

The Public Square for May 2025

Attention Citizens!

There was an election here in Canada, and the good guys won.

I've been keeping half an eye on how outsiders in Europe and the United States are talking about the Canadian election, and what they generally do is talk about the new Prime Minister Mark Carney. That's fine I guess, but I think outsiders are completely missing the real story of what's going on here.

Some examples from my own life.

I was in line to get coffee the other day, and the two dudes ahead of me in line were talking about how Canada needs to start building nuclear weapons, because "just look at what happened to Ukraine."

My buddy in Quebec who is kinda-sorta-maybe sympathetic to Quebec Independence is now all-in on this idea that Canada should implement a peacetime draft. "We need to be ready," he says. By "we" he means Canada, not just Quebec.

I was talking with somebody in public about Canada's ([now under review](#)) contract to buy F-35s from the Americans, and a complete stranger came up to us and started talking about the [rumoured kill-switch](#) that the American build into the planes. We all agreed that Canada should buy European planes instead.

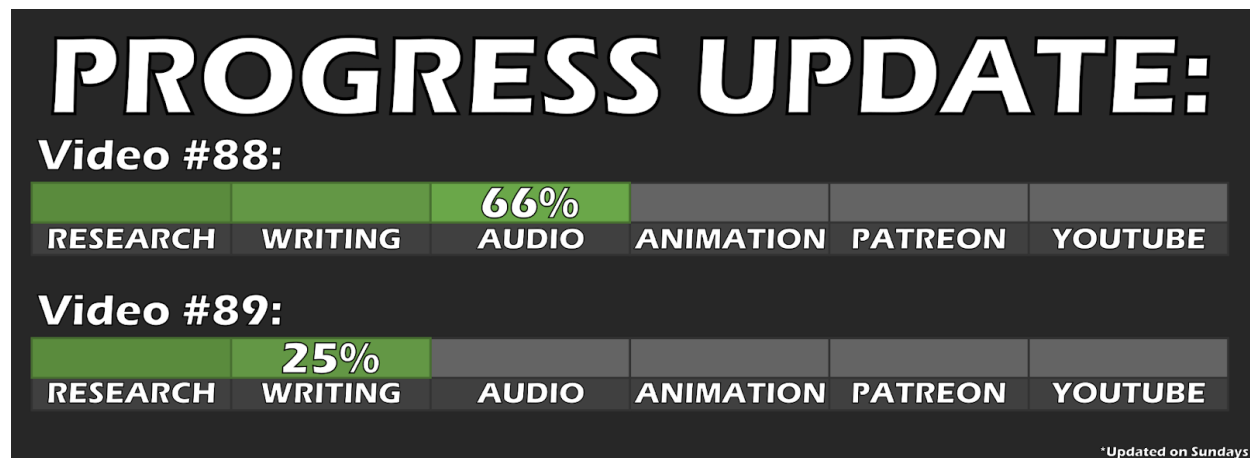
I guess what I'm saying is that Canadians are extremely engaged in a way that probably isn't immediately clear if you're just looking at "what did Mark Carney say" international news stories. On the ground it feels like the politicians are barely keeping up to the mood of the people.

I've never seen anything like it. People are fired up. The mood isn't "oh isn't it a shame what's happening," it's more like "we're ready." I'm not sure that there's an upper limit to what Canadians would support.

And since I've put all of the above in writing, it's [probably not safe for me to travel to the United States](#) for the foreseeable future. Which is fine. But still, that's a "decision" that I had to make before I posted this.

Anyways, on a happier note...!

Progress Update:



This month I spent some time to write up the first draft of Video #89. My first drafts are always very sloppy and loose and rambling, with very weak narrative threads holding them together. But having written it up, I kinda know what I need to do for the second draft and how I need to structure it. I've figured out where some of the holes are in my narrative, so I've been doing some more research to fill in the blanks. So far the research... hasn't really been going very well! I know exactly what I need, but I've had bad luck with the books! Oh well. I'll just continue reading until I stumble across the specific area or knowledge that the video needs.

As for Video #88, the audio is mostly done, the only thing left is to add the music. I've taken a few days away from the audio because I'm sick of listening to my own voice and I need fresh ears. Right now the audio file is sitting at 55 minutes, which is pretty long. Music is next, then listen to it a bunch of times for last minute changes, then it's off to animation.

Books I've Recently Enjoyed:

- **Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind, by Yuval Noah Harari**
 - My ongoing quest to become slightly less lost when it comes to prehistory continues with **Sapiens**. This is very much a pop-science book in both the best and worst senses of the word. But that's okay because I need all the help I can get, I need somebody to talk to me like I'm stupid.

Early in this book Harari makes an argument that I've never heard before. I'm not sure that I'm 100% on board with it, but I still found it interesting. He says that abstract thought, which developed around 70,000 years ago, allowed for the development of mythology, folklore, identify, and (in the broadest sense of the

word,) culture. These abstract ideas were what first allowed large numbers of strangers to coordinate their actions beyond their strict materialist needs.

In other words, before abstract thought, “us” could only include people that you knew, probably limited to around ~50 people. See: [Dunbar’s Number](#). After abstract thought, “us” could also include strangers of the same culture, which meant that several bands of ~50 people were capable of coordinating their actions.

This “ability” was unique to Homo sapiens, and it helps to explain how they were able to successfully push into Neanderthal territory 70,000 years ago. Neanderthals were stronger, more well adapted to their climate, and in some respects even technologically superior, but they couldn’t coordinate in groups larger than 50. (In practice, probably more like 30.) Homo sapiens of the same culture (whatever that meant at the time) were capable of coordinating in groups of like 500, maybe even more, which would have made them an unstoppable force when they were trying to migrate into a new region.

Like I said, I’m not sure that I’m 100% on board, but this was an argument that I’ve never heard before, and it kinda got my brain spinning in creative directions.

And then about half way through the book he transitions into talking about ancient Rome, an area where I’m not so stupid, and then starts to make sweeping generalizations about the nature of Empire that I don’t really agree with. So as the book went on I became less and less impressed with his arguments. Alas! But nevertheless, I really enjoyed the early prehistory chapters. I’m still on a quest to become better educated in this area.

- **God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater, by Kurt Vonnegut**

- Fail Son Eliot Rosewater is the heir to the Rosewater fortune and runs their philanthropic organization, until he suffers some kind of psychic break brought about by the contradictions within capitalism and blows up his life. He moves to Indiana and decides to set up a telephone hotline to just unconditionally give money away to anybody who needs it.

This is just one big excuse for Vonnegut to go on multiple riffs about rich people and capitalism. There’s not much of a story beyond what I described above, but that doesn’t matter, it’s great.

According to my personal notes, I read this book 10+ years ago while I was working on a night shift. I literally had no memory of anything that happened in this book, which is more proof that working the night shift gives you permanent brain damage.

Films I've Recently Enjoyed:

- **The Bounty (1984)**

- Boats. Any movie about boats is basically good. My only complaint? They get off the boat in Tahiti. Nah nah nah, I don't think so. Give me sails, give me rigging, give me stern British faces, give me brace the mizzen sail, give me eight bells and all's well, give me beat to quarters. Building huts on Tahiti is none of those things. Good movie though.

- **The Stepford Wives (1975)**

- It really do be like this, folks. Damn documentary.

All sci-fi is political, but pre-Star Wars '70s sci-fi tends to be extremely political in a way that my brain finds very satisfying. For some reason my brain always draws a straight line connecting **The Stepford Wives (1975)** with **Silent Running (1972)**, even though the movies are not similar at all. It's like... the idealism of the 60s is being stamped out by "society," feminism in **The Stepford Wives (1975)**, and environmentalism in **Silent Running (1972)**. And for some reason my brain finds that message very comforting. Let's not examine that too closely.

Music I've Recently Enjoyed:

- **Arcade Fire**

- I really fell down a rabbit hole this month. I never really paid much attention to the album **Everything Now (2017)**, but something clicked in my brain and now I'm stuck in a pattern where I listen to it almost every single day. I don't know why it happened. The stupid disco-ass beats are hypnotic and good for walking, that's the problem. The songs I've gone back to most often are **Everything Now** and **Put Your Money on Me**.

- **David Bowie**

- I'm an unabashed Bowie-head. I was listening to **Aladdin Sane (1973)** VERY LOUD and paying close attention to the piano in each song (is that strange? lol.) While doing this, the song **Time** stood out to me as kinda brilliant. Before, I had always written it off as a filler song, but it's definitely not, I was wrong, it's doing some really interesting instrumental stuff.

Aladdin Sane (1973) is great, **Watch That Man** is one of my absolute top Bowie tracks. The album also has a cover of The Rolling Stones's **Let's Spend the Night Together**, which in my opinion (is this controversial? maybe...) is way better than the original. Listen to them back to back, it's clear to me that Bowie cracked the song, he figured it out, he finished it. He performs it like the wheels are about to fall off, the whole band is about to have a nervous breakdown, it's so great.

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America Delenda Est.