



ARTICLE | PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE DURING UNCERTAINTY

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The COVID-19 Pandemic makes it difficult to think about the future, while also making it crucial that changemakers plan for their future and that of their communities. Buoyed by our interconnected global economic, social and political systems, this pandemic has amplified uncertainty around how we chart our path future. This uncertainty creates incredible possibilities, both positive and negative, that we all must navigate to strengthen our work.

Understanding the future is difficult in normal times. However, considering major trends and their implications for communities is more crucial than ever now that we are facing divergent possibilities related to the impacts of COVID-19 and our possible responses to it.

Tamarack Institute has been undergoing an exciting process for considering its future over the past year. Driven by a new and expanded Board of Directors, and the important growth in our capacity to support communities and changemakers. We are working with our members, learners and the Board to identify our north star for the next ten years. One component of understanding Tamarack's direction has been considering the impacts of major trends on our members, learners and our organization. Given that many organizations and communities are starting to envision their paths forward, we wanted to share some of what we have learned.

“**Considering major trends and their implications for communities is more crucial now than ever.**”

SIGNIFICANT TRENDS IMPACTING CANADA'S FUTURE

As part of our analysis of significant trends impacting Canada's future, we reviewed a number of documents, written in the last two years, that focused on economic, political and social trends in Canada. These are linked below for your review. We focused on eight macro trends that will have implications for changemakers over the next decade that can be found on the following page.

8 FUTURE TRENDS TO WATCH OUT FOR:

1. TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

- Rapid technological progress is going to impact every sector with increased automation, artificial intelligence, and privacy implications
- Digital economy has grown 40% in 7 years ([RBC](#))
- Technology and automation disrupting up to 42% of the labour force ([CBoC](#))
- Increasing levels of technological fear and a drive for digital detox ([Brookfield](#))

3. POLITICAL CHANGE

- Increasing polarization and populism
- Global disruptions in trade and relationships
- Commitment to SDGs aiming to 2030 Agenda ([CBoC](#))
- Public Debt doubling and continuing to grow ([CBoC](#))
- 70% of Canadians think the world is changing too quickly ([Ipsos](#))

5. URBANIZATION

- 81% of Canadians live in urban settings ([CBoC](#))
- Major population growth in suburbs ([Brookfield](#))
- Reduced services for rural communities
- \$180M being invested in infrastructure over 12 years ([CBoC](#))
- Growth of Smart Cities in Canada
- Growth in remote working ([Brookfield](#))

7. RECONCILIATION

- We face a legacy of policy, legislation and injustice that must be addressed
- The 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will have profound impacts on Canada ([CBoC](#))
- Indigenous population in Canada is growing
- Gaps remain in indicators including mental health, employment, income, educational attainment, and mortality ([CBoC](#))

2. DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

- Canada will join "super-aged" club
- More seniors are continuing to work
- Greater need for government programs and housing
- Government benefits for seniors \$99B by 2030 ([RBC](#))
- Canada's large population of individuals born outside of the country
- Generation Z reaching adulthood ([Brookfield](#))
- Mental illness will cost \$29.1B in lost productivity ([CBoC](#))

4. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Climate change is happening – 4 of the 5 costliest insurance events happened in the last 6 years ([RBC](#))
- Major investments from governments and business in sustainable energy generation
- Central Canada faces risks of water shortages ([CBoC](#))
- Canada will face increase in climate refugees

6. SHIFTS IN INEQUALITY

- Could close gender wage gap by 2035 ([CBoC](#))
- Women of colour earn \$0.67 of that of white men and Indigenous women earn \$0.65 to \$1 ([Brookfield](#))
- In 2016, top CEOs made 209 times more than the average worker ([CBoC](#))
- In 2017, fewer than 50% of Canadians saw themselves as part of the middleclass ([Ipsos](#))

8. ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY

- Economic growth will be slow ([RBC](#))
- 13% of population entrepreneurs ([Brookfield](#))
- Growth in purpose driven businesses ([CBoC](#))
- 49% of Canadians think that the prospect for the world will be worse in 10 years and only 26% believe it will be better ([Ipsos](#))

POSSIBLE RESPONSES TO COVID

We lack historic parallels to properly understand the impact that COVID-19 will have on our world. That is because the sheer complexity of the social, political and economic systems that we now live in make comparisons of previous pandemics unrealistic. With that in mind, there are a number of indicators in recent literature around the impact of COVID-19 worth considering, which include:

1. Highest economic policy uncertainty ever in Canada and USA
 - a. Greater economic uncertainty than the 2008 financial crisis and similar to the Great Depression in terms of magnitude
2. Increasing debt for individuals and governments
3. Major impacts on housing and energy
4. Slowing down of immigration
5. Seeing magnified impacts of inequality
6. Demonstrating the importance of resiliency and redundancies in our systems
7. Renewed searches for connection and meaning for individuals and communities
8. Opportunity for social and normative change to reinforce and support expertise and community
9. The response from communities and governments is offering a blueprint and possible multi-solves to address climate change and poverty
10. New opportunities for the community sector

It is interesting to note that many of these implications reinforce the trends discussed above, and some ever-present opportunities for us to further needed change. It will be important for changemakers to build on the positive responses coming from communities as we navigate a new normal. It is important to recognize these potential changes and plan for their impact on our work, so that we can build on opportunities and proactively address challenges. Most importantly, we must consider the opportunities that they provide for organizations and social change.

The Three Horizons of Growth ([described in this presentation](#)), provide lessons for how to best use the information above. The Three Horizons of Growth help us think of ways to maintain and increase our progress while expanding our capabilities and opportunities.

- **Horizon 1** is more immediate and focuses on innovations to our existing models to support further growth. Can we use new technology to better target resources to our learners?
- **Horizon 2** forces us to think about our medium-term progress and how we can expand to new areas and individuals with our existing offerings. How can we use lessons from our success in poverty reduction to address climate change and social inequality?
- Finally, **Horizon 3** forces us to consider how we develop new capabilities to take advantage of disruptions. Horizon 3 has been sped up due to COVID-19. As Tim

Brodhead points out in his [recent article](#), “this crisis could be an opportunity to adapt and to make necessary but painful changes.”

Community organizations and governments are going to be faced with difficult decisions. The crisis has amplified the need for our work, while straining the resources required to be successful. At the same time, individuals around Canada have stepped up to provide support to their community. They have developed new ways to support each other and we are seeing a real desire to rebuild community and connection out of this crisis. There are real opportunities.

By reviewing trends that were already impacting our work, while also addressing the emergent issues arising from this pandemic, community changemakers can support the progress they were making, expand their impact, and take advantage of the opportunities arising for large-scale social and normative changes. It is up to us to not let this crisis go to waste.

FUTURE PLANNING RESOURCES

- RBC Thought Leadership - [Navigating the 2020s](#): How Canada can Thrive in a Decade of Change
- The Conference Board of Canada - [Canada 2030](#): The Defining Forces Disrupting Business
- The Brookfield Institute - [Turn and Face the Strange](#): Changes Impacting the Future of Employment in Canada
- Ipsos Canada – [CanadaNext](#): Perspectives of Canadians on the Next 10 Years Ipsos and Canada Towards 2030
- McKinsey & Company - [Enduring Ideas: The three horizons of growth](#)
- Shell – [Future Scenarios](#)

COVID-19 IMPACTS:

- Tim Brodhead – [On Not Letting Another Crisis Go to Waste](#)
- Thomas Homer-Dixon: [Coronavirus will change the world. It might also lead to a better future](#)
- Shabnam Banerjee-McFarland - [4 Major Changes and How We Can Respond in the Age of COVID-19](#)
- IISD – [Three Ways the Coronavirus is Shaping Sustainable Development](#)
- Maytree – [Five Good Ideas about How Your Non-Profit Organizations Can respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- Future of Good - [COVID-19 and Its Effects on the Social Impact World](#)

COVID-19 RESOURCES:

- Imagine Canada’s [COVID-19 Resource Page](#)
- Charity Village’s [Resource page for nonprofits and charitable sector](#)
- Ontario Nonprofit Network’s [Resources for Nonprofits](#)
- Innoweave’s [COVID-19 Crisis Leadership Resources](#)