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# GUILBEAULT TO POILIEVRE: STOP LYING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

ANDRE CANTO CUBAS

JUNIOR EDITOR



*Steven Guilbeault served as the Minister of Environment and Climate Change in Justin Trudeau's cabinet from 2021 to 2025. Convergence interviewed him to get his insights on the environmental movement and current events. His views, including quotations used in the article, do not necessarily reflect that of the Convergence editorial board.*

**Do you think that climate change and the environment in general has been politically abandoned in Canada? You don't hear too much about it as much as in 2019 where the Green Party reached its peak.**

Yes, the Green Party reached its peak, but it's not just that. I ran for the 1st time in 2019, and one of the themes of the campaign was carbon pricing, putting a price on pollution. It was like that in 2021 as well. Government will tend to reflect where people's priorities are at. And right now, for understandable reasons, people are concerned about the cost of living, inflation, which is coming under control, but which is still being felt certainly at the grocery store for Canadian families. People are worried about President Trump and this whole discussion about Canada becoming the 51st state of the United States, they're worried about Iran, worried about Gaza.

So it is understandable that the environment and climate are not necessarily top of mind issues as they were just only a few years ago. But for someone who's been working in this field for over 30 years, I am convinced that the environment and climate change will come back as a top of mind issue. We don't know when, it could be in 6 months, could be in a year or two. And it's not because we're not talking about climate change and we're not feeling the impacts of climate change. Year after year, tens of thousands of Canadians are affected by forest fires and atmospheric rivers. So we may not be talking as much about the impacts of climate change, but we are still as a society feeling them very much so.

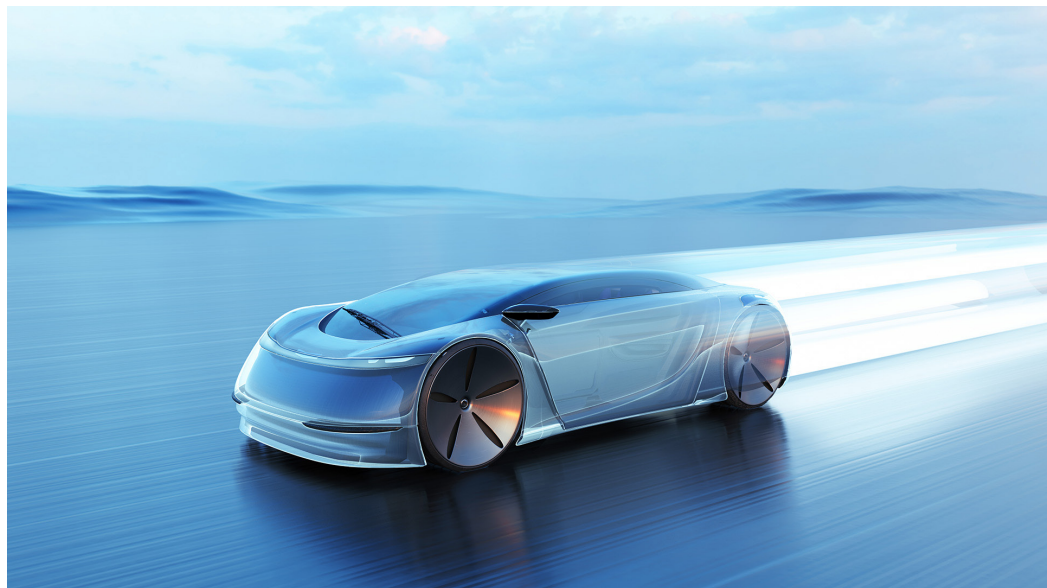
**How do you think the ongoing Iran war will affect government policy when it comes to energy, especially oil?**

My concern is that it will be used as an excuse to push for more oil and gas development, potentially new pipelines to be built in Canada, for a situation that is temporary. And when you look at studies, for example the International Energy Agency, they tell us that demand for oil will peak in the near future. You can argue whether it's 2029 or 2030 or potentially 2031 or 2032, but as more people buy electric vehicles, as we electrify our industries and our buildings, the demand for oil and gas is going to start diminishing. And countries like Norway today, 100% of new

vehicles sold are electric vehicles or plug-in hybrids, and in China 50% of vehicles sold. In Quebec, my own province, about 1 in 3 vehicles, or 30% vehicles sold, are electric. So, it is inevitable that the demand for oil is going to peak in the near future. Is it a wise investment for Canadians to put even more money in oil in a world where the demand for oil is going to start diminishing very soon? I don't think so.

**The new leader of the NDP, Avi Lewis has been recently elected. Some say that he has points of view that are very different from the mainstream. What do you think about his position on oil and oil pipelines in general?**

People have to remember that in the Canadian Constitution, in our federation, the use of natural resources is solely a provincial jurisdiction. So when I was an environment minister, I would not have been able to tell Alberta that it couldn't use its oil, no more that I could have told Quebec or BC that they can't use their water for their dams or wind for electricity production. So what Mr. Lewis will have to do, I mean I'm sure he knows that, for political reasons, he's pretending that the federal government can do things that it can't. If we tried to do that, we would lose in the courts. We would lose all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. What we can do, and what I did as environment minister is to put in place measures to combat the pollution that comes from the use of those natural resources



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and more specifically oil and gas, plastic pollution, vehicles. By doing that, and if we're careful and do this well, then chances are that this will pass the test of our tribunals and we will be able to continue fighting pollution. But the idea that the federal government can dictate how provinces can use their natural resources is an illusion. And unfortunately, Mr. Lewis knows this very well.

*\*Clarification: During Guilbeault's tenure as minister, he did unsuccessfully try to restrict provincial control of resources. In 2023, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the government's Impact Assessment Act, known as the No More Pipelines act by its opponents, for being unconstitutional due to veto power constituting federal overreach into provincial jurisdiction.*

## Is there anything you would say to the opposition and Pierre Poilievre?

Well, I would like him to stop lying about climate change. I would like for him to acknowledge that it is, as many leaders around the world have said, that it is an existential crisis. And leaders have said that, whether they're conservative parties in different countries.

*Former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney*



Even previous leaders of the Conservative Party, like Erin O'Toole, had a plan, albeit not a very strong plan to fight climate change, but it was at least a recognition of the problem.

Brian Mulroney was a very proactive [Progressive] Conservative prime minister on issues of environment and climate change in his days. So it hasn't always been the case that the Conservative Party of Canada has been anti-environment. But clearly, this brand of conservatives are very anti-climate and anti-environment.

## What do you think are the biggest differences between Trudeau and Carney, just on the environment, how they handle it?

Your readers might have seen that the Prime Minister Carney just made an important nature announcement earlier this week, \$4 billion, almost \$4 billion over 5 years, which is a plan I had worked on as nature minister before leaving cabinet. It's a very strong plan. And I think it will ensure that for the years to come, Canada continues to be a leader on nature protection on biodiversity.

On climate, I think the biggest difference is probably that I've come to the conclusion that Prime Minister Carney believes that the market

will handle climate change and that governments don't have an important role to play in doing that, certainly on the side of regulations. And that's where our views differ, him and I.

## Is there something else you'd like to say, such as a final message to close out the interview?

We can't give up. It's too important. We also cannot lose sight of the fact that we have made tremendous progress, globally on this problem over the last 30, 40 years, even if there's a lot left to be done. When I started talking about climate change in the early 90s, people thought I was an alarmist. That I was inventing problems, I was trying to scare people. I think that more and more Canadians and people around the world realize that climate change is real. It's happening, but there are solutions that we can put in place. And we've shown that in Canada over the last few years.

**Thank you for the interview, Mr. Guilbeault.**



# THE ADAM ZHU INTERVIEW

NICHOLAS JIRSCH

SENIOR EDITOR

*Convergence* interviewed Adam Zhu about his AI-based project, which obtained a \$200,000 grant and was featured in the school-wide AI assembly.

**First, could you just summarize what your project is and what it aims to do?**

My project is a CED planning tool; CED stands for Community Economic Development. Essentially what it does is, in very simplified terms, it takes in a bunch of data and outputs a bunch of data in a very structured way. More specifically, that would look something like gathering data through web scraping, government APIs, and mostly through a pretty lengthy form that the CED officers will fill out. And then it'll generate an output based on specific guidelines that I set in place beforehand and previous reports that it gets to analyze and look at.

**Did you have any mentors, adults, or teammates helping you with this project, or was this largely self-driven?**

It was self-driven until I got the funding, to which we had to expand. So, I was put in charge of three undergraduate students, and I got a PhD professor to talk to for consulting. But, before that, all that was just me by myself trying to figure out how AI works and all that different stuff.

**What particularly motivated you to focus your project specifically on Inuit communities? Because it's a pretty interesting niche...**

Yeah, it is very niche. And, it was actually not my original idea: I was in the Future Cities Institute at the University of Waterloo and they had an early project, just in the idea phase. It was basically one sentence. So I just decided to take it, because why not? It looked interesting to me.

**How did you make sure the tools would actually reflect Inuit cultural priorities and not just impose an outside framework? Would you say that's been a consideration for you?**

I'll talk about two parts: the tool interface itself and also the output. There's not much to talk about regarding the tool,



except for languages and translation. So, in that aspect, I'm supervising, but one of my undergraduates is working on this specific section and they're going to be meeting with the CED officers as well as the people of their communities to verify translation, and also hiring professionals with the amount of funding that we got in order to make sure that all the different dialects and different languages are translated correctly and are used appropriately for the situation. As for the generation itself, it does adhere to the guidelines of previous reports. So, I have access to quite a few (by quite a few, I mean over 100) previous CED reports, and I've picked out around 30 that are defined as high quality. I also talked to the representative of NEDA, which is the Northern Economic Development Agency, to just verify the quality, and he picked out a few that I missed. Basically, I just analyzed these reports to pull out a guideline (a structure of 80 pages or so) that would be ideal for the reports, as well as using the official guidelines that are given to each of the 25 municipalities of Nunavut.

**If I'm not mistaken, the project involves processing large datasets for community economic planning. What does that look like in practice?**

We'll talk about the input as well because that's a large important area.

To collect the amount of data necessary to summarize five years of economic development, as well as plan for the next five years, you need a huge amount of data. The main source of that data is just from analyzing previous reports because they have a ton of more of an extension of those reports, maybe finishing off plans that were made earlier, maybe starting up new ones based on previous data. There's also another main part of the input, which is user input. CED officers, the people who know their community best, will be essentially filling out this giant form with all the sections, and providing as much detail as possible. Thirdly, we have web crawling (or web scraping), where we send automated bots to different parts of different websites to gather information, just for new information, new facts, maybe we want some kind of quick data on a certain community's company or maybe some other quick fact. We also have APIs (so private government APIs to their databases) that we just pull information directly from there and give it to the AI as context. And lastly, we have community input. Sometime during this process, and this part usually happens after the baseline report is generated and after a few iterations are made, we do send out the reports to the actual communities to verify accuracy and to make sure everything is correct.

# THE ADAM ZHU INTERVIEW

For the output, we have 14 different AI processes running asynchronously. Each one is responsible for a different section. I also have a quality checker: they follow the guideline that I set beforehand. So they don't analyze the previous reports and make a guideline on the go. I made one beforehand, mostly by myself, but with some AI assistance because I don't want to read through 30,000 pages of text, to create a good enough model or good enough guideline that's been approved by NEDA and Waterloo.

**In assembly, you talked about tackling the problem of AI losing accuracy with longer prompts by splitting input into sections: can you explain how this approach works and how much of a difference it makes?**

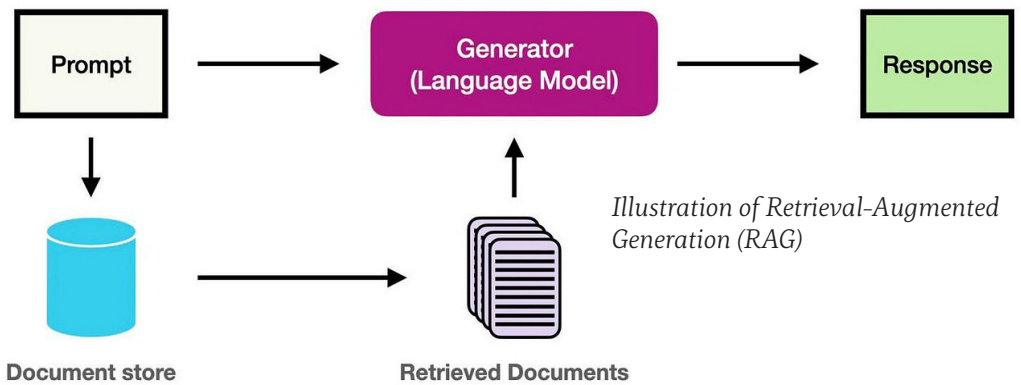
Yeah, I'll get started with the actual problem, and that's commonly called context drift or context degradation. As you increase the amount of tokens in a prompt, which is the message you send to the AI, (think of tokens as sections of a word, each word is split into different sections, maybe "because" would be split into "be" and "cause"), its accuracy or its ability to follow your instructions will decrease. This also applies to when you increase the amount of instructions or you increase the amount of topics that the instruction covers. For example, if I told an AI to generate a huge 80 page report with 13 completely different sections it would struggle because those sections cover completely different areas: maybe one for mining, maybe one for foraging, maybe one for different companies or business opportunities, and it would just be too much. It would be unable to follow this many precise instructions... well, it would be able to follow them, but the quality would be so-so. In addition, the positioning of your context does matter a lot. There's this paper, I think it's called *Lost in the Middle*: AI tends to value instructions, or value tokens, that are placed at the beginning and at the end of a prompt.

So, to solve this, I'll start with the splitting approach: I want each section to be very specialized, so I would assign an AI process. Given a very specific set of instructions, I would put the most important instructions at the start. And then, I would move into context, which is essentially all the data that I'm giving it for it to use. Then at the end, I would go and put

something like, "Do not do this!", "What are your deliverables?", "What are these?", etc. So, the start would look like, "Role: You are a professional writer who is specializing in business opportunities", something like that. You assign it a role, you give it context, then you tell it deliverables and what not to do. That's pretty much the industry standard for AI prompts. And I would do that for each section, starting from beginning to end. It doesn't really matter which order. They're all ran at the same time to reduce the amount of time it takes for waiting. They all finish at approximately the same time. And then, to write the summary, I just run a final AI process on all the different outputs. That AI process is given a set of things to look for, maybe it's looking for proper grammar, maybe it's looking for proper structure because it's going to be using images. It'll go and decide whether it's going to refactor (which is change up or modify a section),

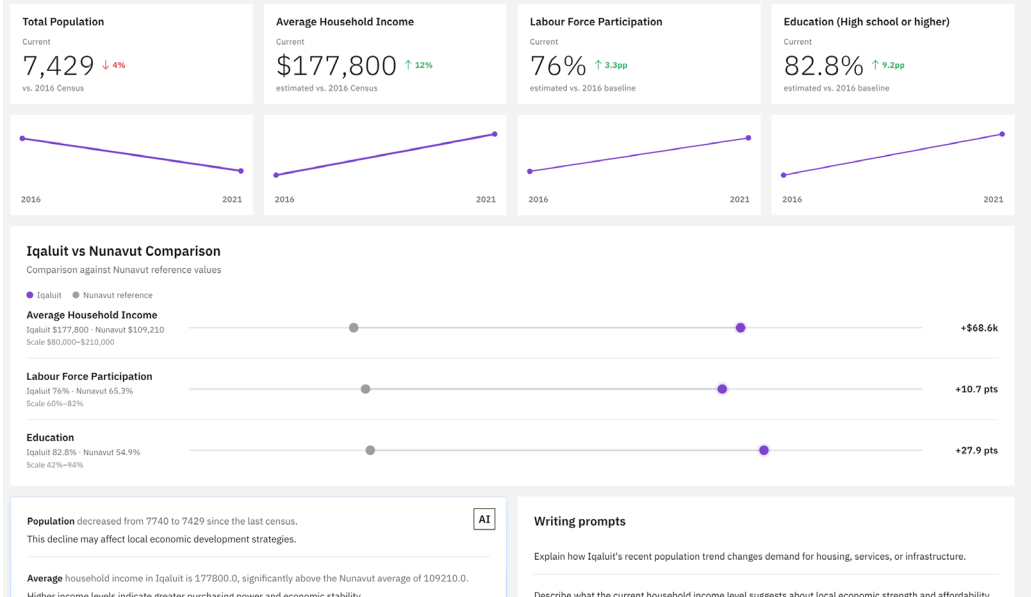
it'll go tell the AI process which made that section for them to remake it in a certain way with updated instructions.

Another part is RAG, which stands for *Retrieval-Augmented Generation*. Standardly, the easiest way to give an AI information is just to give it all the information, even the irrelevant pieces of information, which ties back to the problem of context drift, where the more amounts of tokens you send it, the less it values each individual token because there are just so many of them. RAG, essentially, is a process of defining and setting values to certain pieces of data. I won't get too much into the mathematical sense of how it works, but it essentially only pulls the relevant information for each section. So, instead of pasting all of my data for the AI, it'll only be giving it the relevant pieces of information that it needs.



## Community Analytics Dashboard

Review 5-year historical demographic and economic data before generating your CED report.



# THE ADAM ZHU INTERVIEW

**How did you present yourself and your project to be credible enough to merit a 200,000-dollar grant, which is obviously a hefty investment?**

It starts with the app itself. I used a carbon design system, which is IBM's framework for web development. It's an enterprise level system, so it's very structured, it comes with a very opinionated style. I basically just use that to make my app look very professional because, although it has been used in previous systems (you can customize it to a large extent), the general idea of it is very professional and gives off that professional feel. Just standard web practices, I guess. And for the presentation, I came prepared: of course we were dressed properly, we gave the speech, and then we did a workshop and like a live demonstration for all the 25 city officers to review, and then they asked us questions, and got to try out the tool.

**Was there anything you had to prove about the project's viability before they'd fund it?**

So, they did look at the generated report, and they did look at the entire process including the workshop as well. All those factors came into play when they did make the final decision. Yeah, that's about it.

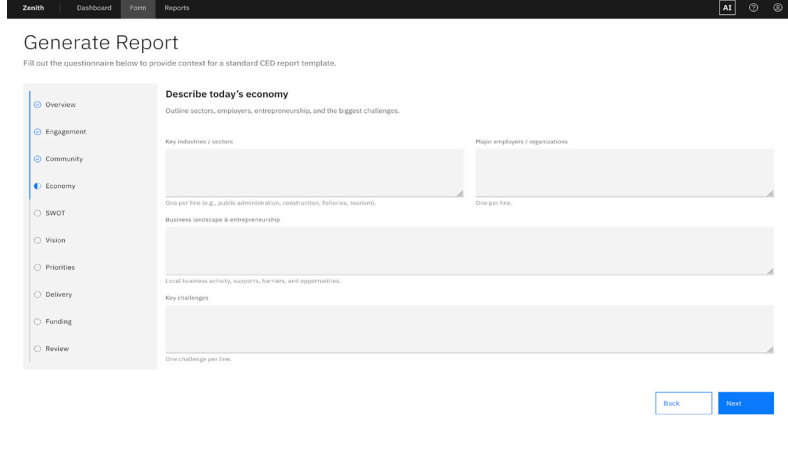
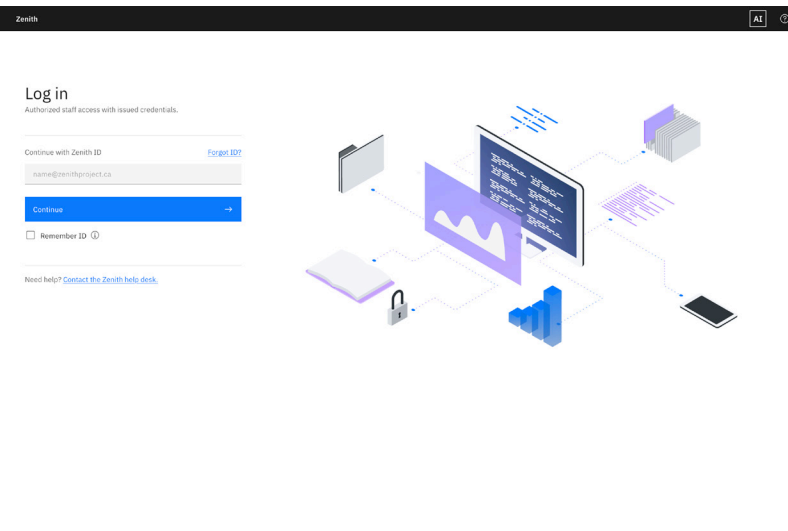
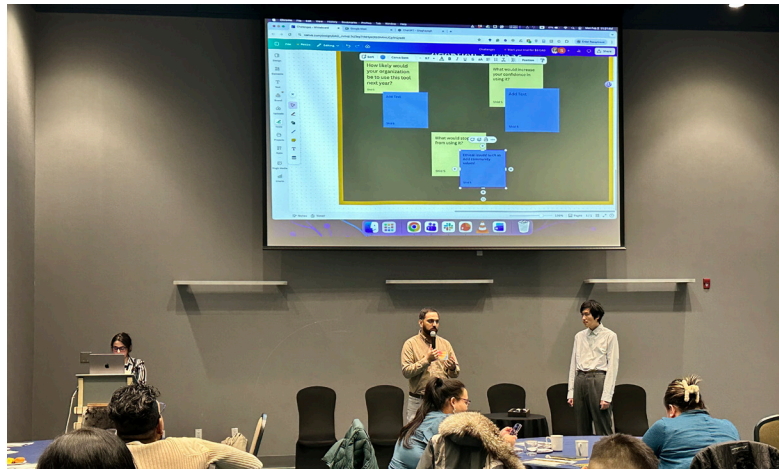
**200,000 dollars is a significant sum. How are you managing the responsibility that comes with that?**

So, the organization part isn't that bad because most of the money is going to be going towards AWS (Amazon Web Services) . It's what I'm using to host the platform. And, a lot of it's going to go to translation. But, the actual process for spending the money is that I have to submit some kind of paperwork to say that I'm going to spend this amount of money on this, and then Waterloo will approve it, and then the money will be used. So, I guess part of the organization is already done by a larger institution, but, for how the money is split, we roughly already decided that maybe we're going to spend \$20,000 on website hosting, and we're going to spend like \$50,000 on translation, stuff like that.

**Where do you see this project in three years?**

Yeah, it'll be done in approximately three months. So, over the March break we did run an internal hackathon, just like an internal sprint within Future Cities Institute, where we got a bunch of data scientists, people specializing in AI, people specializing in front end development, people specializing in math, to come together and go and do a five day sprint in order to get this product up to production grade. The current timeline estimates that we're going to be finished in three months, but the official deadline is next year at around October-ish. But yeah, it'll be done sometime between then and there, but most likely in the next three months. And, maybe, in three years, it'll be in production already. Well, it will be in production, but in five years maybe we'll see our first reports generated by it, because it's about time to get the five-year report.

Product Snapshots



# UCC ROWING TENNESSEE WINTER TRIP

ELIJAH PEARSON & CAMERON CUDDY  
STAFF REPORTERS

Every year during March break, the UCC Rowing Crew travels to Oak Ridge, Tennessee for a high intensity and team bonding trip. The team from grades 9-12 train here in preparation for a dedicated and draining spring season, where, for two months, the team must row 6 days a week at 5 am. All of this effort leads to various regattas where the crew hopes to place among the best teams in Canada, which all finally leads to the Canadian Secondary School Rowing Association Regatta. This national competition is where one hundred schools all compete to be national champions in Canada.

Historically, the college has won, placed, or qualified in many of these very competitive events - creating olympians in the process. With this in mind, the Tennessee training camp is our transition from a four month long winter season into the vital spring season, developing team chemistry and refined on the water technique.

## Before the trip:

In the weeks before the trip everyone was super excited. For the Year 12s, it was their last time and for the novices who were new to the program, it was their first time. After the Ridley Indoor Rowing Championship where UCC had 7 top ten finishes, everybody

headed to the boat house in the outer harbour to de-rig our boats and load them onto the trailer. Though it was hard with almost a foot of snow and the temperature exceeding -10 degrees, the boys persevered and managed to get all the boats loaded quickly and effectively, and next week it was off to Tennessee.

## The bus ride:

At 5am on Thursday, after arriving, we loaded up all their stuff onto the bus and started on our 16-hour journey through the exotic American countryside. The ride down was great, all thanks to Dr. Rezunyk and Mr. Weekes, who helped to keep everybody calm and in check during the trip so that everything went smoothly. A huge thanks must be given to our bus drivers Ron and Ed for driving us from place to place and helping us get through an insane 100kmph wind storm.

## Notable events:

Apart from rowing, the team did lots of other things too. From trips to Walmart to restaurant dinners the trip was far from boring.

While rowing, the crews pushed through some crazy weather and water conditions. Because of the melting snow and runoff from the mountains, water levels rose, causing a large amount of logs and other debris in the water. There were also huge downpours while we rowed. We also had a chance to meet up with



other crews during a UCC-Havergal social event, where the two teams got together to go bowling and socialize.

Finally, we ended the camp with the whole team, senior, and junior dinners. After the whole team dinner at the famous Big Ed's Pizza restaurant we gave gifts to every one of our coaches as a thank-you for all their help.

## Day to Day:

Our day to day schedule included three practices and lots of food. We started the day with breakfast at the hotel at 7:30am. Once breakfast was done, the boys loaded onto the bus and headed off to row. The juniors worked on solidifying technique by getting lots of miles. The seniors worked on improving their technique to the next level. Mornings had two shorter practices, after which the crew was let go for lunch. After lunch, they got back on the bus and left for a long afternoon row. Dinner followed after the session in the afternoon. The town had lots of places to go, like Freddy's Steamburgers and Custard, Walmart, Outback Steakhouse, Chick-fil-A, and First Watch, among many other places. The schedule is really important in making the Tennessee training camp experience both so fun and challenging at the same time. While there is ample time to have fun with your friends and to mess around, you also spend lots of time on the water getting in miles in the boat and practicing.

## Rowing Experience:

The Tennessee experience is so much fun. You have lots of time to hang out with friends and explore the town. But there is also lots of hard work. During the weeklong camp we go through a total of 20 practices and a total of 80 hours of rowing. While it's hard work you have so much fun doing it and it starts to not even feel like work. The pride you feel when you finally get your technique right or after completing a hard piece and knowing you gave it your all and didn't slack off for a single stroke is unlike anything else.



# MODEL UN GOES TO BERKELEY

**DYAUS PAN**  
JUNIOR EDITOR

This past March Break, many went their separate ways for two weeks. Boarding students returned home to their families, and others found themselves exploring the world. But from March 5-9, a group of twenty students went with faculty advisors Ms. O'Halloran and Mr. Turner to Berkeley, California on a mission: to represent Upper Canada College's values through Model United Nations in debate and diplomacy.

## Day 1:

The boys landed in San Francisco International Airport in the afternoon. After a packed train ride through San Francisco and Oakland, they arrived at the Hotel Shattuck Plaza in Berkeley. An hour and 400 metres later, they sat at two long tables at Revival Bar and Kitchen, playing impostor, eating a team meal, and celebrating a team member's birthday. Then, after a quick Target run, they went to bed to rest up for a long day ahead.

## Day 2:

The next morning, after breakfasts at various places ranging from a diner to Trader Joe's, the team walked up the hill to the University of California Berkeley campus. Surrounded by leafless London Plane trees, they hung around the Sproul Steps, awaiting their tour guide. Five minutes passed, then fifteen, and soon enough it became clear that no one was coming. Refusing to accept this, Ms. O'Halloran took her own initiative to take the boys to the top of Sather Tower, where they could see everywhere from the football stadium to the Golden Gate Bridge. Next, they viewed various dinosaur and pre-human fossils, including "Lucy," a groundbreaking fossil that fundamentally changed archaeology. Finally, a quick stop at the UC Berkeley clothing store ended with the team decked out in university merchandise.

With the leisure out of the way, the boys focussed up on last minute research and practice, with many heading to the Berkeley Public Library to make use of its free printer services. Soon, they sat in the opening ceremony, listening to former Science Advisor to President Joe Biden Arati Prabhakar lecture on the importance of using your voice to advocate for change. And an hour later, that is exactly what the UCC delegates did in a grueling three hour first committee session.



Exhausted and proud of their first speeches, they grabbed some food at 10pm and headed to the hotel for some much needed rest.

## Day 3:

If this day could be described with one word, it would be "productive". With seven hours and thirty minutes of Model UN split across two committee sessions, the boys made countless speeches, collaborated with delegates from around the world to write unique solutions, and defended them with knowledge and passion. In between sessions, they explored all that Berkeley has to offer, including collegiate water polo and baseball games, authentic ramen spots, and classic Chipotle. By the end of the day, the team had left their mark on their fellow delegates and chairs; only one session remained between them and the finish line.

## Day 4:



Three hours could not feel longer than the final committee session. This combination of last-minute paper presentations and "Fun MUN" tired the boys, but also showed them how rewarding their efforts were. The closing ceremony to follow would only confirm this. In the heat of the blazing California sun that was so unfamiliar to the winter-acclimated team, UCC's MUN travel team celebrated as countless of them went up to receive their awards. More importantly, they extolled the contributions of everyone as competitors, supporters, and friends. As they returned to the hotel with their heads held high, they set their minds on one thing: making the most of the fleeting time left in Berkeley before the flight the next day.

## Conclusion:

The Upper Canada College Model UN travel team represented the school at Berkeley with class and respect. They showed that Canadians are people committed to advancing global development and human rights around the world. Special thank you to head delegates John Karakoulas and John Mboutsiadis, as well as faculty advisors Mr. Turner and Ms. O'Halloran for their immense commitment and dedication to making the BMUN trip possible. The numerous accolades won and memories made serve as a testament to this trip of a lifetime, one with the best teammates anyone could ask for.

# OUTDOORS CLUB WINTER TRIP

ELIJAH PEARSON

STAFF REPORTER

The UCC Outdoors Club is one of the school's many unique extra-curricular organizations. *Convergence* interviewed Cameron Cuddy about the club's winter trip and his involvement with the club.

## Why did you decide to involve yourself with The Outdoor club?

The reason I got into the outdoor club was because I had friends who were already doing it and it just seemed really fun. I was already interested in the outdoors and wanted to go camping but had never had an apparatus or system to do it, but this was a great way to get out camping and to get some experience.

## How long was the trip? Where did you go? What kind of trip was it?

The trip we did was 4 days long and we went to Arrowhead provincial park. It's seven kilometres north of Huntsville, Ontario. It was an amazing facility. There was so much to do there, like cross country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking and ice skating - everything was really fun. I think everyone would say that the ice skating trail was the highlight of the trip. It was so cool and unique. It was a trail, about a kilometre long, that was all lit up at night. It was so awesome.

## What was your day to day while doing this trip?

In my tent we both woke up around 7:00-7:30am and got the stove going. After enjoying the heat for a little, we had breakfast at 8:00am, which would be the start to our day. We would usually be out hiking or skiing and then stop for snack afterward.

A couple hours later, we would have lunch, and at the end of the day's excursion, we would have one more snack. We would then head back to the campsite for 2-3 hours to hang out, do some studying, looking at natural features or anything else.

Dinner by the fire followed, and we would have some really great conversations with teacher and student over marshmallows and smores. Then we would go skating and after that we would head to sleep.

## Have you ever had experience in doing an outdoors trip like this one?

No. I've only been camping for a year and it's mostly been with the outdoor club. I also haven't done winter camping before so it was all a new experience.

## Continuing on from the last question - what was difficult?

There were a couple moments that were pretty difficult. The first night was pretty hard because I didn't really have a good idea of what I was doing and because of that I got pretty cold the first night. However, after that I was able to get some advice and figure out what to do. It also got pretty warm in our tent once we got the indoor stove going.

## Would you recommend it to others - what kind of person would you recommend it to?

I would highly recommend this trip to everyone. It provides tons of outdoor experience for anyone interested. You get to learn so much about the outdoors and how to camp and just lots more basic skills like how to tie new types of knots, how to make a fire and how to set up a tent.

However, I wouldn't recommend the outdoors club and especially the winter trips to people who aren't willing to put in a good amount of effort in order to make sure the trip runs smoothly. Which is especially important in the winter. There is a fair amount of hardship that goes into daily life. However, if you're willing to put in the work it starts to not feel like hard work at all.

## How would you describe the group dynamics and experience?

The group dynamics were great for this trip. It was a small group this time, while a little worrying at first because it called into question whether we would be able to run the trip or not, however, this worry quickly became excitement when we found out we could. Small trips are great because you know everyone who was going really wanted to be there. Everyone who went knew each other so we all had a really great time, joking and having fun the entire trip. These trips, especially the more mentally and physically strenuous ones, really bring you and the people you go with closer together through a shared experience and struggle.

## Did you have a favourite moment, something memorable about your experience?

As I said before, ice skating was a highlight for everyone. It was a really great site to go to and Mr. Borden, the trip organizer, really did a good job at finding a place to go.

## If you want to become part of the club who should you contact?

The teachers who run the club are Mr. Borden and Mr. Kiddell. They both work in the Economics department so it's easy to find them both. Once you go on one trip you're automatically part of the club. Our next trip in June will be really fun. Just ask Mr. Borden or Mr. Kiddell to put you on the email list. If you know anyone who's in the club, just ask them too.

