



**News Digest of the Canadian Association of Geographers**  
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Compiled by Dan Smith [<cag@geog.uvic.ca>](mailto:cag@geog.uvic.ca)

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**U Toronto's Matti Siemiatycki shoots down idea of Alberta bullet train:** The concept of an Alberta bullet train was shot down by a Canadian transportation expert as legislative hearings on high-speed rail began. Matti Siemiatycki, a University of Toronto geography professor, told a legislative committee that the province must question whether the multibillion-dollar investment required to establish a high-speed link between Edmonton and Calgary would be worth the cost. He said Alberta is "decades away" from having the population density that would make a bullet train feasible. "This project to me doesn't seem viable when you compare the expected ridership to construction costs," said Siemiatycki, who studies transportation, infrastructure and regional planning. Siemiatycki said infrastructure investment is "a springboard for prosperity," but suggested the government would be far better off putting money into urban transit projects. Such developments would provide greater benefits in terms of congestion relief, travel choices and local development, he said. [Calgary Herald](#)

**University of Alberta planning graduates can help reshape city, prof says:** Sandeep Agrawal hopes graduates of a new University of Alberta program will help Edmonton fight its reputation as one of Canada's most spread-out cities. "One of the things I see is the sprawl, the unending sprawl," he says. "What I have been told is Edmonton may be the most sprawled city in the country. "Whether that's true or not, we as planners need to do something about it." Agrawal is the inaugural director of the U of A planning program, which was started in 2012 to provide professional staff desperately needed as booming Alberta continues to grow. He moved to Edmonton last summer from Toronto's Ryerson University, where he was a professor in the School of Urban & Regional Planning as well as in the Ted Rogers School of Management. Without an Alberta urban planning program, people had been coming to the province for work from other parts of the country and often leaving a couple of years later, he says. "The idea is we would train homegrown planners. ... Besides satisfying the industry need and filling positions, I think having a planning program in the city raises awareness of urban planning, of the city and city building." There are a total of 45 students in the first three years of the four-year undergraduate program, which is intended to eventually have 80 students. [Edmonton Journal](#)

**Too Big to Ignore team members from Memorial travel to India for conference:** Members of the Department of Geography at Memorial University travelled to India in December to participate in an international conference on small-scale fisheries governance. Ratana Chuenpagdee was the chief guest at the conference. Also in attendance were Rodolphe Devillers, [Too Big to Ignore](#) staff member Randal Greene, and recent Geography graduate Andrew Song. [MUN Geography](#)

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**U Calgary's Gwendolyn Blue organizing citizen's dialogue on water in a changing climate:** In the wake of the devastating floods in Alberta last year, issues surrounding water and climate change are a greater concern than ever. [Alberta Climate Dialogue](#), a community-university research alliance, is recruiting people from diverse backgrounds for an experimental citizen dialogue on water and climate change. [Gwendolyn Blue](#), an assistant professor in the University of Calgary's Department of Geography, is leading the project. "Alberta Climate Dialogue is exploring how a well-designed citizen deliberation might shift the politics of climate change in Alberta," explains Blue. "All of us have a stake in our future climate and all of us are affected by water." The day-long event will be held Feb. 22 at the University of Lethbridge. Participants will learn about the effects of climate change on water, share their thoughts on the issues, and develop recommendations for action. [Calgary U Today](#)

**New Brock program tackles sustainability and the environment:** "A new master's program at Brock University will prepare graduates for careers that help address our most pressing and complex environmental challenges and opportunities. The program, Sustainability Science and Society, responds to a growing social need to better understand and positively shape our relationship with the planet's natural systems. Students who successfully complete the program will earn a Master's of Sustainability (MS), which is available with or without a co-op option. The program is housed within [Brock's Environmental Sustainability Research Centre](#) (ESRC), and consist of members individuals from the departments of Biological Sciences, Economics, Geography, Political Science, Psychology, Tourism and Environment, and Women's and Gender Studies. "There are few master's degrees specifically designed to address contemporary challenges through the transdisciplinary lens of sustainability science," says Ryan Plummer, director of the ESRC. [The Brock News](#)

**Trent U's Mark Skinner named founding director New Trent Centre for Aging & Society:** Dr. Mark Skinner, an internationally-recognized health geographer and Trent geography professor, has been named the founding director of the new [Trent Centre for Aging and Society](#), an innovative research initiative that draws on Trent's reputation in interdisciplinary excellence to promote research and awareness about aging and old age. "As one of Trent's new flagship research initiatives ... the Trent Centre for Aging and Society provides us the opportunity to not only showcase and expand our multidisciplinary excellence in aging studies, but also, and most importantly for me, provides the chance to contribute to the Peterborough community response to being labelled the Canada's oldest municipality," said Professor Skinner. "Indeed, the driving message behind the Centre's research and community engagement mandate is that "an aging population is nothing to be afraid of" and I am excited about what we will accomplish and am honoured to be a part of it." Prof. Skinner is an expert in community-based research whose primary interests are aging rural communities and volunteer-based support for older people. Along with leading the new Centre, Prof. Skinner teaches courses in qualitative methods, health geography and rural community sustainability. [Trent NewsEvents](#)

**Trinity Western U's David Jordan tours threatened Aldergrove forest:** The Township of Langley is asking to amend the community plan by eliminating an education-recreational zone within a valued forested area. Last weekend a group of WOLF (Watchers of Langley Forests) took a tour of the forest along with David Jordan, Assistant Professor of Geography and Environmental Studies at Trinity Western University and an expert in dendrochronology. "The Forest" is mixed forest, including riparian, and is of a type that is threatened due to limited geographical occurrence and current development pressure. At the site are a number of excellent examples of mature bigleaf maple, red alder, Douglas fir, western hemlock, and western red cedar. Professor Jordan took the time to analyze three specimens, and he estimated that one Douglas fir was approximately 130 years old, one western red cedar was approximately 90 years old and one red alder was approximately 73 years old. Just three trees, compared to the report by Triton which indicated that the most mature trees were between 40 and 50 years old and considered "low value trees." [Aldergrove Star](#)

## Hot Papers by Canadian Geographers

Karen Neil, Konrad Gajewski and Matthew Betts. 2014. [Human-ecosystem interactions in relation to Holocene environmental change in Port Joli Harbour, southwestern Nova Scotia, Canada](#). Quaternary Research. doi.org/10.1016/j.yqres.2014.01.001

Larissa Pizzolato, Stephen E. L. Howell, Chris Derksen, Jackie Dawson and Luke Copland. 2014. [Changing sea ice conditions and marine transportation activity in Canadian Arctic waters between 1990 and 2012](#). Climatic Change. DOI10.1007/s10584-013-1038-3

Uldis Silins, Kevin D. Bladon, Erin N. Kelly, Evan Esch, John R. Spence, Micheal Stone, Monica B. Emelko, Sarah Boon, Michael J. Wagner, Chris H. S. Williams and Ian Tichowsky. 2014. [Five-year legacy of wildfire and salvage logging impacts on nutrient runoff and aquatic plant, invertebrate, and fish productivity](#). Ecohydrology. DOI: 10.1002/eco.1474

Michelle R. Stone, Guy E.J. Faulkner, Raktim Mitra and Ron N. Buliung. 2014. [The freedom to explore: examining the influence of independent mobility on weekday, weekend and after-school physical activity behaviour in children living in urban and inner-suburban neighbourhoods of varying socioeconomic status](#). International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity 11:5

Alan Walks. 2014. [Gated communities, neighbourhood selection and segregation: the residential preferences and demographics of gated community residents in Canada](#). Town Planning Review 85:39-66.

Xiaogang Wang, Jiafeng Wang, Curtis Russell, Paul Proctor, Richard Bello, Kaz Higuchi and Huaiping Zhu. 2014. [Clustering of the abundance of West Nile virus vector mosquitoes in Peel Region, Ontario, Canada](#). Environmental and Ecological Statistics. DOI10.1007/s10651-014-0273-8

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### Other “Geographical” News

**Boycotting academic publishers is a career risk for young scientists:** For many PhD students and post-doctoral scientists alike Nature, Science and Cell continue to represent a major career goal, offering recognition and exposure for their research. But it's more than selfish personal gratification that continues to drive young scientists to publish here. Scientists applying for funding and positions are judged not only according to the quality of their work, but also where it is published. Having a single paper published in any of these high-profile journals can have a transformative effect on a career. With this in mind, it is easy to understand why even scientists who support boycotts in theory might feel unable to join them in practice. Young scientists can have no reassurances that by pursuing such action they will not negatively affect their careers. Each decision to join the boycott must be taken in isolation and for every individual who does there will likely be many more who will not. The career risk is too great. [The Guardian](#)

**Protected Prairie grasslands face uncertain future:** More than two million acres of protected Canadian grassland could be compromised as the federal government starts withdrawing from a decades-old prairie rehabilitation program this year. The Community Pastures Program — which saw federal dollars flow into the management of 85 fields in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta since the 1930s — was scrapped in the 2012 omnibus budget. [Ottawa Citizen](#)

**Alberta predicts major post-secondary enrolment growth, continued budget restraint:** Alberta's Advanced Education Minister Dave Hancock says the provincial government remains in a period of "fiscal restraint," preparing for "major" growth in the PSE sector. Hancock acknowledged the province is in better shape than it was last year, when it cut operating grants to PSE institutions by \$147 million (the government later restored \$50 million in funding), but warned that "the spending floodgates won't open" with the release of the 2014 budget. Hancock is currently in discussions with university and college leaders on a funding model for PSE. [Calgary Herald](#)

**"My grief lies all within" — PhD students, depression & attrition:** From November to March is prime time for academic burn-out in graduate programs — I'm convinced of that. Perhaps it's a seasonal thing; it can be easy to sink into a trough of exhaustion and stress, and not climb out of it for months. But rather than just the seasonal doldrums, my sense is that clinical depression, extreme anxiety and other mental health issues are becoming more common in graduate programs as well as in undergraduate education. Is this a serious structural (and normalized) issue rather than an anecdotal one, and if so, why is no one discussing it? [University Affairs](#)

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### Some not so "Geographical" News



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