

Are We There Yet? Economic Justice and the Common Good

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Session 1.1: Faithful Business: Beyond the Bottom Line

In a world increasingly driven by the demands of capitalism, the idea of running or building a business upon a foundation of religious faith or Christianity in particular is often looked upon as idealistic and contrary to the profit-maximizing norms of business. In this session, four local successful business owners and operators of faith explained how they view the purpose of business, and what makes their businesses different from others.

John Leder, President of Supreme Steel, spoke about how businesses need to act within the community. A business needs to think about three important factors: Stewardship, Sustainability, and Accountability. He stated that since most of us understand the need to act out of stewardship and sustainability, his focus in this session would be mainly on accountability. Businesses operate within a community; the community is responsible to the business, and the business is responsible to the community. When you bid on work or sell things, whether a car or a steel building, you do so in a community. If you go back far enough in the community, the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker were the hub of the community. They supported one another. Today with globalization, that community support is not as important as it once was, much to the detriment of the economy. However, it is important to remember that as businesses grow, they owe something to the community. They have to give back, and whether that is by giving back, or providing jobs, that is the responsibility of the business. On the other hand, it is the responsibility of the community to support the business. For a Christian business owner, accountability extends beyond what is owed to themselves and the shareholders, to what God requires of us.

Kathy Schmidt, broker and owner of Schmidt Realty Group, spoke about the role of the small business in the economy and shared her experiences in developing the faith-based values and structures upon which her business is founded. First, she shared that small businesses account for more than 98% of all firms in Canada and provided 77.7% of all private jobs from 2002-2012. When first establishing her business, Kathy asked, "How can I encourage structures where people can bring their whole selves to work, and what does that really mean?" The first step was to create a mission statement, which includes a reference to God. As not all of those within the organization are Christian, this has resulted in some great spiritual conversations. The team also created values to serve as benchmarks, to determine whether the organization is living

out their foundational beliefs: gratitude, respect, kindness, professionalism, leadership, shared success, and courage. Naming these values allows for discussions around why they chose them, and what makes it a faith-based business. Kathy asked, “How do you connect values and mission statement and make it real? How do you make this a game that everyone wants to play, and make this more than a job and still be sustainable and profitable?” The answer to these questions was the creation of a system with structures regarding how time is spent, how to support each other, and how the financial rewards are set up. This encourages the values to be lived out on a daily basis.

Gregg Oldring, a web entrepreneur who has been involved in a number of successful web-based companies including GSNNet, Mailout Interactive and, most recently, Inkdit, spoke about his personal need as a business person to operate beyond the needs of his business. While pursuing a business degree, Gregg found success in the mid-90s via the internet, and ended up as a twenty-something executive in a dot-com company that was going public. Like many, he was idealistic and felt that capitalism was the way to go. However, after a number of years living and working within the dot-com bubble, Gregg found that markets did not in fact operate in the manner which he thought they did, and ended up laying himself off. During this time, he came to realize that “he was part of this process where people were selling crap on a huge scale, knowing it was crap and a lie and getting rich.” It soon became difficult to reconcile his faith with being a part of that system. Deciding to finish his degree, he realized there was never any discussion about morality in business. Out of this learning process, Gregg decided to make money by creating value for the customers as opposed to simply “buying low and selling high.” By creating value, he was able to build a business that would allow him to sleep at night, knowing he was living his life out as a Christian and loving his neighbor as himself, giving more than he was receiving.

Dr. Lachlan (Lach) Whatley, current General Manager and Senior Research Officer for MetalBoss Technologies Inc. with over 25 years experience in international industry, spoke about how the purpose of business is not to make money. This is a constraint and requirement of business; however, a business’s purpose is to provide an environment which allows us to grow and learn. Therefore, one must build an organization which allows for growth as individuals and nudges people along on their personal journeys. In order to make this happen, a vision is needed – which, for Lach, comes from the “trinity” of revelation. First, there is spiritual revelation from God, which is encouraged through prayer, meditation, being the word, worship, and submission. Second, there is natural revelation: learning and being skilled, combining data, knowledge and experience to do the best job possible, continually striving to improve. Third, there is artistic revelation. For example, if a fourth year business student is able to experience a group of people being oppressed through a play, that student will never be a dictator. Experiences through art can change the way we interact with the world, and business organizations can model and provide these opportunities. Lach argued that as Christians, we need to build organizations that embrace all three elements of revelation, because that is the way God made us.

Session 1.2: Economic Justice and Urban Food Security

In recent years, questions and debates regarding how the city of Edmonton should grow have been frequent and, at times, divisive. The expansion of the city into the Horse Hill area was no different: neighbours disagreed with neighbours about whether or not the area should be rezoned for development or preserved for agricultural use. This session brought together several local experts who together argued that local food issues should be taken seriously by all who live in or near Edmonton and Alberta.

Candace Vanin, a land-use specialist and professional agrologist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, enlightened the audience with the national, provincial, and local realities of agricultural land in Canada. She noted that food lands are less than 8% of Canada's land base; however, over 80% of the prime agricultural land in Canada is located in the prairies. This local reality blinds those of us who live on the prairies as to how scarce food lands really are. In the Edmonton area, the local microclimate creates the longest frost free period in all of Alberta, despite its northern location. Population growth in Alberta has created strong pressures for the growth of urban areas, resulting in an average loss of 10,000 hectares of rural lands per year in the province. She concluded by arguing that the typical view of "urban versus rural" is not accurate; the two are complementary, as food and beverage manufacturing is the second largest contributor to the Alberta economy.

Dr. Elizabeth Smythe, professor of Political Science at Concordia University College, spoke about food security, especially the volatility of food prices and the resulting vulnerability of human populations. For Dr. Smythe, the issue of food sovereignty is focused on who produces food and how the food is produced; food security, on the other hand, focuses on access to food. In the middle is food justice, which is concerned with fresh, nutritious, affordable, locally grown, and culturally appropriate food. She referred to a recent visit to Canada by Olivier De Schutter, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, and his report that highlighted the lack of food justice in Canada. She also noted the recent increase in land speculation by many companies, particularly Walton International, who buy raw land near urban areas, work to have the land rezoned, and then exit the market. The danger in such a practice, Dr. Smythe pointed out, is that questions regarding how the land is developed are irrelevant for these companies; the only real consideration is profit, not food justice, or care for the land itself.

Jessie Radies, founder of Live Local Alberta, spoke regarding the local food system and what local people can do to support their local system. She noted that in 2007, Albertans spent \$16.4 billion in supermarkets and restaurants. This means that food is big business in Alberta, and that local people have a platform to support their local food economy. Consumers should ask questions like, "What are you eating?" "Who are you buying it from?" "Where is it from?" "What happened to it?" "How was it raised or grown?" Each of these questions is important to

ask, for Jessie, before we eat or purchase food. The economic impact caused by purchasing directly from producers and local businesses means that more of the money stays in the local economy, compared with purchasing from global or national chains. Jessie concluded her presentation by giving simple tips for how people can eat and drink local, including: purchasing food from the farmer's market, buying direct from farmers, patronizing local and independent businesses, restaurants, and grocers, and spreading the word about good local food producers.

Janelle Hebert, owner and operator of Riverbend Gardens, spoke about her experience as a local food grower and the history of Riverbend Gardens. Moving from a small hog farm to a vegetable farm, Riverbend Gardens began selling food in the city market in the 1980's. Today, Riverbend Garden sells at seven local farmers markets and delivers crops to local businesses. She also spoke about the pressure on local food producers because of the expansion of the city of Edmonton and her involvement in standing up for local food producers. Janelle concluded by stating that we all have a role to play in saving agricultural land, not just farmers.

Session 1.3: Just Economy and First Nations

Aboriginal people in Canada face a variety of economic challenges and injustices. These range from violations of treaty rights related to land use, traditional livelihoods, and resource extraction, to issues of poverty and unemployment faced by urban Aboriginal people.

Lorraine Land is a lawyer with Olthuis Kleer Townshend LLP in Toronto, a group of lawyers who specialize in Aboriginal law. Lorraine noted that Aboriginal people have been living in North America for thousands of years, and that the Aboriginal economy and way of life has always been, and still is, deeply entwined with the land. Meanwhile, the resource extraction projects that play such a large role in Canada's economy often overlap with areas in which Aboriginal land and resource rights is contested. In some cases, they have serious negative implications for the Aboriginal people involved. This is particularly a problem in the historic numbered treaty regions; whereas modern land claim agreements (such as those in BC and the Territories) take a holistic view that includes self-determination and co-management agreements between companies, government and Aboriginal groups, this often does not happen in the historic treaty areas. The result has been deep social and environmental deficits that must be addressed if we are to move forward towards reconciliation.

The Rev. Canon Travis Enright, Canon Missioner for Indigenous Ministry at All Saints' Anglican Cathedral and chair of Edmonton's Urban Aboriginal Affairs Committee, spoke about the economic challenges facing Aboriginal people in urban areas. He argued that the structures and history within which urban Aboriginals live too often reduce them to relying on welfare, selling their bodies or selling drugs in order to live. It is not enough to tell individuals to make better choices; we must create structures in which the culture, identity and skill sets of Aboriginal people can contribute to genuine well-being—economic and otherwise. Travis argued that Aboriginal ways of thinking can help us critically restructure our economy in positive ways, by questioning excessive material consumption; creating caring, compassionate structures;

developing appreciative connections with the places where we live; seeing the land as something to be in relationship with, rather than something to exploit; and appreciating the gifts of different cultures. The challenge is to develop structures and systems in which all of us can flourish.

Session 2.1: Civil Society

The civil society panel brought together a variety of presenters to discuss issues of justice that relate to particular institutions in civil society: schools, health care providers, and businesses.

Doug Blomberg, Professor of Philosophy of Education and Acting President at the Institute for Christian Studies, discussed the issue of state funding for private schools. He noted that massive amounts of taxpayer money are directed towards compulsory schooling, often in a discriminatory way that funds only particular types of schools and thus impedes people from having access to the type of schooling that they prefer. Doug argued that there is an obligation in secular, democratic, pluralistic societies to provide structures that allow all people to live out their deepest convictions. This includes creating space for schools that operate on the basis of different life visions. Secularity does not mean building a wall between faith and the rest of life; instead, it means establishing a proper relationship between the state and minorities, where different visions of life are treated equally rather than favouring one over another. Because education is not just about cognitive or skills development, but plays a powerful role in inducting children into comprehensive ways of living, parents must be able to choose the education their children receive without discriminatory funding structures that restrict choice.

Theresa Zolner, Associate Professor of Psychology at The King's University College, then spoke on the topic of mental health justice. She argued that the ways in which mental health services are structured in Canada are unjust to the most vulnerable. First, the mental health system in Canada is two-tiered; private services are available for those who are able to pay, but free services are very limited in scope and availability. Since 20% of Canadians suffer from mental health conditions, this is a serious area of concern. Second, service provision is fragmented. There is a significant burden on family physicians to provide these services, despite their lack of specific training in this area and the already heavy workload faced by physicians. Meanwhile psychologists, who are trained to address mental health conditions, are not well integrated into the health care system. Finally, mental health services are provided by a wide range of practitioners, some licensed and some not. The lack of attention to certification requirements raises concerns about proper training and supervision. Because of these issues, some of the most vulnerable people in Canada, those who suffer from mental illness, are not receiving the quality of care that they need.

Harry Kits, Senior Advisor, Corporate Engagement for World Vision Canada, spoke about the role of the private sector in international development. The government of Canada has increasingly been focusing on the private sector and increased trade as the primary means to promote economic growth, which in turn is assumed to reduce poverty. This is raising serious concerns among the development community. Harry pointed out that development is a "wicked"

problem, involving complex interdependencies, causes and consequences, and requiring changes both in the behaviour of multiple actors and in the systems in which they function; there are no silver bullets. He suggested that a holistic focus on the well-being of people, families and communities should come first. Achieving this requires understanding the local situation, building the capacity of communities, and achieving basic social and economic development and the realization of rights at the local level, as well as accountable governments and companies. While the private sector can certainly play an important role in development, especially by providing jobs, markets, and tax revenues, it cannot achieve these conditions on its own.

Session 2.2: Faith, Community, and Climate Change

What is the role of the church with regards to climate change? Do the church's beliefs or history contribute to a discussion on climate change? If so, what do they contribute? These are important questions that are slowly being addressed by denominations and individual churches and church members. This session sought to discuss why the church should consider the issue of climate change, and why the church is in a position to speak authoritatively on this particular issue.

Joe Gunn, Executive Director for Citizens for Public Justice, spoke of the reality of human-caused climate change and how churches are becoming more aware and more willing to take action on climate change. The first half of his presentation focused on what causes climate change, how human activity can cause climate change, and the global and economic consequences that can and are predicted to result from changes to the makeup of the environment. Joe mentioned that Nicholas Stern has predicted that by 2050, climate change could impose costs equalling 20% of global GDP. The results of unmitigated human-caused climate change will have effects including melting glaciers, species extinction, rising sea levels, growing acidity in the oceans, and a threatened global food supply.

The second half of Joe's presentation discussed the assets of religious communities and their growing action on climate change. The assets of religious communities include the capacity to shape cosmologies, moral authority, a large base of adherents, significant material resources, and community-building capacity. These assets can be used to exert influence over how Canada acts on climate change. The remainder of the presentation discussed steps that denominations and religious NGO's have taken to call for increased action on climate change.

Sara Farid, Regional Animator for the Canadian Catholic Organization Development and Peace, explained the history and purpose of Development and Peace and shared her personal experiences in visiting third world countries that are experiencing drastic climate change. Development and Peace seeks to educate the Canadian population on causes of poverty, works with clergy and laity in the Catholic Church, and acts as a listening board for their partners. Local partners will inform Development and Peace of their most pressing issues, which can then be taken to Canadian citizens and the Canadian Government. Sara ended her presentation with a

three-pronged call to action: first, affirm the dignity of every person, second, acknowledge the equal right to access to food, and third, promote life over profit.

Session 2.3: Thought that Matters to Economics

When discussing issues of economic justice, it is often necessary to first address the norms which exist within society which can either hinder or embrace the concept of such justice. In this session, the three presenters shared a variety of philosophical ideas and how these ideas can help shape conversations around economic justice.

Joshua Lee Harris, a doctoral student from the Institute for Christian Studies, spoke about value problems which need to be understood when discussing economic justice. Arguing that the left/right or liberal/conservative categories which dominate discussions of economic justice are not ideal, Joshua sought a new way to approach the theory of value; this is understood to be an attempt to answer questions about the nature of exchange and determine what makes something valuable, whether a correct price is possible, and whether this value is intrinsic or subjective. On the right is the Austrian Subjective Theory of Value offered by Carl Menger, which claims that “value does not exist outside the consciousness of men,” i.e. that nothing is intrinsically valuable, but value is found through the eye of the individual beholder and is determined by needs. From a practical standpoint, this implies that the economy is made up of individual economic actors, and it is necessary to create as much individual freedom as possible and not interfere with the market. On the left is the Labour Theory of Value offered by Karl Marx, where value is the socially necessary labour time required to produce something under normal conditions of production; it is not individual actors who create value, but the social and historical conditions of labour which do so, and value is therefore objective. In order to adjudicate the differences between the right and the left, Joshua turned to the philosophical ideas of Hans-George Gadamer, who claims that you come from somewhere, you don’t just have values but they are formed from where you come from. Applying this thought to economic justice results in three economic ideas. First, value is constituted by a sort of institutional subjectivity, in that it cannot be captured in a single metric (different cultures will have different economies). Second, intermediary institutes (between individual and state) should have status as economic actors. Third, economic justice is about ensuring institutional well-being just as much as it is about the well-being of individuals.

Dr. Michael DeMoor, Assistant Professor in Politics, History and Economics at the King’s University College, talked about the conflict which frequently arises between property rights and the common good, and how the philosophers Aristotle and Hegel may provide a theoretical framework to adjudicate these differing moral claims in a better way. Using two cases which have been in the public eye recently, green belt legislation where property rights are restricted in the name of the common good, and resistance to natural resource development where the rights are the common good are claimed over individual property rights, Dr. DeMoor explained that these claims are normally discussed and adjudicated in a liberal political society through structuralized procedures where one trumps the other. In Canada, where property rights

are NOT included in the charter of rights and freedoms, it is common to convene “expert panels” in matters of procedure concerning “public interest,” often making these decisions through utilization of cost benefit analysis and economic factors in order to determine what is in the best “public interest”. He explained that for Aristotle, a “just” city is one where people are allowed to own property, but not allowed to do as they saw fit, because that right to property comes from one’s political status. In this case, owning property contributes to the common good as it allows for virtuous behaviour such as hospitality and community, but limits that right because too much property limits virtuous behaviour. The key for Aristotle is that the right to private property is justified by the common good, and hence limited by the common good, but is a real right. DeMoor then looked to Hegel, who distinguishes Personhood from Citizenship, but sees them as intertwined in ways that don’t support a straightforward derivation of one from the other; property is seen as an extension of oneself. According to Hegel, no claim to private property is free-standing with respect to the common good, the common good is not advanced by the blatant and continuing disregard for property rights, and the bond between these claims is premised on a certain view of the common good of the political community, where discussion needs to happen. Based then on Aristotle’s idea of civic friendship and on Hegel’s positive freedoms, Michael stated that if we need the courts and review panels to adjudicate these opposing claims, we need to do it in a different way: determining better who has a voice, and how decisions can be made in a more inclusive manner, so that different conceptions of the common good and public interest can be discussed rather than simply presumed.

Dr. Allyson Carr, Associate Director of the Centre for Philosophy, Religion and Social Ethics at the Institute for Christian Studies, examined the philosophical ideas of a 15th century female French philosopher in the context of the work of an activist for social justice in modern day Congo. Allyson began by providing a definition of economic justice: when people have the ability to flourish in context and contribute meaningfully, as well as having all their basic needs met. She then introduced us to “Book of the City of Ladies,” one of the works of medieval French philosopher Christine de Pizan, in which history is retold so that the role women have played is given a more fair and positive perspective. In de Pizan’s allegorical “city” the female figures from history and myth who populate it are enclosed within the walls of that “city” where their stories will be kept safe and their value appreciated. This was in response to the times which de Pizan was writing, when women were thought to be incapable of running a household and, in some places, lived in constant fear of violence. The economic and sometimes physical violence obscured the opportunities which are present in each woman.

The second half of Dr. Carr’s presentation detailed current social practice predicated on some similar ideas to those raised by Christine de Pizan. In modern day Congo, violence is an ever-present reality, and rape is used as a tool of war. In response to these atrocities, activist Eve Ensler asked a number of Congolese women who had been hospitalized due to violent rape about what could be done to help them and to help end the prevalence of violence in the DRC. The result is the City of Joy, where women who have been raped are brought into an actual “city”

with enclosed, guarded walls, in order to experience safety, healing, and learning. While they are residents of the city, the women are given intensive training in leadership, entrepreneurial skills, therapy, onsite farm and agricultural practices, self-defence, theatre, and dance—all with the goal of reclaiming a sense of their own worth, their embodied selves, and their ability to contribute to building a flourishing, healthy society. After six months of this intense training and healing, the women “graduate” from the enclosed walls of the city, and are given money to start their own businesses in their own community, free of any outside intervention, while still receiving support if needed. Since 2011, over 400 women have graduated. Allyson emphasized that violence does not just harm the individuals who experience it; it also shuts down possibilities for all of society. Since violence wrecks lives, livelihoods, relationships, and ability, in order to fully approach economic justice, we need to address violence (physical, social, economic, and other forms). Focusing solely on issues surrounding markets will not solve the issues out of which much economic injustice grows, and unchecked violence will continue to obscure the opportunities for meaningful contributions to social flourishing that each person possesses, further damaging the social fabric.

Session 3.1: Talking About the Oil Sands: Is a Breakthrough Possible?

This panel was structured as a conversation between the three participants: Elwil Beukes, Professor Emeritus of Economics at The King's University College, Dennis Vroom, who works in industry relations in the region of Wood Buffalo, and Wayne Prins, Alberta Provincial Director for the Christian Labour Association of Canada, a union with a large presence in the oil sands. The panellists explained that while discussions about the oil sands often end up in a standoff between supporters and those who are critical, they wanted to move the conversation forward by attempting to think about the issue in a different way. They noted that the oil sands encapsulate one of today's most vexing issues: the fact that our modern society is completely dependent on fossil fuel energy to function, while the production of this energy contributes to a wide range of increasingly pressing environmental impacts which have so far escaped technical solutions. The panellists pointed out that oil sands development has drastically expanded over the past 10-15 years, driven by technological change and oil prices, and it is forecast to expand even more over the next several years. Thus, changing the conversation today can have significant impacts on what happens in the future.

Elwil suggested that the serious economic and environmental issues facing the world today have their roots in outdated paradigms of economic thinking. The modern economy is based on the division of labour and the investment of surplus production in order to expand the productive capacity of the economy. These activities are coordinated through a decentralized market system that is driven by self-interest, the rule of the strongest, and the continued drive for expansion and growth. He argued that a new approach is needed, one that focuses on the

well-being of all stakeholders and the ecosystems in which we live (see, for example, Otto Scharmer's concept of moving from ego-system economies to ecosystem economies). Given the deep embeddedness of the oil sands in Alberta's economy, this will not be an easy change; but for the sake of economic justice and well-being, it is necessary.

Dennis suggested that one way to consider these issues might be through the "triple bottom line" that includes economic, environmental and social implications of oil sands developments. He noted that social impacts have received much less attention in the debate than economic and environmental impacts. However, there are positive signs that this is beginning to change. Governments are beginning to ask more questions; industry itself is beginning to make changes, realizing that businesses cannot succeed in communities that are failing. He cited examples of initiatives where industry, government and communities are coming together to build relationships and address challenges together. Wayne, based on his experience working as a union negotiator with oil sands companies, agreed that the triple bottom line idea is beginning to find traction with industry. He noted that language about social, environmental as well as economic concerns is reflected in company vision statements. However, he argued that such concerns cannot simply be thrust on companies, or governments—individuals need to assume responsibility for these issues within their own lifestyles as well. Wayne noted that unions may have a role to play in encouraging this among their members and others in society. Elwil wound up the discussion by speaking about ways in which companies can reflect environmental and social concerns and the interests of multiple stakeholders not only in their public statements, but also by redesigning their organizations and operations. He referred to Corporation 20/20's (<http://www.corporation2020.org>) principles for corporate design as a helpful resource that can help move us towards these changes.

Session 3.2: Genuine Progress: How do You Measure Economic Justice?

So much of the economic discussion in the media focuses on Gross Domestic Product and the growth of GDP. Does GDP growth in a particular country mean that people are better off? Two of the three presentations focused on these types of questions, while the third traced the history of Liberation Theology and how it found room to grow after the second Vatican Council.

Graeme Esau, who recently worked for the United Nations Development Program in Zimbabwe, explored the topic of GDP and the economics of well-being in his presentation. Graeme referenced Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*, human flourishing, as a concept that closely resembles his understanding of well-being. Rather than focus exclusively on GDP and GDP growth, Esau argued, we should look at what contributes to our well-being. Things like marriage, social relationships, employment, perceived health, religion, and quality of government are some of the contributors to well-being, according to empirical research. On the other hand, a Princeton study found that accumulating more than \$75,000 in wealth does not contribute to well-being. So why do we emphasize GDP so much and where did it come from?

Graeme noted that Simon Kuznets, who developed the concept of GDP, had reservations about the ability of GDP to measure the welfare of a nation. Kuznets, it appears, was correct, as GDP and life satisfaction in the United States have trended in opposite directions. The conclusion, then, is that GDP does not truly measure how well a society is doing. For this type of information, we need to look elsewhere.

Hector Acero Ferrer holds a Master of Divinity from the Toronto School of Theology, Regis College. Hector offered a brief history lesson of the Liberation Theology movement and the influence that the second Vatican Council had on allowing the growth of the Liberation Theology movement. In essence, Hector argued, the second Vatican Council became a way for the Catholic Church to bear witness to the Gospel. In particular, the focus on questions like, “what are the greatest needs you see around yourself?” paved the way for Liberation Theology, with its focus on Jesus as a liberator, and oppressed and oppressor relationships, to grow in Latin America. The relevance of Liberation Theology to a conference on economic justice can be found in the roots of that theology. Growing in a context of economic exploitation, the Liberation Theology movement inspired the creation of community organizations and establishing co-operative systems.

Mark Anielski, President of Anielski Management Inc. and author of *The Economics of Happiness: Building Genuine Wealth*, began with a reminder of Plato’s four virtues of courage, moderation, wisdom, and justice. Building on these four cardinal virtues, Anielski discussed Thomas Aquinas’ virtuous action and sufficiency of material goods. Much of the presentation resonated with Esau’s discussion and critique of GDP as a measure of happiness compared to life satisfaction. There is a great need, Anielski emphasized, for a movement towards new measures that will better indicate what is really going on in society. He also briefly discussed the topics of a living wage for all people on the planet, usury, and debt.

Session 3.3: Canadian Law and Economic Justice

When speaking of matters of economic justice, one wonders what role, if any, Canadian law plays. In this session, our presenters spoke about their personal experiences with the Canadian justice system and how matters of economic justice play out within that context, especially in regard to those who are impoverished.

Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning, community chaplain for the Edmonton Mustard Seed’s Community Justice Services, spoke about his experiences as one whose role within the system is managing community services justice for those who are on the tail end of the justice system. Edmonton is perhaps Canada’s biggest prison city with five federal prisons, several halfway houses housing between 30-100 parolees, a provincial prison in Fort Saskatchewan, two federal prisons which release to Edmonton and a large remand centre within the city limits. Additionally, many people who are released throughout Canada end up in Edmonton due to its reputation of economic well-being. Jonathan explained that issues of economic justice are part and parcel with the issue of incarceration. The average Canadian inmate has a grade 7 or 8 education, as many as

two thirds of them live below the poverty line, issues of mental health and addiction are prevalent, and Aboriginal people are over-represented as 30% of Canada's inmate population. In many cases, these issues relate directly to the crime for which they are being incarcerated, such as theft to feed addiction. Jonathan said that while part of the mandate of the justice system is to keep offenders separated from society, it also calls for rehabilitation to allow for a future after prison such as job training. Over the last number of years, this has been eroding steadily and therefore there are few supports in place for released prisoners. As a result, they often end up becoming a part of the shelter system. Recent changes to criminal law are also adding challenges. Bill C-10 introduced new policies and laws in Canada, such as mandatory minimums, and judges can no longer be flexible and lenient, further compounding the challenges faced by those with mental health issues. Also, with the abolition of early parole eligibility, those who would be better served in the community are now being kept in an environment lacking in positive influences. Further, Jonathan explained that we are failing our Aboriginal community by not adhering to Section 81 of the Criminal Code, which states that Aboriginal offenders should have culturally appropriate settings to serve out their sentences and be as close to home as possible. Often these offenders are finding themselves in unfamiliar and overwhelming locations upon release. While an appropriate centre exists within Edmonton, limited space makes it inaccessible to many.

Mark Huyser-Wierenga, Crown Prosecutor with the Government of Alberta and Board Chair of Citizens for Public Justice, spoke further about the connection between poverty and the criminal justice system and how that connects to the idea of economic justice. He began first with the following definitions: justice is right relations, criminal justice is relationships being disrupted by actions which we label as crimes, and economic justice is right relationships between people. He then went on to explain that there is a growing inequality in our society that there is a clear connection with poverty and the criminal justice system. As a prosecutor, Mark believes that the system over-incarcerates people. Those in poverty often do not have the capacity to deal with a not-right relationship, so the recourse is to call police; thus an issue of relationship becomes one of criminal justice. Mark highlighted CPJ's Canada Without Poverty initiative (www.dignityforall.ca), where the underlying mission is to make the issue of poverty a priority on the agendas of governments.

Session 4.1: Working for Socio-Economic Justice: CLAC's Efforts on Behalf of Under-Represented Groups and Communities

If we have not yet arrived at the reality of economic justice, what then can be done to achieve this reality? This session described the view and practice of the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) in attempting to bring about 'fairness.'

Dick Heinen, Executive Director of the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC), explained that CLAC works towards justice in terms of collective agreements. Dick gave a brief overview of the structure of CLAC and the sectors that it works in. He noted that CLAC exists

to bring about justice, but personally, he prefers to use the term fairness. This is because it can be quite difficult to figure out what is just and what is justice, especially in a member driven institution like CLAC. Fairness in the workplace seeks to ensure that employees do not get blamed for something that is not their fault; management takes on their responsibilities, and accepts that managerial errors are not the fault of labour. Finally, Heinen summarized some of the principles that CLAC is founded on. These include the dignity of each human person; respect; the rights of the community; pragmatism; and integrity.

Dr. Paul Wilson, Director of Research and Education at CLAC, summarized the work and vision of CLAC with four groups: women, youth, aboriginal communities, and the working poor. CLAC seeks justice for women, including equal treatment on worksites and seeking to increase the participation of women working in construction and other trades by working with Women Building Futures (WBF). Amongst youth, CLAC takes careful note of youth unemployment rates across the country. CLAC founded the High School to Hard Hats program, which attempts to increase youth participation in the trades, helping students acquire tools and skills for the trade industry. Aboriginal communities, one of the fastest growing population demographics in Canada, have traditionally higher rates of unemployment than any other demographic. In response to this, CLAC began an Aboriginal Initiatives program in 2005. The mandate of the program is to engage and build long term positive relationships between employers, CLAC and Aboriginal communities; develop Aboriginal awareness training for stewards and members; and develop training to employment programs that meet the needs of signatory employers, and most importantly, the needs of Aboriginal people. Finally CLAC is working to better the circumstances of the working poor who do not make a living wage. By negotiating for better collective agreements for higher wages, and advocating for policy changes to low pay workers, CLAC is attempting to increase the incomes of low income earners.

Session 4.2: Getting to the Roots: Making Public Commitments to End Homelessness and Poverty: Learning from the Edmonton Experience.

At the root of issues of economic justice are homelessness and poverty. In this session, the presenters spoke about how local communities and various levels of government have been working to address, alleviate, and, hopefully one day, eliminate these issues in the Edmonton area.

Bob McKeon, Coordinator of the Office for Social Justice with the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton, spoke about changing approaches to the issues of homelessness and poverty in Edmonton. Edmonton has two public programs: the ten year plan to end homelessness and the Mayor's task force to eliminate poverty. The ultimate goal is to get at the root causes and systemic issues around poverty and homelessness. After decades of working with these issues, he feels that we are seeing an innovative approach to addressing them. In addition, the provincial government has recently adopted similar province wide initiatives, and the federal government is beginning to talk about homelessness and the Housing First approach. These are long term

government plans and are not just theoretical ideas but concrete, multi-sector and broad-based initiatives. The faith community, he argued, has and must continue to play an important role in all of this.

Jay Freeman, Executive Director of the Edmonton Homeless Commission, argued that homelessness and poverty are complex issues; the only way to deal with these complexities is through collaboration. While some think that the problem of homelessness is too big to solve, cities are now moving from management to elimination. We cannot afford *not* to do this; it costs \$4-6 billion annually to manage homelessness, with policing and hospitalization costing an average of \$100,000 per year per individual, while providing supports costs only \$35K per year. Jay shared the good news that five years into the ten-year plan we have made remarkable progress, centred on a “housing first” approach with no preconditions. In the first five years, 2900 have been housed, 80% of those have secured housing in the private rental market, and 84% have remained housed. However, from July 2011 to July 2013, 65,000 more people moved to Edmonton; this means many working homeless people, as vacancy rates are at 0% and rents are increasing. We are failing to deliver permanent supporting housing; approximately 20 percent of the homeless need other supports. Finally, he reminded us that to truly end homelessness, we need to do more aimed at prevention.

Janice Melnychuk, former Edmonton City Councillor and current member of the newly established Mayor’s Taskforce to Eliminate Poverty in Edmonton, spoke about her work within the City of Edmonton and how the approach to poverty has changed in that time. In the last several years, people have realized that responding to poverty requires multi-sectoral leadership, learning and evaluation, knowledge sharing across Canada, and matching dollars from higher levels of government. A number of provinces including Alberta have now developed provincial poverty reduction strategies. We are now moving from managing poverty to solving it, from collaborative to integrative solutions, from being program-focused to person-centred, from individual impact to collective impact, and from worrying about costs to recognizing investments. Janice cited a number of initiatives, including the Edmonton Poverty Elimination Steering Committee, whose vision is that poverty ends in Edmonton within a generation. This will happen by ensuring that Edmontonians and families have income and resources to meet their needs, participate in community life and plan for the future; that every child in Edmonton develops their full potential; that Edmontonians facing multiple barriers experience equitable access to opportunities and supports to thrive and enjoy a better quality of life; and that Edmontonians grow their income and assets, and contribute to Edmonton’s vibrant economy. The new Mayor’s Task Force on Poverty Elimination is another example of an organization boldly going forth with the idea that poverty elimination is good for everyone. Janice invited us all to follow the taskforce’s progress.

Bob concluded the formal presentation by restating the importance of the role of the faith communities. He recognized that these are ambitious goals, but there are people taking these

goals seriously. He finished by challenging us all to come up with a way to become a part of the solution.

Session 4.3: Talking about the Oil Sands: Finding a Way Forward?

A large portion of the Alberta economy is derived from oil sands activity, but this activity also contributes greatly to greenhouse gas emissions in Alberta. This reality means that any discussion of the oilsands in Alberta is usually quite divisive and facts are hotly contested. The aim of this session was to hear from three different voices, a representative of the Mikisew Cree First Nation, an economist, and a political scientist. Together these three voices shared their thoughts on the oilsands themselves, and how we can talk about the oil sands in a way that moves past the heated rhetoric and engages in authentic discussion.

Melody Lepine, Director of Government and Industry Relations for the Mikisew Cree First Nation (MCFN), shared her experiences in dealing with both government and industry, and provided much context for what is going on around Fort McMurray and the Mikisew Cree First Nation. The Mikisew comprise the largest first nation in the region of Wood Buffalo and a large portion of the members still hunt, fish, and trap on the land to provide food for themselves and their families. This traditional way of life, however, is getting more and more difficult as the presence of mines and in situ projects expand at a very quick rate. Melody noted that there are presently 5 mines and 56 in situ projects around the MCFN, resulting in over 5000 square kilometres of land that is being mined. The difficulty then, for the MCFN, is trying to maintain and practice their treaty rights in the presence of so much development. Melody stressed the Duty to Consult, which was awarded to the MCFN through a 2005 court challenge. The duty to consult, however, is only useful for First Nations if government and industry practice this court mandated duty.

Dr. John Hiemstra, Professor of Political Studies at The King's University College, discussed the case of the Northern Gateway Pipeline in Northern British Columbia. Instead of declaring whether he was for or against the project, he couched the discussion in terms of a Christian response to the pipeline. He began by noting that the decision making process is strictly limited to cost-benefit considerations, including quibbling over increasing pipeline thickness by 0.5mm or tiny differences in risk estimates. Questions like 'do we need the pipeline' are rarely asked, because it is assumed that the market mechanism will indicate whether or not the project is needed. Within the joint panel process, then, is the assumption that the world is a clock-like structure with a stable and predictable configuration. Instead of quibbling over these small details, Dr. Hiemstra argued, we should instead ask questions like: do we need the oil? Why do we need the oil? What should be done if the pipeline will be built through non-treaty lands? What are the economic and social costs of the pipeline? What are the social, economic, and environmental costs of the oil sands themselves? How should we develop oil sands in light of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions? Finally, what do we do about the ecological question – our overuse and over-absorption of the earth's natural capital and carrying capacity?

Dr. Gerda Kits, Assistant Professor of Economics at The King's University College, came at the economic discussion of the oil sands in a way that included normative considerations for how we should deal with the oil sands and what the results of development should be. Rather than pursue the goal of economic growth for its own sake, Dr. Kits suggested Herman Daly's three economic goals: efficient allocation, just distribution, and sustainable scale. Referencing keynote speaker Bob Goudzwaard, she emphasized the links between these goals and the concept of stewardship – the conservation care of creation and its fruit bearing potential, avoidance of waste, and a preference for meeting urgent needs first. In assessing efficient allocation, she discussed market failures including externalities and common resources. Evaluating just distribution requires evaluation of the impacts on income distribution and on human rights. Finally, the issue of sustainable scale can be explored through tools such as natural capital accounting, strong sustainability, carbon budgeting, and ecological footprint.