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Canada Watch

Robarts Centre flagship publication

FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL ISSUE

Guest editor's introduction: The early years

BY LORNA MARSDEN

Lorna Marsden was president of York University (1997–2007) and has been a distinguished fellow of the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies since 2019.

Forty years ago, the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies opened at York University. Since then, much has changed in the country, in the University, and at the Robarts Centre. In this, the first of two issues of *Canada Watch* focused on those 40 years, we invited contributions from York scholars, staff, visitors to the Centre, and former students who were part of this process. President emeritus Ian Macdonald's article describes the origins of the Centre and the reasons behind the first focus on the existential "Canada–Québec" question that preoccupied the country during the 1980s. This subject continues in three contemporary essays looking back at that period.

Another burning issue in the 1980s was the development of an "independent" Canadian culture, independent from US culture. Two York scholars draw some conclusions on changes from then to now.

During these years, the Centre attracted many graduate students and visitors to Canada, all in the context of significant changes at the University. Between 1984 and 2023, undergraduate enrolment increased from 30,000 in 1984 to nearly 50,000 today, and graduate enrolment grew from 3,000 then to well over 6,000 now. To conduct teaching and research, the full-time faculty has risen to close to 2,000, and other faculty, many of whom are publishing scholars, enrich the research community. Research centres and scholarship strengthen the University, and because President Macdonald had the foresight to create an endowment when the Robarts Centre was established, the Centre has been able consistently to take a significant role in the support of scholarly research and writing.

A different focus on relations with Latin America attracted many visitors in this period. A former graduate assistant recalls that period, while one Mexican and two Canadian scholars examine questions in each other's world.

In the late 1990s, a different approach to research organization emerged in Canada and at York. The University's first Vice President for Research and Innovation describes why and how it changed, a theme further developed by the current coordinator, who describes the changes in the Robarts Centre's role at York University.

"Canadian Studies" has changed, the Centre's approach has changed, and two colleagues who have served as directors of the Centre look at those changes in recent times. Finally, journalist Steve Paikin, author of the biography of Premier John Robarts, brings us back to the inspiration of 40 years ago.

All of the contributing authors have a relationship to the Robarts Centre, and I am most grateful to each of them for their thoughtful essays on this anniversary. I hope you will enjoy these contributions to the first of two anniversary issues of *Canada Watch*, and look forward with us to next one. ■

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YORK UNIVERSITÉ UNIVERSITY

CANADA WATCH SPRING 2024

Fortieth Anniversary Special Issue

FEATURES

Canada Watch | Robarts Centre flagship publication

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YORK UNIVERSITÉ UNIVERSITY

The road to the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies at York University

BY IAN MACDONALD

Ian Macdonald is president emeritus of York University and professor emeritus of Public Policy and Economics.

It was during my years in the Ontario public service (1965–1974) when I came to realize how many vexatious issues remained unresolved in the profile of Canada's national identity: the irony of trade being less restrictive externally than among our provinces, the limited awareness of the neglect of Indigenous issues, the lack of a fulfilling partnership between our two founding languages, the growing realization that the face of Canada was becoming transformed by an expanding wave of multiculturalism, and the serious conflict between the environment and the economy. York University appeared to me to be the ideal setting to address those issues. It was still a mere institutional adolescent but already displaying remarkable academic leadership.

As a result, when I assumed the presidency of York University in 1974, among the initiatives that I hoped to encourage was the establishment of a research centre in Canadian Studies. What I did not anticipate was how rocky the road to the fulfillment of that objective would be. For understandable reasons pertaining to the longstanding boundaries of academic disciplines, several leaders in the York Senate did not share my enthusiasm. Finally, it was agreed that the Senate would approve the establishment of such a centre if I could raise the funds necessary for its foundation. At the time, I never thought that it would be such tragic circumstances that would enable us to create the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies. John Robarts took his own life in October 1982. Through the clouds of my overwhelming sadness, I realized that many others would want to raise funds to honour his name, as was indeed the case. I was troubled by the need to move with what seemed like unseemly haste, and even more anxious about the call that I knew had to be made to his widow, Katherine, to seek her approval to name the Centre after her husband at such an early stage of her grieving. However, she could not have been more gracious in her response. "If you think this is something that would have pleased John, by all means go ahead." The next step was to enlist the support of his long-time friend and campaign manager, Ernie Jackson, to raise a target sum of $1 million, a not inconsiderable amount for a Canadian university project in those days.

Why did I deem it so important to create a university research centre in Canadian Studies at that time, at York University, and in the name of John Robarts? To answer that question, I must venture into an account of parts of my personal biography, for which I apologize. However, after 50 years, it would be difficult to find other witnesses to the story.

Following three years of graduate studies at Oxford University on a Rhodes scholarship, I was welcomed back to a teaching position in the Department of Political Economy at the University of Toronto, which I enjoyed for the next 10 years. Whereas some professors consider large first-year classes to be a chore, Professor Paul Fox and I thought of them as a challenge. When we succeeded Professors MacGregor Dawson and Vincent Bladen in teaching the introductory courses in political science and economics, respectively, we could not have been happier. I rather assumed that I might well spend my career there. However, I had become increasingly intrigued by the issue of how public policy was made and the challenge of doing so in a highly decentralized federation like Canada.

In the summer of 1964, an announcement appeared in *The Globe and Mail* seeking applicants for the newly created position of chief economist of Ontario. Almost on a whim, I entered the civil service competition and came up the winner. What was not clear to me at the time was the fact that Premier Robarts wanted to twin the position with that of chair of an advisory committee that he proposed to create—the Ontario Advisory Committee on Confederation (OACC). The combined duties represented a huge responsibility. The purpose, as explained by the premier, quickly became apparent. He described a recent conference of first ministers where he observed several rows of young and enthusiastic advisers seated behind the premier of Québec. In contrast, when he looked behind himself, it was to see a row of empty chairs. To build the capacity for policy advice in the Ontario public service, commensurate with the province's role in Confederation, was now his objective.

In our early discussions, it did not take me long to recognize his deep-seated intellectual curiosity. Should we be encouraging economic development where the traffic counters suggested that economic growth should take place, or where public infrastructure and public policy could encourage it to happen? As I drew a deep breath, he added, "Well, think about it, and I have a few other issues that I would like to discuss the next time we meet." This was the beginning of an endless challenge and, later, my perception of the role for a research centre on Canadian Studies

Although it may be a fanciful recollection, my own interest in Canadian Studies

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may be deeply rooted in my own background. My parents were Scottish immigrants who had left school at age 14 and came to Canada, each on their own, at age 16 before the First World War. My father served as a stretcher bearer throughout that war and miraculously survived the carnage and bloodshed. His experience made a deep impression on me in terms of the meaning of public service and how it was the responsibility of countless individuals, not just the responsibility of the leaders of government, nor indeed the members of the academy. However, my early years were also strongly influenced by a traditional immigrant upbringing: "We do it this way, but Canadians do it that way." As a result, I was determined to discover the Canadian way and to assist others in finding that way.

I have often thought how that determination was crystallized in the Confederation of Tomorrow conference. John Robarts was highly aware of the significance of 1967 and 100 years of Confederation as a vantage point from which to view where Canada had been and, more importantly, to ponder where we could be going. A conference of first ministers could well provide that vantage point. My task, along with my colleagues, was to transform Premier Robarts's vision into a workable Ontario initiative. This was the source of my proposal for the Confederation of Tomorrow conference to ponder language issues, regional development, fiscal problems, and other vexatious public policy challenges. He asked me to explore the concept with the OACC and to report back. The committee spent all of one Friday in strenuous debate, as one would expect from a group of leading academics and others, each possessing highly individualistic views. Opinion was by no means unanimous, with some being unfavourable to such an initiative by a province. At the end of that long day, I met with the premier and presented the varying views as fairly as I could. Then he asked me what I thought. My response was simply, "I think we should go for it," to which he replied, "So do I." Clearly, there were risks for a provincial government in staging a conference on national issues of which the premier was well aware. Nor, to say the least, was the government of Canada enthusiastic. Accordingly, he asked me and some of my colleagues to visit each of the other provinces to meet with the premiers to ensure that when he announced the conference, they would undertake to be there.

The question has been posed by many commentators: How did Robarts come by that intellectual curiosity and determination to understand the complexity of Canadian society?

The response from Premier Daniel Johnson in Québec City: "Tell your premier that, when he makes his announcement, I will be the first to promise to attend." Much later, Claude Morin (Premier Johnson's Secretary of Cabinet) reminded me of the unusually long meeting I had with his premier. That was when he told me that the premier had stepped out of a Cabinet meeting for our discussion, keeping his ministers waiting for nearly two hours. That had nothing to do with me—I was merely the messenger. It had everything to do with the respect he had for his fellow premier from Ontario.

During the years that I was privileged to observe Premier Robarts's detailed attention to public policy, I was amazed by his capacity to listen to academic debate while under the relentless pressure of dealing with political priorities. I still have a vivid image of him on a Friday evening in a suite in the old Park Plaza Hotel in Toronto. I knew he had just finished a particularly onerous week, but he had agreed to meet with the OACC for an open-ended discussion about Confederation matters. I can picture him now seated side-by-side with Professor Alexander Brady, listening to Brady's commentary on the issues of the day. Only after a long and lively evening did he return to London, Ontario for the weekend.

The question has been posed by many commentators: How did Robarts come by that intellectual curiosity and determination to understand the complexity of Canadian society? There may be many answers to this, but my own relates to a conversation about his wartime experience in the Canadian navy. He described the lengthy chats he had with a fellow sailor in the lower bunk who came from a small town in Québec. As he contemplated their differences and similarities, what really mattered was that they were both in the same boat, factually and metaphorically. At that point in time, they were sharing a life in a special Canadian way.

When John Robarts was our York University chancellor, we renewed a number of our earlier conversations, often in intervals between convocations. He loved convocation, which he liked to describe as an event where everyone was a winner. Those conversations so often turned to a consideration of Canada—what it was and what it could be! To create a place where such conversations and inquiry could continue in a formal academic environment was the challenge for the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies. ■

John Robarts: True to his own vision of Canada

BY KENNETH McROBERTS

Kenneth McRoberts is professor emeritus of political science, former Glendon principal, and former director of the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies.

Frequently dubbed the "chairman of the board," John Robarts was a self-declared "management man." But, to an extent that has not been fully appreciated, Robarts not only held his own views on the future of his country, but was prepared to act on them. Indeed, he persisted to voice his views even if they placed him outside the conventional wisdom. Unlike his successor as premier and minister of education, when it came to questions of national unity, Robarts had no inclination to defer to Ottawa's claim to national leadership. Thus, even after his tenure as premier had ended, Robarts continued to chart a path for the country that was diametrically opposed to the views that had become, with Pierre Trudeau's ascension to the prime ministership, the basis of a new federal orthodoxy.

CONFEDERATION OF TOMORROW

John Robarts's readiness to follow his own mind on matters of national unity was already in full evidence while he was still premier. After all, it was in 1967 that Robarts called the Confederation of Tomorrow conference, out of concern that the national unity debate then under way was serving to isolate Québec. With it, he gave centre stage to Daniel Johnson, Québec's premier and Pierre Trudeau's arch-enemy. In Robarts's own words, "I remember speaking to Mr. [Daniel] Johnson who was a personal friend of mine and my phrase to him was 'Danny: I'll give you the biggest soapbox in Canada to tell the people of Canada what you really want for your province. And we'll have a discussion about the country from everybody's point of view, provincially'" ("Interview with John Robarts and Jean-Luc Pepin, 1997").

In the process, Robarts transformed an interprovincial conference—essentially a social get-together among the premiers—into a far-reaching debate and dialogue about the future of the country. Nine premiers participated in the event, some of them armed with formal statements; only BC premier W.A.C. Bennett declined his invitation. For their part, federal officials did not bless the conference with their presence: Primer Minister Pearson declined an invitation, as did his justice minister, Pierre Trudeau. In their place, Marc Lalonde attended the proceedings—as observer.

PEPIN-ROBARTS

In his opening address to the assembly, Robarts made a point of stressing that special arrangements for individual provinces were "as old as Confederation." He even insisted that special status, a heretical notion in federal quarters, "does not alarm us": "To us the concept should mean a profound awareness that Canada is a country of disparate parts, each with its own combination of preferences and needs" (Confederation of Tomorrow, 1967, p. 28).

Nine years later, in the midst of public consternation over Québec's election of a Parti Québécois government, John Robarts accepted the Trudeau government's invitation to be co-chair of a task force on national unity. The new entity even bore his name, becoming known as simply the Pepin-Robarts commission. While the group's deliberations have not yet been fully studied, and perhaps never will be, Robarts did indeed sign the final report, which was released in January 1979.

The report identified duality, along with regionalism, as a central feature of Canada's political life. However, the presentation of duality was very much centred on Québec, as opposed to the purely linguistic version of duality, which was the basic premise of Pierre Trudeau's vision of Canada and his strategy to defeat the Québec independence movement. In particular, the report insisted that "Quebec is distinctive and should, within a viable Canada, have the powers necessary to protect and develop its distinctive character; any political solution short of this would lead to the rupture of Canada" (Task Force on Canadian Unity, 1979, p. 87). Then, in the name of the equality of the provinces, it proposed that all provincial governments should be awarded these same powers; but it also called for constitutional provisions to facilitate the transfer of powers to the federal government.

PROVINCIAL ASYMMETRY

Thus, in a novel and heretofore unique vision of Canadian federalism, the report laid the basis for a high degree of asymmetry. Still, the report clearly reflected the view that John Robarts had expressed back in 1967, at the Confederation of Tomorrow conference, that "special status" or arrangements for individual provinces were as old as Confederation itself, even if they should amount to a special status for a particular province, namely, Québec.

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The final report carried this enhancement of provincial power one step further by declaring that all the provincial governments should be able to devise their own language policies and be freed from any constitutional requirements. For good measure, it declared solidarity with Québec's bills 22 and 101: "We support the efforts of the Quebec provincial government and of the people of Quebec to ensure the predominance of the French language and culture in that province" (Task Force on Canadian Unity, 1979, p. 51). The report even proposed to eliminate the constitutional provision (section 133) protecting the use of English, and of French, in the province's legislature and courts.

The departure from the Trudeau vision of the country could not be clearer. Indeed, after the report was released, Pierre Trudeau flatly declared that the commission's recommendations on language policy were "completely wrong." In fact, there is some question whether he even read the report as a whole (English, 2009, p. 189; McRoberts, 2021).

Much has changed in Canadian politics since John Robarts was premier. Ontario's premier is no longer seen to be part of Canada's senior political leadership. Indeed, the present incumbent does not see himself in these terms. Simply put, Ontario is no longer the dominant force in Canada's political economy that it once was; Canada–US free trade has taken care of that. Not only has Canadian public debate become more polarized, but, thanks to globalization and climate change, international issues have forced their way on to the Canadian political agenda. Most important to the debate over national unity, Québec's independence movement has lost much of its force.

Robarts transformed an interprovincial conference—essentially a social get-together among the premiers—into a far-reaching debate and dialogue about the future of the country.

Nonetheless, back when the national unity debate was still in full force, John Robarts stood for a different kind of Canadian federation, with strong provincial governments and a high degree of asymmetry, or special arrangements, among them. In effect, he repeatedly pointed to a path that was not taken. ■

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Parallel lives: The Québec–Canada estrangement in retrospect

BY ROBERTO PERIN

Roberto Perin is professor emeritus and a senior scholar in the History Department, Glendon College, and a former member of the Executive Committee of the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies.

One solution to marital breakdown is to live separately under one roof. Doing so can be motivated by financial expediency, the need to save appearances, or both. Such pragmatic arrangements are usually marked by indifference to the partner's existence and a fixation on one's self-interest. This brief description encapsulates the relationship between Québec and the rest of Canada (ROC) over the past 40 years. The ROC has been largely disinterested in what goes on in Québec, whether from a political, cultural, or intellectual perspective, unless, of course, its own self-interest is involved. Without doubt, it is better informed about happenings and trends in the United States with which it certainly feels a greater affinity. The same can be said about Québec, which has made much of its *américanité* over the years.

Today, universities across the country grant degrees at the highest level to specialists of Canada who do not know the other official language. I'm not referring to the ability to speak or follow a conversation, which requires a higher level of proficiency, but simply a reading knowledge of that language. Québec or the ROC is just not part of these unilingual scholars' mental map. They either ignore the other culture's distinctiveness or assume that what they write or say about their own culture applies to the other as well. Learned societies, mostly organized along this linguistic divide, entrench such attitudes. It should come as no surprise, then, that the print and electronic media generally turn a blind eye to events beyond the language barrier. In the early 19th century, Austrian statesman Count Metternich described Italy as merely a geographical expression. Can the same be said today of Canada?

A BRIEF PERIOD OF UNDERSTANDING AND DIALOGUE

And yet, this was not always the case. The early 1960s witnessed a tragically brief spring of mutual understanding and dialogue. The frustration that had built up over the years in Québec regarding its subordinate linguistic, political, and constitutional position led to the formation of parties calling openly for independence from Canada and to acts of violence against "English" hegemony. In response, Prime Minister Lester Pearson instituted the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, signalling the desire for a new partnership. As co-chair of the commission, he named André Laurendeau, a nationalist who advocated greater power for Québec as the seat of French Canadian culture in North America. In 1967, Premier John Robarts of Ontario lent legitimacy to Québec's desire for change by convening the Confederation for Tomorrow conference of provincial premiers.

In 1968, Laurendeau's untimely death and Pierre Elliott Trudeau's election as prime minister scotched the commission's role as a site of dialogue and renewal. Although Cabinet ministers such as Mitchell Sharp, Jean-Luc Pepin, Paul Martin, and Jean Marchand, and even Opposition leader Robert Stanfield, shared Pearson's broad views on constitutional change, Trudeau did not. In the face of the electoral frenzy unleashed by their charismatic leader, these ministers chose to take a back seat. Trudeau, for his part, rejected increased powers for Québec, arguing that all provinces were equal. None could therefore claim a special status. His only interest in the Constitution was its patriation from London. He was adamant that the sole cause of discontent in Québec was linguistic. Accordingly, he brought in legislation declaring Canada officially bilingual. The *Official Languages Act*, as well as the series of provincial laws recognizing minority-language rights, did nothing, however, to allay anxieties about linguistic assimilation in Québec, fed by a declining birth rate among francophones and immigrant children massively choosing English-language schools.

Meanwhile, an equally charismatic figure, former provincial Cabinet minister René Lévesque, left the Québec Liberal Party to found the sovereigntist Parti québécois (PQ). He and Trudeau had diametrically opposed views, not only on language rights and increased powers for Québec, but on the very concept of culture. For Trudeau, culture was a matter of personal choice, as highlighted in his 1971 statement on multiculturalism: while Canada had two official languages, he declared, it had no official culture. In this regard, individuals were free to express their own preferences with varying degrees of state support. For Lévesque, culture was above all a collective expression. At stake for him was Québec's ability to maintain its distinctiveness in a massively English-speaking continent. This required not only legislation protecting the French language, but the full instruments of statehood to ensure its development.

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POLITICAL HIGH NOON

The 1970s were the high noon of political life pitting the two protagonists against each other. There were many episodes in this high-stakes drama: Trudeau's invocation of the *War Measures Act* in reaction to the FLQ crisis; the failure to reach an accord at the constitutional talks held in Victoria in 1971; the election of a Parti québécois government; the various language laws enacted by the Québec National Assembly, culminating in the *Charter of the French Language*; the marginalization of the commission headed by Jean-Luc Pepin and John Robarts with its radical vision of a reformed Confederation; the patriation of the Constitution with its reinforced *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. From these dramatic struggles Trudeau eventually emerged victorious. The subsequent failure of the Meech Lake Accord, as well as the unsuccessful referendums held across Canada in 1992 and in Québec in 1995, merely prolonged the drama without changing its outcome. In the end, the public on both sides of the linguistic fault line became thoroughly weary of the constitutional question. But the damage in terms of mutual understanding and encounter was done.

We need to remember that what set the whole process in motion was Prime Minister Pearson's response to unrest in Québec. At each subsequent stage, however, new actors intervened to press for their undeniably legitimate claims, each of which needed to be addressed separately: women, immigrants, Indigenous peoples, other racialized groups, and the disabled—willingly or not—deflected Canadians' attention from the Québec question. And yet, with the possible exception of the First Nations, no other body had the power to disrupt the country as did Québec with its territory, its government, its distinct legal system, and its culture. The message from the ROC could not have been clearer: Québec had no greater claim than any other province; the Québécois were merely one of many peoples comprising Canada; and no particular mechanism was required to protect their culture, apart from their own will to perpetuate it. That was the positive message. The negative one, propagated in speeches, articles, and editorials, was that Québec and the Québécois were variously anglophobic, xenophobic, antisemitic, racist, illiberal, fascistic, narrow-minded, or isolationist.

Québec and the ROC now lead parallel lives. The arguments of the past have been suppressed, but not forgotten. There is no love lost between the two. They can choose to drift further apart until another inevitable crisis erupts, or they can begin to rediscover what each has to offer the other.

Québec and the ROC now lead parallel lives. The arguments of the past have been suppressed, but not forgotten. There is no love lost between the two. They can choose to drift further apart until another inevitable crisis erupts, or they can begin to rediscover what each has to offer the other. In either case, the ball is in the ROC's court, where it has lain unattended since the 1960s. ■

Forty years after the Charter: How routine use of the notwithstanding clause is transforming minority rights in Québec

BY EMILY LAXER

Emily Laxer is an associate professor of sociology at Glendon College and the York Research Chair in Populism, Rights and Legality.

Just over 40 years ago, in the spring of 1982, Queen Elizabeth II signed the *Canada Act*, patriating Canada's Constitution and entrenching the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* into law. Spurred by accelerated calls for a bill of rights domestically, and by growing international concern for human rights since the Second World War, the Charter established a pan-Canadian standard of rights and freedoms, transforming the relationship of citizens to governments across the country. At the time of its adoption, and to this day, the Charter has been widely supported, even celebrated, by the Canadian public (Parkin, 2022; Weinrib, 2003). Yet its establishment was also subject to highly divisive political debates, the consequences of which continue to reverberate. This is especially evident in Québec, which—for reasons tied to the pursuit of national autonomy—never signed on to the new Constitution.

Forty years after the Charter's passing, the conflicts at its centre are playing out in the actions of Québec's current Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ) government. Since being elected in 2018, this government has made a regular habit of bypassing the Charter, granting legislators more purchase over the determination of rights in the name of upholding "collective values." Understanding the means permitting—and the ends produced by—this legislative agenda is essential to grasping contemporary Québec nationalism and politics.

POLITICAL MOTIVATIONS

Historians agree that the architects of the Charter in Pierre Elliott Trudeau's Liberal government, in addition to being concerned about enshrining fundamental rights, were politically motivated. They believed that a constitutional Charter would help counter provinces' decentralizing demands, and they hoped it would dampen Québec's escalating independence movement by strengthening national unity (Russell, 1983). Opponents of the Charter, led by a "gang of eight" Canadian premiers (minus those of Ontario and New Brunswick), countered this narrative by portraying the Charter as violating the fundamentals of Canadian federalism by limiting the power of provincial legislatures. Chief among these opponents was Québec premier René Lévesque. He argued that the Charter constituted an act of "trickery" by the federal Liberals, designed to thwart Québec's efforts to secure constitutional recognition as a distinct society (Binette, 2022). On the day that the *Canada Act* was signed by the Queen on Parliament Hill, Lévesque conveyed his discontent by ordering Québec's flags to be flown at half-mast (CBC, 2001).

Although unable to prevent the Charter's adoption, its opponents did secure a major victory through the inclusion of section 33, known as "the notwithstanding clause," which allows federal and provincial parliaments to override sections 2 and 7 through 15 of the Charter for a period of up to five years. Dismayed that the Charter held force in Québec despite his government's objections, Lévesque wielded the clause as a symbolic device throughout the early 1980s, citing it in every one of his government's hundreds of legislative initiatives (Weinrib, 1990). But, beginning in 1988, after it was used by Québec's Liberal premier, Robert Bourassa, to secure language restrictions on commercial signs, the notwithstanding clause fell into disuse in Québec.

Fast-forward to today, and the notwithstanding clause has once again become a routine instrument in the Québec government's political tool kit. In 2019, the CAQ wielded the clause to pass Bill 21, which prohibits public employees in positions of "authority"—including police officers, judges, and teachers—from donning visible religious signs on the job (Assemblée nationale du Québec, 2019). The CAQ government deployed the clause again in 2021 to alter provisions in the *Charter of the French Language* through Bill 96. Among other things, the bill enforces French-language requirements in businesses with 25 or more employees, stipulates that most government services will be offered only in French to immigrants and refugees in the country for six months, and adds clauses to the Canadian Constitution stating that Québec is a nation whose official language is French (Assemblée nationale du Québec, 2021).

MAJORITY VALUES

In both instances, use of the notwithstanding clause enabled the CAQ to divert power from the judiciary to the legislature

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in order to establish a framework of rights that—it alleges—embody the "values" of Québec's majority population.

In justifying its use of the notwithstanding clause on both occasions, the CAQ government has adopted a discursive strategy that is common to modern populisms: that of dismissing the courts as illegitimate, "elite" institutions whose actions lack the endorsement of everyday "people." When asked why his government felt legitimate in deploying the clause to pass Bill 21, for instance, CAQ Minister Simon Jolin-Barrette (2019) replied, "Québec society's decision to have a secular state belongs to the National Assembly, it belongs to the people of Québec through their elected representatives. . . . It is not up to the courts to determine how relations between the state and religions should be organized." This framing of the courts is especially resonant when tied to memories of Québec's betrayal by the "chartistes" of the 1980s. Recalling those memories in the subsequent debate over Bill 96, Jolin-Barrette (2022) decried those "who followed Pierre Elliott Trudeau in creating a constitution without even the approval of the National Assembly [and] imposed a *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* without the endorsement even of the people of Québec."

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MINORITY RIGHTS

Yet, the CAQ's claims to represent the will of the "people" are rendered problematic by mounting evidence that, for many in Québec, Bill 21 undermines fundamental rights, particularly among religious minorities (Cour d'Appel du Québec, 2021). A recent online survey of 1,828 Quebecers, including 632 Muslim respondents, further found that 73 percent of Muslims in Québec feel less safe in public since Bill 21 was implemented. Two-thirds of Muslim respondents also reported being the victim of or a witness to a hate crime in that time (Taylor, 2022).

Forty years after its passing, the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* continues to be the subject of political debate, even conflict. The long-term implications for minority rights have yet to be seen. What seems more certain, however, is that the current CAQ government has made circumventing the Charter a core aspect of its political brand. ■

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What triumph? Whose cinema?

BY SETH FELDMAN

Seth Feldman is a former dean of the School of Arts, Media, Performance and Design, and professor emeritus in the Department of Cinema and Media Arts at York University. He is a former director of the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies (2003–2010).

In 2000, Daniel Drache, who was then director of the Robarts Centre, asked me to serve as the Robarts Chair in Canadian Studies for the upcoming academic year. I had proposed a year-long research project titled "The Triumph of Canadian Cinema." The proposal was the product of a quarter-century of studying, writing on, and teaching the subject. As was customary for the Robarts chair, the project consisted of a series of guest presentations culminating in a research paper representing the chair's own research.

THE TRIUMPH OF CANADIAN CINEMA

"The Triumph of Canadian Cinema" was, with all due modesty, a bit of a triumph. We began the year by arranging a panel discussion of prominent Canadian directors that took place during the Toronto International Film Festival. For the remainder of the year, we brought some of Canada's best-known film personalities to campus. The paper presented by the Robarts chair toward the end of his tenure received a polite round of applause from those present.

One of the highlights of our program was an appearance by Norman Jewison. Having begun his career at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), Norman later worked as director in American television and then directed and produced decades' worth of high-profile Hollywood films: *In the Heat of the Night*, *The Thomas Crown Affair*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Agnes of God*, and *Moonstruck*, among many others. His work had earned him lifetime achievement awards from both the American and Canadian directors' guilds. He also worked as an educator, serving as chancellor of Victoria College at the University of Toronto and as the founder, mover, and shaker of the Canadian Film Centre, which has honed the talents of a long list of Canadian filmmakers. He was recognized in his home and native land by an appointment as a companion in the Order of Canada.

We lost Norman on January 20, 2024. It was a loss marked not only in Canada but in places around the world familiar with his work. Those obituaries were unanimous in citing him as not only one of Hollywood's most reliable craftsmen but also one of its most progressive voices. *The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming* (1966) imagined a small American town ignoring the Cold War to make peace with a stranded Russian submarine crew. His 1967 film, *In the Heat of the Night*, offered an explosive pairing of a Philadelphia detective and a sheriff deep in the Jim Crow American South. When taunted with the line, "What do they call you in Philadelphia, boy?" Sidney Poitier answered with one of the most memorable lines, not only in Norman's oeuvre but in all the films of the civil rights era, "They call me Mister Tibbs."

LIVING IN HOLLYWOOD'S SHADOW

Now, the question: in what way is Norman Jewison, Canada's most celebrated contribution to Hollywood since Mary Pickford left Toronto for her career in American photoplays, to be seen as part of the triumph of Canadian cinema? Here is a hint: 23 short years after the Robarts program, the CBC's Peter Knegt and Eleanor Knowles compiled and published a list of "The Fifty Greatest Films Directed by Canadians." Having seen 44 of those films and taught a couple of dozen in my Canadian Cinema classes, I would credit 30 of the films with being recognizably Canadian—that is, being set in Canada, telling this country's stories, and addressing its concerns. At the same time, the list tells us that some of the best-known Canadian filmmakers—David Cronenberg, Ivan Reitman, Denis Villeneuve, James Cameron—still had to go to Hollywood to achieve major league status.

Having pointed to these numbers, I would still say that there is a meaningful difference between the Canadian film world of a quarter-century ago and what we see today. We have a generation or two of filmmakers—Atom Egoyan, Sarah Polley, Xavier Dolan, Denis Arcand, Guy Maddin, Zacharias Kunuk, and the fast-emerging York graduate Matt Johnson—who have been able to make internationally recognized work while remaining in Canada. What this tells us is that the millions of words spilled, and the millions of dollars spent in creating a national cinema has had an effect. Canadian cinema has, at the very least, attained the stature of the other national cinemas that live within Hollywood's shadow. Like most of those other cinemas, we have earned a place in the international festival and art house circuit. Instead of groping for recognition (which can get kind of pathetic), we have become part of the discussion.

There is even better news. Streaming services have, for motives of their own, created the inkling of a world cinema culture. We have gone beyond the British films and television series that have helped to keep us sane as movie theatres have been taken over by comic book movies. During the three pandemic years, the

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quarantined population had access to a variety of Indian, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Korean, Mexican, Norwegian, and Danish films and television series. There has been an unusual amount of Icelandic spoken on my television and computer screens. At the same time, the perennial problem of being able to access Canadian content has been at least partially solved.

What you can say of Canadian cinema today is that it has grown into the wider perspective of what cinema can be, to the point where it can reward those who make it and view it.

A WORLD BEYOND FEATURE FILMS

One more aspect of Canadian cinema must be kept in mind: ours has always been a fragmented cinema operating around the edges of what most people think of as films, namely, the world of feature film entertainment. After sporadic attempts at a Hollywood North, the modern Canadian cinema was born with the creation of the National Film Board (NFB) in 1939 (three years after the creation of the national broadcaster). During the Second World War, the NFB distinguished itself by producing two weekly newsreel series and several hundred short films on Canadian topics. Almost all of these came under the heading of documentary, although at the time "documentary" could include staged scenes. In the late 1950s, NFB filmmakers pioneered what they called "candid eye" filmmaking, which would later come to be known as *cinéma vérité*. The NFB was also a major player in the development of artistic animated films (as opposed to Saturday morning cartoons). Our enlightened public funding of the arts has made Canada a good place to make avant-garde (a.k.a. experimental) films. Like the documentaries, the animated films and experimental films—and the Canadians who make them—are important to anyone interested in those genres. They are often important enough to draw general audiences and win major international awards.

So, has there been a triumph of Canadian cinema? If survival is the measure of success in Canadian culture, there is no question but that there has been. If measured by excellence, there are more than enough examples to cite. If measured by domination of the world's large and small screens, not so much. In sum, what you can say of Canadian cinema today is that it has grown into the wider perspective of what cinema can be, to the point where it can reward those who make it and view it. ■

The future of Canadian art history and visual culture at York University

BY ANNA HUDSON

Anna Hudson is a professor in the Department of Visual Art and Art History at York University, a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and a member of the Robarts Centre Executive Committee.

When I arrived at York University in 2004, art history faculty and students hardly reflected the diversity of the university-wide student population. Over the last 20 years, however, the Masters in Art History, the combined Masters/Masters of Fine Arts/Master of Business Administration, and the Curatorial Studies Diploma—established under Professor Emerita Joyce Zemans's leadership in 1981, 1998, and 2001 respectively—increasingly drew a wider spectrum of students seeking careers in the arts (Zemans, 2022, pp. 15, 20, 21). With the subsequent expansion of our graduate studies to include a doctorate in 2008, we are today a lively if modest group of curators, art critics, scholars, and students steeped in issues of cultural identity and sovereignty, activism and affect, art criticism, curation and museology, and the multiplicity of roles artists play in society.

THE DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL ARTS

In 1975, when Zemans became chair of what is now York's Visual Art and Art History department, she "found an exciting and creative ambience" (Zemans, 2022, p. 2). Fine Arts interdepartmental and team-teaching links with film, theatre, music, and dance encouraged interdisciplinarity, as did ties to other faculties created by general education courses required for undergraduate degrees. York's educational philosophy, argues Zemans, is strongly underpinned by its foundational pan-university connections across the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. "From the beginning," she recalls, "the Art History program was designed to be inclusive and culturally diverse," albeit problematic if viewed from the perspective of York's current strategy for decolonizing, equity, diversity, and inclusion (see York University, n.d.).

Today, what binds our mixed faculty complement is our collective consciousness of the colonial legacy of privilege and exclusion of the Western canon of art history. During the 1960s, feminist interrogations of access and equity challenged the canon. Over the last decade, its implosion has been accelerated by Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Idle No More, and Black Lives Matter. Efforts to pull it down completely, in the spirit of the fall of Egerton Ryerson's statue at what is now Toronto Metropolitan University in 2021 (see CityNews, 2021), continue. But its legacy persists, baked deeply into the "discipline" of art history and the pride of privilege that Paris and subsequently New York historically took in being imperial art centres. The history of Canadian art within the Western canon is marginalized, frustratingly unable to claim originality or innovation as a colonial backwater.

I am a (white settler) Canadianist. My specialization in historical and modern art in Canada, curation, and Indigenous cultural expression is why I was hired by the university in 2004. In 2002, Joyce Zemans moved from the Department of Visual Art (as it was then known) to take on the directorship of the MBA program in Arts, Media, and Entertainment Management at York's Schulich School of Business. It took two of us, myself and my colleague Dr. Jennifer Fisher—a contemporary art and curation scholar—to fill Zemans's shoes. Since then, our faculty complement and courses have continued to diversify in the spirit of Zemans, who encouraged multicultural interdisciplinarity during her tenure, beginning in the 1970s. Her championing of Canada, however, has been lost. Twenty years later, we barely teach Canadian art history.

CANADIAN ART HISTORY / PROBLEMATIC "HOT POTATO"

At our September 2023 faculty retreat, we talked about the fact that our graduate program originally focused, as Zemans recalls, on "works produced in Canada or in a Canadian collection" (Zemans, 2022, p. 16). We no longer offer graduate seminars on Canada, and our one undergraduate course, "Twentieth Century Canadian Art," is irregularly offered, having become a problematic "hot potato." The canon of Western art emerged in tandem with imperialism and the rise of nation-states in the industrial era. In the Americas, the creation of "countries" along imposed nation-state lines egregiously sliced up Indigenous homelands. Colonialism and nation-states locked step to establish "pretend" nations, in the words of the Blackfoot scholar LeRoy Little Bear (2016). "Canadian" art history has since served the Western canon as a simplifying categorization of otherwise increasingly disparate, disjointed, and colonized Indigenous, settler, and diaspora populations. We ask ourselves: How do we decolonize research and teaching about our geographic locus without reinventing Canada? We are well past Hugh MacLennan's persuasive 1945 "landmark of nationalist fiction," *Two Solitudes*, but are we still circling the question, "Where is here?" posed by Canadian literary scholar Northrop Frye in 1965? Or did Fred Wilson, an American artist and curator, rephrase it more aptly as, "Where am I here?" (Hudson, 2010, p. 29).

York University's graduate program in Art History and Visual Culture still iden-

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tifies four areas of specialization, the first of which is Canadian and Indigenous Art. (The other three draw on professional or temporal categories: Curatorial and Museological Studies; Architectural Studies; and Modern and Contemporary Art.) Could we replace the construct of Canada and its genealogies with Turtle Island, Inuit Nunangat, or the global/hemispheric contexts of Indigenous homelands? Do we abandon place as an identifier, and the shared location of Indigenous peoples, settlers, and diaspora? Maybe we should introduce, as my colleagues Professors Natasha Bissonauth and Tammer El-Sheikh did in the 2023 Art History and Visual Culture Goldfarb Summer Institute, a study of borders, human movement, fringe entities, and identities (Goldfarb Summer Institute, 2023). Might this embrace a decolonizing program of study of alliances, narrative sovereignty, and retribution while holding in precious balance locality, worldview, and the reality of the lessons of the Two Row Wampum, Gaswéñdah—living together respectfully and sustainably as separate nations (Onondaga Nation, n.d.)? Or are we still desperate for a "common bond," "something to say to one another . . . as Canadians," to bridge the breaks, gaps, and overlaps among our communities (Hudson, 2010, pp. 25–27)?

> **Today, what binds our mixed faculty complement is our collective consciousness of the colonial legacy of privilege and exclusion of the Western canon of art history.**

THE FUTURE

My colleagues and I are embarking on a quest to revisit the future of Canadian Art History and Visual Culture at York University by reinstating the kind of year-long, team-taught courses that Joyce Zemans remembers as being so productive in the early years of our department. Our planning will include consideration of the nation-state as the executor of cultural policy, heritage management, and funding agencies like the Canada Council for the Arts and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) that support and amplify multiple voices. The path "Towards a New Consciousness," as Chicana author and cultural theorist Gloria Anzaldúa wrote more than 40 years ago, is a pluralistic mode, and pluralism, argues Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o, is a productively decentred universalism (Hudson, 2010, pp. 32–33). As Kalaaleq artist and curator Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory reminds us all, "This whole thing about reckoning, and listening, and taking into account how colonial aggression takes place is actually based on personal relationships. . . . And so it is through the building of relationships and the continuous dedication to those relationships that we get to new places" (Hudson et al., 2022, p. 205). The first place to start is among our faculty. ■

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The graduate student experience at the Robarts Centre

BY MARC FROESE

Marc D. Froese completed a doctorate in the Department of Politics at York University in 2007. He is a professor of political science and the founding director of the International Studies program at Burman University in Lacombe, Alberta.

I was at the Robarts Centre from 2001 to 2007 under the leadership of Daniel Drache and later Seth Feldman. As leading scholars in the multidisciplinary field of Canadian Studies, they agreed that the Centre ought to approach the study of Canada from a global perspective. To understand this country, we need to understand the dynamics of international integration and fragmentation that influence our politics and culture.

"AN OLD-FASHIONED APPRENTICESHIP"

The graduate students who worked at Robarts began on the bottom rung and progressed from coffee runs and photocopying to conference participation and co-authorship. When asked to describe my duties at the Centre by an external evaluator in 2006, I called it "an old-fashioned apprenticeship," by which I meant that it was a challenging and intellectually rewarding experience. We were learning by doing, and our duties scaled up as we gained competence and confidence.

Under Daniel Drache, who also served as my MA and PhD supervisor, we approached the study of Canada using the mid-century work of Harold Innis (1894–1952) as a touchstone. Innis asked the biggest questions of political economy: how do our economic activities shape our politics, and how do technologies of mass communication shape entire civilizations?

Professor Drache has a talent for drilling down through the big, world-historical puzzles and focusing on their concrete implications for public policy. I worked with him on projects that examined the fast-growing field of international economic law and its impact on Canadian trade policy. In this fertile research environment, my doctoral dissertation became the first academic book published on Canada's experience with dispute settlement at the World Trade Organization (Froese, 2010).

At the Centre, I made friends and contacts that have lasted for decades, including Laura Taman, our coordinator, and David Clifton, a fellow "apprentice" and a doctoral candidate in the York/TMU Communications and Culture joint graduate program. Dr. Clifton is now a performance measurement specialist with Parks Canada. Given the wide-angle policy focus of the Centre, it is entirely unsurprising that one of us would become an academic while the other moved into the civil service.

ROBARTS GOES WEST

I was recruited by Burman University, a rural, liberal arts college, to develop an International Studies BA program in 2007. More than 3,000 km from Toronto, this tiny university, bordered by fields of wheat and canola, is a world away from York. Yet the program I founded maintains the same analytical and policy-oriented approach that sustains the Robarts Centre.

Burman's International Studies program has come to fully inhabit a uniquely Canadian approach first imagined by Harold Innis. On the edge of the great northern plains, students from the Caribbean and East Africa (not to mention Alberta and Québec) are using Innis's insights in ways he never imagined. Just as students do at the Robarts Centre, our students learn to analyze politics in the liminal spaces between rural and urban, domestic and global, hinterland and metropole.

In my own research I have also carried on this policy-oriented political economy tradition. Like Innis, I increasingly appreciate that this country is not only its world-class cities. It is also a vast (and usually frozen) topography of staples production; it is hybrid identities and Indigenous ways of knowing; and it is a complex network of rivers and lakes upon which people have travelled for thousands of years. The north shapes its people.

RELATIONSHIPS REMAIN

Toward the end of my time at the Centre, I collaborated with Professor Drache on the book *Defiant Publics* (2008), in which we anticipated the disruption of status quo politics by social media. That work became incredibly important 15 years later when we decided to collaborate again.

Our newest book engages with the political economy of rising nationalism. We are living through the apotheosis of social media–driven political engagement, replete with conspiracy theories, hate speech, and the global rise of a profoundly illiberal strain of authoritarian populism. *Has Populism Won? The War on Liberal Democracy* was published by ECW Press in 2022.

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Twenty years ago, I understood that a chance to work at the Robarts Centre was an opportunity of enormous value. Today, I see even more clearly that my time at the Centre was not just a moment in an academic career. It has shaped every aspect of my intellectual life—as a teacher, as a researcher, and, most importantly, as a uniquely Canadian student of the global dynamics that shape this country today. ■

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Notes on Canada from Mexico

BY MARÍA CECILIA COSTERO GARBARINO*

María Cecilia Costero Garbarino is a professor in the Political and International Studies program at El Colegio de San Luis, Mexico.

In Theory of International Relations classes, we were taught that one of the indicators of "national power" pertains to a country's geographical extension. In this regard, Canada appeared as a vast extension on maps, surpassed only by Russia. We imagined that Canada with its immense territorial mass bathed by three oceans (Pacific, Atlantic, and Arctic) would have alliances and commercial links in all directions. This huge territory made up of 10 provinces and 3 territories appeared to have perfect territorial outlines. I used to think that only polar bears could see the northern lights, but a more "realistic" vision makes us understand why a threat to its national security could also arise.

A FIRST VISIT TO CANADA

I travelled to Canada for the first time in 2002 when I was invited to participate in the International Summer Seminar of Canadian Studies in Ottawa. Being able to learn about this great northern country excited me. I set myself two additional tasks: to get a totem replica that would fit into my handbag, and to come back with a raccoon souvenir. It was quite a discovery to see the size of the raccoons, wandering at night and frightening visitors.

At that time, the Canadian government provided training to young Mexican researchers, which gave us an up-close perspective on what Canada represented to the world at the start of the new millennium. The Mexican Association of Canadian Studies (AMEC) brought us together annually at working sessions where we discovered the challenges, commonalities, and particular problems of Canada, a country that was close and, at the same time, that felt so far from what we knew. Later, York Professor Edgar Dosman gave the first seminar on Canadian Studies at El Colegio de San Luis, opening communication channels and widening our understanding between our two countries.

In Canada, I found Ottawa, the capital of Canada, which resembled a beautiful English city with its Victorian architecture; a way of guaranteeing liberal ideals; and of course the Queen of England as a symbol of government, portrayed even on Canadian banknotes, just as Benito Juárez and José María Morelos are portrayed on ours. In Mexico, we were moving toward independence from Spain through a monarchy, with a mestizo culture. Meanwhile, in Canada, the French and English, being the two main European colonizers, along with Indigenous populations (First Nations), have written the Canadian multicultural history as we know it.

I had perceived a Canada with policies designed for immigrants to abandon their homeland culture and adopt the dominant culture of the welcoming country, as they do in the United States. However, government policies encouraged the Canadian public to see immigrants as their equals, neighbours, and potential citizens. Cultural and linguistic diversity are added to the ethnic and religious diversity. I thought Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* could not be applied to the Canadian reality.

I was surprised at that first conference to hear about the existence of more than 68 separate Indigenous peoples with different languages and customs in Canada. Both Canada and Mexico have pending issues regarding Indigenous populations. For example, multiculturalism has been recognized in Mexico (ILO Convention No. 169 has been ratified); however, political representation, constitutional changes, and government assistance are insufficient. In politics, Indigenous communities are recognized through "self-identification."

LOOKING AT CANADIAN MIGRATION FROM THE OUTSIDE

In Canada, the three founding nations (Indigenous, French, and English) were subsequently joined by waves of migrants and refugees arriving from Southeast Asia, South America, Somalia, and Cuba, among many others. Undoubtedly, Canada is a country unique for its migration, a symbol of *peace, order, and good government* as we, too, see it from Mexico. This stands in sharp contrast to the *inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness* glorified in the United States.

Recent migration trends among young Mexican professionals show that they want to stay in Canada rather than enter the United States through the Canadian border. They want to stay in Canada because the migration systems are more straightforward here than in other countries. Many feel that a big country such as Canada will need professionals in productive sectors. Yet many Mexicans are also frustrated by having to work "cash jobs" while waiting for work permits.

These exchanges among cultures have led Canada to establish the rights of individuals, to respect gender equality, and to recognize that societies are plural, including the nationwide legal recognition of same-sex marriages in 2005. Canada reflects its numerous cultural pieces, different peoples who live together, becoming closer, or finding places to isolate in this enormous land. Items from ancient civilizations may be viewed in magnificent museums and galleries, such as the Nubia exhibit at the Royal Ontario Museum and the Persian contributions at the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto.

Like Mexicans, Canadians know the responsibilities of citizenship: obey the

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law, pay your taxes, participate in election processes. Canada's unique environmental heritage and commitment make us wonder about how it feels to live in a country where salmon fishing can be banned for periods of time to support the care of bears, where the weather contrasts season to season with squirrels as year-round companions and flowers springing out of nowhere after long winters. In the winter there is ice hockey and the Maple Leafs, and in the summer the blue jay is the symbol of the baseball team.

REGIONAL TRADE

The Canadian presence in forums and international entities continues to be recognized. Preferential trade relations have been enforced in North America since the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. This was followed by the new Canada–United States–Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) which came into force in 2018, with chapter XIV (Investment) becoming crucial. This allowed us to rediscover "the neighbour's neighbour" in mining, financial services, manufacturing, energy, and transportation. While Mexico tightened diplomatic relations, the Zapatista uprising of 1994 revealed that Mexico had a long way to go to reverse the asymmetries of this regionalized trade zone.

We have learned about Canadian transnational corporations (especially in mining), which undertake open-pit projects against the interests of Mexican local communities, and speculation on the Toronto Stock Exchange, where rising Canadian companies speculate on the capital flows from lithium and gold reserves in Mexico. Discourses on social corporate responsibility have been unconvincing.

Cooperation guidelines have been established. These are reviewed at the North American Leaders Summit amid a complex agenda, which includes discussions on Mexican temporary agricultural workers, migration, and human trafficking; democratic transitions; industrial reconversion from non-polluting companies; and the challenges posed by synthetic drugs. Additionally, there are the *good guys*—Canadian tourists—who enjoy and respect our beaches and are highly preferred by locals, unlike the American *spring breakers*.

From Mexico, Canada is perceived as being about identities and anti-hegemonic discourses, about federal and provincial reinforcements on the matters of education, social security, and health.

From Mexico, Canada is perceived as being about identities and anti-hegemonic discourses, about federal and provincial reinforcements on the matters of education, social security, and health. Health care under the public health system is seen as a human right and a duty undertaken by the state, notwithstanding the challenges posed by the global pandemic.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), historically, and the International Development Research Centre (IDCR) have supported developing countries. With a foreign policy, sometimes nationalist, and at other times continentalist, the Canadian government adheres to the doctrine of internationalism. Canada not only contributes to peacekeeping with the United Nations; it also helped the Cuban government, as I have witnessed.

FACING CHALLENGES TOGETHER

A few years ago, the political economist Robert Cox spoke to us at the National University (UNAM) about critical theory. We have maintained contact with Canadian researchers, including professors from York University, who have supported research in Mexico that examines the new world order, multilateralism, civilizations, oral traditions, Arctic resources and peoples, and the hegemonic roles of certain countries. Canada is also a reference point for thinking about *paradiplomacy*, the international activity of the provinces, and the presence of non-traditional actors in the global context. This 40th anniversary edition of *Canada Watch* reflects on some of the work conducted at the Robarts Centre that permeates our study optics, our knowledge about Canada in Mexico, and our necessary bond in facing the challenges of the nation-states of North America. ■

NOTE

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Women in Latin America

BY LAURA MACDONALD

Laura Macdonald earned her PhD from York University (1992) and is a professor in the Department of Political Science at Carleton University.

Since its inception, one of the key interests of York University's Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies has been Canada's position within an evolving global system, with a particular focus on Canada's role in the Americas—particularly in Mexico, because of Canada's shared membership with Mexico in NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) and now CUSMA (the Canada–United States–Mexico Agreement). However, this interest seldom involved an in-depth engagement with understanding the role of women, since Latin American women were commonly assumed to be largely confined to the private sphere, and victims of entrenched patriarchal relationships with little opportunity to engage in international relations or even domestic politics.

This perspective was problematic even at the time the Centre was launched, given women's longstanding, diverse forms of incorporation into the economic, social, cultural, and political contexts of Latin American countries. Moving forward, however, it is becoming ever more important for Canadians to incorporate a gender analysis into their understanding of and interactions with countries south of the United States. Latin American women's participation in public life and in the international system has expanded dramatically in recent years. Many countries have dramatically increased the formal representation of women in politics, and there has been an explosion of women's and LGTBQ+ protest movements, advocating for diverse causes such as reproductive rights, gay rights, environmental rights, Indigenous rights, and opposition to violence against women and feminicides. Canada can also engage with Latin American states in a new way because several of them have, as Canada has under the Justin Trudeau government, espoused feminist foreign policies. The time is ripe for new forms of inclusive engagement between Canadian and Latin American women on how to construct a better region and a better world based on feminist principles of inclusion, peace promotion, equality, and human rights.

PROGRESS AND SETBACKS ON GENDER AND POLITICS IN LATIN AMERICA

One of the most obvious areas of progress for Latin American women has been in their formal representation in legislatures and as heads of state. Women now make up 34.9 percent of the representatives in national legislatures in the region, which is a significant increase from the average rate in 2000, when it was just over 15 percent. This dramatic progress was partly the result of young Latin American democracies' willingness to experiment with the rules of the game by adopting gender quotas. Beginning with Argentina in 1991, 17 countries have adopted a form of gender quota. A few countries like Mexico now have gender parity in their legislatures, while others like Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, and Peru have rates of over 40 percent female members.

Other countries show little progress, partly because of the way in which the laws are designed and enforced, persistent patriarchal attitudes in political parties, the risk of violence against women leaders, and weak civil society organizations pushing for change (Freidenberg & Gilas, 2023). Rates of representation are much lower at the municipal level, where only 15 percent of mayors in Latin America and the Caribbean are female (Observatorio de Igualdad de Género de América Latina y el Caribe, 2023). As of December 2021, however, 32.7 percent of elected city council positions were held by women (CEPAL, 2023).

Increased political representation of women does not necessarily translate into more gender-sensitive policies. Latin American women have achieved some notable successes, however, particularly around reproductive rights. In February 2022, for example, Colombia, which has been an extremely conservative country, decriminalized abortion (up to 24 weeks of gestation). Earlier, Uruguay legalized abortion up to 12 weeks, and in 2020 Argentina's parliament legalized abortion up to 14 weeks. In 2007, Mexico City legalized abortion, a few other Mexican states followed suit, but other states tightened up their restrictions on women's reproductive rights. However, in 2021, a historic decision by Mexico's Supreme Court ruled that criminalizing abortion is unconstitutional. This decision has yet to be implemented in all the states, but it means that Mexican women have achieved progress in this area that American women have been denied with the US Supreme Court's recent overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022).

A GREEN WAVE

Victories like these, part of what feminists call a "green wave," as well as new policies around child care and violence against women in many countries, reflect the growing power and militancy of feminist movements. Women across the region have mobilized to denounce the rise of feminicides and other forms of violence against women. The slogan #NiUnaMenos (Not One Less) has been adopted by feminist groups from Argentina to Mexico, and tactics like a feminist strike on International Women's Day and flash mob pro-

Women in Latin America, page 20

 continued from page 19

tests like the one that originated in the feminist collective Las Tesis Chile spread throughout the region and around the world before the pandemic (*Un violador en mi camino*, "the rapist in my path"). However, women's movements have also suffered from a right-wing backlash and from the impact of COVID-19 on women, particularly marginalized women.

In this context, several countries in the region have adopted the idea of a feminist foreign policy (FFP), an idea that originated in Sweden. Mexico, Costa Rica, and Chile now have FFPs, and other countries, including Argentina and Colombia, are considering adopting it. There is no clear consensus on what a feminist foreign policy would look like, but as UN Women says, "In its most ambitious expression, this movement should aspire to transforming the practice of foreign policy to the greater benefit of women and girls everywhere, impacting a country's diplomacy, defense and security cooperation, aid, trade, climate security, and even immigration policies" (2022, p. 1).

Global Affairs Canada also has a feminist international assistance policy and adopts an "inclusive trade agenda," and has made commitments to the Women, Peace, and Security agenda. While the Trudeau government launched a consultation process in 2020 to develop a policy statement about its broader vision for FFP, it has yet to publish its statement. Mexico, Chile, and other countries in the Americas are ahead of Canada in this respect and could inspire our government about what such a transformative policy could look like.

The time is ripe for new forms of inclusive engagement between Canadian and Latin American women on how to construct a better region and a better world based on feminist principles of inclusion, peace promotion, equality, and human rights.

Over the last 40 years, Canadian academics have developed rich and diverse ties with Latin American feminist and Indigenous scholars. The next 40 years will offer many opportunities to develop these ties and joint analyses, taking the lead from our Latin American colleagues. ■

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Changes in trade flows between Canada and Mexico: An orchestrated evolution

BY CLAUDIA DE FUENTES

Claudia De Fuentes is an associate professor in the Sobey School of Business at Saint Mary's University. She currently collaborates with many Robarts Centre faculty associates.

International trade between North American partners accounts for about $2 trillion in trade between Canada, Mexico, and United States, and the CUSMA (Canada–United States–Mexico Agreement), successor to the former NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), represents one of the largest free trade agreements in the world. Canada's main export markets include the United States (24.3 percent), China, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Mexico (2.2 percent), while Mexico's main export markets include the United States (23.5 percent), Canada (3.3 percent), China, Germany, Brazil, and Japan.[1] Both Canada and Mexico are heavily dependent on international trade with the United States, and that dependence grew after the implementation of NAFTA and, later, CUSMA. However, NAFTA and CUSMA also contributed to an increase of trade between Canada and Mexico. As I will show below, the goods and services that are part of trade between Canada and Mexico have evolved but have remained focused within the machinery and automotive sectors. In addition, Canada exports a high percentage of resource-based goods, including agriculture and oil and gas products, to Mexico.

MEXICO–CANADA TRADE

Under NAFTA, which was implemented in 1994, trade between Mexico and Canada grew quickly between 1999 and 2018. When CUSMA was signed in 2018, and later ratified in 2020, trade between Canada and Mexico fell somewhat, but patterns indicate a return to previous levels of trade between these two countries. NAFTA and CUSMA had a deep, but uneven, impact on trade flows in the region. The United States was the main winner in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita throughout the period 1998–2022, but Mexico's GDP per capita remained steady, as indicated in figure 1.

Focusing on trade flows between Mexico and Canada during this period, we observe a trade deficit for Canada. Exports from Mexico to Canada increased, as did the trade balance. Figure 2 shows Canada's merchandise and services trade with Mexico. In terms of merchandise (figure 2(a)), we observe that between 2001 and 2019 the Canadian trade deficit with Mexico increased sharply, reaching $28.59 billion in 2018, the year that CUSMA was signed. Following ratification of CUSMA in 2020, a reduction of exports from Mexico to Canada reduced the trade deficit.

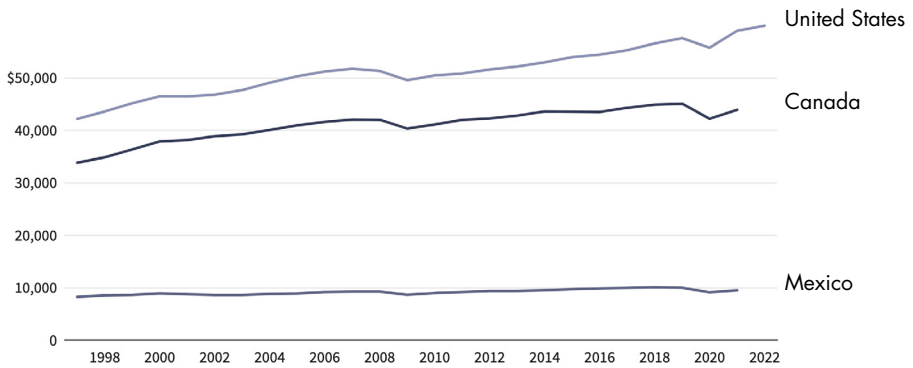
In terms of services (figure 2(b)), we observe a similar pattern, but with a twist. From 2000 to 2015, there was a negative increase in the trade balance, but then a reduction in the trade balance after the signing and ratification of CUSMA. Exports of services from Canada to Mexico increased 30 percent in 2018 over 2017, and a further 19 percent in 2019 over 2018.

One of the main discussion points on Mexico–Canada trade concerns the types of exports and imports between Mexico and Canada, in terms of relative product specialization. Higher-value-added products reflect a higher domestic technological capacity and greater economic complexity—see, for example, the discussion of economic complexity by Hidalgo and Hausmann (2009).

In 1995, the main products exported from Canada to Mexico were rapeseed, motor vehicle parts and accessories, wheat, and computers. The main products that were exported from Mexico to Canada were cars, spark-ignition engines, computers, and insulated wire. In 2018, the main products exported from Canada to Mexico were motor vehicle parts and accessories, rapeseed, raw aluminium, and petroleum gas. The main

Canada–Mexico trade flows, page 22

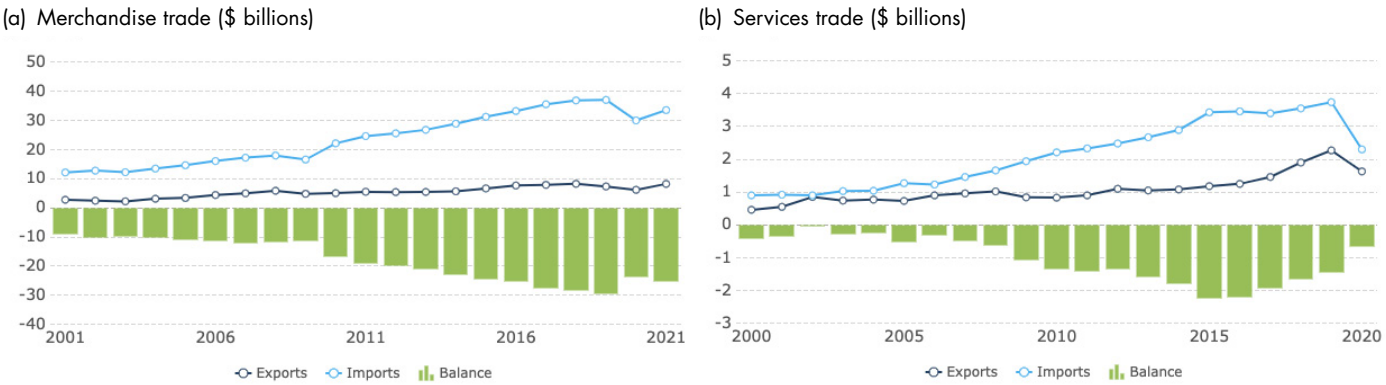
FIGURE 1 Real per Capita Gross Domestic Product, 1997–2022 (in 2012 US Dollars)



Source: Floyd, D. (2023). How did NAFTA affect the economies of participating countries? *Investopedia*. https://www.investopedia.com/articles/economics/08/north-american-free-trade-agreement.asp. Data retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/A939RX0Q048SBEA

Canada–Mexico trade flows continued from page 21

FIGURE 2 Canada's Trade with Mexico



Source: Therrien-Tremblay, A.-M. (2022, July 18). *Trade and investment: Canada–Mexico* (Publication No. 2022-516-E). Parliament of Canada, Library of Parliament. https://lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en_CA/ResearchPublications/TradeAndInvestment/2022516E

products exported from Mexico to Canada were cars, delivery trucks, motor vehicle parts and accessories, and tractors. In 2021, the main products exported from Canada to Mexico were rapeseed ($862 million), motor vehicle parts and accessories ($842 million), and petroleum and gas ($584 million). The main products exported from Mexico to Canada were cars ($2.87 billion), delivery trucks ($1.79 billion), and motor vehicle parts and accessories ($801 million).

A DIGITAL FUTURE

Exports from both countries throughout this period were concentrated in the transport and machines sectors; exports from Canada also included agriculture and resource-based products, such as vegetable products, gas and petroleum, and metals (see figure 3). We observe an important cluster of trade focused on the automotive and transport sectors. In terms of economic complexity, we see specialization across transportation and machines in both countries, which is also influenced by tight commercial ties with the United States and the triad of value chains between the three countries in North America.

It is important to note that these trends also reflect the intermediary trade between the three members of CUSMA. Since there has been a high reliance on the automotive and transport sector, will we see in the future more trade in software and batteries for electric and smart vehicles? Who will be the main winners in the future digital and smart technology transformation, and will the Canadian trade deficit mind the gap? ■

NOTE

1. Data from https://www.economia.gob.mx/datamexico/en/profile/country/canada and https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/statistics/highlights/toppartners.html.

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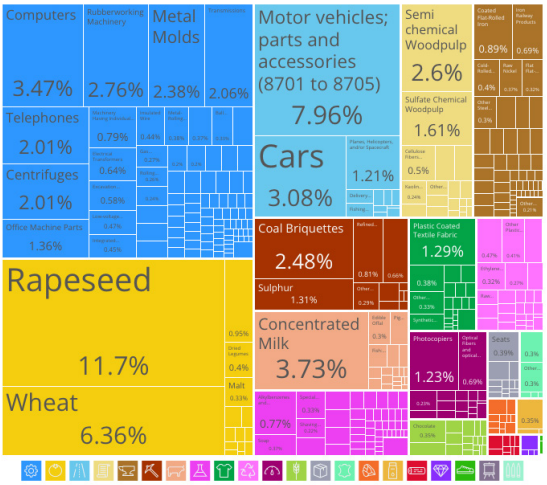
Canada–Mexico trade flows, page 23

Canada–Mexico trade flows continued from page 22

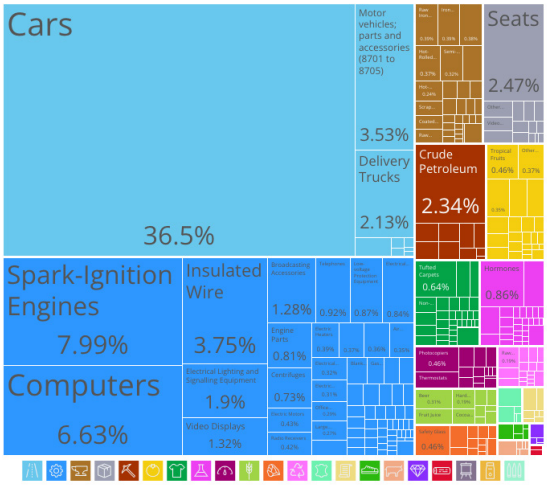
FIGURE 3 Bilateral Trade Products Between Canada and Mexico

(a) Exports from Canada to Mexico, 1995, 2018, and 2021

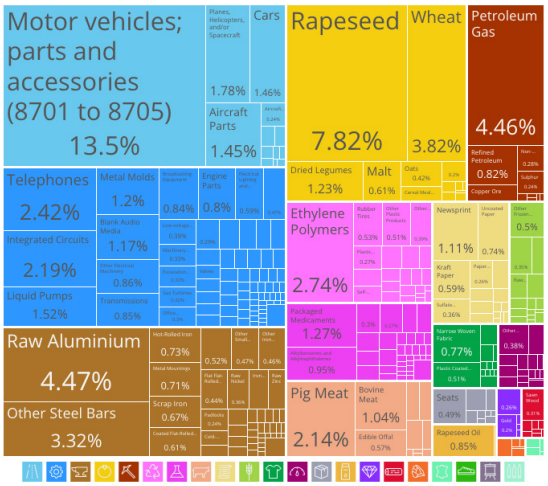
1995



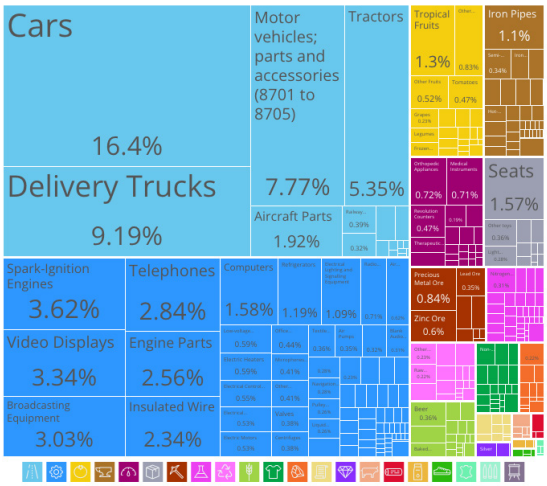
1995



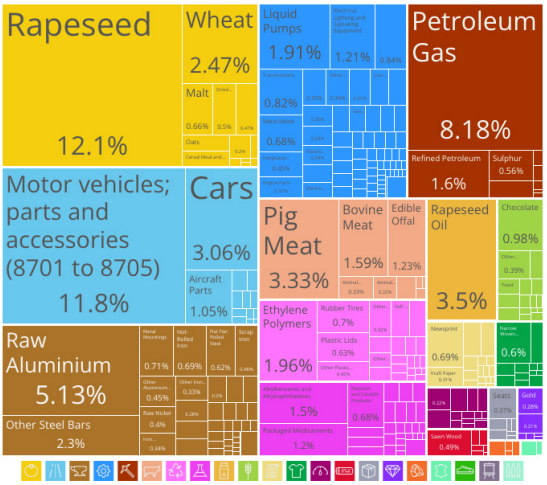
2018



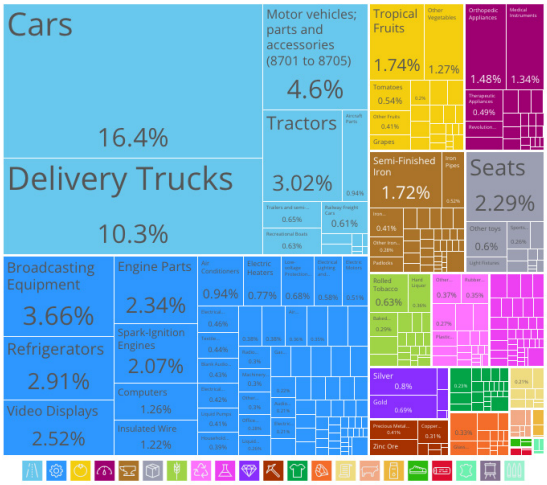
2018



2021



2021



Source: Observatory of Economic Complexity. (n.d.). *Canada/Mexico*. https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/can/partner/mex?productSpaceYearSelector=year2013&dynamicBilateralTradeSelector=year2021

Reflections from the coordinator

BY LAURA TAMAN

Laura Taman is a York graduate and coordinator at the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies.

I started working at the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies as the Centre coordinator in May 2000. The Robarts Centre consisted of a suite of offices with a reception area, meeting room, storage room, and small kitchenette on the second floor of York Lanes. The Kaneff Tower, the current location of the Robarts Centre, did not yet exist. For the first year or two, I worked rather independently with then director Daniel Drache. While there were other research centres in York Lanes, I was not introduced to the coordinators or directors and was completely unaware of the centres' position in the university structure. "Unbelievably," perhaps, it would be a couple of years before I learned that the Robarts Centre was an organized research unit (ORU) under the Vice President of Research and Innovation (VPRI).

"WHAT DOES THE ROBARTS CENTRE DO?"

For many years, if asked, "What does the Robarts Centre do?" I would reply that the focus of the Centre was very much driven by the director's research. An early focus of Centre research and activities with Daniel Drache was "Canada in the World"—what it was to be Canadian in a global context. National and international conferences and publications centred around the public domain, trade and the social deficit, and hemispheric integration.

My first summer, the second of four annual Summer Institutes for Latin American scholars was held and explored themes of exclusion and inclusion in the hemisphere. Over those four years, the Summer Institute hosted scholars from Mexico, Central and South America, the United States, and Spain for one to two weeks on the Keele campus. On the organizational side, it was an "into the deep end" introduction to the position of Centre coordinator, although a recent York graduate, Daniel Martinez, ably assisted me. I will always remember early breakfasts and late dinners with our guests in the Founders College Masters' dining room. Evenings were spent on the patio of the still-missed Cock and Bull Pub.

That first year was also the final year of the original Robarts Chair appointments. Future Robarts Centre director Seth Feldman mounted a year-long series of events on "The Triumph of Canadian Cinema," culminating in the Robarts Lecture delivered in the Nat Taylor Cinema.

AN ORGANIZED RESEARCH UNIT

In 2002, Donna J. Smith, Executive Officer, VPRI began holding regular meetings for the Centre coordinators. These meetings were invaluable. The Office of the VPRI had moved to the second floor of York Lanes, and the very direct relationship between the centres and the VP was at last experienced in practice. Donna's meetings played a key role in connecting the research centres, and the coordinators especially, to the rest of the university. At the meetings, there were presentations from key departments on campus (Finance, Security, Human Resources, University Information Technology, etc.). We were updated on pan-campus policy changes, and we visited many of the new buildings that were going up on campus. The meetings generated a body of administrative and institutional knowledge for the coordinators. The horizon of the research centres expanded well beyond the second floor of York Lanes as I met many of the coordinators and learned of their centres for the very first time. Phyllis Lepore-Babcock would later join the Office of the VPRI as the junior executive officer. These meetings continued for many years and never ceased to be helpful, even essential.

By 2002, Seth had become Robarts Centre director with Daniel as associate director. The directors held a Research Development Initiative grant on Global Cultural Flows. The Centre supported "Death on a Painted Lake: The Tom Thomson Tragedy," one of the Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History series, under research director Gregory Klages. The Centre also celebrated the 100th anniversary of the first wireless communication with the Marconi Galaxy in partnership with the University of Bologna.

In 2004, the Centre began administering the Canadian Media Research Consortium (CMRC) Small Research Grants program for the first time. Professor Fred Fletcher (Communication and Culture, and Robarts Executive Committee member) was pivotal in bringing this funding to York to support research in media and communication. The Robarts Centre would administer the CMRC call annually until 2012, providing over $194,000 in research support to faculty and students in the Joint Program in Communication and Culture. The Centre would be part of York University's 50th anniversary celebrations with a two-day conference at Glendon College examining "Multiculturalism and Its Discontents." In 2010, we awarded the first Odessa Prize for the Study of Canada, an undergraduate essay prize for the best essay in a fourth-year course on a topic relevant to the study of Canada.

THE YORK RESEARCH TOWER

In 2008, a second major institutional change occurred as the directors and coordinators began meeting with then Associate Vice President Research David

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Reflections from the coordinator continued from page 24

DeWitt to envision a move to the new building under construction at the east end of York Lanes. There was much excitement and discussion around which centres would share floor space, many architectural drawings with distinct visions for each floor's footprint, and even fights for walled offices (in opposition to open-concept floors). Synergies and collaborations were discussed and hoped for among what would become the 7th-floor neighbours—the CITY Institute, the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies, the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies, and two centres no longer with us, the Centre for German and European Studies and the York Centre for International and Security Studies. Our large central "agora" space was envisioned as a site for future collaborations and events. In September 2009, the ORUs moved in to the new York Research Tower, later renamed the Kaneff Tower.

In 2011, Colin Coates became director, focusing on a strategic reconnection with the university community. The Centre undertook a membership drive connecting with faculty members and graduate students who identified as "Canadianists." Small grants funding in support of conferences and events were first offered and research clusters were established—the first two being the "Nature Culture" and the "Indigenous Peoples and the Environment" research clusters. The research clusters were seen as mechanisms to bring together faculty and students from across the university with an interest in a diverse range of topics important to the study of Canada. The number of research clusters would grow over the years, with the Centre supporting 10 research clusters in 2021.

In 2013, the Annual Robarts Lectures were reintroduced with Professor Bettina Bradbury reflecting upon the key influences on her career in Canadian Studies. In June 2013, the Centre hosted the annual general meeting (AGM) of the International Council for Canadian Studies (ICCS), establishing a relationship that would eventually see the Secretariat of the ICCS move from Ottawa to the Robarts Centre in the fall of 2021. The Centre also introduced the Barbara Godard Prize for the Best Dissertation in Canadian Studies.

The Centre was defined less by the research direction of the director and more by its mission of providing post-award support, including administrative, event planning, and eventually technical and social media coordination, for faculty associates across the university, in addition to Centre-specific programming.

In 2014, the first annual, multidisciplinary graduate student conference was organized by Mario D'Agostino (graduate student representative on the Robarts Executive Committee). For many years, the graduate student conference was held in conjunction with the Robarts Lecture, and for that first year only, it coincided with a special Canadian Studies comedy night at the Underground, where a few brave faculty members tried their hand at turning their areas of research into stand-up comedy routines.

THE CENTRE'S ROLE EVOLVES

This period also saw a subtle shift in the Centre's role, with the Centre increasingly providing administrative support to faculty associates' research grants. The Centre supported research grants and clusters on cultural performance in the Arctic, First Nations and Métis history, environmental history and culture, Indigenous environmental justice, and women in energy research. The Centre was evolving into what Gabrielle Slowey, who would become director in 2015, described as a "hub" on campus for Canadian Studies. The Centre was defined less by the research direction of the director and more by its mission of providing post-award support, including administrative, event planning, and eventually technical and social media coordination, for faculty associates across the university, in addition to Centre-specific programming.

Appointed director in 2021, Jean Michel Montsion has continued to increase the membership base of the Centre with a focus on providing support for research grant applications and administration. The Centre introduced a keynote lecture held in conjunction with the ICCS AGM and new Robarts Lecture formats. Opportunities for ORU collaborations have been explored, and new external connections have been established with the TransCanadian Network, the Centre Canadian Studies at Stockholm University, and the centres for Canadian Studies at Trent and Mount Allison universities.

The Centre has established initiatives to support student connections with Canadian Studies. In 2018, the Robarts Centre Fellows program was established to enrich the experience of undergraduate students engaged in Canadian Studies. In 2022, as research centres continued to explore the best outreach formats in

Reflections from the coordinator, page 26

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a post-COVID environment, Robarts Connects events were launched as a series of online conversations and mentoring sessions for graduate students. And now, as the Centre looks toward its 40th anniversary, plans are under way for an international summit on the state of Canadian Studies.

A COMMUNITY

What is missing from these reflections? The many people whose paths have crossed with the Robarts Centre over the years, especially the visiting faculty and scholars whom the Centre hosted for a few weeks or many months, some of whom returned year after year. Even before the launch of the Visiting Professorship in Canadian Studies in 2015, the Robarts Centre was a temporary home to scholars from around the world. The Centre has hosted scholars from the University of Western Australia; the Wuhan University of Technology, China; Freie Universität, Berlin; the University of Punjab, India; St. Petersburg State University of Economics and Finance, Russia; the University of Istanbul; Aoyama Gakuin University, Japan; the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; and the Korea Aerospace University, to name but a few.

There are the graduate students who have worked with the Centre's directors or on Centre projects—Marc Froese, David Clifton, Adam Sneyd, Stacy Nation-Knapper, Emilie Pigeon, Daniel Rück, Erin Yunes, Joanna Pearce, and many others. It is always rewarding to be a part of their journey.

Finally, there are York's research centre coordinators with special remembrance for my fellow 7th-floor coordinators from September 2009, on move-in day—Sara MacDonald (CITY), Merle Lightman (CJS), Gary Galbraith (YCISS), and John Paul Kleiner (CCGES). It was such an exciting time as we moved into a brand-new building dedicated to research. We had visited the site during construction when there was nothing but the building skeleton in place, and now we were setting up the research centres anew.

All these connections have made me incredibly happy that I took notice, in 2000, of a job posting for a centre coordinator at the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies. ■

Entering the new millennium: Reflections on the research strategy at York University

BY STAN M. SHAPSON

Stan M. Shapson is professor emeritus and senior scholar in the Faculty of Education, and was the first Vice President Research and Innovation (2000–2011) at York University.

THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT: RENEWED SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH

As Canada entered the new millennium, the federal government enacted a strong policy of renewed support to university research. The Canada Research Chairs (CRCs) program was inaugurated to attract 2,000 top researchers to return to Canadian universities. This initiative complemented the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), which was established to give researchers the necessary infrastructure to "think big and innovate." Soon after, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) were created to broaden the mandate for medical research encompassing "the creation of new knowledge and its translation into improved health."

THE INTERNAL CONTEXT: YORK'S PRE-2000 RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

York University faced the challenge of developing strategies to respond to the federal context for enhancing research. Until then, York provided a relatively basic set of services for researchers with the administrative responsibilities assumed under the large portfolio of the VP Academic. As well, York University had a unique mix of programs—heavily weighted to humanities and social sciences, without a medical school, and with a proportionately small science base. Given its programmatic mix, York was seriously disadvantaged in the pursuit of external research funding. Federal funding heavily favoured medicine and the natural sciences, with only about 12 cents in each dollar allocated for the humanities and social sciences. This hampered York's ability to be among the leaders in the race for research income and impacted negatively on its reputation with policy-makers and the public at large (although York's research was well recognized by the academic community). In addition, there was a strong push, led by the University of Toronto, to set a new policy of having the majority, if not all, of the research funding directed to a small subset of universities—those that had medical schools. The pressure was on to tier universities into research versus non-research (predominantly undergraduate teaching) universities. These challenges were all at York's doorstep and called for action.

THE YORK UNIVERSITY RESPONSE

York President Lorna Marsden quickly acted on the changing research context by creating a new office to provide drive and direction to the research enterprise. She appointed me, as a social scientist and the former dean of education, as the inaugural Vice President Research and Innovation (VPRI). This was noteworthy because, at the time, the overwhelming majority of VPs Research in the country were from the natural sciences, medicine, or engineering. I suggested that the new office be named Research and Innovation (R&I), thus clearly linking these two functions: research—the creation of new knowledge; and innovation—the impacts of research. The VPRI's office would be characterized not only by enhanced research services but also by public and private sector collaboration and community engagement.

BUILDING BLOCKS TO THE R&I STRATEGY

Internal Approach

The first steps in accomplishing the mandate were directed internally, building from the ground up, by providing support and creating visibility for York's diverse research activities. An advanced suite of research services was developed to assist individuals applying for and then managing their research grants. To build local support, an Associate Dean Research was appointed in each of York's faculties. The strategic research plan also encouraged interdisciplinary and collaborative research programs that cut across York's faculties. There were good examples of such academic collaboration scattered through the university, typically in the organized research centres (ORUs), such as the Robarts Centre (the home of *Canada Watch*). Extending this collaborative approach to complex societal themes such as the environment and health—where York had already built substantial strength—would help to close the gap between scientific, technological, and humanistic understanding.

Our team in the Office of Research and Innovation pressed the University for more research facilities and infrastructure. The Sherman Health Science Research Centre was built to provide specialized new space and equipment for vision research and neuroscience, including a research MRI. The Kaneff Tower enabled the housing of multiple humanities and social science ORUs, where large-scale research programs could flourish and graduate students could be exposed to enriched research training environments. The enhancement of the workspace for researchers and the targeting of strategic faculty appointments were solid pillars in enhancing York's research strength.

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External Approach

Early on, I took the deliberate decision to engage externally in the growing York Regional Municipality. The plan was to develop a unique R&I network led by YorkU, beyond our involvement in downtown Toronto networks, which were dominated by MaRS (an urban innovation hub) and UHN (the University Health Network). The goal was to improve performance on the existing playing field for research while moving the ball to a new playing field where YorkU would be fully recognized for its leadership.

We understood that success would depend on building trust and having a visible presence in York Region. An early collaboration formed around the Innovation Synergy Centre in Markham. Extensive talks were held with officials in Markham and with entrepreneurs in industry, including the CEO of Sanofi Pasteur and the VP of IBM Canada. This led to unified pressure on the Ontario government to expand its network of biotech clusters to Markham with YorkU's leadership. The formation of York Biotech along with Innovation York resulted in a strong regional cluster focused on the convergence of IT and medical devices.

Innovative new outlets were created for YorkU's social science, humanities, and artistic research. Relationships were nurtured with regional agencies, community groups, and NGOs. These agencies demonstrated significant interest in YorkU's research on a range of topics such as transit, youth, policing, and immigration services. New links were forged, and collaborative research projects mounted.

The Kaneff Tower enabled the housing of multiple humanities and social science ORUs, where large-scale research programs could flourish and graduate students could be exposed to enriched research training environments.

At the time, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) began to formally request that researchers identify how their research could be more useful to groups outside academia. I was a director on the board of SSHRC, and served as interim president (2005–2006) during a transition in the agency's leadership. Based on the SSHRC work, YorkU launched the first Knowledge Mobilization Office in Canada, which collaborated with external partners to explore how social scientists might intensify the impacts of their involvement in field research. In collaboration with the University of Victoria, Research Impact was launched and soon grew into a national network.

SOME ACHIEVEMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

Alertness to opportunities resulted in a number of significant advances in research performance. Our research income increased about 300 percent in the decade 2000–2010. YorkU gained by being awarded new appointments and infrastructure from CRC and CFI. YorkU was a leader in the country in winning large-scale SSHRC partnership grants. New research facilities with state-of-the-art infrastructure were built.

The early selection of York Region/Markham was deliberate. We built collaborative relationships with top multi-nation enterprise R&D businesses. We opened an Innovation office in Markham and were a leading partner in the Regional Innovation Network. There was ongoing involvement by YorkU's researchers with NGOs, school boards, community groups, and York Region hospitals.

Over time, initiatives change and take on new features. Core activities persist as part of the DNA of R&I at YorkU—York Innovation, the Knowledge Mobilization Unit, and, based on the foundation of trust, goodwill, and contacts, a persisting culture of ongoing collaboration within York Region/Markham. ■

The challenging times for Canadian Studies

BY COLIN M. COATES

Colin M. Coates is a professor in the Canadian Studies program at Glendon College and was director of the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies from 2011 to 2015.

The last few decades have not been kind to units connected to area studies, and Canadian Studies programs and research units have faced a variety of intellectual and practical challenges. A key moment occurred in 2012 with the withdrawal of federal government funds, which had been channelled through what was then called the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (now Global Affairs Canada) to international Canadian Studies and research units. The Conservative government of Stephen Harper, which was undertaking a wide range of program reviews and implementing cost-cutting measures in many departments, cancelled the "Understanding Canada" program entirely. Even though it had been arguably an extremely effective and cost-efficient program, which, at rather modest cost, encouraged teaching and research on Canadian subjects in universities around the world, any political party can make the argument fairly easily that there are few votes to be won in funding scholars outside the country.

"IF STEPHEN HARPER DOESN'T SUPPORT CANADIAN STUDIES, WHY SHOULD WE?"

It was not long before institutions like Duke University closed its Canadian Studies program, arguing, as the then vice provost did, "If Stephen Harper doesn't support Canadian Studies, why should we?" To take another example with which I am more closely acquainted, at the peak of the Canadian Studies presence in the United Kingdom in the late 1990s, there were perhaps seven full-time academics throughout the country who were hired because of their Canadian expertise. (Of course, there were many more British academics who taught individual courses that dealt at least in part with Canada and whose research agenda included Canadian topics.) Today, in the United Kingdom, I can identify only one or two such positions. In comparison, the Polish Language and Literature program at the University of Toronto has three professors. Eight years into a Liberal government, there has been no significant change in policy to support Canadianist research and teaching outside Canada.

Despite the withdrawal of federal government support for Canadian Studies, some of the older and larger associations of Canadian Studies in Europe and Asia have continued to pursue their academic goals, although the decision to cut support has hamstrung efforts to encourage scholars in areas like Latin America. At the same time, the withdrawal of federal funding sent an unfortunate message that the Canadian government did not support teaching and research units labelled "Canadian Studies" within Canada as well. The fact that federal government money did not directly fund these programs and units was irrelevant.

Such programs within Canada had come into existence for two main reasons: first, to ensure that Canadian topics occupied a place on the academic agenda (which was not common in universities in anglophone Canada about 50 years ago), and second, to encourage interdisciplinary perspectives on the country. Given the general shift in many universities away from traditional disciplines and toward multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches, one might be mistaken for thinking that Canadian Studies would be well placed to ride this wave, just as, in its own small way, it had contributed to it in the first place. But the flexibility and fluidity of area studies approaches have also come under attack from certain quarters that decry the attention that some of the scholars involved in such endeavours pay to critical theory.

A second challenge to Canadian Studies has been the academic critique of the nation-state. Where at one point many scholars believed that it was important to explore some topics in a specifically nation-bound framework—for instance, in a "Themes in Canadian Literature" course—scholars and students have responded positively to other, entirely justifiable approaches (based on gender, sexuality, post-colonialism, and Indigeneity, for instance) that do not depend on the nation-state or a region for definition. History and political science courses have tended to maintain their geographical focus, given the concentration on state-defined issues in both disciplines. But even in Canadian history, to take one example, the challenge of the Indigenous experience of the nation-state, which runs counter in so many ways to the experience of settler-colonial Canadians, has led scholars to reconsider long-established beliefs about the country. This is not, in itself, an entirely new phenomenon, since interpretations in all social science and humanities disciplines have continued to evolve depending on current historical contexts. But an unfortunate side effect of this development may

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be to discount the importance of learning about the Canadian state (in all the forms it has taken) and the Canadian nation-state.

Third, an odd assumption about Canadian Studies has always haunted the teaching and research units. Some fellow academics, usually ones little involved in the units, have assumed that Canadian Studies is about justifying and defending the current shape of the Canadian state and nation. In other words, the units are seen as hangouts for unthinking and uncritical Canadian nationalists. While such units indeed presuppose that it is a worthwhile endeavour to encourage the understanding of the geography called Canada and the people who comprise it, particularly for people who expect to engage in its political and social processes, there are, at least in my experience, few unreconstructed, flag-waving scholars involved in the endeavour. Returning to the early years of the Canadian Studies project, it is interesting how critical, even pessimistic, some of the early scholars were. In the first issue of the *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes*, which was designed as a bilingual academic outlet for Canadian Studies research, the editors were surprisingly worried about the state of the nation. This was in the so-called period of national euphoria leading up to the centennial of the Canadian nation-state (in its current form) in 1967: "Canada's national political life has degenerated to a condition beyond patience," wrote editor Denis Smith in the first issue from May 1966.

The research units that foster Canadian Studies may find that they will play a key role as they face the challenges of diminishing commitment for Canadian Studies teaching at home and abroad.

KEEPING CANADIAN TOPICS ON THE ACADEMIC AGENDA

There were reasons then, and there are reasons today, to be wary of the type of approach represented by Canadian Studies. It is fair to point out that area studies approaches are themselves a product of Cold War thinking, when the US government poured funds into encouraging the study of the United States overseas, and dedicated resources to the multidisciplinary understanding of parts of the world where the country had keen geopolitical interests. The Canadian approach reflected that tendency in some ways, though at a much smaller scale abroad and with fewer governmental controls. Within Canada, the development of teaching and research units largely stemmed from a desire to ensure that Canadian topics remained on the academic agenda. The creation of teaching units reflected provincial circumstances and decisions; research units depended on funds.

In the case of the Robarts Centre, and a few others across the country (Trent, McGill, Mount Allison, UBC, and Carleton, among others), generous endowments have allowed the research units to maintain a profile for Canadian topics within the university and often beyond, and to create a space where Canadianists from various disciplines can meet and collaborate. Resource decisions based on the numbers of majors that programs require to survive may lead to the further shrinking of Canadian Studies programs across the country, as has happened over the past two decades. But such decisions, one can hope, will not reduce the place of the study of the land and the people of the geopolitical entity called Canada. Indeed, the research units that foster Canadian Studies may find that they will play a key role as they face the challenges of diminishing commitment for Canadian Studies teaching at home and abroad. ■

The Robarts Centre today and tomorrow: From the quest for self-knowledge to an ethics of care

BY JEAN MICHEL MONTSION

Jean Michel Montsion is the current director of the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies (2021–2026) and an associate professor of multidisciplinary studies at Glendon College.

The Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies was established in 1984, many years before the creation of organized research units (ORUs) at York University and the settling of the administrative structure in its current body, the Office of the Vice President Research and Innovation (VPRI). With an initial focus on welcoming visiting research chairs and supporting post-doctoral scholars, it has taken on several new tasks over the years, including managing scholarly exchanges abroad and serving as a small publishing house. Many internal and external shifts in the academic research landscape have determined the current priorities of the Robarts Centre in supporting the study of Canada, in line with Thomas Symons's vision for Canadian Studies as a quest to knowing ourselves better.

In his 1975 *Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies*, Symons observed that the most valid and compelling argument for Canadian Studies is the importance of self-knowledge, the need to know and to understand ourselves: who we are in time and space; where we have been; where we are going; what we possess; and what our responsibilities are to ourselves and to others (Symons, 1975, p. 12).

A guiding principle to many in Canadian Studies, the quest for self-knowledge remains key to situating the contributions of the Robarts Centre at York. In recent years, however, it has become increasingly difficult to achieve this goal, notably as a result of the declining popularity of the field and the withdrawal of support by Canadian political authorities. This includes the end of the federal program "Understanding Canada" in 2012, a federal initiative designed to support international Canadian Studies (Coates, 2018).

In this context, the Robarts Centre's mission has expanded to host research projects in what looks like an eclectic manner, and to collaboratively maintain strong collegial relations with other Canadian Studies centres and international colleagues. As a result, the Robarts Centre has moved toward supporting a more inclusive, plural, embodied, and detailed study of the country, often by decentring Canada itself.

STRUCTURE AND INSTITUTIONAL PRESSURES

Several academic research units across Canada have followed Symons's adage, despite their institutional differences. At York, the Robarts Centre favours a critical, collaborative, and interdisciplinary study of Canada, but it is institutionally detached from cognate degree-granting programs. It contrasts in mandate and structure with centres such as the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada that have a more public-facing mission; the Frost Centre at Trent University, where Indigenous and Canadian Studies are combined; and the Centre for Canadian Studies at Mount Allison University, which emphasizes regional experiences like the Atlantic Canadian perspective. The Robarts Centre has also moved away from the research chair model, still in existence at the University of British Columbia.

No matter the mandate or structure, as a research engine dedicated to the study of Canada, the Robarts Centre faces similar institutional pressures as these units in having to consolidate several research endeavours under the one exercise of "knowing ourselves." With 166 faculty associates from the 11 faculties of York and 8 interdisciplinary research clusters as of 2023, the Robarts Centre supports many distinct and highly diverse research agendas, with a tradition in prioritizing research geared toward 2SLGBTQIA+ realities, Black Canadian experiences, Canadian politics, climate change and green technologies, environmental history, gender relations, immigrant communities, Indigenous cultural and environmental realities, Northern Studies, urban politics, and visual arts.

The Robarts Centre does not have a monopoly on the study of Canada at York. Many colleagues do not frame their work as "research on Canada." This led the Centre to embrace a broader definition of "the study of Canada," and to collaborate with other research units in incorporating a panoply of scholarship and academic conversations in the quest for self-knowledge. More importantly, some colleagues do not wish to associate their scholarship with a reference to "Canada" or "Canadian Studies," a country and a field that have marginalized, dispossessed, and excluded specific groups, experiences, and voices, and that continue to do so.

DECENTRING THE STUDY OF CANADA

Today's eclectic scholarship at the Robarts Centre shares some guiding principles, rather than a unified narrative or quest. We are committed to rendering visible the

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perspectives of people who form Canada, notably historically marginalized voices, and to understanding the shifting nature of the processes, communities, and realities of a country that is always changing. Rather than solely focusing on the nation-state as a unit, our researchers favour an examination of place-based realities that ground plural experiences of Canada, and a broader contextualization of the Canadian experience within international realities and transnational processes.

The Robarts Centre encourages research endeavours that are lived, promoted, and pursued in ways that are often far from conventional Canadian Studies scholarship, notably as the field is moving from understanding the study of Canada as a form of area studies toward more comparative, transcultural, or transnational approaches (Hodgett & James, 2018). Moreover, in the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada, the Robarts community has a responsibility to work toward changing Canada's settler-colonial structures that shape the country's relationship with Indigenous nations. While it promotes reconciliation efforts and works on fulfilling the TRC calls to action by creating space, active listening, and witnessing, the Centre supports and collaborates with a myriad of stakeholders, including York's Centre for Indigenous Knowledges and Languages.

The Robarts Centre encourages research endeavours that are lived, promoted, and pursued in ways that are often far from conventional Canadian Studies scholarship.

"CARING FOR OURSELVES AND FOR OTHERS"

Although Symons's quest for self-knowledge remains important in the study of Canada, institutions that were created to support this mission, such as the Robarts Centre, are well positioned to fulfill another dimension of the task at hand: the importance and responsibility to care for ourselves and for others. Supporting the study of Canada from a critical, collaborative, and interdisciplinary standpoint requires an ethics of care that complements and grounds our collective quest for self-knowledge. For instance, emotional labour can help foster important conversations about difficult historical and present-day injustices, especially for people from different backgrounds and experiences. It is also key for any productive discussions about Canadian citizenship, notably amid ongoing and recurring debates around immigration.

At a time when knowledges about Canada are plentiful and knowledge production is itself criticized as a restrictive process, we cannot pursue our quest for self-knowledge uncritically, and without institutional support. "Knowing ourselves" too has reproduced structural inequities, and therefore requires ways of moving toward a more inclusive and plural understanding of "us" (away from an us-versus-them mentality), a clearer ethical grounding to our quest for self-knowledge, and a variation on Symons's adage: Caring for ourselves and others will lead to knowing ourselves better and more responsibly. ■

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John Robarts, prime minister of Ontario, 1961–1971

BY STEVE PAIKIN

Steve Paikin is anchor of TVOntario's flagship current affairs program "The Agenda," now in its 18th season. He wrote *Public Triumph, Private Tragedy: The Double Life of John P. Robarts* in 2005.

Imagine a time when the premier of Ontario was indisputably admired and respected not only by his fellow first ministers from coast to coast to coast, but also by most Canadians. Imagine a time when Canada's biggest province routinely balanced its books. Every year. Imagine a time when growth was so buoyant, and revenues flowed so voluminously into the treasury, that the minister of education often attended the ribbon cuttings for three different schools a day.

1960S ONTARIO

Well, if you were alive in the province of Ontario during the 1960s, you didn't have to imagine this. You lived it. The Sixties were, plain and simple, the best time to be an Ontarian. The province was emerging from the sleepier Fifties with a 44-year-old prime minister who was so handsome, and conveyed such leadership chops, that comparisons to America's 40-something President John F. Kennedy were made and the nickname "chairman of the board" stuck.

And no, that wasn't a misprint. John P. Robarts was, in fact, called the "prime minister of Ontario." When reporters asked him whether Ontario's first minister shouldn't return to being called "premier" (as the job was called a few decades earlier), Robarts sheepishly replied, "Well, that's the name that was on the door when I got here." (It would be left to Robarts's successor, Bill Davis, to switch the title back to "premier" a decade later.)

Robarts assumed the leadership of Ontario's Progressive Conservative Party in one of the most exciting leadership conventions ever. It was held at Varsity Arena in Toronto in October 1961 and turned into a six-ballot marathon. But Robarts eventually emerged victorious and, thanks to two majority government victories in 1963 and 1967, maintained the Tory dynasty, which began in 1943 and would last until 1985.

It was a great time to be the prime minister of Canada's richest and most populous province. These were boom times, and the government intended to bring an increasingly urbanizing province into the Go-Go Sixties. That meant an unprecedented school-building program for the baby boomers, whose generation was born immediately after the end of the Second World War. It also meant post-secondary options as never before, with the province building five new universities (including York University in Toronto) and, for those who wanted a more practical post-secondary alternative, the entire college system. It also meant upgrading the teaching skills of teachers at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), and lifelong learning on the country's first television channel dedicated to education, TVOntario. All of these initiatives were undertaken by Robarts's trusted education minister, Bill Davis.

Robarts saw that a burgeoning province would need significant new electricity generation, and so he ordered the building of Ontario's first nuclear power plants in Pickering, just east of Toronto. Commuting to jobs was becoming increasingly necessary thanks to the construction of new suburbs. Thus, GO Transit was built. ("GO" stood for Government of Ontario—maybe not a sexy acronym, but it certainly conveyed the service's mission.)

Robarts thought kids from lower-income families who couldn't afford summer camp also needed a place to play. And so we got Ontario Place, a wonderful locale on Toronto's waterfront. He thought science ought to be fun and, as a centennial-year project, had the Ontario Science Centre built. More than four million people have since visited the centre.

CONFEDERATION OF TOMORROW CONFERENCE

But Robarts also saw bombs blowing up in mailboxes in next-door Québec and wanted to better understand what Canada's French wanted. Robarts was a London-born, unilingual anglophone, yet what came next was an almost unprecedented attempt at nation-building. He invited every Canadian premier to come to the Confederation of Tomorrow conference, on the top floor of the newly constructed and stately Toronto-Dominion Centre, in hopes of having a conversation about the state of the country in its centennial year. And consistent with his statesmanlike approach to politics, he invited both the Liberal and New Democratic Party opposition leaders to attend and sit in the Ontario delegation.

Robarts led the most important gathering of Canadian first ministers since Confederation in Charlottetown a century earlier. Observers agreed: he was likely the only politician in Canada with enough political currency and gravitas to pull such an event together. (More than

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half a century later, there is still a plaque on the wall in the lobby of the TD Centre showing the seating plan of the conference attendees.)

After serving nearly a decade as premier, Robarts announced his resignation in December 1970 with the succinct statement: "I am a product of my times exactly, and my time is finished."

POST-POLITICS

Robarts went on to have as spectacular a post-political career as anyone in Canadian history. He was ensconced at the Toronto law firm Stikeman Elliott and sat on more than a dozen well-paying boards. And yet, he still made himself available when public service called. He co-chaired the Pepin-Robarts Task Force on Canadian Unity, chaired a task force on the future of governance in Metropolitan Toronto, served as chancellor of his hometown University of Western Ontario (as it was then called), and then did another stint as chancellor at York University, which went on to name its Centre for Canadian Studies after him.

Robarts led the most important gathering of Canadian first ministers since Confederation in Charlottetown a century earlier. Observers agreed: he was likely the only politician in Canada with enough political currency and gravitas to pull such an event together.

Despite a brilliant political and professional life, Robarts's personal life was complicated and ended in tragedy. He divorced his first wife (and mother of his two adopted children) and remarried an American divorcée 28 years his junior. London was scandalized. Toronto, less so. In 1981, he suffered a debilitating stroke and never recovered. On October 18, 1982, Robarts walked into the shower stall on the second floor of his home in Rosedale and took with him the shotgun the Ontario PC Party gave him as a thank-you gift for his years of public service. He was lost to suicide.

So much of Ontario today has its roots in decisions made by Robarts and his government. We should never allow the shocking nature of his death to obscure the enormous contribution he made to Ontario and Canada. ■

ROBARTS Centre Directors

1984-1988	John W. Lennox
1988-1991	Susan E. Houston
1991-1994	Kenneth McRoberts
1994-2003	Daniel Drache
	Carole H. Carpenter *(interim 1996-1997)*
2003-2010	Seth Feldman
	Daniel Drache *(interim 2011)*
2011-2015	Colin Coates
2015-2021	Gabrielle Slowey
	Anna Hudson *(interim 2017)*
	Jean Michel Montsion *(interim 2018-2019)*
2021-2026	Jean Michel Montsion

ROBARTS LECTURES

1986 **Fernand Ouellet**
The Socialization of Quebec Historiography since 1960

1987 **Maria Tippett**
The Making of English-Canadian Culture, 1900-1939

1988 **Thomas J. Courchene**
What Does Ontario Want?

1989 **Linda Hutcheon**
As Canadian as... possible... under the circumstances

1990 **Joan M. Vastokas**
Beyond the Artifact: Native Art as Performance

1991 **Kenneth McRoberts**
English Canada and Quebec: Avoiding the Issue

1992 **Ramsay Cook**
1492 and All That: Making a Garden out of a Wilderness

1994 **Janine Brodie**
Politics on the Boundaries: Restructuring and the Canadian Women's Movement

1995 **Carole H. Carpenter**
In Our Own Image: The Child, Canadian Culture and our Future

1996 **Joyce Zemans**
Where is Here? Canadian Cultural Policy in a Globalized World

1997 **Terry Goldie**
Queer Nation? Gay and Lesbian Identities in Canada

1998 **Ken McNeil**
Defining Aboriginal Title in the 90's Has the Supreme Court finally got it Right?

1999 **Robert Wallace**
Theatre and Transformation in Contemporary Canada

2000 **Susan Swann**
The Writer's Conscience: or why reports of the death of the author have been greatly exaggerated

2001 **Seth Feldman**
Canadian Movies, Eh?

2012 **Bettina Bradbury**
Twists, turning points and tall shoulders

2013 **Pat Armstrong**
Working for Care: Caring for Work

2015 **Leslie Sanders**
The People Who Led To My Ideas: Thinking about Black Canadian Studies

2016 **Deborah McGregor**
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and a New Reconciliation Proclamation: How Far Have We Come

2017 **Bonita Lawrence**
Canada at 150, Where is the “Truth” in the Reconciliation Process”

2019 **Miranda Campbell**
A Collaborative Turn: Youth-led Organizing and Communities of Care

2022 **Jody Berland**
Funny Not Funny Here Not Here: Navigating the Canadian in Contemporary Popular Culture

2022 **Anna Hudson**
Art, Culture and Sovereignty Across Inuit Nunaat and Sápmi: Mobilizing the Circumpolar North

2022 **Daniel Béland**
The Changing Politics of Fiscal Federalism in Canada: Recent Challenges and Potential Policy Solutions