INTRODUCTION

BRAVELY IMAGINING WHAT CANADA MIGHT BE LIKE IN 50 YEARS

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I was born in November 1966. So while I was a babe in arms during the year Canada celebrated its Centennial and hosted Expo 67, my memories of that era are scant, and the only powerful emotional attachment I felt then was with my mother. By the time Canada marked the 150th anniversary of Confederation last year, I'd spent decades living in, writing about and contemplating this country — its present and its past — and come to the firm conclusion that, for all of its faults, there was no better nation on Earth. Attachment to Canada? Off the charts.

And if I live to experience Canada's bicentennial in 2067, I'll probably still feel that way. For one thing, Canada's famous public health system (again, for all of its faults) will have kept me alive long enough to join one of the nation's fastest growing demographic groups: centenarians.

But what kind of country would this 100-year-old Canadian be celebrating on July 1, 2067? Well, according to a recent Statistics Canada population projection, I would be one of about 80,000 people in my age category — but only one of about 15,000 men 100 or older. And depending on whether Canada follows StatsCan's low-growth population trajectory or its high-growth one, the fellow members of my "Century Club" pick-up hockey team will be among the oldest citizens in a country with either 40 million people or something closer to 65 million people.

That's assuming hockey is still a thing in 2067. That's also assuming Canada is still a thing by then. Read on, and you will hear from one of the contributors to this volume that, based on the average life expectancy of modern nation states, Canada as we know it today could well be on borrowed time by the middle of the 21st century.

Still, when it comes to predicting the shape of a nation that far into the future, even the widest margin of error can be too narrow. This country's Bicentennial is a long way off. But let's at least remain hopeful that the landmass known today as Canada will continue to occupy a good portion of a habitable planet still orbiting a sun that hasn't gone supernova.

With that happy place in mind, we asked contributors for this edition of *Canadian Issues/Thèmes Canadiens* to bravely imagine what Canada might be like 50 years from now, or at least what future path the country might be on given the trends and forces in evidence today, and in recent decades. To be precise, we framed the task this way:

> What will be Canada's greatest challenge — or challenges — in the year 2067? As a nation, we've just marked the 150th anniversary of Confederation. That occasion prompted much reflection about our collective history, and about how the achievements and failures of the past shaped contemporary Canadian society. Our most recent issue of *CI/TC*, in fact, explored the transformation of Canada — for women, for immigrants, for Indigenous peoples, for culture, for language, for human rights, for national unity and much more — between the 1967 Centennial and 2017 sesquicentennial. We wish to project that line of thinking into the future, inviting contributors to cast their thoughts forward to Canada's bicentennial year: Where will the trajectory of our history take us?

Put another way, we wondered what a 95-year-old former prime minister named Justin Trudeau, when reflecting in 2067 on the state of the country both he and his father once led, might say are the paramount concerns for the people of Canada? Would the greatest challenge be the economy or the environment, intercultural or interprovincial relations, technological or demographic change, domestic or foreign affairs, or some looming challenge we can barely glimpse today on the horizon of the future?

To stimulate thinking about the realm of possibilities, we shared the results of a recent nationwide survey commissioned by the Association for Canadian Studies in which more than 1,500 respondents were asked to rank what they thought would be "the principal challenges facing Canada fifty years from now, in 2067."

The results of that probe are extensively explored here in a contribution from ACS president Jack Jedwab. In short, concerns about aging and health, as well as economic challenges such as employment and home ownership, significantly outstrip all other issues — the environment, national security, cultural identity — as anticipated problem areas. It's no surprise, perhaps, that the top-ranked concerns closely match what are typically the most pressing contemporary sources of anxiety; as Jedwab notes, "the natural inclination" of respondents appears to be "to transfer current preoccupations onto the future."

Pollster Christian Bourque also examines survey results illuminating Canadians' concerns — and imaginings — about the future. Among the intriguing results was a top-ranking response among three-quarters of those polled that citizens of the country will be more environmentally conscious when Canada turns 200. Meanwhile, at the lowest end of the rankings, just 57% of respondents envisioned a nation in which people will be more conscious of gender equality — and more than one-quarter of those surveyed pessimistically expect less consciousness of gender equality in 2067.

Dr. Monica Boyd, a distinguished University of Toronto sociologist and demographer, highlights two of the most significant changes we can expect to see in the structure of Canada's population in the next 50 years: the general transition to "a country of older persons" as the proportion of Canadians aged 65 and older soars from today's 17% to more than 25% by 2067; and the particularly dominant place of today's Millennials in that future Canada, as this "unique birth cohort" — the children of the digital age — redefine what it means to be a senior member of Canadian society.

Western University sociologist Don Kerr, a specialist in examining population change in Canada, puts the country's expected population growth by 2067 into a global perspective, noting that the few tens of millions of people likely to be added to Canada's population over the next 50 years will be "swamped" by what occurs in much more populous countries around the world, where even the lowest projections mean at least another one billion citizens of planet Earth by 2067. With regards to climate change and other environmental implications, Kerr argues that regardless of Canada's own energy-transition strategies and population pressures, "what happens elsewhere will be of major consequence to Canadians as they approach their bicentennial year."

Former Ontario cabinet minister John Milloy, director of the Centre for Public Ethics at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, raises an alarm in his essay about the coming epidemic of loneliness facing Canada. Milloy, who served as provincial minister of colleges and universities as well as community and social services (among other portfolios) during his time as a Liberal MPP between 2003 and 2014, warns that contemporary symptoms of social isolation and alienation — from the smartphone bubbles inhabited by so many, to the existential struggles of churches and other traditional sites of social cohesion and community — may be harbingers of even more worrisome problems as Canada's population ages in the decades leading to 2067. To combat rising loneliness, argues Milloy — who also served as a senior adviser to prime minister Jean Chrétien — "government will need to work alongside groups that connect people and build interdependence, such as volunteer groups, business and community organizations and faith communities, all of which create a sense of belonging."

Economist William Watson, the high-profile newspaper columnist and long-time McGill University professor, states that while the Canada of 2067 is essentially unknowable and prediction is folly, "I do suspect — I think I know — that my children and theirs will still be concerned with three problems that have preoccupied the country since its beginnings": Canada's relations with the U.S., the state of affairs between the country's French- and English-speaking populations, and the never-ending

quest of all Canadians to earn a decent living. "Not just because I'm an economist, I'm reasonably sure material matters will still concern our own grandchildren," Watson concludes — while adding that, beyond such few certainties, "it's all unknown unknowns as far as the eye can't see."

This edition of *Canadian Issues/Thèmes Canadiens* offers two question-and-answer articles flowing from interviews with two notable thinkers about the country's present and future. Irvin Studin, president of the Toronto-based Institute for 21st Century Questions and a leading international policy analyst, discusses the contentious question of Canada's ideal population as we head towards the country's 2067 bicentennial. Studin helped spark a national debate about Canada's population by advocating for a nation of 100 million people to help Canada better command its own vast geography and to more robustly assert its influence on the world stage. "There are a whole host of other things we can accomplish economically and socially with a larger population," says Studin, who also commented that the average lifespan of a modern state is only about 60 years, and that our 150-year existence so far is "exceptional" in global terms. "There will be a host of challenges, to be sure, but I hope we will be well on our way (to 100 million by 2067) and there won't be any debate by that point that we'll need a larger population to reckon with our circumstances."

Finally, Canada's Chief Statistician Anil Arora — whose agency compiles and analyzes the contemporary information about Canada's population, economy and society that allows even the faintest glimpses of the future to be rooted in reality — discusses how Statistics Canada is modernizing its operations to ready the nation for its future in a data-driven world. Even as StatsCan celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2018 as heir to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, the federal agency (armed with a new mandate aimed at ensuring its arm's-length independence) is in the midst of transforming itself to sustain its world-leading reputation in an era of global concerns about data collection and its socially responsible application. "For a statistical agency," states Arora, "these are pressures and opportunities that are impossible to ignore. Our modernization efforts are to react to those pressures, which are very real — and, by the way, not unique to Canada."