

# POLICY BRIEF: Survivors of Socialism

Colin Craig | April 2022



## Executive Summary

Over the past century, Canada has welcomed hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants from socialist and communist regimes all over the world: Venezuela, the former Soviet Union, China, Cuba, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Ukraine, to name a few.

Refugees and immigrants from those nations have often endured tragic experiences: famine, extreme poverty and shortages of essential medicines. Too often, socialist and communist countries also lack basic human rights, such as freedom of speech and freedom of movement. Elections are often compromised (if they're even held), and stories of mass killings, the execution of political opponents and torture are common.

As there is much truth to the phrase "history repeats itself," it is important for policymakers in Canada to avoid the mistakes made in those jurisdictions. SecondStreet.org recently surveyed Canadians who came from socialist and communist countries to learn more about their experiences, and, in particular, to ask if there are any emerging policies in Canada that are of concern to them.



Highlights from our research include:

- The most common concern respondents expressed with Canada's current public policy environment involved efforts by governments to restrict freedom of speech. Many respondents named recent federal legislation aimed to regulate internet content as an example.
- While comments about growing restrictions on freedom of speech were a top concern, almost all respondents indicated that they felt more comfortable expressing their views in Canada than in their previous countries. However, many noted that over time, they felt like their freedoms have eroded or that Canada has become more like the nations they left.
- Respondents were roughly split between feeling like they could speak freely, feeling like they could generally speak freely (but had to do some self-censoring) and feeling like they could not speak freely.

Overall, survey respondents expressed grave concerns about Canada emulating the policies of socialist and communist nations. Many also noted that advocates for socialism needed to learn more about the track record of socialism. Their interviews are of course consistent with macro data that details tremendous hardships and lack of human rights.

## What is Socialism? What is Communism?

Merriam-Webster's dictionary describes "socialism" as: "any of various economic and political theories advocating collective or governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods."<sup>1</sup>

The same source describes “communism” as: “a way of organizing a society in which the government owns the things that are used to make and transport products (such as land, oil, factories, ships, etc.) and there is no privately owned property.”<sup>2</sup>

According to the History Channel, Marx and Engels (widely regarded as the “fathers of communism”) didn’t “consistently or clearly differentiate communism from socialism,” creating some confusion between the two terms.<sup>3</sup> Vladimir Lenin, and many other subscribers of these beliefs, considered socialism to be a stepping stone towards communism. A more contemporary source, the Mises Institute, describes socialism as a “command economy” that “rejects markets entirely in favour of central planning.”<sup>4</sup>

Whether one is talking about socialism or communism, both concepts feature central planning (including price and wage controls), restrictions or abolishment of private property and state ownership of the means of production. Class struggle is central to both ideologies. Marx in particular believed that a struggle existed throughout history between the ruling class bourgeoisie (oppressors) and the working-class proletariat (the oppressed). He argued that violence was necessary to overthrow both the bourgeoisie and existing governments.

While capitalism is driven by market competition in the production and distribution of goods, socialism draws on command economy and collective ownership.

## Socialism and Communism in Practice

Since Marx and Engels released their Communist Manifesto in 1848, many nations have implemented socialist and communist structures of governance; the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in Europe; Venezuela in South America; and China in Asia, to name a few. While well-intentioned Canadians often think that Canada could improve

by becoming more socialist, the historical evidence and the experiences of those who have lived in such systems tell the opposite story. If there is one commonality between nations that have implemented the teachings of Marx and Engels, it is, without a doubt, human suffering.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, a former National Security Advisor to U.S. President Jimmy Carter, has estimated that communism caused the deaths of almost 60 million people during the 20th century:

*In brief, the failed effort to build communism in the twentieth century consumed the lives of almost 60,000,000 human beings, making communism the most costly human failure in all of history.*<sup>5</sup>

The 1997 Black Book of Communism estimated a much higher total – upwards of 100 million deaths. This includes 60 million in China, 20 million in the USSR, 2 million in North Korea, 2 million in Cambodia, 1 million in Vietnam, 1 million in Eastern Europe and 3 million in Africa, Afghanistan and Latin America combined.<sup>6</sup>

Other studies have put the total number of casualties at well over 100 million.<sup>7</sup>

In practice, socialist and communist countries both operate in an authoritarian fashion. They dispense with both standard democratic processes and freedom of speech. Property rights are limited or extinguished – the state can seize businesses and assets from citizens without due process and without compensation, and other freedoms evaporate. Inevitably, this causes conflict and tension between the state and its citizenry.

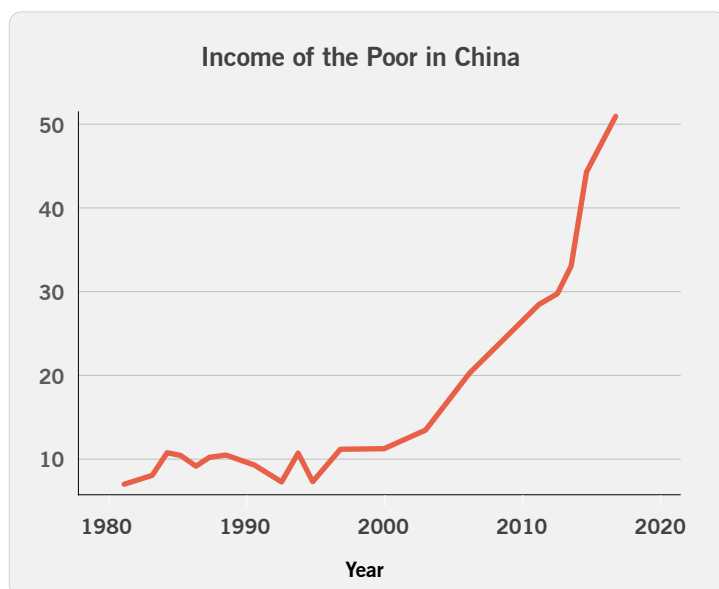
In the USSR, after taking power, Prime Minister Vladimir Lenin acted swiftly to eliminate private urban property and inheritance, and even outlawed private trades. Citizens of all income levels essentially lost their savings as the state rapidly increased the money supply, causing hyperinflation. Lenin

outlawed some opposition parties and introduced compulsory work requirements for citizens, directing workers to take on specific jobs whether they wanted to or not.

According to Britannica.com, “one party after another was outlawed, non-Bolshevik newspapers and journals closed, and all overt opposition suppressed by a new secret police, the Cheka, which was given unlimited authority to arrest and shoot at its discretion suspected ‘counterrevolutionaries.’” Lenin’s USSR regularly rounded up political opponents without even laying charges and would execute them at will.<sup>8</sup>

Economically, after more than seven decades of socialism, GDP per capita in Russia was approximately \$7,846 in 1991 (just prior to the nation’s collapse). This was approximately one third of what US GDP per capita was at the time (\$24,342).<sup>9</sup>

In China, the Chinese Communist Party has controlled the nation since 1949. Millions have died as a result of purges, famines and other atrocities committed by the government. However, and fortunately for millions of Chinese people, their incomes have risen sharply since the Chinese Communist Party moved to a market-based economy towards the end of the 20th century. According to the Hoover Institute, by the mid 2010s, the monthly incomes among the lowest income earners in China were five times higher than what they were before the liberalization of China’s economy.<sup>10</sup>



Source: Hoover Institute. Income is monthly per capita at 2005 PPPs (Purchasing Power Parity)

Today in China, basic human rights are still severely lacking, but the nation has a burgeoning middle class that is moving upwards since the adoption of free market policies. Just as we saw in the USSR, China has maintained a limit on freedoms that those in the west often take for granted. According to CNN:

*China is the opposite of democracy. The ruling Communist Party has held onto power for more than seven decades since the founding of the People’s Republic of China. There is no separation of powers, independence of the judiciary, freedom of association, expression and opinion, periodic free and fair elections by universal suffrage or independent media — which are essential elements of democracy defined by the United Nations ... Chinese activists calling for democracy are routinely silenced, harassed and jailed, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo, who died in prison in 2017 after spending almost a quarter of his life behind bars.<sup>11</sup>*

In Venezuela, a country that embraced socialism more recently, we see a similar pattern of despair. In 1998, just prior to socialist Prime Minister Hugo Chavez taking over, per capita GDP in the country was \$11,927, which was approximately 43% higher than the U.S. poverty level. Yet after two decades of socialism, Venezuela’s per capita GDP fell to \$10,798, approximately 16% below the U.S. poverty level.<sup>12</sup>

The Hugo Chavez / Nicolás Maduro regime has had a catastrophic impact on the people of Venezuela. According to the international Human Rights Foundation (HRF), Chavez implemented “a political philosophy based on populist and socialist ideals that, in practice, led to economic mismanagement, corruption, and the erosion of democratic institutions.”

Chavez curtailed free speech, expanded the supreme court by appointing his supporters and changed the constitution to eliminate term limits. According to the HRF:

*Shortly after rigged elections that gave him a fourth term in 2012, Chávez died of cancer, and his hand-picked successor, Nicolás Maduro, assumed the presidency. Under Maduro, Venezuela's descent into authoritarianism and economic ruin accelerated. By 2014, Venezuela had entered a recession, and is now in the worst peacetime economic crisis the world has seen in decades. Poverty, violence, starvation, and shortages of crucial supplies are now normal. By 2017, almost three-quarters of the population had lost an average of almost 20 pounds, with emergency rooms overwhelmed by cases of severely malnourished children, and citizens scavenging food from trash dumps in the city.*

*By 2019, 94% of Venezuelans lived in poverty. Access to clean water is limited. Hospitals lack the equipment they need to function, and shortages of medicine mean hundreds of thousands of people are at risk or dying without access to treatments for diseases like cancer, HIV, or diabetes. Preventable diseases like diphtheria, malaria, measles and tuberculosis are on the rise, as are rarer diseases like dengue and yellow fever. The rates of infant and maternal mortality have soared.<sup>13</sup>*

One does not need to rely on statistics and academic research to notice the shortcomings of communist and socialist regimes.

Pictures of the Korean Peninsula at night speak for themselves. They show the communist portion, North Korea, is nearly completely dark while the free-market oriented South Korea is brightly lit up where major urban centres are located.

In Europe, prior to the end of the Cold War, millions of Germans fled East Germany (communist) for West Germany (free-market oriented). According to the History Channel, upwards of 1,600 people per day were escaping to the West up until 1961 when the border was sealed and the infamous Berlin Wall was built along with barbed wire, landmines and armed guards in watch towers. Despite those life-threatening obstacles, citizens still attempted escaping to the West. From digging tunnels under the wall to a citizen stealing a tank to smash through it, people risked their lives for a better life on the west side of the divided nation.<sup>14</sup>

According to the City of Berlin,

*Well over 100,000 citizens of the GDR tried to escape across the inner-German border or the Berlin Wall between 1961 and 1988. More than 600 of them were shot and killed by GDR border guards or died in other ways during their escape attempt. They drowned, suffered fatal accidents, or killed themselves when they were caught.<sup>15</sup>*

In Cuba, we find a similar story. Every year, hundreds of Cubans attempt escapes to the United States using makeshift rafts and ships. In some cases, Cubans have even attempted escape by hiding in the wheel wells of airplanes – risking death from hypothermia, a lack of oxygen or falling when the landing gear is extended upon the plane's descent. In 2002, the Globe and Mail reported one such escapee braved a flight from Havana all the way to Montreal in the wheel well of a DC-10 jet liner.<sup>16</sup>

## Why Socialism Fails

Writing for the Foundation for Economic Education, Professor Mark J. Perry identified three common causes for the failure of socialism around the world:<sup>17</sup>

### 1) Prices set through central planning:

Socialist and communist countries utilize central planning, an approach that includes governments setting the price for goods and services. Perry notes that market-driven prices are more advantageous as they promote market efficiency while sending important information to both consumers and suppliers. When prices are high, it's a signal to consumers to conserve the resource in question or consider alternative goods. At the same time, high prices incentivize producers to increase production.

Perry cites the example of gasoline price controls in the U.S. during the 1970s. When the government mandated a low price, long waiting lines developed and producers had less incentive to produce more of the product.

In Canada, the dairy and poultry industries are good examples of how consumers can be adversely affected when central planning is used. In addition to imposing high tariffs on dairy and poultry imports, governments have created a system ("supply management") that determines production quotas and prices for goods rather than allowing producers to determine production levels and markets to set prices. The end result: Canadian consumers pay significantly more for these products. For example, SecondStreet.org found that in 2019, consumers in Canada paid about 29% more for a jug of milk than in the United States.<sup>18</sup>

In 2019-20, media reported that dairy farmers in Canada dumped more than 30 million litres of milk instead of selling this resource to consumers. Under normal market conditions, much of this product would have been sold to the marketplace and would have had a downward

pressure on prices as supply increases. Again, this did not occur under supply management's tightly controlled quota system. (Note: The same Global News story noted that in a "typical," non-pandemic year, the amount of milk that is dumped is closer to 8 million litres.)<sup>19</sup>

### 2) A lack of focus on profits/losses:

In centrally-planned systems, the state determines production rather than market forces. When the latter is used, the most efficient producers rise to the top while those who are not cost-effective fall by the wayside. Perry writes:

*By rewarding success and penalizing failure, the profit system provides a strong disciplinary mechanism which continually redirects resources away from weak, failing, and inefficient firms toward those firms which are the most efficient and successful at serving the public.*

The profit incentive also drives competition, innovation and customer service. In Soviet Russia, customers had to compete with each other for goods, putting monopolistic providers in the driver's seat, "removing the need for thinking about quality customer service at all, let alone improving it."<sup>20</sup>

In China, the decision to switch from a collective farming system to more of an entrepreneur-driven system in the late 1970s led to increases in production and farmers' incomes. According to research by Xue et al., under the nation's new Household Responsibility System:

*All land, adjusted for quality, was distributed equally to farmers in proportion to household size. After fulfillment of grain quotas and tax payments, farmers retained the residual income from agricultural production on contracted lands. The incentive changes contributed to unprecedented gains in agricultural productivity even as the average production scale decreased.<sup>21</sup>*

Instead of the state hoping workers would work hard for the good of the nation, workers had the incentive to work hard and innovate as they would retain earnings above the aforementioned thresholds. Their research also notes:

*The annual growth rates of grain and cotton outputs were 4.8 and 7.7%, respectively, between 1978 and 1984, after having been 2.4% and 1.0% per year between 1952 and 1978.*

Farmers' incomes increased from "133.6 yuan in 1978 to 355.3 yuan in 1984." While mechanization did play a part in the advancement of agricultural practices in China, 78% of the increase was due to changing the incentive structure – in other words, the adoption of profits changed everything.

### 3) Lack of private property:

As noted, socialist and communist countries eliminate or severely limit private property and the means of production are held in common. Perry notes the following about this system:

*while private property creates incentives for conservation and the responsible use of property, public property encourages irresponsibility and waste. If everyone owns an asset, people act as if no one owns it. And when no one owns it, no one really takes care of it.*

Winnipeg provides a good example of irresponsible usage of public property. For years, the city's municipal government used valuable land in the middle of a booming commercial district as a snow dumping site (instead of selling the land for development and dumping the snow on less valuable land somewhere else). Similarly, the same city government sat on prime riverfront land outside of its municipal boundary for 40 years before deciding to sell the property.<sup>22</sup>

Aboriginal reserves in Canada are another example of how the lack of property rights contributes to poverty and poor

social outcomes. Bloomberg notes, "in 1876, the Indian Act 'reserved' Crown-held land for First Nations and took the rest for itself, thus creating a reservation system that to this day prohibits First Nations people from owning land."<sup>23</sup>

Being unable to own land also makes it extremely difficult to finance the construction of a new home. Bloomberg also notes:

*Because First Nations can't own land, they have no assets against which to secure mortgages. That means people who want to build on-reserve homes need to front 100% of their building costs—costs that can surpass normal market value due to the remoteness of many reserves.*

Considering many businesses are started by entrepreneurs who borrow against the equity in their homes, the lack of home ownership on Aboriginal reserves also stifles economic development, deepening dependence on the state and contributing to the many social issues that plague Aboriginal communities.

Without property rights, competitive forces and private profits, there are no entrepreneurs, nor is there the same drive to innovate and use resources productively. This is one reason why socialist and communist countries have suffered from shortages, long waiting periods, ineffective goods and poor customer service.

## Violence in Socialist Regimes: Driven by Class Struggle, Fueled by Suffering

Socialist and communist regimes restrict individual freedom by confiscating citizens' property and forcing workers into jobs they may not like. Poor economic outcomes and shortages of goods exacerbate the friction between the public and the state. Ultimately, citizens have little recourse to respond to these concerns as freedom of speech is restricted, and elections are routinely compromised by those in power.

As previously noted, at the heart of Marxism was a belief that a constant class struggle existed throughout history between the ruling class bourgeoisie (oppressors) and the working-class proletariat (the oppressed). Marx and Engels advocated for the proletariat to use violence when overthrowing the “bourgeoisie” class and state governments. With that in mind, it should come as no surprise that they also supported violence in defence of maintaining socialist and communist regimes.

In 1848, Marx wrote:

*...there is only one way in which the murderous death agonies of the old society and the bloody birth throes of the new society can be shortened, simplified and concentrated, and that way is revolutionary terror.<sup>24</sup>*

Engels was more explicit by articulating that terror is a tool for socialist and communist states:

*A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is the act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon—authoritarian means, if such there be at all; and if the victorious party does not want to have fought in vain, it must maintain this rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionists. Would the Paris Commune have lasted a single day if it had not made use of this authority of the armed people against the bourgeois? Should we not, on the contrary, reproach it for not having used it freely enough?<sup>25</sup>*

## What about Scandinavian Countries?

Many socialists in North America advocate for what they refer to as “democratic socialism” and point to Scandinavian countries as examples of nations to emulate.

However, Scandinavian countries are not actually socialist countries.

Fundamentally, they are market-based economies. Speaking to the Harvard Kennedy School of Government in 2015, Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen rejected the notion that Denmark is a socialist country:

*I know that some people in the US associate the Nordic model with some sort of socialism. Therefore, I would like to make one thing clear. Denmark is far from a socialist planned economy. Denmark is a market economy.<sup>26</sup>*

Many readers need not look further than their own homes to see how Scandinavian countries are in fact market economies rather than socialist nations. Volvo, Ikea, Lego and Carlsberg are well-known private companies from Sweden and Denmark which sell products internationally. The “means of production” are owned privately, and their owners benefit from goods sold. Conversely, most homeowners would struggle to find goods in their homes that were made by large businesses in Cuba, Venezuela or the former Soviet Union.

It is through the wealth generated in the robust private sectors that Scandinavian countries are able to afford the generous social programs that some Western socialists admire. Consider that Denmark, Sweden and Norway all have lower corporate tax rates than Canada and the United States:<sup>27</sup>

Country	Rate
United States	27.0%
Canada	26.5%
Denmark	22.0%
Norway	22.0%
Sweden	20.6%

In fact, while central planning – including wage and price controls – are a major part of communist and socialist nations, Denmark and Sweden do not have minimum wage laws.<sup>28</sup> Where Scandinavian countries differ from North America are the taxes charged on citizenry. Sweden, Norway and Denmark impose higher personal income taxes and sales taxes. For example, the three nations have a 25% sales tax versus the 5% to 15% combined sales tax rate found in Canada.<sup>29,30</sup>

Overall, Sweden, Norway and Denmark are comparable to Canada and the United States when it comes to economic and personal freedoms. Consider the Heritage Foundation’s 2021 Index of Economic Freedom rankings and the Fraser Institute’s 2021 Human Freedom Index:

Country	2021 Index of Economic Freedom – Heritage Foundation – Rank (Score) <sup>31</sup>	2021 Human Freedom Index (Fraser Institute) Rank <sup>32</sup>
Canada	9 (77.9)	6
Denmark	10 (77.8)	3
Norway	28 (73.4)	13
United States	20 (74.8)	15
Sweden	21 (74.7)	9
Venezuela	177 (24.7)	164
Cuba	176 (28.1)	NA

As you can see, the three Scandinavian countries have a lot more in common with Canada and the United States than with socialist nations such as Venezuela and Cuba.

While social programs in Canada are largely delivered through government entities, Scandinavian countries are much more open to private delivery and competition.

For instance, Canadian governments largely ban private health care clinics from selling medically necessary procedures to patients living in the same province. Conversely, the three Nordic countries allow patients to choose between using public health care options or private clinics.

In terms of education, Sweden, Norway and Denmark fund both public schools and charter schools (independent schools funded in whole or in part by government).<sup>33</sup> For example, Sweden funds independent schools (which teach the Swedish curriculum) at the same rate as public schools.<sup>34</sup> In Denmark, private schools receive a grant for their operational expenditures, *“which in principle matches the public expenditures in the municipal schools less the private school fees paid by the parents.”*<sup>35</sup>

### What Concerns Socialist Ex-Pats about Canada?

It is important for policymakers to learn from history and, in particular, avoid mistakes made in other nations. For that reason, SecondStreet.org reached out to Canadians who fled socialist and communist regimes.

We surveyed 35 Canadians between July 2021 and February 2022 to learn about their experiences, why they came to Canada and assess any concerns they might have with emerging policies in Canada. Respondents hailed from China, Romania, Ukraine, the former USSR, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Venezuela and Nicaragua.

The following section notes the questions we posed along with brief summaries of responses and select quotes from respondents. (Only minor typos have been corrected for clarity. See appendix for individual responses.)



Q1

**Why did you decide to leave your native country? What were your experiences or the experiences of others that made you decide to leave?**

Respondents indicated many different reasons for leaving their home countries. Some of the more common responses included wanting freedom from oppression in their home countries as well as freedom of speech. Many respondents indicated they sought a better life in terms of economic opportunities, while others indicated they felt unsafe in their home countries.

*I decided to leave Cuba because I wanted an opportunity to live freely, without uncertainty and without fear. I wanted to have my own business and in Cuba I couldn't because everything belongs to the State and any income derived from the free commercial activity of individuals is considered 'illicit enrichment'. My economic situation in Cuba was good in 2017, but I did not know if that could change tomorrow because in Cuba the communist leaders change the laws and policies overnight. I did not want to live in crime and illegality for the rest of my life, I wanted to be able to put my head on the pillow without remorse, but in Cuba you live every minute in crime since almost everything is illegal ... Things as simple as having a glass of milk or eating a piece of beef may constitute a crime ... Finally, I wanted to be able to express myself freely, to say my opinion without having to lower my voice so that the neighbors would not listen and I wanted to be able to listen to the music I wanted and read the books of my choice.*

– Respondent who came from Cuba

Q2

**Why did you choose Canada to immigrate to and not a different country? What was it about Canada that appealed to you?**

One of the most common responses to this question was the notion that Canada was a country offering “freedom.” Several respondents also indicated that Canada was a welcoming nation for immigrants and they came for positive work opportunities.

*Canada was a free country and I fit in the immigration policy at that moment. The freedom and no socialism in Canada are the main factors which appealed [to] me.*

– Respondent who came from China

Q3

**Did Canada meet your expectations and has Canada changed since you arrived? If so, how?**

The majority of respondents indicated that Canada met their expectations – at least initially. Many noted that over time, they felt like their freedoms had eroded or that Canada had become more like the nations they left. Some even noted that the language used by governments reminded them of the language used by the regimes they escaped.

*Canada has changed immensely since I arrived. Forty years ago, politicians would resign in shame for violating rules, breaking laws, reneging on promises, or caught telling untruths. These seem like quaint values now.*

– Respondent who came from Nicaragua

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*Canada has definitely exceeded my expectations by far. Sometimes I find myself crying or sad about things as normal as good treatment or good customer service from a store clerk. It is something I did not know. Sometimes I am afraid to enter a hotel or any establishment and ask permission to use the bathroom... After [four] years, my husband and I still forget the cart every time we go to the grocery store, because we could never fill a cart before.*

– Respondent who came from Cuba

*[Since 2015], I could hear the same phrases, could witness the same methods used by our Communist party of Czechoslovakia. I'm absolutely certain that Canada is marching towards a totalitarian state.*

– Respondent who came from Czechoslovakia

**Q4**

**Are there any government actions or policies that you have seen in Canada that concern you and remind you of the country you left?**

Almost all respondents indicated concerns with at least one government policy. Not surprisingly, many raised concerns about COVID-19 policies that restricted freedoms.

However, the most common issue, noted by more than a third of respondents, involved efforts by governments to restrict freedom of speech. Many respondents named Bills C-10 and C-36 – two bills previously before Canada's parliament – that sought to regulate internet content. Others commented on “cancel culture” or “political correctness.”

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Finally, it's important to note that many respondents – particularly those who came from China – raised concerns about the federal government refusing to stand up to the Chinese Communist Party.

*Less freedom of speech, debate and opportunities to hear opposing views.*

– Respondent who came from Ukraine

*Polarization of society, turning employees against employers, women against men, races against each other, proposed censorship bills, erosion of freedom of speech, labeling people who have different opinions (calling them deniers, hate speech).*

– Respondent who came from Czechoslovakia

*Higher taxes, overprinting of money to fund poorly thought public projects, questionable behaviour of politicians.*

– Respondent who came from Venezuela

*The censorship we are seeing now in social media do remind me of China. The main stream media's overwhelming one-sided stories on certain topics also remind me of CCP controlled propaganda.*

– Respondent who came from China

Q5

**Specifically, do you feel free in Canada to voice your opinions or criticize the government, institutions and companies? How does it compare to circumstances in your native country?**

Respondents were roughly split between feeling like they could speak freely, feeling like they could generally speak freely (or they self-censored) and feeling like they could not speak freely.

Overall, almost all respondents indicated that they felt more comfortable expressing their views in Canada than in their previous countries.

*Yes, I feel free to voice my opinions on Canadian government. It's not comparable to a Communist China. But I, and many Chinese immigrants here, do have fear of criticizing China because the communists' penetration into Canadian society and it's threatening family members who are still in China.*

– Respondent who came from China

*I don't have the same feeling of freedom of speech which I had 10 years ago. Erosion of our freedom of speech as a base of democracy is enormous.*

– Respondent who came from Czechoslovakia

*No, I don't feel free, I feel the exact same pressure I felt in Cuba, actually I would say people in Cuba are less likely to confront you themselves for your opinions than here. Here people are way more self-righteous, are way more willing to shut you up themselves.*

– Respondent who came from Cuba

Q6

**Many young Canadians do not know much about socialism. As a person who has lived in a socialist country, what would you say to them?**

Respondents were consistent with their warnings to avoid both socialism and communism. Many urged young people to read up on the history of these ideologies and to learn about countries that have tried and failed with these systems: the USSR, Venezuela, Cuba, China and others.

*If socialism is as good as you think, do you think I'd stay in Canada?*

– Respondent who came from China

*Socialism seems very attractive to them because of supposedly 'free stuff' - education, healthcare, housing, etc. However, it isn't free - you pay with your taxes and in USSR you also had just 1 employer - the government. Monopolization of all services by the governments leads to very poor quality (why bother - there is no competition), corruption (tons of opportunities for corruption - one of the key reasons why some politicians love socialism), inevitable collapse - all socialist countries are either already destroyed (USSR, Yugoslavia, Eastern Germany, etc.), had to significantly change their policies (China, Vietnam) or live in poverty (Cuba, Venezuela, North Korea).*

– Respondent who came from Russia

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*There is not a single example in human history of a successful socialist country. There is no human exodus from capitalist countries to socialist countries, nobody risks his life at sea to emigrate from Haiti to Cuba ... Denmark and Sweden are NOT socialists, and Karl Marx never worked, he was always a dependent of Frederic Engels, he never could prove [his] theory. Do not repeat the mistake of believing in an ideology that has more than a hundred million deaths on its resume and counting ...*

*– Respondent who came from Cuba*

## Conclusion

Millions have died at the hands of socialist and communist regimes around the world. Countless more have suffered. Through purges, famines and other consequences that come with authoritarian, centrally planned economies, the results have been devastating.

Promises of utopian societies never materialized, despite attempts to implement socialist systems in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. But that's not to say no one benefitted. Just like Orwell's famous quote – "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" – the same is true for these regimes. For instance, North Korean leader Kim Jung-un reportedly lives quite well as he oversees the largest concentration camp in global history.<sup>36</sup>

While many socialists point to Scandinavian countries as models to emulate, these countries are, fundamentally, free market systems with generous social welfare programs. In some respects, these countries are more free-market than Canada.

To be sure, free-market-oriented systems are not perfect. No system is. But entrepreneurial-driven systems which feature democratic rights, private property and a limited role for governments have lifted billions out of poverty.<sup>37</sup> Freedom affords them various self-correcting mechanisms. The data from China is startling – an enormous middle class is blossoming thanks to a dramatic shift away from central planning to more of a free market structure. That being said, it is obvious that China's human rights record continues to be abhorrent in many respects. The Southeast Asian country's system of forced labour camps for its Uyghur people is just one recent example.<sup>38</sup>

Canadians who are interested in learning more about socialist and communist countries would be wise to speak with those who have already lived through such regimes. Their tales are almost always tragic. It is sobering to think about a governance system that leads to someone risking their life by walking a tightrope over a strip of land that is covered in landmines, barbed wire and patrolled by armed guards. Similarly, it is hard to imagine climbing into the wheel well of an airplane to escape one's homeland. The data on the social and economic outcomes from socialist and communist nations explains what would drive someone to take such risks. As revolutionary General John Stark stated, "live free or die."<sup>39</sup>

Policymakers in Canada would be wise to reflect on the survey responses discussed in this brief. In particular, strong opposition was expressed to decisions by governments to regulate online speech. Considering that online content is already subject to civil and criminal restrictions on hate speech and defamation, it is not clear why the government feels it needs more power to censor online content.

To be sure, Canada is quite different from the socialist and communist nations that survey respondents fled. However, limiting the free flow of ideas, knowledge and opinions is antithetical with democratic states and the advancement of human flourishing.

## About the Author

Colin Craig is President of SecondStreet.org. He has an MBA and a BA (Economics) from the University of Manitoba and is the author of *The Government Wears Prada*, a book that examines how governments could be more cost-effective and prepare for our nation's aging population. Most recently, Colin authored several chapters for the eBook, *Life After COVID: What's next for Canada?* He has contributed to public policy changes at the federal, provincial and municipal levels in Canada.

## Research Contributor

Caitlin Morgante provided research assistance for this policy brief. She is currently working towards her bachelor's degree in economics from Boston University.

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### Appendix: Raw Responses from Survey Respondents

Note: Only minor typos and spelling mistakes have been corrected.

Year arrived in Canada, Country of Origin	- Q1 - Why did you decide to leave your native country? What were your experiences, the experiences of others that made you decide to leave?	- Q2 - Why did you choose Canada to immigrate to and not a different country? What was it about Canada that appealed to you?	- Q3 - Did Canada meet your expectations and has Canada changed since you arrived. If so, how?	- Q4 - Are there any government actions or policies that you have seen in Canada that concern you and remind you of the country you left?	- Q5 - Specifically, do you feel free in Canada to voice your opinions or criticize the government, institutions, and companies? How does it compare to circumstances in your native country?	- Q6 - Many young Canadians do not know much about socialism. As a person who has lived in a socialist country, what would you say to them?
2004, China	"I came to Canada with my family when I was 12 as they immigrated here, so I didn't have a choice coming here initially. After overcoming the language and cultural barriers in the first two years, I've found my experience in Canada to be extremely positive. Having come out at the age of 16, I was glad that the country recognizes same-sex marriage and is generally accepting of people's individual choices and freedom. As a minority in many ways, I'm grateful for the equality of rights and freedoms that would not be possible in China."	My parents also considered New Zealand before deciding on Canada because 1) it was close to the US for the job opportunities, and 2) the path to citizenship would not be as strenuously as with the US.	Personally, Canada has met my expectations, although I didn't have much of an expectation at the young age. I think Canada has changed on social issues since I arrived here in 2004. Same-sex marriage was just legalized in 2004 and the general attitude has been a lot more accepting since then. Medical assistance in dying and marijuana were also legalized and abortion is no longer an issue across the partisan line.	Yes, the expansion of government power during COVID and the heavy-handed approach is reminiscent of the approach that China took. Also worried about the freedom of speech rights being violated in the name of political correctness.	Compare to China, I feel much more free and able to express my opinions. That's not to say that I won't suffer any private consequences for holding my views, but at least I won't be censored or persecuted by the government for doing so, which would be the case in China.	Having studied the recent Chinese history, there are definitely many catastrophic events of socialism/communism that young people would benefit to learn from. I wrote about them in a short blog post here: <a href="https://americasfuture.org/how-i-became-disillusioned-with-communism/">https://americasfuture.org/how-i-became-disillusioned-with-communism/</a>
1995, Romania	The main reason was to be able to access all the opportunities and create a better life for myself and family than I had in Romania	Canada was one of the few countries that I knew will never feel like an immigrant, it will feel like my own country! Friends that immigrated before me described how was to settle down in Canada.	Yes it did meet my expectations and I was able to advance my career and make a very good life for myself. It did start to change in the last 5 years since the liberal government took power. I started to feel the same division, controlling dogma was applied here and under different pretexts with the same end result to make people believe their political ideas were for the benefit of them. Like "we want to the middle class"! Well, the majority of Canadians are middle class! How they attacked the small businesses, called them tax cheats, etc. That's what the communists did! They used the same tactics to destroy the entrepreneurial spirit and create hate towards those people! The history of communism is not thought in school because they do not want children to understand how bad it is!	In the last 14 months the governments of Canada and provinces are using a virus to control and impose their views on Canadians. I saw doctors laid off and attacked for expressing their medical view. I saw the government spending money and taking decision without parliamentary review, I saw a law, C-10 that literally removing the free speech! There is another law in making C-36 that is designed to create confusion, hate and division! I saw our judicial system being bias instead respecting our rights! What happened under this so-called emergency health laws is no different than any dictatorship!	I do criticize the government if I think is abuse of power but I do not longer feel safe in doing so! After what I have seen in the last 14 months, the abuse of power and the laws that are passed I feel exactly as I did in my native country, unsafe and unsure of tomorrow!	I will tell them to ask and try to understand how was to live in communism and not to fantasize that is a perfect society! If it was perfect people would not defect to Canada, people did revolt and ended because if you have no freedom to decide what to do with your life nothing matters, you are a slave told what to do!
1997, Ukraine (USSR)	We were disappointed seeing the way Ukraine was going after collapse of the USSR	We had a chance to get to Canada due to its generous immigration program. Other countries were practically out of reach for us. That time we knew that Canada occupied top position among most prosperous Western countries. It was a thriving democracy with very high standard of living (at least we thought so).	Yes it did. With time Chrétien's government, followed by weaker and weaker other Liberal governments, started disappoint us though. When Stephen Harper became PM, country changed for better. It was a Golden Age for Canada, especially comparing with the next government in power. Trudeau gang is a complete fiasco and tragedy for our country	One party rule. NDP and Greens are out of question, they are insane. But Conservatives with the current leader are no much better than Liberals. Therefore Trudeau and Co have free hands to do what they want. Mainstream media is completely on the left=Liberal side. Bureaucracy is growing and running the country. Socialist ideology is rampant. Badly educated and non-professional government fights climate, kills economy, plants seed of non-white racism They politicize any aboriginal problem they can dig out. And of course, they hope to silence any opposing voices with the censorship of the Bills C10 and C36.	I think I still can, but I am a private person, I am reaching only a handful of people. Being a journalist or politician is different. Looking at Rebel News or PPC of Maxime Bernier one can easily feel that things are going in very dangerous direction. We are not in the USSR yet, but we're definitely moving there.	Socialism is a sickness. The base of Socialism is envy. One cannot make, but he can take from somebody. He cannot do it him/herself, but he/she can appoint somebody to do it. With the most stupid hope that those who appointed to take would be honest and share everything equally. Nonsense. Socialism = Big government. Big government carries first and foremost about itself. And being very powerful it will be most prosperous in this endeavour. The interests of others are the last things on their to do list.  There is a difference between socialist and normal (non-socialist) person: socialist wants to help people at the expense of other people. Normal person would help at his/her own expense.

<p>1988, Czechoslovakia</p>	<p>Stigma of being "politically incorrect", threats made to the family because of voicing concerns not compatible with the then political agenda and propaganda</p>	<p>Canada seemed like a good balance between freedom and social support for new immigrants in view of the fact that we escaped with small children (2 and 5 years old)</p>	<p>Canada met and exceeded our expectations at that time. We fell in love with the country which gave us a lot of opportunities to grow and prosper. We felt free and being able to advance our careers, businesses and family without any political interference. We are deeply concerned what is happening to Canada now; it more and more resembles the country we had to escape from - the ever increasing censorship, propaganda, shutting down opposite and different views (i.e. "he who is not going with us is going against us"), political and social correctness, taxing middle and upper middle class to death while throwing money on useless agenda, programs, foreign countries etc., reduction of freedoms,..... the list too long to list here.</p>	<p>Most of the recent bills i.e. Bill 10, 36 etc. Huge government corruption.</p>	<p>We do not feel free anymore; as mentioned before it reminds us more and more the country we came from.</p>	<p>Do not believe there is anything for free, you will pay dearly! You will be one of many easily replaceable "sheep" in the herd. You will get mealy "social benefit" while living in totalitarian state with no freedoms and confined to your immediate area, no motivation to do anything, no motivation to build anything, lack of everything including food, always checking behind your back if somebody "does not watch you or listen", you will be at mercy of the "ruling class" with everything, you will need permit for everything - the list goes on.</p>
<p>2011, Cuba</p>	<p>I came to Canada when I was 18 years old with my underage sister (14 at the time). We had no options we either became slaves of life or became free independent women. My father who was living in Canada sponsored us. I decided to leave because I saw how girls my sister's age and my age had to prostitute themselves to get by. I was also sexually abused and the system didn't protect me so I didn't feel like I was living in a country that protected women at all. The food issue was horrible. Then, there was more than now and even then sometimes we went to bed with only coffee and still bread in our stomach from that morning. My mother who is a doctor had to work as an artist to make a little bit more money and that broke my heart because she was so smart and loved her career but even after studying so much she could not have a private practice or make enough to feed us. The Cuban Regime took a lot from me; my childhood and my innocence and so today I advocate to end that toxic and violent cancer that it's spreading all over the world. No child should have to wake up to the horror of having nothing to eat for breakfast. No person should have to flee their beloved country in hopes that another land welcomes them.</p>	<p>I didn't choose Canada my dad did. He loved how free and peaceful people were and how people progressed differently than in the States. He worked in a cargo ship. I personally love Canada, it's peacefulness and also how inclusive it is in big cities. How kids can choose their subjects and receive advice to help them reach their career goal. I also love how the system is structured to help the people in marginalized communities to build businesses and become independent.</p>	<p>I will always see Canada as my second home, I'm grateful for having the freedom to become independent and reach my goals. As I have educated myself more about its system and their way of dealing with other countries I have become very disappointed in how Canada is an ally to terrorist regimes like Cuba. I don't understand how knowing the dictatorship up close, they keep sending billions of dollars which they know does not end in the hands of the Cuban people.</p>	<p>Can't comment on that at the moment.</p>	<p>Canada ignores the voice of the people who condemn their shallow, meaningless and worthless speeches. I personally do not want Justin Trudeau to continue to stand as our representative because he is compromised to keep ties with the Cuban Regime due to his family history with Fidel Castro. The news is very manipulative and usually defend communist narratives. I have had to use independent navigators to know what it's going on in Cuba because everything you search on the internet is somehow driven towards the communist propaganda.</p>	<p>When you live in a socialist communist country you won't have access to the information you need but it will be imposed on you. When you live in communism no matter how much you study and work, you will make as much or less as a garbage trucker. When you live in communism you have no right to vote, to voice your opinion or even think critically, or you will go to a cell jail, be tortured and/or killed. When you live in communism you don't have access to the outside world. You live in a bubble that restricts everything, even prevents you from traveling to other countries freely. The next time you hear about Che Guevara in a book in high school, don't think about the man who fought the bad guys outside his country, think of an assassin that put dissidents, gays, intellectuals, and religious people in concentration camps and enjoyed torturing and killing them. Him and Fidel were sociopaths who destroyed and manipulated the view of the world of who they really were. Cubans have lived that story, we can tell you, some of us were victims, some of us are survivors.</p>
<p>1988, China</p>	<p>I came to Canada to complete my Ph.D.</p>	<p>Canada has a very good reputation, and Queen's University awarded me a very generous scholarship that covered my whole expenses to complete my PhD program at Queen's University.</p>	<p>Yes. I thought I'd just complete my PhD and return to China, but right after the 1989 June 4th Tiananmen Massacre, the Canadian government opened the arms to the Chinese students who chose to stay. I'm grateful.</p>	<p>A little bit. The cancel culture and political correctness is gradually erasing the freedom of speech.</p>	<p>Yes, I feel free to voice my opinions on Canadian government. It's not comparable to a Communist China. But I, and many Chinese immigrants here, do have fear of criticizing China because the communist's penetration into Canadian society and its threatening family members who are still in China.</p>	<p>"If socialism is as good as you think do you think I'd stay in Canada?"</p>



<p>1979, Nicaragua</p>	<p>Nicaragua was in a state of civil war when my parents shipped me to Montreal, which effectively saved my life. I was an adolescent boy and was not all that pleased to leave behind my native land, my track and field training, my friends and family behind. But as an adolescent, I had sympathies with the Sandinista guerrillas, a coalition of communists and socialists, and my parents feared that I would head into the bush to join the guerrillas. At the time, several youths no older than I was, some of whom we knew, had done just that and perished during the first wave of armed insurgence in the Fall of 1978. I felt that I was forced to leave.</p> <p>I arrived in Canada in the Spring of 1979. I first came on a student visa, to improve my English skills, to wait out the armed insurrection. Not many among my parents' generation could conceive at the time that the communist guerrilla youth would overthrow the government.</p> <p>But in July of 1979 the guerrillas won. My parents were expropriated, my father thrown in prison, several members of my family were persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, and some were executed. My uncle Julio Fonseca was pushed out of a Sandinista helicopter transport alive. My naive enthusiasm for socialist revolution stopped with the many abuses, human rights violations, and the perpetration at the hands of the 'liberating' guerrillas of many and worse atrocities than those the people had fought to free themselves from. Revenge is not justice. Killings and abuses are killings and abuses regardless of who carries them out. Hard reality and disappointment purged me of the Marxist sympathies of my youth in a hurry. I sought asylum in Canada and stayed here since. I became a citizen in 1986.</p>	<p>The choice of Canada was made for me way back in 1967. My parents had visited Montreal during the Expo 67, and loved the city. My mother then decided that my older sister would come to university in Montreal, so she sent her to Loyola College (now Concordia University) in 1975-76. When they rushed me out of the country in 1979, I came to stay with my twenty-something university student sister.</p> <p>I did not fully have the awareness of what it meant to be in Canada, though I had grown up in a political household, and I was politically alert as an adolescent. The full import of being in Canada did not dawn on me until the communist took over in July of 1979. We became stranded here, we sought asylum and chose to stay.</p>	<p>I did not have formed expectations of Canada as a young adolescent, but I could grasp the value of a peaceful society in light of what I had left behind, even at my young years. Over the years, I learned to appreciate the Common Law tradition and the values of the Westminster system of government. The Rule of Law, in my view, is the most important aspect of that inheritance received from Britain.</p> <p>I have never been under the impression that Canada was perfect. The first shocking surprise about the nature of power in Canada was brushing against the Quebec government of the Parti Quebecois, which prevented me to register in the Jesuit High school just a few blocks from where my sister lived, and across the street from where she went to university. I was forced to go to French-speaking school, which was not a tragedy for me because my ancestry on the Génie side seem to have been Dutch-loyalist Walloons who migrated to the Caribbean, to the Dutch Antilles, shortly after Belgium broke away from the Dutch Crown. I fully expected to learn the language of some of my ancestors while in Montreal. But the legislation forcing me and all others in my 'category' of people left a bad taste in my mouth. I finished HS in French and continued onto French CEGEP willingly. I continue to this day to enjoy speaking, writing and reading in French, but I never forgot that experience of being compelled by government in such as way in a free democratic state.</p> <p>Canada has changed immensely since I arrived. Forty years ago, politicians would resign in shame for violating rules, breaking laws, reneging on promises, or caught telling untruths. These seem like quaint values now. The patriation of the constitution in 1982 made us a more litigant bunch and devalued the unwritten rules in the minds of the electors, it seems. We have become less engaging, more aloof, less interested and less participatory in public affairs. We are more susceptible to fear and to uncertainty. The expansion of the welfare state has made us more entitled, and more risk-averse. We seem to be more accepting of government intrusion in our lives, we take our liberties and freedoms for granted, and we have become less demanding of quality representation in governments. The country is also more divided or at least as divided as it was during the 1980 Quebec referendum, with the difference being that it is the western-most prairie provinces that feel stifled.</p>	<p>Many. Too many to list, but I will mention a couple. I should first mention that I am baffled that Jagmeet Singh, for instance, Canada's current NDP leader, publicly and openly glorifies the Cuban revolution. The same goes for Prime Minister Trudeau and for his father Pierre. They, like so many others, get trapped in the romanticism of revolutionaries, their lofty pronouncements and their real or imagined concerns for justice, but fail to grasp the bloodletting tactics and the murderous record. They ignore the extreme toll of suffering inflicted by these people.</p> <p>The current proposed federal policies designed to exert government control of content on the Internet is one of the most outlandish policies I have seen in Canada. Many of the policies such as forcing western farmers to sell their wheat to the government at predetermined prices (now abolished), singing praises to indigenous peoples while continuing to segregate them, violating provincial jurisdictions to impose taxes on entire populations, persecuting immigrant women through human rights courts for refusing to handle the male genitalia of persons posing as women, burning places of worship with impunity, forcing Albertans to send billions to jurisdictions who actively block the very resources that make the money they covet from us, are all serious distortions and erosions of Canada's traditions of freedom that have equivalents in the Sandinista dictatorship.</p> <p>But the most damaging, I fear, has been the policy reactions to COVID-19. To be clear, the imposition of such wide restrictions was always a policy choice that did not need to be made in such depth and scale. Governments have stepped way out of their bounds, violating most basic liberties, the worst of which was not forcibly interning people on so-called COVID hotels but the blanket restriction on citizens' abilities to protest the limitations of their rights, which was endorsed by courts in Alberta and in Nova Scotia. Was it about the spread of disease? Other protests such as BLM and anti-Israel, equally if not more likely to spread the disease, were not deemed a threat to the power of those forcing restrictions and therefore not prosecuted. The ability to oppose and challenge government policy is the oxygen of liberal democracies, and I was baffled to see these limitations exerted and applied nearly uniformly and unquestioned by elected officials, medical bureaucrats, police and courts in our country.</p> <p>I would have expected a greater resistance on the basis of conscience at some of these various levels. I am profoundly disappointed in my fellow Canadians, and in my fellow Albertans the more, for not resisting these abuses in stern ways. We should have honored better our provincial motto: fortis et liber, strong and free.</p> <p>I fear that the precedents now set by COVID policies, and the indifference to such abuses, will leave a lasting tear on the fabric of liberty of this country.</p>	<p>I feel completely free to voice my ideas and opinions in Canada. I have been working in what some of us call the freedom movement in this country for more than a decade. I have worked in four different freedom-loving institutions in this country, including one in Atlantic Canada. I spent the previous 20 years teaching in a few universities and, ironically, universities were the least free or the most oppressive places that I worked. I worked in the universities when cancel culture made its initial debut.</p> <p>My contract was terminated in one private university because I voiced my views about the academic lynching of one of my colleagues in 2009. It's a long story, but a group of disgruntled professors and administrators openly conspired to fire a colleague just because they disliked him and disliked his approach to being an academic. This friend happened to be a socialist, like many of those willing to crucify him and end his career. It was disgusting. The dean at the time found a way to cancel my contract after I quietly and privately voiced my opinion about the travesty. That my colleague was a Marxist did not matter to me. He was a real scholar, a good teacher, loved his students and was a conscientious thinker, always in pursuit of the truth that he saw in the evidence before him. He was not a follower, he thought for himself and he was not fond of following fads that he found detrimental to teaching and to student learning. He was, and still is, a scholar.</p> <p>The behavior among many of my other colleagues was reprehensible, and in the end I was not unhappy to be pushed out. But I recognized the brutish nature of the lynching because I had seen the brutish nature of collectivism flexing its muscles, exercising power to impose one way of viewing or doing things, the reaction of intellectual mediocrity being challenged by the excellence in one or a few others. This was, and still is, the sort of every-day behavior in Sandinista Nicaragua. It was a bad experience but I am grateful to the dean who liberated me from their midst.</p> <p>Since then the situation has deteriorated further. Cancel culture has exploded, academic standards have fallen, safe spaces are now created for students protecting them from confronting different views, specific lines of ideological thinking are now imparted and imposed, whether environmentalism or the various branches of social justice activity. The worst of these is the newly emerging imposition of racial thinking.</p> <p>That said, I am sufficiently optimistic to see that there remain enough germs of liberty here that can allow us to strengthen the resolve to turn these trends around. But it takes a participatory citizenry with the willingness to stand up to the curtailing of their freedoms, the intrusive or expansive designs of government bureaucracies and well-meaning politicians. Canada remains a decent country in which people can thrive, assuming no more lockdowns, but it can always improve.</p>	<p>As a young person who once sympathized with socialist aspirations, I have had the chance to reflect on some of these things. I have come to the conclusion that the promise of socialism is appealing because we all crave justice and equality. What could be bad about them? But we rarely at that age think about how we're going to get there and whether it is even possible, or even desirable. We could all learn from the wisdom of Milton Friedman, the libertarian economist, who challenged us to evaluate ideas and policies for their results and not for their intentions. This is a crucial issue but hardly a new insight. Jesus teaches his followers to recognise the good tree by the fruit it produces. It's the outcomes that matter most.</p> <p>My direct experience with socialism is limited, but I can draw on the indirect experience from family members and my country of birth. Revolutionary socialism is never as advertised. My personal experience with socialism is the effective disappointment that all the good presented as ideas of redistribution and justice resulted in greater abuse and injustice. The Ortega-Murillo family, the ruling family in Nicaragua, are now among the richest people in the country. Daniel Ortega had no formal education and was penniless when he arrived into government with a ragged camouflage uniform, tattered boots and an AK-47. Given the average income of one of his countrymen, he would have to live several lifetimes to amass the kind of wealth he now possesses. So there was redistribution of wealth. He and his close allies retained the properties and assets of those they disposed, and some of it trickled down to the poor. But Nicaragua is now poorer than it was before they seized power, and the country now competes with Haiti at times for the spot of poorest in the hemisphere. The country traded oppressors, from one colour or ideology to another while tens of thousands of lives were wasted in a dozen or so years of fratricidal war to make the change that left the country worse off. It's a real tragedy.</p> <p>The country today, four decades later, has become a prison for all those who are not directly profiting from the regime. There is no free press, no freedom of expression, no property rights, no democratic rights, no habeas corpus, scant human rights, no personal safety, and the list goes on. As I write this, since May 2021 the Sandinistas have kidnapped and disappeared over 30 community leaders and potential candidates –not actual candidates yet—who might be a threat to them in the already determined 'election' that will take place in early November of this year. The supposed benevolent Sandinista government that Pierre Trudeau, Joe Clark, Brian Mulroney and many Canadians naively supported has become one of the most hideous political clubs on the planet. The Sandinista brand of socialism became such an embarrassment to the International Socialist movement 3 years ago (only three years ago), that they kicked them out of their socialist siblinghood.</p> <p>The results of Sandinista socialism are appalling, and have contributed to immense suffering, people imprisoned, tortured, hundreds of thousands dispossessed, turned into exiled refugees, among which tens of thousands of deaths. About 30 percent of those born in Nicaragua living today live in exile. The equivalent in this country's context would be 11 million Canadians forced to live outside Canada because of political upheaval. This is the legacy of Sandinista socialism, which is still ongoing. I fear that there is more damage ahead as they continue to entrench the Ortega-Murillo family as a dictatorship dynasty.</p> <p>So to recap and repeat. Socialism, like all actions and ideas, ought to be judged by the outcomes in the application of the ideas and policies, and not exclusively on their stated intentions. This distinction and warning are somewhat captured in the wise popular expression that the road to hell is often paved with good intentions.</p>
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2011, China	Because I'm a Falun Gong practitioner, this group of people has been persecuted for over 22 years.	Firstly, Canada is a free country, it cares people's human right. Secondly, because of my work.	Canada meets my expectations. A bit concern is Canada has not clearly understood how evil the socialism is and some people even support it.	The policy of taking vaccine, forcing or half-forcing to take vaccine is not right.	Yes, I feel free in Canada to voice my opinions, it's much, much better than China.	Socialism is completely evil, it killed over a hundred million people all over the world, we need to keep alert of it. If we accept it to come to Canada, it will be disasters to Canadian.
1998, China	For freedom	Canada has good reputation, and is easier to immigrate comparing with USA.	Yes, meet with my expectations.	China is under communism/socialism, but their value standard is after money/power, the whole society is following that now. Hope Canada won't be influenced by China's economic power.	Yes, in Canada we do have the freedom. But in China you will risk your career, your family, or even end up in jail, if you voice something the government doesn't like.	Socialism is not an ideal promise, it is hard to get out of it when it becomes reality. The mechanism of communism/socialism it to control people's mind, you must pretend to live good. Media, textbooks, officials, all pretend to be good, truths are hidden in many cases... for a long run the whole society will go dead.
1998, China	Our family had experience the Chinese community regime's brutality ruling.	Freedom of basic human rights, believes and speech,	It met my expectation at beginning, but recent years became more leaning to Communist regime, it's too soft towards China's human rights abuse, and also policy more to socialism side. it's too sad to seeing the changes of Canada towards to socialism.	see number 5)	In this regard, it's ok for me. no complains.	There is no future for everybody if people to choose socialism, look at South Korea, Cuba and China,
1999, China	Experienced the Communist Party's Tian-anmen Square Massacre while attending a university in Beijing in 1989. Personally there wasn't any repercussion except for fewer jobs were made available in Beijing than previous years due to the government's new policy after the crack down of student movement. I had to find a job in a smaller city after graduation like many my follow classmates.  While living in China, I had noticed unfairness and no transparency in many aspects in the society. If someone follows the rules, many others can jump ahead of her/him by bypassing the rules or regulations, which is a phenomenon and a norm of the society. People have to fight extra hard to get something which could arrive sooner if everyone follows the rules.  Even living in a modern city of China before came to Canada, I sometime felt unsafe as I have experienced or witnessed thief and robbery. Like many Chinese, I didn't trust the police system there.	My decision of choosing Canada as my destination mainly because I worked in a Canadian company doing business in China. While working in that company, I got to know more about Canada and felt Canada is a beautiful and safe place to live life.	Yes Canada has met my initial expectations.	In the past 20 years, I see Canada has moved towards the left, even the PC party has lost its identity. Socialist policy and agenda have been prompted in the society under glory terms such as "social justice", but if you exam those policies closer, you can see they are designed to sacrifice the interests of the real majority in order to satisfy the minorities.  Everyday people are flooded with left ideologies and events on media which sometime deliberately distorted the facts to mislead public's opinion. There are only a few media still holding the conservative views in Canada now. Conservative's voices are suppressed, even on CBC, which is a public funded national media and supposed to be representing voices from all aspects of the society.  One of the reasons that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is so successful of ruling Chinese people is a total control of all media. In China, it is very hard for truth to get out. Canada needs diverse voices and opinions, otherwise Canada is not far away from China's situation.	Comparing to China, there is still certain freedom in Canada once come to voice my opinions and criticize the government, institutions or companies.  Canada has a political system that people can choose their government while Chinese people have no choice.  Rule of law is still working in Canada while CCP is above all the laws in China.	Socialism is communicated under different names and often they sound better such as "social justice" "equality". When a government brings socialist policies and agenda on the table, they often come with the sense of political correctness which makes it hard for policy makers and public to question these policies and agenda as most people don't want to be seen as the enemy to social justice or a cold blood politician, therefore courage to challenge the government is diminished, truth is suppressed.  Socialist countries usually have big government structure such as China. The Chinese Communist Party has over 90 million members. In China, from the central government, to local governments, to state-owned companies, to communities, to universities, to schools etc., they all have the party office embedded in the entity as an additional governance. Staff in the party office don't deliver services to the public or produce products, they are the true overhead, and their job is to control the entity and make sure CCP's interest is maximized.  When a government is managing lots of programs which was traditionally run by NGO organizations or charities. Government becomes big and inefficient and sometime leads to corruptions.
1997, Slovak Republic	Slovak Republic was a democratic country when I decided to leave. The communism collapsed in November 1989. Four decades of communism had not only economic but also moral consequences on our nation. As a result of absolute power held by government, the corruption and bribery become normal, people accepted it. I wanted to raise my family in society which still values integrity and freedom.	Canada had a very good reputation in former Czechoslovakia as a country of freedom and opportunity.	Initially did. When I moved to Canada with my family I felt, that I will be able to raise my children to my values such: integrity, honesty, respect, reward for hard work, individualism. Everything changed for me when the NDP won a provincial election in 2015 and Liberal party won a federal election. Suddenly, I could hear the same phrases, could witness the same methods used by our Communist party of Czechoslovakia. I'm absolutely certain that Canada is marching towards a totalitarian state. I'm very disturbed by level of naivety and gullibility of the Canadian public. I think, the main reason is that they are oblivious and don't believe that Canada can become a totalitarian state. Many of my friends who are former political refugees are feeling now betrayed.  In 2019 I published my article with title " I survived Communism, Are You Ready for Your Turn? where I described the KGB methods for subversion of society. All of them are currently used in Canada.	Polarization of society, turning employees against employers, women against men, races against each other, proposed censorship bills, erosion of freedom of speech, labeling people who have different opinion (calling them deniers, hate speech= those 2 terms have been used by communists at least once per week in different media) elimination of small business, corruption of media and politicians, propaganda and indoctrination in all MSM.	I don't have the same feeling of freedom of speech which I had 10 years ago. Erosion of our freedom of speech as a base of democracy is enormous.	They need to learn a history with all details otherwise the history will repeat. Socialism is a first step to communism. (Lenin)  The word " communism" was discredited, so now they call themselves liberals, new democrats or green party. All of them are socialists, only different shade of red. If young people will choose socialism, they will pay a huge price (monetary, morally) just like we had to. Socialism will destroy our entire economy and will demoralize entire nation.

1999, China	searching for freedom	Immigration policy and multicultural	It did meet my expectation, however, Canada has changed great deal since I arrived. Canada has become so left now and it is like socialist country in many ways.	The great reset ideology and media censorship and infiltration	I am still free to voice out compared to China. But we become very political correctness.	You have to use your own independent thinking on things, understand what is socialist. We do not want Canada to go towards socialist, we must stop it
2020, China	Because I have been persecuted by the Chinese Communist Party, it is forbidden to believe in God, freedom of speech, free publications, expressions of dissatisfaction to the government, any threats to the Chinese Communist regime, and even the various powers granted by the Chinese Constitution are forbidden. Such as publishing, associations, demonstrations, etc.; free childbirth is also forbidden. In addition, the CCP exploited the people's money and deliberately made house prices very high, making us bear high house prices, high taxes, high medical expenses, and so on. Let the Chinese people lose their freedom in China more and more, and the pressure of life has become very great! The most cruel crime committed by the CCP was the persecution of hundreds of millions of Falun Gong practitioners, and thousands of Falun Gong practitioners were thrown into prison. On June 10, 1999, the 610 Office, which is above the constitution, was established and control any police, procuratorate and legal department and other resources for persecuting Falun Gong practitioners and even harvest their organs for huge profits. At the same time, the CCP also carried out genocidal persecutions against various organizations and groups in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. It is obvious to the whole world.	Because Canada is a free nation country, it is very tolerant. It is also the most welcoming country in the world for immigrants. I also like Canada's society and natural environment very much. Here, I feel the relaxation of mind and body. This is a truly free, harmonious and democratic country.	Since I came to Canada, I have felt Canada's welcome and tolerance for immigrants from abroad, so that we can live here with peace of mind and enjoy freedom and faith. Thank you very much for everything in Canada.	Sometimes, when I saw the Canadian government or official institutions showing closeness to the CCP and tolerance of the CCP's crimes, which reminds me of China ruled by the CCP. I hope that all Canadian governments and people can fully understand and understand the evil of the CCP. Don't have any illusions about it! The kindness to the CCP is a crime against all mankind! Because the CCP threatens the entire human race! For example, in 2020, there is a lot of evidence that the CCP spread the new crown virus to the entire world, causing immeasurable disaster losses.	In Canada, I often see people marching in the streets to express their dissatisfaction and demands for certain phenomena. This is absolutely impossible in China. This is the fundamental difference between a free country and a dictatorship. I also hope that Canada, as a free and democratic country, can always use this as the foundation of the country.	Socialism is a cultism that threatens all mankind. It is hoped that young people from all over the world, including young Canadians, can recognize the evil of the CCP. Please also download "Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party" to understand the evil of the CCP. <a href="https://www.epoch-times.com/gb/4/12/13/n746020.htm">https://www.epoch-times.com/gb/4/12/13/n746020.htm</a> Watch "The Ultimate Purpose of Communism" to analyze what communism is? <a href="https://www.ntd.com/chapter-one-the-central-kingdom-divinely-imparted-culture_434669.html">https://www.ntd.com/chapter-one-the-central-kingdom-divinely-imparted-culture_434669.html</a>
1996, China	For safety, freedom, and prosperity. Experiences: Human rights Persecutions, government propaganda, social moral changes/ corruptions. Read the news, still happening every day!	Fate.	Mostly.	Not really.	May be free, but who will listen?	I left China, and am so happy with the decision. I don't want any children to experience what I experienced in China. I wish Canada and the governments and societies have as less similarities to China's as possible.
2000, China	Because Chinese Communist Party persecution Falun Gong and no freedom, no human right	Freedom	Yes	Yes	Two worlds. But some company and people like CCP and do business with it. They will learn the lesson.	Never believe communist
1997, China	To study.	Canada is a country with multiculturalism which welcomes immigrants.	Generally speaking, yes. I felt Canada has changed, especially in the recent years. For example, cancel culture and Bill C-10.	For example, Bill C-10 and possible vaccine passport.	Yes despite changes in the recent years. Canada is much better than China.	According to the Chinese Communist Party, socialism is the preliminary stage of communism. From my experience, socialism is not a way to go.
2003, China	bad human right violation record, and none stop movements of socialism, feeling unsafe of personal property and family, and uncertain of the future of the country. I decided to move out of this country especially when the movement of persecuting FALUN Gong started.	Canada was a free country and I fit in the immigration policy at that moment. The freedom and no socialism in Canada are the main factors which appealed me.	Canada did meet my expectations since I arrived, but have changed when the trade with China got so close and likely Canadian policies has been affected by the trade economy, and turned to be blind on the growing human right violation in China.	The cooperation with China on Military, police department and medical system, education department are totally naive and the national security is under threat and invite the enemy to build the network of espionage in Canada and invite them to corrupt our politicians freely and safely without any consequence.	Luckily, I am still feel free to criticize our government and bring out my opinion in public in Canada. Compare to the China, those who likely to do the same thing will face the unlawful charge from the national security department. That means life in jail or death camp.	I would say that the socialism is just a picture to the young generation who don't have any experience of this world. Once the socialism has the power, it will turn to a killing machine which will kill anyone who has different opinions.

<p>1990, China</p>	<p>My dad immigrated to Canada first, I followed my parents. But I was in Beijing when the June 4 Tiananmen Square massacre happened. I heard gunshots, though I wasn't in Tiananmen Square, I knew students were killed and the Chinese Communist Party lied.</p>	<p>Since I followed my parents, I didn't choose Canada to immigrate to. But the freedom and respect for human rights in Canada appealed to me.</p>	<p>Yes, Canada met my expectations. While I was in Canada, I learned to practice Falun Gong, which teaches the principle of "Truth, Compassion, Tolerance" and has 5 sets of meditative exercises. This has been banned in China since 1999. Hundreds of thousands of practitioners have been jailed, tortured, killed and even had their organs harvested for profit. So I'm really fortunate to be in Canada, where I can enjoy freedom of belief.</p> <p>Canada has changed since I arrived. Seems as our economic tie with Communist China grows, Canada has become less and less willing to publicly and strongly oppose the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s atrocities.</p>	<p>The censorship we are seeing now in social media do remind me of China. The main stream media's overwhelming one sided stories on certain topics also remind me of CCP controlled propaganda. I hope Canada will not impose vaccination passport or make vaccination mandatory, which will be exactly what the CCP is doing to its own citizens.</p>	<p>I do appreciate that in Canada, I have much more freedom in voicing my opinions. We have much more freedom of speech.</p>	<p>Socialism is an expert in deception and brainstorming. It hides its true face behind words and descriptions seemingly appealing and good, but in reality when it gets its way, it means tyranny, massacre, famine, terror, and total collapse of morality in the society.</p> <p>Don't be a boiling frog from socialist ideologies, cherish the freedom we have now. If you ever think socialism might be something good, think about North Korea, think about organ harvesting in China. That's what we'll find ourselves in when we have socialism.</p>
<p>2003, China</p>	<p>I was deeply influenced by my father, who was born in 1941 and had experienced numerous brutal political campaigns carried out by CCP. My father encouraged us to go to western countries when I was very young. And especially after Tiananmen Massacre in 1989, we knew CCP wouldn't stop suppressing its own people, and my dream to live in a democratic country grew bigger and bigger. Pursuit for freedom is the key reason for me to immigrate to Canada.</p>	<p>Chinese culture always talks about pre-destined relationship, so I guess there's certain connection between me and this country. When I was researching on immigration, there were several options: Australia, New Zealand and Canada. One thing more appealing to me for sure is that Canada is close to the U.S. It doesn't feel so lonely on a separate continent or an island like the other two countries. As every Chinese knows, the U.S. is the most powerful country in the world, and Canada is its neighbor and shares the same culture and language. To me Canada would be much like the U.S. Also Canadians seem very friendly. (My English tutor is a Canadian who's very kind and friendly)</p>	<p>When I first came to Canada in November 2003, I loved this country right away. A country with friendly people, beautiful cities and towns, excellent infrastructures and governmental services, including federal, provincial services, libraries, arenas, new immigrant services, etc. Everything made me feel welcoming. Life in Canada was super convenient, comfortable and affordable. Unfortunately Canada indeed has changed since then, and I'm afraid, at least I feel not in a positive way. I have been living in Ontario since I came to Canada, and I have lived in Toronto and other smaller cities. I've seen more and more immigrants coming in, and house pricing have been crazily soaring to a point that few people can afford it, probably only hot money from other countries can afford it. Cost of living is getting higher and higher.</p>	<p>Conservative government is much better than Liberal government. For example, current government spends money like CCP, not transparent, lots of scandals and corruption, they're trying to hide everything from their people, just like CCP. Everyone knows Chinese regime is trying to control the world, and they're influencing western governments with money. However, our government hasn't done much and has been acting very weak on China's notorious human rights abuses. I heard Trudeau is actually admiring CCP's efficiency. Does he have a brain to think it over before speaking out such stupid comments? CCP's efficiency has negatively affected so many people's lives and even has claimed numerous lives.</p>	<p>As a visible minority, I'm very cautious not to express myself too much. When I condemn China, there's usually no problem. However, some people did warn me not to go deep in political topics. Since I have two kids who are in public school system, I've observed deteriorating circumstances in school. so-called inclusiveness, cancel culture, etc. has prevented my children from talking freely. The society is definitely changing to a lefty one, which means the leftists can say anything with no problem, but other's opinions which don't agree with them have no room. In China, people used to be classified with different classes, while now in Canada, they separate people with races.</p>	<p>Many young people are crazy with socialism, because they know nothing about it. CCP has made it clear that socialism is the primary stage of communism. CCP was established in 1921 and took power in 1949. Since its setup, it has caused the death of 80 million Chinese people. If you dig deep in CCP's history, you'll find out that socialism is always linked to hatred, class struggle, killings, fatigue, all kinds of disasters. Socialism shouldn't have existed in the world at all. All the socialist countries, Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea, previous Eastern European countries, and Russia, you name it, go do some basic research and you'll find all those people in those countries were struggling. Socialism and Communism have mastered two keys: lies and violence. First they brainwash you and open fully their propaganda machine to cheat you, when it doesn't work, they'll use police, military to throw violence on you to threaten and scare you. They make you feel your life is on their hands and they can make you disappear from the earth any second, thus, you'll obey them unconditionally. Socialism is evil. Look at today's China, the truth of how many people died in the pandemic is going to be a myth as long as CCP still exists. Our society is getting closer to that point, as they're pushing vaccine passport, even though they knew the vaccines aren't safe enough. Ask yourself a question: why are there so many people immigrate to western countries from China? If socialism is so good, why isn't anyone immigrating to China? Isn't the answer so obvious for you to make your own judgement?</p>
<p>2003, Ukraine</p>	<p>Lack of opportunities, corruption, lack of growth</p>	<p>High standards of living. Opportunities</p>	<p>Yes. Canada is changing</p>	<p>Yes! Less freedom of speech, debate and opportunities to hear opposing views</p>	<p>Less and less. It's not comparable... yet... but it's trending in the wrong direction</p>	<p>Socialism is a myth. Democracy and freedoms we have in Canada we must preserve</p>
<p>2019, Russia</p>	<p>Former KGB officers (who are in charge of Russia today) implemented multiple Soviet policies - 1 party, 1 dictator, lack of social mobility opportunities, censorship, etc. It led to corruption, economic decline, crime, suppression of freedom of speech and assembly, lack of opportunities in foreseeable future.</p>	<p>One of the reasons is related to the score system. Very few countries have a system that allow economic immigrants to quickly move and become citizens. What appealed in Canada - security, economic opportunities, ecology, stability.</p>	<p>It met my expectations. Compared to poverty and depression of Eastern Europe, Canada has way more opportunities to earn money, buy a house, give good education to children, etc.</p>	<p>There are some things that do remind me of USSR/ Russia: 1) one of the main parties of Canada (NDP) openly supports communism and praises Castro 2) WE scandal reminded of corruption that I saw in Russia 3) Education system (at least in public sector) seems to indoctrinate children regarding LGBT, CRT, etc. It is very similar to communist/militant atheist indoctrination in USSR. 4) Burning churches - I am not a Christian, but I think that extremism against Christians is a hate crime and I see double standards. If it was a mosque - there would be a completely different reaction from the government. 5) Politicians bending knees to BLM (pro-Marxist organization), being okay with vandalism and destruction of statues of historical figures. All that decolonization ideas remind me of China Red Guards.</p>	<p>No, I do not feel free to openly discuss specific topics: transgenderism, special benefits for indigenous people, racism against white people, support of Israel - many Canadians and NDP supporters are pro-BDS.</p>	<p>I would tell young people the following: 1) Socialism seems very attractive to them because of supposedly 'free stuff' - education, healthcare, housing, etc. However, it isn't free - you pay with your taxes and in USSR you also had just 1 employer - the government. Monopolization of all services by the governments leads to very poor quality (why bother - there is no competition), corruption (tons of opportunities for corruption - one of the key reasons why some politicians love socialism), inevitable collapse - all socialist countries are either already destroyed (USSR, Yugoslavia, Eastern Germany, etc.), had to significantly change their policies (China, Vietnam) or live in poverty (Cuba, Venezuela, North Korea). 2) Do you trust your government to control all areas of your life? Do you want them to 100% control what you can read, watch, listen or where you are allowed to go (see Iron Curtain) or how you must think in order to 'fit the system'? Are you ready to give up your freedoms for something that has never worked in any country? I hope not.</p>

2000, China	Chinese communist party is a dictator and corrupted. There is no freedom for people over there. My husband and I had to live in different cities over 2000km away, and we couldn't move together because of Chinese HuKou policy (that is, if someone registers his/her ID in a place, he/she can't move to and live in another place.)	Canada is a democratic country, and also it's an immigration country. People have equal chance for success here. We can also have freedom for speech, belief, etc.	Over the past 21 years when I am here, I see that Canada is gradually transforming to socialism.	Canadian government is yielding to communist China for economical benefits regardless of Chinese government's evil behavior and universal moral values.	It's better than in China, but not free.	Socialism is a lie. The government will have big power and will decide what you can do and what you can have.
1993, China	China has a totalitarian regime, one that treats its people like disposable rubbish. There's no dignity, safety of any kind. Sooner or later one becomes a sacrifice for the ruling communist party.	Canada is a peace-loving country with a principle. It stands up for human rights. I see hope in Canada.	Canada was better than it is now, the Liberal government right now does not even dare to stand up against China's communist regime anymore.	Liberalism, progressive movement, socialism and many other left wing movements are just branches of modern communism, that is where all of these aim to get to.	We have fewer and fewer room in this country to voice our opinion, as the media outlets are getting more and more left wing. They do not report on the other side of the story, only ones that fit their agenda becomes news.	If we know history, specifically on how the communists have misled and fooled people in the past century, we would know that is the last thing we want for this country.
2000, USSR (today's Ukraine)	I was 22 when I left. I was studying to get a degree in electronics. A Soviet engineer had a hard time living off their salary. To be able to have a decent living, support a family one had to find an "additional source of income", which usually meant participate in gray or illegal activities. I figured that I can't do this, and Gorbachev has just "opened the border", so I decided to emigrate first to Israel and then to Canada	I knew very little about Canada. I knew that it's a good country and it's in close relationship with the US, and probably a good place to develop my career.	After living in USSR and Israel I was pleasantly surprised with the "Canadian nice" -- the way treat with each other, the level of trust, consideration and mutual respect. Also pleasantly surprising was how the systems work -- the amount of thought invested in processes: making them simple for an "ordinary citizen". Police being part of the community, as opposed to being part of the power structure (this was recently confirmed by the Chief of Ottawa Police refusing to enforce Ford gov-t order to stop people on the street and ask why they are there -- as part of lock-down). Also, it has been 20 years, and my first impressions aren't as strong as they used to be...	Elimination of boundaries between federal, provincial and local governments, e.g. the carbon tax. Suppression of free speech and political correctness in all spheres. Erosion of competency of the political elite -- the ongoing fed election is the best example. Brainwashing at schools, universities and now in large corporations.	Not anymore. I used to joke a lot on issues of politics with my co-workers -- who were Liberal and NDP supporters. I'm hesitant to do this today	Socialism is something to be careful to wish for...
2006, Venezuela	Poor economic outlook, rampant crime and corruption, decaying public services	Family member was offered job here related to O&G, anything had to be than Venezuela	Canada has been an enriching experience, have met more people from more places than I realized existed and expanded my skillset and cultural perspective	Higher taxes, overprinting of money to fund poorly thought public projects, questionable behaviour of politicians	Relative to Venezuela I is noticeably better	It is not what is cracked up to be, noble but idealistic endeavors are very likely to become corrupted before long, Venezuela is no exception
1970, Czechoslovakia	My future husband's father emigrated to Canada in 1968 after the "Russian" occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. He went through Austria after some time in camp for refugees. In Oct.1969 his wife and my future husband legally moved to Canada. My Father in-law decided for Canada instead of Australia. My now sister in-law was in England then as an au-pair and followed her father to Canada. My father was not allowed to come visit me for almost 20 years. He was my stepfather and the communist committee of old "housewives" and gossipers that had everyone under control in my old city did not give him permission. He took care of me since I was 5 years old and I considered him my father all my life! Just some stupid, uneducated, jealous persons made the decision then.	I was pregnant, so I really had no choice. I was only 20 years old and had no inkling about politics as such. I just wanted to be with my would be husband. I had to marry by proxy to be allowed to leave Czechoslovakia. Canada was a free, beautiful country, no communism/socialism.	Yes!! I loved Canada from day one! It was a truly free country. Rich and prosperous, no national debt! People could say what they felt without persecution. Even though I was somehow belittled by my lack of English language. But I learned by taking language courses at my own time with my own money. Canada is changed now that the Liberal government just promises without fulfilling on those promises. When I came to Canada, we had to be approved; education, health and had to pay our own flight in!! Now they take in and pay young able-bodied migrants that have no intention to give anything back and give them for nothing that I don't get in my pension after working my whole life here!! And these people demand that we bend to their religion! Canada started to go down with Pierre and now his son continues that downfall!! All of us immigrants assimilated, learned the language, were productive, therefore paid taxes to the government. For what now??	Everything now! No freedom of speech, mandate on vaccination, not telling the truth about Covid-19 and lockdowns! That is almost fascistic! And immense government spending with no regard for future generations (my grandchildren)! I have one pet peeve, and that is this global warming and Justin's remedy!! Does not anybody know that Canada is only less than 2% responsible in the whole world?? Take it to China instead of kissing their bums. One thing I like about my old country and Poland and Hungary is that they do not bend to the EU to take any migrants. The reason being that those leeches don't go there because they won't get everything served on a gold platter like here in Canada and other so called rich countries! Check Sweden or France or even Germany!! Canadian school system leaves a lot to be desired! How can today's kids learn anything with lockdowns, dismantling and defacing old statues? History was and is what we and our young people should study and learn from to avoid future mistakes!! Sorry to say, this drama teacher won't teach anyone anything. Just grab the handouts and change the whole country to bend to their will. I am glad that I'm old, so I won't see it for long, but I'm sorry for my grandchildren and their kids.	It's now the same as in Czechoslovakia before 1968. Even if I complained, it would not be published. 20 or so years ago when I mentioned at my work (OMAFRA) about the gypsies (which were a big problem then in Canada), how they just mooch the system, I was told to be quiet if I wanted to keep my job.	Study world's history and don't listen to any bullshit (sorry, I had to use this word) from so called educators!! Read, read and learn!!
1982, Czechoslovakia	Oppressive communist government.	Multicultural society friendly to immigrants.	It was great for many years. It has started to deteriorate rapidly with the Trudeau government.	Carbon tax, Green Deal and insane political correctness.	Actually, my native country is presently less leftist than Canada.	Socialism is the greatest danger to democracy.

1996, Cuba	Total lack of freedom. (Personal, espirituales, individual, etc)	Was the country that I had the opportunity to go.	Yes, with my work and sacrifice I was able to complied many dreams.	Comunista influence in the education systems and universities	In my country, any criticism to the government is penalized with in prison	Communism will destroy your freedom, the country economy, destroy your culture and traditions. Will indoctrinate everyone in society and if you disagree you will be punished with long and excessive jail time. Communism makes everyone poor and have a dream will be impossible
2008, Cuba	Economic hardships and lack of freedoms in Cuba.	Economically stable and free. Canada offered more freedoms and economic stability than other Latin American countries due to the amount of capitalism it contained.	Canada did meet my expectations. It has changed greatly both in terms of freedoms and economic stability and opportunities. Canada has begun to adapt many socialist beliefs and doctrines that closely resemble those imposed by Castro in Cuba.	Yes. One Canadian policy that reminds me of Cuba is the disability to arm and protect yourself. Another is the current state of mandates regarding Covid-19.	Not anymore. I feel as though criticizing Trudeau's government gets you put in a specific category that inevitably leads to being labeled as a white supremacist, racist, Trump supporter, alt right, etc.	Socialism is a plague worse than Covid-19. It spreads by promising equality and less hardships. Socialism kills by giving governments full power over the same people it claims to protect. Socialism is the tool of the rich to claim more from the poor. Socialism is like a mermaid that hallucinates you with fake promises and then proceeds to slowly bleed you dry.
2017, Cuba	I decided to leave Cuba because I wanted an opportunity to live freely, without uncertainty and without fear. I wanted to have my own business and in Cuba I couldn't because everything belongs to the State and any income derived from the free commercial activity of individuals is considered "illicit enrichment". My economic situation in Cuba was good in 2017, but I did not know if that could change tomorrow because in Cuba the communist leaders change the laws and policies overnight. I did not want to live in crime and illegality for the rest of my life, I wanted to be able to put my head on the pillow without remorse, but in Cuba you live every minute in crime since almost everything is illegal... Things as simple as having a glass of milk or eating a piece of beef may constitute a crime. I wanted access to a safe and reliable healthcare system where patient privacy was respected and I wanted an education free of indoctrination and cult of personality for my future children. Finally, I wanted to be able to express myself freely, to say my opinion without having to lower my voice so that the neighbors would not listen and I wanted to be able to listen to the music I wanted and read the books of my choice.	The simplest answer is for freedom. For Cubans, emigrating to South Florida in the USA seems to be the simplest option; however, in my mind, Canada is one of the most multicultural and migrant-friendly countries in the world. Opening a business in Canada is very easy, nobody takes you before a court of law for earning honest money. In Canada, human rights are respected and, although it is not a perfect country, every day it tries to improve the conditions of its citizens, to correct the mistakes of the past and to listen to everyone. I had never seen a president apologize in public for a mistake he made, nor have I ever seen a province or city openly discussing its annual budget with its citizens.	Canada has definitely exceeded my expectations by far. Sometimes I find myself crying or sad about things as normal as good treatment or good customer service from a store clerk. It is something I did not know. Sometimes I am afraid to enter a hotel or any establishment and ask permission to use the bathroom... After 4 years, my husband and I still forget the cart every time we go to the grocery store, because we could never fill a cart before. I still feel weird having so much free time for myself, because in Cuba half of the day has to be used in queuing to buy rationed food or waiting for the terrible public transport. Those are small traumas that only people who have lived in dictatorships know. In 4 years I have been so busy trying to be reborn and learn to live as a human being that I have not noticed any major changes in Canada. Life gets more expensive every year and many complain about the imposition of vaccines because they have always had the option to choose between several options. The pandemic has made many countries take extreme measures, I want to think that the safety of Canadians is the only reason behind each decision and I want to continue to give a vote of confidence to this wonderful country	Sadly, I must say that the imposition of vaccines ... You can no longer enter a campus or your workplace if you are not vaccinated. I was among the first to get vaccinated, but I don't like the idea that those who don't want to get vaccinated are blackmailed with their studies or job, or have to pay fines...	There is no possible comparison, at least not yet. Perhaps here they call you a communist for supporting the NDP or the LP, or they call you a fascist for supporting the CP or Donald Trump, but no one will make an act of repudiation at your door or paint the walls of your house with slogans, or put you in jail. On July 11, 2021, many Cubans took to the streets peacefully to shout "LIBERTAD", just that sublime word: freedom. Today many of them face sentences of up to 25 years in prison for "sedition" and terrorism, many of them are minors.	First of all, I advise them to read, study, educate themselves a lot, not to accept only one version of the facts. Listen to the victims and survivors of communism. You see, socialism is the prelude to communism, it is the stage that precedes it, but in essence they are the same: links in the same chain. There is not a single example in human history of a successful socialist country. There is no human exodus from capitalist countries to socialist countries, nobody risks his life at sea to emigrate from Haiti to Cuba ... Denmark and Sweden are NOT socialists, and Karl Marx never worked, he was always a dependent of Frederic Engels, he never could prove your theory. Do not repeat the mistake of believing in an ideology that has more than a hundred million deaths on its resume and counting ...
2008, Venezuela	My mom as a single mother didn't feel like I will have good education. At the same time even though she worked very hard she didn't see any progress in our life style.	Canada is a multicultural country, small in population and the education system is great.	Of course! Here in Canada if you work hard you have the opportunity to have a good life (eg. House, car, clothes, food) in Venezuela you don't.	Yes, the covid restrictions. It's coming to a point that I feel like this might lead to other things. Other rights in freedom being broken.	Yes! In Canada you can protest. In Venezuela you can't. I once went to a protester and the police and the military started to push, hit and fire shots at us.	Socialism in theory sounds very desirable, but in reality is the worst thing that can happen to a country. It starts as socialism and ends in a dictatorship.
2006, Cuba		Freedom	It did meet my expectations and has changed completely	Yes most of them now	No I don't feel free, I feel the exact same pressure I felt in Cuba, actually I would say people in Cuba are less likely to confront you themselves for your opinions than here. Here people are way more self-righteous, are way more willing to shut you up themselves	RUN
2018, Nicaragua	The Nicaraguan government is dictatorial. I cannot express any bad comments against the government even if they do something wrong.	I am a Canadian citizen because my parents are as well. They became citizen 30 years ago.	Yes and yes. Canada had a strong positive influence in my behaviour in many ways. I could learn important lessons that I could never learn back home.	Yes there are some actions or policies that I have seen in Canada that concern me, but they do not remind me Nicaragua.		It is quite important to learn about the socialism and any other political philosophy. Young people have easy access to internet and it will take them a couple of minutes to at least have an idea of what is socialism and how good and bad it can be to a country.
2019, Venezuela	Lack of opportunities in the workplace, no economic growth in the country, no healthcare and lack of basic needs products for day to day needs. I left my country in a time where trying to buy chicken was a nearly impossible task, you had a day of the week selected by the government to buy necessity items like meat, milk and even hygiene products. No matter how good you thought you where getting paid, you where living paid check to paid check, due to the inflation, it was impossible to have any sort of savings.	Economic stability, universal healthcare and better life quality.	It has met my expectations on the universal healthcare and job opportunities, but the housing market has been discouraging because its high prices, making it almost impossible for a medium class family to buy, since renting is also too high.	COVID restrictions in my opinion have been too harsh, especially vaccination and mask mandates.	I do feel free to voice my opinion, it doesn't compare to my country because people could get caught and go to jail for protesting.	I would tell them to read and educated yourself about socialism, don't believe everything you read or hear in the news, investigate and make you own opinion.