

Wilfrid Laurier University

Scholars Commons @ Laurier

---

Social Justice and Community Engagement  
Major Research Papers

Social Justice and Community Engagement

---

2-2022

## Capitalizing COVID-19: A Content Discourse Analysis of Corporate Welfare Perceptions Amid a Global Pandemic

Alessia Rao  
aless.rao@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholars.wlu.ca/sjce\\_mrp](https://scholars.wlu.ca/sjce_mrp)



Part of the [Economic Policy Commons](#), [Social Justice Commons](#), [Social Policy Commons](#), and the [Social Welfare Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Rao, Alessia, "Capitalizing COVID-19: A Content Discourse Analysis of Corporate Welfare Perceptions Amid a Global Pandemic" (2022). *Social Justice and Community Engagement Major Research Papers*. 4. [https://scholars.wlu.ca/sjce\\_mrp/4](https://scholars.wlu.ca/sjce_mrp/4)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Justice and Community Engagement at Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Social Justice and Community Engagement Major Research Papers by an authorized administrator of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact [scholarscommons@wlu.ca](mailto:scholarscommons@wlu.ca).

Alessia Rao

205812640

Dr. Robert Kristofferson

Dr. Kenneth Werbin

Major Research Project

Capitalizing COVID-19:

A Content Discourse Analysis of Corporate Welfare Perceptions Amid a Global Pandemic

November 2021

Wilfrid Laurier University

## Table of Contents

<b>Preface</b> .....	2
<b>Introduction</b> .....	6
<b>Literature Review</b> .....	12
<i>The Construction of the Welfare State</i> .....	12
<i>Dismantling the Welfare State via Neoliberalism and Austerity</i> .....	17
<i>Neoliberal Narratives on the Provision of Welfare</i> .....	19
<i>Corporate Welfare: The Fundamentals in Literature</i> .....	20
<i>Functions and Expenses of Corporate Welfare</i> .....	23
<b>Methodology</b> .....	25
<i>The Guiding Principles of a Discourse Analysis</i> .....	25
<i>Sample</i> .....	26
<i>Data Collection</i> .....	30
<i>Ethical Considerations</i> .....	34
<i>Limitations</i> .....	36
<i>Research Questions</i> .....	37
<b>Findings</b> .....	38
<i>Vilification</i> .....	38
<i>Vilifying Government</i> .....	39
<i>Vilifying Corporations</i> .....	40
<i>Vilifying Political Parties</i> .....	42
<i>Supporting and Opposing, Protecting and Rejecting</i> .....	45
<i>Small Business, Big Worry</i> .....	47
<b>Discussion</b> .....	49
<i>Vilifying, Supporting, Opposing</i> .....	50
<i>Political Orientation and the News</i> .....	53
<i>Moving Forward: A Social-Justice Based Approach</i> .....	59
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	63
<b>Appendices</b> .....	67
<b>References</b> .....	68

## Capitalizing COVID-19:

### A Content Discourse Analysis of Corporate Welfare Perceptions Amid a Global Pandemic

*“While accepting corporate welfare may not be illegal...is it right?”*

COVID-19 has presented modern-day researchers with an incredibly vast and seemingly endless array of materials to unpack and explore. This particular research study, however, dedicates its efforts to a topic outside the popular realm of public health and safety, and instead gears its objective towards a largely understudied and perhaps overlooked issue exacerbated by the pandemic—corporate welfare. Corporate welfare has covertly thrived throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, providing society’s elite with “financial relief” in the form of government subsidies. This method of financial relief is known as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), and continues to be used as a method in which corporate welfare transpires. CEWS, a publicly funded benefit initially implemented with the intention to ease businesses back into normal operations, promote their lifespans, prevent additional job losses and re-hire workers, has additionally been used as a means for large, highly solvent corporations to dispense dividends to shareholders and executives amid the economically challenging pandemic of COVID-19. Considering COVID-19 amplified economic insecurity to exceptional levels, questioning and scrutinizing the allocation of tax dollars has been an especially intensified public practice warranting additional research.

My interest in studying and analyzing corporate welfare, especially amid the pandemic, can be condensed using a twofold explanation. Throughout childhood and well into adolescence, I was led to believe that social welfare— the more “popular” and well-known system of government assistance— was an inherently negative system that only “lazy” people who “never

worked” relied upon. This perception, gained primarily through family members and different forms of media, had been subconsciously internalized as “truth”. In my experience, these adopted beliefs were fostered and reinforced by people who perceived social welfare in an unambiguously negative manner. As such, my perceptions on social welfare were never challenged until I began working in an over-policed community housing complex in Toronto’s west-end during high school. It was then where many of my subconscious beliefs about the social welfare system and the people who relied upon it was internally disputed. It was also then where I realized that so much of what the public understands about social welfare is overwhelmingly flawed.

While in university pursuing my undergraduate degree, I took a stimulating course that focused heavily upon government assistance and its effects. It was here where I was introduced to the realm of corporate welfare. Upon learning more about the subject, I quickly recognized a clear and distinct divide between the two forms of government assistances. On the one hand, I noticed that there was a particular form of government assistance that was widely discussed, heavily judged, and was, to an overwhelming extent, negatively perceived. Yet, on the other hand, I noticed there was another form of government assistance that was rarely discussed, largely undetected and as a result, evaded potential negativity of public perception. Not long after this realization, COVID-19 was declared an official pandemic in Canada and moreover, a state of emergency in the province of Ontario. As a result of mass layoffs and unemployment, the federal government issued financial supports such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) as a means to help eligible individuals and families manage financial hardship. The divide I had previously identified between social welfare and corporate welfare became flagrantly apparent when I discovered that [journals](#), [surveys](#) and several [news reports](#) were

conducted to gain a better understanding of how Canadians perceived the distribution of CERB and its continuance. While CERB was gaining ample attention and media coverage, other forms of pandemic aid— such as CEWS— have been considerably overshadowed. As such, there has been no study to date that similarly studied Canadian perceptions or beliefs on the topic of CEWS. Therefore, I decided to conduct my own research in this field to not only contribute narrowing the gap in literature, but to also gain an understanding of how the public perceives corporate welfare.

According to the Government of Canada, the Canada Emergency Response Benefit has totalled \$74.08 billion in CERB payments alone, while the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy totalled \$94.43 billion in approved subsidies as of October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021 (Canada Revenue Agency, 2021). Despite the \$20.35 billion-dollar difference, the research on Canada’s attitudes towards CERB has far out-paced that on CEWS. To help correct this, my research will seek to reveal how Canadians perceive CEWS and its distribution to large corporations in order to bridge the existing gap between government funded support programs and individual perceptions, as well as contribute to the vast and emerging literature surrounding COVID-19. As such, this research not only intends to uncover and showcase Canadian perceptions towards CEWS and corporate welfare, but to also facilitate discussion regarding the study’s findings while recommending social justice based solutions that stem from the research discoveries.

The research questions guiding this study is three tiered, and each work to uncover the perceptions this research set out to comprehend. The first research question forms the primary base of this study that the subsequent two research questions seek to build upon. The first research question asks: What perceptions and beliefs do Canadians have regarding corporate welfare during COVID-19? The second research question will build on the first, asking: What do

the perceptual findings reveal about how commenters understand their socio-economic world? And lastly, as a major research paper for a program that focuses on both analysis and solutions, the third question asks: How might the findings of this study inform action?

In order to uncover and unpack these responses in a manner that is both effective and productive, an appropriate methodology is required. As such, this study employs a content discourse analysis where the database is comprised of reader comments stemming from a total of seven CBC and Financial Post news articles within the month of December 2020. A content discourse analysis, used to construct a coding frame of categories to structure data and detect underlying patterns and trends, is best suited for my research as comments have undergone a coding process where different themes have been discovered and discussed (Brusis, 2018). Moreover, December of 2020 had been a strategically selected timeframe to use within this study considering news reporting of CEWS skyrocketed after the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) had publicly released a once concealed registry containing a comprehensive list of companies who received CEWS earlier within the same month. As a result of amplified media attention, I collected reader comments through the seven articles using a non-proportional quota sampling technique to assemble a database of 182 comments. The responses posted by the commenters have then been sorted and coded in order to draw findings for the analysis and discussion portion of the research.

In the beginning stages of the writing and coding processes, I hypothesized three central outcomes. The first outcome I expected this research to discover was for a larger number of commenters to vilify and label corporations as responsible and at fault for applying and using the publicly funded subsidy over vilifying the government. Another significant theory I hypothesized in the initial stages was that left-wing ideologies and beliefs would far outweigh right-wing

ideologies and beliefs and, by extension, left-wing beliefs would hence be more prevalent throughout the coding process. The findings section in the later portions of this study will effectively showcase whether or not my initial hypotheses proved accurate.

### ***Introduction***

Since the onset of the pandemic, COVID-19 has confronted individuals and families with infinite adversities. In addition to the threat the virus poses to public health, the pandemic has created a very real and likely more enduring threat to the economy. Pandemic restrictions have led to an economic downturn exacerbated by the introduction of financial supports such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). The current federal government led by Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau implemented CERB with the intent to provide financial aid to employed and self-employed Canadians facing job loss or income reductions as a result of the pandemic. The subsidy provided eligible recipients with \$2000 a month in direct income assistance. In response to CERB's implementation various citizens, taxpayers, and media commentators have been highly critical of this allocation considering the subsidy derives from funds that these groups often refer to as 'their tax dollars.' As a result, CERB commentary has been prevalent in the media, pushing discussions of other government fiscal measures aimed at alleviating the economic devastation of the pandemic into the background. As such, the combination of public interest and concern revealed not only a desire, but a need to conduct further research into the attitudes and beliefs Canadians held regarding CERB and its issuance. The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) found that while CERB was "predominantly used" by individuals who earned under \$47,630 in 2019, the subsidy was simultaneously misused by high-earning individuals who did not require the financial support the benefit provided (Press, 2020). Following the assertion that CERB was being collected illegally, Ipsos—a global leader in market research—conducted a study over the summer of 2020 which found that 85% of

Canadians believed that those who fraudulently collected CERB should be fined (D'Amore, 2020). The evidence is clear. The majority of Canadians believe that individuals who collected CERB fraudulently deserve to face penalty. However, are the same attitudes upheld when individuals are replaced with corporations, and fraudulently collecting CERB is replaced with collecting public funds to distribute dividends? This question introduces the overarching focus of this study: public perceptions of corporate welfare via the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS).

According to the Government of Canada, the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy was created to avert economic distress for businesses who experienced a decline in revenues as a result of COVID-19 (2021). The subsidy, sent directly to employers, was intended to induce employers to re-hire workers, help prevent additional job losses, and ease businesses back into “normal” operations (Canada Revenue Agency, 2021). However, CEWS’ objectives of supporting business and mitigating job loss has not been entirely reflective of reality. Factual information provided by the Canada Revenue Agency has recently come to light showing that some large corporations collecting CEWS have been providing bonuses to company executives and sizable dividends to their shareholders. As a corporate welfare measure, CEWS is a more recent example in a longer history of government grants, subsidies and benefits to Canadian corporations that predate the COVID crisis. Long before the pandemic, a large number of Canadians seriously questioned the morality and ethics of large corporations consuming public funds in any capacity. Considering publicly funded subsidies are made possible exclusively through the mandatory collection of taxpayer dollars, an abundance of public scrutiny ensues when wealthy corporations consume, benefit and profit from such forms of government assistance. For example, a report by the Canadian Centre for the Purpose of the Corporation

found that while 81% of Canadians recognize businesses and corporations play a “vital role in the economy,” 62% of Canadians agree that corporations in Canada can “do better” and 78% of respondents believe corporations should “contribute more to the betterment of society” (2020). As a whole, Canadians were found to generally distrust big business, with only 25% of respondents rating their trust in corporations at a seven out of ten or higher (Greiner, 2021). Canadians’ legacy of distrust of corporations coupled with the current precarious economic environment shaped by COVID-19, can be reasonably predicted to result in heightened public scrutiny around the ethics of wealthy corporations and their elite benefactors benefiting from such government assistance. Further privileging society’s elite amid a global pandemic reasonably strikes a chord with a Canadian working-class facing serious financial hardship in increasing numbers. It is worth noting, for example, that in under one month alone, the federal government received more than four million applications to CERB between March 15 and April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and, that by early August of 2020, the Government of Canada found that one in four Canadians have used CERB at some point during the pandemic (Gilmore, 2020; Punwasi, 2020). In fact, a recent report conducted by the Canada Revenue Agency revealed that 27.57 million applications were received for CERB in a country with a total population of 38.4 million people (Canada Revenue Agency, 2021; Statistics Canada, 2021). Out of the 27.57 applications received, 27.56 million were then processed (Canada Revenue Agency, 2021). Therefore, considering COVID-19 amplified economic insecurity to exceptional levels, questioning and examining the ethics of lucrative corporations’ behaviour has been an especially intensified public practice, and one that warrants additional research.

While this study is particularly interested in understanding how Canadians perceive large corporations utilizing CEWS, it is also important to recognize large corporations are not the only

recipients of the subsidy. Small and mid-sized Canadian businesses are also able to access and use the benefits CEWS provides. As a direct result of COVID-19, the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses (CFIB) estimates that small Canadian business took on a debt of \$135 billion (Matchett, 2021). As of February 2021, CFIB found 52% of small businesses have used the government subsidy to financially cope from the shocks of COVID-19, while six out of ten businesses agree that CEWS has offered their businesses the support they needed to survive (Matchett, 2021). According to Industry Canada, a business is considered “small” if firms have fewer than 100 paid employees, and anywhere above 100 to 500 employees, a business is considered “medium-sized” (Industry Canada, 2012).

While CEWS was in fact able to help maintain the viability of some small businesses, others were, for a combination of differing reasons, forced to close permanently. Only about one month into the pandemic, an April 2020 report conducted by the CFIB found that 30% of small businesses did not have enough cash flow to pay their monthly bills, and 39% were worried about permanent closures (2020). The worry small business owners had regarding permanent closures was valid. Between February 2020 to September 2020, Statistics Canada found that an estimated 25,614 businesses closed in Ontario alone, an 8.3% drop since the pandemic began (Government of Canada, 2020). As such, the need for CEWS in a small business setting was not only justified, but in many instances, essential to stay afloat. Small businesses do not have the same accessibility to resources or capital as large corporations do, making the lifespan of small businesses strikingly lower and more precarious than their larger conglomerate counterparts. For these reasons, this study is not researching how Canadians perceive CEWS in relation to small businesses. Instead, it will focus on understanding how Canadians perceive large corporations

who have continued to use CEWS despite being better positioned and equipped to deal with revenue shocks.

In early-to-mid December of 2020, the Canada Revenue Agency released a comprehensive list of names of over 330,000 employers who received CEWS during that same year. Journalists and researchers soon noticed something peculiar, particularly with the fact that many corporations with assets exceeding \$600 million (or a combined revenue exceeding \$200 million) were listed as CEWS recipients (Mahoney & Smart, 2021). Moreover, 190 CEWS recipient companies were owned by individual billionaires (Mahoney & Smart, 2021). Statistics Canada maintains an Inter-Corporate Ownership (ICO) database—an authoritative index of “who owns what” in corporate Canada, where CEWS recipients and million or billion dollar industries can be cross-referenced. In other terms, the companies enlisted in the ICO are part of large corporate enterprises, with million or billion-dollar net worth’s (Mahoney & Smart, 2021). While small businesses make up most of CEWS recipients not included in the ICO, at least 4170 companies that received CEWS were part of ICO enterprises (Mahoney & Smart, 2021). While the total percentage of this statistic indicates just over 1% of all CEWS recipients are wealthy companies, it must be factored in that larger companies are estimated to receive much larger shares of CEWS payments overall (Mahoney & Smart, 2021). To illustrate this point, the Canada Revenue Agency that revealed about 30% of total CEWS payments went to large businesses and corporations with 250 employees or more (Canada Revenue Agency, 2021; Mahoney & Smart, 2021).

While it is critical for the public to have accessible documents to the companies who collected CEWS regardless of their size, it is also critical to consider the eligibility criteria and requirements companies needed to meet in order to be approved and registered to collect the

government subsidy. According to the Government of Canada, employers can apply for the CEWS benefit if all three requirements are met: i) have had a CRA payroll account on or before March 15, 2020, ii) be an employer to individuals, corporations, trusts, charities, partnerships, Indigenous-owned corporations, athletic associations, journalism organizations, private schools and private colleges, and finally, iii) if the applying business has experienced a drop in revenue (2021). As such, if a large, wealthy corporation was able to demonstrate any loss in revenue, despite the amount, they would found be eligible for the CEWS benefit (Mahoney & Smart, 2021). A highly significant and controversial aspect of CEWS relates to the administration of its delivery. Although the subsidy CEWS offers are tied to employer payrolls, payments are received by firms, not by workers (Mahoney & Smart, 2021). Due to this, it has been suggested that CEWS—especially in the case of large corporations—is likely “saving” relatively few jobs during the pandemic despite its proclaimed objectives. While some individuals suggest that large companies should refuse CEWS payments as a matter of corporate social responsibility, others argue that the government should have ensured that public funds were well-spent in the first place (Mahoney & Smart, 2021). In other words, do people believe there is a lack in business ethics, or do people consider the government to be at fault?

In order to facilitate this discourse analysis, it is imperative to accurately identify the nature of subject. The act of large corporations utilizing public funds to further propel private interests is known as corporate welfare. The concept of corporate welfare appears complex considering the popular societal discourse surrounding the term “welfare” itself. More often than not, the term “welfare” often invokes images of economically insecure individuals and families who receive some combination of financial aids or benefits from the state. As a consequence, society rarely associates that same conception of welfare to large and wealthy corporations

despite decades of business recipients. In fact, large corporations often end up collecting just as much—or, what this study will eventually demonstrate, more—support from their government than actual individual citizens in receipt of ‘welfare’. In order to establish a working definition, this paper refers to corporate welfare as the “various benefits and services that directly, or indirectly, meet the needs of businesses” (Farnsworth, 2013). Examples of corporate welfare include government programs that provide unique benefits or advantages to specific companies or industries through providing grants, subsidies, services or loans (Canadian Taxpayers Federation, 2010). CEWS, including the practices by recipients of funnelling government monies to continue to disburse shareholder dividends, is an example of corporate welfare.

Research on Canada’s attitudes towards CERB has far out-paced that on CEWS. To help correct this, my research will seek to reveal how Canadians perceive CEWS and its distribution in order to bridge the existing gap between government funded support programs and individual perceptions, as well as contribute to the vast and emerging literature surrounding COVID-19. Considering that the current global pandemic has presented researchers with a new, large terrain of information and material to unpack and explore, the ambition of this research is to not only uncover and showcase Canadian perceptions towards CEWS and corporate welfare, but to also facilitate discussion regarding the study’s findings while recommending social justice based solutions that stem from the research discoveries.

## ***Literature Review***

### ***The Construction of the Welfare State***

The term “welfare” often incites unambiguous thoughts and opinions. While this study is interested in better understanding the differing opinions individuals have with respect to corporate welfare, it is imperative to contextualize this research in explorations of the larger

welfare state and its construction. In order to provide a comprehensive overview of the welfare state's creation in both general and Canadian contexts, several significant and historical factors must first be carefully reviewed. The Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 is often cited as one of the first historical factors providing a cornerstone in social policy and welfare history (Yerli, 2020). According to Yerli (2020), the sixteenth century in England—much like all of Europe—was one of poverty and great economic despair despite the former abundant and rich fifteenth century. As a result, the need for governmental intervention became increasingly evident. The 1601 Act for the Relief of the Poor—or more colloquially referred to as the Poor Law—was unprecedented in nature and was likely considered the first national poor-law system in all of Europe (Beier, 2004; Yerli, 2020).

Clark and Page (2019) argue that the great expansion of the number of individuals receiving relief in the late eighteenth century coupled with rapid population growth led to revision of the Poor Law of 1834. The idea that the Old Poor Law “demoralized the working class, promoted population growth, lowered wages, reduced rents [and] compounded the burden on ratepayers” were amongst some of the arguments used to work toward a new configuration of the welfare state (Blaug, 1963, p. 151). The radical reform of 1834 was titled *The Poor Law Amendment Act* and is regarded as the “mother of all welfare reforms” (Clark & Page, 2019, p. 222). In the reform, welfare payments were made to be unattractive to all but the destitute, where welfare was to be received under the strict supervision of a workhouse, but was ultimately proven to be more burdensome, harsh, costly and problematic than its predecessor (Clark & Page, 2019). As it is understood through the Poor Laws and its amendments, the distribution of welfare was only intended to be given to society's most disadvantaged—yet, even in such exceptional circumstances, the act of receiving welfare was highly disdained. This perception of

welfare distribution is interesting to note and return to upon exploring the contemporary Canadian welfare state, especially as it pertains to corporate welfare to analyze the ways in which these views align or diverge.

While it is important to highlight the foundations of the welfare state at large, this research particularly aims to understand the welfare state's emergence in Canada. Both Boyer (2018) and Wallace (1950) depict how individuals and lawmakers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries began questioning how working-class households dealt with income insecurity, wondering what role public and private safety nets played in alleviating such insecurity, and calling in government policies regarding social issues, which assisted in the construction of the welfare state (Boyer, 2018). The idea of "economic insecurity" was a prominent factor that set the welfare state's creation in motion. Economic insecurity involves the risk of "economic loss faced by workers and householders as they encounter the unpredictable events of life" and is deeply entwined with unemployment and other negative income shocks that affect households (Western et al. in Boyer, 2018). In Wallace's work (1950), the prevalent nature of economic insecurity is certainly echoed, however, she further identifies the social well-being of citizens as a striking indicator that pressured the Canadian government to undergo a major policy transformation.

The origins of the Canadian "social welfare state" as it is recognized today may be traced back to the first thirty years after Confederation where one of the first known causes that incited widespread support for social legislation was the mounting demand for free education (Wallace, 1950). Between 1880 and 1900, the urban population in Canada had more than doubled, creating even more demand for social assistances, thus placing a premium upon the value of self-reliance (Wallace, 1950). Being economically secure was synonymous with being independent and self-sufficient—characteristics in which individuals took great pride. However, these values created

an uncompromising set of binaries within which individuals could categorize both themselves and others. For example, Wallace (1950) demonstrated that while self-reliant individuals took pride in not turning to the state for assistance, other individuals who were unable to provide for themselves were bound to be looked down upon, being regarded as “weaklings” or “lazy”. While Wallace (1950) demonstrates evidence that suggests many economically insecure individuals were generally saved from starvation by the efforts of relatives, friends or private charitable or religious organizations, the Canadian state was forced to address the intensifying risk poverty posed and consider social legislations, like unemployment insurance.

In the early 1930s, precisely in the midst of the Great Depression, the controversial issue of unemployment insurance was intensely deliberated. One of pivotal issues surrounding unemployment insurance was that, unlike the sick or the elderly, there was “nothing intrinsically wrong with the able-bodied [person] unemployed” (Struthers, 1979, p. 2 - 3). However, the Great Depression created a challenging terrain of mass job loss that made otherwise working-class individuals and families destitute through “no fault of their own” (Struthers, 1979). The idea that individuals are placed in economically challenging situations through no fault of their own worked to intensify the already existing desire the public had for government involvement in the economic security of Canadians. As such, the Canadian government was otherwise forced to create and implement unemployment insurance and a host of other social programs between the 1940s and 1960s that worked toward the creation of the Canadian welfare state (Finkel, 2006).

Another significant— and arguably most important— welfare state policy created by the Liberals was a national health-care system that was committed to covering everyone and most medical procedures that operated on an interprovincial scale (Anastakis, 2018). An additional

pillar the welfare state implemented under the federal Liberal government was the creation of the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) where social welfare was funded through a cost-sharing program between the federal and provincial governments (Anastakis, 2018). One of most remarkable features about CAP was that it gave citizens the right to welfare and the right to challenge the government if their welfare was denied, unlike the previous federal system where supports were only offered for the “deserving” —or in other terms, those who could “prove” they were in need (Anastakis, 2018). In addition to general social spending, specific programs were implemented that were largely geared towards women, such as the Family Allowance Act. The Family Allowance Act—colloquially referenced as the “baby bonus” —sent a small monthly amount directly to mothers with the intent to purchase groceries, diapers, formula and other related necessities (Anastakis, 2018). The implementation of these measures was not by any means inexpensive. Within the timeframe of 1959 to 1968 alone, the Canada Assistance Plan and the Unemployment Assistant Act produced a massive provincial increase in welfare spending by 167% while the federal increase was eleven-fold (Finkel, 2006). Statistics Canada found that while social spending had soared, it had also significantly decreased the number of Canadians living in poverty as the poverty rate had dropped from 27% in 1961 to 15.4% in 1975 (Finkel, 2006).

While study of the creation and maintenance of social welfare is rife, the same cannot be said of corporate welfare. Tracing the origins of corporate welfare and establishing an accurate historical base is challenging. Academic literature on the subject is disparate, scarce and unfocused. While corporate welfare as a practice in more modern times has emerged as a field of study, it still represents just a small fraction of research produced on its close counterpart, social welfare. As such, it is up to contemporary researcher to contribute to this field of study through

uncovering new information and presenting their findings to further bridge the current gap in corporate welfare literature.

### *Dismantling the Welfare State via Neoliberalism and Austerity*

Just as social spending was yielding substantial results, proponents of neoliberalism declared an attack on the welfare state. Despite the period of 1945 to the mid 1970s advancing social provisions, the period was similarly filled with contestation between the demands of social justice and the demands of lower taxes—as well as how legislation would reflect this divide (Finkel, 2006). In the 1970s, conservatives attributed economic crisis to years of government over-spending on social programs while promoting the underlying argument of neoliberalism: Canadians had become too reliant on “state handouts” and instead needed the discipline of the market to improve their social positioning (Finkel, 2006). Neoliberalism can be defined as a political and economic ideology that holds, in part, that the state should be limited in its role in modern society (Albo, 2002). A few of neoliberalism’s “golden rules” worth noting include making the private sector the primary engine of economic growth, shrinking the size of state bureaucracy, privatizing state-owned industries and utilities, deregulating the economy and eliminating as many subsidies as possible (Friedman, 1999 in Albo, 2002). The origins of the “neoliberal assault” lie in the economic stagnation of the 1970s in North America, as both inflation and unemployment simultaneously rose leading conservatives to openly question the efficacy of Keynesianism (Albo, 2002). By the 1980s, neoliberal philosophy took hold in all of Canada’s major political parties and by default, most provincial regimes elected after 1980 subscribed to some version of neoliberal ideology (Albo, 2002). With this ideology influencing legislation and policy, Canada’s welfare state—as it was once known—began to unravel. Under this new regime, the percentage of unemployed Canadians eligible to collect unemployment

insurance had experienced a dramatic decrease comparable to the early 1950s, and family allowances, the Canada Assistance Plan, and federal financial support for social housing had virtually disappeared by the 1990s (Finkel, 2006). In response to the federal government reducing provincial budgets, several sectors suffered while other sectors began inflating prices for services and programs. For example, health care and post-secondary education were among the most prominent sectors affected by the budget reduction while contrastingly, university tuition rates soared (Finkel, 2006). Social housing was also amongst the suffering sectors, as the neoliberal turn included the federal government cutting off all funds for social housing to the provinces which, as a result, completely halted the building and development of social housing (Finkel, 2006).

In connection to neoliberal ideology and the welfare state's dismantlement comes the key theme of austerity. The term "austerity" has been extensively used in policy debates to refer to spending reductions in both a public and total capacity (Dellas, & Niepelt, 2021). Often in austerity policies, a combination of reduction and restructuring coexist. For instance, austerity policy usually includes a range of cutbacks in state spending, often in the form of salaries, staff, pensions, and overall services (Teeple, 2017). In addition to this, austerity policies encourage and incite reductions in health care, education, and unemployment insurance while simultaneously including tax breaks for the rich and tax hikes for the rest (Teeple, 2017). Austerity, both as a concept and as a policy measure in practice, plays an interesting role within this study. While the functioning principle of austerity is to reduce state spending, primarily via social programs and services, another function austerity produces is benefitting and protecting private—often corporate—interests. This is not only seen through providing tax breaks to the

wealthy, but also seen through corporate deregulation policies and privatization of state corporations (Teepie, 2017).

### *Neoliberal Narratives on the Provision of Welfare*

As illustrated above, the very principle of neoliberalism is directly at odds with the collective welfare state. At the core of neoliberal ideology lays an established link between neoliberalism and individualism. To demonstrate this relationship, consider neoliberalism's insistence that we do not need society since we are all solely responsible for our own personal well-being (Peters, 2001; Brown, 2003 in Smith 2012). Spade (2015) offers an array of examples on how the neoliberal turn centers the individual over the collective. As such, Spade (2015) brings attention to the general trend in neoliberal politics: the denial that unequal conditions exist, portraying any unequal conditions that do exist as natural or neutral, and most significantly, placing an emphasis on the individual and "personal responsibility".

Through understanding the importance placed on individualism, it is clear that the collective welfare state and its policies do not align with neoliberalism's guiding principles. Social welfare in particular clashes with individualism as neoliberal ideology expects people to practice personal responsibility by "investing in their own human capital to make themselves less of a burden on society" (Schram, 2017, p. 308). In this case, it is significant to distinguish who is made to feel burdensome on society and who is not. For instance, neoliberalism suggests that blame should be placed onto the individual for utilizing the resources of the state, however when corporations engage in the same conduct, society may view it as helpful, effective, and even necessary to improve the economy.

### *Corporate Welfare: The Fundamentals in Literature*

This section of the literature review is dedicated to the discussion and assessment of two foundational and significant corporate welfare sources. To begin, Farnsworth's work (2013) not only defines key terms, but is widely cited in other literature involving business and corporate welfare. Farnsworth considers the consequences of the 2008 global economic crisis as his body of work ultimately focuses on direct and indirect measures taken by governments to assist and support corporations in various forms. The present study is similarly geared towards considering such response to economic crisis, only this time in relation to COVID. As such, the benefits of using literature from a post-economic recession is twofold: an interesting and diverse perspective is presented that deviates from typical corporate welfare literature, and moreover, there is a possibility that similar themes and viewpoints can be extracted from previous literature with the possibility of integration within this study. As such, several parallels are able to be drawn from the 2008 and 2020 recessions as the conundrum Farnsworth's work presents readers with is similar to the current challenge facing Canada: how to best balance the needs of private businesses while simultaneously exploring the burden citizens encounter funding corporate welfare through taxpaying. Farnsworth's work offers a convenient glance into the realm of corporate welfare as he explores the positioning between corporations protecting private interests and citizens' unwillingness to fund such interests. In addition to exploring this relationship, Farnsworth (2013) provides readers with a working definition of corporate welfare that is described as the "various benefits and services that directly, or indirectly, meet the needs of businesses" (p. 5). It is interesting to bring attention on how the conceptualizations of corporate welfare and social welfare contrast, as the fundamental premise of social welfare relates to the

various benefits and services that directly or indirectly meet the needs of individuals (Farnsworth, 2013).

A substantial gap in knowledge, however, is revealed at the heart of their work. Farnsworth (2013) admits that official data is either incomplete or nonexistent upon researching state benefits, resulting in unclear understandings of the total amounts in subsidies provided by the public sector to private businesses. As such, assessing the full and relative costs and benefits businesses consume is virtually impossible to calculate, leaving little space for society and academics to concretely scrutinize corporate welfare and its provisions. Farnsworth (2013) notes that scrutiny of corporate welfare in itself is crucially important to social policy analysis overall. To elaborate, corporate welfare is in constant competition with social welfare for state resources and at various levels; and when this occurs, government often has to make a choice between subsidising a firm in order to prevent it from closing, or providing benefits to those made unemployed by the closure (Farnsworth, 2013). Ultimately, Farnsworth (2013) argues that corporations end up obtaining a great deal of value from direct and indirect state provisions and as such, proposes the idea that businesses and wealthy businesspeople should bear more of the related costs (Farnsworth, 2013). These examples alone directly illustrate the need for further research to be conducted in order to explore what individuals think of corporate welfare, its delivery, and its significance, if any, in society. As such, this research will seek to understand and analyze the ways in which Canadians perceive corporate welfare in a global pandemic via CEWS as it pertains to their understanding of their socio-economic world.

While Dawkins work (2002) compliments Farnsworth's in its attention to the lack of information society has with regard to numerous grants and subsidies the government supplies to profitable corporations, its focuses more concertedly on exploring the diverse definitions of

corporate welfare. Despite the overall cost corporate welfare incurs, Dawkins (2002) notes a number of other troubling aspects attached to the common practices: there is no corresponding return to taxpayers, programs favor certain companies over others, corporations do not have to be “needy” in order to access programs, and corporations do not necessarily have to be considered “good corporate citizens” in order to receive benefits. Consequently, the largest companies benefit significantly more from corporate welfare programs in comparison to smaller businesses (Dawkins, 2002).

Dawkins (2002) also found that several negative connotations are attached to the term “corporate welfare” considering it has originally been constructed in relation to the term “social welfare”. Keywords and phrases such as “unnecessary,” “unfair burden,” “lacking any reasonable return,” “egregious expenditures of tax dollars,” and other similar expressions are often utilized to further describe the definition at hand (Dawkins 2002). However, Dawkins’ work offers an alternate outlook of corporate welfare that largely deviates from the “normative” burdensome and immoral viewpoint. For example, Dawkins suggests other perspectives that defend and protect corporate welfare have been less circulated, such as the “advantageous” aspect private companies can offer to the public—such as the promise of job creation (Dawkins, 2002).

While it is relevant to highlight the ways in which these writings can assist the proposed research, it is equally significant to outline the limitations of both Farnsworth’s and Dawkin’s works in relation to this research. For instance, each of these works either imply or explicitly state that corporate welfare is an unethical practice of which the general public is highly skeptical, yet neither provide concrete research into public perceptions to explore the veracity of such claims. As such, I intend to contribute filling this specific gap in research and offer insight

on perceptions and beliefs in a time where the need for understanding public attitudes to the economic world is especially important.

### *Functions and Expenses of Corporate Welfare*

Individuals tend to care more intensely about certain issues when they directly affect their lives. Oftentimes, a person becomes mobilized on an issue when the issue itself is either costing, or on the verge of costing them money. For example, it is often the case that taxpayers have opinions about where their money is being distributed and whether or not the cause or service is “worthy” of their dollars. As such, social welfare and its value has been called into question time and again by politicians, business interests and members of the general public. As a result of this discourse, attitudes towards social welfare have become a popular topic of study, including the ways the public perceives individuals on social welfare. Consider the work of AuClaire (1984) who found that between 1976 and 1982, the opposition of social welfare was strong though has lessened as years progressed, however, there was a limit to the public’s willingness to be taxed for social welfare. More recent literature has been published that similarly discusses the attitudes and beliefs individuals have in regard to social welfare and social tax expenditures. Ellis and Faricy (2021) found that most Americans believe they pay “too much” in taxes and nearly 60% of all respondents believe the wealthy pay “too little” in taxes.

While social welfare has been discussed and researched in great depth, other forms of welfare—particularly corporate welfare—have not garnered similar attention. Corporate welfare’s overall existence takes a “behind the curtain” approach. Olsen and Champlin (1998) reveal two core ways that corporate welfare manages to remain seemingly invisible. First, the key justification for corporate welfare is that it will “benefit society” and therefore, the assertion that corporate welfare will provide jobs is enough to be saved from scrutiny (Olsen & Champlin,

1998). The second way corporate welfare remains largely invisible is through the hidden benefits corporations receive. For instance, corporations receive major reductions in taxes that save large sums of money rather than *take* large sums of money, which makes corporate welfare much less visible in comparison to social welfare since no actual funds are being transferred (Olsen & Champlin, 1998). Nonetheless, the invisibility of corporate welfare is both highly interesting and surprising considering research found that corporate welfare far exceeds the amounts ever budgeted for individual social welfare programs. Two studies conducted in the mid-to-late 1990s shows that corporate welfare is estimated to cost between \$170 and \$200 billion each year whereas individual welfare programs costed roughly \$41 billion within the same timespan (Collins, 1996; Olsen & Champlin, 1998). The researchers conclude their work with the thought that as a society, we have cultivated a “culture of dependency” where corporations can no longer be expected to provide jobs, to invest, or to produce without various and often significant forms of government assistance (Olsen & Champlin, 1998).

While it is evidently necessary and critical to research financial statistics exploring the ways corporate welfare operates—both overtly and covertly—as well as its overall effects, it is also critical to concretely understand how corporate welfare is perceived. The sections above, though brief, showcased how social welfare has outwardly dominated popular discourse and trickled into academia while corporate welfare—despite being studied and researched—has not been analyzed or discussed to the same extent. The number of peer-reviewed sources regarding public attitudes and perceptions with respect to social welfare and its expenditures far exceeds the literature on corporate welfare. As such, my research intends to initiate bridging the gap in literature pertaining to corporate welfare and individual perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes.

## ***Methodology***

The current available— and most popular— sources in the realm of corporate welfare literature is to either illustrate similarities and differences between the competing needs of social and corporate welfare, showcase the ways in which governments incentivize and fund corporations alongside the respective amounts governments grant corporations, and/or facilitate discussion around the perils of corporate welfare and the impact corporate welfare has on the economy. Through this understanding, it is evident that academics have yet to explore the perceptions or beliefs of corporate welfare to the same extent as they have social welfare. Considering this gap, this research will contribute towards bridging this gap of knowledge through the use of a content discourse analysis as its methodology as applied to a database assembled from readers' comments on seven articles from the CBC and the Financial Post.

### *The Guiding Principles of a Discourse Analysis*

The best approach to collect data in this research project is to employ a content discourse analysis where reader comments from news sources will be gathered to establish and understand the opinions and perceptions Canadians hold. A discourse analysis often focuses on relationships between elite groups and institutions as they are being enacted, legitimated, or reproduced (Van Dijk, 1993). The relationship between power and discourse and the specific study of critiquing social inequality is one of the primary aspects involved in a discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 1993). When utilizing a discourse analysis, researchers are motivated to better understand pressing social issues, despite many issues being complex in nature and requiring a multidisciplinary approach (Van Dijk, 1993). As such, discourse analysts aim to make specific contributions to their field of study, namely by attaining further insight into the crucial role of discourse in the reproduction of dominance and inequality (Van Dijk, 1993).

Content discourse analyses belong to the standard toolbox of qualitative research in the social sciences (Brusis, 2018). Content analyses are aimed at the systemic mapping and classification of textual data (Brusis, 2018). This content discourse analysis will construct a coding frame of categories to structure the data and detect underlying patterns or trends (Brusis, 2018). Qualitative research provides an approach to knowledge building that is ultimately aimed at generating meaning (Leavy, 2017). The “meaning” that is then created after the knowledge building process is hoped to extend beyond the project itself, lending its findings to other works, fields of study, and popular discourse. Qualitative research will be used in this specific study to explore, investigate, and learn about social phenomena in order to unpack meanings (Leavy, 2017). Beyond the qualitative approach being used to explore, describe, and explain, the method— among other elements – also involves the crucial and significant element of interpretation (Mertens, 2009). Using qualitative research as the methodological approach for this study is the most effective means of testing, as it not only allows the study to gather and explore relevant information pertaining to CEWS and corporate welfare as a whole but also for the researcher to attach meaning to the findings. As such, an ample discussion will be included and attached to the ways in which Canadians perceive their socio-economic world through the analysis of comments. Once the comments undergo the coding process, meaning is able to be attached to the data at hand using highlighted themes to appropriately categorize each comment.

### Sample

The article samples used in this research analysis stem from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and the Financial Post, a business division of the National Post. Each of the selected articles were published in the month of December 2020. The decision to only use CBC and Financial Post articles and only for that month was strategic. In December of 2020, CEWS

as a subsidy program had received more attention than usual through news reporting. Reporting rates on CEWS skyrocketed after the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) publicly released a once concealed registry containing a comprehensive list of companies who received CEWS (see Appendix I). The CRA's CEWS registry uses a searchable database that allows individuals to search for CEWS recipients in three ways: i) through an A to Z index ii) by entering the company's name, or iii) entering a business number and/or code. The database was eagerly anticipated by reporters who immediately set to work once it was made available to release an influx of articles in response to the new data. The release of the CRA information in early to mid-December of 2020, led to a great deal of CEWS reporting that same month. Thus, December 2020 was an ideal choice to source and compile data.

This research project selected the CBC and the Financial Post as the two news sources from which to compile data for a variety of reasons. First, both news outlets generally tend to lean on different sides of the political spectrum. According to the Canadian Encyclopedia's website on media bias, the CBC has been found to have a left-centre bias (Tattrie, 2019). While there have been debates that not enough research has been conducted to draw convincing conclusions on whether the CBC is truly left-leaning on the political spectrum or not, some evidence supports the implication. For example, one study found that 44% of self-proclaimed "left-wingers" chose CBC as a news source over 34% of self-proclaimed "right-wingers" (Policy Options, 2002). Further, an online independent media outlet additionally found CBC to be left-centre, with a "high" accuracy rate in terms of factual reporting (Media Bias, 2021). The Financial Post, on the other hand, leans on the other side of the political spectrum. Unlike CBC, the Financial Post is found to be politically positioned as right-centre (Media Bias, 2021). The Financial Post is owned by Postmedia Network, a Canadian media conglomerate responsible for

over 120 brands and best known for newspaper publishing. In an inside story on Postmedia's conservative affiliations, the National Post has been described as a "newspaper with an explicitly conservative political mandate" (Craig, 2019). Overall, the general tone the Financial Post conveys tends to support right-leaning beliefs and ideologies. The reasoning behind selecting CBC and the Financial Post as this study's two news samples was to provide variety both in reader comments and in the research overall.

Sampling two news sources with politically divergent orientations additionally allows the research to be more representative and balanced regarding broader and politically diverse public sentiment. This decision has been made on the hypothesis that individuals tend to read news sources that align with their political beliefs. This hypothesis has been tested in a variety of contexts. Noble Prize winner in Economics and Princeton professor Daniel Kahneman discusses two distinct ways people engage in decision-making. One way is slow, deliberate, and effortful, requiring focused energy and attention while the other is rapid, automatic, intuitive, and effortless (Kahneman, 2011). Thus, it has been found that individuals make many of their decisions— including those based around media preferences— using their intuition rather than logic (Kahneman, 2011 in Maidenburg & Dexter, 2017). In other terms, our brains prefer the path of least resistance and relies upon our own confirmation biases (Maidenburg & Dexter, 2017). This reflex we have as humans connects us, whether consciously or subconsciously, to news stories that most resemble and echo what we already think. Lastly, the importance of using the two differing news sources is to include as many diverse perspectives as feasibly possible within a single study.

In addition to the December 2020 timeframe, the articles from the CBC and the Financial Post had to meet two other areas of criteria to be included in the study. First, the article itself

needed to centre CEWS as the core of its story and second, the article needed to have one or more reader comments. As a result, the articles included in the study focus directly on news coverage focusing on the amounts large companies received in CEWS or their expenditure of those monies, particularly on the payment of dividends to their shareholders, rather than politicians' stances or attitudes towards CEWS. As such, most articles in the month of December 2020 pertaining to CEWS with one or more reader comments have been incorporated into this research project. Each article within the specified timeframe has been carefully reviewed using the search function from the website of each news source. The inputted keywords that have been used in the search function were, "CEWS," "shareholders," "dividends," and "bonuses." The selection process yielded a total of seven articles that successfully met all the criteria.

These articles focused most directly on the correlation between CEWS recipients and dividend payments. For example, CBC mobilized a news investigation project titled "The Big Spend" where CBC—and by extension, some of the CBC articles included in this study—examined the unprecedented \$240 billion the federal government handed out during the first eight months of the pandemic, and further, examined how the billions of dollars have been used by businesses and individuals across the country (Lancaster, 2020). Essentially, the articles in this study cover large corporations who, despite being financially healthy overall, qualified for wage subsidies because at least one division has suffered a substantial drop in revenues during the pandemic (Montpetit, Nakonechny & Hétu, 2020). Despite the articles not explicitly provoking readers to consider the ethics or morals of large corporations receiving CEWS, the undertone of questioning ethics is often set by providing short illustrations that trigger otherwise emotional responses. For instance, one of the CBC articles discusses how two Ontario long-term care homes, Extendicare Inc. and Sienna Senior Living Inc., paid a combined total of \$74 million

in dividends this year while more than 480 residents and staff have died of COVID-19 at the companies' care homes (Lancaster, 2020). Another CBC article briefly discusses a woman who struggled and burned through her savings after being laid-off from her job at GDI, a janitorial company. Despite the woman being laid-off even though she was being paid a modest income of \$15.30 an hour, GDI's share price has hit an all-time high, and the company documented having a "record-quarter" between June and September, with revenues up more than 10% (Montpetit, Nakonechny, Héту, 2020). The Financial Post's reportage was somewhat similar. Many of the stories included in this study prompt readers to either consider the ethical concerns around the collection of CEWS by large corporations, or, the government allowing large corporations to collect the subsidy in the first place. Therefore, each of the seven articles focus, often to a large degree, on the ethical considerations entwined in large corporations paying out dividends to shareholders and executives after receiving CEWS from the Canadian government.

### Data Collection

This study's data is comprised of reader comments from the seven selected CBC and Financial Post news articles. Regarding the CBC articles, any individual can comment under the story if they sign up for a free registered CBC account. Once their account has been verified, the individual is able to post comments publicly and, in most cases, immediately. If a person's comment did not immediately post, it likely means the comment is awaiting moderation that follows CBC guidelines. The Financial Post has a similar commenting process. An individual will be prompted to create a free account or sign into their Financial Post account in order to write and post a public comment. Akin to CBC and to maintain a lively yet civil discussion, comments may take up to an hour for moderation before appearing publicly on the Financial Post

site. After this process is complete and the comments are made available to the public, any reader or member of the public can access the comments.

I collected comments from the seven selected articles using a non-proportional quota sampling technique to assemble a database. To better comprehend the basics of non-proportional quota sampling, it is first necessary to discuss nonprobability sampling. Nonprobability sampling is a catch-all term referring both to samples of convenience and to more purposive methods of selection (e.g. quota sampling) (Feild et al., 2006). Nonprobability sampling techniques are often used in exploratory and qualitative research (McCombes, 2021). Although considerations of feasibility and economic constraints often make nonprobability sampling methods optimal, it is critical to take note of their parameters and limitations (Feild et al., 2006). When using nonprobability as a sampling technique, there is “no way of estimating the probability that each element has of being included in the sample, and no assurance that every element has some chance of being included” (Feild et al., 2006, p. 567). As such, nonprobability sampling is the most ideal and suitable choice for this study given the research time constraints; seeing as random sampling—the alternative to nonprobability sampling—is often extremely tedious and time-consuming (Feild et al., 2006).

Understanding the basics of nonprobability sampling enables consideration of the specific technique of non-proportional quota sampling. In quota sampling, the researcher selects respondents according to a fixed quota. Non-proportional quota sampling, however, allows the researcher to specify the exact number of sampled units in a single category (Trochim, n.d). In this sampling technique, the researcher wants to have enough of a population sample to assure they have sufficient materials to discuss findings on the population as a whole. This type of sampling is optimal for this research project considering certain articles have a much greater

number of comments than others. This imbalance poses a challenge of the research seeming possibly disproportioned. For instance, one study article has slightly fewer than 1,100 comments whereas another article used has only 59. To account for this disparity, this study will employ a non-proportional quota sampling technique by deriving its sample from up to the first fifty comments from each news source. Such a method produces a more proportioned and balanced database. Finally, using non-proportional quota sampling is less restrictive in terms of which comments were included and which were not. For example, the alternative to non-proportional quota sampling's technique would be proportional quota sampling, where the researcher is looking for a fixed number of certain characteristics to be filled within a single study (Trochim, n.d). To put this into perspective, if this study were to employ a proportional quota sampling style the research could have experienced a higher risk for sampling bias. In this event, as the researcher, I would be at liberty to choose what characteristics or variables the comments needed to include in order to be incorporated within the study; for instance, choosing comments that typically are more left-leaning to hit a left-wing quota. Therefore, using the non-proportional quota sampling technique is a means to ensure no specific comments— in terms of political orientation— were chosen over others, allowing the study to minimize that potential bias.

This sampling technique resulted in the extraction of a total of 182 comments from the seven articles used in this study. The reason the total number of comments adds up to 182 (rather than 350) is because four out of the seven articles used within this study had less than 50 comments. The titles and dates of the articles along with the number of comments as well as the total number of comments used within the study are outlined in Table 1. Two articles from CBC and five articles from the Financial Post have been used to compose the total of the seven articles used within this research project.

As outlined in Table 1, two CBC articles each had well over 50 comments in the discussion section. The first article titled *Why Millions of Dollars in Pandemic Aid is Going to Corporations Making Healthy Profits* by Jonathon Montpetit, Simon Nakonechny and Marie-Hélène Héту was published on December 11, 2020. Their article garnered a total of 1,060 comments— the first 50 of which were incorporated within this study. The second utilized CBC article titled *2 Ontario LTC operators got \$157M in COVID-19 aid. They also Paid \$74M to Shareholders* published on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020 was written by John Lancaster. Lancaster’s work collected 553 comments with the first 50 integrated within this study’s database.

The five articles from the Financial Post garnered significantly fewer comments than those from CBC.

**Table 1**

<b>Article name and author</b>	<b>Date published and source</b>	<b>Total Comments</b>	<b>Comments used within the study</b>
<i>CEOs Raked in Hefty Dividends as their Companies Accepted CEWS, Financial Post Analysis Finds</i>  Written by: Victor Ferreira and Kevin Carmichael	December 22, 2020.  Article source: The Financial Post.	59	50
<i>FP Investigation: As CEWS Flowed in, Dividends Flowed Out</i>  Written by: Victor Ferreira and Kevin Carmichael	December 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2020.  Article source: The Financial Post.	16	16

<p><i>Arguing Over Optics of Collecting Subsidies While Paying Dividends Obscures Deeper Issues</i></p> <p>Written by: Kevin Carmichael</p>	<p>December 16, 2020.</p> <p>Article source: The Financial Post.</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>10</p>
<p><i>A Subsidy that is Hard to Resist, and Sometimes Harder to Justify</i></p> <p>Written by: Kevin Carmichael</p>	<p>December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020.</p> <p>Article source: The Financial Post.</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>4</p>
<p><i>Canadian Companies that Received CEWS and Kept Paying a Dividend</i></p> <p>Written by: Financial Post Staff</p>	<p>December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020.</p> <p>Article source: The Financial Post.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>2</p>

After each of the 182 comments have been compiled following the non-proportional quota sampling technique, they underwent a coding process where key themes have been extracted. Both the CBC and the Financial Post comments have been uniformly treated equally while coding comments. The data pulled from the comments as well as the key themes will be further spoken to in the upcoming section labelled “findings”.

*Ethical Considerations*

Within the parameters of this research project, no ethical considerations need to be addressed with Wilfrid Laurier University’s Research Ethics Board as this study’s database relies entirely upon public comments. Each comment used in this study has been sourced from an

online database made available and accessible to the general public. Once content of any kind is posted online, it becomes public material, both on the web and in the world. In other words, the content is no longer private and therefore cannot be protected. Considering this fact, any internet user— and in this case, news commenter— who has published information and has no control over how the content they release will be reproduced, distributed or spread, despite their best efforts. Nevertheless, the subject of consent was considered throughout the construction of this research project and explored within the bounds of both CBC and the Financial Post.

Both CBC and the Financial Post have an online Terms of Use document that must be agreed to and signed by all users prior to the creation of an account and prior to posting any comments. On the CBC website, the Terms of Use are outlined for users who wish to create a profile and publicly post submissions. As such, CBC users must comply with the terms of commenting, which explicitly state that when a person posts any content on their site, the person grants CBC, Radio-Canada digital services, and social media a “royalty-free, irrevocable, perpetual, non-exclusive, worldwide license to publish, reproduce, and distribute” the content (CBC, 2020). The term “content” is defined by CBC as “texts, images, sounds, etc.” (CBC, 2020).

Likewise, a Financial Post user must agree to their Terms and Conditions that state “by uploading, posting or otherwise submitting any user content materials ... on a Postmedia site including, without limitation, to any... commenting application [and] review or opinion...you are agreeing to the applicable Submission Release Terms and Conditions” (Postmedia, 2014). The Submission Release Terms and Conditions state that by agreeing to these elements, the user is “waiving any and all rights” to their own user content as Postmedia— and, by default, any Internet user— is free to “distribute, reproduce, communicate, transmit...and otherwise exploit

the user content” (Postmedia, 2014). As such, the comments deriving from the selected news sources are not only able to be freely accessed, but also able to be incorporated within this research study for the purposes of gaining a more comprehensive understanding concerning how Canadians perceive corporate welfare, specifically via CEWS.

### Limitations

This research project is not without its limitations. The most evident limitation stemming from this research is the uneven and inconsistent numbers of comments used within the study. Due to the fact this research project had no participants, I was not at liberty to equally balance my dataset in terms of news sources and comments. Therefore, my database had a finite number of comments that happened to be unbalanced in terms of quantity. For example, out of the 182 comments, a total of 100 comments were derived from CBC whereas 82 comments were obtained from the Financial Post. This limitation poses an imbalance to the overall research as an additional 18 comments is needed from the Financial Post in order to achieve a fully balance and inclusive dataset. This prospect however, was not possible as a researcher considering I had no control over the comments in any capacity, especially the amount of times individuals commented or did not comment on certain news articles. Furthermore, following the timeframe requirements of December 2020 added an additional restriction that did not allow for me to attempt to balance the dataset.

An additional limitation this study experienced was the fact I did not and could not include each and every comment that was available to within the selected news sources for two main reasons. First, I experienced a time constraint in regard to finishing the research and as such, utilizing each and every single comment would be a far too time-consuming task to accomplish within the timeframe. In other words, it was not feasible for me as a researcher to

sort through, code, and ultimately integrate each comment within the study. The second and most notable reason why it would not have been ideal to include each comment into the final study is because the research would then experience a substantially larger and more significant dataset imbalance overall. As mentioned beforehand in the *Data Collection* portion of the paper, the CBC news sources garnered a total of 1,613 comments whereas for the Financial Post the total was 88 comments. Therefore, if all comments in the study were to be used, CBC would have an additional 1,525 comments over the Financial Post, which could open the likelihood of a biased study enormously.

There is one other limitation that influenced the study I want to bring forward. Of the 182 comments, not each observation was able to be used within the research. To elaborate, some of the 182 comments were unusable as they discussed matters that either did not correlate with the article, or did not take a definitive stance on the matter of CEWS, its distribution or its effects. For example, some comments solely discussed and/or debated the origins of COVID-19 and its outbreak while other comments discussed other countries affairs. Therefore, some comments—despite being counted within the 182 total comments— were not able to be integrated within the conclusive findings.

### Research Questions

Research questions are central to research projects, and offer an outline for what the researcher seeks to examine and explore (Leavy, 2017). Three tiered research questions will guide this study. The first research question forms the primary base of this study, upon which the subsequent questions seek to build. The first research question asks: What perceptions and beliefs do Canadians have regarding corporate welfare during COVID-19? The comment database assembled for this study will allow this question to be explored most particularly in the

findings portion of the study. The second research question will build on the first and asks: What do the perceptual findings reveal about how commenters understand their socio-economic world? The second question will be addressed primarily in the study's discussion segment, where discourse and dialogue around the discoveries will be both reviewed and deliberated. Lastly, as a major research paper for a program that focuses on both analysis and solutions, the third question asks: How might the findings of this study inform action? The last question hopes to be the outset for a larger, more enduring conversation about corporate welfare inside and outside of COVID-19. This question embarks to make sense of all the revelations the research has found, and transform the findings into feasible and realistic actions in which the general public can participate.

### ***Findings***

The following section will reveal the findings resulting from the sorting and coding of the 182 comments deriving from the CBC (two articles) and the Financial Post (five articles). One major theme and several corresponding subthemes have been identified from the coding process. It was often the case that more than one theme or subtheme was present within a single comment. The theme and subthemes are detailed below.

### **Vilification**

Vilification is the dominant theme identified in this research. Regardless of political orientation, perceptions and beliefs, numerous commenters within this study vilify one party or another for what they identify as the misuse of CEWS. For example, several individuals in this study believe that COVID-19 is “doing a great job in making the rich richer and the poor poorer,” although the outlook they have when asserting this perception varies from commenter to commenter. While such commenters complained of the inappropriate use of CEWS, they

ultimately assigned such blame in two directions: towards government, or towards corporations. Seventy out of a total of 182 comments fell under this broad theme of vilification. The sections that follow explore two subthemes of this category— vilifying government and vilifying corporations. These subthemes reflect a distinct divide evident between commenters. While a significant number of commenters assigned blame to either government or corporations, the number of commenters vilifying government far outweighed the number vilifying corporations.

Another subtheme of vilification were those commenters who vilified either political parties or their leaders, often through shaming statements. The total number of commenters who vilifying and shaming political parties (23) was notably fewer than the number of commenters who vilified either government or corporations (70), the finding itself is both significant and telling, especially considering the conclusions that stem from this finding assist in revealing the ways in which Canadians perceive, feel, and understand their current political economy.

### *Vilifying Government*

Vilification of government in relation to the administration of CEWS is the largest subtheme of this research. A total of 46 commenters expressed perceptions that government was to blame, at fault and/or bore responsibility for allowing large corporations to access CEWS and use it to their unfair advantage. This figure was by far the most recurring and prevalent finding yielded from the study as 65.7% of all commenters falling under the broader theme of vilification expressed that the government is the prime culprit not only in regard to large corporations taking CEWS, but using the subsidy to dispense dividends amid a global pandemic.

65.7% of commenters on this theme have used terms and phrases that either explicitly or passively vilified the government for a set of CEWS related issues, such as criticizing the government for failing to include an adequate and rational set of regulations regarding CEWS

and its applications which, therefore, led to the perceived inappropriate use of the subsidy, and also for vilifying the government due to the intensifying debt Canadians will be confronted with as a result of the large public expenditure on this subsidy. For example, one commenter thinks that “companies that could pay dividends to shareholders probably did not need the subsidy and should not have qualified but if they did that is the government’s fault...the moral of the story is that government [sic] is incompetent”.

When referring to CEWS being used to distribute dividends, one commenter suggested that “if the government wanted something different, they should have put different rules in place.” Other commenters seemingly agreed with the notion that they “really can’t blame the companies” as CEWS was an example of “government bringing in a policy to look good, as opposed to a policy that actually does good” while another added, “when a government of any level has to put public money into a business to help it survive...the monies should only be available after the business signs onto an agreement that no bonuses or extra value should be or have been provided.” Overall, the more common terms and phrases found to describe the government’s role with large corporations using CEWS are “foolish,” “stupid,” “mismanaged,” “irresponsible overspending,” “unmitigated disaster,” “conmen,” “sickening,” and “incompetent”.

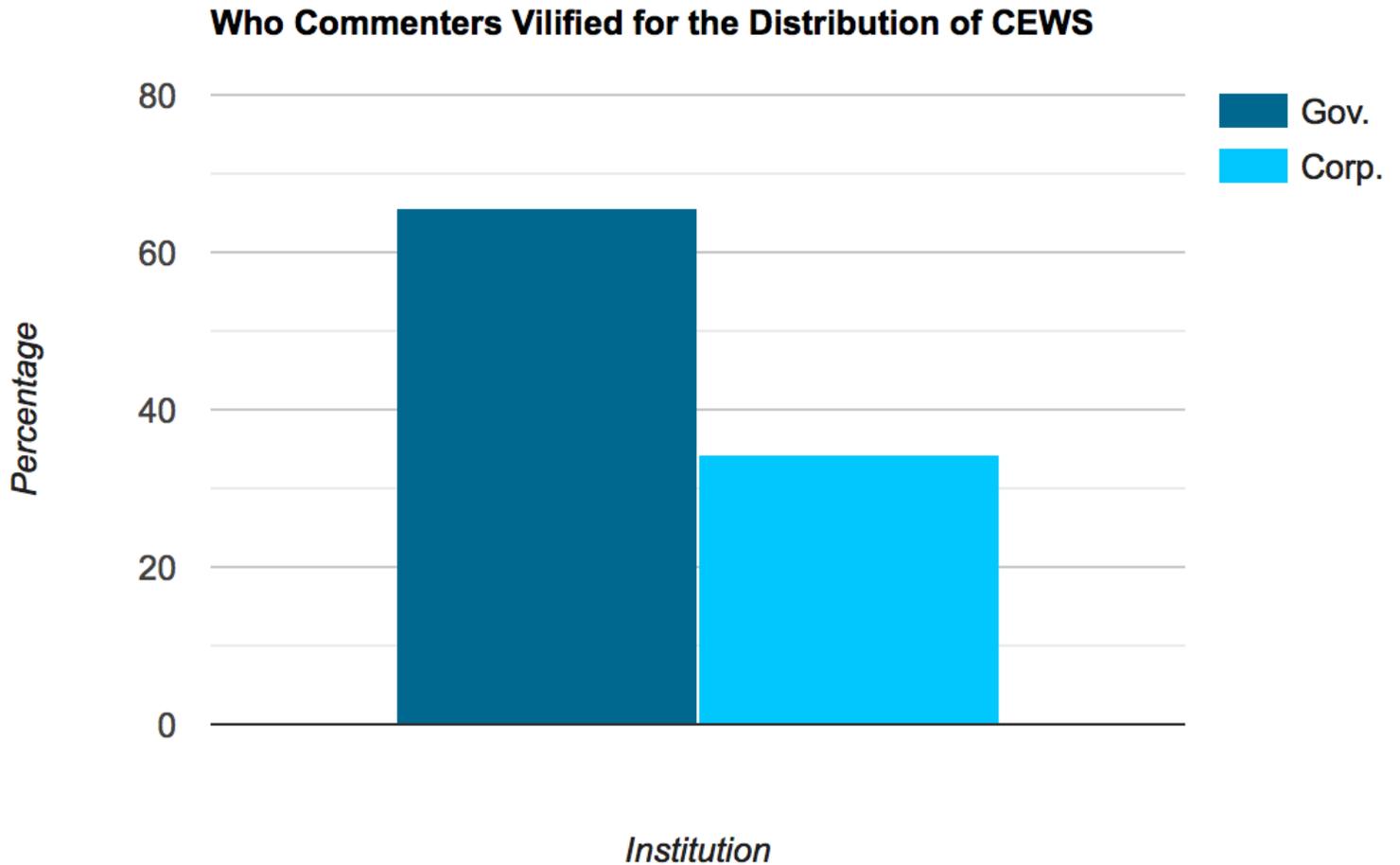
### *Vilifying Corporations*

This research also found that a considerable number of commenters— 24 in total—blamed large corporations over the government for taking and using CEWS to their advantage. In contrast to the predominant 65.7% of commenters who vilify government for CEWS, 34.3% of commenters falling under the broad theme of vilification believe that culpability lays with

large corporations who decided to apply for the publicly-funded benefit despite being better positioned economically (see Figure I).

The commenters who vilified corporations have also used terms and phrases that either explicitly or passively vilified corporations regarding CEWS. For example, one commenter wrote “corporations and their CEO’s are free from any moral restrictions... except when it comes to profits, of course.” Another noted that companies who “didn’t really need the CEWS but applied for it because they fit the specified criteria, and rationalized away any doubts about ethics are... using the pandemic for greedy purposes.” Other commenters who shared this perception posted additional thoughts when it came to CEWS, such as: the belief the public should “boycott all companies who paid dividends,” endorsing penalties for large companies who used CEWS to dispense dividends as they believed it was “misdirection of funds,” and demanding that “every penny that was given to shareholders must be returned to us, Canadians.” Lastly, one commenter posed the question that “while corporate welfare may not be illegal...is it right?”. The terms and phrases found to describe large corporation’s involvement when using CEWS was labelled “underhanded and completely absurd”, “disgraceful”, “greedy”, “incredibly cold and callous” and finally, that “businesses cannot be trusted”.

Figure I



#### *Vilifying Political Parties*

A significant subtheme this research identified under the broader rubric of vilification was the vilification or shaming of political parties—most often the Liberal party and its elected leaders. The vilification of political parties ranged through somewhat of a spectrum, most particularly with commenters discrediting the current federal Liberal party in the following ways: vilifying the current Liberal party and its elected leaders with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at

the forefront, vilifying the Liberal party and their previous history, vilifying the way in which the Liberals implemented CEWS, or a varying combination of the three.

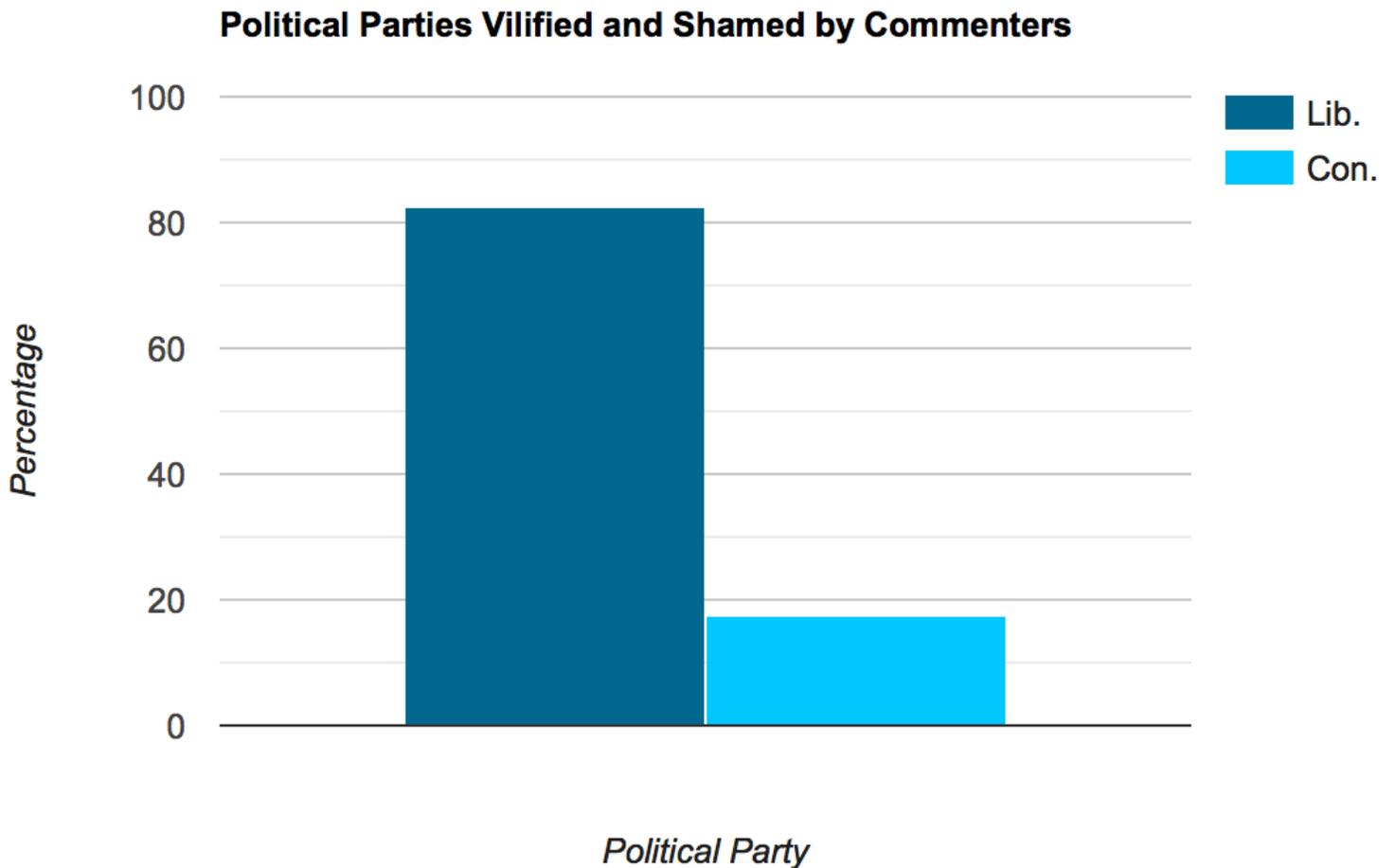
Altogether, 19 out of 23 commenters— a total of 82.6% of political shaming comments — vilified the federal Liberals for their handling of CEWS. In contrast, a much smaller population was found to participate in political shaming the Conservative party. In total, four commenters—17.4% of commenters in this subtheme— shamed and/or vilified Conservative leaders in some capacity, chiefly through discrediting and scrutinizing the current Ontario Progressive Conservative Premier Doug Ford, or the Progressive Conservative party as a whole (see Figure II).

To better illustrate commenters' dissatisfaction with the current Liberal government, consider the commenters who wrote, "Don't blame businesses blame [Trudeau] for not having the education, experience, or intelligence to implement any program", while another stated, "Liberals again proved that they are a joke". When explicitly discussing CEWS and its distribution, commenters who demonstrated their dissatisfaction not only with the Liberal government but also its leaders, believe that "Trudeau [is] building a society based on scamming," labelling Trudeau and the current Liberal party as "utterly foolish and incompetent." In fact, one commenter stated that they "can't wait until the Liberals are gone... hopefully gone forever."

Conservative political shaming on the other hand was far less prevalent. However, when it was encountered, commenters primarily blamed Doug Ford for "pay[ing] out his friends and avoid[ing] accountability," making him "a corrupt coward." These comments were seen in the CBC article that detailed how Ontario's government pledged to spend an additional \$540 million on long-term care despite two of Toronto's largest long-term care providers paid a combining

total of \$74 million in dividends after receiving more than \$157 million in both federal and provincial COVID-19 aid (Lancaster, 2020). Following this story, commenters have written that Ford has been “taking care of his friends again” while another commenter added Ford to their list of “worst politicians.”

**Figure II**



*Supporting and Opposing, Protecting and Rejecting*

Another meaningful theme this research uncovered was a well-defined dichotomy between commenters who sought to protect corporations by expressing support for the collection of CEWS by large companies and commenters who faulted corporations for this practice. To expand using other terms, this study noted a very clear separation between commenters who defended or expressed support for large corporations using CEWS to distribute dividends and commenters who opposed and rejected that practice. For example, when the articles upon which the comments were based profiled large and economically intact companies collecting public funds to distribute dividends, one group of commenters supported large corporations and the ways in which they choose to take and use money while the other group charged that this activity was unethical and immoral. In this respect, the number of responses on both sides of the spectrum were equally matched. Out of a total of 28 comments, 14 individuals—50% of this sample population—publicly defended large corporations from criticism over their use of CEWS to distribute dividends. For example, one supporter argued that “without CEWS, the companies...would have employed fewer people in 2020” while another similarly believes, “the idea behind the program was for businesses to keep employees they would otherwise lay off”. The sentiment that large corporations needed CEWS in order to stay afloat and keep individuals employed—with the potential to hire others—has been echoed in other comments among this group, as another supporter stated:

In fact, if CEWS prevented companies from paying dividends I would suspect that a lot of these companies would have closed down. There is no point in keeping a company going if it is not profitable and pays dividends. Besides, I thought the point of the CEWS was to keep companies running pretty much the same as they did before COVID, which includes those people who invested in the company receiving their shares of profits. There are a lot of retired people and soon to be retired people who will need those dividends to live on.

Another supporter similarly argued that, “investors invest to make money, not donate to charity. There’s nothing wrong with dividend payments,” while another openly stated “in today’s precarious business environment paying out dividends makes perfect strategic and ethical sense.”

On the note of ethics, the individuals who composed the other half of this finding were the commenters who opposed the collection of CEWS by large corporations and grounded their argument on ethical behaviour and morality. In contrast to the 50% who defended the collection of CEWS, this study identified an equal-sized population who opposed the collection of CEWS by large corporations. A total of 14 commenters —50% of this sample population— called the ethics and morality of large corporations into question and moreover, demanded that all public funds used to distribute dividends be returned to the public (see Figure III).

For example, one commenter believed that “if a business needs a handout, they should not be able to pay dividends. The money should be returned.” Asking corporations to return public funds was not a theme isolated to this group. In fact, the demand for return of funds was also recurring amongst the group comprising the other 50% of commenters. For instance, consider the comments that stated, “most if not all of the money needs to be taken back,” while another person wrote, “multinational companies should be forced to repay the [funds]...then revoke their licenses to operate in Canada.” One commenter posed the question that if individuals who collected CERB and, “actually did need the help are being made to pay back in full” then, “will the govt [sic] be getting these companies to pay anything back?” Some commenters additionally believed that in addition to large corporations being made to return the public funds, they should also face penalty for the suggested misuse of CEWS. For example, one commenter argued that companies “should be fined the amount they gave [their] shareholders.”

### *Small Business, Big Worry*

Within the group of commenters who reject and oppose the collection of CEWS by large companies, lays a smaller subset of commenters that raise additional concerns. This smaller subset of commenters not only oppose the collection of CEWS by large corporations, but further express fear verging on panic for the overall fate of small businesses. The group of commenters comprising this subtheme clearly demonstrate their specific arguments in support of small businesses and against the collection of CEWS by large corporations while still being recorded in the overarching finding.

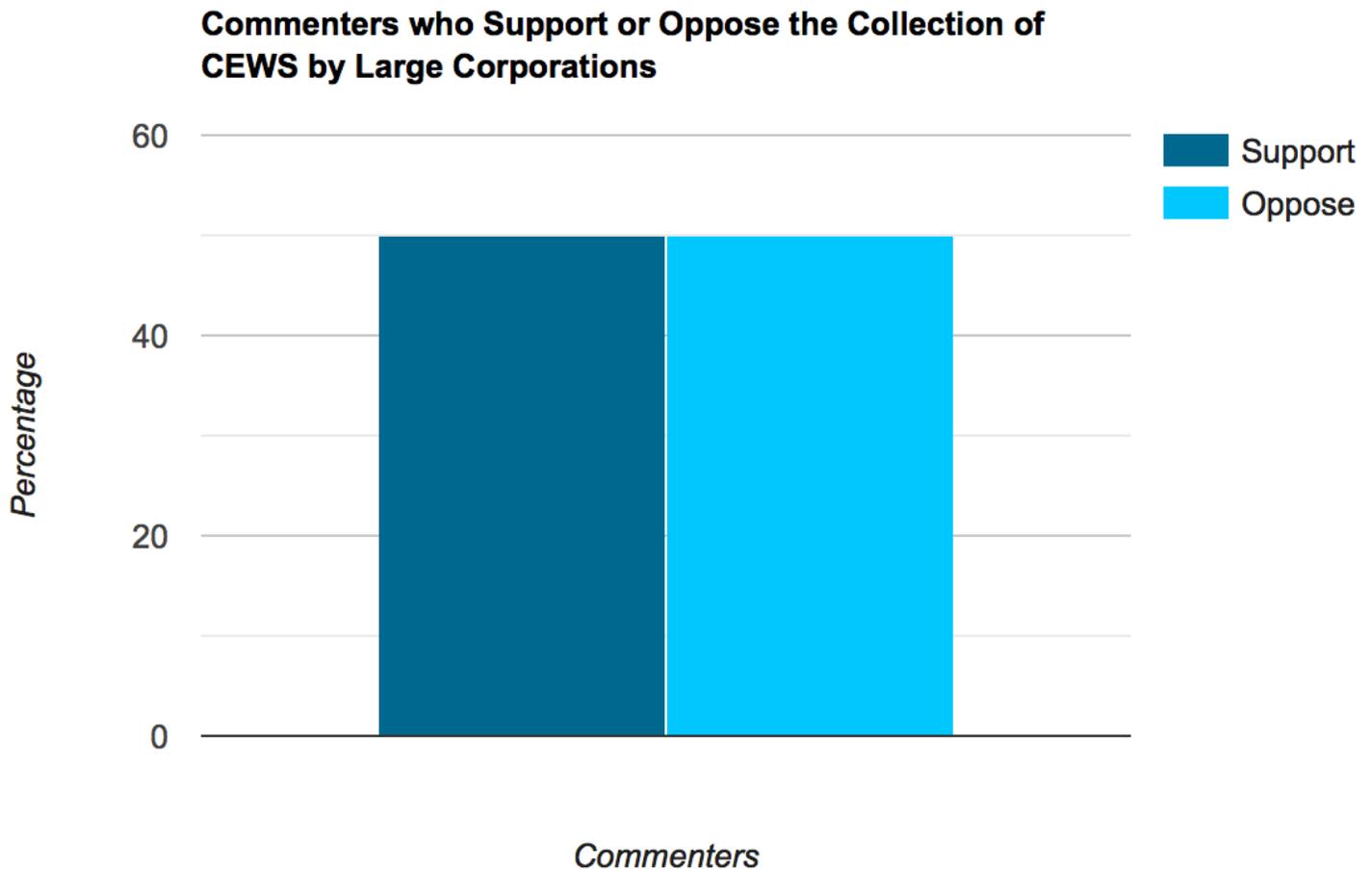
Therefore, the final subtheme this study uncovered was concern about the fate of small business, particularly in the context of the government restrictions, enforced safety precautions and other factors associated with changes they experienced in the context of COVID-19. Small business is defined in this study as firms with fewer than 100 paid employees (Industry Canada, 2012). In all, a very small subset of commenters (4) expressed substantial concern, fear, and panic for the fate of small Canadian businesses. For instance, one commenter—referring to CEWS—stated that, “none of these programs assisted any small to medium sized business and kept them from the brink. The [small businesses] that were sinking have now sunk or will sink. [CEWS] simply propped up businesses that would have been fine to continue on regardless...many sleepless nights in 2020 for business owners.” The idea that CEWS only propped up larger companies to further succeed was supported by another commenter, who adds,

A real ugly side effect of larger corporations taking advantage of free money while making profits is that they now have an unfair advantage against the SMEs [small and medium-sized enterprises] who are struggling to stay afloat. Struggling SMEs managing ever mounting debt loads need to make profit otherwise their chances of survival dwindle. On the other hand, larger corporations— while remaining profitable or tapping into existing cash reserves— that take advantage of free money from the government can effectively eliminate the competition. Large corporations right now are willing to take on business at 0 margin or

even a loss since the free money helps them survive. This way they will be able [to] emerge post-COVID without competition and once that happens they'll control the market even more.

The last commenter adds to the narrative that small businesses has indeed struggled to stay viable amid COVID-19, however, they—similarly to the other individuals in the overall group—believe that, “every penny that was given to shareholders must be returned...Canadians. In fact, all of it should be recovered... There are fellow Canadians struggling out there to put food on the table and pay rents. And small businesses struggling to stay afloat. And this company has the gall to pay shareholder dividends...disgraceful.”

**Figure III**



## *Discussion*

The section above detailed a number of findings that situate the overall study in the corporate welfare literature. This section will offer discussion and analysis of each theme and subtheme in a broader context. In addition, two categories have been created to better represent the ways in which commenters perceptions diverge. The integration of the two categories were created for both clarification and convenience purposes. The first category is labelled “right-leaning commenters” while the second category is labelled “left-leaning commenters”. The right-leaning category is comprised of commenters who were coded for vilifying government (n=46) and/or protecting and defending CEWS and/or corporate welfare (n=14). Whereas the left-leaning category is comprised of commenters who were coded for vilifying corporations (n=24) and/or opposing and rejecting CEWS and/or corporate welfare (n=14).

Using these categories, the findings have identified significant and revealing themes that relate to the primary research question which seeks to understand what perceptions and beliefs commenters have regarding corporate welfare during COVID-19. As previously illustrated, a much larger portion of commenters (65.7%) vilified government for distributing CEWS to large companies as opposed to the smaller population of commenters (34.3%) who vilified corporations. In the findings section, it was also found that those who vilified government used dialogue and language that substantially diverged from those who vilified corporations. This divergence confirmed a clear separation in commenters beliefs and perceptions which, as a result, led to the creation of several subthemes. As such, it was often the case that multiple ideas were able to be extracted from one single comment, sparking the need for in-depth discussion in order to compare and contrast significant discourses.

Second, the relationship between a commenter's political orientation and a news source is a significant association that requires further investigation and discussion. Thus, the news sources from which each comment was extracted were initially hypothesized as likely playing a significant role in determining the political alignment of commenters. In earlier portions of the study, I made a hypothesis grounded in other literature that stated the political leaning of the news source likely aligned with the political orientation of its commenters; creating a similar-minded online environment where commenters can support and propagate a certain perspective, perception or belief more frequently than another. As such, this area of the discussion will test this hypothesis in the light of evidence.

### *Vilifying, Supporting, Opposing*

As demonstrated, approximately two-thirds of commenters vilified government for distributing CEWS to large companies in contrast to the approximately one-third of commenters who vilified corporations. This finding is significant for a few reasons. As mentioned earlier, Greiner (2021) found that Canadians were generally distrustful of big business, with only 25% of respondents in their study rating their trust in corporations at a seven out of ten or higher. Based on Greiner's work (2012) coupled with other sources found in the literature review, it was reasonable to assume that there would be a greater number of commenters within this study who expressed skepticism or cynicism towards large corporations and a correspondingly smaller number of commenters who focused such skepticism or cynicism on government. Instead, the findings suggest the opposite.

As detailed above, the terms and phrases commenters used to describe the government's role in CEWS, (such as "foolish," "stupid," "mismanaged," "sickening," "incompetent," and others) coalesced under the theme of government vilification. However, digging more deeply

into the sample reveals a significant connection between commenters who vilified government and commenters who supported and defended CEWS and/or corporate welfare. In some cases, the same commenters who vilified government for the distribution of CEWS were those who also defended and protected corporations and supported the idea of CEWS as a means for businesses to either “get back on track,” for employees to “avoid joblessness,” or for companies to be “saved” from bankruptcy and permanent closure. More pointedly, this research found that 61.2% of individuals uphold the vision consistent with neoliberal thought. This figure was calculated by adding the codes that compose the category “right-leaning commenters” (n=60) to the category “left-leaning commenters” (n=38) to get a total denominator of 98. As such, 60 out of 98 commenters in this study—61.2% of individuals—exhibited perceptions and attitudes consistent with neoliberalism.

As demonstrated in the literature review, one of the central tenets of neoliberalism is advocacy for a reduction in the size and role of government and an expansion in the free market autonomy of corporations. This paper has also shown that neoliberal ideology places a premium on the value of personal responsibility and individualism in order to make citizens “less of a burden on society” by using little to no government subsidies (Schram, 2017, p. 308). The emphasis on individualism has been further echoed in Spade’s work (2015) where it was revealed that a deeply significant trend in neoliberalism is stressing the importance of “personal responsibility.” The individual acting in the free market and doing so unfettered by the intervention of government is central to neoliberal thought. As such, neoliberal principles suggest blame should be placed on the individual for utilizing the resources of the state, for example, in the form of an individual’s collection of unemployment insurance or other government-sponsored provisions of the social safety net. However, corporations are not held to

the same standard. When corporations engage in the same conduct— that is, using publicly-funded subsidies and/or capitalizing on benefits such as tax breaks and other invisible incentives provided by the government— neoliberal discourse often views such measures as positive, helpful, effective, and even necessary to improve the state of the economy. In this study, 61.2% of commenters align with this perception in that they demonstrated support for neoliberal ideology by viewing CEWS— a publicly-funded subsidy— as a positive, helpful, effective and even necessary mechanism that they believe will assist in improving and stimulating the economy during COVID-19. However, a noteworthy contradiction lays in the notion that large corporations are indeed able to apply and use state assistances without being considered a “burden” on society in the same manner as are ordinary citizens. For example, as seen in the literature review, individuals who rely on economic state assistances are often considered a major societal burden that should be eliminated, however, similar perceptions and outlooks are not upheld when discussing large corporations who both apply and use economic state assistances.

Consequently, it is only rational to draw distinctions that involve the traditional and enduring argument of those who are societally deemed as “deserving” of state assistances (which, in this research, would be large corporations), and those who are deemed “undeserving” (ordinary citizens) as described in the literature review. Through understanding the conventional neoliberal vision, it is made evident to readers that the “deserving” versus “undeserving” argument is not only upheld, but perpetuated in popular discourse through the 61.2% of commenters who vilify government while also supporting corporations and defending corporate welfare. Lastly, this finding not only tells us that 61.2% of individuals within this study agree with neoliberal ideologies, but further that the 61.2% of commenters perceive and believe that

corporations are considered “deserving” of public funds and government incentives, despite their thoughts on government being either incapable, unequipped or unjustified in their role. While this specific finding is not revolutionary in nature, this study has proved that even amid an economically challenging global pandemic, 61.2% of individuals still believe public funds are best geared not towards individuals, but rather the corporate world.

Considering this observation, this research is better equipped to offer a response to the study’s first research question that examines the perceptions and beliefs Canadians have regarding corporate welfare during COVID-19. While a considerable portion of individuals in this study believe that large corporations are to be held accountable for utilizing CEWS amid a global pandemic, a by far greater proportion of individuals perceive government as responsible, accountable and frankly blameable for CEWS and its particular distribution to large corporations. As such, this research found that nearly twice as many individuals vilified government and supported right-wing, neoliberal perceptions and outlooks rather than vilifying corporations and supporting a more left-wing perceptions and outlooks.

#### *Political Orientation and the News*

As discussed in the methodology section of this research project, this study selected the CBC and the Financial Post as its two news sources from which to compile data as both news outlets generally tend to lean to different sides of the political spectrum. This decision was predominantly made to not only allow for a more representative and balanced approach to the research, but also to include as many diverse perspectives as feasibly possible within a single study. While CBC has been positioned as a news source that is positioned as left-centre, the Financial Post was found to be oppositely positioned as right-centre (Tattrie, 2019; Media Bias, 2021). As such, as stated above the decision to use the CBC and the Financial Post as the two

news sources within this study was based on the hypothesis that individuals are inclined to read news sources that align with their political beliefs. This portion of the discussion will put this hypothesis to the test to best determine if the majority of Financial Post comments were predominately grounded in right-wing ideology and the majority of the CBC comments were predominately grounded in left-wing ideology. This will be studied through not only examining the themes of vilifying political parties, but also the themes of government or corporation vilification alongside supporting or opposing CEWS. The latter themes have been included in testing this hypothesis as it was hypothesized that those who vilified government and supported CEWS and/or corporate welfare typically subscribed to a more right-wing, neoliberal ideology while those who vilified corporations and opposed CEWS and/or corporate welfare typically subscribed to a more left-wing, liberal ideology.

After totalling the figures in relation to the news source, I found that 83% of comments from the Financial Post either contained themes of vilifying government, supporting of CEWS and/or corporate welfare, politically shaming Liberals, or a combination of the three. This number was calculated by taking the total number of Financial Post comments in this study (n=82), sorting specific comments that reveal political orientation (n=53) and dividing the total right-wing ideologies (n=44) with the denominator of 53 ( $44/53=83\%$ ) to receive an indication of this study's political alignment and thus, perceptions. Therefore, it is clear that more than three quarters of Financial Post's commenter base aligns with right-wing ideologies.

For CBC articles, it was found that 30 comments out of the total 100 comments (30%) are part of the left-leaning commenters group. Notably, all four commenters who were recorded as politically shaming Conservatives have all derived from CBC articles.

Figure IV

**Commenters with Right-Wing Perceptions in Financial Post and CBC Articles**

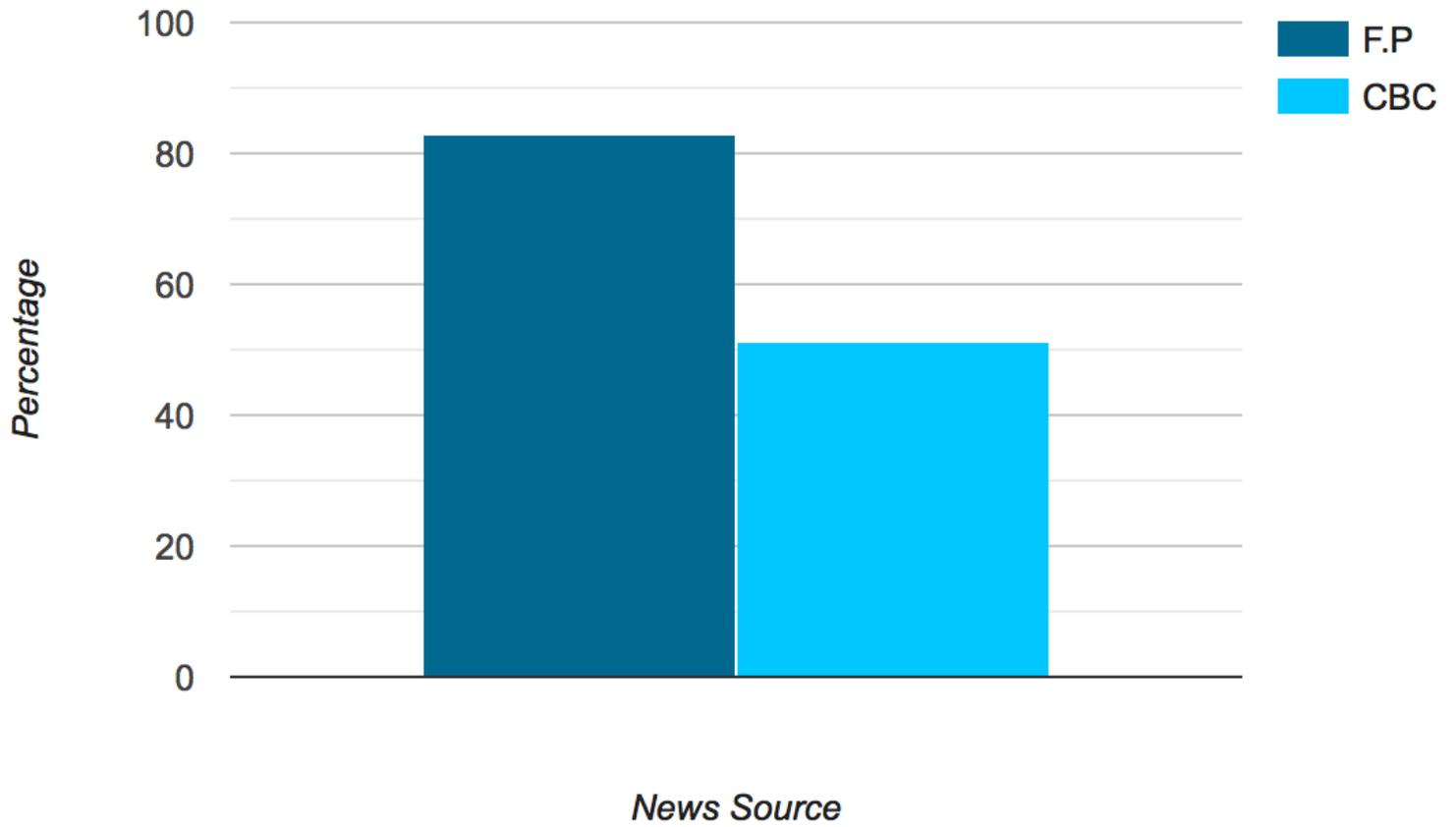
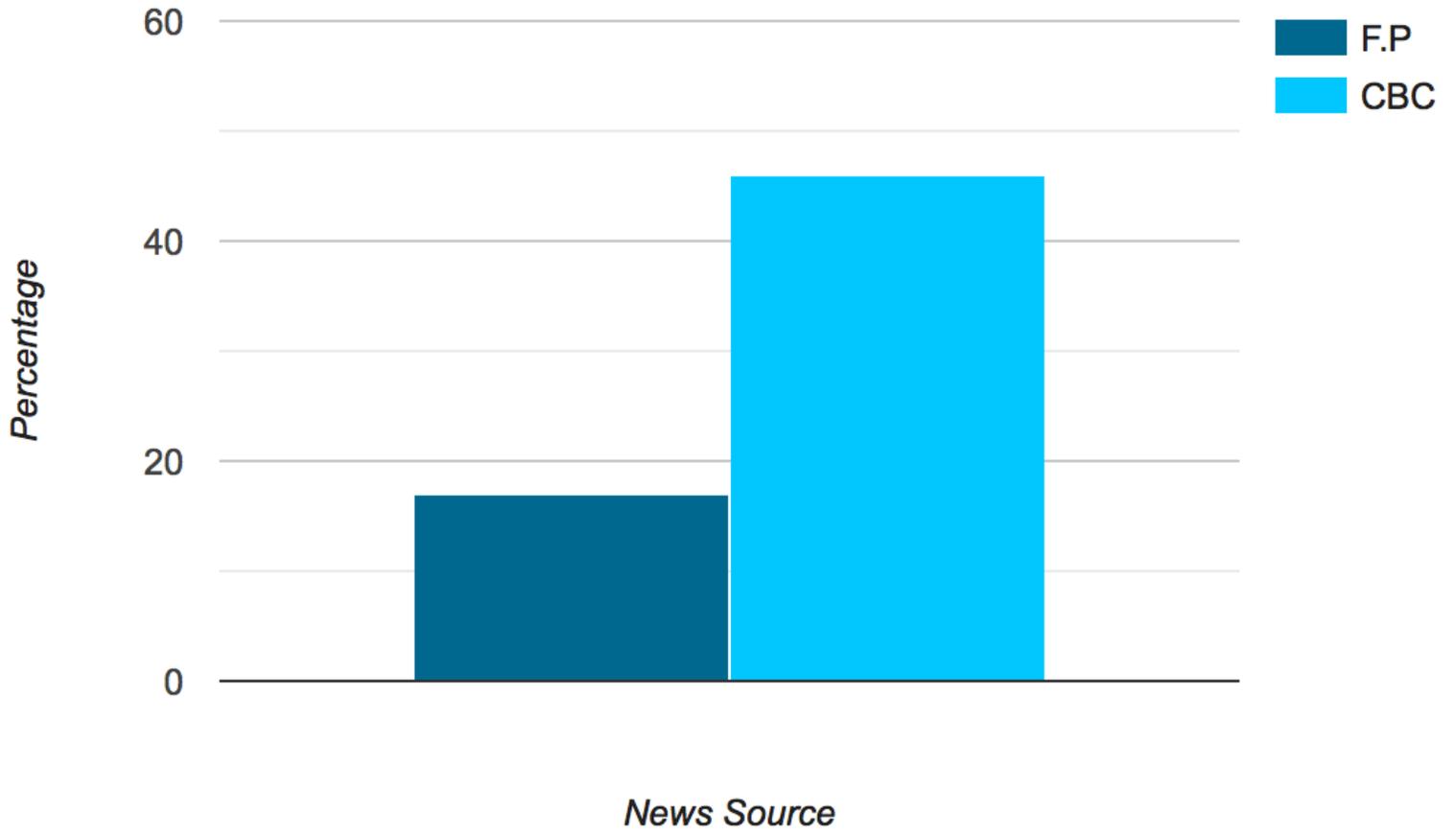


Figure V

### Commenters with Left-Wing Perceptions in Financial Post and CBC Articles



In order to solidify this hypothesis, I inversely tested the CBC comments for the following themes: government vilification, supporting CEWS, and politically shaming Liberals. This test was conducted in order to determine the dominant political orientation from CBC's commenter base, as the results above indicated that less than half of the total CBC comments aligned with typical left-wing perceptions. In addition to the CBC test, I also tested the Financial Post comments for the themes of vilifying corporations and opposing CEWS despite the abovementioned findings indicating that 83%— more than half of the Financial Post's commenter base—aligned with typical right-wing perceptions. The theme of politically shaming Conservatives has been excluded from the test considering each of the four comments had directly derived from CBC articles.

In the case of the CBC, it was found that 34 commenters out of the cumulative 100— 34%— either contained themes of vilifying government, supporting of CEWS, politically shaming Liberals, or a combination of the three. This is interesting to note for a few reasons. First, while it has been stated that CBC aligns with centre-leftist views, this research found that comments individuals posted were slightly more inclined to lean in either a rightist or centre-right approach. There is a second concept that can be pulled and interpreted from this discovery. For instance, it may be the case that CBC's commenter-base still attracts a predominately leftist or centre-left crowd, however, leftist commenters may have been dissatisfied with the way in which the Liberal government implemented and distributed CEWS, which resulted in posting a comment that aligned with rightist or centre-right political orientation. Nonetheless, the CBC disproved the initial hypothesis which claimed that individuals are inclined to read news sources that align with their political beliefs.

On the other hand, the Financial Post validated the initial hypothesis which claimed that individuals are inclined to read news sources that align with their political beliefs. As such, this test verified that the Financial Post's commenter-base is composed of individuals who hold rightist or centre-right views considering only 9 out of 53 comments—17%— were recorded under the themes of corporation vilification and opposing CEWS. As such, this revelation demonstrates a 66% difference between Financial Post commenters who can be reasonably determined as right-wing (83%) and Financial Post commenters who can be reasonably determined as left-wing (17%).

In this particular study, the CBC articles disproved the hypothesis that individuals are inclined to read news sources that align with their political beliefs by the research finding that 4% more commenters corresponded with rightist or centre-right themes. On the contrary, however, the Financial Post articles confirmed the original hypothesis by their commenter-base revealing more than three quarters of the commenters—83%— corresponded with the right-leaning commenters category.

Therefore, in the case of this particular research, there is not enough concrete evidence to definitively suggest that those who consider themselves as more left or left-centrist associate with news sources that are predominately left-leaning, although there is a good amount of evidence that suggests those who consider themselves as more right or right-centrist associate with news sources that are predominately right-leaning. Thus, through the findings of this study, it can be suggested that right-leaning individuals are slightly more inclined than left-leaning individuals to seek out news sources that align with their political perceptions and beliefs. This finding might additionally suggest a possible rightward drift in public political positioning. Considering this suggestion was made in alignment with the research's findings, another

potential response that seeks to understand the suggested rightward drift can be offered. As such, it may additionally be suggested that there are increasing numbers of individuals who subscribe to neoliberal discourses. As previously established in the literature review, neoliberal discourses aim to dismantle social welfare programs yet trust in the assumption that corporate welfare will “benefit society” through providing jobs is enough to be saved from scrutiny, despite corporate welfare costing the state between \$170 and \$200 billion over the span of a single year in the 1990s whereas social welfare programs costed roughly \$41 billion within the same timespan (Collins, 1996; Olsen & Champlin, 1998). As such, this study can reasonably conclude given the research findings and suggested rightward drift that not only are more individuals subscribing to and internalizing neoliberal discourses, but traditional neoliberal ideology and perceptions are being upheld and sustained.

#### *Moving Forward: A Social-Justice Based Approach*

These research findings also prompted consideration of feasible social-justice based actions, including contemplating their use to inform social-justice organizing. This section will also demonstrate how this research project might form the base for potential future research studies concerning similar topics.

Throughout this study, I have explicitly suggested and demonstrated that corporate welfare does not receive the same attention and media coverage as its counterpart, social welfare. In understanding this, I believe one of the main issues corporate welfare has not received the exposure it warrants is due to a lack of awareness on the topic as a whole. This issue can predominantly be solved through three modes of delivery I wish to discuss: education, media attention and accessibility. To begin with education, I feel as though students should learn the basics of government assistances, including corporate welfare and its effects, long before the

student reaches a post-secondary institution. Implementing curriculum that focuses on government assistances and corporate welfare can be weaved in throughout elementary education as well as secondary education for students to have a better understanding and grasp of governmental expenditures and the ways in which the corporate world operates. In increasing awareness via education, students are able to form their own opinions on the topic of social or corporate welfare without having to rely on family or friends' perception. Providing youth with an educational toolbox that includes current and informed curriculum that well-reflects our contemporary society's challenges and issues is not only a desirable, but compulsory measure school boards need to take in order for students across the country to form their own opinions and beliefs on matters that plague their generation.

A second and similarly important measure that must be taken to improve the awareness of corporate welfare is media attention and coverage. Media outlets such as large news sources, both online and on television should be more prepared and willing to cover topics such as corporate welfare—and as an extension, CEWS—that are intensely and obtrusively challenging this generation's economy. Specifically to this research, it would be ideal to see news stories and reports being centred on CEWS and its lasting effects in our economy. As a hopeful result of increased media attention, I would anticipate several more Canadians having conversations and healthy debates centered around corporate welfare.

I additionally want to highlight a third and final suggestion on the lack of awareness of corporate welfare in contemporary culture. I believe that there is an accessibility issue in our society that prevents a large number of individuals from accessing important information and material. All throughout this paper, I recognized and acknowledged how much incredible and in-depth work that has been contributed to the field of corporate welfare and corporate welfare

studies in general. However, I am privileged in the fact I have access to these documents through my school institution. I am well aware of the fact many Canadians do not have the same access to peer-reviewed journals and articles and further, may not have the time or money to invest in seeking out these materials. As such, I believe more accessible literature needs to be completed and released on the topic of corporate welfare that reaches beyond the clutch of college and university students.

I also want to offer some practical and concrete actions that can be taken on an individual level should one feel compelled to act against the collection of CEWS by large corporations or should they wish to have their voices heard in the fight against corporate welfare. The first (and perhaps most anticipated) action one can take is connecting with their [Member of Parliament](#) (MP) or their [Member of Provincial Parliament](#) (MPP) to express their concerns over the distribution CEWS and/or corporate welfare; as well as to demand that an end be put to the use of public taxpayer dollars being disbursed in the private corporate sphere. This individual action will be amplified should one wish to start a local petition with constituents of their Member of Parliament's or Provincial Parliament's riding. Another means of making an impact with the assistance of a large group of people, despite geographic location, is interacting, signing and sharing general petitions. For example, several petitions have been made available online for all members of the Canadian public with access to the internet to view it and potentially add their signature. For example, one can sign an already existing petition that calls for the current Canadian government to end to [corporate welfare](#).

In addition to feasible actions, this study and its subsequent findings can be utilized as a starting point for future research on the perceptions of corporate welfare and individual beliefs on the government's involvement in the economy. For instance, this research found that large

numbers of individuals in this study are either dissatisfied, skeptical or overall argumentative when it comes to government's involvement in the economic sphere. If future research projects with larger sample sizes happens to reach the same conclusions as this limited study, then the validated findings could very well be used to better understand the perceptions and beliefs of the Canadian public, and by extension, how Canadians want their future socio-economic world to resemble. Information such as this is not only critical to better understand the Canadian public, but is also vital for political parties to organize their campaigns by better relating to multiple demographics. Based on the findings of this project, it would be worth investing additional time and efforts into exploring this area of study with a greater number of participants. As such, I recommend and encourage for more research and studies to be conducted in this area of literature to get a better grasp on Canadian perceptions, thoughts and beliefs in the economic and political sphere.

In addition to this, the research findings that stemmed from this study are also beneficial to social-justice advocates and organizers. It is likely that social-justice organizers may recognize that large and lucrative corporations are pulling record profits during a period where countless families and individuals across Canada are financially suffering. To social-justice organizers and the general public, this particular collection of CEWS is problematic, and to that extent, the problem must be resolved. Often in response to problems social-justice organizers wish to combat, a movement or campaign is born. However, if a situation such as this one were to ensue, it is of critical importance for social-justice activists and organizers to conduct preliminary research into the problem itself to hopefully get a better grasp on how individuals tend to understand the issue and, if possible, gain a better insight into their thoughts. As such, understanding that the orientation of commenters (and, extrapolating from that, the general

public) has significantly absorbed many of the discourses of neoliberalism can serve as a strategic consideration for such advocated organizing campaigns. In addition, it would be helpful for social-justice activists and organizers know that based on the results of this study, they will be dealing with a public that is rather unsympathetic to combating corporate welfare.

### Conclusion

CEWS, a publicly-funded subsidy initially implemented with the intention to ease businesses back into normal operations, promote their lifespans, prevent additional job losses and re-hire workers, has additionally been used as a means for large solvent corporations to dispense dividends to shareholders and executives amid the economically challenging pandemic of COVID-19. This paper has demonstrated that CEWS being used in this manner is in fact an extension of corporate welfare and must be studied as such. While this paper duly acknowledges the amount of detailed and distinguished literature surrounding the field of corporate welfare in general, it also points to the lack of existing knowledge academia has on individual perceptions and beliefs of corporate welfare. As such, this study has contributed to narrowing the gap in this particular area of study by researching how Canadians perceive the distribution of CEWS to large corporations while the economically challenging global pandemic of COVID-19 persists. To effectively conduct this research and gather findings, the study used two news sources from the CBC and the Financial Post in order to employ a content discourse analysis as its methodology. Through using a non-proportional quota sampling technique, a total of 182 comments were implemented within the research project in order to gather conclusive findings that helps society better understand the ways in which Canadians perceive and think about corporate welfare, and by extension, their political economy.

The three research questions that guide this study have extracted a few significant and telling findings. First and foremost, this research found that individuals in this study are more concerned with wrongdoing on behalf of government rather than corporations. While a considerable portion of individuals in this study believe that large corporations are to be held accountable for utilizing CEWS amid a global pandemic, an even greater portion of individuals perceive government as responsible and accountable for CEWS and its particular distribution to large corporations. As such, this research found that nearly twice as many individuals vilified government and supported right-wing, neoliberal perceptions and outlooks rather than vilifying corporations and supporting a more left-wing perceptions and outlooks. To be specific, this study discovered that 65.7% of individuals within this study vilify government for distributing CEWS to large companies while a smaller population of 34.3% vilified large corporations for applying and taking CEWS. This finding suggests more commenters subscribed to a neoliberal worldview to a large extent.

The second major revelation this research discovered was that right-leaning individuals are slightly more inclined than left-leaning individuals to seek out news sources that align with their political perceptions and beliefs. This finding might additionally suggest a possible rightward drift in public political positioning, which, allows the reasonable conclusion to be made that despite individual political orientations, individuals have been pursuing or are beginning to pursue news sources and outlets that have been established and rooted in right-wing ideology. Considering the suggested rightward drift, this study can reasonably determine given the research findings that not only are more individuals subscribing to and internalizing neoliberal discourses, but traditional neoliberal ideology and perceptions are being upheld and sustained.

Finally, this research project offered a few actions and responses when it comes to moving forward and combating corporate welfare in a socially-just manner. Concrete and feasible actions include connecting with a [Member of Parliament](#) (MP) or a [Member of Provincial Parliament](#) (MPP) in order to express concerns over the distribution CEWS to large corporations and demand an end to the use of public taxpayer dollars being disbursed in the private corporate sphere. Another practical action this study has offered is signing petitions that aim to end [corporate welfare](#). However, one of the most critical social-justice based offerings this research provides to readers and those in positions of power is that through education, media coverage and accessibility to research and documents, the awareness of corporate welfare's existence will considerably intensify. While this study has also offered additional social-justice based responses that organizers or activists can participate in, this research ultimately recommends and encourages for more research and studies to be conducted in this area of literature to get a better grasp on Canadian perceptions, thoughts and beliefs in the economic and political sphere.

While corporate welfare is to no degree a contemporary practice or an innovative subject in academia, Canadian perceptions on the collection of CEWS by large corporations is a topic that has not yet been studied or examined given the recent nature of COVID-19's pandemic. As such, my research has displayed tangible findings regarding how Canadians perceive CEWS and its distribution that has contributed to bridging the existing gap between government funded support programs and individual perceptions, as well as having contributed to the vast and emerging literature surrounding COVID-19. The current global pandemic has presented researchers with a new, large terrain of information and material to unpack and explore. As such, the ambition this research had to not only uncover and showcase Canadian perceptions towards

CEWS and corporate welfare, but to also facilitate discussion regarding the study's findings while recommending social-justice based solutions has been especially fulfilled.

## Appendices

### Appendix I

The CRA's online searchable database for CEWS recipients as of July 2021.



Government  
of Canada

Gouvernement  
du Canada

[Canada.ca](#) > [Business and industry](#) > [Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy \(CEWS\)](#) > [Search](#)

#### Resources

Online services

Forms and  
publications

A to Z index

Enquiries

## Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) Registry

Use the CEWS registry below to search for employers who have received or will soon receive the CEWS. To protect the privacy of individuals, only corporations and registered charities will be disclosed. Partnerships, sole proprietors, or trusts that are not registered charities will not be disclosed.

#### Business name

*(Enter the business name or an abbreviation)*

#### Business number (optional)

*(Enter the 9-digit or 15-digit business number)*

## References:

- Albo, G. (2002). Neoliberalism, the state, and the left: A Canadian Perspective. *Monthly Review*, 54, 46-55.
- Anastakis, D. (2018). *Re-creation, fragmentation, and resilience: a brief history of Canada since 1945*. Oxford University Press.
- AuClaire, P. (1984). Public Attitudes toward Social Welfare Expenditures. *Social Work*, 29(2), 139-144. Retrieved May 26, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23714427>
- Beier, A. L. (2004). *The Problem of the Poor in Tudor and Early Stuart England*. New York, The United States of America: Taylor & Francis e-Library.
- Blaug, M. (1963). The myth of the old poor law and the making of the new. *Journal of Economic History*, 23, 151-184.
- Boyer, G. (2018). *The Winding Road to the Welfare State: Economic Insecurity and Social Welfare Policy in Britain*. PRINCETON; OXFORD: Princeton University Press. doi:10.2307/j.ctv346pg0
- Brusis, M. (2018, April 2). *Content and discourse analysis*. Getting Europe Right. <https://mbrusis.eu/content-and-discourse-analysis/>.
- Canada Revenue Agency. (2021). *Approved Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) Claims by Size of Applicant*. Canada Revenue Agency. [https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/cra-arc/serv-info/tax/business/topics/cews/statistics/cews\\_p1-p15\\_tbl3\\_e.pdf](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/cra-arc/serv-info/tax/business/topics/cews/statistics/cews_p1-p15_tbl3_e.pdf).
- Canada Revenue Agency. (2021, May 12). Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/claims-report.html>.
- Canada Revenue Agency. (2021, October 8). *Government of Canada*. Claims to date: Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy - Canada.ca. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/subsidy/emergency-wage-subsidy/cews-statistics.html>.
- Canada Revenue Agency. (2021, October 8). *Government of Canada*. Claims to date: Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy - Canada.ca. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/subsidy/emergency-wage-subsidy/cews-statistics.html>.
- Canada Revenue Agency. (2021, June 30). *Who can apply: Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) Government of Canada*. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/subsidy/emergency-wage-subsidy/cews-who-apply.html>.
- Canadian Centre for the Purpose of the Corporation. (2020). (rep.). Canadians want Capitalism Reformed and Demand that Businesses Step up on Fairness and Sustainability. Canadian

- Centre for the Purpose of the Corporation. Retrieved from <https://navltd.com/insights/ccpc/barometer-09-2020/>
- Canadian Federation of Independent Business. (2020, April). *Cash crisis and debt nightmares top small business concerns*. CFIB. <https://www.cfib-fcei.ca/en/media/news-releases/cash-crisis-and-debt-nightmares-top-small-business-concerns>.
- Canadian Taxpayers Federation. (2010, January 10). *On the Dole: Businesses, Lobbyists, and Industry Canada's Subsidy Programs*. Canadian Taxpayers Federation. [https://www.taxpayer.com/media/2007\\_corporate\\_welfare\\_report.pdf](https://www.taxpayer.com/media/2007_corporate_welfare_report.pdf).
- Carmichael, K. (2020, December 8). *A subsidy that is hard to resist, and sometimes harder to justify*. Financial Post. [https://financialpost.com/news/economy/a-subsidy-that-is-hard-to-resist-and-sometimes-harder-to-justify?video\\_autoplay=true](https://financialpost.com/news/economy/a-subsidy-that-is-hard-to-resist-and-sometimes-harder-to-justify?video_autoplay=true).
- Carmichael, K. (2020, December 16). *Arguing over optics of collecting subsidies while paying dividends obscures deeper issues*. Financial Post. <https://financialpost.com/news/economy/arguing-over-optics-of-collecting-subsidies-while-paying-dividends-obscures-deeper-issues>.
- CBC. (2020, June). *Terms of Use*. CBC/Radio-Canada Digital Services. <https://cbc.radio-canada.ca/en/vision/governance/terms-of-use-digital-services>.
- Clark, G., & Page, M. E. (2019). Welfare reform, 1834: Did the new poor law in England produce significant economic gains? *Cliometrica*, 13(2), 221-244. doi:<http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.wlu.ca/10.1007/s11698-018-0174-4>
- Collins, C. (1996). Aid to Dependent Corporations .M. Breslow, J. Miller & B. Reed, (eds). *Economic Affairs Bureau*, 13.
- Craig, S. (2019, August 12). *Postmedia is taking a Turn (Further) to the right*. Canadaland. <https://www.canadaland.com/the-conservative-transformation-of-postmedia/>.
- D'Amore, R. (2020, July 16). 85% of Canadians believe FRAUDULENT CERB users should be Fined: Ipsos poll. Retrieved from <https://globalnews.ca/news/7178681/canada-cerb-coronavirus-fines-poll/>
- Dawkins, C. (2002). Corporate Welfare, Corporate Citizenship, and the Question of Accountability. *Business & Society*, 41(3), 269–291. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650302041003002>
- Dellas, H., & Niepelt, D. (2021). Austerity. *The Economic Journal (London)*, 131(634), 697–712. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ej/ueaa101>

- Ellis, C., & Faricy, C. (2021). The Public and the Private Welfare State. In *The Other Side of the Coin: Public Opinion toward Social Tax Expenditures* (pp. 114-126). NEW YORK: Russell Sage Foundation. doi:10.7758/9781610449045.11
- Farnsworth, K. (2013). Bringing Corporate Welfare In. *Journal of Social Policy*, 42(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279412000761>
- Feild, L., Pruchno, R. A., Bewley, J., Lemay, E. P., & Levinsky, N. G. (2006). Using Probability vs. Nonprobability Sampling to Identify Hard-to-Access Participants for Health-Related Research: Costs and Contrasts. *Journal of Aging and Health*, 18(4), 565–583. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0898264306291420>
- Ferreira, V., & Carmichael, K. (2020, December 22). *CEOs raked in HEFTY dividends as their companies accepted CEWS, Financial post analysis finds*. Financial Post. <https://financialpost.com/investing/executive-dividends>.
- Ferreira, V., & Carmichael, K. (2020, December 10). *FP investigation: AS CEWS flowed IN, DIVIDENDS flowed out*. Financial Post. <https://financialpost.com/investing/fp-investigation-as-cews-flowed-in-dividends-flowed-out>.
- Financial Post Staff. (2020, December 10). *Canadian companies that RECEIVED cews and kept paying a dividend*. Financial Post. <https://financialpost.com/investing/canadian-companies-that-received-cews-and-kept-paying-a-dividend>.
- Finkel, A. (2006). *Social policy and practice in Canada : a history* . Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Friedman, T. L. (1999). *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux.
- Gilmore, R. (2020, April 07). *Feds receive more than 4M applications for financial aid since March 15*. Retrieved from <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/feds-receive-more-than-4m-applications-for-financial-aid-since-march-15-1.4887242>
- Greiner, L. (2021, January). *Only 25% of Canadians trust enterprises, forcing corporations to reprioritize: IT World Canada News*. <https://www.itworldcanada.com/article/less-than-a-quarter-of-canadians-trust-big-business-forcing-corporations-to-prioritize-where-it-matters/441055>
- Government of Canada. (2021). *Government of Canada. Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) Registry*. <https://apps.cra-arc.gc.ca/ebci/hacc/cews/srch/pub/dsplyBscSrch>.
- Industry Canada (2012). *Small Business Branch- Key Small Business Statistics*. Government of Canada. [https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/vwapj/ksbs-psrpe\\_july-juillet2012\\_eng.pdf/\\$file/ksbs-psrpe\\_july-juillet2012\\_eng.pdf](https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/061.nsf/vwapj/ksbs-psrpe_july-juillet2012_eng.pdf/$file/ksbs-psrpe_july-juillet2012_eng.pdf).
- Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

- Kelly, M., & Gráda, C. Ó. (2011). The Poor Law of Old England: Institutional Innovation and Demographic Regimes. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 41(3), 339-366.
- Leavy, P. (2017). Chapter 3: Getting Started Designing a Project. In *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches* (pp. 54-83). New York: Guildford Press.
- Mahoney, N., & Smart, M. (2021, February 23). *Large Corporate Groups that Received CEWS Payments*. Finances of the Nation. [https://financesofthenation.ca/2020/12/29/large-corporate-groups-that-received-cews-payments-in-2020/#\\_ftn1](https://financesofthenation.ca/2020/12/29/large-corporate-groups-that-received-cews-payments-in-2020/#_ftn1).
- Maidenberg, E., & Dexter, M. (2017, August 1). *How do we "choose" our news?* Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/belief-and-the-brain/201708/how-do-we-choose-our-news>.
- Matchett, T. (2021, February). *Small business debt and profitability: The COVID-19 Impact*. Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses . <https://content.cfib-fcei.ca/sites/default/files/2021-02/SME-Debt-and-Profitability.pdf>.
- McCombes, S. (2021, April 23). *Sampling methods: Types and techniques explained*. Scribbr. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/sampling-methods/>.
- Media Bias. (2021) *Media Bias/Fact Check - Search and Learn the Bias of News Media*. Media Bias Fact Check. <https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/>.
- Mertens, D. M. (2009). *Transformative research and evaluation*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Montpetit, J., Nakonechny, S., & Héту, M. (2020, December 11). *Why millions of dollars in PANDEMIC aid is going to corporations making healthy profits* | CBC News. CBCnews. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/cews-wage-subsidy-jobs-covid-1.5834790>.
- Olson, P., & Champlin, D. (1998). Ending Corporate Welfare as We Know It: An Institutional Analysis of the Dual Structure of Welfare. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 32(3), 759-771. Retrieved May 26, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4227351>
- Postmedia. (2014, September 10). *Terms and conditions*. Postmedia. <https://pages.postmedia.com/termservice/>.
- Press, J. (2020, November 21). *New Covid-19 Aid figures reveal who USED CERB*. Retrieved from <https://www.investmentexecutive.com/news/research-and-markets/new-covid-19-aid-figures-reveal-who-used-cerb/>
- Policy Options. (2002, December 1). *Is CBC really biased?* Policy Options Politiques. <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/fr/magazines/kyoto/is-cbc-really-biased/>.

- Punwasi, S. (2020, August 07). Nearly 1 in 4 Canadians have now USED cerb, CANADA'S Emergency benefit. Retrieved from <https://betterdwelling.com/nearly-1-in-4-canadians-have-now-used-cerb-canadas-emergency-benefit/#>
- Schram, S. F. (2017). Neoliberalizing the Welfare State: Marketizing Social Policy/Disciplining Clients. *The SAGE Handbook of Neoliberalism*, 308–322.  
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526416001.n25>
- Smith, C. (2012). Neoliberalism and Individualism: Ego Leads to Interpersonal Violence? *Political and Economic Sociology*.
- Spade, D. (2015). “Trans Law and Politics on a Neoliberal Landscape,” in *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics & The Limits of Law*. Duke University Press.
- Statistics Canada. (2021). *Canada's population clock (real-time model)*. Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2018005-eng.htm>.
- Statistics Canada; Government of Canada. (2020, December 24). *Monthly estimates of business openings and closures, September 2020*. The Daily .  
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/201224/dq201224c-eng.htm>.
- Struthers, J.E. (1979). *No Fault Of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Tattie, J. (2019, October 23). *Media bias in Canada*. The Canadian Encyclopedia.  
<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/media-bias-in-canada>.
- Teeple, G. (2017). Austerity Policies: From the Keynesian to the Corporate Welfare State. in S. McBride and B. M. Evans (eds.), *The Austerity State*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2017 (25-43).
- Trochim, W. M. K. (n.d.). *Nonprobability Sampling*. Research Methods Knowledge Base.  
<https://conjointly.com/kb/nonprobability-sampling/>.
- Van Dijk, T. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), 249-283.  
Retrieved May 27, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42888777>
- Wallace, E. (1950). The Origin of the Social Welfare State in Canada, 1867-1900. *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science / Revue Canadienne D'Economique Et De Science Politique*, 16(3), 383-393. doi:10.2307/137811
- Western, B. et al. (2012). Economic Insecurity and Social Stratification. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 38: 341-359.

Yerli, K. (2020). The Elizabethan Poor Law Of 1601 as a Result of Socio-Political and Economic Conditions of the Sixteenth Century England. *Turkish Journal of Applied Social Work*, 3(1).