



**News Digest of the Canadian Association of Geographers
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Compiled by Dan Smith cag@geog.uvic.ca

U Toronto's Matti Siemiatycki analyses the difficulties in reversing course on public projects:

Canada's first boondoggle involved a national anniversary, a small town on the prairies, and 33 burning wooden outhouses. Since then, Canada has seen a veritable boondoggle boom. At some point every province and level of government has experienced a scandal that caused critics to invoke the "b" word. It's been tagged to infrastructure projects with ballooning bills and procurement programs run amok. While auditing projects and programs when costs outstrip projections might be a popular idea with voters—and even sound policy—it won't do much to head off potential boondoggles. For one thing, says Dr. Matti Siemiatycki, an associate professor at the University of Toronto's geography and planning department, "once projects are in the ground and construction has started, it's infrequent that they're stopped, and it's hard to correct course without huge expense. The problem needs to be addressed earlier on." It's also true that politicians and interest groups have a tendency to lowball a project's cost and hype up its benefits to win approval. "Oftentimes the seeds of a cost overrun are sowed" at the stage when a project is initially dreamed up, says Siemiatycki. "They're actually quite political rather than just technical," he points out. Siemiatycki says there's a need to collect better data on what causes cost overruns, and then use that to design accountability mechanisms to improve decision-making. "There's all sorts of peer-review models that review plans [to] try and screen out some of the optimism biases and even some of the political factors," he notes. Transferring the risk of exceeding budgets away from the government via public-private partnerships is also an option.

[Maclean's Magazine](#)

I'UQTR participe à la délégation québécoise du Fonds de recherche du Québec en France: Une délégation québécoise sélectionnée par le Fonds de recherche du Québec pour la Société et la Culture y participait. La recherche menée à l'UQTR y était représentée par Julie Ruiz, professeure au département des sciences de l'environnement et chercheure au RIVE (centre de recherche sur les interactions bassins versants-écosystèmes aquatiques). Ayant accueilli plus de 980 personnes, il a été l'occasion pour Julie Ruiz de présenter le premier laboratoire vivant en réhabilitation des agroécosystèmes : L'AcadieLab. Elle était accompagnée de Virginie Zingraff (directrice générale de l'organisme RANG3), co-fondatrice de ce laboratoire vivant, avec Samuel Comtois et Marie-Pierre Maurice de l'entreprise Pleine-Terre. Modèle de collaboration pour restructurer des agroécosystèmes, L'AcadieLab, a aussi montré ces capacités pour une recherche intersectorielle lors d'une conférence donnée conjointement avec l'approche patient-partenaire de la faculté de médecine de l'université de Montréal. [Programme de géographie-UQTR](#)

U Waterloo’s Sarah Burch among scholars across Canada urging immediate action on low carbon transition: “If we’re going to have any hope of reaching our commitments under the Paris Agreement or keeping warming below two degrees, then the de-escalation of fossil fuel consumption has to happen immediately.” Department of Geography and Environmental Management professor and Canada Research Chair in Sustainability Governance and Innovation, Sarah Burch is one of the coordinating lead authors of a scholarly consensus report released today identifying the urgency, barriers and economic opportunities for Canada’s transition to a low-carbon future. Commissioned by Natural Resources Canada, *Re-Energizing Canada: Pathways to a Low-Carbon Future* represents the collective views of more than 70 university researchers from all 10 provinces on how Canada can make the low-carbon transition while remaining globally competitive. The authors identified social, political and organizational issues as the key barriers. “Governance is crucial,” Burch stresses. “Low-carbon technological innovation is important, but the most pressing challenges are social and political. Unless we create the right incentives for people to use those technologies, unless we coordinate our efforts and communicate the benefits of this transition, we’re just not going to get there.” But the good news is that we can begin the process of transitioning using existing technology. And with government at all levels providing guidance, support and mobilization initiatives, Canada stands to win. “With its uniquely vast endowment of renewable energy resources, Canada can seize the global low-carbon energy transition as an opportunity to build a major new economic engine for the country,” Burch says. [U Waterloo Environment](#)

U Toronto’s Matti Siemiatycki on Woodbine’s ‘city within a city’: Discussions about what to do with the Woodbine Racetrack lands have been happening for at least four years now. And you might be wondering why we don’t just get on with it. But with a 275-hectare site and plans that potentially include a new music venue, hotels, condos, shops, offices, and sports fields, the scope is equivalent to a development the size of downtown Toronto. But Matti Siemiatycki, an associate professor in Geography and Planning at the University of Toronto, said the development is still “a double edged sword.” While there’s an opportunity to bring jobs and development to an area “in need of investment,” Siemiatycki said when developments are built around casinos they pose “risks in terms of the impact of gambling and gambling addiction.” He also warned that casinos and large-sc “I think the idea of thinking of it as a city in an urban sense is positive but we want our cities to be integrated and to connect and to be able to interrelate.” “The area is so vast. The nice part is that we’re a single land owner which is so unusual...we can plan it out ourselves and create a vision so that everyone that we lease the land to or sell the land to, they’re consistent with the vision.” But some are less confident the development will work out. Siemiatycki said he “never likes to say never” but “a lot of proposals to redevelop that site have been brought forward a number of times over the years.” “These are in many ways about capturing lightning in a bottle,” Siemiatycki said. [Toronto Star](#)



Brock U’s Department of Geography and Tourism Studies announces that Richard Epp is this year’s recipient of Distinguished Graduate Student Award – Geography. The Distinguished Graduate Student Award is presented to one student from each program, who has achieved the highest overall average. [Brock U News Around Campus](#)

Memorial University to host the first-of-its-kind conference in Canada focused exclusively on small and medium-sized cities (SMCs) around the world. Urban scholars and professionals are invited to come together to St. John’s, the capital of Newfoundland and Labrador, to present, learn, and discuss the opportunities and challenges facing the contemporary small city. [Memorial Geography](#)

Hot Papers by Canadian Geographers

Martine August and Alan Walks. 2017. [Gentrification, suburban decline, and the financialization of multi-family rental housing: The case of Toronto](#). Geoforum. doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2017.04.011

Laura Cameron and Matt Rogalsky. 2017. [A Day in Algonquin Park: William W.H. Gunn and the Circadian Audio Portrait](#). Organized Sound 22.

Valorie A. Crooks, Rebecca Whitmore, Jeremy Snyder and Leigh Turner. 2017. [“Ensure that you are well aware of the risks you are taking...”: actions and activities medical tourists’ informal caregivers can undertake to protect their health and safety](#). BMS Public Health. DOI:10.1186/s12889-017-4442-1

Tim P. Duval and Danielle D. Radu. 2017. [Effect of temperature and soil organic matter quality on greenhouse-gas production from temperate poor and rich fen soils](#). Ecological Engineering. doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoleng.2017.05.011

David Fawcett, Tristan Pearce, James D. Ford and Lewis Archer. 2017. [Operationalizing longitudinal approaches to climate change vulnerability assessment](#). Global Environmental Change 45:79–88.

Liming He, Jing M. Chen, Jane Liu, Gang Mo and Joanna Joiner. 2017. [Angular normalization of GOME-2 sun-induced chlorophyll fluorescence observation as a better proxy of vegetation productivity](#). Geophysical Research Letters. DOI: 10.1002/2017GL073708.

Valli-Laurent Fraser-Celin, Alice J. Hovorka, Mark Hovork and Glyn Maude. 2017. [Farmer–African wild dog \(*Lycaon pictus*\) relations in the eastern Kalahari region of Botswana](#). KOEDOE.

M. Foroutana and J.R. Zimbelman. 2017. [Semi-automatic mapping of linear-trending bedforms using ‘self-organizing maps’ algorithm](#). Geomorphology. doi.org/10.1016/j.geomorph.2017.05.016

Alemu Gonsamo, Jing M. Chen, Stephen J. Colombo, Michael T. Ter-Mikaelian and Jiaxin Chen. 2017. [Global change induced biomass growth offsets carbon released via increased forest fire and respiration of the central Canadian boreal forest](#). Journal of Geophysical Research. Biogeosciences. DOI:10.1002/2016JG003627

Steven D. Mamet, Kwok P. Chun, Geoffrey G. L. Kershaw, Michael M. Loranty and G. Peter Kershaw. 2017. [Recent increases in permafrost thaw rates and areal loss of palsas in the western Northwest Territories, Canada](#). Permafrost and Periglacial Processes. DOI:10.1002/ppp.1951

CindyAnn Rose-Redwood and Reuben Rose-Redwood. 2017. [Rethinking the politics of the international student experience in the age of Trump](#). Journal of International Students 7.

Adam G. Yates, Robert B. Brua, Joseph M. Culp, Patricia A. Chambers and Roger G. Young. 2017. [Variation in stream metabolism and benthic invertebrate composition along longitudinal profiles of two contrasting river systems](#). Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences. DOI:10.1139/cjfas-2016-0198

Other “Geographical” News

Toronto's big cycling challenge? Coaxing nervous riders onto the road: Toronto is adding several new bike lanes — several of which are contra-flow lanes, where cyclists can ride in either direction on a one-way street — in 2017 as part of its 10-year cycling network plan. Bike lanes are also on the way for Lake Shore Boulevard in Etobicoke, and Woodbine Avenue in the east end. [CBCNews | Toronto](#)

Cities may be 8 degrees C hotter by 2100: Under a dual onslaught of global warming and localized, urban heating, some of the world's cities may be as much as 8 C warmer by 2100. Such a temperature spike can have dire consequences for the health of city-dwellers, robbing companies and industries of able workers, and put pressure on already strained natural resources such as water. The projection is based on the worst-case-scenario assumption that emissions of planet-warming greenhouse gases continue to rise throughout the 21st century. [CTV News](#)

There are currently no new townhomes available anywhere in Vancouver: Availability of new multi-family housing has reached historic lows. New data has revealed that zero new townhomes were completed and move-in ready in Vancouver, and only 16 townhomes and 15 condos were ready for occupancy in the entire Metro region (Lower Mainland) as of the end of March 2017. [DailyHive](#)

How Toronto can waterproof itself against record-setting rainfall and lake levels: With more rain bearing down on the region, a Toronto architect says the city must find new ways to soak up excess water. She says the city's inability to absorb record-setting rainfall or cope with high Lake Ontario water levels stresses the sewer system and forces more permeable land in Toronto's suburbs to take on an extra burden. She suggested three ways that Toronto could steel itself against the increasingly unpredictable — and this spring, very wet — weather. [CBCNews | Toronto](#)

Some Not So “Geographical” News



All set for a fancy outdoor meal and a canoe ride? The Toronto Islands are suffering the effects of excessive rain, but residents still have a sense of humour.



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