

# Hello, it's me

By Sarah Sobanski

Hello, it's me, I was wondering if after all these years you'd like to speak ? well, Adele, maybe not so many years, maybe just a couple of months, give or take.

Hello, beautiful Bancroft, Ont. I come home to you from the promise land of the west, or so it used to be. After the dramatic drop in oil barrel prices, and the rise in gas prices due to the summer driving season, Alberta doesn't have much to offer in terms of livelihood or financial security.

It's interesting; Ontario has been struggling in an almost constant recession. Jobs have always been hard to get. Students study for years to gain entry-level positions at minimum wage that demand experience instead, and men and women with years of experience are cut back for those who will do the same job at half the pay.

We've created a cutthroat market, whether through corporate oversight in trying to save a dollar, or through entitling our children, or whichever excuse comes next. It seems like a never-ending cycle. Many families scarcely manage their debts.

Journalism is a story all its own. The industry is dying where it should flourish in the wake of the Internet. Mass news media companies struggle to transition from their advertising based revenue TV, radio and print coverage models to an internationally free medium.

Reporters who once thoroughly covered one story, are now expected to cover 10. Those who had cameramen, now have to shoot their own video. Deadlines are every night as opposed to weekly.

We're used to it; going an extra five miles after being told the prize would be at the third. In the west, the mentality of give more, get less, is just starting to sink in.

I went to a steakhouse my first week in Alberta, a place akin to a Montana's BBQ and Bar or an Outback Steakhouse. Where here I can afford to eat out once a week at a similar establishment while maintaining a similar wage, there I couldn't afford the cheapest meal on the menu.

I would later mention this to a co-worker. She would shrug and tell me the prices were based on oil-money.

Looking past the deranged discrepancies concerning inflation and how they irk me, I managed a glimpse into an easier time. Couldn't we all do with enough oil-money to be carefree.

Alberta, especially, now sits between the Green Party, the NDP Leap Manifesto, our windmills and a hard place. It can't implement industry infrastructure without committing to fossil fuel energy consumption that extends past the world's proposed end to fossil fuel energies. This ultimately puts the east in a better position to flourish, even if just because the west must start anew.

I came home to work as a journalist because I love this area.

Originally from Bethany, Ont., I am accustomed to small-town life. Every day on my commute to work I see a beauty I haven't seen anywhere else across the country ? from giant rocks to creeping rivers.

I enjoy seeing my neighbours on every street corner, shopping locally and the atmosphere of support that comes from having to work together to achieve what is now unjustly unavailable for one to achieve.

I also however, came home because I think we might finally be breaking out onto the cliff's edge of rebuilding what was lost, of regaining that mentality that is out west that we have somehow forgotten. Our loss and constant need for innovation might just start paying off.

I hope that we do it right. While fighting for a standardized living wage, and a standardized health benefits plan that doesn't mean paying 10 or 20 or 50 per cent of the cost, we might also fight for long-term, and well-researched green jobs. With new business initiatives, we might stock shelves with fair trade items. Maybe we'll build infrastructure with gender-neutral bathrooms, just because it's a fresh start and who cares.

I know as we come out of the end of the industrialized era, a lot of hearts have hardened to get by. As we look ahead to the next era however, whatever it may be, I don't want our future generations to hold on to the same general mistrust of difference, to the brink of hate, that has been borne out of our uncertainty.

At any rate, I look forward to starting a new life here in Bancroft with the Bancroft This Week. I am excited to watch Ontario transition over the next few decades, but I am also excited to immerse myself in a new community and to make a new home.

If ever you want to come into the office for a chat, or to discuss a community initiative that you value and might need coverage, don't hesitate to get in contact with us.

It's so typical of me to talk about myself, I'm sorry. I hope that you're well.