

Immigration and Scarcity: Canada as a Battleground For Natural Resources

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Canada is a battleground in an undeclared war for access to increasingly scarce non-renewable natural resources. International corporations are the battle tanks; the movement of people across national boundaries, the infantry; and, rapidly devaluing fiat money, the ammunition.

Canada is a relatively wealthy country. The prosperity of its people depends primarily on having a favourable ratio of natural resources per capita. In other words, on an overcrowded Earth, Canadians have a relatively large supply of finite natural resources that are being consumed at an exponential growth rate worldwide.

Corporations and individuals pick the planet clean, abetted by globalization, instant communications, and the dogmas of economic growth and free trade. They have Canada square in their sights.

Canadians are complacent about the assault on their country. Corporations working hand in glove with all levels of Canadian government have sedated them with messages delivered repeatedly by tightly controlled media to make Canadians compliant. Canadians are told that they are a nation of immigrants despite the fact that this is contrary to the legal definition of the word "immigrant." The hidden message is that since you are all immigrants, you have no right to stop new immigrants from coming to Canada, however great their numbers might be. From the 1950s to the 1970s, Canadians focussed on developing their sense of a national culture. That nascent urge was swamped by the doctrine of multiculturalism, with the implication that all cultures are of equal value, and therefore a dominant culture should not exclude another culture or prevent it from swelling its numbers by mass immigration.

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As puppets of their masters in business and government, the media, especially the CBC, are biased in favour of more people, more immigration, and support most refugee claimants even when the claims are obviously contrived. The messages hammered into the brains of the general public are: Canada has almost infinite natural resources; since Canadians have so much we must share it with others; population growth brings cultural enrichment and prosperity; and, Canada has an obligation to open its borders to people from all over the globe in a celebration of globalization and human blending. The common denominator for addressing all these expectations is the holy grail of economic growth, which has become the ultimate measure of the public good for government and business. Overlooked is the fact that this land called Canada faces limits.

Relative to its population, Canada takes in more immigrants than any other developed country. Since 1991, about a quarter of a million immigrants have been admitted to Canada annually. Pressures build to admit an even larger number. Meanwhile, the temporary workers program has been expanded to permit the influx of another approximately 200,000 per year, some of whom return, but many stay. In addition, there are some who come to Canada on temporary visas and remain while managing to avoid removal by various means for years, so it is reasonable to conclude that Canada is admitting well in excess of 250,000 people per year.

In 1900, the population of Canada was 5,310,000, rising to 13,712,000 in 1950 and to an estimated 35,051,409 in 2012. In the same period of time, the population of the Earth increased from about 1.5 billion to over 7 billion. In other words, the rate of population growth in Canada has been higher than that for the world as a whole. What is the sustainable level of population for Canada? Projecting current rates of population growth would result in a population in Canada of 200 million by 2113 and over a billion by 2213. Canada cannot sustain those numbers, so Canadian leaders should be setting targets now before overpopulation becomes a serious problem.

In the short term, a growing population is good for business. Real estate speculators and builders salivate over the increase in demand coming from mass immigration. Canadian business wants cheap labour to suppress wages. A larger population creates more demand for the retail and service sectors of the economy. Banks favour strong real estate markets to support their mortgage lending. Govern-

ments want a larger population to spread the ever-growing debt burden which they have run up by providing services that they could not afford. To retain investment capital, corporate leaders need to show that profits are increasing from year to year.

While intuitively we humans know that we cannot grow our numbers and demands exponentially on a finite planet, we have built our economies including such matters as expectations for economic growth, bearable debt loads, and pension plans on the false assumption that we can continue to grow exponentially. The scarcity of some critical finite natural resources suggests that limits to growth are close at hand.

Why do Canadian leaders choose to ignore or even to deny these limits? They are obsessed with the short term and discount the future. Politicians focus on the next election and bribe voters with public funds. Corporations strive to increase earnings from year to year and let the future take care of itself. Lavish incentives have so-called leaders worshipping at the altar of opportunism while blinding them to the long-term consequences of their myopia. Nowhere is this more evident than with the reckless build-up of debt since the early 1970s. With the post-war economic boom between 1945 and 1970, politicians became used to rapidly growing public revenues and designed extravagant public programs as if this extraordinary growth rate would continue indefinitely. It did not. To meet their obligations and augment nominal growth, governments devalued their currencies and primed consumption by loosening restrictions on lending, making it easier for individuals and governments to incur debt. Now the burden of debt has become unbearable for many countries and individuals. Financial manipulation led to the debacle of 2008 from which most developed countries have not recovered. Since 2008, unprecedented injections of debt have created the illusion of feeble growth while only adding to the future burden. Such is the bitter harvest of short-sightedness.

The growth of population and the steady devaluation of paper money have creditor nations rushing to buy finite natural resources to meet future demand. This activity is becoming more brazen, and Canadians have begun to stir and resist. For example, HD Mining, a Chinese company formed in 2011 to mine a coal deposit in northern British Columbia, announced that they planned to bring in Chinese miners to do the work, saying that they could not find Canadians to do the job. This was a blatant attempt to undermine Canadian labour by bringing in low-cost workers from abroad. Have they never heard of training programs for Canadian workers or of offering wages sufficient to attract them? This is the way that Chinese operations func-

tion in Africa, but Canada is not a Third World country. Recently, HD Mining altered its policy when sued by a Canadian labour union.

The Government of China is known for its long-range thinking. It has probably occurred to them that with China's huge population and Canada's open door to immigrants, a substantial migration of Chinese people to Canada will add to Chinese influence. China has used similar tactics of population shifts within its own borders to cement its control over Tibet and Xinjiang. With a population of 1.3 billion, the Chinese understand the power of numbers and the reality of scarcity.

Regarding the true state of Canadian non-renewable natural resources, Canadians are misled by their political leaders. For example, in 2006, at a G8 (Group of Eight) Meeting, Prime Minister Stephen Harper touted Canada as an energy superpower, stating: "Canada is the world's third largest producer of gas, seventh in oil production, the biggest hydro-electric generator and the biggest supplier of uranium. Alberta's tar sands are second only to Saudi Arabia as the world's largest oil reserve."¹

A renowned Canadian energy expert, David Hughes, has refuted these claims, stating that Canada is not now, nor is it ever likely to be, an "Energy Superpower," and supported his position with the following points:

- Canada may be the third largest producer of gas but ranks only 21st in the amount of proved reserves. We are liquidating our gas reserves as fast as possible as dictated by the markets, not by any coherent energy policy.
- Comparing Canada's oil sands to Saudi Arabia light oil is like comparing apples to oranges. The purported 174-billion barrels of recoverable oil in the oil sands is very energy- and capital- and time-intensive to produce compared to easier conventional oil. As a result, oil sands require much longer timeframes to ramp up production.
- It is true that Canada is the biggest hydro-electric generator, but more than 60 percent of available sites have been developed, and hydro developments are associated with major environmental impacts.
- Although Canada ranks number one in the world for uranium production, it ranks fourth in uranium reserves. Canada has a reserve-to-production lifetime of 35 years, the lowest of any major uranium producer.



• Canadians are among the highest per capita consumers of energy in the world, exceeding even Americans, and currently consume five times the world average. More than 80 percent of this consumption is fossil fuels. The lifestyle of Canadians is underpinned by cheap energy. Canada has been liquidating its inheritance of non-renewable fossil fuels as fast as possible in the name of economic growth. There are currently few restrictions other than the markets on the liquidation of these one-time resources that underpin Canadian energy security.²

The last point is particularly significant regarding the effect of immigration to Canada on climate change. Most of those immigrants come from countries that have a much lower consumption of energy per capita than does Canada. By converting them to Canadian levels of consumption, Canada multiplies their production of greenhouse gases. An American study released in 2008 found that immigrants in the United States produce an estimated four times more CO₂ in the United States as they would have in their countries of origin.³

In 2006, Bengt Soderberg from Sweden did a comprehensive review of the Canadian oils sands, and his findings suggest that production will peak about 2040 and then begin to decline.⁴ The year 2040 is only a generation away. Do Canadians need to wait until they have fallen off a cliff before putting on parachutes?

In 2011, *The Economist* published an article stating that oil production is failing to keep up with demand, noting that the difference is being made up by such things as biofuels, oil derived from coal, and other non-conventional sources.⁵ Shouldn't this warning from an eminent publication encourage Canadians to conserve their supplies of non-renewable natural resources instead of liquidating them at fire sale prices?

In a speech on January 23, 2013, Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, identified "...increasing vulnerability from resource scarcity and climate change with the potential for major social and economic disruption" as one of four megatrends shaping the global future. She described this megatrend as "the real wild card in the pack."⁶ Surely, this wild card of scarcity should be the subject of extensive public discussion in Canada.

A recent book, *Scarcity, Humanity's Final Chapter?* by Christopher Clugston, reviews production figures of eighty-nine non-renewable resources in the United States and globally and concludes that peak production is near or has passed for many of these resources with serious consequences for humanity.⁷ This raises some important questions, such as: What will be the effect of shortages on

economic growth? If growing scarcities lead to a long-term trend of economic contraction, do countries need to shrink their respective populations at the same rate as economic shrinkage to maintain living standards? If growing scarcity causes commodity prices to rise, would there not be an advantage for a resource-rich country like Canada to bank the assets in the ground rather than exploiting them as quickly as possible for fiat money which is steadily devaluing? Shouldn't Canada prevent foreign companies from acquiring Canadian publicly traded companies involved in the natural resources industries, for example, the proposed takeover of the Canadian company Nexen by the Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC)?

If Canadians do not slow the intake of immigrants and the consumption of their finite natural resources, within a generation or two, they may awaken to find their country turned into an empty shell and with a much enlarged population facing poverty. ■

Endnotes

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