



THE CIVIL CONVERSATION
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IN THIS ISSUE

EDITOR'S NOTE

William Brooks

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Miles Smit

ESSAY: A RESPONSE TO OPPONENTS OF FREE EXPRESSION ON CAMPUS

Mark Mercer

DIALECTIC ON IMMIGRATION POLICY

Ezra Levant debates Rahim Mohammed

AND ANOTHER THING

Growing interest in our organization – Speakers' Forums across Canada - An appeal for grassroots support ...and more.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

William Brooks



In this first edition of *The Civil Conversation* for the 20s readers will find a [heartfelt encouragement for organizational renewal by current Civitas President](#), Miles Smit. Your follow-up on our President's call to action could make an enormous difference for the growth of the Civitas Society over the coming decade.

Our [featured essay by Mark Mercer](#), PhD, Department of Philosophy, Saint Mary's University and President of The Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship, is a must read for those troubled by the expanding opposition to free expression in Canadian schools and institutions of higher learning. SAFS is a Canadian non-profit organization founded to promote academic freedom and intellectual excellence on Canadian university campuses.

Many of our readers will recall that our Toronto 2019 program opened with a [debate between two respected members of the Civitas Society, Ezra Levant and Rahim Mohammed](#), who agreed to openly disagree on the contentious topic of Canadian immigration policy.

We are pleased to present the core arguments from both sides of that debate in this issue of TCC.

Our [And Another Thing!](#) section, which we continue to hope will attract submissions from a wider range of Civitas members, previews several possible regional speakers' forums over the coming months along with other matters of interest to our general membership. [We would very much like to include a contribution from you in our March pre-conference edition](#). It could be as short as a tweet or as long as a letter to the editor.

From all of us on TCC editorial team, a happy and productive New Year. Enjoy the read!

[Return to Contents](#)

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

ON THE EVE OF THE 20s CIVITAS IS "ROARING" BACK!

By Miles Smit



It is a privilege to wish all of you and your families the very best at the tail end of Christmastide and the start of a brand new year.

I have never been more excited to write you than right now because there is an almost unprecedented amount of activity in Civitas, driven by energy from our Board, renewed interest from longstanding Civitas leaders and recent recruitment to our organization.

You will read in this issue of *The Civil Conversation* about the exciting slate of regional speakers' forums that have been and are being held in cities across Canada ahead of our annual Conference. These are a great chance to connect with Civitas members new and old, build up our high-trust, high-commitment network, and drive our civil conversation in a current and regionally plugged-in way.

By now you may also have seen the **Programme for Calgary May 1-3, 2020** which is a powerhouse mix of panels and featured speakers that I think will address current issues with resonance & wide and abiding impact, reach back to the perennial principles that have rooted Civitas in the past and given Canada its main strengths, and look to our future with bullish optimism.

Membership Renewal, Recruitment and Conference Registration

I would like to encourage you to participate more fully as a member of our unique Society in the following ways:

- 1) If you have not already done so, renew your membership by going to the [Civitas website](#), hit “Login and Renewal” and proceed to the “Renew Membership” button which will guide you through the online payment process. When you have renewed go to your name on the membership list and update your bio.
- 2) Once your membership is active you may go to the conference page and register early for our Calgary conference and ensure you get the best possible price on conference fees, travel and hotel accommodation.
- 3) Invite and sponsor one or more friends you think would contribute well to the Civitas family. The process is simple and works as follows: Talk about the nature and purpose of Civitas Canada with the friend or colleague you are inviting to join. Ask them to go directly to the [Civitas website](#) and hit the “Apply for Membership” button. This will take your nominee to a page where they will be asked to complete contact information, name you as their sponsor and include a short bio and statement of interest in the goals and purposes of Civitas Canada. Once that is completed, they should hit the “Nomination” button and wait for a confirmation that their nomination has been received and accepted before making their online payment. Nominees can expect a reply within about 14 working days of their application.
- 4) Consider contributing as a “Friend of Civitas” to help increase our operational capabilities and develop new and emerging initiatives. More information for potential donors and sponsors is contained in the “And Another Thing” section of this edition of TCC.

Once again, my heartfelt best regards, and see you in Calgary if not before!

[Return to Contents](#)

ESSAY: A RESPONSE TO OPPONENTS OF FREE EXPRESSION ON CAMPUS

Marc Mercer

Abstract:

Three popular reasons for restricting freedom of expression on campus are that some expression puts at risk things that matter to us strongly, that some expression prevents people, particularly people from marginalized groups, from succeeding at their studies, and that some expression lowers the campus tone. One line of response to these reasons is that they are exaggerated. Anti-choice speakers, for instance, pose no threat to abortion rights, discussions of transgenderism do not deny anyone’s humanity, and a student group’s hosting an occasional firebrand or charlatan does not cast a university into disrepute. Another line of response is to note that since restrictions on expression are pressures independent of evidence and argument, they are inconsistent with the university’s mission to promote moral and intellectual autonomy.....



Among the many reasons frequently heard why universities need to restrict freedom of expression on campus, one of the most popular is that what people say or how they say it can put at risk valued laws, practices, and institutions. What people say can put at risk easy access to safe abortion, say, or can put at risk open immigration policies or programs of preferential hiring. The current state of affairs is just fine; questioning and criticizing what we care about, then, can't make things better but could make them worse.

Another reason is that what people say or how they say it can create an unpleasant or hostile campus work or learning environment, and that can make research and learning more difficult. Especially damaging is expression that creates a hostile environment for students or professors from marginalized or historically oppressed groups. Such expression is socially as well as psychologically damaging, for it prevents people from these groups from gaining the credentials needed to enter into the management and professional classes.

A third reason is that what people say can lower the campus tone, make the university less special and impressive (and more like a speakers' corner), and harm its reputation. A low campus tone will hinder the university's mission to produce significant research or to prepare young people to take their place in the world.

The solution, according to those who criticize wide freedom of expression on campus on one or another of these grounds, is to have more oversight and control of expression at universities. The goal of oversight and control is first to minimize risk of hurt and harm, and second to be in position to repair the damage, and reassure vulnerable students, should something hurtful be said despite the precautions taken.

The goal of oversight and control is first to minimize risk of hurt and harm

We who favour wide freedom of expression on campus might first respond to demands for more oversight and control by noting that the situation isn't yet dire. The policies and institutions we favour are not put at much risk by critically discussing them or even by ridiculing them. Students and professors from marginalized groups are not so fragile that occasionally hearing a rudely expressed offensive opinion will sour them on higher education. And worse for a university's reputation than having a firebrand or charlatan on campus saying obnoxious things is having a firebrand or charlatan disinvited or protested disruptively.

Another point we who favour wide freedom of expression on campus would make is that the cure—oversight and control—will produce much worse effects on university life than the disease.

These responses are fine as far as they go, but they don't go very far. In order to secure freedom of expression on campus, we will need not merely to react critically to arguments in favour of oversight and control, and explain how they exaggerate the threats to university life posed by freedom of expression. We will need also to show how what we most prize about universities cannot be present at a university of oversight and control.

What do we most prize about universities? The two most popular answers to that question are knowledge and education. We prize the fact that universities produce understandings of the ways things are and offer those understandings to government, business, industry, and people generally. And we prize the fact that students leave universities as educated adults, equipped with the skills and knowledge both to contribute to society and to live meaningful lives.

I don't think those are the best answers. What we most prize about universities, I'd say, is that they are institutions within which people may engage intellectually with the matters that concern them. That is why people who enjoy engaging intellectually with the matters that concern them love universities and wish universities to continue to support, as best they can, their endeavours. A university that restricts expression cannot fully support intellectual engagement.

We might note that if knowledge and education are the best things about universities, then expression might well be restricted on university campuses without much or any harm coming to what we prize.

We might note that if knowledge and education are the best things about universities, then expression might well be restricted on university campuses without much or any harm coming to what we prize. Most, perhaps the great majority, of universities in the past were universities of oversight and control and they functioned well both to produce knowledge and to educate students. In church-run higher education and in military colleges, specific, clearly articulated non-academic values constrained research and teaching and campus life. Solid research emerged from these institutions despite the tight controls on what could be said or how it could be said, and students were educated to be competent professionals.

The difference between then and now is simply the difference between what was then to be restricted and suppressed and what is now to be restricted and suppressed. Then what was to be suppressed was expression that troubled religious or humanist sentiment; what is to be suppressed now is expression that troubles social justice sentiment.

When social or other non-academic goals, whether traditional or post-modern, are the ultimate goals, then what is important is simply to have true beliefs and sound values, true and sound as understood from the point of view of the social or non-academic goals. Doctrine is to be inculcated in students and other members of the university community however that might be done. The university's central dogmas are the bedrock or canal stones of the academic endeavour, beyond the reach of critical inquiry and discussion.

There are two ways we come by our beliefs and values: one is argument and evidence; the other is reward and punishment, or the fear of exclusion and the desire for inclusion. Doctrinal or faith-based research and education, whether the doctrine is religious or social justice, encloses the pursuit of evidence and argument within fidelity to the faith. The faith itself is sustained through reward and punishment.

The idea of the university as a space in which people grapple intellectually with the matters that interest them provides us with a different conception of the university. The ethos within a university that supports grappling intellectually with matters of concern is the ethos of study for its own sake, and not study (directly) in service of social or other non-academic values and goals, not even the goal of producing knowledge or the value of education.

In liberal study, one is concerned not only to understand things as they are, but to understand them for one's own reasons, those being reasons of evidence and argument. For an independent thinker, it is better to believe falsely or to value unsoundly for one's own reasons of evidence and argument than to believe truly or value soundly as the result of ignorance, faith, or social or psychological pressure.

Liberal study is dangerous, though, for it alienates one from one's beliefs and values.

Liberal study is dangerous, though, for it alienates one from one's beliefs and values. It does so because it requires one to hold beliefs and values at arm's length to examine them and think about them. Thinking critically about one's beliefs and values can undercut their hold on one.

Those of us committed to liberal study will want wide and robust freedom of expression for ourselves individually—but we will want it also for all other members of the community, out of respect for each individual's project of coming to understand things on the basis of evidence and argument only. That is, we value thinking for ourselves, each of us in our own case and each of us for all the others.

The first line of response to the demand for oversight and control is to minimize the hurt and harm that expression can cause to individuals and to a society. In this line of response, though, we allow that indeed people can be hurt and harmed by the distressing ideas they hear. We note only that no one is wrongfully harmed by what they hear. (We will seek to understand whatever hurt and harm results from free expression accurately, of course; we might conclude that advocates of oversight and control do in fact exaggerate it, but we will not be moved to favour control even if we conclude they don't.) The culture of liberal study is marked by a willingness to risk the harms those opposed to wide or robust freedom of expression fear and would guard against. We will place no barriers between people and their study. All views, even vile ones, are grist for the mill of enquiry and discussion.

In short, for university people, the joy of liberal study outweighs the unpleasantness of hearing vile ideas and even that of entertaining threats to one's identity.

An objection: Even a university of liberal study needs quality control if it is to be a serious place—we should not tolerate wasting time on stupid ideas or ideas that lack evidential or argumentative support. We need, then, at least some oversight and control to ensure that we're typically discussing ideas worth discussing.

The objection attempts to drive a wedge between free and open enquiry and discussion, on the one hand, and freedom of expression, on the other. Freedom of expression, the objection says, gets in the way of free and open enquiry and discussion, for freedom of expression lets charlatans and firebrands crowd out competent and serious enquirers and critics.

One response to the objection is to ask who is to make the determination whether to allow a talk or not? Who will do a good job? Administrators, likely enough, will be lousy as gatekeepers. They will now and then let in someone who lowers the campus tone and now and then deny a platform to someone who has something to contribute. This is because their allegiance is to the institution of the university as a public body, not to the internal practices or ethos of the institution. Better, then, to let campus people and groups do as they wish.

Another response is to note that exposure to charlatans and firebrands can, perhaps ironically, help students and the rest of us to acquire attitudes of dispassionate enquiry and criticism. We need contrasts between good and bad ideas, and between dispassionate exploration and rhetoric, if we are to appreciate the difference.

But the deepest response to the idea that quality control on campus requires vetting and censorship is to note that vetting and censorship create an atmosphere hostile to the freedom of campus members to pursue their enquiries as they wish. The thought that one might be brought before the censors introduces pressures on belief and value that are not the pressures merely of evidence and argument.

Another objection is that discussion without rules, and without penalties for violating the rules, can easily degenerate into insults and hostile argument, and that's bad for enquiry. We need, then, enforceable rules of civility if we are to enjoy engaging intellectually with the matters at hand.

The objection not only fails, but, doing so, exposes the deep incoherence of safe and respectful campus policies. "Respect others or else" cannot be said respectfully. The aim of civility policies must, then, be mere conformity, and not the fostering of independent thought and vigorous discussion. Speech codes and codes of conduct in discussions, it turns out, are yet other attempts to apply pressures not those of evidence and argument to our search for true beliefs and sound values.

"Respect others or else" cannot be said respectfully.

If people gathered at a university value enquiry for its own sake, they will behave in discussion in ways they deem most fit for realizing their goals and ends. As their goal of understanding the matter at hand is furthered by listening to others and considering what they say, they will not need to be guided by external rules of civility.

Our final question is why have institutions of liberal study? The point of universities organized around certain doctrines is fairly plain: they are to promote those doctrines for the benefit both of the students and of the wider society and they are to produce knowledge and skills useful for that society. So why not go over to the traditional mission of the university, to prepare students for life and careers, to guide them into proper and upstanding values, to produce research useful to the wider culture?

Institutions of liberal study, institutions arranged so that people can engage intellectually with the matters that concern them, and enjoy both the process of engagement and the understandings that result, are rare and difficult to create and maintain. Almost always when intellectuals gather they form something like a church, rather than a university of liberal study. They organize around a leader who enjoys the status of being a seer, and they disseminate and guard the ideas that that leader formulates. Their devotion will be such that innovations are not celebrated as innovations but instead claimed to be what the leader actually originally intended. An orthodoxy gets established and heretics excommunicated.

Still, despite the odds, sometimes a place of liberal study evolves, as it did among the Milesian philosophers—though even in ancient Greece, church-like schools in the mode of the Pythagoreans dominated.

Well, the first and best reason to have institutions of liberal study is that some people enjoy thinking for themselves and appreciate being associated with places that nurture and protect independent thought. But that is a reason that appeals only to those who wish to grapple with intellectual problems and who value understanding things as they are and who respect the attempts of others to understand things. Are there reasons for having universities hospitable to liberal study that can appeal to those outside such institutions? After all, those outside them support them with tax dollars.

There are at least two excellent reasons why people outside universities should want their society's universities to be places of liberal study and, thus, places of wide and robust freedom of expression. The first is that the results of research can be trusted only when they come from a place at which any idea may be pursued and any criticism offered. Should people suspect that researchers are under pressure to come to certain conclusions and to avoid others, they cannot have confidence that the conclusions the researchers draw are likely to be sound. If professors and students may not question received narratives about the residential schools, for instance, or the motives people have for changing sex, then whatever they say on these topics will lack credibility.

The second is that independence of mind is a prime value in a free, open, and democratic society. Universities of liberal study can help students to attain both intellectual and moral autonomy. In their role as citizens, those who have come through programs of liberal study will be better able to consider matters fully and fairly and less inclined to jump on bandwagons or to complain of being offended. The knowledge and skills a person can gain at a doctrinal university might suffice for careers, but not for independent judgement.

The general point here is that the needs of a free, open, and democratic society are best met indirectly, through institutions functioning (directly) as places of liberal study.

But those who advocate a university of oversight and control hold that independent thought, that is, thinking for oneself, is overrated. A person might very well think herself into false beliefs and unsound values. Thinking for oneself, it is true, is not socially useful in collectivist or communitarian societies and it puts at serious risk allegiance to social identities. So long as our culture is individualistic and democratic, though, universities of liberal study marked by wide freedom of expression will remain central to what we need.

[Return to Contents](#)

A CIVITAS DIALECTIC: DEBATING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION POLICY

Be it resolved that: Canada is taking too many immigrants and is not taking the right ones

For the affirmative: Ezra Levant, Rebel Commander, Rebel Media

"I like Rahim Mohamed" — Canada needs immigrants who share our values!



I like Rahim Mohamed and I'm glad to have had the opportunity to debate immigration with him at the Civitas conference. I like every Rahim I've ever met including Rahim Jaffer, the first Muslim MP in Canada, an election for which I will claim some credit. Rahim is a traditional Ismaili Muslim name, and it means "mercy", which happens to be a Canadian value. Mercy was not a Ugandan value under Idi Amin, the racist dictator who expelled the Ismailis.

I'm glad Canada took in Ismailis, who are secular, educated, integrated in the wider community and grateful to have been rescued. I'm glad Canada did not take in Amin and his henchmen, who were Muslim too. The difference in my thinking is not based on skin colour or country of origin.

We need to be more discriminating about who we take as a country. We need to screen for compatibility — to preserve and continue the best things about Canada. That's not about race. Like the Ismailis in the 1970s, I can imagine no finer immigrant to Canada in 2020 than the passionate democracy protesters in Hong Kong, who are well-educated, speak English, eschew the welfare state and love our democratic values. But Canada does not sort for compatibility on cultural issues. We are importing countless immigrants who don't share our views on the equality of men and women, a belief in pluralism or the separation of mosque and state. Canadians are noticing.

Honour murders and shocking anti-Semitism are un-Canadian but they are the norm in countries like Somalia and Syria. If we don't screen for those ideas — and how could we? Most immigrants don't have an in-person interview — why should it be a surprise when those values are transplanted here? There are so many rapes by Muslim cab drivers in Halifax, police have stopped describing the suspects. Back in low-trust societies, a drunk girl out at midnight without a male guardian is asking for it. That thinking is incompatible with us.

We need to be more discriminating to ensure the best success for the immigrants' sake, too. Four years after Justin Trudeau's disastrous scheme to fast-track 50,000 Syrian migrants — almost none of whom actually came from Syria — the number of government-sponsored Syrians who are still unemployed is near 90%. Other than lavish social services, how are they better off now than they were in Beirut or Amman, or even returning to a pacified Damascus?

That goes to the quality of immigration. But we need to talk about the quantity, too. Trudeau and his former immigration minister, Ahmed Hussen, have proposed more than a million migrants over the next three years, most of whom they say will not be economically productive. Some will be refugees, but more will be unemployable relatives brought to Canada through chain migration, including elderly parents ready for our pensions and hospitals.

Don't call people racist for opposing indiscriminate, mass immigration. Don't do that intellectually because it's (usually) not true. And don't do it politically because it's a losing campaign strategy, especially for conservatives. It's what woke leftists do. The Media Party loves it. But falsely calling people racist is a reason why Jeremy Corbyn lost working class seats that had been Labour for a century and why Hillary Clinton lost the "deplorables" of the rust belt for the first time in a generation. Insulting voters usually doesn't work — especially on immigration.

The definition of discrimination means to choose. We need to be choosier. Let's choose immigrants who are in Canada's interests. And if we also choose to take some refugees from the world's worst places, let us choose the lambs, not the wolves. As Daniel Pipes says, "radical Islam is the problem; moderate Islam is the solution."

Let's choose immigrants who are in Canada's interests. And if we also choose to take some refugees from the world's worst places, let us choose the lambs, not the wolves.

Right now we don't discriminate at all. At Roxham Road in upstate New York, literally anyone who walks past the sign saying "Illegal Entry" gets right in to Quebec — and typically that's single, military-aged men, who obviously just came through America, a safe country. Who on earth would choose them as "refugees," over women and children in actual jeopardy?

But enough about what foreigners want. How about what Canadians want? Angus Reid says Canadian support for increased immigration is at an all-time low — 6%. The startling success of Francois Legault’s CAQ party in 2018 came by promising a significant reduction in immigration and a ban on religious symbols in the civil service. The 2019 revival of the Bloc Quebecois was, in part, Quebec’s federal restatement of those provincial plans.

Angus Reid has tested Quebec’s burka ban and other policy proposals nation-wide. They have the support of every province and every demographic group. It’s not racism; but it is a proxy for wider questions about immigration, because the ubiquity of burkas and hijabs is a reminder that a Canadian value — the equality of men and women — is being undone, and no-one ever asked us.

A few days before Rosemary Barton filed her lawsuit against the Conservatives, Andrew Scheer sat down for an interview with her, in which she pressed him on how many immigrants he’d accept if he were prime minister. Scheer dodged the question several times, but finally collapsed and agreed that Trudeau’s figure of 350,000 migrants a year was “reasonable”. Scheer had never expressed that publicly before; it wasn’t in his campaign platform. He just blurted it out in the moment, to avoid being called racist. Scheer said what the fancy people wanted him to say — not unemployed oil workers or auto workers wondering why a thousand more low-skilled workers a day are being brought to Canada to compete for jobs.

But Scheer was still called racist. The highest-migration ridings still voted Liberal. Hussen held campaign rallies in York South Weston in the Somali language; those migrants didn’t seem moved by Scheer’s capitulation. That is a strong reason why Liberals support mass migration. But it’s not in the country’s interest and certainly not in a Conservative’s interest.

Mass immigration drives down wages. It drives up the cost of housing. It adds pressure to social services like hospitals and schools. It makes traffic worse. It puts stress on social services like hospital waiting rooms and schools, and has overwhelmed Canada’s food banks and homeless shelters. It pushes out Canadian students from universities in favour of foreign students and drives up tuition for those who can get in.

High immigration is good for banks and cell phone companies and condo developers and corporations looking for cheap labour at Tim Hortons. But it’s not good for young Canadians trying to start a family and earn an honest living.

There are some issues where the entire political establishment is just wrong, and the people are right. Immigration is one of them. Francois Legault figured that out. Let’s hope the next Conservative Party leader can, too.

Opposing the resolution: Rahim Mohamed, Visiting Assistant Professor, Wake Forest University

Why We Mustn’t Succumb to Xenophobia



This past May, at the annual Civitas Conference in Toronto, I had the opportunity to debate Ezra Levant, Founder of The Rebel Media and all-around right-wing troublemaker, on the topic of immigration in Canada. I was truly grateful for this opportunity as it gave me a chance to tell Ezra, to his face, why I believe that far-right outlets like The Rebel imperil both Canada’s salutary culture of liberal pluralism and the electoral prospects of Canadian conservatives.

The Rebel is Canada’s most prominent contribution to the network of far-right social media sites that populate the so-called Intellectual Dark Web (IDW). Such outlets traffic in a multitude of anti-mainstream positions – serving up broadsides against feminism, transgender ideology, and political correctness, for example. Yet arguably the most strident message they convey is the exhortation that mass migration threatens to erode the classically liberal underpinnings of Western civilization. Far-right pundits most commonly play up the cultural threat posed by Muslim immigrants, painting Islam and western liberalism as fundamentally at odds with one another.

Most purveyors of this worldview insist that their concerns have nothing at all to do with race (Ezra made sure to let me know how much he admires my own Ismaili Muslim community), but the advent of the IDW seems to have given way to greater, or at least more open, racial bias among self-identified conservatives. A recent poll conducted by EKOS found that 70 per cent of Conservative Party of Canada supporters believe that there are ‘too many’ non-white immigrants entering the country (Toronto Star 4/16/2019).

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This should concern all of us.

Firstly, capitulating to the tide of xenophobia would be tantamount to political suicide for Canadian conservatives. Despite assurances from the Trudeau government that the 2015 federal election would be the last-ever conducted under the first-past-the-post system, electoral reform is unlikely to happen anytime soon. This means that, for the foreseeable future, the Canadian equivalent of ‘swing states’ will continue to be places like Brampton, Surrey, Richmond and other suburban pockets that are heavily populated with immigrant and visible minority voters.

The Conservative Party learned this the hard way in 2015, winning just one of Canada’s twenty most immigrant-heavy ridings – a collapse that factored heavily into the election’s overall outcome. Over a decade of constructive engagement with Canada’s immigrant communities (highlighted by the superb outreach activities of Jason Kenny) was near-instantaneously undone amidst asinine fracas over niqabs, barbaric cultural practices, and old-stock Canadians. We should now look to the election as a cautionary tale and strive to avoid making the same mistakes going forward.

Secondly, the knee-jerk nativism of outlets like The Rebel obscures the immutable realities created by our aging population and sub-replacement domestic birthrate. Canada’s median age is a not-so-springy 42.2 (compared to 38.8 in the United States) and there are already more seniors (65-and-over) than there are children (14-and-under) in the country (Statistics Canada 2016). The steady march of Baby Boomers and Gen Xers toward retirement age will invariably place a severe strain on national finances.

The Conference Board of Canada estimates that we will need to welcome 300,000 to 450,000 working-age immigrants annually over the next 20 years in order to maintain present standards of living (May 2018, pp. 18-22). Suffice it to say, these new Canadians will not be coming from places like Norway and Luxembourg.

Economic necessity dictates that sustained immigration from non-white countries will be a fact of life for the foreseeable future. The tired clash of civilizations bromides offered by far-right pundits do nothing to alter this reality or help us with the ongoing challenges of integration.

But, above all, this new wave of intolerance is wholly inconsistent with our conservative principles. More than anything else, conservatism in Canada has been about standing up to the Anglo-French Laurentian elite and pushing for a more inclusive conception of Canadian national identity. Conservatives gave Canada its first black member of parliament (Lincoln Alexander), its first Muslim member of parliament (Rahim Jaffer), and its first prime minister of Germanic descent (John Diefenbaker).

We should be proud of our history of broadening the purview of what it means to be Canadian. Falling prey to the anti-immigrant fervor permeating the far right would be a dangerous and self-destructive step backwards.

[Return to Contents](#)

AND ANOTHER THING!

An eclectic collection of observations, contentions, reflections, book reviews, maxims, opinions, tweets, salon reports, information and advice from members of the Canadian Civitas Society:

Civitas Forums: Some months ago, a "Call to Action" was sent out asking members to consider hosting a Civitas Speakers' Forum (or a "Civitas Salon" as we initially described these events) in their area.

These events promised to serve a dual purpose. In addition to the benefits and pleasures of hearing quality speakers and debates, members were asked to invite friends and colleagues whom they thought would make good members of Civitas Canada.

In other words, Civitas Speakers' Forums have been re-conceived as an attractive method for sustaining and growing our membership nationally, from the ground up, so to speak. This is an activity in which all members can easily participate. And the response so far has been very good, as the schedule of current and planned events below indicates.

So just imagine: if every Civitas Speakers' Forum in Canada - whether a gathering of a half dozen, or half a hundred - were to produce one or two, or five or ten new members, and each year we were to double the number of Forums, so that they sprouted like flowers in all sorts of cities and towns across Canada, we would have a potent method for fighting back against the closing of the Canadian mind.

So please take a look at what Civitas members are doing this season to help open minds across Canada, and consider hosting a Forum yourself, or teaming up with another member or two for this purpose. Here is quick summary of the Civitas Forums members are hosting across the country prior to our Calgary Conference:

In November 2019 Will Johnston hosted a Vancouver forum featuring Mark Milke speaking on his new book, "The Victim Cult: How the Culture of Blame Hurts Everyone and Wrecks Civilizations". Thanks to John von Heyking this popular session will be repeated in Lethbridge, Alberta on January 25, 2020.

On January 15, 2020, Bill Gairdner and Miles Smit are teaming up in Toronto to host a forum with Bruce Pardy and Lisa Bilty on the subject of "Law and Social Justice".

Bill Brooks has a Montreal evening lined up at the **Atwater Library on March 18th with The Hon. Maxime Bernier on the subject of conservative principles and the prospect of "Moving the Overton Window"**.

Other hosts for prospective events in the forthcoming months include: Stephen Perrott in Halifax, Rodney Clifton in Winnipeg, Alberto Polizogopoulos in Ottawa, Caylan Ford in Calgary, Salim Mansur in London, Leah Rowntree in West Vancouver, Keith King and Omid Ghoreishi in Aurora and Zork Hun in Barrie.

So if the spirit moves and you would like to host a Forum, please let me know by reply to: wgairdner@gmail.com, and I will send you our informal Guideline, and some other materials to help get your Civitas Forum event off the ground. **William Gairdner**



On fundraising for a free society: Unfortunately non-government organizations like Civitas cannot operate entirely on good will. Our Board of Directors works on a voluntary basis and this year our Calgary conference will feature a host of highly qualified speakers and panelist who have agreed to participate without any form of financial compensation. This is how Civitas has managed to remain active for almost a quarter century.

Nevertheless, each year, several members and supporters of Civitas make donations in support of maintaining first-rate services at our national conference, a functional members' website and general administrative costs.

Donations can now be received in the form of a credit card payment option which appears on the Civitas website. Gifts in any amount will receive grateful acknowledgement in our conference program. Giving categories include: Friends of Civitas (\$50 - \$499), Conference Patrons (\$500 - \$1,999) and Major Benefactors (\$2,000 and upwards).

Special donations in support of student registration fees are also welcome and anyone inclined to accept a role such as Reception Sponsor, Keynote Speaker Sponsor, Lunch or Dinner Sponsor or Major Conference Benefactor, please call: Andy Crooks at 403-875-2622 or email him at acrooks@richcrooks.ca. I would be delighted to discuss a sponsorship level for you personally or your business organization.

As of now, I am pleased to announce that Facebook has stepped up to the plate and agreed to sponsor Civitas at a Gold level. This is an important validation of Civitas. Facebook has expressed its pleasure at being able to promote and support a "Place Where Ideas Meet."

Also, Epoch Times has agreed to renew its Silver sponsorship for the conference. We are working to deepen the relationship between Civitas Members and Epoch Times. Many of our members have been featured in that paper's opinion columns over the last year and we look forward to a continuing relationship with this excellent publication for truth and tradition. **Andy Crooks**



Getting “wired” in Canada. There are ways to energize your mind other than lining up for a buzz from your local government marijuana dispensary. Check out The NorthWire, a YouTube channel that a like-minded friend of mine recently recommended. There, among other interesting podcasts, you will find some familiar Civitas members: like Dr. Shawn Whatley on “5 things Bernie Sanders doesn’t know about socialized medicine” or Queen’s University Law Professor, Bruce Pardy on “The Two Kinds of Equality.” Concise, clear and unafraid - these guys are well worth a look. **William Brooks**



[Return to Contents](#)