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# E-WEDNESDAY

August 4th, 2021

“

We make a living by what we get,  
but we make a life by what we give.

”

Winston Churchill



# Money

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"If money doesn't grow on trees why do banks have branches?" u n k n o w n

## **White House to maintain travel restrictions as Delta ravages unvaccinated Americans**

The White House is expected to keep international travel restrictions in place as the United States battles a resurgent COVID-19 among unvaccinated Americans.

With only about 57 per cent of eligible U.S. residents fully vaccinated, media reports say the Biden administration plans to keep its borders closed for now.

The decision comes after the U.S. extended a separate travel ban at its land borders with Canada and Mexico last week.

And it reflects the concerns of public health officials who fear the more infectious Delta variant will wreak ever more havoc in states with low vaccination rates.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says the seven-day average of daily new cases was 47 per cent higher last week than the previous week.

The CDC also says that Delta comprises 83 per cent of all new U.S. cases, the vast majority of which are among the unvaccinated.

## **Calgary's downtown office vacancy rate hits new high at 29.2%**

Calgary's downtown office vacancy rate is on track to top 30 per cent and potentially reach a level unseen in a major North American city since the 1930s, a commercial real estate firm said last week.

According to a new report from Avison Young, the office tower vacancy rate in downtown Calgary broke a new record in the second quarter of 2021 and now sits at 29.2 per cent. That's up from 28.9 per cent in the first three months of 2021, and up from 25 per cent in the second quarter of 2020.

The firm now predicts Calgary's downtown vacancy rate will reach 30 per cent sometime in the next three months, with over 14 million square feet of empty space. Avison Young's worst-case projections show the vacancy rate climbing to 34 per cent before it tops out.

News reports from the 1980s suggest Houston hit an office vacancy rate in the low 30s during that decade. Denver's downtown also struggled during that time. (Comparing vacancy rate statistics over time can be difficult because different brokerages use different formulas. Some look only at



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buildings over 100,000 square feet, while others look at all buildings over 20,000 square feet, for example.)

But in Canada, a downtown vacancy rate above 30 per cent is unprecedented - and it's "exceptionally rare" everywhere else, said Avison Young insight manager Susan Thompson. If the office market vacancy rate was to climb to 34 per cent, it could be a North American record.

"That kind of vacancy rate has not been seen in a modern major office market since probably the Depression era," Thompson said.

"I sit on conference calls with my global counterparts around the world and they all shake their heads and say, 'that's not a number I can wrap my head around.' "

Calgary's downtown has been severely impacted by years of low oil prices and a wave of mergers, acquisitions and layoffs in the oil and gas sector. In one high-profile example, the merger of Cenovus Energy and Husky Energy earlier this year was expected to result in more than 2,000 layoffs - the majority in Calgary.

Energy and related engineering companies occupied 57 per cent of downtown Calgary in 2012. They now occupy just 32 per cent of the city's downtown core. Five of downtown Calgary's 170 office buildings are currently completely empty, according to Avison Young, and there are an additional seven properties with at least 75 per cent vacancy.

But as dire as the latest numbers are, Thompson said, there are hopeful signs.

The vast majority of commercial real estate deals occurring in Calgary's downtown right now are for offices under 10,000 square feet. Though those small deals won't make up for the large oil and gas tenants being lost, it does indicate that other industries - including the high-tech sector - are moving in.

Real estate is a lagging economic indicator, Thompson said, so office market vacancy rates take a while to start improving even as local conditions improve.

"It takes some time to play out," she said. "But we do eventually see the tide turning."

In April, Calgary city council voted to spend \$200-million on the first phases of strategy aimed at finding a long-term fix for the downtown. The approved plan calls for investments in infrastructure, amenities and streetscape improvements, as well as the setting aside of \$45-million in available incentives for office-to-residential conversion projects.



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"It will take time to see the impact of the plan, but we are working towards a better future for Calgary's downtown space," said Brad Parry, interim chief executive of Calgary Economic Development, in an emailed statement.

"While these (vacancy) numbers are not where we'd like them to be, we do expect to see them change in the coming year as markets around the world begin to reopen and people get back to pre-COVID activities," Parry said.

## **Inter Pipeline scraps Pembina deal, ready to talk with Brookfield**

Inter Pipeline Ltd. has pulled the plug on its friendly takeover arrangement with Pembina Pipeline Corp.

In a release last week, Inter Pipeline announced that its board of directors will not stand by an earlier recommendation for shareholders to vote in favour of the all-stock takeover by Pembina. As a result, Inter Pipeline will pay a \$350-million break fee.

"While we are disappointed with this outcome, we will continue to seek opportunities for growth through focused acquisitions," said Pembina Pipeline President and Chief Executive Officer Mick Dilger in a separate release.

Despite breaking away, Inter Pipeline is not yet throwing its full support behind the latest hostile offer from Brookfield Infrastructure Partners L.P.

"Inter Pipeline's Board of Directors is open to engaging with Brookfield in an effort to reach a mutually agreeable transaction in the best interests of shareholders," the company said in its release, adding that it plans to make a formal recommendation in due course.

Brookfield had been attempting for months to break up Inter Pipeline's deal with Pembina. In its recently sweetened hostile offer, Brookfield said it would offer either \$20 in cash or 0.25 of a Brookfield Infrastructure Corp. class A share for every Inter Pipeline common share.



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# Insight

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"Always and never are two words you should always remember never to use."

W e n d e l l   J o h n s o n

**The secrets behind the top three memes of the decade** - By Alexandra Seidman, Sumaya Bernier, Office of Advancement

*Samantha Thrift discusses the most influential memes in celebration of Social Media Day*

Memes have been around in one form or another for decades, if not longer. They have become an integral part of modern popular culture, creating new means of connection and communication.

The digital meme, which generally refers to online-user generated content like jokes, videos or images that spread in modified form from one person to another, has become intertwined with the way that we use and experience social media.

Dr. Samantha Thrift, PhD, feminist cultural studies scholar and senior instructor of communications and media studies at the University of Calgary, researches and teaches about the social and political impact of memes.

"Scholars agree that memes can reflect the mindsets and even actions of social groups. Memes can frame issues, they can raise awareness, shape attitudes and spur political action. So, part of their importance lies in the way that online communities can, and do, coalesce around successful memes," says Thrift, BFA'98, BA'00, MA'02.

In celebration of Social Media Day, which recognizes how social media has redefined the way that people interact and communicate, Thrift shared her thoughts on three of the most influential memes of the decade.



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## LOLCat

The LOLCats meme gained popularity with the website [icanhas.cheezburger.com](http://icanhas.cheezburger.com), which features funny animal memes. The LOLCats meme features the archetypal meme format that we've become familiar with: an image with superimposed text in very distinctive block font. This is known as LOLSpeak and is meant to represent the commentary of the cat. LOLSpeak is often grammatically incorrect, as it is meant to be humorous and cute.

So, why do LOLCats matter?



"Although LOLCats have been around longer than 10 years, they make the list because they've helped popularize that very foundational meme format — an image macro with a changeable caption — which is important because it is easy to replicate. And that's a key feature of memes: people need to be able to replicate, modify and share them, as they are participatory objects. That's an integral part of the digital culture that we have, and memes exemplify that aspect of it." Doge Meme



## Dogecoin

You can't have LOLCats without Doges. The Doge meme hit peak popularity in 2013 and became notable not only due to the many iterations that were created, but because the meme made its way into American politics. Intentionally misspelled "doge," this meme features a Shiba Inu dog with superimposed text. The text is meant to illustrate the dog's inner thoughts, typically expressed as incoherent, but cute two-word phrases.

So, why does the Doge meme matter?

"It's importance stems from the fact that this meme generated something called Dogecoin. This joke cryptocurrency was created by software engineers who were trying to parody Bitcoin. Yet, recently this currency acquired a significant market value of around [US]\$55 billion. Given the volatility of cryptocurrencies — and especially parody ones like Dogecoin — who knows how long that valuation might persist. But it does beg the question of whether and how memes might be able to move markets or carry economic impact."

Pepe the Frog



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## Pepe the frog

Pepe the Frog was created by cartoonist Matt Furie for his comic book series, Boy's Club. The original comic features an image of an anthropomorphic amphibian, Pepe, the pacifist frog, along with the phrase, "Feels Good Man." One frame of Boy's Club was appropriated by the alt-right movement, morphing into what is now the Pepe the Frog meme. This meme has come to represent white supremacy and extreme nationalism and was later indexed as a hate symbol by the Anti-Defamation League.



So, why does the Pepe the Frog meme matter?

"Memes can exemplify fun and humour, and the enjoyment of participating in digital media culture. But this example raises questions about ownership and control of these bits of digital content. We have Matt Furie suing people and winning for the unlicensed use of Pepe the Frog when deployed as a symbol of white nationalism. I think this example helps illustrate some of the important issues that circulate around memes — particularly when weaponized to fuel the interests of hate-led agendas — that sometimes get lost under this veneer of light-hearted humour."

<https://ucalgary.ca/news/secrets-behind-top-three-memes-decade>



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"Life is like an ice-cream cone, you have to lick it one day at a time."

Charles M. Schultz



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# Home & Community

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"A community is like a ship; everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm."

Henrik Ibsen

## **RESTAURANTS YOU MUST TRY IN BANFF AND LAKE LOUISE** - by Caleb Caswell, *AMA Travel.ca*

The top restaurants in Banff and Lake Louise provide more than just the best food in Banff National Park. Each offers unique ambience, stories, and service that amplifies each dish beyond what's on the plate. It's what makes dining in Banff and Lake Louise such a broad experience that can't be fully digested in just one visit.

Take for example the storied history of Ticino Swiss-Italian Restaurant, family-owned and run for decades. Or Farm & Fire, which uses the freshest ingredients the region has to offer. Then there's the Sky Bistro that also serves the most glorious view of the sun setting over the Rocky Mountains after an incredible gondola ride.

Every experience we've included offers its own flavour, making up a marvelous buffet of options that taste better when combined in an eating extravaganza!

### **FARM & FIRE**

The philosophy of Farm & Fire is two-fold: That ingredients should be farm-fresh, and that every meal is elevated by being cooked by a wood fire. While the chorizo-spiced Scotch eggs and rotisserie chicken are delectable examples, their delicious array of forno pizzas bring to the forefront the power of this immaculate combination.

### **THE MAPLE LEAF**

Brunch is the most important meal of a good day (because if you didn't sleep in long enough to miss breakfast, it wasn't that good of a day). But no matter when you wake up, an artisanal salmon eggs benedict or deliciously filling farmer's breakfast made with farm-fresh ingredients will start anyone's day off right. Come back for dinner to experience a plethora of Alberta game and B.C. seafood that showcases how The Maple Leaf has been in business for over twenty years!

### **LA TERRAZZA**

Located in the Banff Park Lodge, La Terrazza delectable Italian menu tantalizes with supple gnocchi, braised Albertan lamb, hand rolled meat balls, decadent tiramisu, and an expansive wine collection. The menu is as delicious as the atmosphere: Floor to ceiling windows and a glass ceiling complete the experience, so every bite is enjoyed with the splendor of the mountains surrounding your table.



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## **CHUCK'S STEAKHOUSE**

Chuck's Steakhouse is a celebration of everything Alberta beef. Try the succulent goodness of the 45-day dry-aged burger, the corn crème brûlée dusted with rosemary sugar, or go all in on a fantastically marbled cut of Canadian wagyu beef. And whether you're stopping in for a plate, or you want to experience a multi-course dinner, you will feel the reverence Chuck's has for serving up the best tasting, sweet grass-fed beef imaginable.

## **TICINO SWISS ITALIAN RESTAURANT**

Established in 1974, Ticino (pronounced ti-CHEE-no) bases their menu off the culinary history of the Ticino region in Switzerland which shares a border with Italy. The cross influence led to dishes that blend Swiss cheeses with delightfully simple and amply delicious Italian recipes. Bison lasagna blanketed in gooey Raclette cheese, veal wiener schnitzel, elk osso bucco, and much more tantalize across the menu, leaving you no choice but to try them all!

## **NOURISH BISTRO**

For those into vegetarian and vegan meals, you'll delight at Nourish's menu (and the omnivorous will find it equally appetizing). Gyoza filled with sautéed mushrooms, cheese-less cheesecake as deliciously textured as the real thing, chickpea omelets, and bowls of quinoa, salad, and an amazingly inventive plethora of dishes that raise the status of humble vegetables from sides to main course!

## **PARK DISTILLERY + RESTAURANT + BAR**

For a late-night quaffing, look no further than Park Distillery. Their house-made spirits are infused with glacier water and local ingredients, making for an incredible maple rye, dry gin, and vodka. While you can purchase bottles from the distillery, getting a table at the restaurant allows you to take a tour of the bar and its ingenious cocktails that display all the wild and wonderful concoctions you can make with some of their more adventurous spirits (chili vodka, anyone?). And if you want to see even more, then take the full tour of the facility!

## **SKY BISTRO**

At the top of Sulphur Mountain, following an especially scenic view of the valley below from the Banff Gondola, you'll find the Sky Bistro. At 7,510 feet, the unparalleled ambience will be as much a part of the meal as the herb-brined, puréed, pan-seared, toasted, caramelized, smoked, glazed dishes themselves. There's simply no other experience like it.

<https://www.amatravel.ca/articles/best-restaurants-banff-and-lake-louise>



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# Health & Wellness

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"It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver." M a h a t m a  
G a n d h i

## **Resilience 101: Taking a Small Town Approach to Youth Mental Health in B.C. -**

By Diane Amato

*Foundry is a youth mental health organization dedicated to making it easier for young people to find the resources and support they need. With a belief that change can only happen when youth, their families, their communities and support organizations work together, Foundry is transforming care.*

Across the country, youth have been facing the persisting challenges of the pandemic — as well as the day-to-day trials of life as a young person. In a recent conversation, Dr. Steve Mathias, Executive Director at Foundry, explains that while some challenges have been amplified over the last sixteen months, youth are experiencing the same struggles as they have for generations. What has changed — and what will continue to evolve — is the type, access and level of care available for young people in even the smallest communities of the country.

"As we continue to recover from the most extraordinary crisis of our generation, the need for young people to find access to mental health resources and services has never been more critical," said Martin Thibodeau, Regional President for British Columbia. "RBC in BC is proud to help Foundry make a meaningful difference in the lives of Canadian youth by promoting confidence, resiliency and hope, and unite families and communities in the process."

In a discussion between RBC and Dr. Mathias, the Foundry Executive Director shares his thoughts on the importance of working together to serve youth and what rural communities can teach the rest of the country about resilience and support.

### **Q: Can you describe the Foundry model?**

**Mathias:** Foundry centres are collaborations between non-profit organizations, the ministry of children and family services as well as health authorities to provide most of the health and social services a young person would typically need between the ages of twelve and twenty-four. We try to bring all those services into one place and develop brand recognition in communities over time — so that when families are looking for support, they're not hunting for solutions.

Communities are supported by the Foundry Central Office, which brings together all the stakeholders, engages young people and their families, designs and builds the centres and continues the work of integration once the centres are open.



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The Foundry model is intended to be one where young people can walk through the door, have a conversation with someone and understand how they can get help.

**Q: How is Foundry different than other youth services?**

**Mathias:** The term 'Foundry' actually represents a term used to describe the partnerships that are created to deliver services. It represents a different way of working together, where the idea is to have shared leadership and collective impact within communities.

We are finding that as more and more youth become empowered to advocate for themselves, Foundry is growing as a movement — a movement of youth-friendly services that meet young people where they are.

**Q: You also have robust virtual services. Can you describe your virtual offering?**

**Mathias:** Our virtual care team is made up of clinicians and peer support workers that are located in all parts of the province. They provide virtual counselling, virtual peer support and primary care to young people across British Columbia. Even for those without a centre available to them, they can access virtual care 7 days a week delivered through an app portal.

I am very proud of not only our staff to hire up and develop this program out of nothing, but also the community organizations that were part of our network and that led the pivot when the pandemic struck.

**Q: From your perspective, how has the Canadian mental health landscape for young people evolved since COVID hit?**

**Mathias:** Nothing and everything has changed. The need for increased access to services for young people was the impetus for getting Foundry off the ground in the first place in 2015. We proposed virtual care in 2015 — and again every year — and each time the government rejected us. It took a pandemic for the government to shift their thinking around this and see the benefit of what we were proposing.

As far as the mental health needs of young people go, not much has changed. There is still a significant number of young people who are struggling with day-to-day issues. It's a part of life — young people struggle — and many times those struggles grow into something more, such as anxiety and depression.

The difference today compared to before is that more young people are feeling disconnected, or they're struggling with the anxiety of an uncertain future. I also think some transitions are going to be harder now because young people may not have been in school full time and the stress of going back will be more intense.

But at the end of the day, it's important for everyone to understand what we're dealing with now is not that different from what we were dealing with before. The needs haven't really changed in what young people are going through, although certainly they have been amplified in certain areas.



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**Q: Why does Foundry focus on ages 12 to 24 when it comes to supporting young people?**

**Mathias:** The historic system of offering services and care to youth aged eighteen and under is outdated and limits access to young people at times when support is needed most. We've been seeing an international shift in many of our partner countries, which is more in line with developmental needs. Young people often need support well into their twenties.

Our work is meant to significantly minimize the struggles that come with periods of transition, particularly around ages 17, 18 and 19. For these youth, school has been a part of their entire lives — and then suddenly they go into a very different setting, whether it's post-secondary school or the workforce. It's a lot to deal with when half of your waking hours have shifted — so maybe we shouldn't be shifting the supports they've relied on as well? Let's be there for young people as they go through that shift.

**Q: Do you feel youth from smaller communities face as many challenges as those in urban centres?**

**Mathias:** Youth from urban and rural environments are more similar than they are different. The challenges young people are facing around identity, their future, education and employment are shared across the age span and across the province.

What we start to recognize is that access to services may be different in small communities, such as accessing a specialist, but there are also advantages specific to rural communities. For instance, there is a defined community and an expectation that the organizations working there are going to take care of their young people. When you move to a large urban centre such as Surrey or Vancouver, who's taking care of you? Who is responsible for you? Who is your community? In many ways when it comes to our health delivery, we've moved away from acknowledging or identifying the community a young person is in.

**Q: What are other challenges rural youth face in Canada?**

**Mathias:** Beyond access to specialists, access to transportation can be an issue — we have seen that with First Nations youth living on the land. How do they get support? And in smaller communities, there is a scarcity of human resources — there may be a job opening but no one to fill it.

As well, there are some rural communities that don't have the protective factors larger centres have — they may not have the recreational resources or critical mass required to run a summer sports league, for instance. One of the things we hear is, "there's just nothing to do here for young people." We need to figure out a way to support smaller communities.

**Q: If small towns don't have the people there to offer programming, what solutions are available?**

**Mathias:** It's not an easy problem to solve, but we need to think differently. Is there a way of breaking out of the ageism we see with sports leagues? Can we have inter-generational leagues or activities, instead of saying we need to stratify them into a 16- to 18-year-old age group? There is a lot of resilience in rural communities — it's a very heterogeneous situation.



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**Q: How would you describe the resilience of people in rural communities?**

**Mathias:** Most communities would describe them as resilient because they've been a community for dozens or hundreds of years. Certainly, our First Nations communities would say they have a long history of resilience, and that's something we certainly acknowledge. What also makes them resilient is that they have been working together for years and years — even if there are rifts, it's easier to resolve them in small communities because you know everyone. You can pick up the phone and work it out.

And because there is a scarcity of resources, they problem-solve, they scramble. The absence of a psychiatrist in a community will not mean a young person can't get care — it means they will find another way.

**Q: What can small towns teach the rest of the country about resilience?**

**Mathias:** I think that when you get into the larger centres, sometimes it's hard to imagine who is going to come together to problem solve a situation. Who has the authority to have those conversations? In the absence of that authority or togetherness, you get a lot of organizations working alone. Unfortunately, the funding model created within governments and some philanthropic organizations is that you create some competition for contracts or resources.

Pursuing collaboration over competition and committing to collective impact are among the important lessons rural communities can teach the rest of the country about resilience and support for our young people.

<https://discover.rbcroyalbank.com/resilience-101-taking-a-small-town-approach-to-youth-mental-health-in-b-c/>

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