



NEWS RELEASE

Reality of socialism in Poland serves as a stark warning to the 50% of young Canadians who favour socialism

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For immediate release

VANCOUVER—Younger Canadians aged 18 to 24—50 per cent of whom favour socialism as their preferred economic system—need to understand the real misery socialism inflicted on countries that tried it such as Poland. This is the main lesson of an upcoming book to be published by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan, Canadian public policy think-tank, working in partnership with think tanks in the U.S., Australia and the U.K.

“As a direct result of socialism, the Polish people were materially poorer. They died younger. They had less food and fewer social services. Their freedom was curtailed and they were generally miserable,” said Matt Mitchell, Fraser Institute senior fellow and co-author of the upcoming book *The Road to Socialism and Back: An Economic History of Poland, 1939–2019*.

The new book, to be fully released next month along with a new interactive website *RealitiesofSocialism.org*, documents the misery that socialism inflicted on the Polish people from 1944 to the early 1990s, when Poland transitioned to democracy and a market economy.

- **Shortages** were endemic to socialist Poland. Stores had no soap, coffee, sugar, laundry detergent, or meat. Poles waited 15 to 30 years for housing. Just 11 per cent had cars and just seven per cent had telephones.
- **Standards of living** in Poland were about 40 per cent of U.S. living standards (as measured by per capita GDP). Life expectancy was well below the average for other comparable European countries and in fact, for the last 16 years of socialism in Poland, life expectancy actually declined.
- **Inequality** was rampant in socialist Poland, since the communist elite—called the Nomenklatura—did not pay taxes, vacationed in their own resorts, enjoyed their own spas, and hunted in their own hunting grounds. They had their own pension plans and their own health care. Party elites could have passports and leave the country, and they even shopped in their own shops stocked with goods that were unavailable to the masses.

The new book is especially important, given recent polling findings by Leger, commissioned for the Fraser Institute in the fall of 2022. That survey found that 42 per cent of all Canadians—and fully 50 per cent of young Canadians aged 18-24—support socialism as their preferred economic system. And among those who say they favour socialism, 35 per cent support government directly running the economy by owning companies and entire industries.

“Young people today weren’t alive when actual socialism was imposed on one-third of the planet. As memories fade and as the number of living witnesses to the socialist experiment dwindle, many are tempted to jump back on the road to socialism.” Mitchell said.

“If we don’t educate them about the realities of socialism, and the misery it inflicted on tens of millions of people, we risk repeating those same mistakes with catastrophic consequences.”

*This pre-release is part of a new multimedia project, **The Realities of Socialism**, by the Fraser Institute, the Institute of Economic Affairs in the UK, the Institute of Public Affairs in Australia and the Fund for American Studies in the U.S.*

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