



## **LISTENING POST**

### **Canada at the Dawn of 2020**

Toronto, Jan 8 2020

#### **PART 1: THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES**

##### **What we think about**

Today a Ukrainian Airliner exploded killing all its passengers including 68 Canadians while leaving Teheran. Our prime minister, Justin Trudeau declared that it was blown out of the air by an Iranian guided missile. Canada has a large well integrated Iranian community.

One of us noticed that people from around the world have come to live in Toronto and seem to be able to get along in our society without losing their ethnic identity. They seem to be able to maintain their communities of origin in this country.

Pervasive inequality of wealth is a topic that arises frequently. This is tied to how hard it seems for young people to get out of the gig economy. It seems difficult to find a permanent job and many young well trained people work in even academic environments on short term or interim contracts. But the pervasiveness of Amazon, Uber, and the various food delivery apps makes it seem as if the gig economy is overwhelming us and inequality of wealth is increasing.

This appeared tied to the extremely rapid advance of digital technology. Its intrusion into our private lives and the rise of the idea of a state not far from the vision of 1984.

Another person was spending a lot of time thinking about aging. We are growing older and are beginning to focus on the pains, difficulties and perils of deterioration and decay in our physical, mental and social capacities.

Trump and his brand of populism crops up in many daily conversations and in our thinking. We spend a lot of time listening to arguments mostly on one side of this large social debate.

And climate change is a constant worry for many of us. We wonder why it is not being properly addressed by all our countries.

At the same time someone else had a feeling of being silenced and not able to speak her mind. There seem to be obstacles and restrictions that make it difficult to say out loud what you are really thinking.

## **PART 2: IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES**

### **The main themes that emerged from the first discussion are**

Polarization of political difference. The fact that the populist forces and the anti-populist ones are hardening their views, and are less and less able to discuss and resolve their differences.

The increasing rate of income inequality that sets a growing number of billionaires against an even more quickly growing part of the population that cannot find a secure living wage. The recognition that it is better to live in a country with less income disparity, and one that is not controlled by the super-rich and one which like Canada is able to receive and integrate a diverse population of immigrants.

There was a sense that a major regret is that we as human beings seem to have fouled our own nest. There was also a genuine fear that our inability to control climate change may mean that the world as we know it will come to an end in the foreseeable future. The fires in Australia are a vivid picture of how that world might look. Yet there was also the feeling that we might be able to adapt to the situation and somehow respond to the crisis.

## **PART 3: ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION**

### **Underlying issues**

We appear to be attracted to people rather than policies. Celebrity is a lure. Despite our apparent tolerance for difference, we are incapable of developing and maintaining policies that reduce inequalities of all kinds. As a species we seem to be intent on fouling our nest amid increasing polarization of views about our situation.

We are becoming increasingly aware that the mechanical medical model we use is inappropriate, that our understanding of the environment is inadequate and excessively short sighted, our computer technology is intrusive and operating on steroids and can eliminate all notions of privacy.

Despite this we are able to offer sanctuary for some people. Canada seems to be in a special position both with respect to many of these global threats. We are wealthy, tolerant of immigrants, not excessively unequal and live in an environment that will not be excessively impacted by global warming in the short term.

**Convener:** Sholom Glouberman