



**News Digest of the Canadian Association of Geographers**  
**No. 420, October 21, 2016**  
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**U Guelph's Evan Fraser on the *Food From Thought* research program:** In early September the Federal Government announced \$77 million in funding for a research program called Food From Thought. The research is expected to focus on information management, analytics and computing power and how the technology can be harnessed to produce more food with fewer inputs. As well, it plans to look at growing food consumers will trust. "This is an acknowledgment by the federal government that this is a big area of growth and innovation and is worthy of investment," said Evan Fraser, Guelph geography professor and Canada Research Chair in Global Food Security, "It's an attempt to help the (agri-food) industry on its path to the use of big data in production and distribution." Over the last couple of years so called "big data" has been touted as the next big thing in agriculture, with multinational companies investing billions to acquire and create businesses with expertise in data and analytics. Monsanto and others hope to sell services to help farmers make better management decisions. "Farmers... the most important element they've had on their farms is the decision-making process. They make 50 decisions a year (that are) high-stakes poker," said Barnes, who founded Farmers Edge in 2005. "They make these decisions without a lot of (data). There's a lot of gut instinct." As an example, a farmer might rely on past experience to choose a certain variety of crop. But data might indicate the variety isn't suited for the soil type or management practices on that farm. Fraser, his U of Guelph colleagues and *Food From Thought* industry partners are hoping the \$77 million investment changes the game and pushes Canada forward. [The Western Producer](#)

**Western Geography's Urban Development Program (UDP) - Experiential Learning Opportunities:** Last year Western Geography's [UDP](#) and with the support of the [Imran Jaffer Foundation](#), a summer internship with Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL), a leading financial and professional services firm specializing in commercial real estate services and investment management, was initiated. Dianne Ramos, the inaugural recipient reported that she learned a lot of the basic knowledge of real estate having experience in many different departments throughout the summer. 'Tenant representation, database and research, investment banking, human resources and project development services were the departments that I was able to get involved in and help out. It was interesting to see the collaboration and the intelligence within the office. Everyone was so supportive in answering my questions which helped me learn a lot about not just JLL but the whole real estate industry. It was an extremely valuable internship experience that gave me a taste of where I would be after my four years at Western.' See Dianne's [letter](#).

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**U British Columbia's Loch Brown leveraging technologies to make learning more flexible:** The financial burden placed on students is nothing new. Living expenses, tuition and textbooks all contribute to students' concerns about being able to afford their education. When the bills pile up, required readings can seem like an optional expense. Some faculty at UBC have been trying to alleviate financial pressures on students by leveraging technologies to help make learning more flexible. According to Loch Brown, a geography professor, open educational resources and open textbooks are a very easy way to do this. For Brown, utilizing open educational resources was a no-brainer when it came time to update some of the courses in the geography department. "We were building a lot of interesting course materials and educational resources, and we decided quite early on that we would just share these with everybody," said Brown. Brown has made the resources available through [open.geog.ubc.ca](http://open.geog.ubc.ca). The geography department also currently offers three different open education textbooks, which can solve the costly problem of publishers frequently printing new editions. However, it's easier said than done for open textbooks to completely replace physical copies. According to Brown, another large setback for the open movement lies in the mindset of fellow faculty members. "The whole incentive system that's set up kind of encourages faculty to hold onto their intellectual property and their courses as well. They don't share their courses with the world —they guard them. I think we need to shift our mindset around that," said Brown. "If they write an open textbook, they're not going to get recognition for it. If they write a published textbook with a publisher, they get a lot of recognition for it. When they're putting together their files for promotion, it makes a big difference." Despite these obstacles, various groups are hard at work to keep the open education movement moving forward. [The Ubysey](#)

**Simon Fraser U's Valorie Crooks questions medical tourism study methods:** A medical tourism specialist is questioning the methods and results of a new study about how many Canadians are getting care abroad. Simon Fraser University Geography professor Valorie Crooks says the study is not a reflection of how many Canadians are choosing to go abroad for medical treatment or why. "We actually have no way of tracking the number of people that do that," she says. "We don't ask if people received medical care abroad, even though we seem to be concerned about the potential impacts of that on the Canadian health care system." The study asked medical specialists in 12 fields across Canada what percentage of their patients received non-emergency treatment outside the country in the past year. It estimates 45,619 Canadians, one per cent of the population, sought foreign treatment in 2015. "Patients that don't have contact with one of those specialist groups won't actually be included," Crooks says. The institute does concede it only looked at data collected from its own doctor surveys, but says that shows there could be even more people getting medical care abroad. Crooks also takes issue with the numbers because they don't give the reasons why people are getting medical care outside the country beyond which specialist they were seeing. Not everyone who gets care abroad could be considered a medical tourist, she says, pointing to snowbirds who live in other countries for extended periods of time and may need medical help during that period. Crooks says she doesn't agree with what she believes is the study's agenda to conclude patients are leaving because of long wait times. "They make a connection between what they call lengthy wait times and people choosing to go abroad for medical care and they do that despite the fact that the survey they issued is not asking physicians to comment on why their patients are receiving this care," Crooks says. She adds some people can only receive certain types of care in other countries or immigrants may feel more comfortable getting major procedures done in countries where they can be closer to family or familiar places. [News 1130](#)

**U Saskatchewan's John Pomeroy points to above average temperatures as cause for shrinking glaciers in the Canadian Rockies:** Glaciers in the Canadian Rockies are losing the all-important firn pack — the accumulation of older snow — at an accelerating rate, say scientists. "Temperatures were on average a degree and a half above normal, but there were periods when they are four or five degrees above normal in late spring of this year and last year," said John Pomeroy, a University of

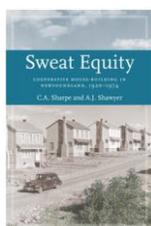
Saskatchewan hydrologist who monitors glaciers in Alberta as part of the Changing Cold Regions Network. As a result, he said glaciers such as the Athabasca — a popular tourist attraction that's part of the Columbia Icefield along Highway 93 N. — started melting in May and lost about five and a half metres of its surface in 2015. They haven't yet calculated the total loss in 2016, but this year's temperatures were also above average. Pomeroy said the Athabasca Glacier started melting in April. "It's been melting so fast that we've had trouble with our (monitoring) stations," he said. "We had to re-drill the ones on Peyto (glacier) and the force of water coming off of Peyto was so much we couldn't shove our metal poles back into the ice very well. "It's actually become difficult to measure because Peyto has these large rivers gushing off the end of it and it's dropping into a lake . . . that wasn't there a few years ago." for that," he said, noting there were similar conditions this summer. "The difference is that it switched to the wet cold much earlier this year than it did last year, but there was much more severe heat and dryness before then. "It was even more extreme this year than the year before."

[Calgary Sun](#)

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## New Book

Chris A. Sharpe and A.J Shawyer. 2016. [Sweat Equity. Cooperative House-Building in Newfoundland, 1920–1974](#). ISER Books. 438 pages. ISBN 978-1-894725-34-7



The lack of decent urban housing — a problem neither new nor unique to Newfoundland — was widely recognized during the twentieth century. After numerous piecemeal attempts to find a solution, a remarkable and successful government-supported “sweat equity” program was established in 1952, where homes were built cooperatively and, upon completion, became owner-occupied. This labor (about 2,000 hours per man) was accepted in lieu of a down payment. Tracing public policy during the Commission of Government and the early days of the Smallwood administration, and sourced from archival material and interviews with surviving members of the cooperatives, Sweat Equity outlines how people in Newfoundland tried to solve the housing shortage themselves by building more than 500 houses in the 1950s and 1960s. This critical monograph-length study — the first of its kind on the subject — is the story of how the Commission of Government and the then new provincial government recognized the desperate need for decent accommodation and what they did to provide it.

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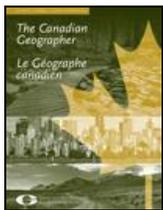


**CAGONT 2016 will be hosted by the University of Waterloo, October 28th & 29th, 2016.** Final [conference details](#) and [program](#) now available.

**U Victoria's David Atkinson** was interviewed by CHEK News about the extreme weather forecasted for British Columbia. [CHEK \(skip to 11:14\)](#)

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## New in The Canadian Geographer



Peter Ashmore and Belinda Dodson. 2016. [Urbanizing physical geography](#). The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien. DOI:10.1111/cag.12318

Trevor J. Barnes. 2016. [The odd couple: Richard Hartshorne and William Bunge](#). The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien. DOI:10.1111/cag.12321

Stéphane Castonguay. 2016. [Cartographic productions and historiographical representations: Geographical imaginations of the St. Lawrence River](#). The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien. DOI:10.1111/cag.12317

Michèle Dagenais and Ken Cruikshank. 2016. [Gateways, inland seas, or boundary waters? Historical conceptions of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River since the 19th century](#). The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien. DOI:10.1111/cag.12316

Jean Dubé et Mario Polèse. 2016. [À propos du rôle de la taille dans la croissance urbaine : Une analyse pour 135 agglomérations canadiennes entre 1971 et 2011](#). The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien. DOI:10.1111/cag.12322

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### Hot Papers by Canadian Geographers

David F Attaway, Nigel M Waters, Estella M Geraghty and Kathryn H Jacobsen. 2016. [Zika virus: Endemic and epidemic ranges of Aedes mosquito transmission](#). Journal of Infection and Public Health. DOI:10.1016/j.jiph.2016.09.008

Michelle Buckley, Siobhán McPhee and Ben Rogaly. 2016. [Labour geographies on the move: migration, migrant status and work in the 21st century](#). Geoforum. DOI:10.1016/j.geoforum.2016.09.012

Drew Bush, Renée Sieber, Gale Seiler, and Mark Chandler. 2016. [The teaching of anthropogenic climate change and earth science via technology-enabled inquiry education](#). Journal of Geoscience Education 64:159-174.

Oliver T. Coomes, Tim R. Moore and Sébastien Breau. 2016. [The price of journals in geography](#). The Professional Geographer. DOI:10.1080/00330124.2016.1229624

Lei Meng, Nigel Roulet, Qianlai Zhuang, Torben R Christensen and Steve Frohling. 2016. [Focus on the impact of climate change on wetland ecosystems and carbon dynamics](#). Environmental Research Letters 11.

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Jeffrey R. Masuda and Sonia Bookman. 2016. [Neighbourhood branding and the right to the city](#). Progress in Human Geography. DOI:10.1177/0309132516671822

K.J. Rattan, J.C. Corriveau, R.B. Brua, J.M. Culp, A.G. Yates and P.A. Chambers. 2016. [Quantifying seasonal variation in total phosphorus and nitrogen from prairie streams in the Red River Basin, Manitoba, Canada](#). Science of The Total Environment. DOI:10.1016/j.scitotenv.2016.09.073

Zhenzhong Si, Jonathan Crush, Steffanie Scott and Taiyang Zhong. 2016. [The Urban Food System of Nanjing, China](#). Hungry Cities Partnership. Hungry Cities Report No. 1. ISBN 978-1-920597-16-0

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### Recent Theses and Dissertations

Rick Epp. 2016. Coming Out by Staying In: Men who have sex with men in the Niagara Region and how they represent themselves online” today. MA thesis. Department of Geography, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario.

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### Other “Geographical” News

**'It's not a victimless crime' – the murky business of buying academic essays:** Contract cheating – where students pay for others to complete their coursework – is a huge problem. All sorts of assignment requests can be fulfilled, by a growing number of online sites. These essay cheating sites are global, and they take advantage of gullible students to rake in profit. Students are promised that essays and assignments will be returned quickly, often within 24 hours. In the panic of a looming deadline, the temptation is understandable. They are supposedly guaranteed original, plagiarism-free work that will earn them first-class grades. They are often in for a disappointment when the work they receive back is far from the promised standard. [The Guardian](#)

**Monthly record-warm streak ends, September second warmest on record for globe:** August's warmth spread into September, contributing to the warmest year to date for the globe, but not enough to continue the recent 16-month streak of record warmth, according to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Even so, September 2016 ranked as the second warmest September on record. [ScienceDaily](#)

**On Vancouver Island, summer streamflow droughts are the new normal:** Many Canadians imagine that Vancouver Island is perpetually damp. With its incessant winter rains and its temperate rainforest of massive cedar and Douglas fir trees dripping with moss and lichen, it would certainly seem so. In reality, Vancouver Island's climate is “warm-summer mediterranean,” with mild, wet winters and relatively dry summers. For the last three years, each of those dry summers has turned into a severe streamflow drought. Given the cascading effects of streamflow drought on everything from agriculture to hydropower generation to fish habitat, provincial scientists have been keeping a closer eye than usual on summer conditions on Vancouver Island. [CBC | The Nature of Things](#)

**Looming water shortage in Okotoks can be solved with pipeline to Calgary, says mayor:** Okotoks is renewing its call for government funding to help build a new 16-kilometre pipeline to transport drinking water from Calgary, as the town's mayor says a future water shortage could turn the taps off on construction growth. Okotoks Mayor Bill Robertson says his community will face serious growing pains unless it finds an additional source of drinking water. [CBCNews | Calgary](#)

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## Some Not So “Geographical” News



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GeogNews Archives: <http://www.geog.uvic.ca/dept/cag/geognews/geognews.html>

@CanGeographers Weekly: <https://paper.li/CanGeographers/1394987315>