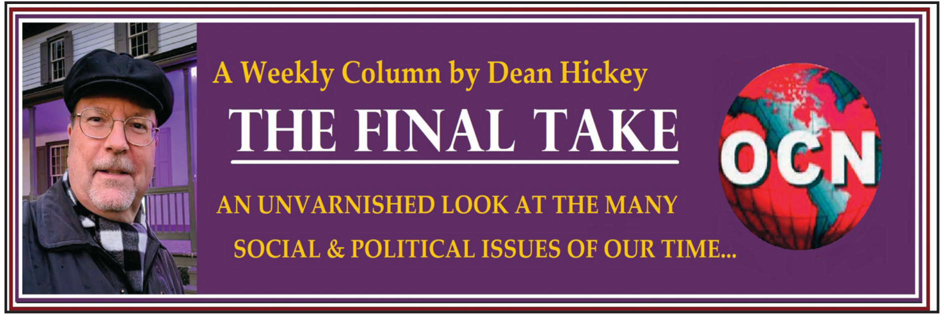


## PROPERTY RIGHTS IN CANADA ARE ERODING AND IT'S TIME TO TAKE ACTION

PROPERTY RIGHTS IN CANADA ARE ERODING and our governments are about to face a political tsunami they alone are responsible for. At the same time, there appears to be a growing public awareness of the threat to private property in this country – resulting from court decisions and government legislation, particularly in British Columbia where indigenous claims are involved. We are now facing a real and very direct threat to our economy, our living standards, and our peaceful society.

Men like Adam Smith, author of The Wealth of Nations published in 1776, have tried to capture the fundamental reasons why some countries prosper while others fall so far behind, and they include culture, religion, resources, and geographical advantages. But at the end of the day there appears to be one explanation that modern-day economists keep returning to time and again - private property rights.

Almost everyone who has taken the time to study the matter agrees that private property is a necessary condition for long term prosperity. As Adam Smith himself wrote, "Commerce and manufactures can seldom flourish long in any state which does not enjoy a regular administration of justice, in which the people do not feel themselves secure in the possession of their property."

A private property right necessitates the exclusive authority to own, use and transfer an asset. Each of these characteristics plays an important role in economic growth. When citizens are allowed to use an asset however they wish, they're incentivized to put it to its most productive use, again adding to a nation's overall wealth. And most importantly, when they have the ability to transfer it to others on mutually agreeable terms, it tends to be reallocated to those who can create the most value out of it. That's important.

I have had had legal title to land and buildings in my lifetime, and I enjoyed a degree of confidence in having ownership of those assets. I harbored a willingness to maintain them, invest in them, and to see their value increase. All of that adds to a stock of private capital in this country that allows us to become more productive and therefore wealthier as individuals and as a society.

This doesn't happen by accident, but rather it is the direct result of a set of laws and institutions structured to ensure that property rights are unambiguous - so that it's easy to determine who owns what - and widespread, so that rights are enjoyed by everyone and not just a select few. These are not just theoretical considerations. Decades of economic research demonstrate that private property is all-important for a nation to truly flourish in all its aspects.

In his study of more than 1,000 years of economic development, Dutch historian Bas van Bavel documents a recurring pattern. From Northern Italy, to Iraq, to the Dutch Republic, secure property rights led to economic growth and prosperity, and conversely, when property rights were eroded, economies stagnated or even declined.

In extensive fieldwork throughout Latin America, Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto found that when private property rights are well recognized, owners are able to breathe new life into otherwise "dead" capital, turning it into collateral for loans and investment, leading to real increases in living standards.

In their Nobel Prize-winning work, economists Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson point to the "natural" experiment on the Korean Peninsula. While the two Koreas share similar histories, culture, and natural resources, the South has instituted well-defined, secure and general private property rights while the North has attempted to centrally plan a communist state with almost no protection of individual private property. While their incomes were once comparable, South Koreans now earn about 26 times what their North Korean neighbours earn.

Here in Canada, we must make ourselves aware of the broader implications of weakened private property rights. Recent court decisions and legislative initiatives by governments appear to be promoting a sort of new, collective Aboriginal rights and land-title reality that overrides existing property ownership. If Canada's longstanding tradition of strong property rights protection continues to be eroded like this, our long-term prospects for peace and prosperity will certainly be put at risk. That is an unescapable reality.

This Canadian-made property upheaval has two distinct sources. The first is Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. The second is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). British Columbia is particularly susceptible to both, but the rest of the country is not immune from them either. What is very important for readers of this column to remember is that the Courts control Section 35, but it is our elected representatives that control whether UNDRIP applies in their various jurisdictions throughout Canada.

Section 35 was the basis of the recent Cowichan decision from the B.C. Supreme Court in which Aboriginal title, the court said, is "prior and senior" to fee simple property. Seriously, this actually happened. The B.C. law that eventually enacted UNDRIP now forms a part of the NDP government's socialist mandate to make agreements granting title and/or management rights to specific Aboriginal groups over specific territories. That is absolutely frightening and a recipe for civil unrest in the years to come.

Over on the east coast, in New Brunswick, Wolastoqey First Nation claimed the western half of the province, including large tracts of land owned by seven private companies. In 2024, those companies brought a motion to be released from the claim. The Court of King's Bench of New Brunswick dismissed the action against them, but not because the claim for their land could not succeed. Striking the claim against the private defendants "does not mean that the Aboriginal group will be denied the possible remedy of repossessing [the defendants'] land," the judge wrote. Where the Aboriginal claim is made out, the court could instruct the government to expropriate private property from its owners and hand it over to the Aboriginal group.

All of this began in 2021 when the federal Liberal government under Justin Trudeau passed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, which legally obligates the Canadian government to ensure its laws are consistent with that Declaration. Now we're beginning to pay the price for yet more Liberal Party stupidity.


# Karmageddon

**By Mr. 'X' ~ John Mutton**
**CENTRAL EXCLUSIVE**

There are moments in politics when you can simply feel that change is coming—and that change needs to come. In many cases, it is healthy for the electorate when mayors or senior politicians serve a couple of terms and then move on, whether to the private sector or to other pursuits. Renewal matters. No position better illustrates public fatigue with elected office than that of mayor. We will never see the likes of Hazel McCallion again—someone who was not only embraced by the electorate but who also never needed "strong mayor" powers. She was a strong leader, plain and simple, and she governed with the clear will of council behind her. Mayors have a best-before date. Councillors don't. With the incredible powers now granted to strong mayors, it is more important than ever that we see new leadership and new ideas after eight years. I firmly believe term limits—similar to those in the United States—should be implemented in Canadian municipalities. Looking across Durham Region, we can see examples of what to do—and what not to do. Ajax Mayor Shaun Collier will not be seeking re-election after two terms. His time in office was marked by real accomplishments in the Town of Ajax and by consistent leadership, often with strong majority support from council. Oshawa Mayor Dan Carter is also retiring after two terms, having governed one of the most challenging municipalities in the region. Oshawa carries a heavy social-services burden while also serving as Durham's industrial hub—no easy task for any mayor.

Elsewhere in Durham, with the exception of Clarington, municipalities have relatively new mayors and are moving forward with fresh agendas and updated strategic plans. That brings us to the curious case of Clarington. Adrian Foster is now seeking a fifth term, making him the longest-serving mayor in Clarington's history. He announced his intention to run again months ago—during a televised council meeting, no less—which struck many as odd and inappropriate.

It is hard to ignore the areas where Clarington has taken a sharp and troubling turn: extreme taxation, questionable service expansions, and priorities that no longer reflect what residents actually want—particularly around recreation and the continued failure to build arenas.

Recent reporting by the new online publication Clarington Current has highlighted serious breakdowns in communication between the municipality and other levels of government, including unprofessional and disrespectful treatment of the local Member of Parliament's office.

We have also learned of Clarington staff being reprimanded by judicial bodies for punitive and hostile behaviour toward constituents. That is not an isolated issue—it is a collapse of leadership. When staff culture deteriorates this badly, responsibility rests at the top. This is what happens when people remain in power too long—egos grow unchecked, accountability disappears, and a circle of enablers emerges. We see it in certain staff behaviours and in municipally funded external bodies, including the Clarington Board of Trade, where legitimate concerns are not addressed professionally but instead met with personal attacks or legal threats. I can feel change coming. And when it comes, it will not stop at the mayor's office. It will ripple through the entire organization and through the satellite bodies funded by taxpayers. This upcoming election—the first under the strong-mayor system—will expose opportunists at a whole new level. Watch closely as loyalties shift, backs are scratched, and distance is quietly created from the current administration. Frankly, I can't wait.

## McDonald's price freeze is bad economic news for Canada

By Sylvain Charlebois

McDonald's isn't being generous. Cheap burgers come with consequences, especially for Canadian processors and farmers already under strain

McDonald's Canada has launched a full-scale price war—and the shockwaves will not stop at the drive-thru. By freezing prices for an entire year on its $5 Value Meals and $1 menu items, the country's largest fast-food player is locking in entry-level affordability at a moment when consumers have made it unmistakably clear they have had enough of fast-food inflation. This is not a marketing flourish. It is a defensive economic move.

The reaction from competitors was immediate. Burger King and Wendy's are already leaning harder into value bundles and limited-time discounts. When McDonald's moves, the entire fast-food sector adjusts. There is no larger price setter in Canadian foodservice, and history shows that when McDonald's chooses to compete on price, everyone else must follow, whether they can afford to or not.

McDonald's fast-food prices are frozen, but costs don't disappear. This price war pushes pressure onto processors and farmers

When the country's biggest fast-food chain freezes prices, it's a sign demand is fragile and confidence is thin.

What makes this moment especially notable is that it has been a long time since Canada has seen a true fast-food price war. The last nationwide episode dates back to roughly 2013-15, when McDonald's aggressively expanded dollar-menu pricing and value breakfasts to protect traffic. Rivals followed suit, but that war ended quietly as costs stabilized and chains pivoted toward premiumization, including craft burgers, specialty coffees, delivery fees, and app-driven upselling. From about 2016 onward, the industry steadily moved away from value and toward margin expansion.

That context matters because this price war is unfolding under far weaker economic conditions. The last one was fought during a period of relatively stable input costs and consumer optimism. Today's battle is unfolding in an inflationary environment marked by weaker demand, declining restaurant visits, and widespread financial stress across foodservice. While headline inflation has eased, food prices have remained elevated in recent years, leaving households far more sensitive to everyday price increases. This is not about gaining market share. It is about preserving demand.

To consumers, the price freeze looks like a win. After months of menu prices creeping well beyond what "fast food" was ever meant to be, McDonald's is restoring a sense of predictability at the counter. But price wars of this scale do not stop at the drive-thru window. They ripple through the entire food supply chain, all the way back to Canadian farms.

McDonald's Canada is not just a restaurant chain; it is one of the most powerful agricultural buyers in the country. The company operates more than 1,400 restaurants nationwide, giving it enormous purchasing leverage across multiple food categories. At the farm gate alone, its annual demand represents roughly $300 to $350 million in Canadian beef, $200 to $250 million in potatoes, $80 to $100 million in dairy, $70 to $90 million in produce, $40 to $50 million in eggs, and $25 to $35 million in wheat. Taken together, that amounts to approximately $720 to $875 million a year in farm-level value. Once processing, packaging, logistics, and distribution are added, McDonald's injects roughly $1.6 to $1.8 billion annually into the Canadian food economy.

Those numbers explain why this decision matters so much right now. When McDonald's freezes prices, the pressure does not disappear—it moves. Restaurants absorb the hit first, with profit margins being squeezed. Processors are next, pushed into renegotiating contracts, shaving costs, and demanding higher efficiency. Farmers feel it last, but they often feel it hardest. A sustained price war tightens margins upstream at a time when producers are already grappling with higher fuel, fertilizer, labour, and financing costs.

This is also happening against a backdrop of structural contraction in the restaurant sector. According to estimates from the Agri-Food Analytics Lab, more than 11,000 restaurants in Canada are projected to close over a 24-month period, with closures significantly outpacing openings. Independent operators and mid-sized chains do not have the purchasing power or balance sheets to survive prolonged discounting. When global fast-food giants fight on price, smaller players are squeezed out.

The fast-food sector is already adjusting. Menus are being simplified, promotional cycles shortened, and technology deployed to cut labour costs and increase throughput. Entry-level items are being protected at all costs, even as premium offerings quietly shrink or disappear. Value, not variety or innovation, has become the dominant competitive weapon.

McDonald's decision to lock prices for a year should not be misread as a signal that food inflation is over. It is an admission that consumers have reached their limit. When the most powerful restaurant brand in the country decides it must absorb inflation rather than pass it along, it tells us demand is fragile and confidence is thin.

Fast-food price wars are back—but this time, they are being fought in a far more fragile economy. The relief at the counter will be real. The pressure on competitors will be intense. And for processors and farmers, the consequences will be deep and lasting. Because a price war at McDonald's is never just about burgers. It is a nationwide supply-chain shock that starts at the menu board and ends in the field.