REVIEW • FORUM
Doug Saunders' *Maximum Canada*[1]

Bigger, bolder, better: Historical images and Canadian population history

Review by Gordon Darroch, York University

Doug Saunders, known as Canada's leading international-affairs columnist, has become one of Canada's leading public intellectuals. In *Maximum Canada*, he writes for a wide public, aiming to influence public policy and asking that we think carefully about our collective past and about what we are presently doing, and failing to do, to shape our collective futures.

Saunders' 2011 book, *Arrival City*, was received as carefully researched and humane, written for a wide audience.[2] *Maximum Canada* is a very different book, focused on Canada in a rare attempt to make this county's population history a matter of urgent public debate. His starting point is "an often overlooked fact about Canada: it is a country that has long had trouble keeping people" (p. 8). The history of emigration seems an unlikely topic for an intervention into Canadian public-policy, much less for aspiring best-sellers. It is welcomed.

Saunders constructs a tale about how from the seventeenth century onward Canada has been marked by a singular contestation—a "moral war"—between two overarching worldviews, a "minimizing impulse" and a "maximizing impulse." These conflicting typifications are Saunders' central narrative device in his story about Canada's history of "underpopulation" (p. 5).

The book is organized in three parts. First is Saunders' version of the origins and character of his "minimizing impulse," stretching from the early nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. Emanating from powerful governing ideas (p. 9), the formation had six main features: restrictive immigration, which sustained narrow British ethnic homogeneity, primacy of staples exports, a racialized view of indigenous peoples, fearful relations with the US, and unduly limited population growth. The consequence was "insufficient population density, market size, and tax-payer base to service the country's geographic, human, and economic needs" (p. 11).

The second part is the story of the "maximizing impulse." It first surfaced during Canada's greatest immigration experiment in the Laurier-Sifton years, 1896 to 1911, but only bloomed in the late 1960s.[3] The transformations arose from sea changes in the everyday experience and world views of ordinary Canadians—marked visibly, for example, by Expo '67; political elites had to catch up. The new formation began with more diverse sources of immigration, accompanied by a shift from the primacy of resource extraction toward an urban-industrial and service economy,

---

1. *Maximum Canada: Why 35 Million Canadians Are Not Enough* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2017). ISBN 978-0-7352-7309-2. Softcover C$29.95, 247 pp.
2. See, for example, the reviews posted at https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/sep/18/arrival-city-migration-doug-saunders and http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/18/books/arrival-city-by-doug-saunders-review.html.
3. Between 1896 and 1911, some two million immigrants joined a population of just over five million.

with late-blooming interest in continental trade. Quebec's neo-nationalism emerged in this era, as did a slow conversion toward acknowledging indigenous peoples as sovereign nations that require rights-recognition and negotiation. Concentrated urban populations emerged as the main source of cultural and economic creativity (ch. 5).

A sub-plot in these accounts is a comparison between the negative effects of continuing emigration from Canada and the positive effects of US immigration. For Saunders, if Canada's limited population growth largely resulted from massive emigration to the south, this emigration also drained off the most capable and energetic people. I find this to be his most contentious claim.

In the third part, Saunders assesses the risks of continuing "underpopulation" and makes policy recommendations. The challenge is to boost the population to 100 million by 2100, requiring "a set of family policies to bring fertility rates to 1.7 and a modest increase in immigration, to a rate of 1.3 percent annually," to approximately 400,000 or so immigrants yearly (p. 157).[4] Saunders' focus is not on population growth but on enhancing human "capacity" (p. 152)—that is, intensified urban concentrations of markets, taxpayers, labour forces, cultural audiences, and clusters of expertise. The argument echoes his main theses in *Arrival City*, which documents the dynamism of concentrated migrant communities worldwide, including the Thorncliff community in Toronto.

He makes five key points about the costs of failing to increase population capacities. The first is a familiar argument about an ageing population, which increases dependency ratios and restricts the fiscal basis for public services. He provides a brief, conversant account of the problem, suggesting that although it is the most widely publicized, it is also the most readily resolvable.

Of greater concern are Canada's limited size and concentration of markets, which inhibit the productivity of a generally well-educated and resourceful labour force, making innovators and investors unduly dependent on foreign capital and markets. Saunders is persuasive about how the expansion of innovative urban centres and increased density of urban populations underwrite economic productivity and employment. His third point concerns the environmental costs of a scattered national population, and here Saunders writes against the grain. Population growth is not a problem, he says, if it provides a critical mass of strategically distributed fiscal and human resources, increasing the reliance on green energy, lowering transportation costs and carbon-dioxide emissions, and enhancing coastal and urban infrastructures to face the consequences of climate change.

His fourth issue is national security and stability. He notes that contrary to much public sentiment, immigrant populations tend to reduce crime rates and particularly violent crime (although he skirts the causal question). He argues that larger and more concentrated populations make more efficient use of resources for defense and security needs, while boosting the capacity for multilateral influence. The fifth and last issue is cultural. Multiple dispersed and regionally variable audiences challenge Canadians' ability to cultivate and sustain many cultural institutions, from magazines, news channels, and museums to statistical agencies. He points to Quebec's more concentrated and successful funding in supporting cultural institutions as an example.

Chapter 7, "The case against 100 million," is particularly laudable. Saunders thoughtfully reviews the obstacles and risks faced in attempting to achieve his policy goals. First, he provides a measured account of why political interventions are required; the rare historical conditions engendering immigrant successes in the post-WWII years cannot be duplicated. Then he faults

---

4. Saunders acknowledges the objective is not an original idea, serving as a symbol for a larger set of proposals (p. 157). See the Century Initiative (http://www.centuryinitiative.ca), Advisor Council on Economic Growth, October 20, 2016 (https://www.budget.gc.ca/aceg-ccce/pdf/immigration-eng.pdf).

the regionally decentralized and exclusionary accreditation processes that create obstacles for current immigrants in upgrading their technical and professional training. Finally, he addresses the possibilities of a rising anti-immigrant backlash in the absence of sufficient institutional preparation, but is optimistic about the ways that racism and exclusion can be moderated. He candidly admits that in the absence of sufficient institutional preparation and investment, even immigrants' historic inventiveness and ambition might not make the risks of increased immigration worthwhile.

The concluding chapter asks how Canada can establish a supportive context for significant population growth. Saunders makes a persuasive case for expanded, subsidized child-care, supplemented by more flexible family leave and work programs. Other proposals include increasing investments in immigrant settlement and employment opportunities through appropriate Federal and Provincial ministries. Following *Arrival City*, he argues that the key is fostering urban home-ownership, small business, and employment opportunities for immigrants in a variety of urban growth poles, as well as in Canada's three major reception cities. Increasing population concentrations provides opportunities for newcomers, enhances environmental stewardship, and has widespread, long-term benefits.

Maximum Canada deserves to be widely read and debated. It is readable, convincing, and (with important exceptions) draws on a considerable, selected research literature. It is notable in making population history central to public policy debates. In my view, it could serve as a starting text in senior undergraduate and graduate courses in social demography, population history, social change, or political sociology. But it needs to be complemented by alternative research studies and critical assessments. The book's ambition and concision invite criticism of its historical accounts and leave a number of nagging questions.

Saunders' representation of the Canadian national experience in terms of two conflicting "impulses" lends the book a dramatic and engaging story-line. Like most historical typifications, however, they greatly simplify complex historical processes, including a tendency to exaggerate the organic, self-adjusting character of the formations described. The nineteenth- and early twentieth-century "minimizing impulse" is simplistically presented as a set of governing ideologies, imposed from above on seemingly passive ordinary folk, almost without resistance (p. 25–27, 39).[5]

By contrast, the "maximizing impulse" erupts in the 1960s "from below," catching political elites by surprise (p. 115–16, 127). Absent is a convincing account of this historic turnabout. The absence partly arises from a questionable stereotype about Canada's rural past as peopled by self-sufficient, isolated, non-commercial "traditional" folk (in Saunders' unfortunate terms, "a self-selected group who didn't want much from life" [p. 49][6]).

A related, deep flaw is Saunders' repeated notion that continuing emigration to the US throughout most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a powerful filter, selecting out the most knowledgeable, ambitious, inventive, entrepreneurial, and talented (p. 38, 46, 49, and elsewhere). Saunders cites a useful body of migration research, but none warrants this speculation and many other studies complicate it (McInnis 1994; Ramirez 2001; Widdis 1998).[7] Migration

---

5. The resistances were readily defeated, as in the rebellions of 1830s.

6. For revisionist interpretations, see Craig (2009) or McCalla (2015) regarding the routine involvement of early Canadian rural households in local markets and their "deep engagement in the international world of goods" (McCalla 2015: 153).

7. McInnis (1994) gives some evidence that significant numbers of nineteenth-century emigrants from Canada to the US were simply sojourners, those who found it easier or cheaper to travel through Canada before moving on, as they originally intended. Saunders cites the many studies of the historical French-

flows are always selective, with selectivity varying widely. The differences in the character of migrants and non-migrants are complex and difficult to address with historical evidence. The closest Saunders comes to systematic evidence is citing Lew and Cater (2012), who indicate that Canadian migrants to the US in the first decades of twentieth century tended to be more literate than those who remained. Research documents a variety of historical conditions under which migrants tend to be more literate or educated than non-migrants (see Long 1973; Ozden and Schiff 2006). But Saunders takes literacy itself to stand in for knowledge, ambition, inventiveness, and talent. Of course, some talented people left. The original authors are more nuanced, however, interpreting literacy differentials in the context of chain and career migration, differing employment opportunities, and the likely effects of US literacy tests after 1917.

I find curious, too, Saunders' notion about the determinative role of the "minimizing impulse" in the history of racialization and brutality toward Canada's indigenous peoples. He fails to note how this relationship has been paralleled in the US and the antipodal settler societies, despite many historical differences. The author also ignores some less sanguine research about the limited effect of immigration on wages and employment even in the longer term—or, for that matter, on solving the ageing population problem (see Riddell et al. 2016; this review was probably not available in time for Saunders' publication, but the research cited was).

Two nagging questions about Quebec arise. Saunders usefully cites the province's experience of support for cultural institutions and the relative success of its childcare policies. But Quebec is not Canada. One wonders about the capacity of our very different regional cultures to pursue similar political initiatives, especially among the low-tax political cultures. And unaddressed is the larger question about how to manage ramped-up national immigration without it being perceived as culturally threatening in Quebec or as upsetting the historical balance of population, political influence and economic well-being between the province and the rest of Canada.

Maximum Canada is an unusual attempt at public education and intervention in public policy. Saunders constructs a compelling and intentionally provocative combination of a simplified but engaging historical narrative and a set of policy proposals. The book's central virtue lies in its potential to invite public consideration of the many social and political implications of our population history and future.

References

Bélanger, D-C., and C. Bélanger. 2000. *French Canadian Emigration to the United States, 1840-1930*. Last revised 23 August 2000. Available at http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/readings/leaving.htm. (Retrieved 1 November 2017)

Craig, B. 2009. *Backwoods Consumers and Homespun Capitalists: The Rise of Market Culture in Eastern Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Canadian emigration to New England as if they confirmed his idea that this bled the province of its best and brightest. No evidence supports this claim. Even the work he mainly cites, Bélanger and Bélanger (2000), reiterates the importance to emigration decisions of prior migrants, family networks, channels of information, chain migration, and the opportunities for employment in not-too-distant mills, including employment of family members, especially of women. The emigrants were self- and family-selected, but not by some sieve that strained talent, risk-taking, or initiative and left the dregs behind.

Lew, B., and B. Cater. 2012. Canadian Emigration to the US, 1900–1930: Characterizing Movers and Stayers, and the Differential Impact of Immigration Policy on the Mobility of French and English Canadians. Paper prepared for a meeting of the Canadian Network for Economic History. Banff Alberta, October 26–28. Department of Economics, Trent University. Available at http://www.economichistory.ca/pdfs/2012/lew-cater.pdf. (Retrieved 8 January 2018)

Long, L. 1973. Migration differentials by education and occupation: Trends and variations. *Demography* 10(2):243–58.

McCalla, D. 2015. *Consumers in the Bush: Shopping in Rural Upper Canada.* Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

McInnis, M. 1994. Immigration and emigration: Canada in the late nineteenth century, in *Migration and the International Labour Markets, 1850–1939*, edited by T.J. Hatton and J.G. Williamson. London and New York: Routledge.

Ozden, C., and M. Schiff (eds). 2006. *International Migration, Remittances, and the Brain Drain.* Washington, DC: World Bank and Palgrave Macmillan.

Ramirez, B. 2001. *Crossing the 49th Parallel: Migration from Canada to the United States, 1900–1930*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Riddell, W.C., C. Worswick, and D. Green. 2016. How does increasing immigration affect the economy? *Policy Options Politique: The Public Forum for the Public Good.* Available at http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/november-2016/how-does-increasing-immigration-affect-economy. (Retrieved 1 December 2018)

Saunders, D. 2011. *Arrival City: The Final Migration and Our Next World.* Toronto: Vintage.

Widdis, R.W. 1998. *With Scarcely a Ripple: Anglo-Canadian Migration into the United States and Western Canada, 1880–1920*. Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

REVIEW • FORUM
Doug Saunders' *Maximum Canada*[1]

Maximum Canada: What do Canadians wish to maximize?

Review by Roderic Beaujot, Western University,
and
Lise Patterson, Economist, formerly with Canada's Privy Council Office

While including a history of population questions going back to the war of 1812, *Maximum Canada* is fundamentally a book-length argument for higher immigration, aimed at boosting Canada's population to 100 million by the year 2100. Throughout the book, the author contrasts what he calls a "minimizing impulse" and a "maximizing impulse," with a clear preference for maximizing. Doug Saunders claims, for example, that as far back as the early nineteenth century: "Canada was making a concerted effort to be small in size and limited in function. This would be a recurring trend through the next two centuries—but it would constantly be in conflict with another, larger idea" (p. 8).

Originally, the minimizing impulse sought to keep Canada as a colony of Britain and a source of staple products. Later, this approach envisaged a mono-ethnic population of British or Anglican identity, favouring an economic elite with strong links to the mother country and preventing Canada from becoming anything like the United States. In contrast, the maximizing ideas placed Canada in a North American context, benefiting from strong trade relations with the United States.

Saunders' maximizing vision extends beyond broad-source immigration and population growth to include continental integration and open trade within North America; a diversified and value-added economy; pluralism and ethnic heterogeneity; indigenous nations as sovereign partners; and a view of society as a collection of individuals (p. 123–25). Besides linking population growth to economic growth and to cultural inclusiveness, Saunders sees ecological benefits to larger cities with a dense pattern of habitation. For Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, he proposes that "all three metropolitan areas could easily double or triple their populations without extending their current boundaries (p. 222–23).

While we support the arguments for cultural inclusiveness, we find that Saunders pays too much attention to overall economic growth and too little heed to individual standards of living and quality of life considerations. Above all, we find it hard to swallow his suggestions that large-scale population growth will bring net ecological benefits.

For instance, Saunders proposes that a more populous Canada could better afford costly climate change mitigation and adaptation measures (p. 177–78). He fails to mention, however, that such population growth would require Canada to act more aggressively to meet its target commitments under the Paris Climate Accord. These targets are expressed in terms of total impact on the

---

1. *Maximum Canada: Why 35 Million Canadians Are Not Enough* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2017). ISBN 978-0-7352-7309-2. Softcover C$29.95, 247 pp.

environment, not in terms of per capita emissions or efficiency of resource use. We would observe that while Canada is 37th in population size, it is already 10th among the countries of the world in terms of total CO_2 emissions (Kerr and Beaujot 2016: 307).

In the concluding chapter, Saunders calls for "a large-scale inquiry into the investments need-ed at national, provincial/territorial, and municipal levels to prepare Canada for its next (popula-tion) tripling" (p. 212). As proposed, this inquiry would not consider other alternatives such as low or medium immigration, only how to accommodate higher levels.

Here, we would observe that his population proposals are out of synch with broadly endorsed goals for further slowing the pace of global population growth (see, for example, United Nations 1994: 5). Such goals will prove elusive if each country seeks to maximize its own population.

Canada benefits from immigration, especially from the diversity that brings us into contact with a pluralistic and globalizing world. By including refugees in immigration planning, Canada comes to the aid of the world's most marginalized individuals and families. Instead of seeking to triple the population of Canada by the end of the century, we would argue for achieving popula-tion stability through our current levels of fertility, and immigration levels that are closer to the postwar historical average (Beaujot 2017). While Saunders would "focus exclusively on high-skill and post-secondary student immigration" and predicts a "sharp decrease in refugee numbers, which tend to spike only during crises every few decades" (p. 221), we would argue for a diversity of immigrants across the economic, family, and refugee classes, along with diversity of skill levels and places of origin.

Dominance of a minimizing impulse

Before returning to the current context, we will reflect on some interpretations that Doug Saunders gives to population growth over Canada's history. He argues that while a maximizing orientation was present during the years 1897–1913, and slowly took hold in the period after 1967, a minimizing impulse was otherwise dominant: "The starting point of this book [is that Canada] is a country that has long had trouble keeping people. During most decades of the nineteenth century, and for many decades in the twentieth, Canada sent more people to other countries than it received as immigrants" (p. 8).

Saunders asserts that the period 1867–1967 represented a "century-long crisis of underpopula-tion that had kept the country closed, dependent, and in denial" (p. 122). In particular, he observes that during the 90 years between 1851 and 1941, Canada attracted 6.7 million immigrants but lost almost 6.3 million to emigration, for a net gain of only 400,000 (p. 99). All accounts of Canadian immigration history point to four decades of net emigration at the time surrounding Confedera-tion (1861–1901) and another such decade in the 1930s, but various analytical works point to net immigration in all other decades. For instance, Kerr and Beaujot (2016: 113) and Edmonston (2016: 116) both show a net immigration of 960,000 for the period 1851–1941 (6,191,000 immigrants and 5,230,000 emigrants). McInnis (2000: 387) calculates a net positive immigration for each decade from 1821 to 1861, for a total net gain of 487,000 in these four decades of the 19th century.

Saunders is correct in saying that the United States attracted a number of the immigrants who originally landed in Canada, and also that large numbers of Canadian-born emigrated to places south of the border. But despite low levels of net immigration, the Canadian population did in fact grow—from 2.5 million in 1851 to 14.0 million in 1951, or by a factor of 5.6. This is lower than the 6.5-fold growth of the US population, from 23.2 million in 1850 to 150.7 million in 1950, but it is higher than the 2.0-fold growth of the world population over this century (1.241 billion in 1850 to 2.529 billion in 1950; see Livi-Bacci 2012: 25).

Our main point of disagreement regarding the pre-1960s period is that Saunders attributes Canada's disadvantage to a "minimizing approach" that worked against attracting and retaining more immigrants. In our view, he downplays various factors that drove population growth in the New England colonies and the subsequent United States of America. Already by 1760, at the end of New France, the white population of the United States was over a million (1,268,000), compared to just 70,000 in Canada. The USA began building a more industrial economy with its larger population, especially over the last three decades of the 19th century, and by 1900 its population reached 76 million, as against 5.3 million in Canada. This more dynamic economy south of the border was partly based on an independent and enterprising capitalist spirit, but it was also based on the exploitation of Black and Indigenous populations. Clearly, the industrializing US economy of the 19th century was an attractive alternative to the surplus agricultural economy along the Saint Lawrence Valley.

Saunders also downplays the role of climatic and geographic disadvantages north of the border. When comparing Quebec and New England, the Canadian prairies and the Dakotas, and Toronto, Montreal, and Hamilton to Chicago, New York City, and Boston, he says, "And no, it was not the weather," that these represent "similar climates" (p. 35). The *Farmer's Almanac* (2018) shows considerable differences in average annual frost-free days: Montreal at 181 compared to New York City at 230, Regina at 106 compared to Minot (ND) at 141, and Toronto at 173 frost-free days compared to 204 for Chicago. There are other important geographic differences. In the 19th century, there was year-round marine access to New York, while Montreal was not accessible in winter. The United States also benefits from a more contiguous agricultural area, while the narrow strip north of the border is interrupted by the extensive Canadian Shield. Thus, it is not only due to differences in political will that the US westward push, and the associated displacement and near elimination of the Indigenous population, occurred two decades earlier south of the border.

With the benefit of hindsight, we can agree that Canadian Prime Minster John A. Macdonald's "National Policy" was misguided, especially in not integrating the Indigenous and Metis peoples into an advancing agrarian economy (see Carter 1990). Nonetheless, this policy did establish an east-west economy north of the border that managed to avoid being absorbed by US expansionism. It is true that the arrangement gave much land to the railways, and to the Hudson's Bay Company that originally owned Rupert's Land, but here again Saunders is exaggerating. He says that "homesteads could not be established within twenty miles of a train track because the railways had been granted that prime land by Parliament for future development" (p. 57). In effect, 20 miles would have been an almost impossible distance for bringing grain to the railway by horse and wagon or horse and sleigh. In fact, the land given to the railways was on "odd numbered sections" representing an average of 16 of the 36 sections of a given township (Waiser 2007: 156–57). Homesteads *were* available next to the rail lines, not just at a 32-km distance (Tyman 1972). Looking at the homestead map for the Rural Municipality of Silverwood (No. 123), which adjoins the Canadian Pacific Line that opened to Whitewood Saskatchewan in 1882, about one-third of the 324 sections (each a mile square) are labeled as "C.P.R.," but these are spread out over the 18×18 square-mile area of the municipality.

Saunders proposes that "the entire program of settling the Prairies was a failure," in part because of the lack of urban infrastructure and associated markets (p. 58). However, we would observe that by 1921, Saskatchewan was the third-largest province by population, after Ontario and Quebec. It was the dust-bowl conditions in this fragile geographic area and the coinciding 1930s economic depression that undermined the population of the prairies, not the lack of urban infrastructure. Saunders proposes that by 1941, "Canada's population had become more rural" (p. 99). In fact, the rural percentage declined from 58.3% in 1911 to 48.9% in 1941 (Beaujot and McQuillan, 1982: 158).

A maximizing orientation: The 15-year Canadian century and building a maximizing consensus since the 1960s

While it is true that the Wilfrid Laurier years represented a strong advance in building Canada's population, the groundwork had been done during the time of John A. Macdonald. The period 1897–1913 corresponded to a time of globalization, when Canada benefited from conditions much beyond the political reach of Canadian policy. This was just as much "La Belle Époque" as it was the "The Fifteen-Year Canadian Century," to quote the title of Chapter 3.

Saunders proposes that the 1960s and 1970s were a time of confrontation and debate that ultimately produced considerable consensus toward an open economy and pluralistic inclusiveness. In effect, there was the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963–70) that resulted in the Official Languages Act (1969) and the Multiculturalism Act (1971, 1988). In 1982 there was the incorporation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the Constitution. The Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada (aka Macdonald Commission,1982–85) became the basis of the 1988 Free Trade Agreement with the United States and the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement. The Commission made a case for free trade on the basis that in contrast to other developed economies, Canada did not have access to a market of 100 million people. In 1991–96, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples produced a new push toward better recognition of the First Nations and repairs of historical injustices.

Saunders sees the associated discussions as resulting in "core maximizing ideas": ethnic, racial, and religious pluralism, as well as population growth, immigration, North American free trade, individual rights, and Indigenous self-government (p. 126). As reviewers, we share in this consensus with regard to openness and pluralism, but we ask why it should be linked to increasing to a population of 100 million by the end of this century. If Canada is already characterized by this "maximizing consensus," why do we need such a large population? While Saunders says that "35 million is not enough," he also observes that Canadians are among the most educated people in the world, with Canada ranking in the top four countries on the Global Entrepreneurship Index and as a world leader in science and technology innovations (p. 160). We would add to these Canada's high life expectancy, which is among the best of the world and three years above US life expectancy (United Nations 2017: Table S6). Apropos, if we need a significantly larger population to be successful, how did Norway, with a population of 5.3 million, achieve such success in the 2018 Winter Olympic Games? By moving instead toward a stable population, can we not build on these core values of openness and pluralism while also playing our role as responsible ecological stewards?

Saunders also claims that the political parties in Quebec have moved away from concern about the relative size of Quebec in Canada to concern about the small absolute size of Quebec:

> By the time the neo-nationalists had evolved into the Parti Québécois in 1968, both separatists and Liberals shared the view that Quebec's absolute population needed to grow, and fast, even if that meant that Canada itself grew faster (p. 138). […] There's a great understanding that Quebec is underpopulated […] francophone Quebecois are a generation ahead of English Canadians in recognizing the shortfalls of absolute population and the need to have a more robust population (Doug Saunders as quoted in Runnalls 2018: 59).

We asked a Quebec demographer who follows these questions to comment. Jacques Légaré (2018) responded that he had never heard anyone make propositions of this kind. He observed that Quebec had been focused on avoiding population decline, but small changes to family policies and immigration have pushed this concern off into the 2060s (see Légaré 2017). There remains a preoccupation to not have the Francophone proportion decline because of international immigration.

Saunders observes that Canada's population tripled in the period 1946–2015, from 12 to 35 million, and thus it is not such a stretch to triple once again, to 100 million, as a Conference Board of Canada study has proposed (Ades et al. 2016). We would argue that there are serious limits to comparing such growth in the 1946–2015 period to a similar increase for 2015–2100. The postwar period was a time of rebuilding. Prime Minister Mackenzie-King had wanted to ensure that the returning soldiers would not be as poorly integrated into the society as had been the case after the Great War. In effect, Canada's welfare state was first designed for the returning soldiers, including health benefits, support for higher education, loans for persons going into business or farming, and investments in housing. As the welfare state expanded, including family allowance, it provided security to young families and set the basis for the baby boom.

It is noteworthy that both groups of immigrants of the 1897–1913 and 1946–60 periods followed a hiatus in immigration, and both groups achieved fairly successful economic integration (Richmond and Kalbach 1980; Beaujot et al. 1988). The lesser economic success of arrival cohorts since the 1990s (Picot and Sweetman 2005) brings into question the continued high levels of immigration.

In contrast to the period 1946–2015, the proposed tripling of population for 2015–2100 would occur under rather different circumstances. In particular, this tripling in Canada would stand in marked contrast to the projected 1.4-fold growth in the US and 1.5-fold increase for the world as a whole (United Nations 2017: medium projection for US and world population).

Saunders is not clear about the immigration level that would be needed to reach this 100 million mark. At one point he says that even at "current immigration levels and fertility rate, (Canada's population) would still be approaching 90 million people by 2100" (p. 217); elsewhere he says that "a robust set of family policies to bring fertility rates to 1.7" and an immigration rate of 1.3 per cent annually would reach a population of 100 million by 2100 (p. 157).

It is worth citing official projections relating to Canada's long-term population growth. United Nations (2017) projections show low, medium, and high populations of 36.4, 51.6, and 72.0 million, respectively, for 2100. Since the Canadian immigration level has averaged 7.5 per 1,000 population over the period 1991–2015 (Kerr and Beaujot 2016: 112), Statistics Canada uses the low, medium, and high assumptions of 5.0, 7.5, and 9.0 immigrants per 1,000 population (Bohnert et al. 2015); these are paired with Total Fertility Rate assumptions of 1.53, 1.67, and 1.88 births per woman, respectively. Because of the underlying uncertainty of projections, Statistics Canada only publishes results for 25 years at the provincial level and 50 years at the national level. It is, however, possible to extend these projections up to 2100 based on a continuation of the same assumptions. These produce populations of 40.8, 65.9, and 100.8 million for 2100 under low, medium, and high assumptions, respectively.[2] Thus, even an immigration of 5.0 annual arrivals per thousand population, with fertility rates of 1.5, shows a larger population in 2100 than in 2015.

The case for 100 million

Saunders' case for the near-tripling of Canada's population hangs substantially on the promise of large economic and fiscal gains. He argues that the resulting changes to Canada's age structures, GDP growth, and government revenues would offer a "significant" cushion against pressures associated with population aging and free up much fiscal capacity (p.157–59). Among other things, such gains would help Canada sustain social programs (p.157–58), expand public institutions (p.181–83, 188), upgrade foreign policy, security, and defence capabilities (p. 180–81), undertake

---

2. These results were provided to the authors by Statistics Canada on special request.

costly climate change–related investments (p. 177–78), and make long-needed upgrades to transit systems, affordable housing, and other urban infrastructure (p. 211, 221–28). Canada's private sector would also benefit from the rising population size and density, which would unleash significant gains in innovation, productivity and economies of scale (p. 159–72). Ultimately, Saunders holds out the promise of a more prosperous, sustainable, and safer society that enjoys not only higher standards of living but also a better quality of life.

Saunders tempers these bold assertions with notes of caution, as he admits to certain social and political risks associated with his population strategy (p. 192–213). He also acknowledges that his proposed surge in immigrant numbers would require costly up-front investments in programs, institutions, and infrastructure (p. 212, 222–25). In the end, he maintains that the potential benefits of the strategy would far outweigh all such costs (p. 212). We remain unconvinced, however, as we believe that he has overstated likely economic gains while ignoring or downplaying significant risks to the environment and to human well-being. Below we raise some specific concerns with his arguments and flag other points that may warrant consideration.

Impacts on age structures and dependency ratios

Saunders cites the burden of rising dependency ratios as a key reason for boosting Canada's population growth. He acknowledges that his proposed population expansion would not prevent overall population aging (p. 154–59), but suggests it would produce a "considerably younger" population (p. 221) and a "markedly lower" peak share of Canadians over the age of 65 (p. 157). By contrast, other sources and studies suggest that similarly large increases in immigration levels would yield only modest long-term changes in age structures, median ages, old age dependency ratios, and workers-per-retiree ratios (Kerr and Beaujot 2016: 198–200; Riddell et al. 2016; Statistics Canada 2015: 14; El-Assal and Fields 2017: 20–22).

Fiscal impacts

Saunders quotes fiscal projections from a 2016 Conference Board of Canada study to demonstrate that certain strategies yielding a population of 100 million by 2100 would free up substantial fiscal capacity by the end of the century (p. 157). We would discount this portrayal for two reasons: (1) there is dubious value in fiscal projections out to 2100; and (2) the study focuses on outcomes with respect to health care and Old Age Security costs, but does not consider spending increases associated with much higher levels of immigration (Ades et al. 2016). A subsequent Conference Board study, which looks at "status quo" versus higher immigration scenarios out to 2040, gives a somewhat more balanced take on fiscal impacts; it projects that a high-immigration policy would reduce health care costs by an amount equal to roughly two per cent of provincial government budgets by 2040, while adding an unspecified amount to social expenditure costs. The study also warns of possible negative fiscal and economic consequences if Canada fails to address the long-standing obstacles to labour market integration faced by immigrants (El-Assal and Fields 2017: 20–22). This suggests that much higher levels of immigration would likely offer some long-term fiscal relief, though this is not guaranteed. In any event, a large windfall of added fiscal capacity seems unlikely in the years to 2040.

Impacts on GDP versus GDP per capita

Saunders points to large GDP gains under his suggested high immigration scenario, but he says nothing about the consequences for GDP per capita. The above-mentioned 2017 Conference

Board study projects that Canada's total GDP in 2040 would be nearly 5 per cent higher under the high immigration versus the "status quo" scenario. Conversely, the projected GDP per capita in 2040 would be roughly 2.0 per cent *lower* for the high-growth versus "status quo" scenario (El Assal and Fields 2017: 20). High-level immigration would no doubt increase Canada's national income over time, but it might do little for average individual incomes.

Impacts on productivity and competitiveness

Saunders contends that his population strategy would deliver large economic gains in the form of enhanced innovation, productivity, market size, and economies of scale. We see a need for further study of these effects within the Canadian context and on a microeconomic scale, as outcomes could vary substantially by industry. Researchers should also assess the broader economic costs and benefits of such growth on those cities and metropolitan areas most affected. Some urban planners suggest that optimum density levels vary by city, and they warn of possible negative economic and social consequences if these levels are exceeded (Florida 2012; Lehmann 2016). Might a tripling of Canada's population mean a four-fold increase within the Vancouver census metropolitan area? If so, this area would harbour 22,000 people per square kilometre, twice the current population density of New York City. A quadrupling of people within Toronto's census metropolitan area would yield a population of 25 million and a density of over 17,300 people per square kilometre. (NYC nd; Statistics Canada 2017; Statistics Canada 2016). Would these numbers fall within "optimal" ranges?

Saunders is correct to flag the serious productivity concerns facing Canada, and the extent to which these may undermine future standards of living. We would note, however, that studies have pointed to multiple potential causes and remedies for this problem, many of which do not relate to population or labour market size (Antunes and Ozyildirim 2015; Capeluck 2016; Drummond 2011; Hodgson 2017; Van Ark et al. 2015).

In making the case for a larger domestic market, Saunders points to a global rise in protectionist tendencies since 2009. We should not assume this trend will last, as the world has seen numerous swings to and away from protectionism in the past two centuries (Reuveny and Thompson 2004: 112–15). One might further argue that current high levels of globalization and tightly integrated transnational supply chains will serve to limit the depth and duration of protectionist swings going forward (Sandbu 2017). In any event, a Canada of 100 million would no doubt remain substantially reliant on external markets; our market size and related economies of scale would still be dwarfed by those of the USA, the EU, China, and the increasingly integrated markets of East Asia. We should recognize this and maintain a strong focus on securing access to diverse external markets.

Impacts on labour markets

Maximum Canada has little to say about the effects of proposed population increases on employment rates, real wage levels, and labour market composition. Past research suggests that immigration flows to Canada have had relatively little impact on wages and employment rates, although less is known about potential distributional effects (Riddell et al. 2016). Looking ahead, however, it may be wise to consider the impacts of population growth on labour market conditions and income distributions, given the unknown and potentially disruptive effects of forthcoming labour-saving technologies and anticipated high levels of job automation throughout the developed world (WTO 2017: p. 90–100).

Impacts on the environment

We find that Saunders' arguments are weakest in the environmental realm. He notes that increased levels of urban density serve to improve ecological outcomes (p. 174–79), and this is certainly true when population levels are held constant and redistributed to achieve greater density. It is a dubious assertion, however, when such density is achieved by enlarging populations. Saunders explains that one city of 8 million people requires 15 per cent less material infrastructure than two cities of 4 million people each (p. 175). While this may be true, it is also almost certainly true that 8 million people will have more total environmental impact than 4 million.

Saunders allows at one point that his proposed high immigration strategy might add to overall problems of pollution and environmental degradation in Canada (p. 176). This can be justified, he suggests, because increased immigration to Canada would benefit the global environment; it would help to depress global population growth because immigrants to Canada from high-fertility source countries tend to have substantially lower birth rates within a generation of arriving (p. 177). We see several problems with this justification: (1) the fertility rates of most major source countries have dropped or are in decline; (2) per capita consumption levels tend to balloon for immigrants who move from developing to developed countries; and (3) Canada is responsible for protecting its own environment, for the sake of its current citizens and future generations.

Saunders cites underpopulation as the cause of urban sprawl, traffic gridlock, and other environmental problems in Canada's largest cities. He claims that current population levels "force" us to use inefficient or high-carbon technologies, as our cities lack the financial resources and tax base required to install adequate public transit systems and green infrastructure (p. 173–74, 222). Some might argue instead that these cities have failed to keep pace with the needs and impacts of their surging populations because residents and governments have been slow to embrace needed changes in behaviours, policies, and investment priorities (Resnik 2010). To the extent these latter factors play a key role, adding large numbers of people will not solve our urban problems and may well make them worse.

There is good international evidence to suggest that cities need not be highly populous to be sustainable. For example, a sustainable cities index compiled by two multinational consulting firms ranks cities around the world according to their environmental performance; six of the top 10 cities on the latest list have populations smaller than those of Canada's three largest cities (Arcadis 2016: 20–21). Certain US cities with populations under one million were among the best performers on a 2010 index of urban sprawl compiled by University of Utah researchers; only two cities larger than a million made their top 10 list for urban "compactness" (Jaffe 2014). Some of the best-performing US metropolitan transit systems also have populations of less than a million, according to a 2011 study by the Brookings Institution (Tomer et al 2011: 824–25).

Saunders contends that a tripling of Canada's population would not jeopardize valuable farmland or green areas, as substantial population growth would only take place in the largest cities; indeed, such growth would leave "natural spaces untouched and probably better protected" (p. 171). This assertion does not align with Canada's past experience, however, as large-scale urban population growth has invariably spilled over into nearby regions, disrupting local ecosystems. Even if governments managed to prevent all such peripheral growth, a tripling of Canada's population would result in significantly more travel to or through Canadian wilderness areas. Such a trend would place added pressures on Canada's natural ecosystems at a most disadvantageous time; the World Wildlife Fund has warned that as many as half of Canada's wildlife species may be dying off at alarming rates due to habitat loss, climate change, pollution, and overfishing (WWF 2017: 5).

Impacts on well-being

While pursuit of urban density is a desirable and increasingly necessary response to population growth, it does not automatically follow that people are happiest living in high-density environments; indeed, a variety of foreign-based studies point to negative effects on health and happiness for those living in high-density environments (Cramer et al. 2004; Florida 2016; Lederborgen et al. 2011; Okulicz-Kozaryn and Mazelis 2016; Peen et al. 2010; Sundquist et al. 2004) There is no doubt that efficient transit systems and good urban design, including features such as green architecture and urban forests, can do much to reduce ill effects from urban density. Yet there is risk in assuming that such optimal conditions will prevail, and that they will solve all problems associated with high-density living. There is also danger that while some population groups may benefit from increasing density, others with fewer resources will disproportionately suffer the costs.

Finally, we submit that Saunders puts the cart before the horse when he calls for a national inquiry into the feasibility of major immigration increases. Instead, Canada should first embark on broad-based discussions and debates over a desired population trajectory. These discussions should not be left to select committees alone; they should incorporate views from interested citizens, officials from all levels of government, NGOs, and specialists from a wide array of disciplines, ranging from the social and health sciences to environmentalists and urban planners. Such population debates could prove contentious, and there is no reason to expect that compromises would emerge. But this airing of views could allow for well-informed policy decisions that better reflect a balance of Canadian interests.

Canada suffers from a dearth of research into the impacts of population growth on diverse aspects of Canadian life. These analytical gaps make it difficult to assess and properly challenge many assertions in *Maximum Canada*, and they impede any national debates on this topic. More important still, governments at all levels currently lack analytical support for many population-related decisions. Canada's academic and research community needs to step up with a more comprehensive and refined array of analytical studies into the impacts of changing population size on the prosperity and well-being of Canadians and the health of domestic ecosystems. If *Maximum Canada* inspires such needed studies and debates, it will have served Canadians well.

References

Ades, J., D. Fields, A. Macdonald, and M. Stewart. 2016. *A Long-Term View of Canada's Changing Demographics: Are Higher Immigration Levels an Appropriate Response to Canada's Aging Population?* Ottawa: The Conference Board of Canada. https://www.conferenceboard.ca/temp/a33ec153-ba61-45b6-85c4-8320f4aff932/8282_LongTermDemographics_RPT.pdf

Antunes, P., and A. Ozyildirim. 2015. The Productivity Crisis: A Global Trend, A Canadian Problem. Conference Board of Canada Webinar. 23 November 2015. http://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=7481

Arcadis. 2016. *Sustainable Cities Index: Putting People at the Heart of Sustainability.* Retrieved from https://www.arcadis.com/media/0/6/6/%7B06687980-3179-47AD-89FD-F6AFA76EBB73%7DSustainable%20Cities%20Index%202016%20Global%20Web.pdf

Beaujot, R. 2017. Canada: The case for stable population with moderately low fertility and modest immigration. *Canadian Studies in Population* 44(3–4):185–90.

Beaujot, R., and K. McQuillan. 1982. *Growth and Dualism: The Demographic Development of Canadian Society*. Toronto: Gage.

Beaujot, R., K.G. Basavarajappa, and R. Verma. 1988. *Income of Immigrants in Canada*. Cat. no. 91-527E. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

Bohnert, N., J. Chagnon, S. Coulombe, P. Dion, and L. Martel. 2015. *Population Projections for Canada (2013 to 2063), Provinces and Territories (2013 to 2038): Technical Report and Methodology and Assumptions*. Cat. no. 91-620-X. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-620-x/91-620-x2014001-eng.pdf

Capeluck, E. 2016. *A Comparison of Australian and Canadian Productivity Performance: Lessons for Canada*. CSL Research Report 2016–07. Ottawa: Centre for the Study of Living Standards. http://www.csls.ca/reports/csls2016-07.pdf

Carter, S. 1990. *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Cramer, V., S. Torgersen, S. and E. Kringlen. 2004. Quality of life in a city: The effect of population density. *Social Indicators Research* 69(1):103. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27522133

Drummond, D. 2011. Confessions of a serial productivity researcher. *International Productivity Monitor* 22:3–10. http://www.csls.ca/ipm/22/IPM-22-Drummond.pdf

Edmonston, B. 2016. Canada's immigration trends and patterns. *Canadian Studies in Population* 43(1–2):78–116.

El-Assal, K., and D. Fields. 2017. *450,000 Immigrants Annually? Integration Is Imperative to Growth*. Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada. https://www.conferenceboard.ca/temp/8fdb497c-8c48-494c-b27d-d9ec54c6f0e3/9131_450%20000%20Immigrants%20Anually_RPT.pdf

Farmer's Almanac. 2018. Growing Season. https://www.almanac.com/gardening

Florida, R. 2012. The limits of density. *CityLab*. 16 May 2012. https://www.citylab.com/design/2012/05/limits-density/2005/

———. 2016. The prince of happiness in cities. *CityLab*. 27 June 2016. https://www.citylab.com/equity/2016/06/the-price-of-happiness-in-cities/487823/

Jaffe, E. 2014. The U.S. cities that sprawled the most (and least) between 2000 and 2010. *CityLab*. 4 June 2014. https://www.citylab.com/equity/2014/06/the-us-cities-that-sprawled-the-most-and-least-between-2000-and-2010/372105/

Hodgson, G. 2017. Canadian productivity: Even worse than previously thought. *The Globe and Mail*. 26 March 2017. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/economy/economy-lab/canadian-productivity-even-worse-than-previously-thought/article13988435/

Kerr, D., and R. Beaujot. 2016. *Population Change in Canada*. 3rd edn. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Lederborgen, F., P. Kirsch, L. Haddad, F. Streit, H. Tost, P. Schuch, S. Wüst, J.C. Pruessner, M. Rietsche, M. Deuschle, and A. Meyer-Lindenberg. 2011. City living and urban upbringing affect neural social stress processing in humans. *Nature* 474:489–501. doi:10.1038/nature10190

Légaré, J. 2017. La démographie au cours des cinquante dernières années : une science en évolution et qui permet d'analyser les changements des comportements de la société québécoise. Speech given as Lauréat du prix Gérard-Parizeau, 25 September 2017. https://tintin.hec.ca/audiovisuel/opal_vis/visionnement.cfm?idM=2891_174957488

Légaré, J. 2018. Personal communication. 9 March 2018.

Lehmann, S. 2016. Sustainable urbanism: Towards a framework for quality and optimal density? *Future Cities and Environment* 2:8. http://doi.org/10.1186/s40984-016-0021-3

Livi-Bacci, M. 2012. *A Concise History of World Population*. 5th edn. Wiley-Blackwell.

McInnis, M. 2000. The population of Canada in the nineteenth century, in *A Population History of North America*, edited by M.R. Haines and R.H. Steckel. Cambridge University Press, p. 371–432.

NYC (New York City). nd. New York City Population. NYC Planning. https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/data-maps/nyc-population/population-facts.page

Okulicz-Kozaryn, A., and J. Maya Mazelis. 2016. Urbanism and happiness: A test of Wirth's theory of urban life. *Urban Studies* 55(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098016645470

Peen J., R.A. Schoevers, A.T. Beekman, and J. Dekker. 2010. The current status of urban–rural differences in psychiatric disorders. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandanavica* 121:84–93. DOI: 10.1111/j.1600-0447.2009.01438.x

Picot, G., and A. Sweetman. 2005. *The Deteriorating Economic Welfare of Immigrants and Possible Causes: Update 2005*. Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series 262. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

Resnik, D. 2010. Urban sprawl, smart growth, and deliberative democracy. *American Journal of Public Health* 100(10):1852–56. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2009.182501

Reuveny, R., and W.R. Thompson. 2004. *Growth, Trade & Systemic Leadership*. Ann Arbor, MI: Univeristy of Michigan Press. DOI: 10.3998/mpub.11832

Richmond, A., and W. Kalbach. 1980. *Factors in the Adjustment of Immigrants and their Descendants*. Cat. no. 99-761E. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

Riddell, C.W., C. Worswick, and D.A. Green. 2016. How Does Increasing Immigration Affect the Economy? http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/november-2016/how-does-increasingimmigration-affect-economy/

Runnalls, J. 2018. Q&A. *Corporate Knights*. Winter 2018: 58–59.

Sandbu, M. 2017. Three reasons why globalization will survive protectionist rebellions. *Financial Times*. 9 March 2017. https://www.ft.com/content/1a4e31ce-0333-11e7-aa5b-6bb07f5c8e12

Statistics Canada. 2015. Population Projections for Canada, Provinces and Territories, (2013 to 2063), Provinces and Territories (2013 to 2038). Cat. no. 91-520-X. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-520-x/91-520-x2014001-eng.htm

———. 2016. The 10 highest population densities among municipalities (census subdivisions) with 5,000 residents or more, Canada, 2016. https://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170208/t001a-eng.htm

———. 2017. Population of census metropolitan areas. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/demo05a-eng.htm

Sundquist K., G. Frank, and J. Sundquist. 2004. Urbanisation and incidence of psychosis and depression: follow-up study of 4.4 million women and men in Sweden. *British Journal of Psychiatry* 184:293–8. https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.184.4.293

Tomer, A., E. Kneebone, R. Puentes, and A. Berube. 2011. *Missed Opportunity: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America*. Metropolitan Policy Program. New York: Brookings Institutions. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0512_jobs_transit.pdf (accessed March 8, 2018)

Tyman, J. 1972. Patterns of Western Land Settlement. *MHS Transactions* 3(28). http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/3/landsettlement.shtml

United Nations. 2017. *World Population Prospects, 2017 Revision: Key Findings and Advance Tables*. Vienna: United Nations Population Division. https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2017_KeyFindings.pdf

Van Ark, B., A. Ozyildirim, P. Bhide, E. Crofoot, A. Erumban, and G. Levanon. 2015. *Prioritizing Productivity to Drive Growth, Competitiveness and Profitability*. Research Report R-1580-KBI. Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada. https://www.conferenceboard.ca/temp/36bd171c-6ce5-4091-8446-c810938a0f30/TCB-Productivity-report.pdf

Waiser, B. 2007. Land I can own: Settling the Promised Land, in *The Prairie West as Promised Land*, edited by R.D. Francis and C. Kitzan. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, p. 155–74.

WTO (World Trade Organization). 2017. *World Trade Report 2017: Trade, Technology and Jobs*. https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/world_trade_report17_e.pdf

WWF (World Wildlife Fund). 2017. *Living Wildlife Report Canada: A National Look at Wildlife Loss*. World Wildlife Fund Reports.

REVIEW • FORUM
Doug Saunders' *Maximum Canada*[1]

Does size really matter?

Review by Guillaume Marois, World Population Program, IIASA (Austria)

The book by the *Globe and Mail*'s columnist Doug Saunders, *Maximum Canada*, proposes to encourage a substantial increase in the population of Canada. Indeed, according to the author, the current population of Canada, about 35 million inhabitants, is not enough, and immigration and fertility policies should seek to strongly increase the size to 100 million by 2100, in order to improve the overall living conditions of the people and to have more opportunities to deal with the consequences of population aging. In other words, according to the author, the size of the population matters. Reading this book leaves me with mixed impressions, as it includes several very interesting parts but also has many deficiencies that, when summed up, do not manage to convince this reviewer as to how an increase in population size would really change the daily life of the average Canadian citizen.

The first two parts of the book are the most interesting. Through a rigorous and concise overview of the history of Canada since the British conquest of 1760, the author presents a summary of the debate around two geopolitical views of Canada. For most of its history and until the end of the 19th century, a *minimalist* view influenced most government policies. Canada then had the role of a colony, with the economy oriented toward providing resources for England, and immigration was restrained to assure that Canada's population profile remained white, British, loyalist, and rural. And thus, entrepreneurial thinking and education were not promoted, trade with other nations was constrained by taxes and fees, and emigration toward the USA was high. Consequently, the overall population growth was small.

Starting in the early 20th century, mentalities gradually changed and a *maximalist* view took over the minimalist one. Canada switched from British dependency to North American integration, seeing the emerging US as its main trade partner, which culminated in the free trade deal in the 1980s. Among other important changes at the time, ethnic diversity became recognized and accepted by every class. Indeed, as the author aptly notes, today even the harshest critics of immigration to Canada would be considered by most other countries as favouring immigration.

Although this reviewer is not an expert in political history, these parts of Saunders' book appear accurate, even the statements related to the Quebec situation. Indeed, Saunders accurately states that the unloved Bill 101, far from being an excessively oppressive regulation, does not differ that much from the Canadian vision of immigrant integration. While Canada's *multiculturalism* policy encourages allophones to adopt English or French (but de facto English) at work and in public institutions, Quebec's *interculturalism* opts for French only. In both cases, it is not possible for allophone immigrants to work, go to school, or receive public services in their maternal language.

Although I appreciated the first two parts of *Maximum Canada*, it's unclear how they are related to the main thesis of the book. Most of Saunders' arguments in favour of a strong increase of the Canadian population are in the third part. Unfortunately, this last section is much less convincing than the preceding ones. Compared to the first two parts, where the statements are supported by rigorous research and relevant references, the final section is a bit disappointing. Summing up, one can divide Saunders' arguments in this section into three broad categories.

In the first category of argument I place those which rely on little empirical evidence or are trivial. For instance, according to Saunders, the small size of the Canadian population is a day-to-day costly experience for most Canadians. To support this statement, he writes that "[m]any international products cost considerably more in Canada than they do a few kilometres to the south, because of the higher cost of distributing them across a thinly populated geography" (p. 160). Maybe it is true for some products, but overall, purchasing parity indexes show that the cost of living in Canada is comparable to the USA, and generally more advantageous than many more populated Western nations, such as the United Kingdom (OECD 2018). In addition, without providing any evidence, Saunders says that some products are not available in Canada because the population would be too small to develop a market. I do not have the expertise to invalidate this statement, but it is doubtful that this hypothetical lack of products is a major concern for many Canadians. In addition, the author also argues that discounts are less exciting in Canada because of the lack of competition. Is this really an issue on which public policies should focus? If so, then a better policy than increasing population might be to assure that seeming competitors such as Provigo and Loblaws are not the same company with two different names.

Many statements in the book are based on preconceptions and anecdotes, or are simply slogans, without any empirical evidence to support them. For instance, Saunders writes that "anyone in business will tell you that there are real limits to what can be accomplished in Canada's low-density population" (p.160) or that "[f]or [the] individual Canadian, the most familiar experience of underpopulation is the discovery, at some point in your career, that you need to leave the country" (p. 150). In fact, when looking at emigration rates, fewer people leave Canada than most other developed nations (Abel 2016).

In my second category are arguments based on a confusion of concepts, as well as those based on doubtful reasoning. Indeed, all over this part of the book, Saunders mixes different demographic dynamics that are not necessarily related, such as population aging, population growth, population density, and population size. For instance, he uses an erroneous statement related to population growth to pose an argument, saying that "[a]s a result (of low fertility), Canada's population growth currently depends entirely on immigration" (p.156),[2] and then briefly summarizes the economic consequences of population aging. However, a fast-growing population does not always imply a much younger age structure, and similarly, an aging population does not necessarily lead to a population decline. Furthermore, at the same time as the author says that the low population of Canada is a major issue that is responsible for a lack of opportunities, and is at the root of the country's presumed vulnerability and unpreparedness for a more challenging economic future (why?), he also says that it is density that matters rather than absolute size. Actually, it is not quite clear whether the author is arguing for a more populated country, a younger country, or for better redistribution of the population over the national territory.

Still in my second category, Saunders surprisingly links a large population with alleviation of the ecological footprint. According to his reasoning, a low population is an ecological cost

---

2. In 2016–17, the number of births in Canada surpassed the number of deaths by about 110,000. According to Statistics Canada's most recent projection (medium scenario), natural growth will not be negative before 2060.

because it implies highly polluted forms of transportation, heating, and energy. And so, according to the author, "by settling in urban areas, the next wave of Canadians will be the country's most important ecological asset" (p.173). He also says that the poor quality of public transit in cities is caused by the low population of Canada. This reasoning is misleading, as it forgets that the inefficiency of local public transit in Canada does not rely on the population size of cities but rather on the urban development policies that placed the car in the centre of commuting practice (Newman and Kenworthy 1999; Kenworthy and Laube 1999). Many North American metropolises are stuck with even worse public transit systems than Montreal or Toronto, and yet they have higher populations (Los Angeles, Houston, Atlanta, etc.) (Arcadis 2017). Nevertheless, Saunders quickly solves this issue by saying that future population growth in Canadian metropolitan areas will automatically generate higher density. However, there is no empirical evidence showing that this will be the case. Urban sprawl and its consequences have long been acknowledged to be a problem by North American urban planners and governments, yet there have not been any efficient large-scale solutions (Neuman 2005). Indeed, without a drastic change in urban planning—including the destruction of many low-density districts—that is unlikely to happen. Any further population growth would probably just accelerate the urban sprawl on fertile lands, which would raise several issues around food dependency, traffic jams, pollution, and reduction of biodiversity (Nechyba and Walsh 2004; Huard et al. 2010; Roberts 2001). In addition, even if changes in urban planning policies could help turn population growth into an economic incentive for a more efficient public transit system, it is hard to conclude that this would be an asset for the environment. Maybe the ecological footprint per capita would be slightly reduced in Canada, but since population growth would rely either on additional people on Earth (in the case of new births) or on the move of people from low-consumption countries to higher consumption ones (as in the case of most Canadian immigrants), the global ecological footprint would necessarily be negatively affected.

One more thing: Saunders admits, rightly, that most growth in population, especially through immigration, would take place in metropolises rather than in small cities or in the rural areas of Canada. Then, it is hard to understand how an increase in population could resolve issues related to areas that are sparsely populated or experiencing population decline; in fact, none of the major immigration hubs in Canada are facing issues related to population decline. Saunders argues that medium-sized cities would eventually benefit from increased immigration, as the housing cost would be favorable to new settlers when compared to Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. However, again, empirical evidence goes against this wishful thinking. For instance, the average housing price in Saguenay is already about half that in Montreal (CMHC 2018), and still the city receives only a few dozen immigrants a year (or about 0.1 per cent of the number that settle every year in Montreal.

In my last category I place those arguments that benefit only a small part of the population, such as businesses or international artists. Indeed, Saunders presents many numbers to show the positive consequences of population increase on economic growth. Obviously, a larger population would lead to a larger economy that would offer more opportunities for companies to grow and develop new markets. However, when considering "per capita" indicators that are more relevant for the prosperity and living conditions of the average Canadian (such as GDP/capita, Human Development Index, etc.), increasing population size has virtually no effect on them (House of Lords 2008; Prettner 2014). In fact, when looking around the world, the fastest growing countries, or those with large populations, are generally not those with the highest living conditions.

Saunders also states that "[m]any of our largest national companies, once they grow big enough to compete with world markets, are suddenly too big to be owned by Canadians." Consequently, we have to endure some Canadian companies being bought by foreigners. It is not clear, however, how these issues are caused by the low and sparse population of Canada rather than by the broad consequences of globalization. The examples he provides are not convincing: he cites the purchase of Alcan by a company from Australia, a country that is very similar to Canada in terms of geo-demographic dynamics. Sure, some Canadian companies are bought by foreign ones, but many Canadian companies also buy foreign businesses, such as Jean-Coutu and Couche-Tard. Summing up, the author does not provide evidences that the overall balance for Canada is negative on this topic, or that increasing population size or density would change it positively.

Finally, I would like to add my personal view on some expected consequences of a Canada reaching 100 million inhabitants, mainly through immigration, as proposed by Saunders. First, it would probably imply a strong marginalization of rural areas and of small and medium cities, because most of the future growth would benefit only the metropolitan areas and their surrounding regions. Second, the urbanization required to accommodate such population growth would negatively affect the agricultural lands surrounding most metropolitan areas, and consequently would reduce Canada's agricultural potential on the whole. We could expect a merger of the urbanized territory within the Great Lakes Region, forming a megacity of something like 40 million inhabitants. A large part of the farms around Montreal would also disappear, and extensive urban sprawl would occur in the metropolitan areas of the Prairies, particularly in Alberta. Third, such strong population growth would exert massive pressure on the real estate market in metropolitan areas. It is hard to see how a city with limited space, such as Vancouver, could manage any additional pressure, knowing that it is already a challenge for middle-class families to find an affordable dwelling there. Fourth, Canada would become increasingly fragmented ethnically, which could raise issues of social cohesion and even economic growth (Patsiurko, Campbell, and Hall 2012). Also, because most newcomers are much more likely to choose English as their language of integration (Quebec is already struggling, with only limited success in integrating their 50,000 annual newcomers to the French environment (Bélanger and Sabourin 2013), the maximum Canada proposed by Saunders would amplify the marginalization of French-speaking Canadians, from a quarter of the Canadian population actually to something like 10 per cent or even less. This is likely to awake linguistic conflicts. Finally, and not least, in the long run it is not demographically possible to maintain an immigration rate of 1.3 per cent of the total population, as suggested by Saunders. With such immigration levels, the population would grow exponentially and would eventually reach an implausible level; meanwhile, sooner or later all countries in the world will have to achieve stationarity of their populations (if not population reduction). Summing up, are all these plausible undesirable consequences of the Canadian population reaching 100 million inhabitants by 2100 really worth it for the average Canadian to receive "more exciting discounts"?-

To conclude, although I am not convinced by Saunders' thesis on maximum Canada, I appreciate the contribution of the author. His book opens up the debate on population policies, which are too often forgotten or ignored in the public space and by policy makers. Thus, while I still believe that population size does not matter, I am more convinced than ever that demography does matter.

References

Abel, G.J. 2016. *Estimates of Global Bilateral Migration Flows by Gender between 1960 and 2015.* VID Working Paper 2/2016. Vienna: Vienna Institute of Demography. http://www.oeaw.ac.at/fileadmin/subsites/Institute/VID/PDF/Publications/Working_Papers/WP2016_02.pdf.

Arcadis. 2017. *Sustainable Cities Mobility Inder 2017: Bold Moves.* North America Edition: Arcadis Design & Consultancy for Natural and Built Assets.

Bélanger, A., and P. Sabourin. 2013. De l'interprétation des indicateurs linguistiques du recensement Canadien. *Cahiers Québécois de Démographie* 42(1):167–77.

CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation). 2018. Housing and market information. *Housing Information Monthly*.

House of Lords. 2008. *The Economic Impact of Immigration.* London: Select Committee on Economic Affairs, Authority of the House of Lords.

Huard, A-M., M-È. Deshaies, and G. Garand. 2010. *Bilan de La Situation Des Milieux Humides de Laval.* Laval, QC: Conseil régional de l'environnement de Laval.

Kenworthy, J.R., and F.B. Laube. 1999. Patterns of automobile dependence in cities: An international overview of key physical and economic dimensions, with some implications for urban policy. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice* 33(7):691–723. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0965-8564(99)00006-3.

Nechyba, T., and R. Walsh. 2004. Urban sprawl. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18(4):177–200.

Neuman, M. 2005. The compact city fallacy. *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 25(1):11–26. https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X04270466.

Newman, P., and J. Kenworthy. 1999. *Sustainability and Cities: Overcoming Automobile Dependence.* Washington DC: Island Press.

OECD. 2018. *Monthly Comparative Price Levels.* http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CPL.

Patsiurko, N., J.L. Campbell, and J.A. Hall. 2012. Measuring cultural diversity: Ethnic, linguistic, and religious fractionalization in the OECD. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35(2):195–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2011.579136.

Prettner, K. 2014. The non-monotonous impact of population growth on economic prosperity. *Economics Letters* 124(1):93–95. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2014.04.031.

Roberts, W. 2001. *The way to a city's heart is through its stomach: Putting food security on the urban planning menu.* Crackerbarrel Philosophy Series. Toronto: Toronto Food Policy Council.

REVIEW • FORUM
Doug Saunders' *Maximum Canada*[1]

Minimum ecology in *Maximum Canada*: A review from an ecological economics perspective

Review by Eric Miller, Consulting Economist, Hamilton, Ontario

Doug Saunders, an international affairs columnist for the *Globe and Mail* newspaper, is convinced that an extra 65 Million people living in Canada's cities by 2100 would be "the best ecological asset Canada could have" (p. 179). In his book *Maximum Canada: Why 35 Million Canadians are not Enough*, the author boldly asserts that "underpopulation harms Canada's climate and ecological prospects." He writes that underpopulation "forces us" to use energy-inefficient and polluting transportation systems and heating technologies. And it "denies us" the people and tax revenue needed to replace inefficient systems and technologies with green energy that would "protect us against the effects of climate change" (p. 173). The sprawled auto-dependent mode of past planning is the result of too few people, such that Toronto and Vancouver "need a lot more population in order to overcome the practical and ecological problems of population" (p. 174).

Saunders anticipates that some might question whether "a higher population means more pollution and degradation" (p. 176). In a global context, Saunders claims that "Canada serves as a population-growth reducer for the world, accelerating the decline in the number of carbon-emitting people" (p. 177) by offering them a new home, a lower-fertility jurisdiction. He asserts a positive correlation between "places with large, dense populations" and "robust conservation programs": "Canadian history has shown that conservation and respect for natural resources rise when populations increase and become more diverse." This idea is extended abroad, noting that ecological catastrophes, including the Exxon Valdez oil spill, "occurred in sparsely populated places where few eyes are watching and there aren't sufficiently dense communities to press for ecological protection" (p. 178).

This environment-focused content occupies about 10 per cent of the pages that imagine Canada's capacity in the future. About two-thirds of the book is devoted to a historic exploration of "the minimizing impulse" (p. 9) from pre-confederation to the present era, which he calls "the maximizing consensus" (p. 121). Readers interested in the environmental aspects of Canadian population are likely to be underwhelmed by the amount of content that should have been included to support many of the bold "ecological" assertions in the book. In the opinion of this reviewer, it would have been more instructive to raise questions, rather than provide assertions, about the ecological ramifications of a "maximum" Canada. In this review, I offer a few of my own questions on the ecological aspects that arose upon reading *Maximum Canada*.

---

1. *Maximum Canada: Why 35 Million Canadians Are Not Enough* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2017). ISBN 978-0-7352-7309-2. Softcover C$29.95, 247 pp.

Does population density determine the means of transportation, or vice versa?

Saunders rightfully criticises the inefficiency of transportation based upon the internal combustion engine. But I question the assertion that "we don't have the masses of people needed" (p. 173) for transit and rail. I live in Hamilton. As in many Canadian cities, hydroelectric-powered transportation once dominated Hamilton, with its streetcars and electric inter-city rail. These were developed by, and for, a *smaller* population—and were all removed with a *growing* population. No explanation is offered as to why the automobile came to dominate, and no exploration of how its dominance might be incentivized to subside in bigger cities, or be deliberately downsized. And no hint is given as to how the existing landscape of suburban mazes could be retrofitted, considering the lock-in of not just the internal combustion engine but also current property rights and pro-automobile social norms.

Will efficiency necessarily grow enough to offset growth in total consumption?

Saunders suggests that population growth would enable more energy and emissions efficiency, without considering its practical implications. By my calculation, to accommodate the energetic demands of 100 million Canadians by 2100 through greater efficiency alone would require 1.35 per cent reductions in total energy consumed *every year for the next 80 years*, while the number of energy consumers grows at the same rate. That would be an extraordinary accomplishment. For example, applying that to Saunders' concern about "single-family dwellings that lack heating efficiency" (p. 173), space heating in 2100 would need to be generated from just 34 per cent of the energy used today. To accomplish this by changing habitation alone would require almost tripling the average household size without any increase in the total volume of heated habitation within Canada.

How much of this challenge could be mitigated by new furnaces, or different furnaces, and higher insulation (net of its up-front energetic costs)? I'm not aware of any research that has explored this empirically; for now, one may be skeptical not only of its technical potential but also its economic feasibility and practical likelihood. Moreover, even without any growth in the number of consumers, increased efficiency can generate what are known as rebound effects, with some of the savings from increased efficiency being used to further consumption of the same thing, or other things, thus mitigating the net benefit. Add to this challenge another one that is not addressed in *Maximum Canada*: Canada has made commitments to significantly reduce *total* emissions over the coming decades. A 2011 report by the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy (NRTEE) is cited about the costs of adapting to climate change, and is used to assert that the costs would be easier to manage with more people in Canada—without, however, acknowledging that more people would mean more infrastructure to adapt.

Do cities necessarily provide ecological economies as they grow in size?

In Saunders' book it is asserted that "larger, denser cities are vastly less ecologically damaging than smaller, looser ones" (p. 174). The academic literature is rich with investigations into whether pollution and other ecological outcomes decline with a growing scale of human activity. Some of this is captured by studies on "decoupling" and some by the theory of an Environmental Kuznets Curve (which Saunders considers). A more neutral and nuanced read of the literature casts doubt on some of the categorical correlations and causations. Comparing cities of different sizes—even when considered within just one country—can obscure important differences that could prevent smaller ones from replicating the characteristics of larger ones through growth.

Different cities can rely upon different energy mixes for electricity and heat, resulting in different emissions even with the same consumption of energy. Furthermore, different cities can exist in different climates, and can take different forms, from monocentric to polycentric patterns,

each offering different possibilities and constraints for densification. And different cities can have people with different levels of average material affluence and disposable income. All of these details should temper one's enthusiasm for categorical assumptions about ecological economies of scale. Even without any empirics, in the realm of theory one should wonder whether the theory of economies of scale is indefinite, or whether there can be points beyond which there are dis-economies of growth. On the other hand, there are certainly enough examples in the world of megacities with lower ecological consumption per resident, but at the cost of vastly lowered quality of life.

How can we account for the total ecological demand of cities?

Saunders is rightfully concerned about land use efficiency. But on this matter it is important to point out that the physical footprint of a city is only part of its *total ecological demand*. All economic production involves the transformation of materials and energy from nature, requiring ecological inputs and generating outputs into ecosystems. Cities concentrate people, and can indeed economize on infrastructure (as Saunders correctly noted), but their areas are still supported by the use of ecosystems outside their boundaries. Without counting total ecological demand, one cannot be sure that a city with a higher human density is necessarily more ecologically efficient. Similarly, one may question the assumption that the hinterland will be better conserved with more people living in cities, since more hinterland will need to be used to supply the additional materials and energy (especially *green* energy) and ecosystem services used by additional urbanites.

The Ecological Footprint is a useful and relevant measure. It measures the amount of biologically productive land and sea area needed to supply a given population with settlements and infrastructure, cropland, grazing lands, fishing grounds, forested lands that provide timber and fibre, and other areas that sequester greenhouse gas emissions (Borucke et al. 2013). The broad scope of this indicator makes it a comprehensive measure of the ecological demands of humans.

A 2015 assessment of Ontario's Ecological Footprint found that its size was close to the sum of all biologically productive areas within Ontario's borders (Zokai et al. 2015). Assessments at a municipal scale have found a lack of correlation between the size of cities and the Ecological Footprint of their residents. For example, residents in Winnipeg and Quebec have a smaller average per-capita Ecological Footprint than those who live in Toronto, while residents in Calgary and Edmonton and Halifax have some of the highest (Wilson and Anielski 2005; Isman et al. 2018). The physical footprint of settlements and infrastructure is a relatively small part of the Ecological Footprint of urban dwellers. Global assessments similarly shed light on wide discrepancies in per-capita footprints and the effect of trade flows, such that some jurisdictions have effectively offshored their Ecological Footprint (Borucke et al. 2013).

What are the costs and dependencies of growth and demographic changes?

Saunders seems to imply that a growing population provides a sort of free lunch, with more people providing more bodies and more tax revenues to support public services. This optimism isn't balanced by a consideration of how demand would change from a larger and growing population; nor is consideration given to any change in age structure that would result from combinations of growth from fertility and net immigration.

Demand for public services, and the capacity to supply them, are a function of the total population, its age structure, and any differences between cohorts. However, the convention of using age-based measures of dependency can be questioned. After all, not all *working-age* people work, not all *seniors* depend upon *working-age* people for care, and higher fertility generates additional *young* dependents. These details are important, but are not considered by Saunders.

Saunders suggests that a public inquiry should be held to estimate "the investments needed" (p. 212) to accommodate growth. In the public interest, such an inquiry should consider competing population and economic policies—not just the scenario of a 100-million Canada. It should also consider the *returns on investment*, to inform a more balanced consideration of costs and benefits. And it should assess *who* would and could do the investing and *who* would benefit. As with all properly done economic assessments, such an inquiry should consider externalized costs, including unpriced environmental benefits and damages such as wastes and pollution.

Humans depend upon ecosystem goods and ecosystem services. Their scarcities also need to be considered as part of the logic of demographic dependencies. In response to Saunders' view that immigration to Canada reduces population growth elsewhere, which results in "accelerating the decline in the number of carbon-emitting people" (p. 177), consider a couple immigrating to Canada from India. The couple would raise 1.6 children in Canada rather than 2.4 children in India, according to average national total lifetime fertility rates (World Bank 2015). Yet their smaller family in Canada would account for 54.4T of emissions, versus 7.5T if they raised a larger family in India (based on average per-capita emissions of 15.1T in Canada versus 1.7T in India; World Bank 2014).

Does demography affect behaviours and attitudes and environmental outcomes?

Environmental outcomes are a function not only of the number of people, but also their age structure and cultural norms, which can be cohort-based. Research in this area is admittedly weak, in part because there have been few recurring environment-oriented surveys by Statistics Canada. Saunders hopes that more people will generate more pro-environmental political attitudes, and thereafter more higher-density settlements. This reviewer is not convinced. In my observation, younger cohorts remain as paradoxical as older ones. Car-sharing is hip, as is interest in global travel; I see more vegetarianism together with a normalization of dining out and deliveries; I see young people wanting to live in denser neighbourhoods while still wanting a house with a yard for the family dog. The young households in my neighbourhood don't appear to fill their recycling boxes with the *Globe and Mail*, but they certainly put out a lot of take-away containers and parcel boxes from Amazon.

Will market forces (on their own) generate environmental outcomes?

In this book, market liberalization is attributed as a maximizing orientation. But it's not clear how the minimizing impulse on emissions and energy use would be achieved within a laissez-faire context. To achieve the environmental commitments that Canada has already made will require governments of all levels to deliberately make pollution and depletion and land more scarce by making it more costly. Saunders' claim that a more populous Toronto or Vancouver would provide the "voter clout to make such developments happen" (p. 174) is not convincing. Indeed, it seems to me that the supply of elected representatives has not matched growth in the supply of the electorate, with an outcome that political power is increasingly concentrated.

All considered, the above questions are just a few that come to mind to this reviewer when reading *Maximum Canada*. The chapter on sources is prefaced by Saunders' assertion that "a comprehensive history of Canadian population has yet to be written." I would add that a comprehensive demographic-environmental assessment of Canada's future is also needed. I would encourage Canadian demographers to take an interest in environmental issues—and for environmental scholars to take an interest in demography. Both lend themselves to useful empirical modelling in order to test conjectures and explore the implications of oft-held beliefs.

References cited

Borucke, M., D. Moore, G. Cranston, K. Gracey, K. Iha, J. Larson, E. Lazarus, J.C. Morales, N. Wackernagel, and A. Galli. 2013. Accounting for demand and supply of the biosphere's regenerative capacity: The National Footprint Accounts' underlying methodology and framework. *Ecological Indicators* 24:518–33. doi:10.1016/j.ecolind.2012.08.005

Isman, M., M. Archambault, P. Racette, C.N. Konga, R.M. Llaque, D. Lin, K. Iha, and C.M. Ouellet-Plamondon. 2018. Ecological Footprint assessment for targeting climate change mitigation in cities: A case study of 15 Canadian cities according to census metropolitan areas. *Journal of Cleaner Production* 174:1032–43.

Wilson, J., and M. Anielski. 2005. *Ecological Footprints of Canadian Municipalities and Regions.* Canadian Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

World Bank. 2014. CO_2 emissions (metric tons per capita). Retrieved Jan 30 2018 from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.PC

World Bank. 2015. Fertility rate, total (births per woman). Retrieved Jan 30 2018 from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN

Zokai, G., J. Ortego, D. Zimmerman, and M. Wackernagel. 2015. *The Footprint and Biocapacity of Ontario, Canada: Comparing Results for 2005 and 2010.* Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

REVIEW • FORUM
Doug Saunders' *Maximum Canada*[1]

The end (of growth) is nigh

Review by William E. Rees, University of British Columbia

Doug Saunders' *Maximum Canada* is an excellent, well-researched book about an idea whose time has gone.

Saunders argues that Canada's national development has been stunted, like an undernourished orphan, by a variety of circumstances and purposeful politics. Much of Canada's colonial and even post-confederation history has seen the nation seemingly "making a concerted effort to be small in size and limited in function" (p. 8). One consequence is that even as late as the 19th century—while Europe was disgorging an unprecedented 40 million immigrants into the New World, and the world as a whole was "enjoying" an unprecedented population boom—Canada bled more people to other countries, particularly the United States, than it welcomed as immigrants.

Indeed, the fact that Canada "has long had trouble keeping people" (p. 8) provides the starting point for Saunders' analysis. The nation will remain underweight as long as it remains underpopulated; and to create a diverse self-reliant economy and maintain a credible role on the world stage, it must attract more people and learn to retain its most gifted citizens.

For early Canada-to-be, the main organizing question was whether to serve mainly as a subservient provider of unprocessed resources for its overseas masters or strive for a more diverse economy and greater independence. Saunders weaves a necessarily convoluted tale, in which the emerging nation lurches between these divergent poles—buffeted by external events, colonial mandates, and the personal beliefs of those in power. Regardless of which vision was in ascendance, however, the relevant authorities recognized underpopulation as being problematic for achieving their specific goals.

Perhaps the first hint of trouble ahead followed from the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which encouraged the northward migration of settlers from the Thirteen Colonies of British America. The resultant trickle of ambitious American immigrants soon chafed under the restrictive economic and political conditions imposed by Britain over the Province of Quebec (formerly New France's colony of Canada) and Nova Scotia (Acadia), newly acquired from France. Meanwhile, the British became apprehensive over the potential long-term threat to their hegemony posed by the dynamism and entrepreneurial sensibilities of the new arrivals.

The subsequent flood of American migrants during and after the war of independence exacerbated this fundamental tension. Britain's suspicion of Americans' zest for commerce; her fear that the rebellious spirit of the new settlers would feed the desire for greater autonomy in the Canadas; and the growing economic clout of the United States itself precipitated furious debate

---

1. *Maximum Canada: Why 35 Million Canadians Are Not Enough* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2017). ISBN 978-0-7352-7309-2. Softcover C$29.95, 247 pp.

in the Parliament of Great Britain. Overwhelming nascent liberal leanings, Britain followed its Tory instincts and resolved to "lock down" the Americans by restricting their trade and marine commerce, and to reward Canada's loyalists by consolidating their role as exclusive providers of lumber, grain, fish, and other resources to Britain.

These actions helped to precipitate the war of 1812 and, soon after, to consolidate a set of ideas on the British side into what Saunders refers to as Canada's "minimizing impulse." Fearful of their own people, the colonial rulers were now determined "to prevent Canada from becoming anything like the United States" and "erect a set of barriers between their subjects and the fast-expanding North American culture and economy" (p. 27–28).

The minimizing impulse had several core elements: *restrictive immigration* favouring mainly white Western Europeans (Saunders' account is of an alarmingly racist Canada); *an official desire for ethnic homogeneity,* preferably British Anglican; *a simple resource-based economy* in the service of imperial Britain; *restricted relations with the United States*; a perception of *indigenous-people-as-problem* subject to paternalistic control; and *chronic underpopulation*, mostly as a result of the previous elements.

The minimizing impulse became Canada's dominant governing framework throughout the 19th and much of the 20th centuries, driving out many of her most gifted citizens and retarding national development. Not until the fractious years following the nation's 1967 Centennial did it show signs of collapsing under the cumulative weight of bigger ideas. Significantly, these ideas "weren't coming from parliament or the courts; they were becoming imbedded in public thought as the collective results of twenty million lived experiences" (p. 123). Canada's colonial mentality was finally dissipating, enabling the full emergence of a new "maximizing impulse."

The maximizing impulse inverted the minimizing variety: *Pluralism and ethnic heterogeneity* recognizes that Canada's *de facto* core values and institutions are independent of ethnic, religious, or racial identities; *broadly based expansionist immigration* fosters economic diversity and population growth; *a diversified value-added economy* recognizes that the manufacturing, high-end service, and knowledge-based sectors are essential to the nation's self-reliance and independence; *free trade and greater economic integration within North America* acknowledge the natural north–south flow of goods and services and the waning of ties to Britain; seeing *First Nations as sovereign partners* recognizes their constitutional and additional legal rights as defined in the treaties; and, most importantly, *a growing population* facilitates further development.

Indeed, Saunders' central thesis is that a greater population is necessary to create adequate concentrations of people and sufficient economies of scale to ensure the cultural, entrepreneurial, economic, and fiscal vitality of any more-or-less self-reliant country. The final sections of *Maximum Canada* therefore provide a balanced rationale for policies geared toward enabling Canada to nearly treble its 2018 population, to 100 million by the end of the century. Chapter 6 details the continuing public, private, ecological, strategic, and cultural costs of underpopulation and, by implication, the benefits of overcoming them. Saunders' obvious expansionist bias does not prevent chapter 7 from outlining possible barriers to success. Do we have the developmental skills and opportunities to accommodate triple our present number of workers? Can our urban infrastructure adapt to the high densities required for an ecologically sound tripling of the population? Will we invest adequately in human capital to enable new citizens to realize their full potential? Most importantly, will Canada be able to avoid a backlash among old Canadians as we attempt to integrate expanding numbers of new Canadians? These are indeed important questions, and Saunders freely admits that "the 100-million plan is probably best rejected if Canada is not willing to make investments and take precautions in advance to ensure that the system continues to function well" (p. 211).

This brings us to what may be the biggest deficiency in Saunders' expansionist thesis. *Maximum Canada* virtually ignores contemporary biophysical reality and assumes that the *global* long term will unfold more or less as a smooth extension of the recent past. These are potentially fatal flaws.

Consider that it took all of human evolutionary history (about 200,000 years) for the world's population to reach 1 billion in the early 1800s, but only 200 years—1/1000th as much time—to expand to today's 7.6 billion! Meanwhile, material demand on the planet ballooned even more— real global GDP has increased 100-fold since 1800, and average per-capita incomes by a factor of 13 (rising 25-fold in the richest countries).[2] Consequently, consumption has exploded hyper-exponentially: half of the fossil fuels and many other resources ever used by humans have been consumed in just the past 40 years! The result? Techno-industrial society is in overshoot, using even renewable resources and natural sinks beyond the regenerative and assimilative capacity of ecosystems (WWF 2016; Steffen et al. 2007; Rockström et al. 2009).

Three observations should be drawn here. First, the recent spurt of population and economic growth that we take to be the norm is actually the most *anomalous* period in human evolutionary history. Second, this explosion of enterprise and population got underway precisely when Saunders' "minimizing impulse" was securing its grip on Canada. Third, the phenomenon is unrepeatable—*the ship of unconstrained growth has sailed, arguably having left Canada stranded on the dock*.

The problem is that if prevailing growth trends continue, they will likely lead *in this century* to runaway climate change, the collapse of major biophysical systems, food shortages, global strife, and generally diminished prospects for global civilization (Barnosky et al. 2012). As early as 1992, the world's top scientists issued a *Warning to Humanity*[3] that "a great change in our stewardship of the Earth and the life on it is required, if vast human misery is to be avoided"; a second notice, issued on 13 November 2017, stated that most of the negative trends identified 25 years earlier "are getting far worse."[4] By ignoring such warnings the world invites an era of geopolitical chaos and forced de-growth. This is hardly a propitious time to advocate a 65-million increase in the population of a nation whose citizens consume four or five times more energy and resources than the world average and have among the world's largest per capita ecological footprints (Rees 2013).

Despite this weakness, Doug Saunders' *Maximum Canada* is a fascinating, well-written, and readily accessible tale that leaves us asking what the nation might have become had its maximizing impulse prevailed from the outset. (Keep in mind that we have actually done rather well in the past half-century, while United States society is arguably in steep decline.) But *Maximum Canada* also leaves us wondering what to do now. Science tells us, "The future ain't what it used to be." How might Saunders' vision change were he to account for current ecological realities and likely future prospects? What if, for example, the main driver of national population growth in coming decades is an irresistible flood of desperate, mostly impoverished refugees, fleeing from flooding coastlines, spreading deserts, encroaching famine, and geopolitical strife?

How then to "maximize" Canada?

---

2. https://ourworldindata.org/economic-growth
3. http://www.ucsusa.org/about/1992-world-scientists.html#.WguS5miPIdU
4. https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/doi/10.1093/biosci/bix125/4605229

References

Barnosky, A.D., E.A. Hadly, J. Bascompte, E.L. Berlow, J.H. Brown, M. Fortelius, W.M. Getz, J. Harte, A. Hastings, P.A. Marquet, N.D. Martinez, A. Mooers, P. Roopnarine, G. Vermeij, J.W. Williams, R. Gillespie, J. Kitzes, C. Marshall, N. Matzke, D.P. Mindell, E. Revilla, and A.B. Smith. 2012. Approaching a state shift in Earth's biosphere. *Nature* 486:52–58. doi:10.1038/nature11018

Rees, W.E. 2013. "Ecological footprint, Concept of," in *Encyclopedia of Biodiversity*, 2nd edn, vol 2, edited by S.A. Levin. Waltham, MA: Academic Press, p. 701–13.

Rockström, J., W. Steffen, K. Noone, Å. Persson, F.S. Chapin, III, E.F. Lambin, T.M. Lenton, M. Scheffer, C. Folke, H.J. Schellnhuber, B. Nykvist, C.A. de Wit, T. Hughes, S. van der Leeuw, H. Rodhe, S. Sörlin, P.K. Snyder, R. Costanza, U. Svedin, M. Falkenmark, L. Karlberg, R.W. Corell, V.J. Fabry, J. Hansen, B. Walker, D. Liverman, K. Richardson, P. Crutzen, and J.A. Foley. 2009. A safe operating space for humanity. *Nature* 461:472–75. DOI:10.1038/461472a.

Steffen, W., P. J. Crutzen and J.R. McNeill. 2007. The anthropocene: Are humans now overwhelming the great forces of Nature? *Ambio* 36(8):614–21.

WWF. 2016 *Living Planet Report 2016*. Gland (Switzerland): World Wide Fund for Nature.