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No people in the world manage the four seasons better than we Canadians. The turning of those seasons, we’re not always so good at.

We lose fall to winter the way a child loses a mitten, without intent or regret. Winter becomes spring through a more tedious melt, while the declaration of summer’s arrival rests entirely, it feels, on one’s pursuits and passions. There’s a weekend for golfers (tee up), another for cottagers (docks in), and another still for gardeners (weeds out).

Only summer’s end seems to be something we can all agree on. It’s today. Labour Day. So long, summer. Announcing autumn. The calendar may say not for another three weeks. Yet we all know a season – mentally, spiritually – turns today.

With that in mind – and with the arrival of all that autumn presents, busier markets, new homework schedules, fall food, political campaigns and entertainment delights – we present our first Labour Day ebook, Fall Forward. It’s available only for Globe subscribers, to help you prepare for the coming onslaught, whether you’re a parent, a student, a policy wonk, an investor, a film buff, a hockey nut, or maybe all of the above.

In these pages, you will enjoy a primer full of Globe insights on the news and trends worth watching this fall, as well as compelling gems (and, yes, recipes) from our archives.

Summer may be gone, but we’re Canadian. We make the most of what our seasons deliver. So, welcome autumn, and count on The Globe and Mail to help along the way, through our website, mobile apps, newspaper, magazines and more ebooks for subscribers. Enjoy!

John Stackhouse
Editor-in-Chief
Politics
Politics

For news hounds, there’s no shortage of headline fodder this fall. At home, Stephen Harper’s agenda for the rest of his term will grab attention, along with the Charter of Quebec values. Abroad, eyeballs will be on Julian Assange’s bid for Aussie senatorship, and the final fate of Keystone XL.

G20

Russian President Vladimir Putin – who has been making few international friends of late – hosts world leaders at this year’s G20.

The gathering in St. Petersburg comes as a growing number of issues place Russia on the defensive as it prepares to host the Sochi Winter Olympics in early 2014.

U.S. President Barack Obama is making the trip but has cancelled a bilateral meeting with Mr. Putin because of Russia’s decision to grant asylum to Edward Snowden, a former U.S. intelligence official who leaked information to the British and American press.

The President – as well as Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird – also criticized Russia for its law banning gay “propaganda.”

The official G20 agenda is largely centred on approving new international rules to prevent tax evasion. The focus of the G20 is generally on economic matters by ensuring that national monetary and fiscal policies are in sync globally. However, pressing international files – such as developments in Egypt and Syria – are sure to be discussed when leaders meet.

For Prime Minister Stephen Harper, the G20 offers important opportunities for one-on-one meetings where he can press Canada’s efforts to strike new trade deals with several key members of the G20.

Bill Curry

Defining ‘Quebec values’

The long-simmering debate over the limits on religious freedoms in Quebec will intensify this fall with the tabling of a contentious Charter of Quebec Values.

The government of Premier Pauline Marois, who has made the question of secularism in the public sphere a priority, says it will table proposals this September on accommodating religious minorities. The issue has been disputed in Quebec for years and got a full airing during a high-profile commission in 2007 headed
by leading intellectuals Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor.

The issue promises to be a fractious one. Leaks about the government’s proposed charter suggest it would curb the display of religious articles of faith such as the Muslim hijab and the Jewish kippa in public-sector workplaces. The ban would reportedly extend from elementary schools to daycares to hospitals. Provincial opposition parties and minority groups have voiced concerns that the proposals are both discriminatory and unnecessary.

Members of the PQ government have remained mum on the details of its Charter but say they believe Quebec needs rules to guide requests for religious accommodations. It promises to table its proposals when the National Assembly reconvenes on Sept. 17, with legislation to follow. Ingrid Peritz

50 years after JFK

Young, brilliant, and charismatic John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Jackie, his sophisticated and beautiful first lady, brought glamour and great promise to the White House. Mr. Kennedy was the Pulitzer-prize winning war hero son of one of America’s most powerful political families and a Catholic; the youngest man ever elected president and the first one born in the 20th century.

But Camelot, as the Kennedy era was dubbed, was bloodily cut short after barely 1,000 days by an assassin’s bullet on Nov. 23, 1963 in Texas.

The killing shocked the world and elevated Kennedy to almost mythic status. Still revered by many, history has uncovered the darker aspects of the Kennedy presidency – his chronic philandering, secret back-channel Cold War deals, the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba and the escalation of war in Vietnam. A half-century later, tangled conspiracy theories still swirl around the six seconds in Dallas with the Mob, the CIA and Cuban Communists among those implicated.

The Kennedy clan, still marred by tragedies, has largely faded, but the president’s great achievements still endure. It was Mr. Kennedy who vowed America would put a man on the moon. At home, Mr. Kennedy was cautious on civil rights but helped set in motion the sweeping changes that would transform America during the wild and sometimes violent decade of the 1960s. Paul Koring

Prime Minister – and candidate

October’s Throne Speech will kick off a short and heated fall session of Parliament. But it will also mark the unofficial start of the next election campaign.
Prime Minister Stephen Harper used the front end of his first majority government to tackle controversial files such as reforming Old Age Security and Employment Insurance. Now, the Throne Speech is his opportunity to lay out the government’s plans for the final stretch, with an eye on winning back some of the political support that has drifted away from the Conservatives since they won 39.6 per cent of the vote in 2011.

After getting an earful through the summer, Conservatives realize they will need a strong response to the scandal over Senate expenses. The problem is that their hands are largely tied as they wait for the Supreme Court to rule on the constitutionality of the various options for reform.

Throne Speech promises tend to be at a fairly high level, with details to be outlined later. However, Mr. Harper’s finance minister, Jim Flaherty, has already said he will aggressively reject proposals for new spending in order to announce balanced books before the next election.

How to make a splash without spending money is the Prime Minister’s challenge this fall. Bill Curry

Julian Assange: Senator

Australia’s national elections are Sept. 7 – the culmination of a 30-day campaign crammed with everything from sexting scandals to Islamophobic gaffes by parliamentary candidates. Apart from Australia’s usual collection of small parties, the big race is between the Liberal-National coalition, led by Tony Abbott and now in opposition, and the Labor Party of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (who recently took back leadership from Julia Gillard). The economy is the core issue, but the election has also veered towards Australia’s policy on “boat people,” with Mr. Rudd vigorously defending his government’s tactics to discourage such immigrants and keep asylum seekers in detention centres. As for the leaders: Mr. Abbott has long fought an image as a sexist, and has proposed a generous parental leave policy; Mr. Rudd’s platform argues that Labor has kept Australia out of recession. Adding fizz to the race is Julian Assange. Although the WikiLeaks founder is holed up at the London embassy of Ecuador, which has granted him political asylum, he has set up a WikiLeaks party, with a platform focusing on transparency and human rights, and is running for a Senate seat.

Susan Sachs

Pipeline, at last?

After years of delay, a decision on the controversial Keystone XL pipeline should
come this fall. The $5.3-billion project to funnel upwards of 1-million barrels of Canadian oil sands crude daily to sprawling coastal refineries in Texas and Louisiana has morphed from being just another big pipeline to an iconic symbol of whether a grave threat looms from carbon emissions driving climate change.

Opponents claim Keystone XL will unleash massive and dangerous development of Alberta’s vast oil sands reserves, spewing more carbon-heavy fossil fuels into an already damaged atmosphere. They lampoon Canadian claims of job creation and energy security for Americans. Keystone XL would send Alberta’s “tar sands” – as they call them – to world markets. Instead, they want the carbon-heavy Canadian reserves left entombed forever while the world weans itself off fossil fuels and turns to greener energy sources. Keystone XL has emerged as a key battle in the political fight over future energy policy in the United States.

President Barack Obama says he will reject the project unless it doesn’t make climate change worse, seen by many as a call to Ottawa to clean up its emissions act. Prime Minister Stephen Harper calls the decision a “no brainer” but Ottawa is scrambling to shine as the decision day looms. Paul Koring

More energy economics

B.C. Premier Christy Clark is counting on the fledgling industry for liquefied natural gas (LNG) to be British Columbia’s economic trump card. In May’s provincial election, Ms. Clark led the Liberals to a surprising majority government victory after she campaigned hard with an optimistic campaign that, among other things, touted natural gas reserves as the key to driving B.C.’s long-term prosperity. Over the next year, she will be relying on cabinet minister Rich Coleman to help ensure that details will be finalized for a proposed tax on exports of LNG.

Transporting LNG in tankers from the West Coast will help meet Asia’s thirst for energy. The challenge will be getting government and companies to navigate massive construction budgets and complex negotiations as they secure LNG supplies to load onto tankers.

There are a flurry of private-sector proposals to tap natural gas reserves in northeastern British Columbia, and plans for constructing pipelines to carry the product to export terminals, including ones to be located at Prince Rupert and Kitimat. The National Energy Board has already started to issue export licences for LNG proponents, though it remains to be seen which plans will ultimately come to fruition in what will be a multiyear process. Brent Jang
Critics call Quebec’s proposed ban on religious headwear ‘Putinesque’

The report that revealed that the minority government of Premier Pauline Marois would seek to prohibit religious symbols in the public sector from daycares to hospitals.

On Tuesday, a news report suggested that the minority government of Premier Pauline Marois wants to prohibit public employees from wearing items such as hijabs, turbans and kippas, in a broad ban that could extend from elementary and university teachers to nurses and childcare workers.

The minister responsible for the values charter, Bernard Drainville, would not comment on the report, published in the Journal de Montréal and the Journal de Québec. However, no one from the Marois government disavowed it.

The PQ is expected to table new rules in the fall, part of a set of proposals by the government to enshrine the secular character of the province into law.

The measures come as Quebec faces renewed debate over the accommodation of religious minorities in the province. The province made headlines worldwide this summer after the Quebec Soccer Federation, with Ms. Marois’s blessing, banned Sikh turbans on soccer pitches; the ban was repealed under national pressure. And Mr. Drainville condemned long-standing parking exemptions for observant Jews during religious holidays in Montreal, saying “we cannot start saying we are going to change the highway code and the parking signs according to different religions.”

But the PQ’s supposed remedy to such cases, as outlined in the Journal de Montréal, suggests that the Marois government can expect significant blowback on the issue. Critics called the reported proposals divisive, draconian, and even reminiscent of Vladimir Putin’s Russia.

Human-rights lawyer Julius Grey, who has fought numerous constitutional cases, says the rules would likely fail a challenge under freedom-of-religion provisions in the Canadian Charter of Rights. Because Quebec’s new rules would reportedly exempt private schools,
the proposals risk driving minorities into separate, religious-based schools, he said.

Mr. Grey also said such “values” rules were more typical of the political right than of a party like the PQ that sees itself as progressive. “A charter of values smacks of the [U.S.] Tea Party,” Mr. Grey said.

According to the media report, the new charter would also apply to the private sector by amending the Quebec Charter of Human Rights to include the principle of equality between men and women. Some institutions, however, could reportedly seek exemptions to the rules.

Ms. Marois campaigned heavily on identity issues in last year’s election campaign and her government has already promised a ban on overt religious symbols among civil servants; opinion polls have shown Quebeckers support limits on displays of religion in the public sphere.

However, the reported proposals are running into political headwinds.

The head of the left-leaning Québec Solidaire, Françoise David, said the measures could set off situations where a male Muslim teacher with a beard could teach, but his headscarf-wearing wife could not. The ban would also cover ostentatious crucifixes.

“There are people who wear the crucifix. Are we going to start to measure the size of crucifixes?” Ms. David asked.

The PQ has said it would allow the prominent crucifix in the National Assembly to remain over the Speaker’s chair, since it is an artifact of Quebec’s heritage.

Charles Taylor, a prominent intellectual and co-chair of a high-profile commission that studied the issue of religious accommodation in Quebec in 2007, compared the reported proposals to Russia’s restrictions on gays. He called them “Putinesque.”

While Quebec institutions must remain neutral, state employees should be free to express their religious convictions, he said Tuesday.

“Hydro-Québec isn’t Hydro-Catholic, Hydro-Muslim, Hydro-Atheist,” he told the TVA network. But “employees are individuals … they are free.” He called the reported proposals “absolutely draconian” and said they would create obstacles to immigrants’ integration in Quebec.

Quebec Liberal Leader Philippe Couillard called the measures a trial balloon, and is on record as saying he will oppose a new charter if the rules end up being divisive. “If the sought-after goal is a strategy to divide Quebeckers, foment the idea that Quebec is under siege and at risk, we’re not there,” he told the Presse Canadienne this month.
Reboot and refresh

A ‘fatigued’ brand. A new, charismatic challenger. An economy that refuses to pick up steam. As Stephen Harper marks the second anniversary of his majority election victory, The Globe looks at how the Prime Minister is preparing to win the next one.

STEVEN CHASE
Originally published on May 2, 2013

Stephen Harper, who turned 54 this week, is a man on the verge of a reboot as his government approaches the mid-point of its third term in office.

It’s been two years ago Thursday since Mr. Harper was returned to 24 Sussex with a majority government.

The Prime Minister is now crafting a sizable cabinet shuffle for mid-2013 – likely relatively early this summer – that is intended to refresh his ministry and showcase for Canadians the team that he will campaign with during a 2015 election.

Former PMO officials say they expect that Mr Harper’s chief of staff, Nigel Wright, is approaching ministers to determine whether they plan to retire after this term and could therefore be dropped from cabinet to make way for new blood.

Mr. Harper is expected to follow up this overhaul of his ministerial team by proroguing Parliament – hitting the reset button on the session – before returning in late September with a new Speech from the Throne that lays out the political agenda for the last half of his mandate.

This refresh is well timed.

After more than seven years in office, Mr. Harper’s political brand is feeling its age, according to pollster Nik Nanos. “The Harper brand is becoming a little fatigued,” he said.

Like many political leaders after any length at the helm, the Prime Minister now has a record that includes ministerial resignations for slip-ups, government misadventures like picking the F-35 fighter jet without a proper search, and unaccounted-for funds such as the $3.1-billion in money earmarked for anti-terrorism flagged by the federal Auditor-General this week.

The Conservatives have sold Mr. Harper as the only leader who can be trusted to be Canada’s economic steward and, while this country has fared remarkably well compared to its peers, the economy remains weak and slow-growing even several years after the recession ended.

“As the economy becomes a little more uncertain, it kind of cuts directly to his personal brand,” Mr. Nanos said.
The Prime Minister is also facing a new challenger in the form of Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau.

Even Conservatives who remain confident they can fend off the Montreal MP say they’re concerned by the press buzz the son of former prime minister Pierre Trudeau is generating.

Mr. Harper retains a commanding lead over his rivals, NDP Leader Tom Mulcair and Mr. Trudeau, when it comes to perceived competence, Mr. Nanos says.

“It’s the long-term trend that counts and what we’ve seen in the last six months is a general erosion of positive views related to the Prime Minister,” the pollster said. “What we’ve seen are fluctuations in views, which are usually the first indicator of change. He still enjoys a comparative advantage, but he does not stand as tall politically as he did five years ago.”

The pollster suggested Mr. Harper needs a signature project “to demonstrate there are still things to be done under a Stephen Harper Canada,” adding: “Parties that win over the long term actually remake themselves.”

The shuffle will bring new faces into cabinet as Mr. Harper recruits from those MPs who have been performing support duties as parliamentary secretaries to ministers. Hopefuls include Chris Alexander, Kellie Leitch, and Shelly Glover.

The key question for the shuffle is whether Finance Minister Jim Flaherty is ready to go.

The long-serving Whitby MP has said he wants to remain until the budget is balanced – but it’s far from certain he would stay another term. “I would be shocked if he ran again,” one long-time colleague said.

Mr. Harper would have to decide whether to replace the minister right away if Mr. Flaherty tells him this is his final term in office.

Mr. Nanos, however, points out that the Harper government might unsettle markets by replacing both Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney – who’s leaving for England at the end of June – and Mr. Flaherty at the same time. “That might be too much of a change. Until the new Bank of Canada governor is settled, they are probably going to want to keep Flaherty there.”

While the Prime Minister is putting a fresh coat of paint on his government, the overriding political imperative in Ottawa for the next two years is balancing the budget. The Conservatives are determined to retire the deficit by 2015 – barring a sudden and drastic drop in economic fortunes.

Mr. Harper needs this. He promised to eliminate the deficit in the last
campaign, and his strategy for the next election is predicated on a balanced budget. The Conservatives want to deliver on pricey political promises such as income-tax splitting that should form the core of their next election platform but are contingent upon surplus cash in federal coffers.

All signs suggest the Conservative’s fall Throne Speech will focus on the unfinished business of economic reforms that have become a mainstay for a government with little money to spend but a desire to make Canada more competitive. It should wrap together labour market changes to attract skilled foreigners faster, find more jobs for aboriginals, close loopholes that allow too many temporary overseas workers, and enact the new job skills grant announced in Budget 2013.

It will include references to Immigration Minister Jason Kenney’s planned Expressions of Interest system for more quickly locating skilled immigrants, as well as concerted efforts to find new markets for Canadian petroleum such as the Gateway project.

The Prime Minister’s Office rejects the idea Mr. Harper’s brand needs to change. “For us, the brand is the economy,” said Andrew MacDougall, Mr. Harper’s director of communications. “That’s what the Prime Minister cares about and thinks about. We’re facing some tough circumstances out in the world and he’s not going to take his focus off this and he’s not going to change what he is. That’s not what the country needs right now. We need someone who has the experience and wherewithal to keep moving along with the reforms we need to make.”

Harper’s bumpy ride

Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s leadership score – a combination of polling results about trust, competence and vision for the country – is down but remains above that of his major competitors, Thomas Mulcair of the NDP and Liberal Justin Trudeau. “He still enjoys a comparative advantage but he does not stand as tall politically as he did five years ago,” says pollster Nik Nanos. “We’ve seen fluctuations in views, which are usually the first indicator of change.”

Still, when the Harper brand slides, his support doesn’t go to other leaders, Mr. Nanos says. In those cases, “Canadians who previously think Harper is the best on key measures move into the none of the above or unsure category. There is a parking effect. This explains why he has been able to rebound whenever his brand power has weakened.”
Assange plans run for Australian Senate

WikiLeaks founder hopes election victory will put pressure on Canberra to help free him from the Ecuadorean embassy in London

PAUL WALDIE
Originally published on April 6, 2013

For nine months, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has been holed up in the Ecuadorean embassy in London knowing that if he leaves, he’ll be extradited to Sweden to face questioning about sexual-assault allegations and then possibly sent to the United States where officials are after him over WikiLeaks’ release of thousands of secret documents in 2010. But Mr. Assange has now hatched a novel escape plan: running for the Senate in Australia.

At first glance that might appear far-fetched. However, Mr. Assange and his supporters note that he is an Australian citizen and he’s listed on the electoral roll in the state of Victoria, where his family still lives, making him eligible to run. They also point out that under Australia’s complicated voting system for the upper chamber, where six senators will be elected in each state on Sept. 14, it only takes about 14 per cent of the vote to win a seat. And they say Mr. Assange is taking the political move seriously. He and his father, John Shipton, have helped set up the WikiLeaks Party in Australia, which is being formally launched Saturday and plans to field up to half a dozen Senate candidates across the country.

“It’s a real campaign,” said high-profile Australian lawyer Greg Barns, a long-time backer of Mr. Assange who became the party’s national campaign manager this week. Mr. Assange and others believe “that there needs to be a transformation from WikiLeaks to involvement in the political process in Australia.”

In an interview from Melbourne, Mr. Barns said Mr. Assange has received up to 25-per-cent support in recent polling and he appeals to Australians’ sense of backing an outcast. “I think there is an element of Australians who love the underdog and see him as being an underdog against the U.S.,” he said.

If Mr. Assange wins, the plan is to put pressure on the Australian government to help free him from the embassy. The government has shown little interest in Mr. Assange’s case and Prime Minister Julia Gillard has condemned WikiLeaks’ publications as “grossly irresponsible.”

Mr. Barns believes a Senate win would force the government’s hand. It would be “faced with a situation where the people
of Victoria have elected a senator to represent them and the Australian government then has to decide are we going to use political and diplomatic capital to bring Julian Assange home, or are we going to allow him to continue to languish in the Ecuadorean embassy despite the fact that he has been elected,” Mr. Barns said.

“I think that that presents a real dilemma for the Australian government, because you’ve this person who the voters want to represent them and he wasn’t disqualified for any reason, he wasn’t ineligible for any reason, there is no reason that he can’t take his seat in the Senate other than the fact that he sought asylum in the Ecuadorean embassy.”

All of this remains a long shot. Small parties rarely win seats in Australia’s 76-seat Senate, which is dominated by the Labor and Liberal parties. There is only one independent member and one senator who represents the small Democratic Labor Party. Even if Mr. Assange won, he would have no automatic diplomatic protection as a senator and he could still be arrested by British police if he left the embassy. In a recent interview with an Australian website called The Conversation, Mr. Assange said, if he is elected in Australia, he believes Britain would be compelled to let him go or face an international diplomatic row.

And then there is the issue of campaigning. The official campaign period will begin in August and Mr. Assange won’t likely be available to do any in-person events. Mr. Barns, a veteran political organizer who once led a failed bid to make Australia a republic, said much of the campaigning will be done online and through media interviews. But he acknowledged this won’t be a typical campaign, noting that while he contacts Mr. Assange regularly by phone and e-mail, he has yet to meet him face to face.

“He’s an unusual candidate,” Mr. Barns said with a laugh. “You can’t sort of ring him up and say let’s go and have a coffee.”
The unlikely environmentalist

Founder of hedge fund interested in energy sector is emerging as patron of coalition of environmental groups opposing oil sands

JOSH WINGROVE
Originally published on April 6, 2013

EDMONTON – Tom Steyer is a man at odds with himself. He made his fortune by founding a hedge fund with a keen interest in the energy sector, including leading oil, pipeline and mining companies. The firm also gobbled up stock in BP a year after its Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. All this should hardly make him a darling of environmentalists.

Yet there’s a green streak to Mr. Steyer – one that led last year to something of an existential crisis: Climate change, the American billionaire decided, was the “defining issue of our generation.” And so he left the firm he had spent a quarter-century building, Farallon Capital Management, because it valued a company’s bottom line, not its carbon footprint.

“I have a passion to push for what I believe is the right thing,” Mr. Steyer, 55, said in an interview with The Globe and Mail this week. “And I couldn’t do it in good conscience and hold down a job – and get paid very well for doing a job – where I wasn’t directly doing the right thing.”

The Harper government and Canada’s oil patch might have wished he had stayed at Farallon.

Mr. Steyer has since set his sights on the proposed Keystone XL pipeline. He has waded into the Democratic primary in Massachusetts by lampooning a pro-Keystone Democrat, Stephen Lynch, for being in the pocket of “big oil.” Mr. Steyer also accused him – in the form of a cheeky banner, pulled by a plane through Boston’s skies – of a loyalty akin to treason: being a Montreal Canadiens fan.

It matters not to Mr. Steyer that Massachusetts could hardly be farther from both the Keystone route and his native San Francisco. Or that Mr. Lynch’s anti-Keystone opponent had to donate to charity because Mr. Steyer’s interference violated a pact to keep outsiders from influencing the race. Or that Alberta’s heavy oil is, according a Jacobs Consultancy report cited by the provincial government, less carbon-intensive than heavy oil from Mr. Steyer’s home state of California.

“We have very little tolerance for hypocrisy on the magnitude that Tom Steyer has exhibited,” Lynch spokesman Scott Ferson said.
But Mr. Steyer has powerful friends—the likes of Warren Buffet, Bill Gates, Al Gore and Nancy Pelosi, the House minority leader who also happens to be his congresswoman. And this week, Mr. Steyer personally hosted President Barack Obama for a $5,000-a-head fundraiser, pleading with him to stop Keystone.

More broadly, though, he’s emerging as a patron of the coalition of environmental groups targeting the oil sands. An anti-Keystone protest staged this week targeted an Obama fundraiser hosted by Ann and Gordon Getty, oil heirs, and not that of Mr. Steyer, BP-buying hedge fund titan. “Tom Steyer is a great activist,” said Becky Bond, political director of CREDO Action, one of the groups that planned the protest. “We are allies in this fight.”

But, Mr. Steyer acknowledges, this whole fight isn’t strictly about Keystone. “There’s definitely a symbolic side to this,” he said. “It has become, you know, a symbol in some ways in the fight over how to think about this. And that happens sometimes. Sometimes, specific incidents take on a life of their own.”

Mr. Steyer founded Farallon—now reportedly a $20-billion fund—in 1986. He’s a graduate of Yale and Stanford business school; at the latter, he and his wife, Kat Taylor, have since donated $40-million to found the eponymous TomKat Center for Sustainable Energy. The couple have also signed the Giving Pledge, to donate half their fortune to charity, and opened a not-for-profit community bank in Oakland, which Ms. Taylor leads.

Mr. Steyer doesn’t evoke an image befitting a hedge fund titan. He drives a decade-old Honda hybrid, which he bought at the time because he didn’t “want to contribute to this [Iraq] war by driving a big gas-user.” He wears plaid ties, typically red—he bought a bunch, and now people buy them for him, so it remains his thing—and has tousled hair that’s just this side of shaggy.

He and Ms. Taylor have four children, age 19 to 24. As they have grown older, Mr. Steyer has waded more into politics. He was a founding member of a Democratic think tank, the Hamilton Project. Then-senator Barack Obama attended the opening. Mr. Steyer worked on, and helped bankroll, two high-profile ballot initiatives in California. In the first case, in 2010, he fought against Prop 23, which would have relaxed the state’s environmental laws. In 2012, he was the force behind Prop 39, which toughened the tax code for major corporations. He struck a populist tone by saying the cash-strapped state needed to “close a loophole,” leaving California manufacturers fuming.

“There was no reason to slip the rug out from these very large, substantial, high-wage manufacturers ... and heap all
these new costs onto them, and then call it some tax loophole, which it wasn’t,” said Gino DiCaro, vice-president of the California Manufacturers and Technology Association, which fought Mr. Steyer on both ballot initiatives. “He clearly succeeded. He has lots of money and got his message out there.”

Mr. DiCaro was left with a grudging admiration for his deep-pocketed rival. “When he gets behind something, he doesn’t quit ... You can say we congratulate him on his success, because he’s definitely good at what he does.”

In Massachusetts, Mr. Steyer is targeting his fellow Democrat, Mr. Lynch, a congressman seeking the nomination to replace the former senator, now Secretary of State John Kerry. Mr. Lynch is pro-Keystone while his chief opponent, front-runner and fellow Democratic congressman Ed Markey, is against the proposed pipeline. The positions are largely moot, as Keystone doesn’t come anywhere near Massachusetts, but Mr. Steyer says climate decisions affect all 50 states. He has bought ads, hired a roving billboard and made the allegation that Mr. Lynch was a Canadiens fan (a play on him being a fan, also, of Canadian oil). Mr. Lynch’s camp called that “outrageous,” and has fired back.

“[It] leaves us to wonder if the money makes him that arrogant, or was he born that way?” said Mr. Ferson, his spokesman, adding the congressman will support whatever Keystone decision the President makes. “But that’s not good enough for Tom Steyer, who made all of his money off of BP stock? It’s the height of hypocrisy.”

TransCanada Corp., the company behind the proposed Keystone XL project, has also fired back. “If Mr. Steyer is truly concerned about climate change, he should focus his money and time on much larger sources of greenhouse gases than the oil sands industry, such as coal-fired power generation in the United States,” spokesman Grady Semmens said in a statement.

When these critiques are presented to Mr. Steyer, he pauses.

“Of course coal is a huge issue here, in the United States and around the world. And I don’t disagree with TransCanada on the need for us to dramatically reduce our usage of coal,” said Mr. Steyer, who last month spoke at a Los Angeles anti-coal rally alongside Mr. Gore. “But I think the biggest thing that we need to understand is that we need a different way of thinking about energy, and honestly this pipeline is an example of the wrong way to think about energy.”

Rumours, meanwhile, have swirled about Mr. Steyer’s political future. He says he has no plans to seek office. And
he might be more valuable to Mr. Obama that way, working on climate change to shift public opinion and giving, he hopes, the “leeway” for Mr. Obama to nix the pipeline. Or, at least, that was Mr. Steyer’s pitch to the President during Wednesday’s fundraiser.

“We said we will go out and do that work for you, because we know you understand these issues and we’d like you to be able to do the right thing,” he said.

Farallon’s holdings, as of its last Securities and Exchange Commission filing, include Kinder Morgan, which is pushing to expand a pipeline from Alberta to Vancouver; Nexen, one of Calgary’s largest energy companies; and Potash Corp., the Saskatchewan mining giant. Farallon owns stakes in CB&I, a leading pipeline and oil platform manufacturer, and Union Pacific, one of many railroads moving more and more oil with existing pipelines full. Farallon also still holds stock in BP. Mr. Steyer left Farallon at the end of last year, but all these were purchased under his watch. He still holds a stake, saying he’s asked for his portfolio to be greened.

“I really, honestly, have tried to think about that hard, and square my behaviour to my beliefs. Everybody gets to decide whether I’ve succeeded,” he said. He says he prefers not to read the press, but does take encouragement from family. His eldest child, a 24-year-old working at an NGO in Tanzania, cheers on his Keystone fight – “an enormous motivator for me,” Mr. Steyer said, allegations of hypocrisy notwithstanding.

“I’m going to try and be straightforward. It weirds me out to hear people say either I’m terrific or I’m a total snake,” he said. “I’d like to think I’m an okay guy.”
Business
A buyer for BlackBerry

By the end of the year, Canada’s best-known technology brand may no longer exist as a public company.

BlackBerry, the Waterloo-based maker of the world’s first smartphones, is on a quest to sell itself to the highest bidder. The company is looking for an investor to help it avoid a spiral of declining sales in the face of rivals such as Apple and Samsung.

One of the company’s options is to go private. Such a move would mean buying back all BlackBerry’s shares on the public market, which would require billions of dollars. A number of private equity firms, including Canada’s FairFax Financial, which is already BlackBerry’s biggest shareholder, might be able to raise enough money to buy the company outright.

BlackBerry may also find a suitor among its many competitors, such as Microsoft, Amazon or Facebook. All those companies have enough cash on hand to buy the company outright, but once they do so, might decide to split BlackBerry into parts, get rid of a significant portion of its workforce or even stop production altogether.

Another possibility: BlackBerry is stuck with no buyer at all, forcing it to remain a public entity. But given its plummeting sales and stock price, doing nothing might be the worst outcome of all for Canada’s once-mighty technology giant.

Omar El Akkad

The home game

The housing market’s year-long slump appears to be coming to a close, and economists will be watching for any signs that it is either heating up again too quickly or poised for another downturn. Ottawa, meanwhile, is trying to keep the market hovering between those two extremes, and has shown its willingness to intervene when necessary.

Sales of existing homes are now approaching the levels they were at
before Finance Minister Jim Flaherty tightened the mortgage rules in July 2012, a move that sent sales plunging. Vancouver, the hardest-hit market, is in the midst of a rebound, helping nationwide home sales to come in higher than a year ago for the first time since the rule changes. Sales in many other cities have also picked up to an extent that has surprised economists in recent months.

But there are plenty of threats to this upturn. Unemployment is a big one. The jobs numbers have been weaker than expected, and strong employment levels are critical for the housing market. Higher mortgage rates are another concern, with the banks likely to bolster their rates in step with changes in five-year government bond yields. For now, the central bank continues to characterize the housing market as one of the largest domestic threats facing the Canadian economy.

Tara Perkins

Wanted: World’s most powerful banker

All eyes will be on the U.S. Federal Reserve this fall, as its chairman, Ben Bernanke, concludes one of the most dramatic tenures in the history of the world’s most powerful central bank. It was on his watch that the U.S. and much of the rest of the world were plunged in 2008 into the worst financial crisis and deepest economic slump since the Great Depression. In response, he boldly steered the Fed into previously uncharted territory, slashing interest rates to zero and launching unprecedented monetary easing to keep banks afloat and credit flowing. He ignored critics who feared the policies would trigger inflation and create new asset bubbles.

The economy is now on the mend, however, so the tricky task ahead is to reduce this high-octane stimulus without sending the patient back into shock. Much of this work will fall to Mr. Bernanke’s successor after he departs in January. The leading candidates for a post that ranks just below the U.S. president in terms of domestic power and global influence are Fed vice-chair Janet Yellen and former treasury secretary Larry Summers. Ms. Yellen, who has prodded Fed policy makers to do even more to help the economy, would be the first woman in the job. The markets fear Mr. Summers would move faster to reduce monetary stimulus. All of which will make for considerable nervousness in coming weeks. Brian Milner

Speaking of banks ...

They were dark days that few will ever forget – whether senior Bay Street bankers or small business owners. Five years ago this fall, the global financial system
nearly collapsed when a U.S. housing crash snowballed into a global economic crisis. In just a matter of months, Canadians saw the Toronto Stock Exchange soar higher than 15,000, and then lose half its value.

It is a period that few people want to revisit. Lehman Brothers, one of the world’s biggest investment banks, went bankrupt, and countless other financial institutions had to be bailed out — including AIG, the world’s biggest insurer. The chief culprit: complex securities such as “collateralized debt obligations,” which packaged mortgages into new investments, and credit default swaps, which served as a form of insurance. When the U.S. housing market went bust, both conspired to generate tens of billions of dollars of losses.

To navigate Canada’s financial institutions through the tidal waters, it took tight-knit collaboration between Ottawa, the Bank of Canada and the biggest names on Bay Street. They pulled it off, and ultimately Canadian banks were praised for their resiliency. But no one will ever forget how close the global financial system came to the brink. And many wonder if we’ve done enough to safeguard the system to prevent it from happening again. **Tim Kiladze**

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### Selling off the spectrum

The word “spectrum” is obscure enough to make most Canadians’ eyes glaze over. But that invisible public resource, the radio waves that bring our smartphones to life, is now at the heart of a heated battle — the outcome of which could shape competition and consumer prices for decades to come.

The federal government is preparing to auction off wireless licences for the 700 megahertz frequency — the most valuable spectrum that has ever come up for bidding. And as U.S. telecom giant Verizon Communications Inc. considers whether to become a bidder, Canada’s Big Three wireless carriers are mounting an all-out effort to convince Ottawa to change the rules.

Although the 700 MHz auction is not scheduled to begin until January, carriers face a Sept. 17 deadline to apply as bidders and to put down initial deposits — which means Rogers Communications Inc., BCE Inc. and Telus Corp. are running out of time to persuade Ottawa to change the rules.

Specifically, they oppose rules that would allow Verizon to acquire double the amount of prime spectrum in the 700 MHz auction. But incumbents also object to other policies that allow new players to “piggyback” on their networks and
purchase small carriers that are off-limits to them.

The stakes are high. This particular spectrum, which was previously used to deliver over-the-air television, is highly sought-after because of its ability to penetrate buildings and travel long distances with fewer cellular towers, making it ideal for both urban and rural coverage.

“There’s a competition – apparently an aggressive competition – amongst companies to have the opportunity to engage the Canadian marketplace in providing technologies over that spectrum. This is a win-win for consumers,” said Industry Minister James Moore, adding “in the third week of September, people will ante up.”

He says the government has no intention to change its wireless policy, but incumbents continue to press for change.

*Rita Trichur*
If BlackBerry is sold, Canada faces an innovation vacuum

As Corporate Canada reduces its spending on R&D, there is no technological ground breaker waiting in the wings to take over from the smartphone maker

Konrad Yakabuski
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As Corporate Canada reduces its spending on R&D, there is no technological ground breaker waiting in the wings to take over from the smartphone maker.

The sale and breakup of a flagship technology company is a reoccurring theme in Canadian business. But this time is different. If BlackBerry Ltd. goes, there is no ready replacement. That’s a telling switch from the situation Canada faced with the sale of Newbridge Networks in 2000 and the demise of Nortel Networks in 2009.

More than a decade of declining business investment in research and development has left Canada without an obvious BlackBerry successor. Despite bright spots in Waterloo, Ont., and Ottawa, the country’s performance on most of the important benchmarks of innovation has been deteriorating for years.

Blame business. Governments have kept up their end of the bargain by bolstering research funding for firms and universities – to the point that Canada now ranks first among the Group of Seven industrial countries in higher education research. And the number of Canadian science and engineering PhDs has soared in recent years.

Yet, R&D performed at the corporate level keeps slipping. From 1.14 per cent of gross domestic product in 2006, private sector spending on R&D declined to 0.89 per cent in 2011. By that measure, Canada fell to 25th from 18th place among the 41 countries measured by the Organization for Economic Co-operation Development.

The result is an innovation bottleneck. An abundance of science is generated in university labs and startup firms but most of it never finds its way into commercial applications. Risk-averse banks and too many businesses of the bird-in-the-hand variety remain the weak links in Canada’s innovation system.

“We punch above our weight in idea generation,” observes Michael Bloom, who leads the Conference Board of Canada’s Centre for Business Innovation. “But the further you move towards commercialization, the weaker we get as a country.”

If BlackBerry is sold – as seems likely
after the board announced a strategic review and hired investment bankers – it will most likely be carved into pieces. That stands to make Canada’s innovation situation worse. The company, which benefited from government grants and loans in its early days, has given back by nurturing the countless startups for which BlackBerry is a customer or mentor. Nortel played a similar role in its day. The loss of an anchor can compromise an entire ecosystem of innovation, making it even harder for startups to make the leap to commercialization.

Ironically, Mike Lazaridis, the creator of the BlackBerry and the company’s long-time co-CEO, opposed the dismantling of Nortel – “chopped up and sold off like so much cordwood,” in his words – telling a parliamentary committee in 2009 that “the most important research programs are performed in close proximity to the headquarters of global leaders.”

“We can’t lose all of those [flagship] companies,” Mr. Bloom insists. “It’s crucial that we have successful enterprises and that they grow. One of the big issues is having the management capacity to keep the innovation going.”

The next BlackBerry need not be a tech firm. Innovation can be driven by any sector, even the old-economy resource extraction business of the oil sands. But tech firms remain by far the most R&D-intensive players in any economy. Hence, the tech sector is a key barometer of a country’s innovation strength. And innovation matters because it has a profound influence on our living standards – it is “the key long-run driver of productivity and income growth,” the OECD says.

Somehow, Canadian business didn’t get the memo. At its peak in 2000, Nortel, the now-defunct Canadian telecommunications equipment maker, spent $6-billion on research, a sum that dropped to $1.67-billion in 2008, just before its bankruptcy. Even then, Nortel remained Canada’s R&D leader.

Luckily for Canada, BlackBerry hit its stride before Nortel collapsed. Almost by default, the Waterloo-based firm became Canada’s biggest R&D spender. But even with outlays of $1.54-billion in 2011 – some of which was spent developing its line of BlackBerry 10 phones – its expenditures on R&D were barely a quarter the amount Nortel was spending a decade earlier.

Indeed, overall R&D funding by Canadian firms has fallen in both real and nominal terms in recent years. Canadian companies allocated $14.1-billion for research in 2012, down from $14.9-billion in 2006. Though the recession may partly explain the drop, R&D spending does not appear to have picked up with the
recovery.

This is not where Canada needs to be in a world in which knowledge-based capital is increasingly supplanting physical capital and labour as the main driver of productivity growth, competitiveness and standards of living.

Yet, despite countless warnings, Canadian businesses remain oddly complacent.

“We tend in this county not to look at the true market opportunity of innovation,” Mr. Bloom adds. “If you only see a market of 35 million people, you’re going to see more risk than if you see the market as Europe, the U.S. and Asia. Americans see risk, but also great opportunity.”

It’s no coincidence that many of Canada’s greatest entrepreneurs and innovators have been immigrants. Unlike his American counterpart, the average Canadian business graduate does not dream of becoming the next Sergey Brin, Steve Jobs or, for that matter, Peter Munk.

Mr. Lazaridis and ex-BlackBerry co-CEO Jim Balsillie notwithstanding, how many Canadian entrepreneurs and innovators have truly changed the world, or aspire? By all accounts, not that many. A Conference Board study released last month found that only 10 per cent of Canadian firms (almost all of them small ones) pursue “radical or revolutionary” innovations. Large firms focus at best on “incremental” innovations.

A 2012 OECD study identified what it called the “striking paradox” of Canada’s innovation record. Despite one of the world’s best educated populations, strong institutions, deep economic integration with the world’s technology leader (the United States) and “ample public spending in support of innovation, Canada’s business innovation activity is by any aggregate measure lacklustre.”

The Paris-based organization zeroed in on the difficulty innovation-driven firms here face in obtaining credit, given the forbidding collateral requirements set by banks and the country’s relatively small venture capital sector. It also noted a higher reliance of Canadian firms on government to “motivate” investments in R&D compared with other countries. And it underscored the weak quality of management in Canada vis-à-vis the United States: “One reason for superior U.S. performance is competition and market discipline. Well-run firms are rewarded more quickly with greater market share, while poorly managed firms are forced to shrink and exit,” the study said.

Changing the culture of Canadian business will not be easy. Some argue it may only get harder as the oil sands become the country’s dominant engine of growth. Could Canada revert to its default setting
as a resource economy with a bunch of satellite industries focused on servicing the oil sector?

The OECD study noted that “resource-rich” countries like Canada and Norway have weaker innovation records than “resource-poor” counterparts such as Israel, South Korea and Japan. “The presence of resource rents might itself dull the drive to innovate,” the report said, by attracting labour and money to extraction businesses that conduct less research.

Resource wealth need not be destiny, however. The oil sands employs a slew of scientists and engineers working to improve productivity and reduce the sector’s environmental impact. “The cost of production in the oil sands has come way down in the past 20 years because of innovation,” Mr. Bloom adds.

Still, governments could do more to drive innovation in the oil sands by putting a higher price on carbon emissions and setting stricter regulations for restoring land affected by bitumen mining. The payoff would extend beyond the environmental benefits to include the commercialization of new technologies.

What more could Ottawa and the provinces do to improve Canada’s innovation performance?

That question has led to the felling of entire forests over the years, most recently with the 148-page report tabled by a federally-appointed panel led by Open Text Corp. executive chairman Tom Jenkins.

The federal and provincial governments have long sought to spur research spending with generous tax incentives. (R&D tax credits cost Ottawa $3.5-billion in 2011 alone.)

But while the incentives have generated plenty of work for accountants, they have yielded only mediocre innovation results.

Based in part on the panel’s recommendations, Ottawa is scaling back tax incentives starting next year, particularly for large companies, and putting more money into direct research grants and vouchers. The latter will enable startup firms to pay universities to conduct research on their behalf and get management advice from business experts.

Another major shift is the rewriting of the National Research Council’s mandate, directing it to conduct applied research commissioned by businesses.

Big business and academics have roundly criticized the changes. The former argue they will be penalized under the new tax rules, while the latter fear that “pure” research could suffer. But if creating the next BlackBerry (and the next one after that) is the end goal of Canada’s innovation policy, Ottawa appears to be on the right track.
As the Jenkins panel concluded, “the federal government needs to focus its innovation support more sharply on the strategic objective of growing innovative firms into larger enterprises.”

It can’t happen fast enough.
How Canada’s housing downturn threatens to shake up real estate commissions

BY TARA PERKINS

Technology and regulators have been unable to break down relatively high property sale fees, but the sector’s downturn just might succeed where others have failed.

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The power of the Internet was going to shatter the grip that realtors have on house sales in Canada, driving down commissions and empowering consumers.

The Internet failed

The Competition Bureau waded in to overcome the industry’s stasis, attempting to create a market where consumers pick which services they want and data are more widely available.

But, so far, it’s accomplished little.

In a country where grousing about bank fees is a national pastime, where a 5-cent rise in gasoline prices sparks outrage, one fee remains remarkably static: the thousands in commissions paid to real estate brokers. Technology has failed to snap consumers out of their complacency, and regulatory efforts to force the industry to make it easier for new Web-based firms to compete have been abortive.

But there is a new threat to the status quo that could be the catalyst for industry-rattling change: the housing slowdown.

Canadian house prices were generally on a tear from the turn of the century until last year, with most sellers still netting a tidy profit even after paying commissions. But that growth has now begun to taper off, with year-over-year price increases slowing from more than 6 per cent at the outset of last year to less than 3 per cent at the outset of this year (and some markets, such as Vancouver, seeing outright declines).

Economists suggest that the market could be entering a lengthy period in which house prices remain essentially flat. Toronto-Dominion Bank’s economists recently estimated that the nominal annual rate of return on real estate will be about 2 per cent over the next decade. In other words, the rise in home prices will just keep pace with inflation.

And that means that homeowners who buy and sell homes in the next 10 years will not be making the profits that homeowners who bought and sold in the past decade got used to. More commonly, sellers will be accepting prices that are much closer to what they paid.

John Andrew, a professor at Queen’s University, suggests the following analogy: When the stock market is rising and you’re making money, then you don’t mind paying a broker a fee, but if you lose money on your investment, then the charges will be upsetting.

The market dynamics are changing at a time when new real estate startups, which are largely Internet based, are becoming more innovative. “There is no question that commissions are very high, and there is a big consumer pushback against
that,” Mr. Andrew says. “It doesn’t make sense to me that it be a fixed per cent, and perhaps it’s time to begin to look at more of a sliding scale like we have for the land transfer tax, like we have for the income tax.”

Realtors’ commissions are negotiable, and industry sources say the current average commission in the Greater Toronto Area, as an example, is between 4 and 5 per cent. Commissions tend to be higher in rural areas than in major cities, and in many parts of Canada they are often lower. In Western Canada, sellers often pay a two-tiered rate that is closer to what Mr. Andrew would like to see, such as 7 per cent on the first $100,000 of sales value, and 1.5 per cent on the balance.

Over the course of the past 12 years, a period in which house prices rose at an astonishing clip, the average resale price of a house in Toronto roughly doubled, while commissions remained around 5 per cent (that commission gets split between the buyer’s agent and the seller’s agent). That means the average total commission rose from about $12,160 in the year 2000 to $24,950 last year. Price increases have been steeper in some other parts of the country. If you take 5 per cent as a basic commission, Calgary saw commissions on an average sale rise to $20,620 from about $8,820 during the same period and Vancouver saw them increase to $36,500 from $14,800.

**Change comes slowly**

The stakes are high. Real estate agents took in an estimated $8.26-billion in commissions across the country last year (based on a 5-per-cent rate), up from $3.96-billion 10 years ago, reflecting both an increase in the value of home prices and the number of sales.

“Real estate agents used to have to sell quite a few houses to make a living, and in cities where the prices are really high, they don’t any more,” Mr. Andrew says.

But he and others are quick to point out that the life of a realtor is not a life of leisure. A lot of work goes on behind the scenes, and since the number of homes changing hands in most areas of the country has shrunk significantly since last summer, agents have had to work harder in recent months to keep business up.

Canada lacks data on the exact amount of commissions that are paid to realtors each year.

“There are no set commissions,” says Gary Simonsen, the chief executive officer of the Canadian Real Estate Association, which represents about 100 real estate boards and associations. “They are purely negotiable between buyer and seller and the agent involved, and it’s not something that we track nor do our boards and
associations.”

Canada also lacks data on how many consumers buy or sell a house without a realtor.

Mr. Simonsen says the number of transactions that are occurring over the MLS has remained remarkably constant over the past decade. “I think people will certainly try various and sundry things depending upon their own personal circumstances, but at the end of the day we still see that people are relying upon a realtor ultimately to assist them in the transaction, whether it’s on the buying or the selling side.”

Amid the market turmoil, CREA launched a new TV ad campaign this spring. Its amusing commercials are based on the theme of Internet overconfidence. One spot shows scenarios such as a man searching “how to be your own lawyer” online and winding up strip-searched by police; a guy checking relationship advice on his smartphone only to find his date storming out of dinner, smashing the dishes on the restaurant table and popping her middle finger on the way; and a cheat sheet on edible mushrooms followed by footage of a naked man laughing like a lunatic and spinning around the woods. Cue the announcer: “Why do we think if we can look it up we can do it? When it comes to your home, get help, get a realtor.”

Home sales have been in a slump since last summer, creating a situation where a realtor’s help is generally more valuable to sellers. But economists expect the declines to dissipate and give way to a period of more stable, but moderate, sales. “The market has to swing a bit more in favour of the seller, and sales have to pick up, for these alternatives to really have the opportunity to compete,” Mr. Andrew says. The companies that cater to do-it-yourselfers argue that sellers without a realtor have an advantage in this market, because they can afford to reduce their asking price by the amount of commission they stand to save.

The Competition Bureau recently noted that, at least when it comes to Toronto, the top five agencies have cornered the market, taking in more than 70 per cent of commissions in recent years. Re/Max and Royal LePage combined are responsible for more than 40 per cent of commissions.

Walter Melanson, director of partnerships at PropertyGuys.com, is hoping that the market dynamics will loosen the grip that the big brokerages have on the market. “We anticipate that an increasing number of sellers will abandon the high cost of using a traditional agent because they won’t want to give up what little equity they do have,” he says. But he’s been wrong before.
PropertyGuys.com has been up and running since the dot-com era was in its heyday. The company sells advertising services to people who want to sell their home without a realtor, and is rolling out a new product it calls “Pro Approach” where online experts, real estate lawyers, appraisers and others are made available for a cost that Mr. Melanson says still amounts to a small fraction of a realtor.

Not long after starting out, PropertyGuys.com had thousands of customers a year. But in the early days those customers couldn’t get their houses onto the all-important Multiple Listing Service and the industry’s realtor.ca website without paying to use a realtor’s full services. That changed in 2010 as a result of prodding by the Competition Bureau. The Canadian Real Estate Association, which represents realtors from coast to coast and owns MLS and realtor.ca, agreed to change the rules so that brokers could post a listing on those sites for a flat fee. It was supposed to be a game changer. Sellers could get their listings on the most important website in Canadian real estate for a relatively small amount. Overnight, PropertyGuys.com saw the number of customers it was dealing with rise from between 7,000 and 8,000 a year to about 10,000, Mr. Melanson says. But growth stalled at that level.

“The market is right where the bureau left it, it’s in the same state almost that it was then,” he says with a sigh, calling the failure of technology to upend the industry “the non-existent revolution.”

**Fighting against lower fees**

One of the highest hurdles new entrants say they have to clear is access to data that are controlled by the realtors’ association. While it’s possible to sell a home through MLS without an agent, it’s still largely impossible for those outside the system to access the vast trove of market intelligence and sales figures assembled by local real estate boards.

That makes competing real estate services and websites less attractive to people selling their homes.

“The Canadian Real Estate Association controls the listings, controls the MLS, nationally, and as a result nobody else has been able to make inroads into the buying-and-selling-property business with online tools and apps,” says Peter Zollman, founding principal of Aimgroup.com, a consultancy based near Orlando, Fla., that publishes a report on real estate websites around the world. “In our view, Canada is still very much an outlier, because there is so little competition among real estate sites.”

The Competition Bureau recently lost, and is now appealing, a case in which it
was seeking to make data about the prices that have been paid for homes more accessible online. That case, against the Toronto Real Estate Board, which represents more than 35,000 agents, was seen as a test case for the whole country.

“As a practitioner with an interest in the field, I can say that the…decision bears close scrutiny and it raises important issues about the interplay between the statutory prohibitions in the [Competition] Act and conduct by those few firms in Canada that are truly dominant in their market,” says Melanie Aitken, who stepped down as Competition Bureau commissioner last fall.

PropertyGuys’ Mr. Melanson argues that the dominant players are resisting change with all their might. “There are 100,000 real estate agents in this country that don’t want fees to drop,” he says. “We’re going to have to fight for every inch.”

Stories abound of consumers who have tried to sell their home on their own and thrown in the towel, but there is also a growing number of satisfied do-it-yourselfers.

Deryck Hatheway paid PropertyGuys $798 plus tax for their full-service package to sell his house in Bathurst, N.B., recently, as he sold his optometry practice there to move to Fredericton. He also paid $299 to have his house listed on the MLS, $39 for photos and $20 for an additional ad in the paper.

His house sold in December, two months after he listed it, for $146,000, a bit less than his asking price, and saved thousands of dollars by putting the extra effort in himself.

“We have a zinc mine that’s closing down, so it’s not booming real estate,” Mr. Hatheway says.

“So I found two months to be pretty good for Bathurst. And, having done that, I’d never go through a real estate agent again.”

Anecdotally, it’s believed that about 20 per cent of sellers in Quebec and 10 per cent in the rest of the country don’t use a realtor, says Phil Soper, CEO of Royal LePage and Brookfield Real Estate Services.

There’s no evidence that the sales-by-owner model and lower-commission alternatives are making significant headway; there is no evidence they aren’t. No one’s certain.

But Mr. Soper’s not worried. The threat from technology? He points to other technological revolutions that haven’t panned out: “Grocery Gateway, we were going to have intelligent fridges…” The Competition Bureau’s efforts? “I’d say in the aftermath of it all, nothing’s changed,” he says.

He adds that most of the new ventures
aren’t turning much, if any, profit. Part of the reason is that real estate services have low profit margins, he says. In order to cut commissions, you need high volumes.

“While we’ve looked at it, and while there has been a lot of interest at the low end for four or five years now, I don’t see anybody making money,” he says. “The full-service brokerage remains the most preferred model in the country, or at least the model with the highest level of satisfaction. We’re not investing in the alternative brokerage model any time soon.”

While the proportion of people who want to use alternative models has remained the same, the number of companies catering to them has risen, says Gurinder Sandhu, executive vice-president at Re/Max Ontario-Atlantic.

“So there’s less and less to go around for each one of those players.”

Will the stagnation of house price growth be the catalyst that ultimately changes that? With the new players raising their game and the Competition Bureau not backing down, Queen’s University professor Mr. Andrew, for one, believes that the commission revolution is still likely to occur.

“I think the full-service real estate agent who is charging full commission and providing the full host of services is probably going to become few and far between.”

AGENTs OF CHANGE

In addition to companies such as Proper-tyguys, Comfree and Quebec-based DuPro-prio, which cater to people who want to sell without a real estate agent, firms have been popping up with a variety of business models. Here’s a sampling:

Realosophy: A Toronto brokerage whose agents charge sellers a 1.5-per-cent commission, which the agency boasts is “a savings of at least $5,000 on a $500,000 house.” Realosophy recommends sellers pay the buyer’s agent 2.5 per cent, because otherwise fewer agents might bring clients to see the house. “In urban centres, this is a generation that uses things like wedding planners,” Realosophy’s John Pasalis said. “At the end of the day, people still need help.”

Commission Pitch: A new startup focusing on southwestern Ontario that allows agents to compete for business in an auction-style process, which the company says can save thousands of dollars in commissions.

SundayBell.com: A Canadian online service that markets itself as being akin to an online dating service, matching consumers with real estate agents throughout North America.
**TheRedPin.com**: A Toronto-based service that employs real estate agents but it pays them differently. Rather than being commission-based, they are paid a salary plus a bonus that hinges on customer satisfaction as opposed to sales. TheRedPin.com still takes standard commissions from clients, but returns a portion in the form of rebates. It counts Onex Corp. founder Gerry Schwartz as a backer.

**Zoocasa**: An online service for buyers and sellers, owned by Rogers Communications, that has recently obtained a brokerage licence, primarily so it can access more data. It is in the midst of rolling out its newest services across Canada, works with agents from all of the major brokerages, such as Royal LePage, but it is pressuring commissions by offering consumers a rebate of roughly 15 per cent of their commission. “This industry as a whole has been determined to control the speed of progress and innovation, and has been successful in slowing innovation,” said Lawrence Dale, group head of the real estate business at Zoocasa. “It’s as if progress is only permitted if it does not upset the status quo and is available to everyone.”
How the Big Six banks won the battle for Canadians’ wealth

Their massive scale and huge distribution network has left independent retail brokerage firms on the losing end of the fight.

TIM KILADZE
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The white flag of surrender hasn’t quite been raised, but the war for the Canadian investor looks all but over.

Coming out of the financial crisis, the big banks and independent retail brokerage firms each had big ambitions to expand their businesses. The crisis and the stock market crash, they hoped, would bring opportunity; rattled investors would want help and advice on how to repair their battered portfolios and save their retirement plans.

Several years later, what seemed like an even-handed fight between the banks and their smaller independent rivals has become lopsided. And it’s the Big Six that are winning.

It’s a tough pill to swallow for someone like Andrew Marsh, who has been on both sides of the battle. For 12 years, he built a solid business as a retail broker in London, Ont., giving financial advice to a lengthy roster of loyal clients at Bank of Nova Scotia’s investment division, ScotiaMcLeod.

But in 2004, he left it all behind to become one of the co-founders of GMP Private Client, an advisory shop created by investment bank GMP Capital Inc. to butt heads with the banks. It seemed like a good decision – until the market crashed.

Losing money, Mr. Marsh’s firm merged with rival Richardson Partners in 2009 to bolster both companies’ balance sheets. The combined entity, Richardson GMP Ltd., is still struggling, posting a loss in 2012. Canaccord Genuity Wealth Management, another independent, hasn’t turned a quarterly profit in a year and a half. Small firms that generate most of their revenue from advising retail investors collectively lost $99-million last year, according to the Investment Industry Association of Canada.

The banks, meanwhile, are swimming in profits. Though they also suffered during the downturn, their wealth-management divisions, which sell mutual funds and other products to millions of Canadians, rebounded with incredible
speed. Royal Bank of Canada’s wealth division made $763-million last year, while Toronto-Dominion Bank’s earned just over $600-million in the same period.

This is no accident. The banks have invested heavily in their asset management and financial advice operations, hoping these businesses can combat slowing growth in other units. Canada’s housing market is cooling, making it harder to find growth in selling mortgages; revenues from investment banking and other high-end corporate businesses are volatile, and are now feeling the effects of the capital drought in the energy and mining sectors.

There’s also an element of safety to the Big Banks’ strategy. Since the crisis, banking regulators have been tightening up the rules for how much capital banks need to hold. The business model of wealth management is a simple one – it’s about helping people to invest their money in return for a fee – so there’s no risk of the kind of catastrophic trading losses that brought down major U.S. banks in 2008. For that reason, regulators don’t demand that banks hold a large capital cushion against these units.

“Clearly, wealth is a nice offset to credit businesses and trading divisions that carry different risk profiles,” RBC chief executive officer Gordon Nixon said.

Against this backdrop, banks are getting more aggressive. The acquisitions are starting to add up. Scotiabank scooped up independent DundeeWealth for $2.3-billion in 2010 and National Bank of Canada acquired Wellington West Holdings Inc., an independent brokerage, as well as HSBC Bank Canada’s retail brokerage arm. The country’s biggest banks now control nearly half of all the long-term mutual fund assets in Canada; by some estimates, they have 90 per cent of all the assets in retail brokerage accounts.

That leaves little for the four big non-bank brokerage firms – Canaccord Genuity, Richardson GMP, Raymond James Ltd. and Macquarie Private Wealth Inc. – as well as their smaller peers.

But while the numbers say that the banks look smart, the independents tell a different story. They argue that the Big Six are using their natural advantages – their size, deep pockets and vast networks of bank branches on street corners everywhere – to push them aside. Mutual fund companies are also feeling the pain, as banks continue to take away market share from the likes of AGF Management Ltd. and others.

Some believe the Big Six are in the process of conquering the asset-management industry – just as they swept up independent investment dealers and trust companies in the 1980s and 90s. That may turn out well for bank shareholders, but it also
represents an even greater concentration of market power in a small number of already-powerful institutions.

“Every step of the way,” Mr. Marsh says, “the banks are very active in telling people that there’s no way we can make it.”

Distribution disadvantage

Banking is an industry rife with buzzwords. When you ask bank executives about the gains they are making in the wealth-management business, here’s one they are likely to use: “open architecture.”

The term refers to the selection of financial products they are willing to sell to clients. “Open architecture” means that they sell not only their own funds, but those of other companies.

“There’s no doubt we have open architecture,” said Dave Agnew, head of Canadian wealth management at Royal Bank of Canada. “We do not force any product, whether it’s in-house or not ... to the clients within our wealth businesses in Canada.”

Generally speaking, that’s true. Bank-owned brokerages still sell mutual funds from independent players like AGF Management Ltd., Templeton Management Ltd., Fidelity Investments Canada and CI Financial Corp., among others. But they’re less inclined to do so now than in the past; their own funds offer higher profit margins.

A decade ago, the banks’ own long-term funds made up about 25 per cent of all new mutual fund sales. In the 12 months that ended this past March, their share soared to 57 per cent.

And the banks’ own branches tend to be closed to independent funds. “The actual bank branches, we’ve been told we cannot go there,” said a senior executive at an independent fund company, who spoke under the condition of anonymity out of fear of retribution from the banks. That means a customer who walks into a RBC or TD Bank branch, for example, will be offered only that bank’s mutual funds, and may not even know that other – sometimes lower-cost – options exist.

The situation has irked Rob Wessel for years. Mr. Wessel is managing partner of Hamilton Capital, an asset management firm in Toronto, and used to cover Canadian banks as an equity research analyst for National Bank Financial.

“Independent domestic mutual fund companies are at a massive distribution disadvantage to the banks, which explains why so many have sold or partnered with a larger competitor over the past 10 years,” he says.

Asked about these concerns, the banks say that less-sophisticated clients with small amounts of money to invest don’t need an abundance of options. They also reiterated that their retail brokers, who serve wealthier investors, sell all sorts of
funds. Rajiv Silgardo, co-chief executive officer of Bank of Montreal's global asset management arm, said only about 10 per cent his bank's exchange-traded fund sales come from its BMO Nesbitt Burns brokers.

Still, the broader data demonstrate the shift is real. Not only are the banks hiring product experts to create their own “proprietary funds,” they are buying whole companies.

Last year, TD Bank bought U.S.-based Epoch Investments for $668-million to expand its equity fund offerings. A few years ago, RBC bought London-based BlueBay Asset Management to add depth to its lineup of fixed-income funds. And Scotiabank’s deal for DundeeWealth mopped up one of the more vigorous independent fund companies in Canada.

The banks stress that they have no malicious intent. By expanding their offerings, they say investors are better served because they have more options. And selling their own products simply makes sense because they earn more money on them.

But their growing power should cause regulators to act, some say. Mr. Wessel, for example, is a strong advocate of a rule change that would force bank branches to have open architecture – to carry other companies’ funds.

In the early 1990s, U.S. banks became very active in developing proprietary funds, and the situation eventually drew the attention of financial watchdogs.

In 2004, regulators dinged Morgan Stanley for giving its brokers small incentives – such as steak dinners – for pushing their own products above others.

In Canada, the topic is little discussed by regulators.

Across the board, the banks say that they seek to act in their clients’ best interests, taking things like an investors’ risk tolerance and investment timeline into consideration, as regulations require them to do. But they do not worry about the concentrations of their own funds in customer accounts.

Consider RBC’s Private Investment Management product, an account that gives the investment adviser considerable discretion to invest his client’s money as he sees fit. Naturally, the bank has guidelines for the brokers – such as limits on just how much weight one specific stock, bond or fund can have in the portfolio. But there aren’t explicit rules or limits on how much can be in RBC’s proprietary products.

BMO’s Mr. Silgardo said his bank separates its fund-creation arm, where he works, from its retail brokerage business, BMO Nesbitt Burns.

The two groups have separate profit-and-loss statements, and “every time
we have a product, we have to prove to [Nesbitt Burns] why that product is either unique or the best of its kind,” he said.

‘Scale matters’

The banks are easy targets for resentment, of course, because they are so big and so profitable. But they can’t always be blamed for their competitive advantages. Sometimes, the odds are simply stacked in their favour.

Since the financial crisis, Canadian regulators have required the country’s wealth managers to implement better compliance systems that track the risk profiles of client accounts. The costs are significant. Mr. Agnew at RBC said his bank easily spent $15-million to $20-million just to meet some of the latest standards.

Because the expenses are such a burden, it can be hard for independent firms to shoulder them. The banks, however, have the luxury of huge retail banking arms to pick up any slack.

“Scale matters,” said Tim Hockey, TD’s head of Canadian retail banking. “When you have these increasing compliance costs ... what are you going to spread that over?”

Their size is also an advantage when recruiting talent. Stealing a top investment adviser from another firm is expensive – signing bonuses have topped $1-million in some instances, according to several industry sources.

“We do the math on how much [firms are] throwing around to advisers, and we don’t feel that people would make money on that adviser in seven or eight years,” Mr. Marsh, the independent, says.

The banks, though, are less likely to balk at the price because they know they have size on their side, and can also cross-sell products like mortgage and chequing accounts to their investing clients. (RBC, though, say the cross-sell opportunities are vastly overstated.)

There are also concerns that the banks’ emphasis on proprietary products gives them another leg up in the recruiting game. The more of their own funds they sell, the easier it is to convince a client to stay with the bank, even if his or her broker is leaving to go elsewhere.

If a ScotiaMcLeod broker leaves for Macquarie, for example, it is very easy for the bank to call the client and say he or she might as well stay with the bank because the majority of the client’s funds are Scotia products anyway.

In this environment, it is tough for Mr. Marsh and his independent peers to look like attractive options. The Big Six have instilled a fear, whether valid or not, that “unless you’re at a bank, you won’t survive,” he said.
How Verizon’s return could shake up Canada’s wireless mark

Nine years after leaving Canada, the U.S. wireless giant is plotting a comeback. Why this time is different

RITA TRICHUR & GRANT ROBERTSON
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On a spring day in 2004, executives from Verizon Communications Inc. politely informed a board meeting of Telus Corp. in Vancouver that they’d had a change of heart: Their company was done with Canada.

As corporate breakups go, it was an amicable one. The American giant’s 20-per-cent ownership stake in Telus had served both companies well. The CEOs were allies; then-Verizon boss Ivan Seidenberg was known to join Telus’s Darren Entwistle on conference calls with analysts, just to show his support.

But Mr. Seidenberg had better things to do with the money that was locked up in his friend’s company. The Canadian telecom market was getting bigger, with the rollout of faster networks and new smartphones, but the U.S was growing more quickly and was more lucrative.

For Verizon, home was where the action was and where investment was needed. Months later, it completed its sale of Telus shares for $2.2-billion.

Nine years later, Verizon is looking hard at Canada again – and the circumstances couldn’t be any more different.

If the U.S. company returns to the market, it would be as a potential aggressor – a threat to the dominance, or at least the profits, of Canada’s three wireless giants: Telus, BCE Inc. and Rogers Communications Inc.

Verizon’s overtures to buy up small and struggling wireless companies like Wind Mobile and Mobilicity take advantage of a new rule that allows foreigners to acquire telcos with less than 10-per-cent market share. If the deals come to fruition, it could mark one of the biggest shifts Canadian telecom has seen in decades.

With a $700-million (Canadian) preliminary bid to buy Wind, exploratory talks with Mobilicity, and an opening to bid in an upcoming auction of wireless spectrum, Verizon is angling to be more than just a passive investor this time around. It wants to be a player.

Two crucial things have happened in order to attract the company’s interest. The U.S. market has reached a saturation point, with cellphone adoption at more than 100 per cent, meaning there is more than one handset for every adult in the
country. Canada, at about 80 per cent, still has some growth left.

The bigger change has come in Ottawa, where the Conservative government has bet political capital on a policy of bringing new competition into the wireless sector, and has gradually warmed to the idea of allowing a large foreign telecom company set up shop.

Having opened up the wireless sector to new competition about five years ago, only to see ambitious upstart companies like Wind, Mobilicity and Public Mobile fail miserably against the Big Three, the government wants to see a viable fourth player in every region more than ever.

If Verizon does set up shop in Canada, it will disrupt the wireless sector like never before – adding the most deep-pocketed competitor the sector has ever seen. But Ottawa may not necessarily get the outcome it so desperately covets: lower prices for consumers. Because as Canada’s phone companies know well, and as Verizon has shown in the U.S., you don’t get to the top of your industry by engaging in price wars, and by giving away the service at bargain-basement rates. In wireless, profits are a long-term game.

**Trojan horse or white knight?**

Based in New York, Verizon is a product of the wave of consolidation that swept through the U.S. telecom sector in the late 1990s.

Formed through a merger between two of the oldest and largest American phone companies, Bell Atlantic Corp and GTE Corp., Verizon made its debut in mid-2000 as the main rival to AT&T and Sprint in the battle for U.S. cellphone subscribers.

The name itself means nothing – it is a linguistic mash-up dreamed up by marketers who wanted to combine the optimism conjured by the word “horizon” with the reliability implied by the word “veritas,” the Latin word for truth.

Inside the industry though, Verizon is known simply as Big Red, a nod to the colour of its logo and its sheer size. At last count, Verizon Wireless had nearly 99 million wireless subscribers, which is roughly a 34-per-cent share of the U.S. market, ahead of AT&T and Sprint.

Verizon Wireless – a joint operation that is 55 per cent owned by the parent company and 45 per cent by Vodafone Group PLC of Britain – is the jewel of an operation that also sells Internet, television and home phone service. The wireless business operates the largest 4G LTE network (which stands for fourth-generation, long-term evolution) in the U.S., putting it at the forefront of the smartphone revolution.

The company has expanded through
acquisitions in the U.S. and has built its name on the reliability of its wireless services.

Last year, it rolled out a “Share Everything Plan,” a strategy that has since been copied by Canadian carriers. The idea is to allow subscribers to share large amounts of data among multiple devices, including smartphones and tablets. For example, a family with two smartphones and one tablet can eat up four gigabytes of data a month, and talk as long as they want, for $160 a month before taxes and other surcharges. The strategy is not necessarily revolutionary, but it is aggressive, and it has resulted in lower customer turnover – something every wireless company fights for.

As a result, Verizon’s total churn, a measure of how many customers leave the company, was a paltry 1.3 per cent for the first quarter – which some say is a direct reflection of Verizon’s ability to also heavily subsidize the hottest smartphones. A report by ABI Research found that “the average U.S. implied subsidy” for Verizon devices averaged $447 – which is $40 more than the industry average per smartphone.

Verizon Wireless has the efficiency and scale to ensure it can “at least break even” by the end of a contract, said ABI senior practice director Nick Spencer.

By any measure, it is truly a massive company. With a market capitalization of $147-billion (U.S.), it is one of the 20 largest public companies in the U.S., bigger than Cisco Systems Inc., and about twice the value of Rogers, BCE and Telus added together.

That has left analysts asking what impact it might have. Though the company would theoretically only be buying up the tiny assets of Wind and Mobilicity (assuming either of those deals go through), would it be content as a bit player in a small country?

One theory is that Verizon’s expansion into Canada would be merely to provide a cross-border infrastructure for its U.S. operations – cheaper rates and more flexibility for its American customers when travelling to Canada’s major cities.

But some analysts believe it would have grander aspirations, particularly with the government encouraging a fourth competitor that can put downward pressure on industry prices. To get there, however, Verizon would have to strike a network-sharing deal or spend heavily to build out a Canadian network to become a coast-to-coast player, something that could take years.

Martyn Roetter, a Boston-based telecom consultant, says it is unclear which version of Big Red might emerge in Canada – the aggressive company that likes to dominate the U.S. market but has also
angered consumers for its habit of adding extra fees to bills, or a niche player quietly testing the waters of international expansion.

“If I look at Verizon in Canada, an obvious question is, will they, once they get in there, start acting the way they do in the U.S.?” Mr. Roetter said. “Or will they act like a scrappy entrepreneurial entrant who really tries to do things in a different way and provide more options?”

Canadian telcos are eager to portray Verizon in Ottawa as the American invader that won’t come in and lower prices for consumers, but will cash in on the plump margins it can wring from Canadian subscribers, while forcing the industry to spend more on marketing.

Adam Shine, an analyst with National Bank Financial, suggests Verizon could emerge as either “the government’s white knight” or possibly its “Trojan horse” in the effort to stimulate sustainable competition in the sector.

For its part, Verizon is being quiet about its plans. Other than confirming a few weeks ago that it was indeed looking at opportunities in Canada, Verizon executives have said little more.

“This is just us dipping our toe in the water,” Verizon’s chief financial officer Fran Shammo said after The Globe revealed that it was in takeover talks with Wind.

Verizon a challenge for Big Three

The politics behind Verizon’s possible return to Canada are decidedly populist. The government may welcome its arrival in the belief that Canadians will be comfortable with opening up the sector to a big U.S. player if they get lower cellphone bills in return.

There are some 27.4 million wireless subscribers in Canada. And at any given time, there are roughly 10 million customers who are considered “free agents” – either because they are not locked into longer-term contracts or are using pay-as-you-go plans.

As the wireless market matures, and more people upgrade to data-hungry smartphones, the fight for customers has become fierce. Prices have been coming down: A study released this week found that Canadian wireless prices have decreased 18 per cent since 2008. The report was commissioned by Industry Canada and the CRTC, and Industry Minister Christian Paradis did not miss an opportunity to trumpet the report’s findings. “We will not hesitate to use any and every tool at our disposal to protect consumers and promote competition in every region of the country,” he said.

To achieve its goal, the government has taken a number of steps, cementing its authority on spectrum transfers between
wireless carriers and relaxing foreign investment restrictions for small telcos – a change, introduced last year, that gives Verizon its gateway back in to Canada.

But would Verizon drive prices significantly lower in Canada? South of the border, Verizon is hardly a low-end player. It primarily targets the most lucrative smartphone users – ones with voracious appetites for data.

“As a premier carrier in the U.S., we don’t expect the company’s modus operandi to shift dramatically in Canada, especially if it’s looking north for incremental growth, let alone a reasonable return on the more than $2-billion it’s likely to spend over the next 12 to 18 months to establish itself here,” wrote National Bank Financial’s Mr. Shine.

As a big carrier, Verizon has done plenty to raise consumers’ ire. This spring, it announced that customers would have to wait longer to upgrade their subsidized smartphones on two-year contracts. And much like its peers, it also charges so-called “below the line fees.” That included an “administrative fee” of 90 cents and a regulatory charge of 16 cents, according to published reports from late May.

Although those amounts are relatively small, Americans find them irksome. “It is pure bloody profit, and it costs them nothing. And that is the sort of thing that they get away with,” said telecom consultant Mr. Roetter.

Nevertheless, a Verizon entry could still have a meaningful impact on the bottom line of the Big Three, whose shares tumbled last week on a Globe report of the U.S. company’s Verizon’s early-stage proposal to buy Wind.

Verizon has already drawn up some preliminary plans, including how it might remove one stumbling block to completing a Canadian deal – Wind’s core network infrastructure, which was built by Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd. The Chinese telecoms gear maker, which is founded by a former member of the People’s Liberation Army, is the ultimate bête noire for Western governments due to allegations that its equipment is designed to allow espionage or sabotage foreign communications systems.

Though Huawei has always strenuously denied such claims, Verizon could win points in Ottawa by proposing to simply rip out Huawei’s equipment from Wind’s backbone network, a move that could cost up to $100-million, according to sources familiar with the matter.

Wind and Mobilicity together have about 850,000 customers, giving Verizon only a modest foothold in Canada to build from. The U.S. company would be forced to spend heavily on marketing, spectrum and equipment to create a viable business here. “Verizon would need to
quickly invest to upgrade the networks it would be acquiring,” Mr. Shine said.

“I think a few companies would be happy to sit back and watch Verizon blow its brains out,” said one source close to Rogers, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

At the very least, a major push by a company of that size will cause revenue pressure for the incumbents, which could instigate cost cutting in the industry, Mr. Shine said. “This will mean significant layoffs, which could easily trump the hiring to be done by Verizon.”

The veteran communications analyst figures that Verizon may have the upper hand in lowering prices for smartphones – given the scale advantages it has on buying them in bulk – but the Canadian incumbents will be able to bundle more services together, such as Internet and TV, offering discounts to keep their customers out of Big Red’s hands.

There’s another aspect to Verizon’s proposed Canadian expansion that could be the most problematic for the Canadian companies: its presence in in upcoming auctions of wireless spectrum.

The 700-megahertz frequency, which will be auctioned off in January, is considered especially valuable because it is well suited to carry wireless data traffic, such as mobile video.

To ensure that at least four competitors will be able to buy wireless licences in each region, Ottawa plans to limit the amount of so-called “prime spectrum” that incumbents can purchase. Specifically, incumbents are capped at one prime block, while new entrant carriers can bid on two blocks. If Verizon bids, it would qualify as a new entrant carrier.

“We’re prepared to compete with them, but we want the ability to compete for the same amount of spectrum,” said Mirko Bibic, executive vice-president and chief legal and regulatory officer for BCE Inc.

Given there are only four blocks of prime 700 spectrum, “there is a risk” that one of the big three incumbents could get shut out if Verizon is able to bid for two blocks. “One of the three incumbents likely will be unable to acquire 700 MHz spectrum,” added Mr. Bibic.

That is “particularly troubling,” because Canadian incumbents would never enjoy such preferential treatment south of the border, he said.

“It is not like the U.S. government is saying to any of the Canadian wireless players, ‘Hey, come get spectrum in New York; come get spectrum in Chicago, Miami, Phoenix, L.A. at an advantage over [Verizon], AT&T and Sprint.”

But the U.S. has never wanted a serious new competitor to emerge the way
Ottawa needs one. And for those reasons, Verizon is no longer done with Canada. It may only be getting started.
Sports
All eyes on Nadal

The last time Rafael Nadal won a Grand Slam on hard court was three years ago, his one, and so far only, U.S. Open title. This year, however, has marked the resurrection of the 27-year-old Spaniard, who some believed was finished in the top tier of men’s tennis, forever hindered by wonky knees, worn down by his ferocious, pounding style of play. Instead, Mr. Nadal has delivered one of the greatest-ever seasons of tennis on hard courts, winning most of the biggest tournaments. So, while Novak Djokovic may be, for now, the No. 1-ranked player in the world, and Wimbledon winner Andy Murray returns to New York as the defending U.S. Open champion, it is surely Mr. Nadal who will command the most attention and perhaps deliver the most memorable tennis. Along for the ride at the Open (which runs Aug. 26 to Sept. 9) are two hotshot young Canadians, Milos Raonic, who in August cracked the world top 10, the first Canadian to do so, and Vasek Pospisil, who cracked the top 40. The likelihood of their extended longevity in New York is not particularly promising but it will be suitably harsh environs to gird the two young men for the Davis Cup semifinal a week later in Serbia. The Davis Cup final four is a stage Canada has never reached – we’ve only reached the final 16 twice before – and if another major upset is in the offing, after knocking off Spain and then Italy, Mr. Raonic and Mr. Pospisil will have to conjure something special to upend Mr. Djokovic in the comforts of his home. David Ebner

The NHL’s hopeful season

Call it the annual autumn outburst of irrational optimism. Everything seems possible when NHL training camps open in the second week of September – particularly for hockey fans in the seven Canadian cities represented in the league. In Toronto, those who root for the Maple Leafs will look at their team’s narrow loss to the eventual Stanley Cup...
finalist Boston Bruins, add it to the summer’s free agent signings, and come up with a team that could be poised for a long playoff run for the first time in 20-plus years. Montreal, meanwhile, finished a surprise second in the Eastern Conference in the lockout-shortened season, and despite a hasty playoff exit at the hands of the Ottawa Senators, Habs fans will believe theirs is a young team on the rise. Speaking of Ottawa, even the messy off-season divorce with iconic captain Daniel Alfredsson isn’t enough to dampen the warm fuzzies that Sens Nation feels when it looks at an exciting team that includes perhaps the league’s best defenceman in Erik Karlsson, and newly-arrived power forward Bobby Ryan.

Looking west, the denizens of the MTS Centre will point out that their beloved Winnipeg Jets narrowly missed out on the post-season last season, and with the expected arrival of blue-chip prospect Mark Scheifele, they expect to take part in the post-season dance. In Calgary and Edmonton, where the Battle of Alberta of yore has yielded to the battle of the bottom-feeders, the hope is of sunnier days ahead. Oilers fans are more justified in their optimism, given the continuing development of brilliant young players like Taylor Hall, Jordan Eberle and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins. In Calgary – well, they can at least cling to the hope that funny things happen in an NHL season, and their team may actually win a few games. On the left coast, the Vancouver Canucks have resolved their goaltending soap opera, with former Team Canada netminder – and part-time Twitter comedian – Roberto Luongo firmly ensconced. The Canucks are still only three years removed from a Stanley Cup final appearance, and can argue they are still well-placed to end the 20-season championship drought for Canadian NHL teams.

Sean Gordon

Gaming the baseball playoffs?
Look to underdogs

One prediction that will definitely hold true: the Toronto Blue Jays – their revamped roster and ballyhooed hopes for a sterling 2013 campaign notwithstanding – will not be playing postseason baseball. Beyond yet-another baseball-free October in Canada’s largest city (a tradition stretching back two decades), the season is shaping up much like others, with a number of teams bunched together at the top, and one slightly out in front. That team seems to be the National League’s Atlanta Braves – but there is a lot of baseball left to play in September. The next stretch will show whether the unlikely Pittsburgh Pirates could end 20 seasons of sub-.500 play and
make the playoffs for the first time since 1992, when they lost to the Braves (which perhaps fate will pit them against once more). In the American League, meanwhile, the revived Red Sox aim to excise a short-but-intense recent history of failure, and the still-strong Detroit Tigers, including the erratic Justin Verlander, hope to make the final step, after being swept in the World Series last year, of bringing the bankrupt Motor City its first World Series championship since 1984. David Ebner

Andrew Wiggins’ shot at the pros

This ESPN-concocted Champions Classic, now in its third year, will be the first big-time showcase of Toronto-raised Andrew Wiggins, as Kansas squares off against Duke (for just the second time in the past 11 years). Mr. Wiggins arrives as a freshman at Kansas with impossibly high expectations and preternatural cool. The No. 1 high school recruit moved this past spring into Division I – he was also named the best high schooler ball player in the United States – is expected to be one-and-out at Kansas, playing with a star-laden freshman class before he ascends to the next perch everyone has long predicted, the No. 1 pick in the 2014 National Basketball Association draft. Mr. Wiggins, a 6-foot-8 shooting guard, has always delivered on heady demands and this game, featuring two of the best teams in the country, will be an early collegiate acid test. The November game will be the first time many fans will watch Mr. Wiggins against top competition. If all unfurls as imagined, Mr. Wiggins’s draft next year will mark not only his induction into the NBA but back-to-back No. 1s for Canada into the association. That bodes well for the country’s once-moribund men’s national team program; a medal in 2016 at the Rio de Janeiro Summer Olympics is realistic possibility. David Ebner

Get out those watermelon hats

It’s one of this country’s few truly national institutions, and if you want evidence of how serious partisans are, look no further than how quickly the 101st Grey Cup sold out. Five thousand tickets were snapped up in a 101-hour window in July, fully five months before the game is to be played on Nov. 24. Canada’s football championship will be contested in Regina this year, the first time the CFL’s glamour event has been held in the Saskatchewan capital since 2003. That year, 50,909 fans braved the chill to watch the Edmonton Eskimos defeat the Montreal Alouettes.

At least as many will turn up in Mosaic Stadium in the dying weeks of this fall to pump for the Roughriders. Particularly
since the home team is surely the best edition of the Riders since 2007, the last time the men in green carried the Grey Cup off the field. Regular season dominance is no guarantee of post-season success, but the Riders, who are community-owned, have built what appears to be a juggernaut, led by 36-year-old coach Cory Chamblin, quarterback Darian Durant and running back Kory Sheets. The trio may hail from Alabama, South Carolina and Connecticut, respectively, but they know intuitively how much it would mean for the Riders to win the big game before their crazed, watermelon-hat-wearing fans. To pull that feat off would be a first, and doubtless the greatest moment in the history of a franchise that inspires many of its fans to drive five and six hours to get to games – and embark on the long trek home after the final whistle. Sean Gordon
Wendel Clark comparisons unfair to David Clarkson

New Leaf free agent carries sky-high expectations as he follows in footsteps of now mythic childhood idol

JAMES MIRTLE
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TORONTO – His are some of the biggest skates any player could be charged with stepping into in this market.

They would belong to Wendel Clark, a former first-overall pick and captain, a heart-and-soul type who gave Toronto Maple Leafs fans something to cheer for in some of the NHL franchise’s bleakest days, scoring and fighting his way into their hockey hearts.

Now 46, and 13 years into retirement, Clark has become almost a mythical figure for a certain subset of Leafs fans, the ones who still pine for the type of unbridled, in-your-face game he played.

There’s been a vacancy in that department in Toronto for some time, too, which has only allowed those myths to fester and grow. While the likes of Darcy Tucker, Gary Roberts and Owen Nolan have filled the role of the skilled, gritty forward to varying degrees, it has essentially sat empty the past five years.

That’s the uncomfortable void David Clarkson will step into next season, carrying sky-high expectations after signing a seven-year, $36.75-million (U.S.) contract and doing double duty as the heir to the Clark throne and a local boy coming home.

For those who have been waiting, keeping things in perspective won’t be easy.

The newcomer was even asked Thursday if he planned to adopt Clark’s No. 17, just to complete the takeover.

“No, no, that’s not in the equation,” Clarkson said, standing next to his childhood idol for a photo op after the two chipped in at the team’s hockey school. “I couldn’t do that. I couldn’t live up to what he has done. To me, [wearing his jersey] was a childhood thing.”

Clarkson is a pretty remarkable story on his own, as he went undrafted throughout an unremarkable junior career and only caught on with the New Jersey Devils farm club at 21.

After two years of modest production and dropping the gloves, he graduated to a checker’s role in the NHL and spent the next four years chipping in an average of 12 hard-nosed goals a season.

Clarkson’s past two seasons have been by far his best, as skating in a second-line role alongside talented players such as
Patrik Elias, Adam Henrique and Travis Zajac, he blossomed into an effective scorer with 45 goals in 128 games.

Part of his success has simply been his willingness to shoot the puck from anywhere and everywhere, as he hit the net 180 times last season, more than all but Alexander Ovechkin, Evander Kane and Zach Parise league-wide.

Put into a similar role with the Leafs – likely with Joffrey Lupul and Nazem Kadri on the second line – should mean he can produce 20 to 25 goals and 45 to 50 points right away, and for as long as he remains healthy.

What he (and, really, almost anyone) will struggle to do is live up to his billing as the next Clark, who was a one-of-a-kind throwback and had already scored 187 goals by his 426th NHL game, more than double Clarkson’s modest career totals.

The rush of Leafs Nation to draw the comparison between the two has alarmed some of Clarkson’s former backers, as Devils fans have flooded the Internet with skepticism and concern in the wake of the free-agent signing last week.

“This is going to be a disaster,” wrote one such backer, Rob DeCotiis, on Twitter. “The Clark comparison isn’t fair to Clarkson whatsoever ... [I will] hate to see him vilified when he misses expectations. D.C. is a great guy.”

Even Clark, who’s well aware of the pitfalls of playing in Toronto, appeared to catch onto that possibility Thursday, as he attempted to deflect a little of the comparison talk that inevitably arose when the team put the pair side-by-side for a media availability.

“You never want to put pressure on one guy,” the soft-spoken Clark said at one point. “It’s a team thing. If the team starts the way they finished the season, all the guys will do well.”

If they don’t, it may not be pretty.

So far, Clarkson’s return home has been a storybook one, a first week as a Leaf filled with being recognized on the street and looked up to by kids on the ice.

But come the fall, the bar will be raised much, much higher, and stepping in for a myth will involve a lot more than bringing a similar game – and name – to the rink each night.
Alfredsson accepts fan criticism over abandoning Sens

Daniel Alfredsson heads to Detroit for a chance at the Stanley Cup, leaving Ottawa to pick up the pieces without its leader

Some permutations and possibilities in life simply defy imagination.

Perhaps because they’re too painful to envisage, or so remote as to be unfathomable – whatever, this is such an event.

Daniel Alfredsson, the longest-serving captain in the NHL, will pull on another team’s sweater next season, the first time in 18 years he won’t spend September in Ottawa.

It’s the sort of radical occurrence that upends entire belief systems.

And Sens fans responded with uncommon fury on talk-radio stations in the nation’s capital and on Twitter.

Traitor, they foamed after it was announced Alfredsson had signed a one-year, US$5.5-million deal with the Detroit Red Wings. Ingrate. Judas.

The frothing cloud of how-could-you over Ottawa may have been visible from space.

The thing is, Alfredsson gets it.

“I expect there will be some resentment and anger from the fans ... and there should be,” he said on a conference call Friday from his summer home in Sweden.

Rather than trying to deflect blame or dodge the criticism, Alfredsson opted for candour.

“T’m doing this for myself, I feel this is right for me,” he said.

It’s hard to argue a player who has dedicated himself so completely to a franchise and a city has earned the right to indulge himself a little as the sun prepares to set on his career.

It doesn’t lessen the surprise.

Even Red Wings general manager Ken Holland admitted when he called Alfredsson’s agent: “I really expected to get a response that he was going to be staying in Ottawa.”

Alfredsson spoke at length to Wings centre Henrik Zetterberg – his countryman and Olympic teammate – and ultimately decided Thursday.

By then, it was obvious to Ottawa GM Bryan Murray something was up. “When I got nervous was [Thursday], when I kept calling and calling and there was no
answer,” he said. In the evening, he arrived at his cottage to find a voicemail message waiting.

It was 8:40 p.m. (EDT) – Murray turned up at a news conference Friday armed with a detailed timeline, which says something about the importance of the occasion.

“I woke some poor guy up in Sweden because [Alfredsson] left the wrong number, or I dialled the wrong number,” he said.

Alfredsson soon called back, and though Murray tried to prevail on his captain to change his mind – and offered the possibility of a trade later in the season – the decision was final.

“It was a devastating evening, you go to bed and you lie there all night,” said Murray, adding the only discussion he had on financial terms with Alfredsson’s agent was last Saturday.

The crestfallen GM, who estimated exchanging 20 phone calls with team owner Eugene Melnyk over 48 hours, said: “I was convinced [a deal] was a matter of one phone call.”

Assigning the blame in this tale is a matter of perspective.

Could Murray have countered more forcefully at the beginning of the process, or pressed the issue when Melnyk said: pay him? Sure. Could Alfredsson have better communicated his intentions?

Certainly.

Officially, the reason for the move is an opportunity for a 40-year-old player to fulfill his lifelong dream of lifting a Stanley Cup – although reported interest from Boston would have made the Cup finalist Bruins a more obvious choice.

Whatever the deep motive, it only manifested itself recently.

“I didn’t really see myself making a change if you would have asked me a week ago,” he said.

The fact the Sens are a budget team may have had something to do with it (Melnyk’s finances aren’t what they used to be); the conspiracy theorists will draw a straight line between Friday and Alfredsson’s frank admission in the playoffs Ottawa wouldn’t be able to mount a comeback against the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Alfredsson batted the suggestion aside, saying Detroit is placed to contend now.

The Sens show great promise, he said, “but at this stage of my career ... I don’t really have the time to wait for that.”

Still, he’ll be uprooting his family in September – Alfredsson and his wife, Bibbi, have four boys – and wouldn’t commit to returning to a city where he has become piece of the metaphorical furniture.

That may be the deepest cut of all. Within a couple of hours of the
Alfredsson announcement, Murray offered a balm to the fan base, swinging a deal with the Anaheim Ducks to acquire 26-year-old right winger Bobby Ryan.

A deal has been in the works for a couple of weeks, and the second-overall draft pick in 2005 came at a steep cost: second-year NHLer Jakob Silfverberg, 2011 first-round pick Stefan Noesen and a first rounder in 2014.

But let’s face it, Murray needed to do more than just sign former Toronto Maple Leafs forward Clarke MacArthur to a free-agent deal.

Ryan is signed for two more seasons at $5.1-million – less than what Alfredsson will fetch in Detroit. The American has topped the 30-goal plateau in four of his five full NHL seasons.

Asked if he expected to replace the departing captain in the Sens lineup, Ryan told Sportsnet: “God, I hope not. I don’t think Alfredsson will ever be replaced in that organization.”

He’s right.
Nash sees massive potential in the ‘golden age of Canadian basketball’

ROBERT MacLEOD
Originally published on July 23, 2013

There was a time, Steve Nash says, when Canadians were skeptical about a young player who would set his sights high and dream of making it to the NBA.

Nash went through it, being constantly told he was too small to make his mark in the game only Americans played.

That was when Nash was a teenager playing high-school basketball in Victoria before earning a scholarship to Santa Clara University in California. He is currently enjoying a 17-year NBA career in which he established himself as one of game’s best point guards, securing two league most valuable player awards along the way.

“There was a time I think in this country where people would look down upon you if you had a goal that was too high in this game,” Nash said Monday after announcing the list of 18 players who will take part in the national senior men’s training camp later this week at the Air Canada Centre. “And that’s no longer the case here.

“This really is the golden age of Canadian basketball,” said Nash, 39, and entering his second season with the Los Angeles Lakers. “You look around the country and around the world and what our athletes are able to do at every single level, we’re thriving. And we have talent and potential depth at every age group.”

As the general manager of the Canadian men’s senior team, a job he accepted last summer, it is Nash’s job to help put the program back on the world map. The Canadian men have not made the Olympics since 2000, when Nash was the team leader and starting point guard.

It has been an exciting year for Canada and Canadian basketball, highlighted by the historic first-overall selection of Anthony Bennett in the NBA draft by the Cleveland Cavaliers. Kelly Olynyk, another Toronto native, went 13th overall to the Dallas Mavericks, who traded his rights to the Boston Celtics.

Andrew Wiggins of Vaughan, Ont., the top high-school prospect this past season, who will play at the University of Kansas this coming year, is already being touted as the odds-on No. 1 pick in the 2014 NBA draft.

“Around the world people are starting to take notice,” Canada head coach Jay Triano said. “The depth that we have in our country is better than it’s ever been.”
Nash noted Canadian athletes these days are no longer sheltered when it comes to taking up the game and that from a young age they are exposed to the best competition world-wide.

“All of our top players are playing against the best players in their age groups in the States and internationally,” he said. “I think that’s something that was different than when I was in high school. I had maybe one opportunity to go and play in a tournament in the States and you never know who you’d get to see.”

Nash was asked what made him different to be able to succeed when he was starting out.

“Maybe partly delusional,” he said. “I always thought that if you get a little bit better every day, why is there a ceiling? So I always just kept at it every single day. I didn’t take any days off and stuck with the plan and a vision.

“A lot of days I didn’t want to do it, but I knew if I was going to realize this little project I’d have to stick with it.”

The immediate goal for the men’s team will be to qualify for the 2014 FIBA World Cup in Spain. The qualification tournament will be held in Caracas from Aug. 30 to Sept. 11.

Canada will be in tough as both Bennett (shoulder) and Olynyk (foot) are injured and won’t be able to play. Wiggins has also sent his regrets, telling Basketball

Canada his first-year commitments to Kansas will prevent him from playing.

Tristan Thompson of the Cleveland Cavaliers will be among the Canadian NBA players who will be at camp, along with Cory Joseph (San Antonio Spurs), Joel Anthony (Miami Heat) and Andrew Nicholson (Orlando Magic).
The game that binds us

In Canada, we stand on guard for three downs, a big field and the rouge. The CFL may be quirky, but it’s all ours. And we cherish that most Canadian symbol of them all – the Grey Cup. The days of hoopla and the one-game wonder are in our national DNA, Robert Everett-Green says.

When Ken Dryden published his best-selling book The Game nearly 30 years ago, nobody needed to ask which game he meant. Hockey is the Canadian team sport, as everyone says – yet in some ways Canadian football has a better claim to belong to us and no one else. Hockey is played all over Europe and the United States, but only in this Dominion can someone throw a long pass deep into the end zone. We have our own rules, our own field – bigger than gridirons down south – and a unique relationship to a game that connects with the land and its people like no other professional sport.

The Grey Cup itself has the best claim to be, as reader Bill Kimball says, the real People’s Cup. It was contested by amateur teams for its first half-century, and didn’t always stay in big cities. The Sarnia Imperials played for the Cup three times in the 1930s, winning twice, including once on home field. (Sarnia was one of more than 100 stops on the Grey Cup 100 Train Tour that ran coast to coast for 10 weeks this fall.) Kimball recalls how, after the Argonauts beat the Lions in Ottawa in 2004, “the Cup was sent around to the hometowns of players from the winning team. I have a picture of the Cup in Peterborough, Ont., with Argo linebacker Gabe Robinson, who made sure ordinary folks had a chance to see, touch – and drink from – the legendary chalice. None of that snooty, Stanley Cup packed-in-a-crate, gloved-hands treatment!”

Championships in hockey and baseball grind on for days.

But the football season’s climactic story is compressed into a single day. A related narrative flows through the preceding days, as fans travel from across the country to make national whoopee in a town that may not even have a team in the game. The days of countdown before the kickoff are essentially off the clock of normal life – they’re the carnival before combat, the delirium before the discipline. Street revels and bizarre rituals, such as marching a horse through a hotel, become keenly important.
The non-game elements were especially big in my household the year my mother, Edmonton CBC TV host Jo Green, did the on-air commentary for the Grey Cup parade in Ottawa in 1967. She noted, as many have since, the number of seats left empty at Lansdowne Park by those too hung over to make the game.

But even those who don’t watch the Cup seem to feel its pull, which unlike hockey’s playoff marathon, lasts only long enough to register a clear beginning, middle and end.

Unlike the NHL, which plays its regular season and playoff games indoors, the CFL embraces the indignities of Canadian weather. It’s not uncommon to see snow settling on helmets during playoff season, and weather-scarred finals such as the 1962 Fog Bowl are hallowed memories. The CFL even recreated the 1950 Mud Bowl this year, with help from a fire hose. Canadian masochistic pride in our harsh climate takes a new twist when you’re watching a receiver from Texas scamper through wind-driven sleet to meet a frozen ball you desperately hope he’ll catch.

Scenes like that help save us from the numbing solemnity of the American game. Our football is more about the comedy of adapting to the unpredictable, less about rival generals duelling from the sidelines.

Far from being a skewed copy of the U.S. gridiron sport, the Canadian game came first in North America. Canadians played English rugby football – as the game was then known – for years before we showed it to the Yanks during friendly games at Harvard University in 1874. They liked it so much, they allegedly stole the Canadians’ oblong ball between matches, and began developing their own game.

Whether from pride or colonial stubbornness, our teams refused for decades to consider “anything approaching the American style of scrimmages,” as a report of one league-forming meeting in 1884 put it. Changes eventually crept in, but we kept the most exciting features of the Canadian game, including the long, wide field with generous end zones, and the get-on-with-it thrills of only three downs.

CFL heroes live closer to the common grain than most pro athletes, because they’re not millionaires. The starting salary for players is reckoned to be around $40,000, and a recent tally by the Winnipeg Free Press set Argo quarterback Ricky Ray’s pay at $400,000. Many players have part-time jobs, and some even room together. These are regular guys, enacting the national survival struggle on an open field, and they compete in more provinces than NHL players do.

The CFL has spent decades resisting a more powerful U.S. competitor – a sports
version of the two countries’ mouse-and-elephant relationship. The league even had an 1812 moment in the mid-1990s, launching short-lived teams in five cities in the United States, with the Cup going to the Baltimore Stallions (now the Montreal Alouettes) in 1995. Last year, B.C. MP Peter Julian tried to head off further cross-border skirmishes with a private member’s bill that would forbid football league exports in either direction. Take that, Rob Ford.

Even before the CFL formed in the late 1950s, Canadian football reflected regional tensions, as much through schisms over rules as in actual games. The Alouettes’ Grey Cup win over the Calgary Stampeders in 1970 coincided with the civil trauma of the October Crisis. That made the game doubly unforgettable for Alouettes fan Stephen H. Halperin, who at age 20 trekked to Toronto’s CNE Stadium to see the first Als victory in his lifetime.

“If ever a Canadian city needed a harmless distraction from the pain of real life,” Halperin says, “that was the place and time.” He remembers seeing Als kicker George Springate, a member of Quebec’s National Assembly and colleague of murdered labour minister Pierre Laporte, guarded on the sidelines by a security detail.

The police uniforms I associate with the Grey Cup final are the Mounties’ red dress tunics. There’s always a pair of them on guard near the trophy, and as the game nears its end, the TV cameras always cut from the play a few times to show the Cup being carried down the steps through the stadium. It’s said that there’s no ritual without walking, and the promenade that carries Lord Grey’s silver relic to the victors is one of the best rituals in sports.

Compare that to what I saw in the SkyDome after the Blue Jays’ Joe Carter won baseball’s World Series with a home run in 1993. The players celebrated briefly on the infield, then went to their locker room, leaving 50,000 of us to stare at an empty field.

No, that won’t do. We need the days of hoopla, the formal yet elemental struggle of the game, and the field ceremony that shows our revels are truly ended. The Grey Cup goes to the winner, but it stays forever with us.
Arts
Arts

Oscar bait will be rolling into theatres. TV gets serious about drawing eyeballs. And, yes, it’s doorstopper books season. For those with too much to do and too little time, some tips on cultural musts from the Globe’s Arts team.

Stardust in your eyes

David Bowie is perhaps rock’s greatest chameleon. This was especially true during his 1970s/1980s heyday, when the former David Robert Jones would adopt, then discard, personae with dazzling, dizzying frequency – Ziggy Stardust, Aladdin Sane, the Thin White Duke among them. Each character change, of course, involved myriad costume ch-ch-ch-changes, the highlights of which will be among the 300-plus Bowie-themed objects displayed Sept. 25 through Nov. 27 at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Toronto is the only Canadian stop for “David Bowie is” which drew record crowds last spring upon its opening at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum. The AGO is striving mightily to bring Mr. Bowie to town – he reportedly made one appearance, after-hours, during the V&A run – but the prospect appears remote: at 66, Mr. Bowie’s preferred persona seems to be that of recluse, not showman.

Another figure conspicuous by his absence is Ai Weiwei, the famous Chinese dissident artist whose first-ever major international touring showcase, “According to What?,” is running concurrently with the Bowie exhibit at the AGO. Chinese authorities confiscated Mr. Ai’s passport in 2011, thereby making it impossible for him to attend the Toronto opening as he’d hoped. As with “David Bowie is”, the AGO is the only Canadian venue for the Ai show, its survey of a varied artistic practice spanning more than 30 years on view through Oct. 27.

James Adams

After REDRUM

Stephen King, one of the most popular and successful writers of this or any era, is having a very good year: His summertime haunted-carnival confection, Joyland, has been a bestseller list stalwart, and Under the Dome, the television adaptation of his massive novel about a small Maine town trapped under a big glass dome, is a hit with critics and audiences. And if early
reports are to be believed, he’s saving the best for last: Doctor Sleep, the eagerly-awaited sequel to one of his best books, 1977’s The Shining, hits stores on Sept. 24.

The novel catches up with Dan Torrance, the grown up version of young Danny, whose REDRUM fantasies terrified generations. Dan, now settled in New Hampshire after decades of psychological torment stemming from the horrors he witnessed at the Overlook Hotel, works at a nursing home caring for the dying. But he is pulled from his comfortable life to confront a group of sort-of-immortal people known as the True Knot, who travel the nation’s highways, as the book’s press materials put it, “living off the steam that children with the shining produce when they are slowly tortured to death.”

It sounds kind of silly when you put it like that. But so does a novel about a rabid dog, yet Cujo scared us all to death. If Stephen King’s earned anything after more than fifty books, it’s the benefit of the doubt. Jared Bland

Toronto International Film Festival: 2013 Edition

Between bookmark galas on Sept. 5 and Sept. 14, Toronto will once again play host to hundreds of film folk from around the world – and to gangs of celebrity gawkers. Although the festival started as a way to honour local industry types, it’s evolved into one of the top three platforms for premiering top-notch cinema and has launched more than its fair share of Oscar fodder (see: Slumdog Millionaire and The King’s Speech). Festival directors Piers Handling and Cameron Bailey have secured yet another impressive lineup for this year: a total of 366 films (288 features and 78 shorts) representing 70 countries. Some of these films are already generating considerable buzz. Among the standouts: August: Osage County, based on Tracy Letts’ Tony- and Pulitzer Prize-winning play, starring Meryl Streep and Julia Roberts; Steve McQueen’s 12 Years a Slave, with Benedict Cumberbatch and Michael Fassbender in starring roles; The Fifth Estate, TIFF’s opening night movie, helmed by Bill Condon and featuring Mr. Cumberbatch again, this time as Julian Assange; and finally, Under the Skin, in which Scarlett Johansson’s character belongs to an alien race that feeds on humans. Yeah, yeah, so that’s on screen. What about flesh and blood celebrity power? If you’re in the city, watch for Sandra Bullock, Matthew McConaughey and James Franco on the red carpet or getting into trouble (we can hope) at a downtown watering hole. Amy Verner
The master of Maus

Art Spiegelman has been a giant of graphic art since Maus was first published in 1986. That’s because, while it looked like a standard comic book, its subject matter was the Holocaust, specifically the experience of the author’s father during the war. The characters are animals who stand in for various aspects of the conflict: mice (Jews), cats (Nazis) and pigs (Poles). The work drew powerful responses. It won a Pulitzer Prize and, for a generation of artists, elevated the medium’s possibilities.

But if Maus is the work for which Mr. Spiegelman is best known (for many people, it’s probably the only work he’s known for), the now 65-year-old cartoonist has had a broad and prolific career beyond that – including his days as co-editor of the comic magazine Arcade, work for The New Yorker and the graphic novel In the Shadow of No Towers, about his reaction to Sept. 11.

To give him his due, the Vancouver Art Gallery hosted a retrospective earlier this year. Now, Montreal-based publisher Drawn & Quarterly is releasing a “comprehensive” book as well, which will show Mr. Spiegelman’s development as an artist and his influence on others. Co-Mix: A retrospective of Comics, Graphics, and Scraps is essential reading for fans of graphic novels and a much deserved tribute to a genre-defining artist. Dave McGinn
Art Spiegelman retrospective: A look back on a career that’s been all about looking back

A retrospective of his dark oeuvre has given Art Spiegelman the chance to look back on a career that’s been all about looking back.

MARSHA LEDERMAN
Originally published on February 15, 2013

VANCOUVER – There’s an episode in Art Spiegelman’s autobiographical and Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel *Maus* in which Spiegelman’s father, Vladek, has a dream. Imprisoned as a slave labourer during the Second World War, working for a big German company, Vladek dreams of his dead grandfather.

“Don’t worry, my child, you will come out of this place – free!” his grandfather promises. And it will happen, he says, on Parshas Truma.

The reference is to a section of the Torah. A different segment – called a parsha in Hebrew – is read each week. In the Parshas Truma (spellings vary), read once a year, God instructs Moses and the Israelites wandering in the desert to construct a tabernacle, a temporary sanctuary, with various materials including gold, silver, colourful wool and precious stones.

In *Maus*, and in his life, Vladek was indeed released from that labour camp on Parshas Truma – finding sanctuary in the desert of Nazi Germany, but it, too, was only temporary. There were many more troubles to come – including Auschwitz. Still, he survived, and after the war, he had a son, Art, born the week of Parshas Truma. When Art turned 13, this was the Torah portion he recited at his bar mitzvah.

And this is the Torah portion that will be read in synagogues this Saturday, the day after Art Spiegelman turns 65, and as a retrospective of his extraordinary career opens at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

“That’s auspicious, having an opening like that,” said Spiegelman this week, during an interview at the VAG (conducted on a rooftop deck so he could smoke).

But wait, there’s more: It’s also exactly 20 years since his first New Yorker cover – Feb 15, 1993. A shocker of a Valentine’s Day illustration early in the magazine’s Tina Brown era, it featured a Hasidic Jew kissing a black woman, inspired by New York’s Crown Heights riot two years earlier. “That cover entered the DNA of the New Yorker and changed it,” says Spiegelman, who should know: His wife, Françoise Mouly, is the magazine’s art...
director.

The illustration is one of more than 400 works that form Art Spiegelman CO-MIX: A Retrospective of Comics, Graphics and Scraps.

Spiegelman was born in Stockholm in 1948 and immigrated with his parents, both Auschwitz survivors, to the United States in 1951. As a child in New York, he devoured comics, and started his own fanzine in junior high. He was 15 when hired by Topps Bubble Gum Co., which became, he says, his “Medici” for 20 years. The steady work, including creating the parody series Wacky Packages and Garbage Pail Kids, allowed Spiegelman to focus on his first love, comics.

He began in the underground scene, and founded the comics magazine RAW with Mouly in 1980. But it was *Maus* that changed everything – for him, and the art form. “Art hates it when we call him the first graphic-novel artist, but of course he invented the genre,” says Bodo Von Dewitz, CO-MIX coordinating curator in Cologne.

*Maus*, which was initially serialized in RAW and published as *Maus I* in 1986 and *Maus II* in 1991, can only be described as groundbreaking. Portraying Jews as mice, Germans as cats, and Poles as pigs, *Maus* was rejected by many publishers, but was ultimately an enormous critical and commercial success. The work not only brought new attention to that horrific chapter in history but mainstream literary respect to the art form. In 1991, Spiegelman had a solo exhibition, Making *Maus*, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

It took the “visceral shock” of his Holocaust comics for graphic art “to move into another zone,” Spiegelman says. “So that’s been useful to the world and to a degree useful to me, although I’ve been left with the aftershock of that.”

That aftershock has meant acclaim and financial freedom. But it has also meant everything else he subsequently created would be compared to *Maus*. “I feel like … a blues musician who had one crossover hit, so they just ask you to play that at every concert,” he says.

In 2011, he was awarded the prestigious grand prix at the Angoulême International Comics Festival, an award that entailed the creation of the retrospective now visiting Vancouver. The exhibition opened in Angoulême just over a year ago and travelled to Paris and Cologne. After Vancouver, it will move to the Jewish Museum in New York.

The exhibition is a comprehensive career retrospective – from Spiegelman’s juvenilia to RAW to other comic works such as *Breakdowns* and his post-9/11 stunner, *In the Shadow of No Towers*. There is his graphic work, his New Yorker
covers (including a 1993 one featuring schoolchildren carrying guns, which has received a lot of attention post Newtown), his children’s literature, and of course, a strong focus on Maus – walls of studies and finished pages; artifacts related to his family; audiotape of interviews with his father, who died in 1982.

“I wanted to show this process of work that I found very important,” said curator Rina Zavagli-Mattotti, from Paris this week, “the fact that to make one image that will be printed, he maybe does the work, the sketches, 100 times.”

VAG senior curator Bruce Grenville, who had worked with Spiegelman on the 2008 VAG show KRAZY!, contacted Spiegelman after the 2011 publication of the author’s book MetaMaus to congratulate him, and asked if he would consider doing something else at the VAG. Spiegelman suggested bringing CO-MIX to Vancouver. “It was really just the right moment, because he swore up and down he would never do a retrospective,” says Grenville.

“Disaster is my muse,” Spiegelman declares in the introduction to In the Shadow of No Towers. So how does he continue to create when life is so good? “Fortunately,” he quips, “disasters can include hangnails for me.”

He’s quick with the joke, but it seems that dark thoughts are never far from his mind.

“I was realizing I’m thinking about death a lot these days, because turning 65 is a big deal. But then I’m looking back over my journals, [and I realize] I’ve been thinking about death since I was 15 or something.” He continues, ambivalent. “There is something epitaph-like about a retrospective. But here it feels like an interesting coincidental confluence to have it happen on my birthday. And I’ll take it as a gift, rather than as a curse.”
Vampire theories you can sink your teeth into

So, why are vampires so compelling?

1. Vampires are sexy.

Well, duh. Comely English actress Kate Beckinsale has played a vampire in two movies and a vampire hunter in a third. Along the way, there was plenty of form-fitting pleather, gunfights, Goth steampunk gadgets and scenes filmed in the rain. This puts all the strained angst and absurd thunderclap baseball games of Twilight in the shade. Baseball versus Kate Beckinsale in a shiny jumpsuit? No contest.

But why do we find the Goth look so sexy? The white face. The pouty dark-red lips. Are we in love with death? No, we are in love with Kate Beckinsale. In a shiny jumpsuit.

2. Vampires are teenagers.

Much ink has been spilled in pursuit of the insight that vampires, especially the Twilit vintage thereof, are metaphors for adolescence. They have terrible secrets about unspeakable appetites, and they feel at once awkward and predatory. Dark misunderstood outsiders, far more interesting than they appear. And then fangs!

Unfortunately for this theory, teenagers are not that interesting. Except to themselves.
3. Vampires are cool.

A logical extension of the first two theories. Hanging out with, maybe even dating, a vampire gives you an edge in the social-position sweepstakes of high school. Vampire-cool gives you the illusion of being dangerous and privy to arcane knowledge.

But remember the part where vampires live by sucking human blood? Your edgy boyfriend actually wants to have you for lunch. In a memorable episode of the television series Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Buffy watches with some satisfaction as a bunch of hipster teens are massacred by their vampire friends. Buffy says vampires are not cool, just dangerous. Buffy is the Chosen One. Buffy is always right. Vampires are not cool. Q.E.D.

4. Vampires are our fear of death.

A creature who can’t die but can only inflict death makes us confront our own mortality, which unsettles us.

Problem: Too obvious.

5. Vampires are our fear of technology.

Better. Vampires are actually not about dying, they’re about not dying – that is, our inability to take death in stride, to make a place for it. Medical technology is deployed as a denial of death, a doomed attempt to hold it off for as long as possible. Death has been folded into the general logic of technological control – but only paradoxically, because it can’t be controlled.

This is good stuff! Use it during your second glass of wine.

6. Vampires are our fear of addiction.

Better still. Unlike zombies, which are feared because they spread zombieness like a virus, vampires are all about controlling an extreme condition with will and good drugs. The good vampires in Twilight treat themselves as recovering alcoholics of blood, deftly crossing 12-step consciousness with the conventions of the horror movie. Anne Rice’s vampires are more straightforward: They know drinking blood is more like an orgasm than a drink.

Problem: May not be suitable for use at cocktail parties.

7. Vampires are consumerism.

Physical addictions morph into addictions of the soul. The general account of desire that underwrites all vampire books and movies – the terrible cravings, the drivenness – is an apt metaphor for the way our desires for things and experience
are stoked by advertising, branding and those alluring displays of shoes, handbags and overpriced T-shirts.

Problem: This kind of thing is so 1990s. Uncool.

8. **Vampires are capitalism.**

Yes, because the last theory doesn’t focus on the right level of complexity. It’s the system itself that puts the bite on us, that drains us of lifeblood, that poisons us with longing just so it can keep us alive as a barely living, will-destroyed food source. Vampires and their kept ones are therefore synecdoches for relentless growth, bubbling post-industrial markets, derivatives trades, credit-default swaps, leveraged buyouts and inflated spectral currency.

Actually, that one sounds almost plausible.
Streep, Johansson and Franco – in 3-D

As the film festival unveils the full – very full – list of celebrity attendees for next month’s event, The Globe picks out 10 stars who promise to make the red carpet even more glamorous and buzzy than usual.

AMY VERNER

Originally published on August 21, 2013

For some, the Toronto International Film Festival means a 10-day movie blitz. For others, it means an opportunity to see stars in actual 3-D. Over its 38 years, TIFF has done a stellar job of attracting celebrities; they say they enjoy Toronto and its polite, enthusiastic audiences. But as the festival directors Piers Handling and Cameron Bailey noted on Tuesday, filmmakers and actors alike know that exposure in Toronto can be vital for kick-starting awards season.

“It’s positioned as the key festival in the world for the Golden Globes and Oscars,” said Handling.

Essentially, everyone benefits in a way that Bailey described as “alchemic.” We get the red-carpet glamour; the talent gets the necessary buzz. Ah yes, buzz, that elusive, ever-shifting notion that serves to single out some of this year’s guests more than others. When TIFF released its red-carpet list Tuesday, it was as impressive as in years past; there are so many stars in the cinema galaxy that the absence of Brad is replaced by the presence of Matthew McConaughey. Alas, unless you count Alice Cooper, there’s no Oprah wild card. But then TIFF ‘13 did manage to score Meryl Streep.

These 10 standouts made the cut based on an unscientific formula involving talent, award potential, comeback opportunity and unapologetic hotness.

Scarlett Johansson:
Play a human-eating alien? Check

Scarlett Johansson has already portrayed a superhero, a 17th-century servant and a brainy sexpot. So naturally, she jumped at the chance to play Isserly, an alien accessorized with a Pat Benatar-inspired coif, in Jonathan Glazer’s Under the Skin. Based on the protagonist in Michael Faber’s novel from 2000, Isserly belongs to an extraterrestrial race that enjoys eating humans. Her job is to fetch Earthling hitchhikers who will be subject to fattening, you know, like foie gras. Handling called Under the Skin “maybe one of the most daring, audacious films starring a Hollywood star that [they] had seen this
year,” presumably because there are a number of deeper take-away messages. Or maybe because Johansson as a cannibal remains seared in his mind.

Sandra Bullock:
Did somebody say action?

The trailer for Alfonso Cuaron’s Gravity looks nothing short of terrifying. We don’t see much of Sandra Bullock; she’s in a space suit floating somewhere above Earth. And that’s exactly the issue. On a spacewalk with co-star George Clooney, something goes disastrous wrong and all hope seems lost. Not since Speed has Bullock taken on a suspense role that has the potential to jolt our adrenaline levels into overdrive. It will be exciting to see her step out of her comfort zone – heck, out of anyone’s comfort zone.

Matthew McConaughey:
Losing weight, winning form

By the end of Montreal-born director Jean-Marc Vallée’s Dallas Buyers Club, we see one of Hollywood’s go-to leading men emaciated in the final stages of AIDS. The year is 1985 and Matthew McConaughey’s character pursues various alternative courses of treatment, eventually forming a club to help others. Images of the actor at his lowest weight – reportedly down 47 pounds – had celebrity watchers fearing for his health. But body transformations always score points when it comes to award season. And anyway, McConaughey has assured interviewers that he’s back to cheeseburgers.

Julia Roberts:
Call it a comeback

It’s been three years since Eat, Pray, Love – the last time that Julia Roberts starred in a movie worth watching (ahem, Mirror Mirror). And all signs point to August: Osage County being a winner. The story comes care of Tracy Letts, whose 2007 play by the same name won both a Pulitzer for best drama and several Tonys. Roberts’s pal George Clooney is a co-producer and John Wells (ER, The West Wing) directs. Roberts plays Meryl Streep’s daughter, which is persuasive to the extent that both have earned Oscars. But really, as long as Roberts gives good smile on the red carpet, we’ll be happy.

Benedict Cumberbatch:
Good things come in threes

Each year, there’s one actor who emerges as TIFF’s triple threat. For 2013 that honour goes to Benedict Cumberbatch, seemingly bestowed with a name
straight out of a Dickens tale. But of his three films that premiere at the festival, only one has the 37-year-old stepping back into time: Steve McQueen’s *12 Years a Slave*, which takes place in 1841. Cumberbatch is also part of the brood in *August: Osage County* (see above). His final film, *The Fifth Estate*, bows in TIFF’s choicest spot: opening night. It’s a thriller about government cover-ups that is very much of our times and positions Cumberbatch as – wait for it – Julian Assange. You definitely won’t forget his name now.

**Meryl Streep:**
**Because she’s Meryl Streep**

By now, you’ve probably realized that *August: Osage County* has quite the ensemble cast (Ewan McGregor, Abigail Breslin and Juliette Lewis also contribute to the family dynamic). The entire film, however, hinges on Streep as the no-nonsense dysfunctional matriarch, Violet. Consider that when TIFF first began as the Festival of Festivals 38 years ago, Streep hadn’t even transitioned into film. And today, she’s arguably the finest actress of them all. The festival was lucky to score this title – and luckier still to have Streep attending.

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**Idris Elba:**
**The awards buzz starts here**

According to Bailey, Idris Elba’s performance in *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* remarkably captures the leader’s body language, as well as his way with words. At a time when Mandela’s health remains so fragile, there’s sure to be something moving about seeing such a realistic portrayal. We’ve watched Elba flex his muscles in dark, gritty or high-impact pics like *Thor*, *Prometheus*, *28 Weeks Later*, *Obsessed* and TV’s *The Wire*. But you don’t get to play Nelson Mandela if you can’t deliver emotion. So when the award buzz starts building around Elba in a few months, it all began here.

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**Jude Law:**
**Still got it**

One look at the poster for Dom Hemingway circulating online and any question that Jude Law has lost his mojo can be put to bed. The catch: We’re no longer dealing with a seductive dilettante à la *Alfie* or *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. Here, his titular character sports mutton chops and has a mouth filled with gold teeth. He’s a convict whose soft spot is his estranged daughter. Yep, he’s gone from cad to criminal dad. Who’s judging, though; he can woo with his accent alone.
Léa Seydoux: 
Looks good in Blue

There is no shortage of beautiful French talent expected at this year’s TIFF (Marion Cotillard, Juliette Binoche, Fanny Ardant and Emmanuelle Devos round out the légion française). But in May, Léa Seydoux, along with co-star Adèle Exarchopoulos and director Abdellatif Kechiche appeared on the podium at Cannes to accept the Palme d’Or for Blue Is the Warmest Color. Anyone who has seen Seydoux in the Prada Candy fragrance ads can attest to her gamine-next-door charm. In Blue Is the Warmest Color she plays a young lesbian with blue hair. It’s the type of role that makes an impression – if you weren’t already convinced from Midnight in Paris and Inglourious Basterds.

James Franco: 
The artist is present

James Franco is one of the few whose name appears as both director and “guest” (aka celebrity) on the official TIFF red-carpet list. Indeed, he’s turned into the type of ambitious polymath – actor, artist, author, director – whom no one takes seriously until he’s completed his art and then, voilà, it’s not actually that bad. He is becoming a TIFF regular (127 Hours showed here, as did Spring Breakers) and, frankly, he cleans up real nice. No doubt he’ll also be promoting his two films, Child of God and Third Person (directed by Paul Haggis), on Instagram to his 461,000-plus followers. In that way, he’s a PR pro, too.
TIFF unveils this year’s star studded list of film premieres and galas

From George Clooney to Kiera Knightley, the 38th annual Toronto International Film Festival announces this year’s list of gala and special presentations featuring Oscar bait from Hollywood and pedigreed foreign films

SIMON HOUPT
Originally published on July 23, 2013

From George Clooney to Kiera Knightley, the 38th annual Toronto International Film Festival announces this year’s list of gala and special presentations featuring Oscar bait from Hollywood and pedigreed foreign films

Audiences at this year’s Toronto International Film Festival looking for escapism may feel they’ve turned on the news instead, with a clutch of movies based on real-life events that are continuing to play out even as the festival approaches.

Among the more than 70 galas and special presentations announced on Tuesday was the festival’s opening night film, The Fifth Estate, a thriller about the WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and his battles with governments, the press, and some of his now-estranged colleagues. Directed by Bill Condon and starring Benedict Cumberbatch as the Australian-born activist, the film is based in part on a book by Daniel Domscheit-Berg, who served as a WikiLeaks spokesman before quitting the organization in 2010 after a falling-out with Assange.

Last year’s festival included a TV movie about the teenaged Assange, but the new film, which will have its world premiere at TIFF, comes as the U.S. government is again vexed by leaks about its intelligence programs.

“This is one of the most timely stories right now,” said Cameron Bailey, the festival’s artistic director. “I can’t think of anybody who doesn’t have all kinds of information about themselves online. Governments have access to that, in some cases the companies that we put our trust in have access to that. Assange is somebody who began asking questions, and began looking for transparency in terms of how that information is disseminated, and I think that’s something we all need to think about.”

In the film’s trailer, one character (played by Stanley Tucci) says of Assange, “He’s not a journalist, he’s a threat to national security,” echoing recent attacks on both the former intelligence worker.
Edward Snowden and The Guardian’s Glenn Greenwald, who reported the recent leaks about the National Security Agency’s operations.

Another newsy film at TIFF, which will celebrate its 38th edition Sept. 5 to 15: An ode to Nelson Mandela, whose diminishing health has been front-page news this month. *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom*, based on Mandela’s autobiography, stars Idris Elba as the anti-apartheid activist who eventually became the first black president of South Africa. Naomie Harris plays Winnie Mandela.

Other films dealing with issues that continue to resonate include *Omar*, a Cannes award-winner about a Palestinian man forced to become an Israeli informant, and *Blue is the Warmest Color*, the French film about a lesbian love affair that won the Cannes Palme d’Or in May only days after that country legalized same-sex marriage.

And the festival will make news about itself, on the wings of celebrity angels. While no stars are yet confirmed to walk the red carpets, those who have films coming include Julia Roberts, Meryl Streep, Nicole Kidman, Ewan McGregor, Pierce Brosnan, Emma Thompson, Mike Myers, Zac Efron, Jennifer Aniston, Mos Def, Tim Robbins, George Clooney, Colin Firth, Thandie Newton, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Scarlett Johansson, Keira Knightley, Matthew McConaughey and Jennifer Garner.

**TIFF LINEUP HIGHLIGHTS**

**Canadian films (and non-Canadian films made by Canadians)**

Gala world premieres for Canadian films include actor-writer-director Don McKellar’s *The Grand Seduction*, starring Brendan Gleeson, Taylor Kitsch and Liane Balaban; Jeremiah Chechik’s *The Right Kind of Wrong*; and Jonathan Sobol’s *The Art of the Steal*.

Hometown hero Atom Egoyan, meanwhile, goes Hollywood again for *Devil’s Knot*, about a notorious miscarriage of justice that wrongly sent three teenagers from West Memphis, Ark., to prison for 18 years. And two celebrated Quebec filmmakers make the jump to (indie) Hollywood: Jean-Marc Vallée (*Café de Flore*) directs Matthew McConaughey in *Dallas Buyers Club*, a low-budget drama about a Texas man with HIV in 1985 who battles the medical establishment for permission to use non-traditional treatments; and Denis Villeneuve (*Incendies*) directs Hugh Jackman, Jake Gyllenhaal, Maria Bello and Terrence Howard in *Prisoners*, a thriller about an abduction.

**Industry veterans, newbie directors**

Numerous actors and writers trying to cross over to feature directing for the first
time will bring the results to TIFF, including Arrested Development’s Jason Bateman (Bad Words) and Mike Myers, who is hemming Supermensch, a feature documentary about his friend Shep Gordon, a veteran Hollywood music and film agent. Actor Joseph Gordon-Levitt (Looper) directs himself and Scarlett Johansson in the comedy Don Jon. And Matthew Weiner, the creator of TV’s Mad Men, will make his feature directorial debut with the world premiere of You Are Here, starring Owen Wilson, Zach Galifianakis and Amy Poehler.

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Oscar bait

One of the most impressively pedigreed films at this TIFF is August: Osage County, an epic family drama adapted from a 2007 Broadway play that snagged the Pulitzer Prize and five Tony Awards. The all-star cast includes Meryl Streep, Julia Roberts, Ewan McGregor, Juliette Lewis, Dermot Mulroney, Chris Cooper, Sam Shepard and Benedict Cumberbatch, with TV veteran John Wells directing. 12 Years a Slave, by director Steve McQueen, tells the true story of a free black man sold into slavery in 1841. It stars Chiwetel Ejiofor, Michael Fassbender and, again, Benedict Cumberbatch.
Tips from the ultimate party crasher: Blend in, be social. And it helps to walk behind Will Smith

JAMES BRADSHAW
Originally published on September 4, 2009

As 10 days of galas, premieres, parties, after-parties (and after-after-parties) kick off at the Toronto International Film Festival, thousands will find themselves longing for a peek behind that velvet rope – to no avail.

But there are those who refuse to let strict guest lists and hulking bouncers stand in their way. They are experts in the art of A-list espionage, sneaking and charming their way through the checks and balances designed to keep an event exclusive.

Ryan Sebaa, a 22-year-old film and engineering student from Ottawa, morphed himself into an unlikely party crasher extraordinaire last year after he wrote a treatment – and then a full script – for a comedy called Making of Sam’s ‘Hero’, which he was determined to get into the hands of fellow Canuck Seth Rogen.

Make no mistake, Sebaa says, this was business, not pleasure. But after 17 months – first back-and-forthing to Los Angeles, then snagging a spot at a film school there – photographs prove Sebaa’s unexpected acumen: He is shown posing with Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie, Leonardo DiCaprio, Clint Eastwood, Sean Penn, Dustin Hoffman, Will Smith, Ben Stiller, Anne Hathaway, Forest Whitaker, Drew Barrymore, Justin Long, Ryan Reynolds – and eventually, Rogen himself.

A video Sebaa shot also shows a montage of stars wishing him a happy birthday (he crashed a party the night of his 22nd, and another the next evening). Another he has posted to his website shows Jason Alexander interviewing Brad Pitt at the Critics’ Choice Awards, and there’s Sebaa at the next table, ensconced beside Pitt’s manager, chuckling knowingly. He rode an elevator with Jimmy Kimmel, plying him for help contacting Rogen. He bumped into Steve Carell in a washroom and made the same pitch.

And his list of crashed events is long and distinguished: the Teen Choice Awards, the Palm Springs International Film Festival, the Golden Globes (“crashed that like it was a high-school prom”), an HBO party, the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Awards, the Writers Guild Awards, the Grammys, and the party of them all, the Vanity Fair Oscars after-party.

How does he do it?
**FIRST**, Sebaa makes it clear he doesn’t recommend being a party crasher.

“It was definitely something I needed to do. I wouldn’t do it again. I mean, I had trouble with the law,” he said, referring to an incident when he tried to crash the Oscars ceremony, something he now calls impossible. He and his friends were “detained” for several hours at a Hollywood police department before being released. (Note: That didn’t stop him crashing the Vanity Fair party that same night.)

Still, if you’re feeling brave, here are some of Sebaa’s tips.

For starters, don’t get so focused on getting in that you forget about getting out. “As a crasher, you can’t have an entry strategy. You can’t, you just don’t know what’s going to happen. But always be prepared to have an exit strategy. Be ready to talk, be ready to explain why you’re there, act like you don’t know what’s going on.”

**SECOND**, never use fake credentials – “That’s something that will get you in a lot of trouble.”

**THIRD**, and perhaps most importantly, the entourage is your friend. “Walking behind a filmmaker can get you far. My first awards show was the Teen Choice and walking behind Will Smith, no one will question you. So Will Smith got us all the way from the red carpet inside the theatre. I mean, his bodyguard was actually behind us, kind of protecting us.”

Somewhat obvious, but crucially important: “Definitely, you have to dress the part. You have to try to blend in. And obviously, act the part. Be social, don’t be nervous.”

And there can be both strength and weakness in numbers. Sebaa crashed some parties solo, but most he approached with a school friend. “Having someone else makes it kind of hard to crash [a party] but, once you do, people don’t question two or three people. It’s like, there’s no way they’re not supposed to be here. There’s three of them.”

Since he handed Rogen his script – nothing came of it – Sebaa has hung up his crasher’s tuxedo. He’s back at school in Ottawa and expects he’ll have to get his film, still for sale, made “indie-style.” For the time being, he won’t be popping up at any TIFF parties, leaving the door wide open for an heir apparent.

Unless, that is, he gets an invite. “The best advice I would give people is to make a great film and you’ll have a spot eserved,” he said.
TIPS FROM THE PROS

Practice made Ryan Sebaa the party crasher he is. But when he and a friend were just starting out, they cribbed from the rulebook in the Vince Vaughan-Owen Wilson blockbuster *Wedding Crashers*, making adjustments where necessary. Below are a few nuggets of wisdom from the crashers’ playbook, listing in their entirety at http://www.sebaar.com.

RULE NO. 2:
Always use your real name.

RULE NO. 13:
Writers are desperate – console them.

RULE NO. 38:
Try not to break anything, unless you’re not having fun.

RULE NO. 44:
Always work into the conversation: “Yeah, I have tons of money. But how does one buy happiness?”

RULE NO. 48:
If pressed, tell people you’re related to Elton John. Everyone loves Elton John.

RULE NO. 57:
Two shutouts in a row? It’s time to take a week off. Ask yourself: What is it that is getting in the way of my happiness?

RULE NO. 61:
Keep interactions with the managers and publicists of the actor to a minimum.

RULE NO. 65:
You’re from out of the country. ALWAYS. It gives the impression you’re rich.

RULE NO. 66:
Know something about the place you say you are from. Canada is played out. For some reason, Kazakhstan seems to work.

RULE NO. 68:
Tell the celebrities you work here and the workers that you’re a celebrity.
Back to school
Thanks to performance creep – the pressure for younger and younger kids to excel at everything from academics to extracurriculars – the fall can sometimes feel less like a fresh start than yet another chapter in a casebook on anxiety.

Did you buy your Grade 2 student the right tablet (or backpack or shoes or fill in the blank)? What’s more important for an 11-year-old: tutoring time or a run? If sleep is so important to brain development, should you really be nudging your teen to get out of bed by 8? And what are you supposed to do about increasing evidence that failure, not just (ego-boosting) success, is a key factor in long-term achievement?

This year also continues an ongoing trend towards “multiple” educations – tailored lessons for primary students, experiential learning, online calculus courses accessible even thousands of miles from a college, expanded international partnerships at universities.

All of which can leave parents (and educators) stumped on what’s really working to equip our kids for the future.

In December, we will have at least one benchmark as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development releases its latest results on how 15-year-olds are doing at reading, math and science. A number of new faces at the highest level of the educational system will also be grappling with these issues: The University of Toronto, McGill and Dalhousie are all introducing new presidents. And students will join educators at a closely watched conference at the University of Waterloo focused on what education will look like in 2030.

For new grads already done with the educational system, there are other concerns: Last year’s major theme was the mismatch between skills and jobs. There’s also a growing backlash against the practice of “training” new grads as unpaid interns: In Canada, interns won back pay from B.C. social media company HootSuite, in the United States, there are 15 lawsuits tied to internships currently pending.

Of course, back-to-school season isn’t just about the “kids.” It’s a time when we tend to rethink everything from our careers to our spouses to work-life balance.

Read on, for pieces on all of the above from writers including Margaret Wente, Erin Anderssen and the country’s top education reporters.

Simona Chiose
When to buy your kids a $250 pair of jeans

Parents need to teach their kids about budgeting and prioritizing to ensure they understand they can't have everything they want. Here's how

SIMONA CHIOSE
Originally published on August 22, 2013

This year, Canadian parents plan to spend approximately $200 per school-age child on back-to-school shopping, according to a survey released this week by BMO. For university-aged kids, that number almost triples. Compare that to the $600 budgeted for Christmas gifts and it’s not surprising that shops start to air back-to-school ads in July. There’s money to be made from outfitting the kids to learn.

BR Pirri, a personal shopper and style adviser at Calgary’s Southcentre Mall, usually helps adults update their look, but at this time of year she keeps parents on budget even while they have to meet demands for Vans sneakers, Rich & Skinny jeans and iPhones. The mother of two offered some ideas on how to decide where to save and where to splurge.

What items do kids and parents fight about the most over value for money?

It’s really around jeans, jeans and school bags. ... A lot of parents ask, as a personal shopper, to try and speak with their children about where to spend their money and where it doesn’t matter. The pressure of friends with $250 jeans is there and so they want to have that $250 denim. That’s half the budget for what most parents spend, if not more. For boys, it tends to be high-end shoes, that high-end sneaker and the high-end hoodie.

So what do you tell the kids?
‘Sorry, we can’t afford it’?

We try and tell the kids to get a really nice pair of sneakers because you’re in them all day. Get a nice backpack if you’re in middle school. Get a really nice pair of jeans, but maybe you can compromise and get jeans at Winners that are still designer for $150 or $100. Gone are the days when the teens are wearing jeans from your basic stores.

No, the moms do that so they have money to spend on the kids’ jeans.

Yup.
So are jeans an area where you should say yes to your kids?

At junior and high-school age, I would spend the money on one pair of jeans, so they do fit in, and then get a knock-off brand that they don’t care so much about. For boys, you might get one pair of Vans and then there are Converse knock-offs, there’s a ton of Keds out there. Get one pair of jeans or shoes that fit well, that they feel good in and then do the mid- to lower-end on hoodies and blouses, their T-shirts, so they feel they’ve had a say in what is in their back-to-school wardrobe.

Is it a good idea to set a budget and discuss it with your kids?

Before you even set that budget, shop your closet first. Then make a list of the important items and share that with your children and tell them: “This is what we have to spend and we need to fit everything in. So why don’t you have a look at the list and tell me what your No. 1 priority is on the list and we’ll go from there?”

So they have to make compromises.

Yes, you don’t want to get to the store and they fall in love with a $200 pair of jeans or the $200 sneakers, and you say, “Dude, we just spent most of the budget getting all this other stuff, I didn’t know you wanted these.” When there are surprises at the store, mom and dad are shocked because of the prices, the child gets emotional and things start to happen.

How do you deal with kids wanting brand-name items at earlier ages?

I’m a huge advocate for uniforms. Kids will always find a reason to bully another child, but if you take the designer-clothing element out of it, that’s one less thing for kids to be teased about. It’s becoming a big deal, seeing high-school students with Louis Vuitton handbags. It’s really not necessary and the pressure that puts on parents is immense.

Okay, you’ve made your list of essentials and your kid says, ‘Mom, my No. 1 priority is an iPhone 5. I don’t care about anything else.’

I would make up a contract, based on their age and ability, and I’d get them to sign it. The conversation is: You’re willing to compromise on jeans, your wardrobe, your shoes. You’re willing to have all of this compromise – for the entire school year – so that you can get this iPhone. You can’t come to us in three months and say you want designer jeans and you need
this super-cool hoodie. The contract is teaching them that accountability: This is a very expensive tool, you need to understand there’s a ton of money behind it, and that means you’re sacrificing everything else.

WORTH THE SPLURGE

Kindergarten to Grade 6

- Indoor shoes. Kids’ feet are growing and developing and they are in gym class every day.
- A down-filled winter coat with a nylon outer shell so it’s water repellent. Winter boots should be rated to –20 or –25.

Grades 6 to 9

- A sturdy backpack with straps and reinforced zippers.
- Mini laptops or tablets with detachable keyboards can be a splurge dollar-wise, but a save as many are available for $200 to $300 and perform as well as full-sized laptops for kids’ requirements. They’re also much more suitable for throwing into a backpack.

Ways to save:

- Take your child to consignment shops – no one has to know that you paid half-price.
- Find out about or organize clothing swaps where teens can shop each others’ closets or moms can shop younger kids’ closets.
- Don’t buy in the week immediately before school. Surveys have shown prices rise then. Wait until school is under way.
The recipe for good grades? Breakfast

It takes more than new school supplies to help kids perform well at school

LESLIE BECK
Originally published on August 25, 2013

Studies demonstrate that eating certain breakfast foods can give kids an academic edge: increasing memory, improving test scores, lessening absenteeism, heightening positive mood and energy levels.

The memory-boosting effect of breakfast is attributed to glucose, a sugar supplied to the brain from carbohydrate-rich foods such as cereal, toast, fruit, milk and yogurt. The brain relies almost exclusively on glucose for fuel and it’s also used to make acetylcholine, a brain chemical important for memory.

Some carbohydrate-rich foods do a better job than others at sustaining brain-power. Studies show that children and teenagers who eat a low-glycemic index (GI) breakfast (like oatmeal) score higher on memory tests than those who eat a high GI meal (sugary cereal).

Foods with a low GI provide a slower and more lasting release of glucose, enhancing memory and attention.

Low GI foods include bran cereals, muesli cereal with nuts and fruit, large-flake and steel-cut oats, oat bran, 100-per-cent stone-ground or sourdough bread, apples, bananas, oranges, grapefruit, berries, grapes, pears, dried apricots, milk, yogurt and soy beverages.

The benefits of breakfast go beyond memory. Kids who eat the morning meal have improved nutritional status. They’re more likely to meet daily targets for fibre, vitamin C, folate, calcium, iron and zinc – nutrients growing bodies and developing brains rely on.

Breakfast skippers don’t usually make up for the nutrients they miss at other meals throughout the day, studies report.

Eating breakfast can also help kids maintain a healthy weight. Numerous studies have found that children and teens – adults too – who skip breakfast are heavier than their peers. Missing breakfast makes you more likely to overeat during the day.

Breakfast foods that are protein- and fibre-rich keep appetite in check and blood sugar stable during the morning. While staving off hunger before lunch helps weight control, it also allows kids to concentrate in class.

Common reasons for skipping breakfast include the morning time crunch, kids squeezing in extra time to sleep, long bus rides to school, lack of parental supervision and not having readily available
breakfast foods.

To make busy mornings less hectic, plan for breakfast in advance.

Have your child help set the table the night before. Cut up fruit after dinner so it’s ready to throw on cereal or into a smoothie. Cook steel-oats overnight in your crockpot on low setting. (Coat the insert of the crockpot with butter or non-stick cooking spray to prevent oatmeal from sticking.)

On the weekend, make a batch of whole grain muffins or breakfast bars for quick breakfasts during the week.

Whenever possible, be a role model for breakfast behaviour. Eat breakfast with your children so they can follow your lead.

HOW TO FUEL YOUR CHILD’S MIND

At the table:

- Scrambled eggs, salsa and grated cheese wrapped in a whole-wheat tortilla, served with fresh fruit.
- Whole-wheat toast spread with refried beans, cheese and salsa.
- Oatmeal topped with raisins, dried cranberries, sunflower seeds and low-fat Greek yogurt.
- Break breakfast boredom by serving leftovers from the night before, even pasta or pizza.

On-the-go:

- Homemade trail mix made with whole-grain flakes, shredded wheat cereal, dried fruit, sunflower seeds and shredded coconut.
- Thermos-ready fruit smoothie made with milk or soy milk.
- Granola bar, apple and part skim cheese string. (Choose a granola bar with no more than two grams of saturated fat, zero grams of trans fat and at least two grams of fibre. Choose bars with no more than eight grams of sugar per serving and preferably less.)
- Homemade muffin, hard-boiled egg and banana.

Leslie Beck, a registered dietitian, runs a nutrition consulting practice in Toronto. She can be seen every Thursday at noon on CTV NewsChannel's Direct. lesliebeck.com
Forget the tutor – a run may help your kid’s grades more

MARK FENSKE

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Back to school can mean back to worry for parents concerned about academic performance. How do you get your kid’s brain working at its best? Take a “Tiger Mother” approach, with academic drills and strict expectations? A private tutor? Before breaking out the flash cards, maybe you should start instead by lacing up your sneakers and taking your kid out for a run.

Physical exercise is a powerful way to enhance brain function. Research with animals has long suggested that aerobic exercise, in particular, enhances blood flow throughout the brain. It also stimulates the release of a protein called brain-derived neurotrophic factor, which encourages the growth of new brain cells and neural connections, especially in regions involved in learning and cognitive processing. Neuroscientists have only recently confirmed that exercise induces similar neuroplastic changes within the human brain, including those of children. Brain scans have revealed that the hippocampus – a memory-intensive, medial-temporal lobe structure on each side of the brain – is larger in children with higher fitness levels than in less-active kids. The fit ones also performed better on relational-memory tests.

Another neuroimaging study found that childhood exercise affects the dorsal striatum, a region of the basal ganglia associated with cognitive control, deep within each of the brain’s hemispheres. Children with lower fitness levels had smaller dorsal striata and were also less able to resist distraction than more active kids.

These results support evidence that increases in physical activity lead to increases in overall academic achievement. Indeed, significant improvements in math, reading and spelling have been shown across a range of school grades with as little as a 90-minute increase in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per week.

Eating the right food also aids learning-related brain plasticity. Consider the omega-3 and -6 families of fatty acids. Such “good fat” in foods such as fish, eggs, seeds and nuts are thought to be particularly important for the growth and maintenance of neurons and their synaptic connections. Foods containing high levels of antioxidants, such as blueberries, also help protect neurons from the damage of oxidative stress. Boosting the amount
of fish, nuts, berries and other fruits and vegetables your child eats is therefore a relatively simple way to optimize and protect their developing brain.

Eating properly can also boost your child’s ability to resist distraction, avoid emotional outbursts and otherwise regulate behaviour. The ability to exert such acts of self-control has been linked to fluctuations in blood glucose, the fuel that, along with oxygen, supports metabolic activity in neurons. Making sure your child eats breakfast and has small, frequent meals throughout the day can help to maintain glucose levels. Steering them away from sugar-laden food will also help them avoid the subsequent rush of insulin that ultimately causes blood-glucose levels to plummet. This may be particularly important in classroom settings, given evidence that low-glucose-related failures of self-control are most likely to occur following sustained periods of minding one’s behaviour.

Getting a good night’s sleep provides another boost for a young person’s brain. While they snooze, research suggests their brains are busy repeating patterns of activation between the hippocampus and other cortical regions. This oscillating activity seems to modify the strength of synaptic connections to make memory traces more durable. The result, among other things, is enhanced learning and memory from the previous day’s events. Studies link insufficient or disturbed sleep with children having problems at school.

With wide-ranging, often controversial opinions about how to raise a successful kid, it is nice to find consensus on at least a few brain-boosting fronts. How can your child do better in school? Exercise more. Eat right. Sleep well. Good advice for parents, too.
A rested development:  
The sleep imperative

Modern life is turning the world from an early bird into a nighthawk, and the transformation may carry a heavy price. Armed with studies that show what lack of rest can do to the human brain, especially that of a child, concerned researchers are pressing educators and health-care specialists to start singing the praises of a good night’s sleep. What happens if they fail? No one really knows.

ERIN ANDERSSEN
Originally published on February 16, 2013

Sleep is for losers. Kush Thaker, 17, doesn’t say so explicitly – he’s a student politician, after all – but it’s clear that he has been sold on the awake-is-great ethos of modern society. Pulling an all-nighter is “glorified.” The notion that he may spend one-third of his life sleeping is “daunting.” He admires the entrepreneurs whose “brilliant ideas strike at 4 a.m.” High achievers, he explains, “are expected to forgo sleep.”

And Kush has better things to do, including Grade 12 homework, texting, updating his Facebook page, working on a national youth blog and his obligations as a Toronto school board student trustee. He estimates that he gets four to six hours a night. “I know it’s not good, but I have gotten used to functioning while drowsy,” he says. “I wish I did get more sleep. But it’s just rationally weighing the costs and benefits. Sleep is my reserve time.”

But a growing body of brain science and behavioural research serves as a wake-up call to the fact that his calculation is wrong.

For one thing, sleep is an investment that reduces stress and improves productivity. Last year, Harvard researchers estimated that chronic sleep deprivation was costing U.S. companies $63.2-billion annually, because dozy employees are less effective.

Research shows that good sleepers are less likely to smoke, more likely to exercise, and drink less alcohol. Athletes who sleep longer perform better.

Getting extra sleep, a recent study found, really does produce better test results than using the time to crack the books. Sleep even keeps us svelte – when tired, we’re much more likely to be seduced by salty French fries.

It is no coincidence that, over the past 50 years, citizens of the industrialized world have, as well as getting fatter and more anxious, lost about an hour of
sleep a night – roughly one full night’s worth every week. And because of city lights, social media and such habits as eating and exercising later at night, what sleep remains is often not the soundest. As Till Roenneberg, the author of *Internal Time*, points out, 80 per cent of the world now needs an alarm clock to get up each morning. As a result, the head of human chronobiology at the University of Munich’s Institute of Medical Psychology says, we live in a permanent state of “social jet lag.”

And no segment of the population is more jet-lagged than teenagers. Surveys show that no fewer than three-quarters of them fail to get the rest they need, and find themselves in school the next morning expected to learn when their brains want them to sleep.

Society is increasingly torn when it comes to sleep – we lament its loss even as we boast of how little we require. Because rising at dawn made more sense when most people were farmers and candle wax was expensive, the shift from early bird to nighthawk seems of no great consequence.

Yet as science demonstrates how, without enough sleep, the brain falters, there is a growing campaign to turn back the clock. Researchers are calling for more specific school-based interventions, particularly for elementary students, to establish better sleep habits early on life, and to make sleep education more central in health classes.

And what exactly will happen if nothing is done to help people get a decent night’s sleep – can we adapt and learn to thrive with less rest? Scientists admit that they don’t know, but the early indications suggest that society’s new bedtime story won’t have a happy ending.

**Diet and exercise not enough**

“We have all heard of healthy eating – the same thing has to happen now with sleep,” says Reut Gruber, a clinical psychologist at McGill University who studies sleep and has created an education program for elementary students in Montreal-area schools.

Adults’ bad habits, she says, are setting an unhealthy pattern because kids get the message that sleep is “a waste of time.” But good diet and exercise won’t make us healthy, if we don’t sleepwell at the end of every day.

Dr. Gruber is leading a national committee of psychologists, pediatricians and scientists that is developing new guidelines for healthy sleep for children and youth and strategies to prevent sleep deprivation. When it comes to public health policy, prominent researchers argue that sleep deserves a higher profile
right up with making sure a child gets 60 minutes of exercise a day.

In fact, stressing exercise without giving sleep equal weight may have done some harm, suggests Mark Tremblay, director of the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa.

Dr. Tremblay led the committee that revised the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines last year, and says that “sleep has been largely lost in this discussion” even though it is vital to a healthy lifestyle.

He worries that parents feel that it’s enough to take their kids to hockey practice on Saturday morning. “As a parent of four kids, I don’t know if I can recall ... when I have ever talked casually to neighbours about sleep as an important thing in our children’s lives ...” he says.

“We need to draw sleep into the popular vernacular.”

**Tired but sleepless**

In Grade 9, to stay awake in class, Ottawa student Andrew Zeigler chugged Monster energy drinks regularly. “I knew it would give me a jump start,” he says, “almost like a car that’s broken down.” Then he began to worry about what was in what he was drinking, and switched to slushies for his midday jolt.

Now, in Grade 11, he’s trying to eat a good breakfast, but with just five hours of sleep most nights, he still feels that he is running on empty. Even so, he has trouble falling asleep: “My mind is on a lot of things.”

Teenagers may be dozy by nature, and concern about children not getting enough sleep goes back more than a century, but research shows that young people really are sleeping less than their parents did at the same age. If anything, culture has shifted away from helping teenagers sleep, with the distractions of 2 a.m. texts, and pressure of extracurricular activities and school performance.

It’s a common teenage tale: In a survey released this week by the Toronto District School Board, 29 per cent of high-school students said they “lose sleep because of worries” and 48 per cent said they feel “tired for no reason,” often if not all the time.

None of the 10 high-school students who commented for this article gets more than seven hours a night, and half admitted to having nodded off in a morning class. They all want more sleep, but none quite knows how to get it.

An obvious solution is to delay the start of the school day. One U.S. study found that pushing school starts times by just one hour improved academic performance and attendance. Many high
schools still start at 8 a.m. or shortly afterward – which Dr. Roenneberg, the German sleep researcher, considers evidence of “the enormous discrimination against these young children who are brought to school in the middle of their internal sleep.”

He cites studies that show the academic disadvantages vanish in university, when students can choose later classes.

How much sleep people need and whether they would rather rise early or late are decided by genes, age and how much light they get. There is even a physiological explanation for why teens are notorious for sleeping late. During puberty, melatonin, the hormone that regulates the sleep cycle, is released in the body later in the evening – around 9 or 10 p.m. This makes it difficult for teenagers to nod off early, and nearly impossible, given family and school schedules, for them to get the optimal nine to 10 hours that health guidelines suggest they need.

What’s more, Dr. Roenneberg suggests, our body clocks are out of sync with modern life. “They evolved thinking we would be outside in broad daylight during the day and inside in pitch darkness during the night. We are not living that way any more.” As a result, we get by on less sleep than we need, and spend every night trying to catch up.

Brain experiments and behavioural studies show that this is an unhealthy habit, for memory, cognition and mood at every age. Sleep, in such short supply for today’s adolescents, may be especially important for development during puberty.

And the quality of sleep is a key factor: A Harvard University study released in September found the hormone that triggers ovulation in girls and testosterone production in boys was most actively released by the brain during deep sleep. In a recent experiment at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont., sleep-deprived students were found to have suppressed levels of testosterone, and, compared with a control group, were more less motivated to challenge a cheater in a card game.

“You are effectively blunted to do anything inspirational or active, you don’t really care about anything,” says psychology professor Kimberly Cote, who led the study. In another experiment, Brock researchers found that sleepy subjects took significantly longer to notice errors in a computer test than a well-rested control group.

Neuroimaging experiments are also unravelling the stages of sleep – to unlock the role it plays in consolidating memory and controlling behaviour.
At the University of Montreal, researcher Stuart Fogel is conducting studies in which subjects sleep in a magnetic-resonance imaging (MRI) machine after learning a new memory task to see what parts of the brain are active as they rest. (In another experiment, he found that young adults who napped after learning a task performed it better after waking than those who stayed awake.)

Research elsewhere is exploring how sleep is different for people with mental disorders such as schizophrenia. Several papers published last year used MRI scans to show that, when people were short on sleep, the higher-thinking region of the brain that dictates food choices was impaired, leading them to crave sweeter and saltier tastes. Research is also revealing the potential long-term implications of poor sleep – another recent study found a link between sleep and insulin resistance in teenagers, which could affect the risk of diabetes later in life.

And yet a little more sleep goes a long way. In one of Reut Gruber’s recent studies, giving just 27 minutes more sleep to children who are 7 to 11 shows improvements in their emotional behaviour in school, and a significant drop in reported sleepiness. (Dr. Gruber reports similar findings with children with attention-deficit disorders.)

An astrophysical solution?

As for Kush Thaker, he has accepted his sleepy adolescence – dozing off in morning classes, catnapping (along with many of his peers) during study period and resorting to the occasional Red Bull, although lately, he is more likely to try water – “drinking, splashing, whatever works.”

Mathew Pilon, 17, a Grade 12 student in Port Colborne, Ont., quips that, unless “the Earth’s rotation slows drastically somehow, ... I’m stuck with drowsy mornings and sleepless nights.”

The problem is that those drowsy mornings and sleepless nights add up to a lifetime of sleep deficits.

And even if science is still struggling to assess whether the end result will be good or bad, “the impact of poor sleep on society is rather under-appreciated,” a tactful Stuart Fogel says.
Crash, burn, achieve? Why kids need to fail

BY MARGARET WENTE

What makes kids succeed – in school, and in life – may not be what you’d expect. As Paul Tough argues in a provocative new book, IQ isn’t the key. Nor is affluence.

What really matters? The sheer grit to fall down, often, and get back up again. The Globe talks to the Canadian writer about the surprising power of failing well.

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How much influence do parents really have on their children’s success in life? My own view has always been: far less than they think, and far less than the experts tell them. I’ve always thought that how your kids turn out depends a lot more on their genes and their IQ than whether you played them Baby Beethoven.

Various experiments with education reform tend to confirm my fatalistic view. Every so often, some shiny new idea comes along – self-esteem! prizes for all! multiple learning styles! – that is supposed to turn every failing kid into a winner. None of these fads appears to have the least effect on student achievement.

At the same time, the problem of failing kids is one of the most pressing issues of our time. Children from stable higher-income families have a huge advantage over children from unstable, lower-income families. After 40 years of trying, we know how hard it is to narrow that gap. But we owe it to those kids to keep trying – and to ourselves as well.

Paul Tough is a realist about all this. But he is also an optimist. He has spent more time with disadvantaged kids than any journalist I know, and he has learned a lot about the factors of success. He has learned how two kids of equal abilities can have wildly different outcomes, and how kids with certain character traits can narrow the achievement gap.

His findings offer some surprising answers to the questions every parent asks: How much do test scores really matter? What’s the real difference between students who graduate from university and students who drop out? What role does parental encouragement play in children’s achievement, and what kind of encouragement do they need?

Mr. Tough’s new book, How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity and the Hidden Power of Character, combines compelling findings in brain research with his own first-hand observations on the front lines of school reform. He argues that the qualities that matter most to children’s success have more to do with character – and that parents and schools can play a powerful role in nurturing the character traits that foster success. His book is an inspiration. It has made me less of a determinist, and more of an optimist.

You argue, quite convincingly, I think, that IQ is not destiny, far from it. For kids to succeed in life, they need certain character traits – and one of them is what you call “grit.”

Yes, it’s a psychological category discovered by Angela Duckworth at the University of Pennsylvania. She actually started out studying self-control and
demonstrated that it has a huge impact on kids' grade point average. But she came to think that there was some other skill out there that she hadn’t quite put her finger on – not just self-control but having a passion for something and a determination to stick with it, despite setbacks.

She named that grit, and she invented this thing called the “grit scale.” It’s a short little questionnaire about how likely you are to stick with projects. And she found that it’s incredibly predictive, that people are pretty honest about their grit levels and that those who say, “Yes, I really stick with tasks,” are much more likely to succeed, even in tasks that involve a lot of what we think of as IQ: She gave the test to students who were in the National Spelling Bee and the kids with the highest grit scores were more likely to persist to the later rounds; she gave it to freshmen at the University of Pennsylvania and grit helped them persist in college; she even gave it to cadets at West Point and it predicted who was going to survive this initiation called “Beast Barracks.”

So, in some ways, grit just means what we think it means – what John Wayne said that it meant – but it has something to do with academic persistence as well. It’s not just smarts, it’s the ability to stick with a task that makes a difference.

**Resistance, persistence, perseverance, stick-to-itiveness ...**

Yes, and I would add passion. It’s not just dutiful stick-to-itiveness. It’s people who really want to finish – not because someone has told them to, but because they’re dedicated to it.

**That’s very new in a world where we’ve raised kids based on the self-esteem movement. So how do you teach grit? Can you?**

I think you can. There’s not yet a clear path, but it seems like there are a few things that help. The main one is helping kids learn how to manage failure and adversity. That involves two things: One is just making sure they actually have some failure and adversity in their lives. Especially for high-achieving, high-income kids, that’s often what’s missing.

These kids are so overly protected that they don’t have the opportunity to overcome setbacks. It’s also giving them that experience in a setting that lets them not just be disappointed and hurt by failure, but learn from it.

I also spent a lot of time in some really poor neighbourhoods in American cities. In those neighbourhoods, there’s no absence of failure or adversity. These kids confront it all the time. But some of them
are just beaten down by it. So it’s not simply the volume of failure in your life – it’s giving kids an opportunity to fail productively, to grow and learn from it.

You’re really talking about two ends of the socio-economic spectrum. So tell me a little bit more about why failure – productive failure – is so important to character development.

There is this study that came out recently from a few psychologists that talks about the number of adverse experiences kids have growing up. This not really serious adversity, just run-of-the-mill setbacks. What’s interesting is that the kids who experience more of those, generally, find that their psychological well-being goes down – but so do kids who experience no adversity.

Where I saw this most clearly, I think, was in a chess class I spent a lot of time following at a fairly low-income school in Brooklyn. The teacher, Elizabeth Spiegel, has figured out that chess is the perfect laboratory for learning how to manage failure, because in chess you fail all the time. No matter how good you are, you lose about half your games. And even when you win, you’re making terrible mistakes all the time. So you have to figure out a strategy for dealing with failure.

So there are kids who, when they try to play chess and start to fail, they just decide, “Oh, I don’t really care about chess. I’m losing too much.” And there are those who beat themselves up about it. Neither group does all that well. But a third group, which Ms. Spiegel tries to develop, is made up of kids who take their failures very seriously but divorce themselves from it a little bit; they say, “Okay, let me actually analyze the mistakes that I made: What can I do differently next time?”

There’s something about that process that actually echoes certain types of therapy. Once you start talking about therapy with kids, I think it makes everybody a little bit anxious. But I’m not talking about lying on a couch and talking about your parents. I’m talking about cognitive therapies that let you look at your own processes and say, “Okay, what are the mistakes I keep making and what can I do differently?”

Your writing on these chess kids is absolutely gripping. First of all, this teacher takes kids from low-income, low-achieving environments and turns them into high-performance players who can take on anybody in the United States. But she also doesn’t coddle them. She’s very, very tough. She bawls the kids out. She’ll say, “You played that too fast,” or ‘You made a stupid mistake. Why are you
still making that stupid mistake?” What does that tell us about how we’ve gone wrong coaching kids to cope with adversity?

I think there is a real difference between developing self-esteem and developing character, and in the past few decades we’ve become confused about that. Yes, if you want to develop kids’ self-esteem, the best way to do it is to praise everything they do and make excuses for their failures.

But if you want to develop their character, you do almost the opposite: You let them fail and don’t hide their failures from them or from anybody else – not to make them feel lousy about themselves, but to give them the tools to succeed next time.

I think in some ways we know this, because lots of us have had that experience with a teacher or a coach or a music tutor; the ones that we remember are the ones who were tough on us, not mean or belittling, but the ones who said, “No, this isn’t good enough. You can do better.” That’s an incredibly powerful message for a kid to hear. It’s not wounding. Just looking at my own three-year-old and remembering my own experiences, when kids feel like they’ve got a teacher or a parent really on their side, then I think they’re very much willing to hear some very tough messages.

The larger message, then, is how much non-cognitive character traits matter to success in life. For example, making it through university. What’s the difference between kids who drop out and kids who finish? You argue that it’s not intelligence ... It is something else. There’s not a great body of research on persistence and grit and curiosity and optimism as separate categories. I think those are all really important character strengths, but research generally tends to lump them together.

So, at this stage, we have to look at what we know about non-cognitive skills in general. College persistence offers some clear evidence: IQ matters a lot in terms of what your freshman GPA is, but graduating from college has much more to do with character strengths like persistence, perseverance and grit. It’s that ability to deal with setbacks, because in college you’re always going to have setbacks – whether it’s not being able to pay a tuition bill, or not getting along with your roommate, or failing a class.

There are always moments where kids can drop out, especially kids from low-income neighbourhoods where they’re the first person in their family to go to college. The whole system is kind of
pushing them to fail, so in order for them to make it through college, they need a huge amount of non-cognitive skill.

It’s interesting to think about how kids can be almost pushed to fail, or inherently succeed. You write about fascinating science looking at the connection between infant brain chemistry and adult psychology – at least in rats. Should we look to rats as model parents?

An interesting question. Michael Meaney and a team of neuroscientists at McGill University have discovered some amazing things about mother rats and their kids. When their pups are stressed out, certain mother rats do something very specific – they lick and groom them to calm them down.

Even when these pups are weaned from their mothers and kept separate until adulthood, the ones who have had warm, attached relationships as infants do much better at all sorts of skills: They are better at mazes, they are braver and more curious, less nervous in all sorts of ways. That research parallels a lot of what has been done on the importance of secure (human) attachment between a parent and a child in the first year of life. There are huge correlations between a child’s attachment style in that first year and what they’ll be like in kindergarten, how well they’ll get along at camp with peers, even how likely that child is to graduate or drop out of high school.

So should we be licking and grooming our kids?

I think that we should, in a way. I do think that for infants – and I was reading all this research just as my wife and I had our first child – the most important thing is that warm, stable attachment relationship with a parent. I should say that the word attachment in parenting has become a little confused in the past few years. I don’t mean the kind of super-attachment parenting that gets you nursing your child on the cover of Time magazine. This is basic, good parenting, being responsive to an infant’s cues, coming when they cry ... but it makes a huge difference early on.

That’s very different from the message we were just talking about – about getting tough on your kids. I don’t think that is the right message for parents of infants. One of the conclusions I’ve reached is that, in the first year or two of life, kids don’t need adversity, they need comfort and support. But then part of what makes parenting so complicated is that right at the stage I’m at now, my son is 3, kids’ needs shift; now, my son needs to
prove his independence and his ability to deal with problems. But when a child has that attachment experience in the first year or so, the research shows they have a lot more confidence to be independent and bold and curious when they get to toddlerhood, and childhood and adolescence.

That’s a big issue for people thinking about the equality gap between rich kids and poor kids.

Yes, for kids growing up in low-income neighbourhoods, having a secure attachment relationship can make a huge difference. There’s evidence that it serves as a kind of insulation from all of the other problems of poverty. It can’t wipe them out altogether – and it doesn’t mean we don’t have to think about food and shelter and those things – but it’s striking how much it matters. Think about Barack Obama. He wasn’t super-poor, but he was raised by a single mother and they were on food stamps for a while. But he had this mother who was incredibly devoted to him and worked really hard and pushed him really hard to succeed – so adversity didn’t hold him back but, arguably, may have pushed him forward. From a public-policy point of view, this is a challenge, because we don’t really know how to get government to help improve attachment relationships in low-income homes. And I think we’re also not quite sure whether that’s something we should be doing. It makes us nervous to think about that as a public responsibility. But I think it’s something that we really need to think about, and there are lots of people finding ways to intervene and help families improve their relationships.

The other huge difficulty has been clearly raising achievement levels of low-income kids. Almost everything that has been tried – more teachers, smaller classes, all that stuff – hasn’t worked. But you seem to have found some extraordinary educators turning underperforming, undermotivated, low-income kids into successful university students.

Yes. The one young woman I write about at most length is named Kewauna Lerma from the South Side of Chicago. She had a really rough life growing up. Raised by a single mother without a lot of money, she moved around a lot, spent some time homeless and got into lots of trouble as a kid – you know, acted out, got put in the “slow” class in sixth grade. She was heading on a downward trajectory. But then, partly because of a conversation she had with her mother and great-grandmother, but also because of a program she enrolled in called OneGoal, she is now
about to start her sophomore year in college at Western Illinois University.

I met Kewauna when she was a junior in high school in Chicago and she had just started working with this program. She described this huge transition—transformation—she had made. Some of it, I think, was her innate character strength. But OneGoal is also specifically designed to help kids in high-poverty neighbourhoods leverage their non-cognitive strengths to overcome their disadvantages. Like Ms. Spiegel’s chess players, they learn to really focus on their shortcomings, to think about what skills they have and what they’re missing and how they are going to overcome that gap. In this case, they’re specifically applying that thinking to college: where am I going to go, what am I going to need when I’m there, how am I going to graduate.

The four-year graduation rate for kids on the South Side of Chicago is terrible, it’s 2 to 3 per cent. But right now, 85 per cent of Kewauna’s cohort is entering their sophomore year of college. So they’re not graduates yet, they may all drop out this year, but it really seems like that what they learn in their OneGoal classes in high school gives them exactly the skills they need to make it through college. And that’s going to change the trajectories of their lives in a huge, huge way.

This suggests that it’s possible to help disadvantaged kids make up the achievement gap by developing their non-cognitive skills.

Yes. A lot of these kids are still not testing fantastically in high school. In fact, some of them aren’t testing well at all. But they’re able to compensate for that with these non-cognitive skills and, as a result, are on track to graduate from college. That challenges my understanding of what you need to graduate from college. It’s not just the smartest kids who graduate, it’s kids who are able to persist.

So you don’t need to be a genius but you do need grit.

Absolutely. And I think that’s true in the workplace too. You need a certain amount of intelligence to survive in any workplace. But we all know people who are really smart but don’t have a good work ethic, or just can’t organize their thoughts, or have terrible social intelligence, and so don’t do well. We also know people who aren’t necessarily going to score high on IQ tests but have all of these other skills—and they’re not just window dressing, they’re important in getting tasks done.

For the kids we’ve been talking about, the same persistence and character
strength that get them through college are going to help them in whatever else they do. Among my peers, graduating from college didn’t mean that much. Everyone expected you to and you expected yourself to and you could still graduate and have no idea who you were or where you were supposed to go. But for these kids, what they have to overcome to get to college gives them this huge confidence and drive. It’s not empty self-esteem, they’ve really proved to themselves that they are able to do something that everyone else thought was impossible.

Let’s talk about your own education for a minute. At the end of your book, we learn that you actually dropped out of university – twice. You never graduated.

True.

So you could say you were a classic example of character failure – you just couldn’t stick with it – except that those experiences also gave you chances to succeed in unexpected ways.

I hadn’t spent a lot of time thinking about that period until I started working on this book. And then I started thinking about it a lot. Interestingly enough, the work I was doing gave me two different ways to look at it: one that was harder on me and one that was more positive.

The harder point of view came from sitting in that classroom on the South Side of Chicago with Kewauna and her classmates. They were all applying to colleges and were so focused, so thoughtful about what they wanted to get out of it, and so determined to persist – so much more so than I had been at that stage. I just felt bad about myself. There’s all this research about how kids drop out of college because of a lack of non-cognitive skills, and I have to admit I think that that was a big factor for me. I did not have a lot of persistence and grit at that time.

But then, as I thought about it more, I was also influenced by the thinking of Dominic Randolph, the head of Riverdale Country School, a private school in New York. He talks about how character is built through failure, especially for kids who are real successes as adolescents in the narrow realm of academics. If they don’t have an opportunity to really push themselves and struggle and overcome failure, they’re going to go through life lost.

I think what happened to me in college, both times, is that I felt, in a way that I wasn’t quite able to articulate then, that I was missing that opportunity to really challenge myself. I think if I had had other character strengths, I might
have been able to find a way to do that at college. I don’t think it was inevitable and necessary for me to drop out. But I do think that what I did instead was, you know, this crazy idea of bicycling alone as an 18-year-old from Atlanta to Halifax ... 

**Right, to prove something.**

At the time it sort of seemed like, “Oh, this will be fun.” But looking back, I really think I was trying to give myself a challenge. This is the time of life when people join the army, go away to war. ... My life wasn’t at risk, but it was hard: I didn’t know what I was doing and I had to figure things out for myself at every turn.

It didn’t change my life and make everything clear thereafter, but I do think it shook me up in an important way and helped push me to make some better decisions about what I wanted to do.

I had the same feeling as those kids from the South Side of Chicago when they graduate from college – that feeling of confidence that comes from really challenging themselves and succeeding.

**You got to Halifax.**

I got to Halifax. Shangri-la.

*This interview has been edited and condensed.*
Why big business needs you to read Jane Austen: The case for a core curriculum

BY JAMES BRADSHAW

Universities have long been accused of failing to equip students for the real world, but that world has changed: Today’s grads must be well-rounded, not merely well-trained. Yet, even as schools overseas overhaul their courses, The Globe finds Canada in no great hurry to embrace the trend – an attitude that may come at a price.

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By the time Atara Messinger finished high school in Ottawa, she had already settled on a career in medicine. But first would come her undergraduate degree, and she had no desire to “just be another biomedical major.”

She enjoyed chemistry and math, but also English, and chafed at programs that pushed her “in one direction.” In the end, she settled on McMaster University’s highly regarded arts and science program, which offered a wide-ranging timetable mixing courses clearly applicable to medicine (biochemistry) with some (philosophy and “math and society”) whose utility was less readily apparent.

Like her parents, she worried briefly about what the program’s reputation for hard marking might mean for her medical-school applications, but that didn’t stop her. “I didn’t want to specialize,” says Ms. Messinger, now 21 and in the final year of the program, “because I know that I’m going to specialize for the rest of my life.”

Her quest for a broad education places Ms. Messinger in the vanguard, which is strange considering that is just what universities were said to provide before being pressed to produce graduates better equipped to fill the needs of the “real world.” Now, the tide seems to be turning, with business leaders lamenting that, although the new talent arriving at their doorsteps has deep technical knowledge, it lacks the skills needed to put this knowledge to full use.

Grads are said to have trouble communicating and working in teams, and often struggle to see complex problems from a variety of angles. Becoming a specialist, it seems, doesn’t mean losing sight of the fact that education is still defined as “acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment, and generally preparing intellectually for mature life.”

To ensure that students receive a broad foundation, universities are revisiting the concept of a “core” curriculum: a suite of courses that steer students through a combination of great texts, natural sciences and sometimes statistics, mathematics or languages.

“I think, increasingly, anything you learn is going to become obsolete within a decade,” says Lawrence Summers, a former president of Harvard University, “and so the most important kind of learning is about how to learn.”

John Galaty, who teaches anthropology at McGill University, adds: “To my mind, it’s very important to have some sort of basic education that has something to say to every student, and it seems to me it’s a little bit of a training in citizenship.”

And soon it may be a competitive necessity. McMaster’s program
notwithstanding, Canada lags behind other countries, and now faces a new challenge: Asian universities, long renowned for their success at grooming well-drilled specialists, are suddenly leading a charge toward a well-rounded, liberal education.

Pericles Lewis, a Canadian-born English professor, is leading Yale University’s collaboration on a core curriculum with the National University of Singapore. So he has seen first-hand Asia’s burgeoning appreciation of learning that can “develop creativity” and make students “more versatile and capable of moving among different careers.”

Even though his program doesn’t launch until next August, it has already drawn applicants from as far away as China and South Sudan.

‘Duck, Duck, Goose’

Despite the rise of specialized education over the years, broad-based learning has remained a hallmark of many U.S. institutions. The most celebrated examples are Columbia University and the University of Chicago, which have ensured that all undergrads take the same “great books” courses early in their degrees.

But many liberal-arts programs elsewhere – including some officially labelled core curricula – are simply “general education” systems. Rather than being told what to take, students are allowed to choose from a menu of courses in a range of disciplines – what Duke University professor and interdisciplinary-studies expert Cathy Davidson describes as “the duck, duck, goose model.”

“We’re great at giving people dribs and drabs of a little bit of everything; we’re terrible at showing students how they’re connected,” she says.

“If you learn a little programming and a little calculus, what does that have to do with the little ancient Greek?”

True core curricula are highly prescriptive, and dictate what a university feels every student needs to know, as well as how it all fits together. Professors and administrators have fought epic battles over how much Adam Smith undergrads should read and whether to add Toni Morrison to the syllabus.

But the resulting courses can “transverse the silos of education,” Prof. Davidson notes, thus encouraging students to explore fields outside their comfort zones and see humanities and sciences as complementary rather than two solitudes.

Due to the rising interest abroad, John W. Boyer, dean of the undergraduate college at Chicago, is getting used to playing
tour guide for delegations that arrive from Asia seeking advice on how to create a core curriculum of their own.

Columbia, too, has entertained visitors from China, India, Argentina, Spain and Germany eager to scrutinize its 93-year-old core, says Kathryn Yatrakis, dean of academic affairs. “The way [such countries] have structured their higher education, where students have to specialize very early on in what they want to do, they’re very fearful – I would say correctly so – that this is not really serving students well as we bumble and lurch into the 21st century.”

Yale’s joint venture will create a special college in Singapore offering a four-year program that caters to students across the region. They will start by spending a third of their time on a mandatory “common curriculum” that spans great texts, sciences and social studies. Even after choosing a major, they will take interdisciplinary courses that cover such topics as climate change, public health and politics.

“We’ve got lots and lots of demand,” Prof. Lewis, the college’s inaugural president, says by phone from his new base.

Attracting applications from Korea, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nigeria as well as China and South Sudan tells him that “the whole idea of a liberal-arts education is catching on.”

Canada’s conundrum

But not in Canada. Those who try to expand broad-based learning here face stiff obstacles.

The concept is hardly unknown. The University of King’s College in Halifax launched its renowned “foundation year” four decades ago. In the great-books tradition, it organizes landmark texts into six historical periods and immerses students in small-group settings with a heavy emphasis on frequent writing assignments. As many as 900 applications are received each year, but only a third of them are accepted.

First offered in 1981, Ms. Messinger’s program at McMaster accepts about one applicant in 10 and is distinctive in ensuring that students leap between the humanities and math and science. Writing, critical thinking and reasoning are emphasized, but also “social awareness and increased community engagement,” says its director, Jean Wilson.

A handful of others have sprung up, including Carleton University’s College of the Humanities and Vancouver Island University’s liberal studies program, but most have remained elite, niche offerings within a university system that has 1.2 million students, admitting fewer than 100 people a year, often through fiercely competitive admissions.
Why the lack of growth? A recent attempt by McGill serves as a cautionary tale. Arts Legacy was introduced in 2005 as a first-year option, described by principal Heather Munroe-Blum at the time as “wonderful” and “innovative.”

Prof. Galaty, then associate dean of arts, designed it to go beyond the humanities and instill in students what he calls “an integrated sense of world culture.”

Ninety students took four half-semester courses consecutively, each organized by historical period from the ancient world to modern times. Subjects embraced a variety of disciplines and were taught comparatively, usually by two professors from different departments.

Prof. Galaty’s hope – “and maybe, it was foolhardy,” he now says – was to create a core program that could be applied across the campus,

Instead, Arts Legacy shut down last year, despite rave reviews from students, to be replaced by a liberal-arts program largely focused on the humanities. “We carried out an experiment, and I think it succeeded in everything except being inexpensive,” Prof. Galaty explains.

Assigning multiple professors to a class and hiring instructors to lead small groups was costly, but not the only roadblock. For example, upon completing Arts Legacy, students needed credit for their special first-year courses to move on, but Prof. Galaty says some departments simply refused to recognize them.

Difficulties like this illustrate why, attractive as it may seem, a common curriculum has found little traction: Even expanding an existing one can be a logistical nightmare.

Administrators’ efforts are often opposed by departments that assert their independence, compete for resources and guard their best teachers for fear of taking attention away from their main missions. Even the professors may balk if asked to teach students from other faculties.

These challenges are not restricted to Canada, says Prof. Summers, who once led a rancorous bid to refresh Harvard’s general education program, which he felt “had atrophied.”

“They would be brave individuals who will undertake this,” he says, quoting a predecessor who compared curriculum reform to trying to move a cemetery.

Harvard’s fiery debate was not unique, evoking memories of “the core wars” of 1999 when the University of Chicago revealed plans to adjust and scale back its storied core curriculum. “There’s always a controversy when you reform something,” admits Dean Boyer, “and then, after a couple of years, it becomes the new normal.”

But not all the resistance stems from a turf war.
Many prospective students – as well as their parents – still consider liberal-style learning impractical. “Even if they find it interesting, are they going to be employable?” says Maureen Okun, chair of liberal studies at Vancouver Island University. “They worry a lot about that.”

And some educators accuse employers of sending conflicting signals.

“The CEOs of many companies would say to me, ‘Look, we need a broad liberal-arts education. We don’t need students who are trained to do a particular job,’” says Gerhard Casper, former president of Stanford University.

“But when their recruiters came to campus, they wanted something much narrower.”

**The way ahead**

Whatever the obstacles, the fact remains that, to stay globally competitive, nations like Canada need populations that are intellectually agile and well-trained.

Duke’s Prof. Davidson has given dozens of talks to corporations over the past year, and she says she hears repeatedly that the Googles of the world may require and value technical ability, but they reward those who also have softer skills and cultural sophistication first and foremost. And now rising economic powerhouses in the East have received the message, and are acting on it.

Ms. Messinger believes that the broad, interdisciplinary education she has enjoyed is “guiding you to where the world is going,” but she can see from her perch at McMaster that it is still “so, so hard to get these days.”

So how will Canada respond?

Harvard’s Prof. Summers acknowledges that expanding core curricula will never be easy, given Canada’s education landscape, but he thinks that, with vocal leadership and enough pressure for change, it is possible.

“I think it takes students’ expressing dissatisfaction with the status quo. I think it takes strong leadership of institutions who are prepared to ask faculty to do things that aren’t faculty’s first choice,” he says. “And I think it requires creating some significant successes early on.”

As Prof. Davidson says, “The world knows there’s a crying demand. ... Students have figured it out, but academics have not.”

*James Bradshaw writes on higher education for The Globe and Mail.*
Recipes
Fall is entertaining season for many households – or at least the time of year when keeping your family engaged at the dinner table is critical.

Among the celebs with cookbooks to inspire you are Jamie Oliver, Daniel Boulud and a new manifesto from Moosewood Cookbook author Mollie Katzen. Closer to home, The Globe’s Beppi Crosariol teams up with regular contributor Lucy Waverman for The Flavour Principle – recipes and beverage pairings themed for 11 “tastes” from the sweet to the spicy. And readers may also be curious about the upcoming book of recipes by Kate Gosselin, famed mother of eight.

In October, those who can make their way to Toronto’s Delicious Food Show can also meet and greet luminaries from the notorious Martha Stewart to Chuck Hughes (star of Food Network Canada’s Chuck’s Week Off and the owner of Montreal hotspot Garde Manger), Michael Smith and Lynn Crawford.

As for gear, Style Editor Danny Sinopoli is keeping his eye on tableware from Zara Home – which makes its debut in Canada this fall. Another of his favourite products: Krups’ BeerTender, a tabletop beer system available at Crate & Barrel. It’s designed to tap a five-litre Heineken mini keg (patented internal carbon technology keeps contents fresh for up to 30 days).

To get you started in your kitchen, read on for recipes to fill your lunchbox, plan for fall events from the Jewish New Year to Thanksgiving and the secret to a killer pie crust.
Sue Riedl’s
Fall sandwiches

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEBORAH BAIC
The end-of-summer-denial-sandwich

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pint cherry tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- salt
- pepper
- crusty baguette
- salted cultured butter, such as French Beurre d’Isigny
- old cheddar, such as Balderson three-year-old
- basil leaves

METHOD

Night-before prep: Toss one pint cherry tomatoes with 2 tablespoons olive oil and salt and pepper. Lay on a parchment-lined cookie sheet (to speed cleanup) and put into a 400°F oven for 10 to 15 minutes, until tomatoes are slightly shrivelled. Let cool.

Assembly: Spread one side of a baguette generously with salted cultured butter (such as French Beurre d'Isigny). Add thick slices of aged cheddar (Balderson three-year-old is perfect) and layer with fresh basil. Keep the tomatoes separate until lunchtime to prevent sogginess. The tomatoes are great at room temperature but a quick zap in the office microwave brings out their flavour even more.
The Omega-3 Sandwich

INGREDIENTS

- rye bread
- 85-g salmon fillet
- olive oil
- salt
- pepper
- squeeze of lemon
- fresh dill
- mayonnaise
- pine nuts
- sorrel

METHOD

Preheat oven to 350°F. Place a 4-oz (85-g) salmon fillet in an oven-safe dish. Drizzle with olive oil, salt, pepper and a squeeze of lemon. Bake 15 minutes or until the flesh is flaky and just opaque. Cool completely. Roughly chop fresh dill and mix it into a tablespoon of mayonnaise. Generously spread it on the bottom bread and sprinkle with some pine nuts. Add fillet. Top with the tangy sorrel.
The Pretend-It’s-a-Picnic Sandwich

**INGREDIENTS**

- Pork tenderloin, thinly sliced
- Kaiser bun
- Coleslaw
- BBQ sauce

**METHOD**

You may not have a wicker lunch bag, but you should probably wrap this guy up in wax paper to catch the juicy drips from the coleslaw and smoky BBQ sauce. (And perhaps carry a checkered napkin to wipe your fingers.)

To assemble this at home, lay thinly sliced pork tenderloin on either side of a kaiser bun, put a couple of large spoonfuls of coleslaw on top, and then a drizzle of your favourite BBQ sauce. The meat will act as a moisture barrier for the soft bun. You can also bring the slaw separately and add it last.

**Tip:** If you’re running short on time, it is totally legit to buy coleslaw at the deli.
The Is-It-Lunch-Yet Sandwich

INGREDIENTS

- Italian bun
- Dijon mustard
- Medium-rare roast beef slices
- Sharp horseradish cheddar
- Caramelized onion
- Pickled daikon

METHOD

Nothing wrong with looking forward to lunch – even if you haven’t left the house yet. When making the sandwich spread the Dijon on both side of a fresh Italian bun. Divide your medium-rare roast beef slices (leftovers are perfect or buy the good stuff at the deli) between both sides before adding the final ingredients. That way you prevent the bun from getting soggy from the other condiments.
The I-Wish-It-Was-Brunch Sandwich

INGREDIENTS

• 3 to 4 slices back bacon
• Walnut bread
• Honey mustard
• Maple cheddar
• Shaved Granny Smith apple

METHOD

As-soon-as-you-get-up prep: Fry 3 to 4 slices back bacon until the edges are browning and crisp. Inhale deeply.

Assembly: You can assemble everything at home, but leave out the back bacon if you're able to warm it in the office microwave. Spread both sides of the walnut bread with honey mustard, add slices of maple cheddar and shaved Granny Smith apple. (For paper-thin slices use a mandoline if you have it. You just want the apple to add a cool tang, not a solid crunch.)
The Bi-partisan Sandwich

INGREDIENTS

- Multi-grain bread
- La Quercia Prosciutto
- Vermont butter
- organic lettuce
- tomato jam
- pickled hot peppers
- roasted cherry tomatoes

METHOD

Democrat Side: Iowa’s La Quercia Prosciutto, artisanal Vermont butter and organic lettuce – grown on a school rooftop if possible. Please share with folks who don’t have a sandwich.

Republican Side: Rile it up with some sweet, sour and spicy: tomato jam, pickled hot peppers, roasted cherry tomatoes. Throw on whatever you want, don’t let me tell you what to do. (But don’t come running if you get a stomach ache.)

Slap the two together and eat.
Fun and game

Try squab with soba noodles for a hearty fall soup

I owe my introduction to the world of game to my uncle Clovis. Living in the English countryside, we had the privilege of eating our local hunters’ catch. On his way home from work, Clovis would meet these hunters and buy a pheasant or hare for our family to enjoy. It was then that my lifelong enjoyment of game began. When I moved to Mauritius, my uncles there would stalk the mango groves, hunting the fruit bat, a local delicacy that was served in a stew. Thanks to my relatives, I developed a fondness for game meats of all kinds.

During my time as a cook in England, I vividly remember red grouse season. As a sous chef under Anton Mosimann, I had the good fortune to taste many great kinds of game.
of game meats: August for me meant the opening of the Scottish red grouse season, an occasion marked by great feasts. This type of grouse is impossible to raise on a farm and is highly regarded for its flavour. I was also lucky enough to spend two weeks accompanying and cooking for the Royal Family on an autumn hunt led by Prince Charles. The Royal Hunt’s rewards were amazing, instilling a sense of respect in me for England’s love of the hunt. Cooking game hunted by those who knew and respected it so thoroughly only increased my respect and sensibility for game.

In Canada, I have worked with many of this country’s varied game meats, including caribou, bison, venison and squab. An avid hunter and passionate fisherman, Steve Latner, has brought me beautiful game over the years. This warming fall soup with soba noodles is an ideal use for squab.

– David Lee is co-owner of Nota Bene in Toronto.

Chef David Lee’s Squab and Soba Soup

INGREDIENTS

- ¼ cup taro root, diced into 1-inch cubes and simmered for 8 to 10 minutes
- ⅛ litre chicken stock
- 1 tablespoon light soya
- 3 ounces soba noodles, cooked as per directions
- 1 whole squab (about 14 ounces)
- Chinese five-spice powder
- 4 thin strips ginger
- 1 chilli pepper, thinly sliced
- 4 Thai basil leaves, torn
- 1 small sprig coriander
- 1 wedge of lime

METHOD

Heat olive oil in a medium-sized, season the squab with a pinch of kosher salt and Chinese five-spice mix and sear on all sides for a maximum of one minute per side. Put the squab in the oven at 325 F for 8 minutes, remove and let rest for 5 minutes.

Place cooked soba noodles, taro-root cubes, sliced chilli, basil leaves and coriander in a bowl. Bring chicken stock to a boil, add soya and pour liquid on top of noodles. Remove the squab breast from the bone, slice diagonally into ½-inch pieces and add to soup. Sprinkle the spice mix on top of the dish and squeeze the lime wedge over top.

Serves 2 as appetizer.
Bounty hunt

Meet this country’s newest breed of farmers: passionate urban ruralists who are turning their yards and rooftops into full-out foodie oases. From homegrown hazelnuts to hand-harvested honey, their output is an indication of just how much can be grown in Canada’s concrete jungles. Globe Style taps the ingenuity of three such DIYers for a Thanksgiving menu with truly local flavour.

Not long ago, dinner guests would consider you a serious do-it-yourselfer if the Caprese salad you set before them had come from a tomato plant and a pot of basil you picked up from the garden centre and watered just enough to keep alive. Not any more.

These days, the national appetite for organic, artisanal and locally grown food is so great that an increasing number of city-dwellers from Vancouver to Halifax are turning their modest backyard plots into mini-farms. Growing extensive fruit and vegetable crops, raising chickens and even keeping bees for honey, they have fallen for an ultra-locavore approach that blurs the line between urban and rural living.

Take Nova Scotia native John Bignell, a paramedic by day and avid apiarist in his off-hours. With the help of his wife and their two young boys, Bignell keeps more than 20,000 bees in his Halifax backyard.

“It was important to show my kids where food comes from, to have that connection to the natural world,” he says. “Keagan, who is 5, knows honey doesn’t come from a bottle.” What’s more, Bignell says, “our bees are foraging from the trees and flowers right in our neighbourhood. We don’t have to worry about the pollen coming from a crop that has just been sprayed.”

Concerns about health and food security were at the front of Marci Babineau’s mind when she decided to set up an urban farm in her Montreal backyard. She and her family live in a turn-of-the-century Westmount semi with a small garden running around its edge—at least it was a garden before Babineau got in there and turned it into what she calls an “edible forest.” Now she grows an array of tree fruits, from apples and plums to cherries, as well as hazelnuts, berries and vegetables. An experienced organic gardener, Babineau applies the tenets of permaculture to her backyard oasis, which dictate that the best way to develop a sustainable ecosystem is to take a step back from tilling the soil and, instead, to...
work with what you’ve got. “You follow nature’s model,” she says. “Every year, it dumps a pile of leaves on top [of her beds] as compost and you just build over that. Nature is the ultimate blueprint for how you plant. You look at the sun and see how many hours you get where; you take advantage of vertical space, train fruit limbs to grow up high or use trellises and rooftops.”

Babineau also keeps hens on her city property for the eggs they provide. “The first year [2009], we were completely undercover. Keeping chickens wasn’t against the law, but I didn’t want to [attract attention],” she says, noting that she was then new to the neighbourhood. Today, the chickens cluck and peck out in the open. “People come to see my hens. Kids come to hold them. They’ve been embraced by the community.”

Community is a huge part of Jessica Mudry’s urban-farming experience, too. When the university professor moved into a new Toronto home last year, she and her young children acquired a big vegetable plot in the west-end house’s backyard. Less experienced in farming than most of her neighbours, Mudry happily receives help from all sides, she says. “The neighbourhood is really a leaning-over-the-fence-to-talk kind of place. One day last summer, I came home and found that someone on my street had come and staked my tomatoes. He must have seen them drooping from three houses away.”

Mudry also grows Chioggia beets, red chicory, zucchini, grapes and herbs, which she and her kids enjoy along with the figs, bitter melon and collard greens that her Portuguese and Chinese neighbours grow and share with her. “When they give you their produce, there’s always this proviso: ‘They’re not very good this year,’ they’ll say, even though they’re beautiful.”

Even if many Canadians aren’t blessed with neighbours such as Mudry’s, don’t have the nerve to keep bees and lack the patience to train fruit trees, it’s still possible to mount an ultra-local Thanksgiving feast this (or any) year. How? Among other things, shop for close-to-home ingredients, visit farmers markets and think seasonally when planning a menu. There are also the recipes on these pages, each featuring a star ingredient from the urban plots of Bignell, Babineau and Mudry, hands-on exemplars of city “farming” at its most productive.
Sourdough stuffing with kale and hazelnuts

Prep time: 20 minutes
Ready in: 45 minutes

INGREDIENTS

• ¼ cup butter
• 1 large onion, cut into ½-inch chunks
• ½ pound bacon, cut into ½-inch chunks
• 1 large apple, cut into ½-inch chunks
• ½ bunch sage leaves, stems picked off and leaves left whole
• ½ bunch kale, torn into large pieces
• 1/3 cup hazelnuts, roughly crushed
• 1 tsp apple cider vinegar
• 1 loaf sourdough bread, cut or torn into chunks
• ½ cup chicken stock
• Black pepper to taste

METHOD

Melt butter over medium-low heat in a large skillet. Add onion, bacon and salt and cook for about 8 minutes or until the onion is soft and the bacon is cooked through. Add apple chunks, sage, kale and hazelnuts and cook for about 2 minutes. Stir in apple cider vinegar and remove from heat. Put bread chunks in a large bowl and stir in onion mixture. Spoon stuffing into a baking dish and pour stock over it. Bake until the top is browned (about 20 minutes).
**Frozen Greek yogurt with salted honeycomb**

*Prep time: 5 minutes
* + 12 to 25 hours for freezing*

**INGREDIENTS**

- 500 ml full-fat plain Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- ½ cup runny honey
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp Maldon salt
- ¼ cup honeycomb, chopped into ¼-inch pieces

**METHOD**

In a large bowl, mix yogurt, cream, honey and lemon juice until combined. Refrigerate for 1 hour. Process in ice-cream machine for 25 minutes. Meanwhile, break up honeycomb with a fork. When ice cream is thickened, stir in salt and honeycomb to the frozen-yogurt mixture. Stir to combine, then place in container and freeze at least 12 hours; 24 is preferable. If you don’t have an ice-cream maker, purchase good-quality vanilla ice cream or frozen yogurt and top each scoop with 1 tbsp chopped honeycomb and a pinch of sea salt. Serves 6 to 8 as a pie topper.

**Roasted-beet salad with spicy vinaigrette**

*Prep time: 15 minutes
*Ready in: 60 to 90 minutes*

**INGREDIENTS**

- 8 large or 12 medium-sized beets
- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 large pinch cayenne
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1/3 cup grape-seed or other vegetable oil
- 1 head radicchio, cut or torn into bite-sized pieces
- Parsley, stems picked off and leaves left whole
- Black pepper

**METHOD**

Preheat oven to 400 F. Cut tops off beets, leaving about ½ inch of stems. Scrub beets, then place in a small baking dish or cast-iron pan and cover tightly with foil. Roast in oven until the beet yields easily to the tip of a knife, about 45 minutes to 1 ½ hours, depending on their size. Remove from oven and peel when cool enough to handle. (This step can be done a day ahead; store peeled beets in the fridge.) In a large bowl, mix vinegar, honey, cayenne and salt. Whisk in oil in a slow stream. Add sliced beets, radicchio and parsley and toss gently. Season with fresh black pepper.
Comfort foods to ease their way back

Iceberg lettuce, chicken, pasta and brownies make for a kid-friendly dinner to soothe back-to-school jitters.

As a backup, I usually make plain pasta to serve with the chicken – even the pickiest kid will gladly eat pasta.

Leftovers can be creatively used for another meal. Some suggestions: Use leftover chicken and sauce to top a pre-baked pizza; just sprinkle on lots of cheese and bake at 450 for 10 minutes. Or combine the chicken, a bit of sauce and leftover salad and some grated cheese in a tortilla, fold over and fry each side for a quesadilla. Leftover wedgies can be torn up for another salad. And brownies are great for a mid-week treat.

I’ve always liked to make a special dinner for the “back to school” bunch in our family. Choosing recipes that are kid-friendly often depends on the kid, but a great home-cooked meal is always appreciated.

LUCY WAVERMAN
The Wedgie

We took the traditional Roquefort out of the dressing in deference to younger palates, but you can add it back in if you want a sharper taste. (Stilton or gorgonzola are also good substitutes.) Let your kids choose their own toppings. Mine love bacon, tomatoes and chopped egg. Avocado or chopped chicken are also good options. Here is my family recipe.

*Prep time: 20 minutes
*Ready in: 20 minutes
*Serves 4

**INGREDIENTS**

- 1 head iceberg lettuce
- Dressing:
  - 3 tablespoons mayonnaise
  - 2 tablespoons Greek yogurt
  - 1 tablespoon lemon juice
  - ½ teaspoon garlic, chopped
  - ¼ teaspoon dried mustard
  - ¼ cup olive oil
  - 2 tablespoons water (or more) to thin
  - Salt and freshly ground pepper
- Toppings:
  - 6 strips bacon, sautéed and crumbled
  - 2 hard boiled eggs, chopped
  - 2 tomatoes, diced finely
  - ½ cup Roquefort cheese, crumbled

**METHOD**

Cut lettuce into quarters (or eighths if very large). Place on serving dishes and set aside. Combine mayonnaise, yogurt, lemon juice, garlic and mustard, and whisk olive oil in a little at a time. Thin with water to desired consistency and add salt and pepper. Drizzle dressing over lettuce and top with bacon, eggs, tomatoes and Roquefort. Extra dressing should be dotted on the side.
Chicken Provençal

Emma Waverman, my daughter, and Eshun Mott, my recipe tester, collaborated in writing Whining and Dining, a cookbook to help feed the picky eaters in your family. This recipe, one of the more sophisticated in the book, is a favourite of adults and children alike (though some kids will just eat the chicken and avoid the sauce). Leftovers can be combined with the lettuce from the wedgie inside a tortilla to make a mock chicken fajita.

*Prep time: 10 minutes  
Cooking time: 40 minutes  
Ready in: 50 minutes  
Serves 4*

**INGREDIENTS**

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup all-purpose flour for dredging
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 pound (500 grams) boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- 1 cup onion, chopped
- 2 anchovy fillets, minced (or Worcestershire)
- 1 tablespoon garlic, chopped
- 1 19-ounce (540-gram) can tomatoes
- ½ cup chicken stock
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme, chopped
- 1 bay leaf
- ½ cup black olives, pitted
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley (optional)

**METHOD**

Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a large, deep frying pan over medium-high heat. Place flour in a dish and season with salt and pepper. When oil is hot, dredge chicken in flour, shaking off any excess. Working in batches, cook chicken for 2 minutes per side or until browned. Remove to a plate and reserve. Add remaining 1 tablespoon oil to pan. Lower heat to medium and add onions and anchovies (or Worcestershire sauce) and cook for 5 minutes or until onions are soft. Add garlic and cook for 1 minute longer. Add tomatoes, stock, thyme and bay leaf and bring to a gentle simmer. Add olives and chicken. Submerge chicken in sauce and cook, turning chicken after the first 15 minutes, for 30 minutes or until cooked through. Garnish with parsley.
Raspberry chocolate brownies

These moist, chocolaty squares have a welcome hit of raspberry for contrast. They freeze well and only take about 30 minutes to come back to room temperature, which makes them ideal for packing in lunchboxes. By freezing brownies just before baking you get the perfect texture - fudgy and moist.

*Prep time: 1 hour, including freezing
Cooking time: 40 minutes
Ready in: 3 hours, including cooling time
Makes 16 brownies*

**INGREDIENTS**

- 6 ounces (175 grams) dark chocolate, chopped
- 1 cup unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- 4 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2/3 cup raspberry preserves

**METHOD**

Butter an 8-inch-square baking pan and line the bottom and 2 sides with a piece of parchment paper. Place chocolate and butter in a heavy pot over low heat and stir until melted. Remove pan from heat and stir in eggs and vanilla. Combine sugar, salt and flour and stir into chocolate mixture. Scrape half of batter into prepared pan and freeze for 30 minutes or until firm. Spread a thin layer of preserves on top of frozen batter and cover with remaining batter. Freeze 20 minutes longer. Preheat oven to 350°F. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until brownies are set but still slightly moist in the middle. Cool on a rack.
The Technique: How to make a perfect pie crust

You? Make a pie? Of course you can. And with rhubarb season upon us, you’ll be wanting to take matters into your own hands. This pastry is easy to make, especially if you have a food processor. The key to a flaky crust is keeping the ingredients cold and handling the dough as little as possible to prevent gluten buildup, which makes for a tough pastry.

1. With a fork, mix 1 1/4 cup flour, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon sugar. Add 1/2 cup (1 stick) cubed, cold unsalted butter and rub the butter into the flour mixture by hand (use your fingertips to literally rub butter and flour together to combine). Or, you can do this in a food processor and pulse until the mixture has the texture of coarse crumbs – the butter should be in pea-sized pieces.

2. Add 3 tablespoons ice water to the dough. Using your hand or pulsing in the food processor 20 to 30 seconds, gently mix the water into the flour mixture until the dough just holds together. Add another tbsp ice water if needed. Look for the dough to be loose but to stick together when pressed between your fingers.

3. Take your dough and form it into a disc shape, which is easier to roll out than a ball. Wrap tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate for an hour (or overnight). This dough will also freeze well.

4. Remove from fridge and roll out on a lightly floured surface until the crust is about 10 inches in diameter and about 1/4-inch thick. Transfer dough to dish and tuck in overhanging edges. Chill in fridge for one hour before baking at 375°F for 15-20 minutes for prebaking (crust will be dry but still pale) and another 10-12 minutes to bake completely (crust will be dry and golden).