An independent, non-profit, public service student press covering the University of British Columbia community since 1918.

The Ubyssey

Published in Vancouver, British Columbia, on the traditional, ancestral and stolen territories of the Coast Salish peoples including the xʷməθkʷəy̓ əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) nations.

VOLUME CVIII | ISSUE X | NOVEMBER, 16, 2026 | SINCE 1918

Guide to 500+ Pages of Canada's Budget

Carney's government wants to strengthen Canada's sovereignty by investing in infrastructure. Opposition leaders have criticized the budget for increasing debt, failing to address Quebec's needs, and giving tax breaks to businesses.

Editor's Note

The Ubyssey's news reporters are breaking down the Canadian 2026 federal budget's 511 pages into short explainers to guide you through the document — topic by topic. We have focused on economic policy, health care, transportation, climate & energy, housing, immigration, research, and technology.

Economy

On economic policy, this budget's watchwords are "windfall" and "productivity."

The federal government expects the 2025-26 deficit to be nearly $28 billion less than expected this spring — about 40 per cent smaller — owing largely to high energy prices driven by the U.S.-Iran War. That's the "windfall" being talked about, and the government is reinvesting it into the second watchword.

"Productivity" appears 186 times in the document — 55 times more than in the 2025 budget and 123 times more than in the Trudeau government's last budget.

For years, the Bank of Canada has warned that the country is underinvesting in things like equipment, reducing how productive workers can be compared to better-equipped counterparts. It's known as Canada's "productivity problem" in public policy circles.

Read more on page 4 & 5.

THE CROWN SLIPS AWAY ONCE AGAIN



Photo by Arina Parvin for *The Ubyssey*

After falling in last year's national final, UBC hoped to finish the job at home. Instead, another heartbreaking loss awaits.

By Maia Cesario
Women's Soccer Reporter

Nov. 12 has been circled on the UBC women's soccer calendar since long before this season even started.

The day marked the official start of the 2026 U Sports national tournament which runs until Nov. 15. With the Thunderbirds hosting this year, the team was finally ready to make their mark at Thunderbird Stadium.

From preseason additions to a dominant 13–0–1 regular season and the Canada West playoffs, everything has been in preparation for nationals.

As hosts, the expectations for the Thunderbirds were set higher than ever. In the 2025 season, they faltered in the national final while gunning for a historic three-peat. After falling 2–1 against Montreal to earn silver, they were comforted by the opportunity to return to the national stage — this time, at home.

The T-Birds quickly picked up momentum in their 2026 campaign to fulfill their objective of returning to the finals. After topping the Pacific Division, they soared through the Canada West playoffs, earning their third-straight Canada West title and 19th overall.

With another banner added to their collection, UBC earned the No. 1 seed. Everything was going accordingly — as the top seed, UBC would typically expect an easier quarterfinal matchup.

But that wasn't the case.

Instead, the No. 8 seed was a familiar U Sports foe, l'Université Laval Rouge et Or. UBC and Laval have matched up four times in the past five national tournaments, splitting the series 2–2. Most recently, however, UBC has been the one to come out on top.

Continued on page 9.

OPINION / OP-ED

Cutting Ties Deserves Deliberation

This March, students called on UBC to cut ties with universities upholding apartheid. The motion to do so is misunderstood by senators and faces bureaucratic obstruction, writes student senators Bryan Buraga, Sarah Kamal, and Sultana Razia.

This past March, 83.5 per cent of students who voted demanded that UBC cut ties with all institutions upholding apartheid. The AMS's subsequent open letter and a motion that would formally cut those ties were presented to UBC's Vancouver Senate by students in April.

Rather than discuss the proposal at that meeting or defer it to a separate, special Senate meeting, the motion was referred to a working group and stalled while a framework for institutional partnerships was developed. That framework is now scheduled to be presented to the Senate later this week, on Nov. 18.

This is a failure of the Senate's democratic deliberative processes.

Cutting ties with institutions upholding apartheid has high stakes for students, including our safety abroad and being implicated in institutional partnerships. These high stakes drew remarkable support for this motion: the landslide 83.5 per cent referendum result; endorsements from the GSS, AMS, and CUPE 2278; a similar motion being passed by the Students' Union Okanagan; and over 100 letters of support from faculty and public intellectuals. Yet, student proponents of the motion and multiple members of the Student Senate Caucus alike have not been allowed to advance their motion on the Senate floor, nor participate in the development of the global partnerships framework ostensibly meant to replace it.

Continued on page 11.



No Vacancy: Bring Back the Villages Plan

Vancouver's new mayor and city council have a mandate strong enough to revive the ill-fated plan.

By Finley Ludeman
Housing Columnist

On Oct. 17, Vancouver elected a new mayor and council. Mayor Pete Fry and the Vancouver Greens are promising to deliver "more housing types everywhere" and ensure everyone in the city can access "a safe, affordable place to call home."

These are ambitious goals, but Vancouver does not need to start from scratch. One proposal that could help deliver these promises has already been developed, debated, and rejected: the villages plan.

The villages plan proposed to develop 17 "villages" along major streets throughout the City of Vancouver. Within these areas, single-family residential lots would have been rezoned to allow a range of housing options, including below-market housing and buildings up to six storeys. This was meant to deliver the "missing middle," a housing solution between single-family residential homes and the high-rise developments that dominate Vancouver's core.

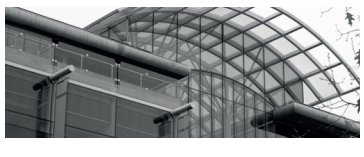
The plan also proposed adding more retail space for local small businesses, allowing residents to access necessary amenities within a short walk or roll from home. The chosen sites were centred on existing retail clusters and transit nodes, allowing for quick connectivity between homes, workplaces, schools, and local services.

Continued on page 10.

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UBC Supports Policy Requiring Open Access for Tri-Agency Funded Research

UBC has two years to publish an open access strategy once it gets guidance from the agencies, but is still waiting on those resources.



ARTS | MUSIC | Page 06

Does Joni Mitchell Sound Better in the Dark?

Pitchblack Playback events ask one thing of attendees: simply close your eyes and listen.

ARTS | FILM | Page 07

La Bola Negra Deserves the Biggest Screen Possible

Los Javis' epic interweaves the lives of queer men, without regard for the limitations of space or time.

SPORTS | BASKETBALL | Page 8

Vancouver's Pursuit of a WNBA Team is About More than Basketball

The WNBA's Vancouver game offered a glimpse of women's pro basketball in the city. But for many, the vision extends far beyond the court.



OPINION | EDITORIAL | Page 05

There Are No simple Solutions

Solving today's problems will require attentiveness to the truth and a willingness to work through disagreement.



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Callout from News

Deputy News Editor Saba Majd and Community Reporter Madeleine Semple are working on an investigation of UBC's handling of sexual misconduct (violations of SC17) reports. If you (or someone you know) have experienced sexual misconduct at UBC and feel comfortable sharing information about your experience with UBC's support systems (the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office, the Investigations' Office, and Office of the University Counsel), please reach out to *news@ubyssey.ca*. If you wish to remain anonymous to the publication, submit a tip at forms.*ubyssey.ca/tips*.

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News

New Tri-Agency Policy Requires Immediate Open Access for Funded Research

UBC has two years to publish an open access strategy once it gets guidance from the agencies, but is still waiting on those resources.

By Jitya Bagga
Research Policy Reporter

Starting next year, all peer-reviewed research articles funded, partially or in full, by the Canadian Tri-Agencies will be open access immediately upon publication. The Government of Canada announced the 2026 Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications, a revision of the 2015 version, on Oct. 5.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), known as the Tri-Agencies, are federal research funding organizations that manage public funds to support post-secondary research and training.

The policy does not apply to student and postdoctoral awards and fellowships, though students and postdoctoral fellows are still encouraged to use no-cost routes for sharing research where possible. The agencies also encourage all Canadian researchers, regardless of their funding source, to follow the policy to build a culture of open exchange of research results.

The release states that the agencies recognize the importance of "diamond open access," a community-led, not-for-profit publishing model with no subscription or publication fees.

The agencies have listed six principles guiding their approach.

Transparency and accountability are supported by making publicly funded research results freely available and ensuring that public funding is used efficiently. To mobilize knowledge, research results should be effectively shared with potential users. In the spirit of academic freedom, researchers should have the right to choose how their results are published and communicated.

High standards of research integrity, including in peer-review, research assessment and the conduct of research, must be preserved while providing open access. Research sharing should be considered within the open exchange of ideas and research results, and appropriate measures may be taken to safeguard research that could risk national security or have negative ethical implications. Finally, the agencies aim to align their policy with domestic and international research funding agencies and best practices.

In 2025–26, UBC's research projects received $923 million in funding. Of that, $269 million (29 per cent) came from the agencies and supported 3,292 of the university's 10,184 projects.

UBC will be expected to comply with the revised policy. In a statement to The Ubyssey, University Librarian Dale Askey wrote that the revision will bring "Canada into closer alignment with international approaches to open access and will help increase the reach and impact of Canadian research."

The main stipulation for UBC, and other post-secondary institutions and research hospitals, is to create and publicly share an institutional open access strategy within two years of receiving guidance and resources from the agencies. Askey said UBC is still waiting for these resources but has started coordinating with other Canadian institutions to support a uniform approach.

He added that the Office of the Vice-President Research and Innovation and UBC Library will engage "stakeholders across the university, including those with expertise in equity-based approaches and Indigenous research" to inform the strategy. He stated that "while it is too early to provide details, we will share updates with our research community as the strategy develops."

The agencies say the policy aligns with domestic and international recommendations for open access. One is Canada's Chief Science Advisor's Roadmap for Open Science, which outlines the steps needed to make federal science barrier-free while considering privacy, security, ethics and intellectual property rights.

Another is the G7 Science and Technology Ministers' Communiqué, which highlighted the misuse of open international research cooperation in light of Russian aggression against Ukraine and made recommendations to promote "safe, secure, and open international cooperation in research and innovation."

The policy also supports the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science, though UNESCO casts a much wider net: while this policy only covers peer-reviewed research, UNESCO calls for all scientific knowledge to be open in all its aspects.

The revised policy also sets requirements for all grantees and chairholders. For example, they must acknowledge the support they received from the agencies. All peer-reviewed research must also carry an open license, preferably the least restrictive one, such as Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY). That license allows reusers to "distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format" as long as the original creator is credited, and it permits commercial use.

Researchers may worry about open research being misused, for example by artificial intelligence (AI) tools that can access and reuse work published under a CC BY license. The Ubyssey asked Askey about these concerns, but he said the question would be better directed to the Tri-Agencies.

Grantees must inform publishers of the authors' rights and duties under the revised policy. Authors still retain rights over their accepted manuscript or version of record, but are obliged to make their work open access. Most importantly, all peer-reviewed research must be open access and freely available at the time of publication, under an open license, either through a Canadian institutional repository or a trusted Canadian platform. This significantly shortens the 12-month window for making published research freely available that was set out in the 2015 policy.

Many participants in the agencies' engagements also recommended a Tri-Agency repository where funded authors would be required to submit results from peer-reviewed work. They also expressed support for sharing preprints (early versions of scholarly research that have not been peer-reviewed), as well as journal articles in repositories.



Photo by Aleah Kippan for *The Ubyssey*

In a statement released Oct. 27, Askey and Vice-President Research and Innovation Peter Zandstra highlighted the supports UBC already has in place to help grantees and chairholders comply with the new policy. One is cIRcle, UBC's open access institutional repository. Articles published there are automatically free and available under an open license. Askey said he anticipates increased use of the repository under the new policy.

The agencies also emphasized the importance of research and knowledge mobilization in French, encouraging researchers to pursue dissemination practices that improve accessibility for official Language Minority Communities. They also recognized the research contributions of Indigenous Peoples and noted that this research should be shared in culturally relevant ways, in local languages and formats.

Askey said UBC supports "equitable and inclusive research dissemination," adding that the university recognizes the importance of sharing Indigenous research in ways that "respect [Indigenous communities'] priorities, languages, and cultural practices."

Participants in the agencies' engagements also pointed to the importance of supporting multilingualism in local communities, citing the potential for AI to mistranslate publications or fail to properly translate scientific concepts and theories.

The 2015 policy will still apply to research that received funding between May 1, 2015, and Dec. 31, 2026.

Should Non-Students Campaign in Student Elections?

Councillor Bryan Buraga is leading an effort to ban non-students from campaigning in AMS elections. President Dylan Evans opposes the proposal, saying it would disadvantage people without a "friend group."

By Juan Pablo Sastoque Vega
News Editor

Non-students are allowed to help students campaign in AMS elections, which is not the case at several other student unions, including the ones at McGill and SFU. After being defeated by a candidate who received outside help, one student leader is looking to change that.

During a September AMS Council meeting, GSS Councillor Bryan Buraga introduced a motion to amend the rules for the Vice-President Student Life by-election, which Council was about to approve. Buraga's motion tried to ban people who are not students from supporting campaign efforts. It required a two-thirds majority to vote in favour.

President Dylan Evans said such a change would put students who "haven't found their friend group" at a disadvantage.

"You know, we have a lot of transfer students coming in that don't have friends that are students. They haven't found their friend group. To put a restriction on folks that are only students to be campaigning seems to put certain groups at disadvantages," Evans said.

In an interview with The Ubyssey, Buraga said nothing would change his mind about the importance of the issue. He added that if somebody is unable to find a small friend group that could help them campaign, he finds "it difficult to believe that [they'd] be a good student advocate."

Vice-President Finance Nathan Shack said amending a policy from the Council floor is not best practice and that it could set a dangerous precedent — a sentiment he reiterated in a statement to The Ubyssey, where he argued the Governance Review and Elections committees "should be the first bodies to review and propose any amendments." The AMS's election policy, GV5, is reviewed by those committees.

During the Sept. 2 meeting, GSS Councillor Katelynn Hubenig supported Buraga's motion. She also argued that just because a policy has been longstanding does not mean it should necessarily remain the same.

"Always looking to the past is not always the best way to move forward," Hubenig said.

Ultimately, Buraga conceded that although he felt the amendment was important, it did not have to be rushed for that specific by-election. He then moved to refer the proposal to COMPASS — the ad hoc governance review committee chaired by President Evans. The AMS's website says COMPASS is due to file a report with Council by the "end of February" of the upcoming year, before the next campaign period.

The Ubyssey requested an interview with Evans and Elections Administrator Keiko Prasadja to ask about their position on Buraga's proposal moving forward. Instead, we received a statement from VP Finance Shack and President Evans.

In the statement, Evans wrote that Buraga's proposal would "interfere with the independence of our elections administrator and elections committee," and that it was moved "without any prior consultation with the responsible bodies or personnel." He added that "a single anecdotal experience would be suspending well-established governance."

The "anecdotal experience" Evans is referring to is Buraga's — which he brought up at Council on Sept. 2. That evening, Buraga said the idea to ban non-students in the first place came after they ran against a candidate who had non-student volunteers during the last election in March of this year.

Specifically, Buraga said an opponent's campaign relied on help from former AMS executives, who had already graduated. At the time, Buraga was running against then-AMS Vice-President Academic & University Affairs Zarifa Nawar, Jacky Xue, Sultana Razia, and former VP AUA Drédyn Fontana to be one of two student representatives on the Board of Governors — UBC's highest governing body.

In a statement to The Ubyssey, Governor Nawar said her campaign received support from her former romantic partner Kamil Kanji — a former vice-chair of the UBC Senate and VP AUA — and from her "friend and mentor" Eshana Bhangu — a former AMS President, VP AUA, and two-term Governor.

At the time, Buraga filed a complaint with the AMS elections committee, alleging, among other things, that Nawar was engaging in "slate-like behaviour" with Kanji and Bhangu, both of whom were running for convocation seats at UBC's Vancouver Senate. Convocation senators are UBC alumni, elected by other alumni. GV5 prohibits candidates from running in slates or appear to run in slates.

The elections committee dismissed Buraga's complaint, which later went to the election appeals committee twice. Nawar admitted "some slate-like behaviour," but the appeals committee found that the elections committee had not considered all relevant information. Ultimately, the election appeals committee ruled against Buraga. The reason was that the Convocation elections were covered by separate processes, according to UBC's Registrar.

"Buraga lost a university-wide election and decided he wanted to undo that outcome through every avenue available to him ... What [he] portrays as a principled defence of democratic integrity instead raises serious questions about his respect for it. Democratic accountability cannot mean respecting the process only when it delivers the result you want," Nawar wrote in her statement.

Buraga told The Ubyssey he "would have done the same thing regardless of if [he] won or not." They said that at the time of their defeat they could not have changed the policy.

"I always thought it was odd, and it just so happened that one of the other candidates that I was running against engaged non-students to help with their campaign. So, based off of that, I thought it was important to advocate for this now in the roles that I am in, so that the next generation of elected students doesn't have to deal with this sort of thing," he added.

Buraga also said his proposal was backed by his experience at the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU), where he was the 2019–20 president. On Sept. 2, Buraga said of McGill, "there's a very strict prohibition on this practice ... you have to have students be registered with the elections committee to ensure that only students are able to participate in campaigning."

The SSMU's election's policy says "campaigning and related activities may only be carried out by members," meaning McGill students. "Any campaign believed ... to have participation, either direct or indirect, from by non-members will be subject to sanction up to and including disqualification."

The AMS's GV5 has no such provision for elections, but it does for referendums. In referendums, only active members — meaning current UBC undergraduate students — can campaign, organize campaigning, and/or recruit campaigners.

The SFSS (Simon Fraser University) prevents non-students from campaigning, as does the UTSU (University of Toronto) which limits "campaign teams" to ten people registered with their elections officials. The UVSS (University of Victoria), like UBC's AMS, does not have a rule about non-students campaigning.

"I strongly oppose this proposal," Nawar said in her statement, adding that she is unsure how the AMS would enforce it.

"If a candidate's parent helps them pick up campaign materials using the family car, would that constitute a violation? If a professor permits a candidate to make an announcement in their classroom, would that professor be considered to have assisted their campaign? Where exactly does the AMS intend to draw the line between legitimate personal support and prohibited campaign assistance?" Nawar asked.

Her concerns are similar to the ones Evans brought up on Sept. 2. "I know it's already an extreme task to run an election, and it strains the entire team ... but to then have to go in and check potentially hundreds and hundreds of volunteers against the student list — that also takes time as well," he said. Elections Administrator Keiko Prasadja said it would be difficult to verify all volunteers.

At McGill, Buraga said, the burden of proof is on a campaign to demonstrate it's following the rules. He added that he does not envision the AMS's elections team enforcing a similar provision, but that "they'd have the register of candidate volunteers, and then it'd be up to the candidates to report any violations ... I don't expect them to be [checking] every single campaign volunteer."

If Buraga's proposal ever comes into effect, it will apply to AMS elections, but still have to exclude the Board of Governors and Senate races like the one between them and Nawar. Although the AMS logistically organizes those races, candidates are bound by UBC's elections regulations, which also do not say who is or is not allowed to campaign on behalf of a candidate.

Buraga said he trusts COMPASS to consider his proposal and "come back with a recommendation." Council will then have to "figure out the best way to move forward," he said.

EXTENDED BYLINE

Saba Majd was this story's backfield editor. **Sophie Gunn** and **Calla Smith** were the copy editors. **Sophia Clearwater** designed the page in print. With files by **Vihaan Shah**.

A Guide to 500+ Pages of Canada's Budget

Carney's government wants to strengthen Canada's sovereignty by investing in infrastructure. Opposition leaders have criticized the budget for increasing debt, failing to address Quebec's needs, and giving tax breaks to businesses.

Economy

By Spencer Izen
Managing Editor

Continued from page 1.

In response, the budget follows through on a commitment announced at the Canada Investment Summit, debuting the corporate tax cut the government calls the "Productivity Mega Deduction."

Under it, businesses can fully write off the cost of new eligible capital investments, including "fibre-optic cable, mining property, oil and gas pipelines, software, research and development, computer equipment, aircraft and vehicles, patents, rail track, bridges, and roads."

Previously, about 15 per cent of assets were eligible — that figure is now more than 65 per cent, according to the Department of Finance.

The measure will cost the government $36 billion over five years, but it expects 0.5 per cent growth in real GDP by 2030 as a result. The move will shift the marginal effective tax rate on new business investment down nearly 10 percentage points to 6.4 per cent — lower than the United States — and nearly 36 percentage points from its peak in 1990.

The government will continue to finance the 175,000 placements via the Canada Summer Jobs, Youth Employment and Skills Strategy, and Student Work Placement programs.

The Youth Climate Corps program was established last year, but as a far more modest $40-million initiative than the $1 billion the multi-year campaign's organizers had hoped for. It's supposed to roll out during the 2026-27 fiscal year. The budget contains no new information about how it'll be implemented beyond that Natural Resources Canada and Parks Canada will be involved alongside Employment and Social Development Canada.

The budget also maintains the status quo on the Canada Student Financial Assistance Program, which is co-administered with the provincial government in B.C. via StudentAidBC.

In March, the government announced it would temporarily increase student loans and grant amounts for full-time students, effective 2026-27. Per the announcement, Canada Student Grants are increased from $3,000 to $4,200 per year. Canada Student Loans are increased from $210 to $300 per week.

A June report from UBC administration states that over 24,000 government loans and grants were disbursed to recipients across both campuses.



Health Care

By Harleen Randhawa
Health Reporter

Health care remains a major area of federal spending, with money flowing to provincial services such as dental care, mental health, and community care. Federal health transfers keep rising — but the most recent budget also includes proposed cuts across several federal health agencies.

The Canada Health Transfer (CHT), which helps provinces and territories pay for health services, is expected to reach $57.4 billion in 2026-27, up from $54.7 billion the previous year. This five per cent increase, however, comes from an existing federal funding agreement, rather than a new budget commitment.

The guaranteed minimum annual increase ends after 2027-28. After that, it will be relinked to economic growth, with a minimum increase of three per cent.

The latest budget includes $1.2 billion in 2027-28 to extend federal agreements on mental health, substance-use facilities, home care, and community care until March 2028.

It proposes $2 billion over two years, starting in 2027-28, to build community mental health and substance use facilities through a new Health Infrastructure Fund and $100 million over two years to renew Health Canada's Emergency Treatment Fund, which supports community responses to substance use and overdoses, including outreach and naloxone distribution.

It also aims to make the Canada Caregiver Credit fully refundable, so lower-income caregivers can receive financial support at a cost of an additional $845 million over four years.

The Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) rolled out its first phase in 2023 and has expanded since, covering eligible Canadians who don't have private dental insurance and have an adjusted family net income below $90,000.

According to Health Canada's Dental Care annual report, approximately 3.6 million Canadians enrolled between May 2024 and June 2025. More than two million used the plan. The federal government paid $2.1 billion towards dental services in that period. Budget 2026 does not announce a similar expansion of eligibility or coverage.

It also doesn't announce a major expansion of national pharmacare, instead proposing $10 million over two years for work on improving access to medications and pharmaceutical research.

Budget 2025 proposed spending cuts at Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, among other orgnizations. Those cuts are expected to grow from $105.6 million in 2026-27 to $382.6 million a year on an ongoing basis. The government said the changes would reduce administrative costs and streamline programs.

Certain health groups say the budget falls short. The Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Nurses Association (CMA and CNA, respectively) have raised funding concerns.

Health groups say the budget falls short. The CMA welcomed the caregiver credit and investments in Indigenous and women's health, but says the budget still lacks a long-term plan for health care funding. The CNA says the budget doesn't do enough to close gaps in access to care. It wants a national nursing workforce strategy and more support for nurse-led care, warning that new facilities will need enough nurses and other health professionals to run. Both groups are calling for more predictable federal funding so provinces can plan.

With the current CHT growth guarantee ending after 2028 and the mental health and home care extension lasting only until March 2028, questions remain about how these services will be funded in the longer term.



Transportation

By Naomi Brown
Transportation Reporter

This budget delivers a transportation agenda focused on regional connectivity, particularly in areas with infrastructure deficits.

Some items in Masters of Our Destiny are simply renewals of funds for existing programs, while others fall under the domain of "nation-building" projects and new initiatives.

Transport Canada is the federal department in charge of transport safety, security, policy-making, and programs across the country. The traveller and trade routes they oversee include rail, marine, air, and road. Transport Canada also manages a large portfolio including several Crown corporations, such as the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, VIA Rail Canada Inc., and Federal Bridge Corp. Ltd.

This year's budget committed $4.3 million over four years for Transport Canada to develop a Traveller Biometrics Strategy, and $55.3 million over two years to further digital trade processes in partnership with industry.

It also renewed funding for two programs which seek to connect populations living far away from urban areas. The Ferry Services Contribution Program — which serves communities in Atlantic Canada and Eastern Quebec but not B.C. Ferries — will use $1.3 billion to support operations and build new terminals until 2032. British Columbia's ferries are expected to receive $37.8 million in funding from Ottawa in the 2025-26 fiscal year. This will increase to $39.1 million in the following years. The discrepancy in funding between the East and West Coasts has given rise to complaints in B.C.

The Remote Passenger Rail Program, aimed at connecting Indigenous communities in Manitoba, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador, will receive $35.1 million in 2027-28.

Compared to this year, the 2025 budget announced more new funding for Transport Canada, including a $5 billion Trade Diversification Corridors Fund to be delivered over seven years.

Budget 2026 grants $1.2 billion directly to Crown corporation VIA Rail Canada over the course of three years. It reports increased VIA Rail Canada ridership since summer 2025, when the Canada Strong Pass was implemented for Canadian tourists visiting other provinces.

In addition to providing targeted funds for Transport Canada and its partners, Budget 2026 proposes and confirms plans for transportation infrastructure projects deemed of "national interest."

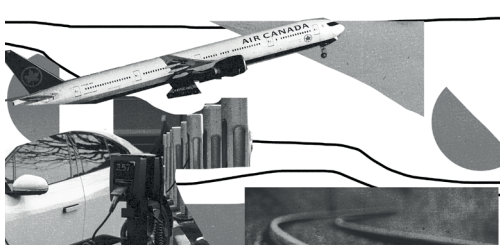
The Major Projects Office was established in August 2025 to streamline approval and financing for large infrastructure projects, particularly in transportation and energy. The 2026 budget proposes fully funding construction and certain maintenance costs for the Mackenzie Valley Highway in the Northwest Territories, currently under review as a project of "national interest" under the Canada Building Act. This new major roadway would connect isolated communities and act as an economic corridor year-round, per Budget 2026.

Another project identified as important for connecting communities is the LaSalle Causeway Bridge Replacement Project in Eastern Ontario. After damage to the bridge in 2024, residents in Kingston have been relying on a temporary bridge that closes on weekends. Budget 2026 commits to moving forward with the delivery of a new full-time bridge, using existing funding of $261.8 million.

Electric vehicle adoption is another infrastructure goal being handled in part through government programs. Budget 2026 will renew the Zero-Emissions Vehicle Infrastructure Program in 2027-28 with a contribution of $587 million over five years. It also proposes giving an unannounced amount of funding to the program for the deployment of up to 55,000 new EV charge points across Canada. Additionally, Natural Resources Canada would be awarded $45 million over five years to come up with EV charging solutions that blend the interests of businesses and capabilities of the energy grid with the needs of Canadians.

The budget reaffirms the federal government's intention to seek private investment in Canada's four largest airports.A consultation process will take place near the beginning of 2026-27, followed by legislation to determine operating conditions and the selection of a suitable operator by 2029. Proposed long-term concession agreements would allow the government to retain ownership of airport land and charge private investors for allowing them to manage airport operations.

Earlier this month, workers at the Vancouver International Airport (YVR) protested against its privatization after The Globe & Mail reported that YVR is Ottawa's first candidate for privatization.



Climate & Energy

By Jhalak Garg
Climate Reporter

The federal government is committing billions to clean energy investment over the next decade. But the 2026 budget also projects big cuts to spending on existing climate programs.

Carney's plan extends the Clean Technology and Clean Electricity investment tax credits to 2040, giving businesses a longer window to claim incentives for clean energy projects. The Clean Electricity credit is a refundable credit worth 15 per cent of what a company spends building certain low- or non-emitting power generation, so Ottawa effectively covers part of the cost of new clean power.

It also expands the Clean Electricity credit to cover the highest-voltage transmission lines within each province, as Ottawa looks to increase electricity generation and the infrastructure to distribute it. The government estimates the changes will cost $2.4 billion between 2027-28 and 2030-31, followed by $36.1 billion between 2031-32 and 2041-42.

The extension continues a funding model established in previous budgets, although the government's priorities have shifted.

Budget 2024 introduced a $160-billion net-zero economic plan, including $93 billion in projected investment tax credits by 2034-35 for clean electricity, clean technology, hydrogen production, (making hydrogen fuel, which doesn't release carbon dioxide when burned, with little or no emissions) and carbon capture (trapping carbon dioxide from industrial exhaust so it doesn't reach the atmosphere).

Budget 2025 built on 2024's through a Climate Competitiveness Strategy, which linked emissions reductions with industrial investment and Canada's ability to compete in a changing global economy.

This year, the budget gives energy infrastructure a more prominent role. Alongside investments in electricity and nuclear energy, the government has included natural gas and critical minerals as part of its broader infrastructure plans. It also identifies the proposed Pacific Link pipeline, which would transport up to one million barrels of oil per day to the West Coast, as a project of national interest.

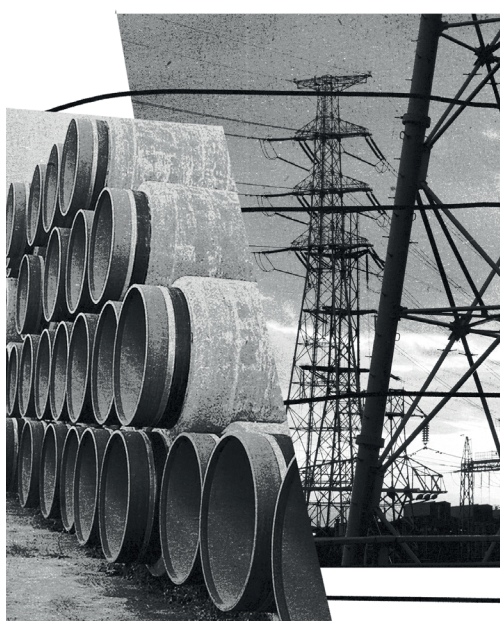
Alberta Premier Danielle Smith and business groups back the pipeline, though federal NDP Leader Avi Lewis said it is not in the national interest. Several B.C. First Nations say they weren't properly consulted, and some have filed court challenges.

The budget points to carbon capture as a way to reduce emissions from existing oil production, estimating that the Pathways, a proposed carbon capture network, and related industry commitments could reduce emissions by 16 million tonnes annually. Pathways would capture CO_2 from oil sands facilities in northern Alberta and send it through a shared pipeline to a storage site near Cold Lake.

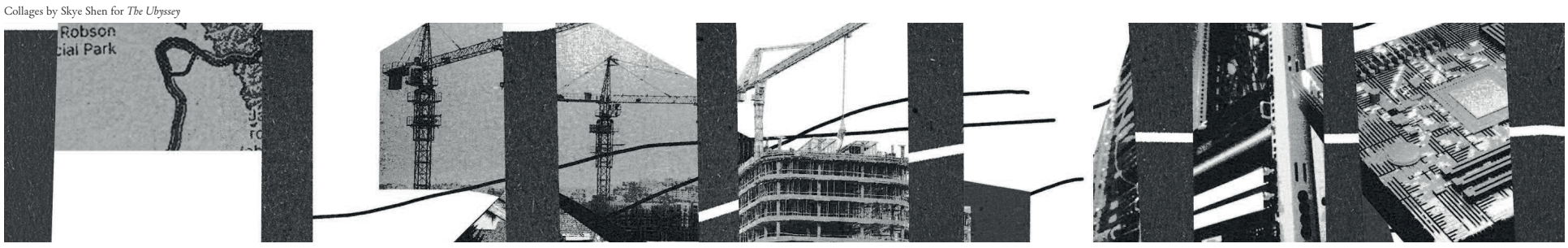
But while the government is extending incentives for private investment, planned spending within Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), the federal department responsible for climate policy, environmental protection, and weather forecasting, is moving in the opposite direction.

The department's total planned spending is expected to fall from a forecasted $3.2 billion in 2025-26 to $1.7 billion in 2026-27. Funding for its clean growth and climate change responsibilities is projected to decline from approximately $1.2 billion to $476 million over the same period. The department expects that figure to fall even further by 2028-29.

ECCC attributes much of the overall reduction to the end of funding for returning fuel-charge proceeds to Indigenous governments, the expiry of temporary initiatives, and cuts under the government's Comprehensive Expenditure Review. Among the affected programs is the Low Carbon Economy Fund, which supports projects intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as energy efficiency upgrades in public buildings, and Indigenous-led clean energy projects.



Collages by Skye Shen for *The Ubyssey*



Research

By Jitya Bagga
Research Policy Reporter

The budget's main theme is "Canadian sovereignty," and part of that is recruiting "international talent" to support businesses and entrepreneurship and bring in new skills and expertise. Budget 2025 announced the $1.7 billion International Talent Attraction Strategy and Action Plan, which funds the Eddie Goldenberg Research Chairs of Canada program.

In August 2026, UBC nominated nine of the first 64 chairs across its two campuses and plans to welcome them over the coming months. Their work covers health technology, wildfire resilience and water security, democracy in the digital age, using data to advance health, and reimagining engineering through artificial intelligence.

The 64 chairs were appointed under the Canada Global Impact+ Research Talent Initiative. They include leading researchers from 13 countries as well as Canadians who are continuing their work in the country.

The program is a one-time effort to help institutions recruit leading researchers working on critical national and global challenges. Chairs are expected to take on ambitious projects, build and maintain research teams, and train the next generation of researchers. Each receives long-term institutional support through an award of either $8 million or $4 million over eight years, depending on the research.

The awards come from $541 million the government has set aside for the first wave of recruitment. So far, $504 million has been used to recruit these researchers. The remaining $37 million is meant to recruit 63 "emerging leaders" to Canadian universities.

Industry Minister Mélanie Joly has said not all the money will go directly to the recruited academics. They are expected to use it to bring over "professors, students, lab co-ordinators and others to work with them."

Forty-eight of the 64 chairs are from the United States, which has raised questions about whether Canada is "poaching" American academics. Many researchers are leaving the U.S. as the Trump administration cuts research funding and grants in many fields, which has made offers elsewhere more attractive. Asked about poaching, Joly said, "The U.S. administration is taking its own decisions and we're taking ours."

On Aug. 27, she said, "We're very glad that these fantastic professors are coming," and announced that the second intake for the Eddie Goldenberg chairs was starting that day.

The government says it is also committed to "boosting innovation and commercialization," including helping businesses turn innovations into viable products without leaving Canada. The budget proposes that the three federal research granting agencies — the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research — modernize their policies to bridge the gap between publicly-funded research and commercial products.

Artificial Intelligence

By Rafferty Meier
Technology Reporter

A rapidly growing area of the Canadian budget is the AI sector. As the artificial intelligence industry continues to expand, the federal government argues that Canada's need for sovereign AI infrastructure grows as well. To engage this new frontier, on Jun. 8, the Canadian government introduced "AI for All," the government's plan to make Canada a global competitor on the AI frontier without relying on the U.S. markets.

The new plan has come with an increase in government spending. In 2025, the Canadian government allocated $925.6 million over the course of five years towards AI infrastructure development. In Budget 2026, this figure has over doubled in 2027 alone, reaching $2.7 billion.

Last year's budget focused primarily on compute capacity and data measurement programs. The 2026 fiscal plan is a huge pivot towards large-scale infrastructure deployment, commercialization, and nationwide economic integration.

Budget 2026's AI investments fall in line with its focus on sovereignty. For instance, to increase the resilience and competitiveness of Canada's industry, the 2026 budget commits to providing Canadian AI companies with access to 500 megawatts of sovereign AI computing capacity. These 500 megawatts of power will be consumed by the "small number of large-scale, sovereign AI data centre projects" that the Canadian government plans to fast-track. This expansion relies heavily on financial tools that aim to mobilize the private sector.

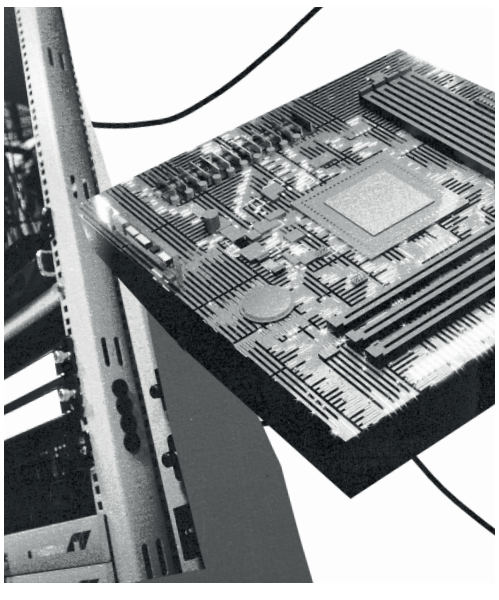
Past budgets had a deeper focus on academic research and intellectual property protections. This year, policymakers have set their sights firmly on commercial productivity and structural transformation. This change is likely driven by the rapid increase in Canadian firms using AI, which has more than tripled since 2024, climbing from 6.1 per cent to 19.2 per cent.

To bridge the gap between those who use AI and those who don't, the 2026 budget commits to a massive acceleration of domestic AI adoption. It sets a national goal to raise the share of Canadian businesses using AI from 12 per cent to 60 per cent by 2034.

Human capital investments are also being scaled up. Budget 2026 delivers $162 million over five years to Mitacs, a company that supports business and academic research through AI. The $162 million aim to support the creation of 10,000 specialized AI-related work placements in an attempt to keep young talent in Canada. The budget also allocates $6.2 million over four years to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada to support Canada's continuing participation in the OECD's Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence — a program that aims to advance "human-centric, safe, secure, and trustworthy" AI.

All these investments are on top of the recently announced $1.6 billion equity investment made by the government in Toronto-based AI company Cohere.Cohere is an LLM trainer that creates AI models specifically made for corporations. These investments in domestic, foundational AI companies hope to ensure Canadians can choose secure, sovereign, Canadian-made AI for decades to come while also providing high-paying, technical jobs.

Canada already ranks second among its peers when it comes to private AI funding, and this budget will continue to push it ahead. As the AI race continues to march forward, Carney's government has made it clear that they intend to remain ahead of the curve.



Immigration

By Ishita Sharma
Immigration Reporter

The headline numbers in Budget 2026's immigration plan aren't new. The 2027-29 Immigration Levels Plan sets permanent resident admissions at 380,000 and new temporary arrivals at 370,000 annually. Budget 2025 had already set these figures for 2026-28 and 2027-28 respectively, so only 2029 is new. The budget defers the category breakdown to the annual report to Parliament.

The real change is a one-time pathway for up to 200,000 temporary residents already in Canada to become permanent residents by the end of 2027. The budget says 100,000 would be workers eligible for Express Entry or the Provincial Nominee Program, which also raises the province's share of economic immigration. It sets aside $302.3 million over four years starting in 2027-2028, plus $90.6 million later.

The budget doesn't say whether these admissions count towards the 380,000 target.

Last year's budget proposed moving up to 33,000 work permit holders to permanent status in 2026 and 2027 at a cost of $19.4 million, and a separate one-time measure for protected persons, costing $120.4 million.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has put the protected persons group at about 115,000 and described those admissions as in addition to the 380,000 target. If this year's pathway is treated the same way, the headline target will again understate how many people become permanent residents.

On temporary residents, the deep cuts came in last year. Budget 2025 cut the new temporary resident target from 673,650 in 2025 to 385,000 in 2026, with 155,000 students and 230,000 workers. For 2027 and 2028, it set 150,000 students and 220,000 workers. This year's budget holds the total at 370,000 and gives no split, which it says will come with the annual report.

It does report that new student arrivals from January to August 2026 were 71 per cent lower than the same months of 2024 and new worker arrivals 57 per cent (170,455) lower. Asylum claims were down 68 per cent. Last year's budget cited declines of about 60 per cent for students, 50 per cent for workers, and 33 per cent for asylum claims, so the two sets of figures aren't strictly comparable.

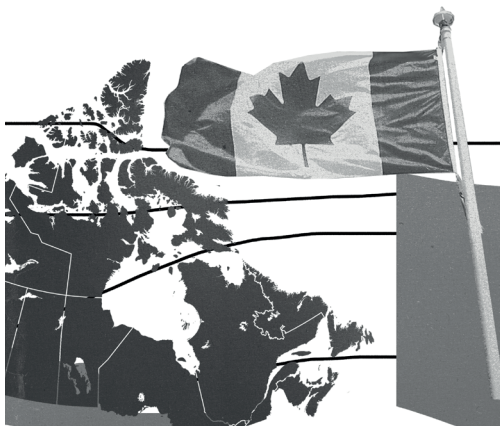
The 2026 budget compares 971,815 new temporary arrivals in 2023 with the 370,000 target, a 62 per cent reduction, and 483,655 permanent residents in 2024 with 380,000 — a 21 per cent reduction. It leaves out 2025 and 2026 actuals, and the permanent resident bar doesn't include the pathway.

Budget 2025 also set a goal of cutting temporary residents from 7.5 per cent of the population in 2024 to under five per cent by the end of 2027. Converting temporary residents into permanent ones would lower that share without anyone leaving the country, since converted residents stop counting as temporary.

On spending, the 2026 budget adds $56.9 million over four years to implement the Levels Plan, with $205.4 million more in later years, and $151.5 million over five years for Temporary Foreign Worker Program reforms aimed at regional labour needs, processing times, and employer compliance. Last year's cost for the Levels Plan was $168.2 million over four years, mostly lost fee revenue from fewer temporary admissions.

Budget 2025's spending review also asked IRCC for savings reaching about $614 million a year, including narrower settlement eligibility for economic immigrants. The 2026 pages don't say whether those cuts continue.

The 2026 budget compares 971,815 new temporary arrivals in 2023 with the 370,000 target, a 62 per cent reduction, and 483,655 permanent residents in 2024 with 380,000 — a 21 per cent reduction. It leaves out 2025 and 2026 actuals, and the permanent resident bar doesn't include the pathway.



Housing

By Charlie Branton
Housing Reporter

Prime Minister Carney and Finance Minister Champagne's plan for housing is divided into three pillars: putting an end to homelessness in 10 years, expanding non-market and affordable housing, and having a "housing market that works for all."

To end homelessness in a decade, the government will invest $11.2 billion over four years beginning in 2027-28. Build Canada Homes (BCH), the Crown corporation created in September 2025 and tasked with delivering affordable housing, will be central to these efforts. BCH's role will be to "unlock" federal land for housing projects. Budget 2026 also aims to renew the Canada Housing Benefit for 10 years, which provides financial assistance to low-income renters across the country.

Nonetheless, the success of this plan will rely on Ottawa's ability to collaborate with provinces and territories. Speeding up construction of housing, a big area of focus, inherently involves negotiations with provinces and municipalities, crossing regulatory frameworks and planning and zoning laws. Vancouver's freshly sworn-in Mayor Pete Fry called the goal "aspirational, but very possible."

According to 2025 numbers from the federal government, for every 10,000 people in Western and Northern Canada, there are 28 experiencing homelessness, which had gone up 47 per cent from 2020-22.That is six more unhoused individuals than the Canada-wide number, four more than Atlantic Canada, and nine more than Quebec and Ontario.

Budget 2026 lays out $1.8 billion over four years for housing that integrates mental health treatment. That funding will go up to $3.2 billion after 2027-28, and will be administered by BCH through a new "Integrated Supports Fund."

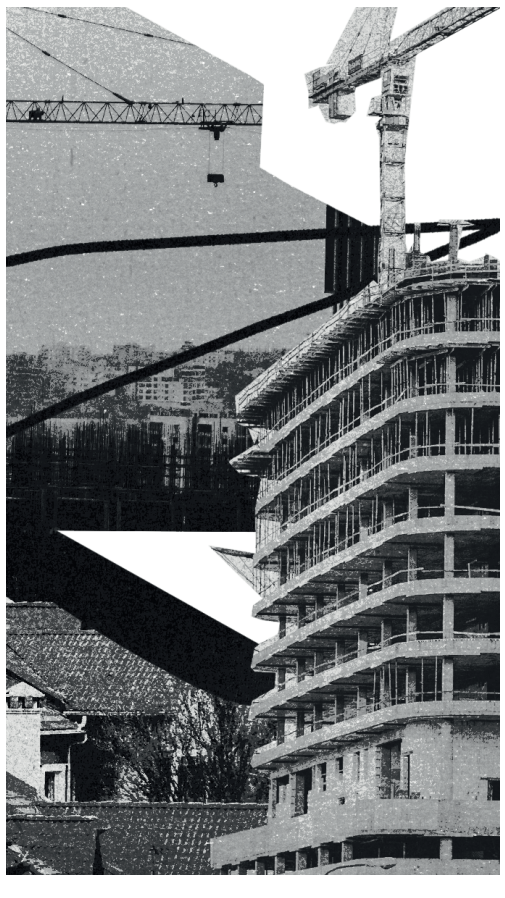
The plan will begin in Manitoba, where Carney has vouched to give $1 billion to the city of Winnipeg for 2,000 transitional housing units and a new centre for mental health and addiction.

To expand non-market housing, BCH will receive $13 billion over 10 years starting in 2028-29. According to the budget, the investment will set Canada on a path to build 200,000 new homes in the next decade.

With this investment, the total capitalization of BCH will reach $45 billion. At least 10 per cent of that will be dedicated to Indigenous housing initiatives. Additionally, Budget 2026 commits $12.7 billion over 10 years for First Nations Housing.

For the third pillar, Budget 2026 proposes a $100 million investment over three years to adopt artificial intelligence and e-permitting at the municipal level, which it claims will decrease approval times. It also proposes extending an existing ban on foreign purchases of residential properties to address market pressures, "including speculation."

Finally, it references the Productivity Mega Deduction as a helpful measure to lower the costs of construction and encourage developers to build more housing.



Does Joni Mitchell Sound Bett

Pitchblack Playback events ask one thing of attendees: simp

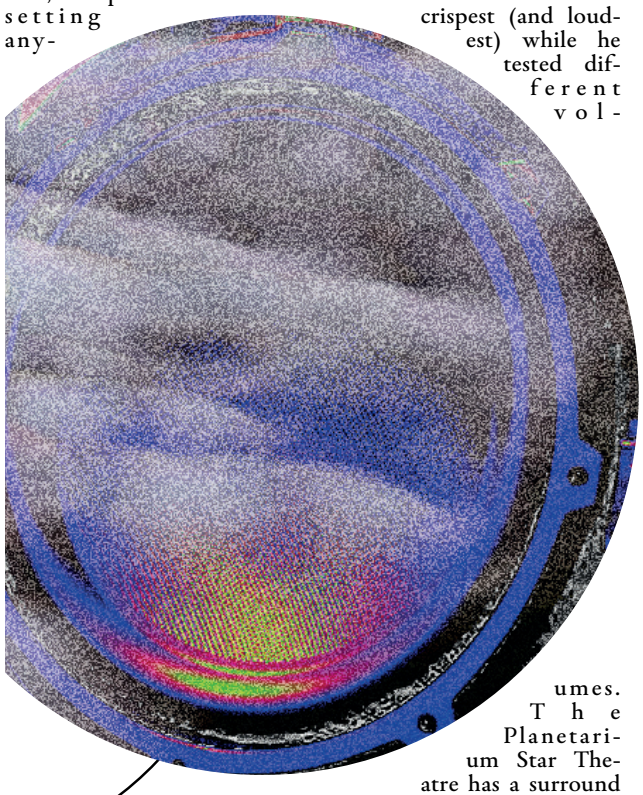
By Annabel Moir Smith
Music Critic

I was at the H. R. MacMillan Space Centre to celebrate a birthday, of sorts — the 50th anniversary of Joni Mitchell's 1976 album Hejira. The Space Centre partnered with the UK-based company Pitchblack Playback, "the world's biggest deep listening event," for a listening session with a straightforward aim: you take your seat, the lights go out, and you listen to the album in full.

The first time I heard Hejira, the audio quality was pretty much in the pits. This was 2023, when Mitchell's catalogue was unavailable on Spotify in protest of the platform's promotion of podcasts that spread misinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic. So in my Orchard Commons dorm, I'd listen to her music on YouTube on my laptop browser. Despite this, the album's open tunings and stories of the open road haunted and enchanted me, and Joni's jazzy travelogue soundtracked the remainder of a turbulent first year.

I knew I'd have a good time at the Space Centre, if only because I was listening to one of my favourite albums — but I was curious (and a tiny bit skeptical) about what listening to the album in this setting could offer me.

Pitchblack Playback has been hosting listening sessions since 2016, when founder Ben Gomori was inspired by attending an album preview at a movie theatre in London's Soho district. "You came and sat and had a preview of the album, and they had some visuals on the screen," Gomori said. "I was really taken with the experience and the focused listening. I'd never done that before, in a public setting any-



way, and I wanted to replicate that and bring it to the public." A friend of Gomori's suggested that holding the sessions in the dark would enhance the experience after seeing a production of Not I, a play by the absurdist playwright Samuel Beckett. Not I takes place in near-complete darkness, with a spotlight illuminating only the actor's mouth.

Pitchblack Playback has hosted events in Vancouver before, but it was their first time partnering with the Space Centre. The Planetarium Star Theatre hosted three listening sessions on Nov. 5, each celebrating the anniversary of an iconic album: Loveless by My Bloody Valentine, A Seat at the Table by Solange, and, of course, Hejira. They'll be hosting more sessions at Lobe Studio in Strathcona, playing Phil Collins' Face Value on Nov. 19 and 22 and Bon Iver's 22, A Million on Dec. 13.

"[Planetariums are] acoustically-treated, they're completely dark and black-out-able. They usually have good sound," Gomori said. "We like spaces where you can be kind of immersed in a bubble of sound, and it's not just coming from the front."

The planetarium theatre is no stranger to music — Michael Unger, the Space Centre's director of programming and community engagement, informed me they've been running their Pink Floyd laser show since the 1970s, and they host live music, dance, and drag shows in the space. "I've always seen this space as a great place to listen to music," Unger said. "Over the years, as I became program coordinator, I certainly wanted to bring that back to this space."

But laser shows take full advantage of the planetarium's state-of-the-art projection technology. An event that eschewed the visual entirely was uncharted territory.

I stuck around for Unger's soundcheck, trying out various seats in the planetarium to find out for myself where the audio would be crispest (and loudest) while he tested different volumes. The Planetarium Star Theatre has a surround sound system, and because it's a round room, sitting in a different seat could give you an entirely different experience of the album. I found that the sound was best toward the middle of the theatre: you were closest to the speakers there — if you chose a seat near the back, the noise of the planetarium's fans could be overpowering.

Each ticket to a Pitchblack Playback event comes with a black cotton eye mask emblazoned with the company's name and logo. Venues are required to keep emergency exit lighting on during listening sessions in case of emergencies, so the masks help audiences immerse themselves in complete darkness if they so choose.

When the doors opened, I settled into a second-row seat. Just before the lights went out, Unger came out to introduce the show and talk about the Space Centre's arts and culture programming. I saw several people jump out of their seats when an announcement from Pitchblack blared over the speakers. Then, I slipped my eye mask on and settled in for 52 minutes of Joni.

Immediately, I could appreciate why Unger says the planetarium is a great space for music. While there was slight distortion at times, the impression that Joni Mitchell was singing right in my ear made up for it, and I could feel Jaco Pastorius's iconic bass lines reverberate in my chest — a far cry from my days of listening on YouTube. But I found myself feeling a bit bored and distracted during the first few songs. I had expected to feel a strong connection to the music, to be carried away by it; even though I felt the impact of the sound physically, what I experienced was a strange distance. I realized I was waiting for a transcendent experience, and when it didn't come right away, I was disappointed.

But I realized quickly that the experience would be exactly, and only, what I made of it. An event like that is meant to challenge its audience, not relax them — if you're looking to relax, stay home and do it for free. Once I began to treat it like an intellectual exercise, I began noticing and responding to things I'd never paid any thought to in the dozens of times I've listened to this album. It helps that Hejira is a very imagistic album, and giving it the entirety of my focus helped me reflect on and connect images I'd only considered in the abstract before.

Why had I never attended to lyrics like "Pawn shops glitter like gold tooth caps / In the grey decay / They chew the last few dollars off / Old Beale Street's carcass / Carrion and mercy" in "Furry Sings the Blues"? I must have heard those words a hundred times before, but had only ever considered how pretty they sounded sitting in the planetarium. In the days since the listening session, I keep pausing to think about those pawn shops as teeth eating away at the former glory of a famous blues neighbourhood. Or the drums in the album's title track, played by Bobbye Hall, which are faint to the point of fading away at times but add an ineffable richness to the track — I came away wondering what was wrong with me that I'd never given the percussion a second thought.

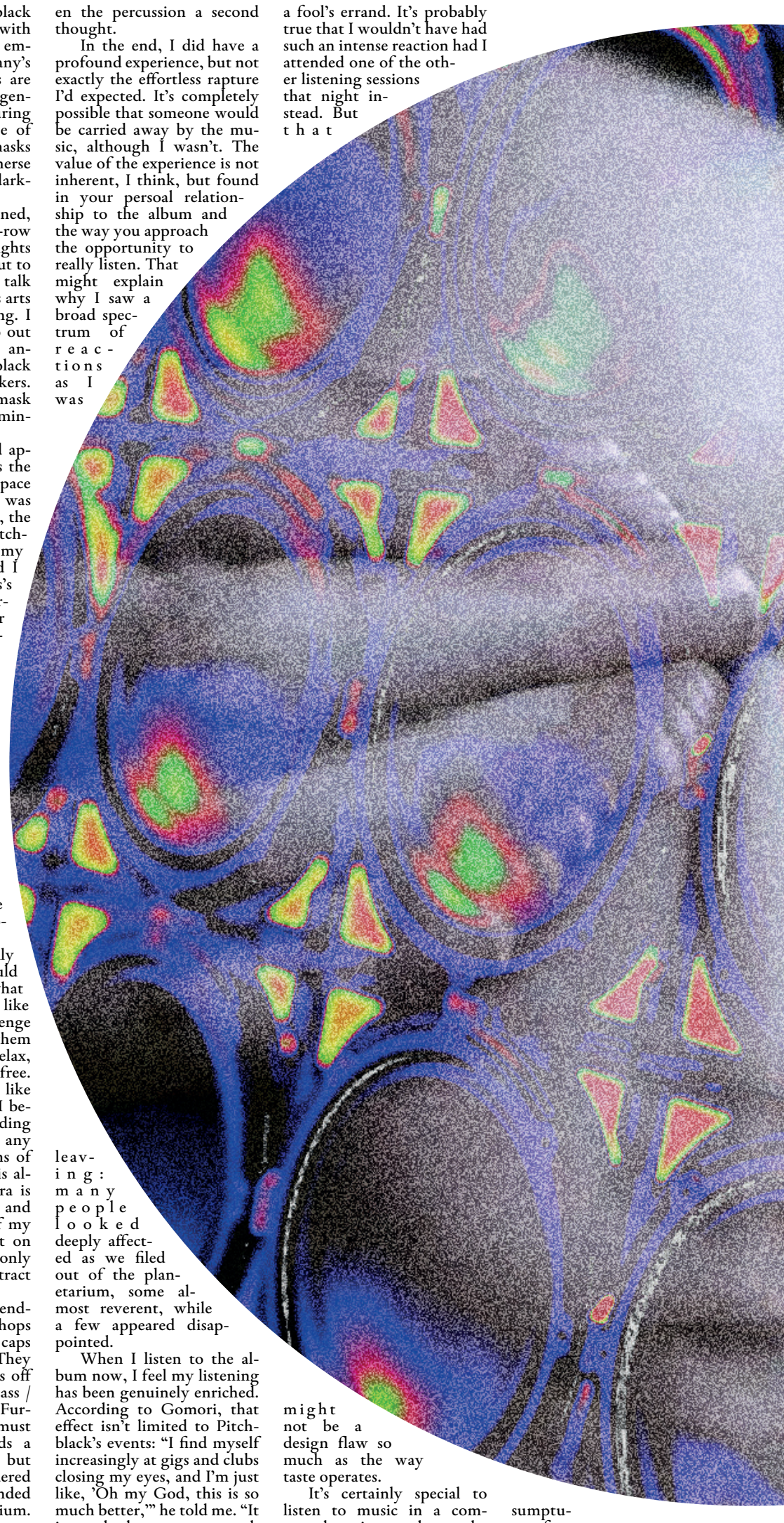
In the end, I did have a profound experience, but not exactly the effortless rapture I'd expected. It's completely possible that someone would be carried away by the music, although I wasn't. The value of the experience is not inherent, I think, but found in your persoal relationship to the album and the way you approach the opportunity to really listen. That might explain why I saw a broad spectrum of reactions as I was leaving: many people looked deeply affected as we filed out of the planetarium, some almost reverent, while a few appeared disappointed.

When I listen to the album now, I feel my listening has been genuinely enriched. According to Gomori, that effect isn't limited to Pitchblack's events: "I find myself increasingly at gigs and clubs closing my eyes, and I'm just like, 'Oh my God, this is so much better,'" he told me. "It instantly becomes so much more intense and visceral, in a way... It just consumes you."

My critical brain struggles to determine what about my experience was owed to the event, and what was simply the brilliance of Joni Mitchell (when I asked Gomori why they selected Hejira for the Space Centre, he said, "She's the queen."), but separating the two might be a fool's errand. It's probably true that I wouldn't have had such an intense reaction had I attended one of the other listening sessions that night instead. But that might not be a design flaw so much as the way taste operates.

It's certainly special to listen to music in a communal setting, and yes, the surround sound in the planetarium is far better than headphones, but that alone isn't enough to justify going out of your way. If you're the sort of person who regularly commits their time and energy to sitting down and listening — really listening — to albums, you may not need to spend money to have an experience similar to mine.

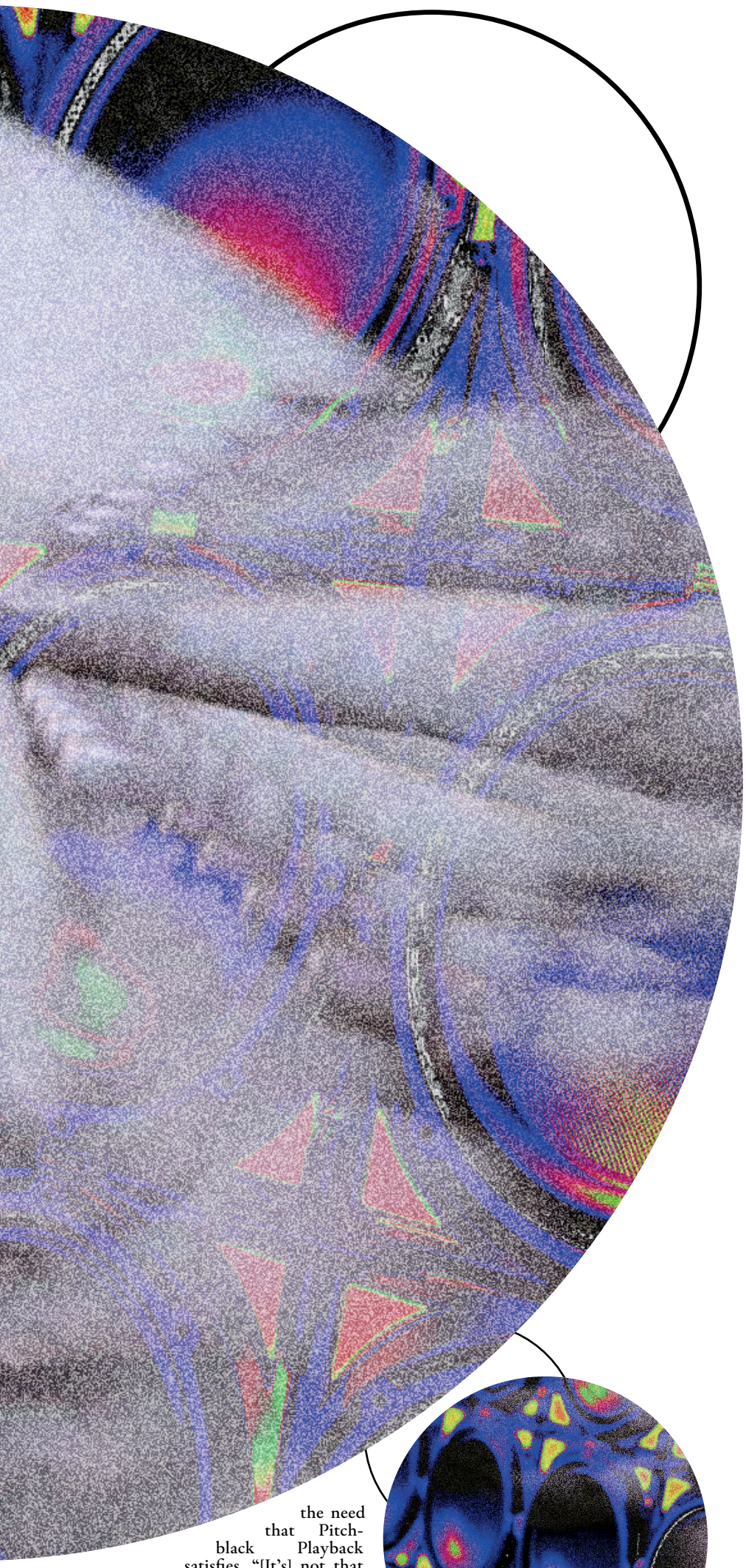
But allow me to be presumptuous for a moment: you are probably not that kind of person. I'm guessing most of the people reading this are more like me, throwing on an album to soundtrack a commute or study session and discovering new music through streaming algorithms. That's understandable — our time is scant, and our attention is valuable and dwindling fast. Even so, the growing



rts

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ply close your eyes and listen.



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the need that Pitchblack Playback satisfies. "[It's] not that different from what we're asking our audiences to do when they come in here," Unger said. "It's a meditative act to be looking up at the stars, and listening to music is also a meditative act."

In the end, that was the thrill Pitchblack Playback served up to me: not the excitement of a novel event, but the old, familiar thrill of great music.

EXTENDED BYLINE

Elena Massing was this story's backfield editor. **Skye Shen** made the graphic. **Aarna Upadhyay** designed the page in print.

La Bola Negra Deserves the Biggest Screen Possible

Los Javis' epic interweaves the lives of queer men, without regard for the limitations of space or time.

By Thomas Favelle
Film Critic



Film still retrieved from IMDb

Once finished with the heart-stopping beginning in which a Spanish village is "mistakenly" bombed by Italian forces, directors Javier Ambrossi and Javier Calvo (collectively Los Javis) smack the audience with a striking opening credits sequence.

It's a barrage of photos that barely gives the viewer time to linger on any individual one. The photos are of soldiers desecrated with pink illustrations of shirts and arrows to the chest. They don't come across as an attempt to disrespect the past so much as one to put a new perspective on it.

La bola negra sees history with fresh eyes. Adapted from a unfinished 1936 manuscript by Federico García Lorca and a 2015 play by the film's co-writer Alberto Conejero, the extravagant work is intent on blowing viewers away with its scale.

It's hard to distill the film — an indulgent 160 minutes — onto the page, largely due to its balancing of three narratives across 80 years. The film dips in and out of time periods with a disdain for over-explanation, choosing early on to let go of the audience's hand.

That trust goes a long way in making a seamless experience, where the barrier of time breaks down and the stories find their place on par with one another.

At the heart of the film is Sebastián (Guitarricadelafuente) in 1937, a young man who's forced to serve in the Spanish Civil War despite his heart belonging far away from it. Five years earlier, Carlos (Milo Quifes) lives in a dreamy little town and longs for membership in the local social club, but is ostracized because of his open-secret homosexuality. In 2017, Alberto (Carlos González) uncovers his estranged grandfather's past in a long-lost manuscript that brings the worlds of Carlos and Sebastián closer than they appeared.

The three plots trace nearly a century of heartbreak, queerness, and limits on self-expression. Alberto slowly unearths links between the men, but it's the solidarity in how they live their lives that keeps their stories in conversation with one another. Carlos and Sebastián have to reckon with societies that won't accept who they are, while Alberto, even with modern-day affordances like Grindr and a doting boyfriend, still struggles to feel adequate under his detached mother and his own ambivalence towards the world.

Carlos toes the line of melodrama. His entire world is ripped straight from the stage, with a dazzling dance scene that slots well into his story. The audience follows him from behind, floating around him as he dances and wanders through dreary streets for a late-night meet-up. We're up-close with his inner battle between being the man he is or the one his father expects.

Sebastián, in both his love and the cinematography, is teased with tantalizing possibilities. His story is rife with tension — skin glistening with sweat, a hand hovering just above a sleeping body, forced self-restraint. He struggles to fit in with the other soldiers, and the camera knows this. Even in crowded scenes, he feels like an outsider, continuously singled out.

Alberto, despite being the most in touch with his sexuality, feels coldly devoid of emotion. He's portrayed through a still and observant gaze as he makes his way through the story with distant relationships and a struggle to find connection even when it's right in his face.

They are three men cut from the same cloth, separated by time.

While the film is an ensemble, it's the skill of the actors behind them that makes this epic work — but the film ultimately sidelines Carlos, treating his adventures as the least worthy of the three. Even though Alberto and Sebastián emerge as favourites early on, it's off-putting to drop and pick Carlos back up at an uneven rate, especially when his story serves as the most ambitious of the three.

A host of characters dot the rest of the screen, many of whom manage to leave a mark even with only a couple minutes to do so. Penélope Cruz's flirty Nené Romero offers a brief reprieve to Sebastián's mask of comfort, and a standout performance comes from Miguel Bernardeau as Rafael Rodríguez Rapún, a prisoner of war in the same time period.

He becomes an unwitting love interest, caught between being a wounded enemy and a passionate soul Sebastián can't help but find himself drawn to.

The relationship between Sebastián and Rafael, defined by a literal closeness and a societal separation, is the heart of the film. Their doomed emotions never fail to create a spark, despite the circumstances of their situation. A wartime base camp has never been a good place for love, but they try their best. Whether it's Sebastián towelling Rafael down with nervous curiosity, or a fleeting moment of privacy in a bustling hospital, the two share electric chemistry, even in the quickest touch.

La bola negra is also a feast for the eyes. Despite being adapted from non-theatrical works, the story feels uniquely crafted for the big screen. The imagery of Sebastián climbing atop a fallen statue, now synonymous with the film's marketing, is a spectacle that further indulges in the gravitas of its opening moments. The film flexes an assortment of gorgeous locations, from a battle-scarred town to a quaint countryside village, populated with richly-decorated and well-lived interiors, all of which fill the screen with life beyond its performances.

Los Javis don't just pride themselves in finding beautiful landscapes to film — the camera puts in the work to justify such backdrops. There are never dull visuals; they're unafraid to dramatize a space, to throw realism out the window and worry about what is and isn't diegetic later.

Music is a driving force behind the film, the thread that lingers in each of the narratives. At one point, the sound of Sebastián's trumpet bleeds through time, connecting his sorrow with that of Carlos and Alberto, acting as another bridge between narratives. Raül Refree'sscore is both sombre and exhilarating, and an original track from him and Guitarricadelafuente placed towards the end of the film encapsulates a moment so perfectly that one can only hope it sweeps every best original song category in existence.

It is only in how big the movie goes that it starts to lose itself. Ambrossi and Calvo are not interested in subtlety or anything of the sort. They're often so focused on sweeping up the audience that they just as easily wash them away. It's easy to get lost between one gigantic moment to the next, from a riot overtaking the streets around Carlos to Nené's risqué performance for a crowd of soldiers. The film has so much to say, it's on the cusp of not saying anything at all.

If there's one thing the film does deliver — a reminder becoming increasingly clear as each character grapples with it in their own ways (Sebastián's the most beautiful, Carlos's the least subtle) — it's the need to live life truthfully. To not speak is to die, and the film is a strong supporter of being unflinchingly earnest in all capacities.

Whether it's a mountain of snow in the summer or the dramatic staging of two lovers in the dark, La bola negra is a film that values extravagance over everything else. It demands to be seen on the biggest screen possible — the only experience that will do justice to the size of its ideas and visuals.

Even when it falters, the swings the film takes are so much bigger and louder than anything else in theatres right now that it deserves your attention.

EXTENDED BYLINE

Elena Massing was this story's backfield editor. **Aarna Upadhyay** designed the page in print.

Vancouver's Pursuit of a WNBA Team is About More than Basketball

The WNBA's Vancouver game offered a glimpse of women's pro basketball in the city. But for many, the vision extends far beyond the court.

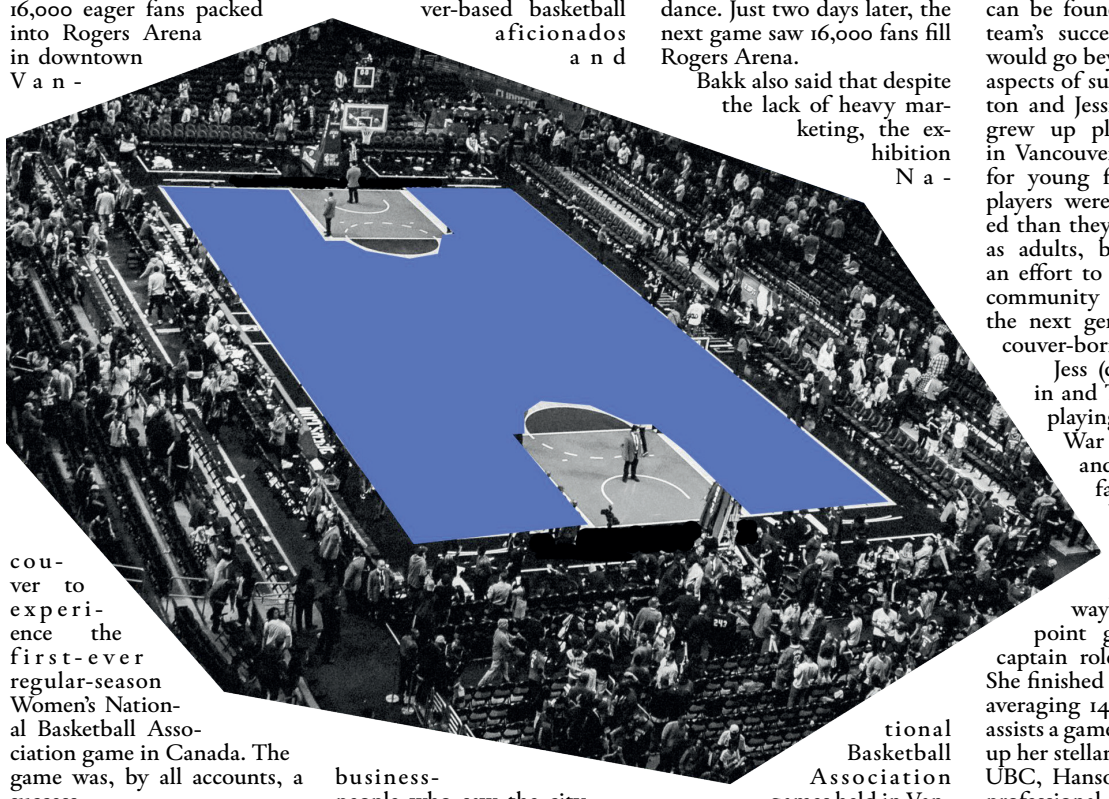
By Ian Cooper
Deputy Sports Editor and
Men's Basketball Reporter

Vancouver is a basketball city; it always has been. Public basketball courts litter the parks and are scattered in the city's farthest corners. The instantly recognizable Vancouver Grizzlies logo remains a fixture in Vancouverites' wardrobes, despite the team not having played here in nearly three decades.

For the past 25 years, the question has remained: "Will Vancouver ever have a professional basketball team again?"

In recent summers, the city has been given glimpses of an exciting possibility and, for the first time in a long time, a push for a professional team is finally underway.

On Aug. 15, 2025, nearly 16,000 eager fans packed into Rogers Arena in downtown Vancouver to experience the first-ever regular-season Women's National Basketball Association game in Canada. The game was, by all accounts, a success.



Two playoff-bound teams went head-to-head for 40 minutes, featuring both exciting young talent — like Seattle's then-19-year-old Dominique Malonga, known for casually throwing down two-handed jams in layup lines and games — and all-time greats — like Nneka Ogwumike, the WNBA's fourth-all-time leading scorer. The game came down to the final shot: a missed, potentially game-tying floater. The electric atmosphere of the contest provided everything a marketing team could wish for when trying to captivate a new audience.

At the time, however, plans to pursue the city's first-ever WNBA franchise were already in motion, though the group would not be revealed until the following autumn.

"When I went to the very first WNBA game last August, Seattle playing Atlanta, the crowd was just chanting, 'We want the Grizzlies,'" said Bill Bakk.

Bakk, who was involved in the original pitch for the Grizzlies in the early 1990s as a consultant at Deloitte, saw the opportunity for a WNBA push and decided to take action.

In June 2025, Bakk began assembling a group of like-minded, Vancouver-based basketball aficionados and business-people who saw the city as a potential future home for a WNBA franchise. The group brought together people with unique ties to Vancouver's basketball community and who shared a collective goal.

Julie Smulders, the founder of She's Got Next and David Nelson, the chair of Nelson International, both suited up for the T-Birds during their time at UBC. Kevin Hanson served as the head coach of UBC men's basketball for 25 years, and his wife, Theresa Hanson, is the former athletic director at Simon Fraser University. Jodi Evans is the current vice-chair at Deloitte and represented Canada in women's basketball at the 1996 Summer Olympics.

The group agreed that now was the time to pursue a competitive bid for Vancouver's first-ever WNBA team. By fall 2026, their theory had been proven correct.

Last year, the Vancouver Goldeneyes, in their inaugural season, had the second-best Professional Women's Hockey League attendance average, drawing over 11,000 spectators per game. This summer, two WNBA games were played in Vancouver, both featuring Canada's first WNBA franchise, the Toronto Tempo. The first game, played on Friday, Aug. 21, against the WNBA's other expansion franchise — the Portland Fire — saw 12,000 fans in attendance. Just two days later, the next game saw 16,000 fans fill Rogers Arena.

Bakk also said that despite the lack of heavy marketing, the exhibition National Basketball Association games held in Vancouver since the departure of the Grizzlies have drawn large crowds. He sees the staying power of the local fanbase over the past three decades as one of the main reasons Vancouver could be a prime location for a new team.

"Every one of them [NBA games] had north of 17,000 people, maybe 18,000, and really there wasn't a lot of marketing, quite frankly, on either the WNBA or the NBA games, which said to me that they're [fans] all out there. They want the game."

Currently, the group remains in an exploratory phase. The WNBA has made no official announcements about expanding beyond its planned expansion into Philadelphia in 2030. However, the expectation is that the league will continue to grow, and Bakk and his group want to be prepared to put forth the next winning bid.

"We didn't get the opportunity to bid on a WNBA franchise last May when the three were awarded [Toronto, Portland, and San Francisco], but nevertheless we were in their [the league's] minds. They just didn't see anybody putting their hand up to say, 'I'm there.' I'm pretty confident they're [the league] very much in tune with what the city's all about as a basketball community," said Bakk.

The attendance figures are there, and the funding can be found, but a WNBA team's success in Vancouver would go beyond quantifiable aspects of success. Carlie Paxton and Jessica Hanson both grew up playing basketball in Vancouver when resources for young female basketball players were far more limited than they are today. Now, as adults, both are making an effort to give back to the community and help foster the next generation of Vancouver-born hoopers.

Jess (daughter of Kevin and Theresa) grew up playing basketball at War Memorial Gym and watching her father coach the UBC men's basketball team. Eventually, Jess worked her way into the starting point guard and team captain roles for the Birds. She finished her senior season averaging 14 points and four assists a game. After wrapping up her stellar playing career at UBC, Hanson continued her professional career abroad, playing in Ireland, Germany, Portugal, and most recently, Australia this past summer. Now, Hanson has returned to Point Grey as an assistant coach with the UBC women's basketball team.

Paxton also grew up playing basketball in Vancouver and had a successful playing career at the University of Alberta. Paxton remains involved in the Vancouver basketball scene as the head coach of the Little Flower Academy girls' basketball team and founded playHER Basketball in 2019. playHER runs a series of camps for girls in grades 8 to 12 in Vancouver who play basketball. The camp is specifically for girls, is led by women, and focuses on topics that typical camps often overlook, notably athlete performance and women's health education.

Paxton's father was a basketball coach during her childhood, and she picked up the sport because of him. At the time, infrastructure for young girls hoping to play basketball was incredibly limited.

Hanson faced similarly limited options. When it came to watching and participating in women's basketball, the opportunities were few and far between.

Hanson recalled that girls once had very few club teams to choose from, with the provincial team being one of the only competitive pathways. Now, there are far more clubs in high school.

For both Paxton and Hanson, the value of a potential WNBA franchise in the city is hard to overstate. Having a local team to root for means the world to young sports fans. I grew up in San Francisco and have Steph Curry and the Warriors to thank for my interest in basketball. And, in a city with such a strong basketball culture, not having a professional women's basketball team seems like a long-standing missed opportunity.

When the Grizzlies last played in Vancouver, Hanson was a young child — she even has a photo of herself being held by star player Shareef Abdur-Rahim. Paxton remembers the team's impact even more directly. After winning a scholarship program run by the Grizzlies, she got to sit courtside at a Grizzlies game.

"Hearing the players, the banter back and forth, and watching the coaches, and just seeing it at a floor level was very eye-opening."

At the moment, there's no guarantee of a WNBA team in Vancouver, but the message remains clear: people in Vancouver care about women's sports.

The hankering for live sports is there (just look at the attendance numbers), and Vancouverites' willingness to show up for professional sports, regardless of gender, is apparent. What should hoop-heads do in the meantime as they wait and cross their fingers for a franchise? Hanson and Paxton both had the same thought: go watch and support university basketball programs.

"I think there's a great level of basketball out here, particularly at UBC. I'm a little bit biased, but bring the family out to games. It's smart basketball with lots of energy," said Hanson.

Ultimately, however, the prospect of a WNBA team isn't simply about attendance numbers and ticket sales; it's about what it could do for young girls and aspiring basketball players across the Greater Vancouver area.

Ontario native and current Portland Fire forward Bridget Carleton put it best in an interview with the CBC, right before playing a game in Vancouver.

"I would never have imagined this when I was a kid growing up in Canada. We didn't see it on TV. The fact that I'm 29 now, playing in Canada in a WNBA game, is just crazy. That kids have this to look up to in Canada, it's just really cool."

Paxton had similar thoughts. She believes a Vancouver franchise could strengthen the pathway from grassroots basketball to university and professional competition, while creating more leadership opportunities for women.

Whatever Bakk and his team manage to put together when they get the opportunity to pitch to the league will certainly be compelling. The attendance numbers they have to present and the money they raise may be what ultimately convinces the WNBA that a team would fit here.

But the real value of a team would be in what those numbers cannot measure. What representation means for young girls and athletes is felt beyond numbers.

EXTENDED BYLINE

Sofia Campanholo was this story's backfield editor. **London Clark** was the copy editor. **Jianna Haobam** made the collage. **Sophia Clearwater** designed the page in print.



Game Analysis

Once Again, the Crown Slips Away

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By Maia Cesario
Women's Soccer Reporter

Continued from page 1.

In the 2024 national tournament, the T-Birds battled hard against the Rouge et Or in the championship final. A lone goal by Sophia Ferreira proved to be the game winner in the 1–0 victory, marking UBC's back-to-back championships.

In 2025, the Thunderbirds and Laval matched up in the semifinal. After falling behind 2–0 early, the T-Birds made an incredible comeback powered by Jayda Thompson's three-point performance.

Both Laval and UBC have built a long list of accolades at nationals. This has been especially true in recent seasons — so this matchup was destined to be intense.

"We know they're a top team, and they've got a medal in the last [five] national championships," Symons said. "We knew it was gonna be a big battle."

And a battle it certainly was.

The first half was outstanding for UBC, as they came out looking equipped for the occasion. The Thunderbirds scored an early goal and managed to stay in control. The second half, however, fell flat.

Laval flipped the script on the Thunderbirds, becoming the team to come from behind. Once they tied the game at one, the momentum completely changed. With a second late goal, the Rouge et Or stunned UBC, leaving them with no real chance to come back.

When the final whistle blew, the T-Birds fell to their knees. While Laval got to celebrate with their small contingent of family members and fans, UBC was left reeling in heartbreak. Laval had ruined their chance at a fairytale ending this season.

"With the crowd and the whole atmosphere, it was a really tough game," Laval head coach Yann Le Roy said. "We found in ourselves some belief, and we always thought that we were able to come back."

The strong start made the loss even harder, as the promising result many expected suddenly seemed within reach.

In fact, the T-Birds were quickly on the right foot, pushing the offence. It took them no time at all to score.

UBC earned a free kick in the 10th minute that would be the set piece they needed. With the ball just past halfway, defender Zoelle Apps played a short pass to Taiya Dennehy who sent it right into the box for striker Maddy Norman to do what she does best — scoring with a header.

The stadium erupted in cheers as the T-Birds took the early lead in the 11th minute with a beauty of a goal that originated from the free kick. UBC has tried to build their identity on set pieces this season, and this was a prime example of that approach paying off when it mattered most.

The first half was exactly the energy they needed, as every player pushed the pace and gave their all. If this intensity had continued throughout the whole game, it might have produced a different result.

"It was amazing to have the community out," said Symons. "We really appreciated it. We felt the love, and it pushed us to the end of that game, but unfortunately, we couldn't get across the line for them."

Their defence was also particularly stellar to start. They held Laval to only two shots in the first half, with zero corners, as the whole team embodied their defensive identity. Apps even put on a defensive masterclass towards the end of the first half.

With Laval seemingly about to break away, Apps was the only player between the attacker and the net. Turning on the speed, she threw her body on the line and cut off the angle to the net. Not only did she prevent a shot, but she denied Laval a corner and won UBC back possession.

In a game like this, defence is key. The score was still close, as UBC struggled to find the back of the net again. Even into the second half, UBC was outshooting the Rouge et Or but still struggling to score.

In the 57th minute, Bailey Doerksen saved the ball from going out and crossed it back into the box. She found Sienna Gibson for a shot, but she couldn't quite get her foot behind it, and Laval's keeper was able to save the attempt. Gibson was one of several players who had close chances but couldn't quite connect, adding to the team's frustration.

As the second half became more back-and-forth, Laval found a stronger offensive rhythm. While UBC was struggling to connect, Rouge et Or's improved play paid off late in the second half.

"The whole game plan was about not conceding," said Le Roy. "Everyone stayed focused, regrouped, and just [brought] another level of capability."

In the 71st minute, Laval managed to tie the game at one. As Rouge et Or launched an attack, they caught UBC off guard and forced the Thunderbirds onto the back foot. In the ensuing scramble, Léa-Jeanne Fortier was able to sneak Laval on the scoreboard, curling the ball off the post and into the net. Suddenly, it was anyone's game, and every moment counted.

"We know what [Fortier] is capable of on the right, and today she just proved it," said Le Roy. "When she scored, we knew we really had a chance to change the momentum."

Unfortunately for the T-Birds, the momentum had completely shifted in favour of Laval. With only a few minutes left, Rouge et Or earned a corner. The Thunderbirds had to be prepared on defence, but they were just too slow to react to the Laval charge.

As the ball came sailing in, UBC got to it first, but Anaïs Bujold-Samson controlled the rebound. She shot, and Marilena Spagnolo was there to save, but it bounced out again. Bujold-Samson got to the rebound once more, with the T-Birds off balance, and fired it into the net to give Laval the 2–1 lead.

Bujold-Samson earned Laval's player of the match honours, assisting on the first goal and scoring the second and eventual game-winner. In only her second



Photo by Arina Parvin for *The Ubyssey*

year, she has battled an injury that kept her out for almost two months at the start of the season.

"I didn't know what was gonna happen for me for the rest of the season," said Bujold-Samson. "To play this game, almost full time, and have an assist and a goal, it's really nice. It wasn't at all what I expected, so I feel very [surprised] and happy."

With only the last few minutes of play remaining, the T-Birds had almost no time left to come back. After earning a couple of corners, they had their last chance to tie it once more. Although a set piece had paid off earlier, it would not come through again for the Thunderbirds as they could not finish before the final whistle.

On the biggest stage, at home, UBC's perfect storybook ending abruptly came to a close. There would be no fairytale for the Thunderbirds this season. The Thunderbirds' dreams of returning to the finals for the third season in a row were quickly dashed, leaving them to face one of the hardest parts of sports: defeat.

A loss like this is especially tough — playing in front of the home crowd as the No. 1 seed, with all the expectations built up. The quarterfinals are particularly unforgiving, as a loss means the team has no chance at a medal. Instead, UBC was sent to the consolation bracket, where they would be able to play for as high as fifth place.

For the Thunderbirds, this result is unheard of in recent seasons — the last time they didn't earn a medal was in 2022. Once again, Laval was the team that knocked them out of the championship bracket that year, as they lost the quarterfinal in penalty kicks.

The tournament is still not over for the Thunderbirds, however, as they will rest, recuperate, and return to the pitch on Nov. 15 in the consolation final against the Ottawa Gee-Gees. Although this isn't the tournament run they were hoping for, they still get to play on the national stage at home one last time.

"We'll go again," said Symons. "We're definitely one of the contenders year after year, so we're excited to keep building for next year."

EXTENDED BYLINE

Sofia Campanholo was this story's backfield editor. **Saba Majd** was the copy editor. **Arina Parvin** took the photos. **Sophia Clearwater** designed the page in print.

The Impossible Made Real

The Thunderbirds are Hardy Cup champions, the culmination of one of the most improbable, impressive seasons of university sport you'll see.

By Caleb Peterson
Sports Editor and
Football Reporter



Anybody who says they saw this coming is a liar.

Beyond the players and coaches themselves, who clearly believed in this group from the start, predicting a conference championship for this T-Birds team felt like a pipe dream.

Last season, they looked dead in the water. Their dismal 3–5 record was kind to them, with one win coming off a missed field goal, and another off a miracle overtime comeback. The offence was non-functional. The defence was a sieve.

It was fairly reasonable to expect improvement from a young roster that was visibly inexperienced. But this? An 8–2 record and a Hardy Cup championship? It didn't feel in the realm of possibility.

They played six games against teams ranked in the national top ten, and won five of them. "If there was a schedule tougher than that, I want to see it," said head coach Blake Nill.

They were one of only two Canada West teams to not have a pre-season game, which was perhaps the only reason they lost their opener against Calgary. They're an incredibly young team — yet they look like grizzled veterans, continually finding ways to win in difficult situations.

That continued in the Hardy Cup. They may have raised the collective blood pressure at the Thunderbird Stadium in doing so, but after two overtimes, a blown 15-point lead and countless close calls, the UBC Thunderbirds are champions of the West. It's as well-earned a championship as you'll ever see.

Even during this game, it still felt like midnight was seconds away from striking on this Cinderella run.

The Birds came into this one feeling the effects of a long, gruelling campaign. Injuries had taken their toll, particularly in the secondary and the backfield.

The defence has been grinding through their ailments all season, with defensive back Ches Rednour-Bruckman estimating that the team has "switched secondary units every game." Without that consistency, teams have been able to move the ball against the T-Birds through the air. But the Birds always stepped up when they needed to.

In a game where every point mattered, the defence came up with two key turnovers to keep the T-Birds in front in the second half.

The first came off an impressive punch-out from Darrien Brown, with Rednour-Bruckman recovering. "I just knew [that a] ball on the ground has got to be ours," he said. Then, a few drives later, Damien Bucknor read the eyes of Regina quarterback Owen Sieben for a pick.

Sieben and the Rams moved the ball against UBC's defence, with 443 yards through the air. It was a well-called, well-schemed game from Regina that stretched the Birds horizontally with creatively designed screens, reverses and zone-beaters. It was death by a million paper cuts — but the timely turnovers stopped the bleeding.

Both the fumble and the interception led to UBC points. You can grumble about the yardage given up, or the four passing touchdowns, but this secondary, as hobbled as they were, stepped up.

The situation in the backfield was much more concerning.

As the run game goes, so does this UBC offence. One of the main reasons this team turned things around early was because of the breakout of Marvyn Larozar, the team's star first-year back.

Over the past few games, Larozar's been dealing with injuries. Riley Michaud has filled in well, bringing a gritty, head-down style that suits this team. Against Regina, both were out.

So, the UBC run game, and by extension, the UBC offence, was on the undersized shoulders of five-foot-seven Josh Martin.

Martin has impressed whenever he's been on the field, including last week against Manitoba, with a 53-yard scamper that put the dagger in the Bisons. But the starting role was a step up for the first-year.

"We knew that Josh can carry it," said Nill. "It's just that he hasn't he hasn't had to do that all year."

So, perhaps because of the change in role, perhaps because the staff was unsure about sending a smaller back between the tackles in a playoff game, early on the run game was non-existent.

Martin ran the ball only twice throughout the entire first half. It was a surprising de-emphasis of the run for a team that clearly wants its offence to be built on the ground game. They struggled because of it.

The Birds went into the half down only 13–10, but they were lucky to be that close. While the Rams' offensive formula felt replicable, UBC's one-touchdown drive was mostly built on a couple low-percentage throws to their incredible receivers.

It's a testament to the skill of players like Trey Montour and Kai Rednour-Bruckman — who are both monsters in contested-catch scenarios — but those completions were never going to be consistent.

Quarterback Drew Viotto played a good half, but he was clearly hampered by the offence being one-dimensional. Play-action passes that worked in their first couple drives were blanketed by Rams defenders as the game went on.

Nill downplayed the adjustment somewhat. "They're obviously concerned with our passing, and if they're going to play a light box, we're going to try to run." It was more than that. The run had been abandoned, and in the second half, they knew they had to find it again and trust Martin to carry the load.

He vindicated that trust. And then some.

"I perform better when there's pressure on me," Martin said.

Martin came out of the locker room and reignited UBC's offence. In the first three plays of the quarter, UBC ran the ball twice, which was the same amount they had achieved all half. With balance re-established, Viotto had windows to throw again, which he took advantage of. The Birds led two straight touchdown drives out of halftime to build up a multi-score lead.

Martin's yardage numbers were impressive, but weren't anything mind-blowing — 78 yards on 13 carries in the second half. It was the way in which he ran that was remarkable. Again, he's exceptionally small for a running back, but he runs as if he's three times his size.

Much larger players would try to take him down. They couldn't. He fought through contact, churned his legs, and worked for every inch. It was an inspiring, gritty performance, and it rubbed off on his team.

As Martin — who's been an undersized player throughout his career — explained, it's just what he does. "I already took the beatings when I was younger. So I'm kind of used to all of this." The rest of us aren't. After being the team's third-string back all year, Martin was named the Hardy Cup MVP.

Now, after Martin's efforts brought the team up 15, the unfortunate footnote for UBC was the Regina comeback. In a matter of five minutes, the Rams erased the T-Birds' lead, sending the game to overtime. As a credit to UBC, however, that comeback is a footnote, not the story.

In overtime, all three units made plays when they needed to. The defence held Regina to field goals twice after giving up demoralizing touchdown drives at the end of regulation. The offence made a key conversion on second down to get into field goal range.

UBC's kicker, Alexander Hillyard, drilled both attempts — one from fairly deep — to get UBC the win. After Regina's kicker missed his attempt, the Birds could celebrate.

The team will travel to Montreal next week to play in the Uteck Bowl, the last step before the team can play for a national title. The last time these two teams played in 2023, UBC had their season end in the Vanier Cup.

While time will tell if this team can out-do the accomplishments of 2023, no matter what happens next Saturday, they might already be more exceptional.

Nill won Canada West Coach of the Year last weekend. It'll be a robbery if he doesn't win the national award as well.

He took a team that looked to be at the start of a multi-year rebuild to the top of the conference. He developed his young, often error-prone quarterback into one of the best passers in Canada West. He transformed a bottom-five rush defence into a brick wall. He turned around the worst rushing attack in Canada and produced the country's top back.

Nill, as he always does, would likely turn any praise back towards his team, and particularly the rest of his coaching staff. As he should. To name a few, Khari Jones, Noah Cantor, and Shomari Williams have been spectacular on offence, defence, and in recruiting, respectively.

Yet, the results speak for themselves, and Nill is the leader of this team. He's had a storied, nearly 30-year career as a head coach.

This might be his most impressive season yet.

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Opinion

FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

There Are No Simple Solutions

Solving today's problems will require attentiveness to the truth and a willingness to work through disagreement.



Collage by Skye Shen for *The Ubyssey*

When the Global Summit AI Vancouver came to town last week, the protests weren't surprising.

We agree with the protesters on many counts. The AI made, used, and promoted by multinational corporations is harmful to our communities and our world. Data centres are environmentally damaging and harmful to the health of nearby communities. The usage of AI in surveillance and autonomous weapons systems is abhorrent.

These should be protested. Protests are necessary for social change and the advancement of human rights.

Yet, AI is undeniably part of our reality. We don't say this as AI enthusiasts — our newsroom has a strict policy against AI usage in our journalism — but as students, as a university, and as a society, we need to reckon with how to live alongside the technology.

The AI summit held in the Nest was not a Machiavellian consortium of the most powerful names in technology. There were some panelists and speakers who work at large technology companies like Cisco and Google.

(In 2021, Google signed a contract worth $525 million to provide cloud computing services for Israel's Project Nimbus, despite internal warnings that the services might facilitate human rights abuses, The New York Times reported. Leaked documents obtained by the Guardian show Cisco continued to expand its relationship with Israel despite the ongoing genocide in Gaza.)

Many people at the conference, however, were small business owners or UBC researchers. The conference focused on the uses of AI in a business — specifically in startups.

Some panels addressed technical concerns with implementing AI — like how to deploy and debug AI systems — while others were more critical assessments of our reliance on the technology — like a panel questioning if we can trust agentic AI.

Like the protesters, we are also concerned by the push for AI's adoption in recent years, and think its value for businesses is often overblown. Our economy is clearly in an AI bubble that is making a couple people richer at everyone else's expense.

These are all problems.

But last week's protest exemplified a trend we have seen play out time and time again. On charged issues, our community falls into a polarized state of absolutes. In this case, pro- or anti-AI.

When we experience this polarization, our communication becomes more about emotion and less about reality. Being detached from reality is harmful to the efficacy of protests. Strong emotions and justified anger can and should coexist with the truth.

For instance, the posters advertising the protest said "UBC is hosting Big Tech oligarchs in our student union building," but the summit wasn't organized or hosted by UBC. It was hosted through AMS Catering and Conferences, which regularly hosts corporate events and conferences to help fund AMS services.

We don't want to nitpick minutiae, but it matters whether UBC or the AMS is hosting the summit. Advocating for change is less effective when advocating to the wrong body.

In more extreme cases, protesters sharing false information can lead to their legitimate concerns being dismissed as exaggeration.

During the protest, a UBC alum shouted "there's literal war criminals in the building." In an interview with The Ubyssey, he was unable to name any such war criminals. He said that he had been referencing "representatives of the companies" rather than individuals, because the identities of attendees were secret.

While, yes, some speakers at the summit were employees of companies that materially support states in committing war crimes, those speakers are not inherently war criminals. That's not to say a senior technical lead at Cisco has a clear conscience, but there's a big gap between morally dubious and war criminal.

The problem is that this level of exaggeration, mistruth, and omission, while rooted in real concerns, can be dismissed as false without engaging with a protest's underlying concern. An argument is only as strong as its weakest link.

When thinking in a moral binary, it's difficult to engage in the productive discussion that is needed to move society forward. The issues that are protested are all complicated problems to which there are no simple solutions. AI as a technology is far from God's gift to Earth, but it's not entirely evil either.

We need to hold space for nuance within our conversations, and grow comfortable with acknowledging multiple competing truths. AI can be immensely harmful, and because of that, it should be discussed — between opponents and supporters. We should not celebrate "shutting down" any conference just because it relates to AI, especially one that includes researchers and experts, considering the appropriate civilian applications of the technology.

That doesn't mean we must relent and accept the AI-driven world that technology companies advertise to us. But if we want to face AI's issues, we need to talk about them. And no place is more appropriate to discuss a controversial and societally important issue than a university.

Universities are institutions of learning, free inquiry, and respectful discourse. But conducting these conversations in a productive way requires curiosity.

At the AI summit protest, this was best demonstrated by Alex Dabbs, a protester who led much of the chanting, inviting Bob Seeman, a summit attendee, to speak with the protesters outside.

For over 90 minutes, Seeman engaged in good faith conversation. He and the protesters he spoke to agreed about many of the issues caused by AI, but they disagreed about how to solve them. This type of disagreement creates the productive conversations needed to actually solve the difficult issues of our time.

Unfortunately, Dabbs also went behind Seeman's back to mock him with a sock puppet. Seeman didn't seem to notice; he was too focused on good-faith discussion.

We don't say this to dismiss protests and activists as detrimental to public discourse. Protests and civil disobedience has a long history of bending the arc of the moral universe towards justice. Protests are necessary, and the commitment of the organizers to participation on public life is admirable. We just want protests and activism to be thoughtful and effective — not just driven by negative reactions, as they have been in the past.

In 2025, divestment protesters misidentified a group of people as governors, telling them to divest before dispersing; the actual Board of Governors continued their meeting undisturbed. When opponents to the AMS's new body worn camera policy came to council, their accusatory questions were all answered in a publicly available draft policy. Taking the time to learn governors' faces or read the draft policy would have kept this advocacy from falling on the wrong ears or seeming unserious.

Protesting in a more productive way requires everyone to change how they engage with discourse.

If we want to change the world, all of us must be passionate and emotional. We need to make good trouble and be deliberatively disruptive.

But we also must welcome discussion across viewpoints. We must update our beliefs when we learn new facts. And we must be legitimately curious about why people disagree.

Working through that disagreement is how we'll form the complex solutions needed for the world's complex problems.

EXTENDED BYLINE

Leah Grossman was this story's backfield editor. **Skye Shen** created the graphics. **Irisa Rao** designed the page in print.

NO VACANCY

Bring Back the Villages Plan

Vancouver's new mayor and city council have a mandate strong enough to revive the ill-fated plan.



Stella Broom for *The Ubyssey*

By **Finley Ludeman**
Housing Columnist

Continued from page 1.

This is precisely the kind of development Vancouver should be encouraging. So why did it fail?

In July, former mayor Ken Sim's ABC rejected the plan, with city councillor Sarah Kirby-Yung attributing that decision to a "landslide of opposition," suggesting there was "no social license to move this plan forward."

Opponents of the plan cited concerns around a lack of infrastructure to support increased density, such as parking, schools, and parks, loss of neighbourhood character, and a decrease in urban tree canopy.

Nearly 2,800 public comments on the villages plan were submitted to the city, with about 80 per cent in opposition. That number deserves to be taken seriously. Public consultation is an important part of any urban development project, and all residents should have the opportunity to voice legitimate concerns about their neighbourhood and any proposed changes.

However, the number of objections does not necessarily reflect the wants or needs of Vancouver's broader population. Nearly all opposition came from the city's wealthier, predominantly-homeowner neighbourhoods, raising questions about whose voices are most influential in decisions about the city's future.

A 2023 study conducted by researchers at UBC's Sauder School of Business, the University of Toronto, and the University of Hawai☒i found homeowners have an outsized influence on decisions around urban planning and design, and are significantly more likely to oppose density and new development. Limin Fang, a former urban planner and co-author of this study, describes how "homeowners can pressure councillors," holding significantly more power than renters, who are often temporary residents. He further suggests homeowners are often opposed to densification because it can reduce property values while putting pressure on parking and amenities.

On the other hand, most renters spoke in support of the plan.

"I would love for my friends and family to be able to live in neighbourhoods like mine," Bonnie Lai, a resident of Hastings-Sunrise, wrote in a public comment to city council, "but there isn't enough housing to allow for affordable prices for both homeowners and renters."

Lai also suggests that adding lowrises "will allow for more density while still allowing a strong sense of community to be maintained compared to high-rises."

Studies show that by building more housing, costs can be brought down for everyone. Furthermore, certain new developments within the proposed villages plan would require below-market rental housing, creating more low-cost options for residents.

Renters, students, and young workers — like Lai — who stand to benefit from an expanded housing supply also deserve to have their needs represented in the city's future.

This is where UBC students should be paying attention. The debate surrounding the villages plan has primarily focused on the concerns of homeowners. Meanwhile, the people who rely on more affordable rental housing have had comparatively little influence.

The increased supply of below-market housing envisioned by this plan can create a separate option for students to find housing within a short commute of campus. UBC's student housing system faces enormous demand, failing to provide a bed for all those who need it. Some of the original proposed villages are in neighbourhoods close to UBC, including Macdonald Street, Mackenzie Street, Oak Street, Granville Street, and Angus Drive.

Until a solution to UBC's own housing crisis is built, this plan could alleviate some demand, creating more options for students seeking accommodation close to campus.

Students are not simply observers in Vancouver's housing crisis, but are rather among the people who will experience the consequences of decisions like this firsthand. While the villages plan is not a dedicated student housing strategy or a solution to the housing crisis, it is something we should be supporting.

None of this means that concerns raised by opponents should be dismissed. However, if your main concern is loss of tree canopies, then the solution isn't to entirely cancel the plan, but rather to consider how we can better balance construction plans and existing urban tree canopies. If you're concerned about transit or parking, then the city should make those investments part of the development process.

These concerns should inform how the plan is implemented, not serve as reason to abandon it altogether.

Rejecting an entire housing proposal without seriously considering how its shortcomings could be addressed demonstrates a failure to balance the needs of homeowners with the thousands of people struggling to find an affordable place to live.

Vancouver City Councillor Lucy Maloney was one of the few politicians to challenge the decision to abandon the plan altogether. Maloney proposed amendments that would have slowed the implementation of the plan or sent it back to public consultation, allowing council to address resident concerns without completely abandoning the proposal. Both amendments were rejected by council.

Even Mayor Fry, who considers himself a "housing affordability" advocate, voted against the plan. Fry attributes the proposal's failures in part to its proximity to the election, suggesting "it was doomed" from the very start.

But the election is over, and Fry has a new mandate. If the plan's timing was a barrier to its approval, that barrier has now been removed.

The villages plan is not perfect, but neither are any other planning proposals. If our new mayor and council are serious about affordability and creating spaces for all residents to live, they need to stop treating density as a threat and recognize that a city's character is defined not by the buildings, but rather the communities that inhabit them.

For students, faculty and staff here at UBC, this is an opportunity to recognize that decisions made at city hall will shape whether Vancouver remains a place where we can afford to study, work, and build a life. We need to be part of the conversation, and should make our housing needs heard by local politicians elected to represent us.

Vancouver should be building a city where renters, students, families, and young workers can afford to participate and exist within those communities.

The villages plan is an opportunity to move in that direction. Council should revisit it.

EXTENDED BYLINE

Leah Grossman was this story's backfield editor. **Stella Broom** created the graphics. **Sophie Gunn** was the copy editor. **Irisa Rao** designed the page in print.

Cutting Ties Deserves Deliberation

This March, students called on UBC to cut ties with universities upholding apartheid. The motion to do so is misunderstood by senators and faces bureaucratic obstruction, writes student senators Bryan Buraga, Sarah Kamal, and Sultana Razia.



Collage by Skye Shen for *The Ubyssey*

This is an op-ed which was written by guest contributors Sultana Razia, Sarah Kamal, and Bryan Buraga.

Op-eds are subjective essays that take a stance on issues important to the UBC community. The views expressed in an op-ed are the contributor's and don't represent the views of The Ubyssey. Opinion essays are not impartial, but they are still subject to the same editing process and fact-checking standards as anything else published in The Ubyssey's report.

By Sultana Razia (she/her)
a Student Senator at-Large in her fifth year majoring in Cognitive Systems and Economics. Sultana is a senate representative on AMS council.

& Sarah Kamal (all pronouns)
a Graduate Student Senator who was elected with a mandate to advocate for the cutting ties motion. Sarah represented the UBC encampment in talks with the administration in 2024 and helped organize the hunger strike, petitions, and referenda on Palestine at UBC Vancouver campus.

& Bryan Buraga (he/they)
a Graduate Student Senator and Co-Chair of the Student Senate Caucus. Bryan previously served as President of the Students' Society of McGill University, and on the Senate and the Board of Governors of McGill University.

Continued from page 1.

Bringing the cutting-ties motion to the Senate was a lengthy process. Student advocates collected more than 1,400 signatures in support of the campus-wide referendum, whilePalestinian and Jewish students convinced AMS Council not to block the referendum — as Council had done to other referendum questions in previous years — and to endorse a "yes" vote.

Meanwhile, students emailed UBC senators to inform them of the motion and offered to discuss its substance and rationale. Not all senators replied, but some spoke with the students supporting the motion, either face-to-face or by email. Most who engaged were open to learning more about our stance. Some shared perspectives that enhanced our understanding while others were sincere, but misinformed in ways we continue to encounter today. A few were reluctant to speak with students.

When the motion to cut ties with institutions upholding apartheid was introduced in April, the Senate Agenda Committee proposed a special meeting just to address the motion. Senate Chair and UBC President Benoit-Antoine Bacon required that any debate on the special meeting discuss only procedural matters of the rescheduling, not the substance of the cutting ties motion. Because we respected this request, we didn't have a chance to present the motion's rationale or discuss its merits. Certain senators, however, addressed the motion's substance, putting into the record misunderstandings that student senators did not have a chance to correct.

Bacon said that he wanted the special meeting so we could have a full discussion on the motion, yet we watched multiple members of his administration vote "no" to holding the special meeting. Four student senators also abstained from that crucial vote.

A majority of the Senate — 64 per cent — wanted to discuss the cutting-ties motion in a special meeting. But because scheduling a special meeting requires a two-thirds majority, we have yet to have any discussion seven months later.

Instead, the consideration of the cutting-ties motion was delayed while the Provost's Working Group on Global Partnerships developed a set of principles to guide the university's international partnerships. Senator Jasper Lorien said the working group had committed to consulting "proponents of the motion." Lorien is the only student on the working group. Despite other student senators requesting multiple times to attend working group meetings and to invite student proponents to present their concerns, the working group denied these requests.

This week, the working group will present a human rights framework for UBC's institutional partnerships, theoretically making Senate motions to cutting ties with institutions like ours unnecessary. We are deeply concerned that this framework will not answer the call of the student body. How exactly is the working group supposed to address student concerns without discussion with students? Focusing on this framework doesn't seem to address our concerns and prevents our cutting-ties motion from reaching Senate debate.

While any one of these difficulties could be an anomaly, together they form a pattern. Despite our repeated offers to participate and us raising concerns about Senate procedure, students have been sidelined and silenced by the democratic body that upholds UBC's academic mission.

Senate needs to discuss the cutting-ties motion because UBC maintaining institutional ties with universities that uphold apartheid supports ongoing discrimination against UBC's own students and faculty and is neglectful of student safety. Israel's well-documented apartheid system means that students and faculty with Palestinian or Arab identity documents face systemic racism upon entry to Israel. They are disallowed from arriving at Tel Aviv's airport; forced to deal with segregated checkpoints, roads, and services like healthcare; and subjected to a military legal system. Some crimes carry a death penalty — but only if you are Palestinian.

Maintaining these partnerships extends anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian racism to our campuses and shows disregard for the care of UBC students and faculty.

Cutting ties isn't unprecedented and overly political — it is bringing UBC into alignment with Canada's foreign policy. In September 2026, Canada announced it would "enforce targeted measures against [Israeli] settlements and those who facilitate them or profit from them." In doing so, Canada joined the United Kingdom, France, and nine other states in a coordinated pledge to ban imports of goods produced in Israeli settlements which imposes a cost on Israel's system of illegal settlement expansion. UBC partnering with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem — an institution that built its Mount Scopus campus on occupied Palestinian land — flies in the face of Canada's sanctions on settlements. Our university is at odds with federal policy, Canada's recognition of the State of Palestine, and UBC's own commitments to Indigenous rights.

If UBC won't cut ties, it cannot claim to uphold Canadian values.

If, as we suspect, the Global Partnerships' framework does not address our needs, and we are able to present our original cutting-ties motion, we will face the same concerns, misrepresentations, and misunderstandings that we did in April. Most other senators don't say that Israel's conduct is defensible. They are concerned — we believe in good faith — that cutting ties with these institutions would backfire.

Dialogue around such reservations is important. Ideally, these concerns would be raised and addressed during Senate deliberation, which we were not permitted to do at the April meeting.

Some senators are concerned that cutting ties will isolate scholars and students by preventing outside values from reaching Israeli campuses.

UBC archaeologists working in the region might appear to show that partnerships open a channel for outside values. Archaeology shows the opposite. Whoever controls an excavation decides the story the site tells visitors through what is uncovered, preserved, and cleared away. Under occupation, that control belongs to the occupier, allowing them to use the past to strengthen a claim to land that's not their own. This is exactly why international law restricts it. The Second Protocol to the Hague Convention bars an occupying power from concealing or destroying historical evidence and excavating occupied territory except to protect cultural property.

In the Palestinian neighbourhood of Silwan, excavations at the "City of David" site have been run by Elad, a settler organization. Israeli archaeologists have documented how these digs create a single Jewish national narrative that supports settlement in the neighbourhood around them. Contributing to this research does not tell Israeli institutions that the occupation is wrong. Instead, the occupation gets UBC's credibility. A channel that runs in this way is not one worth protecting.

Cutting ties with Israeli universities may harm progressive voices inside Israeli universities — this is a valid concern. Unfortunately, Israeli universities are not the bastions of democracy and liberalism, according to Israeli academic and former UBC fellow Maya Wind. When UBC sends students to study at Israeli partner universities, it places them in institutions that censor Palestinian history and teach a state narrative that writes Palestinians out of their own land. Further, Wind says that many scholars in Israel are calling for external help and would welcome cutting ties with these universities to check the impunity that has led the Israeli government into increasingly horrific war crimes. She points to the complicity of the Israeli academy in repressing and destroying higher education in Palestine, which is a tool for the dispossession of Palestinians.

Our students are not bringing anti-colonial values to Israeli campuses. They are being taught to see occupation as normal. If the concern is that partnerships cause values to cross borders, UBC should be asking what its own students bring home.

If dialogue between scholars is the goal, nothing in our motion prevents it. Individual engagement is not the same as institutional partnership. Cutting institutional ties does not stop a UBC professor from collaborating with an individual Israeli colleague, inviting dissenting scholars to speak here, or publishing jointly. What it ends is UBC's formal endorsement of institutions that are part of the machinery of Israeli occupation.

Faculty have also brought concerns that cutting ties sets a precedent with no end. The logic goes that almost every country is involved in some conflict or injustice, so cutting ties with every problematic institution would leave UBC with no partnerships at all. This misreads what our motion asks for. It does not ask UBC to cut ties wherever there is conflict. It asks UBC to act when a specific and unusually high bar has been met: when a state has been found by an international court of competent jurisdiction to be in breach of the international legal prohibition of racial segregation or apartheid as contained in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

We agree with concerns about the consistency of how this standard is applied: UBC should have clear criteria for when a partnership becomes untenable. That is the purpose of the Global Partnerships Working Group framework that it fails to fulfill. The answer to "we can't act everywhere" cannot be "so we act nowhere." If another country's universities ever met the same threshold, the same principle should apply. Consistency is a reason to act on a principle, not to drop it.

We call on students and faculty to learn from these experiences. UBC isn't trying to dissipate our community's pressure using overt force; it's using the bland face of procedure and the plausible deniability of bureaucracy. We need to remember that we have power as a collective — look no further than CUPE 2278's successful strike vote and the university's subsequent capitulation.

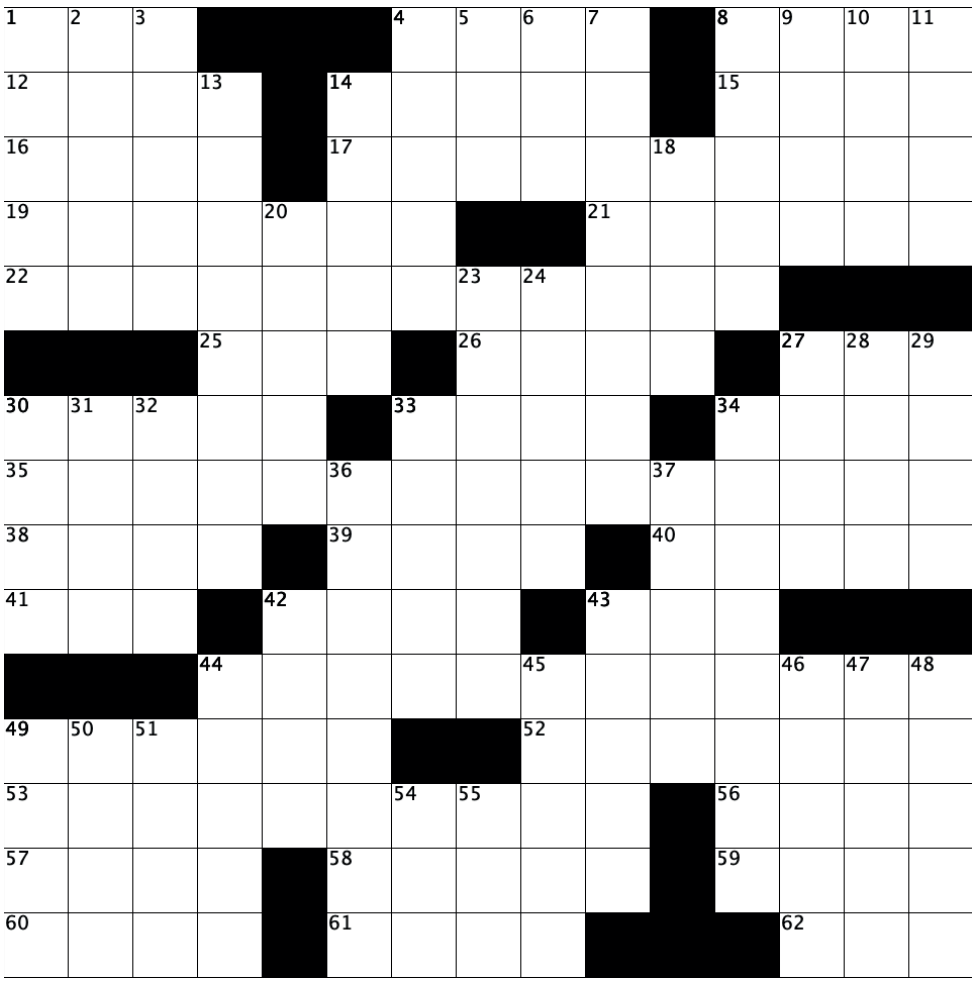
Thousands voted for us to cut ties in the Senate. Now, we need your help to keep UBC accountable to its students and its procedures. We can't be bested by bureaucratic obstructionism: recognize the patterns, call them out, and keep organizing.

Stay informed, stay vocal, and most of all, refuse to accept that our campus maintains ties with institutions upholding apartheid.

EXTENDED BYLINE

Quyen Schroeder was this story's backfield editor. **Isabella Donn** was this story's copy editor. **Skye Shen** created the graphics. **Sophia Clearwater** designed the page in print.

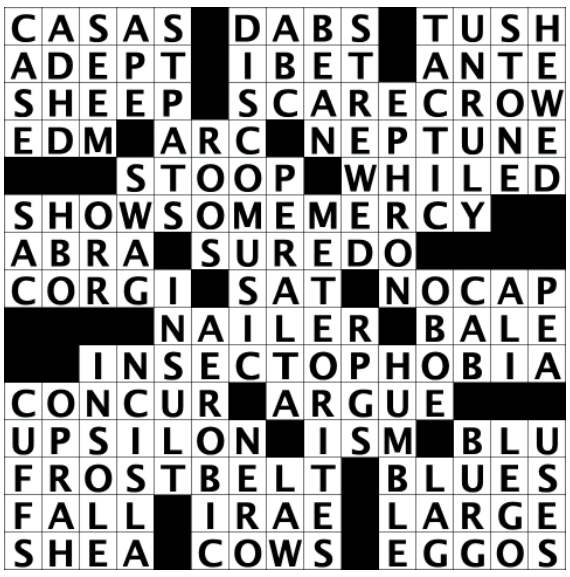
THIS WEEK'S CROSSWORD



Crossword by Dylan Fitzhenry for *The Ubyssey*

Constructor's Note: Have you ever thought that your current university program wasn't quite hard enough? Like you just wish you could be doing a second at the same time? Then this puzzle might be up your alley! In the clues, you'll find six titles for some uncommon double graduates which also act as literal descriptions for six characters scattered throughout the puzzle. Don't get stuck thinking inside the box (except maybe for 35-Across...) and have fun! For questions or feedback, please reach out to *games@ubyssey.ca*

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS



Crossword by Dylan Fitzhenry for *The Ubyssey*

If you want to make the next crossword, go to:

ubyssey.ca/join

We want more custom games for our website and print but we need people like you to make them!

ACROSS

1. Promising sound from a barbecue
4. Slime, or gunk, or muck, or crud, for example
8. Give up
12. Name that gives a hard grade?
14. Wear away, as rocks by the ocean
15. Vancouver's is over 1.2 trillion square centimetres
16. Square centimetre, for example
17. Bachelor of Law and Film?
19. Pockets that may be filled with cheese
21. Drag race sounds
22. Doctor of Life Science and Developmental Biology?
25. Digital storage measurement equal to 8,000 bits
26. King or queen, for example
27. Master of Theology and Classic Literature?
30. One coming in 12th place, in "Mario Kart Wii"
33. Spots to sizzle some sausage
34. Snowballs, for example
35. Associate of Philosophy and Quantum Physics?
38. Exclamations of discovery
39. Bun or beehive
40. Organizations (abbr.)
41. Major of Music and Astronomy?
42. Actress DuVall of "Veep"
43. Angsty punk aesthetic
44. Minor of Graphic Art and Counselling Psychology?
49. Cover of frozen land (and not the Tim Horton's drink that apparently has an extra P)
52. End of a parliamentary debate, from the French for "fence"
53. University program resulting in expertise in two fields, and a description of the clues for six characters in this puzzle
56. Heated times to be in Quebec
57. To be in Quebec
58. ___ Dragon (aptly-named final enemy of "Minecraft")
59. "Aw, fiddlesticks!"
60. It comes with expression and esteem?
61. ___ in Boots
62. Green-lights

DOWN

1. Small part of a blue group
2. Navigation system for a submarine
3. Four-armed Hindu deity of destruction
4. Spot that might get pulled during hurdles
5. Suffix after bass, in an orchestral instrument
6. Poem of praise
7. Annoyingly obstinate
8. Unlike fan fiction
9. "Therefore..."
10. Consider (to be)
11. Pointed parts of an elf
13. Bad eggs, figuratively and literally
14. Them femmes
18. Dry, as both Antarctica and the Sahara
20. "Whatever you say, dude..."
23. "Coldplay CEO" event, for example
24. Ballroom dance that takes two to do, idiomatically
27. Some pickup trucks, in short
28. The only country that begins with its first letter
29. High points in Fiji and Beijing?
30. Exam for a future attorney (abbr.)
31. Number of tentacles on el pulpo
32. Phony
33. Pan flautist, for example
34. Like a box of chocolates (you never know what you're gonna get...)
36. Singer of "Don't Start Now", as mispronounced in a viral meme
37. Title role played five times by Sylvester Stallone
42. Giga-___ (meme image featuring a man with an enormous chin and confident smile)
43. Wrangler of wriggly reef-dwellers
44. String player's symbol between treble and bass
45. Slushy drinks
46. Musical fade away
47. ___ havoc
48. Constructions built by cranes
49. "Beware the ___ of March"
50. "Aww..."
51. Title for Charles Grey (who is the namesake of a popular blend of tea)
54. Antelope you may find at the zoo, that aptly rhymes with "zoo"
55. Ends of addresses, briefly