

# The Cold Hard Truth about Canada for Dummies

By TIM MURRAY

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Canada suffers from a cargo-cult mentality. To listen to Canadian federal leaders speak of their ambitions of boosting our immigration intake from its absurdly high level of a quarter million migrants a year to 1 percent of the country's population level, one would think that Canada is the Garden of Eden. A tropical cornucopia needing only greater input of cheap labour and capital to liberate a treasure trove of resources.

## A Geography Lesson for Dummies—and Politicians

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Green Party leader Elizabeth May is among the most ardent advocates of this all-party gospel of denial, and on September 14, 2008 on CBC radio, she made a remarkable revelation that exposed her ignorance of Canada's reality. In answering a critic about the stress that immigration was placing on our major cities, she offered that New Canadians could simply be deflected to the depopulated regions of the country like rural Nova Scotia or northern Saskatchewan, conjuring up the image of Canada as a capacious hotel fit for many permanent guests.

## No room at Canada's Ecological Inn

The sad fact is, however, there is no room at the Ecological Inn called Canada. Many of our "rooms" are bogs, marshes, wetlands, frozen permafrost unfit for con-

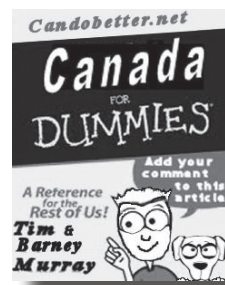
struction, fens, taiga shields, boreal forests, mountains, and lakes. If Canada attended an NHL hockey training camp and had to submit to that body fat composition test, it would be flunked out of camp the first day. The "fat," that portion of our country deemed unfit for human habitation, is far too high. And even if we did have the "space," space is not carrying capacity, is it? Antarctica has space. How many people can it support?

Wetlands comprise 14 percent of Canada. Lakes 7.6 percent. Together with permafrost tundra, the boreal forest upon which the global climate depends and mountains, they combine over 94 percent for the "other" category that Wikipedia lists as opposed to "arable cropland." The Canadian Shield covers 48 percent of the country's surface, and even if the Arctic Shield is excluded, it makes up 32 percent of the land surface. If you want an image of it while sipping your latte with your open-borders, politically correct friends, think of undulating hills of spongy swamps, decaying peat, between thick taiga forest on top of rock dotted with thousands of lakes—not an ideal site for the town home accommodation of ten million refugees.

The most compelling statistic, though, is the pitifully small portion of our land base that is arable, 5.2 percent. And 80 percent of that land is farmed in the prairie provinces. It gets more scary. Of the 5.2 percent that is arable, only .5 percent is classified as "Class 1," and more than half of that is found in the province of Ontario. And guess where in Ontario? Close to the beacon of mass immigration, the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Nationally, we have lost close to one fifth of our Class 1 farmland to development. Residents of B.C.'s Fraser Valley can bear witness. It stands to reason that as Canada has fallen victim to the immigration madness of the last two decades, it has been precious farmland that has paid the price. As the Ontario Farmland Trust put it, "Flat, cleared, agricultural land is not only easily developed, it is also very affordable to developers who are seeking to meet the demand for land to accommodate urban growth. It is often financially profitable in the long term for a farmer to sell his or her land knowing that it may be converted to some non-agricultural land-use, than to continued farming."

## "Planning" does not solve impossible problems

Of course, for Green and progressive politicians, the scapegoat is "sprawl" rather than immigration, and their



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panacea is “land-use planning.” Portland, Oregon and the corrosion of British greenbelts under the pressure of immigration have demonstrated that Ontario Environment Commissioner Gordon Miller’s warning must be heeded. Unless Ottawa reverses course, he said, the Golden Horseshoe will see another six million people in two decades, and to see that future, Ontario need only look in the rear view mirror at what became of 650,000 acres of farmland.

**What about food security?**

Between 1976 and 1996 farms averaging 75 acres amounting to 150,000 acres were lost. That loss accounted for 18 percent of Ontario’s Class 1 farmland. During the period of mass immigration, between 1996 and 2006, the GTA lost at least 650,000 acres of farmland. If each farm averaged 75 acres, that would be over 8,000 farms! That is a lot of subdivisions. How many people did the GTA gain in that period? Now if the loss of 150,000 acres accounted for the loss of 18 percent of Class 1 farmland, what did the loss of 650,000 acres account for? <http://www.ontariofarmlandtrust.ca/issues-and-programs/saving-farmland>

The rapid incremental loss of farmland not only impacts our self-sufficiency in food, but the viability of our ecosystems. Subdivisions do not control flooding, nor protect wetlands or watersheds, nor absorb and maintain waste water. Nor do they provide food and habitat for wildlife. That is why more than 500 species-at-risk are found just at the perimeter of those urban areas of Canada that are bursting with immigrant-driven population growth. Elizabeth May speaks of “the rich texture of cultural diversity.” But it clearly is coming at the expense of our “rich texture of biological diversity.”

**Illogicality of “avoiding sprawl” by filling the “big empty spaces”**

It is curious and paradoxical. On the one hand Ms. May argues that newcomers should be concentrated with other Canadians in urban centres by “smart” growth, packed closely together out of harm’s way from greenbelts. Sorry. Won’t work. On the other hand, her story is that New Canadians can be steered in their millions to those empty cold places that others before them found undesirable and left. She didn’t intimate how the Charter of Rights and Freedoms could be over-ridden to oblige them to go north,

or how money could be found to entice them in that direction, or once having arrived there, what would compel them to stay.

**Climate**

There is a reason, other than economics, why 90 percent of Canadians live within a stone’s throw of the U.S.



border. Climate. Let me illustrate. The average latitude in Canada is 61 degrees. Let’s select Yellowknife, latitude 62 degrees, 47 minutes as a fair inland example. Yes, it is cold in central Saskatchewan in the winter. But if you live in Saskatoon in December at latitude 52 degrees, and your average day is minus 19, and you decide to take a job in Yellowknife 1,223 miles northward, your days are going to be, on

average, 9 degrees colder. That is why it takes a whole lot of money to get people to establish lives in the far north.

**Greens policies imply exploiting immigrants**

Is Elizabeth May proposing a kind of apartheid for this country then? Canadian-born and the earlier wave of immigrants enjoy the amenities of the milder south, but the newest citizens swat black flies in the inhospitable north?

I think that Elizabeth May’s “Great Multicultural Project,” her euphemism for the mass immigration policy which all federal parties and leaders support with mindless enthusiasm, is best imposed on the penguins of Antarctica. They at least know the cold, hard facts about the environment in which they live. And if any of them should object, I am sure a Penguins’ Rights Tribunal could be established on the Canadian model to stifle and silence them into submission.

Antarctica is a big place with lots of room for lots of people. ■