

## Special issue – Guest editorial note: Canada’s Economic Geography

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## SPECIAL ISSUE – GUEST EDITORIAL NOTE: CANADA'S ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

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The 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting and Conference of the Ontario Division of the Canadian Association of Geographers was held on October 2023 in Toronto, Canada, at the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU). During the conference, students, professors, professionals, and others presented many topics covering the full spectrum of geography. The keynote speech, titled "Geography's Staying Power", was given by Ian Williams, the Director of Information Management for the Toronto Police Service. As expected, the conference was very fruitful and informative, thanks to the organizing team at TMU led by Professor Evan Cleave, the President of the Ontario Division of the Canadian Association of Geographers.

One of the main special sessions was titled 'Canada's Economic Geography', which called for a presentation on a wide range of topics related to the economic geography of Canada. The special session was generously sponsored by the Canadian Journal of Regional Science (CJRS) and chaired by Jesse Sutton (PhD Candidate at Western University). The purpose of the special session was twofold. First, to highlight recent research being conducted on Canada's economic geography. Second, to bring researchers closer together to continue Canada's legacy of a strong research community, exploring economies' geographical and regional nature. The Call for Presentations caught the attention of numerous scholars, which resulted in the special session being divided into two sessions, with five presenters in each session.

Following the conference, CJRS proposed a special issue. In total, four articles were accepted in the CJRS for the special issue on Canada's Economic Geography, with three articles being submitted by presenters in the special session and a fourth being added to round out the special issue. The four articles in this special issue

cover various topics, ranging from left-behind places, industrial plant closures, public intervention on property values in landslide hazard zones, and economic centres of gravity. Overall, the articles advance our understanding of Canada's economic geography.

The first article, by Barber and Hartt (2024, in this issue), leaning on the concept of left-behind places, examines the geographies of economic change in Canada. Specifically, they explore the spatial distribution of socio-economic change (i.e., educational attainment, unemployment rate, and population) across Canadian cities and regions from 1981 to 2021. The spatial analysis found that socio-economic change is influenced by peripherality, as measured by a Remoteness Index. Indeed, rural and peripheral municipalities experienced stagnation in educational attainment and average income trends. Unexpectedly, it was found that unemployment rate trends had a positive relationship with population size. Barber and Hartt conclude that the geographies of economic change in Canada are complex and, hence, advise that targeted approaches are needed to address the effects of decline in Canadian communities.

The second article, by Arku and Sutton (2024, in this issue), investigates the causes and effects of industrial plant closures. To do so, they conducted a media analysis, examining 1,157 news articles published between 2000 and 2019 on industrial plant closures in Ontario, Canada. The analysis reveals that the broad causes of closures were market forces, corporate factors, endogenous factors, economic crisis, and globalization. Also, the study identified that closures have multi-level effects, extending from individual impacts to regional ones. Interestingly, they find that closures can have social impacts on communities. Arku and Sutton concluded by providing several considerations for future research using media analysis to examine plant closures.

The third article, by Lee and Breau (2024, in this issue), offers new estimates of Canada's economic centre of gravity. Using income measures, they find that from 1986 to 2019, Canada's economic centre of gravity shifted westward a net distance of 173 km. Notably, Lee and Breau use self-contained labour areas for their analysis to provide a more robust delineation of regions compared to more core-based approaches. They find that within the overall westward shift, five distinct major directional changes were driven by fluctuations in resource-based commodity prices. In their concluding remarks, Lee and Breau advocate that future research should focus on developing a counterfactual analysis to examine how Canada's economic centre of gravity will potentially shift in different scenarios.

The fourth article, by Des Rosiers and Tossou (2024, in this issue), explores the effect that public intervention has on the property values of residences in landslide hazard areas. They precisely examine the influence of a municipal compensation scheme targeting homeowners in landslide hazard areas, implemented in 2012, on residential values in La Baie in the City of Saguenay, in the province of Quebec, Canada. La Baie is an area that was severely impacted by the 1996 Saguenay flood, which was followed by a series of landslides. Using a difference-in-difference spatial hedonic price model, based on a sample of 813 single-family sales transacted in La Baie between 2009 and 2016, Des Rosiers and Tossou found that the municipal compensation scheme did not fully offset the disadvantage of building constraints on high-risk sites. To conclude, Des Rosiers and Tossou call for further case studies to be undertaken to

understand the intersection between public intervention, landslide hazards, and property values.

The articles in this special issue provide a glimpse into the economic geography research being conducted among scholars in Canada. Notably, a common sentiment among the articles is that Canada's economic geography is constantly changing, which requires continual monitoring and examination. As a result, investigating Canada's everchanging economic geography perpetually offers a promising avenue for future research, a task economic geographers and regional scientists are well equipped to undertake.

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