford an average-priced two-bedroom apartment. A minimum-wage worker in Vancouver would have to work 84 hours a week to afford the average-priced one-bedroom apartment or 112 hours a week for a two-bedroom apartment.

The next highest average rental wages are found in Toronto (\$33.70/hr), Victoria (\$28.47/hr), Calgary (\$26.97/hr) and Ottawa (\$26.08/hr). A detailed, searchable map of rental wages across Canada is available on the CCPA website (www.policyalternatives.ca/rentalwages).

For this report, we have determined the rental wage in 795 Canadian neighbourhoods based on two-bedroom rental costs, as two-bedroom apartments are the most common type, making up 50 per cent of all units. One-bedroom rentals make up 36 per cent of apartments, with the bachelor and three-bedroom (or more) categories each making up less than 10 per cent of units. With two-bedroom units being more common, it is easier to determine the rental wage in more neighbourhoods outside of Canada's biggest cities.

Everyone deserves a decent place to live. The two-bedroom apartment, therefore, serves as a proxy for various family types in Canada, since it offers a modest amount of room for multiple living arrangements. Many households rely on only one income but contain more than one person – single-parent families, for example, or an adult caring for a senior.

A sole income earner working full time should be able to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment for their family in a country as rich as Canada. But, in most Canadian cities, including Canada's largest metropolitan areas of Toronto and Vancouver, there are no neighbourhoods where it is possible to afford a one or two-bedroom unit on a single minimum wage. In fact, it is possible for a minimum-wage worker (e.g., a single parent) to comfortably afford the average two-bedroom rental rate in only three per cent of the 795 neighbourhoods where rental and income data are available.

In only nine per cent of neighbourhoods can a minimum-wage worker afford the average priced one-bedroom apartment without spending more than 30 per cent of their income on rent. Remarkably, of the 36 metro areas in Canada, 23 have no neighbourhoods where the average-priced one-bedroom is affordable to a minimum-wage worker, and 31 have no neighbourhoods where a two-bedroom apartment is affordable.

The highest two-bedroom rental wages are found in Toronto's downtown Bay Street corridor (\$73.17/hr), Vancouver's North False Creek neighbourhood (\$60.93/hr) and the Toronto waterfront and island area (\$53.01/hr).



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Elections Canada voter information campaign

To ensure that Canadians can exercise their democratic right to vote, Elections Canada conducts a Voter Information Campaign before and during federal elections to provide Canadians with all the information they need on when, where and ways to register and vote in a general election.

The national campaign – delivered through a variety of products with consistent messages, look and feel – primarily targets the general population and groups who face higher-than-average barriers to participating in elections: New voters (youth and new Canadian citizens,) Indigenous electors, and electors with disabilities.

For the first time, Elections Canada has launched its voter information campaign before the election call to increase awareness of the upcoming general election, position itself as the official source of information on the electoral process, and encourage eligible Canadians to register to vote and work in the federal election. The pre-election campaign targets the general population with a focus on new voters and other priority groups with lower electoral participation rates.

One of Elections Canada's key roles is to communicate effectively and clearly to Canadians about the electoral process, including registration procedures and the identification required to vote. To that end, the agency has developed many resources to reach out to the Canadian electorate, especially those who face barriers to voting. Electors in these groups often lack the identification documents required to prove their address. They are less likely to be registered and receive a voter information card (VIC). Research over the last 15 years indicates that the VIC is the primary source of information on voting for electors.

Research also shows that these groups experience barriers to participating in elections, including not knowing the many different ways to register and vote; or how to work in an election. Some Canadians lack interest in politics or do not feel confident in their political knowledge. By expanding information-sharing methodologies, Elections Canada can help address some of the access and motivational barriers to getting involved with elections.

1. Services and Information for Electors with Disabilities

Elections Canada's Information for People with Disabilities' web page provides details about the tools and services available to electors with disabilities for the 2019 federal election, including the Accessibility Policy and Service Offering for people with disabilities, and information on outreach and stakeholder engagement.

2. Communication Channels

The Voter Information Campaign delivers concise, reliable and accessible information about the voting process and voter identification requirements using a wide variety of products, formats and channels to maximize its reach to Canadians.

3. Election website

The Federal Election 2019 microsite (www.elections.ca/homeGE.aspx) is intended to help Canadians to find, understand and use the information they need to register and vote in the federal election. The information will be updated through to election day, as it becomes available. The evolving content will be tailored to ensure the website responds to user needs through the electoral period calendar (i.e. removing "expired" voting options and featuring the most useful call to action on the homepage on any given day). The mobile and tablet-friendly website is modern with a minimalist design consistent with the look and feel of the Voter Information Campaign.

4. Social media

Elections Canada manages accounts in both official languages on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube channels. The latter will feature videos as they become available. Elections Canada will use these media to help increase awareness of where, when and ways to register and vote, voter identification requirements, and employment opportunities. These channels also make it easy for followers to share Elections Canada' digital communication products.

Sub-populations who face barriers to voting	Population	% of population*	Source
Youth (18–24)	3,079,095	8.8	Census (2016)
Post-secondary students	2,034,957	5.8	Census (2016)
Seniors (65+)	5,935,630	16.9	Census (2016)
Living in a health care and related facilities ^{Footnote 1}	428,585	1.2	Census (2016)
Indigenous people (First Nations, Métis and Inuit)	1,673,785	4.8	Census (2016)
Canadians citizens through naturalization	5,621,975	16.3	Census (2016)
New Canadians (acquired citizenship between 2012–2016)	904,865	2.6	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (2018)
Canadians with disabilities	6,246,640	17.8	Canadian Survey on Disability (2017)
People who are homeless	235,000	0.7	Canadian Observatory on Homelessness (2016)

*The denominator for calculating population percentage is 35,151,728—the total estimated population of Canada.

Elections Canada improves the voting process

Elections Canada started preparing for the 2019 federal general election in 2015. Its goal ... to improve the voting experience, strengthen electoral security and make processes easier for election workers.

Strengthening election security

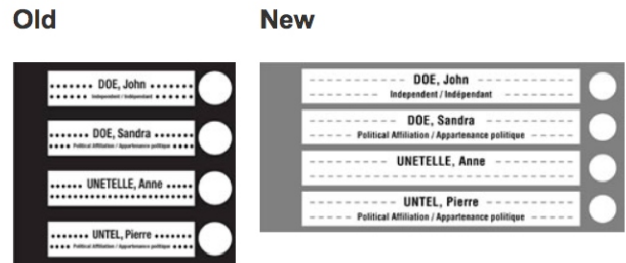
The environment in which elections take place is changing. Experts continue to identify threats to Canada's democracy, ranging from foreign interference and influence efforts to cyber-attacks and attempts at disinformation. Elections Canada is paying careful attention to these threats to democracy, working to limit the impact within the bounds of its legal mandate and relying on the assistance of security agencies.

Easier process at advance and election day polls

For the 2019 general election and any upcoming by-elections, staff will use simpler paper processes at advance and election day polls. The reduced and simplified processes mean faster and smoother service for voters. The new processes will also reduce the environmental footprint.

Redesigned ballot

Elections Canada consulted persons with disabilities, the general public and other stakeholders to redesign the ballot. It is now much more accessible and eco-friendly. It debuted the new design in the December 3rd by-election in Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. The new ballot is two inches wider to improve handling. The background is grey instead of black, the font sizes are bigger, and dots have been replaced by dashes – all to improve readability and optical character recognition (OCR) by screen readers.



Printing methods have also been improved to reduce waste and ballots will be printed on 30 per cent recycled paper. The changes to the ballot conform to the Canada Elections Act and maintain all existing security features.

More advance polls and longer hours

More and more Canadian electors are voting before election day. In the 2015 election, there was a 75 per cent increase in votes cast at advance polls. In anticipation of high demand, Elections Canada is extending hours at all advance polls. Instead of opening at noon and closing at 8:00 p.m., polls will open at 9:00 a.m. and remain open to 9:00 p.m. As well, more advance voting sites are planned to give Canadians more convenient options.

Improved service at Elections Canada offices

Elections Canada will use a one-stop shop approach to improve service to electors. One agent can now add or update voter information on the list of electors and register electors to vote by special ballot. Voting can take place any time after the election is called right up to six days before election day in any Elections Canada office across the country. Elections Canada plans to have more than 600 offices open for the next general election. It expects the time needed to vote in Elections Canada offices will be cut in half.

continued next page

Voting process improved

More on-campus voting

In the last general election, Elections Canada offered special ballot voting services in 39 post-secondary institutions. For the 2019 general election, it is working on expanding these services to more than 115 campuses across Canada. Using the same new one-stop shop approach as Elections Canada offices, electors will be able to vote on campus at more locations as an early voting option. On-campus voting will be available on select days to be announced.



Working with Indigenous communities

Elections Canada is working with First Nations, Inuit and Métis to offer better election services in their communities. One improvement, which is guided by recently updated polling place selection policy, is to increase the number of advance and election day polling places on reserves. Returning officers began reaching out to these communities in the summer of 2018.

Elections Canada has also launched a pilot project in 87 remote communities across 27 electoral districts where barriers to registration and voting were found to be higher than elsewhere. This project will help returning officers build ongoing relationships with community leaders to plan election services for their communities.

Better community relations

Elections Canada is enhancing the Community Relations Officer program, a key element of its outreach activities. Community Relations Officers work with local leaders to improve access to registration and voting in communities. These officers provide information on when, where and ways to register and vote, as well as on the tools and services available to voters. For the 2019 election, the program will include opportunities for Métis communities and official language minority communities.

Online voter registration

Elections Canada has recently added the Secure Online Document Submission service to its online voter registration service to help electors who want to register but who do not have a driver's licence or an accepted provincial or territorial ID card. Eligible electors including Canadians living at non-standard addresses such as First Nations reserves can use the online voter registration service to register to vote or to check and update their registration information.



Voter Registration - Welcome

Use this service to:

- check if you're registered to vote
- update the address on your voter registration, or
- register to vote

The distance to polling places

Elections Canada is using new and improved geography services to help returning officers decrease the travel time between voters' homes and polling places. Returning officers will also be able to use the new tools to draw polling place boundaries that make sense to electors, grouping neighbourhoods and communities together. New software will tell returning officers if another polling place is closer for a voter. It will also tell them if there are voters who have to travel longer than other voters in the area which will be particularly beneficial to electors in rural areas.

Alberta's free press faces off with a vindictive premier

By Jim Hume

In 1935, a group of unhappy citizens tried for a foothold in the Alberta general election. These relatively unknown "Social Crediters" voiced strange theories about new ways to finance government.

Their rank and file leader was fire-and-brimstone evangelist William Aberhart. He and thousands of others were stunned when the returning officer announced Social Credit would form government with 56 seats in the 63-seat Legislature. The United Farmers of Alberta (UFA), in power since 1921, elected zero. It was the first time a sitting government had lost every seat it held.



The Socreds enthusiastically elected seatless Aberhart their president, thus, premier without a seat. That problem was solved with the resignation of a newly-elected Socred and agreement the Liberals, Conservatives and UFA would not contest a byelection.

Premier Aberhart quickly focused on his enemy, "the press," which was challenging his economic theories and strange ideas on banking regulations. In 1935, the press – large circulation dailies and modest rural weeklies – was the enemy.

Edmonton Journal Publisher John Imrie and Editor A. Balmer Watt dismissed Aberhart and his economic theory with references to half-baked populists seduced by pseudo-economic theory.

Aberhart fired back. In words that echo in 2019, he said they were just "the mouthpiece for financiers ... publishing falsehoods that are entirely unfair and untrue. If this is done in the name of liberty of the press, we must question that liberty. The calibre of the men who are managing these newspapers is so low ... they should not be at large!" (Not quite "lock her up," but close.)

Aberhart backed his rhetoric in 1937 with three pieces of legislation – two dealing with financial matters and a third draconian law to bring the press under government control. All three moved easily through the Socred-dominated Legislature in 1938.

The Accurate News and Information Act required newspapers to be government licenced; compelled reporters to hand names and addresses of their sources to government investigators; forced editors to permit government-appointed editors to have final say on the wording of all political reporting including editorials and opinion columns; and it included the right to suspend the publication of any newspaper indefinitely.

Lieutenant Governor John C. Bowen refused Royal Assent to all three bills, but that didn't stop the premier. In March 1938, a warrant was issued for the arrest of *Edmonton Journal* columnist Don Brown. He was to be taken to Lethbridge provincial prison and held there without trial "at the pleasure of the Legislative Assembly."

Officials from the *Journal* were called before the Legislature for questioning and informed their columnist was going to be charged with "scandalous misrepresentation." He had poked fun at two MLAs, they said.

On March 25, 1938, Liberal MLA Gerald O'Connor quietly ended the debate with a motion that the charge be withdrawn. And without objection it was, but with a warning note from Aberhart that while he was pleased to offer Brown clemency, he wouldn't hesitate to take further action against the writers and publishers of "false information." That was denied Aberhart when all three bills were declared unconstitutional.

Six weeks later, the United States Pulitzer Prize committee awarded a special bronze plaque to the *Edmonton Journal* for its defence of press freedom plus special certificates to the *Calgary Herald*, the *Lethbridge Herald*, three smaller dailies and 50 Alberta weeklies for their robust defiance of bad law. They were the first Pulitzer awards outside the USA.

This story is retold as a memorial of times past when newspapers were strong, their reports reliable, and the communities they served were richer for them. And, with regret that the electronic media world has drowned clear voices with social gossip.

Mexico's finance minister grim-faced in his new job

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) – Mexico's Arturo Herrera looks grim in a viral video in which President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador names him finance minister, a job Herrera's predecessor left in a huff at a time when Latin America's second-largest economy is signalling weakness.

For an agonizing six minutes – with Herrera at his side – Obrador denounced former Finance Minister Carlos Urzua's fiery and unexpected resignation letter accusing the government of formulating economic policy without sufficient foundation.

The well-regarded Herrera looked so downcast in the video that it garnered far more online attention than Obrador's remarks.



Body language analyst Jesus Enrique Rosas at the Knesix Institute said Herrera's avoidance of eye contact and rapid blinking – some 60 blinks per minute versus a normal rate of 15 per minute – might reflect heightened nervousness. Herrera's blinking increased throughout the event.

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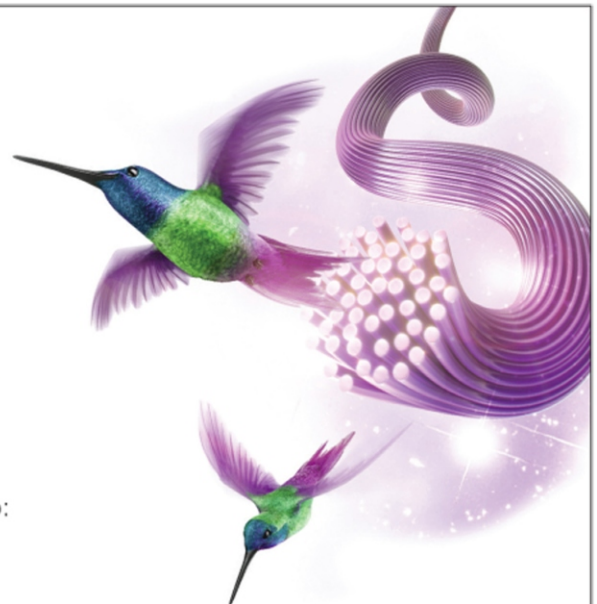
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Member News

Please send news about your activities to ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com for the next newsletter.

Where are they now?

Each issue we ask a former Member of the Legislative Assembly a series of questions. What drew them to public service; what lessons have they taken away; and, most important, what are they doing now.

This month we welcome Moe Sihota, NDP MLA for Esquimalt-Metchosin (formerly Esquimalt-Port Renfrew) from 1986 to 2001. He served in several cabinet posts for premiers Mike Harcourt, Glen Clark, and Dan Miller. He also served as President of the BC NDP from 2009 to 2013.



What prompted you to seek public office?

I was elected UBC Student Ombudsperson (1975) and dealt with access to post-secondary education. As a result, I became active in student politics and was elected president of the Young NDP (1980). Then I was encouraged to seek the nomination in Esquimalt upon the retirement of Frank Mitchell.

Which political figure most influenced you?

Dave Barrett ... a brilliant orator and a charismatic leader. He also took me under his wing, introduced me to party activists and became a mentor. Some in our party doubted that an Indo-Canadian could win Esquimalt. Dave believed colour and ethnicity should not be a barrier. Without the support of the Barrett and Mitchell families, I would not have become the first Indo-Canadian elected to any provincial legislature in Canada.

Was it hard to make the transition from private life to public life?

No, I had worked at the Legislature with several MLAs, was active in Operation Solidarity and had managed enough political campaigns to have a good sense of what to expect. As time passed, I appreciated the good fortune and privilege of being an MLA and minister. Working with distinguished colleagues and civil servants offset any turbulence that accompanies public life. I think, in some

ways, the transition is harder for spouses and family as there is little support and recognition for them. That needs to change.

What was your biggest challenge returning to private life?

Some would argue that I never left public life. Within a week of leaving politics, I was asked to serve as a talk show host for the (now) Victoria CTV affiliate which I did for three years. Subsequently, I was invited onto – and still contribute to – the CBC Vancouver Early Edition political panel. And in 2009, I served a four-year term as NDP Party President. The late Mark Rose told me that the transition is relatively smooth if “you leave on your own terms.” I did; Mark was right.

What is the biggest lesson that has stuck with you since being an MLA?

In the Sikh Culture “seva” means service to community. I appreciate the importance of service to community and the immense sacrifice that individuals of all political stripes make to help make this a better world. I understand that seva is a lifelong obligation that continues beyond your time in office and that seva can be both political and apolitical.

Tell us a bit about your active or part-time professional interests?

I look after my business and try to help out at our Gurdwara. Above all, I love to spend time with Jessie and our kids. I’m very proud of our son, who spends six months each year in India studying yoga and meditation and teaching English at an orphanage, and our daughter, who has a career in international development.

Finally ... pet projects? Hobbies? And the value of remaining involved in the Association and OOTD.

Jessie and I are avid golfers and spend much of our winter in Palm Desert and summers in Victoria and Osoyoos. I thoroughly enjoy reading OOTD and keeping up to speed with former members. It always brings back fond memories and reminds me of how fortunate we have been to have had the opportunity to make a difference.

125 years ago

Labour Day's roots go to 1872 printers' strike

Labour Day has its roots in an 1872 printers' strike in Toronto. Fighting for a nine-hour workday, the strikers' victory was a major milestone in the changing relations between Canadian workers and their government.

In a time now when the news of labour "strife" is dominated by disputes between millionaire athletes and billionaire owners, history provides a useful perspective on a period when working people had to fight to work less than 12 hours a day. The "Nine Hour Movement" began in Hamilton, Ontario, and then spread to Toronto, where its demands were taken up by the Toronto Typographical Union.

In 1869, the union sent a petition to its members' employers requesting a weekly reduction in hours per week to 58, thus placing itself among the leading advocates in the industrialized world for a shorter workweek. The union's request was refused outright by the owners of the printing shops, most vehemently by George Brown of *The Globe*.

By 1872, the union's stand had hardened from a request to a demand to a threat to strike. The employers called the demand for a shorter workweek "foolish," "absurd," and "unreasonable." As a result, in March 1872, the printers went on strike.

In mid-April, a demonstration was held to show solidarity among the workers of Toronto. A parade of some 2,000 workers marched through the city, headed by marching bands. By the time the parade reached Queen's Park, the sympathetic crowd had grown to 10,000.

The employers fought the strikers by bringing in replacement workers from small towns. George Brown launched a counterattack by launching legal action against the union for "conspiracy." Brown's action revealed the astonishing fact that according to the laws of Canada, union activity was indeed considered a criminal offence. Under the law, which dated back to 1792, police arrested and jailed the 24 members of the strike committee.

Brown, however, overplayed his hand. Prime Minister John A. Macdonald had been watching the Nine Hour Movement "with curious interest, his big nose sensitively keen," wrote historian Donald Creighton, "like an animal's, for any scent of profit or danger." The scent of political profit came from the fact that Macdonald's old Liberal rival George Brown had made himself a hated man among the workers of Canada.



Macdonald was quick to capitalize. In Ottawa, he spoke to a crowd at city hall, promising to wipe the "barbarous laws" restricting labour from the books. Macdonald then came to the rescue of the imprisoned men and, in June, passed the Trade Unions Act, which legalized and protected union activity. Macdonald's move not only embarrassed his rival Brown but also earned him the enduring support of the working class.

For the strikers themselves, the short-term effects were very damaging. Many lost their jobs and were forced to leave Toronto. The long-term effects, however, were positive. After 1872, almost all union demands included the nine-hour day and the 54-hour week. Thus, the Toronto printers were pioneers of the shorter workweek in North America. Meanwhile, campaigns for an eight-hour day were already gaining in popularity, and would eventually take hold in the United States.

The fight of the Toronto printers had a second, lasting legacy. The parades held in support of the Nine Hour Movement and the printers' strike led to an annual celebration. In 1882, American labour leader Peter J. McGuire witnessed one of these labour festivals in Toronto. Inspired, he returned to New York and organized the first American "Labour Day" on September 5th of the same year.

Throughout the 1880s, pressure built in Canada to declare a national labour holiday and on July 23, 1894, the government of Prime Minister John Thompson passed a law, making Labour Day official. A huge Labour Day parade took place in Winnipeg that year that stretched some five kilometres. The tradition of a Labour Day celebration quickly spread across Canada and the continent.

It had all begun in Toronto with the brave stand of the printers' union.

(Source: The Canadian Encyclopedia)



The Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia

*Under the distinguished patronage of
Her Honour Janet Austin, OBC, Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia*

Association Annual Dinner

**Friday, September 20, 2019
Government House, Victoria**

***With thanks to Her Honour, Lieutenant-Governor Janet Austin
you and your guests are invited to our 2019 Dinner.***

Time: 6 p.m. for 7 p.m.
Dress: Business attire please
Cost: \$115 per person, taxes included
Special Guest: **George Garrett**
Author and former CKNW reporter

This event is open to all. You and your guests need not be former MLAs. Join us for dinner and enjoy! Please advise soonest.

Please make your cheque payable to the **Association of Former MLAs of BC** and mail it to the address below. (If you wish, you may post-date your cheque, but **no later** than September 7, 2019). Sorry, no refunds after that date. If you have already reserved, thank you!

Dinner guests can also purchase tickets electronically by going to our website www.formerbcmla.com. Go to the Payments page in the navigation bar and follow the prompts. Be sure to let us know the names of all the persons attending by including them in the Comments section on the payments page and/or by email to ootd@shaw.ca.

Response Coupon - please detach and return with your payment

I/we plan on attending Dinner at Government House on Friday, September 20, 2019.

My cheque for _____ persons @ \$115 is enclosed. Total \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

(please list additional guest names on the reverse side of this coupon)

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Email: ootd@shaw.ca or ootd.afmlabc@gmail.com



The Association of Former MLAs of British Columbia

This is to notify all Members of our A.G.M.

Official Notice of 2019 Annual General Meeting **Friday, September 20, 2019**

Hemlock Committee Room
Parliament Buildings, Victoria
Commencing 1:30 p.m. sharp



Additional guest names

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____