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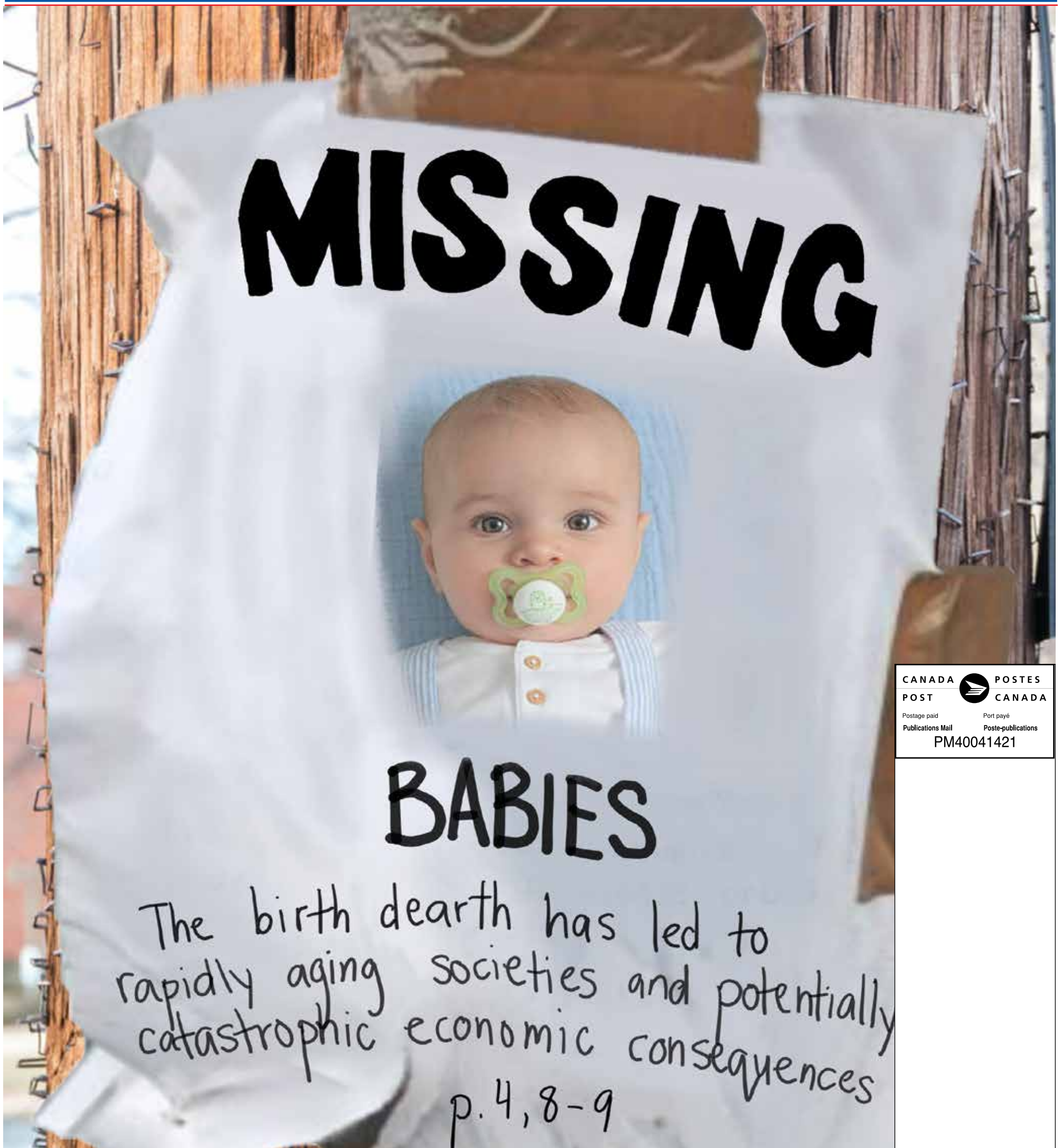


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Trudeau government reintroduces bill expanding euthanasia

Disabilities group condemns C-7, EPC says safeguards are being eroded

Paul Tuns

Justice Minister David Lametti introduced Bill C-7 on Oct. 5, bringing back the federal government's legislation to broaden so-called Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD).

Last September, a Quebec court threw out several provisions of the federal euthanasia and assisted-suicide law, most notably the requirement that death be "reasonably foreseeable" in order to access medically assisted killing. The court gave the federal government until March to change the law and then gave it an extension until June because the Trudeau government did not introduce legislation until near the deadline. Because of the pandemic, the court gave the feds another extension, Dec. 18.

Lametti said, "the government of Canada remains committed to making the necessary changes to the federal MAiD legislation ... this is why we have reintroduced these important proposed amendments, which aim to reduce suffering, while also supporting individual autonomy and freedom of choice."

Lametti insists the existing safeguards remain, but that a new track for euthanasia and assisted suicide is being created for people who are not terminally ill.

The government says the new law, if passed, would require a person making a request for assisted-suicide to be fully informed of alternatives and ensure "serious consideration is given to reasonable and available treatment options." It would also effectively allow advance directives by introducing a waiver of final consent that exempts a person from giving final consent prior to the procedure. The Euthanasia Prevention Coalition says this amendment could make it diffi-

cult for patients to change their minds from wanting to have MAiD to wanting to live. Alex Schadenberg, executive director of the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, said the change means patients with dementia or who otherwise become mentally incompetent could be stuck with an outdated or now unwanted directive to be euthanized.

Schadenberg said, "a person could make a request for death by euthanasia when having a 'bad day' and die the same day even though studies prove that a person's 'will to live' will fluctuate."



Heidi Janz of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities says systemic "ableism" makes expanding euthanasia extremely dangerous.

The government is also dropping the 10-day wait period between a request to be euthanized and the procedure in cases in which death is considered imminent. It would also reduce the number of witnesses to a request for euthanasia from two to one.

For those whose deaths are not "reasonably foreseeable," the government is requiring two doctors or nurse practitioners to provide an assessment approving the request for euthanasia, and one of them must have expertise in the condition causing the patient's suffering. The doctor or nurse practi-

tioner would be expected to tell the patient about means to relieve the suffering and believe that the patient considered alternatives to death. These assessments must take at least 90 days to complete unless in their medical opinion the patient might lose their mental capacity to make such decisions in that time.

The federal government claims that C-7 rules out access to MAiD for people who are suffering solely from mental illness, but mental anguish can be the affliction that qualifies a patient for euthanasia or assisted-suicide.

Schadenberg said, "Bill C-7 falsely claims to prevent people with mental illness (alone) from dying by euthanasia," because it "permits death by lethal injection when a person is physically or psychologically suffering in a manner that is intolerable to the person and that cannot be relieved in a way that the person considers 'acceptable,'" yet mental illness is considered a form of psychological suffering and the bill does not define psychological suffering. Schadenberg said the government should define psychological suffering to specifically exclude mental illness, but despite the fact these concerns were raised when the original bill was introduced in February, it has not corrected this omission.

Schadenberg said, "Bill C-7 does not limit itself to the provision of the Quebec Court decision," but opens euthanasia and assisted-suicide much more broadly, and tosses aside so-called safeguards that have been in place a mere four years.

The Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD) condemned C-7 and called upon "the Trudeau government to withdraw Bill C-7 and replace it with a new bill that strikes a

balance between autonomy rights and equality rights for people with disabilities."

Dr. Heidi Janz, chair of CCD's Ending-of-Life Ethics Committee, said that systemic discrimination against those with disabilities, exemplified by disability as an exclusion criterion for critical care during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, and widespread "ableism" – "the discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior" – would endanger the lives of Canadians with disabilities, especially considering there are insufficient safeguards "to prevent marginalized Canadians from being driven to seek assistance to die because they cannot get assistance to live."

Tracy Odell, president of Citizens With Disabilities – Ontario, said "the government seems committed to spending time, energy, and resources to helping us die sooner." She urged the government "to show its resolve to be a 'kinder and gentler' nation."

Many doctors are opposed to expanding euthanasia and assisted-suicide. When *The Interim* went to press, more than 300 physicians and surgeons had signed a petition, MAiD to MAD. The petition noted: "This is not the medicine that we have devoted our lives to practicing," explaining: "Our intent is to heal and to alleviate suffering, not to deliberately end life. We advocate for the lives of our patients, not their deaths. We believe in garnering adequate supports for all our patients so that they have the basic requirements needed to live; we do not sanction and facilitate their death as a response to their suffering."

Alberta NDP push abortion access guarantee

Interim Staff

On Sept. 29, members of the Select Special Public Health Act Review Committee of the Alberta legislature debated adding abortion access to the province's *Public Health Act*. The motion was put forward by NDP MLA Kathleen Ganley (Calgary-Mountain View) and was defeated in committee the following day on a straight party-line vote, with the NDP committee members supporting it and the United Conservative Party members opposed.

The motion sought to amend the *Public Health Act* to "a) expressly set out an individual's right to access and be provided abortion services, and (b) expressly include abortion services as a service that (i) a regional health authority must provide under section 10 of the act, and (ii) the minister must provide under section 12 of the act."

Introducing her motion, Ganley said, "The issue before the committee is whether we want to entrench the right to access abortion services in Alberta." She said, "In the view of the official Opposition, we should entrench the right to access abortion services in the legislation. Women in this province have been waiting for far too long for this type of right."

Ganley said, "For more than a generation, abortions have been legal in this country," but "access is a separate and distinct issue." She said that "a right imposes an obligation on other people around them," which she suggested meant the province needs to make it easier access. "That is what differentiates a right from a liberty." She also said there was "unanimity" among experts that abortion improves public health. She mentioned several journals that purport

to illustrate "when women lack access to safe abortion services, they have a higher incidence of mortality. To put it bluntly, they die."

Ganley said the main rationale for bringing this motion forward now was that the abortion issue could be curtailed by the



MLA Jackie Lovely said her constituents oppose abortion.

courts, noting that the Supreme Court in the United States could revisit the abortion issue south of the border.

NDP Health Critic David Shepherd (Edmonton City-Centre) said adding abortion access to the *Public Health Act* was necessary because, "We know it is possible for governments to make use of systems where there are not perhaps quite so overt a statement to try to circumvent or use other delays or drags or tactics to prevent women from having this important and key access" — although he did not mention any specific restrictions.

NDP MLA Sarah Hoffman (Edmonton-Glenora) said the fact there are only two freestanding abortion mills in the province is evidence that there is insufficient access, particularly outside Calgary and Edmonton.

UCP MLA Jackie Lovely (Camrose) said she was "happy" to oppose the motion, noting that she received a petition from 500 constituents opposed to abortion. She also noted that when the NDP were in government, they amend-

See *'Motion'* p. 6

Nova Scotia man killed over wife's objections

Interim Staff

On Oct. 3, an 83-year-old Nova Scotian was killed by lethal injection following a legal battle in which his wife of 48 years tried to prevent the euthanasia killing.

Katherine Sorenson, 82, failed in her legal bid to stop the medicalized killing of her husband Jack. Lawyers for the wife may seek leave to appeal to Canada's Supreme Court to address several remaining legal questions. In July, Katherine Sorenson went to court to have her non-terminally ill husband from accessing Canada's so-called Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD) regime.

Jack, who had who had Stage III chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and was thus not seriously ill or dying, was originally scheduled to be killed on August 3, but court pro-

ceedings moved the date of death back two months. He suffered from anxiety and depression, and Katherine raised questions about his capacity to consent.

Furthermore, Jack had conflicting assessments of his eligibility for euthanasia, having been rejected as ineligible in April before being approved several months later despite no change in his medical condition.

Hugh Scher, a lawyer representing Katherine, argued that "doctor shopping is a serious concern that must be addressed," and that "court or tribunal oversight are essential in those rare cases where there are multiple conflicting medical reports over the core issue of capacity, which is an essential condition of eligibility for MAiD."

"The question we were asking is, when you have

multiple assessments and you've got a couple of assessments saying, yes, he qualifies for euthanasia and other assessments saying he does not qualify for euthanasia, how then is that properly determined?" said Alex Schadenberg,



Lawyer Hugh Scher (above) says there are unresolved issues surrounding the euthanasia death of Jack Sorenson.

executive director of the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition (EPC).

The EPC got involved in

the case to help Katherine save her husband's life and financed the challenge to the euthanasia order. Katherine asked for donations to the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition in lieu of flowers in her announcement of Jack's death.



According to the CBC, Jack was euthanized one day after three judges of the Nova Scotia Court of

Appeal ruled that preventing him being lethally injected would be a "significant harm," and was contrary to his "fundamental right to personal autonomy and medical self-determination." Justice Cindy Bourgeois wrote the decision, which stated that courts should not intervene in assessments made by medical practitioners.

The Court of Appeal also ruled Katherine did not have the legal right to contest what her husband was trying to do and that her "feelings do not give her standing to challenge the determination he meets the eligibility criteria for MAiD." Schadenberg said that under the current euthanasia law, individuals who are capable of consent and make a voluntary request for lethal injection can be euthanized if two doctors diagnose them as having

a "grievous and irremediable medical condition" and that death is "reasonably imminent." He said that there were legitimate questions about Jack's competence nor did he suffer from a medical condition that would reasonably be considered imminently terminal.

Katherine, whom Jack stopped talking to after she went to court to keep him alive, was not informed that her husband had been killed at Fisherman's Memorial Hospital in Lunenburg, N.S., and only learned about his passing when the funeral home contacted her after they had possession of his body.

Katherine said, "I've had a wonderful life with Jack ... we did a pretty good job of reconciling two pretty opposite views, until this issue came up of end of life."

Amnesty International reasserts pro-abortion position

Paul Tuns

On Sept. 28, Amnesty International, the international human rights group, announced it was updating its “sexual and reproductive rights” policy, essentially reaffirming its pro-abortion position.

Amnesty International had previously supported abortion in certain circumstances, although it released papers and launched campaigns that supported broadening abortion in numerous countries and circumstances. It now calls for full decriminalization of abortion.

Amnesty International is “calling on governments to fully decriminalize abortion, and ensure universal access to safe abortion services to all people who need them,” including providing and paying for abortion. It also calls for removal of parental or spousal consent laws “which deny autonomy over their own bodies.”

In the decade since it released its initial pro-abortion position, Amnesty International says, “international legal norms and standards around abortion have undergone a substantial evolution,” implying that abortion-in-demand is the new norm. But a fact sheet released in support of the new document, includes a statistic that undermines its own statement. The fact sheet states

that the World Health Organization says that 40 per cent of the world’s population lives in countries that restrict abortion or are not readily accessible to the majority of the population.

laws,” as well as medical professionals, activists and legal experts.

Matt Wojciechowski, vice president of Campaign Life Coalition who has extensive experience working at the United Nations

small coterie of pro-abortion and feminist NGOs.”

Amnesty International said that the new policy “equips the organization to undertake stronger campaigning and advocacy around abortion and

conditions under which many of these abortions take place regardless of legal status.

Amnesty International’s new policy includes the “recognition” that “anyone who can become pregnant has the right to an abortion,” that “decisions around pregnancy and abortion directly impact the full spectrum of human rights,” and that “human rights protections start at birth,” as well as calling for universal access “as early as possible and as late as necessary,” removal of abortion from criminal law and all punitive laws and regulations intended to punish “all pregnant people” and healthcare providers, reform of laws and policies that limit abortion to specific circumstances, and promotion of policies that allow pregnant people to make decisions including access to health care and welfare.

“Abortion is not an isolated issue. Denying people the right to make decisions about their own bodies perpetuates gender and economic inequality, and entrenches stigma and discrimination,” said Rajat Khosla, Amnesty International’s senior director of research, advocacy, and policy.

Wojciechowski said the declaration that “human rights begins at birth” is a “rejection of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which states

that “the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth.”

He also noted that the new policy also nods to the transgender ideology, claiming abortion as a “right of anyone who can become pregnant” – a cumbersome term that is repeated throughout the revised document.

Wojciechowski said, “This isn’t the Amnesty of our parents’ generation, which advocated on behalf of political prisoners and those facing injustice.” He continued: “today’s Amnesty International is one of the world’s leading pro-abortion organizations, that infiltrates countries that still have legal protections for children in the womb, and uses extremely well-funded campaigns and lobbying efforts to legalize abortion-on-demand.”

He has witnessed Amnesty International operatives at work during CLC’s efforts at the United Nations and noted that Amnesty International was one of the leading forces behind the “My body, my rights” campaign in Ireland during the 2019 referendum that legalized abortion. “Their long-standing reputation as a defender of human rights has been compromised for many years.”



Amnesty International graphic on their webpage promoting abortion as a human right. The human rights group equates illegal abortion with unsafe abortion.

On the webpage announcing the revised document, Amnesty International states, “We have updated our position to align with evolving international human rights law and standards, to make it as inclusive as possible, and to ensure it addresses the full range of barriers that impede access to safe abortion and the full range of human rights violations due to criminalization of abortion.” The organization claims it consulted with “women and girls whose lives have been shattered by restrictive

on life and family issues, told *The Interim* that there is no international norm or standard on abortion, with most countries having some limits on abortion and many others outlawing abortion except under circumstances such as rape or genetic defect. “Amnesty International is calling for full abortion-on-demand, paid for by taxpayers, and represents that as typical across the globe when, in effect, few countries hold that standard.” Wojciechowski added: “The global consensus they claim exists only among a

to better support local movements advancing sexual and reproductive rights.” It also promotes the usual pro-abortion numbers, saying, “Around 47,000 women die each year as a result of seeking unsafe abortions.” Amnesty International said “This global tragedy will not end until abortion is fully decriminalized and made accessible and affordable to everyone.”

Wojciechowski said Amnesty International, like other pro-abortion groups, equates legal abortion with safe abortion, ignoring the

What’s YOUR Vision for Canada?



Erin O’Toole supports:

- Abortion-on-demand
- Gay marriage
- Pride parades
- Conversion therapy ban
- Transgender access to women’s shelters

By manningcentre - Flickr: Manning Centre party 2014 1115, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=63839850>

Rod Taylor and the CHP support:

- Protection of innocent human life at all stages
- Traditional marriage between one man and one woman
- Access to therapy for the gender-confused
- Privacy and security for women and girls



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I agree with the following: There is one Creator God—the God of the Bible. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms acknowledges the Supremacy of God and the Rule of Law. All innocent human life must be protected by law from conception until natural death. Marriage is the exclusive union of one man and one woman. Parents are the primary authority for the care and education of their children. Canadian laws must reflect biblical moral standards.

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The population balm

A parable of Saint Matthew's Gospel describes a master who, before going on a journey, entrusts his property to three servants. Their charge is not a light one. They have, after all, been entrusted with the wealth — the very substance — of their lord. The talents imparted to them are, therefore, both responsibility and gift, rare and precious riches to be treated with reverence, and engaged with care. Two of the servants understand the meaning of their commission, and set to work: they take the gifts of their master and make them grow and yield and, in time, their talents double. The last servant, however, has a different attitude. He thinks he understands both his employer and the property with which he has been charged: he is suspicious of the one and burdened by the other. In essence, he doubts that the gift he receives is good, and does not go forth to make it multiply. And so, the money is buried and the responsibility that it imposes is shirked. Time passes, yet the gift does not grow. This servant, of course, is wrong about both the master and his gift. In reaping where he has not sown and gathering where he scattered no seed, the governor whom we glimpse through these telling details is one that revels in abundance,

**We suffer from
a kind of
reproductive
eating disorder**

whereas the slothful servant is timid, sterile, and sad. Sadder still is the fact that this servant is such an apt figure for our own slothful, timid, and sterile age.

We, too, are ignorant of our gifts and unconvinced of their goodness. We think, for instance, we understand life and its course — an interval of comforts and conveniences, with pleasures to be enjoyed, professions to be pursued, and prizes to be collected. Within its course, life can be augmented by romantic partners who come and go from time to time, as aims and moods both shift. From the outside, it looks like we are multiplying our goods prodigiously.

But ours, in fact, is a buried life, an existence which keeps its most precious potential hidden and inert. Such a life is blinded by a deep misunderstanding about its own nature: for life is not about grasping, grabbing more goods and holding them more tightly, but about giving, yielding, and putting into circulation the very miracle of being into which we have all been serendipitously cast. Life invites us to be the prodigals of our own existence, to give of our very lives like disciples who dispense, from bottomless baskets, blessed loaves and fishes. If the self is given in this radical, generous, and total way, it becomes a seed cast into fruitful, loamy soil; if not, it remains only a wasted talent, buried in the dirt.

The two types of servants depicted in Matthew's parable and the two attitudes they represent, might not seem to have a place in the perpetual motion machine of the news cycle. This, however, is not because such stances are too subtle to detect, but rather because the existential attitudes they embody are too large to bring into view. Across the Western world, growth rates are withering. Family trees no longer branch broadly out like mighty oaks but rise sharply like slender poplars that bend with the wind. The most

prosperous and privileged populations in the world are watching their growth rates enter free fall; their talents have ceased to increase.

Instead of being good stewards, then, and heeding the first injunction that our Creator placed upon us — “Be ye fruitful and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth” (Gen 9:7) — we have become slaves through our own avoidance of this initial call. No generation has been so obsessed with the material mechanics of the procreative act — nor has any been so far removed from its true meaning, blessings, and holy fruits. We suffer from a kind of reproductive eating disorder: we are addicted to its taste, yet we counteract the nourishment that it should necessarily and naturally provide.

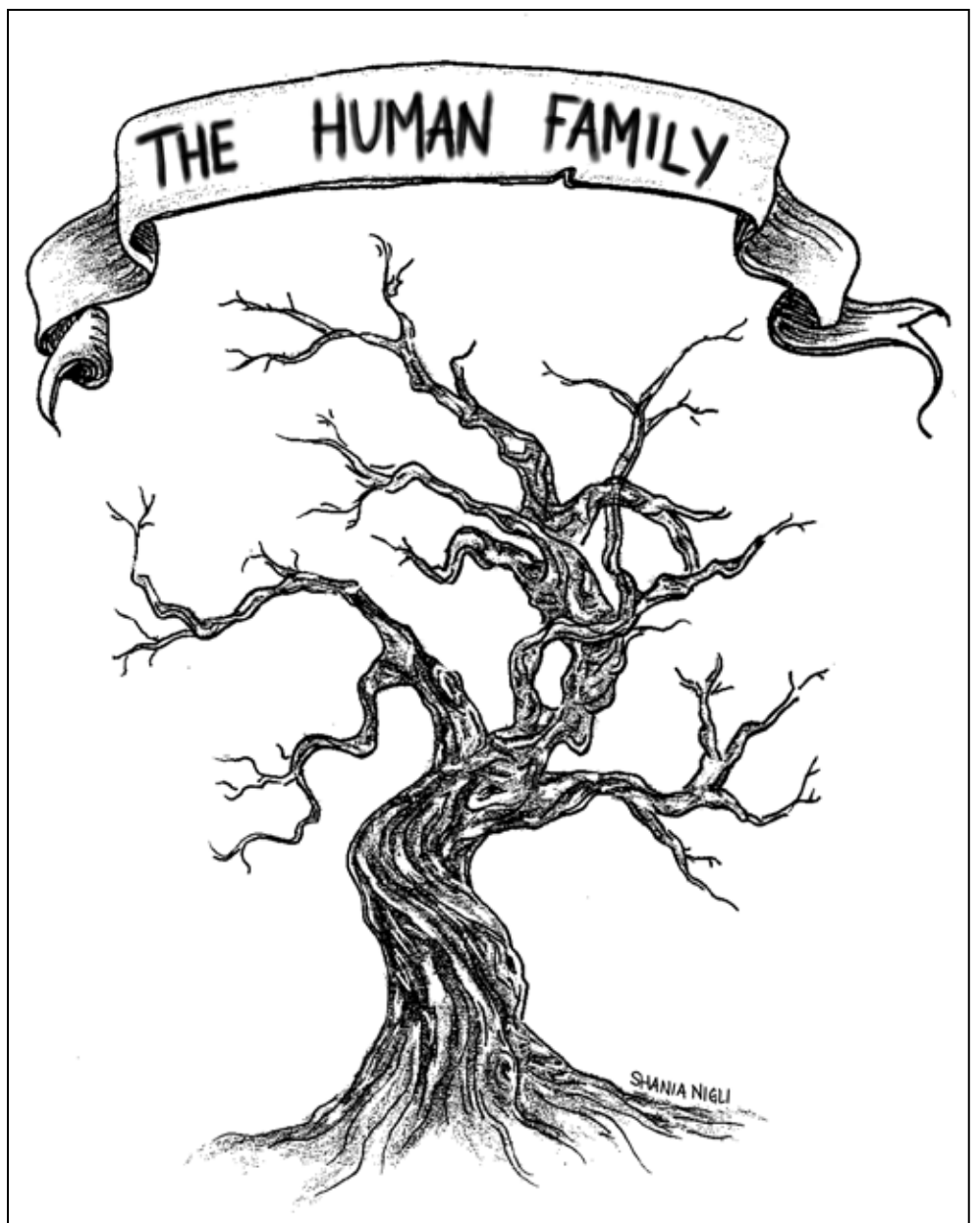
And so, like the indolent servant, our waste both springs from and exacerbates empty fears and paranoia. We now dread the progeny that our transient, fruitless embraces would produce, not only for the permanence they represent but for the responsibilities they would enjoin. Thus does the child turn from a blessing to a curse: an unwelcome, unwanted stranger whose arrival must be thwarted by any means.

This suspicious perspective underwrites and motivates the other errors of our age. The profusion of population — dreaded by pessimistic prognosticators like Thomas Malthus and Paul Ehrlich — is not seen as a boon but a bomb; from their perspective, human life is distorted, becoming something like limitless vegetable growth or a teeming animal brood. In other words, population is never seen for what it really is: a plurality of individuals, the totality of irreplaceable, invaluable members of a human family, who represent, in each instance, the wonder of the human race's regeneration.

St. Theresa of Calcutta once said, with her usual profundity and insight, “How can there be too many children? That is like saying there are too many flowers.” Just so: for “population” is, if anything, not a bomb but a balm, a healing, rejuvenating, soothing unction poured out procreativity through the wonder of human love and the miracle of divine creation. Moreover, it is through human beings that the challenges of seeming shortages are themselves overcome. Indeed, the “ultimate resource” as the late economist, Julian Simon, observed, is the human person as such, and his dazzling capacity for innovation and creativity. And yet *this* is the gift that we cast into the ground; while we fret about the future, the very solution to our problems is the one we have, by our own hands, interred.

God gives the gift of life to be shared and spread, not hoarded and hidden away. We must, therefore, vote not only with our feet but, as it were, with our gametes. We must gamble on the future by giving unwritten chapters of our history the protagonists that it will need. For the meek — those who humbly receive those fruitful, lasting blessings that grow and toddle and mature — do, indeed, inherit the earth because, as the great prophet of demography, Mark Steyn, has observed, “the future belongs to those who show up for it.”

The stakes, of course, could not be higher — and COVID-19 has given us a clear glimpse of what kind of future awaits us if we let our family trees wither any further. For the societies that begin by burying the talents of their unborn children end up by entombing themselves, suffocating under ever more onerous restrictions and precautions, all in the name of an unattainable safety. To cautious and frail cultures, every threat is potentially fatal, and every danger the cause for endless alarm. Only the healing salve of growing life will give us the courage to face the future; indeed, without such a growing population, we have no future at all.



Letters

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John Turner's bad advice

To those of us in the pro-life movement, John Turner will always be remembered as the justice minister who brought legalized abortion to Canada (“John Turner, RIP,” October). What is particularly shocking and disturbing about his story is that he sought and received counselling from bishops and theologians on this matter and was given the go ahead. He was even advised to not impose his morals on the country. One has to wonder whether they would have given the same advice to Wilberforce or Lincoln when they sought to end slavery. The advice Turner was given was spiritual malpractice in the extreme. In a nut shell, the dilemma facing Turner was whether to obey men or obey God. This is a dilemma that all Christians must face from time to time. Evidently, Turner and his advisors concluded that it was better to obey Pierre Trudeau than to obey God.

There is little doubt that Trudeau was totally inflexible and determined to legalize abortion with or without Turner's cooperation. Turner did have the option of resigning from cabinet and voting against this evil legislation as a private member. This is the advice the bishops and theologians should have given him. He wouldn't have been in cabinet, but at least he wouldn't have to stand before God with blood on his hands.

Bruce Burgess
Hamilton, Ont.

Supply management

Joseph Campbell, in his September article (“Cause and defect”) states that supply management is receiving subsidies. This is incorrect. Supply management, in our country, is not receiving subsidies. And economics does apply to hard-working Canadian farmers.

Steve De Jong
Surrey, B.C.

Chastisement?

Back in 1992, when Ireland was still considered a Christian country, five of their leading obstetricians co-signed the following statement: “As obstetricians and gynecologists, we affirm that there are no medical circumstances justifying direct abortion, i.e., no circumstances in which the life of a mother may only be saved by directly terminating the life of her unborn child.” More recently, more than one Christian leader/spokesman/prophet has said essentially that because of the widespread sin of abortion, which together with genetic experimentation, a chastisement will surely be brought on the whole world. We wonder if the present Covid-19 pandemic isn't that chastisement?

**Gordon and
Mary Lou MacKenzie**
Barry's Bay, Ont.

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Developments: *Interim* and news



From the editor's desk

We are working to bring more graphics and make the paper more pleasing to read, and that process is underway as you will see in our centerspread story on our ageing global population. We are also going to have a redesign in the new year to make the paper a little easier to read. But the downside of making the paper more attractive and easier to read, is that there is less space for stories. For years, people have asked whether there is enough life and family news to write about to justify a monthly newspaper, and my stock response is that enough stories do not make the paper that we could easily become bi-weekly. We could also choose to fill the paper with what is often called in the business as "hard news" and not run book reviews or features, or publish fewer columnists. But I think that we publish the right mix of news, features, analysis, commentary, and reviews. What do you think? Let us know by mailing a letter to the editor at the address (see page four) or emailing letters@theinterim.com.

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There is one easy way to publish more stories each month: publish a larger paper (20 pages), but that requires resources. If we had more advertising, we could publish more stories. We choose the number of pages based on a formula of how much advertising we have, and because of the way that the printer works, we have to add by four-page increments. With about a page-and-a-half of additional advertising, we can add a total of four pages – or two-and-a-half pages of articles. The advertising covers the additional cost of printing more pages and the cost of paying writers for content. If you would like to advertise or know someone who has a business that might do so, please contact us at advertising@theinterim.com. It is a great way to support the pro-life movement and it is deductible as a business expense.

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Another way you can support *The Interim* is by becoming a Friend for Life. About a decade ago, we decided to free up some space by giving churches and pro-life groups the option of "advertising" as a sponsor of the Friends for Life page (formerly known as the Friends of Life for Life), instead of with a display ad. Many did, and we are thankful. But over the years, as churches and local pro-life groups saw dips in donations, they were no longer able to help sponsor the paper, and what used to be full page of sponsorship is now down to a quarter or third of a page of sponsoring churches and pro-life groups. We are asking you to approach your church or local pro-life organization on our behalf to sponsor the paper; you might even consider donating to them to pay for the sponsorship. Current rates for churches and groups begin at \$115 for one month and are deeply discounted for each additional month. Individuals can support us, too. We are now offering individuals and families the chance to become a Friend for Life for the following terms: \$50 for one month, \$100 for three months, \$250 for six months, and \$500 for a year. Your name will appear along with other sponsors of the paper. Call us at (416) 204-1687 or 1-800-730-5358 or contact us at administration@theinterim.com for more information.

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My hope is to use this space less for announcements and more to comment on current events, to add my two-cents to stories that we may or may not cover in the paper. Sometimes I will use the From the Editor's Desk to amplify what others are saying about the issues we cover – which is what I'll do in the rest of this column – but there are continuing changes and challenges for this paper as we improve our product and grow to reach a wider audience. But for that to happen, we need the continued financial and prayerful support of our long-time subscribers.

**

We cover the newest, horrific euthanasia development in the Netherlands in And Then There Was This on page 14, namely that country's decision to allow children to be killed by euthanasia and assisted-suicide. We have repeatedly warned in our pages that any "safeguard" that government erects today will be discarded eventually because one person's safeguard is another person's unjust discrimination. Indeed, we see it over and over again, as whatever protections are afforded to a vulnerable group are soon thrown out by courts or changed by politicians after the death lobby screams that someone falls outside the regime of legal medicalized killing.

But there is another phenomenon that leads to the ever-expanding realm of permissible euthanasia: the redefinition of unbearable suffering. Wesley Smith, a leading opponent of euthanasia, wrote at FirstThings.com that, "Once a society accepts the noxious notion that killing is an acceptable answer to human suffering, the definition of 'suffering' never stops expanding." The Dutch are ready to expand euthanasia to children and those who are simply tired of life.

Smith writes: "Over the decades, Dutch doctors 'progressed' from euthanizing the terminally ill who ask for it, to the chronically ill who ask for it, to people with disabilities who ask for it, to the mentally ill who ask for it, and even to people with dementia who are unable to ask for it (as long as they left written instructions requesting it)." Over the years, the euthanasia age was lowered to 16 and then to 12. Under the Groningen Protocol, terminally ill or disabled newborns can be exterminated. But now the phrase "pediatric euthanasia" is about to enter the medical lexicon. I would not consider this progress. Sounds more like a dystopia. Smith observes that expanding eligibility for euthanasia is usually justified as "merely coloring in 'gray areas' to permit greater certainty and transparency," but "these redefinitions of the law only go in one direction — increasing the number of people eligible for lethal injection."

The end result, eventually, will be euthanasia-on-demand. For as long as someone who wants to be killed by a medical professional is prevented from doing so, there will be a court or activist somewhere declaring that the law discriminates.

**

I urge you to read the centrespread story on global ageing even though it is long (approaching 3000 words). I understand the story may come across as negative toward seniors, which is not my intent. The point is that a society that grows old and does not have children has immense economic challenges. Indeed, as we were finalizing layout, a Bloomberg View column by Noah Smith was published, "Old-age is the next global economic threat." He covers much the same ground that we do, but some of it is worth highlighting. He begins noting that the world is dealing with an economic depression caused by the pandemic yet "there's another long-term global challenge that no one really knows how to deal with: population ageing." As global population becomes static or even shrinks, "economies around the world will come under significant strain." He focuses on the recent experience in Japan, which has had persistently low fertility rates and a burgeoning ageing population. Japan has not become impoverished, but the consequences have not been benign, either. Society-wide ageing has led to "macroeconomic dysfunction" with persistent deflation, which reduces the spending power of consumers and firms, and increases their debt burdens; this usually results in lower standards of living, especially for the elderly. Smith briefly lists other economic problems facing Japan, but the bottom line is that an ageing society is probably not going to be very economically robust, and that people must do with significantly less as the elderly see their assets devalued and workers are taxed more. Not that Smith says this, but the economic stagnation or decline that many nations face soon is the societal cost paid for the convenience of abortion and contraception.

**

As we went to press a pair of stories broke that we will cover in the next issue. Pope Francis appears to have endorsed the notion of same-sex civil unions and Doug Ford's Ontario government seems to have two problematic sections regarding marriage in its Bill 213, "An Act to reduce burdens on people and businesses by enacting, amending and repealing various Acts and revoking a regulation." We will report on both of these developments in the December edition.

-Paul Tuns

Then and now



Light is Right Joe Campbell

I'm embarrassed to admit it, but my father went to school for only four years. At that point, he told me, he completed his formal education. My mother completed hers in eight years.

I'm embarrassed because it took me 17 years to complete mine.

I guess when my parents went to school education was more efficient. Why, in one-room elementary schools a single teacher could instruct all eight grades. Not any more. By the time I started my formal education, we needed one elementary school teacher per grade and one high school teacher per subject.

As for university, in those days, hardly anyone went. Now, nearly everyone has to go. It shows you how inadequate elementary and high schools have become. But universities have declined, too. One degree used to be enough for most students. Now, more and more of them have to get two or three.

I went for two before dropping out, but ever since I got them, I've had to keep learning on my own. Little wonder I envy my father his superior education and feel embarrassed about my scholastic shortcomings.

I not only envy him. As a child, I strove to emulate him. When I graduated from Grade Four, I announced proudly that I was leaving school. "Just like you, Dad," I told him.

Of course, he wouldn't hear of it. He could see what was happening to formal education. Even my mother, who had taken twice as long to graduate as he, wouldn't hear of it. She could see what was happening, too. Unfortunately for me, seeing made them both hard of hearing.

After finishing Grade Eight, I tried again, but to no avail. By then, they were stone deaf.

I had no option but to complete high school and go on to university. It must have pained them to support my formal education into adulthood, especially as my father was a mere child and my mother barely a teenager when their parents no longer had to support theirs.

Back then, even teachers didn't need advanced training. If they knew their subject, they could teach it. But at some point, they forgot how and teacher colleges sprung up to remind them. Now, they spend so much time learning how to teach there's not enough left to learn what to teach.

Lawyers and journalists didn't used to need advanced training either. They learned on the job, in a law office or a newsroom. Now, would-be lawyers and journalists have to take years of post-secondary training before they're fit to practice, let alone perform.

I guess education is like money. When my father was growing up, a little of both went a long way. Today, a lot of both go a little way.

Although a little went a long way, money for education was scarce. As a result, students had to endure subjects that were inexpensive to teach, like grammar, and discipline that was inexpensive to administer, like the cane and the strap.

"It was brutal," my father told me.

"I can imagine," I replied, "the cane and the strap."

"I was referring to the grammar."

"Just talking about it upset him."

"You don't want to hear what they made us do to sentences."

"Try me," I said bravely.

"Some sentences we had to parse."

"Parse?"

"They made us break them down and expose their syntactical relationships."

"How demeaning."

"Others we had to punctuate."

"That is brutal."

"They forced us to conjugate verbs."

"Is that legal?"

"And pluralize nouns and pronouns."

It sounded like cloning to me, but I held my tongue. I didn't want to add to his distress.

"Some we had to treat as objects."

"Oh my."

I was tempted to feel grateful for progressive education. By the time I reached school, grammar had become composition and the cane, though not the strap, which had disappeared. Today, communicating in sentences is optional and psychology has replaced punishment. If you work at it, you can get through school without learning anything.

Not only education but life in general used to be more efficient. If you were born into my parents' generation, you could expect to live 50 or 60 years. That's all you needed to make your mark and tidy up.

It's no longer enough. Adding to my embarrassment, statisticians have extended life expectancy to 80 years or more. Even that may be too short if successive generations keep putting off amounting to something.

I don't always trust statisticians. They can make figures say anything. But I'm not against statistics. Some of my best friends are statistics.

Long before the inefficiencies disappear, I suspect I'll be a statistic, too.

IN THE DECEMBER ISSUE...

✻ CHRISTMAS PUZZLES AND TRMA ✻ THE UNITED STATES ELECTION ✻ POPE FRANCIS AND CIVIL UNIONS ✻

COVID fear takes on religious over-tones



Law Matters
John Carpay

With a religious fervour, fear of COVID-19 is permeating and shaping our laws, policies, and culture. The job-killing, economy-destroying, soul-deadening, anxiety-producing, loneliness-creating, debt-incurring lockdowns, imposed on us since March 2020, have now become permanent restrictions on our *Charter* freedoms to move, travel, associate, assemble, and worship.

Prior to Thanksgiving, Quebec's health minister prohibited celebrating with family and friends. Fortunately, the magnanimous Christian Dubé said that he might allow Quebecers to enjoy "a nice Christmas" if citizens were sufficiently submissive to his Thanksgiving decrees. Quebec has given police the ability to obtain "telegarrants" allowing them to enter people's private homes quickly and easily. Gone are the bad old days of needing to submit a hard-copy sworn-and-signed affidavit to a judge, a process which made it so cumbersome for police to barge into citizens' homes.

Saskatchewan and other provinces have also imposed restrictions on celebrating Thanksgiving, Halloween, and Remembrance Day.

It has now become largely illegal to feed our souls and spirits by socializing freely with other people in pubs, clubs, restaurants, curling rinks, football stadiums, churches, theatres, and concert halls. We must avoid handshakes, hugs, in-person meetings, and meaningful human contact at weddings, funerals, children's school plays, music recitals, 12-step programs, and political gatherings. We should wear a mask while having sex. I shudder to think about the tsunami of mental illness, psychiatric disorders and suicides that will surely flood Canada in the months ahead, as a direct result of this inhumane approach.

Media are driving the fear that has turned lockdowns into permanent violations of our rights, freedoms and human dignity. They do this by hyping the number of COVID-19 "cases" without providing relevant context.

For the sake of accuracy and truth, the courtroom oath asks the witness to tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Even a news story that is devoid of errors and lies becomes misleading when vital, crucial, relevant facts are omitted. The COVID-19 death data that are readily available on government websites make it abundantly clear that the latest "cases" are harmless to more than 99 per cent of Canadians; COVID-19 death numbers are not returning to the peaks they reached this past April and May; there is no "second wave" of COVID-19 deaths.

Headlines like "COVID cases jump 40 per cent in Canada in one week, with Quebec and Ontario hardest hit" (Canadian Press, 7 Oct. 2020) make no mention of the fact that COVID-19 deaths are down to a mere trickle of their peak in April and May. You won't catch the media reporting on COVID-19 deaths in September being approximately one tenth of the deaths in April. Government data show that there has been only one "wave" of COVID deaths, and that the new "cases" this fall are harmless to roughly 99.85 per cent of Canadians.

When trumpeting new "cases," media say little about the way the PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test is set at a level of cycles designed to pick up even the tiniest traces of viral RNA, which could be from a past illness, or unrelated cold virus. What media refer to as "cases" are more accurately described as "positive tests" without illness.

Media rarely mention that governments are conducting far more tests than they did a few months ago. Unsurprisingly, the more testing that is done, the greater the number of cases. But media seek to keep matters very simple and very scary.

By hyping data about "cases" and refusing to report on the nearly non-existent fatalities from those cases, the media become lobbyists and evangelists for harmful lockdown measures that violate our human rights and *Charter* freedoms.

What is driving this dishonesty?

Charter-violating lockdown policies are based on the following beliefs: life's central and highest purpose is to make our physical bodies live as long as possible; our minds, souls and spirits (if these exist at all) are vastly inferior to the physical body and require little care or attention; dying of COVID is so much worse than dying by way of suicide, undiagnosed cancer, cancelled surgery, neglect in a nursing home, a drug overdose, and other lockdown consequences.

As always, the antidote is truth. There is more to life than avoiding a virus; we should care for our souls and spirits as much as we care about our bodies; death is sad whether caused by COVID-19 or by something else; we should not join the ranks of those who are so terrified of dying that they have forgotten how to live.

Lawyer John Carpay is president of the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms (jccf.ca).

Life Chain 2020



Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario



Lindsay, Ontario



Truro, Nova Scotia



Calgary, Alberta



Richmond Hill, Ontario

Motion defeated on a party line vote

Continued from p. 2

ed the *Public Health Act* three times and yet never attempted to guarantee access to abortion when in power.

UCP MLA Miranda Rosin (Banff-Kanaskasis) said she opposed the motion because "the *Public Health Act* is the right place for it." Rosin added that she has not seen any public cry to enshrine abortion access in law.

Rosin also said, "I think that if we are going to suddenly recommend legislating access to a specific service when there is not a single other service legislated anywhere in the act, it doesn't necessarily make

sense." Rosin said there was no legislative guarantee for "access to cancer treatment, access to dialysis, access to tuberculosis treatment." Rosin concluded her statement, "I think for us to suddenly open up a debate of injecting one specific service into the act without considering every other medical procedure and treatment that may be out there for every other medical disease or infection doesn't necessarily make sense."

The debate continued briefly on Sept. 30, with Ganley and Hoffman reiterating the points they made the previous day. The four NDP MLAs voted

for the motion — Ganley, Neudorf (Lethbridge-East), Hoffman, Shepherd, and Roger Reid (Livingstone-Macleod), Thomas Dang (Edmonton-South) — while seven UCP MLAs voted against: Lovely, Rosin, Martin Long (West Yellowhead), Nathan

Neudorf (Lethbridge-East), Roger Reid (Livingstone-Macleod), Searle Turton (Spruce Grove-Stony Plain) and Garth Rowswell (Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright).

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Amy Coney Barrett says *Roe* is not super-precedent

Oswald Clark

When Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the Supreme Court justice who was a darling of feminists and others on the Left, passed away in late September, it set up an opportunity for President Donald Trump to leave a long-term legacy by appointing a third justice to the country's highest court. Earlier in the summer, Trump had released a list of potential Supreme Court appointments that included senators Ted Cruz (Texas), Mike Lee (Utah), and Josh Hawley (Missouri), three reliably pro-life votes in the Senate. Hawley had recently said that he would not vote for any appointee that did not think that *Roe v. Wade* was wrongly decided.

Trump ended up nominating Amy Coney Barrett, Catholic mother of seven children (two adopted), with a track record of pro-life decisions and writings. After Trump announced Barrett would fill the seat formerly held by Bader Ginsburg, Senate Democrats attacked her over her faith and family, and ramped up the scaremongering about overturning *Roe v. Wade* and a judicial scrapping of Obamacare.

The 47-year-old has served as a judge on the Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit and before serving on the federal bench was a professor of constitutional law and civil procedure at Notre Dame Law School. The Senate narrowly voted to approve her appointment in October 2017.

On the Seventh Circuit, Barrett has voted on three

abortion-related issues. In 2018, she voted with the minority against striking down an Indiana law requiring burial or cremation of fetal remains; Supreme Court later reinstated the Indiana law. In 2019, she voted to rehear a challenge to Indiana's parental notification law. But that same year, citing Supreme Court precedent on the constitutional legitimacy of bubble zone laws, she upheld a Chicago buffer zone ordinance.

During the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings, Barrett was asked about abortion, marriage, and other issues, and she occasionally invoked the standard which Elena Kagan, a Bill Clinton appointee, used when being grilled by Republicans during her hearings. Barrett said she would give "no hints, no previews, no forecasts" regarding future or hypothetical decisions. She added: "it's ... inconsistent with the duties of a sitting judge...to take positions on cases that the Court has decided in the past."

The ranking Democrat on the committee, Senator Dianne Feinstein (California), noted that Justice Antonin Scalia, whom Barrett is often compared to as an "originalist" jurist, said that *Roe* was wrongly decided and should be reversed and asked if Barrett agreed with him. She replied that she could not give her opinion on Supreme Court precedent which would signal "to litigants that I might tilt one way or another in an impending case." Barrett added: "Senator, I do want

to be forthright and answer every question so far as I can. I think on that question, I'm gonna invoke Justice Elena Kagan's description, which I think is perfectly put. When she was in her confirmation hearing, she said that she was not gonna grade precedent, give a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down. ... It would be wrong and a violation of the canons for me to do that as a sitting judge."

Feinstein repeatedly pressed the question, with Barrett repeating her answer before finally saying, "My answer is the same ... It's a contentious issue ... but I can't express views on cases, or pre-commit to approaching a case any particular way."

Asked by Senator Amy Klobucher (D, Minnesota) directly about whether *Roe v. Wade* was a "super-precedent" — a previous Supreme Court decision could not be overturned — Barrett said she did not consider it such a precedent. She said that legal experts disagree about what constitutes a super-precedent, but clearly stated that she did not think it was not in the same category as the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (1954) which declared segregated public schools unconstitutional. Unlike *Brown*, she said, there is still debate over *Roe*. She said the fact there is significant disagreement over *Roe* suggests it "doesn't fall in that category" because it's "not a case that's universally accepted."

She also tried to assure senators that she could set aside Catholic doctrine when making decisions on the Supreme Court, which would be based on

her reading of the law, just as she has a circuit court judge.

Senator Patrick Leahy (D, Vermont) asked about an open letter she signed while at Notre Dame, which opposed in vitro fertilization. She said she signed the letter leaving church because it stated "we support the right to life from conception to natural death," but declined to give her opinion about IVF.

Senator Richard Blumenthal (D, Ohio) pressed Barrett to answer to answer whether a sexual assault victim who felt she should get an abortion should be permitted to. Barrett said that under *Roe*, she clearly had the right to do so.

Barrett was widely praised for her knowledge of case law and when Senator John Cornyn (R, Texas) asked her to hold up the notes she was "referring to in answering our questions" she held up a blank notepad. "Is there anything on it?" asked Cornyn. "The letterhead that says United States Senate," the judge replied. Cornyn said, "That's impressive."

Americans were evidently pleased with what they saw from Coney Barrett. The MorningConsult poll found that on Oct. 4, 46 per cent of Americans wanted her confirmed while 31 per cent did not; on Oct. 18, her numbers improved to 51 and 28 per cent. Those are small, but significant shifts.

The Senate vote occurred after *The Interim* went to press, but multiple reports said that she had the necessary support to be confirmed.

The politics of a Supreme Court appointment



National Affairs
Rory Leishman

Amy Coney Barrett, President Donald Trump's nominee to serve on the Supreme Court of the United States, has outstanding credentials as a lawyer, law professor, and federal judge. She is also solidly pro-life. But does it follow that pro-life Republicans in the United States Senate should rush through her ratification before the November elections?

On this issue, reasonable pro-lifers can reasonably disagree. Republican senators who favour quick ratification point out that there is nothing in the Constitution to prohibit this manoeuvre. That's true, but as recently as October 3, 2018, Lindsey Graham, Republican chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, defended the Republicans' refusal to hold hearings on President Barack Obama's nomination of Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court in 2016 on the ground that if a vacancy on the Court occurs in the final year of a president's term, the President should refrain from nominating a replacement until after the people vote in the November elections.

Furthermore, Graham avowed: "If an opening comes in the last year of President Trump's term, and the primary process has started, we'll wait to the next election."

Yet Graham is now presiding over ratification hearings for Barrett. Granted, he and most of his fellow Republicans are not alone in having flip-flopped on this issue: The same goes for leaders of the Democrats. For example, despite having clamoured for hearings on the Garland nomination in 2016, Senator Chuck Schumer, Democrat Minority Leader in the Senate, now insists that Republican plans to ratify Barrett constitute "a cynical attack on the legitimacy of the Court engineered by (Republican Senate Majority Leader) Mitch McConnell and Donald Trump." Schumer avowed: "We are going to do everything, everything, everything we can to fight it."

That, alas, is no empty threat. Many leading Democrats are now advocating that as soon as the Democrats regain the presidency and a majority in the Senate, they should exercise their undoubted constitutional authority to pack the Court with two or four leftist judicial activists who can be counted upon to reaffirm and extend the abortion license in *Roe v. Wade*.

When asked what he thought about this proposal, Schumer ominously responded: "If we win the majority, everything is on the table."

Packing the Court with pro-abortion judges would be an appalling calamity for the pro-life movement. Such an extreme move would also undermine what remains of the legitimacy of the Court and could jeopardize the already fragile unity of the bitterly partisan, violence-torn United States.

In *Divided We Fall: America's Secession Threat and How to Restore Our Nation*, David French, a Harvard-trained lawyer and constitutional expert, has set out two plausible scenarios on how implacable Republican and Democrat animosity could sunder the United States into two or more divisions with one part consisting of the pro-life states of the South and Midwest while the remainder includes pro-abortion states of the Northeast and West Coast, some of whom, like Canada, have legalized abortion on demand for any reason up to the last second before birth.

What can be done to prevent such disasters? French, an Evangelical Christian and ardent pro-lifer, maintains that both Republicans and Democrats need to relearn the fine art of compromise. In the case of the Barrett controversy in particular, he has joined with several other prominent constitutional experts such as Adam J. White of the American Enterprise Institute and Professor Ilya Somin of the George Mason University Law School in calling upon the Republicans to press ahead with hearings on Barrett's appointment to the Supreme Court, but refrain from a final ratification vote on the nomination until after the election.

According to this proposal, if Trump wins, the Senate would ratify Barrett's appointment. But if Biden wins, the Republican leadership in the Senate would attempt to reach a compromise with Biden and leading Democrat Senators whereby the Republicans would withdraw their support for Barrett in exchange for a firm commitment from the Democrats to refrain from packing the Court with pro-abortion judicial activists.

Regardless of the merits of this idea, one point is clear: Judges alone cannot end the evil of abortion. And neither can anyone else. Except, that is, for conciliatory pro-lifers who reach out to all their fellow citizens with a winsome message that finally persuades the great majority once again to embrace the self-evident truth that all human beings are created equal and have been endowed by their Creator with an unalienable right to life.

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary rules 'sexual preference' is offensive

Paul Tuns

Hours after Hawaii Senator Mazie Hirono (D) attacked Judge Amy Coney Barrett during the confirmation hearings for Donald Trump's appointee to the Supreme Court of the United States for using the term "sexual preference," the online version of *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* changed their definition of the word.

On Oct. 13, Barrett had used the term sexual preference in discussion about court cases affecting individuals who identify as LGBTQ+, and Hirono said in her questioning of the judge: "Not once but twice you used the term 'sexual preference' to describe those in the LGBTQ community. And let me make clear: 'sexual preference' is an offensive and outdated term." Hirono explained: "It is used by anti-LGBTQ activists to suggest that sexual orientation is a choice. It is not. Sexual orientation is a key part of a person's identity. That sexual orientation is both a normal expression of human sexuality and immutable was a key part of the majority's opinion in *Obergefell*, which, by the way, Scalia did

not agree with." (*Obergefell* is the 2015 Supreme Court decision that legalized same-sex "marriage" in the United States.)

Hirono's critique came after MSNBC producer Kyle Griffin tweeted: "'Sexual preference,' a term used by Justice Barrett, is offensive and outdated. The term implies sexuality is a choice. It is not. News organizations should not repeat Justice Barrett's words without providing that important context."

Covering the hearings, *LGBTQNation* headlined their online article: "With just two words, Amy Coney Barrett revealed how biased she is against LGBTQ people." The story called "sexual preference" a "right-wing dog whistle."

Later that same day, *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* changed its definition of "preference" to say that the term is "offensive" when used to refer to sexual orientation. "The term preference as used to refer to sexual orientation is widely considered offensive in its implied suggestion that a person can choose who they are sexually or romantically attracted to," *Merriam-Webster* stated in a usage

note below the definition.

Journalist Steve Krakauer tweeted, "Webster's Dictionary included a definition of 'preference' as 'orientation' or 'sexual preference.' TODAY they changed it and added the word 'offensive.'"

Catholic theologian Charlie Camosy tweeted: "The kind of cultural power necessary to push institutions like Webster to make instachanges like this is stunning to think about. An absolutely massive cultural shift has taken place over a historically-tiny period of time."

Just this year, Democrats and LGBTQ+ journalists were using the term that was deemed offensive after Hirono's chastisement of Barrett. In May, Joe Biden, then coasting to the Democrat presidential nomination, used the term sexual preference. *The Federalist* reported that two Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee, before which Barrett was questioned—Dick Durbin and Richard Blumenthal—"recently used the word in public settings and received no push-back." The *Free Beacon's* David Rutz reported that Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the

darling of the Left whose death led to Barrett being appointed to the Supreme Court, used the term in 2017 in a legal decision. The LGBTQ+ magazine *The Advocate* used the term in September, promoting an entertainment story, in which the homosexual subject of the feature uses the term about his own sexual preference.

The online *Slate* magazine also declared "sexual preference" was outdated and offensive, even though it used the term in a story about how "sexual preference can evolve" over time within a person.

As for *Merriam-Webster*, they are no strangers to politically correct amendments to their dictionary. Last year they added another definition of the pronoun "they" to reflect its use by individuals who view themselves as neither male nor female and in June they added the term "systemic racism" to their stock of defined phrases.

The Federalist's Jordan Davidson said these changes follow "a pattern of the institutions guarding the language guidelines in society backtracking on their definitions to match what the mob is demanding."

Demography

Low fertility rates, not over-p

Paul Tuns

“Demography is destiny,” the French sociologist Auguste Comte reportedly said. Population trends – fertility rates, infant survival, ageing, and other facts that are literally about life and death – greatly influence the economy, politics, culture, and world affairs. Demography may not be destiny, but it is nonetheless a powerful force and one that often seems fretted over more than dealt with. Growing or declining populations need not be good or bad phenomena, depending on how governments react – or don’t react – to population shifts.

Since the beginning of recorded history, there have been population worriers: philosophers who warned that there were too many people, or too many of the wrong kind of people. Population catastrophism was popularized in the late 18th century by Thomas Malthus who incorrectly observed that population grows geometrically but that food supply increases arithmetically – that the number of people grows faster than the ability to feed them. While famine exists to this day, food shortages are usually the result of political decisions and sometimes extreme weather events, not a systemic inability to produce enough food for the more than seven billion people that inhabit the world today.

But Malthusian pessimism is a hardy perennial that continues to this day, influenced by the bogus book *The Population Bomb* by Paul Ehrlich in 1969 and the Club of Rome’s dubious report, “The Limits of Growth.” Today, regular updates by various groups that produce population projects, including the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat

(UNPD), the World Bank and the Applied Systems Analysis at the Wittgenstein Centre, invariably lead to apocalyptic concerns about feeding 10 billion or more mouths in the next half century or so. In recent years, climate change alarmism has added an urgency to reduce population growth – if not embrace depopulation schemes – for the sake of the planet.

A large or growing population is neither bad nor good; the issue is whether public policies can accommodate more people, especially an ever-growing cohort of retired seniors and fewer people in employed work. Old models for health care and pensions might not make sense in the future, and wiser or more creative policies to deal with congestion and housing will be necessary.

In recent years, there has been a growing concern about an increasingly ageing society in many European and East Asian countries, as well as in Canada and the United States, as birth and fertility rates decline and more people live into their golden years. This presents its own set of challenges, including paying for pensions and health care for seniors and having the workforce necessary to both produce the goods and services an economy needs and to pay the taxes to provide government services to the general population. The ageing society also becomes a self-replicating problem as older people tend not to have children, thereby depressing the number of births, exacerbating the skewing of the average age in society ever older.

Dire predictions wrong

Soon, however, these trends will not be limited to East Asia, Europe, and North America. In July, a study published in *The Lancet* – funded by the

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has raised concerns about over-population – found that the global population is unlikely to reach the 10.88 billion mark forecasted by the UNFD in 2100, but will rather peak at 9.73 billion in 2064 before dropping to 8.79 billion by 2100. Different methodologies produce different results – although 2 billion people is a huge difference—and past short-term predictions have often missed the mark. Projections also cannot know future migration patterns. One might quibble with the specific assumptions or outcome, but clearly population will continue to grow for a while.

The Lancet study is unique in assuming that past patterns – increased access to contraception, urbanization, and increases in education and employment for women – will influence each other factor (whereas others assume Malthusian-style geometric increases). And unique among population forecasts, it finds that the vast majority of countries will experience decline in population within 80 years and that many countries would be experiencing it today were it not for immigration.

According to the *Lancet* study, a total of 23 countries will lose half of its population by 2100, including Japan, Spain, and Ukraine – depopulation on a mass scale – while another 34 countries will see their populations decline 25-50 per cent, including Red China. The authors of the *Lancet* study state: “Our findings suggest that continued trends in female educational attainment and access to contraception will hasten declines in fertility and slow population growth.” They also state that sustained lower-than-replacement level fertility rates in many countries

“would have economic, social, environmental, and geopolitical consequences.”

Those consequences might be mitigated with the correct suite of public policies, but most politicians seem incapable of addressing long-term issues. The problem is that the popular mitigation strategy to counter lower fertility rates, namely immigration, cannot be the fix for depopulation when almost every country is experiencing lower fertility rates and ageing.

While there are some advantages to ageing societies and lower fertility rate such as a lower education spending (although the cost per pupil tends to increase) and a reduction in crime and associated costs of incarceration, for the most part, an ageing society presents more problems and challenges. The obvious is the increase in health care and pension spending.

Canada’s rapid ageing

Last year, Statistics Canada provided population projections to 2068. It forecast that within five decades, the middle projection sees Canada having 55 million people, “largely because of strong immigration.” That continues a trend; Canada’s population grew from 30.7 million people in 2000 to 37.1 million people in 2018, mostly due to immigration. So-called “natural population growth” – the increase (or decrease) in population only taking into account births and deaths – is expected to slow and avoid decreasing only because people are living longer. Usually projections are provided with a high, middle, and low estimate; in every scenario, “Canada’s population would continue to become older” and the proportion of people aged 65 or older “would grow rap-

idly.” Statistics Canada estimates that the proportion of Canadians 65 and older would reach between 21.4 per cent and 29.5 per cent, compared to 17.2 per cent today (there are currently 6.835 million Canadians aged 65 or over). The number of Canadians who are octogenarians (those in their 80s) or older, will rise from 1.6 million in 2018 to 5.5 million in the medium-growth scenario by 2068. In other words, there will be more people older than 80 in 50 years than there are over 65 today. The number of centenarians will rise from about 10,000 today to more than 90,000 in 2065.

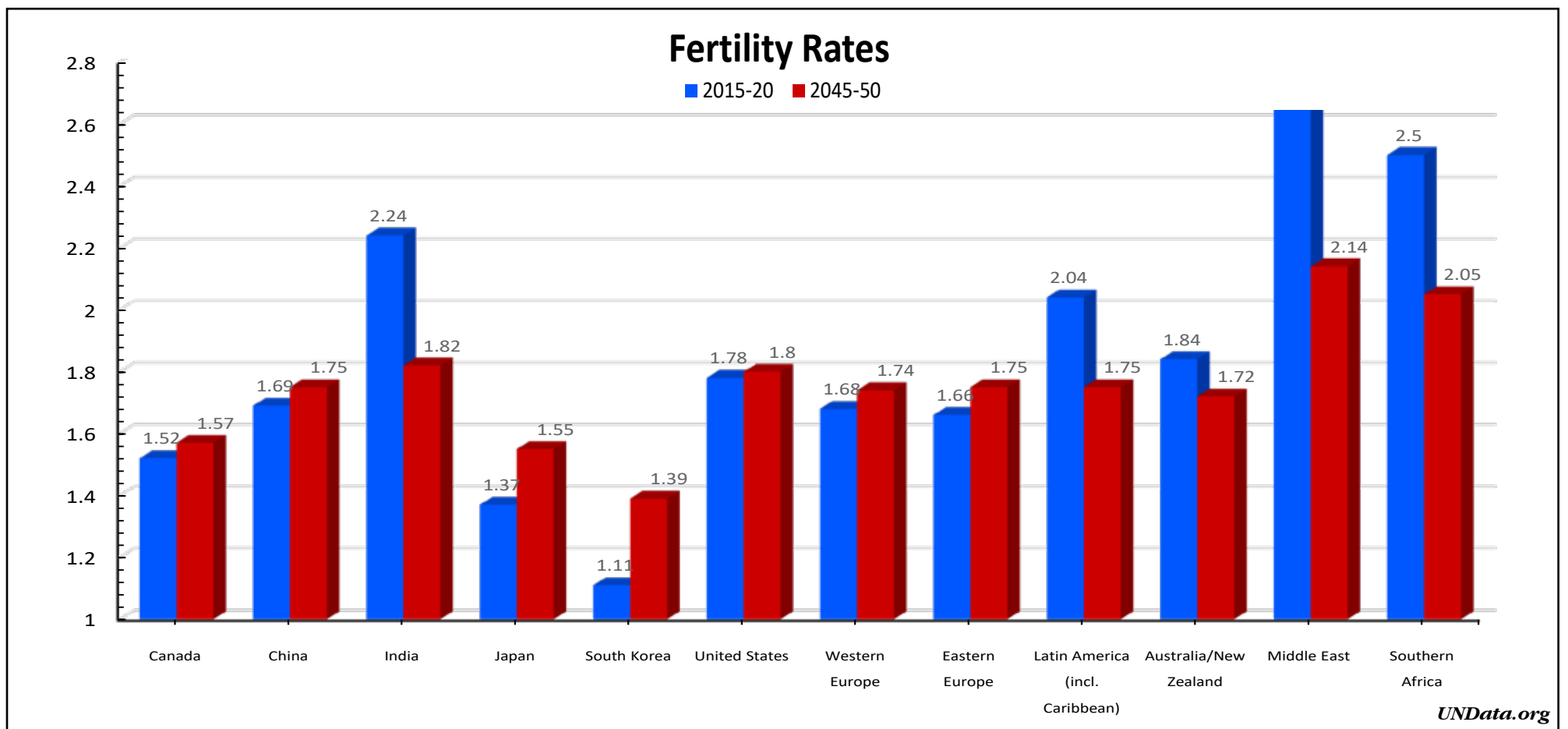
When the Canada Pension Plan was created by the Lester Pearson government in the 1960s, life expectancy at birth was 68.3 years for men and 74.2 years for women. Today, those numbers are 79.9 and 84.1 respectively – a decade longer. Statistics Canada projects life expectancy to increase to 88 years by 2068. Meanwhile the number of workers – taxpayers – will decrease as a proportion of the population and eventually in raw totals, too. The implications for federal and provincial finances will be immense. *Globe and Mail* columnist Andrew Coyne and researchers at the Fraser Institute regularly predict decades of deficit spending and increased debt without significant changes to Canada’s health care, Old Age Security, and the Canada Pension Plan. The folks at the Fraser Institute say, “absent a change in policy the federal government could run budget deficits ... with no return to budget balance in sight.” Fiddling with the retirement age by a year or so only slightly mitigates the costs of pensions, especially when there is an ever-growing number of octogenarians and centenarians.

Statistics Canada notes “this transition” to an older

population, “could affect Canadian society in various ways, placing additional pressure on pension and health care systems and decreasing the share of the working-age population.” As people live longer, raw numbers of octogenarians and centenarians will put a strain on both public and private pensions and health care. When there are more retirees – and retirees who live much longer than before – and fewer workers, taxes will need to increase to sustain programs for the welfare of seniors. Statistics Canada notes that the working-age population (15-64, although most teens are not really in the workforce) will decrease from 66.7 per cent today to between 57.9 and 61.4 per cent in 50 years. There will be about two workers (taxpayers) for every recipient (person in school or retiree). The tax rates to pay for programs – a cost that was foreseen two decades ago by think tanks like the C.D. Howe Institute and Fraser Institute – could be astronomical and may incentivize some workers to leave for lower tax countries, although many of them will face the same fiscal challenges.

Health costs

And that doesn’t get into increased health costs, as people require more intensive medical interventions as they age. Put more bluntly, older people tend to use the public health care system more, and increasingly they live through cancers and heart attacks that claimed lives a few decades ago, meaning many will face multiple health problems. According to a 2019 Canadian Institute for Health Information study, seniors account for 16.8 per cent of the population but 44.2 per cent of health care expenditures. Another CIHI study, from



and destiny

population, present challenge

2014, found that per capita cost of public health care between the ages of 16 and 64 was \$2,664, but \$11,625 on average for a person over 65, and well over \$25,000 per capita over the age of 85.

The National Institute of Ageing released a report last October forecasting long-term care costs (nursing homes) will triple from \$22 billion today to \$71 billion by 2050. Health care costs will increase with a rapidly ageing population and once again the problem is that the taxpayer base is shrinking. There will be fewer taxpayers to pay for more cataract surgeries, long-term care for patients with Alzheimer's, and second and third bouts of cancer. It is hardly conspiracy thinking to see why policy-makers might be eyeing assisted-suicide not as a form of merciful care for the elderly and dying, but as a way to maintain some sense of fiscal sanity.

Demographers talk about the dependency ratio: the number of people under 20 and over 65 – typically people in school or retired – compared to the number of people in the working ages of 20-65. From 1986-2016, there were about 60 dependents for every 100 workers, but Statistics Canada forecasts that number will reach 70 by the mid-2020s and 80 by the beginning of the 2040s. If every person between 20 and 65 worked, there would be five workers for every child and retiree in about two decades. Even if the state does not pick up the tab for care, the unpaid care for a sandwich generation without siblings caring for parents (and grandparents) and their own children, will be squeezed for time and other resources.

Of course, many seniors have private pension they paid into and have purchased health insurance that helps cover increased costs of aging. And many still pay taxes because of investments or other retirement income. It should be noted there are many benefits of having a growing population of seniors which are not easily captured by economic metrics. They also provide (often

unpaid) caregiving for grandchildren and serve as mentors and volunteers. There is also the value for families to have ties to the past, especially grandchildren who are helped socially and emotionally by having a connection to their grandparents.

Many implications

Demographics could have political ramifications, with Quebec's share of the population decreasing from 22.6 per cent today to just a shade over 20 per cent by 2043; yet, they have fully a quarter of the seats in Parliament. Several Atlantic Canada provinces are projected to see population decreases (not including in-country migration), which could also see their influence in Parliament decrease. Furthermore, Atlantic Canadian provinces will be, on average, older, with nearly one-third of Newfoundland and Labrador residents over 65 compared to under one-fifth in the Prairie Provinces. National unity could be strained as politicians decide on policies that benefit younger workers over retirees or vice versa. The point is that demographics could convulse Canadian politics in ways that are barely imaginable today.

On a personal level, lower birth rates and longer lives means smaller families and fewer people who have siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins. On the plus side, more people will know their grandparents and great-grandparents. But already some schools are banning textbooks that reference aunts or uncles because the concept is foreign to so many students. And from yet another front in the culture war, there is the practical question of the physical, mental and monetary cost of an only child caring for senior parents, especially if that person has his or her own family. Separate reports in Canada, New Zealand, and the United States this year or last show that the fastest growing type of household is singles, meaning more people living alone. If family is the foundation

of learning about connecting to other people, fewer people will learn those lessons. In the near future, few family trees will branch out very much.

A large population is often associated with geopolitical strength, with large-population countries obtaining advantages in both the size of their economies and military, as well as the human capital of innovation and emigration, which creates international networks. There is expected to be a massive shift in power from Europe – which is forecast to have 138 million fewer people in 2100, with chronically low fertility rates in the vicinity of 1.4 – to East Asia and Africa (which is forecast to have the largest workforce in the world with four of the ten largest populations in 80 years). The business management guru Peter Drucker called Western voluntary infertility “collective suicide” more than three decades ago. Red China is expected to become the largest economy in the world by 2035, but the United States is forecast to regain top spot later in the century. That said, China, Japan, and South Korea are already shrinking in population.

Can it be reversed?

Most policy experts concerned about ageing societies think that the solution to low fertility and rapid ageing is mass immigration. These include authors Matthew Yglesias (*One Billion Americans*) and Doug Saunders (*Maximum Canada: Why 35 Million Canadians is Not Enough*). The C.D. Howe Institute has released two studies over the past two decades suggesting that while there are benefits to immigration, lessening the pressure of a rapidly ageing population is not one of them; because immigrants tend to come to Canada well into their careers, the number of years in which they pay into pension systems tends to be proportionately small and they slow demographic ageing only marginally.

There is also the problem of logic. If nearly every country is experiencing

declining population in the next eight decades, from where would the immigrants come? Nigeria and Tanzania cannot repopulate Western Europe, North America, Australia, the Middle East, Latin America, and East and South Asia. There is a limit to the total global immigrant pool, and while most choose Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia today, there is no guarantee that these countries will win the global competition for immigrants over the next 80 years.

Solutions

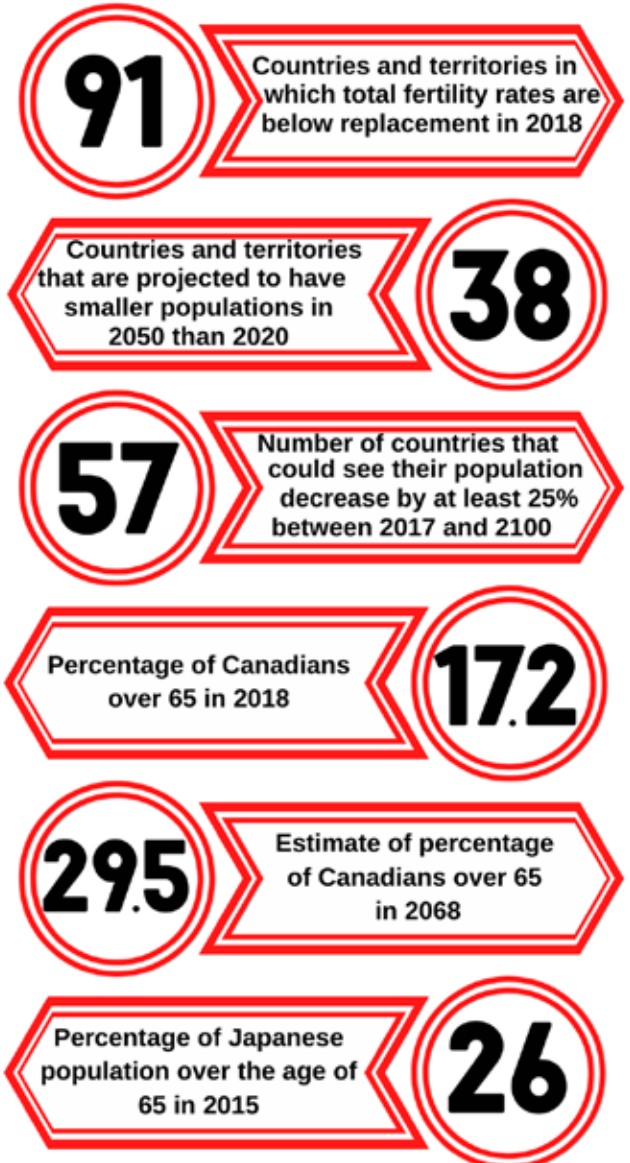
So what can be done? Very little if warnings are not heeded. Kevin McQuillan, then a University of Western Ontario sociologist and demographer, warned about Canada's declining fertility rates and eventual depopulation in the 1980s. Stephen Harper made a modest attempt to raise the age of eligibility for Old Age Security from 65 to 67, but Justin Trudeau reversed that change immediately after being elected prime minister in 2015. But tinkering with programs for the aged is missing what is truly necessary: increasing fertility rates. Earlier this year when it was announced that New Zealand's fertility rate fell to 1.71, Pushpa Wood, director of Massey University's financial education and research center, urged her fellow kiwis to “please have children” to help the country stave off future fiscal disaster.

Tyler Cowen, the George Mason University economist, asked Yglesias in an interview why the author of *One Billion Americans* didn't focus more on increasing fertility. To which Yglesias replied that “reproductive freedom” is important to Americans and he would not want to limit women's choices. Cowen countered that the best way to increase fertility is an increase in religiosity and marriage, both of which increase fecundity at the margins. But public policy is limited in what it can do to incentivize religious adherence and marriage. Probably the best it can do is to stop encouraging irreligious attitudes and undermining the sanctity of marriage.

Public policy is severely limited. Hungary's pro-child, pro-family policies (which include subsidies to expand a home when additional children are born and tax advantages to women who have multiple children) have yet to bear fruit and other countries' experiences, including France's payments for more children and longer maternity leaves and Scandinavian child care programs, indicate that paying for kids or making parenting easier does not seem to help much.

The fact that these programs do not increase fertility rates baffles demog-

BY THE NUMBERS



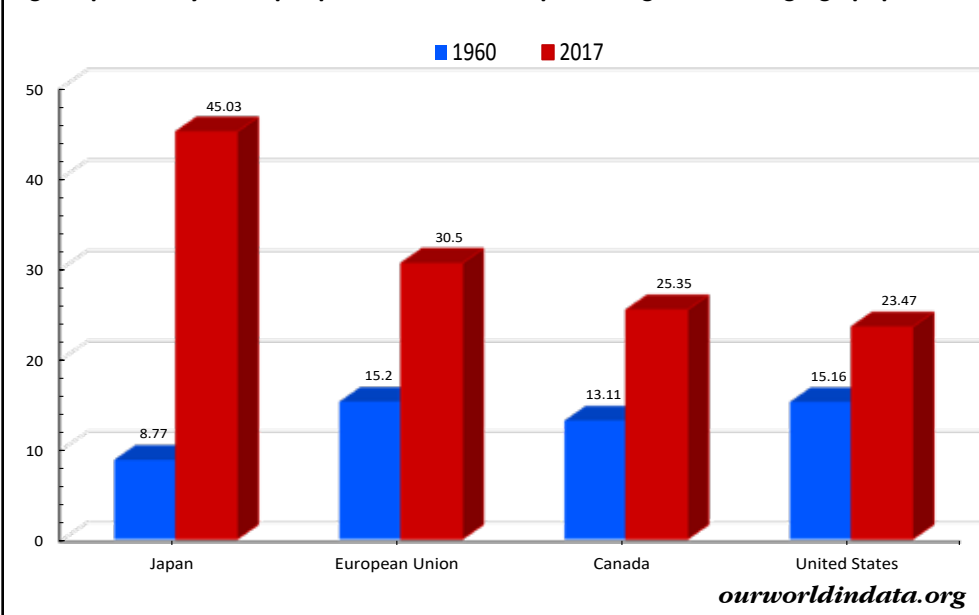
raphers. Survey data from numerous countries show that women in the developing world have more children than they prefer to have (partly a result of high infant mortality rates, but also due to early marriage, and lack of education and employment opportunities). But surveys also show that western women typically have fewer children than their preference, especially in Canada and the United States. Shannon Roberts, who writes about demographics for Mercatornet.com, says that finding the balance between employment for women and “the crucial role of motherhood” is a “global dilemma.” Typically, public policy and cultural pressures push women toward careers that inhibit the ideal of family life that many women crave. It is a repeated theme of Roberts that it is “crucial” that governments and society learn to value the role of parenthood. There needs to be a cultural shift that recognizes that motherhood is, at least, on a par to women participating in the labour force as a life choice. And public policy needs to stop promoting careerism among women and undermining both religion and family life.

But an obvious policy area cries out: banning abortion and contraception. In Canada, at least four million babies have been eliminated by surgical abortion since 1969. There

is an unknowable number of lives prevented through contraception and chemical abortions. Those who might have been born in the first two decades of the abortion license would today be of child-bearing age themselves. There is a demographic ripple effect from the widespread use of abortion as a form of birth control and easy access to contraception. Every country facing fertility rates under replacement today has liberal abortion laws, and places like China which faces demographic collapse in the next half century, have coercive abortion regimes.

Public policy tweaks to health care systems and old-age assistance programs are mitigation strategies to limit the fiscal implications for countries and provinces or states around the world. To truly turn around the demographic crisis facing the vast majority of countries over the next few decades, a total rethink of the abortion license and contraceptive mentality are needed. (It is not just Catholic moral teaching that eschews contraception; Martin Luther and John Calvin both considered contraception intrinsically evil.) Countries that allow themselves to reverse their sordid abortion histories have a chance to be geopolitical leaders, while those that remain steadfast in their acceptance of abortion will hardly be around to see the 22nd century.

Age dependency ratio, people 65 and older as percentage of working-age population



Instagram, the ignored social media platform



Amusements Rick McGinnis

The term “social media” wasn’t in widespread use over 10 years ago, when I started writing this column. Back then we still worried about television and the general amount of “screen time” our children were spending on increasingly smaller and less expensive devices. Re-reading my old columns, like almost every exercise in forced nostalgia, has the effect of opening a window on what now seems like a simpler time. And no, I can’t believe I just wrote that, either.

The phrase “social media” had been used in technology circles since the ‘90s, as a speculative term to describe how new public networks like AOL would infiltrate a still-very-analog world. But it didn’t become a mainstream reference everybody understood until the early 2010s, when smartphone adoption finally surpassed 50 per cent. One of the really startling passages in *No Filter*, Sarah Frier’s history of the decade-old photo-sharing app Instagram, is a passing mention that, in early discussions about Facebook buying the then-new app, the website that was (and remains) the first social media giant was still having teething problems migrating its platform onto mobile phones.

We talk about social media a lot these days, and we spend an awful lot of time on it, and it goes without saying that we also spend a lot of our time on social media talking about social media. Imagine, if you will, a time when up to a quarter of all books were about the threat of publishing to democracy and social cohesion, of sitting through at least an hour or more of prime time TV programming every night that featured earnest discussions about how television was harming our children and exploiting our most basic emotions. These kinds of discussions were, of course, always happening, but the extent to which consuming social media has become understood, an anxious and guilty activity makes it an unprecedented form of media.

A recent interview with digital veteran and virtual reality pioneer Jaron Lanier in a recent issue of *GQ* magazine sets the general tone of this anxiety. Lanier was promoting his latest book, *Ten Arguments for Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now* – do you get the drift yet? – and sums up his concerns: “Facebook might have won already, which would mean the end of democracy in this century,” Lanier said. “It’s possible that we can’t quite get out of this system of paranoia and tribalism for profit—it’s just too powerful and it’ll tear everything apart, leaving us with a world of oligarchs and autocrats who aren’t able to deal with real problems like pandemics and climate change and whatnot and that we fall apart, you know, we lose it. That is a real possibility for this century. I’m not saying I think it’s what’ll happen, but I wouldn’t count it out. There’s evidence every single day that it’s what’s happening.”

Facebook and its founder Mark Zuckerberg are the most prominent face of this looming digital autocracy, followed closely by Twitter – a platform whose rampant toxicity and preponderance of journalists and pundits as active members has to be understood as significant. The social media brand that somehow escapes much of the panic and censure despite being fully as successful as Facebook and Twitter is Instagram, the subject of Frier’s very detailed portrait of what might be the quintessential mobile platform app.

Instagram was founded in a roundabout sort of way in 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. Originally conceived as a location-sharing app like Foursquare – another once-hot app that’s receded into the digital forest – it was finally launched as a photo-sharing app whose competitive edge was its built-in filters that allowed users to buff up and improve the primitive photos taken on their cellphones.

Its aesthetic focus would come to define how the app encouraged users to work within the app, and with how Instagram would try to condition relationships with companies and brands that would come to the app to advertise themselves, once it had reached the market saturation that made it an irresistible place to sell – which it did quickly.

“On Instagram,” Frier writes, “people wanted to post things that would attract the adoration of an audience. If an image was beautiful, well designed, or inspirational, it would do well on the app. So people changed their behavior, seeking out more things that would do well, appreciating well-plated meals, street-style fashion, and travel. Phrases like ‘outfit of the day’ and ‘food porn’ and ‘Instagrammable’ entered the vernacular as the company grew. Nobody said ‘Facebookable.’ Instagram had a higher bar.”

When it came time to bring advertisers on board, Instagram founder Systrom made his pitch. “I think what makes it so good is the honesty that comes with the photos,” he said at a tech conference in 2012. “The companies and brands that use Instagram – the best and most successful ones – are the ones where it comes across as honest and genuine.”

The app almost instantly helped create a new brand of online celebrity – the “influencer,” who would make a career out of posting sponsored photos and stories featuring brands and destinations who wanted to make themselves look aspirational. It helped create the Kardashian brand globally, and attracted actual celebrities from the worlds of music, sports and movies. Miley Cyrus, Justin Bieber, Cristiano Ronaldo, and Ariana Grande were early adopters. Pope Francis launched an account in 2016.

A growth industry suddenly appeared, where hobbyists and enthusiasts attracted huge numbers of followers on the app, and were able to attract enough sponsorship to quit their day jobs and make Instagram their full-time job. One of them profiled in Frier’s book is Marion Payr, an Austrian woman working in the marketing department of a television company who turned her passion for travel into a living after she was picked by Instagram as a “suggested user,” creating a huge spike in followers.

“She built a small studio to consult with brands on the side about how to use Instagram strategically,” Frier writes. “Once she had 200,000 followers, all of them wanted to build an audience like hers. She was considered an expert in getting attention on the now-lucrative Instagram app, but still had no idea why she’d gotten popular.”

For so many influencers, the rise to Instagram stardom was similarly mysterious and serendipitous. Companies created apps that manufactured hundreds and even thousands of fake followers – “bots” – that boosted account profiles. For big name celebrity users, Instagram created a team that liaised with stars and their teams, helping them manage their brands. For everyone else, Instagram success was – and is, more than ever – elusive and probably unattainable.

The worst criticism directed at Instagram is that it has created an unhealthy culture of envy, fuelled by the insecurity of users – young ones, especially – who constantly strive to outdo the carefully curated feeds of star users. Instagram selfies and the filters that digitally retouch faces led to a well-documented spike in plastic surgeries to turn online personas into reality. Photos taken of Instagrammers sitting on the ledges of skyscrapers or dangling from cliffs led to fatal accidents when other users tried to copy or one-up these stunts.

I am, by marketing demographic standards, an old man in the eyes of Instagram, so these strivings for self-definition online have no effect on me, as I am literal ballast in their growth strategies. I have two Instagram

accounts with risible numbers of followers, and immensely prefer the app to competitors like Facebook and Twitter, mostly because it’s easier to curate your feed and exclude politics and the inevitable shouting matches that politics produces today.

As a professional photographer the app should be a powerful tool in self-marketing, considering its founders’ emphasis on beautiful images, but the simple truth is that Instagram isn’t really selling photography as an art as much as images as commodities – artful snapshots of places we want to be, experiences we want to have, and people we aspire to become. My carefully created feeds of cellphone outtakes and highlights from shoots are like a little art gallery hidden in the sub-basement of a megamall full of chain stores and luxury brands; any new visitors I attract are likely to arrive by accident, lost on their way looking for something else.

Still, I love Instagram as a venue to show new work daily, something that was impossible when I started in the business, and had to either find a publisher or a willing gallery if I wanted to share photos with strangers. The trade-off for this unprecedented access to a potential audience is that photography – like music, video and political opinions – has lost its market value as it has become ubiquitous.

The story of Instagram as told by Frier ends pretty much like every other internet business tale – Systrom and Krieger ended up leaving the company in 2018 after losing their fight to keep their company from being absorbed by the corporate culture of Facebook, who had bought it for the once-astounding sum of a billion dollars. Rich beyond their dreams, the pair teamed up together again this year to launch an app to track Covid-19 numbers across the United States.

The flaws that emerged with the platform – the culture of envy, a homogenization of output as ambitious users try to catch a visual trend in search of followers, the inevitable and elusive bullying and propagandization that thrives in social media – seem to be baked into the medium, and will prove to be impossible to weed or legislate out.

As for Jaron Lanier, it’s impossible to say if he took the advice he gave in the title of his book and left all social media. (The writer of the *GQ* piece claims that he did leave Twitter – for all of three weeks.) He does say that he declined to flee to boltholes in places like New Zealand where many of his friends in the digital elite have gone to ground this year, and decided to stay behind and help fight for what he thinks might be the elusive potential in our ever-more-tightly-networked world.

“I love the foundational papers of the United States, where they talk about, you know, the pursuit of happiness,” he tells *GQ*. “Like, you don’t define what happiness is, and you don’t define it as something that can be achieved. It’s the pursuit. You leave space for future people to find it themselves. And so, I think the number one priority is not to create perverse incentives that ruin quests for meaning or for happiness or for decency or betterment.”



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Looking up — not left, right



Talk Turkey Josie Luetke

Being somewhat of a political nomad, I was eager to read James Mumford's *Vexed: Ethics Beyond Political Tribes*, published just this year, precisely because it seemed it would affirm my choice of wandering in the (metaphorical) wilderness rather than buying into one of the flawed "package deals" on offer by present political parties.

Mumford, informed by his experience in both the United States and United Kingdom, argues that if we are to care about the good of the stranger — the man belonging to a group that we do not identify with, perhaps for reasons of remoteness in time and space — we need to awaken our "moral imaginations." Doing so would entail escaping our respective political ideologies and identities, merely inventions of some mysterious "elites" pulling the strings, to consistently apply the first principles of "inclusivity, family values, sufficiency, personal responsibility, reverence for nature, and the sanctity of life."

In his perspective, the environmentalist is obliged to reject transhumanism; the advocate for personal responsibility, a retributive model of "justice" that ignores human dependency and removes agency; and the anti-consumerist, the sexual consumerism of the current hook-up culture. Social conservatives, in particular, ought to pursue a decent standard of living for all so that families can thrive, and to prioritize the defence of life, not property nor liberty, in respect to gun ownership.

I am sympathetic, of course, but found that Mumford only scratched the surface of some of the issues he brought up. For instance, he contends that if the Left genuinely values inclusivity, it ought to avoid the slippery slope of euthanasia/assisted suicide, which would inevitably lead to further marginalization of the elderly. His case — that "the room for abuse is too broad, the risk too great" — is utilitarian; he almost completely misses the crux of the matter, which is the sanctity of life (though he discusses that principle in the context of abortion and guns).

In addition, in attempting to present each camp in the best light, he makes naïve assertions, such as insisting

that the Left "has most definitely decried the sexualization of childhood." The Left, rather, has been a full and willing participant in the sexualization of children; it's clear that Mumford is just ignorant of phenomena like "drag kids" and the pervasiveness of "comprehensive" sexual education. The Left is responsible for the encroachment of the state on family life, as well, and the breakdown of the nuclear family, an institution which is pivotal in the protection of the vulnerable.

Relatedly, while the Left/Right dialectic is catchy, it often serves as a straitjacket. Mumford ends up making broad generalizations and questionable assumptions. His attribution of certain principles/philosophies to each side is sometimes clunky and awkward (like sufficiency to the Left and the "cult of the transitory" to the Right).

So concentrated on whether the Left and Right are operating consistently, Mumford also doesn't acknowledge that principles can and do conflict. He does establish the concept of the good — universal human flourishing — early on, which can resolve such conflicts, but doesn't expound on that connection.

His most glaring error is the omission of religion. Frankly, the ideal he's pitching sounds awfully close to the vision the Catholic Church has spent centuries popularizing. Encouragingly, the book is at least a reminder then that moral conclusions the Catholic Church touts can be arrived at through our own reason, but make no mistake: Ideas like "the inextinguishable humanity of one's adversary" do not originate with man.

Criticisms aside, Mumford's thesis that the arbitrary package deals we subscribe to have left both the Left and Right with room for improvement is hard to dispute. Really, what are the chances that right and wrong just happen to align with our frequently-in-flux political parties? Slim to none, I would think. Yet, our desire to belong prompts us to choose an affiliation anyway, which in turn obscures our ability to be objective.

As for tackling this problem, *Vexed* provides a good start. Some of the solutions Mumford proposes, (really, religious precepts at heart), like attention and aestheticism — "viewing every object (and person) as you would a work of art" — very attractive.

Caring about the stranger (or loving one's neighbour, in Christian terms) so much that you're willing to disrupt your party's aims or discard political labels all together can be a lonely business. I, unlike Mumford, however, can suggest that you find a community of fellow believers to pull you along. Naturally, I must mention too: "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first" (John 15:18).

Imagery



Laying Down the Lawton Andrew Lawton

Tucked in my front door this week was a pro-life leaflet showing what was left of two unborn children after they were aborted. While these sorts of images don't shock me anymore, they do sadden me. They anger me as well, though not for the reasons they do so many others who encounter them.

The story is a familiar one given that the media rewrites it with a new main character a few times each year: (Pro-life group) publishes graphic abortion imagery in (leaflet/billboard/advertisement) in (suburban Canadian city), angering (local mom) because (that's just too much for kids to handle/children shouldn't have to see that).

Did I miss anything?

Almost every time an iteration of this story comes out, the aggrieved person qualifies it by saying that it's just the medium they find troubling, while paying the obligatory lip service to freedom of expression.

Yet this always rings as inauthentic to me. Society is not one big safe space: whether it's a homeless person, a junkie, someone using foul language or a couple fighting, there is any number of things a parent and child might encounter in the world that lead to potentially uncomfortable conversations.

The difference with graphic pro-life imagery is that it forces "pro-choice" people to confront the ugly reality of what they call a human right. I can only imagine how difficult it would be to defend something like that to a child, should such a situation arise.

This isn't to say I think children should be deliberately exposed to all of the world's unpleasant realities from a young age, but I trust parents to decide how to approach these things.

While I'm rarely a fan of puritanical pearl-clutching, I don't disagree that there are some images, such as pornography to use an extreme example, that cross the threshold into indecent speech. These matters have been decided as such, however. Political speech continues to be protected.

Moreover, if pro-choice people simply see abortion rights as something to be celebrated in Canada, why find the images off-putting at all?

I can't help but notice that the people mortified that a child might see a pro-life pamphlet are the same ones who push for more aggressive sexual education programs because "kids are around this stuff anyway." Funny how that doesn't extend to abortion as well.

About a week before I received my pamphlet, a man in my city of London, Ontario, was detained by police for following and filming two people who had been dispensing the literature in his neighbourhood. In this case, police sent the man home, respecting the rights of the two campaigners, with the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform, to carry on without being harassed. Doves of other London homeowners have petitioned City Hall calling for the flyers to be banned.

I happened to write the above formula for news coverage before stumbling upon a recent CBC London piece that proved me right. "Kids don't need to see that stuff. There's no warning on it, no envelope," one local mom said, though the article insists "she supports free speech."

The city's deputy mayor called the literature an "assault" and said his "heart goes out to everyone who has been harmed by the distribution of these flyers."

It's a particularly dark moment when politicians see more harm in someone looking at pictures of aborted children than they do in the children being aborted. But this dynamic is precisely why pro-life advocacy exists.

In Calgary, the right to utilize such imagery took a hit in October, when a bylaw amendment was passed banning a sign any larger than a postcard "that publicly expresses an opinion on an issue or cause" within 150 metres of a school on a school day.

It was clear the restriction was a fairly direct response to young pro-life activists, who make a point of speaking to teenage students, who often have more open minds about these issues than their parents do.

This cycle of outrage only just brings about more attention to the issue pro-life campaigners seek to change, though that doesn't make it any less tired.

My caution to the media is this: before you entertain the "won't someone think of the children?" narrative, take a moment to question which side of this debate is actually doing that.



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'No international right to abortion': coalition

Interim Staff

On Oct. 22, a coalition of 32 countries led by the United States and representing 1.6 billion people issued a declaration that there is "no international right to abortion."

The declaration explains its purpose is to express, "the essential priority of protecting the right to life" and promoting "strength of the family and of a successful and flourishing society."

It also states that the signatories, "reaffirm the inherent dignity and worth of the human person" and that "every human being has the inherent right to life."

The 32 countries emphasize that, "in no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning" and that abortion policy should be "determined at the national or local level according to the national legislative process."

The signatories commit their governments to, "improve and secure access to health and development gains for women ... without including abortion."

Brazil, Egypt, Hungary, Indonesia, Uganda, and the United States co-sponsored the declaration. Other signatories include Cameroon, Iraq, Kenya, Pakistan, Poland, Saudi Arabia, and Senegal.

Friends for Life

"If one suffers, all suffer"

1 Corinthians 12:26



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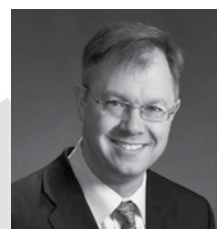
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R.I.P. Grant Knechtel

Grant Knechtel, 77, of Mississauga, ON, passed away on October 7, 2020. A longtime member of the Knights of Columbus and former Grand Knight of the John Paul II Council No. 11955, Grant devoted much of his time to service in his community. Grant's and his wife Mary's predictable presence at the Life Chain in Mississauga was indicative of their strong support for the pro-life cause. May he rest in peace.



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Flannery O'Connor: A modern Socrates

Donald DeMarco
Commentary

In Plato's dialogue, *Gorgias*, Socrates prophesies the course of his trial which will condemn him to death. "I shall be judged," he accurately predicts, "like a doctor brought before a jury of children with a cook as prosecutor." Although the trial is set in the context of what is believed to be "justice," Socrates measures justice by a higher standard than that of political expediency. Socrates is a philosopher and seeks the truth of things. He aims at what is best, not at what is pleasant. He anticipates his death and understands that he is helpless to prevent it. What he is more concerned about, however, is the purity of his soul and this is the only thing that is really within his power.

Socrates also sees himself as a doctor who cares for people's souls. But he understands only too well that whether a doctor deals with the body or the soul, he will not be involved in a pleasant undertaking. But the authentic life requires the acceptance of difficulties in order to attain a greater good. Children are not born virtuous. The cook, on the other hand, represents, for Socrates, one who offers delightful fares which will please the children. Naturally, from the level of basic human nature, the children will support

the cook and oppose the doctor. Socrates is caught in the middle between two sides that prefer pleasures to truth, convenience to authenticity.

The underlying message here is that justice is not possible without truth. When convenience replaces truth, justice vanishes. Socrates, then, is a victim of injustice. He is also a martyr to truth and a model of virtue that has been a source of inspiration for so many people for more than 2,000 years. In a sense, he is a Christ figure.

There is much talk these days about justice; but without truth, justice degenerates into political correctness, something that Socrates opposed with his life. On university campuses we read about students who vilify yesterday's heroes who are not in line with their ideals of political correctness. A recent victim is Flannery O'Connor. In response to a number of petitioners, her name has been removed from a residence hall at Loyola Maryland where it had been inscribed for 13 years.

The standards set by the dubious yardstick of political correctness appear to be higher than the standards used to canonize saints. Statues of Junipero Serra have been mutilated. This is especially ironic since the secular world seems lost in a moral swamp of abortion, pornography, violence, sex-

ual misconduct, euthanasia, and other salient vices. Yet it is not hesitant to throw the first stone.

Many came to the defense of Flannery, some of whom were experts concerning her life and work. They did not find her guilty as charged. She was not a racist, they averred. Yet political correctness, like the empty rhetoric of the ancient sophists, carried more weight than the simple truth of the matter. Her name was effaced, though not in the minds and hearts of the many who were inspired by her writings and her life. One of the petitioners stated that "recent letters and postcards written by Flannery O'Connor express strong racist sentiments and hate speech." A curious comment since Flannery has been dead for 56 years. Injustice has a broad band of freedom.

In her final years, Flannery was hobbling around on aluminum crutches and able to work but two hours a day. In *A Habit of Being*, a posthumous collection of her letters, she informed a correspondent that, "My greatest exertion and pleasure these last years has been throwing the garbage to the chickens and I can still do this, though I am in danger of going with it."

Maggie Levantovskaya is a writer and professor of Russian literature. She was diagnosed as having lupus

at age 26, the disease that ultimately claimed Flannery O'Connor's life. How does one find the will and the energy to keep writing and teaching given this terrible life-sentence? Levantovskaya found particular inspiration in what O'Connor had to say about her own affliction: "I have enough energy to write with and as that is all I have any business doing anyhow, I can with one eye squinted take it all in as a blessing." Maggie regarded this line as eminently quotable "because it captures a sense of resilience without delusion, a gratitude for a life marked by a disease, one that proved to be fatal." In reference to this quote, another author said that "Flannery has taught me how to invert my artistic gaze and see the powerful potential in every experience, no matter how difficult." All things considered, writes Miss Levantovskaya, "We must repudiate O'Connor's (charge of) racism".

In an hour when injustice prevails and Catholics are attacked simply for being Catholic, the issue of martyrdom arises. To stand against political correctness, as did Socrates long ago, requires the kind of courage that is consistent with martyrdom. We may not need to pay with our lives for standing up for truth. Our price may be no more severe than public ridicule.

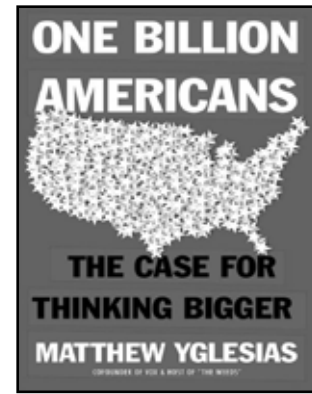
If Flannery O'Connor's

name no longer appears on the residence hall at Loyola Maryland, it may be adopted in the minds and hearts of Catholics — indeed, all Christians — who must summon the courage to live their lives faithful to the truth. Flannery O'Connor is truly a modern Socrates. She was never intimidated by popular trends or prominent people, and remained faithful to her vision until she passed from this earth at the all-too-young age of 39.

Donald DeMarco, a regular contributor to *The Interim*, is professor emeritus at St. Jerome's University and adjunct professor at Holy Apostles College and Seminary. He is a regular columnist for the *St. Austin Review*. He is the author of 37 books, including most recently *Why I Am Pro-life and not Politically Correct: A Moral Compass for a World in Confusion*, and *Reflections on the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Search for Understanding*.

Not big enough

Paul Tuns
Review



One Billion Americans: The Case for Thinking Bigger by Matthew Yglesias (Portfolio, \$37, 267 pages)

Matthew Yglesias is a policy wonk and political commentator for the left-wing Vox website. His new book, *One Billion Americans*, could have been a good and important contribution to American discourse, adding to the dearth of serious, or at least ambitious, ideas.

Yglesias makes the economic case that a bigger population is better, and that considering the United States is a continental nation with plenty of spare room, it is doable. Experts can quibble about the optimum size of a country, but even if we accept his premise that the only way the U.S. can remain the dominant global superpower (putting aside whether that is in itself a good thing), his prescription for getting comes up short.

There are three ways to grow a population: increase the number of babies born, increase life expectancy, or increase the number of immigrants welcomed. Increased life-expectancy has been the primary driver of growing populations over the last century.

Yglesias focuses too much on immigration, which he envisions as the primary driver of population growth. But the raw numbers required to boost U.S. population from 330 million today to one billion in 80 years, would be politically infeasible, even if there was a sustainable supply of such immigrants.

An obvious place to look to grow the population is to increase fertility rates. To boost the number of children Americans have, Yglesias argues for an expansion of government programs to make family life more affordable. The chapter on this issue is titled "The dismal economics of childrearing" and indeed children are expen-

sive. For Yglesias, it takes massive collective action to raise a child, as he argues not only for childcare and post-secondary education subsidies, but government programs for afterschool and summer-time, too. Western European democracies provide childcare and post-secondary subsidies (although not afterschool and summer programs) and their collective fertility rate is lower than America's. Yglesias insists that his cradle to graduation welfare scheme is not designed to be a real-world Handmaid's Tail because he has no interest in scaling back "reproductive freedom" which he claims is "crucially important." But if he were serious about reaching one billion Americans, he would question both abortion and the contraceptive mentality.

In many ways, *One Billion Americans* is much like Doug Saunders' 2017 book, *Maximum Canada*, which envisioned a Canada with 100 million Canadians by 2100. Saunders, too, focused on increasing the Canadian population through immigration and gave no credence to pro-natal policies beyond expanding the scope of the state to pay for childcare so women with small children could easily remain or enter the workforce.

Yglesias says that he offered his bold vision because "a renewed political focus on the big questions — economic growth, international competition, and the future of the American project — might help heal a political system that seems currently trapped by internecine conflict." But this admittedly "optimistic view" is unlikely to sway many, seeing that all Yglesias offers is standard liberal fare; not many conservatives or Republicans are likely to be won over to an agenda that includes more immigration and a larger role for the state in family life. A more interesting book would have offered a trade to conservatives, suggesting some more immigration and targeted government programs in exchange for acceptance on the part of the Left of a more pro-life agenda that curtails abortion and contraception. Alas, Yglesias is not really interested in uniting America with a bold vision or even getting to a United States with a billion Americans; he is more interested in moving the political center leftward.

Beyond the smorgasbord

Paul Tuns
Review



Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World by Tara Isabella Burton (PublicAffairs, \$35, 320 pages)

We are told, by pundits and polling data, that fewer people are practicing any religion in the West, and the secularization of America is happening at an ever-quickening pace. Recent surveys show that "religious Nones" — those who do not adhere to any religious practice — now outnumber evangelicals in the United States, as one in four U.S. adults claim no religious affiliation, and even higher proportion of those under 30. Furthermore, the events in life that often draw fallen-away adults back to church, are not happening as childlessness and the single-life become more common; but even among those who do marry, just 22 per cent get married in a house of worship, down from 41 per cent in 2009. But is it true that a growing number of Americans

are absolutely religionless? The novelist David Foster Wallace said: "There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship."

Tara Isabella Burton is a columnist for the Religion News Service, and she writes about the "spiritual-but-not-religious" phenomenon in *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World*. She says that Americans, and especially young adults, are not eschewing religion, but reinventing it.

Burton says a religion must provide four things: meaning, purpose, community, and ritual. Very few people, in fact, do not search for meaning, purpose, community, and ritual, but it is probably a stretch to say that any phenomenon that provides those four things is a religion. (Burton says the strange new rites she describes do not always provide all four.)

She says that many Americans pick some of one religion and mix it with practices from another; rather than strictly follow one church's or religion's moral code and rituals, Americans are looking at a religious smorgasbord and picking what suits their wants and needs. She calls such adherents the "remixed." This seems to borrow from Roberta Rosenthal Kwall's excellent 2019 book, *Remix Judaism: Preserving Tradition in a Diverse World*, which described how many American Jews pick which moral beliefs

and customs to incorporate into their lives, but on their own terms. Kwall's book explored how non-Orthodox Jews incorporated Judaism into their preferred cultural practices, rather than truly live their lives as Jews.

In many ways, Kwall's book is more satisfying, perhaps because it is more focused. But Burton's is the better read, as they say. With a journalist's eye, Burton also tells the stories of people who find meaning in the young adult novels Harry Potter and the supposedly transcendent trappings of sado-masochism sex. Ever the reporter, Burton tells the stories of a Brooklyn boutique owner who lights phallus-shaped candles and the witches that put a hex on Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh. No doubt some of these have the trappings of religious-like experience, but it is a stretch to call these rituals a religion.

I'm also not sure how many of the phenomenon Burton describes are all that widespread. Friendsiving, in which urban millennials who do not want to spend the money to travel to see family during American Thanksgiving (or want to avoid fighting with their more conservative parents), instead spend the holiday with friends. But most people probably still visit family rather than avoid them for Thanksgiving. If anything, the ritual of American Thanksgiving is more a religious-lite celebration with rituals (turkey, foot-

ball) than the faux-celebration that Burton highlights. While I see Friendsiving on my Twitter feed every late-November, it is mostly conservatives mocking it than people partaking in it.

What Burton does very well is describe how modern consumer culture commodifies the imitation religion that is supposedly going on. Corporations, Burton says, are very good at selling meaning, branding purpose, custom-producing community, and tailor-making rituals for people searching for those things. But rather than give the consumption of all this ritual credence as a religion, I'm more inclined to think of P.T. Barnum: "There's a sucker born every minute."

Kwall was describing for Jews what Catholics have long dealt with: cafeteria Catholics, followers who decide to live the moral beliefs they choose and disregard the rest. Burton says that modern man has little time for commandments, and treats both real religion and increasingly secular phenomenon as a smorgasbord from which to find meaning, purpose, community, and ritual. But it is doubtful that Harry Potter or sado-masochistic perverts would be willing to be martyred for their beliefs. Burton, who is often sympathetic to those she writes about, has produced an entertaining and insightful combination of journalism and sociology, but real religion requires theology, about which she — and her subjects — have little to say.

And then there was this ...

Canada

A member of the legislative assembly in Nunavut territory is no longer a cabinet minister. Patterk Netser committed the unspeakable crime of posting on Facebook that “All lives matter” in rebuttal to Black Lives Matter. Nunavut Premier Joe Savikataaq announced that the minister responsible for Arctic College and the Nunavut Housing Corporation had written an “unacceptable social media post.” Netser wrote, “Just thinking out loud, I wonder how many Black ladies go through abortion and at what stage of gestation? Are they not lives too?” Savikataaq, quick to respond, did so in splendid woke style proclaiming that “there can be no tolerance for disrespect, hurtful remarks or actions and we must uphold our government’s principles and values.” So it is a value of the territory of Nunavut to eliminate black babies by abortion? Now that we know Savikataaq’s values, what of Netser’s? Are his values of no value? Isn’t he being disrespected when he is so vehemently dismissed? And what of several Native organizations, whose female spokespersons also rejected, with venom, Netser’s comments? Stephanie Bernard, president of the Nunavut’s Black History Society and Black Lives Matter Committee, told the CBC her reaction to the post was “extreme horror” and her group applauded Savikataaq’s quick action. Sileema Angoyuak, president of Qullit Nunavut Status of Women Council, was also “enraged” by Netser’s Facebook post. Do they not see that Native lives in Canada have long been in jeopardy through government inaction, racial profiling, depopulation efforts, lack of help for addiction problems, young Native women going missing and never found alive, and general horrendous living conditions? Netser, a Christian father, grandfather and great grandfather remains calm but firm amid the tornado of criticism. He reaffirms his pro-life position on the sanctity of human life, drawing on his experience as a Native Canadian whose people have survived attempts at genocide. An MLA meeting on Oct. 21 will decide if further action will be taken against Netser.

Babies used to be just messy little ones, faces smeared with porridge, hands sticky, diapers (well we won’t go into that). They yelled for attention, screamed when in pain, laughed with joy and were a blessing in a family, even if material circumstances weren’t always the best. But today, the poor babies not only have to duck and squirm to avoid the abortionist’s tools, they can’t even be thought of as ‘a twinkle in the eye.’ A controversial set of billboards in Vancouver is encouraging single-child or child-free families to think twice about having that ‘bundle of joy,’ as their future child or children will be a root cause of “resource depletion, species extinction, poverty and climate change.” The group is the Minnesota-based charity, One Planet One Child website. Some of the billboards feature the picture of a black baby, with the caption ‘The most loving gift you can give your first child is to not have another.’ Oh, for those days when messy diapers were the worst that parents could expect from their babies.

United States

Professors Jordan Dickerson of MIT and David Solomon of Boston College claim that there were an estimated 145,000 fewer births in the U.S. between 1980 and 2017 because of the potential costs they would bear on families, in particular as they relate to car seats. In their July report, they argue that stricter safety requirements over time have forced the sharpest decline in births after 2008, just as the total fertility rate in the US also plummeted. They write: “We document a large and perverse effect whereby child car seat mandates have unintended consequence of large reductions in birth rates.” Their research shows that just as birth rates were rebounding in the U.S. in 1977, state laws mandated that

children of a certain age had to be in a car seat. They write: “We estimate that these laws prevented only 57 car crash fatalities of children nationwide in 2017. Simultaneously, they led to a permanent reduction of approximately 8,000 births in the same year, and 145,000 fewer births since 1980, with 90 per cent of this decline being since 2000. Catherine Ruth Pakaluk, a professor of social research and economic thought at Catholic University of America commented that the report is “a very classic unintended consequences paper” pointing to a central economic insight that “people change their behavior in relation to policy.” She continued that unintended consequences, such as the cost of car seats, can most often affect “the marginal people, the people who are kind of on the fence.” Numerous news outlets carried stories under a headline that equated car seats with contraception. The fertility rate in the U.S. hit a record low in 2019 of 1.7 children per woman of child-bearing age.

There is a video of Judge Amy Barrett and her husband leaving their home with their children on their journey to the White House. They have two vehicles in which to transport their seven young children. As Mrs. Barrett has often said, she and her husband wanted a large family when they married. How counter-cultural. Professors and judges can easily afford car seats.

International

The Netherlands led the way in legalizing euthanasia and assisted suicide in 2002, targeting mentally competent adults who were facing a terminal illness. However, like all slippery slopes, the hill turned into a mountain of ice down which humanity began to hurl on skates at a tremendous speed. The concept of ‘legal but rare’ turned into legal and demanded, so that it has come to include the extermination of persons with non-terminal chronic illnesses, disabilities and mental health problems. In 2019, there were 6,361 cases of euthanasia in Holland, which now saw the euthanizing of infants under the age of one (with parental consent), and of minors 12-15 with their consent and that of their parents. Voluntary euthanasia is available for those aged 16-17 without parental consent. For nearly two decades, the Groningen Protocol has permitted euthanasia for disabled newborns. But there was still the pesky group of terminally ill children between the ages of one and 12. They needed to be brought under the ever-expanding umbrella of death. As the Dutch “Health” Minister, Hugo de Jonge, said recently: “There is a need for active termination of life ... of incurably ill children, who are suffering hopelessly and unbearably and will die within the foreseeable future.” Just ponder those words for a minute. In the face of the death of their babies, parents are being handed poisonous words of non-comfort from elected government officials who should be offering compassion and ensuring that the babies are given all the care that the government can possibly provide for whatever length of time that the babies have to live. It is hard to imagine a “need for active termination” of children, but we suppose that is the natural extension of eugenic abortion: euthanasia for sick – and disabled? – children. The pediatricians’ association NVK supports the government ruling, but it seems most concerned that its doctors are legally exempted from prosecution rather than offering optimal care for young children. Thank God for the Catholic Cardinal Willem Eijk of Utrecht, who was one of the few dissenting voices in the country. As Canadians, we have always been justly proud of our military who liberated the Dutch people at the end of WWII; Canada receives tulip bulbs yearly to be planted on Parliament Hill as gratitude from the Dutch. How that nation has fallen. Can we ever look again with pride at tulips blowing on Parliament Hill?

Pro-abortion feminists in Mexico City threw Molotov cock-

tails and paint at police and smashed windows on Sept. 28, “International Safe Abortion Day.” The Associated Press reported that protesters demanded Mexico legalize abortion-on-demand; currently, some states permit it while others do not. The protesters also grabbed the police riot shields and formed a phalanx in an attempt to march to another part of the city where pro-lifers were holding their own demonstration. Earlier this year, the Catholic News Agency reported that pro-abortion activists vandalized Catholic churches with pro-abortion and anarchist symbols, including the tired line “keep your rosaries off our ovaries.” And in March, pro-abortion feminists broke into a church on International Women’s Day. LifeNews has reported on more than 100 pro-abortion acts of violence since 2018, including the August 20 vandalism against Vernon and Area Pro-Life Society’s sign near Highway 97 in British Columbia. It was the second time the sign had been vandalized. Bubble zone laws are often promoted with the flimsiest suggestion that pro-lifers near abortion facilities pose some sort of threat to women and staff, but most documented cases of violence are committed by pro-aborts. And that doesn’t even count the tens of millions of acts of violence that are committed against the preborn under the guise of women’s rights.

The U.K. government has opened an inquiry into claims that seniors’ care homes were placing blanket Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders on residents’ files, without consent, during the height of the coronavirus pandemic. There have been cases recorded of elderly and ill people, including autistic individuals being forcibly pressured to sign DNR forms in case they caught the virus, as well as the parents of ill children. All of the cases being reviewed took place in the state-run and publicly funded National Health Service (NHS) hospitals. More than 18,000 residents in care homes have died or are suspected of having died of the Chinese coronavirus. The present inquiry is just one of many that have been undertaken to look at suspicious deaths involving the NHS. For example, a police investigation was opened in 2019, for the fourth time, to look at hundreds of deaths at an NHS hospital in Hampshire England, after 456 patients died after being prescribed opiate drugs at the hospital, between 1989 and 2000. A third inquiry, in 2018, suggested that patients who were deemed a “nuisance” were given opiates which often resulted in their deaths. Continued suspicions have triggered a fourth inquiry.

An investigation was opened in 2017 in what has been called the worst maternity scandal in British history. In 2017, an independent review was commissioned when it was found that 1,200 cases of maternal neglect dated back to the 1970s. The interim report in November 2019 stated that there were 42 avoidable deaths of babies, 51 cases of infant brain damage or cerebral palsy that were considered avoidable, and 47 instances of substandard care. Three mothers also died while in maternity care. All cases happened in National Health Service hospitals. The November 2019 report indicated that the NHS has an “obsession” with natural birth and an aversion to caesarian sections when needed. Parents have complained of being pressured by midwives to have a “natural birth.” Midwives are in charge of births in maternity wings. The report also indicated a lack of compassion for grieving parents. In one case, medics forgot that the body of a baby had been returned from the autopsy and the remains were left in the open air to decompose. Some infants’ deaths were the result of midwives not monitoring heartbeats properly during labour. As one lawyer for grieving parents put it: “The cases ... suggest a failure to err on the side of caution.” The enquiry is expected to be completed by the end of 2020 at which time the police will determine if criminal charges can be brought.

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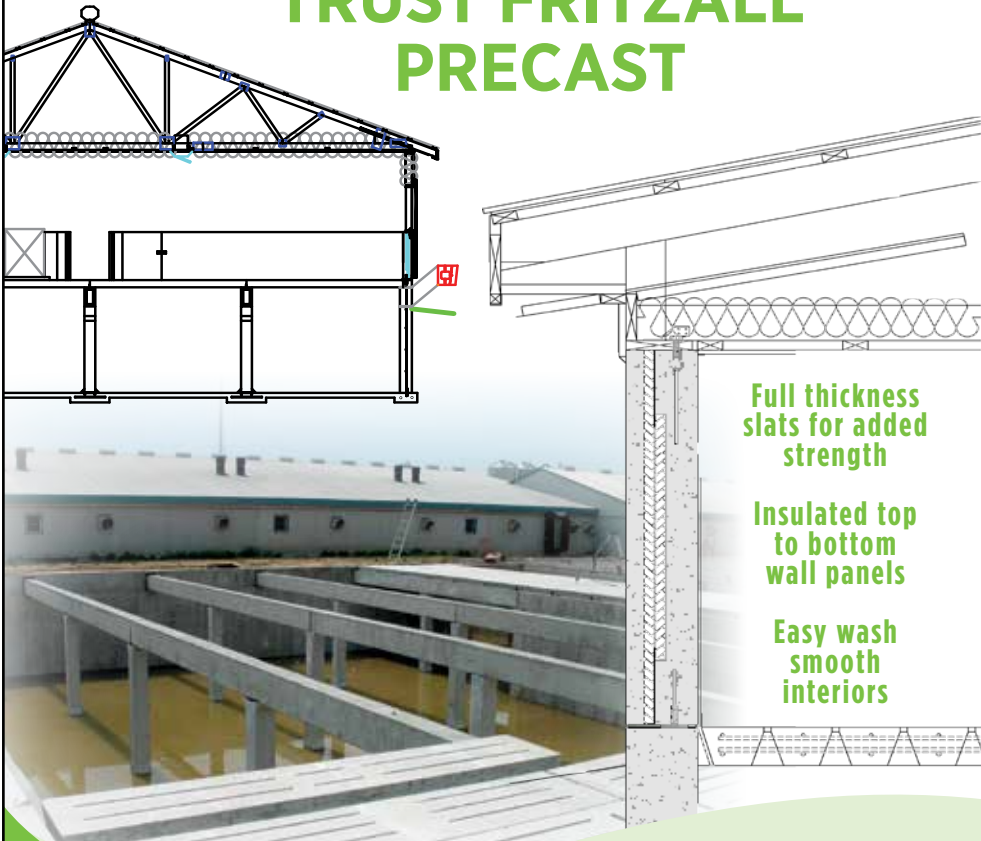
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