PLENTY OF LAND BUT NOT ENOUGH HOUSES

Discursively Constructing a Public Land Regime in British Columbia’s First Socialist Legislature (1972–75)

Mikayla Marazzi

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“At particular historical moments, certain discourses can seem natural and be relatively uncontested…but the naturalised discourses are never definitively established, and their moments can again become elements and thus objects for new articulations.”[1]

- Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips

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[1] Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (SAGE Publications Ltd, 2002), 47.

Abstract

Despite its vast territory, Canada has plenty of land but not enough houses for its growing population. Housing supply shortages have once again risen to the level of ‘crisis’, particularly in the province of British Columbia. While most OECD and G7 peer countries have larger private land markets, Canada's publicly owned land accounts for approximately 89 percent of total national land mass and 95 percent of the British Columbia (BC) province. Once remote, mountainous, or otherwise undevelopable terrain is excluded, only a small fraction of land remains available to the private housing market. Applying a critical discourse analysis perspective and discourse historical approach, this thesis takes Canada’s public land regime as a social practice produced and reproduced through discursive practices. These practices construct public land as a collectively stewarded resource essential to the government’s ability to respond to the housing shortages. Over time, these practices have been normalized through party platforms, media coverage, legislative debates, and institutional housing policies. This thesis demonstrates how these discursive practices serve Canada’s public land regime and in turn, enact unequal power relations between the government and its populace.

This thesis attributes the origin of these discursive practices to the first socialist government in British Columbia, the New Democratic Party, which came to power at a past iteration of housing supply crises in the 1970s and applied their socialist ideologies to the province’s agricultural and residential land markets. Through a close textual analysis of legislative debate transcripts from the 1972–75 BC Legislature, this thesis demonstrates how land became conceived of as inherited, limited, belonging to future generations, threatened by private ownership, and ultimately, essential to the province’s housing intervention. This thesis contributes a deeper understanding of the structural practices underlying the constricted land supply in Canada and BC’s housing market, demonstrating how they were constructed rather than inevitable. In the context of the contemporary housing supply crisis, this distinction this matters: if our contemporary conception of Canada and BC’s land regime was constructed, it can also be reconsidered and reconfigured in a way that brings more housing to Canada.

Keywords: discourse historical approach, critical discourse analysis, housing-land relations, public land, public ownership, private ownership, socialism, liberalism, common-sense, hegemony

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Abbreviations and Actors

Abbreviations:

BC-NDP – British Columbia New Democratic Party
SOCRED – Social Credit Pary
NDP – New Democratic Party
UBC – University of British Columbia
CMHC – Canadian Mortgage and Housing Federation
CCF – Cooperative Commonwealth Federation
CPC – Communist Party of Canada
SPC – Socialist Party of Canada
PRHC – Provincial Rental Housing Corporation
NHA – National Housing Act

Political Actors:

BC New Democratic Party Members

Mr. Dave Barrett – Premier, 1972–75
Mr. David Stupich – Agricultural Minister
Mr. Lorne Nicolson – Housing Minister
Ms. P.F. Young – Legislative Member
Mr. Nunweiler – Legislative Member
Mrs. Daisy Webster – Legislative Member
Ms. Rosemary Brown – Legislative Member
Mr. Steves – Legislative Member
Mr. Oswald – Legislative Member
Mr. Gorst – Legislative Member
Mr. Cummings – Legislative Member
Ms. Sanford – Legislative Member
Mr. G.H. Anderson – Legislative Member
Mr. Linden – Legislative Member

Opposition Members

Mr. W.A.C. Bennet – Social Credit Party, Premier, 1952 to 1972
Mr. Wallace – Progressive Conservative Party, Legislative Member
Mr. Hugh Austin Curtis – Progressive Conservative Party, Legislative Member
Mrs. Jordan – Social Credit Party, Legislative Member
Mr. Donald Phillips – Social Credit Party, Legislative Member
Mr. McGreer – Liberal Party, Legislative Member

CHAPTER ONE:
Land and Housing Struggles in Canada

Chapter One situates Canada's contemporary housing challenges within broader ideological struggles over utilizing public land for housing policy. After framing the direction of the thesis, it provides an overview of the housing crisis in Canada, with particular attention to British Columbia. The chapter then discusses the emergence of British Columbia's first socialist government—the New Democratic Party—and its interventionist housing approach that provoked intense ideological conflict in the 1970s provincial legislature. After outlining my methodological approach and research question, the chapter puts these ideological conflicts in the wider landscape of Canadian housing policy at this time, a period of housing history that many historians interpret as the peak of state investment in housing and a reference point for addressing contemporary housing crises. These historical accounts are then placed in dialogue with the discourses of contemporary housing scholarship and the political actors in Canada's most recent federal election. Upon this analysis, the chapter links contemporary housing discourses to broader ideological struggles over land use, demonstrating how Canada's current housing crisis is increasingly framed through the problematization of "locked up" land and the promotion of "unlocking" land as a solution. By returning to British Columbia in the 1970s, when socialist and liberalist conceptions of utilizing public land for housing sharply clashed, this opening chapter demonstrates how these earlier debates helped shape emerging ideas about the superiority of state land ownership—a legacy that continues to shape housing policy and discourse in Canada's housing crisis today.

1.1 Framing the Thesis

Section 1.2 offers a high-level overview of the thesis, giving a framework for the chapters ahead.

When a state owns nearly all its land and its residents can only access this land through long-term leases or nonmarket housing, the power amassed by the state is significant. In the province of British Columbia in Canada (henceforth "BC"), the federal and provincial governments own 95 percent of the province's total land mass, leaving only 5 percent of it to private land markets. This thesis refers to this land system—in which the majority is held within the domain, authority, and jurisdiction of the Crown—as 'BC's Crown land regime'. Most importantly, this thesis posits that one does not need to be an economist to work from the premise that less land available in BC's housing market equals a constrained land supply, leading to higher land costs and therefore higher housing costs. When public land is treated as an 'untouchable' collective resource, this puts strain on the land supply in the housing market, thereby constraining the province's housing supply.

This thesis began with the broad topic of Canada's contemporary housing crises and its connection to its public land regime, and arrived at the discursive practices that serve this land regime, focusing particularly on the province of BC. This topic arose from my personal background as a born and raised Canadian from BC and consequently, a witness to the skyrocketing housing costs and the steady rise of homelessness on the streets, and my professional background in the nonprofit affordable housing industry, working for almost a decade as a developer of federally and state funded nonmarket housing projects in the American Midwest.

The link between discursive practices and BC's housing crisis is the ultimate contribution of this research. When the province's first socialist government came to power in 1972, they intervened boldly in the province's agricultural and housing land markets and helped produce and reproduce BC's Crown land regime. They brought their socialist ideologies into the legislature and collided with the liberalist discourses that had dominated the province for decades. They spoke in familiar ways about the threat of private land ownership, while also gaining a platform for newer, less familiar ways of speaking about public land in the province, such as public land ownership being an essential asset to addressing the province's housing crisis.

Applying a critical discourse perspective through the discourse historical approach, this thesis conceptualizes BC's Crown land regime as a social practice that enacts uneven power relations between the province and its residents. It applies to the three-dimensional model popularized by Norman Fairclough: seeing BC's public land regime as a social practice, the discursive practices of legislative members as constituting that social practice, and the land and housing discourses in the first socialist-dominant legislature as constituting those discursive practices.[2] Altogether these three dimensions contribute to a shared provincial identity around collective land stewardship and a sense of normalcy surrounding the province's public land-dominant system.

This thesis argues that the discursive practices of the first socialist government helped stabilize and normalize this land regime—through constructing land as a collective resource and normalizing social ownership as the 'common sense' approach to using land for housing development. The rise of the first socialist government in BC, the British Columbia New Democratic Party, can be understood as a 'hegemonic intervention', in which socialist ideologies translated into housing policy interventions that were legitimized through discursive practices in the legislature—all of which contributed to the sort of consent-building and common sense-establishing that Antonio Gramsci referred to in his theory of hegemony.[3] Moreover, when looking at the discourses of BC's current political landscape, it becomes clear that these discursive practices of BC-NDP in 1972–75 have been enveloped into the province's identity and its approach to using public land for housing in the present day. This thesis adds another layer of understanding to existing housing scholarship about the structural practices underlying the constricted land supply in BC's housing market and how they were constructed rather than inevitable. In the context of BC's contemporary housing crises this matters—because if it is constructed, it can also be reconstructed.

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[2] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 65.

1.2 Housing Chaos in Canada

Section 1.2 provides an overview of the housing affordability and supply challenges in contemporary Canada and specifically, BC as another iteration of housing crises.

At the quarter of the twenty-first century, here is a snapshot of the Canadian housing market: The rental vacancy rate is at a historical low of 1.5 percent nationwide. Eleven percent of the population are in core housing need, meaning they spend over thirty percent of their income on housing.[4] 3.5 million additional housing units are needed over the next five years to restore affordability.[5] Less than half of emerging 1.9 million Canadian households will be able to own a home.[6] "An entire generation has been locked out of home ownership," describes one of the leading authorities on housing issues in Canada, urban planner Carolyn Whitzman.[7]

The largest housing supply gaps are concentrated in Ontario and my home province, BC.[8] "BC is drowning in people but starving for homes" is the title of an opinion piece from *Business in Vancouver* media outlet.[9] The influx of foreign investment and rapid population growth have collided into a reality where demand has extraordinarily outpaced supply. Housing experts estimate that there is shortfall of 450,000 to 570,000 units in the province.[10,11] BC is the fastest growing province in Canada and is expected to add another one million residents by 2030.[12] The trends in unaffordability are forcing residents to turn towards other markets, such as BC's next-door neighbor Alberta, where the average home costs 55 percent less than in BC.[13] In 2023, BC's interprovincial migration was negative for the first time since 2012; the province lost 8,000 residents to other Canadian provinces.[14]

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[3] Antonio Gramsci, "Hegemony, Intellectuals, and the State," in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, Third Edition (Pearson Education Limited, 2006), 85.

[4] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *OECD Economic Surveys: Canada 2025* (OECD Publishing, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1787/28f9e02c-en.

[5] Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, "Estimating How Much Housing We'll Need by 2030," *CMHC* (blog), September 13, 2023, https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/observer/2023/estimating-how-much-housing-we-need-by-2030.

[6] Royal Bank of Canada, *Housing Report 2024* (RBC Thought Leadership, 2024), https://thoughtleadership.rbc.com/wpcontent/uploads/Housing_Report_en_2024.pdf.

[7] Carolyn Whitzman, *Home Truths: Fixing Canada's Housing Crisis* (University of British Columbia Press, 2024), 3.

[8] CMHC, "Estimating How Much Housing We'll Need by 2030."

[9] Tegan Hill and Austin Thompson, "Opinion: B.C. Is Drowning in People but Starving for Homes," *Business in Vancouver*, May 21, 2025, www.biv.com/news/opinion-bc-is-drowning-in-people-but-starving-for-homes-10689900.

The hottest markets are Canada's metropolises: Vancouver is at the epicenter of the housing crisis, and my hometown, Abbotsford, absorbs the aftershocks. A 2024 report ranks Vancouver as the third most expensive housing market in the English-speaking world, just after Hong Kong and Sydney, and the metropolis has held onto this ranking for the last sixteen years.[15] Housing prices increased 105 percent between 2013 to 2023, and in 2025, the average cost of a house is $1,266,441.[16,17] High-income households earning *250 percent* of local median income are unable to afford their first homes.[18]

The City of Abbotsford, located about forty-five miles east of Vancouver, is a prime "spillover market."[19] Abbotsford is the fifth most populace city in BC and the centre of the Fraser Valley region. Municipalities in the Fraser Valley have typically enjoyed a more affordable housing market, but the ongoing shortages in Metro Vancouver have put pressure on the region. Many young individuals and families see Abbotsford as an "attractive alternative" to the unaffordability of

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[10] British Columbia Real Estate Association, *How Soon* Is *Now? The Future of Affordability* (Urban Development Institute, 2024), https://udi.org/pdfs/blog/BCREA-Outlook-How-Soon-is-Now-UDI-Okanagan.pdf.

[11] Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, "Canada's Housing Supply Shortage: Restoring Affordability by 2030," CMHC (blog), June 23, 2022, https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/observer/2022/canadas-housing-supply-shortage-restoring-affordability-2030.

[12] Pegasus Mortgage Lending Center Inc, *BC Housing Affordability Crisis: Government Policies Impacting Housing Supply and Affordability* (2024), https://pegasuslending.com/blog/housing-affordability-crisis/.

[13] Wowa Leads Inc., "Canadian Housing Market Report," data from Canadian Real Estate Association, updated February 19, 2026, https://wowa.ca/reports/canada-housing-market.

[14] Angus Reid Institute, *Is BC the Place to Be? Amid Affordability Woes, One-in-Three Residents 'Seriously' Consider Leaving the Province* (2024), https://angusreid.org/bc-investment-migration-housing/.

[15] Wendell Cox, *Demographia International Housing Affordability: 2024 Edition* (Chapman University, 2024), 10, http://www.demographia.com/dhi.pdf.

[16] Pegasus Mortgage Lending Center Inc, *BC Housing Affordability Crisis.*

[17] Wowa Leads Inc., "Canadian Housing Market Report."

[18] Whitzman, *Home Truths*, 4, emphasis added.

[19] Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, *Housing Market Insight: Vancouver CMA* (Government of Canada Publications, 2017), https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/schl-cmhc/nh12-278/NH12-278-2017-5-eng.pdf.

Vancouver.[20] The city's 2024 *Interim Housing Needs Report* reveals an increase of 34 percent in the average rental cost from 2015 to 2019 and an overall vacancy rate of 1.5 percent. [21]

Vancouver and Abbotsford both showcase some of the worst horrors of the housing affordability crisis: high levels of homelessness visible on their streets. In Vancouver, Hastings Street runs east of the city into the downtown core, with several blocks occupied by homeless individuals, their encampments, and open drug use. In Abbotsford, the homeless encampment moves around—in my childhood, it occupied a narrow strip by the railroad, in recent years it has manifested as a protest occupation of the parking lot by city hall. Since 2018, the BC government has funded *Point-in-Time Homeless Counts* across all major municipalities. A 2023 report summarized this data to show a total 11,352 individuals experience homelessness in BC (4,821 in Vancouver and 1,094 in the Fraser Valley), a 31 percent increase from the 2020/2021 Report.[22,23]

The home is the foundation of our lives, and it is little wonder why this topic is top of mind for the Canadian electorate. The twenty-first century has brought high levels of immigration, the acceleration of climate-change events, and the flood of opiate dependency disorders—all factors that have put extreme pressure on the housing system. Despite adjectives like "unprecedented" appearing in Canadian media and research institutions, affordability and supply housing challenges are not new.[24] At the opening of her 2024 book *Home Truths: Fixing Canada's Housing Crisis*, Whitzman beckoned us towards the lessons of Canada's housing history:

> "Like the climate crisis, the housing crisis resulted from a series of political decisions that built up over time to pose a critical threat to all Canadian. Other capitalist countries made better decisions, with better results. Canda made better decisions in the past. In some cases, we need to return to those good ideas—modified for new realities."[25]

The crisis rhetoric around housing has indeed circulated Canadian politics for nearly a century, and if we go back several decades, we find a country facing strangely similar housing challenges. These are good reasons to take a closer look at the past. In this thesis, I return to the twentieth century to explore how the first socialist government in BC, the BC New Democratic Party of 1972–75, faced the province's housing crises head-on with bold, interventionist strategies—creating a frenzy of ideological discourses in the provincial legislature on nature of utilizing public land for housing.

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[20] GP Rollo and Associates, *Abbotsford City Centre and Historic Downtown Commercial Market Study* (City of Abbotsford, 2017), https://www.abbotsford.ca/sites/default/files/2021-02/HDNP%20Commercial%20Market%20Study.pdf.

[21] City of Abbotsford, *2024 Interim Housing Needs Report* (2024), 14, https://www.abbotsford.ca/sites/default/files/2024-11/2024%20Interim%20Housing%20Needs%20Report.pdf.

[22] Homelessness Services Association of BC, *2023 Report on Homeless Counts in B.C.* (BC Housing, 2024), 21-22, https://www.bchousing.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2023-BC-Homeless-Counts.pdf.

[23] Homelessness Services Association of BC, *2023 Report on Homeless Counts in B.C.*, 49.

[24] Clarence Decatur Howe Institute, "Housing Policy for a Growing Canada," C.D. Howe Institute (blog), February 4, 2025, 4, https://cdhowe.org/publication/housing-policy-for-a-growing-canada/.

[25] Whitzman, *Home Truths*, 3.

1.3 Approaching the Chaos

Section 1.3 introduces the methodological approach and research question that guided my analysis of the ideological conflicts over land use and housing policy in the BC legislature of 1972–75.

The first socialist government was elected in BC in August 1972: the British Columbia New Democratic Party (henceforth "BC-NDP"). Achieving a historic victory by not only winning but procuring a majority government, the BC-NDP applied their socialist ideologies to the province's housing challenges. The BC-NDP government inherited the housing affordability and supply issues that had accumulated over the early twentieth century—similar, in many ways, to the issues the province faces today—and they responded with increased provincial spending on housing, novel regulations on agricultural land, investments in social housing development, and even the creation of a brand-new provincial housing department. These interventionist strategies sparked intense and lively debates on public land in the BC legislature.

This thesis thus explores these core ideological struggles between socialist and liberalist assumptions about utilizing public land for housing and their direct influence on housing policy outcomes. As the BC-NDP is back in the seat of power, having won the provincial mandate in 2017, 2020, and again in 2024, the ideological struggles of the 1970s are relevant to the province's contemporary housing crisis. In fact, a 1985 master's thesis from Simon Fraser University by Beverly Greive argued that "the changing underlying philosophies of the governments…has affected the government's ability to deal with housing problems."[26] Greive's analysis of BC's provincial housing policy found that the warring ideologies, or 'philosophies', of different political administrations weakened the province's capacity to deal with its housing challenges, and this thesis takes Greive's findings as a 'flashlight', shining its light rays on a piece of housing history that demands deeper investigation.

1.2.1 Methodological Approach

The discourse historical approach (henceforth "DHA"), developed by Ruth Wodak and colleagues in the 1990s, draws from the theoretical and methodological toolkit of critical discourse analysis and history to provide an interdisciplinary, problem-oriented approach to analysing discursive practices over time. In this thesis, I apply the DHA to ideological struggles over utilizing public land for housing in the BC Legislature during 1972 and 1975. As such, this thesis contributes a historically situated example of how 'the changing underlying philosophies', referred to by Greive, impact a state's capacity to respond effectively to housing crises.

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[26] Beverly Grieve, "Continuity and Change: Provincial Housing Policy in British Columbia 1945–1985," (master's thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1985), 2.

The DHA was born out of the Vienna School of Discourse Analysis and *not* the Department of History, such that its roots are in linguistics, social theory, philosophy, and critical social research—not the discipline of history. Lest the addition of the historical term mislead the reader, the DHA belongs to the field of critical discourse studies. As proof, the "the discourse historical approach" is the second chapter of Sage's *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies* 3rd edition, where Wodak and Reisigl describe the DHA as "interdisciplinary research with a special focus on historical imbedding."[27] The DHA 'borrows' from the discipline of history by incorporating a wide dataset of primary source materials to triangulate understandings of past events, but it 'belongs' to CDA. By firmly rooting itself in CDA's notions of critique, non-neutrality, and post-structuralism, I seek to avoid "the combination of theoretically incompatible approaches" that Wodak and Reisigl warn against.[28] This characteristic of belonging-to CDA while borrowing-from history is absolutely essential to understanding the nature of the DHA's interdisciplinarity.

Overall, the DHA provides an analytical toolkit well-equipped to analyze public land and housing discourses in the BC legislature and how they construct a 'common-sense' approach about how the province's public land should be used for housing. The contribution of this thesis then is two-fold: First, it demonstrates how legislative members belonging to the BC-NDP produce and reproduce socialist ideologies about land and housing, and second, how such discourses contribute to a shared conception of 'common-sense' in the province's approach to utilizing public land for housing. In the end, this thesis offers an additional layer of context and understanding to the intergovernmental dynamics impacting BC and ultimately, Canada's contemporary housing crises.

1.2.2 Research Question

The research question guiding this thesis is as follows:
How do discursive struggles in the provincial legislature of BC's first socialist government (1972–75) construct a 'common sense' approach to utilizing public land for housing?
The supplementary research questions are:
What policies related to public land and housing were implemented during 1972–75?
What discursive struggles emerged during legislative debates on these policies?

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[27] Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl, "The Discourse Historical Approach," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, (Sage Publishing Ltd, 2016), 31.

[28] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse Historical Approach," 57.

What ideologies were revealed through these discursive struggles?
What role do these ideologies play in constructing a conception of 'common sense' towards the province's use of public land for housing?

1.2.2 Thesis Outline

Chapter One demonstrates the research problem by situating BC within broader national housing crises and outlining the province's acute affordability and supply challenges. Importantly, this chapter highlights a defining structural condition: BC's extraordinarily high rate of public land ownership and ways in which this reality both shapes and constrains the province's residential land market. Even amid intensifying housing demand pressures, the province maintains firm institutional control over its public land—what I term "BC's Crown land regime." **Chapter Two** describes the methodological approach taken in this thesis, rationalizing my selection of the DHA and showing how an iterative research process led me to focusing on the discursive events surrounding the 1972–75 BC-NDP. This chapter clarifies the research design, data selection, and analytical framework, while describing the research process chronologically.

Chapter Three establishes the theoretical foundation of the thesis, demonstrating how understanding language as shaping social relations, reproducing power dynamics, and embedding ideologies in material forms provides the conceptual framework necessary to analyze the relationship between political discourses and housing policy. **Chapter Four** features the analysis of the discursive events of the 1972–75 BC Legislature, beginning with the relevant political, historical, and cultural context-building; then identifying the practices of discourses and their argument strategies performed by BC-NDP members in advancement of their policy interventions; and finally, showing how the success of their policy interventions helped to normalize constructing public land as collectively-stewarded resource. **Chapter Five** concludes the thesis by synthesizing its findings and providing concluding remarks on contemporary relevance, reflecting on why understanding the discursive thread of first BC-NDP government to the current BC-NDP government is relevant to the province's contemporary housing crisis.

1.4 Housing Chaos in 1970s Canada

Section 1.4 places the BC-NDP of 1972–75 in the broader landscape of Canada's housing crises in the 1970s, highlighting the social housing investments led by the federal government at this time and how housing scholars have characterized this period of housing policy history as a "better time."

Despite provinces having the constitutional authority for housing since the 1867 Constitution Act (via the legal jurisdiction over land tenure, property, and civil rights recognized in Section 92), Canada's provincial governments lacked the financial capacity, the public mandate, and legislative framework to operate a coherent provincial housing program in the earliest decades of sovereign Canada.[29,30] Therefore, housing policy initially evolved from the federal government. Economic and global events of the twentieth century prompted federal authorities to intervene in new ways and consequently lay the groundwork for more coordinated housing strategies in the decades to come.

Housing scholars generally date the beginning of Canadian housing policy to the 1930s. The Great Depression brought a deterioration in the conditions of the housing market: household incomes dropped dramatically, forcing relocation and 'doubling up'; as result, vacancy rates rose, mortgage defaults increased, and residential construction rates fell.[31] Pressured by local civic groups and housing industry organizations, Canada launched its first official piece of federal housing legislation, the Dominion Housing Act (1935).[32] This bill provided $20 million in federal loans to help stimulate housing construction, resulting in a total of 4,900 new units.[33] Three years later, it was replaced by the National Housing Act (1938) or NHA, which expanded federal loans to include slum clearance and home modernization as well as construction financing for low-income housing.[34] In 1944, the federal government released the now well-known 'Curtis Report', which analyzed Canada's post-war housing period and estimated a shortfall of 300,000 housing units in Canada.[35,36]

The aftermath of the Second World War created a surge in housing demand: urban areas already had increased populations from the men and women that relocated for work in defense-oriented industries and the return of veterans led to rapid family formation.[37] In response, the federal government intervened at a considerable scale by creating the "Crown corporation," Wartime

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[29] Constitution Act, 1867 (UK), 30 & 31 Vict, c. 3, s. 92(13), https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/section-92.html.

[30] David Hulchanski, "What Factors Shape Canadian Housing Policy? The Intergovernmental Role in Canada's Housing System," in *Municipal-Federal-Provincial Relations in Canada,* ed. Robert Young and Christian Leuprecht, (Queen's University, 2004), 229, https://www.queensu.ca/iigr/sites/iirwww/files/uploaded_files/StateFed04.pdf.

[31] David Hulchanski, "The 1935 Dominion Housing Act: Setting the Stage for a Permanent Federal Presence in Canada's Housing Sector," *Urban History Review* 15, no. 1 (1986): 21, https://doi.org/10.7202/1018891ar.

[32] Hulchanski, "The 1935 Dominion Housing Act," 22.

[33] Patricia Begin, *Housing and Parliamentary Action* (Parliamentary Research Branch, 1999), https://publications.gc.ca/CollectionR/LoPBdP/modules/prb99-1-homelessness/housing-e.htm.

[34] Hulchanski, "The 1935 Dominion Housing Act," 35.

[35] The Curtis Report is formally known as 1944 report of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Planning of the federal government's Advisory Committee on Reconstruction.

[36] David Gordon, "The Curtis Report as a Critical Juncture in Canadian Urbanism," *Planning Perspectives* 39, no.4 (2024): 761–91, https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2023.2296922.

[37] H. Peter Oberlander et al., *Housing a Nation: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Centre for Human Settlements, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1992), 36, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2018/schl-cmhc/nh15/NH15-818-1992-eng.pdf.

Housing Limited, a state-owned housing enterprise that developed 45,930 housing units across major Canadian cities."[38,39] In 1946, it was succeeded and its assets passed on to another Crown corporation today known as the Canadian Housing and Mortgage Corporation or CMHC. The establishment of the CHMC—born out of the need for a coordinated federal response to post-war housing shortages—marked the consolidation of federal housing programs into one agency, including the administration of the NHA, and today, it functions as the primary agency responsible for administering federal housing policy and programs.[40] As the CMHC was modeled after the Central Mortgage Bank, it is primarily a financial vehicle for administering loans to provincial authorities, builders, home buyers, and nonprofit developers. In 1973, an amendment to the NHA brought the most comprehensive program for housing construction aimed at social objectives Canada had ever seen, including significant financing for nonprofit and cooperative housing.[41]

The 1970s marked another iteration of housing crises, and this time there was no single global event to explain it. These "turbulent times," as the economist Lawrence Smith described it, resulted from cumulated pressure on the housing system stemming from urbanization, population growth, shifts in household composition, and vulnerability to world markets, causing economic recessions, fluctuating interests rate, and inflation as well as rapid increases in housing costs and rental supply shortages. [42,43] The title of Smith's 1977 monograph aptly describes the turmoil of this time, *Anatomy of a Crisis: Canadian Housing Policy in The Seventies.* Another important government report, known as the 'Hellyer Report', was released right at the turn of the decade and declared that Canada faced housing challenges to be "of far more than routine significance" at this time.[44] Hellyer too cited a confluence of factors—urban unrest, climbing interest rates, and population bursts—all contributing to massive housing shortages and the need for one million

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[38] Crown corporations are legal entities owned by the federal or provincial government in Canada, created with a specific mandate to advance policy objectives independently while being subject to public accountability. Simply put, they are an enterprise owned by the state.

[39] Begin, *Housing and Parliamentary Action*.

[40] Oberlander et al., *Housing a Nation*, 37.

[41] Begin, *Housing and Parliamentary Action*.

[42] Lawrence Berk Smith, *Anatomy of a Crisis: Canadian Housing Policy in The Seventies* (The Fraser Institute, 1977), https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/anatomy-of-a-crisis.pdf.

[43] Oberlander et al., *Housing a Nation*, 64.

[44] Paul Hellyer, *Report of the Federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Development* (Federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Development, 1969), 1, https://archive.org/details/canada-task-force-housing-urban-development-hellyer-1969.

additional housing units in the next five years.[45] Another government report from this time, prepared for Environment Canada, noted a housing crisis in BC specifically. The baby boom of the 1950s, the influx of urban migration, and the trend of interprovincial and foreign migration created a demand pressure for housing; an estimated 20,000 people were migrating to BC's Lower Mainland every year.

Political scientists Barbara Wake Carroll and Ruth J. E. Jones divide Canada's evolution of housing policy over the twentieth century into five stages, marking the 1970s as the second stage and the time of "social development," reflecting a market philosophy of "intervention, participation, and flexibility."[46] Indeed, other foundational texts on Canadian policy history point to the 1970s as the next swell of housing crises and the federal government's first significant foray into non-market housing. Housing scholars such as Whitzman or another prominent contemporary housing authority, David Hulchanski, both write actively about the 1970s as a period of creative housing intervention in which the federal and provincial governments developed and built housing on a scale that has not been seen before or since. In *Home Truths*, Whitzman asked 'how did we get in this mess?' and pointed her answer towards the policies and programmes that stimulated massive housing construction in the 1970s, writing: "…if new home construction had stayed at 1970s levels, we'd have an additional six to seven million homes."[47] Over a quarter million homes were built between 1973 and 1977, compared to 222,000 in 2022 or 259,028 housing starts in 2025.[48,49] Whitzman noted this surge in housing construction was the result of federal investments in purpose build housing; at the peak of the housing construction, 25 percent of housing completions came from federal investment in nonmarket and regulated affordable-housing programs.[50] Hulchanski, researcher and professor at the University of Toronto, marked the 1970s as a shift towards social housing: "The direction of Canadian housing policy shifted after the 1970s. It was 1980 when Canada experienced its peak year for federal support in social housing, when 31,400 units were funded."[51] The legacy of the 1970s does in fact loom large: new housing construction was up, as was purpose-built rental stock and nonmarket housing, funded by federal-provincial joint funding programs.[52]

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[45] Hellyer, *Report of the Federal Task Force on Housing and Urban Development*, 22.

[46] Barbara Wake Carroll and Ruth J. E. Jones, "The Road to Innovation, Convergence or Inertia: Devolution in Housing Policy in Canada," *Canadian Public Policy / Analyse de Politiques* 26, no. 3 (2000): 279, https://doi.org/10.2307/3552401.

[47] Whitzman, *Home Truths*, 11.

[48] Whitzman, *Home Truths*, 29.

[49] Statistics Canada, "Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, housing starts, under construction and completions, all areas, annual," data from Table 34-10-0126-01, January 21, 2026, https://doi.org/10.25318/3410012601-eng.

[50] Whitzman, *Home Truths*, 31.

It was the 1973 amendments to the NHA that marked a decisive shift towards direct federal support for forms of nonmarket housing, including public, private and cooperative versions of nonprofit housing.[53] These amendments expanded the federal government's authority to finance, insure, subsidize, and develop housing outside the private market, altogether featuring ten new or significantly revised programs.[54,55] The 1973 NHA amendments marked the 1970s as a period of interventionist housing policy aimed at meeting the social and affordability needs of Canadians.

From the beginning of the twentieth century to the 1970s, it appears that Canada has consistently navigated booms and busts in its housing system. A few foundational texts—Peter Oberlander et al.'s 1992 *Housing a Nation: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy;* John C. Bacher's 1993 *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy;* and Albert Rose's 1980 *Canadian Housing Policies (1935-1980)*—provide different perspectives on its evolution in the twentieth century. Where Oberlander et al. framed the federal government's housing policies as increasingly moving towards an interventionist approach, Bacher and Rose framed the federal government as slow to take responsibility for the social needs of Canadians.

Bacher, as his title suggests, framed Canada's housing system as one primarily organized around the market logics and lacking in social objectives—focusing on the local coalitions of union leaders, social activists, local business, and engaged public servants that actively pushed against the domination of the private housing market and helped institutionalize what reviewer Christopher Leo calls "the successful pursuit of left-of-centre political objectives in Canadian cities."[56] The throughline of Bacher's account is that Canada's housing system has always relied heavily on the private market—even when compared to the United States, which dipped it's toes into public housing on a national scale an entire decade before Canada.[57] Rose framed Canada's housing system as the balancing act between two continuums: giving the private market regulatory space to increase the overall supply and protecting rental affordability with strict regulatory controls.[58] As Bacher critiqued the market-orientation of Canada's housing system, Rose assessed its lack of support for low-income families. Rose believed the solution to Canada's housing challenges was an ideological shift towards treating housing as a social good and basic need, away from the objectives of homeownership and economic development.[59]

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[51] David Hulchanski, "Community Based Social Housing: The Evolution of Non-Profit and Co-operative Housing in Canada," paper presented at Hopkins Policy Leadership Seminar, John Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies, May 6, 1993, 1, https://utoronto.scholaris.ca/items/3a32c111-c27d-4fe9-a336-cca61d45ad83.

[52] Hulchanski, "Community Based Social Housing," 10-11.

[53] Hulchanski, "Community Based Social Housing," 3.

[54] Oberlander et al., *Housing a Nation*, 121.

[55] The ten new or revised program include: Assisted Home Ownership (new Sections 34.15 and 34.16); Non-Profit Housing Assistance (new Section 15.1); Co-operative Housing Assistance; Neighborhood Improvement Program (new Part III, Section 27); Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (Part IV.l); Land Assembly Assistance; New Communities Program (Part V.l); Developmental Program (Part V); Native On-Reserve Housing; and -Purchaser Protection.

[56] Christopher Leo, "Review of Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 3, no. 1 (1994): 77, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44320305.

Taking Bacher's critique of Canada's private-market housing orientation and Rose's call to treat housing as a social good, a picture of the ideological tensions in Canada's housing system emerges: Is it the role of the state to make up for gaps left by the private housing market? Can we expect the housing market to self-regulate? Most serious scholars are likely to dismiss such queries as oversimplifications that rely on false dichotomies between socialist and liberalist logics. No market is entirely free from regulation or oversight, and no state is purely capitalist or socialist, certainly not in Canada or most OECD countries. Since the 1980s, many western countries have gone through a process of neoliberalization, with the increased financialization of Canada's housing market reflecting this.[60] Housing, as Bacher pointed out, is predominantly the domain of the private sector in Canada, but the policies of provincial and federal governments bring regulatory constraints as well as assistance aimed at a variety of outcomes: support for private housing construction and private homeownership or sometimes, support for non-market housing construction and rental housing tenure. Housing scholars are generally concerned with how policies impact the entire housing system: private *and* nonmarket, renters *and* owners, high-income families *and* low-income families, citizens *and* noncitizens, etc.

While Oberlander, Bacher, and Rose wrote about the twentieth century while still living in it, contemporary housing scholars like Whitzman and Hulchanski are peering at Canada's housing history from the vantage point of the twenty-first century—and they are both pointing their fingers at the 1970s. In a paper written for an American audience at the John Hopkins Institute for Policy

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[57] Richard Harris, "Review of Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy," *Urban History* 22, no. 2 (1995): 305, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44613972.

[58] Albert Rose, *Canadian Housing Policies (1935-1980)* (Butterworths, 1980), 195, http://archive.org/details/canadian-housing-policies-1935-1980-albert-rose-1980-book.

[59] Rose, *Canadian Housing Policies (1935-1980*, 198.

[60] Yushu Zhu et al., "Neoliberalization and Inequality: Disparities in Access to Affordable Housing in Urban Canada 1981 2016," *Housing Studies* 38, no. 10 (2023): 1860, https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2021.2004093.

Studies, Hulchanski marked Canada's social housing pursuits in the 1970s as an admirable convergence from the American liberalization strategy. Canada developed a permanent stock of good quality non-market housing at this time, which helped develop a "third sector" of housing, comprised of nonprofit community-based housing development agencies.[61] The significance of housing policy in the 1970s, according to Hulchanski, is how it showed that "there are things the market can and things it cannot do" and thereby institutionalized the role of non-market housing in Canada's overall housing system.[62] Whitzman's book too focused on this period of government investment in nonmarket housing as a model that should be repurposed for the contemporary crises.[63] To Whitzman and Hulchanski, the 1970s demonstrated a better time in Canadian housing history—a time in which the government stepped in with programs aimed at meeting the needs of all Canadians, not just middle income families or homeowning households.

1.5 Locked Up Land for Housing

Section 1.5 places discourses on non-market housing within the broader debates on solutions to Canada's contemporary housing crises, with particular attention to how "locked up" land has emerged a central object of political and policy discourse.

Historians of the twentieth century, Bacher and Rose, and housing scholars of the twenty-first century, Whitzman and Hulchanski, critique classical liberalist approaches for their exclusive prioritization of homeownership and treatment of property as an economic good, while gesturing admirably towards more classical socialist approaches which move away from ownership models to pursuing nonmarket housing and constructing housing as social good. I will discuss these ideological approaches in the following chapters, but first, I will set the discursive scene, showing how using public land for housing emerged in the political discourse in Canada's 2025 federal election.

Federal politics in Canada is a dance between four political parties: the Liberal Party of Canada and the Conservative Party of Canada dominate, tossing the baton of leadership back and forth, while the Bloc Quebecois and the New Democratic Party function as *third parties*, playing a non-governing oppositional role in parliament. The Liberal Party sits at the center-left of Canada's political spectrum, the Conservative Party sits at the center-right. The Bloc Quebecois too sits at the center-left but with a unique devotion to a single region of Canada—the home to the majority of French-speaking Canadians, the Province of Quebec. Political scientist Guy Lachapelle describes the Bloc Quebecois as "a sovereigntist party representing Quebec's interests in Ottawa."[64] The New Democratic Party (henceforth "NDP") sits further to the left of the Liberal Party and Bloc Quebecois, generally considered to be Canada's democratic socialist party despite its most recent Constitution describing itself to be a "progressive democratic party" with only *roots* in "the social democratic and democratic socialist traditions."[65] The NDP *is* the predecessor of Canada's twentieth century socialist movement, with deep roots in agrarian concerns and labour politics in western Canada, particularly BC and Manitoba. Today, the NDP has enveloped many of the concerns of the *New Left*, focusing on climate change action and 2SLGBTQIA+ rights.[66]

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[61] Hulchanski, "Community Based Social Housing," 1.

[62] Hulchanski, "Community Based Social Housing," 2.

[63] Whitzman, *Home Truths*, 33.

It is important to note that Canada's political system mirrors its federalist composition: though provincial and federal parties may share names and values, they operate independently of one another.[67] In provincial politics in BC, for example, the Liberal Party actually sits at the center-right instead of the center-left—taking up the main opposition to the left-wing BC-NDP, even going as far as to remove its affiliation with the federal Liberal Party by changing its name to the BC United in 1987.[68] That this party has oriented further to the right in its opposition to left-wing politics serves to demonstrate the strength and dominance of the BC-NDP on the BC political landscape.[69]

Housing was one of the defining issues of the 2025 federal election and the election campaign featured discourses from each political party on their respective solutions to Canada's affordability and supply issues. I noticed general patterns in the political discourse: The Liberal Party talked about the government playing an active development role in the housing market and a new private-public housing industry, while the Conservative Party spoke of supporting the private industry through tax incentives, deregulation, and bringing more developable land to the private market. The Liberal Party wanted to "unlock" federal lands to build affordable nonmarket housing, while the Conservative Party wanted to "unlock" federal lands by selling them to private developers.

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[64] Guy Lachapelle, "Le Bloc Québécois: A Niche Party," in *Political Marketing in the 2021 Canadian Federal Election*, ed. Jamie Gillies et al. (Springer International Publishing, 2023), 73, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-34404-65.

[65] British Columbia New Democratic Party, *Constitution of the New Democratic Party of Canada* (2023), 3, https://xfer.ndp.ca/2025/Documents/2025%20Constitution.pdf.

[66] British Columbia New Democratic Party, *Policy of the British Columbia New Democratic Party of Canada* (2023), 6-20, https://convention.ndp.ca/sites/default/files/2024-04-11_policy-en-2023-v2.pdf.

[67] As further note: The Bloc Quebecois only exists on the federal level and the NDP is the only political party with a shared provincial-federal membership; when someone joins the BC-NDP, they automatically become a member of the federal NDP.

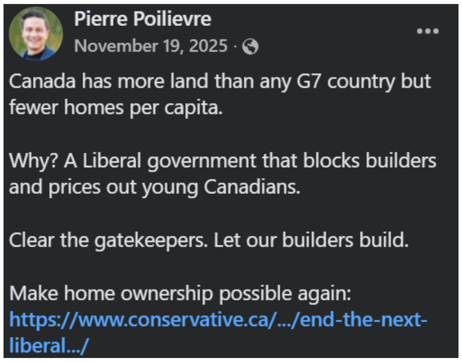
[68] Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, "B.C. Liberal Party Officially Becomes B.C. United," *CBC News*, April 12, 2023, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/liberal-bc-united-name-change-1.6807593.

[69] Donald E. Blake and R. Kenneth Carty, "Partisan Realignment in British Columbia: The Case of the Provincial Liberal Party," *BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly*, no. 108 (1995): 61–74, https://doi.org/10.14288/bcs.v0i108.1241.

At a campaign event in Ontario months ahead of the election, the leader of the Liberal Party and now 24th Prime Minister of Canada, Mark Carney, pledged his government would intervene directly and be an active housing developer: “We’re getting government back in the business of building affordable homes.”[70] He vowed to create a new state-owned enterprise, Build Canada Homes, and a new housing industry born of public-private partnerships, native building materials (emphasis on Canadian mass timber), and utilizing Canada’s federal lands.[71] Build Canada Homes “will make good on the promise to unlock federal lands for home building on a post-war scale,” said Carney.[72] These announcements are echoed in the 2025 Liberal Party policy handbook, which played-up the federal government’s policy interventions over the twentieth century and vowed to become an active player in the “business” of housing development: “It used to be that the federal government built the housing that our growing population needed. So, we’re going to get back into the business of building houses.”[73] In this way, the Liberal Party articulates the government as both a necessary partner to the private sector and an active developer in the market itself.

Poilievre, on the other hand, regularly repeats the rhetoric that Canada had plenty of land but not enough houses. “Canada has the most land to build on, yet we have the fewest homes per capita in the G7,” he said in the campaign speech, and again in a Facebook page last November:[74]

Image 1.5: ***Facebook post from Pierre Poilievre, November 2025***[75]



Pierre Poilievre
November 19, 2025 ·

Canada has more land than any G7 country but fewer homes per capita.

Why? A Liberal government that blocks builders and prices out young Canadians.

Clear the gatekeepers. Let our builders build.

Make home ownership possible again: https://www.conservative.ca/.../end-the-next-liberal.../

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[70] Cable Public Affairs Channel, “Mark Carney unveils Liberal housing plan –,” posted March 31, 2025, YouTube, 42:19:00, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05Ys9GaJiTY, at 11:33-35.

[71] Liberal Party of Canada, *Canada Strong: Unite. Secure. Protect. Build.* (2025), https://liberal.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/292/2025/04/Canada-Strong.pdf, 40.

[72] CPAC, “Mark Carney unveils Liberal housing plan –,” at 11:31-33.

[73] Liberal Party of Canada, Canada Strong: Unite. Secure. Protect. Build., 39.

[74] Cable Public Affairs Channel, “Pierre Poilievre promises to build 2.3M homes in five years,” posted April 21, 2025, YouTube, 35:54:00, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifzWdX5h72g, at 10:05-8.

[75] Pierre Poilievre MP, “Canada has more land than any G7 country but fewer homes per capita — why a Liberal government won’t build them,” Facebook, November 19, 2025, www.facebook.com/PierrePoilievreMP/posts/canada-has-more-land-than-any-g7country-but-fewer-homes percapitawhy-a-liberal/1398628844958297/.

Poilievre's rhetoric suggests that Canada has developable land that is locked-up in state-ownership, and if a government had the mandate and political will to sell it into the housing market, this would improve housing affordability. Poilievre's explanation of the housing crisis draws on the classic economic principle of supply and demand: When land supply in the housing market is scarce, this creates a demand pressure and a surge in housing prices, or vice versa, when the land supply in the housing market increases, the demand pressure lifts and prices go down. The following section explores this logic further.

1.6 Connecting Land to Housing

Section 1.6 draws the link between high land costs and high housing costs, demonstrating that developable land is essential to housing construction and how land costs can become "inflated" when there is artificial scarcity.

At this point, the assumption that land begets housing may still be unclear. I will explain. Since the ocean is not solid, the land is the best place to construct a permanent shelter. Yet "land" is as about as broad as a category can be; swaps are not an ideal place to build a house, nor are mountain cliff sides or sandy desert dunes. The best place to build housing is on land that is flat, firm, safe from natural hazards such as an avalanche or flooding, with proximity to amenities of value. In nineteenth century, Canada, this meant proximity to a riverbed or a field of arable soil, and in twenty-first century Canada, this means proximity to grocery stores, malls, parks, lakes, industrial zones, and downtown areas. Moreover, land suitable for housing development must first be serviced, a process that may include clearing, leveling, connecting utility services, etc. In this way, developable land is the prerequisite to housing construction.

In his aforementioned 1974 report, E Neville Ward found that the short supply of developable land in the BC housing market was contributing to "inflated" land costs, leading to increases in housing prices. "The shortage of serviced land in B.C. is a principal underlying cause of inflated land price," he wrote.[76] The report from a 1975 national housing conference, written by Derek Shearer and Lee Webb described the province's "key" to meeting housing needs as the "orderly supply of reasonably-priced serviced land."[77] In the absence of serviced land, housing cannot be built. Echoing Ward's rhetoric of "inflated" land costs arising from an artificial land scarcity, the conference report said, “There is no land shortage, but raw land reserves must be converted into serviced parcels of land for building.”[78] A more recent report from urban policy analyst Wendell Cox too observed that land costs underlay housing costs. “The housing affordability crisis is fundamentally a land cost issue,” Cox stated in her 2024 report.[79] The historically situated analysis of Ward as well as Shearer and Webb, paired with the contemporary analysis of Cox, advance the premise that BC’s high land costs are “inflated” by an “artificial scarcity” placing a demand pressure on housing construction costs, resulting in unaffordable housing costs and housing supply shortages. In the next section, we will explore how Canada’s land system contributes to this artificial scarcity.

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[76] E. N. Ward et al., *Land Use Programs in Canada* (Environment Canada, 1974), 58, https://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.883223/publication.html

[77] Derek Shearer and Lee Webb, "Housing For People: Programs of the British Columbia Department of Housing," paper presented at 1975 Madison Conference On Alternative State And Local Public Policies, June 13-15, 1975, 2, https://hdl.handle.net/1813/30139.

1.7 Unlocking Land for Housing

Section 1.7 provides the context for Canada’s inflated land costs; it discusses Canada’s high proportion of state-owned land and the competing interests—resource extraction, conservation, and Indigenous land sovereignty—that fuel this land regime.

Canada is the second largest country by land mass in the world; however it ranks among the lowest density countries in the world.[80] The modest Canadian populace congregates along just a few corridors: two out of three people live in just 4 percent of the nation’s territory, within 100 kilometres of the Canada-United States border, and approximately 33 percent live within the Great Lakes region.[81,82] Moreover, the entire Canadian populace—currently around forty-one million people—can easily fit into the State of California, the Basque Country in Spain, or Metro Tokyo in Japan.[83]

On the global stage, Canada stands out for its extraordinary scale of state owned land: 89 percent of Canada’s total land is owned by the federal or provincial governments (41 percent federal and 48 percent provincial) and just 11 percent is owned privately.[84] On top of this sits the fact that BC, along with Newfoundland and Labrador, has the most amount of provincial state-owned land amongst the thirteen Canadian provinces and territories. In BC, nearly all land is in the authority of the government, land known as “Crown land:” 94 percent is provincial Crown land, 1 percent is federal Crown land, and just 5 percent is privately owned.[85] These facts render Canada to be a Crown-dominant land regime, meaning the majority of the nation’s territory is controlled by the state and access to the land is mediated through leases and licences, rather than private ownership.

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[78] Shearer and Webb, “Housing for People,” 2.

[79] Cox, *Demographia International Housing Affordability: 2024 Edition*, 19.

[80] World Bank, “Population Density (people per sq. km of land area),” data from World Bank Data, accessed November 15, 2025, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST.

[81] Statistics Canada, “Population size and growth in Canada: Key results from the 2016 Census,” Government of Canada (blog), February 8, 2017, www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/170208/dq170208a-eng.htm.

[82] Government of Canada and Government of Ontario, *Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health* (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2014), https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/canadian-environmental-protection-act registry/publications/canada-ontario-agreement-great-lakes.html.

[83] Statistics Canada, “Canada's population estimates,” Government of Canada (blog), September 9, 2024, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/250924/dq250924a-eng.htm.

[84] V. P. Neimanis, “Crown Land,” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Historica Canada, 2011), updated November 14, 2024, https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/crown-land.

Let us now situate Canada’s high proportion of state-owned land in a global context. Canada’s levels of state-owned land make it comparable to nations like Russia, a post-communist society. At the collapse of the USSR, there virtually was no private land ownership in Russia.[86] Today, official statistics are difficult to locate, but the share of state ownership of agricultural land can be used as a proxy: According to the Russian federal real estate registry in 2022, *Rosreestr Land Registry*, the state controls 66 percent (251.5 million hectares), while private individuals and companies own 34 percent (104.1 million hectares).[87] And on the far end of the spectrum is China, in which private land ownership was abolished by the 1982 Constitution—declaring that all urban land is “state-owned with exceptions.”[88] Individuals and organizations cannot privately own land in China but can be granted “land use rights” for a fixed time period for up to seventy years, and rural agricultural land is owned by village collectives which report to state authorities.[89] Or take Saudi Arabia, a gulf monarchy ruled by Islamic Sharia law. In Saudia, the 1992 Constitution shows the state’s complete control of land: “All God’s bestowed wealth…shall be the property of the State as defined by the Law.”[90] Russia, China, and Saudia Arabia are nations with high proportions of state-owned land but with vastly different systems of governance, none of which are democracies resembling Canada’s government. Yet turning to OECD countries, we see that Canada’s crown-dominated land regime is still an outlier.[91]

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[85] “Working on the Land Base,” Province of British Columbia, updated 2026, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/natural-resource-use.

[86] Zvi Lerman and Natalya Shagaida, “Land Policies and Agricultural Land Markets in Russia,” *Land Use Policy* 24, no. 1 (2007): 14, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2006.02.001.

[87] Inessa Valueva, *Russia’s Largest Agricultural Landholders 2024* (BELF, 2024), 3, https://www.befl.ru/upload/iblock/ce1/ce1978d10f99e1d9648ab3c6eda82968.pdf.

[88] Shitong Qiao, *Chinese Small Property: The Co-Evolution of Law and Social Norms* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 15, https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/chinese-small-property/0DA7C7788ED64E22772314216901E495.

[89] Laney Zhang, *China: Real Property Law* (The Law Library of Congress, 2014), 1, https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/llglrd/2014504252/2014504252.pdf.

[90] World Intellectual Property Organization, *Saudi Arabia's Constitution of 1992 with Amendments through 2013* (Constitute Project, 2021), https://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/legislation/details/21069.

It is perhaps unsurprising that Canada differs entirely from its southern neighbor in this regard: approximately 60 percent of the land of the United States is owned privately, while merely 39 percent is held publicly, managed by federal, state, or local governments.[92] A 2020 *Congressional Research Service Report* found the federal government owns "about 28% of the 2.27 billion acres of land in the United States."[93] The American legal historian, Stuart Bruchey, famously said: "Perhaps the most important value of the Founding Fathers of the American constitutional period was their belief in the necessity of securing property rights."[94] The esteem of private property and economic opportunity is a crucial emblem of the American story.

Perhaps more surprisingly though is that Canada's public land ownership rates outpace the European context as well. In Norway, for example, private individuals or organizations own the majority of land—around 80 percent—while the state-owned company Statskog owns around 20 percent of mainland Norway.[95] Norway has some of the highest homeownership rates in Europe, with 77 percent of households owning their own dwelling.[96] Norway's land system reflects a long, 1000 plus year history of evolving land tenure: medieval allodial ("odelsrett") rights and the early modern transition from tenancy to peasant freehold ownership helped establish strong private land-ownership norms.[97,98] In France, the majority of land is held in private ownership. The entity that manages state-owned property, the Direction de l'Immobilier de l'État (DIE), controls about 10 percent (10,000 hectares) of France's 5.4-million-hectare landmass. Additionally, three-quarters of the French metropolitan forest area belong to private owners, while the state owns 9 percent.[99] Germany also maintains higher levels of private land ownership—about 80 percent of agricultural land and 48 percent of forest is held in private ownership.[100]

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[91] OECD refers to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, an international organization of 38 member countries founded in 1961 aimed at developing sustainable economic growth, employment, and better living standards through research, analytical work, and policy recommendations.

[92] David Winter and George P. Bush, "State Land Management Can Strengthen Public Services," *FREOPP (blog)*, March 17, 2023, https://freopp.org/whitepapers/state-landmanagement-can-strengthen-public-services/.

[93] Laura A. Hanson and Carol Hardy Vincent, *Federal Land Ownership: Overview and Data* (Congressional Research Service, 2020), 1, https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R42346.

[94] Stuart Bruchey, "The Impact of Concern for the Security of Property Rights on the Legal System of the Early American Republic," *Wisconsin Law Review* 1135 (1980): 1136, https://repository.law.wisc.edu/s/uwlaw/item/26897.

[95] "Statskog," European State Forest Association, accessed February 2, 2026, https://eustafor.eu/members/statskog/.

[96] Mathias Killengreen Revold**,** "Large majority own their dwelling," Statistics Norway (blog), September 13, 2017, www.ssb.no/en/bygg-bolig-og-eiendom/artikler-og-publikasjoner/large-majority-owntheirdwelling.

[97] Knut Dørum, "The Odelsrett in Norway c. 1200–1800: Function and Importance," in *Nordic Inheritance Law through the Ages,* ed. Marianne Holdgaar, Auður Magnúsdóttir, and Bodil Selmer, (Koninklijke Brill NV, 2020), 292, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004435582_015.

[98] Andreas Holmsen, "The Transition from Tenancy to Freehold Peasant Ownership in Norway," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 9, no. 2 (1961): 152–64, https://doi.org/10.1080/03585522.1961.10411437.

Canada's land regime proves to be an outlier amongst similar OECD countries in terms of combining an extensive regime of state-land ownership with a predominantly market-driven housing system. It may appear that the government is *hoarding* land, but to truly understand this Canadian phenomenon, some contextualization is in order: the majority of Canada's Crown land is used for nature conservation, resource extraction, and Indigenous land governance and thus the politics surrounding Crown land are laden with controversial environmental, industrial, and colonial topics. In the words of the 1969 annual report for BC's Department of Lands:

> "British Columbia holds title to a major portion, over 90 per cent of its land area…This does not mean that Crown lands are vacant and unused. Prospecting and mineral development take place largely on Provincial land. Tens of thousands of head of cattle graze on it. Crown forests yield huge volumes of wood for a billion-dollar forest industry. Extensive areas have been set aside for parks and recreation, timber growing, municipal water supplies, and other public purposes."[101]

Indeed, the Canadian landscape is uniquely vast and diverse. The nation stretches across over 998 million hectares and is home to vast topographies and biomes, from the ancient rocks of the "Canadian Shield" to the arable valleys of the interior plains to the harsh permafrost of the arctic tundra.[102] The nation's coastline spans three oceans and is the longest in the world.[103] The province of BC alone covers various biomes: temperate rainforest, stretching along its coastline; boreal forest with mountainous regions, high precipitation, and wildlife such as moose and bobcats; and alpine tundra in the far north, where the average monthly temperature stays between negative four and zero degrees Celsius.[104] The majority of Canada's Crown land is located in the nation's vast wilderness—forests, wetlands, prairies, shorelines, lakes, and rivers. Canada, in fact, is estimated to have over 9 percent of the world's total forest.[105] For these reasons, many parts of the Canadian landscape are considered unsuitable for residential living and urban development.

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[99] "Who Does the French Forest Belong To?," Institut National De L'Information Geographique et Forestiere, accessed February 2, 2026, https://inventaire-forestier.ign.fr/spip.php?rubrique84=&utm_.

[100] Lisa Kopsieker and Tilmann Disselhoff, "The Contribution of Private Land Conservation to 30x30 in Germany," *Frontiers in Conservation Science* 4 (2024): 4, https://doi.org/10.3389/fcosc.2023.1324928.

[101] R.A. Williams and D. Borthwick, *Report of the Lands Service* (Province of British Columbia, 1969), 9, https://open.library.ubc.ca/viewer/bcsessional/1.0373678#p0z-3r0f:.

[102] "The Atlas of Canada - Physiographic Regions," Government of Canada, updated April 2, 2019, https://atlas.gc.ca/phys/en/index.html

[103] "Geography," Government of Canada, updated January 17, 2018, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-402-x/2011000/chap/geo/geo-eng.htm.

[104] "Types of biodiversity in B.C.," Province of British Columbia, updated November 15, 2023, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/biodiversity/bc-biodiversity.

In fact, Canada has set conservation targets: aiming to conserve 30 percent of its lands and 30 percent of its oceans by 2030. These areas are intended to be "safeguards" for biodiversity and "provide opportunities for people to connect with nature."[106] In BC, provincial Crown land covers 1,039 provincial parks, conservancies, protected designated areas, ecological reserves, and recreation areas on over 14 million hectares of land (about 14.4 percent of the province). [107,108] This includes some of BC's most beloved natural landscapes such as the Garibaldi mountain range, the Chilcotin river, and the Great Bear rainforest.

Regarding industry, Canada uses its Crown land primarily for forestry, mining and mineral exploration, oil and gas extraction, fishing, and agriculture. According to *Natural Resources Canada*, 90 percent of Canada's over 637 million hectares of forests are on Crown land and 45 percent of these forests are used for the forestry industry. Only 7 percent of Canada's forests are held in private ownership.[109] The federal government regards Canada as a "leading mining nation," producing sixty minerals and metals valued at 72 billion Canadian dollars in 2023.[110] BC is the nation's largest exporter of coal, while also producing copper, silver, gold, lead, zinc, and thirty other industrial minerals.[111] Yet, total mineral exploration and production only covers a small area of the provincial land base, less than 15 percent at any given time, claims a private-sector report.[112] Similarly, a 2013 report showed that total area for oil and gas production activities was merely

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[105] Natural Resources Canada, *The State of Canada's Forests: Annual Report* (Library and Archives Canada, 2023), 28, https://naturalresources.canada.ca/sites/nrcan/files/forest/sof2023/NRCAN_SofForest_Annual_2023_EN_accessible-vf.pdf.

[106] Environment and Climate Change Canada, *Canada's Conserved Areas: Canadian Environmental Sustainability Indicators (2025),* consulted November 17, 2025, 5, https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/eccc/documents/pdf/cesindicators/canada-conserved-areas/2025/conserved areas_en.pdf

[107] "Types of Parks and Protected Areas," Province of British Columbia, accessed February 2, 2026, https://bcparks.ca/about/our-mission-responsibilities/types-parks-protected-areas/#designations.

[108] "Park Boundary Adjustment Guidelines," Province of British Columbia, accessed February 2, 2026, https://bcparks.ca/about/management-plans/boundary-adjustment-guidelines/.

[109] Natural Resources Canada, *The State of Canada's Forests*, 25-26.

[110] "Minerals and Metals Facts," Government of Canada, updated January 18, 2018, https://naturalresources.canada.ca/minerals-mining/mining-data-statistics-analysis/minerals-metals-facts.

[111] Gordon Clarke et al., *Exploration and Mining in British Columbia, 2023: A Summary* (British Columbia Ministry of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation, 2024), 1, https://cmscontent.nrs.gov.bc.ca/geoscience/publicationcatalogue/InformationCircular/BCGS_IC2024-01-01.pdf.

[112] Hemmera, *Framing the Future of Mineral Exploration in British Columbia* (Association for Mineral Exploration, 2016), 2, https://amebc.ca/wp-content/uploads/AME-BC-Mineral-Land-Access-and-UseReport-2015-No-AppF-1.pdf.

399,641 hectares in Northeast BC, where the majority of production occurs.[113]

Lastly, Canada's crown land covers vast traditional Indigenous territory, especially in the far north and west coast. The Constitution Act of 1867 outlines that the provinces have exclusive jurisdiction—the ability to make laws—over "the management and sale of the public lands belonging to the province," the territory now known as 'Crown land' (Section 92(5) +109)."[114] Over a century later, the 1982 amendments added Section 35, the protection of Aboriginal and treaty rights. The first BC-NDP government was operating in the decade before this amendment came to pass—at the time in which a new consciousness around Indigenous rights were emerging. Today only a small part of Canada is legally recognized as belonging to Indigenous communities, what are known as Indian Reserves and negotiated treaty settlement areas. Indian Reserves cover about 3 million hectares of land across Canada and historic and modern treaties are estimated to cover 60 million hectares in land—these figures making up around 6 percent of Canada's total landmass.[115] However, large parts of Canada were colonized *without* treaties, and today these areas are considered *unceded territory,* subject to legal battles and modern treaty negotiations. The proportion is contested and subject to ongoing litigation, but most academic sources consider the majority of BC, the Maritime provinces, and parts of Ontario and Quebec to be on unceded Indigenous territory.[116]

Since the BC's confederation, the province's proportion of Crown land has not meaningfully shifted, despite the free market-oriented governments of the twentieth and twenty-first century. No comprehensive statistical dataset tracks the privatization of Crown land; this data is spread across various government databases, provincial department summaries, financial records, and the Crown land register system. To comb through these various data sources would require more time than this thesis allowed. However, one proxy to understanding how BC stands out from other Canadian provinces in their land system is through data of the Dominion Lands Act of 1872, modelled on the homestead legislation from the United States passed a decade earlier. As the Canadian Encyclopedia cites: "The *Dominion Lands Act* provided the legal authority under which the Crown granted lands to individuals, colonization companies, the Hudson's Bay Company, railway construction, municipalities and religious groups."[117] The legislation encouraged westward expansion and settlement to Canada's western provinces, which included BC and the Prairies (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba).[118] **Figure 1.6** on the next page captures the homestead-based transfers of Crown land into private ownership in BC and the Prairie provinces over the life of the Dominion Lands Act, revealing that BC transferred significantly less land than Prairie provinces.[119]

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[113] BC Oil and Gas Commission, *Oil and Gas Land Use in Northeast British Columbia* (2013), 1, https://www.bc-er.ca/files/reports/Land-Use/oil-and-gas-land-use-northern-bc.pdf.

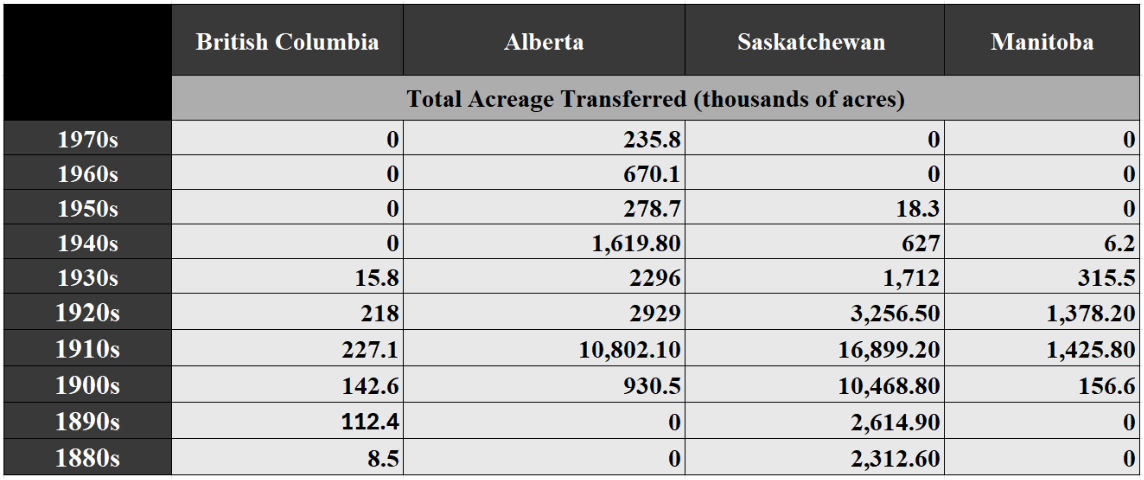
[114] Constitution Act, 1867, 30 & 31 Vict., c. 3 (U.K.), s. 92(5).

[115] "The Numbered Treaties (1871-1921)," Government of Canada, updated February 15, 2013, https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1360948213124/1544620003549.

[116] Clifford Atleo and Jonathan Boron, "Land Is Life: Indigenous Relationships to Territory and Navigating Settler Colonial Property Regimes in Canada," *Land* 11, no. 5 (2022): 4, https://doi.org/10.3390/land11050609.

At the moment of Confederation in 1871, BC entered Canada with unique land terms. Unlike the Prairie provinces, which entered the Confederation later than BC and had their land retained by the federal government until 1930, BC entered with control and jurisdiction over its public lands.[120] Historians note that colonial leaders involved in the 1870-71 negotiations insisted on having economic and political autonomy and considered land to be BC's principal asset in the absence of a significant population and therefore large tax base. Moreover, BC's land was better suited for resource extraction than agricultural settlements. This early history marked the province's prioritization of resource industries—forestry, mining, and fishing—as key foundations of the province's survival and wealth.[121]

Figure 1.6: ***Total Acreage Transferred to Private Ownership Under the Dominion Lands Act***[122]



	British Columbia	Alberta	Saskatchewan	Manitoba
	Total Acreage Transferred (thousands of acres)			
1970s	0	235.8	0	0
1960s	0	670.1	0	0
1950s	0	278.7	18.3	0
1940s	0	1,619.80	627	6.2
1930s	15.8	2296	1,712	315.5
1920s	218	2929	3,256.50	1,378.20
1910s	227.1	10,802.10	16,899.20	1,425.80
1900s	142.6	930.5	10,468.80	156.6
1890s	112.4	0	2,614.90	0
1880s	8.5	0	2,312.60	0

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[117] Eli Yarhi and T.D. Regehr, "Dominion Lands Act," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Historica Canada, 2003), https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/dominion-lands-policy.

[118] Yarhi and Regehr, "Dominion Lands Act."

[119] Brian S. Osborne, "Section L: Lands and Forests," Statistics Canada (blog), July 2, 2014, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-516-x/sectionl/4147441-eng.htm.

[120] Bartholomew Sparrow and Diane Sun, "The Expansion of the Canadian Federation: Terms of Territorial Growth," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50, no. 3 (2017): 725, https://doi.org/10.1017/S104909651700049X.

[121] Daniel P. Marshall, "Mapping a New Socio-Political Landscape: British Columbia, 1871-1874," *Histoire Sociale / Social History* 31, no. 61 (1998): 2, https://hssh.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/hssh/article/view/4688.

[122] Brian S. Osborne, "Land Acreage Patented in Canada, by Province, 1871–1975," data from Table L5-13, July 2, 2014, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-516-x/sectionl/4147441-eng.htm.

This history is inextricably linked to the province's approach to controlling its Crown land and treating its land as a collectively-stewarded resource. The province's orientation towards a Crown-land dominated land system—which draws on the constitutional and legislative authority it exerts over land, the legal and administrative mechanisms that maintain its authority, and the normalisation of common-sense approaches to how the province uses its land for housing development—is what I have termed 'BC's Crown land regime'. Throughout the thesis, the term is employed to denote the relatively stable legal and political structure through which Crown land is allocated, retained, or mobilized for housing development.

1.8 The Barriers of BC's Crown Land Regime

Section 1.8 expands on BC's Crown land regime through addressing its role in the province's contemporary housing crises and its connection to the BC-NDP government 1972-75, embedding this conceptual framing of BC's land system in the thesis's analytical framework.

As Canada faces a new iteration of housing crises, it needs more developable land to house its current population, and the 95-percent-statistic creates a powerful illusion that BC is sitting on an ocean of developable land. Yet the reality is that even if a government wanted to privatize Crown land and increase the land supply of the housing market, they face the barriers of the hegemonic character of BC's Crown Land Regime: a set of discursive practices that construct land as a collectively-stewarded resource and public ownership as necessary for the province's economic and social goals. This thesis defines "hegemony" by Antonio Gramsci, who spoke about "the struggle for cultural hegemony" as one of vying for moral, cultural, intellectual, and political leadership over the whole society—when one ideological approach positions itself as universal (**See 3.5**).[123]

Today, BC's Crown land regime appears to be firmly rooted in the province's identity. The retention of Crown land in the province's approaches to addressing its housing crises are evident. When looking at the landscape of BC's contemporary politics, this cultural hegemony surrounding the province's land seems to be firmly rooted. Even the province's center-right parties, the BC Conservatives and BC United (formerly the BC Liberals) do not appear to question this land regime. Though the federal Conservative party lists privatizing public land for housing development as one of their party's platform, as Poilievre indicated in his campaign speech, the BC Conservative party does not incorporate this into their platform, despite declaring the principles of "individual liberty" and "free-enterprise economy" in their 2025 Constitution and Bylaws.[124] Instead, the BC Conservatives advocate for adding tax incentives for rental construction; defending property rights through a new regulatory entity; and auditing the province's housing development agency, BC Housing. The closest the BC Conservatives get to commenting on unlocking public land for housing is in Article 19.11: "Identify land outside the Agricultural Land Reserve with potential to support new communities."[125] This statement refers to identifying land located outside the province's protected agricultural zone (without specifying what they would do with such land), as land inside the zone cannot be used for commercial or residential construction—legislation that was actually authored by the BC-NDP all the way back in 1973 through the Land Commission Act (**See 4.2**).

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[123] Antonio Gramsci, "Hegemony, Intellectuals, and the State," in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, ed. John Storey, 3rd ed., (Pearson Education Limited, 2006), 85.

BC United, however, did include a plan to unlock provincial Crown land for housing during their 2024 campaign with an important caveat—this land would exclusively used for below-market housing development on 99-year leasehold terms such that: “The land will remain in public ownership while delivering housing for multiple generations.”[126] BC United declares itself to be “a made-in-BC, independent political party united by free enterprise values;” yet it does not appear to extend these values to its plan for the province’s public lands, preferring to lease the land rather than privatize it.[127] In this way, BC United’s platform rhetoric echoes that of the federal Liberal Party and not of the federal Conservative Party; this is despite being more ideologically aligned with the federal Conservative Party and being no longer affiliated with the federal Liberal Party by name. In the 2024 election, in fact, the BC United stepped out race two months before the election citing that they did not want to weaken its chances of defeating the NDP by splitting the center-right vote.[128]

Turning to BC-NDP, we find a campaign website that is more colorful, detailed, and packed with content—a nod to the party’s entrenched legacy and dominance in the province. The feature of the BC-NDP’s housing platform is “BC Builds,” a housing program that identifies low-cost land for housing development and financial support with low-interest loans and grants. The approved developable land—whether it is municipally, provincially, or federally owned land, or land owned by First Nations, nonprofits, or private owners—gets listed on the BC Builds website and becomes available for development.[129] The program cites its goal as "to leverage underused public lands," which it achieves through facilitating partnership agreements and lease agreements between the landowners and the developers.[130] No change in ownership is proposed.

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[124] Conservative Party of British Columbia, *Constitution and Bylaws of the Conservative Party of British Columbia* (2025), passed at Annual General Meeting, 2, https://conservativebc.ca/official-documents/.

[125] Conservative Party of British Columbia, *Policy Declaration of the Conservative Party of British Columbia* (2025), passed at Annual General Meeting, 21, https://conservativebc.ca/official-documents/.

[126] “Use Empty Public Lands to Build Affordable Housing,” British Columbia United, archived August 16, 2024, Internet Archive, https://www.web.archive.org/web/20240816151406/https://www.votebcunited.ca/where-we stand/use-empty-public-lands-to-build-affordable-housing/

[127] “BC United: Overview | LinkedIn,” LinkedIn, accessed February 9, 2026, https://www.linkedin.com/company/bcunited/

[128] “BC United Homepage,” British Columbia United, archived October 1, 2024, Internet Archive, https://web.archive.org/web/20241001025930/https://www.votebcunited.ca/.

When we rewind five decades in the province, we find the BC-NDP taking a similar approach to utilizing public land for housing in the 1970s—and for the first time in the province's history, ideologically justifying their prioritization of Crown-land ownership over private ownership. The rise of the BC-NDP in 1972 marked a significant departure from the preceding twenty years of rule by the Social Credit Party in the province. From 1952 to 1972, BC had been governed by the 'free-enterprising logic' of Premier W.A.C Bennet, whose government subscribed to "a free enterprise or free market philosophy," that believed in "the doctrine of laissez-faire and the private ownership of property…that government intervention is only justifiable if it promotes and not hinders private capital accumulation."[131] Thus, when the province fell into the hands of "the socialists," the political landscape was transformed. From the establishment of public auto insurance to an agricultural land reserve to the construction of 13,000 units of social housing, the 1972–75 BC-NDP government worked quickly, guided by its leader, Dave Barrett, who instructed that they were "there for a good time, not a long time."[132] For three brief but dynamic years, the BC-NDP led the province and implemented radical reforms—passing an astonishing ninety-seven pieces of legislation.[133] Political scientist Paul Tennant described that "the number and scope of innovations made under the NDP was undoubtedly greater than in any other forty-month period in British Columbia history."[134]

Prior to 1972, the Legislative Assembly did not sit regularly, nor did it keep a public record of transcriptions of the debates that took place within the legislature. Author Lorne Kavic paints a bleak picture of the legislature under the previous administration: "the Premier was frequently absent from the House, as were many Ministers" and the Opposition faced "jeers and catcalls," not to mentioned they were "denied the right to introduce bills or amendments involving money matters" and "other bills were generally ignored."[135] The introduction of the Hansard system brought a complete verbatim transcript of the legislative proceedings, offering a glimpse into the dynamics of the BC parliament like never before. The implementation of the complete Hansard transcriptions as well as 'the Question Period'—a daily fifteen minutes reserved for the Opposition to ask questions of the Government—were produced by Premier Barret's BC-NDP government. Moreover, the legislative sessions of the Barrett government were far longer and more grueling; from 1972–75, the legislature sat for an average of 110 days per year—in contrast to Bennet's government which only had the legislature in session thirty-eight days per year in the 1950s and about forty-five days in the 1960s.[136] Quoting Walter Young, the Barrett government was described as "lively centers of political life," while the Bennet government was described as "the real business of government did not concern debate or party politics…the legislature, in many respects, was not the real world."[137] The transcripts from this period of legislative history thus reveal a unique political era in which various policies for unlocking public land for housing were implemented through loud, dynamic, and unpredictable conversations in the legislature.

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[129] "About BC Builds," Province of British Columbia and BC Housing, accessed February 9, 2026, https://www.bcbuildshomes.ca/about.

[130] "Frequently Asked Questions," Province of British Columbia and BC Housing, accessed February 9, 2026, https://www.bcbuildshomes.ca/faq.

[131] Grieve, "Continuity and Change," 2.

[132] Geoff Meggs and Rod Mickleburgh, *The Art of the Impossible: Dave Barrett and the NDP in Power*, 1972–1975 (Harbour Publishing, 2012), 15.

[133] Meggs and Mickleburgh, *The Art of the Impossible*, 16.

[134] Paul Tennant, "The NDP Government of British Columbia: Unaided Politicians in an Unaided Cabinet," *Canadian Public Policy / Analyse de Politiques* 3, no. 4 (1977): 497, https://doi.org/10.2307/3549569.

Going from the 'free enterprise' party to the 'first socialist government' marked a significant change in governing philosophy in the province. As author and psychologist Vivien Burr wrote, it is at the point in which "other discourses pose a real threat"—like the socialist party gaining real power for the first time—that they will always be "contested by other discourses."[138] What makes this period ripe for study is precisely this: the inversion of power and subsequent leveling of the discursive playing field that the BC-NDP's rise to power represented. Even though the NDP won the election and managed to form a government, they knew the power they held was precarious and limited. Barrett's government had won a narrow majority, and they knew they were likely to face a backlash at the next election, whether from the public's reaction to controversial policies or the improved campaign efforts of embittered Social Credit politicians.[139]

The BC-NDP brought its socialist ideologies to the provincial government, sparking discursive conflicts inside and outside the legislature. How these socialist ideologies shaped the province's approach to using public land for housing are explored in this thesis through taking a closer look at the discursive formation of the following legislative events: a $50 million allocation for housing-focused expenditures (Special Funds Authorization Fund Act, 1973); legislation for protection of agricultural land (Land Commission Act, 1973); the creation of the first provincial department of housing in Canada (Department of Housing Act, 1973); and the acquisition of a private development company (Dunhill Development Corporation, 1973) to undertake housing activities aimed at increasing the housing supply: purchasing underutilized municipal lots, servicing available public land, and facilitating housing construction through partnering with nonprofit organizations and provincial-federal housing programs.

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[135] Lorne J. Kavic, *The 1200 Days: A Shattered Dream; Dave Barrett and the NDP in B.C., 1972-75*, with Internet Archive (Kaen Publishers, 1979), 59, http://archive.org/details/1200daysshattere0000kavi.

[136] Meggs and Mickleburgh, *The Art of the Impossible*, 21.

[137] Meggs and Mickleburgh, *The Art of the Impossible*, 23.

[138] Vivien Burr, *Social Constructionism*, 4th ed. (Routledge, 2024), 128, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003335016.

[139] Kavic, *The 1200 Days*, 59.

Political scientist Phillip Nesnick suggests that the BC-NDP's rise to power was "a test case of social democracy in practice in Canada," and this thesis argues that the test results are in: not only could socialism receive an electoral mandate in Canada, but it could become part of its institutional fabric, identity, and common-sense approach to using land for housing.[140] Where Whitzman and Hulchanski point to the federal government's disinvestments to nonmarket housing as the structural root of the housing crisis, this thesis points at the discursive practices of the Crown land regime. In applying the methodological and theoretical framework of the DHA to the 1972–75 BC Legislature, this thesis shows how the prevailing discourses around BC's public land were constructed in a particular historical, political, and cultural context—ultimately demonstrating that these discourses "could have been—and can become—different."[141]

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[140] Philip Resnick, "Social Democracy in Power: The Case of British Columbia," *BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly*, no. 34 (1977): 34, https://doi.org/10.14288/bcs.v0i34.923, 5.

[141] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 37.

CHAPTER TWO:
Methodological Framework

Chapter Two rationalizes my methodological decisions while explaining my research process, selected dataset, and analytical framework. This chapter demonstrates how the DHA served as the best framework for understanding the ideological struggles over public land and housing in the 1972–75 BC legislature. While the DHA and its interdisciplinarity, will be discussed more deeply in the next chapter, this chapter takes up the systematic methods applied to the legislative debates of the BC legislature. It begins by justifying my selection of the DHA, followed by an explanation of my research process through the it's eight-part procedure, showcasing the abductive approach of the method of moving fluidly between theory and empirical data. Next, it details my rationale for selecting the legislative debates as my primary data source, alongside showcasing the rest of my dataset. Lastly, the chapter reflects on my positionality and limitations as well as further research.

2.1 Selection of Methodology

Section 2.1 justifies my selection of the DHA on account of its interdisciplinary toolkit, integrating historical context into the interpretation of discourses.

This thesis began with a high-level literature review of contemporary housing scholars and pursued side quests on the evolution of Canada's cooperative housing movement, the housing solutions promoted by provincial and federal politicians, and the idea of housing as a human right. After a few months of this research, it emerged that the 1970s was a unique period of investment in nonmarket housing and that this was particularly evident in BC, where the first socialist government happened to come to power in 1972. As I dove into this period of housing history, I found an era filled with competing discourses on how the government should or should not intervene in addressing housing problems—discourses echoed by my real-estate owning parents, my best friend paying a high rent in Vancouver, my sister working with homeless populations in our home city, and our politicians, both BC-NDP Premiers John Horgan (latest) and David Eby (current) and Prime Ministers Justin Trudeau (latest) and Mark Carney (current) and Opposition Leader Pierre Poilievre. When I discovered that full transcripts of provincial legislative debates were publicly available, the direction of the thesis clarified: I would study political discourse in the context of housing history.

As the field of critical discourse analysis (henceforth "CDA") is not only a well-developed, traditional approach to the academic study of discourse but a methodology familiar to my department, the University of Oslo's Centre for Global Sustainability, for its close relation to practice theory, actively used by researchers Arve Hansan and Ulrikke Bryn Wethal to study consumption trends impacting the global climate crisis. CDA is understood as an extension of practice theory's perspective on social actions as a reproduction of institutionalized, context-driven practices, as the methodology treats discourse itself as a linguistic social practice embedded in a specific field of political or social action.[142,143] However, my topic concerned historically situated discourses and needed a broader toolkit then practice theory or critical discourse analysis had to offer alone. Here I discovered the interdisciplinarity offered by the DHA, which offered the methodological toolkit of critical discourse analysis *and* history. The DHA provided a way to trace how *recurring* ways of speaking about utilizing public land for housing.

The DHA approach is well-developed, having been around since the 1990s, and it offered a systematic and theoretically-grounded way to distill and organize my research. This system included a eight-part procedure to follow in the research process (**See 2.2**), categories of discursive strategies to employ at the stage of textual analysis (**See 2.3**), and diagrams for visually organizing fields of political action, topics of discourse, and interdiscursive relationships (**See 2.4**).[144] The DHA's theoretical roots in critical theory and post structuralism allowed me to treat housing discourses in the 1970s BC legislature as historically situated social practices revelatory of ideological positions and assumptions. Yet the two main advantages of DHA to my research were its interdisciplinarity and abductive nature, as it enabled me to move actively between theory and empirical data and across genres and public spheres. My personal and professional experience on the topic manifested in a 'hunch'—that a prevailing, even hegemonic mindset around the necessity of state-owned land contributes to high land costs and consequently, high housing costs.

The flexibility of the DHA procedure allowed me to explore this 'hunch' through empirical data without being methodologically tied to it as deductive approach or being banned for 'hunches' in an inductive approach. In this thesis, this looks like: tracking BC's privatization of Crown land in its early history; analyzing the campaign rhetoric of the BC-NDP and the legislative debates for ideologically-laden discourses on public land and housing; and comparing these discourses to those of housing historians and contemporary politicians in BC and Canada. The DHA permitted me to employ a wide dataset in multiple discursive genres to achieve a triangulation of analytical findings

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[142] Alan Warde, "Consumption and Theories of Practice," in *Consumption: A Sociological Analysis*, ed. Alan Warde (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-55682-0_5.

[143] Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis," in *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, vol. 2, ed. Teun A. van Dijk (London: Sage, 1997), 258–84.

[144] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse-Historical Approach," 30-31.

and contemporary relevance, as Wodak summarized that "practice is the target" of the DHA.[145] In summary, the DHA provided a methodology capable of linking discourse, ideology, and institutional practices across time—enabling this thesis to show how legislative debates of the 1972–75 BC Legislature expressed core ideological conflicts over public land and housing, while also situating these finding in a contemporary context and identifying directions for further research.

2.2 Selection of Dataset

Section 2.2 describes the selection of the dataset and how it serves to answer the research question.

The main primary source of this thesis is the transcripts of the legislative debates of the BC parliament (1972–75), which consisted of five legislative sessions beginning October 17, 1992, and ending June 26, 1975. The transcripts of BC's legislative debates offered direct insight into the day-to-day discourses of the legislature. The transcripts are publicly available, stored in a system called Hansard. "Hansard is the official and substantially verbatim report of debates in the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia," as defined by the Legislative Assembly of BC.[146] Hansard was first established in 1970 but only became a full record the year of the NDP's election in 1972, when the debates of budget estimates and clause-by-clause bills were included. The introduction of the Hansard system brought—for the first time—a complete verbatim transcript of the legislative proceedings. Today Hansard is one of Canada's democratic pillars and it offers an accurate ways in which to examine the discursive proceedings of the provincial and federal legislatures.

Following the DHA's emphasis on the historical context of discursive events, I have selected a variety of supplementary materials alongside my main primary source to establish a rich dataset capable of establishing a "triangulation of data."[147] All selected materials contain discourses or context relevant to the discursive struggles surrounding the 1972–75 BC-NDP government, thus equipping me to answer my research question concerning discursive construction of the public land regime—and thereby actualize the DHA's values of "recontextualization" and "interdiscursivity."[148]

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[145] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse-Historical Approach," 70.

[146] "Hansard Services," Legislative Assembly of BC, accessed September 30, 2025, www.leg.bc.ca/learn/hansard-services.

[147] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse-Historical Approach," 26.

[148] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse-Historical Approach," 70.

Figure 2.2.1: ***Summary of Dataset for Thesis***

Summary of Dataset

Primary Sources	Secondary Sources
Main Primary Source	Peer-reviewed journal articles
Legislative Debates trasncripts from Hansard (1972–1975)	
Supplementary Primary Sources	Historical accounts of Canadian housing policy and socialist movements
Journals of the Legislative Assembly from Hansard (1972–1975)	
Archival materials from University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections (convention and constitution party documents, campaign pamphlets, newspaper clippings)	Biographies of Premier Dave Barrett
Archival materials from Library and Archives Caanda (executive orders, sessional bill summaries, department reports, fiscal year estimates, public account statements)	Publicly available public land and housing data from Statistics Canada

The main primary source of this thesis is the transcripts of the legislative debates of the BC parliament (1972–75), which consisted of five sessions beginning October 17, 1992 and ending June 26, 1975. The transcripts of BC's legislative debates offered direct insight into the day-to-day discourses of the legislature. The transcripts are publicly available, stored in a system called Hansard. "Hansard is the official and substantially verbatim report of debates in the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia," as defined by the Legislative Assembly of BC.[149] Hansard was first established in 1970 but only became a full record the year of the NDP's election in 1972, when the debates of budget estimates and clause-by-clause bills were included. The introduction of the Hansard system brought—for the first time—a complete verbatim transcript of the legislative proceedings. Today Hansard is one of Canada's democratic pillars and it offers an accurate way in which to examine the discursive proceedings of the provincial and federal legislatures.

The supplementary primary sources are materials from Library and Archives Canada, available online, and UBC Rare Books and Special Collections, located on UBC's main Vancouver campus. During a visit to BC, I spent four days looking through archival materials: the New Democratic Party of British Columbia fonds (RBSC-ARC-1394); the Dave Barrett fonds (RBSC-ARC-1026), the BC-NDP Premier; and the Bob Williams fonds (RBSC-ARC-1794), the BC-NDP's Minister of the Department of Forestry, Lands, and Water Resources. The fonds held a range of materials, from personal letters to business cards to a funeral bill for the commemoration of Premier Barrett's father. The relevant materials that became incorporated into the corpus of the research were the NDP constitution, convention papers, and 1972 campaign pamphlet "A New Deal for People" as well as various newspaper clippings from *Vancouver Sun*, *Colonist*, and *The Province*.

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[149] "Hansard Services," Legislative Assembly of BC.

Figure 2.2.2: ***Summary of Visit to UBC Rare Books and Special Collections, September 2025***[150]

Fond Name	Reference Code	Total Boxes	Boxes Accessed	Topics Covered
New Democratic Party of British Columbia Fonds	RBSC-ARC-1394	477	425, 426, 461	Constitution Documents; Convention Papers; Election Records; Commitee Reports; Investigation Reports
Dave Barrett Fonds	RBSC-ARC-1026	47	4, 6, 7, 8, 18, 36	Appointment Books; Newspaper Clippings; Campaign Files; Correspondences; Agency Reports
Bob Williams Fonds	RBSC-ARC-1794	52	1, 17, 30, 33, 37	Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Water Resources Records; Crown Corporations Records

Though I tried to visit the provincial archives held at the Royal BC Museum, they were not open during my visit due to an ongoing public strike from the B.C. General Employees' Union. Fortunately, most of the materials that would have been available were also available online through Library and Archives Canada. I relied on the Journals of the Legislative Assembly for day-by-day accounts and summaries of proposed and passed bills as well as other government documents—reports from the CMHC and Environment Canada, public housing data from Statistics Canada, and provincial budgets and public account statements—to understand policy outcomes and draw an accurate timeline of legislative events.

Lastly, the supplementary secondary sources provided context and triangulation to the legislative debates and proceedings, offer academic reflections on contemporary and historical housing trends, policy events, and housing discourses as well as biographical information on the key political actor of the 1972–75 BC-NDP government, Premier Dave Barrett—all of which I draw on throughout the thesis. These texts were incorporated in the literature review phase of the research, as discussed in the following section. Altogether, the dataset covers multiple political genres and discursive contexts, ranging from media coverage to interparty communications to official public-facing records, while being centered around my central research topic: the discursive struggles that emerged from the 1972 election of the BC-NDP. In the next section, I provide a chronology of how I discovered the data and how it was incorporated at each stage of my research process.

2.3 Research Process

Section 2.3 outlines my research process, including the literature review, collection of empirical data and archival research, and introduces the analytical framework applied in **Chapter Four.**

The author of the DHA, Ruth Wodak from the Vienna School of Discourse Analysis, describes the method as a two-level process: an initial "entry-level analysis" that involves identifying the discursive themes in the texts, followed by an "in-depth analysis" involving a deeper "scrutinization" of the texts for triangulation, coherence, and cohesion.[151] In Sage's *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, Wodak and Reisigl outlined an eight-part procedure to the DHA methodology.[152] What follows is an explanation of my research process organised by this procedure.

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[150] "Explore Archives at UBC," Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, accessed February 11, 2026, https://rbscarchives.library.ubc.ca/university-of-britishcolumbia-library-rare-books-and-special-collections.

2.3.1 Step One: recollection, reading, and discussion of previous research

This thesis began with a topic and a hunch, mirroring the abductive nature of the DHA methodology. The topic being Canada's contemporary housing crisis, with a particular focus on BC, and the "hunch" being the impact of public land ownership on housing unaffordability driven by institutionalized socialist ideologies. At this point, I had not yet discovered the legislative debates of the BC Legislature or the uniqueness of the 1970s in Canada's housing history. Instead, my research started with a high-level literature review of contemporary housing scholarship.

As referenced in Chapter One, Whizman and Hulchanski emerged as prominent academic scholars studying Canada's housing trends, and others included Martine August, Steve Pomeroy, and Alexandra Flynn. Working from a critical political economy perspective, August attributes Canada's housing crises primarily to the financialization of housing—where homes are increasingly treated as an investment asset by large corporate owners and housing policy consistently privileges investors returns over meeting the social needs of Canadians.[153] Steve Pomeroy also points to the financialization of housing but focuses primarily on the long-term underinvestment in non-market housing since the 1990s, when the federal government divested from nonmarket housing and devolved housing responsibilities to the provinces.[154] Specifically, Pomeroy points to the 1970s as a time in which the federal-provincial partnerships created "a large legacy stock of rental housing that over the subsequent decades has enabled a degree of complacency about the amount and sustainability of this stock," as he wrote in 2019 report.[155]

Where August is a political economist and Pomeroy a policy consultant, both working in the province of Ontario, Alexandra Flynn is a property law expert directly situated directly in Vancouver, BC as a professor and researcher at the University of British Columbia. Flynn's work explains Canada's housing crisis as a result of fragmented approaches to housing policy across municipal, provincial, and federal entities, and points to the need for strong leadership and a rights-based framework to housing policy. [156,157] Like Pomeroy, Flynn argues that investment in nonmarket housing in the decades leadings up to the 1990s set "a precedent for federal leadership," showing that the federal government can indeed build and maintain social housing.[158]

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[151] Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear* (SAGE Publications Inc., 2015), 50.

[152] Adapted from Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse-Historical Approach," 2016.

[153] Martine August, *The Financialization of Housing in Canada: A Summary Report for the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate* (The Office of the Federal Housing Advocate, 2022), 4, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2023/ccdp-chrc/HR34-7-2022-eng.pdf

[154] Steve Pomeroy and Duncan Maclennan, *Rental Housing in Canada's Cities: Challenges & Responses* (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2019), 19-26, https://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/201904-UP2-RentalHousing-ChallengesResponses.pdf.

[155] Pomeroy and Maclennan, *Rental Housing in Canada's Cities*, 22.

That Whitzman and Hulchanski agree with this argument was discussed in **1.4**: Whitzman argues that Canada has solved its housing crises in the past, using the federal government's investment in nonmarketing housing in the 1970s as the underlying premise of her book, referencing in on the very first page, and Hulchanski additionally argues that the 1970s and 80s marked turn towards "social" housing in Canada, when federal financing developed approximately 205,000 units of affordable nonmarket housing—what he described as "a permanent stock of good quality non-profit 'social housing'."[159] The wealth of content produced by these researchers, as well as other scholars there was not space to discuss, provided a working knowledge of the various discursive topics amongst contemporary Canadian housing scholars: the increasing financialization of housing and catering to corporate investors; the fragmentation of housing policy across the federal, provincial, and municipal governments; and the divestment in social housing programmes in the 1990s, corresponding with the past investment in nonmarket housing through federal-provincial partnerships. Pomeroy and Flynn's discourse on the divestment after the 1990s and Whizman and Hulchanski's discourse on investment in nonmarket social housing in the 1970s suggested an overarching theme about this period as a "history lesson" for Canada's contemporary housing crises. The findings of my literature review thus narrowed the investigation to the 1970s as a critical period in Canada's housing history, and this early phase of research ultimately encompassed the first step of the DHA procedure, an "activation and consultation of preceding theoretical knowledge,"

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[156] Alexandra Flynn, "Constitutional Silence, Political Noise: The Case for Strong Federal Involvement in Housing Policy in Canada," *International Journal of Constitutional Law* (Blog), May 22, 2025, www.iconnectblog.com/constitutional silence-political-noise-the-case-for-strong-federal-involvement-in-housing-policy-in-canada/.

[157] Alexandra Flynn, "Binding Rights: Contractual Federalism and the Right to Housing in Canada," *European Review of Contract Law* 21, no. 3 (2025): 393–412, https://commons.allard.ubc.ca/fac_pubs/2814.

[158] Alexandra Flynn, "The Precedent for a Federal Leadership Role in Housing," *Policy Options*, November 9, 2023, https://policyoptions.irpp.org/2023/11/housing-federal-role/.

[159] Hulchanski, "Community Based Social Housing," 1-3.

providing the discursive backdrop for my analysis of the legislative debates.[160]

2.3.2 Step Two: systematic collection of data and context information

To dive deeper into this period of housing history, I read long-form historical literature, alongside peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, masters theses, policy documents, and government reports—allowing me to track housing discourses across multiple genres and discursive contexts, including historical, academic, governmental, and political. I used multiple databases for my literature search, including the University of Oslo library, University of British Columbia library open collections, Google Scholar, Government of Canada publications, as well as UBC Rare Books and Special Collections, and Library and Archives Canada. I came across one significant resource referenced in **1.2**: Greive's 1985 master thesis, which found that conflicting 'philosophies' (which I treat analytically as a close synonym of 'ideologies' in the context of housing policy debates) have weakened the province's capacity to deal with its housing challenges.[161] In the forty years since Greive conducted her research, BC is in another iteration of housing crises, with different political parties offering different solutions.

Discovering Greive's thesis at this stage in my research process is what led me to BC's legislative debates, which became my primary source. In her thesis, Greive quoted the words of SOCRED party leader Bill Bennet during a heated legislative debate on the proposed Leasehold and Mortgage Act in 1975: "People have come here from countries where they were tenants of the state and couldn't own land... It is unacceptable to the public that they do not have the opportunity to own a piece of their own country which comes with homeownership."[162,163] This discursive trace from the past bounced around in my head for months—*housing as owning a piece of one's own country*—and eventually, I sought context for the quotation in the full transcript of the legislative debate. What I found in the transcript was a lively discussion on what it means to belong to a nation, to safeguard natural resources, and to commune with nature. The topics of discourse, alongside the passion and playfulness of the discursive strategies employed by legislative members, suggested that housing policy brings up more than just the necessity of shelter; it connects to ideas of belonging, freedom, democracy, and nature. Housing policy appeared as an ideological expression—tied to our most fundamental ways of seeing the world. At this point, I had stumbled upon a rich discursive dataset that could help me explore the ideological conflicts impacting BC's capacity to address its housing crises. By moving iteratively between secondary scholarship, archival documents, government reports, and legislative debates, I was able to link these diverse texts and thereby establish interdiscursivity between housing discourses and their entanglement with broader discourses of national identity, democracy, and human nature, achieving a "systematic collection of data and context information."[164]

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[160] Wodak and Reisigl, "Discourse Historical Approach," 36.

[161] Grieve, "Continuity and Change," 2.

[162] Quoted in Grieve, "Continuity and Change," 76.

[163] The *Leaseholder and Mortgage Conversion Act* proposed mortgages at subsidized rates to enable households to acquire a home on publicly owned lots through a long-term lease arrangement; it received intense criticism.

2.3.3 Step Three: selection and preparation of data for specific analyses

At this point in my research, I had learned that contemporary housing scholars highlight the 1970s as a unique period of government investment in nonmarket housing and Greive had raised the issue of ideological conflicts in the pursuit of effective housing policy in BC. The discovery of the provincial legislative debates transcripts provided an ideal discursive context to analyze the connection between housing policy and ideology. Two things were still missing: a consolidated dataset and a systematic analytical framework to apply to my data.

I built my specific dataset from all the transcripts available on Hansard and the archival materials available through UBC Rare Books and Special Collections and Library and Archives Canada. I dove into the legislative debates and legislative journals from this time to identify the key policy events related to utilizing public land for housing as well as the key actors and supplementary policy documents and reports. I discovered the two dominant political parties of the 1970s, the BC-NDP and Social Credit Party, engaged in intense discursive struggles and vied for political power during this decade, particularly over policies related to public land and housing. The BC-NDP government not only introduced new and innovative housing legislation while in power, but as the first socialist government elected in BC, their government inspired lively debate on ideological phenomena related to land and housing, such as the nature of land as a resource versus a commodity or the human right to seek profit through land ownership versus the right to use the province's land.

I began combing through the transcripts of all five legislative sessions that occurred during the BC-NDP government. I used the indexes to search for debates related to key words that arose during my literature review: *housing, housing crisis, housing policy, affordable housing, public land, crown land*, etc. I was overwhelmed with discursive content related to these topics and thus decided to limit my search to discourses occurring within specific legislative events that came up in my search. These five legislative events fell naturally into a chronological timeline: the Special Funds Appropriation Act (Bill 77) and Land Commission Act (Bill 42) were passed in the second legislative session; the Department of Housing Act (Bill 49) passed in the third; and the executive order to purchase Dunhill Development Corporation was issued right before the fourth. I downloaded every single transcript related to these legislative events and uploaded them into NVivo, where they were highlighted for discursive topics and strategies and argument schemes.

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[164] Wodak and Reisigl, "Discourse Historical Approach," 38.

As my research had led me to the discursive context of the legislative debates and the topic of ideological conflicts, I naturally looked to the well-established field of critical discourse studies. In Sage's *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies* 3rd edition, I found Wodak and Reisigl's chapter on the DHA, which immediately appeared to be a methodology well-suited to my research. From here, I familiarized myself with the various applications of the DHA as well as various texts from prominent CDA scholar Norman Fairclough, amongst others in the Blackwell's *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. These texts offered a cannon of content to theoretically ground my approach to studying the discursive formation of ideologies in a social and historical context. In summary, my research led me to investigate ideological struggles over public land and housing in the historical context of the 1970s and therefore select the DHA as my methodological and theoretical approach.

2.3.4 Step Four: formulate precise research questions(s)

To move from a broad research interest towards a precise analytical research question, I drew from the "three-dimensional" approach put forth by Wodak in the DHA:[165]

1) Identify the specific historical context: *What policy events occurred?*
2) Investigate the discursive strategies: *How were these policy events discussed and debated?*
3) Examine the linguistic realizations: *How do the discourses impact BC's Crown land regime?*

From here, I formulated (and reformulated) my research question around the ideological conflicts that influence the utilization of public land for housing development.

2.3.5 Step Five: operationalize the research questions in linguistic categories

At this point, I reached a point in my reading where discursive themes had strongly emerged across the multiple genres of text I had amassed in my dataset. From contemporary housing scholarship, historical accounts of federal housing policy, archival documents of policy memos or executive-orders, political campaign materials, to transcripts of the 1970s legislative debates—similar topics of discourse came up over and over again, a few examples being: *The government had*

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[165] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse Historical Approach," 32.

a responsibility to intervene in the housing market; access to housing is a human right; land should serve social needs. What I needed now was a systematic approach to analyzing the nature of these discourses—a way to deconstruct it and break it down into parts with the DHA toolkit.

The DHA toolkit is deep and vast, having been applied across various contexts and developed by Wodak and other scholars over decades. Broadly, Wodak and Reisigl describe "discursive strategies" as "systematic ways of using language" used at "different levels of linguistics organisation and complexity."[166] I began with their five categories of discursive strategies outlined in *Discourse and Discrimination*, but found them poorly adapted for my research question, as they were developed for deconstructing discriminatory rhetoric. However, I discovered these discursive strategies were adapted to analyze national identity formation in Austria in *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*. Here I narrowed I operationalized the "constructing strategy," a macro-strategy that attempts to construct and establish a particular shared group identity by "promoting unification, identification and solidarity, as well as differentiation."[167] This construction of shared-identity is realized through argument schemes that are composed of argument *premises*, content-related *topoi*, formal categories of *argumentation strategies*, and *macro-structures* of the argumentation, referring to the stages of the argument and the inter-dependency of arguments.[168]

In my analysis, I articulate *premises* as functioning as the basis of various discursive practices—ultimately contributing to the overall discursive construction of land as a collectively-stewarded resource based on their stage in the argument process. Each articulation of the premises identified in the research belong to distinct *topoi* and *argumentation strategies*: *Topoi,* a Greek word that Wodak defines as "parts of argumentation that belong to the required premises" which connect the argument premise to the argument conclusion through socially conventionalization and habituality.[169] An example from my data is the *topos of use*, part of the premise that land should be used rather than owned, or the *topos of scarcity*, part of the premise that farmland is limited and should therefore be protected by the government. *Argumentation strategies* include appeals to authority ("argumentum ad verecundiam"), appeals to the populace ("argumentum ad populum"), using the pronoun "we" to signify unity, or employing references to discourses in other contexts

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[166] Wodak and Reisigl, *Discourse and Discrimination* (Routledge: 2001), 44.

[167] Ruth Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 33.

[168] Ruth Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 33.

[169] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse Historical Approach," 35.

("interdiscursivity").[170] Together, these four aspects of argument schemes contribute to "a comprehensive analysis of argumentation," which I apply to my analysis in **Chapter Four**.[171]

2.3.6 Step Six: apply the linguistic categories sequentially on to the text

Here I applied Wodak's three-dimensional approach to my specific research questions:

> 1) identified the historical and political context (results showcased in **1.4**, **1.5**, and **4.1**),
>
> 2) investigated the "constructing strategies," finding *topoi* in argument schemes and other *argumentation strategies*, such as using "we" and "our" or an "appeal to authority" or "an appeal to populace" or "interdiscursivity" (results showcased throughout **Chapter Four**)
>
> 3) examined the linguistic realizations, locating the overarching discursive practices that emerged through analysis and their connection to the broader social practice of BC's Crown land regime (results showcased in **4.7**)

Wodak's three-dimensional approach coincides with Fairclough's three-dimensional model that captures the practice nature of discourses in social contexts. Finding Fairclough's model helped me understand BC's Crown land regime as a social practice, with discursive practices functioning as a mediator between the texts and social practice.[172] This meant that between the legislative debate transcripts and BC's Crown land regime there lived discursive practices. I then combined Wodak's three-dimensional approach with Fairclough's three-dimensional model to organize my analytical framework—relying on Wodak's approach to systematically categorize the discourses down to their linguistic categories and relying on Fairclough's model to understand the function of these linguistic categories as a practice contributing to society. I adapted Wodak's approach and Fairclough's model for my research, combing rhetorical linguistic analysis with social practice analysis. I drew and redrew the diagram many times over the course of my analysis, reformulating it based on new understandings of the dataset in relation to my research question—finally emerging in **Figure 2.4.2** in the following section.

2.3.7 Step Seven: draw up the context diagram for the specific text and fields of action

The part of the DHA toolkit that seeks to place discourses within social practices is the context diagram, which Wodak et al. calls "Selected dimensions of discourse as social practice."[173] This context diagram visually links the discursive research to broader fields of action (or *social practices*) that they are embedded in. This diagram applies Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse into a DHA methodological context, in which discourses are studied over time with close historical and political context gathering. The advantage of the context diagram as opposed to simply the three-dimensional model is that it incorporates the entire empirical dataset in an actionable political context—i.e. how discourses impact institutional processes through time. Applying to the context diagram, I could showcase my entire dataset from legislative materials to campaign materials and their relation to institutional process, what Wodak calls *fields of action* and Fairclough calls *social practices*. The resulting context diagram is **Figure 2.4.1**.

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[170] Wodak and Reisigl, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 72.

[171] Wodak and Meyers, *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*, 35.

[172] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 69.

[173] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse-Historical Approach," 68.

2.3.8 Step Eight: make an extensive interpretation and return to the research questions

The final step of the DHA procedure was the most difficult—applying my analysis to my research question and offering an interpretation of the analytical results. As I took an abductive approach to the research, moving between my dataset, analysis, theory, and historical context fluidly, the interpretation process was iterative, sometimes slow and then understand would come all at once. The more time I spent in this process, the more that all the various components of the research came together in a pattered way and I could see how the BC-NDP used discursive practices related to collective ownership to bolster their land zoning, acquisition, and leasehold strategies and in turn, bolster and retain BC's Crown land regime. These interpretations are weaved throughout the thesis from the abstract, introduction, analysis to conclusion, creating a triangulated, historically-situated, and practical-minded critique of the discursive structural dimension of BC's Crown land regime.

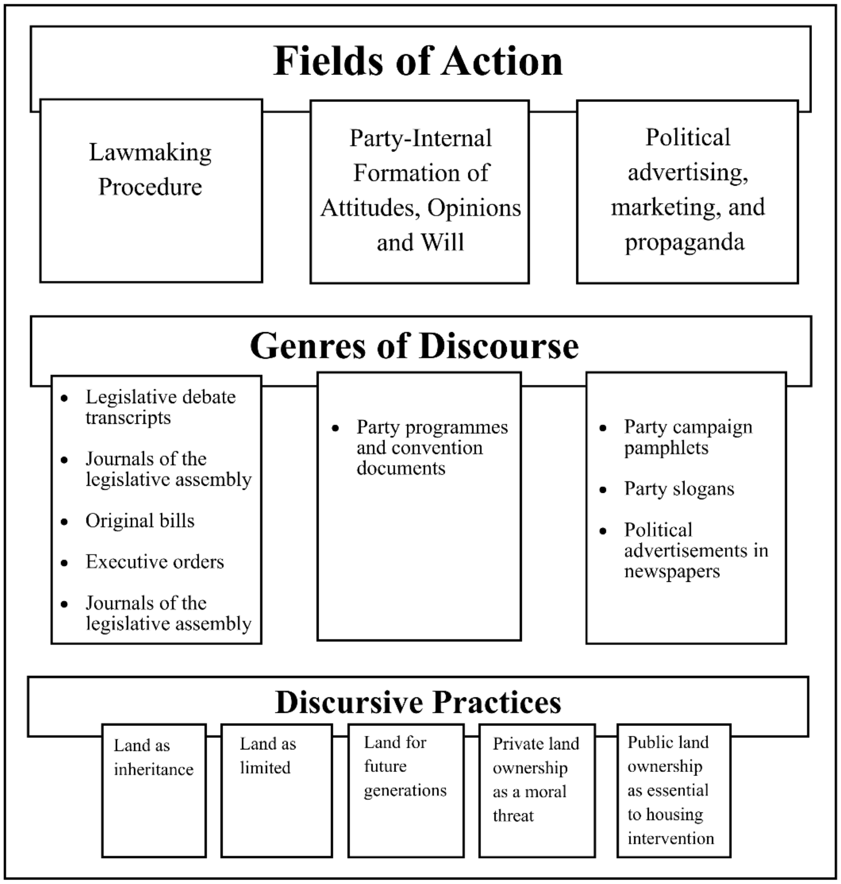
2.4 Analytical Framing

Section 2.4 equips the reader with a visual depiction of the analytical framework applied in Chapter Four. The previous section described the research process sorting through the various tools of the DHA toolkit, while this section showcases the applied version of such tools.

Applying DHA's context-driven approach, I considered the entire field of the discursive event in my analysis—the discursive event being the legislative debates of the 1972–75 BC Legislature. This means that though my analysis focused primarily on the discourses of BC-NDP Members, it also included discourses from Opposition members as a way of providing context, contrast, and 'clues'. Moments where the Opposition reacts strongly, as if an internal spark has been lit, and the energy in the legislature amplifies, are revelatory of core ideological collisions: new discourses antagonize old discourses and create an opportunity for new articulations. When one's core assumptions about the world are brought into conscious language and debated, threatened, or criticized, this is likely to elicit a strong response. When members interject and interrupt one another, when name-calling happens, when banter goes from harmless to cruel—these are often moments in the discourse where ideologies are alive, active, and passing through a 'hegemonic intervention'.[174]

Political actors use discursive strategies to position themselves within broader ideological structures such as democratic socialism (in the case of the BC-NDP) or liberalism and free-enterprising values (in the case of the Opposition) as well as to rationalize ideologically-motivated policies. Throughout the analysis, the category of the "constructing strategy" helped me understand how BC-NDP members employed both *offensive* and *defensive* plays to construct a unified approach to the province's public land: Offensive plays are featured in the first and last part of the analysis, where BC-NDP members employ various argument schemes in their discursive practices—construct land as inherited, limited, belonging to future generations, and essential to housing intervention. Defensive plays are featured in **4.5**, where BC-NDP members antagonise the sedimented discourses created by the Opposition—constructing private land ownership as a moral threat to the province. The diagrams in **Figure 2.4.1** and **Figure 2.4.2** will help the reader orient to the analytical framework of this thesis.

Figure 2.4.1: Adaptation of the DHA's "Context Diagram"[175]


Fields of Action
Lawmaking Procedure
Party-Internal Formation of Attitudes, Opinions and Will
Political advertising, marketing, and propaganda
Genres of Discourse
• Legislative debate transcripts
• Journals of the legislative assembly
• Original bills
• Executive orders
• Journals of the legislative assembly
• Party programmes and convention documents
• Party campaign pamphlets
• Party slogans
• Political advertisements in newspapers
Discursive Practices
Land as inheritance
Land as limited
Land for future generations
Private land ownership as a moral threat
Public land ownership as essential to housing intervention

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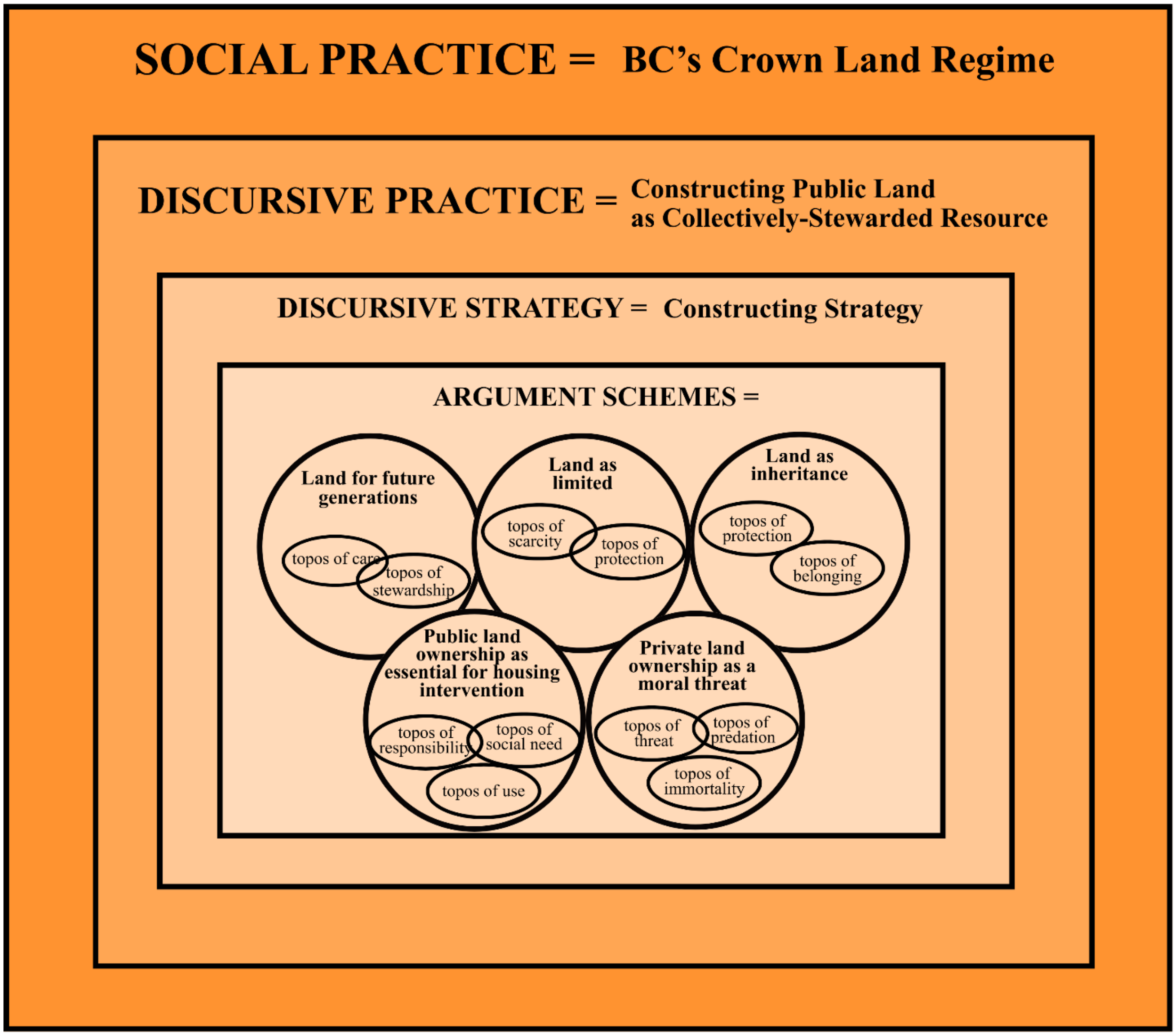
[174] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 48.

[175] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse-Historical Approach," 68.

Figure 2.4.2: ***Adaptation of the DHA's three-dimensional approach and Fairclough's three dimensional model with the analytical results***[176][177]


SOCIAL PRACTICE = BC's Crown Land Regime
DISCURSIVE PRACTICE = Constructing Public Land as Collectively-Stewarded Resource
DISCURSIVE STRATEGY = Constructing Strategy
ARGUMENT SCHEMES =
Land for future generations
topos of care
topos of stewardship
Land as limited
topos of scarcity
topos of protection
Land as inheritance
topos of protection
topos of belonging
Public land ownership as essential for housing intervention
topos of responsibility
topos of social need
topos of use
Private land ownership as a moral threat
topos of threat
topos of predation
topos of immortality

2.5 Positionality and Reflexivity

Section 2.5 seeks to make my position towards the research topic clear, while additionally describing how I incorporated reflexivity throughout the research process.

Aligning with the DHA's adherence to critical theory, the socio-philosophical orientation of "questing for truth" from "the point of view of an ideal or standard or alternative to a system," I do not claim to take an objective but rather a critical, non-neutral stance towards the research topic.[178] Working within the broader field of CDA, the transparency of the researcher is even more emphasized. As Fairclough states, "Critical linguists make explicit their political interests."[179] Like the political actors in the BC Legislature, my embodied experiences with housing policy outcomes, my political cultural knowledge and my underlying ideological assumptions inform how I construct the world and interpret land relations in BC's housing market. The same critical eye I bring to the data, I must bring to myself. This means being as clear as possible about my about personal, professional, and politics connections to the research topic, as through these connections I garnered curiosity, contextual insight, situated understanding, and enhanced access to materials.

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[176] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse Historical Approach," 32.

[177] Fairclough et al, "Critical Discourse Analysis," in *Critical Discourse Analysis Volume 1,* ed. Ruth Wodak (SAGE Publications Ltd, 2013), 73.

[178] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse Historical Approach," 25.

I am Canadian-born and raised and maintain strong personal ties to BC. Familiarity with the province's political institutions, housing systems, and public discourse informed my personal motivation towards the research topic. I am a witness to the housing affordability and supply crisis in the greater Vancouver area of BC, whether by witnessing homelessness on the streets or seeing my friends and family members struggle with high rental prices and worry about never being able to enter the housing market. I left BC when I turned voting age and have never participated in a provincial or federal election, nor am I affiliated with any political party in Canada. Not living in the province, only visiting regularly, I am an outside observer with personal connections.

I am also a professional in the American Midwest social housing industry, with several years of experience developing social housing projects in partnership with state and federal funding opportunities. What the government does or does not fund has a direct impact on the housing market, one example being the state's choice to fund recovery housing in 2023, which led to the development of 2 million dollars worth of housing for individuals recovering from substance addictions in my community. With enough government funding aimed directly at housing development, an entirely new industry can be created—what has come to be called the *third housing sector*. As my professional work has been rooted in this third sector, I bring embodied knowledge about how political cultural practices impact housing markets. As such, I understand the BC-NDP's interventionist housing policies in the 1970s as setting the stage for the emergence of a third housing sector—an industry of private, nonprofit, and cooperatives groups orienting towards the funding priorities and policy programmes of the government. My professional background thus motivates me towards understanding the impact of the third sector on the overall health of the housing market; in this case, the impact of the BC-NDP establishing a government-led housing sector with public land at the center of its policy interventions.

Making clear my political background and ideological assumptions is more difficult, as they are more complex, diffuse, and unconscious than childhood geography or professional history. The best I can articulate is this: I align with liberalist values of land and homeownership, *and* I support housing policy that ensures society's most vulnerable have a place to call home. Becoming a lucky homeowner at a young age, I have amassed a decade worth of embodied knowledge on its benefits and challenges. The financial security of homeownership is one benefit, but its social security has been wholly another. Taking housing to be the place where one belongs-to the world and from where one cares-for their world, I have come to see the agency afforded by private ownership as a tried and true pathway for meeting the basic human need of social security: feeling-safe, belonging-to, and caring-for. Moving down the housing continuum, from homeownership-on-private-land to homeownership-on-leased-land to renting-from-the-private-market to renting-from-the-government-subsidized-market, it is agency that gradually diminishes and at the very bottom of the continuum, individuals must rely on the funding priorities of the government to secure their housing. I seek housing policy that can balance these two elements while encouraging upward movement on the housing continuum—policies to deregulate the housing market and allow it to operate more efficiently than it presently does under the BC-NDP government. These values inform my critical eye aimed at the BC-NDP's socialist policies and its contribution to BC's Crown land regime.

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[179] Fairclough et al, "Critical Discourse Analysis," 95.

I worked to be reflexive and engage in "continuous self-reflection" throughout the research process.[180] As is the abductive nature of the DHA, I moved fluidly between the debate transcripts, the CDA theory, the relevant scholarship, and supporting materials—always seeking to root my analysis in broader historical and contemporary housing scholarship whenever possible. In this way, I worked with a wide dataset which helped me reflect on my assumptions. Examples include: dialoging with prominent Canadian housing scholars, namely Whitzman and Hulchanski, using their work on federal disinvestment in nonmarket housing as a jumping off point, and contextualizing the BC-NDP's housing discourses by comparing them to those of other political parities in Canada. Altogether, my personal, professional, and ideological background advantaged my research such that 1) I personally cared about the data and research question, 2) I began with a situated understanding of government policy impacts housing markets, and 3) I naturally oriented towards social critique and resisting power.[181]

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[180] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse Historical Approach," 24.

[181] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse Historical Approach," 24.

2.6 Limitations and Further Research

Section 2.5 describes the constraints of the research process and elaborates on future research possibilities and ways to expand the dataset.

My research began with a desire to explore public land ownership in Canada and its connection to the housing crisis. Once I learned of the dominance of public land ownership in Canada, I wanted to understand the nature of the Crown land regime. These curiosities were curtailed however by limited time, page count, and theoretical and analytical knowledge. Not having the economic, political, or statistical background necessary to take on a quantitative or policy-focused approach, I turned to my academic background in rhetoric and literature and found the well-suited field of critical discourse analysis studies. This limited me to asking about the *discursive* production and reproduction of BC's Crown land regime, rather than the full nature of its social practice. As a social practice also includes non-discursive elements such as legal frameworks, institutional structures, and social realms, it cannot be fully and properly analyzed by discourse analysis.

The next limitations came to my dataset, which had to be continuously whittled down to a reasonable size for the scope of a master's thesis. First round, I had narrow my focus to the BC-NDP government of 1927-75, only linking to the contemporary BC-NDP government for foregrounding the research question and grounding my findings in cotemporary relevance. Second round, I had to narrow my focus to the Land Commission and Department of Housing debates, though I started with the intent to analyze four legislative events. Third round, I had to narrow my focus to the discourses of BC-NDP members, only incorporating discourses from the Opposition for context and contrast.

As for my primary data source, interviews could have perhaps captured more clear rationales for policy decisions or more genuine acknowledgements of ideological positions. As Wodak et al. pointed out, the limitation of the parliamentary discourse arena is that politicians often adapt their speeches according to context and audience—so far as them being a sort of "chameleon."[182] Yet, on another hand, this is also why legislative debate discourses made suitable sources for my research: The nature of public-facing, audience-adapted discourse is that it demonstrates how the politicians want to be understood by the public, and in the case of the government-side of the legislature, the discursive practices are in service of justifying its own policies rather than opposing policies it disagrees with. This makes it is especially useful when trying to understand the formation of shared identities and shared conceptions of common sense in the political culture—because they live precisely in the public political arena. If political actors echo the ideological positions and policy approaches of the political party to which they belong, they are, in that moment, participating in the formation of shared identities and establishing normalcy and common-sense.

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[182] Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, 73.

Though many decisions were made throughout the research process that could have been otherwise, each decision was taken in accordance with my limitations in mind and the pursuit of the research question at hand. These limitations, however, mean that there are many opportunities for further research. The dataset may be expanded to include a close analysis of contemporary BC-NDP discourses; BC-NDP discourses at the turn of the century; NDP discourses in other provincial contexts; and NDP discourses at the federal level. Expanding the dataset could further include incorporating more archival materials such as cabinet minutes, internal party memos, and more campaign pamphlets as well as conducting qualitative interviews with legislative members, public housing leaders, non-elected party members, and housing policy historians and experts. The selection of data could also be turned towards the preceding or proceeding Social Credit governments, as a means of understanding what discursive practices served to maintain or antagonize the Crown land regime under a more liberalist government.

The analytical framework developed in this thesis may be applied to how discursive practices reproduce the Crown land regime at the municipal level, in other provincial governments, and especially, on the federal political landscape. It may also be applied to other countries, so that Canada’s Crown land regime could be understood in reference to OECD and G7 peers with larger private land markets—looking at what discursive practices construct their land regimes and what hegemonic understandings of land and housing dominant on their political landscape. This multi-governmental, possibly multi-national analysis would help break down the Crown land regime into further parts, making the structural elements of this powerful and reproducing social practice more recognizable, understandable, and ultimately, malleable.

CHAPTER THREE:
Theoretical Framework

Chapter Three establishes the theoretical framework of this thesis, beginning with the theoretical distinctness of the discourse-historical approach within the broader field of critical discourse analysis, showing how the DHA's emphasis on historical reconstruction and diachronic analysis allows discourses to be traced across time and connected to contemporary housing politics. Next, the chapter explains how discourse can be understood as producing social relations, identities, and power dynamics, grounding the thesis in social construction and Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse. The chapter then describes how discourses are ideological and become visible through discursive practices and materialized into legal structures. Finally, drawing on Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, the chapter frames the 1972–75 legislative struggles as a hegemonic intervention in which sedimented liberal property discourses were challenged by collectivist discourses, re-articulating the common-sense approach to the province's land.

3.1 Tracking Discursive Practices Across Time

Section 3.1 situates the DHA within the broader field of CDA, showing how its emphasis on historical reconstruction and diachronic analysis provides the theoretical foundation for linking temporally bounded legislative debates to broader macro-structures.

To understand BC's Crown land regime by analysis of the 1972–75 BC-NDP, I needed a way to link situated discourses with a fixed timestamp to a broader phenomenon without a fixed timestamp. One means of doing so is through the CDA model developed by Norman Fairclough, whose work links discourses to broader social phenomena, particularly through the advancement of discourse as a social practice.[183] While this theoretical model became indispensable to my conceptualization of BC's Crown land regime as a social practice constitutive of discursive practices (**See 3.2**), with Fairclough's three-dimensional model informing my analytical framework (**See 2.4**), I needed to understand the historical development of these practices across several decades of time. The DHA was explicitly designed for such diachronic analysis—to situate discursive practices within specific political events, institutional processes, and interdiscursive chains over time. Context, while essential to Fairclough, was a tool for grounding complex social relations on the macro-sociological level, more so than a tool for situating discourses in particular historical and cultural moments on the socio-political level.[184] In this way, the DHA diverges from Fairclough's model on account of its analytical emphasis.

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[183] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method,* 65.

Stemming-from and belonging-to the broader field of CDA, the DHA is grounded in critical social theory, Foucauldian power/ideology theory, post-structuralism, western Marxism, and functional linguistics, as the next sections will explain. The various CDA models stem from scholars that have advanced particular aspects of these theoretical traditions: Fairclough's socio-cultural approach, Teun A. van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, Theo van Leeuwen's social semiotics approach, and Wodak's socio-historical approach.[185] Wodak's DHA model emphasizes historical contextualization and interdiscursivity, adjusting the CDA traditional toolkit in service of 1) "interdisciplinary research with a special focus on historical imbedding", 2) "multiple triangulation as a methodological principle", and 3) "practical application of results."[186] First, the CDA tradition is interdisciplinary by nature, stemming from linguistics, social theory, philosophy, and political economy, and the DHA model takes this interdisciplinarity a step further, drawing from the discipline of history and its detailed archival analysis in search of a triangulated understandings of past events. Secondly, the DHA grounds the discursive event(s) in various perspectives from multiple textual genres and archival sources, seeking to triangulate the analysis through a wide and diachronic empirical dataset. Thirdly, the DHA takes on socio-political topics that present a contemporary complex problem, seeking to disseminate practical insights not just to academic audiences but to the 'general public' through educational seminars, newspapers, radio, political consulting, etc. "The approach is problem oriented," writes Wodak, "not focused on specific linguistic items."[187,188] The distinct characteristic of the DHA model, as opposed to other CDA models, can be summed up as such: The DHA is concerned with the historical and socio-political context of discourses, their evolution through time, and their relevancy to current complex problems. The ubiquity and urgency of Canada's housing crisis, particularly in BC, is thus a topic ripe for DHA analysis.

The DHA's emphasis on 'historical imbedding' advantages my research, as it embeds the Crown land regime in a timestamped context, as if giving an ethereal phenomena a body and a place to call home. While pure CDA approaches restrict themselves to the study of language, the addition of history allows the researcher to incorporate more background information, sources of data, and other empirical observations.[189] The DHA is distinct in its 'multi-methodology', working "a variety of different empirical data as well as context theories."[190] As such, my research focuses on one primary text (the transcripts of legislative debates) but also incorporates archival materials. These emblems of 'contextual knowledge' are woven throughout the thesis.

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[184] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 66.

[185] Wodak and Reisigl, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 4.

[186] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse-Historical Approach," 31.

[187] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse-Historical Approach," 31-56.

[188] Wodak and Meyers, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (SAGE Publications, Ltd, 2001), 11.

The DHA debuted in the 1995 book *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of racism and antisemitism,* authored by Wodak alongside fellow Austrian linguist, Martin Reisigl. This book surveyed the aforementioned CDA approaches by Fairclough, van Dijk, and van Leeuwen for their strengths and weaknesses, finding three underspecified areas in the dominant approaches of the 1990s: a need for rigorous diachronic contextualization; a need for a more structured toolkit for identifying discursive strategies; and a need for triangulating discourse across texts, genres, and historical events. Most importantly, the Vienna School was studying antisemitism, right-wing populism, and nationalist rhetoric in Austria—discursive phenomena with deep entanglements with the political events, institutional processes, and shifting political systems surrounding World War Two. Such deep-seeded discursive phenomena developed over decades of meaning making and shifting political contexts, making structured historical contextualization essential to the research.[191]

Wodak and Reisigl presented a new CDA approach—rooted in traditional CDA conceptions of critique, ideology, and power, while growing new theoretical roots in rigorous historical reconstruction, triangulation through diverse datasets, and clearly defined analytical procedures. *Discourse and Discrimination* presented racism as a social practice with ideological roots that "manifests itself discursively" that can be systematically broken down into linguistic parts to make the discursive strategies of discriminatory rhetoric knowable.[192] A few years later, Wodak and Reisigl were joined by linguist Rudolf de Cillia and political scientist Karin Liebhart to study the "manifold attempts to imagine and construct national identity" in Austria, especially in the aftermath of joining the European Union in 1995.[193] The resulting book, the *Discursive Construction of National Identity*, further developed the DHA approach, showing it to be capable of capturing

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[189] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse-Historical Approach," 26.

[190] Ruth Wodak, "Pragmatics and Critical Discourse Analysis," in *Pragmatics of Discourse*, ed. Klaus P. Schneider and Anne Barron (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2014), 378.

[191] Wodak and Reisigl, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 1-10.

[192] Wodak and Reisigl, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 44.

[193] Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, 2.

"macro-strategies" that construct national identities over decades, their dataset spanning the post-WWII period to the 1990s.[194] This book was particularly helpful to my research, as it helped me understand the Crown land regime as part of a collectively shared-identity, ruled by "principles for 'proper behaviour'" and "stands for 'proper speaking'," rooted in a shared territory, history, myths, and conceptions of common-sense.[195]

Since then, the DHA has been applied to the study of xenophobic, nationalistic, and racist rhetoric in Europe (*The Politics of Fear*, 2005; *The Shameless Normalization of Far-Right Discourse, 2020*); the everyday lives of politicians in the European Parliament (*The Discourse of Politics in Action*, 2009); the discursive strategies of right-wing populist parties in EU member states (*Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse,* 2013); and the re-contextualization of fascism in post-war European political discourse (*Analyzing Fascist Discourse*, 2013). These studies orient around a clear topical theme: trying to expose discursive strategies entangled with political power. On account of its prolific founder, Ruth Wodak, the DHA has been applied as a defense against political power—a way of making hidden structures knowable through tracing discourses over time. The DHA's orientation around political outcomes is theoretically significant; it roots political power in its discursive foundations, showing how language shapes the possibilities within which political action unfolds—whether in antisemitic propaganda that undergirded the Holocaust or in the contemporary normalization of anti-immigrant and nationalist politics in Europe.

The DHA stands apart in its ability to capture the discursive construction of collective political imaginaries: racist political agendas, national identity, or immigration legislation. Traveling from the European continent to North America and jumping from discriminatory rhetoric to social ownership rhetoric is not a methodological leap. The DHA is meant for complex, diachronic, and multifaceted political phenomena, with Wodak and Reisigl specifying its use for contemporary socio-political topics such as reporting on climate change events, right-wing attitudes towards immigration, tensions between nation states, or parliamentary debates on data security.[196] Canada's contemporary housing crisis is entangled with similar political phenomena—immigration politics, national identity, and ideological tensions between left- and right-wing populism—and it is a complex web of problems that affect all socio-economic levels of society. The housing crisis stems not only from policy decisions, market forces, and regulatory systems but from deeply sedimented discursive practices, constructed through decades of political discourse. Applying the DHA to Canada's Crown-dominant land regime helped me trace the contemporary phenomena back to its discursive roots. In focusing on the headquarters of Canada's left-wing populism, the province of BC, I am able to show how this this Crown-dominant land regime was not inevitable but constructed by specific discursive practices, ideological contexts, and institutional processes that began several decades ago.[197] The emergence of the BC-NDP on the political landscape in 1972 introduced socialist principles into the province's land markets and institutionalized regulatory controls on agricultural land with the Land Commission and the retention of Crown land for residential development through the policy strategies of the Department of Housing.

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[194] Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, 3.

[195] Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, 20-21.

[196] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse-Historical Approach," 27-57.

Though my analysis focuses on only a three-year period (1972–75) and does not linger on the proceeding decades into present-day, this is merely a function of the limits of a masters thesis. I anchor my research in the diachronic nature of the DHA because the discursive practices of the BC-NDP were institutionalized into laws that continue to exist into the present. The Land Commission Act still functions as a key legal and public-facing pillar of the province's stewardship of agricultural land, and though the Department to Housing has since been dissolved, its policy approach of leasing the province's Crown land for publicly-funded housing not only remains but is now articulated by all of province's political parties (**see 1.5**). When discursive practices are leveraged in service of real legislative impacts, this means they get to live past their discursive moment, institutionalized into the structural fabric of the province. As such, the analysis of past BC-NDP discursive practices holds contemporary relevance precisely because these discursive practices are still with us, echoing through the current Agricultural Land Commission and the platforms of BC's political parties. The DHA provided the theoretical basis to connect these past discursive practices to the contemporary Crown land regime and implication in Canada's housing crisis.

The DHA connects contemporary discourses to preceding discourses which developed in a specific historical, cultural, and political context. The BC-NDP's discursive practices cannot be fully understood without knowing the particular liberalist-dominated space the BC legislature had been in for the 20th century (**See 4.1**), the circumstances of the broader housing market in the province at the time, (**See 1.4**), and the structural nature of the province's land system they operated in (**See 4.1**). The DHA provided a way to link timestamped discursive events to overarching macro-structures without leaping but instead traveling step-by-step through their discursive evolution. Though this thesis does not capture the entire discursive evolution of BC's Crown land regime, it does make knowable the impact of a particular discursive event on the contemporary political landscape.

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[197] Ruff, Norman J. "Institutionalizing Populism in British Columbia." *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1993 94): 24–32. https://www.revparl.ca/english/issue_param_147_art_980.ht.

3.2 Understanding Discourse as Social Practice

Section 3.2 expands on the link between legislative debates and broader macro-structures, grounding these claims in social constructionist thought and Fairclough's three-dimensional conception of discourse's role in producing the social world. Through this, I establish legislative discourse as part of producing social relations and therefore part of the 'practice' architecture of BC's Crown land regime.

The advantage of the DHA 'belonging-to' the theoretical traditions of CDA was that I could understand the Crown land regime as a social practice without being methodologically inconsistent. That CDA had advanced the theory of discourse being a part social practice, primarily through Fairclough's work, was indispensable to my research topic. Fairclough's three-dimensional model, which I adapted for my research topic and showcased in **2.4**, conceptualizes discursive events as having three analytically distinct but dialectically related dimensions: 1) a text, 2) a discursive practice, and 3) a social practice.[198] This model provides a way of understanding the link between discursive events and broader macro-structures in society, thus providing a concrete analytical framework that can be applied to understand social phenomena.

Do not be misled by the term *social*, as Fairclough uses this term as a catch-all for all the ways that discourses produce the social world. The theoretical foundation for the *discursive construction of national identities* that Wodak et al. wrote about takes discourses as part of constructing social identities. How people (or using Fairclough's more formal term, "social actors") use language is a signal to that which they value, how they socially identify, what systems of knowledge or belief they belong to, or where they find meaning in the world.[199] When BC-NDP member Ms. Brown says that *land should be used and not owned*, this suggests a value orientation towards equity, an identification with collectivist notions of ownership, and an alignment with ideological traditions that advocate social ownership over commodified property relations.[200] This discursive moment reinforces the ideological system of socialism through its rearticulation on the legislative floor, meaning that the act of speaking something out loud reproduces its life yet another time. Just as every time Pierre Poilievre, leader of the federal Conservative Party, stands behind a microphone and declares his political platform to include *unlocking public land for housing*, this idea lives on another day through language. Every time it is said out loud or written in a text, the concept of unlocking land becomes a bigger part of the cultural lexicon. In summary, people are social actors using language to produce social identities, which are connected to fundamental ways of seeing the world (ontology and values) as well as broader systems of knowledge and beliefs we can call ideological systems or social structures.'

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[198] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 68.

[199] Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Polity Press, 1992), 64.

[200] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 3rd Sess., October 15, 1973, at 7.

These theoretical claims rest on the philosophy of *social constructionism*, which Vivien Burr situates within the broader philosophical terrain of *post-structuralist* or *post-modern* thought.[201] Where the modernists (or *structuralists*) were driven by the belief that hidden structures and rules could unveil a singular *right* way, the post-modernists and post-structuralists rejected the notion of "hidden structures" and "ultimate truth"[202]—i.e. classical music is no better than pop-music, reading a novel is no better than a blogpost, leasing land is no better than private ownership, etc. Post-structuralism questions the universality of these social structures, arguing that knowledge and meaning-making are historically contingent rather than grounded in fixed foundations. In this way, post-structuralists argue that language is the "prime site of the construction of the person," as Fairclough argues that social actors use language to construct their social identities.[203]

Burr argues that "reality" is "not constant but an ever-changing realm that is both discursively and practically constructed by people."[204] This means that while discursive elements create reality, they do not do so entirely on their own. These are the limits I referred to in the last chapter; discourse analysis can only evaluate the discursive elements of social practice, rather than the entire architecture of the practice. Yet the capacity of discourse analysis to contribute anything to social structures rests on this claim—that language constructs reality by way of constructing the social world. The best way to understand this is by way of understanding language as epistemologically relational: meanings emerge through systems of difference and social interaction between individuals and the world they inhabit.

It is not just that language has emerged as a communication tool but that it is a representation of epistemological relationality: "meanings exist only within systems of difference and social interaction."[205] This epistemological relationality also explains more abstract concepts such as Crown land. The term Crown land represents a legally codified relationship between the territory and the state, grounded in specific constitutional and legal structures as well as inherited notions of dominion. In fact, at confederation in 1867, the Canadian Crown went by the name "The Dominion of Canada."[206] Though BC-NDP members, such Ms. Brown and Mr. Nunweiler, speak about belonging-to the land rather than having dominion over it (**See 4.2**), they rely on the same relational structure of meaning-making to make this point: the word land is itself a representation of a *something else* to which Ms. Brown and Mr. Nunweiler relate to. This is not to say that belonging-to something rather than having dominion-over does not express something meaningfully distinct; it is that in both cases, land is a representation of a *self* recognizing that a *something else* exists—and this is the way language brings about social realities.

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[201] Burr, *Social Constructionism*, 13.

[202] Burr, *Social Constructionism*, 13.

[203] Burr, *Social Constructionism*, 61.

[204] Burr, *Social Constructionism*, 117.

If language operates through relational systems of meaning-making, then meanings remain fluid, interdependent, and historically contingent. Notions of objectivity must then be understood as historically situated within ongoing dialectical exchanges rather than neutral or universal. In this way, Burr writes that "meanings carried by language are never fixed, always open to question, always contestable, always temporary."[207] Keeping Fairclough's dialectical relationship in mind, the *self* and the *something* else both reinforce and transform the other; and this runs parallel to how discourse and social structures reinforce and transform one another.[208] This is the theoretical basis upon which Fairclough argues that discourses maintain and reproduce dialectical relationships of social power: "…every instance of language use makes its own small contribution to reproducing and/or transforming society and culture, including power relations, that is the power of discourse; that is why it is worth struggling over."[209] To understand the social world then, we must look not to an individual's personality or actions, but to the "linguistic space in which they move with other people."[210] This linguistic space is what discourse refers to: representations of our relationality through speech, writing, and other creative uses of language. Discourse is another way of referring to ways of using language, or as Fairclough says, "an analytical category describing the vast array of meaning-making resources available to us."[211] Again, discourse is a process of relational meaning-making; language signals what we value, how we understand reality, and how we belong to the social world.

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[205] Burr, Social Constructionism, 58.

[206] Eugene Forsey and Matthew Hayday, "Dominion of Canada," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Historica Canada, 2006), https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/dominion.

[207] Burr, Social Constructionism, 60.

[208] Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 64.

[209] Fairclough et al., "Critical Discourse Analysis" in *Critical Discourse Analysis Volume* 1 (Sage Publications Ltd, 2013), ed. Ruth Wodak, 91.

[210] Burr, Social Constructionism, 62.

The innermost part of Fairclough's three-dimensional model is the textual dimension. This refers to the linguistic features of a specific text: transcripts of the legislative debates, journals of the legislative assembly, or the convention document of the BC-NDP. The next dimension is *discursive practice*, the production or consumption of the text. If discourses are the *what*, then discursive practices are the *how*. A transcript of provincial legislative debates is produced through a complex set of formal procedures and collective dialogue by elected politicians and it is consumed by the politicians themselves as a means of referencing back, checking for accuracy, or catching-up on missed days in the legislature as well as by interested members of the public such as political journalists, legal historians, or amateur discourse analysts such as myself.[212]

Acknowledging that discursive practices are composed of both production and consumption demonstrates that there is a dialectical relationship between the producer of the text and the consumer of the text. This means that the discursive practices I identify in the debate transcripts represent the dialectical relationship between legislative members and their fellow legislative members, their representations in the media, in history, and in the gaze of the concerned public. Legislative members perform discursive practices when they express social concern, justify a policy decision, or signal belonging to an ideological system or allegiance to a political party. Though the debates were filled with discursive practices performed by legislative members, my analysis focused on the discursive practices that constitute the discursive dimension of BC's Crown land regime. In my analysis, I identified five discursive practices: land as inheritance, land as limited, land for future generations, private land ownership is a moral threat, and public land ownership is essential to housing intervention. All of these discursive practices ultimately served to construct land as a collective social practice, which I take to be the primary discursive practice contributing to BC's Crown land regime.

The outermost part of the model is the *social practice* to which the discursive practices and the discursive text belong to. While Fairclough's practice theory is influenced by broader practice theory traditions, this thesis remains grounded in the CDA framework rather than engaging with practice theory directly. I draw on Fairclough's dialectical perspective that discursive practices contribute to "producing society" as well as "transforming society;" the relationship between discursive practices and broader social structures goes both ways.[213] This is not to say that discursive practices fully constitute a social practice but that they are an important part of their construction and reproduction. At first glance, BC's Crown land regime may not seem like a social practice, but much of its practice architecture *is* the social world: relations between political actors and their populace, between the political actors and their political party, between political actors and external events, and between the political actors themselves.

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[211] Fairclough et al., "Critical Discourse Analysis," 79.

[212] Fairclough et al., "Critical Discourse Analysis," 73.

With the DHA's addition of historical embedding, I use my multi-genre dataset to contextualize the discursive practices I identified in their various dialectical social relationships: between the BC-NDP and the Social Credit party (explaining their long history of ideological clashes and discursive struggles), between the BC-NDP members and their political party (demonstrating how members refer back to their convention document and campaign pamphlet), between BC-NDP members and their ideological system (showing how members signal to socialist principles and values), between the BC-NDP government and the federal government (explaining how the BC-NDP take up a provincial responsibility for housing through available provincial-federal funding opportunities), and between BC-NDP members and their populace (demonstrating how members refer to the demands of their electorate in justifying their policies). These social relations impact the legislative outcomes and legal structures that stabilize BC's Crown land regime. Discourse research should explore the "links between language use and social practice," not aim to explain entire architecture of the social practice.[214] The following two diagrams provide a visual representation of the three-dimensional model and how it maps on to my research topic.

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[213] Fairclough et al., "Critical Discourse Analysis," 65.

[214] Jørgensen and Phillips, Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method, 69.

Figure 3.2.1: ***Fairclough's three-dimensional conception of discourse***[215]

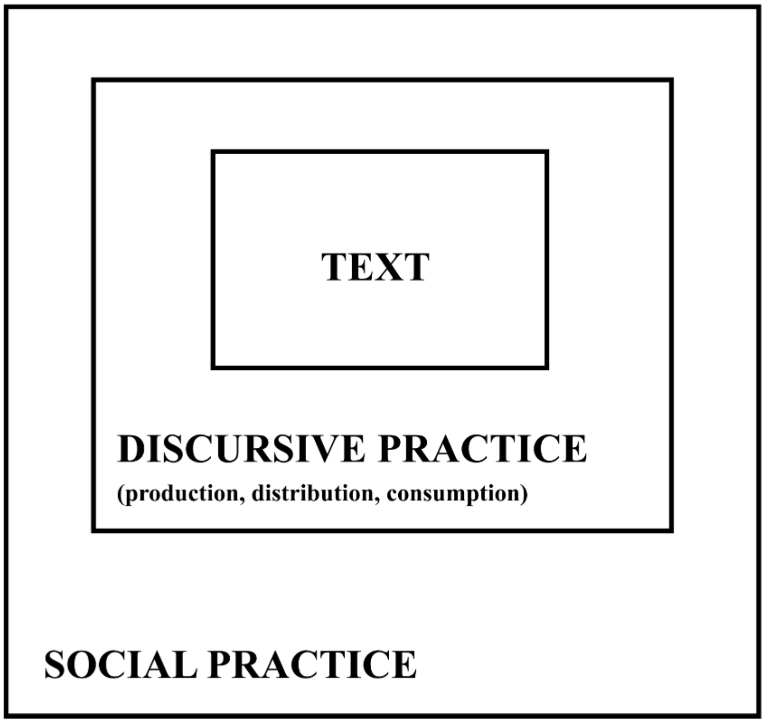
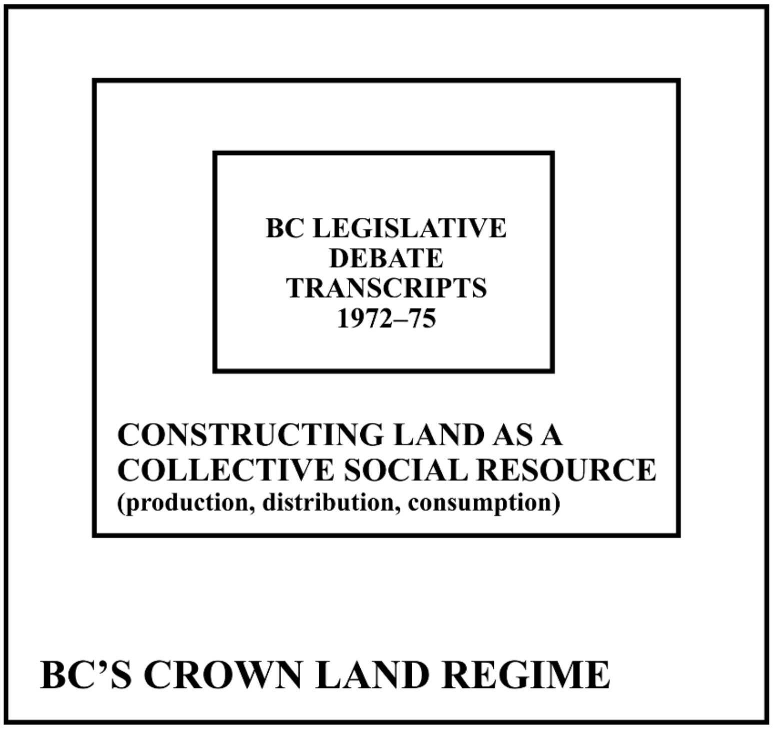

TEXT
DISCURSIVE PRACTICE
(production, distribution, consumption)
SOCIAL PRACTICE

Figure 3.2.2: ***Adaptation of the three-dimensional model for my research***


BC LEGISLATIVE DEBATE TRANSCRIPTS 1972–75
CONSTRUCTING LAND AS A COLLECTIVE SOCIAL RESOURCE
(production, distribution, consumption)
BC'S CROWN LAND REGIME

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[215] Fairclough et al., "Critical Discourse Analysis" in *Critical Discourse Analysis Volume* 1, 73.

3.3 Understanding Discourse as Enacting Power Relations

Section 3.3 builds on the theoretical foundation that discourses produce social relations and impact broader social structures, showing them as producing and reproducing power relations.

All CDA approaches, including the DHA, are concerned with the role of discourse in shaping social and political power. This is connected to the influence of Marxism and Frankfurt School critical theory on CDA, as Fairclough et al. writes: "[CDA] openly and explicitly position itself on the side of dominated and oppressed groups and against dominating groups."[216] The act of analyzing the minutiae of discourse is itself an intervention in the social practice that is enacting uneven power relations. In Fairclough et al.'s words, this act can "make more visible these opaque aspects of discourse as social practice."[217] This means that through applying the three-dimensional model, analyzing the text for discursive strategies and linguistic devices, and embedding the text in its temporal context, the discursive practices that mediate between the discourse and broader social structure can be made knowable. The act of making these discursive practices knowable is an intervention in the power dynamic because it reveals subconscious, ritualistic, or habitual phenomena and most importantly, it points to which discursive elements are reproducing the social practice that is enacting uneven power relations. With an understanding of these discursive elements, we learn how a social practice is discursively constructed, thereby opening space for reconsideration of asymmetrical social relationships.

Wodak and Reisigl describe power as an "asymmetric relationship among social actors who have different social positions or who belong to different social groups," and that power is implemented through various ways, one of which is "technical control" such as owning the means of production.[218] Though CDA approaches are rooted in Marxist traditions which critique the exploitation of labour and seek for the proletariat to seize the means of production, this does not mean that my critique of a socially-owned land system is methodologically inconsistent. Rather, I see the application of critique and power to a socialist-driven land regime to be an important use of the theoretical tools. It inverts the expected critique, showing how power can manifest out of socialist ideologies as much as liberal ideologies. As the Social Credit party reproduced power relations through granting tax cuts and resource deals to big corporations, so the BC-NDP reproduced power relations through regulating agricultural land, acquiring more land for the Crown, and retaining land for nonmarket housing development. Control over land constitutes control over a foundational means of production, as land underpins capitalist development and resource extraction.

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[216] Fairclough et al., "Critical Discourse Analysis," 80.

[217] Fairclough et al., "Critical Discourse Analysis," 80.

[218] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse Historical Approach," 26.

Drawing from critical theory, I am concerned with truth, self-reflection, and social change in regard to BC's Crown land regime. The words Michel Foucault capture the aim of my research: "the art of not being governed in this specific way and at this specific price"—not rejecting governance itself, but critically examining how specific governing structures have significant social impacts.[219] The *specific way* in which the province is being governed is that the government has *technical control* over the province's land—with 95 percent of it being fully in the authority of the government (1 percent of that being in the authority of the federal government) and the remaining 5 percent left to the private market under regulatory control, such as agricultural land forced to live under the Agricultural Land Commission and private residential property forced to remain regularly occupied, lest the owner pay the taxes under the Speculation and Vacancy Tax program. Both of these regulatory controls were implemented by a BC-NDP government: the Agricultural Land Commission under the 1972–75 BC-NDP and the Speculation and Vacancy Tax under the 2017–20 BC-NDP government.[220,221]

The discursive construction of land as a collective soial resource to be stewarded by the government rationalizes this *technical control*, which in turn structures material access to the land and produces measurable social consequences. I am not suggesting that discourse alone determines material arrangements but that it legitimates, stabilizes, and normalizes them as part of reproducing a broader social practice, in this case BC's Crown land regime. The *specific price* is that access to land is almost entirely mediated through government programs or through a highly constrained private market with extraordinarily high prices. Even if the BC-NDP constructs the Crown land regime as a form of social ownership that enables people to use land rather than own land, this use is entirely contingent on the legal structures, policy decisions, and regulatory controls of the government. The populace can only use this land through resource extraction licenses, hunting licenses, provincial parks, nonmarket housing units, or long-term leases on residential land, in which ownership inevitably reverts back to the Crown. Less than 5 percent of the province's land is available for purchase on the private housing market and moreover, the extraordinarily high housing prices make this land out of reach for most middle and low-income households. These factors constitute an asymmetrical relationship between the BC government and its constituents. As Fairclough describes CDA as being concerned with relations of dialogue, contestation, and dominance between discourses— "show[ing] how different discourses are brought into dialogue and contestation within processes of strategic struggle"—the legislative arena is precisely the site of such *strategic struggle*, where competing discourses on public land confront one another, are negotiated, and at times, become stabilized through policy outcomes.[222]

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[219] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse Historical Approach," 24.

[220] British Columbia, *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, S.B.C. 2002, c. 36, https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/02036_01.

[221] British Columbia, *Speculation and Vacancy Tax Act*, S.B.C. 2018, c. 46, https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/18046.

3.4 Understanding Discourse as Ideological

Section 3.4 demonstrates how discourse can be understood as ideological, stemming from one's most fundamental perspectives of the world, and how discursive practices can emb ideological phenomena in material structures.

At this point, I have laid the theoretical foundation for viewing discourse as a system of relational meaning-making that is situated in a temporal context, which both produces and transforms asymmetrical social relationships—because such relationships are dialectical. Through this process of meaning-making, discourse analysts see discourses as functioning ideologically.[223] The role of the discourse analyst is to situate, contextualize, and analyze discourses so that ideological phenomena can be made knowable. Wodak and Meyers describe ideology as "a perspective" or "a worldview," with a fully developed ideology being a "grand narrative," which is to say one of the *isms*: communism, socialism, liberalism, or capitalism.[224] Fairclough relies more heavily on the connection between ideologies and power relations, describing them to be "reproduc[ing] unequal relations of power, relations of domination and exploitation."[225] More holistically, Fairclough defines ideologies as "significations/constructions of reality…which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices…which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination."[226]

That Fairclough connects ideologies to relations of domination and exploitation makes his view non-neutral, meaning that ideologies are always implicated in power dynamics, employed to amass or maintain domination. An ideology is the lens through which one views the world and if this is antagonized by others, or the culture at large, this can provoke strong defensive reactions. When right-wing Opposition members were introduced to the Land Commission Act, which prohibited agricultural land owners from selling their properties for non-approved government uses, they pushed back aggressively with name-calling, filibustering, and passionate defences of individual property ownership rights—responding so fiercely to the proposed policy that the response itself signals an ideological struggle. In defense to this oppositional criticism, BC-NDP members passionately defended the need to protect agricultural land from the interests of the private sector. In Fairclough's words: "Where contrasting discursive practices are in use in a particular domain or institution, the likelihood is that part of that contrast is ideological."[227] In this way, the 1972–75 BC Legislature featured the collision of ideological systems, even being described by a local newspaper at the time as "the issue of socialism versus private enterprisers."[228]

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[222] Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Thesis of Language*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2010), 19.

[223] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 63.

[224] Wodak and Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*, 25.

[225] Fairclough et al., "Critical Discourse Analysis," 93.

[226] Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 87.

Where can we locate ideological phenomena? Where can we find it alive, active, and sustaining domination? Fairclough points us to the second dimension of the three-dimensional model—discursive practices—as this is the *linguistic space* that mediates between text and social practice. This means looking at the production and the consumption of the text; the speaker or author *and* their audience, with consideration to the *context* of producing and consuming.[229] As a discursive event may or may not "do ideological work," an in-depth analysis of the context (political, social, cultural, etc.) helps the researcher "consider how texts are interpreted and received and what social effects they have."[230] Fairclough further specifies that ideological phenomena manifest through "certain uses of language and 'other' symbolic forms;" language such as *collective* or *commodification* and symbols such as modified illocutions suggesting passion or furry.[231] When context is brought into the analysis, a BC-NDP member's use of *commodification* in a speech about the adverse social impacts of private ownership connects to: 1) their context in the legislature in which they are defending a public-land centered housing policy; 2) their membership to a political party that has declared an ideological stance that resources should meet social needs rather than generate profit; and 3) the problematic state of the province's housing market, that does not have enough land to adequately meet housing needs. The ideological phenomena are found in the language and symbols (the member's passionate condemnation of land commodification) combined with the specific context of the discursive event (rationalizing housing policy, belonging to a socialist political party, and being in the midst of a province-wide housing crisis). Understanding the ideologies of a social group and its social actors then involves looking at both the discursive evidence and situated contingencies.

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[227] Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 88.

[228] Pat Hrushowy, "'Socialist' Label Surfaces," *The Province*, August 18, 1972, University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections.

[229] Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 80.

[230] Fairclough et al., "Critical Discourse Analysis," 93.

[231] Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 87.

Ideologies can be obvious to the researcher when key terms such as *collective ownership*, *individual rights*, or *land commodification* are used to evoke particular assumptions about the world, while other discursive practices merely point the way towards the underlying ideologies.[232] In these cases, "underlying language practices, be it a 'code', 'structure', or 'formation'" act as coded messages pointing the way to ideological phenomena beneath the utterances.[233] These codes messages are found in rhetorical devices like metaphors, story, or tone, and this is where a methodological framework for decoding the discourses is paramount. This is particularly prudent for political debates on public land use, as such discursive struggles rely on pre-conceived notions of what is natural or necessary in regard to humans relating to the land such as. For example, these notions are reflected in socialist traditions that conceptualize land as a collectively stewarded resource, and in classical liberal property theory, where Lockean notions of labor-based appropriation conceptualize land as transformed into private property through individual labour. At stake is whether humans are understood as autonomous agents who acquire land through labor, or as fundamentally interconnected beings whose relationship to land is stewardship-based rather than appropriative.

Here it becomes important to distinguish between the various terms employed to describe ideological phenomena. Wodak and Fairclough conceptualize the terms *ideological assumptions* and *underlying ideologies* similarly to each other but distinct from the term *ideological position*. The later describes a conscious and strategic use of discursive strategies to signal one's position within the broader socio-cultural landscape, while the first terms describe a deep and often hidden level of social reality, below consciousness and beyond subjectivity. Wodak places particular analytical weight on this term in her analysis of historical political materials (i.e. parliamentary debate, media discourse, or internal party rhetoric) and uses it to emphasize the performative nature of ideologies. She suggests that the term *ideological position* indicates a sort of conscious performance, adapted to context and political opportunity.[234] When a legislative Member echoes their party's rhetoric or takes non-partisan stance during a debate, their discourse situates them in a larger ideological structure. Fairclough distinguishes between these terms similarly but places an emphasis on how such ideological positions are used to maintain or resist power—focusing, for example, on how a legislative member's support for a bill proposed by its own political party signals membership to the ideological position of that political party (speaking *in party line*). [235]

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[232] Fairclough et al., "Critical Discourse Analysis," 93.

[233] Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 88.

In this way, ideologies work to maintain "shared social identities" among legislative members, signalling their allegiance to their political party, and to maintain "unequal power relations" through policies that maintain and increase the government's technical control of the province's land.[236] It may seem obvious that a discursive event in the legislature would reveal competing ideologies; of course an BC-NDP legislative member would present a discourse on land as a collective resource, revealing a socialist ideology. Yet this would ignore human complexity, that people do not always say as they mean or mean as they say—that underlying ideological assumptions and individual social identities are not found in the institution but in the *linguistic space* where social, cultural, and political phenomena collide. "It is quite possible for a social subject to occupy institutional subject positions which are ideologically incompatible," Fairclough writes, "or to occupy a subject position incompatible with his or her overt political or social beliefs and affiliations, without being aware of any contradiction."[237] A BC-NDP member can be critical of labour unions or advocate for the rights of individual homeowners, a Social Credit legislative member can believe in protecting the province's agricultural land while condemning the regulatory controls of the Land Commission Act in line with his fellow party members.

That a discursive event contains a broader social impact, according to Fairclough's three-dimensional model, is how ideological phenomena have material existences. Fairclough points to the "practice of institutions," such as rules, procedures, programs, and laws as material forms of ideology."[238] This is useful for understanding how the ideological system that is expressed by the BC-NDP—both as a political party and as individual legislative members—exists in a material way through their policy actions. Prime examples are the acquisitions of agricultural land as mandated through the passing of the Land Commission Act and the acquisitions of residential land as mandated through the executive order that purchased the housing development company, Dunhill Development Corporation. The socialist ideological position of the BC-NDP and individual member's ideological assumptions exist materially in this legislative act and executive order. When ideologies are embedded materially in an institutional practice, as in the case of the above examples, these ideologies can effectively become "normalized" or "naturalized" and thereby "achieve the status of "common-sense."[239] That ideology-becomes-common-sense, "built into norms and conventions," is the theoretical basis for connecting ideology, power, and hegemony.

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[234] Wodak and Reisigl, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 45.

[235] Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 87.

[236] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse Historical Approach," *25.*

[237] Fairclough et al., "Critical Discourse Analysis," 44.

[238] Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 87.

3.5 Understanding Discourse as Setting Common-Sense

Section 3.5 explains how ideologies can become normalized within political institutions through processes of hegemonic struggle and institutionalization, shaping what is accepted as common-sense in the province's approach to public land use.

As an ideology is established and reproduced over time, it can become embedded in the discursive norms of an institution—in the case of my research, the BC government. This process—often described as *normalization* or *naturalisation*—refers to the emergence of common-sense assumptions through *negotiation* and *consent-building*. As Fairclough says, "Naturalisation gives to particular ideological representations the status of common sense, and thereby makes them opaque, i.e., no longer visible as ideologies."[240]A political institution, such as the BC-NDP or Social Credit parties or the government's housing department, can have "a sort of speech community" which is "perceived first as norms of the institution itself and second as merely skills or techniques which must be mastered in order for the status of competent institutional subjects to be achieved."[241] These *norms* are not the property of the social institution itself but of an "ideological discursive formation" or "IDF," another way of describing ideologies reaching the status of common-sense or taken-for-granted assumptions.[242]

While Fairclough refers to the emergent *norms* as an 'IDF', Wodak and Reisigl refer to similar phenomena through the concept of *hegemonic identity narratives*.' Wodak and Reisigl describe that ideologies are "important means of creating shared social identities" and "establishing and maintaining unequal power relations through discourse" through discursive practices—which in turn sets the cultural framework for accessing "specific discourses or public spheres," determining the conditions for what can be said and thought in particular contexts.[243] Wodak and Reisigl refer to this as "gate-keeping:" for example, within the BC-NDP, particular ways of speaking about public land—critical of private property and supportive of collective-stewardship—become normalized as the expected discourse of their political party and their government policy approaches.[244]

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[239] Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 87.

[240] Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Thesis of Language*, 44.

[241] Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Thesis of Language*, 43-44.

[242] Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 43.

Fairclough, Wodak, Reisigl, and other CDA scholars alike rely on the theory of cultural hegemony to describe this normalization, naturalization, and common-sense-setting process. CDA approaches, as Wodak and Meyers wrote, are aimed at "analyzing, understanding, and explaining the relationship between complex historical processes and hegemonic narratives."[245] The theory of cultural hegemony was most prominently advanced by Antonio Gramsci, a founder of the Italian Communist Party and a critic of the Italian fascist dictator Benito Mussolini who was imprisoned for his outspoken resistance. During his long imprisonment, Gramsci wrote over 3,000 pages of history and political analysis, which were later compiled and published in *Prison Notebooks*. In these writings, Gramsci put his own 'spin' on the Marxist tradition, characterizing capitalist societies by their "struggle for hegemony—that is, for moral, cultural, intellectual and, thereby, political leadership over the whole of society—between the ruling class and, as then principal subordinate class, the working class."[246] Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony thus describes how ideologies are normalized through institutions, laws, culture, and language by way of gaining consent and rebranding a set of ideological assumptions as common-sense, becoming hegemonic.

Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony is especially apt for democratic societies, as he insists on the importance of consent-building in its formation, writing: "The 'normal' exercise of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary regime is characterised by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent."[247] In this way, the Gramscian theory of hegemony is not coercive in nature but rather the product of discursive struggles and consent-building processes. As Gramsci wrote, the "struggle for hegemony" includes "constructing alliances and integrating rather than simply dominating subordinate classes."[248] In these processes, discursive events are key pillars—as it is through discourse that ideologies become rationalized, repeated, and reproduced.

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[243] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse Historical Approach," 25.

[244] Wodak and Reisigl, "The Discourse Historical Approach," *25.*

[245] Wodak and Meyers, *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*, 13.

[246] Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Thesis of Language*, 95.

[247] Gramsci, "Hegemony, Intellectuals, and the State," 85.

[248] Fairclough et al., "Critical Discourse Analysis," 61.

By means of discursive practice then, ideological assumptions can be reconstituted, re-negotiated, or replaced. Discourse analysts Jørgensen and Phillips refer to processes as *hegemonic interventions* that can at any time enter the political arena. To undergo a "hegemonic intervention," three elements are required: first, the antagonization and problematization of "sedimented discourses," referring to discursive practices that have become hegemonic; second, the successful articulation of an alternative discourse that gains consensus on political terrain; and third, the institutionalization of that new discourse into material forms such as legislative and administrative practices.[249] Once previously sedimented discourses are dissolved through the hegemonic intervention process, a new cultural hegemony emerges, thus establishing a new notion of common-sense. This is the theoretical basis by which the discursive struggles of the 1972–75 BC Legislature may be understood as a *hegemonic intervention*—a process in which previously sedimented discourses were antagonized and alternative collective-stewardship discourses were institutionalized through the public land policies of the BC-NDP government. As I will show in the next chapter, not only were new socialist discourses towards public land institutionalized by way of legislation—the Land Commission Act and Department of Housing Act—but these legislative frameworks have survived successive right-wing governments and emerged as part of the institutional structure of the BC government.

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[249] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 36-37.

CHAPTER FOUR:
Constructing Land as a Collectively-Stewarded Resource

Chapter Four looks closely at the land and housing debates in the BC legislature (1972–75) and finds the discursive practices that produce and reproduce BC's Crown land. These discursive practices emerged from my close analysis of the legislative debate transcripts and journals of three legislative acts—the Supply Act and Special Funds Authorization of Act (the budget debates), the Land Commission Act (Bill 42), and the Department of Housing Act (Bill 49)—alongside supplementary archival materials, including BC-NDP's 1972 campaign pamphlet and newspaper articles from the time. The chapter opens with the historical and ideological context of the BC-NDP at the time of their 1972 electoral victory, followed by five sections focusing on a single discursive practice that helped construct land as a collectively-stewarded resource during the BC-NDP government of 1972–75. The chapter concludes by showing how these discursive practices survived the critiques of the Opposition, ultimately stabilising through this process and becoming institutionalised in the province's structural fabric.

4.1 From Electoral Mandate to Discursive Construction

Section 4.1 provides the historical and ideological context at the time of the BC-NDP's electoral victory, setting the stage of the analysis: introducing how the discursive practices employed by BC-NDP members served to disrupt sedimented discourses and ultimately act as a *hegemonic intervention* that reconceptualized the province's common-sense approach to utilizing public land.

The first socialist legislature in BC opened on October 17th, 1972. The BC-NDP had just won a majority government, ending the "forty years in the desert" as biographer Lorne Kavic put it, signaling the party and its predecessor's long history of trying and failing to gain power.[250] For two decades, the Social Credit party had been governing the province under the leadership of Premier W.A.C. Bennet. By 1972, they were beginning to show signs of fatigue, with seventeen of the Social Credit cabinet ministers having been in office since the early 1950s.[251] The 1972 election marked the defeat of twenty-eight Social Credit legislative members and the election of the first black woman, Rosemary Brown, to any provincial legislature in Canada.[252] The BC-NDP's rise to victory marked a critical juncture in BC's political history; for the first time, the socialists were not only in the seat of power, but they also won a majority government.

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[250] Kavic, *The 1200 Days*, 10.

[251] Grieve, "Continuity and Change," 33.

[252] Philip Resnick, "Social Democracy in Power: The Case of British Columbia," BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly, no. 34 (1977): 34, https://doi.org/10.14288/bcs.v0i34.923, 5.

In the BC parliamentary system, the power of the executive dominates inside and outside the legislature.[253] When the government can issue executive orders without legislative approval and introduce bills that are essentially guaranteed to be approved based on *party discipline*, the discursive arena of the legislature begins to look like a mere performative exercise.[254] Notwithstanding the reality of dominating executive power, the discursive exchange of the legislature still matters. The legislature is the discursive arena where rational argumentation establishes the democratic legitimization of policies and government activities, what Wodak and Reisigl call the "public discursive-democratic process," and legislative debates create discourses that reverberate outside the walls of the legislature and contribute to the stabilizing, normalizing, and institutionalizing of discursive practices.[255]

Applying Fairclough's three-dimensional model to this analysis, I conceptualize BC's Crown land regime as a social practice that enacts uneven power relations between the province and its residents. The three dimensions feature: BC's Crown land regime as a social practice, the discursive practices of legislative members, and the legislative discourses. Altogether these dimensions contribute to a shared provincial identity around responsible land stewardship and a sense of normalcy surrounding the current Crown-dominant system.[256] This thesis argues that the discursive practices of the BC-NDP (1972–75) helped stabilize and normalize this land regime—through constructing land as a collectively-stewarded resource and normalizing social ownership as the common-sense approach to using land for housing. The rise of the BC-NDP can be understood as a *hegemonic intervention*, in which socialist ideologies translated into land and housing policy interventions that were legitimized through discursive practices in the legislature—all of which contributed to the sort of consent-building and common-sense-establishing that Gramsci refers to in his theory of hegemony.[257]

At the advent of the new BC-NDP government, this is the temporal and geographical context: The Canadian constitution is just over 100 years old and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau is working to evolve federal-provincial relations and repatriate the constitution from Britain via the *1971*

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[253] Robert. S. Milne, "The British Columbia Crown Corporations Committee: Comparisons and Implications," *BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly*, no. 68 (1985): 39, https://doi.org/10.14288/bcs.v0i68.1221.

[254] Milne, "The British Columbia Crown Corporations Committee," 35.

[255] Wodak et al., *Discourse and Discrimination*, 34.

[256] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 65.

[257] Gramsci, "Hegemony, Intellectuals, and the State," 85.

Victoria Charter. It is just over two decades since the Second World War and one decade since the Cuban Missile Crisis. The estimated 55,000 British Columbians that served the war effort have returned home. Reintegration services like the Veterans Land Administration and Wartime Housing Limited—critical programs in the 1950s and 1960s—are winding down due to Canada's federal housing agency (CMHC) shifting their focus away from veteran housing and towards social and cooperative housing. BC has just survived the "radical social movement sand countercultures" of the Sixties and a "New Left" movement is just emerging.[258] Marxist ideals are pumping through the disillusionment of free-market ideals and Vietnam War fatigue, with many people beginning to embrace socialist and anti-imperialist ideals. Media outlets are publishing messages about Cold War anxiety and fear of the *pink menace* or *red scare* (fear of communist ideologies).[259]

Prior to 1972, the Social Credit government had been promoting free-enterprise interests and private land ownership by selling and alienating Crown land for individual and business interests for two decades. These instances of privatizing Crown land helped facilitate industrial development and resource-extraction across the province, and though these transfers were real and consequential, they did not meaningfully reduce the proportion of land held by the Crown in BC. The Social Credit government entered 1952 with 95 percent of BC classified as Crown land and exited the era with essentially the same figure. Despite not making a meaningful change in the overall proportion of Crown land in BC, the Social Credit governments did transfer Crown parcels over to private owners in strategic resource zones and important urban areas, such as transfers to oil and gas companies for agricultural land in the Peace River district and to private housing and industrial developers in the urban regions of the Lower Mainland.[260]

With the new BC-NDP government came new justifications for maintaining the province's supply of Crown land. Where the Social Credit party and previous coalition governments had discursive practices that constructed Crown land as a collective *economic* resource essential to the province's economic engine, the BC-NDP introduced new discursive elements—collective inheritance, limited supply, and social responsibility—that produced a new iteration of discursive practices, constructing Crown land as collective *social* resource essential to the province's social engine. The BC-NDP emphasized the social dimensions of collective land ownership, not just the economic, and thereby offered a new set of discursive pathways by which to reinforce BC's Crown land regime. Those disgruntled by Social Credit's partnerships with big resource companies or tax write-offs to private housing developers could find a new discourse to which to belong.

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[258] David Blocker, "'To Waffle to the Left': The Waffle, the New Democratic Party, and Canada's New Left during the Long Sixties," (PhD dissertation, the University of Western Ontario, 2019), i, https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14721/29553.

[259] Benjamin Isitt, *Militant Minority: British Columbia Workers and the Rise of a New Left, 1948-1972* (University of Toronto Press, 2011), 55-61, https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442690158

[260] Jacob Helliwell, "A Province Defined: An Analysis of the Political Ideology of the 1952-1972 Social Credit Government of British Columbia," *On Politics* 4, no. 1 (2010): 67-70, https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/onpolitics/article/view/4192.

A few months after the election, Premier Barrett introduced the spending priorities of the new BC-NDP government, setting a tone of social responsibility in the socialist's first budget.

> "In the coming fiscal year, $1,195,199,000 or 69 per cent of the total provincial revenues will be devoted to the social improvement of our people. This record expenditure, which, Mr. Speaker, is more than the total provincial revenue as late as 1970, is for education, health, and social service, which reflects the Government's philosophy of people-oriented policies."[261]

In this statement, Premier Barrett made clear the social objectives—what he refers to as "education, health and social service"—of his government.[262] The Journals of the Legislative Assembly actually record that both the number of social assistance case load and total number of recipients doubled when the BC-NDP took power.[263] In total, the BC-NDP's budget amounted to over a quarter of a billion dollars more than the previous year's budget under a Social Credit government, and Premier Barrett's description of his spending as a "record expenditure" suggests that he saw the increased expenditures as something to be celebrated.[264] Moreover, Premier Barrett rooted the increased expenditures in the BC-NDP's ideological position that he described as a "philosophy of people-oriented policies."[265]

This people-oriented discourse is an example of *intertextuality*, as BC-NDP members draw on their 1972 campaign slogan, "A New Deal for People," and the pamphlet bearing this slogan as its title. BC-NDP members draw on this people-oriented rhetoric from previous communicative events and materials to preserve the discursive thread (or "intertextual chain") and present a stable and coherent ideological position.[266] This discourse points to an ideological assumption that policies should serve social needs or make social sense, such as the earlier statement from Premier Barrett:

"This may be an appropriate point to offer further comment upon the general philosophy of

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[261] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 2nd Sess., February 9, 1973, at 12.

[262] BC, February 9, 1973, at 12.

[263] Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia*, 30th Parl., 2nd Sess. (Queen's Printer, 1973), 65.

[264] BC, *Hansard*, February 9, 1973, at 8.

[265] BC, *Hansard*, February 9, 1973, at 12.

[266] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 73-75.

> the new Government of British Columbia. It might be said that we desire to turn attention around from gauging the province's progress quantitatively to a qualitative measurement. I have said before that the economy should serve the people, not people in the economy. This approach calls for a new perspective, both in government and in private sectors. We do not desire more growth for growth's sake, but rather growth on terms suitable to this province…Mr. Speaker, that is a major philosophical point that separates this group from the Opposition over there. We're not ashamed that perhaps we may be the only jurisdiction in this country to say that we wish to protect those resources for the best interests of the people, not just for political expediency through development"[267]

In this statement, Premier Barrett clearly presents the BC-NDP's democratic-socialist ideological position, aligning the BC-NDP government with a distinct "philosophy" or "new perspective": an epistemological shift towards valuing qualitative forms of knowledge; a socio-economic shift towards an economy in service of people; and a political-economic shift toward regulated economic growth.[268] Here, Premier Barrett highlights a departure from the practices of the preceding Social Credit government and a movement towards a new practice. Premier Barrett's statement rears its head on the old rhetoric, slicing through the BC's political history of free-enterprising dominance.[269]

Biographers of Premier Dave Barrett, Meggs and Mickleburgh, quote from a column in the *Vancouver Sun*: "'There 'is no socialist government in North America…the one place it could happen is BC' and Barrett could be the man to do it."[270] They describe the 1972 NDP victory as novel in BC: "…the news of a socialist government in free enterprise, *booming BC* made the paper in Europe, through the United States and across Canada."[271] As a BC native, I found this surprising to read, as today BC has the "reputation as Canada's most progressive province," as articulated by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.[272,273]

Yet, in the several decades leading up to the 1972 election, the political parties in BC arranged and rearranged themselves to keep 'the socialists' out of office. Writing in 1985, Grieve described the politics in BC as “largely a history of a series of attempts to keep the CCF/NDP from power.”[274] To quell the threat of CCF victory (the party that preceded the BC-NDP), the Liberal and Conservative parties formed a coalition government in 1941, governing until the 1952.[275] The victory of the Social Credit in 1952 represented “a new form of coalition” to stave off the “socialist threat,” historian Benjamin Isitt wrote.[276] Isitt frames the twentieth century as the struggle between the “capitalist class” and the “working class,” describing BC politics as “a tug-of-war between labour and capital over resource wealth, corporate consolidation and rising opposition to American resource firms.”[277] In the post-world-war years, the fear of communist ideas loomed.[278] A newspaper article from 1953 described BC as “fertile spawning ground” for Canadian communism:

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[267] BC, *Hansard*, February 9, 1973, at 3.

[268] BC, *Hansard*, February 9, 1973, at 3.

[269] Donald E. Blake and R. Kenneth Carty, "Partisan Realignment in British Columbia: The Case of the Provincial Liberal Party," *BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly*, no. 108 (1995): 61–74, https://doi.org/10.14288/bcs.v0i108.1241.

[270] Meggs and Mickleburgh, *The Art of the Impossible*, 29.

[271] Meggs and Mickleburgh, *The Art of the Impossible*, 48.

[272] Luke LeBrun, "The Rise of Zany Conspiracy Theory Politics," Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (blog), April 1, 2025, https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/the-rise-of-zany-conspiracy-theory-politics/.

[273] This reputation is owed to its early adoption of same-sex marriage (Barbeau v. British Columbia, 2003), inclusion of trans and non-binary rights (Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2016), legal affirmation of multiculturism (Multiculturalism Act, 1993), institutionalization of Indigenous Rights (Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, 2019), and leadership in climate-friendly policies (Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets Act, 2007; Climate Change Accountability Act, 2018).

> “Strategically placed as Canada’s Gateway to the Pacific and as an ever-growing source of much strategic material for the Canadian and allied defense efforts, British Columbia today is one of Canadian Communism’s most fertile spawning grounds, a bastion in the over-all Canadian Communist disruptive strategy.”[279]

In the months leading up to the opening of the new legislature, after W.A.C. Bennet’s legislature has been dissolved, the media filled with discourses on socialism—capturing the mixture of celebration for the end of twenty-year Social Credit reign and fear of new ideologies on BC’s political landscape. A Social Credit advertisement that ran in *The Province* two months before the 1972 election demonstrated the socialist-versus-free-enterprise discourse in the media. “We know the great majority of British Columbia citizens do not want a socialist government…. Let’s preserve our free enterprise way of life.”[280] In the *Vancouver Sun*, the Social Credits claimed to be “the only Government in Canada to help people buy homes,”[281] voicing their ideology that private property is a natural and unalienable right that must be protected. This was again echoed in the *Colonist* in bold lettering “VOTE TO KEEP THE HOME-OWNER GRANT GROWING.”[282]

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[274] Grieve, “Continuity and Change,” 30.

[275] Grieve, “Continuity and Change,” 30-31.

[276] Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 19.

[277] Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 19.

[278] Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 55-61.

[279] Quoted in Isitt, *Militant Minority,* 55-56.

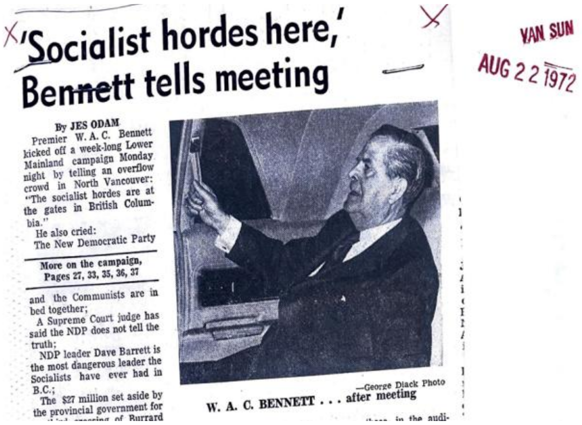
[280] “British Columbians for Bennet,” *The Province*, August 29, 1972, University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections.

[281] “The Only Government in Canada to Help People Buy Homes,” *Vancouver Sun*, August 24, 1972, University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections.

[282] “VOTE TO KEEP THE HOME-OWNER GRANT GROWING,” *The Colonist*, August 22, 1972, University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections.

An article from *The Province* reported a speech from Social Credit leader W.A.C. Bennet, in which he "really attacked socialism" for the first time in the 1972 election.[283] Bennet's speech demonstrates his rhetorical strategy of rendering the ideological assumptions of the NDP explicit: "I want the people in the audience and on the air tonight to know they are cheering for socialism," Bennet warned the crowd.[284] The front page of *The Colonist* featured the provocative warning that Bennet gave to his electorate: "the socialist hordes are at the gates in British Columbia."[285] Also reporting on this statement, the *Vancouver Sun* ran a photo of the long-time leader after the campaign, marred with an expression of exhaustion:

Image 4.1.1: ***News article from the Vancouver Sun (1972)***[286]



'Socialist hordes here,' Bennett tells meeting

VAN SUN
AUG 22 1972

By JES ODAM

Premier W. A. C. Bennett kicked off a week-long Lower Mainland campaign Monday night by telling an overflow crowd in North Vancouver: "The socialist hordes are at the gates in British Columbia."

He also cried:

The New Democratic Party

More on the campaign, Pages 27, 33, 35, 36, 37

and the Communists are in bed together;

A Supreme Court judge has said the NDP does not tell the truth;

NDP leader Dave Barrett is the most dangerous leader the Socialists have ever had in B.C.;

The $27 million set aside by the provincial government for

—George Diack Photo

W. A. C. BENNETT . . . after meeting

On the same day, the *Vancouver Sun* ran an article linking the BC-NDP and the Communist party. The article quotes Mr. Chabot's query about the "Waffle Manifesto:" "What is the position in British Columbia with the radical leftist group, the Waffle party, the Communist party?" The "Waffle" refers to a radical flank of the socialist movement in Canada that was playing out in the federal branch of the NDP; the "New Left incursion into the party," as Quebec scholar David Blocker describes.[287] The Waffle movement formed around the 1969 "Manifesto for an Independent and Socialist Canada," which stated that its intention to make the NDP "a truly socialist party" that is

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[283] Hrushowy, "'Socialist' Label Surfaces."

[284] Hrushowy, "'Socialist' Label Surfaces."

[285] Ian Street, "'Socialist Hordes At Gate,'" *Colonist*, August 22, 1972, University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections, 1.

[286] Jes Odam, "'Socialist Hordes Here,' Bennet Tells Meeting," *Vancouver Sun*, August 22, 1972, University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections, 2.

[287] David Blocker, "Labour and the Waffle: Unions Confront Canadian Left Nationalism in the New Democratic Party," *Labour / Le Travail*, no. 87 (Spring 2021): 50, https://doi.org/10.1353/llt.2021.0004.

"radicalized from within and…from without."[288] Waffle sympathizers would eventually leave the NDP and found the Movement for an Independent and Socialist Canada.[289] At a time in which the political landscape feared the influence of socialist ideas, the federal branch of the NDP feared the influence of revolutionary socialist ideas from within their own party. At a time of intense anti-communist fear, the BC-NDP sought to distance themselves from communist affiliations, despite aligning on an ideological level. This demonstrates how politicians leverage ideological positions to achieve political outcomes, i.e. relating to socialism and communism in ways that are advantageous to the cultural and political context of the time.

In this same way, Social Credit members implement the strategy of *trying* to affiliate the BC-NDP with communism and stir up anti-communist fears in the media and inside the legislature. It is a common tactic of the Opposition to draw parallels between the BC-NDP and communism. During several debates, Social Credit members refer to the Waffle manifesto to suggest radicalization within the BC-NDP and create a fear around the ideological motivations of the new government.[290] For example, Mr. Gardom suggested that the new government was following "a few of the statements in the Waffle Manifesto," while Mr. Phillips declared that "they are trying to create in British Columbia a complete socialist state with the Waffle Manifesto being the blueprint". [291,292]

The historian, Isitt, wrote that the fear of Soviet influence was not without merit, as "throughout the Cold War, BC communists retained close relations with the Soviet Union and travelled to the socialist heartland on numerous occasions."[293] Indeed, the BC-NDP party does have ideological roots within the same movement that gave birth to the Communist Party of BC. The socialist and labour movements of the early twentieth century provided the ideological and cultural fodder that gave rise to Canada's left wing political parties—with the province of BC as its organizational and ideological epicenter. The earliest political party, the Socialist Party of Canada, was founded in 1904 and notably, headquartered in Vancouver, BC. They led to two distinct contemporary branches of Canadian socialism: the ideological radical party founded on revolutionary Marxism, the Communist Party of Canada, and the Co-operative Commonwealth

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[288] David Blocker, "'To Waffle to the Left': The Waffle, the New Democratic Party, and Canada's New Left during the Long Sixties," (PhD diss., Western University, 2019), 489, https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14721/29553.

[289] Blocker, "Labour and the Waffle," 84.

[290] These members include Mr. Gardom, Mr. L.A. Williams, Mrs. Jordan, Mr. Morrison, Mr. Phillips, and Mr. Smith

[291] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 5th Sess., April 10, 1973, at 12.

[292] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 3rd Sess., October 31, 1973, at 14.

[293] Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 55-68.

Federation (CCF), which became the predecessor to the BC-NDP. Today, the Communist Party remains headquartered in Vancouver and participates in provincial elections, usually earning just a small number of votes.[294]

While discourses on the infiltration of communist ideologies preceded the BC-NDP's rise to power, the 1972 provincial election marked a measurable and substantive threat—i.e. these ideas would be supported by real executive and legislative power. My analysis of the legislative debates during the BC-NDP government (1972–75) showed that legislative members' discourses strongly reflected those of their respective party's ideological affiliations: the BC-NDP with democratic socialism and the Social Credit party with liberalism and pro-free-enterprising values. The BC-NDP described itself as a democratic socialist party in its 1972 party constitution. I perused the original document during my visit to the UBC Archives and found that it explicitly declared its belief in the "application of democratic socialist principles," providing the following definition:

> "That the production and distribution of goods and services shall be directed to meeting the social and individual needs of people and not for profit. To modify and control the operations of *monopolistic* productive and distributive organizations through economic and social planning, towards these ends and where necessary, the extension of the principle of social ownership."[295]

The BC-NDP's declaration of democratic-socialist principles does the work of defining its ideological position as a departure from the pure socialist and communist labels. The underlined text showcases the ideological assumptions driving the discursive practices of the BC-NDP members, whose membership to the party either reflects their internal ideological alignment with socialism, or at least, their external affiliation with its politics. Discourse analysts take discourses to be automatically ideological—not that they necessarily reflect one's true beliefs or ontological view of the world, but that they always reproduce social dynamics and power relations.[296] BC-NDP legislative members, like Premier Dave Barrett or Housing Minister Mr. Nicolson, perform discursive dances on the legislative floor that they learned before they ever walked onto the government side of the legislature. Their performances in the legislature are not isolated from discursive events but reflections of their embodied knowledge and past experiences in party convention meetings or out on the campaign trail.

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[294] Elections BC, *Statement of Votes: 2024 Provincial General Election* (Elections BC, 2024), https://elections.bc.ca/docs/rpt/statement-of-votes-2024-provincial-election.pdf.

[295] "NDP Convention Papers 1972," British Columbia New Democratic Party, 1972, accessed September 9, 2025, University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections.

[296] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 63.

The leader of the 1972 BC-NDP and first BC-NDP Premier, the Honourable Dave Barrett, is described by historians and biographers as an enigmatic and idealistic character. Dave Barrett was about to turn forty-two years old when he became the province's first socialist Premier. Barrett was the son of politically active parents, Sam and Rose Barrett; Sam was "a politically active East Vancouver grocer who supported and revered 1930s CCF leader Ernest Winch" and Rose was "a Communist who participated in many of the Depression-era campaigns against poverty and colonialism."[297] Authors of the book *The Art of the Impossible: Dave Barrett and the NDP in Power, 1972–75 ,* Geoff Meggs (a Vancouver city councilor) and Rod Mickleburgh (a labour journalist for *Globe and Mail*) describe Barrett as "a powerful and spontaneous speaker" and "clearly the most talented front-bencher on the NDP team."[298] They quoted Barrett's description of himself as "a free swinging humanist" that aimed to make the NDP more human, representing the "the common interests of the common man."[299] These descriptions differed substantially from the author's descriptions of Barrett's predecessor W.A.C. Bennet, who they described as "a man in power who sees himself in an almost divine right position…he sees not a cabinet around him, but rather a court."[300] Again, a polarization is drawn between the BC-NDP and the Social Credit party, this time embedded in party's main social actors. Meggs and Mickleburgh's book opens with scene of Barrett standing in front of his cabinet and campaign team on their first day in office, asking the rhetorical question: "are we here for a good time, or a long time?"[301] This rhetorical question captured a consciousness felt by BC-NDP members that they sat at a critical historical juncture in the province's political history. In a province dominated by decades of liberalist politics, the BC-NDP had scraped a narrow electoral victory. The historian Allen Seager even suggested that "something like a one-term revolution was imagined" by the Barrett's government.[302]

The historian Barry E. Smith, however, found that the BC-NDP was more "revisionist" than "revolutionary," resembling "the pragmatic, adaptive, and democratic socialism of Britain and Scandinavia" more so than that of Moscow-communism.[303] In the context of BC, the BC-NDP could only implement their "revolution" as far as the structures of their provincial constitution would allow. The ideological positions of Premier Barrett and BC-NDP cabinet ministers were bound by the length of their electoral mandate, their inheritance of past liberalist policies, and the existence of an active market economy. As such, at the counting of the last vote in 1972, the BC-NDP promoted to Government and the long-reigning Social Credit Party demoted to Opposition, thus inverting the province's power dynamics and relegated free-enterprising discourses to the backbench of the legislature. Indeed, a local newspaper, *The Province*, described the crux of the 1972 BC politics as "the issue of socialism versus private enterprisers."[304] The socialists vs the capitalists. The pink menace versus the greedy free enterprisers. Indeed, the BC-NDP brought new understandings of the world and fiercely criticized the free-enterprising and growth-minded ideologies of the former Social Credit government—forcing these sedimented discourses through a sort of water fountain that softened and cracked the hard and compact layers of the province's identity. This is a metaphor for the formation of the Gramscian theory of cultural hegemony, in which one perspective comes to dominate through a process of naturalization and consensus-building. The election of BC-NDP in 1972 acted as a *hegemonic intervention*—reconceptualizing common-sense in the province's approach to its public land, turning the discursive practices that maintain BC's Crown land regime towards the social responsibility of providing adequate and affordable housing for its residents.[305]

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[297] Meggs and Mickleburgh, *The Art of the Impossible,* 27.

[298] Meggs and Mickleburgh, *The Art of the Impossible,* 28-29.

[299] Meggs and Mickleburgh, *The Art of the Impossible,* 34.

[300] Meggs and Mickleburgh, *The Art of the Impossible,* 36.

[301] Meggs and Mickleburgh, *The Art of the Impossible,* 1.

[302] Allen Seager, "The Art of the Impossible: Dave Barrett and the NDP in Power, 1972-1975," *BC Studies*, no. 178 (2013): 151, https://bcstudies.com/issue-single/bc-studies-no-178-summer-2013/.

[303] Barry Edward Smith, "The British Columbia Land Commission Act—1973" (master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1974), 90, https://doi.org/10.14288/1.0093604.

4.2 Land as Inheritance

Section 4.2 begins the analysis with the land debates, demonstrating how BC-NDP members construct land as a collective inheritance, drawing on the *topos of belonging* and *topos of protection*.

When the BC-NDP began applying their democratic socialist principles in the first legislative session and proposed a revision of the province's relationship to its agricultural land, many Social Credit reacted to the legislative event as if it were a brutal revolution. The Land Commission Act (Bill 42) was introduced to the BC legislature on February 22, 1973, with Meggs and Mickleburgh describing it as surpassing "any legislation now in force in Canada for the control and preservation of both agricultural and other open space land."[306] The Land Commission Act proposed a redesignation of farmland in BC, in which all arable land (including that which was privately owned) would come under the designation of the Agricultural Land Reserve, which would be managed and controlled by the Agricultural Land Commission. The legislation prevented agricultural landowners from subdividing their land or selling it to industrial or residential developers. In a report commissioned by Environment Canada long after the legislation's passing, E. Neville Ward summarized the role of the commission:

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[304] Hrushowy, "'Socialist' Label Surfaces."

[305] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 37.

[306] Meggs and Mickleburgh, *The Art of the Impossible*, 77.

> "The major duties of the Commission are described; namely, to designate Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) plans for each Regional District, to review applications for exclusion of land from ALRs, and to review applications for inclusion of land in an ALR. The Commission is also involved in purchasing land that is made available to young farm families under a career farm leasing program."[307]

This later duty of the Committee—land acquisition that would increase the province's portfolio of Crown land—featured the most controversial aspect of the legislation and was targeted viciously by the Opposition by discursive practices that voiced private property as an individual right and intense fear of government overreach.

The ideologies that BC-NDP members present to defend Bill 42 were actualized into discursive practices, one of them being constructing the province's land as a collective inheritance. Though rhetoric on inheritance is employed by BC-NDP members as well as Opposition members, the nature of the inheritance is different. Where Social Credit members construct the right to *own* land as an inheritance, BC-NDP members construct the right to *use* land as an inheritance. During a passionate defence of private property rights in response to Bill 42, Social Credit member Mr. McClelland claimed that: "…the socialists believe in the abolition of property in land. They believe in the abolition of the right of inheritance."[308] This is compared to the day after, when BC-NDP member Mr. Steves declared his wholehearted support for Bill 42's protection of farmland "heritage": "I believe this bill will go down in history. This is the first government in North America that has had the guts enough to protect our farming heritage; to protect our farmland from the wanton destruction by greedy land speculators and developers."[309] Mr. Steves employed the pronoun "our" to signal that the "heritage" of the province's farmland applies to the collective, not just to particular demographic or political party. Mr. Steves' use of the word "heritage" brings up associations with intergenerational meaning and tradition, such as the smoke lamb meat (*pinnekjøt*t) that western Norwegians cook every Christmas season. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "heritage" as "that which has been or may be inherited" and thus associates the term with a sort of passing along from one generation to the next.[310] Mr. Steves wrapped his rhetoric in the *topos of protection*, taking his premise to justify policy approaches that protect the land for all people: if land is "heritage," then it needs protection from those that wish to tarnish it.

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[307] Ward et al., *Land Use Programs in Canada*, 74.

[308] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 2nd Sess., March 21, 1973, at 29-30.

[309] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 2nd Sess., March 22, 1973, at 17.

The Minister of Agriculture Mr. Stupich tirelessly defended the controversial measures of the Land Commission Act in the face of loud and angry Opposition members. He joined Mr. Steves in pointing backwards, endowing farmland with a significance and preciousness that can only be achieved through passing through time and witnessing history as it happens. The following excerpt shows Mr. Stupich doubling up on *interdiscursivity* with a two-layered dive into past discourses; he quoted from the 1951 British Columbia National Resource Conference report, a quote which drew on biblical language, values, and authority to offer an "eleventh commandment:"

> "'Thou shalt inherit the holy earth as a faithful steward, conserving its resources and productivity from generation to generation.
>
> Thou shalt safeguard thy fields from soil erosion, thy living waters from drying up, thy forests from desolation and protect thy hills from over-grazing by thy herds, that thy descendants may have abundance forever.
>
> If any shall fail in the stewardship of the land, thy fruitful fields shall become sterile, stony ground and wasting gullies, and thy descendants shall decrease and live in poverty or perish from off the face of the earth.'"[311]

The choice to read this excerpt shows the constructing discursive strategy in action. Mr. Stupich leverages the authority of a previous discursive event in which provincial authorities came together in consensus-seeking deliberation; this showed that the basic discursive elements of inheritance, protection, and stewardship were already alive in the discursive field of land-use politics. Mr. Stupich tied together discursive threads from the past and the present and in doing so, constructed farmland as a collective inheritance, as fundamental as universal laws or divine orders.

BC-NDP member Ms. P.F. Young went a step further in her discursive practice of constructing land as a collective inheritance. Ms. Young went back to the province's colonial past to deflate a critique launched by Social Credit member, Mr. Phillips: "I would suggest to that Hon. Member that if he carried his analogy far enough in regards to loss of private ownership of land, his several lots in the South Peace River country rightfully belong to the Indians indigenous to that area."[312] Mr. Phillips had evoked the plight of "the Indians" to suggest that Bill 42 was "stealing land," yet he failed to include the actual perspectives of Indigenous peoples and Ms. Young sought to rectify this:

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[310] "Heritage, n. Meanings, Etymology and More," Oxford English Dictionary, updated 2026, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/heritage_n.

[311] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 2nd Sess., March 9, 1973, at 32.

[312] BC, *Hansard,* March 21, 1973, at 18.

> "I had the privilege a few years ago of attending a series of workshops that involved the Indian and non-Indian community in which we really let our hair down. We talked to each other over a series of about eight weeks at Capilano College. It was one of the most constructive, rewarding experiences I've ever had — to find that the native Indian feels that he is a part of the universe; he is not lord of the universes, he is not lord of the land, he does not have dominion over the land; he is a part of land. That is why the Indian community recognizes as totems, seals, whales, ravens and wolves — because they feel they are brothers to the lakes and the forests and the skies of this province."[313]

In this statement, Ms. Young draws on "Indigenous worldviews" to advance the premise that BC residents naturally belong to the province's land. Her rhetoric presents the *topos of belonging* as a sense of being part of the land rather than separate from it, alluding to the fundamental state of nature as one of inter-relationality instead of alienation or disconnection. In this way, Ms. Young employed the premise of belonging-to as way to promote a sense of unity rather than separateness, an example of the constructing strategy, which serves construct to a shared-identity.[314]

Ms. Young carried her discourse a step further along this premise, quoting the prominent Indigenous leader Chief Philip Paul in the *Victoria Times* paper:

> "[Chief Paul] said one of the main problems facing Indians today is the conflict over values and attitudes. He is being pushed to accept the values of non-Indians which he knows are false. The Indian still instinctively believes in the attitudes of his forefathers who held that land was an extension of man."[315]

Chief Philip Paul had denounced the fervent opposition to Bill 42 as "a shoddy display of non-Indian attitudes and values," by which he meant that criticism aimed at protecting private property rights antagonized the Indigenous perspective of belonging to land and not owning it.[316] By hanging her discursive hat on Indigenous worldviews, Ms. Young constructed the Opposition's defense of private land ownership as an antagonism to the fundamental "heritage" of those who call the province home. If the province's land is locked up in private ownership, then it is not accessible to all people in the province (i.e. the collective) and they are robbed of their natural inheritance (i.e. the land).

Other BC-NDP members employ the *topos of belonging* to construct a shared-identity around the province's lands—as something to which they fundamentally belong to. Ms. Brown delivered a passionate speech during the first budget debates, echoing the Indigenous perspective of fundamental interconnectedness of people to the land:

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[313] BC, *Hansard,* March 21, 1973, at 19.

[314] Wodak et al., *Discursive Construction of National Identity*, 33.

[315] Quoted in BC, *Hansard,* March 21, 1973, at 18.

[316] Quoted in BC, *Hansard,* March 21, 1973, at 18.

> "There are other reasons, of course, why we must get into the housing business. For one, as has been said before, land is a non-renewable resource, and we have to husband it. It has to be preserved. We have to work towards a commitment of planning, developing and leasing of land for the good of all people and not for just a few — no speculation, no rip-offs, neither by people nor municipalities. Land belongs to all of us and is here to benefit all of us. The Government has to take responsibility for administering this resource. The private sector has proven itself to be too irresponsible for this priceless resource to be left in its hands."[317]

In just a few sentences, Ms. Brown offered an ideological goldmine. Her statement touches on the many ideological assumptions driving the BC-NDP's policy interventions into the province's agricultural and residential land markets. These policy interventions utilize the province's land for the collective benefit rather than the goals of individuals or private corporations, and Ms. Brown's statement is an example of how BC-NDP's members rationalize these policy approaches through the discursive practice of constructing land as a collective inheritance for the province's people. Ms. Brown employed the pronoun "us" to promote a sense of unity and signify that her statement applies to the collective, having already articulated that the land is for "all people" and not just "a few."

Another BC-NDP member, Mr. Nunweiler, draws on the topos of nature to advance the premise that collective inheritance is part of the "natural order" of the land. In Mr. Nunweiler's speech supporting Bill 42, the *topos of belonging* and *topos of nature* discursively play together. As Mr. Steves and Ms. Young articulated that land is a natural inheritance of all people, so Mr. Nunweiler roots this articulation in the fundamental state of nature:

> "We don't always appreciate and consider seriously enough the landscape which has always been at our doorstep and which we tend to take for granted. I am referring to the natural landscape of British Columbia — the abundance of wilderness areas accessible to the public. We should underline the fact that the landscape as it is today presents the greatest resource that we have. But it may not always be here if we do not safeguard and preserve its natural order. That is, the natural order of the land. If we wait until we face it, it will never be restored. I am not talking here only of wilderness reserves or park recreation but the careful preservation of streams, rivers, and forest areas… If large urban areas, and small urban areas for that matter, do their housekeeping and leave the other 99 per cent land area in a natural healthy state, a balance of nature may yet be worked out."[318]

Mr. Nunweiler's statement emphatically suggests that there is a "natural order" to land and that current policy approaches are not facing it. He does not employ the words "belonging," "inheritance," or "heritage," but he does advance a parallel premise that leads to the same outcome as the other member's discourses: that the land needs to be protected. Mr. Nunweiler's discourse goes to the BC-NDP's ideological roots—the state of nature is to be stewarded and used, rather than dominated and owned. His discourse directly confronts the worldview that sees the natural state of the world as one in which nature can be appropriated by man, going back to world views advanced by eighteenth century philosopher John Locke. Widely considered the father of liberalism, Locke argued that "the state that all men are in naturally" is "a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit."[319] In this way, Mr. Nunweiler ensures that the discursive practice of constructing land as a collective inheritance is rooted in one's basic understandings of reality.

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[317] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 2nd Sess., February 21, 1973, at 17.

[318] BC, *Hansard,* February 21, 1973, at 23-24.

As discursive practices are always contingent on a variety of contexts, it is important to note the legal context in which Mr. Steves, Ms. Young, and Ms. Brown performed their discursive practicers in support of the BC-NDP's policy approaches. There is a nationally situated, legal context that drives the premise that private property obscures the fundamental right of inheritance to use the land: The concept of private land ownership in BC is a relic of the British feudal system, as all Canadian provinces inherited the "free-hold," also known as "fee-simple" title, from the British Crown; as legal historian J. E. Cote described in his historical account of how English law was adopted by Canadian jurisdictions.[320] In countries that have the tradition of *allemannsretten*, known as "everyman's right" or the "right to roam," private land ownership must contend with citizens' rights to travel through their property.[321] *Allemannsretten* facilitates outdoor recreation practices and a generous culture of free-roaming that could include hiking through private gardens or skiing in neighbors' backyards. These are just two examples of how legal and cultural contexts can impact the meaning of private land ownership. In BC, its populace did not have the right to roam on private property as *Allemannsretten* permits, which meant that land was locked up for public use while in private ownership—a structural factor that emboldened BC-NDP members in constructing land as a collective inheritance for not just private owners but all people in the province's populace.

Together, the discourses of Mr. Steves, Ms. Young, Ms. Brown and Mr. Nunweiler construct a conception of what land is at a fundamental level. Mr. Steves presents land as a heritage from past generations and Ms. Young argues that man belongs-to and is interconnected-with the land. Ms. Brown then connects these discursive elements—heritage, interconnectedness, and belonging—to all people (i.e. the collective), and Mr. Nunweiler roots these elements in an ideological view of the world, suggesting that land as inheritance is part of the state of nature. Together, these discursive elements stitch together a discursive practice of constructing land as a collective inheritance.

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[319] John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government.* (Printed for R. Butler, 1821), 189, https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/009708470.

[320] J. E. Côté, "The Reception of English Law," *Alberta Law Review* 15, no. 1 (1977): 29, https://www.canlii.org/en/commentary/doc/1977CanLIIDocs77

[321] Brynhild Granås, "'10,000 Years Of Cultural Encounters': Understanding Northern Landscapes through Allemannsretten, Friluftsliv and Outdoor Recreation Moralities," in *Understanding Human-Nature Practices for Environmental Management* (Routledge, 2025), 15-36, http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781003481041-2.

4.3 Land as Limited

Section 4.3 takes up the second discursive practice in the Land Commission debates, showing how BC-NDP members constructed land as limited through *topos of scarcity* and *topos of protection*.

The discursive practice of constructing land as limited was both a justification for the regulatory controls imposed by the Land Commission Act and a simple reflection of the province's topography. In a BC Studies article written the same year, Andrew Petter found that the concern about diminishing arable land in BC was "undoubtedly justified."[322] Only 4 percent of BC's total land is considered suitable for cultivated agriculture and 3 percent of it is located West of the Rocky Mountains.[323] By 1973, an estimated 20 percent of the province's arable land had been lost to housing and commercial development in the Lower Fraser Valley and in other parts of the province, arable land was disappearing at rate of 3,000 acres per year. Thousands of acres more had been lost on account of farmland subdivisions for purposes of speculative land holding, estate planning, or hobby farming.[324] The original sessional bill of the Land Commission Act played on this *topos of scarcity*, opening with a statement on the vulnerability of the province's agricultural land, stating that "Farmland is highly vulnerable to acquisition by other uses for well understood reasons."[325] These reasons include its particular susceptibility to housing and commercial developers because of the nature of the arable land itself: "Farmland lends itself to low-cost development: topsoil is already present, the topography favourable and service installation costs are low."[326]

In fact, the discursive practice of constructing farmland as scare began before the BC-NDP came to power. The BC-NDP members were actually drawing on preceding discourse uttered by the same legislative members now antagonizing their efforts to protect the resource they had identified as scare—this drawing on the earlier Social Credit members discourses presenting an ironic form of

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[322] Andrew Petter, "Sausage Making in British Columbia's NDP Government: The Creation of the Land Commission Act, August 1972-April 1973," *BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly*, no. 65 (1985): 5, https://doi.org/10.14288/bcs.v0i65.1202.

[323] Ward et al., *Land Use Programs in Canada*, 74.

[324] Petter, "Sausage Making in British Columbia's NDP Government" 5.

[325] British Columbia, *Bill 42: Land Commission Act*, 30th Parl., 2nd Sess., 1973, 2.

[326] BC, *Bill 42: Land Commission Act*, 2.

intertextuality.[327] The previous year, the Social Credit government had passed the Environment and Land Use Act, which gave the Environment and Land Use Committee the power to make recommendations on land use planning and development to the lieutenant-governor—a legislative move that the BC-NDP government later leveraged to introduce the Bill 42. In the Environment and Land Use Act, the Social Credit government lists "Reasons for Concern about Loss of Agricultural Land," citing the same facts that the BC-NDP government used to justify the Land Commission Act two years later: limited arable land, loss of arable land, agriculture's economic importance, and global food shortage concerns.[328] It turns out the Social Credit party had laid the legislative ground work the BC-NDP needed to pass Bill 42—what Barry E. Smith called "a 'stage-setting' piece of legislation" that foreshadowed the Land Commission Act to come.[329]

Just days after the BC-NDP opened their first legislative session and several months before the Land Commission Act is introduced, Mr. Oswald summarized the threat that BC-NDP perceived towards the province's scarce and disappearing farmland.

> "We see farmland rapidly disappearing, changing into industrial lands and into residential lands. There's only so much land available in the Lower Mainland and we've certainly got to make the best use of it. The results now are that large tracts of land in my area are held by large development companies, companies that are sometimes registered in other parts of the world. These people have really only one interest and that is making a profit on the land and the zoning changes that they can bring about."[330]

As the underlined parts of his statement show, Mr. Oswald employed the pronoun "we" as a means of strengthening his premise that farmland is limited and disappearing and presenting it as *taken-for-granted, common-sense* knowledge.[331] By saying "we see…" (plural), instead of "I see…" (first person) or "it is well known that…" (neutral), Mr. Oswald *covertly* expands the authority of his premise; such that the premise presents as a universal fact, well-known not just amongst BC-NDP members but everyone in the legislature.[332] The employed "we" to acknowledge how farmland is disappearing to industry and housing development helps construct the nature of the province's farmland as vulnerable and needing protection (*topos of protection*). In the second sentence, Mr. Oswald employed the contracted "we" ("we've") to leverage the premise that farmland is limited ("there's only so much land available") into what is ultimately an argument for government intervention through regulatory control and legislative authority ("we've certainly got to make the best of it"). In this way, Mr. Oswald draws upon collective rhetoric to appeal to the authority that is amassed by the collective—all in an effort to make natural and common-sense the viewpoint that province's farmland as scarce, vulnerable, and needing protection. All this before the legislation had even emerged on the legislative floor.

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[327] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 73.

[328] Lesley Campbell and Jim Ploknikoff, *Agricultural Land Reserve Historical Binder On the Agricultural Land Reserve 1973* (BC Department of Planning, 1995), 46, https://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/assets/alc/assets/library/archived-publications/alr history/alr_historical_binder_on_alr_1973.pdf

[329] Barry E Smith, *A Work in Progress: The British Columbia Farmland Preservation Program* (BC Government and Agricultural Land Commission eBook Collection, 2012), 4, https://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/assets/alc/assets/library/archived-publications/alr-history/a_work_in_progress_ _farmland_preservation_b_smith_2012.pdf

[330] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 2nd Sess., October 20, 1972, at 3.

[331] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 21.

[332] Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, 45.

The BC-NDP also foreshadowed the Land Commission Act themselves in their 1972 campaign pamphlet titled "N.D.P: A New for People," which was widely distributed leading up to the election.[333] During the debates, Ms. Young claimed this pamphlet was "in the hands of most of the people in this province."[334] The pamphlet is a twenty-eight-page summary of the BC-NDP's political platform, detailing their approaches to the resource economy, labour-management, women and indigenous rights, urban issues, environmental policy, education, social services, and human rights. After the BC-NDP cements its position on social ownership and mobilizing capital for social investments through the creation of new state-owned enterprises for economic development, transportation, and telecommunications, they introduce a new approach to the agricultural industry entitled "New Deal for Farmers."[335] This page focuses on the role of land in the agricultural industry, stating their intentions to establish a land-zoning and land-banking program.[336] They use a metaphor to suggest that farmland can be compressed in the palm of a hand, evoking qualifications of smallness and vulnerability: "Vast and powerful corporations now dominate agriculture. Their tightened grip on the land squeezes every British Columbian."[337]

Indeed, the BC-NDP had been constructing agricultural land as small, vulnerable, and limited for decades. Petter writes that "the need for legislation to preserve such land had been reaffirmed at CCF and NDP conventions and council meetings throughout the 1950s and the

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[333] British Columbia New Democratic, *British Columbia New Democratic Party Platform* (1972), University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections.

[334] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 2nd Sess., March 21, 1973, at 23.

[335] BC-NDP, *British Columbia New Democratic Party Platform*, 6.

[336] BC-NDP, *British Columbia New Democratic Party Platform*, 8.

[337] BC-NDP, *British Columbia New Democratic Party Platform*, 8.

1960s."[338] Even the discursive and legal processes begun months before the Land Commission Act was brought before the legislature. Months prior, the BC-NDP government announced the forthcoming legislation to the B.C. Federation of Agriculture and followed with an executive order to place an immediate freeze on all subdivision of farmland via Order-in-Council #4483/72.[339] By the time Bill 42 hit the legislature, the legal process was already underway, the stakeholders had been warned, and unsurprisingly, the legislative plans had leaked to the media.

By the second read reading of the Land Commission Act, the Minister of Agriculture Mr. Stupich said he had received so many letters that his department "used up what was expected to be a year's supply of note paper" in writing response letters and Opposition member Mr. McClelland said that his party had received "thousands and thousands of letters all in opposition to the bill."[340,341] At this point, a dust storm has clouded the proposed legislation: published adverts by the Opposition filled newspapers and bulletin boards and concerned constituents joined the B.C. Federation of Agriculture in demonstrating to withdraw the bill.

Agricultural Minister Mr. Stupich's speech for the second reading reached into the *topos of history* to perform the discursive practice of constructing farmland as a scarce resource in need of responsible stewardship. The *topos of history* relies on 'history teaching lessons' as Wodak and Reisigl write, and Mr. Stupich relies on its teachings to argue that protecting agricultural land has a deeper authority than mere present circumstances.[342] Mr. Stupich floated the premise that ancient civilizations such as Mesopotamia or Broze Age agrarian societies were particularly concerned about "the abuse of land particularly suited for agricultural production" as early as 4,000 years ago.[343] Such civilizations had documented soil depletion, salinization, and misuse of fertile land, showing that limited agricultural land was "in no way at all a new concern of people."[344] Mr. Stupich then reached back to the 1953 BC Natural Resources Conference to repeat warnings that farmers would not be able to keep up with growing food demands caused by rapid population growth. "Very limited use existed long ago," Mr. Stupich said, "The idea that people should control land use is not a new one —4,000 years old if you like."[345] These discursive moments link discourses from different genres into a single communicative event (i.e. *interdiscursivity*) as a means of rationalizing zoning, landbanking, and oversight of farmland as a not only rational but historically-rooted response to the scarce nature of arable land.[346]

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[338] Petter, "Sausage Making in British Columbia's NDP Government," 8.

[339] Campbell and Ploknikoff, *Agricultural Land Reserve Historical Binder On the Agricultural Land Reserve 1973*, 29,

[340] BC, *Hansard,* March 9, 1973, at 36.

[341] BC, *Hansard*, March 9, 1973, at 36.

[342] Wodak and Reisigl, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 80.

[343] BC, *Hansard*, March 9, 1973, at 26.

[344] BC, *Hansard*, March 9, 1973, at 26.

A few paragraphs in the transcript later, Mr. Stupich again advanced the premise of limited arable land, this time with increased illocutionary force, switching from "we" to a direct "you" aimed at the Opposition bench: "I think there can be no argument that the areas are definitely limited… Twenty-two years ago it was argued that this must be accepted as a basic principle, and today I am asking you to accept that as a basic principle."[347] He then again made an *interdiscursive* link along the *topos of history*, quoting from another conference report, this one from 1951, then clippings from previous Ministers of Agriculture in BC, and finally, newspaper clippings from the *New Westminster Columbian* and the *Vancouver Sun* about farmland lost to private development.[348]

To be clear, Opposition members do appear to deny this premise or "basic principle" as Stupich says. The Opposition did not antagonize the premise that farmland was limited to four percent of the province's territory; they antagonized the method of preservation. Their discourses criticized how zoning regulations would be imposed on public and private land equally, how the bill would give the government the authority to acquire land for a new state-owned landbank, and especially, how a "five-man dictatorial commission" would be established to oversee the project.[349] The Social Credit member who performed a 12-hour soliloquy against Bill 42, Mr. Phillips, railed against what he called "a sinister bill" and "the most controversial bill that has ever been in the legislature,"[350] but he did not disagree that farmland was scarce and in need of protection. Right after Mr. Stupich's speech, his first statement makes this clear:

> "I don't think, as I said before, that anybody in this House, or any farmer, or any man in the city, anywhere, disagrees with the principle of preserving farmland. What we do disagree with, Mr. Speaker, is the principle involved in Bill 42 — *The Land Commission Act*."[351]

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[345] BC, *Hansard*, March 9, 1973, at 26.

[346] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 73.

[347] BC, *Hansard*, March 9, 1973, at 26-27.

[348] BC, *Hansard*, March 9, 1973, at 27-28.

[349] BC, *Hansard*, March 13, 1973, at 32.

[350] BC, *Hansard*, March 9, 1973, at 17.

[351] BC, *Hansard*, March 9, 1973, at 32.

Importantly, the discursive practice of constructing land as scarce resource in need of protection was not limited to discourses on the province's farmland—the *topos of scarcity* and the *topos of protection* emerged across various legislative debate topics. In the first budget debate, BC-NDP member Mr. Gorst commented on what he called "this whole mess of land use in British Columbia."[352] Representing the electoral district located at the foremost tip of Vancouver Island, Mr. Gorst had a close eye on the province's fishing industry and sea sewage disposal, and so he first-hand understood the impact of constructing land as an unlimited, self-renewing resource.

> "Let us not be misled by those who expound the theories of unlimited land, limitless wildlife and overabundant fisheries. These things and all of the problems which go with them need the immediate attention of all of the people of British Columbia if we are to give our grandchildren even a semblance of the life we would like them to have."[353]

In this statement, Mr. Gorst antagonizes the discursive construction of land as "unlimited." Discourse analysts take antagonisms to be a sign that incompatible discourses are colliding. Land is either unlimited or limited; each premise will be advanced towards different means.[354] Mr. Gorst's discourse demonstrates that it is important to be clear about one's fundamental assumptions about reality and the material world—because these assumptions will ultimately lead to sustaining life for future generations or destroying it.

In the same day in the legislature, Ms. Brown had nominated land as a "non-renewable resource," saying: "…as has been said before, land is a non-renewable resource, and we have to husband it."[355] In this way, Ms. Brown employed the same premise as Mr. Gorst, advancing the argument that government's intervention into the province's agricultural and housing land markets is not only necessary but socially responsible. Both Ms. Brown and Mr. Gorst's discursive practice of constructing land as limited and non-renewable are covert examples of *interdiscursivity* with the limits to growth rhetoric popularized by the 1972 Club of Rome's *The Limits to Growth* report. The report had been published in March 1972, just seven months before the BC-NDP's ascendancy into government, and it had quickly become a bestseller and a controversial subject, sparking conversations about unregulated economic growth and environmental protection around the world.

This discursive practice loomed so large amongst the BC-NDP members that Social Credit member Mr. Philips spent a chuck of his 12-hour soliloquy antagonizing the limits to growth rhetoric, referring to it as "rabid rhetoric" from "doomsayers" and a "doomsday cause," and even quoting from a book titled *The Doomsday Syndrome* by John Maddox.[356] In one incoherent statement, he denounced its claims as a 'disaster prophecy':

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[352] BC, *Hansard*, March 21, 1973, at 35.

[353] BC, *Hansard*, February 21, 1973, at 36.

[354] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 47-48.

[355] BC, *Hansard*, February 21, 1973, at 17.

> "In short, the weakness of today's disaster prophecies is that they are exaggerations, many of them frighteningly irresponsible. Frightenan — frightening; gracious…! frightenenainly… (Laughter) irresponsible. I'll get it yet. Anyway it frightens everyone — and they're irresponsible. Frighteneningly!"[357]

Though Mr. Phillips pleaded with the Speaker of the House and the BC-NDP members to "withdraw that bad bill" over the course of hours and days, the BC-NDP ploughed forward with the Land Commission Act, employing the limits to growth rhetoric in service of normalizing interventionist approaches to the province's struggling land markets.[358,359]

When the legislature eventually took on the BC-NDP's policy interventions into the housing market, the Housing Minister Mr. Nicolson overtly leveraged the limits to growth rhetoric to rationalise budget expenditures on the newly established Department of Housing and its interventionist approaches to addressing the province's housing crises. "It is true to say that many of the housing problems in this province stem from our high rate of economic growth," Mr. Nicolson said, "as economists are now beginning to recognize, too rapid economic development can have serious social and environmental costs, and a shortage of housing is often one of these costs."[360] Here the limits to growth rhetoric serves as a means of problematizing the private sector's pursuit of economic growth as a contributor to the province's housing shortage. Mr. Nicolson framed "too-rapid" economic development as a threat to the province's housing supply. It is unclear from the discursive context what type of economic development Mr. Nicolson was referring to, so we must take the term to be encompassing of both industrial and housing development. Rapid industrial development could remove developable land from the housing market more quickly than the market could sustain its loss, while rapid housing development could result in developable land being lost to expensive condominiums or poorly constructed apartment buildings—both ultimately removing land from the housing market that would be necessary for constructing affordable and socially-considerate housing options. In this way, Mr. Nicolson employed the warnings of the limits to growth rhetoric to rationalise the need for government intervention in the market. This discursive moment draws covertly upon the *topos of scarcity*, while framing its argument explicitly along the *topos of protection*—ultimately constructing the government as the responsible protector of the province's scarce and non-renewable resources.

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[356] BC, *Hansard*, March 13, 1973, at 19-22.

[357] BC, *Hansard*, March 13, 1973, at 22.

[358] BC, *Hansard*, March 13, 1973, at 22.

[359] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 21.

[360] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 3rd Sess., February 14, 1974, at 8.

4.4 Land for Future Generations

Section 4.4 builds on the previous sections by showing how BC-BDP members expand the collective nature of land to include not just current populations calling BC home but also those of future generations. Through the *topos of care* and the *topos of stewardship*, land is constructed as belonging to unknown future others.

This discursive practice of constructing the land as essential to intergenerational stewardship is leveraged by the BC-NDP as a rationale for the policies of the Land Commission and Department of Housing. As part of the Minister of Agriculture Mr. Stupich's defence of the Land Commission Act, which received more criticism and vitriol from the Opposition by the day, he rationalised its protectionary mechanisms of zoning, regulation, and oversight as necessary to safeguard farmland for future generations. The following statement is from the second reading of the bill, right before Opposition Mr. Phillip's launched his infamous 12-hour soliloquy in defence of individual rights—a notable *antagonism* to BC-NDP member's defence of prioritizing benefits to the collective:

> "…Dr. Warren, one of the panelists from UBC said, 'Public interest, human welfare and good management require that all land owners or lessees of land and water, public or private, care for soil and water under their control in a manner that will ensure that future generations may derive from them full enjoyment and benefit.'
>
> Mr. Speaker, we are concerned today not only with the people who are here today, but with future generations. When we do something to farmland that cannot be undone, then we are paying absolutely no attention at all to generations that are coming after us."[361]

Mr. Stupich began this excerpt by drawing on the authority of the 1953 British Columbia Natural Resources Conference, using *interdiscursivity* to strengthen the premise of his argument: we ought to care for unknown future others. This premise along the *topos of care* instilled a tone of moral obligation, appealing to sympathy to rationalise the BC-NDP's intervention into the agricultural land market. Mr. Stupich's use of this argument scheme mandates legislative members to expand their circle of care beyond the economic well-being of individual agricultural landowners and consider the interests of the collective: the past (honoring our farmland heritage), present (defending farmland against current threats), and future (safeguarding farmland for future generations).

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[361] BC, *Hansard*, March 9, 1973, at 27.

Mr. Stupich also structured part of his speech as a conditional clause, using an *if-this, then-that* statement to create a tone of warning: if we let bad things happen now, future others will have to pay for the consequences of our actions. As part of this discursive strategy, Mr. Stupich employed the paternalistic "we" in service of projecting an authoritative tone and constructing concern for unknown future others as a universal value. Mr. Stupich's conscious or unconscious choice to use "we" instead of "you" functioned as a means of obscuring or trivializing any "self-determination" the other legislative members might have in regard to the discursive topic—promoting an it-is-what-it-is sort of feeling.[362] The conditional statement and the paternalistic "we" serve in removing a sense of agency from the legislative members receiving Mr. Stupich's speech. Together, these discursive strategies command a sense of urgency and moral obligation towards future generations—useful to a speaker trying to rationalise land control mechanisms.

Though it was more common for BC-NDP members to construct land as belonging to future generations in the Land Commission Act debates, this discursive practice did also emerged in the housing debate. Once the new provincial housing department was established, Housing Minister Mr. Nicolson rationalised that acquiring developable land and bringing it under public ownership would preserve it for future generations. At this point, in the Spring of 1974, he proudly announced that much had already been accomplished by the new housing department, stating that "…preliminary figures that I have obtained indicate that a record 37,627 new housing starts occurred in the province in 1973. This figure represents an increase of 6.5 per cent over 1972."[363] The debates surrounding the Department of Housing Act had constructed developable land in the housing market as threatened by profit-seeking speculators and this served to rationalise the need for a centralised housing department. Now, in the budget debates for the expenditures of the new housing department, Mr. Nicolson drew upon the *topos of threat* once again to justify intervening—but this time to safeguard land not just for current struggling population but for the sake of future households.

> "What we are now engaged in is the development of a strategy to put housing on each and every piece of land that has been acquired by the province. And this includes the University Endowment Lands and the Blair Rifle Range in North Vancouver. For the first part, the government will lease rather than dispose of land on a fee simple basis, because we believe that it is proper that future further private speculation be prohibited and that any windfall profits that accrue should accrue to all the members of the community. [364]

Here Mr. Nicolson constructed land as vulnerable to ongoing speculation and individual profit-seeking motivates of future investors and developers and then drew on the *topos of stewardship*, using this premise to argue, as Mr. Stupich did, that if nothing is done now, the land will not benefit future generations. In this way, Mr. Nicolson too achieved a tone of warning and moral obligation to the interests of the collective. Here is a specific justification of the BC-NDP's strict leasehold policy as necessary for intergenerational stewardship—suggesting that if the government owns the land, and continues to own the land through leasehold contracts, then the land can be safeguarded for the use and benefit of the collective, i.e. all members of the community, present and future.

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[362] Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, 46.

[363] BC, *Hansard*, February 14, 1974, at 8.

[364] BC, *Hansard*, February 14, 1974, at 9.

4.5 Private Ownership as a Moral Threat

Section 4.5 examines the Department of Housing debates, where BC-NDP members move beyond scarcity rhetoric and instead mobilize topoi of *threat*, *predation*, and *immorality* to characterize private land relations. Through condemning speculators and profiteers, BC-NDP members construct private ownership as a moral danger to the province, thereby legitimizing land acquisition and leasehold policies that reinforce BC's Crown land regime.

Throughout the twentieth century, the province has been dominated by the free-enterprising values and political-right philosophies: the Conservative Party (1903-1916, 1928-1933), the Liberals (1916-1924, 1933-1941), the Liberal-Conservative coalition (1945-1952), and finally, the Social Credit party (1952-1972).[365] This political history brought sedimented discourses in support of free-enterprise values and private ownership rights and thus the election of the BC-NDP marked a departure from the old ways. With the collision of socialism into liberalist-dominate spaces, these long sedimented ways of discursively relating to land and housing had a chance to soften, crack, and even break away to leave room for new discursive practices. The following section shows how BC-NDP members played defense and broke through deep seeded liberalist discourses by constructing private land ownership as harmful, immoral, and unjust.

4.5.1 Topos of Threat

When the legislature took on the Department of Housing Act half a year after the Land Commission Act's passing, BC-NDP members notably left behind the discursive practice of constructing land as limited and turned their rhetoric towards the vulnerability of land. Land threatened by external forces. Land threatened by commodification, ownership, and greed. Drawing heavily on the *topos of threat*, BC-NDP members blamed inflated land and housing costs on profit-seeking behaviours and growth-hungry mindsets of the free-enterprisers and private ownership schemes. The significance of the BC-NDP members drawing attention away from the *topos of scarcity* and towards the *topos of threat* is made clear through the discursive context: the BC-NDP are actively trying to solve a problem caused by limited land supply with policy interventions that will decrease the amount of developable land in the property market. The closest they get to leveraging the premise is when Mrs. Webster acknowledged that developable land was limited in her district, stating: "In the Vancouver South area I realize that there is very little land left for the development of housing."[366] Most of the time, though, the *topos of scarcity* is merely implicit, lurking in the background of the discourse.

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[365] Elections British Columbia, *Electoral History Of British Columbia 1871-1986* (Legislative Library, 1988), https://elections.bc.ca/docs/rpt/1871-1986_ElectoralHistoryofBC.pdf.

The BC-NDP's earmarked a total of 60 million dollars to go towards *acquiring* developable land for housing in their first budget. As Premier Barrett declared, "This $50 million must not be locked in isolation but must be tied in to the previously announced $10 million for land acquisition," referring to the Provincial Land Acquisition Fund.[367] The Premier clarified this acquisition strategy in the budget address, a formal speech for the government to articulate its vision for the year:

> "The Government desires to acquire land for housing projects for the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, while it is still available. This land will form a bank for future housing sites to help ensure our citizens have an opportunity, for adequate housing, and I am recommending $10 million be placed in this fund from current or surplus revenues."[368]

The Premier also proposed another ten million dollars would go to the new Housing Incentive Fund Act and that these expropriations would also land acquisition activities:

> "Mr. Speaker, one of the most pressing problems facing any government today is how to provide low-cost housing to its citizens in the face of rapidly escalating land prices. I believe all will agree that it is in the best interests of the public themselves, communities and the province as a whole to have all citizens living in proper housing accommodation. The province has entered into a large land purchase arrangement with the Government of Canada, and this will be carried on to the maximum extent possible. In addition, however, we wish to build our own landbank while the land is available for future housing use. This bill, therefore, sets up a $10 million Housing Incentive Fund for the purpose of purchasing such land."[369]

These statements make the land acquisition strategy of the BC-NDP clear: developable land will be acquired, stored in a landbank, and earmarked for housing development. This land acquisition will remove land from the private market, shrinking the province's housing land supply, and it will add land to BC's Crown land regime. Moreover, the BC-NDP intended for this land to remain permanently in the ownership of the province—explicated through their strict policy of leasehold tenure. This policy was first articulated in their 1972 campaign pamphlet. After a message from BC-NDP leader Dave Barrett declaring that "B.C. needs a New Deal for People," statements on making the province's economy serve people, not profit through establishing "secondary industries" under public ownership, and the proposed 'new deal for farmers' that became the Land Commission Act—the pamphlet turns to "a massive program of housing, land and transportation reforms."[370]

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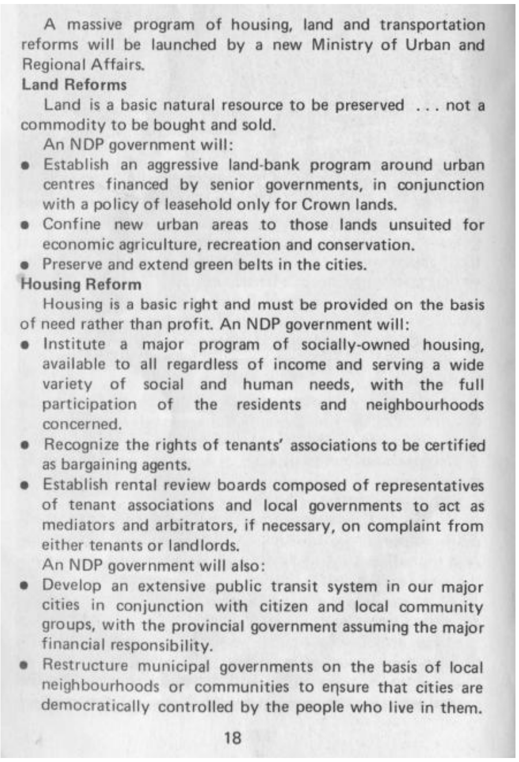
[366] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 3rd Sess., October 12, 1974, at 12.

[367] BC, *Hansard*, February 9, 1973, at 10.

[368] BC, *Hansard*, February 9, 1973, at 10.

[369] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 2nd Sess., April 9, 1973, at 10.

Image 4.5.1: *Excerpt from BC-NDP's 1972 Campaign Pamphlet "A New Deal for People"*[371]



A massive program of housing, land and transportation reforms will be launched by a new Ministry of Urban and Regional Affairs.

Land Reforms

Land is a basic natural resource to be preserved . . . not a commodity to be bought and sold.

An NDP government will:

- Establish an aggressive land-bank program around urban centres financed by senior governments, in conjunction with a policy of leasehold only for Crown lands.
- Confine new urban areas to those lands unsuited for economic agriculture, recreation and conservation.
- Preserve and extend green belts in the cities.

Housing Reform

Housing is a basic right and must be provided on the basis of need rather than profit. An NDP government will:

- Institute a major program of socially-owned housing, available to all regardless of income and serving a wide variety of social and human needs, with the full participation of the residents and neighbourhoods concerned.
- Recognize the rights of tenants' associations to be certified as bargaining agents.
- Establish rental review boards composed of representatives of tenant associations and local governments to act as mediators and arbitrators, if necessary, on complaint from either tenants or landlords.

An NDP government will also:

- Develop an extensive public transit system in our major cities in conjunction with citizen and local community groups, with the provincial government assuming the major financial responsibility.
- Restructure municipal governments on the basis of local neighbourhoods or communities to ensure that cities are democratically controlled by the people who live in them.

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On this page, the BC-NDP constructed land as a resource, not a commodity, and housing as a human right, not the object of profit. Putting these ideological premises as headings, suggesting they drive their policy approaches, they explicitly state their strict leasehold policy: *a BC-NDP government will establish an aggressive landbanking program with a policy of leasehold only for Crown land.* These statements construct public land as necessary to BC-NDP's housing approach and showcases their motivation to keep public land with the Crown and prevent privatization.

This means that even if the public land is developed by private or nonprofit owners, they would not own the land beneath their housing; they would only own a long-term (typically 99-year) lease on the land. In the end, all the land acquisitions that occurred under the BC-NDP did not move the province's proportion of Crown land even a single full percentage point—despite the Premier saying the strategy would "be carried on to the maximum extent possible."[372] Yet, the fact remains that this land acquisition strategy was performed by a government that already owned 95 percent of its land. This leaves 5 percent of the province's land held in private ownership, with much less of that is land being suited for housing development. In the end, the amount of land for housing is undeniably limited. Just as the supply of arable land is limited by the province's topography, the supply of developable land is limited by the province's tight grip on land.

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[370] BC-NDP, *British Columbia New Democratic Party Platform*, 1-18.

[371] BC-NDP, *British Columbia New Democratic Party Platform*, 18.

Housing Minister Mr. Nicolson got close to acknowledging this interplay between BC's Crown land regime and the high land costs, but he merely acknowledged it as a critique of the opposition without offering a strong rebuttal, saying:

> "We have been accused from the other side that by purchasing this land and taking it off the market we have actually driven up prices. By purchasing this land and having a very small land bank — so far — there is the knowledge that this land bank could be made available at any time at all and this is one of the things that is holding a little bit of downward pressure on prices so far."[373]

Here Mr. Nicolson immediately diverted the discourse back to the government's land acquisition strategy, dismissing the critique and instead constructing the strategy as the true solution, claiming it had a downward pressure effect on the province's land supply. He also tried to downplay the significance of the landbank by describing it as "small" and strengthening his authority by showing that he understood the critiques leveraged against him. Altogether, Mr. Nicolson's response to the criticism about the BC-NDP's land acquisition strategy leaves the critical eye wanting.

Over and over again, the *topos of scarcity* is absent in debates on the province's approach to housing. BC-NDP members emphatically pin the housing affordability and supply issues on the high cost of land, while constructing the land speculators, high construction costs, and mortgage rates as the perpetrators of these inflated land prices. Just as Mr. Nicolson linked the housing crisis to the cost of land, saying "one of the problems which is quite obvious to one who looks into the housing crisis, is the cost of land," and followed with the *topos of threat*, constructing land as threated by speculators and constructing the government as the best authority to rectify and put the land in service of societal wellbeing rather than investors pocketbooks:

> "There, of course, is a great amount of land being held by small speculators as well as large speculators. There is no simple answer to this. Government is in the best position to know

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[372] BC, *Hansard*, April 9, 1973, at 10.

[373] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 2nd Sess., October 15, 1973, at 27.

> where the types of development are going to take place. Government is in the best position to acquire land prior to development taking place, as I mentioned last year in debate. It is hoped that there would be less objection to government developing land because there is a tremendous antagonism towards development of any type."[374]

This act of labeling a land investor as a speculator is both a function of etymological history and a discursive strategy—the term goes back to the eighteen century to describe those who seek profit from investing in land by speculating on its appreciation value and it evokes a variety of associations such as harm, greed, risk, power, and misuse.[375] Back in 1920, the American economist Richard T. Ely discussed the "different meanings" attached to land speculation, distinguishing between good speculation and bad speculation on the basis of whether the investor's actions cause hurt to society or social harm.[376] When BC-NDP members refer to the profit-seeking land investors as land speculators, they evoke associations with *bad speculation* and point the metaphorical finger at the *bad* land investors.

Another BC-NDP member Mr. Gorst employed the rhetorics of speculation, suggesting that the high cost of land was connected it to the treatment of land as "a commodity which is speculated on." In this way, he constructs the land speculators as a threat to housing affordability and the provincial government's housing department as a liberator.

> "All kinds of arguments are put forward for the high cost of housing, and quite justifiably so, but one is the high cost of land. I happened to note that there is a report that housing in this area since 1969 up to this time, has increased an average of $6,000 a dwelling in that short space of four years. I would guess that a great deal of that increase, probably the major portion of it, is on the price of the land itself, a part of housing that has for too long now been treated as a commodity which is speculated on. On that speculation is added the high interest rate of the mortgage, calculated on the price of the land, which really has nothing to do with the cost of the house. I think it would make far greater sense, Mr. Speaker, through the provincial government housing department, to assemble the land and provide it on a lease basis to homeowners, thereby saving the homeowner, the burden of the interest rate on the land and taking that profiteering and speculation on the land out of the housing operation."[377]

Mr. Gorst's statement points to the treatment land as a commodity, associating this premise with a way of looking-at and talking-about the world that aligns with classic economic theory: resources such as land are objects that one has a right to work, transform, and employ towards their own self-interest, including profit-making.

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[374] BC*,* *Hansard*, October 12, 1973, at 7-8.

[375] "Land-Speculator, n.," Oxford English Dictionary, updated September 2025, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7702878754.

[376] Richard T. Ely, "Land Speculation," *Journal of Farm Economics* 2, no. 3 (1920): 121–35, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20171665.

[377] BC *Hansard*, October 12, 1973, at 24.

This premise that land is a commodity is canonically associated with liberalism and classical economics, in which Locke advanced the premise that men naturally had agency over nature to anchor his labour-based "appropriation principle": the first person to mix their labor with land needs no one else's consent to do so, today known as Lockean Property Theory.[378] The father of classical economics, Adam Smith, formalized this premise into a comprehensive system of political economy now driving market-based economies today. The political journalist P.J. O'Rourke Smith wrote that the "best insight" from Smith's work is that "There is nothing inherently wrong with the pursuit of self-interest."[379] The discursive practice of constructing land as threatened by profiteering and speculation is thus an *antagonism* of this premise and its associated ideologies; it puts sedimented discourses into a broader *field of discursivity* to suggest that there are other meanings outside this one specific discourse. Mr. Gorst's discourse demonstrates a strategic attempt at interrupting hegemonic understandings of what land is for and how people can relate to it. Through constructing the commodification of land as the inflator of land and housing costs, the *topos of threat* placed two discursive practices in dialogue, creating a sort of antagonistic collision. Mr. Gorst employed this argument scheme to not only support the new Department of Housing but also its intervention policy approach of joining the speculators in purchasing land based on its perceived value. Yet, of course, this is where different discursive practices generate different goals from the act of speculation—where those with free-enterprise values pursue profit-maximization, those with socialist values pursue social outcomes such as subsidized housing.

Discourse analysts take discursive practices as a function of ideology, a process in which the way people make meaning in everyday life is mobilised to order discourse and maintain power.[380] Mr. Gorst statement is just one example of how discursive strategies serve to interrupt sedimented discourses that understand of land as a commodity and advance new discourses that understand land as a limited, non-renewable social resource.[381] This interruption process is understood as a *hegemonic interruption*, where discourses collide in the negotiation of new understandings of land.

In his contribution to the housing debates, Mr. Gorst also drew on the preceding discourses in his strategy of antagonising land commodification, including Ms. Brown:

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[378] Karl Widerquist, "Lockean Property Theory: A Menu of Options for the Justification of Unilateral Appropriation," in *The Problem of Property: Taking the Freedom of Nonowners Seriously*, ed. Karl Widerquist (Springer International Publishing, 2023), 22, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-21948-1_3.

[379] P. J. O'Rourke, *On The Wealth of Nations*, Internet Archive (Atlantic Books, 2007), 2, http://archive.org/details/onwealthofnation0000orou.

[380] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 63.

[381] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 48-56.

> "I agree with the Hon. Member for Vancouver-Burrard (Ms. Brown) that too many older homes are being torn down in our communities. But there again, those structures are victims of land speculation and high mortgage rates and really have nothing to do with providing housing for people. Any housing that is provided is secondary to the original concept of making another dollar. In most cases it makes far more sense to upgrade those homes and provide some families with a civilized environment to grow up in."[382]

Here Mr. Gorst again leveraged the *topos of threat* to construct destroyed homes as the 'victims' of profit-seeking industries in pursuit of 'making another dollar.'

Even the Opposition articulated alignment with Ms. Brown's discourse. Mr. Williams, member of the Liberal party, said Ms. Brown and other BC-NDP members have "made excellent suggestions" while the Housing Minister Mr. Nicolson has not. "What's he been doing for the last four or five months?" implored Mr. Williams.[383] Earlier in this day of housing debates, Mr. Nicolson had made the interventionist intentions of the Department of Housing Act clear, stating: "We would hope to enter into this field using this Act and this department as a vehicle."[384] Mr. Williams' primary discursive strategy is to question *how* the Department of Housing will become successful in joining the 'speculators' and actually develop its acquired land into affordable housing projects.

The answer to Mr. Williams' question lies in the BC-NDP's purchase of a private housing development agency named Dunhill Development Corporation. After the passing of the Department to Housing Act, the BC-NDP government issued an executive order for an Order-In-Council to purchase the private company. A 1981 report from the Canada Lands Directorate show how this execution action was understood on the federal level:

> "To aid in expediting such programs, Dunhill Development Corporation Limited was acquired by the Department of Housing on January 10, 1974. Dunhill, on behalf of the Department of Housing, investigates and acquires land in urban areas where housing needs are greatest. Where possible, land acquisitions are made by Dunhill, in conjunction with a municipality, so as to assist in the implementation of municipal development programs or to benefit from land—serving funds made available under the Municipal Act."[385]

The primary advantage of acquiring Dunhill was that it provided access to development expertise, industry-specific knowledge, and legal advantages: it could hold land and housing assets and operate as a separate entity, being a private company that simply came under provincial ownership.

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[382] BC, *Hansard*, October 12, 1973, at 24.

[383] BC, *Hansard*, October 12, 1973, at 25-26.

[384] BC, *Hansard*, October 12, 1973, at 8.

[385] Ward et al., *Land Use Programs in Canada*, 56.

By the beginning of 1974, 60 million dollars had been allocated in the previous year's budget for land acquisition activities, the new provincial housing department had been established, and the government had acquired the development expertise of Dunhill. In this third legislative session then, 75 million dollars were allocated to the new department.[386] With the acquisition of Dunhill, Mr. Nicolson could shape the new housing department into an active housing developer and intervene in the housing market as the provincial government had never done before. Discourses from the third legislative session show how the threat rhetoric was actualized into true policy interruptions of market-based hegemonies: Mr. Nicolson saying, "we are entering a field which has been traditionally the preserve of private enterprise in this country,"[387] with another BC-NDP member, Mr. Rolston, declaring a sense of victory: "Now socialists actually try to deal with the problem."[388]

In this way, the BC-NDP performed the discursive practice of constructing land as vulnerable as a justification for its interventionist housing policies. The discourses of Mr. Nicolson, Mr. Gorst, and Ms. Brown constructed the province's developable land as vulnerable to the profit-seeking motives of speculators and profiteer'—all the while omitting the *topos of scarcity* and thereby denying any connection between the provinces' Crown land regime and inflated land costs.

4.5.2 Topos of Predation

Pointing to free-enterprising values was an argument scheme that ran throughout the BC-NDP's defence of their policies, from the budget debates through to the land and housing debates. A variant of the topos of threat was the *topos of predation*, in which BC-NDP members employed in creative discursive strategies including metaphors of a predatory ant or cancerous growth or delegitimating associations such as linking the province's biggest development company with organized Mafia crime. It was in the first budget debates that Mr. MacDonald deployed his predatory ant-metaphor:

> "For too long have some foreign speculators and profiteers crossed and crisscrossed this province like predator ants, leaving nothing behind for the people of this province but devastation. I say that this budget signals that those days have come to an end within the housing sector."[389]

By using predatory ants as a simile for free-enterprisers, Mr. McDonald created a villainous image of a hive-mind collective spreading across the province and hunting for prey. Ants are animals that can sting, poison, and simply overwhelm their prey through the sheer numbers. The metaphor of an ant colony paired with the adjective foreign creates a strong sense of threat in large numbers.

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[386] Resnick, "Social Democracy in Power: The Case of British Columbia," 16.

[387] BC, *Hansard*, October 12, 1973, at 7.

[388] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 4th Sess., February 13, 1974, at 29.

[389] BC, *Hansard*, February 13, 1973, at 3.

When it came to the Land Commission debates, BC-NDP members singled out the land speculators and developers as preying upon the province's vulnerable agricultural land. As the BC-NDP's campaign pamphlet pointed to "vast and powerful corporations," Mr. Steves pointed to 'greedy' developers.[390] In the second reading, Mr. Steves read from a local newspaper editorial, revealing that the Agricultural Minister of the recent Social Credit government, Cyril Shelford, had expressed similar plans as the BC-NDP were proposing then:

> "The New Westminster *Columbian,* October 23, 1971. The heading
>
> > 'Developer's greed, like time, waits for no man.'
>
> It's an editorial:
>
> > 'If developers know that land is not going to be available for speculation, then that land speculation value evaporates. Itis absolutely imperative that some action be taken to freeze zoning particularly on large tracts now because farmland is disappearing so quickly (and in such large hunks) like the Spenifore Farm in Delta. The greed of the developer, like time, waits for no man, least of all for Cyril Shelford, the Minister of Agriculture.'
>
> This is what the Columbian said about Cyril — 'Cyril Shelford had a plan to establish a land fund to buy development rights from the farmers' — and it mentions this in the editorial."[391]

Here Mr. Steves drew upon *interdiscursivity* to show how even a government with a wholly different philosophy was motivated to protect farmland against greedy developers. Mr. Steves went on to read from newspaper articles suggesting that all the previous center-right governments—Conservative, Liberal, and Social Credit—had discussed taking away the development rights of agricultural landowners to protect farmland. He framed the Opposition as seeking to protect development rights now, despite formerly considering their removal. Mr. Steves pleaded: "Are they going to treat farmers equally or are they going to put the money in the hands of the land speculators?"[392]

In the housing department debates, Mr. Steves also pointed directly at private developers, singling out of the most prominent companies, Block Brothers, for strategically buying up valuable land in urban residential areas through a door-to-door sales pitch with a large financial offer involved. Mr. Steves pointed to this behaviour as the source of the housing problem, as he did in the case of agricultural land, exclaiming that it was all "Perfectly legal!" and implied that one of the company principals had “some connection with the Mafia.”[393] As Mr. Steves pointed out that the Block Brother’s behavior was not *illegal*, his condemnation of their behavior must then be based on a different metric: what I suggest is a scale of morality. By referencing the company’s Mafia connection, Mr. Steves used the Block Brothers as an example of the ruthlessness and amorality of the private development industry.

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[390] BC-NDP, *British Columbia New Democratic Party Platform*, 8.

[391] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 2nd Sess., March 23, 1973, at 8.

[392] BC, *Hansard*, March 23, 1973, at 10.

Mr. G.H. Anderson linked the private sector’s pro-growth mindset (i.e. profit-seeking motives) to the development chaos facing the city of Kamloops, south of BC’s interior region:

> “Some of the best news to me is the beginning of the land accumulation for land banks. After seeing *the unregulated and cancerous growth* of the Kamloops area with no planning — a hodgepodge affair of one community leaping over the other with very little space in between — we find that this system won't work. *There has to be control; there has to be planning*.
>
> I feel that the best way that this can be done is for the Department of Municipal Affairs *to buy land and lease it out* and get some of the speculators out of the market that have been robbing us for so many years. I say "robbing” quite knowingly because that is what they have been doing. I hope that very soon our government will follow the example of the Government of Manitoba and go extensively into the public housing field.”[394]

Mr. Anderson applied the attribute of unregulated and cancerous to refer to the development activities of private land and housing developers in a province and a municipality that has been dominated by free-enterprising values for several decades. He even suggests that such developers are robbing from the province through their speculation activities, referring to strategically investing in profitable land and developing it for the purpose of gaining profit. Mr. Anderson’s deployment of the verb robbing constructs a sense of danger, criminality, and dishonesty, and in this way, he reconstituted the sense of the province’s land being preyed upon—this time not by predatory ants but by robbers. Mr. Anderson used this premise as a rationale for intervening in this development market and adding protective regulatory controls, long-term planning, and land acquisition strategies that protect the province’s developable land out of the preying free-enterpriser’s hands.

4.5.3 Topos of Immorality

While Mr. McDonald, Mrs. Steves, and Mr. Anderson focused on the behaviors of free-enterprisers (hunting, robbing, knocking on doors, etc.), other BC-NDP members focused on their ethical and ideological motivations. As part of her contribution to the Land Commission Act debates, she employed colorful terms to construct free-enterprisers as not just troublesome but immoral:

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[393] BC, *Hansard*, October 15, 1973, at 16.

[394] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 2nd Sess., February 14, 1973, at 26, emphasis added.

> “The Hon. Member for North Vancouver–Capilano (Mr. Brousson), Mr. Speaker, told us again yesterday of some of the *grave abuses by some members of the private sector* in the mortgage business. He called, and rightly so, for something to be done to prevent these abuses in the future. He very kindly outlined a four-point programme for ensuring that this was done.
> Well, I thought about his four-point programme, Mr. Speaker, and I think that it was a good one. However, I do not think that it will have the effect that he is looking for. It is my belief that the *devious free enterprise mind* of so many of the entrepreneurs in the mortgage business out there, and the *devious free enterprise mind* of so many of their lawyers, would find ways around his recommendations. In four years or eight years or 20 years from now, he would again be able to stand up in this House and list the abuses of mortgage companies perpetrated against the gullible or just plain desperate public.
>
> I came to this conclusion, Mr. Speaker, not because of the abuses itemized by the Hon. Member that were perpetrated by *the charlatans and dishonest brokers* in the mortgage business, but because some of these same abuses are, by his own words, being practiced — albeit in a lesser degree — by the large, respectable members of the mortgage community — the respectable members who not only turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the practices of their more *dishonorable members*, but who indulge in and participate in these *immoral deals* themselves.
>
> These deals may be legal, Mr. Speaker. They may be absolutely clean by the books, but they are *immoral*. This has always been the area in which the free enterprise system has failed — in its lack of corporate morality.”[395]

Ms. Brown’s denunciation of the free-enterprising mind has the illocutionary force of one denouncing a serious moral threat. Drawing from the analytical framework of Wodak and Reisigl, this discourse could even be understood as discriminatory rhetoric. When Ms. Brown follows two uses of ‘”devious’” with the intensifying term “charlatans,” it takes the discursive tone from passionate reprimanding to harsh beratement. Wodak and Reisigl found that the use of derogatory or debasing names was “the simplest and most elementary form of linguistic and rhetorical discrimination.”[396] It is Ms. Brown’s beratement and use of the choice word “charlatan” which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as “an itinerant seller who makes exaggerated or dishonest claims about his or her goods” that takes her speech just out of the realm of rational argumentation.[397,398] In this way, Ms. Brown constructed private land and housing developers not just as individuals she philosophically disagreed with but as nefarious individuals, acting against natural morality.

Mr. Linden described how individuals get swept up and harmed in the wake of a free-enterpriser's bidding, giving examples of private building companies that swindled a young couple: "What happens is that these builders get people involved. And once again young couples trying to find a place for themselves, they get involved in such a way that they just can't get out of it."[399] Like his fellow BC-NDP members, Mr. Linden pointed to the free-enterprisers, whether builder, speculator, or developer, as taking housing opportunities away from the province's populace and thus rationale of the provincial government to intervene in the market:

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[395] BC, *Hansard*, February 21, 1973, at 18.

[396] Wodak and Reisigl, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 45.

[397] P. J. O’Rourke, *On The Wealth of Nations*, Internet Archive (London: Atlantic Books, 2007), http://archive.org/details/onwealthofnation0000orou, 2.

[398] “charlatan,” *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2025), https://www.oed.com/dictionary/charlatan_n.

> "There are people being made millionaires all over this province by picking up cheap land and selling it for whatever the market can bear; and it hasn't only happened in the lower mainland. I know I've read stories of it happening in the Interior and in the Okanagan as well. The people who have been doing that are still doing it. They are a little afraid that the new department might get involved in the thing and scare away some of the profits that they have been making, and I hope we can do that."[400]

Mr. Linden's final sentence echoed the harsh discourse of Ms. Brown's denunciation of the free-enterprise mind. His rhetoric suggests a defensive play against private ownership, in which he constructs *them* as the threat and *us* as the liberator. He recommended that "awfully brutal" retaliatory measures be taken against the profit-seeking speculators: "Somehow it seems to me that the Minister is going to have to work with the municipalities and that we are going to have to be awfully brutal with those people who are unfair to the citizens of this province. We must put them out of business if that's the way they want to carry one."[401] Mr. Linden, like Ms. Brown, delivered a strong denouncement of the private sector, constructing private ownership as synonymous with amoral profit-seeking behaviour that causes development chaos and individual harm.

4.5.4 An Old Discursive Practice Reconstituted

In their decades spent on the Opposition-side of the BC legislature, most recently as the Official Opposition to the previous long-reigning Social Credit government, the BC-NDP and their predecessor, the CCF, were in the habit of antagonizing the liberalist philosophies and free-enterprising values of the government. This discursive practice was a well-worn discursive pathway and these discursive struggles were a feature of the legislature.[402] Yet the intervention of this dynamic meant that in 1972 the BC-NDP discursively performed from the government-side of the legislature for the very first time. Suddenly, they were able to propose their own policies and do so with the power of the democratic majority on their side. For the first time, BC-NDP members could use their discursive practice in service of rationalizing immediate and legitimate policy approaches, meaning that their discursive practices were contributing to broader social practices in real time and in real ways, and this context could only infuse the discursive event with more urgency, intensity, and sense of needing to defend.

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[399] BC, *Hansard*, October 15, 1973, 10.

[400] BC, *Hansard*, October 15, 1973, 9.

[401] BC, *Hansard*, October 15, 1973, 11.

[402] Bruce Alan MacKenzie, *Party and Press Portrayals of the British Columbia CCF-NDP, 1937-79* (PhD diss., University of Victoria, 1981), https://hdl.handle.net/1828/18803.

Defend they did, using their familiar discursive practice in service of their new housing approach, which served the hegemony of BC’s Crown land regime. Finally on the government-side of the legislature, the BC-NDP had true political power over the Opposition members. They could issue executive orders or propose legislation that would inevitably be passed, as they did on many occasion, and most importantly, they could focus their energy on implementing their socialist values rather than defending them. Despite this, the BC-NDP still did spend discursive effort on denouncing free-enterprising values and advancing premises of threat, speculation, predation, and immorality to construct private land ownership as a moral threat to the province. They pointed straight at the free-enterprisers as if identifying the murderer from the line of suspects: *you are the reason we must protect the province’s residential in the safety of public ownership.*

From the 1972 campaign pamphlet’s announcement of their aggressive landbank and leasehold policy, to Premier Barrett and Housing Minister Mr. Nicolson’s announcement of a new housing department and housing approach featuring land acquisitions and a leasehold policy, to the various discursive strategies along the *topos of threat*, *predation*, and *immorality* that BC-NDP members used to justify this policy approach—there is a clear discursive thread of retaliating to liberalist ideologies in service of collective land ownership.

4.6 Public Ownership as Essential for Housing Intervention

Section 4.6 shifts from the BC-NDP's defensive posture to its offensive strategy, constructing public ownership as the necessary alternative to the moral threat of private property. Through the topos of *responsibility*, *social need*, and *use*, the BC-NDP normalized a new discursive practice in service of BC's Crown land regime.

As the 1972 campaign pamphlet showed, the BC-NDP recognized that the province was experiencing a housing affordability and supply crisis. Members were witnesses to the skyrocketing housing costs and had heard the pleas coming from their electorate. Thus, the BC-NDP decided to boldly intervene and take up the provincial responsibility for housing as a key social issue. Across Canadian provinces up to this point, housing had primarily been the responsibility of the federal government. It had been the federal government that responded to unaffordable and blighted housing in the wake of the Great Depression and the massive housing shortages in the aftermath of the First and Second World Wars.[403] Fueled by their socialist ideologies, the BC-NDP saw housing as a social need rather than an economic asset—even going as far as considering access to housing as a "right."[404] These ideological assumptions, paired with the circumstances of the housing market, converged in a perfect storm: it seemed the BC-NDP had the necessary motivations and was at the right moment in housing policy history to institutionalize a provincial responsibility for housing. When they successfully passed the Department of Housing Act legislation, they formed the first provincial department in Canada exclusively dedicated to housing. The BC-NDP did not stop at creating a housing department; they leveraged its legal authority and financial strength to become an active player in the housing market, relying on the development expertise and land-holding capacity of the newly purchased company Dunhill Development Corporation.

At the center of these policy interventions was land. The new housing department oversaw the acquisition of available developable land, its storage in a state-owned landbank, and its conversion into new forms of housing. Primarily, the land was developed through partnerships with nonprofit organizations and cooperative groups through leveraging the provincial-federal joint financing programs available via the 1973 amendments to the National Housing Act.[405] If the land was granted to private housing developers, it was done so on a leasehold basis. This meant that publicly owned land, i.e. Crown land, was essential to the BC-NDP's specific interventionist strategies. As such, during legislative debates on the BC-NDP's proposed policies emerged the discursive practice of constructing public land ownership as necessary for housing intervention, as if asking the question: *If the province did not hold tightly on to its Crown land, how could it intervene in its housing crises?*

4.6.1 Topos of Responsibility

The rationale for the new housing department began with the *topos of responsibility*. BC-NDP members appealed to the demands of the province's citizens, presenting these demands as their electoral mandate and thus their responsibility to respond to—as these were the people elected them to the seat of government. Even the Lieutenant Governor, the representative of the Crown at the provincial level, referred to the demand of citizens when he announced the BC-NDP's intentions to legislative a new department exclusively dedicated to housing:

> "As my predecessor said on the occasion of the opening of the second session of the 30th parliament in January, we are mindful of the high level of expectations that our citizens have

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[403] Begin, *Housing and Parliamentary Action*.

[404] BC-NDP, *New Democratic Party Platform: British Columbia 1972*, 18.

[405] Hulchanski, "Community-Based Social Housing," 3.

> from governments across the nation. To meet these expectations various announcements of government plans have been made since that time. Accordingly, in two important fields, namely consumer affairs and housing, you will be asked to consider departmental Acts and powers during these next few weeks."[406]

The Lieutenant Governor articulated the citizen demand as "high" but more effective was the use of the term 'expectations', as it is suggestive of promise, duty, and responsibility-to someone or something. The Oxford English Dictionary associates 'expectations' with anticipation and foresight; "the belief that something will happen or be the case."[407]

Appealing to the demands of the populas is a case of the discursive strategy "argumentum ad populum" in action—what Wodak and Reisigl describe as the "populist appeal to 'masses' of people," used to pass off a premise as stemming from popular support rather than one's own point of view.[408] The Housing Minister Mr. Nicolson too employed this discursive strategy to rationalise the need for the new housing department, advancing further along the *topos of responsibility*. Opening the second reading of the Department of Housing Act, Mr. Nicolson drew immediately upon the demands of the populas:

> "It's with a great deal of pleasure that I rise to open debate on the *Department of Housing Act*. The purpose of the Act is quite obviously to create a department. One might speculate on the necessity of placing such a priority on housing. I think, however, that the volume of time and space being devoted in the media to the problem of housing speaks on its own."[409]

While the Lieutenant Governor did not provide details on how the demands of the populas were obtained, Mr. Nicolson did point to the media and another BC-NDP member, Mr. Steves, pointed to a specific radio call-in program. "The people were most concerned about housing, and this is what they zeroed in upon," Mr. Steves reported to the legislature.[410] Altogether, these discursive appeals to the populas are in service of constructing the BC-NDP's legislative actions as an electoral responsibility. These statements achieve an air of moral efficaciousness, as if the subtext of the discourse read: *we see ourselves as socially conscious stewards of the collective populas, so we will intervene in popular policy arenas to show we are responsive and responsible.*

Mr. Nicolson then advances along the *topos of responsibility* by drawing upon the authority, power, and morality of the state in the argument scheme that legal capacity generates obligation.

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[406] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 30th Parl., 3rd Sess., September 13, 1973, at 3.

[407] "Expectation, n." *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2025), https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9030491594.

[408] Wodak and Reisigl, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 72.

[409] BC, *Hansard*, October 12, 1973, at 5.

[410] BC, *Hansard,* October 15, 1973, at 8.

> “Government is in the best position to know where the types of development are going to take place. Government is in the best position to acquire land prior to development taking place, as I mentioned last year in debate. It is hoped that there would be less objection to government developing land because there is a tremendous antagonism towards development of any type. With provincial, federal and municipal governments cooperating in the development of land, it will be not for profit. I think this is a very important point. The acceptability of development will be more defensible where people know that excessive profits are not being made where the benefits are going to the government — that is, to the people”[411]

In this statement, the mere existence of the legislative and jurisdictional authority the province commands over its land is constructed as *common-sense reasoning* as to why the provincial government is responsible to leverage this authority in benefit of the populace through responsible state-driven housing development and land acquisitions. Notable here is Mr. Nicolson’s deployment of the discursive strategy “argumentum ad verecundiam,” the appeal to authority as a means of strengthening his argument scheme. Wodak and Reisigl say this discursive strategy is deployed to “back one’s own standpoint by means of reference to authorities considered to be passed off as being competent, superior, sacrosanct, unimpeachable, and so on.”[412] Lurking in the background of this strategy is the domination of the Crown land regime, the province’s vast ownership of land that can be used for housing and its intention to acquire more it. The other discursive element supporting Mr. Nicolson’s argument scheme is the *topos of social concern*, as revealed through his efforts of decoupling housing development and profit-generation and aiming its efforts at social goals, i.e. for the benefit of ‘the people’. Such people-oriented rhetoric echoes Premier Barrett’s discourse from the budget address and the title of the BC-NDP campaign pamphlet.

4.6.2 Topos of Social Need

The next part of Mr. Nicolson’s speech expanded on the *topos of social need* by painting a bleak picture of the social impacts of high housing cost, evoking images of individuals forced out of the housing market and into their cars or on the streets:

> “We cannot just simply dismiss our responsibility by saying that if we provide low-income housing, we are going to have a flood of people into British Columbia… I suppose that if we don't respond to this need, what we might do is make it so that the people who were born in the province and worked in this province and, through some misfortune, are on low income, in spite of being in this province all these years — we might make it so that these people who have nowhere to go and are homeless and…I had a phone call this morning and I was told that people are living in cars in Prince Rupert because of lack of housing. I'll tell you one thing: if we don't move to do something about housing — not just low-income housing

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[411] BC, *Hansard*, October 12, 1973, at 8-9.

[412] Wodak and Reisigl, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 72.

> but housing for everyone because, as I've mentioned, the crisis is extending up into the middle-income group at the present…. I don't know where it will end, but if we don't move what will happen is that only those who can afford it will be housed."[413]

Here he appealed to the most visible impact of the BC's housing problems—homelessness—as proof of severity and the government's corresponding responsibility to intervene. In this way, Mr. Nicolson generates empathy for those impacted by high housing costs and draws the circle of care around both those who have inherited the province by birthright and those who accessed it by immigration.

When employing crisis rhetoric, BC-NDP members mix *topos of social need* with *topos of responsibility* to rationalize intervening. Describing the province's housing affordability and supply problems as a crisis both raises the threat level of the problem and the responsibility obligation of the provincial government. Mr. Nicolson deployed crisis rhetoric in the excerpt above as well as at the beginning of his speech, where it was tied together through *appeals to authorities*, in this case those working in the housing development field:

> "There have been people in various fields of development: people in the field of mortgages, landlords, mobile home operators and mobile home tenants, senior citizens, public housing tenants, and many, many more groups. I've attended probably four or five seminars outside of the capital area. I've travelled reasonably widely — not as much as I might have hoped — and everywhere that I go there is a tremendous sense of a housing crisis among the people who are aware, who are involved and on this firing line." [414]

Here my analysis is not evaluative: I am not commenting on whether or not the province's housing problems deserve crisis rhetoric but rather demonstrating how BC-NDP members use such rhetoric to advance their policies. Though Opposition members described the province's unaffordable land and housing costs, it was BC-NDP members who deployed 'crisis' rhetoric when referring to the province's housing programs. This discursive strategy intensifies the subject and creates a sense of urgency and demand. As BC-NDP members followed Mr. Nicolson in taking their stand in the housing department debates, they each took up this discursive strategy in turn, including, Mrs. Webster saying, "there certainly is a crisis;" Mr. Cummings declaring, "There is a crisis in housing in Vancouver;" and Ms. Sanford stating that housing has risen to "crisis proportions here."[415,416,417]

Using this 'crisis' rhetoric, BC-NDP members construct housing as a pillar of social wellbeing. Here they draw from their democratic socialist ideologies outlined in their constitution and focus on the social impacts of the housing crisis. In this way, they construct housing as a social concern, social need, and social right as 'common-sense' rationale for their responsibility to intervene. When Mr. Gorst spoke in the debate, he focused on the social right to housing: "I would like to make a few remarks about this very basic human right of housing, along with the food, clothing, health, education et cetera."[418] This rights-based rhetoric links to the housing section of the BC-NDP's campaign pamphlet and commands a sense of legal and moral obligation to intervene.

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[413] BC, *Hansard*, October 12, 1973, at 8-9.

[414] BC, *Hansard*, October 12, 1973, at 6, emphasis added.

[415] BC, *Hansard*, October 12, 1973, at 11.

[416] BC, *Hansard*, October 15, 1973, at 7.

[417] BC, *Hansard*, October 15, 1973, at 21.

When Mr. Gorst concluded his speech, he placed the *topos of social need* at the center of his support for the proposed Department of Housing and its corresponding interventionist policies:

> "I would like to conclude by saying that I view the matter of housing as a question of who is going to direct the development of our community. I repeat that *those who profiteer on land and mortgages* must not be allowed to continue to develop and direct and formulate the kind of community that we are going to live in. Housing, I would suggest, is now in the same context as highways, hospitals, health and education, and is really a social utility and has to be provided for in that way through social capital which can *only come through government intervention*."[419]

Here Mr. Gorst constructs the profit-seekers as the problem ("those who profiteer on land and mortgages") and the government taking responsibility for housing as the solution ("it can only come through government intervention"). In nominating housing as a 'social utility', Mr. Gorst put housing in the same category as medical care and education services—both which were already approached collectively and directly funded by the government at this point in the province's history. Mr. Gorst leveraged the 'rights-based' rhetoric, the *topos of social need*, and the policy arenas already approached collectively to rationalize the BC-NDP's interventionist housing approach. Saying that the provision of socially-aimed housing "can only come through government intervention" is not just an act of persuasion but of careful 'common-sense making' reasoning—constructing the BC-NDP government as the only entity capable of fulfilling these objectives.

Mr. Cummings used the *topos of social concern* to prop-up the BC-NDP's strategy of developing and managing housing themselves, focusing on its ability to meet the needs of low-income households. Both at the beginning and conclusion of his speech, Mr. Cummings doubled-down on the necessity of public housing development, even deploying the adjective "plead:" at the beginning saying, "It is very, very important for public housing to be done,"[420] and at the end intensifying his premise, "I wish to come back and plead again for public housing because public housing is the only way we can supply housing for the poor people, the working poor—literally, the average citizen of British Columbia."[421] This last statement constructs the poor and the working poor as representatives of the province's common populace. If this describes the people of the province, then it rationalizes the need for government-funded housing. Yet does this really describe the people of the province, or does it describe a demographic at the center of the BC-NDP's electoral base? The logic put forth by Mr. Cummings statement is embedded in the discursive context, connected to the BC-NDP's discursive control over both the housing problem and the housing solution. With context, this statement is better understood as a discursive practice, fueled by ideology, identity, and social relations, not necessarily a true reflection of reality.

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[418] BC, *Hansard*, October 12, 1973, at 24.

[419] BC, *Hansard*, October 12, 1973, at 25, emphasis added.

[420] BC, *Hansard*, October 15, 1973, at 7.

4.6.3 Topos of Use

In Ms. Brown's debate speech, she merged *topos of responsibility* and *topos of social need* with *topos of use* to justify the BC-NDP's leasehold policy on Crown land.

> "Oh, in any event, I still think that the government should be made more responsible and should become more involved in the whole area of public housing, with one very basic kind of commitment: to lease rather than to sell. I think that we have to get away from the idea of ownership — that everyone has to own their own little plot of land or own their own house. We have to start looking at the business of utilizing housing and using space rather than owning it…We have a dilemma that involves meeting the physical need for housing while taking into account the social needs that are involved with housing."[422]

In this excerpt, the discursive strategies along the premise of responsibility, social concern, and land use come together to form the following argument scheme: *as housing is not just a physical need but a social need, the provincial government bears responsibility for its provision, and can meet this responsibility by maintaining control over land and allocating it for use.*

Ms. Brown's insistence on use over ownership is anchored on her fundamental understanding of reality which views the state of nature as people belonging-to the land rather than having authority-over the land. Her statement repelled liberalist understandings of private land ownership and advanced socialist understandings of social land ownership. In the conclusion of her speech, Ms. Brown expressed the hope that this way of viewing land and housing would be further advanced by intentional education, as a means of becoming normalized and common-sense in the province's identity: "I hope that the department is also, Mr. Speaker, going to embark on the business of education, and that it will see as its priority the education of the consumer to the concept of using housing rather than owning housing and to leasing land rather than buying land."[423] In this way, Ms. Brown advanced the rationale of the BC-NDP's policy of using socially-owned land (i.e. Crown land) for housing developments with only leasehold land contracts.

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[421] BC, *Hansard*, October 15, 1973, at 8.

[422] BC, *Hansard*, October 12, 1973, at 17.

Ms. Sanford echoed Ms. Brown's mix of *topos of social need* and *topos of use* in her discursive support of the BC-NDP's housing approach:

> "I would have to agree with many of the other speakers that because we have treated land as a commodity and not as a resource, it has been priced out of the market for so many of the people of British Columbia. I would like to see our land used — the emphasis on the use of land and not on the ownership of land."[424]

Here Ms. Sanford too distinguished between the different understandings of land use that operate at the ideological level, constructing land as a collective resource and dismissing its treatment as an economic commodity. In this way, Ms. Sanford discursively drew attention away from the private market and towards nonmarket forms of housing development. Continuing along this premise, she then problematized the private sector for acquiring developable land surrounding rural communities and not using it for housing development:

> "Mr. Speaker, there is another problem in regard to housing in some of our rural areas. Much of the land surrounding our rural communities is owned by private companies — usually foreign-owned companies. These companies are paying a very low rate of taxation on this land, yet they will not, in some cases under any circumstances, release this property for use for building purposes."[425]

In this statement, Ms. Sanford strategy deploys of the *topos of use* in an inverted premise: She blames the private sector for *not* using land and in failing to use it, the private housing sector is constructed as misappropriating the province's land and worsening its housing problems.

Finally, Ms. Sanford too declared her support of the BC-NDP's leasehold policy, appealing to its cost advantage and thus capacity to help financially struggling households access housing:

> "I would suggest to the Minister, Mr. Speaker, that in areas surrounding communities where Crown land is available…I personally favour the long-term lease concept so that property may be made available to the people on a long-term basis at very low prices so that these people can afford to build a home."[426]

As if her premise of land use and social ownership was not clear, Ms. Sanford explicitly urged

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[423] BC, *Hansard*, October 12, 1973, at 19.

[424] BC, *Hansard*, October 15, 1973, at 22.

[425] BC, *Hansard*, October 15, 1973, at 23.

[426] BC, *Hansard*, October 15, 1973, at 23.

Premier Barrett to "look at ways of perhaps getting some of this land back into the hands of the Crown" and concluded her speech by telling the Speaker of the House once again, "I personally favour the concept of long-term leases of Crown lots to individuals."[427]

Mr. Steves too expressed his support of the leasehold policy but advanced the premise of efficiency, arguing it would get rid of the middleman:

> "Mr. Speaker, when the provincial government does get involved in a land assembly programme, and does start putting land on the market, I would like to see us do it on a lease basis only and on a long-term lease basis. I would like to see us get rid of the middleman in the resale of such land that we develop."[428]

Hiding in the subtext of Mr. Steves discourse is the middleman that he would like to get rid of: a creative discursive strategy that helps dismiss the private sector's role in housing and reinforce the provincial government's role.

4.6.4 A New Discursive Practice Emerges

In summary, the first socialist government established the Department of Housing as an active interventionist force that relied upon the province's Crown land regime to do its bidding. The relationship between public land and housing sat at the center of the housing department debates, sometimes invisible and sometimes as big as an elephant. The BC-NDP reached down onto the dusty legislature floor and picked up the many housing *hats*, taking on what they saw as their responsibility, their moral duty, their opportunity to bring socialist values into a province dominated by free-enterprise. They became appraiser, investor, speculator, funder, developer, builder, and manager—all for the sake of housing intervention.[429] In this way, the housing department institutionalized the province's policy approach of using Crown land for housing development through long-term leases—arming this approach with legislative authority, financial capacity, fixed programs, and most importantly, discursive practices to be levied in support of it.

As BC-NDP members took their stand in the housing debates, they pirouetted with theirs stack of many hats, expressing pride, support, and joy in their party's policies, and finally, taking a bow in an act of moral efficaciousness. They appealed to the demands of the populace and their responsibility to intervene; the crisis of the province's housing situation and the level of social need; and the principle of using land rather than owning and the necessity of leasehold tenure on public land. The discursive strategies reveal how the BC-NDP wanted to be understood by their audience:

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[427] BC, *Hansard*, October 15, 1973, at 23.

[428] BC, *Hansard*, October 15, 1973, at 16.

[429] Ward et al., *Land Use Programs in Canada*, 56.

responsive, responsible, socially-concerned, and morally ethical. Altogether, these discursive strategies—the *topos of responsibility*, the *topos of social concern*, the *topos of use*, and the appeals to the populus, the authorities, and rights-based rhetoric—amounted to a new discursive practice performed on the government-side of the legislature floor: constructing public land ownership as essential to housing intervention. This discursive practice served to make the BC-NDP's approach of using, keeping, and expanding Crown land for housing development as necessary, normal, and even common-sense.

A convergence of factors had to come together to create this particular discursive practice: 1) the emergence of the first socialist government in a province dominated by free-enterprising values, 2) the problematic circumstances of the province's housing market in the 1970s, and 3) the existing Crown-dominated land system that province already had. The collision of these context factors came together in a big bang, and boom, a new discursive practice was born in defence of BC's Crown land regime.

As the BC-NDP came to power at the advent of the province's legislative debates being fully transcribed by Hansard Services, their audience extended outside the legislature and into the public sphere. Other public employees, the media, and concerned citizens at the time read about the BC-NDP rationalized wearing so many hats with its particular discursive practice of constructing its public land as essential to housing intervention. This discursive practice was then carried through time by archivists, historians, and researchers such as myself. Most notably though, they are carried by the political party itself—passed down from one generation of BC-NDP members to the next through its shared ideology.

Indeed, the ideological framework of the BC-NDP has evolved over the decades and into the twenty-first century, most recently with the party dropping "socialism" off its headline and relegating the term to its historical roots in its 2023 constitution.[430] Yet I draw on Wodak et al.'s findings to argue that these discursive practices live on in the present evolution of the BC-NDP: Collective group identities are formed upon shared historical memories, common narratives, and public culture, which "sets the standards for 'proper speaking'" through a system of rules, values, and principles for proper behaviour.[431] By taking the BC-NDP as another collective group identity, we can understand its unity to be formed by it's deep roots in the socialist movement (historical memories); its notion of inheriting land, belonging to the land, and using the land (common narratives); and its discursive practice of constructing the province's Crown land as essential, untouchable, almost sacred (public culture).

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[430] BC-NDP, *Constitution of the New Democratic Party of Canada* (2023), 3.

[431] Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, 20-21.

The BC-NDP's strict leasehold policy on Crown land helped to ensure that the province's land remained within the government's control and available for government use. When the government indeed makes the land available for public use through actively funding housing development, there is a clear social benefit to financially struggling households. Yet abundantly missing from the BC-NDP's discourse is how this approach to using land for housing in the province amasses significant power differentials. Power dynamics can become so naturalised, so much apart of the common-sense, that they disappear into the background, only uncovered through close discursive analysis.[432]

4.7 Stabilizing BC's Crown Land Regime as Common-Sense

Section 4.7 shows how the BC-NDP's discursive practices became normalized and institutionalized in the province's legal structures, shaping a common-sense approach towards the province's land.

In a parliamentary system such the BC, legislative processes begin on the parliament floor—lest they bypass it through executive action, as was the case with purchasing Dunhill. Prior to being introduced to the legislature, there are preceding discourses: a coffee-table discussion, a committee meeting, a party platform printed on a convention document or campaign pamphlet. In this way, the BC-NDP had a way of speaking about land and housing before they ever stepped onto the government-side of the legislature and picked up their many hats. From the earliest *Socialist Manifesto* of 1910, produced by Canada's first socialist party, the Socialist Party of Canada; to the *Regina Manifesto* of 1933 that birthed the next iteration of Canadian socialism, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation; to the first constitution of the newly named BC-NDP in 1961 declaring its democratic socialist principles; to the 1972 campaign pamphlet of the BC-NDP outlining regulatory controls on farmland and land acquisitions and leasehold policies on Crown land; to the legislations passed by the 1972–75 BC-NDP government that legally institutionalized those policies; to the contemporary housing policies of the BC-NDP government reproducing these policies in the present day—there is a discursive thread of 'collectivism' binding these discursive events together.[433,434]

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[432] Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, 32.

[433] Newell, *The Impossibilists*, 233.

[434] Newell, *The Impossibilists*, 201.

This discursive thread shows how collective-stewardship ideologies have been alive in the political discourse for several decades—beginning in the earliest twentieth century socialist movements, institutionalized in the 1970s, and re-articulated again in the province's contemporary politics. The present BC-NDP government has held power since 2017, and they have implemented a wide-range of housing policies that contain discursive elements of previous events detailed in this thesis: speculation taxes on vacant buildings (*Speculation and Vacancy Tax*), prohibitions on foreign property investors (*Additional Property Transfer Tax on Foreign Entities*), investments in nonmarket housing through BC Housing, and the continuation of land acquisition and leasehold policies on Crown land (*BC Builds*). [435,436,437]

That these contemporary housing policies share practical elements with the legislative acts of the 1972–75 BC-NDP government—regulatory controls on private land markets, land acquisition strategies, and strict leasehold policies on Crown land—suggests that collective-stewardship discourses have gone through a process of naturalization, emerging in the present day as a common-sense approach to using and maintaining the province's public land for housing intervention. The 1972–75 BC-NDP constructed themselves as responsible to the populace's social needs, well-positioned by its monopoly on the province's land, and protectors of the moral threat posed by speculators, profiteers, and treatment of land as a commodity. Through constructing the province's land as inherited, limited, belonging to future generations, and public land ownership as essential to fighting the moral threat of the private sector and successfully intervening in the housing crisis—the BC-NDP established an alternative discourse capable of antagonizing the sedimented discourses that had been established by previous successions of right-wing political parties in the province. Applying the Gramscian theory of hegemony, this can be understood as a *hegemonic intervention* in which sedimented discourses were dissolved through the process of discursive struggle, normalization of an alternative discourse, and ultimately the embedding of collectivist ideologies into the province's legal structures: the Land Commission and the Department of Housing Act.[438]

Though this thesis focused on BC-NDP side of the legislature, I assure the reader than the discursive struggles were intense and fierce. The Opposition side of the legislature was led by W.A.C. Bennet, who had governed the province for six consecutive terms prior to the BC-NDP's

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[435] *Speculation and Vacancy Tax Act*, S.B.C 2018, c. 46.

[436] British Columbia, *Miscellaneous Statutes (Housing Priority Initiatives) Amendment Act, 2016*, S.B.C. 2016, c. 27, https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/lc/billsprevious/5th40th:gov28-3.

[437] "About BC Builds," BC Builds, updated 2026, https://www.bcbuildshomes.ca/about.

[438] Gramsci, "Hegemony, Intellectuals, and the State," 85.

victory. Twenty years in government, and one election day later, the Social Credit party was relegated to the opposite side of the legislature, forced to exert their political platform primarily through parliamentary discourse. From this inverted dynamic, Opposition members countered the new seat of power with passionate defences of private land ownership—constructing the BC-NDP as amassing too much control over the province's land markets and seeking to fully abolish the rights of individual property owners. One Social Credit member Mrs. Jordan aptly summarized the ideological conflict:

> "There are two fundamentally different philosophies between that side of the floor and on this side of the floor. We on this side of the floor believe that people are supreme. You on that side of the floor believe that the state is supreme, that the land is supreme, that the forests are supreme—not in terms of people but in terms of supremacy and power."[439]

The Opposition's responses included moments of name calling and filibustering, at times even teetering on the edge of discriminatory rhetoric, according to Wodak and Reisigl's analytical framework.[440] One example being Mrs. Jordan's personal accusations of Premier Barrett, calling him "young" and "idealistic," before the House Speaker asks her to withdraw the comment, signaling she had breached the rules of debate.[441] In another moment, Mrs. Jordan managed another jabbed at the BC-NDP, saying "They have attacked the farmer and draped this foreign flag of Fabian socialism around his body and over his land."[442] Another Social Credit member Mr. Chabot launched a slur at a political rally, associating the BC-NDP with "the Commies"—a term that is colloquially understood to imply hostility and Cold War-era stigma prior to the election: "Never mind the smear tactics of the Commies and the NDP…there is not much difference between the two."[443] These moments demonstrate the intensity of the ideological conflict between the BC-NDP and the province's Opposition parties, showing the Gramscian struggle for hegemony in action.[444]

One Social Credit member Mr. Phillips dominated the Land Commission debates, crystallizing the Opposition's ideological defense of private property against what he framed as excessive state control. During his 12-hour soliloquy, he repeatedly refers to "the five-man commission" mandated by the legislation as a "nameless, faceless" body with unprecedented authority over the province's remaining five percent of privately owned land.[445] Mr. Phillips evoked the premise that ninety-five percent of the province's land is already owned by the Crown, calling the legislation "land by confiscation," and even metaphorically likening it to Geroge Orwell's *Animal Farm*, drawing on dystopian tales of authoritarian threat and activating Cold War anxieties.[446] In this way, Mr. Phillips constructs the legislation as socialist overreach into the province's only remaining frontier of private land ownership, threatening individual liberty and private property rights. Mr. Phillips discourse exemplifies the Opposition's resistance to the BC-NDP's 'alternative discourse' of re-articulating land as a collective, socially stewarded resource.

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[439] British Columbia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly (Hansard)*, 3rd Sess., 30th Parl., November 1, 1973, at 16.

[440] Wodak and Reisigl, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 80.

[441] BC, *Hansard*, November 1, 1973, at 17.

[442] BC, *Hansard*, March 22, 1973, at 15.

[443] Scott Honeyman, "Chabot Charges NDP Link with Communist Party," *Vancouver Sun*, August 22, 1972, University of British Columbia Rare Books and Special Collections.

[444] Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 88.

As Mr. Phillips is accused of filibustering in the Land Commission debates, so Mr. McGreer dominated the Department of Housing debates, constructing the expansion of provincial housing authority as a threat to individual liberty and private property rights. Mr. McGreer referred to the legislation as "the Machiavellian legislation," and framed the Housing Minister as "want[ing] to own all the land" and "be everybody's landlord."[447,448] In this way, Mr. McGreer amplified fears that the BC-NDP's leasehold policies would erode private property rights and render the populace dependent on shifting political authorities. He repeatedly asserted that homeownership is "the most important single purchase" in a person's life, providing a "physical basis" for family and economic stability, thus articulating a Lockean understanding of property as both an economic security and moral stake in the community.[449] Mr. McGreer proposed that instead that "the government should use its resources to purchase land outright…then prepare that land with the necessary services and sell it at cost, or below the cost," contesting the BC-NDP's land acquisitions for government owned housing and its strict leasehold policy for even private housing developers building on Crown land.[450] Mr. McGreer appealed to ideological notions of what is natural in regard to land relations:

> "Surely the government realizes now, if they didn't realize it when they first came to office, that people are kind of funny about their land. They're sensitive about it; they cherish it. No matter how widespread collectivism may be in some of the socialist states of the eastern world, the idea that people should own their land and that ownership should be protected is as old as civilization in North America itself." [451]

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[445] BC, *Hansard*, March 13, 1973, at 25.

[446] BC, *Hansard*, March 13, 1973, at 8-21.

[447] BC, *Hansard*, November 1, 1973, at 7.

[448] BC, *Hansard*, November 1, 1973, at 41.

[449] BC, *Hansard*, November 1, 1973, at 20.

[450] BC, *Hansard*, October 15, 1973, at 21.

[451] BC, *Hansard*, October 15, 1973, at 37.

In this way, Mr. McGreer's discourse too opposed the BC-NDP's *alternative discourse*, defending a liberal property ideology as the foundation of agency, belonging, and security rather than a collective-stewardship ideology using the province's land for housing development that individuals will not be able to own.

Andrew Petter, public policy researcher and elected BC-NDP legislative member 1991-21, writes that the policy initiatives of the 1972–75 BC-NDP government were innovative, even bold, but often "inadequate or short-sighted" and surrounded by "chaos," however, "the extent to which many of those initiatives endured under Social Credit suggests the opposite."[452] When the same Opposition members regained the seat of power, they did not haste to undo all the policy measures they had viciously fought against. Petter found that "they accepted the policy outcomes of the NDP," echoed by another political scientist *not* formally associated with the BC-NDP, Paul Tennant: "they kept every one of the policy-making and regulatory agencies established by the NDP." [453,454] Despite elaborate discursive performances and various attempts at passing amendments from the Opposition, these new policy interventions into the province's land markets still succeeded. The most significant policy events of the first socialist government not only remain intact but have become institutional pillars in BC.

The Land Commission Act "engender[ed] a storm of criticism," said Petter, referring to the two months it spent under intense scrutiny in the legislature, where Opposition members pulled every possible trick out of the bag to try and prevent its passing. Yet, he continues, it has since become "revered within the province's political culture."[455] Indeed, if one were a fly on the legislature wall and heard Social Credit members calling it a "calamity" and "a knockout blow to the rights of every individual," one would have not expected the same party to keep the legislation upon regaining power.[456457] However, five decades later, the Land Commission Act remains, institutionalized in the Statues of British Columbia. The Agricultural Land Commission is now a symbol of the province's protection and stewardship of agricultural land and the housing development by the BC-NDP still make up the majority of the province's non-marking housing assets.[458] As for Dunhill, its housing development activities only slowly folded into the background, finally dissolving into the British Columbia Building Corporation in 1977.[459] Even if people do not know the origin of these policy outcomes five decades later, they know them as the province's share-identity of being a collective land stewardship.

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[452] Petter, "Sausage Making in British Columbia's NDP Government," 3.

[453] Petter, "Sausage Making in British Columbia's NDP Government," 3.

[454] Tennant, "The NDP Government of British Columbia," 501.

[455] Petter, "Sausage Making in British Columbia's NDP Government," 4.

[456] BC, *Hansard*, March 13, 1973, at 21.

[457] BC, *Hansard*, March 21, 1973, at 34.

Through these intense discursive struggles, the BC-NDP's new discursive practices in service of BC's Crown land regime became a normal way to think about housing policy in the province. The BC-NDP's policy of leasehold on Crown land is now adopted into the policy platforms of all the province's political parties—including, most importantly, its right-wing parties BC United and BC Conservatives, as I outlined in **1.8**. These discursive echoes of the discursive practices performed by BC-NDP members five decades ago are here in the province's present. The discursive thread carries across time and new iterations of the province's housing crises.

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[458] Hulchanski, "Community Based Social Housing," 10-11.

[459] British Columbia, *British Columbia Buildings Corporation Act*, S.B.C. 1977, c. 56, http://bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/93consol17/93consol17/79035

CHAPTER FIVE:
Discursively Constructing BC's Land Regime Past and Present

Chapter Five provides a summary of the research, while reflecting on its relevancy to the contemporary context of BC's housing crisis and its contributions to broader housing scholarship.

Summary of Research

This thesis has asked how the discursive struggles in the 1972–75 BC Legislature construct a common-sense approach to utilizing public land for housing, and it has found that the discursive practices of the BC-NDP served to antagonize sedimented discourses on individual liberty and private property rights; normalize alternative discourses on collectivism and social stewardship; and institutionalize such discourses through successful policy interventions, ultimately stabilizing collective stewardship as the common sense approach to the province's land and intervening in the province's housing challenges.

The first chapter foregrounded the research, showing how BC faces a housing affordability and supply crisis in the midst of a broader national housing crisis; how the province's extraordinarily high rate of public land ownership strains it's residential land market; and how the province continues to keep a tight grip on its public land, even in the midst of its housing crisis—which I termed BC's Crown land regime. The second chapter rationalized my selection of the discourse historical approach and how my iterative research process led me to the discursive events surrounding the province's first socialist government. The third chapter grounded my research in the theoretical foundations of critical discourse analysis, showing how understanding language as constructing social relations, reproducing power dynamics, and institutionalizing ideologies in material forms served my research of BC. The fourth chapter analyzed the discursive events of the 1972–75 BC Legislature: providing the political, historical, and cultural context; revealing the discursive strategies employed by BC-NDP members in service of their policy interventions; and demonstrating how these strategies established alternative discursive practices capable of normalizing the BC-NDP's interventions into the province's agricultural and residential land markets as normal and common-sense. This fifth and final chapter concludes the research by demonstrating what it has accomplished and how it connects to future research.

The thesis answered the research question though a close analysis of the discursive events surrounding the three-year period of the province's first socialist government—or *The 1200 Days* as the title of Lorne Kavic's book suggests—which marked a significant disruption to the previously free-enterprising dominated province. Taking a discourse historical approach, the thesis tracked public land discourses from the twentieth century to present day by showing how this three-year disruption both drew on preceding socialist discourses and projected re-articulations of sedimented discourses into province's future. Drawing on a wide-ranging empirical dataset—supporting the 1972–75 legislative debates with party convention and campaign materials, archival newspaper clippings, government reports and public account statements, and a range of historical and contemporary scholarship—the thesis contextualized its findings and provided a 'triangulation of results'. Moreover, this thesis grounded its analysis in the theoretical framework of critical discourse analysts Wodak, Fairclough, and Gramsci that understand discourse as a social practice, as enacting power, as ideological, and as setting common-sense and creating cultural hegemonic narratives.

As such, I applied a critical eye to the discursive events inside the 1972–75 BC Legislature and wrapped such events in political, historical, cultural, and interdiscursive contexts, and showed how BC-NDP members constructed public land as inherited, limited, belonging to future generations, and essential to fighting the moral threat of private ownership and intervening in the province's housing challenges. By way of these discursive practices surviving the criticism and counter-discourses of the Opposition and stabilizing into institutionalized legal structures, I demonstrated how a collective-stewardship mindset emerged as the common-sense approach to the province's land markets, particularly for housing—showing how BC's Crown land regime has a past and a present role in the province's housing crises.

Contemporary Relevance

The establishment of a department dedicated exclusively to housing during the 1970s marked a critical institutional shift: housing was centralized, planned, and elevated as a core provincial responsibility and policy priority for the first time in BC's history. Though the Department of Housing was folded back into other ministries under the Social Credit governments of 1975-91, its legacy endures. When the federal government began devolving housing responsibilities to the provinces in the 1990s, the principle that housing constituted a provincial responsibility remained intact, and its closest remaining relative, BC Housing, was born. BC Housing became a Crown corporation and now operates under a yearly mandate issued by the Minister of Housing, where it takes on the responsibility for the province's public housing delivery.

Fast forward five decades and it seems BC's political landscape is now dominated by the NDP: Since winning a minority government in a snap election in 2017, the BC-NDP have held steady power. In 2022, and again in 2024, the BC-NDP have had a majority government under the leadership of Premier David Eby.[460] At the federal level, almost half of the NDP's total seats represent BC ridings—thirteen of the twenty-five NDP seats came from BC during Premier Trudeau's 2019-24 government and three of the seven NDP seats come from BC under Premier Mark Carney's current government.[461]

Since returning to government in 2017, the BC-NDP have once again implemented housing programs that share ideological positions with their 1972–75 counterpart. The BC-NDP have once again grabbed the many hats off the legislature floor and established themselves as investor, servicer, builder, manager, and developer. The closest relative of the former housing department, BC Housing, has been charged with the mandate to develop and manage non-market and publicly supported subsidized housing, while also implementing the BC-NDP's flagship housing program: BC Builds.[462] BC Builds positions itself as a housing program mediating between land owners and housing developers "to speed up the development of new homes for middle-income working people throughout British Columbia."[463] The program seeks to connect available land with developers, offer grants to nonprofits, cooperative, indigenous, and public housing corporations, and finally, arrange leasehold contracts for housing developed on the province's Crown land. While these policies connect the 1972–75 BC-NDP government to the present BC-NDP government, this thesis demonstrates there is a discursive thread binding these two governments across five decades: a collective-stewardship approach to the province's land, constructing it as essential to its capacity to intervene in the housing crisis.

Concluding Remarks

In a policy arena that comes back to the most basic elements of life—the land and the home—it is worth paying attention to the power dynamics at play in BC's contemporary Crown land regime. In a housing market characterized by constrained supply and inflated prices, renting often represents a rational response to structural conditions rather than a lifestyle preference. With homeownership becoming increasingly unattainable for a growing proportion of the BC populace, many residents are forced to settle for long-term rental housing, relocating away from urban centers, or leaving the province altogether. As friends of mine living in Vancouver, the heart of BC's housing crisis, contemplate giving up on the dream of homeownership and consider life-long renting, I wonder: Will they be missing something important? The feeling of being home, having a financial and structural safeguard for their future, or feeling belonging to their country? Or could it free them from being house poor, open up new forms of co-living, community, and social-connectedness?

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[460] "Provincial Election Results," Elections BC, updated 2026, https://elections.bc.ca/resources/results/provincial electionresults/.

[461] "General Elections," Elections Canada, updated September 15, 2025, https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=ele&dir=pas&document=ge&lang=e.

[462] "BC Housing," Province of British Columbia, updated June 24, 2025, https//www.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/crown corporations/bchousing

[463] "About BC Builds," BC Builds.

How the government talks about land and housing impacts how the populace in turn understands their being pushed out of the housing market. My friends unconsciously repeat the BC-NDP's discourses, saying: *we think we will probably never own a house in this market, but we shouldn't even own land anyways*. These discourses help rationalize the pushing of low- and middle-income families out of the housing market—*we should not own land anyways*. Yet wait lists for public housing in BC are several years long, homelessness is at epidemic levels, cooperative housing still makes up less than 1 percent of the housing market, and the provincial government has not and is not investing in housing development on any scale close to what they did in the 1970s, despite new programs like BC Builds and new mandates for BC Housing. Where are people like my friend supposed to go to *use* the province's land except the private market?

The power relations amassed by BC's Crown land regime is significant. If the government is not adequately providing housing for households and the private rental market is overloaded and therefore unaffordable, this presents clear structural problems underlying the province's housing crisis. BC's Crown land regime keeps the private market constrained, the available land locked up, and the potential of the province's housing role looming, always promising that it might help, always insisting that it is keeping land locked up for the collective good. As I said in Chapter One, if it was constructed, it can be deconstructed. The rhetoric, argument schemes, discursive strategies, discursive practices of the BC-NDP in 1972-75 constructed public land as collectively-stewarded resource—requiring the protections and oversight of public ownership. By looking at these discursive practices, we can understand the discursive elements that make up BC's Crown land regime—and doing so could loosen the province's tight grip on land enough to effuse the housing market with a meaningful amount of land, serviced and pre-zoned for housing, which in turn, could transform the structural factors of BC's housing crisis.

Today, as in the 1970s, policy interventions into the housing crisis operate within a housing system already constrained by artificial land scarcity, and as Cox observed, "The housing affordability crisis is fundamentally a land cost issue."[464] The question posed at the beginning of this thesis returns with a renewed urgency: Why does a province with such vast land resources continue to experience persistent housing unaffordability? The answer I propose in this thesis is that BC's housing unaffordability and constrained housing supply stems from the high cost of land. These high land costs are not natural or inevitable but are produced by an artificial scarcity—a limited supply of developable land maintained through political decisions that prioritize provincial land control, rather than privatization. The ideologies and legal structures that uphold this arrangement is what I have termed BC's Crown land regime.

My research found that the BC-NDP's discourses and policy strategies of the 1970s arguably played a significant role in stabilizing this Crown land regime. As the province's first socialist government, the BC-NDP introduced socialist land ideologies into a province that already held the majority of its land under Crown ownership. BC-NDP members constructed public land as a collectively-stewarded resource that is inherited, limited, intergenerational, threatened by the private sector, and essential to government housing intervention. These discursive practices alongside their material policy form—regulating agricultural land, establishing a housing ministry, acquiring development companies, expanding state landholdings, constructing social housing, and maintaining strict leasehold policies—served to normalize, stabilize, and institutionalize a collective-stewardship approach to the province's land markets.

This thesis does not claim that the BC-NDP's ideologies alone explain BC's housing crisis, but that discursive practices, once institutionalized, can shape policy outcomes for decades. By tracing how a collective-stewardship approach to land emerged, evolved, and became embedded in BC's housing institutions during the 1970s, this thesis shows that the current housing crisis is not simply a market failure or a contemporary anomaly. Rather, it is the outcome of historically situated ideologies about land, ownership, and the role of the state that continues to structure how housing problems are defined and how solutions are imagined. This thesis contributes another layer of understanding to the unaffordability and supply challenges facing BC's housing market today—helping us look closer at the ideas that bind us and constrain us, ultimately showing that they can be re-articulated in new forms and thereby produce new results.

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[464] Cox, *Demographia International Housing Affordability: 2024 Edition*, 19.

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