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A Little Shelter from the Storm: COVID-19 and the ‘Atlantic Bubble’

Dylan Mackenzie

Abstract: The “Atlantic Bubble” (hereafter AB) is often conflated with the impressive resistance to COVID-19 outbreaks in Atlantic Canada. My paper discusses the evolution of that resistance as a way of clarifying this distinction. Understood as a political plan, AB features a response to COVID-19 which contrasts with the reaction in much of the rest of Canada. As a result, it has practical implications for future political planning in Canada, especially *vis-à-vis* epidemiological risk assessment. I conclude with a brief survey of the broader questions raised by AB, arguing that there are philosophical assumptions about the nature of community in Atlantic Canada which have been critical in its fight against COVID-19.

Bio: Dylan Mackenzie is an independent scholar with a master’s degree in philosophy from Saint Mary’s University. In addition to social philosophy, he has research interests in aesthetics, moral philosophy, theory of metaphor, environmental philosophy, and philosophy of education. He comes to philosophy from a background studying history.

Keywords: accountability, applied ethics, citizenship, community, COVID-19, economy, pandemic, risk, social and political philosophy

Introduction

Sometimes I think we look to the Atlantic provinces and say, ‘Oh, they’re so small. What they’re doing wouldn’t work in Ontario or Quebec.’ But there are some very large countries doing the same thing. (Irfan Dhalla¹)

The Atlantic Provinces have enjoyed comparatively low COVID-19 case numbers as a fortunate side effect of their relatively small population and isolated geography. Some observers may wonder whether there is something more at work besides population or geography which has contributed to these lower numbers. Anyone who has kept abreast of the news about the Atlantic Provinces since the pandemic began will know that the respective provincial governments have been intimately involved in this phenomenon.² That, in turn, raises the question: is there something to AB which could be of help to the rest of Canada? In order to respond, we must first define the “AB”. To clarify this term, we must also explore the context in which it arose.

AB is a political plan. It is a policy of risk mitigation developed in response to the dangers posed by the current coronavirus pandemic to the safety and well-being of the residents of the Atlantic Provinces and the respective economies of this region. The question of risk in the context of politics has been highlighted by COVID-19, but it is nothing new.³

The way provincial governments approach this risk does not differ from how municipal planners must incorporate risk assessment into their asset management. In each case, they ask what the community can afford to do, proactively, in order to maintain agreed-upon levels of service which the relevant planning body is responsible to provide. Conversely, they must ask what we can afford *not* to do, given the same parameters. In the present case, the areas of interest continue to be health and safety, mental health, and the economy. Though no two provinces have adopted an identical approach, the Maritime Provinces, and later Newfoundland and Labrador, began the fight against COVID-19 with sufficient shared principles in their risk management plans to be able to build an integrated, regional plan. "AB", as it was officially dubbed, became an extension of the Atlantic Provinces' individual pandemic responses, one that Atlantic Canadians could look forward to with hope, both at the time of the early stages of lockdowns and a year later during the middle stages of the vaccine rollouts.

Thus, while those outside AB may easily mistake the phrase for low case numbers in the region, and while there is undoubtedly a geopolitical context which helps to account for them, AB is fundamentally a political plan. I argue below that a central contributing factor to AB is a sense of community in the Atlantic Provinces that may no longer be possible in much of the rest of Canada, or at least in areas with large urban centers. Moreover, if this position regarding Atlantic Canada's fortunate and meritorious strength of community stands, then what AB affords of philosophical and historical interest are the current challenges to community in many areas of

contemporary Canada. Essentially, Atlantic Canadians' shared accountability has provided sufficient temporary reprieve to permit the implementation of AB, thereby allowing the local economies to get back on their feet.

What, then, is the nature of this plan? Also, how was the context in the Atlantic Provinces different from the rest of most of Canada during the early days of the pandemic such that AB could be implemented? To answer these questions, we must review the timeline of the major events connected to COVID-19.

Early Action

In December 2019, reports came out of Wuhan, China about a new SARS-like outbreak.⁴ By the end of February 2020, the third presumed case was discovered in Toronto. At the time, Toronto's mayor, John Tory, insisted that COVID-19 was still a low risk.⁵ Two weeks later, on March 5th, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spoke in a similar vein, reversing the calls for both closing borders and mandating self-isolation of travelers returning from abroad to suggest that the real danger was the alarm raised by these demands, as opposed to the risk to which they sought to bring attention.⁶ Meanwhile, the Maritime Provinces were taking early action. Shortly after the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020, all three Maritime Provinces prohibited unnecessary travel into each respective province, and required those who did enter to quarantine for two weeks.⁷ A little over a month later, Newfoundland & Labrador followed suit, restricting unnecessary travel into the province.⁸ These actions were not mirrored in the other Canadian provinces until later, if at all.

The driving force of these pre-emptive actions was a shared commitment to prevent the virus from taking root in Atlantic Canada *whatsoever*. This is commonly known as a "COVID-

zero” approach.⁹ Electing for this course of action, Prince Edward Island, for example, placed its trust and confidence in its non-partisan chief medical health officer, Heather Morrison, who, in a similar fashion to Bonnie Henry, the chief medical health officer of British Columbia, led a “largely successful” early pandemic response, which left aside the politicking obstructions that had plagued other provinces’ initial pandemic response planning.¹⁰ As has been noted by some observers, Atlantic Canadians are more likely to listen to authority, provided that the words from the authority match ‘common sense’.¹¹ Responses to the early restrictions concerning preventative COVID-19 measures in the region were no exception. Notwithstanding occasional rule-breaking and corresponding flare-ups of the virus, rules regarding limits on public and private gatherings, along with travel and self-isolation, were largely followed. Consequently, the virus never took a firm hold in the Atlantic region in the way that it did in Quebec and Ontario in the early days of the pandemic, much less the way it spread in much of the United States. In other words, community spread was never given a chance, and I will argue that a *quasi*-localized conception of community is in large part responsible for this fact.

Of course, factors such as population and geography must not be downplayed. No less so can the cultural difference between the Atlantic Provinces and early hotspots such as Italy and Spain. On the one hand, a smaller geographical area with few natural access points and a smaller population than many other parts of Canada, render tracking and screening a much easier process. After all, there are no major international airports in the Atlantic Provinces, and in places like Prince Edward Island, most flights were cancelled, while those remaining were required to come directly through Trudeau International Airport in Montreal only.¹²

On the other hand, typical super-spreader events like eating out in crowded spaces in the evening--common in many streets of Italy and Spain--are, with the possible exception of Halifax

and a few streets in some cities in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland, not a major challenge to monitor in the Atlantic region, thanks to both the climate and the culture. That being said, restaurants continued to be hotspots for the virus. Tracking a few tables in restaurants during the stages of lockdowns when they were allowed to operate with socially-distanced dine-in customers, however, stands in stark contrast to tracking innumerable tables in tight spaces along a main thoroughfare in Barcelona, for example, which any number of family, friends, and community members will have visited during the course of a typical day under the same lockdown conditions.

Still, while these geographical and cultural factors benefitted the Atlantic Provinces, there was an accountability among community members to observe the rules, especially those pertaining to self-isolation after travel, which also contributed to the avoidance of major influxes of COVID-19 in the region. This accountability was reinforced by a combination of low population and community involvement. At the very least, without the anonymity offered by larger towns and cities elsewhere, Atlantic Canadians had a tougher time getting away with breaking the rules in the first place.¹³

In fact, many Atlantic Canadians assumed a responsibility, largely unsolicited by the local governments, for assisting with the policing of these very rules. In the town of Souris, Prince Edward Island, where the port for the Magdalen Islands is located, for example, residents and local business owners continually notified the authorities of Quebecers violating pandemic rules to enter local shops (as opposed to using the allowed curbside pickup) on their way to and from the Magdalen Islands ferry.¹⁴ *Ipsa facto*, this trend reinforced a public perception of divergent attitudes towards the pandemic between Atlantic and Central Canadians, in terms of how seriously compliance with rules set out by the province and chief public health office was

taken.¹⁵ Allan MacPhee, a local store owner in Souris, articulated the general sentiment behind this rigorous rule observance: “We don’t want to be the epicenter of COVID coming to our community.”¹⁶ Yet there was a drawback to such unofficial ‘policing’; namely, increasing ‘nosiness,’ which manifested itself in multiple instances on Prince Edward Island as overzealous Islanders behaved aggressively towards deemed rule-breakers from off-island without knowing for certain whether the people in question were in compliance or not.¹⁷ Still, as Dennis King reflects, the mantle of positive responsibility assumed by most Islanders, like many Atlantic Canadians, resulted in “compliance like no other jurisdiction.”¹⁸

Since all Atlantic Provinces had taken similar courses of action in terms of strict and early pandemic-specific rules and guidelines by May 2020, the fight against COVID-19 in this area was made much easier. In turn, with case counts in all four Provinces becoming increasingly stabilized, there was no problem with creating a bubble: a linking together of confirmed safe areas from the virus. Thus, it was that on July 3rd, 2020, AB was brought into being by the combined efforts of the Atlantic Provincial Governments, their chief medical officers of health, and their support staff, allowing the post-travel quarantine rule to be waived locally, though maintaining the 14-day self-isolation rule for any persons entering the bubble from outside Atlantic Canada.¹⁹

Flexibility was, and continues to be, an essential part of AB, however. By late July 2020, concerns arose that the bubble would burst.²⁰ Measures began to be ramped up. On July 24th, 2020, the premier of Nova Scotia at the time, Stephen McNeil, announced mandatory rules for indoor mask wearing in most public spaces for anyone three years of age or older, effective July 31st, 2020.²¹ In August 2020, Newfoundland announced the same provisions. In October, New Brunswick implemented the same measures in response to case surges.²² By November 2020, a

second wave of COVID-19 had hit Atlantic Canada in earnest by standards internal to the region, necessitating Prince Edward Island to instigate its own mandatory mask-wearing policy on November 22th, 2020.²³ In spite of impressive communal efforts to keep the zone COVID-zero, such as the implementation of rapid testing sites for asymptomatic low-risk demographics, the bubble officially burst on November 23rd, 2020, with each of the four provinces more or less reverting back to the pre-bubble rules, albeit with the intention of restoring AB once the situation was under control.²⁴

Notably, it was not all top-down decision-making that drove the return to earlier, stricter rules. Residents of the Atlantic Provinces had experienced an arms-length relationship with the pandemic that was closer to normal everyday life than in much of the rest of a country where, by the same time, long intensive lockdowns to keep intensive care units from being overwhelmed had become normalized. This privilege was far from unnoticed by many within AB. Once the region was at risk again, there was no shortage of community groups willing to abide by stricter rules to return to AB all the faster. For example, one day after AB was closed, the Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia requested that the Provincial Government mandate a temporary ban on in-restaurant (and bar) eating so as to hasten the return to normal operations.²⁵ Nevertheless, although Atlantic Canadians, including the author, eagerly awaited the return of AB for Christmas holidays and visiting family in other Atlantic provinces, recurrent outbreaks of COVID-19, particularly in New Brunswick near the border with Quebec, prevented this from happening.²⁶ Therefore, in keeping with earlier measures, by March 2021, round two of AB was officially announced to open effective April 19th, pending the rollout of more vaccinations.²⁷ Emergent community spread in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, subsequently precluded this, pushing the re-opening of AB to late June 2021. This third wave, as such, was treated no differently by

decision-makers in Atlantic Canada than the previous incursions of the coronavirus into the region. Spheres of physical contact were forced to retreat yet again so as to ensure that tracing, testing, and treatment would remain manageable.²⁸

Regia Atlantica?

Regardless of whether we are speaking about AB, as it is formally known, or the steps that provisionally ensured it and continued to facilitate its second potential instantiation, some commentators object to this entire tack. An analogy may help with understanding the negatives concerning AB that these critics maintain are at issue. Is AB, they ask, simply “Fortress America” (henceforth FA), in miniature?²⁹

According to Mark Kingwell, FA—and the larger “regressive attacks on the idea of Otherness” with which it is allied—is the refusal to allow “people to come inside the magic circle of protection and potential affluence,” as we saw “in Mexico and elsewhere by the depredations of the[n] American president, [Donald Trump,] who demanded that a wall be built and also that someone else pay for it.”³⁰ Alternatively, in the words of Ken Kalfus, the sanctuary of the West

...is heavily guarded; from the outside, it looks more like a fortress, with high-tech, weaponized ramparts. Every day thousands throw themselves at its walls in leaky boats that wash up on the beaches of the Mediterranean, or by trekking through the American desert, or by boarding airplanes with vague dreams and papers that will be contemptuously scrutinized—dreams and papers both.”³¹

Worse still, Kingwell adds, the walls of FA and its kind “are high, and grow higher by the day.”³²

In terms of dealing with COVID-19, if AB is like FA, then does it not bring to attention, *contra* our appraisal of Atlantic Canada’s sense of community, a fault in this very notion, a definitional

contradiction in how AB is departing from the kind of *inclusion* inherent to any viable understanding of the term “community”?

Granted, Atlantic Canada is more multi-cultural now than it ever was, if an increased cultural diversity within the region by itself is an appropriate measure. Accordingly, it is difficult to see how much of the racial prejudices associated with FA could obtain in this analogy. Yet the objection can be made that AB is isolationist in a negative sense. Consider how those with cottages in Atlantic Canada were not allowed to travel to them, even to isolate, during the harshest restrictions.³³ At the best of times, provisions were made for allowing *Canadian* residents from outside Atlantic Canada to apply for coming to AB to, first, isolate and, subsequently, move freely.³⁴ Those without Canadian citizenship were given no such option. It is easy to imagine the frustrations this would have precipitated, especially for those part-time residents who nonetheless are considered members of communities within AB.

If we broaden the scope of our analysis, there is also a much larger feeling of helplessness than can be imagined for those looking to AB from other areas of the globe. We have the luxury in Canada, as in the United States, of extensive testing for the coronavirus, thanks to the strength of our medical health care system. In contrast, large portions of the global struggle with the virus are not as fortunate, largely due to a lack of testing and, in some cases, the infrastructure to manage this kind of process.³⁵ “It is all very well to have stringent anti-outbreak measures in place,” a prospective immigrant in one of these less fortunate parts of the world might say, “but to essentially blockade anyone from outside of Canada from even coming to isolate inside AB by shutting down international flights goes beyond what is humane.” Both in the case of the non-Canadian cottage-owner and the hopeful-immigrant, there is clearly something to this line of complaint with which any neutral observer would likely concur.

For better or worse, there are proscribed limits about AB that bring to mind the historical isolationism of the final period of the Bubonic Plague.³⁶ After all, not everyone has been allowed in, by any means. It is not as if most Atlantic residents do not have friends or family outside AB whom they want to see. Still, one might make the rejoinder that all the complaint really shows is one imperfection, or drawback, of what is otherwise a political plan that has enjoyed almost unrivalled success in Canada during the pandemic. Treatment of non-Canadians notwithstanding, for Canadians wishing to enter AB, the primary requirement was and is simply a precautionary isolation period. Like the communal physical distancing tactics of the Middle Ages in the fight to survive the Bubonic Plague, however, it is a prudential recourse. AB is not, therefore, “fortress Atlantica,” as we might call it. Nor is it a perfect plan. Nevertheless, in good pragmatic (which is also, ironically, American!) fashion, it is something that worked.

Contemporary Challenges to Community

While none of the Atlantic Provinces is in any obvious way a reincarnation of the Greek *polis*/city state, nonetheless, they are collectively characterized by a sense of community. One may rightfully question whether, or to what extent, this does not apply to any town or province in the rest of the country. In response, I would argue that AB has shown that it does not necessarily apply to any town or province in Canada, at least not in several relevant respects.

For example, while far removed from the Greek city-states of antiquity, each Atlantic province has demonstrated through the lead up to AB, and through its execution, a general adherence to the Greek belief, which Aristotle endorsed, concerning how a good economy begins in the home.³⁷ Our individual decisions have a direct impact on the economy--now as much as ever. If we ignore isolation requirements after travelling, we risk transmitting the virus

unwittingly, and therewith the potential for the implementation of a lockdown, laying the groundwork for a major disruption of the economy. Therefore, it is up to individual Canadians to be responsible to adhere to rules set out in these pandemic days for keeping us safe and, in turn, protecting our economy. In this regard, Atlantic Canadians have fared better *per* their sense of citizenship. As one commentator has observed, this is not a new trend: "Atlantic Canadians... have a long-held reputation for rule-following, which helps explain why much of the population is justifiably proud of keeping COVID-19 at bay."³⁸

So what is the secret of AB? One answer may be that it is an inherent communitarianism, to the extent that communitarians "believe that political judgement is a matter of interpreting the traditions and practices we already find ourselves in."³⁹ When calls for early action were issued in Atlantic Canada by provincial action planners at the outset of the pandemic, faith was maintained that these planners and officials were doing what they judged was most likely to counter the growing risk to safety, well-being, and local economies, in a manner consistent with lessons gleaned from experience within the region.

There is "more to Atlantic Canada's success than its 'get-tough-quick' approach," as Michael MacDonald notes.⁴⁰ According to a research project directed by Oxford University, the "COVID-19 Government Response Tracker," leadership is a key difference between Atlantic Canada and several other Canadian provinces.⁴¹ More precisely, non-partisan public health officials, such as Prince Edward Island's Heather Morrison and Nova Scotia's Robert Strang, led the early and successful pandemic responses in Atlantic Canada with a "personable and straightforward communication style" that inspired public trust.⁴² In contrast, partisan premiers introduced public health restrictions in provinces such as Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario, "a strategy that has not been without confusion," MacDonald claims.

Still, there may be a community element in Atlantic Canada that is no longer possible in some other areas of Canada, especially large urban centers which became hotspots for coronavirus outbreaks like Montreal and Toronto. In the Atlantic Provinces, there is less potential for anonymity within one's neighborhood, more geographical bottlenecks for scrutinizing travelers, and plenty of community awareness, all of which helped the region enormously in its fight against COVID-19. As the COVID-zero approach leading up to AB was not mirrored in places such as Ontario and Quebec, it is by no means purely speculative to suggest that the discrepancy between these regions and Atlantic Canada is due to differences in a sense of community. Additionally, much more densely populated areas like Taiwan, Vietnam, and South Korea imposed rules around travel and isolation in the early days of the pandemic, similar to Atlantic Canada, with considerable success.⁴³ At first glance, this would seem to undermine the idea that a localized sense of community is a significant contributor to Atlantic Canada's success. However, by itself this does not preclude the possibility that these other areas also enjoyed some success with a COVID-zero approach thanks, in part, to their own robust sense of community, one which could galvanize around a long-standing practical pandemic response plan, as in Taiwan since soon after the SARS outbreak of 2003.⁴⁴

Ultimately, what may be argued to be diverging senses of community between places like Atlantic Canada and Montreal and Toronto, for example, is a social and cultural condition of our time, a state of affairs, in the latter two cases, that increases risk. Risk, Kingwell insists, is rapidly compounded when "natural forces" meet certain "social and cultural conditions."⁴⁵ Because we have seen that what made AB possible was a communal resilience to the kinds of mistakes that would allow a single super-spreader event to ramp up COVID-19 case counts in Atlantic Canada to the point of essentially running amok, this discrepancy in senses of

community between regions is indeed a social and cultural condition which undermines the capacity of some regions to respond to natural forces such as pandemics. Accordingly, no less than heeding the lessons of Atlantic Canada's swift and decisive COVID-19 response, future epidemiological planning ought to consider the benefits of a revival of community in more densely populated regions of Canada, either politically or by some form of grassroots movement/s.

A further such condition that helped bring this discrepancy into focus was a general lack of pre-emptive planning for the pandemic here in Canada and abroad--particularly in the United States.⁴⁶ Upon this "do nothing" tableau *per* up-front planning for the virus, the "flatten the curve" strategy was employed in both Canada and the U.S., like in many countries, as a *post-hoc* reaction, exacerbating economic impact to various sectors.⁴⁷ In turn, this strategy was impeded by confusion and disagreement, such as that caused by former U.S. president Donald Trump. Summing up this point, Friedman wryly observes:

...like Trump wakes up every morning and asks himself: what health expert's advice can I defy today? What simple gesture to reduce the odds that the coronavirus continues to surge, post-lockdowns, can I ignore today? What quack remedy can I promote today?"⁴⁸

These kinds of antics proved a twofold blow to the fight against COVID-19. On the one hand, they undermined health measures such as social distancing. On the other, they redirected blame and incited hate. Whence, the "covidiot" persisted on the beaches and at rallies protesting public health measures, even to the point of gunfights ensuing over whether or not masks should be worn.⁴⁹ "Conspiracism" too was a toxic element promulgated by Trump, along with being a frequent factor in how these protestors understood the origin of the pandemic.⁵⁰ Needless to say, most agree that "Hanlon's razor"—the idea that it is more likely that stupidity is the driving force of the virus than "centralized malice" in the form of a foreign body or global cabal—trumps

Trump's conspiracism.⁵¹ Ironically and sadly, the anti-mask figures in viral videos, whose antics former President Trump reinforced, are overwhelmingly white suburban. As Gessen observes, they "expect to be served and assume they are safe, both from the virus and from facing any consequences for flouting the rules or physically harming others."⁵² Gessen proceeds to articulate the basic underlying problem, one which echoes our speculation in relation to the benefits of a robust sense of community in Atlantic Canada: "For a sense of common cause to appear, there has to be a sense of *us*: a community that is facing a threat and mounting a response. But we have vastly different experiences of the pandemic and vastly different expectations of the government."⁵³

Conclusion

I have argued that AB--properly understood as a political plan--presupposes a common understanding of community membership and concomitant collective responsibility within the Atlantic region. This has been central to its success, both in allowing AB to come into existence during the pandemic and in working towards AB restored feasibility. Regardless of the degree to which this understanding is passively inherited or actively deliberated, it is clear from the relative success of the region in response to the pandemic that other areas of the country should take appropriate heed in their future epidemiological risk assessment planning.

The question remains, though, as to whether the same level of community effort could obtain in more densely populated areas, where anonymity is easily secured and natural geographical borders are limited. Taken together, they make COVID-19 tracing more difficult and make it harder to hold individual persons to account for their level of pandemic-specific rule adherence. Nevertheless, if we suppose that the different senses of community found in areas like

Atlantic Canada and large urban areas of southern Central Canada, for instance, have more to do with an implied limited communitarianism, there may be more hope for a revival of notions of community in these areas than I had initially presupposed above. AB came about by Atlantic Canadians assuming, on the one hand, that their local leaders' strategy with regards to the pandemic reflected the kind of practical wisdom required to protect them while maintaining their tradition and ways of life as best as possible. On the other hand, it resulted from Atlantic Canadians accepting responsibility to do their part. Therefore, in effect, Atlantic Canadians have demonstrated that negative liberty to be free *from* things is not enough; we need not only to have a positive liberty to be free *to do* things, but to do those actual things which involve the kinds of collective responsibility for which citizens are accountable in any time or circumstance.

Simply put, Atlantic Canadians have gone beyond a "moral individualism" in which one is free of obligations that one has not voluntarily incurred. If this is the case, then an option for addressing the redevelopment of a robust notion of community in certain areas of Canada would be to start with attention to the need to go beyond mere moral individualism. A theoretical shift might thereby complement the practical shift towards a revitalized sense of community in these other areas, thus minimizing the risk associated with failure to act early, decisively, and cohesively in the face of a potential pandemic.⁵⁴

Notes

¹ “The ‘Atlantic bubble’ has held off COVID-19, but is it worth the cost to civil liberties?”

² Cf. “P.E.I. Premier Dennis King provides an update on the fight against COVID-19;” “COVID-19 on Prince Edward Island, one year in;” “P.E.I.’s Chief PHO urges Islanders not to travel for holidays;” “As Ontario seeks help in its COVID struggle, P.E.I. considers stricter border measures.”

³ *On Risk*, p.17

⁴ “The complacent country: How Canadian public health allowed itself to be steamrolled by COVID-19.”

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, and “The ‘Atlantic bubble’ has held off COVID-19.”

⁸ “The ‘Atlantic bubble’ has held off COVID-19.”

⁹ “COVID-Zero: Why Atlantic Canada excels at slowing the spread of COVID-19.”

¹⁰ Both of these public health leaders have been commended for how their honest communication styles invited public trust (*ibid.*).

¹¹ “14 days of solitude: The lonely success of the ‘Atlantic bubble’.”

¹² “The Atlantic bubble was not only a good idea, but a blueprint for dramatic change.”

¹³ “Community buy-in critical to Nova Scotia’s ‘magnificent’ handling of pandemic.” Cf. “Year One: The untold story of the pandemic in Canada: A comprehensive report on the country’s mishandling of the crisis of the century,” chapter two, “Canada’s strongest bubble”: “The Atlantic provinces had restricted interprovincial travel starting in March, requiring most travellers entering the region to spend 14 days self-isolating, and discouraging internal travel during outbreaks. (‘Stay the blazes home,’ in the words of Stephen McNeil, then Nova Scotia’s premier.) But after a two-week quarantine in a seaside cottage, I was delighted to roam freely in a jurisdiction *where everyone wore masks without complaint in the supermarket although there was virtually no infection*—two active cases in the middle of July. It felt like a place apart, a land without COVID. Restaurants and bars were full. Real estate agents were overwhelmed with business from Upper Canadians seeking a seaside escape” (emphasis added).

¹⁴ “Quebec residents reportedly breaking pandemic rules in Souris, says mayor.”

¹⁵ “Souris store owner dealing with out of province people in his store ‘almost daily’.”

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ See “Year One,” chapter two: “The dark side, if you could call it that, was a certain nosiness which arose—part of the social cohesion that kept the region safe.” After all, not many Canadians enjoy “being quizzed by a self-appointed health inspector.”

¹⁸ “P.E.I. to make masks mandatory in indoor public places.”

¹⁹ The ‘Atlantic bubble’ has held off COVID-19.”

²⁰ “14 Days of Solitude.”

²¹ “Province Announces Mandatory Masks in Indoor Public Places.”

²² “Mandatory masks in N.L.: Here’s when you’ll need them, and when you won’t.”, and “Additional information regarding mandatory masks in New Brunswick and some retail closures as result of move to Orange Level.”

²³ “Masks to become mandatory in Prince Edward Island”; and “P.E.I. to make masks mandatory in indoor public places.”

²⁴ “Community buy-in critical.”

²⁵ “Community buy-in critical.”

²⁶ See “COVID-19 roundup: 1 new case in N.B. as Edmunston enters orange recovery phase.”

²⁷ “Atlantic bubble 2.0 expected to begin by April 19, premiers say.”

²⁸ See “Reopening of Atlantic bubble delayed until May 3.”

²⁹ *On Risk*, pp. 18-9

³⁰ *On Risk*, p.18.

³¹ *Coup de Foudre*, requoted in *On Risk* p. 19

³² *On Risk*, p.19.

³³ See “Seasonal residents could arrive on P.E.I. starting June 15.”

³⁴ See “Canadians driving through N.B. to summer homes in P.E.I. to face heavy screening.”

³⁵ *On Risk*, p.24.

³⁶ Quarantines in the form of legislated periods of self-isolation post-travel were used to counter the bubonic plague in Italy *circa* 1348-49, just as they are used to combat the coronavirus in Atlantic Canada nowadays (“Social Distancing and Quarantine Were Used in Medieval Times to Fight the Black Death”). While there are further similarities--e.g., town-dwellers fleeing to the country, and country-dwellers often fleeing from each other--the current isolationism leading up to and following AB differs, for the most part, from the Middle Ages response of fleeing one’s job to seek isolation, largely thanks to the contemporary functionality of the Internet and the related ability for many Canadians to work remotely (cf. *Western Civilizations*, p. 360).

³⁷ *Politics*

³⁸ *On Risk* p. 24.

³⁹ *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, p. 2.

⁴⁰ “COVID-Zero.”

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ The communal effort to stave off any potential infiltrations of the coronavirus in Taiwan involved significant coordination and buy-in of governments on all levels, along with private institutions, which parallels the buildup to AB in Canada during the early days of the pandemic (“The Secret to Taiwan’s Successful COVID Response”). However, because these plans were already in place, at least much more so than in Atlantic Canada, it could be argued that for Atlantic Canadians to rally around the harsh pandemic restrictions of the early days of lockdowns took a larger degree of community buy-in.

⁴⁵ *On Risk*, p.9.

⁴⁶ *On Risk*, p.14.

⁴⁷ *On Risk*, p.15.

⁴⁸ Quoted in *On Risk*, pp. 21-2, footnote.

⁴⁹ *On Risk*, pp.24-5.

⁵⁰ *On Risk*, pp.25-6.

⁵¹ *On Risk*, pp. 26-7.

⁵² Quoted in *On Risk*, pp. 35-6.

⁵³ Quoted in *On Risk*, p. 35.

⁵⁴ Sandel, *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?*, p. 213.

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