

THE DECLINE OF THE WEST

How Canada traded free enterprise, cheap energy
and limited government for central direction



LET'S TALK

ALBERTA

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The Decline of the West

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and limited government for central direction*

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Contents

How to read this booklet	4
Executive summary	5
1 What built the West	7
2 Marxism	11
3 Canada's socialist roots	15
4 The Leap Manifesto	19
5 The international agenda	23
6 Ownership versus control	28
7 The economic record	32
8 The politics of utopia	36
9 What has changed in Canada	41
10 The future of Western freedom	44
Summary of findings	47
References	49

How to read this booklet

This booklet makes a serious claim. Every important claim is backed by a document you can look up yourself: a party manifesto, a statute, a court ruling, a government report or official statistics. Where I interpret, I say so.

Three labels run through the chapters:

- **Stated intent:** an organization said it, in its own words. I quote it.
- **Traced influence:** money, people or an official document connects one actor to another. I show the link.
- **Shared direction:** the ideas match but no direct link has been proven. I say so.

I also separate three things that are often blurred together: what a party *proposed*, what a government *enacted*, and what an international body *recommended*. A resolution at a party convention is not a law. A UN goal is not a treaty. Treating them as the same thing weakens an argument.

I report what cuts against my case. Ottawa has reversed some of its own policies since 2025. Mark Carney, whose book I examine closely, praises markets in places. I include those facts and answer them.

Executive summary

For two hundred years, the West ran an experiment no civilization had tried at scale: let ordinary people own property, trade freely and use as much energy as they could afford. The result was the largest rise in human welfare in history. In 1820 roughly three in four people on earth lived in extreme poverty. By 2018 it was one in ten.¹ Over the same period, world energy use grew more than thirty-fold and life expectancy more than doubled.

That system is being dismantled from the inside. It is not a secret cabal. It is happening in the open, through party manifestos, statutes, regulations, international frameworks and funded campaigns. Each one is published and can be traced. I follow that paper trail.

What I found:

1. **Canada's main socialist party said what it wanted, in writing, for eighty years.** The 1933 Regina Manifesto pledged to "eradicate capitalism." The NDP constitution called for "the extension of the principle of social ownership" until 2013, when the words were removed but the party still described itself as part of the "democratic socialist" tradition.
2. **Outright nationalization mostly failed at the ballot box. Control succeeded instead.** Canada rarely seizes businesses. It directs them: what they may build, how they must build it, what they may emit and whether they may expand. The deed stays private; the decisions move to Ottawa.
3. **The direction accelerated after 2015.** A national carbon price, a discretionary project-approval regime the Supreme

Court found "largely unconstitutional," a net-zero target written into law, a national "just transition" planning council, and rules that phase gas power off the grid.

4. **Much of the agenda came from outside elected government.** The UN's 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement's targets, the World Economic Forum's "Great Reset" and foreign-funded campaigns shaped the debate. Most of these are not binding. Ottawa chose to adopt them.
5. **The economic results are poor.** Canadian business-sector productivity fell to 71% of the US level by 2022. Canadian workers now receive 41 cents of machinery and equipment investment for every dollar a US worker receives. Real GDP per person in 2026 is below its 2022 peak.
6. **The central idea behind it all is old.** Experts with enough power can build a better society. Today's version speaks of "values" instead of "planning," but the question is the same: whose values, chosen by whom?

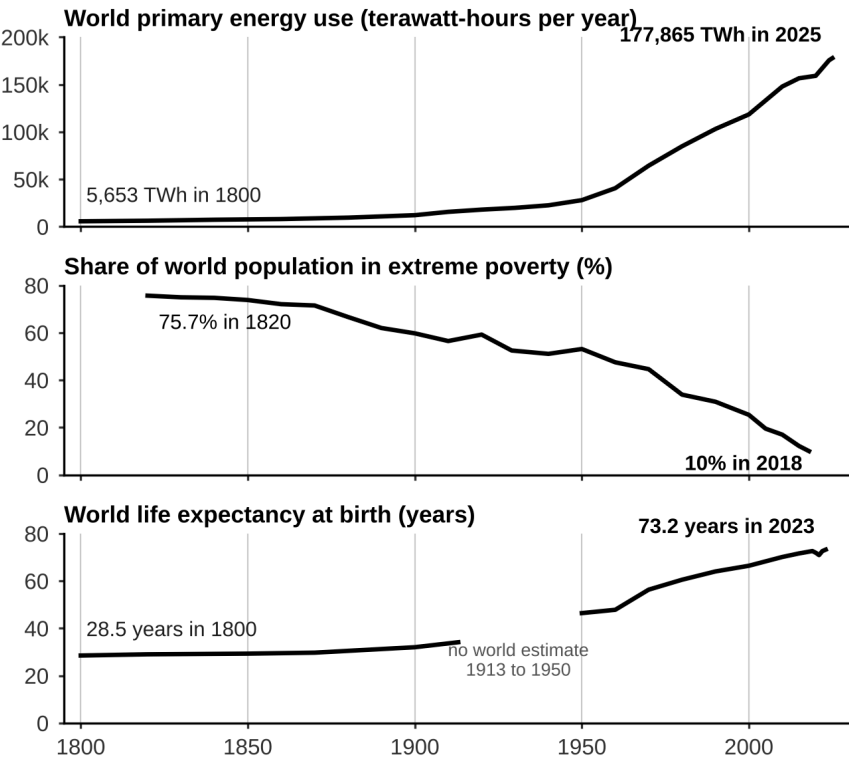
This is not a story of communism in Canada. It is a story of a free society slowly handing decisions to people it never elected. The final chapter sets out what Canadians, and Albertans in particular, can do to take them back.

What built the West

For almost all of human history, nearly everyone was poor. A peasant in 1700 lived much like a peasant in 700. Then, starting in Britain and spreading through Europe and North America, something changed. Within a few generations, ordinary people had more food, longer lives and more freedom than kings once had.

Three things made it happen.

Since 1800, world energy use grew 31-fold while extreme poverty fell from 3 in 4 people to 1 in 10



Three measures on one time axis, world totals. The lines move together; the chart alone does not prove cause. Source: Our World in Data (see reference 1).

1. You own what you build

In 1689 the English philosopher John Locke argued in his *Second Treatise of Government* that people have a natural right to their life, liberty and property, and that governments exist to protect those rights, not to grant them. A man who mixes his labour with land, Locke wrote, makes it his own.²

This was a radical idea. It meant a farmer could improve his land knowing the gain was his. A craftsman could save, invest and expand without a lord or king taking the result. Secure property gave ordinary people a reason to work, save and take risks. It also gave them independence: a man who owns his house, his tools and his savings does not depend on the favour of the state.

Property rights only work under the **rule of law**: the same rules for everyone, enforced by independent courts. Contracts mean something. Theft, including theft by the government, can be challenged.

2. Prices coordinate what no planner can

In 1776 Adam Smith published *The Wealth of Nations*. His central insight was that millions of people pursuing their own interest through voluntary trade produce an order no one designs. "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner," he wrote, "but from their regard to their own interest."³

In 1945 the economist Friedrich Hayek explained why this works better than central planning. The knowledge needed to run an economy is scattered across millions of minds: a farmer knows his soil, a shopkeeper knows her customers, an engineer knows his machine. Prices pull that knowledge together. When something becomes scarce, its price rises, and

everyone adjusts without being told. No central planner, however intelligent, can gather and process that much information.⁴

This matters for the rest of this booklet. Every plan to direct an economy from the centre, whether in Moscow in 1930 or Ottawa in 2026, runs into the same problem: the planners don't know what they don't know.

3. Cheap, abundant energy

The third ingredient is the one most often forgotten. Before 1800, almost all work was done by human and animal muscle, plus a little wind and water. Coal, then oil and gas, changed that. A single barrel of oil holds as much energy as several years of hard physical labour. Even after engine losses, it does the work of two to three years of manual labour.⁵ Cheap energy powered factories, tractors, railways, refrigeration, fertilizer and hospitals.

The chart above tells the story in three lines. As world energy use rose more than thirty-fold, extreme poverty fell from three in four people to one in ten, and life expectancy more than doubled. The scientist Vaclav Smil has documented in *Energy and Civilization* (2017) how every leap in human living standards rode on a leap in usable energy.⁶ Correlation does not prove cause. But the mechanism is simple: a society that can do more work per person can produce more per person.

Alberta knows this better than anywhere in Canada. Its prosperity, and a large share of the federal transfers that have funded the rest of the country, came from energy.

Capitalism's real failures

Early industrial capitalism had child labour, dangerous factories and company towns. Monopolies like Standard Oil crushed competitors. Financial panics, from 1929 to 2008, wiped out savings and jobs.

Look at how these were fixed. Most were cured by the rule of law applied equally: anti-trust law, safety codes, fraud prosecution. Many were made worse by government favours: protected monopolies, bailouts, and banks that knew they were "too big to fail." Markets need rules. The lesson is that rules should be the same for everyone. They should set the boundaries of the game, not pick the winners.

Four words that are often confused

Term	What it means here
Classical liberalism	Individual rights, private property, free markets, limited government. The tradition of Locke and Smith.
Conservatism	Preserving inherited institutions, faith, family and nation; wary of rapid change.
Modern liberalism	Markets plus an active state that redistributes and regulates to pursue equality.
Libertarianism	Classical liberalism pushed further: the smallest possible state.

In this booklet I defend the classical liberal tradition that built the West. Chapter 8 returns to its moral foundations.

The question for the rest of the booklet: if property, prices and energy built Western prosperity, what happens when all three are weakened at once?

Marxism

In 1848, two young Germans published a pamphlet that would shape the next century. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels argued that all history is a story of class struggle, that capitalism exploits the worker, and that it would eventually be replaced by a society without private property. Their *Communist Manifesto* stated the goal:

"The theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property."⁷

The *Manifesto* then listed ten measures for "the most advanced countries." They included:

- "Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes."
- "A heavy progressive or graduated income tax."
- "Abolition of all rights of inheritance."
- "Centralisation of credit in the hands of the state, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly."
- State ownership of transport and communication, and free public education.

Some of those ideas, like free public schooling, became ordinary features of every Western country. Pieces of the program entered the mainstream one at a time.

The promise

In 1875 Marx sketched the end point in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. In "a higher phase of communist society,"

society would live by the rule: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!" Marx meant this as a final stage after a long transition, not a plan for a welfare state.⁸

Engels described what would happen to government once the means of production were in state hands. In *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880) he wrote that "the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things," and that "The State is not 'abolished'. It dies out."⁹

That is the utopian promise. Concentrate power for a time, and it will disappear.

The transition

Lenin was more candid. In *The State and Revolution* (1917) he described the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as "democracy for the vast majority of the people, and suppression by force, i.e., exclusion from democracy," of the former owning classes.¹⁰

The coercion was not an accident of bad leaders. It was in the doctrine. If private property is the root of injustice, someone must take it away, and people who own things rarely hand them over voluntarily. A state strong enough to abolish property is strong enough to do anything else it wants. In no case did it "die out."

The family tree

Not every left-wing movement is Marxist. The tradition split into branches that kept or dropped different parts of the program:

Branch	Ends private ownership of industry?	Central planning?	Revolution?	Elections?
Revolutionary Marxism (Lenin, Mao)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Branch	Ends private ownership of industry?	Central planning?	Revolution?	Elections?
Democratic socialism (early CCF, Regina Manifesto)	Yes, major industries	Yes	No	Yes
Social democracy (later NDP, Nordic parties)	Selected sectors only	Partial	No	Yes
Modern progressivism	No	Steering through regulation, subsidy and targets	No	Yes

The direction of travel matters more than the label. Each branch moved further from owning industry and closer to *directing* it. Chapter 6 argues that, in practice, direction can achieve much of what ownership once promised.

The record

The fairest way to judge an economic system is to compare countries that share history and culture but chose different systems. History has run that experiment several times:

- **East and West Germany.** One people, one language, split in 1945. By reunification in 1990, West Germany was far richer, freer and more productive, and East Germans had to be fenced in to stop them leaving.
- **North and South Korea.** One peninsula, split in 1953. South Korea became one of the world's advanced economies. North Korea suffered famine in the 1990s and remains one of the poorest, most repressive countries on earth.
- **Venezuela.** Once the richest country in South America, it nationalized its oil industry and much of its economy after 1999. Its economy collapsed and millions emigrated.

The larger record is darker. Historians such as Robert Conquest and Anne Applebaum (the Soviet Union) and Frank Dikötter (Mao's China) document famines and repression that killed tens of millions. Mao's Great Leap Forward alone caused a famine in which estimates of the dead range from about 15 million (official Chinese figures) to 45 million (Dikötter), with most scholarly estimates between 30 and 45 million.^{11,12}

War, dictatorship and corruption also contributed to these outcomes, and capitalist dictatorships have also been brutal. But the paired comparisons control for much of that. The same people, under different systems, got different results.

"But the Nordic countries are socialist"

They are not. Denmark, Sweden and Norway combine high taxes and generous social programs with private ownership, free trade and some of the world's most open markets. In October 2015, speaking at Harvard's Kennedy School, then Danish prime minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen said that "Denmark is far from a socialist planned economy. Denmark is a market economy."¹³ Sweden moved away from heavier state control after an economic crisis in the early 1990s.

The Nordic model is a debate about how big the welfare state should be. It is not evidence that state ownership or central planning work.

Canada's socialist roots

Canada never had a communist revolution. It had a democratic socialist party that told voters what it wanted. The party won power in provinces, shaped national policy from opposition, and softened its language without changing direction.

Regina, 1933

In July 1933, in the depths of the Depression, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) met in Regina and adopted its founding program. Its preamble said:

*"We aim to replace the present capitalist system, with its inherent injustice and inhumanity, by a social order... in which economic planning will supersede unregulated private enterprise and competition."*¹⁴

It called for the chartered banks to be "socialized and removed from the control of private profit-seeking interests." It closed with this pledge:

*"No C.C.F. Government will rest content until it has eradicated capitalism and put into operation the full programme of socialized planning which will lead to the establishment in Canada of the Cooperative Commonwealth."*¹⁴

This is stated intent, in the party's own words. In 1933 nearly 30 per cent of the labour force was out of work, and many saw capitalism as a failure.¹⁵ But the CCF did not seek to reform markets. It sought to replace them.

Winnipeg, 1956

By the 1950s, post-war prosperity had made "eradicate capitalism" a hard sell. The CCF's Winnipeg Declaration of 1956 accepted that "in many fields there will be need for private enterprise." But the core stayed the same: "Private profit and corporate power must be subordinated to social planning designed to achieve equality of opportunity," with "public ownership as the most effective means of breaking the stranglehold of private monopolies."¹⁶

The tactic changed. The goal of subordinating private enterprise to planning did not.

1961 to 2013

In 1961 the CCF merged with organized labour to form the New Democratic Party. For more than fifty years, the NDP constitution's preamble committed the party to production for human need and, "where necessary the extension of the principle of social ownership."

In April 2013, at its Montreal convention, the NDP rewrote that preamble. Delegates voted 960 to 188 to remove the social-ownership language. The new text spoke of "a rules based economy... in which governments have the power to address the limitations of the market in addressing the common good." It also kept the party firmly "within the social democratic and democratic socialist traditions."^{17,18}

The state no longer needs to *own* the economy. It needs "the power to address the limitations of the market." That is the shift I track in this booklet: from ownership to control.

2016 and 2021

In April 2016, at its convention in Edmonton, the NDP voted to have its riding associations debate the Leap Manifesto (Chapter 4), describing it as "a high-level statement of principles that speaks to the aspirations, history and values of the party." That was an exploratory resolution, not adopted policy.¹⁹

At the 2021 convention, riding associations submitted resolutions to nationalize Canada's five big private banks, to impose a 100% tax on wealth over \$1 billion, and to declare the NDP "an explicitly socialist party with the goal of public ownership and democratic control." **None of these was adopted.** Most were never debated. I include them because they show what some party activists still want. They are not NDP policy.²⁰

Influence without winning

The CCF and NDP have never formed a federal government. Critics say that makes this irrelevant. It doesn't, for two reasons.

First, the party governed provinces, including Saskatchewan from 1944, British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Alberta from 2015 to 2019. The Notley government introduced a provincial carbon levy, accelerated the coal phase-out and reviewed royalties.

Second, it shaped federal policy from the opposition benches. The clearest case is the March 2022 "supply and confidence agreement," in which the NDP agreed to keep the minority Liberal government in power until June 2025 in exchange for dental care, progress on pharmacare, "Just Transition legislation," and "a plan to phase-out public financing of the

fossil fuel sector." A party that won 25 seats²¹ got a large part of its agenda enacted without ever winning government.²²

What this chapter shows: Canada's left set out to replace private enterprise with planning (stated intent). Over time it stopped asking to own industry and started asking for the power to direct it (stated intent, 2013). Some of those aims became law through a minority-government deal (traced influence, 2022).

The Leap Manifesto

In September 2015, a month before the federal election that brought Justin Trudeau to power, a group of activists, artists and union leaders led by the writer Naomi Klein and filmmaker Avi Lewis launched *The Leap Manifesto: A Call for a Canada Based on Caring for the Earth and One Another*. It was blunt about Canada's oil and gas industry.

What Leap demanded

Three lines capture its program:

Canada should "get 100% of its electricity from renewable resources within two decades."

"There is no longer an excuse for building new infrastructure projects that lock us into increased extraction decades into the future."

"We call for an end to all trade deals that interfere with our attempts to rebuild local economies, regulate corporations and stop damaging extractive projects."²³

It also called for community-owned renewable energy, "polluter pays" taxes on corporations and the wealthy, a guaranteed income, retraining for energy workers and a central role for Indigenous rights in land-use decisions.

For Alberta, the meaning was plain. No new pipelines, no expansion of the oil sands, and a managed wind-down of the province's largest industry.

What happened next

In the decade after Leap, Ottawa enacted or proposed measures that point the same way. The table below sets them side by side. The last column asks: did Leap *cause* the policy, did both come from the same movement, or is the resemblance only thematic?

Leap demand	Later federal action	Year	Status	Link
No new extraction infrastructure	Impact Assessment Act (Bill C-69): broad discretionary approval for major projects	2019	Law; largely struck down by the Supreme Court in 2023, then amended	Shared direction
No new extraction infrastructure	Oil Tanker Moratorium Act (Bill C-48): tanker ban on the northern B.C. coast ²⁴	2019	Law; Ottawa agreed in 2025 to "explore options" under it	Shared direction
100% renewable electricity	Clean Electricity Regulations: 65 tonnes CO ₂ per GWh from 2035, zero from 2050	2024	Regulation; in abeyance in Alberta since 2026	Shared direction
Polluter-pays carbon pricing	Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act ²⁵	2018	Law; consumer charge ended 2025, industrial price continues	Movement
Retraining for energy workers	Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act ²⁶	2024	Law	Traced influence (via 2022 NDP deal)
Cap on oil and gas	Proposed oil and gas emissions cap	2023–24	Proposed; dropped in 2025 Canada–Alberta deal	Shared direction
End trade deals that block climate rules	No equivalent	—	—	None

What I found

I have not found a federal minister or official document that cites Leap as the source of a policy. So I do not claim Leap wrote Canada's climate policy. What the record shows:

- Leap's authors stated their goals openly (stated intent).
- The federal NDP formally voted to engage with Leap in 2016 (stated intent).
- The NDP's 2022 deal with the Liberals delivered "Just Transition legislation," which became the Sustainable Jobs Act (traced influence).
- Several other Leap goals became federal law or regulation over the next nine years (shared direction).

Leap was a symptom of a broader movement, not its cause. That movement included environmental groups, some unions, academics, foreign-funded campaigns (Chapter 5) and senior political staff. Its policies were then adopted by a government that never campaigned on "keeping it in the ground," but enacted much of what that slogan required.

The retreat

Since 2025, Ottawa has stepped back from several of these measures. The consumer carbon charge was set to zero. Under the November 2025 Canada–Alberta memorandum of understanding and its May 2026 implementation agreement, Ottawa agreed not to implement the emissions cap, put the Clean Electricity Regulations in abeyance in Alberta and opened a path to a West Coast pipeline application.^{27,28,29}

Albertans pushed for those changes. But look at what stayed:

- The net-zero target remains in federal law.³⁰
- The industrial carbon price continues and is designed to rise. Alberta's industrial credits, which traded near \$20 a tonne in late 2025, are targeted to reach an effective \$130 a tonne by 2040. The headline price rises from \$95 to \$140.^{29,31}

- That cost doesn't vanish. It moves from the line on your gas bill into the price of everything industry makes.

The retreat shows that public pressure works. It does not show that the direction has changed.

The international agenda

Many Canadians sense that the rules shaping their lives are increasingly written somewhere else. They are partly right. A network of international bodies, private forums, foundations and funded campaigns has shaped Canadian policy for decades. Very little of it is binding. Ottawa *chose* to adopt it. That means elected governments handed their judgment to people Canadians never voted for.

The frameworks, sorted by legal force

Framework	Year	Legal force	What Canada did
Habitat I, Vancouver Action Plan	1976	Voluntary recommendation	Hosted the conference
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change	1992	Binding treaty (process only)	Ratified
Agenda 21	1992	Voluntary	Adopted by some municipalities as "Local Agenda 21"
Paris Agreement	2015	Binding duty to set and pursue targets; targets set nationally	Wrote its 2030 target into federal law (2021)
UN 2030 Agenda (17 SDGs)	2015	Voluntary; targets "aspirational"	National strategy, <i>Moving Forward Together</i> (2021)
WHO Pandemic Agreement ³²	2025	Treaty text adopted; not yet open for signature	Supported its development; no ratification decision
WEF "Great Reset"	2020	None; a private forum	Adopted the language; see below

Land

The most striking UN statement on private property was made in Vancouver in 1976, at the first UN Habitat conference. Its Action Plan said:

"Land... cannot be treated as an ordinary asset, controlled by individuals and subject to the pressures and inefficiencies of the market. Private land ownership is also a principal instrument of accumulation and concentration of wealth and therefore contributes to social injustice."

It concluded that "Public control of land use is therefore indispensable."³³

This was a recommendation, not a law. It shows how the people writing international policy were thinking. Agenda 21, sixteen years later, used gentler language: land should be allocated "to the uses that provide the greatest sustainable benefits" through "integrated physical and land-use planning."³⁴ Agenda 21 does not abolish private property. It does assume that someone other than the owner should decide what land is for.

Agenda 2030

The UN's 2030 Agenda describes its 17 Sustainable Development Goals as "applicable to all," while calling its targets "aspirational" and leaving each government to set its own. Ottawa responded in 2021 with a national strategy declaring that "All governments (federal, provincial, territorial, municipal and Indigenous) have roles to play."^{35,36} A voluntary global framework became a direction for every level of Canadian government, without a vote in Parliament.

Part of the Paris Agreement *is* binding: each country must "prepare, communicate and maintain" national targets and pursue measures to meet them. The targets themselves are set nationally. Canada wrote its Paris target into the 2021 Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act. Ottawa made its own international pledge into domestic law.^{30,37}

The World Economic Forum

In June 2020, WEF founder Klaus Schwab wrote that "we need a 'Great Reset' of capitalism," and that "the world must act jointly and swiftly to revamp all aspects of our societies and economies." The WEF's *Davos Manifesto 2020* declared that a company's purpose is "to engage all its stakeholders in shared and sustained value creation."^{38,39}

The WEF has no legal power. Its influence comes from who attends, who partners with it and whose language governments borrow. One example: Mark Carney, writing in *Value(s)* (2021), described how the pandemic's "'great reset' of company and national strategies offers renewed opportunity to tackle climate change."⁴⁰ It is one phrase in a long book. It shows the idea moving from Davos into the thinking of the man who now leads Canada's government.

Two claims about the WEF need care:

- **"You'll own nothing and be happy."** This came from a 2016 essay by Danish politician Ida Auken, written as a speculative scenario and turned into a WEF video. It shows a mindset. It is not WEF policy.⁴¹
- **The UN's *Replacement Migration* report (2000).** It concluded that the migration needed to offset aging would be "extremely large" and unrealistic. It is not a plan to replace anyone.⁴²

Mark Carney

No single career shows the path from the international network into Canadian government more clearly.

- **2015:** As Governor of the Bank of England, Carney warned at Lloyd's of London that most proven fossil fuel reserves

would be "literally unburnable without expensive carbon capture technology."⁴³

- **2020:** He joined Brookfield Asset Management as "vice-chair and head of ESG and impact fund investing," later becoming its chair and head of transition investing.⁴⁴
- **2021:** He published *Value(s)* and co-chaired the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero.^{40,45}
- **2025:** As Prime Minister, he warned Canadians to prepare for "sacrifices" ahead of his first budget, in the context of the break with the US economy.⁴⁶

Chapter 8 examines what his book actually argues.

Foreign money in Canadian campaigns

Alberta's Public Inquiry into Anti-Alberta Energy Campaigns (the Allan report, 2021) found \$1.28 billion in foreign funding of Canadian-based environmental initiatives between 2003 and 2019. Of that, \$54.1 million was in grants designated for "anti-Alberta resource development activity," about \$3.5 million a year. Allan said the figures were likely understated. He concluded that much of the fall in energy investment was due to market forces, with the campaigns playing a role. He also found that "No individual or organization... has done anything illegal."⁴⁷

The argument is not that these groups broke the law. Canadians cannot easily see who funds the campaigns that shape their laws. A province's main industry was targeted by money from outside the country, and its own residents had no say. Across all registered charities, money from outside Canada ran about \$3 billion a year from 2020 to 2022, roughly 1% of charity revenue.⁴⁸ No reliable year-by-year record exists back to 1980.

Who benefits?

Each time a freedom is traded for a promise, ask who comes out ahead. You rarely see their names on a ballot. You can find them in subsidy announcements, fund prospectuses, grant records and lobbying registries:

- **Investment funds built around the transition**, positioned to profit from rules that strand older assets.
- **Subsidy recipients**, such as the multi-billion-dollar federal and Ontario battery-plant deals.
- **The compliance industry**: ESG raters, carbon-offset sellers and consultants paid to measure what new rules require.
- **Funded advocacy groups**, whose budgets grow with each campaign.
- **The administrative state itself**: every new regulation comes with a budget and a staff that need it to continue.

None of this requires a secret plan. It only requires incentives.

Ownership versus control

The classic socialist program was to take ownership of industry. That proved unpopular and unworkable. What replaced it is subtler: leave ownership in private hands, and move the decisions to government.

If the state decides what you may build, how you must build it, what you may produce, what you may emit, what you may charge and whether you may expand, the deed in your name means less every year. You carry the risk. Ottawa makes the calls.

The control ladder

Not every rule is a step toward socialism. A free society needs rules. The question is what kind. I sort them on a ladder. The higher the rung, the more the decision moves from the owner to the state.

1. **Rules of the game.** Contracts, fraud law, safety codes. They apply to everyone equally and don't pick outcomes. *Every free economy needs these.*
2. **Pricing a harm.** A tax or price on pollution. The owner still decides what to do and pays for the damage caused. *Economists across the spectrum have supported this.*
3. **Mandated technology.** You must use this method or product. Example: the Clean Electricity Regulations, which effectively phase unabated gas power off the grid after 2035.⁴⁹
4. **Production limits.** Caps on how much you may produce or emit. Example: the proposed oil and gas emissions cap.

5. **Permission to exist.** Open-ended approval with wide discretion for ministers and agencies. Example: the Impact Assessment Act.
6. **Directed capital.** Subsidies, tax credits and Crown lending that steer where private investment goes. Examples: the Canada Infrastructure Bank, battery-plant subsidies.
7. **Ownership.** Crown corporations and nationalization. Examples: Petro-Canada (1975), Trans Mountain (2018).

The line falls between rungs 2 and 3. Below it, the owner still decides and the state sets the terms. Above it, the state decides and the owner carries out the decision. Canada's policy since 2015 has moved steadily up this ladder.

Case study: Bill C-69

The 2019 Impact Assessment Act set out a purpose "to foster sustainability" and gave federal authorities broad discretion over which major projects could proceed. Industry called it the "No More Pipelines Act." Alberta challenged it in court.⁵⁰

In October 2023 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled 5–2 that the core of the scheme was unconstitutional. Writing for the majority, Chief Justice Wagner said that "Parliament has plainly overstepped its constitutional competence" and that "This scheme is ultra vires."⁵¹

Even before the ruling, the law's own timelines weren't met. The Act set 180 days for the first phase of review. Canada West Foundation found the average was 332 days, ranging up to 693, with about 80% of projects having the clock stopped.⁵²

Uncertainty is a cost. An investor who can't know whether a project will be approved, or how long it will take, puts the money somewhere else.

Case study: Trans Mountain

In 2018, after private owner Kinder Morgan threatened to walk away from the Trans Mountain expansion amid regulatory and legal delays, Ottawa bought the pipeline. The government that made private construction too risky became the owner. Ottawa paid \$4.5 billion. The expansion's estimated cost then rose from Kinder Morgan's 2013 estimate of \$5.4 billion to about \$34 billion by March 2024, more than six times over, before the line entered service on May 1, 2024.⁵³

Albertans needed the pipeline built. But regulatory uncertainty drove out the private owner, and the taxpayer took on the risk.

Case study: your own property

Control isn't limited to energy companies. Consider:

- **The Charter left property out.** The 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects many rights but not the right to own and enjoy property. Unlike the US Constitution, Canada's supreme law offers no direct shield against the state taking or restricting what you own.⁵⁴
- **Alberta did it too.** From August 2023 to February 2024 the provincial government paused approvals of new renewable power projects.⁵⁵ It was the same tool: the government decides whether a landowner may use land for a lawful purpose.
- **The Emergencies Act (2022).** During the trucker convoy protests, Ottawa froze bank accounts without court orders. Chapter 10 covers what the courts later said.

"Every rich country regulates like this"

This is the strongest objection. It is partly true. All developed countries regulate, and many price carbon. The question is

degree and direction. Canada combines a top-tier carbon price with technology mandates, production limits and discretionary approvals, often for the same industry at the same time. Each measure might be defensible alone. Stacked together, they amount to direction of an industry.

The test for any rule is simple: **does it set the boundaries of the game, or does it play the game for you?**

The economic record

If the shift from enterprise to direction were harmless, the numbers would show it. They don't. On almost every measure that matters to a family's standard of living, Canada has fallen behind. The sharpest declines are in the sectors most exposed to the policies in this booklet.

Productivity

In March 2024, Bank of Canada Senior Deputy Governor Carolyn Rogers gave a speech titled "Time to break the glass." Her message: "it's an emergency."⁵⁶

The numbers behind it: "Back in 1984, the Canadian economy was producing 88% of the value generated by the US economy per hour... by 2022, Canadian productivity had fallen to just 71% of that of the United States."⁵⁶

Productivity, meaning how much a worker produces in an hour, is what pays for higher wages over time. A country whose productivity lags will see its wages lag.

Investment

Workers become more productive when businesses give them better tools. The C.D. Howe Institute reported in December 2025 that "in 2024, Canadian workers received 41 cents of machinery and equipment investment for every dollar received by US workers," and just 32 cents for intellectual property.⁵⁷

Rogers made the same point: "While US spending continues to increase, Canadian investment levels are lower than they were a decade ago."⁵⁶

Energy investment

Capital spending on Canadian oil and gas peaked at C\$80.7 billion in 2014, according to the Canada Energy Regulator, then fell 57% to C\$34.9 billion by 2016.⁵⁸ The industry association CAPP projected about \$40 billion for 2024, still half the 2014 level in nominal dollars, and cited "ongoing uncertainty surrounding proposed emissions policy in Canada."⁵⁹

Fairness check: world oil prices collapsed in late 2014, and that alone explains much of the initial drop. A Statistics Canada researcher, Wulong Gu, found the fall in investment per worker was largest in mining, oil and gas and linked it to "the collapse of global commodity prices that started in 2014."⁶⁰ The question is why Canadian investment never came back the way it did elsewhere when prices recovered. Industry points to regulatory uncertainty from 2016 onward.

Living standards

The C.D. Howe Institute reported in June 2026 that from its peak in the second quarter of 2022, "Canada's real GDP per capita has fallen by roughly 1.4 percent" even as the overall economy grew more than 5%.⁶¹ Analysis by the Business Council of British Columbia of OECD long-term projections (2021) put Canada "dead last" among advanced economies for growth in real GDP per person, at about 0.7% a year to 2030 and 0.8% a year from 2030 to 2060.⁶²

Fairness check: a major cause of the recent fall is population growth. Canada's population grew about 2.5% a year from 2022 to 2024, much faster than the economy. Philip Smith of the Centre for the Study of Living Standards found that the changing makeup of the population, driven by rapid

immigration, was the single most important factor in the per-capita decline since mid-2022.⁶³ Immigration is a separate issue from regulation.

Housing

CMHC's homebuying affordability ratio, which compares house prices to household income adjusted for mortgage rates and ownership costs, rose from 39% in 2019 to 54% in 2024 nationally. In Calgary it rose from 27% to 38%, in Edmonton from 26% to 31%, in Toronto from 59% to 74% and in Vancouver from 71% to 99%.⁶⁴ Supply shortages, interest rates, population growth, municipal planning rules and approval delays all contribute. The last two are a form of control.

Investment heading out

Statistics Canada reported that at the end of 2025, Canadian direct investment abroad stood at \$2.43 trillion against \$1.60 trillion of foreign direct investment in Canada. The net position fell for the first time since 2012.⁶⁵ Capital goes where it is welcome.

The federal balance sheet

Finance Canada's own tables show how much larger the federal government has become relative to the economy:

Fiscal year	Program spending (% of GDP)	Accumulated deficit (\$ billions)	Accumulated deficit (% of GDP)
2000–01	11.8%	520	47.0%
2007–08	12.8%	458	29.0%
2014–15	12.5%	629	31.5%
2019–20	14.6%	721	31.2%
2020–21	27.4%	1,049	47.2%

Fiscal year	Program spending (% of GDP)	Accumulated deficit (\$ billions)	Accumulated deficit (% of GDP)
2024–25	15.9%	1,266	41.2%

Source: Department of Finance, *Fiscal Reference Tables*, November 2025. Public debt charges in 2024–25 reached \$53.4 billion, about \$1 billion a week.⁶⁶

The pattern is clear. Canada paid down debt from 2000 to 2008, held steady to 2015, then borrowed heavily, first by choice and then for the pandemic. Spending never returned to its earlier share of the economy.

What the evidence supports

The record does **not** prove that regulation alone caused Canada's stagnation. Commodity prices, population growth, weak competition in protected sectors and housing shortages all play a role.

It **does** support three claims:

1. Canada's decline is real, long-running and measured by the Bank of Canada, Statistics Canada and the OECD.
2. Investment fell hardest and recovered least in the energy sector, which faced the most new federal rules.
3. The industry's own stated reason for holding back investment is regulatory uncertainty.

That is enough to put the burden of proof on those who claim more direction from Ottawa will make Canadians richer.

The politics of utopia

Every generation hears the same promise in new words: give experts enough authority, and they will deliver a fairer, safer, greener society. In 1848 the word was *communism*. In 1933 it was *socialized planning*. Today it is *values, sustainability* and *mission-oriented capitalism*. The trade underneath stays the same: your choices, for their plan.

What Mark Carney's book argues

No document states the modern version more clearly than *Value(s): Building a Better World for All* (2021), written by the man who became Prime Minister four years later. It deserves a fair reading.

Carney does **not** call for abolishing markets. He writes that markets use "prices as signals acting as far superior guides to resource allocation than central planning."⁴⁰ He calls the Thatcher–Reagan reforms "long overdue" and says they "unleashed a new dynamism." Replying to Greta Thunberg, he writes: "Continued growth isn't a fairy tale; it's a necessity."

His complaint is that "we moved from a market economy to a market society," where price determines the value of everything. His remedy:

*"We need political processes to define our goals and objectives – to set our values. Markets can then be marshalled to help discover and drive solutions in a form of mission-oriented capitalism."*⁴⁰

That sentence is the heart of this chapter. The goals are set by government. The market becomes the tool that carries them

out.

The book spells out what that means:

- "There are assets that will be stranded and embedded capital that must be scrapped."
- Businesses that fail to adapt to net zero "will cease to exist."
- Air travel demand should fall, with people "no longer zooming through the skies but zooming through our broadband for business meetings."
- A person born today gets a lifetime carbon budget "equivalent to one-eighth of that of their grandparents."
- Governments can hand climate policy settings to unelected "Carbon Councils," up to "deciding the calibration of a limited number of instruments in a manner analogous to central bank policy setting."

During the pandemic, Carney observed that "people were willing to surrender to Hobbes' 'Leviathan' such basic rights as the freedom to leave their homes," and he wrote that cost-benefit analysis had "mercifully been overruled."⁴⁰

A note on what the book does **not** say. A quote circulating online, "Western society is morally rotten, and it has been corrupted by capitalism... This requires rigid controls of personal freedoms," is fake. The Canadian Press searched the book in 2025 and found none of those words.⁶⁷

Whose values?

Here is the flaw in "human values." Values are subjective. One person values human life, family and faith. Another sees humanity as the problem and wants fewer people consuming less. Steering an economy by "values" without saying whose

values win leads to one of two results: chaos, or rule by whoever gets to choose.

Carney sees part of this. He writes that the subjective theory of value "now goes largely unchallenged in economic teaching,"⁴⁰ and his book sets out to challenge it. But his answer, values set by "political processes," doesn't remove the subjectivity. It concentrates it.

Consider what a free market actually is. Every purchase, every job taken, every dollar saved or invested records what a real person values, decided by that person. Economists since Carl Menger in 1871 have called this subjective value.⁶⁸ A market is a running count of millions of people's values, every day. A "political process" counts the values of whoever controls it: ministers, central bankers, regulators, ESG raters and climate-finance alliances.

The question for every Canadian: **who picks the values, and who elected them?**

Stewardship

If values can't safely be left to whoever holds power, they need a standard above power. The West had one. It is the moral foundation under the prosperity described in Chapter 1.

I hold that standard to be the biblical one:

- **Work it and keep it.** In Genesis 2:15, people are placed in the garden "to dress it and to keep it." People are caretakers *and* beneficiaries of the earth, not a problem to be reduced.
- **Use what you are given.** In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14–30), the servant who buried his talent out of fear was condemned. Productive use, not locking resources away, is the duty.

- **Property under a higher law.** "Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15) puts property beyond the reach of any majority or ruler. Locke built his own argument for property on scripture in his *First Treatise*.
- **Every person counts.** The historian Tom Holland, in *Dominion* (2019), traces the West's ideas of human dignity and equality before the law to Christianity. He does not write as a believer.⁶⁹

Carney himself acknowledges this foundation. He credits medieval Church thinkers who "insisted that economic offices be discharged consistent with a doctrine of stewardship,"⁴⁰ and he laments the decline of religion as a check on greed. Then he replaces that fixed standard with values set by political processes. That is the turn I am asking Canadians to examine.

Readers of other faiths, or none, can still accept the core principle: a moral standard that sits above the state and that the state does not get to rewrite.

The strongest case on the other side

The opposing case at its strongest:

Their argument	My answer
Climate change is a real collective problem that markets won't solve alone.	Agreed that pollution is a cost markets can miss. A clear, predictable price on it is a rung-2 rule (Chapter 6). The problem is stacking mandates, caps and discretionary approvals on top.
Unregulated markets produced monopolies and financial crashes.	True. Those were fixed best by equal rules and competition, and often worsened by government favours and bailouts.
Public health care and pensions are popular and work.	A debate about the size of the welfare state is legitimate. It is different from the state directing production.

Their argument	My answer
Stewardship requires aggressive climate action. Pope Francis argued exactly this in <i>Laudato si'</i> (2015). ⁷⁰	Biblical stewardship puts people at the centre and makes them responsible for productive use of the earth, not for shrinking human activity.

The pattern

The political scientist James C. Scott, writing from the left, studied failed grand plans across the twentieth century in *Seeing Like a State* (1998). His conclusion: plans fail when central authorities override local knowledge in the name of a vision of the future.⁷¹ Hayek made the same point from the right in *The Road to Serfdom* (1944).⁷²

Canada's leaders are not Stalin or Mao. They do share one assumption with every central planner: that people at the centre know better than the people they govern. History is not kind to that assumption.

What has changed in Canada

Laid end to end, ninety years of documents show a steady direction with occasional retreats. Two patterns stand out. First, the outright socialist proposals, to own industry, mostly stayed proposals. Second, after 2015 the pace of *control* over private industry picked up sharply.

Category key: *Socialist ownership* = public ownership or planning replacing private enterprise. *State ownership* = the government owns a business within a market economy. *Expanded control* = the government directs how private owners use their property. *Civil liberties* = state power over individuals. *Mixed-market* = conventional welfare or pricing policy. *Reversal* = a step back.

Year	Document or policy	Proponent	Stated objective	Actual effect	Category
1933	Regina Manifesto	CCF	"eradicate capitalism"; "socialized planning"	None federally; set the agenda for the Canadian left	Proposal: socialist ownership
1956	Winnipeg Declaration	CCF	Profit "subordinated to social planning"	None federally	Proposal: socialist ownership
1961	NDP founding constitution	NDP	"the extension of the principle of social ownership"	Party principle until 2013	Proposal: socialist ownership
1975	Petro-Canada created ⁷³	Trudeau Liberal government	A national oil company	Crown corporation; later privatized	State ownership
1980	National Energy Program ⁷⁴	Trudeau Liberal government	Energy self-sufficiency and Canadian ownership	Federal price controls and new taxes on Alberta oil	Expanded control

Year	Document or policy	Proponent	Stated objective	Actual effect	Category
1982	Charter of Rights and Freedoms	Trudeau Liberal government	Entrench rights	Property rights left out	Omission
2013	NDP preamble rewritten	NDP	Government "power to address the limitations of the market"	Ownership language dropped; "democratic socialist" tradition kept	Proposal
2015	Leap Manifesto	Klein, Lewis and others	No new extraction infrastructure; 100% renewable power	Shaped the activist agenda	Proposal
2015	Paris Agreement; UN 2030 Agenda	UN members, incl. Canada	Emissions targets; 17 goals	Paris process binding; targets national	International
2016	NDP Leap resolution	NDP, Edmonton	Debate Leap in ridings	Party engaged formally	Proposal
2018	Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act	Trudeau Liberal government	"behavioural change"	National carbon price on fuel and industry	Expanded control
2018	Trans Mountain purchased	Trudeau Liberal government	Get the pipeline built	Crown ownership; large cost overruns	State ownership
2019	Impact Assessment Act (C-69)	Trudeau Liberal government	"to foster sustainability"	Discretionary approval; Supreme Court: largely unconstitutional (2023)	Expanded control
2019	Oil Tanker Moratorium Act (C-48)	Trudeau Liberal government	Protect the northern coast	Tanker ban on B.C.'s north coast	Expanded control
2021	Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act	Trudeau Liberal government	Net zero by 2050	Paris target written into law	Expanded control
2021	<i>Moving Forward Together</i>	Federal government	Adopt UN SDGs	Directs "all governments" toward the SDGs	International adopted

Year	Document or policy	Proponent	Stated objective	Actual effect	Category
2022	Emergencies Act invoked	Trudeau Liberal government	End convoy protests	Bank accounts frozen without court order; later ruled unreasonable	Civil liberties
2022	Liberal–NDP supply deal	Liberals and NDP	Dental, pharmacare, just transition	NDP priorities enacted from opposition	Mixed-market and control
2024	Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act	Trudeau Liberal government	"shift to a net-zero economy"	National transition planning council	Expanded control
2024	Clean Electricity Regulations	Trudeau Liberal government	Net-zero power grid	65 t CO ₂ /GWh from 2035; zero from 2050	Expanded control
2025	Consumer carbon charge ended	Carney Liberal government	Affordability	Fuel charge set to zero, April 1, 2025	Reversal
2025	Canada–Alberta MOU	Carney and Smith governments	Pipeline path; industrial carbon pricing	No emissions cap; electricity rules suspended in Alberta	Reversal and control
2026	MOU implementation agreement	Canada and Alberta	Effective \$130/t industrial carbon price by 2040	Industrial price set to rise	Expanded control

What the timeline shows: Canada did not adopt socialism. It adopted a steady transfer of decisions over energy, land and capital from owners and legislatures to ministers, regulators and international targets. Most of that transfer happened in the last ten years.

The future of Western freedom

Freedom and prosperity don't erode by accident. They erode when specific protections go missing, and they can be rebuilt by putting those protections back. This chapter is about what citizens can do.

Eight conditions for a free and prosperous society

Condition	Where Canada stands	What to put to voters and governments
Private property	Not protected in the 1982 Charter	A constitutional right to property; strong provincial property-rights law
Economic opportunity	Workers get 41 cents of equipment investment per US dollar (2024)	Lower barriers to building, hiring and investing
Competitive markets	Banking, telecom and airlines remain protected oligopolies	Open protected sectors to new competitors
Civil liberties	Emergencies Act use ruled unreasonable by two federal courts	Tighter limits and automatic court review of emergency powers
Democratic accountability	Major policy made by regulation, intergovernmental deals and adopted UN frameworks	Parliamentary votes on major regulations; sunset clauses
Independent courts	Supreme Court struck down most of C-69 in 2023	Respect the constitutional division of powers
Freedom of expression	Online Streaming and Online News Acts extend regulator reach ⁷⁵ ; courts found the 2022 emergency measures breached Charter s. 2(b)	Narrow, clear limits on regulators
Limits on arbitrary power	Wide ministerial discretion over project approvals	Fixed timelines and clear criteria written in law

What the courts said

In February 2022, Ottawa invoked the Emergencies Act for the first time to end the trucker convoy protests. Bank accounts

were frozen without court orders.

In January 2024, Federal Court Justice Richard Mosley ruled that "the reasons provided for the decision to declare a public order emergency... do not satisfy the requirements of the Emergencies Act" and that the measures "were not justified under section 1 of the Charter."⁷⁶ In January 2026, the Federal Court of Appeal dismissed the government's appeals, holding that "the declaration of a public order emergency was unreasonable" and that parts of the measures "infringed paragraph 2(b) and section 8 of the Charter."⁷⁷ In March 2026 Ottawa applied to the Supreme Court for leave to appeal; as of this writing, that application is pending.⁷⁸

A government freezing citizens' bank accounts without a judge should concern every Canadian. Two courts found it unlawful. A digital currency run by a central bank, which Mark Carney calls "the most likely future of money," would make such measures far easier.⁴⁰

Both dangers

There are two ways a free society can fail. One is too much central direction: investment flees, productivity stalls, and decisions drift to people no one elected. The other is too few rules: monopolies, fraud and pollution go unchecked. Chapter 1 admitted the second danger is real.

My case is that Canada has drifted toward the first while still claiming to fight the second. The answer is not to tear down all rules. It is to move rules back down the control ladder (Chapter 6): clear, equal, predictable rules that set the boundaries and let free people decide the rest.

What you can do

1. **Read the documents.** Every major source in this booklet is public. Look up the Regina Manifesto, the Supreme Court's C-69 ruling, the Net-Zero Act. Judge for yourself.
2. **Ask the ladder question.** When a new policy is announced, ask: does it set the rules of the game, or play the game for us?
3. **Ask the values question.** When someone says policy should reflect "our values," ask whose, and who chose them.
4. **Demand transparency.** Who funds the campaigns, who benefits from the subsidies, who sits on the councils.
5. **Take part.** Town halls, school boards, municipal councils, provincial legislatures and federal elections. Decisions drift away from citizens who stop showing up.

Alberta

Alberta has lived the consequences of central direction more directly than any province: from the National Energy Program in 1980 to pipeline cancellations, tanker bans and emissions caps aimed squarely at its largest industry. It has also shown that pressure works: the 2025 reversals came because Albertans pushed.

What Albertans decide about their own future is a question I leave to them. What I ask of every reader: judge the evidence, ask who decides, and do not hand away freedoms that took centuries to win.

Summary of findings

What Marxist and socialist thinkers proposed. The abolition of private property (Marx and Engels, 1848), central planning, and a powerful transitional state that would supposedly "die out" (Engels, 1880) but in practice never did (Lenin, 1917, and every regime after). Where this was tried, paired comparisons such as East and West Germany or North and South Korea show worse outcomes under the planned system.

What Canada's political left proposed. To "eradicate capitalism" (CCF, 1933), to subordinate profit to "social planning" (1956), and to extend "social ownership" (NDP, 1961–2013). In 2013 the NDP dropped ownership language and asked instead for government "power to address the limitations of the market," while keeping its "democratic socialist" identity. Grassroots resolutions to nationalize banks (2021) were not adopted.

What modern movements advocate. The Leap Manifesto (2015): no new extraction infrastructure, 100% renewable power in two decades, an end to trade deals that block climate rules. The WEF: a "Great Reset" of capitalism. Mark Carney's *Value(s)* (2021): goals and values set by "political processes," with markets "marshalled" to deliver them, stranded assets, and climate settings delegated to "Carbon Councils."

What Canadian governments actually enacted. A national carbon price (2018), a discretionary approval regime the Supreme Court found largely unconstitutional (2019, struck down 2023), a north-coast tanker ban (2019), a net-zero target in law (2021), adoption of the UN SDGs across all levels of government (2021), a national transition-planning council (2024), clean electricity rules phasing out gas power (2024), a

state-owned pipeline (2018), and an emergency declaration two federal courts found unlawful (2022). Since 2025, Ottawa has reversed the consumer carbon charge, dropped the proposed emissions cap and paused electricity rules in Alberta, while raising the industrial carbon price and keeping the net-zero law.

What followed. Canadian productivity fell from 88% of the US level in 1984 to 71% in 2022. Canadian workers receive 41 cents of equipment investment for every US dollar (2024). Oil and gas capital spending fell from \$80.7 billion (2014) to about \$40 billion. Real GDP per person in 2026 is below its 2022 peak. Federal debt more than doubled from \$629 billion (2014–15) to \$1.27 trillion (2024–25).

What can weaken the argument. Most socialist ownership proposals never became law. International frameworks are mostly voluntary. Commodity prices and rapid population growth explain a large share of the economic decline. Foreign funding of environmental groups broke no laws. Carney defends markets over central planning. Ottawa has reversed several policies since 2025.

My conclusion. Canada is not a socialist country. What the record shows is a quieter shift: decisions over energy, land, capital and even citizens' bank accounts moving from owners, legislatures and courts to ministers, regulators, international targets and funded campaigns. The language changed from *ownership* to *planning* to *values*. The direction did not. Whether it continues depends on whether citizens insist on deciding for themselves.

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For two hundred years, secure property, free markets and cheap energy made the West the freest and most prosperous civilization in history.

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