WHAT'S LEFT?
ALBERTA AND THE FUTURE OF CANADA

November 20-22, 2015
Centennial Centre for Interdisciplinary Science, University of Alberta
MAP OF CCIS
Plenary Session: Room 1-430
Concurrent Sessions: Rooms 1-140 and 1-160
This year’s conference will explore the potential for progressive change Alberta’s dramatic spring election offers. After over 40 years of neoliberal policy construction in the province, has our concept of what it means to be progressive shifted? To what extent can truly progressive policy be implemented in the province? And, as Alberta changes, could the province lead federal conversations on progressive public policy in the country?
Dear Conference participants,

Welcome to Parkland Institute’s 19th annual conference. The institute has long prided itself on addressing topics that are both current and vitally important to the economic, political, and social health of Albertans and Canadians at large, and to challenge conventional orthodoxy. This conference proves to be no different.

The conference title perhaps says it all: “What’s Left? Alberta and the Future of Canada.” The sub-title is taken from The Trojan Horse, a book critical of the Conservative government of Ralph Klein. The book came out twenty years ago and was launched at a conference in 1995 much like this one. The sub-title was meant at the time to be a warning, and preceded Parkland Institute’s founding the next year.

This year, the sub-title’s meaning is quite different, however. Its use in the conference title and theme connotes the possibilities of progressive change; change set in motion by the tectonic shift in Canadian politics that has occurred in recent months, beginning in Alberta with the New Democrats’ surprise win in Alberta’s spring provincial election and ending with the Liberals majority victory in the recent federal election.

Both elections come in the context of larger social and political current sweeping much of the world. Anti-austerity movements have been rising throughout much of Europe, casting aside traditional parties of both the right and left.

But what do these changes mean in the larger picture? Has there been a deep and permanent political change? Is a new era of left progressive politics at hand? If so, how might civil society groups leverage this opportunity for even further political and social advances? Are there specific alternative policies that we should consider?

Each of the conference speakers is uniquely positioned to explore these questions and many more. Each speaker is also uniquely able to examine – and propose – real policy solutions that Aboriginal peoples, labour unions, business, and other civil society organizations might promote and that governments might adopt and implement. The range of specific policy areas examined at this conference is vast. It includes, among other areas, taxation, the environment, child care, labour, resource development, education, and democracy.

Ultimately, as with all of our conferences, the biggest question of all is, “What kind of society do we want – today and in the future?”

Parkland conferences provide the opportunity to meet new people and catch up on old friendships. As in the past, I hope this conference also informs you and inspires you to act. Please renew your Parkland support by making a donation, so Parkland can continue to make a difference. Parkland relies on contributions from you, and people like you, to thrive. Finally, I want to personally invite you to come speak with me to discuss your concerns and insights.

Warm regards to all,

Trevor Harrison
The Director and Co-founder, Parkland Institute
FRIDAY
November 20, 2015

7:00 pm – 9:00 pm
1-430, CCIS

KEYNOTE

ALEX HIMELFARB
The Decline of the Collective

Today taxes are seen as a burden and tax cuts are treated as the last free lunch. While we increasingly demand politicians tell us the cost of new initiatives, we don’t ask about the cost of tax cuts. This distorted conversation on taxes has evolved over two decades. Alex Himelfarb explores the history and the consequences for Canadians on the assault on taxes.

SATURDAY
November 21, 2015

8:30 am – 9:00 am  Doors Open  North Lecture Theatres, CCIS

9:00 am – 10:15 am
1-430, CCIS

PLENARY

Feeling Wisconsin’s Labour Pains: stopping Alberta and North America’s union-busting contagion

STEPHANIE BLOOMINGDALE, AFL-CIO, WI

There is a growing threat against unions in the US and Canada and across the globe. Who’s behind it? With over 20 years experience in the labour movement Bloomingdale examines American blue collar voter backlash.

10:15 am – 10:45 am
PCL Lounge, CCIS

BREAK

Fair trade locally roasted coffee and tea from Earth’s General Store and pastries by Bon Ton Bakery

10:45 am – 12:00 pm
A.  1-140, CCIS

CONCURRENT

Everyone’s Fair Share: finding equitable taxation alternatives

Kathleen Lahey, Queen’s University. Professor and Queen’s National Scholar, Faculty of Law

Taxation in Alberta, Sex Equality, and Income Inequalities: policies for better tomorrows

Greg Flanagan, research fellow of Parkland Institute

The Intersection of Poverty and Inequality

B.  1-430, CCIS

Participatory Politics: Constructing citizen engagement in a new Alberta

Yasmeen Abu-Laban, University of Alberta

David Kahane, University of Alberta. Professor and lead on the Alberta Climate Dialogue

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm
Basement of North Lecture Theatres, CCIS

LUNCH

Catered lunch by Upper Crust
### CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

**1:00 pm – 2:15 pm**

**A. 1-140, CCIS**

**CONCURRENT**

**Common Ground, Common Good: New ways to fight for advanced education**

*Claire Polster, University of Regina*

How and why to change the ways we try to change Canada’s universities

*John Nicholls, Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations*

Alberta universities and the wider community

**2:15 pm – 2:30 pm**

**PCL Lounge, CCIS**

**BREAK**

Fair trade locally roasted coffee and tea from Earth’s General Store and pastries by Bon Ton Bakery

**2:30 pm – 3:45 pm**

**A. 1-140, CCIS**

**CONCURRENT**

**Beyond the Market: The case for public childcare**

*Martha Friendly, Childcare Resource and Research Unit*

Progressive childcare policy in Alberta? Getting from here to there

**B. 1-160, CCIS**

**Climate of Change: Policies for a new environmental reality**

*Gwendolyn Blue, University of Calgary*

Beyond mitigation: Climate policy for a transforming Alberta

*Jim Byrne, University of Lethbridge*

Alberta and Canada: The way forward on energy and climate change

**3:45 pm – 4:00 pm**

**BREAK**

PCL Lounge, CCIS

**4:00 pm – 5:15 pm**

**1-430, CCIS**

**AFTERNOON PLENARY**

**DUNCAN CAMERON, rabble.ca**

Agenda for a Peaceful Revolution

Duncan Cameron proposes transformation of the ecologically unsustainable business-as-usual global economy to create a green economy under democratic control and negotiate a new bargain that balances the needs of young and old Canadians alike.

**7:00 pm – 9:00 pm**

Dewey’s Lounge in the old Powerplant, U of A campus

**AFTER THE SANDS**

**Book Launch and Social**

Political economist and founding director of the Parkland Institute Gordon Laxer proposes a Canadian-first perspective and road map to transitioning to a low-carbon society.
SUNDAY
November 22, 2015

8:30 am – 9:00 am Doors Open North Lecture Theatres, CCIS

9:00 am – 10:15 am
1-430, CCIS

MORNING PLENARY

GREGG OLSEN, University of Manitoba
Poverty and Austerity Amidst Affluence

Despite prosperity witnessed in Canada, poverty has remained stable or increased, its severity and consequences intensified. How are nations outside of the developed world outperforming their Anglo/American counterparts, with less inequality and lower poverty levels? What is possible in the current era of globalization?

10:15 am – 10:30 am
PCL Lounge, CCIS

BREAK

Fair trade locally roasted coffee and tea from Earth’s General Store and pastries by Bon Ton Bakery

10:30 am – 11:45 am
A. 1-140, CCIS

CONCURRENT

The Art of the Possible: Alberta’s changing labour landscape

Bob Barnetson, Athabasca University
Overcoming legal barriers to fair labour practise

Ian Hussey, Parkland Institute
Alberta’s fight for the $15: The politics and practicalities of raising the minimum wage

B. 1-160, CCIS

Keeping it Public: How Alberta can lead on health care

Colleen Fuller, health policy researcher and writer
Medicare at the crossroads

Guy Smith, president of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees
Opportunities for a better health care system

11:45 am – 12:00 pm
PCL Lounge, CCIS

BREAK

Fair trade locally roasted coffee and tea from Earth’s General Store and pastries by Bon Ton Bakery

12:00 pm – 1:15 pm
1-430, CCIS

CLOSING KEYNOTE

KATHLEEN MONK
Looking Back, Looking Forward

Kathleen Monk will provide analysis on the recent Alberta and federal elections, and evaluate the state of progressive politics in Canada and its future.

Kathleen Monk was the founding executive director of the Broadbent Institute. She served as director strategic communications for NDP leader Jack Layton. She previously worked in newsrooms in Toronto, Ottawa and Washington.
1. Coffee and pastries will be provided Saturday and Sunday morning.

2. Please bring your own mug.

3. Lunch on Saturday will be provided in your registration fee or if you have volunteered three shifts for the conference. There will be vegetarian options. Please feel free to bring your lunch or there are some vendors open on the main floor of the Students’ Union Building.

4. Your full registration fee includes:
   - Alex Himelfarb keynote
   - All plenary and concurrent sessions
   - Saturday lunch

5. Parking options
   - Parking lot E is located directly in front of the CCIS North entrance off Saskatchewan Drive ($5/hour)
   - Street parking ($3.50/hour)
   - Windsor Car Park 116 St. and 92 Ave:
     - Evenings (4:30pm - 6:00 am) $5
     - Weekends: $5.00 flat rate

6. Please complete the conference feedback form that is in your conference package.

Thank You Volunteers!

This conference is made possible by the many volunteers who dedicate their time and resources. Over the conference you will see many people with VOLUNTEER name tags who will help with registration, set up, tickets, food and more. They ensure you get the microphone to ask your question and have a seat in a great spot for all sessions. Please help us thank them for their time.

Special thanks go to Flavio Rojas who has worked to create the conference design and to Rob Butz for the website design and management. Special thanks to Scott Harris who took on a lot of the work coordinating conference registration processes to Parkland’s new website.
RESPECTING DISCUSSION TIME

Parkland conferences embrace diverse and thoughtful conversation. This is why so much time is dedicated to question and answer portions of each session. But to maximize the sharing of information among our diverse attendees we need to ensure all have equality of access to question time. This is why we must all be aware of the captive capacity of “The Ranter” and that this hogging of time will not be allowed.

Value dialogue: Everyone has something to contribute.

Honest and positive contributions create better discussions and results.

Balance seriousness with humour.

People who have not spoken yet will get priority.

Speaking lists will be altered to balance, gender, age and race.

Do not interrupt the facilitator or presenters as discussion time is allotted at the end.

Do not campaign at the mic.

Keep comments brief and on topic.

Be conscious of how much space you take up or how much you speak in a group. Practise “stepping up, stepping back” so we can each contribute to equal participation.
ALEX HIMELFARB
The Decline of the Collective

Today taxes are seen as a burden and tax cuts are treated as the last free lunch. While we increasingly demand politicians tell us the cost of new initiatives, we don’t ask about the cost of tax cuts. This distorted conversation on taxes has evolved over two decades. Alex Himelfarb explores the history and the consequences for Canadians on the assault on taxes.

Alex Himelfarb is a former top public servant and public policy expert. He served as director of the Glendon School of Public and International Affairs at York University from 2009-2014 when he was then appointed director emeritus.
# Saturday

**November 21, 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30 am - 9:00 am</td>
<td>Doors Open &lt;br&gt;North Lecture Theatres, CCIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00 am – 10:15 am</td>
<td>Plenary Session &lt;br&gt;Room 1-430, CCIS &lt;br&gt;Feeling Wisconsin’s Labour Pains: Stopping Alberta’s and North America’s Union-Busting Contagion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15 am - 10:45 am</td>
<td>Break &lt;br&gt;PCL Lounge, CCIS &lt;br&gt;Fair trade locally roasted coffee and tea from Earth’s General Store and Pastries by Bon Ton Bakery</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Stephanie Bloomingdale

The abrupt end to Wisconsin’s union-busting Governor Scott Walker’s presidential bid by no means signals an end to the war on working people. As thought leaders, we must recognize and respond to the growing threat against unions in the United States, Canada and across the globe. Framed by recent events in Wisconsin, this presentation will examine who’s behind the anti-labor agenda and how organized labor and progressive movements in Alberta can inoculate their communities and stop the anti-union crusade from spilling across the border.

*Elected the first female Secretary-Treasurer for the WI State AFL-CIO, Stephanie Bloomingdale has more than 20 years of experience in the labor movement as an organizer, negotiator, and activist. Stephanie previously served as the Director of Public Policy for the Wisconsin Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals, where she had a key role in strengthening the voices of nurses and healthcare workers throughout Wisconsin. Stephanie is married to Doug Savage, a member of AFT-Wisconsin, and has two sons who are often seen at rallies and door to door canvasses. Stephanie currently serves as a Parkland Institute Research Fellow.*
Concurrent Session
A. Everyone’s Fair Share: Finding equitable taxation alternatives

Kathleen Lahey
Taxation in Alberta, Sex Equality, and Income Inequalities: Policies for better tomorrows

Governments around the world have institutionalized austerity in annual budgets through taxation and spending. While looking for optimal economic development strategies these policies ignore women’s economic needs and roles. This talk evaluates Alberta’s recent tax and spending changes from the perspectives of their impact on gender equality, human well-being, and durable economic development, and outlines policy alternatives that can enhance existing policy directions in light of this province’s unique characteristics and potentials.

Kathleen Lahey is professor and Queen’s National Scholar, Faculty of Law, at Queen’s University, Canada. Kathleen has consulted on numerous law reform commissions and bodies, including the Ontario Fair Tax Commission, Law Reform Commission of Canada, and various Parliament of Canada committees. She has presented her work internationally and is involved in transnational collaborative fiscal policy research, including projects funded by the EC Horizon2020 program and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Greg Flanagan
Exploring Progressivity

How do we evaluate the progressivity or fairness of a government’s revenue? As a government budget includes the revenue side and the expenditure side. For this perspective the expenditures side is taken as independently determined. The various opportunities for government to obtain the necessary revenue to contribute to these expenditure obligations will be outlined; and the progressivity or fairness of various revenue options will be discussed.

Greg Flanagan is a public finance economist with an MES (Political Economy and the Environment) from York University, and MA (Economics) from the University of British Columbia. Greg has taught and been in administration for 30 years in the Alberta post-secondary system, and recently retired from the University of Lethbridge. He has been involved with Parkland Institute since its inception as a board member, frequent researcher, and advocate; and is a distinguished research fellow.
10:45 am – 12:00 pm
Room 1-430, CCIS

Concurrent Session
B. Participatory Politics: Constructing citizen engagement in a new Alberta

David Kahane

Government consultation in Alberta under the Tories mainly used shallow forms like telephone town halls, open houses where you got to write a sticky note, online polls and workbooks, and the closed door sessions where invited groups got to have a quick say. All of these forms of public consultation draw from a narrow segment of the population. None of them bring citizens and civil society organizations into real deliberation. And none of them do much to build an engaged or mobilized civic culture.

Those of us who hoped that the NDP would bring in dynamic new approaches to public involvement in policy development have so far had a telephone town hall on the budget, a few perfunctory opportunities to offer opinions online, and the chance to put up stickies at open houses for the climate panel and the royalties panel.

What would it look like for the NDP to break the Tory mould for public engagement? To turn a familiar rhetoric of ‘listening to Albertans’ into meaningful, transformative action with citizens?

In this participatory session, we’ll think about what a different path of public engagement would look like, and how to get the NDP on that path.

David Kahane is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Alberta. He is Project Director of Alberta Climate Dialogue (ABCD), a SSHRC-funded community-university research partnership convening citizens in Alberta to deliberate on climate change policy, and learning from careful evaluation of these processes and their outcomes. His broader research deals with theories and practices of democratic dialogue and deliberation, with particular focus on features of process design that make public dialogues more inclusive and transformative. Publications in this vein include two edited volumes, Deliberative Democracy in Theory and Practice and Dispute Resolution in Aboriginal Contexts: Land Claims, Treaties, and Self-Government Agreements.

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Lunch – Catered lunch by Upper Crust

Lunch Basement of North Lecture Theatres, CCIS
SATURDAY

November 21, 2015

1:00 pm – 2:15 pm
Room 1-140, CCIS

Concurrent Session
A. Common Ground, Common Good: New ways to fight for advanced education

Claire Polster

How and why to change the ways we try to change Canada’s universities

New strategies are needed to combat the corporatization of Canada’s universities. When it comes to making change people almost invariably revert to strategies based in causal thinking. But this dominant strategy has failed and has left activists disappointed and demobilized. This presentation describes and critiques the cause-and-effect approach to change and advocates an alternative, namely a “social relations” approach. Three current examples will demonstrate how a social relations approach can allow us to make better use of our energies and opportunities. And new strategies will be discussed to help those committed to public serving universities stay grounded in this alternative approach to making change.

Claire Polster is a professor of sociology and social studies at the University of Regina. She is also a co-founder of the University of Regina Faculty of Arts’ Community Research Unit. Her research focuses on the transformation of Canadian higher education and its implications for the public interest. In addition to scholarly and popular articles, she has published two books in collaboration with Janice Newson: Academic Callings, and A Penny For Your Thoughts: How Corporatization Devalues Teaching, Research, and Public Service In Canada’s Universities.

John Nicholls

Alberta universities and the wider community

The neo-liberal austerity agenda has put our universities on the defensive, with teaching and research increasingly constrained by the demands of government and industry. While the universities tool up to turn out more ‘job-ready’ graduates and help ‘build the economy’, the ‘relevance’ of the humanities and social sciences, in particular, is being questioned. Yet the need for fresh thinking and new approaches to the many challenges facing our society is obvious, and with the support of a progressive government, there is an opportunity now for Alberta universities to refocus their priorities and re-imagine their role in the wider community.

John taught History before embarking on a long career as a research consultant to government. A founding member of Public Interest Alberta (PIA), he was appointed ED of CAFA in 2005. While John has personal experience of no fewer than eight ministers of advanced education, dating back as far as Lyle Oberg, he would be hard-pressed to name a favourite.
Concurrent Session
B. Climate of Change: Policies for a new environmental reality

Gwendolyn Blue

Beyond Mitigation: Climate policy for a transforming Alberta

The newly elected NDP government in Alberta has made a laudable commitment to address climate change. But it has focused primarily on mitigation - reducing greenhouse gas emissions. While successful mitigation strategies are important, alone it is insufficient. Current policy conversation in Alberta misses attention to adaptation which is a matter of necessity and justice. The impacts of climate change are here and fall disproportionately on those who are least able to bear them. A more comprehensive political and public response to climate change must reach beyond mitigation and the climate-energy nexus. In part, this means that public funds and resources be allocated towards developing adaptive capacity in the face of ecological change, particularly for the most vulnerable among us.

Gwendolyn Blue is an associate professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Calgary. Her research addresses the various publics that form around environmental issues, with a particular focus on climate change.

Jim Byrne

Alberta and Canada: The way forward on energy and climate change

Liberal and Conservative Canadian governments and Conservative Alberta governments have been complicit with the energy industry obfuscation of the regional and global environmental impacts of our fossil fuel projects for decades. Claims of energy superpower status and world class environmental monitoring of the oil sands were fallacious, at best.

The election of a different government in Alberta provides the national and global credibility and opportunity to address the environmental problems caused by fossil fuel developments in Alberta. The discussion will focus on the possible ways forward for Alberta to protect and diversify our economy, improve environmental protection and make meaningful commitments to address our huge per capita contributions to global greenhouse gases and climate change.

James Byrne is a professor at the University of Lethbridge and a specialist in global environmental change. Byrne is lead scientist and co-producer of a series of environmental documentaries and served as National Theme Leader in Water Resources Management on the Canadian Water Network Research Management Committee from 2001-04. In the last decade, he has led or convened a series of climate change meetings and sessions through the American Geophysical Union.
2:30 pm – 3:45 pm
Room 1-140, CCIS
Concurrent Session
A. Beyond the Market: The case for public childcare

Martha Friendly
Progressive childcare policy in Alberta? Getting from here to there

Treating childcare as a market system has left the supply of quality childcare inadequate to meet the need. Fees are out of reach of many families, while care and education services are disconnected from one another and so less effective. The election of a progressive Alberta government and the potential election of a federal government with a commitment to a national childcare program, however, could open a window for change to create a comprehensive public system of care. If there is an opening to change child care in Alberta, how could we go about it? What are Alberta’s childcare assets, what are the pitfalls, what are the options and what can be learned from elsewhere?

Martha Friendly is the executive director of Toronto-based Childcare Resource and Research Unit. She has authored numerous books, reports, articles and popular pieces and is a regular media commentator on childcare. With other researchers, social justice and early childhood groups, her goal is a universal, national high quality ECEC program. Trent University awarded Martha an honourary Doctor of Laws degree in 2015.

Julie Hrdlicka
Replacing the childcare market model

Thousands of Alberta families struggle without access to affordable, quality childcare. Families are forced to make difficult decisions such as exiting the workforce or leaving their children in unsupervised or unlicensed care because we lack an equitable system to accommodate them. Lack of quality spaces, high costs for quality care, low wages and limited training for workers in the sector has led to a childcare crises in our province. It is time to replace our childcare market model with an affordable and quality system which is accessible to all Alberta children. This can be done. And with a new government in place, who has a committed to bring in $25/day childcare, we have the opportunity to make it happen.

In April 2015 Julie was elected as the Calgary Board of Education Trustee for wards 11 & 13. She has made a career as a human rights, social justice and environmental advocate. With a degree in international relations she has been committed to working on local issues of poverty, childcare and inequality along with international issues of peace and human rights. Over the past 10 years Julie has worked for both the Parkland Institute and Public Interest Alberta.
SATURDAY

November 21, 2015

2:30 pm – 3:45 pm
Room 1-160, CCIS

Concurrent Session

B. Whose Resources? Energy, royalties and collective ownership

How can resource revenue work to benefit First Nations and all Albertans? Has a failure to recognize proper ownership and revenue from resource development resulted in underfunding of social programs in First Nations communities? This session will look at these intertwined issues.

Craig Makinaw

Craig Makinaw, a Cree from Ermineskin Cree Nation (Neyaskweyahk), is the Alberta Regional Chief for the Assembly of First Nations. He is the former Grand Chief of Treaty Six (2012-14) and the former Chief of Ermineskin Cree Nation (2011-14). His extensive political knowledge includes 18 years of holding an Ermineskin Cree Nation Councillor position (1993-2011). As the Grand Chief of Treaty Six and Chief of Ermineskin Cree Nation, he has presented position papers at the Senate level on Bill C-38, Bill C-45, Bill C-7, Bill S-6 and Bill C-428. He has also presented at the United Nations in both New York and Geneva.

Linda Many Guns

Linda Many Guns is a Siksikaki member and a member of the Blackfoot confederacy. Being passionate about her own culture and heritage, her focus is on bringing awareness, understanding, and validity to the complex knowledge held in the culture. Her PhD and other projects are infused with the processes that animate traditional knowledge in all venues including community development, employment using the knowledge to transform and reshape. Her PhD created a bridge for better cultural understanding through art based inquiry and narrative. She has also worked in the heritage tourism sector, and with various governments in policy and as a researcher for the Treaty and Land Claims Commission in Ottawa. Currently she is at the University of Lethbridge in the Native Studies Department teaching Aboriginal law courses. She is also continues to dabble as an artist and crafter of traditional Blackfoot clothing and items, and is a proud grandmother of four.

3:45 pm - 4:00 pm
PCL Lounge, CCIS

Break
Fair trade locally roasted coffee and tea from Earth’s General Store and Pastries by Bon Ton Bakery
SATURDAY

November 21, 2015

4:00 pm – 5:15 pm
Room 1-430, CCIS

Afternoon Plenary Session
Agenda for a Peaceful Revolution

Duncan Cameron

What is the agenda for revolutionary change in Canada? Duncan Cameron proposes transformation of the ecologically unsustainable business-as-usual global economy to create a green economy under democratic control; negotiate a new intergenerational bargain that balances the needs of young and old Canadians alike; and move social determinants of health to the very centre of our public policy decisions to create the conditions necessary for a healthy future for all.

Duncan Cameron is the president of and columnist at rabble.ca. He is the author, co-author, editor or co-editor of 11 books. He is the former editor of Canadian Forum and former President of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

7:00 pm – 9:00 pm
BOOK LAUNCH SOCIAL

“A MYTH DESTROYING BLOCKBUSTER.”
—RALPH NADER

Dewey’s Lounge in the old Powerplant, UofA campus
### SUNDAY
#### November 22, 2015

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<td>Opening Plenary Session&lt;br&gt;Poverty &amp; Austerity Amidst Affluence</td>
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**Gregg Olsen**

Despite the prosperity and economic growth witnessed in Canada, the UK and the US over the past 30 years, poverty has remained stable or increased, and its severity and consequences have intensified. Although social policy retrenchment and austerity have been widespread across the developed world, many nations have consistently outperformed their Anglo/American counterparts, with less inequality, lower poverty levels and far greater social supports. What is possible in the current era of globalization?

Gregg M. Olsen is professor of sociology at the University of Manitoba. He has published numerous scholarly articles and books in his field, including *The Politics of the Welfare State: Canada, Sweden and the United States* and *Power and Inequality: A Comparative Introduction*. He is currently completing a book focusing on poverty trends in the Anglophone nations.

**Unions:** Bringing you a Canadian standard of living.

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**Image Description:**

The image contains a schedule for the event, detailing times, locations, and activities. It also features a section about Gregg Olsen and his research, emphasizing the contrast between different countries' social policies and outcomes. The visual elements include icons representing public health, work-life balance, occupational health & safety, respect in the workplace, retirement security, and quality public education. The Unions logo promotes their role in providing a Canadian standard of living.
SUNDAY
November 22, 2015

10:30 am – 12:00 pm
Room 1-140, CCIS

Concurrent Session
A. The Art of the Possible: Alberta’s changing labour landscape

Bob Barnetson
Overcoming legal barriers to fair labour practice

Now is the time for change as Alberta’s New Democrat government considers revising Canada’s most regressive labour laws. Currently the legal framework that governs unionization and collective bargaining poses a profound barrier to workers seeking to exercise their associational rights in Alberta’s workplaces. Some labour advocates call for the end of mandatory certification votes, first-contract arbitration, and meaningful remedies when employers interfere with union organizing. Others suggest more fundamental change. For example, instead of certifying workplaces, some advocates argue for unionization on a worker-by-worker basis (so-called minority unionism) in addition to the existing system of exclusive majoritarian unionization. This talk will examine the options in this time for change.

Dr. Bob Barnetson is an associate professor of labour relations at Athabasca University. His research focuses on the political economy of workplace injury, farm workers and child labour in Alberta.

Ian Hussey
Alberta’s fight for $15: The politics and practicalities of raising the minimum wage

In the 2015 Alberta provincial election, the NDP pledged to raise the provincial minimum wage to $15/hour by 2018 if elected. Since winning a majority, the NDP have reaffirmed their commitment, and on October 1st took the first step toward that objective by raising the general minimum wage to $11.20. This presentation looks at the political economy of the minimum wage, addresses the trade-offs the government is making in raising the minimum wage, discusses the practicalities of hiking the minimum wage in pre-announced increments and some of the ways these increases will affect small businesses, and analyzes why there are sound economic and social reasons to raise the minimum wage to $15.

Ian Hussey is a research manager at the Parkland Institute, where his work focuses on political economy and labour studies. In June, Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour Lori Sigurdson mentioned Hussey’s work for Parkland as part of the Government of Alberta’s rationale for raising the minimum wage. Hussey is currently completing his PhD in sociology at York University.
Concurrent Session
B. Keeping it Public: How Alberta can lead on health care

Colleen Fuller

Medicare at a crossroads

The election of a New Democrat government in Alberta promises to bring a different and energetic leadership to the national health care stage. Economists predicted that Alberta would be the only province to benefit from changes to the federal funding formula announced in 2011. But that advantage depended on a booming, resource-based economy. Today Albertans, along with all other Canadians, are likely going to feel the sting of reduced cash transfers just when they are needed the most.

The health care system has been left fragmented with higher costs and increased privatization as cooperation between Ottawa and the provinces has been absent. Albertans can demonstrate, perhaps better than anyone else in the country, why Canadian provinces must ensure that the federal government works with them to strengthen and expand universal medicare and publicly funded delivery within a national health care system.

Colleen Fuller is a health policy researcher and writer. Colleen worked for 14 years in the trade union movement which she left to focus on the impact of privatization on universal access to health services. She has written extensively about Canada’s health care system, including access to safe and effective prescription drugs and medical devices. Her published work includes Caring for Profit, How Corporations are Taking Over Canada’s Health Care System (1998), and The Push to Prescribe: Women & Canadian Drug Policy (co-author, 2010).
Guy Smith

Opportunities for a better health care system

With the election of a progressive government, Alberta has an opportunity to implement health care reforms that turn the neoliberal governance and delivery models of the past 30 years on their head.

Front-line workers, and their unions, are ready to pick up the challenge of helping make the health care system more responsive to the needs of Albertans. But this commitment must be reciprocated by government and proven through tangible efforts to address front-line workers issues such as chronic under staffing and poor working conditions, which impact the quality of services to Albertans.

Guy Smith a veteran union and social justice activist from Edmonton, has been the president of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees since 2009. Smith has 20 years of history as a union activist on his worksite. A member of AUPE Local 006, he is now on leave from his position as a Child and Youth Care Counsellor at the Yellowhead Youth Centre.

Throughout his years as an AUPE activist and leader, Smith has been committed to involving members in decision-making and action when needed. He believes that our struggles are only won through grassroots involvement and mobilization of the rank and file membership.

Smith has been successful in organizing against privatization and in defending the interests of AUPE members when it comes to negotiations, working conditions, and the preservation of public services.
Kathleen Monk

Dramatic change has occurred in progressive politics. Kathleen Monk, former director of strategic communications to Jack Layton and founding executive director of the Broadbent Institute, will examine the recent Alberta and federal elections and reflect on the state of progressive politics in Canada, and its future.

*Kathleen Monk was the founding executive director of the Broadbent Institute. She served as director of strategic communications for NDP leader Jack Layton. She previously worked in newsrooms in Toronto, Ottawa, and Washington. She’s a frequent media commentator and was named one of the Top 100 Most Influential People in Government and Politics by the Hill Times in 2012.*

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—The Staff at the Parkland Institute—

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