

# GOOD WORK NEWS

The Working Centre, 58 Queen St. S. Kitchener, ON N2G 1V6

Issue 142

September 2020

Subscription: A Donation Towards our Work

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## Food and Housing – Can we offer any less?

By Stephanie Mancini

We admit to being overwhelmed! This is the first statement to make as we respond to unprecedented numbers of homeless people in our community, at a time when common spaces are locked-down in a COVID-world.

Some 500+ people are homeless in our community. Hard stop on that statement. How did this number of people without housing get so high?

Can you imagine what it is to be homeless at this time? Nothing is open; even such a basic need as available bathrooms is inaccessible. Food is hard to find; and what you do find are the leftovers of our consumer lifestyle. Life is a bit wilder and people must focus on basic survival. Especially now as the temperatures start to drop – it was one thing to live rough during the summer, but a whole new world is emerging. The world is getting rougher – we see it in the number of break-ins, deaths, assaults, and mental health challenges that show up in the news feeds.

Add to this the complexities of people who live actively with dependence on an unsafe/toxic drug supply, people who have often ended up homeless because of unbearable stories of trauma, where each day people navigate survival for now. Shelter, food, clothing, safety, and

now warmth. These are the critical issues of daily life for far too many people in our community.

How can we continue to embrace our ethic of a caring community, while so many are living outside as the winter approaches? We are hearing the voices of people who are afraid to invite people into our own neighbourhoods – will we be safe, will our children be safe? These are real sentiments, but if we do not soon shift the wider conversation of exclusion by helping people to build stable housing opportunities, we are reinforcing the isolation and disenfranchisement of a core group of people.

This time challenges the core of our ethics; of our understanding of what it means to be community. The Harper Magazine article on Sanctuary, an experiment designed to invite people into a non-policed and non-structured attempt to share housing, suggests that this project failed because it was too naïve. This may be true, but we need to learn from these new experiments. We know that the hunger created by deep addiction to toxic drugs steals people's ability to be their best self, and is often unbearable to watch. One school of thought creates these really interesting alternative approaches, while others move to more rigid policing (note the small p, not a capital P) options that

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## The New Normal

By Isaiah Ritzmann

Whatever else it was, late March and early April of this year was a time of great disorientation. In a matter of weeks everything changed and our usual way of being in the world was completely upended. As we began to isolate from each other and refrain from the usual weekly ballet of work, errands, family, & friends many of us felt this strong yearning in our hearts: we want to go back to normal. Yet alongside that cry for the familiar & the ordinary many of us also shared a deep sense that the normal we had become so used to was destructive and undesirable. What was normal before COVID-19 was a world of ecological, economic, and social woe: climate change, the sixth great mass extinction, extreme wealth inequality, rising xenophobia, drug addictions, epidemic anxiety, depression, and loneliness. In a COVID-19 world what we need is not only a vaccine and a bail-out package – we need a new normal.

Whenever and wherever voices have emerged questioning the status quo they have always insisted that to be an effective critique, lament must be coupled with vision and hope. We can't just focus on the downsides of the old normal. We have to paint a picture of what the new normal might look, sound, and feel like. Grace Lee Boggs, long-time social activist from Detroit, once said "People are aware that they cannot continue in the same

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old way but are immobilized because they cannot imagine an alternative." If we can't imagine a new normal we'll get stuck, not wanting to go back to where we were but not knowing where we want to go and how to get there. Part of the work of leaving the old normal behind is imagining a new normal that can inspire and mobilize us to create a new kind of society that is just and sustainable.

### Reducing CO<sup>2</sup> Emissions

The great gift of COVID-19 has been the widely shared experience of a different way of being. We don't have to imagine a new normal from scratch. Some of those experiences have already been handed to us. Take as an important example all the ways people reduced their CO<sup>2</sup> emissions during the COVID quar-

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## Thank You!



*We are grateful for the many generous donations received during the COVID-19 pandemic that have helped our ongoing response.*

## Thirty Sixth Year

Issue 142

September 2020

# Good Work News

Good Work News was first produced in September 1984. It is published four times a year by The Working Centre and St. John's Kitchen as a forum of opinions and ideas on work and unemployment. Four issues of Good Work News constitutes our annual report. There is a circulation of 12,000 copies. Subscription: a donation towards our work.

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Charitable Registration #13092 9607 RR0001

## The New Normal

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antine. Commuting slowed down rapidly & flying virtually stopped. During this time many people rediscovered working from home and vacationing in place. These acts, imposed by the quarantine, have had a significant cumulative effect. A recent estimate from the US suggests that the new normal of working and shopping from home will "reduce driving in the United States by up to 270 billion miles a year." ([energypost.eu](http://energypost.eu)).

### An Upsurge in Biking

An upsurge of biking has been another unintended consequence. As people no longer have to commute for work, yet still desire to explore the world and be out of the house, many have turned to biking through their cities and surrounding countryside as an enjoyable activity that is also ecologically friendly. The interest has been so great that in some places in Ontario bike shops have actually run out of inventory.

### Growing Food Locally

At the same time interest in local food has greatly expanded. In the early spring seedlings were near sold-out from greenhouses across North America. More and more people are planting gardens in their backyards or local community gardens. Urban agriculture and local farmers have also benefited. In communities across Canada and the United States participation in community-shared agriculture has nearly doubled.

### Renewing Neighbourhoods

As we meet our physical needs in new ways many of us are rediscovering neighbourhood to meet our social needs. As large gatherings in-

doors are no longer able to happen many people are finding renewal in the social life of neighbourhoods - backyard gatherings, friendly hellos, and occasional porch chats. Both food and friendship are becoming local again.

### Imagining A New Normal

All of us are aware that we cannot continue in the same, old, pre-COVID way. Yet there is no reason to be paralyzed. We can imagine an alternative. We can imagine a new normal. The new normal will look like re-localized economies with lower-carbon footprints. It will look like working from home, backyard and community gardening, and healthy inhabiting of neighbourhoods and countryside. More cars will become electric over the next decade all while people will drive less and bike more. Buying vegetables and fruits from California probably won't disappear but gradually more and more people will buy more and more from farmers here in Ontario.

COVID-19 brought economic stress and social isolation. As we move out of pandemic mode over the next year we hope that people are able to find economic security and community belonging. Yet we also hope that all these possibilities for a new normal are not lost but nurtured. How can we take all the good that COVID-19 did bring and catalyze it into something more? We've only looked at a few of the elements of what a new normal can look like.

The sad news is the new normal is certainly not inevitable. The hopeful news is that the new normal is nevertheless possible. The future isn't written in stone. It all depends on what we collectively choose in the months and years ahead.

# Making Carbon Neutral, Carbon Normal

By Isaiah Ritzmann

We now have less than a decade to avoid catastrophic climate change. As has become common knowledge, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned that to keep average global warming below 1.5 degrees humanity needs to cut our carbon emissions by 50% by 2030. This is a tall order. To do this requires a deep transformation of our whole society and of ourselves. A happy accident of our collective COVID experience is that many of the behaviours that we need to adopt in order to lower our carbon footprints have already been adopted, at least in part and at least temporarily. In my article "*The New Normal*" I listed some of the new ways of living that COVID has bequeathed to us. Commuting to work and flying have dropped dramatically as people work from home, rediscovering a life rooted in place. During the summer, the desire to be outside has encouraged more and more people to bike; so much so that some bike shops have sold out of bikes, others have been overwhelmed by new business. Our relationship to food is also changing. In the past six months more and more food has been grown in backyard or community gardens. Greenhouses have been sold out of seedlings and many community-shared agriculture programs have doubled their business. Can we read the signs of the times?

We should be optimistic here, but in moderation. In early September the UN Environmental Program warned the world: "Climate change has not stopped for COVID-19. Greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere are at record levels and continue to increase. Emissions are heading in the direction of pre-pandemic levels following a temporary decline caused by the lockdown and economic shutdown. The world is set to see its warmest five years on record - in a trend which is likely to continue - and is not on track to meet agreed targets to keep global temperature increase well below 2°C or at 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels."

In other words, returning to the old normal is as dangerous as some people have been saying. The possibilities of a new normal that COVID gave to us need to be sustained and built upon. These possibilities were the first steps but we need to go further. Part of going further is imagining exactly what further looks like. As the late Grace Lee Boggs often said "People are aware that they cannot continue in the same way but are immobilized because they cannot imagine an alternative." What could this alternative look like? What would it mean concretely, for us as individuals and as a society, to transition to much lower carbon footprints in a short-period of time?

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### Four Main Sources of Carbon Emissions

Average household carbon footprints in Canada and the United States come from four main sources: our cars, our homes, our stuff, and our food. These four domains are responsible for the bulk of our carbon footprints. About 30% of our emissions come from transportation which is mainly driving, but also flying. Another approximately 30% come from home energy use, especially heating in the winter and cooling in the summer. Another 25% comes from the stuff we buy, all the consumer goods we collect and the carbon emissions associated with their production and disposal. Finally about 15% comes from the food we eat, especially from red meat and other high-on-the-food-chain type consumption. If we really want to lower our emissions we have to think creatively and seriously about lowering our footprints in these four areas. The more we can imagine what this looks like, the more it becomes possible.

### Transportation

Transportation remains a major source of emissions. While emissions may account for about 30% over average, household carbon emissions, according to Climate Action Waterloo Region transportation counts for 49% of all carbon emissions in our area. This year COVID has pointed a way forward. Not driving by working from home, not flying by vacationing in place, and rediscovering the joy of biking are all significant steps forward. What else can we do to drive and fly less? While electric vehicles are promising there are significant doubts (due to other environmental limits like lithium supply and the intermittency of green energy) that they can be taken to scale to replace our current vehicle fleet, let alone growing, global demand. As an alternative we will need to learn to walk, bike, take public transportation, and carpool more. Government policy and infrastructure spending can help with that. In the past decade progressive policy in our Region has redesigned public transportation around the ION

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## Carbon Neutral

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and has helped create dozens of new bike lanes. Carpooling networks and networking technology exists. Various bikeshare programs are popping up, as are community bike shops like Recycle Cycles where people can learn to fix and maintain their bikes.

While there is more that can be done on government levels to lower transportation related emissions, including carbon taxes, there is also a lot to be done on a personal and cultural level. We are a car culture, partly for the love of it. In the United States people talk about the 30-40-50 trip distance rule. That is to say in the United States (like Canada), statistically speaking, 30 percent of car trips are a mile or shorter, 40 percent are two miles or shorter, and 50 percent are three miles or shorter. To put it another way half of all car trips are the equivalent of 15 minute bike rides. In order to get

er efficiency in technology has not meant lower energy use - instead it has meant the opposite. People often will "spend" more energy than they have "saved." According to Stanley Cox, energy analyst from the Land Institute, between 1993 and 2005 the energy efficiency of air conditioners improved by nearly 30%. In the same time period energy consumption by AC rose nearly 40%. We need both new technology and new habits.

A major area of overall emission and energy waste comes from air leakages; because of poor insulation, space around windows and doors, ducts, plumbing holes, etc. On average air leaks squander 15-25% of heat in the winter and account for the same amount of heat home's pick up in the summer. The need to retro-fit homes for an energy efficient future is clear, and great work has already been started on this and advocated for by local groups like REEP green solutions. A massive retro-fit project is also a key pillar of various versions of the Green New

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**Once we realize the four main sources of our carbon footprint are our cars, our homes, our stuff, and our food, we can begin to make choices in all these areas that lets us become more and more part of the solution.**

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emissions are about 60% higher than most city planners estimate if we factor in items that people buy that are made outside city limits. This dynamic exists on the national level as well. The UK, for example, reported that between 1990 and 2004 they had a 6% decline in annual carbon emissions. When these numbers include "imported emissions" - overseas emissions from imported goods - a 6% decrease becomes an 11% increase instead. The large carbon footprint doesn't just come from the hidden emissions in the before-and-after story of the stuff we buy. The large carbon footprint comes from the sheer amount of things we buy, our own excessiveness. Those of us in the middle classes or higher have more clothing, furniture, & gadgets than we can count. As a startling example consider that less than half of our used clothing is donated to thrift stores and thrift stores get so much clothing they can at best only sell half of them, if that. How much of the world's carbon emissions come from buying clothes we don't need that then end up in landfills shortly after?

If buying so many things is so dangerous, why do we keep on doing it? In part because it is normal. Everybody's doing it, it must not be that bad. Part of the work of reducing our global emissions by 50% by 2030 will be challenging consumer culture. We must make the weirdness of simple living the new normal, as well as gently but firmly challenge our own bad habits. Aside from individual change we also need system change. As both studies and intuition have shown, the nature of paid work and the hours we spend at it contribute systematically to our culture of consumption. The lack of freedom and meaning at work, combined with related stress, leads people to overcompensate through binge-watching TV and so-called "retail therapy." Meanwhile we spend so much of our lives at work we have less time for meaningful relationships with friends, family, and our wider community. In response we try to substitute consumption for community - which, of course, doesn't work. If we are going to challenge the reign of consumerism over our culture we need to change the structures of work and work-time. A Green New Deal package could call for Work-Time Reduction, a set of policies that would include more vacation time and moving from a five-day to a four-day work week. Juliet Schor, economist from Boston College, has studied the relationship between work time and ecological impact in both North America and Western Europe. She has shown that a reduction in work-time of about

20% is correlated with about a 30% reduction of carbon emissions. This is because people who have more time drive less & shop less, they use their time abundance to live a more meaningful life rooted in community which in turn gives them more ability to resist the drudgeries of consumer living.

### Food & Diets

The final main source of our carbon emissions come from the food we eat, especially red meat. Even though driving, heating, cooling, and buying are disproportionately greater emitters, climate vegetarianism has become the most popular and "viral" of the new normal of climate-conscious behaviours. According to a recent IPSOS study in the past 15 years over 10 million Americans have adopted a plant-based diet. Beef, dairy, & cheese top the list of highest emitters, but even here there is a range of better or worse options. In places like Brazil massive deforestation is taking place to expand cattle ranches, mostly to feed growing demand for beef worldwide. On the other hand, there are some places in the world where management practices such as rotational grazing means that beef, while not carbon neutral, is emitting far less per kilogram than consumed. Even before climate change became a recognized problem in the 1980s the early environmental movement urged a change in diet to accommodate a growing population within an abundant but limited global ecology. Frances Moore Lappe's *Diet for A Small Planet* (1971) argued that the earth could produce enough for everyone but when so much land was set aside to feed animals for those rich enough to eat meat there was less land left aside to grow vegetables and grains for the hungry. Food, early environmentalists pointed out, proved Gandhi's point that "the earth provides for everyone's needs, but not for everyone's greed."

### Making Choices

The path to living lightly on the earth may be a long one, and may be difficult, but it doesn't have to be complex and confusing. Once we realize the four main sources of our carbon footprint are our cars, our homes, our stuff, and our food, we can begin to make choices in all these areas that lets us become more and more part of the solution. At the same time we can raise our voices together, asking governments for bolder climate action that supports all of us by building better public transportation infrastructures, more bike lanes, a public works program for retro-fitting housing, more time off work, and strong support for local food systems. A sustainable future is still possible. The more we can imagine concrete steps we can take towards it, both individually and as a society, the more possible it becomes. Yet a sustainable future is not inevitable and won't always be possible. We need to act, we need to act collectively, and we need to act now. Never in history will our collective choices mean as much as they will in the next ten years.

### SOURCES OF HOUSEHOLD CARBON FOOTPRINT



**TRANSPORTATION**

**30%**



**HOME ENERGY USE**

**30%**



**CONSUMER GOODS**

**25%**



**FOOD & DIETS**

**15%**

to a new normal when it comes to getting around, we need to question what has become "normal" when it comes to our cars. What drives our driving? Is there another way?

### Home Energy Use

Another 30% of our overall emissions comes from home energy use, and in particular how we heat and cool our homes in the winter and summer. The energy it takes to heat our homes in the winter comes from either natural-gas burning furnaces or through electricity (which, in Ontario, is less carbon-intensive than other places). Likewise in the summer a major way of cooling our homes is through air-conditioning, an energy consumer in both production and use. On a personal level we can reduce our energy usage in both winter and summer in multiple ways. In the winters we can keep the temperature lower by wearing sweaters inside. In the summer we can use blinds, and fans, and other low-tech ways of keeping cool. When we can afford it we can purchase more efficient technologies, like better air conditioners. But beware of the Jevon's paradox. Historically great-

Deal. A massive jobs program that would hire hundreds of thousands of people to retro-fit homes meets both short-term economic and long-term environmental needs. Such a project is beyond the scale and ability of individuals or neighbourhoods - it needs and requires government intervention. Will the government take on the role of leadership in this area, as history and hope are asking?

### Consumer Goods

The third major source of household carbon emissions is the stuff we buy, counting for about a quarter of our overall footprint. Everything we buy - ranging from clothing and furniture to washing machines and electronic gadgets - comes at a carbon cost. There are embedded emissions each stage in the life cycle of our stuff from mining the raw materials, to manufacturing, transportation, and finally the waste disposal. We don't see these emissions but they are very much there. C40 cities - a global association of 96 of the world's largest cities, trying to tackle climate change - released a study in 2018 that suggested that municipal

## St. John's Kitchen Responses Over the Last Six Months

By Stephanie Mancini

### 600+ Meals Daily

We are now preparing 600 meals a day – delicious, fortifying food – that satisfies the need for comfort in hard times. We are working actively with the Food Bank to support this increasing need for food; we have renovated our Queen Street building (Maurita's Kitchen) to help us to involve more volunteer help as we prepare large quantities of food (something that was easier before COVID). Where we have traditionally embedded our food production in common spaces, we now have to re-invent our spaces for volunteers to be involved in safe ways in this food production. The numbers of people needing food have grown exponentially! We are close to doubling our food preparation to meet the current food needs in our community. We welcome volunteers to help with the disciplines of food chopping and preparation! Renovations to build food production efficiencies and purchase equipment at Maurita's Kitchen required an investment of \$100,000 and we welcome contributions to this renovation.

### Changes at St. John's Kitchen

St. John's Kitchen has been a place of learning and change in these times. We have been serving 220 people outside St. John's Kitchen (people who have shelter), and another 180 people inside St. John's Kitchen (mostly people without shelter). This is already 100 more meals per day than we were serving before the pandemic, and the numbers continue to grow. St. John's Kitchen has been a place of welcome for those who are unsheltered – offering washrooms, showers, laundry, meals, and harm reduction supplies – when so many other doors were closed for this group. We have collaborated with the Region of Waterloo to create this bold response during COVID, and have welcomed redeployed workers from the City of Waterloo, the Region of Waterloo, Ray of Hope, Thresholds, and The Working Centre (and then faced more complexities as these folks went back to their regular jobs). This is front-line service that embraces COVID risk, combined with a philosophy of never-saying-no to each request/situation as people have lived raw in outside spaces.

### Outreach & Support to Motels

We have been supporting over 40 people in motels: bringing meals, bringing healthcare, problem-solving intense and complex health, mental health, legal, and survival needs. It has been an interesting experiment, where people in motels have stabilized with the more focused help we have offered – wound care, regular food, and problem-solving when issues emerge.

All of this complements the community of connections and support that we provide through St. John's Kitchen, street outreach, support with concurrent mental health and substance use issues, financial problem-solving, housing support, and

links to employment and income support options, plus access to housewares and clothing.

The Region of Waterloo is working with us to expand our street based outreach supports. We will support people who are unsheltered to find housing opportunities.

### University Avenue Residence

University Ave housing opens on October 5 and will provide interim housing to 80 people in an un-used off-campus residence – private rooms, shared bathrooms and common spaces. We will welcome 80 people who are traditionally unable to make shelters work or who have been unable to find housing. People will have their own rooms, with a lock on the door, and share common washrooms and dining/gathering places. This place of welcome will provide rest and stability. We are shaping this space actively within the Region of Waterloo's homelessness strategy – exploring this option that puts housing first for residents, but also provides a range of wrap-around supports for this type of housing.

### Water Street House

Water Street House has opened, and we are learning so much as we engage in this work. Six of 8 beds are now filled with people actively navigating their housing, health, substance use, and general wellbeing. We are working to fully welcome and accept the person, active drug use, the expressions of trauma, and the work together to make a safe and healthy space for everyone. Staff people celebrated the joy of serving pancakes as a food of choice for a young man who has been unable to eat fortifying food for such a long time. Small steps gradually invite people into wellness and acceptance. Step by step.

### A Better Tent City

We continue to work in cooperation with Lot 42 and A Better Tent City. What a great experiment this has been, inviting people to self-manage in shared space. It is sometimes more raw than how we have worked, but it is engaging people in creative responses that teach us new ways to move past our habits of managed supports. We have things to learn about support that becomes disabling and continue to build on people's capacity for community building, while also resisting street justice. As a broader community, we have not stepped up far enough to support this innovative project. How can we support this initiative better?

### Inner City Health Alliance

The great success of the Inner City Health Alliance has drawn us together as allies to deepen our partnership, to provide a COVID-safe environment, to host an Isolation Ward for those with COVID symptoms, to move ahead the concept of health care in shelter environments (ShelterCare), and to build practical and equitable access to healthcare. We are a core part of the Ontario Health Team application that went forwards to the province of Ontario.

## Homelessness in the Time of the Pandemic

In reviewing the list of homeless/unsheltered, there are so many people in their 40's, 50's, 60's and 70's whose lives have left them in this chronic homeless place. The hardships of homelessness for an aging group of people adds complexity; homeless people have a lower life expectancy and aging on the street or in shelters is not easy.

We are seeing youth who are deeply traumatized, unwell, and feel so left out; as we work to bring the virtue of unconditional love into this world, we are quite overwhelmed with the need. There are many families who have been unable to handle the disruption of active drug use, or families that have struggled to be family since the beginning. Youth are deeply affected by active substance use and mental health issues.

People often face the hardship of dislocation and trauma. Living as a deeply afraid person, tenting in the forest as cold weather starts to encroach because they lost their housing money to a fraudulent landlord. A woman is facing deep mental health issues that only allow her to stay inside 20 or so days a year; her current encampment is blocking a hydro meter and she is unable to move without great disruption. A young woman is being trafficked at a local motel to earn income to satisfy the deep drug addiction she experiences, as well as her handlers.

Growing numbers of people are tenting in groups for the solidarity, or tenting alone to keep away from the drama and unsafety of encampments; each week we hear of a few more tents that are popping up on private land, or nestled into small places.

There is a growing litany of remembrance; as each week we add to the list of people who die from overdose caused by a deeply addictive and toxic drug supply. In Waterloo Region, fatal opioid-related overdoses have already increased in 2020, (64 suspected opioid-related deaths in the first 8 months of 2020 vs 63 total in 2019, and 61 total in 2018). Within Waterloo Region, opioid-related overdoses are the second leading cause of acute accidental deaths.



## Volunteer Opportunities at St. John's Kitchen

We are looking for volunteers to help assist our response:

Food preparation of 600 meals:  
Monday - Friday, 9am - 4pm

Packaging of meals for Distribution:  
Monday - Friday, 9am - 11am

Assisting St. John's Kitchen with serving meals, cleaning and hospitality:  
Monday - Friday, 10am - 4pm

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact:  
[jens@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:jens@theworkingcentre.org)

Financial contributions can be made by visiting:  
[donate.theworkingcentre.org](http://donate.theworkingcentre.org)

# Water Street House Renovations Completed



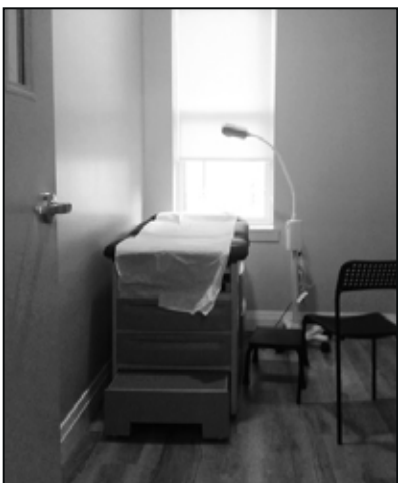
Above: Front of Water Street House, and the main floor kitchen and laundry



Above: Extensive renovations and an addition to the back of the existing building have transformed the property



Above: Interior includes a second floor kitchen and community room  
Below: Medical clinic exam room, and resident bedroom



## A Place of Inclusion & Healing

In June 2018, the Working Centre purchased the Water Street House with the intention of building a safe house for those homeless and dealing with acute medical and drug use issues. We had hoped that the house could also be the Safe Consumption Site as that would have combined resources together to ensure the house was viable. After a year of planning and ten months of construction the project has been completed. In the meantime, the Safe Consumption Site is located nearby, and instead the house has a dedicated medical clinic. The Water Street House has secured funding for staffing through the Provincial Government's expansion of mental health and addiction supports. We are grateful that this project was supported by the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network who helped make ongoing core funding possible.

At the end of July 2020, we slowly started to accept guests as we work

to build the culture of the house. As of September, six people are living in the house. What we learned right away is that the Water Street House is a landing spot for individuals who are not only dealing with the dislocation of homelessness but are also dealing with very complex realities like infections, amputations, broken legs, spinal cord injuries, suicide, addiction trauma and mental health symptoms like anxiety, depression and general disorder. Most of those who have come to the house are in their twenties and vulnerable. Rather than a long term hospital stay, which is impossible to navigate when dealing with significant addiction and mental health challenges, the Water Street House offers a place of rest, with small bedrooms, TV's, nutritious food, and lots of ongoing support. We are pleased that this house is immediately fulfilling the need for a place of refuge for those caught in a cycle of trauma.

**Thank You to our supporters and donors who made many contributions to help us complete this project**

- Canadian Alternative Investment Foundation
- KWCF Social Investment Fund loan towards purchase of the property
- CMHC SEED Grant | \$45,000
- CMHC Co-Investment for Shelter | \$576,000
- Savvas Chamberlain Family Foundation | \$250,000
- Waterloo Region Crossing | \$80,000
- United Way of Waterloo Region \$125,000 towards first year of operation
- Waterloo Wellington LHIN contribution towards ongoing operational expenses

### Some Special Contributors:

- Dinesh Benjamin
- Paul Born and Marlene Epp
- Tari & Kevin Kalbfleisch
- Voisin Developments
- Ninth Valley Construction
- Jay Shah
- Sobara Law
- Strassburger Windows and Doors
- Just Working Construction
- Andy Jones Electric
- Robert Dyck Architect
- Conestogo Mechanical
- Many donations under \$5,000

Learn more about Water Street House and see more photos by viewing the interactive presentation available on our website: [www.theworkingcentre.org](http://www.theworkingcentre.org)

# Decommodify Housing

By Kiegan Irish

The housing market is in crisis. As many as 6000 people will be evicted from their living spaces over the coming weeks as the Landlord and Tenant Board in Ontario processes the eviction applications that have built up over the course of the Covid-19 lockdown. The government lifted the moratorium on evictions as of the end of July. Those numbers will be much higher if we consider everyone who will be evicted across the country after being unable to pay rent through the Covid-19 pandemic and the attending job losses and economic downturn.

Many in our community and at the Working Centre experience homelessness and we can testify to the great toll that lack of basic security and stability can take on a person's health. It is profoundly disturbing that in the midst of this pandemic our society would be so willing to expose people to homelessness through the violence of eviction. It is no exaggeration to say that this will lead to the deaths of vulnerable people.

This latest round of evictions in the midst of the pandemic is symptomatic of the larger housing market which is itself the sickness. While the Ontario Human Rights Commission recognizes housing as a right for all, the way we manage housing demonstrates that we do not honour this right. The housing market has created conditions where it is nearly impossible to afford a place to live while working full time on minimum wage—and it is much more difficult for those who cannot participate in this kind of waged work. An OW cheque is significantly less than the cost of a bachelor apartment, unless an individual has friends or family supporting them therefore, they have no chance of renting. These conditions result in increasing homelessness and exposure of the most vulnerable people in our society to violence and death.

Government deregulation has opened up housing to financial markets and speculation. Land speculation and investment has become increasingly profitable; at the same time as thousands of luxury housing units sit empty, more and more people are forced into homelessness or precarious and dangerous rental housing. The City of Kitchener has recognized housing as an area of great need and their report acknowledges that there is a shortfall of about 14 450 units of affordable housing. Working Centre's experience in temporary shelter last winter saw up to 260 different people sleeping on the floors of St. Mary's church and an old Tim Horton's as they had no other options. Rent seeking and profiting from one of the basic needs of survival is a direct cause of the dislocation which characterizes housing insecurity in Kitchener, in Ontario, and beyond.

The solution lies in the decommodification of housing and organizing housing as a resource for the common good of everyone—as it

says in our human rights code, it is the right of every person to have a place to live. Another approach is to consider housing as part of an equitable healthcare system. Equitable access to health care means that the same services are available to everyone within a given territory regardless of their social position. However—as one of our outreach workers puts it—you have to be alive to receive healthcare. A safe dwelling place is at the foundation of all other health concerns.

The Working Centre continues to provide supported housing units focused on helping people move from homelessness to a stable, safe environment. Increasingly, we are working to place housing within the wider supports of the Working Centre and the Inner City Alliance: flexible and responsive initiatives that focus on food security, harm reduction and safe use, access to healthcare and healthcare professionals, and specialized outreach supports. Along with emerging shelter initiatives, this is a direct response to the local crisis in housing.

We will readily admit that it can be incredibly difficult to house people who have been street involved over many years and who experience complex and compounding challenges like addiction and mental health issues. At the same time, we can attest to the profound – and at times, unlikely – healing journeys many have lived since becoming securely housed. These healing journeys may not have been possible if The Working Centre acted as landlords protecting an investment. Instead, we have committed to leaning-in



Meg Crocker-Birmingham

with our partners to bring healthcare resources, compassion and a trauma-informed lens to our shared work. Apartments can be repaired and rebuilt, not so relationship with and the health of vulnerable people. We are working to leave behind the punitive rental market for the inherently more sustainable community housing model that assumes access to and retention of housing.

But these initiatives are only so large, and they are hard work. There is certainly no infrastructure in place to aid thousands of people now being ejected from their homes. The difficulty of transitioning from homelessness to stable forms of housing is precisely why it is so important to prevent evictions and preempt homelessness through significant efforts at constructing and facilitating affordable housing. Furthermore, we need to work to re-regulate the housing market, put an end to speculation and high-return investment, and drive the cost of housing down. A shift in values needs to happen from a financial perspective which views housing as a source of income and a valuable investment to a perspective which views housing as a basic human need and the beginning of dignity.

## Food & Housing

continued from page 1

try to build safe space through more structure. The best answer is probably somewhere in the middle, but must consider both the reclaiming of personal autonomy plus the common good of safety for everyone.

We have some years for to make-up for. As a society we have valued money, pleasure, and privilege for too long. There is a price for this world; paid by people who already experience trauma and dislocation. In our work, we see the price of this more than most people – see page 4 of this newspaper to read just a few examples of the realities people are living with. The need for healing has never been greater.

A recent *Globe & Mail* Opinion column by Dr. Stephen Hwang stated, "Our goal must be more than moving people off the street. It must be to help people live full lives and be connected, healthy and well. [...] To make a successful transition, many people – particularly those with serious mental health and substance use issues – need intensive supports [...] Research shows that investment in these services is not only critical to achieving a lasting reduction in chronic homelessness, but also that much of the costs are offset by reductions in the use of other services."

We need deeper services and supports to counteract the trauma, but we also need more autonomous and respectful housing options where people can build meaningful engagement and feel more in control of their lives. How do we support people in ways that give space to build community together? How do we make up for the dislocation that has resulted from the loss of affordable housing in our community? The spirit of active love, of unconditional personal regard, of holding onto each person, is the constant and daily work that continues in beautiful and deep ways.

We have come through some complex times, as a community, as an organization, and we have learned so much and feel such gratitude for the people who do the work, for the people who make this work possible with their generosity. Most importantly, we continue to build towards creative responses that welcome those who are most disenfranchised, those who are most left out of our society.

The work of creating affordable housing has just begun. Even after the latest housing/shelter strategies move forwards, we estimate there will be close to a hundred people still without shelter; in spite of the fact that we have all worked together to give our best efforts!

The Working Centre has some strategies to add new housing as do a number of other community partners. Will we welcome these new housing developments into our neighbourhoods? How will we support and coordinate these exciting efforts to allow creative ideas to move forwards quickly? The social and personal costs of the lack of affordable housing is high. The time to act is now.

## A Better Tent City



Ron Doyle the owner of Lot 42 personally opened up Lot 42 to make *A Better Tent City* a reality. When everything else shut down, his vision and big heart helped 40 people find a home during the pandemic. *A Better Tent City* continues seven months later.

Above: Ron working with Jeff Wilmer at *A Better Tent City*



## BOOKS FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

You can place orders by phone (519-743-1151 x111), or by visiting [catalogue.theworkingcentre.org](http://catalogue.theworkingcentre.org)

### Sustainable Economics

by Joe Mancini

This week, *Globe & Mail* headed its new Climate Change section with the statement, “We knew this was coming.” Increasingly, people and institutions are getting the picture. It is not just the four major hurricanes that have recently made landfall in North America, nor that California is suffering under drought conditions in the midst of a heat wave producing extended 50° C temperatures. Nor is it the scale of dramatic wild fires, or the fear of the smoke filled toxic air that is filling cities up and down the North American west coast.

This past month has demonstrated how climate change will deliver intense shifts in weather patterns that are forceful and disruptive. The path of destruction that these temperature fluctuations are causing, confirms the fears many have for our future if we do not change how we use the resources of planet Earth.

Again, in the past week, 560 major worldwide companies with 4 trillion in revenue have called for governments to do more to reverse the accelerating destruction of the natural world and to support broader efforts to fight climate change.

The scale of the change ahead means that we have to consider widely what the transition to a sustainable economic model looks like. How can we all live productive lives while drastically reducing the amount of energy and resources we use? This is the challenge, how to take seriously the need to use less of what we take for granted.

The transition to a sustainable society is multifaceted. One aspect is to rethink how economics affect the structure of our society. Since the Great Recession of 2008, a breakthrough of sorts has been taking place. Old assumptions are not holding and in their place is developing a new understanding about how human societies can live sustainably on this earth. Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*, reflects this coming together of new thinking:

*Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth. The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet’s capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world.*

*A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor...*

*Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations.*

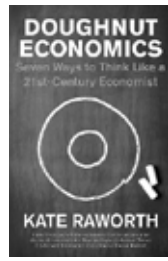
One way to engage this new thinking is to consider the ideas of public thinkers who have explored the intersection of economy, consumption, and regenerative ways of living. These authors add a wide texture of opinion and approach while thinking directly about how Climate Change will impact us. These authors are all activists in the public sphere. They have all developed a unique message by working their ideas through organizations, institutions, and governments as they seek to root their work in a community of support.

Kate Raworth has a brilliant model for rethinking economics. She challenges all of us to redraw our economic assumptions. What is the difference in our mindset between ‘rational economic man’ compared to ‘socially adaptable humans’? The answer is that our economic systems would evolve differently if we fully recognized our shared humanity compared to only individual gain. This suggests that if our model of economic growth is both regenerative and distributive, then the picture of our economy would change for the better. Raworth’s work is summarized nicely in her YouTube Ted Talk, *A Healthy Economy Should Be Designed to Thrive Not Grow* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rhcrbcg8HBw>

Juliet Schor has been teaching and writing since the 1980’s, critiquing the structure of work with books such as *The Overworked American* and *The Overspent American*. In *True Wealth*, Schor describes a slowly evolving transition that moderates the hours that we work and replaces them with ecologically and community-oriented restorative activities that strengthen the fabric of our economy and democracy.

Jeremy Rifkin has engaged the public for 40 years by linking the economy to sustainability thinking. His recent successes with the European Union have focused on designing and rolling out wide scale green energy projects. A helpful overview summary is Vice Media’s *The Third Industrial Revolution: A Radical New Sharing Economy*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX3M8Ka9vUA>

These books and authors are a good starting point, as all of them address the challenge of rethinking how our economy produces and consumes resources. As the new reality of Climate Change influences our choices, these books help us build a new dialogue forward.



#### Doughnut Economics

Seven Ways to Think like a 21st Century Economist

Kate Raworth

Sets out seven key ways to reframe our understanding of what economics is and does. How we can break our addiction to growth; redesign money, finance, and business to be in service to people; and create economies that are regenerative and distributive by design. Raworth handpicks the best emergent ideas—from ecological, behavioral, feminist, and institutional economics to complexity thinking and Earth-systems science—to address this question: How can we turn economies that need to grow, whether or not they make us thrive, into economies that make us thrive, whether or not they grow?

384 pages | \$ 24.95 softcover



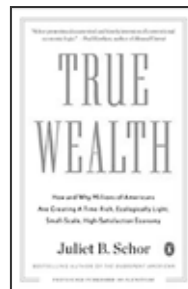
#### After the Gig

How the Sharing Economy Got Hijacked and How to Win It Back

Juliet Schor

The “sharing economy” was supposed to transform work—giving earners flexibility, autonomy, and a decent income. But a dark side took over: exploited Uber drivers, neighborhoods ruined by Airbnb, racial discrimination, and rising carbon emissions. The basic model—a peer-to-peer structure augmented by digital tech—still holds potential. Schor presents a compelling argument that we can engineer a reboot: through regulatory reforms and cooperative platforms owned and controlled by users, an equitable and truly shared economy is still possible.

272 pages | \$24.95 hardcover



#### True Wealth

A Time-Rich, Ecologically Light, Small Scale Economy

Juliet Schor

In *True Wealth*, economist Juliet B. Schor rejects the sacrifice message, with the insight that social innovations and new technology can simultaneously enhance our lives and protect the planet. Schor shares examples of urban farmers, DIY renovators, and others working outside the conventional market to illuminate the path away from the work-and-spend cycle and toward a new world rich in time, creativity, information, and community.

272 pages | \$24.00 softcover



#### Less Is More

How Degrowth Will Save the World

Jason Hickel

The world has finally awoken to the reality of climate breakdown and ecological collapse. Now we must face up to its primary cause. Capitalism demands perpetual expansion, which is devastating the living world. There is only one solution that will lead to meaningful and immediate change: DEGROWTH. If we want to have a shot at halting the crisis, we need to restore the balance. We need to change how we see nature and our place in it, shifting from a philosophy of domination and extraction to one that’s rooted in reciprocity and regeneration. We need to evolve beyond the dogmas of capitalism to a new system that is fit for the twenty-first century. But what does such a society look like? What about jobs? What about health? What about progress? This book tackles these questions and traces a clear pathway to a post-capitalist economy. An economy that’s more just, more caring, and more fun. An economy that enables human flourishing while reversing ecological breakdown. An economy that will not only lift us out of our current crisis, but restore our sense of connection to a world that’s brimming with life. By taking less, we can become more.

Available November 2020 | 320 pages | \$20.00 softcover



#### The Green New Deal

Why the Fossil Fuel Civilization will Collapse by 2028, and the Bold Economic Plan to Save Life on Earth

Jeremy Rifkin

A new vision for America’s future is quickly gaining momentum. The Green New Deal has caught fire in activist circles and become a central focus in the national conversation, setting the agenda for a new political movement that will likely transform the entire US and world economy. Although the details remain to be hashed out, it has inspired the millennial generation, now the largest voting bloc in the country, to lead America on the issue of climate change. In *The Green New Deal*, New York Times best-selling author and renowned economic and social theorist Jeremy Rifkin delivers the political narrative, technical framework, and economic plan for the debate now taking center stage across America. The concurrence of a stranded fossil fuel assets bubble and a green political vision opens up the possibility of a massive global paradigm shift into a post-carbon ecological era, hopefully in time to prevent a temperature rise that will tip us over the edge into runaway climate change.

304 pages | \$37.99 hardcover



#### Sacred Economics – Charles Eisenstein

Money, Gift, and Society in the Age of Transition

Charles Eisenstein

*Sacred Economics* traces the history of money from ancient gift economies to modern capitalism, revealing how the money system has contributed to alienation, competition, and scarcity, destroyed community, and necessitated endless growth. Today, these trends have reached their extreme - but in the wake of their collapse, we may find great opportunity to transition to a more connected, ecological, and sustainable way of being. Eisenstein also considers the personal dimensions of this transition, speaking to those concerned with “right livelihood” and how to live according to their ideals in a world seemingly ruled by money.

496 pages | \$26.95 softcover

# THE CONSEQUENCES OF INACTION



THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ARE NO LONGER PREDICTIONS OF SCIENTIFIC MODELS. WE INCREASINGLY SEE REAL WORLD DAMAGE FROM A RISE IN GLOBAL TEMPERATURE.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR COLLECTIVE INACTION GROW AS WE ACCELERATE INTO WIDESPREAD NATURAL AND CIVILIZATIONAL DISASTER.

IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTIONS AND DEDICATE OUR EFFORTS TOWARDS SLOWING AND AVERTING THE MOST CATASTROPHIC CHANGES FROM OCCURRING.

## Working Centre Updates

### Job Search Resource Centre Support

Resume, cover letter, job search, support with Zoom/virtual interviews, support with career/work change, labour market information

**In person:** Open 9:00 am to 12:30 pm Monday to Friday

Please wear a mask – queue forms outside and limited numbers inside at a time

No public access computers at this time; phone available

**Virtual:** Support over the phone, through zoom

Appointments available Monday to Thursday

Call 519.743.1151 ext.0 (leave a message – we will call you back)

Email us at [genmail@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:genmail@theworkingcentre.org) please include your name, phone number and what kind of help you would like

**Money Matters** is offering in-person and virtual appointments for Money Matters help, income tax support, financial problem-solving. Email [moneymatters@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:moneymatters@theworkingcentre.org) or call 519.743.1151 ext.0 to book an appointment.

**Our public spaces** remain closed down for now, including Queen Street Commons Café, Fresh Ground, Recycle Cycles, and Computer Recycling. Worth a Second Look is now open and we are planning for the re-opening of the other projects.



## A Good Season at Hacienda Sarria Market Garden

by Adam Kramer & Rachael Chong

The sun has been shining this September and the growers at Hacienda Market Garden have been making full use of it! In a challenging year, the garden has been incredibly productive and heading into fall we are very pleased with the growing season so far and are feeling confident and hopeful for the seasons to come!

Like many of you, our work flow begins to shift as we head into September. A few of us are back to school, while we also begin include more volunteers into our work and shift from summer to fall harvesting. We're excited to start the next chapter in the year!

Increasingly there are cooler days and nights in the garden, so we are readying ourselves to say goodbye to most of our summer vegetables. Night temperatures have gone down low enough that we've already had some patchy frost, so a hard killing frost might not be far off. We've come to welcome it in many ways as it lets us breathe a sigh of relief as the summer growing season ends in earnest.

On the other hand, we aren't out of woods yet - weeds are still growing! Even in the first weeks of autumn we did a significant amount of work cultivating and hand-weeding in our onions and salad green beds - a bit of help to all our fall greens that are growing most excellently.



Fall means preparing for winter and the spring that follows. Our cover crops are really growing quickly, though would have benefited from a little more rain - it's been dry lately! Daikon radish, oats, and buckwheat made up the bulk of our fall and winter cover crops, which will serve to protect and build our soil.

Our small scale lets us intensively manage our soil with less mechanization thanks to the hard work of a great bunch of gardeners (though there are fewer of us than in seasons past). The fall season has brought several long-time volunteer garden-



ers back to the garden and we are so happy to have their work, energy, and company again. There have been some great days of soaking up the sun and chatting as we've cleaned our cured garlic, onions, and shallots - which have been taking up way to much room in the shed (a sign of a good harvest!). Some of the garlic will be kept as seed to be planted in the coming weeks and some will appear in our CSA shares in October. We're keen to share these storage crops with all our members!

Our CSA share season runs from mid-June through October, so there is still plenty of harvesting left to do. Celery, carrots, beets, and greens are a few of the staples for the month ahead, though we also have a few new trial crops we are excited to begin giving out to our CSA members. We're always learning, adjusting, and planning for next season to make our shares even better!

## Climate Change Workshops

### Ecological Economics

*Finding the roots of economy in community and nature*

Virtual online discussions  
Wednesday evenings  
Oct. 28th - Dec. 2nd

### Climate Change and Community Resilience

Four week series starting mid October with online discussions

For more information: [freshground@theworkingcentre.org](mailto:freshground@theworkingcentre.org)